Stephan Conermann (ed.)

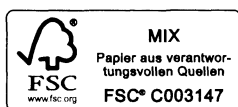# Everything is on the Move

The Mamluk Empire as a Node in (Trans-)Regional Networks

With 19 figures

V&R unipress

Bonn University Press

universität**bonn**

Contents

Albrecht Fuess (Marburg)

Ottoman Ġazwah – Mamluk Ǧihād.
Two Arms on the Same Body?

Introduction

In the sixteenth century collection of diplomatic letters of the head of the Ot-
toman chancery Ferīdūn Beg (d. 1583), a diplomatic exchange of the Mamluk
Sultan Barqūq (r. 1382 – 1389/ 1390 – 1399) and the Ottoman Sultan Bāyezīd I (r.
1389 – 1402) can be found. In these letters from 1391 Barqūq informs his Otto-
man counterpart that he has asked for the release of Muslim merchants captured
by the Genoese. Bāyezīd welcomes this initiative for the Muslim merchants and
asks in turn for mercy for Ottoman merchants in Mamluk custody, because they
had allegedly breached Mamluk custom legislation. Both rulers thereby stress
the unity in Islam, culminating in the phrase that their lands are to be regarded
as "two arms on the same body".[1] This expression might be perceived as a dip-
lomatic flowery phrase. However, there was certainly a shared feeling of the
Ottoman and Mamluk sultans to belong to the same *Sunni* sphere of Islam. This
resulted in a friendly mutual approach as long as common interests did not
overlap too much. Until 1453 and the conquest of Constantinople by the Otto-
mans, both powers managed to stay out of each other's way for most of the time.
But with the splendid victory in hand, the Ottomans would after 1453 openly
challenge the Mamluk's role as prime Sunni power of the region. Afterwards
relations started to turn hostile especially about the question of hegemony over
Eastern Anatolia.

However, this was not yet the case prior to the fall of Constantinople when
concepts of *Holy War* were shaped in the Mamluk and Ottoman Empires. But, as
will be discussed in this contribution, the concepts of *Holy War* of both Empires
were quite distinct and they will be presented in the following as Mamluk *ǧihād*
and as Ottoman *ġazwa*. Of course, I can't take the credit to be the first one to

---

1 Ferīdūn Beg, *Münşeat al-Salatin*, vol. 1: 118, İstanbul: 1274 – 1275/1857 – 1859. Here cited
  after: Cihan Yuksel Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks: Imperial Diplomacy and Warfare
  in the Islamic World*, London: I.B. Tauris 2014, 78.

speak of a *Ġāzī* state of the Ottomans, this goes back to Paul Wittek and the late 1930s and a lecture series held at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London: "(…) in the struggle with this extraordinary resistance [of the Byzantines] the Ghâzî state of Osman developed its extraordinary strength. The grave sternness and tenacious courage that distinguish this state in its later history were deeply imprinted upon its soul during these years of its early youth."[2] For Wittek the *Holy War* in its Ottoman form, the *ġazwa* was vital for the formation of the Ottoman state and was upheld until later periods. However, this thesis has been challenged, revised, revisited quite often in later years, but as İlker Evrim Binbaş has put it "seventy years on, Wittek's scholarship is still with us. Cemal Kafadar explained its persistence by its flexibility. It is a form of ideology, or a metaphor, and it could be incorporated into various other explanatory frameworks even though Wittek did not foresee such combinations."[3] Therefore Wittek's *ġazī* thesis can still be useful regarding Ottoman studies and in the following it shall be combined with the approach that the Mamluk *ǧihād* concept is as well something peculiar, which developed at the very beginning of the Mamluk Empire and shaped the mental framework of the Mamluk Empire right to its downfall. However, Ottoman *ġazwa* and Mamluk *ǧihād* do overlap, especially as they target identical foes, i.e. Christians and non-Sunni Muslims, but their respective ideological grounding and their military approach is quite distinct. Still, one could ask how the present contribution is linked with the overarching theme of this book, i.e. "The Mamluk Empire as node in (trans) regional Networks." Henning Sievert shows in his contribution to this volume how "networkstudies" can be very effective looking at social networks on the basis of individual or groups within the Mamluk period.[4] When I was thinking about preparing my contribution, I thought that it might also be worthwhile to look at nodes and networks in the context of ideas and mentality. In this context, I would be inclined to see Ottoman *ġazwa* and Mamluk *ǧihād* as mental nodes within a larger ideological network of *Holy War* within the Muslim sphere.

I then found out that the term "mental nodes" plays an important role in Cognitive Psychology. Donald G. MacKay argues that within mental nodes of humans there is a clear relation between perception and action: "In the case of

---

2 Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire. Studies in the history of Turkey, thirteenth – fifteenth centuries,* With translations into English by Colin Heywood, Rudi Paul Lindner and Oliver Welsh. With a Preface by İlker Evrim Binbaş. Edited by Colin Heywood (With an Introduction and Afterword), London: Routledge 2012, 62.

