

# *The Hungarian Community in Mamluk Egypt*

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## **Abstract**

The Hungarian community had no noticeable activity in the era of Mamluk period 1250–1382, and that's because of their small numbers which no one can observe their roles in that period. In addition to that, the Islamic sources do not name any strange population by its names or nationality but reported them as the Franks. Even foreign sources and travelers books in the same period did not mention the names or groups that had a prominent role in the Egyptian society in the Mamluk era in that period. So the researcher cannot link the term Franks and any groups or individuals who had a significant role in the Egyptian society during the period under study. By the end of the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, the Eighth Century AH, the Ottoman Empire appeared as a new force in the area to increase the conflict between the East and the West. The ambitions of the Ottoman Empire exceeded the maritime boundary between it and Europe, so the military clash resulted a large number of Hungarian prisoners, and with many wars and victories the palaces of the Sultans had been filled by them. The Ottoman Sultans sent large numbers of Hungarian prisoners as gifts to the Mamluk Sultan in Cairo, as an expression to their victory, and the great role they played to support the Islam. As a result of the large number of those prisoners, the Ottoman Empire slave markets were filled with them, so they had been sent to other markets, and Egypt was the first destination for releasing this quantity of prisoners. Genoa played a great role in transferring these prisoners for sale in slave markets in Egypt. By the time, in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century AD, the Ninth AH, the Hungarian community ranked first level among all Mamluks coming from the European lands. They entered into the sultan's entourage, or came to the service of princes, and some of them joined the military teams. The writings of foreign travelers who visited Egypt during this century confirmed that Hungarians represented the largest number of the other Mamluks who came from European continent. Despite Hungarians involvement in the Egyptian society in the Mamluk era, and despite their respect for the saying "peoples on the religion of their kings", they have often expressed their culture of traditions and customs. Some of them convinced by Islam, some of whom embraced it to escape tribute or imprisonment. That latter category in the late Mamluk period, brought actions contrary to Islamic law and Egyptian society traditions, the matter forming diseases that contributed significantly to the collapse of country power. The researcher relied on many Arab sources, writing of foreign travelers and some Turkish sources; trying to compare and link between what came in these sources, to reach the nature of the life of that community within the Egyptian society in the Mamluk era.

**Keywords:** Community, Hungarian, Mamluk, Egypt, Egyptian society, Ottoman Empire

For their variety of issues and ideas that help illustrate the different characteristics of societies, whether Eastern or Western, cultural studies are of great interest. Therefore, the researcher's interest in the study of the Hungarian community in Mamluk Egypt relied on contemporary Islamic sources, and writings by foreign travelers who visited Egypt during that era. The Mamluk power, then, began to decline after a period of prosperity. Several questions are posed: how did that community arrive in Egypt, did they play a role in political life, and did they have an impact on social life within the Egyptian society? What was their life style within the society? Did they continue embracing Christianity or converted to Islam? Did they get adapted to the customs of Egyptian society or kept their own?

Investigation of this community must be based on ultimately strong evidences represented in the Islamic sources, chiefly those of Ibn Tagharbardi<sup>1</sup>, ibn Eyas<sup>2</sup>. The former complemented what was written by al-Maqrizi and the latter complemented what was written by the former while all of them were contemporary and witnesses of the history of the Mamluk state in two stages of power and decadence. Also, there are books by writers who visited Egypt in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. These books occupy an important position in the list of sources<sup>3</sup>. In the forefront of those travelers was Felix Fabri, a German monk who had more pride in his identity; he was so fanatic to it more than his pride in belonging to the Dominican Order. He made two journeys; the first to Palestine a short one in 1480<sup>4</sup>.

The second was a long journey – to Palestine and Egypt – in 1483<sup>5</sup>. Fabri depicted, in his book, his observations; what he read and heard. That journey was very important as it took place a decade before the end of the Middle Ages, the discovery of America, the end of the Mamluk state and the Ottoman's takeover of *Biladu al-Sham* (The Levant) and Egypt

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Tagharbardi, *Al-Nujum Al-Zahira Fi Muluk Misr Wa Alqahira* (The Bright Stars on the Kings of Egypt and Cairo), vol.16, part 1, Egyptian Book House, Cairo, 1929.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Iyas, *Badae' Al-Zuhur Fi Waqae' Alduhur* (Wonderful Flowers on the Events of the Ages), edited by Mohammed Mustafa, 5 parts, part 1, Wiesbaden, 1974.