3 İlker Evrim Binbaş. "Preface", in: Wittek, *The Rise,* xiv. Cf., Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two worlds. The Construction of the Ottoman State,* Berkeley: University of California Press 1958, 58. For critics of the Wittek Thesis, see: Colin Heywood, "Introduction", in: Wittek, *The Rise,* 3 – 4.

4 See Henning Sievert's contribution in this volume.

mental nodes, perception is synonymous to respond. When a mental node becomes activated during perception, all of its associated higher level (e.g., proposition) nodes and lower level (e.g., phonological) nodes become strongly primed or readied for activation under the most-primed-wins principle."[5] Without pushing any analogy to my present topic, which must be limping, too far, I would argue that in my case the *Muslim Holy* war could be perceived as main "Mental Node" and Ottoman *ġazwa* and Mamluk *ǧihād* represent sub mental nodes within a specific historical, regional and cultural context. Once the *Muslim Holy War* node is activated through exterior threats it sends the message to the sub nodes who then prepare the (re)-action. As we will see in the following it has been the Ottoman *ġazwa* concept which managed to be better prepared for the sixteenth century and who prevailed under the above mentioned "most-primed-wins principle."

Mamluk *ǧihād*

The Mamluk military prestige was very much shaped in the military encounters with the Crusaders and Mongols in the second part of the thirteenth century. The Damascene scholar Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) praises the Mamluks for their victories against these great enemies and the defence of the community of believers, *the umma*, with the following words: "In respect to the group which governs Egypt and Syria in the moment, one has to acknowledge that it is them who fight for the religion of Islam and they are the people who merit to be described by the authentic saying of the prophet – God shall pray for him and grant him peace – when he said: 'A group of my community will not cease to fight for the triumph of the almighty. Nothing can harm them, not the one who fights them nor the one who betrays them, until the hour comes' (...). Their power is the power of Islam and their degradation is the degradation of Islam. If the Tatars [Mongols] would become their masters, there would be no more power in Islam."[6] However, if we look closely how the *ǧihād*-concept developed through Ayyubid and Mamluk times it was mainly an intellectual reaction towards the crusaders, who had come, in stark contrast to the Mongols, with a religious ideology which challenged Islam supremacy. As early as 1105, six years after the fall of Jerusalem, the Syrian author as-Sulamī (d. 1106/07) talked about the negligence of religious duties among contemporary Muslims. Therefore God had sent the Christians in

---

5 Donald G. Mackay, *The organization of perception and action: A theory for language and other cognitive skills*, Berlin: Springer 1987, 128. See especially Chapter 7: "The functions of mental nodes and mirror neurons" (pp. 126 – 140).

6 Yahya Michot, "Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya. Mongols et Mamlūks, XIII," in: *Le Musulman*, 26 (1995), 26, 28.

order to punish and purify them: "and they did not cease to strive on their ğihād against the Muslims, while the latter were sluggish, allying against fighting the enemy and were proud of being in peaceful contact with them."[7]

In this citation the rendering of ğihād as "holy war of the Christians" is quite remarkable, as in later periods it would be used quite exclusively in a Muslim context beginning with the active re-conquest of the coast under Nūr ad-Dīn Zangī (r. 1146–1174), the Atabeg of Mossul. His counselor Ibn Munīr encouraged him to fight the Christian crusaders by apparently saying that he should not give up, until "he would see Jesus himself fleeing Jerusalem."[8] Jerusalem became subsequently a main brick of the ğihād concepts of Zangīds and their successors the Ayyubids. When Jerusalem was finally taken by the Ayyubid Sultan Ṣalaḥ ad-Dīn (Saladin) (r. 1171–93) in 1187 Abū Šāma (d. 1203) wrote, putting the victory in a larger Islamic context: "The Ka'ba rejoices in the liberation of its brother al-Aqṣā" and "the faith which was banned from its sanctuary, finds today back to its birthplace."[9] The re-capture of Jerusalem, however, completely changed the situation. Now Muslim armies had not to re-conquer Jerusalem from the Franks, but to defend it against them. Muslim rulers over bilād aš-Šām had now to come up with a working defense strategy. It was then, that ğihād in the Syrian context obtained a specific defensive notion of defending the dār al-islām against outer foes. The switch of ğihād strategy came when the Ayyubids realized after their victory of the battle of Ḥaṭṭīn in 1187 that they were not able to expel the Crusaders from the coast in an overhasty manner but that they needed patience.

Saladin had taken Acre from the crusaders in 1187, but he could not hold it against the naval supremacy of the Franks. His emirs had initially asked him to destroy Acre, but he did not follow their advice.[10] However, afterwards Saladin altered is tactics and in the same year he let the coastal town of Ascalon destroy, when King Richard Lionheart approached it with his troops. The reason for the destruction was that he assumed that he could not hold the town against the combination of Frankish sea and land forces.[11] When the Mamluks came to

---

7   As-Sulamī, 'Alī b. Ṭāhir, "Kitāb al-ğihād," in: Arba'a kutub fī l-ğihād min 'aṣr al-ḥurūb aṣ-ṣalībiyya, ed. by Suhayl Zakkār, Damascus 2007, 45; here cited after: Stefan Leder, "Sunni Resurgence, Jihād Discourse and the Frankish Presence," in: Crossroads between Latin Europe and the Near East: Corollaries of the Frankish Presence in the Eastern Mediterranean (12th-14th centuries), ed. by Stefan Leder, Würzburg: Ergon 2011, 90.

8   Abū Šāma, k. ar-Rawḍatayn fī aḫbār ad-dawlatayn, vol. 1, Cairo: Maṭba'a wādī an-Nīl 1870, 57; Emmanuel Sivan, "Le caractère sacré de Jerusalem dans l'Islam aux XIIe – XIIIe siècles," in: Studia Islamica, 27/1967, 155.

9   Abū Šāma, k. ar-Rawḍatayn, vol. 2 (1871), 98, 110; Emmanuel Sivan, "Le caractère sacré," 163.

10 Hans Eberhard Mayer, Geschichte der Kreuzzüge, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1989⁷, 130.

11 Ibid., 131–34; al-Maqrīzī, k. as-Sulūk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk, ed. by Muḥammad Mu-ṣṭafā Ziyāda, Cairo: Laǧnat at-Ta'līf wa-t-Tarǧama wa-n-Našr, 1934, vol. l, part 1, 104–05;

power in 1250, they copied this strategy: all coastal towns in the vicinity of Jerusalem were razed out of fear that the crusaders might use a fortified town at the coast as a bridgehead for further attacks on the Holy Land as they could supply coastal towns easily with the help of their superior fleets. On the coast only rudiments of former settlements were to remain, whose harbours could exchange goods, but were not able to defend themselves. Only when the threat of the crusaders ceased in the course of the following centuries, some fortifications were renewed.[12] When talking about *ǧihād* in Mamluk times, contemporary Mamluk authors link it mainly to the defense of the coast. In Mamluk times, several works were written which praise the merits of *ǧihād* (*faḍā'il al-ǧihād*) and the merits of Syria (*faḍā'il aš-Šām*) in order to ideologically bolster the fight against Crusaders in Syria.[13] Ibn Taymiyya wrote a treatise in the fourteenth century with the title *al-Murābaṭa bi-ṯ-ṯuġūr afḍal am al-muǧāwara bi-makka šarafahā Allāh ta'ālā?* ("Is it better to guard the coastal towns than to live and serve in the vicinity of God Blessed Mecca?"), which underlines the merits of coastal war and guardianship against the Christians.[14] In this context, it is also quite remarkable what Ibn Baṭṭūṭa had to say about Jerusalem when he passed by it in 1326; according to him, Sultan Baybars (r. 1260–1277) completed the demolition of the entirety of the wall fortifications "out of fear, that the *rūm* (Christians) might retake it and could not be thrown out again."[15] Jerusalem, the target of the Christians, appears here as an Islamic border fortification (*ribāṭ*) or even a coastal town (*ṯaġr*). It is the only town so far inland which was stripped off its fortifications.

Since then, this defensive *ǧihād* concept was upheld throughout Mamluk times. Especially the attack of King Peter I of Cyprus (r. 1358–1369) on Alexandria in 1365 and subsequent attacks by him on the Syro-Palestinian coast, let

---

idem, *A History of the Ayyūbid Sultans of Egypt*, translation with introduction and notes by R. J. C. Broadhurst, Boston: Twayne Publishers 1980, 90–93.

12 See: Albrecht Fuess, *Verbranntes Ufer. Auswirkungen mamlukischer Seepolitik auf Beirut und die syro-palästinensische Küste (1250–1517)*, Leiden: Brill 2001. See for the special case of Tripoli (in Lebanon): Albrecht Fuess, "Déplacer une ville au temps des Mamlouks: Le cas de Tripoli," in: *Chronos* (Revue d'histoire de l'Université de Balamand, Liban), 19 (2009), 157–172.