<sup>3</sup> Travels books contain much information about countries, regions, and peoples of different ages. Their material sheds light on various aspects of societies in the West and East, providing us with ample information that we lack in political books and yearbooks. These are usually written under certain motives, sometimes blurring things – intentionally and deliberately. If unfolded, they would have altered many aspects of recorded history. In sum, the books of trips live up to be the original sources in identifying the major and lateral mysterious events and moving them from the margin of thought to the center of thought, correct perception, reasonable interpretation and corresponding to reality. They are not free of the material that is not available in others – in varying proportions – because of the penetration, which abound in history books. The travel books were of particular importance in terms of the historical element, which at the same time, were often far from prejudice. This is the result of an eyewitness at most.

<sup>4</sup> Fabri, F., *The Book of the Wanderings of Brother Falix Fabri's Journey to the Holy Land*, trans. into English by A. Stewart, in *Palestin Pilgrims' Text Society*, II Vols., IV Parts, London, 1896, Vol.1, Part 1, pp. 7–47.

<sup>5</sup> His second trip was published in Fabri, *The Wanderings*, Vols. I–II; Fabri, F., *Le Voyage en Egypt de Felix Fabri 1483*, III Tomes, ed. Jacques Masson, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Le Caire, 1951.

by about a quarter of a century<sup>6</sup>. It is clear from his trip that he was aware of a great deal of information about the roads and places he visited. This is confirmed by his stating at the beginning of his trip that he should take the road through Hungary and Dalmatia, then Constantinople<sup>7</sup>, where the Emperor of Constantinople would give him Fifty Ducats<sup>8</sup> because he used to pay any pilgrim visiting the Holy Land this sum. But he stated that this Emperor was a Turkish Muslim not a Christian<sup>9</sup>. Fabri's answers revealed his good familiarity with the history of places he would pass, their political circumstances, as well as geography. However, he did not notice that the Ottomans did not hold the title of Emperor, but rather the title of Sultan. His stating the generosity of the Ottoman Sultan is not surprising to Sultan Mehmet (Mohamed) the Conqueror.

The Hungarian community reached Mamluk Egypt through the Ottoman Empire, either as gifts from the Ottoman sultans to the Mamluk sultans or through buying when they came for sale in the Egyptian markets<sup>10</sup>. Thus, we should quickly review the Ottoman–Mamluk relations that began peacefully though marred by caution due to the aspirations of both powers.

Such aspirations might have made clash probable, especially with the increase of the Ottomans' power and their superiority over the kingdoms established following the collapse of the Seljuk Turks. Ottoman sultans used to send Christian prisoners of war as gifts to other Islamic kingdoms, especially that of Mamluks, as a sign of victory. It is stated that Sultan Beyazid I (1389–1402) sent sixty prisoners as a gift to the Mamluk Sultan al-Zaher Barquq AD (1382–1388) and (1389–1398) in Cairo<sup>11</sup> after his victory in Nicopolis (1396)<sup>12</sup>. Hungarian prisoners might have been among that dispatch for the great role

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<sup>6</sup> For the trip of Falix Fabri and his life, see Fabri, *The Wanderings*, Vol I, part I, pp. 1–6.

<sup>7</sup> It is very clear that the route described for Felix Fabri largely corresponds to the route of the First and Second Crusades and the German army in the Third Crusade.

<sup>8</sup> Ducat, a pure gold coin that was minted by a decision of the Senate of Venice on 31 October 1284. Refer to: Sabra Afaf, *Relations between East and West, Venice relationship with Egypt and the Levant in the period from 1100–1400 AB*, House of Arabic Renaissance (*daru al-nahda*), Cairo, 1983, pp. 144–148.

<sup>9</sup> Refer to: Fabri, *The Wanderings*, Vol. I, part I, p. 316. Sultan Mohammed the Conqueror was characterized by tolerance, long-sightedness, grace and awareness of the meaning of freedom of conscience and freedom of opinion. For more on his personality see: Al-Rashidi Salem, summary of the book Mohammed al-Fateh, "Earthquake of Constantinople 1453", abbreviated and edited by Khaled Fahmy, Cairo, 2010, pp. 247–270.