13 See therefore: Yehoshua Frenkel, "*Jihād* in the Medieval Mediterranean Sea," in: *Crossroads between Latin Europe and the Near East: Corollaries of the Frankish Presence in the Eastern Mediterranean (12th-14th centuries*, ed. by Stefan Leder, Würzburg: Ergon 2011, 103–125. Albrecht Fuess, Muslime und Piraterie im Mittelmeer (7–16. Jahrhundert)," in: *Gefährdete Konnektivität- Piraterie im Mittelmeerraum in Antike, Mittelalter und Neuzeit,* ed. by Sebastian Kolditz and Nikolaus Jaspert, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh 2013, 175–198.

14 Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Murābaṭa bi-ṯ-ṯuġūr afḍal am al-muǧāwara bi-makka šarrafahā Allāh ta'ālā?*, ed. by Abū Muḥammad Ašraf b. 'Abd al-Maqsūd, Riad: Aḍwā' as-Salaf 2002.

15 Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥlat ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, Beirut: aṭ-Ṭibā'a wa-n-Našr 1964, 57; H.A.R Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. A.D. 1325–1354*, London: Hakluyt Society 1958, 77.

the Mamluk viceroy of Syria Manjaq ask the Damascene scholar Ibn Katīr (d. 1373) to write a treatise on *ǧihād* in 1368. Ibn Katīr then named it: "*k. al-Iǧtihād fī ṭalab al-ǧihād*" (The Book of effort in the quest of *al-ǧihād*). "(Manjak ordered) that I write down, what can be found in the book, and the *sunna* and literary works about the beauty of guarding (*al-murābaṭa*) the blessed Muslim coastal towns in order to let the wish grow among the inhabitants to obtain the merits God has foreseen for them for guarding the Islamic coastal towns".[16]

A classic Mamluk *ǧihād-ḥadīt* found in the *ǧihād*-book of as-Suyūṭī (d. 1505) would read even as late as the end of the fifteenth century as: Guarding the (coastal)fortress for a Day and a night is better than to fast a whole month."[17] However, as Yehoshua Frenkel has pointed out recently, as-Suyūṭī's *ǧihād* collection is very interestingly dedicated to the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451 – 1481) "the conqueror" and not to contemporary Mamluk sultans. In this case, one can assume a subversive act of as-Suyūṭī towards the Mamluk authorities who were not able to live up to his *ǧihād* expectations.[18] Whatever the economic disadvantages of the Mamluk defence strategy were, one has to admit that it worked. Al-Qalqaṣandī (d. 1418) commented this as follows: "The conquest [of Acre in 1291] was followed by the fall of Sidon, Beirut, and ʿAṭlīt in the same year. With this conquest the whole coast was liberated, and when these towns were captured they were totally razed out of fear that the Franks could re-conquer them. They have stayed in Muslim hands until now."[19] In order to complete the picture of the Mamluk *ǧihād* concept, which aimed at guarding the Empire against outer foes like Crusaders and Mongols rather than expanding it, one has to look as well at is second component which was directed towards alleged inner foes like Christians and Shiites. Ibn Taymīya regarded them as fifth column of the outer enemies. "The doctrine of the Rāfidites [Shiites] is worse than that of the Khārijite renegades. The Rāfidites have the concept of helping the unbelievers against the Muslims, something which the Khārijites would never do. It means that the Rāfidites love the Tatars and their Empire."[20] "They the Rāfidites are auxiliaries (of the enemy) like Jews and Nazarenes in their fight against Muslims."[21] This kind of argumentation led Mamluk officials to clamp down on religious minorities at several occasions especially after the Black Death of the

---

16 Ibn Katīr, *k. al-iǧtihād fī ṭalab al-ǧihād*, ed. by ʿAbd Allāh ʿAbd ar-Raḥīm ʿUsaylān, Beirut: Dār al-Liwāʾ 1981, 61.

17 Ǧalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī, *Arbaʿūn ḥadītan fī faḍl al- ǧihād*, ed. by Marzūq ʿAlī Ibrāhīm, Cairo: Dār al-Iʿtiṣām, 1988, 86. (Ḥadīt 31)

18 As-Suyūṭī (gest. 1505), *Arbaʿūn ḥadītan*, 50; Cf., Yehoshua Frenkel, "*Jihād*," 111.

19 Al-Qalqaṣandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā fī ṣinaʿat al-inšāʾ*, ed. by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Šams ad-Dīn, vol. 4, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿilmiyya 2000, 185.

20 Michot, "Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya XII," in: *Le Musulman*, 25 (1995), 30.

21 Michot, "Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya XIII," in: *Le Musulman*, 26 (1995), 25.

mid-fourteenth century. In 755/1354 local Christian and Jewish leaders had to consent to the reinforcement to discriminatory laws against minorities like the wearing of specific clothes. However this did even more incite the populace and Christians were chased through Cairo during the next days and many were perished.[22]

Humphreys has, hinting at the general defensive attitude of the Mamluks, described their Empire as a "fortress-state" that "had been constructed in and for the world of the late thirteenth century"[23] While there might be something to this line of reasoning, I would like to add that the Empire still functioned rather long after its founding, so it was able to maintain at least a certain level of flexibility, especially in the military sector, but the overall defensive *ǧihād* ideology as guardianship of the Empire suited the Mamluk military class rather well. In order to expand, they would have needed to import more costly military slaves, for which they did not have the funds, or open up the army for non Military slave troops on a large scale, which might have led to their marginalisation within the army and that was certainly not in their interest either.

Ottoman Ġazwa

Ġazw was originally a short military expedition of limited scope in order to gain plunder. In its noun of unity, *ġazwa* was especially in use to designate the raids of the Prophet against the infidels.[24] A *ġāzī* is an active participant in these expeditions. Early on in Islamic history *ġāzīs* were to be found in border regions like the Arab-Byzantine frontier. There, the Turkish element in the military became the main constituent in the days of caliph al-Muʿtaṣim (r. 833–42). This led to the fact that it became increasingly a Turco Byzantine border zone as even on the Byzantine side the so-called *akritai*, guardians of the frontier, were recruited quite often among Turkish mercenaries.[25] When the Seljuqs invaded Anatolia after the battle of Manzikert in 1071, the *ġāzī* concept passed on to the

---

22 Al-Maqrīzī, *k. as-Sulūk*, vol 2, part 3, 922–925.
23 Stephen R. Humphreys, "Egypt in the World System of the later Middle Ages", in: *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Vol. I: Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, ed. by Carl Petry, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998, 460–461.
24 T.M. Johnstone, "Ghazw," in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Brill Online, 2012. Reference. UNIVERSITATSBIBLIOTHEK MARBURG. 03 September 2013. Http://refenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/ encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ghazw-SIM_2499.
25 Mélikoff, I.. "Ghāzī," Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition. Brill Online, 2012. Reference. UNIVERSITATSBIBLIOTHEK MARBURG. 03 September 2013. Http://refenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/ encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ghazi-SIM_2489.

incoming Turkish tribes who tried to extend their regencies at the detriment of the Byzantines, thereby combining their Turkishness with a Muslim component in order to create their concept of *Holy War*, as can be seen in the following story: "According to [a] legend, after Osman's first local victories over neighboring Byzantine lords, he had a dream the meaning of which was obscure to him. In his dream, a moon rose from the breast of a widely revered dervish sheikh, Edebali, and entered Osman's own breast. From Osman's navel sprang a great tree, which grew to shade the entire world. Under the branches of the tree were mountains, from which flowing water served to quench the thirst of some and to irrigate the fields of others. When Osman sought Edebali to learn the meaning of the dream, the sheikh told him that it signified God's grant of sovereignty to him and his descendents. The moon, explained Edebali, represented his own daughter, to whom Osman was forthwith united in marriage .... In most versions, the historical narrative continues by noting two direct outcomes of the event: Osman's solemn dedication to *ghaza*, holy war against the infidel, and the birth of Orhan, the second ruler, from the union of Osman and Edebali's daughter."[26] The following Ottomans are therefore clearly the sons of a warrior and grandsons of a religious man.[27]

But even in the Turkish context it was clear that *ǧihād* constituted – compared to *ǧazwa* – the higher religious obligation. It was considered a religious duty (*farḍ*) whereas *ǧazwa* was of course commendable but a lesser category. Cemal Kafadar has shown that this argumentation line is also to be found in Ottoman sources of the fourteenth century.[28] But how come then, that in the Anatolian context fighting the Christians is mainly connected with *ǧazwa* instead of *ǧihād?* My personal reasoning would be, that it was already the prevailing concept at the Muslim-Byzantine border since Early Islamic times and that its aggressive expansive side appealed to Turkish tribesman even more so as the *ǧihād* became increasingly connected to Syria and the fight for the liberation of Jerusalem in the time of the crusades. In order to substantiate his already above mentioned thesis that the Ottoman Empire was from its beginning a *ǧāzī*-state, Paul Wittek uses literary evidence. He cites the famous Ottoman poet of the fourteenth century Aḥmadī (d. 1413) who questioned "why have the Ghâzîs appeared at the last?" and Aḥmadī answered to himself "because the best always comes at the end. Just as the definitive prophet Mohammad came after the others, just as the Koran came down from heaven after the Torah, the psalms and the gospels, so

---

26 Leslie P. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem. Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993, 16; Friedrich Giese, *Die altosmanischen anonymen Chroniken.* Edited and translated by Friedrich Giese, part I: Ottoman text, Breslau: Selbstverlag 1922, 6–7; part II: German translation, Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus 1925, 12–13.

27 Pierce, *Imperial Harem,* 18.

28 Kafadar, *Between two Worlds,* 80.

also the Ghâzîs appeared in the world at last."[29] He sees in this story, which is subsequently embellished by Aḥmadī in the following pages when describing the ġāzīs, a clear hint for the general acceptance of the ġāzī theme in the fourteenth century. Wittek argues against critics of his thesis, who say that his proofs were only literary evidence by one author, that a stunning inscription from 1337 from Bursa confirms his view. On this mosque inscription the Ottoman ruler already bears the title "Sultân, son of the Sultân of the Ghâzis, Ghâzî, son of Ghâzî, marquis of the horizons, hero of the world."[30] However, it has been argued after Wittek that this inscription was not original but part of later restoration works of the mosque.[31]

Other critics like Paul Linder have asked that if the ġāzī spirit was at the core of Ottoman success than how come that other ġāzī principalities like the Danishmendis in Central Anatolia failed whereas the Ottomans prevailed?[32] And of course there has been certainly more to Ottoman success than just the ġāzī spirit. To a certain extent, the early image of ġāzī warriors might also "simply" have been "an ideological creation of later Ottoman historiography,"[33] as Cemal Kafadar put it, but it proved a prevailing flexible concept that well reflects the attitude of early Ottomans. Their goal was to expand; and once the process of expansion accelerated, it became a self-runner, accompanied ideologically by the ġāzī concept. However, the ġāzī concept did not hinder the Ottomans to attack Muslim Sunni neighbors when they were in the way, but it was more difficult to justify such wars religiously. In these cases, Ottoman sultans like Sultan Murad I (r. 1360 – 1389) obtained legal documents by his 'ulamā' that he had to fight Muslim neighbors in the East, because they were hindering him from his real goal, i. e. the Holy War against the Christians on the Balkan.[34]The word ǧihād is rarely used in the frontier narratives of early Ottoman chronicles. According to a recently discovered codebook of fourteenth century Anatolia it is quite clear that ǧihād is classified as defensive, whereas ġazwa is seen as more expansive.[35] Other works of this genre make that clear as well: "These works make a distinction between ghazâ and jihâd: In them jihâd, a duty incumbent upon all Muslims, refers to defense of Muslim cities against invasion by 'infidel' armies, while ghazâ, a duty that may be discharged by a sufficient portion of the

---

29 Wittek, The Rise, 44.
30 Ibid.
31 Linda T. Darling, "Contested Territory: Ottoman Holy War in Comparative Context," in: Studia Islamica, 91 (2000), 160.
32 Rudi Paul Lindner, "Stimulus and Justification in Early Ottoman History," in: The Greek Orthodox Theological Review, 27/2 (1982), 219.
33 Kafadar, Between two Worlds, 57.
34 Colin Imber, The Ottoman Empire, 1300 – 1650, New York: Plagrave Macmillan 2002, 121.
35 Kafadar, Between two Worlds, 79 – 80.

Muslim community, refers to invasion of 'infidel' lands by Muslims authorized
by the caliph or to defense of far-distant parts of Muslim territory."[36]

The Ottoman regency increased considerably in Europe and on the Balkans in
the thirteenth and fourteenth century. The Ottomans increasingly saw them-
selves as *ġāzīs* who had to permanently increase the territory of the house of
Islam. Their immense successes resulted in the fact that their *ġāzī* concept
became a self-fulfilling prophecy. *Ġazwa* obtained therefore a clear Ottoman
connotation until the fifteenth century. Colin Imber remarks in this context: "By
the late fifteenth century, in the words of the chronicler, Neshri, the Ottoman
sultans had become 'the pre-eminent ghazis ... after the Apostle of God [Mu-
ḥammad] and the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs'."[37] The climax of Ottoman
ġazwas was constituted undoubtedly by the conquest of Constantinople, the old
Byzantine capital in 1453. With this enormous victory against Christendom the
Ottoman *ġāzīs* could now challenge in the following effectively militarily and
ideologically the Mamluk *muǧāhids* as leading Sunni power.

The use of *ġazwa* and *ǧihād* in a joint Mamluk and Ottoman perspective

The fifteenth century then witnessed the preparation for the great apparently
inevitable Mamluk-Ottoman clash and in this context the *ǧihād* of the Mamluks
and the *ġazwa* of the Ottomans came closer, especially when looking at it from a
diplomatic perspective. However, now that I have constructed my argument
about concepts of Mamluk *ǧihād* and Ottoman *ġazwa* and how they are distinct,
I have partially to deconstruct it again at least on the basis of literary sources, as
Ottoman and Mamluk texts are full of references to *ġazwa* and *ǧihād* and use
them quite often in an intertwined manner, without a clear separation of both.[38]
This holds especially true after the Ottoman victory against the Crusader forces
at the battle of Nicopolis in 1396. This victory provided the Ottomans now as well
with an ideological grip on the term *ǧihād* and the Mamluks thereafter lost their
monopoly in fighting the crusaders.[39] Al-Qalqašandī acknowledges the Ottoman
military contributions in the frontier zones and their efforts to conquer Con-
stantinople.[40] Letters from the Mamluk chancery to Ottoman sultans were
among plenty other titles addressed to the *ġāzī*, the *muǧāhid* and the "helper of

---

36 Darling, "Contested Territory," 140.
37 Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300 – 1650*, 120.
38 Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks*, 74.
39 Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks*, 145.
40 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, vol. 5, 349, vol. 8, 15 – 16; Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks*, 145.

ġāzīs and *muǧāhidīn*" (*Nāṣir al-ġuzāt wa-muǧāhidīn*) and "God may strengthen his *ǧihād*".[41]

And for some Mamluk victories sultans are hailed as *ġāzīs* as well. When speaking about the conquest of Acre by Sultan al-Ašraf Ḥalīl (r. 1291–93) al-Qalqašandī uses the phrase that the Sultan had embarked on a *ġazwa* (*aḥada fī ġazw*). Maybe this usage of the term *ġazwa* has to do with the fact that al-Ašraf Ḥalīl had in this case actually successfully conquered a coastal town and was not praised for a defensive action.[42] However, one can notice that *ġazwa* and *ǧihād* are used in the context of both ruling dynasties. Still, the claim to the term of *ǧihād* was more pronounced on the Mamluk side at the beginning of the fifteenth century as they were the older dynasty and the guardians of the Holy Cities. Moreover, Timurlenk's Western expedition at the beginning of the fourteenth century had shaken the Mamluks but left the Ottomans in tatters. Together with the following wars, the outcome of Timur's expedition kept the Ottomans from challenging the Mamluks sooner. Moreover, on the Mamluk side the early fifteenth century was the time of the last successful anti-crusader expeditions against Cyprus from 1424 to 1426. Envoys of the Ottomans were especially invited to witness the victory procession in Cairo and see the Cypriot King Janus (r. 1398–1432) paraded through the streets.[43] This restored the Mamluk reputation for a while, but then came the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453.

Afterwards the situation changed ideologically as well. In a letter, which Sultan Mehmed II the conqueror (r. 1444–46, 1451–1481) sent allegedly on this occasion to the Mamluk Sultan Īnāl, it states that after a period where mutual relations had turned silent: "Now this is the time to reconnect between the person who shouldered the responsibility of enabling the pilgrimage for the pilgrims and pious people and the person who shouldered the responsibility of preparing and equipping the people of *ghaza* and *jihad*, as he inherited this task from his fathers and descendants[…]"[44]. This contains several insults as it depicts the Mamluk sultan as a pure manager of the pilgrimage, while the Ottoman sultan is really pushing *ġazwa* and *ǧihād* further. Moreover it is stated in the letter that the Ottoman sultans had inherited their tasks from their fathers who were already sultans. This is a subtle critique to the fact that the Mamluk sultans were raised as slaves and did not have such noble ancestries. However, there are two versions of the letter, one which contains the insults and can be found in the

---

41 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, vol. 8, 225.

42 Ibid., vol. 3, 499.

43 Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks*, 174–177. See for Mamluk Cyprus as well: Albrecht Fuess, "Was Cyprus a Mamluk Protectorate? Mamluk Influence on Cyprus between 1426 and 1517," in: *Journal of Cyprus Studies*, 11 (2005), [28/29], 11–28.

44 Feridun, 1274, 1:235–8, here cited after: Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks*, 210.

document gathering of Feridun Beg, the head of the Ottoman chancery, and the second version is to be found in the work of the Mamluk scholar al-Biqāʿī (d. 1480) which omits these insulting expressions.[45] One can only guess if they were deleted in Cairo or added later in Istanbul. Be it as it may, the end of the story is well known: the Ottomans conquered the Mamluk Empire in 1516/17, but they felt they had to justify the attack on a fellow Sunni Muslim power. Their prop- aganda told the story that the Mamluks had plotted with the Shii Safavids against the Mamluks.[46] The Ottoman chronicler Saadedin said: "When the Circassians support the Qizilbash, we shall draw our sword also against them."[47] A Ḥanafi *qāḍī* of Damiette wrote in his chronicle in the mid sixteenth century, that the Ottoman and Mamluk Sultans had a friendly master – slave type relationship at the beginning.[48] But in the noble fight against the Safavids the Mamluks had taken the wrong position. Sultan Selīm (r. 1512 – 1520) had been the only one who helped the suppressed Sunnis in Iraq; but the Mamluks had plotted with Safavids against the Ottomans. Therefore the war was justified.[49]

However while one has obviously to acknowledge that the terms *ǧihād* and *ǧazwa* are used sometimes interchangeable to denote Mamluk and Ottoman military activities towards Christians, I would uphold the point of view that the underlying state concepts which I describe as Mamluk *ǧihād* and Ottoman *ǧazwa* are very different in their outward approach representing a defensive outline on the Mamluk side and an offensive on the Ottoman side.

Outlook: Ottoman *Ġāzī* concept after the Mamluks

So what happened after the great victories of the Ottomans against Mamluks and Safavids in the sixteenth century? One gets the impression that now at the nadir of their empire the *ǧāzī* concept was no longer sufficient on its own for the Ottomans to legitimate their rule. They moved beyond and expanded their legacies. Sultan Suleiman (r. 1520 – 1566) increasingly used epithets such as "Caesars of Caesars" or in the Persian context against the Safavides "Choesroes of Choesroes". The Ottoman sultans from the mid-sixteenth century were

---

45 Al-Biqāʿī, *Tārīḫ al-Biqāʿī*, ed. by Muḥammad Sālim b. Šadīd al-ʿAwfī, Riad 1992, 425 – 431.
46 Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, *Les Ottomans, les Safavides et leurs voisins. Contribution à l'histoire des relations internationales dans l'Orient Islamiques de 1514 à 1524,* Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul 1987, 191 – 192.
47 Saadedin, *Tac üt-Tevarih,* vol. 2, Istanbul: 1863, 328.
48 Diyārbekrī, *Tercüme en-nüzhe es-seniyye fī zikri l-ḥulefā ve-l-mülūki l-miṣriyyen* British Library, Add. 7846, 102 r; Here cited after: Benjamin Lellouch, *Ottomans en Égypte. Historiens et conquérants au XVIe siècle,* Leuven Peters 2006, 217.
49 Diyārbekrī, *Tercüme, 109 v – 110 r;* Here cited after: Benjamin Lellouch, *Ottomans en Égypte,* 219.

"Sultan of Arabs, Persian and Romans".[50] Other evidence of the weakening of Wittek's *Ġāzī* state is the fact that several reforms took place in the course of the 16th century in the Ottoman Empire which hint at a change of governmental attitude: sultans married again, whereas before they had only concubines; princes are kept in the harem instead of being sent to govern provinces; etc.. In the wake of the locking of princes in the harem, Ottoman fratricide among princes would first be highly criticized and finally ended at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Ottoman Empire had apparently less need for free *ġāzīs* anymore but needed instead civil and military bureaucrats. A parallel development is that the religious frontier of Crusader times disappeared from the beginning of the sixteenth century onwards. *Realpolitik* took its place, especially after the fall of the last upholders of Crusader or *ǧihād* ideology on both sides, i. e. the Mamluks in 1517 and the Knights of St. John of Rhodes in 1522. Both, who had been present as principalities in crusading times, were defeated by the Ottomans.[51] The big religious struggles of the sixteenth century were fought within the realms of Christianity and Islam – i. e. Protestants vs. Catholics and Ottoman Sunnis against Safavid Shiis. This process can also be shown by the fact that a mutual French-Ottoman fleet attacked the Christian town of Nice in 1543, which belonged then to the Dukes of Savoy. This Christian-Muslim mutual alliance was undertaken against their common foe, the Habsburg Empire. Such an alliance would have been unthinkable had the Mamluk Empire still persisted.

Conclusion

What to make out of the mental nodes of Ottoman *ġazwa* and Mamluk *ǧihād?* As stated above, these two terminologies describe very different concepts about how to govern and improve a state with an ideological bolstering. It is clear though that there can't be a clear cut separation of the two concepts and that there is a larger mental network connecting them and binding them to the superior node of Islamic Holy War. The Ottoman sub-node of *ġazwa* seemed to be better prepared for action in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and hence the Mamluk sub-node of defensive *ǧihad* was less active for a certain period of time until the rise of Imperialism, which revived this concept again and the ideology of Ottoman *ġazwa* was deactivated in the Modern period. But let's come back to the initial question about the two arms on the same body. In this respect

---

50　Imber, *Ottoman Empire*, 125.
51　Albrecht Fuess, "Braudel and the Sea. What to make today out of Braudel's Méditerranée for the Study of the Greater Mediterranean Region in the 15th and 16th Centuries," in: *La frontière méditerranéenne (15e – 17e siècles). Échanges, circulations, et affrontements*, ed. by Albrecht Fuess and Bernard Heyberger Turnhout: Brepols. (Forthcoming in 2014)

Mamluk *ǧihād* and Ottoman *ġazwa* are clearly different but they are two arms of the same body within the greater framework of pre-modern Islamic ideologies, only that the Ottomans controlled apparently the stronger arm.