<sup>10</sup> It was normal for a country like the Mamluk Sultanate to rely heavily for its Mamluk army on slaves and to have markets known as "slave markets". Each type had its own market. The white slave was sold in the kiosk and Khan Jaafar agency, both the most important markets where this type is sold. See: Zaki Naim, *International Trade Routes and Stations between East and West*, Cairo, 1973, p. 244; El-Sayed Ali, *Female-slaves in the Mamluk Cairo community*, the General Egyptian Book Organization, Cairo, 1988, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Schiltberger, J., *The Bondage and Travel of Johan Schiltberger, A Native of Bavaria, in Europe, Asia, Africa, 1396–1427*, trans. by Telfer, B, with notes by, Brunn, P., New York, 1878, p. 7. Johan Schiltberger was one of Nicopolis' captives, a German of origin. He would almost have been sent with them without a serious battle injury. See: Schiltberger, *The Bondage*, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> For Nicopolis, see: Froissart, *Chronicle of Froissart*, trans. by J. Bouchier, Lord Berners, ed. by. Macaulay, G.C., London, 1930, pp. 435–448; Doukas, M., *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, trans. by Magoulias, H.J., Detroit, 1975, pp. 83–85; Condylas Chalco, L., *Historia-*

played by the Hungarian King in that battle<sup>13</sup>. Some accounts have estimated that the number of the Hungarian army amounted to 60.000 men<sup>14</sup>, while another mentions 40.000 men<sup>15</sup>. The French historian De Laville le Reulx who relied on a contemporary Hungarian source stated that the army of the King of Hungary had consisted of thirty-six thousand men, twenty-six thousand were mercenaries and sixteen thousand were infantrymen from Transylvania<sup>16</sup>. This was 65% of the army involved in the battle against the Ottomans.

A given historical source, by the Venetian Emmanuel Piloti, referred to the presence of those prisoners in Egypt. He pointed out that the Ottomans sent 200 prisoners of Nicopolis to the Mamluk Sultan, and that he himself saw the French, Italians and Greek prisoners. He said "I've seen all of them at the Sultan's palace in Cairo. I spoke to them. They were all good-looking young men who were carefully selected."<sup>17</sup> Piloti's statement may be refuted by the fact that the battle of Nicopolis included no Italians, according to De Laville le Reulx, who had read the Hungarian, French and Italian sources. He stated that Venice offered to provide a quarter of the number of ships; not exceeding twenty-five ships, provided that the other European powers get involved in the Battle of Nicopolis<sup>18</sup>. Still, J. Richard believes that it is necessary to believe Schiltberger's account of the Ottoman sultan's sending only sixty captives to the Mamluk court in Cairo; the rest that Piloti saw were other Mamluk Slaves for Sultan al-Zaher Barquq<sup>19</sup>. This seems logical for our knowledge of the presence of many European prisoners in the Mamluk court<sup>20</sup>.

The state of cordiality between the Ottoman Sultanate and the Mamluk Sultanate soon had tensions because Sultan Bayazid I seized Malatya which it belonged to the Mamluk Sultan in 1399<sup>21</sup>. But the common danger of Tamerlane (1336–1405) prompted the Ot-

*rum Demonstrations*, ed. B. G. Niebuhrii, book II, in CSHB, Bonne, 1841, pp. 75–77; Thuróczy, J., *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, trans. by Frank Mantello, Indiana, 1991, pp. 52–58; Atiya, A.S., *The Crusade of Nicopolis*, London, 1934.

<sup>13</sup> Atiya states the Hungarians' previous experience of fighting the Ottomans and their knowledge of their combat tactics from European soldiers from the West. King Sigmond (-1437 AB) saw that they began to fight and that, fearing from Mercea, Laczkovic, the rulers of Werter Waywod and Transylvania, he placed them in a position to make their withdrawal from the battle difficult. The Hungarian king knew that the Ottomans were saving the better of their armies for the decisive battle, and wanted to save his best troops for the same purpose. Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis*, p. 85.

<sup>14</sup> Froissart, *Chronicle of Froissart*, p. 444; Schiltberger, *The Bondage*, p. 107 (not.1).

<sup>15</sup> Kohler, G., *Die Schlachten von Nicopli und Warna*, Breslau, 1882, p. 24.

<sup>16</sup> Le Reulx De Laville, J., *La France en Orient au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Expéditions du Maréchal Boucicaut*, II Tome, Paris, 1886, Tome I, p. 265.

<sup>17</sup> Dopp, P.H., ed., *L'Egypte Au commencement du ceunzime siècle d'Après Le Traite d'Emmaual e Au commencement du Qunzime sieo mania 1401-14-piloti de crete (Incipit 1420)*, Le Caire, 1950, pp. 109–110.

<sup>18</sup> Le Reulx De Laville, *La France*, Tome I, pp. 228–231, 265.

<sup>19</sup> Richard explains that the Ottoman sultan had given the Mamluk sultan sixty captives, and the remaining of two hundred were also prisoners of the Battle of Nicopolis, which was later bought by the Mamluk sultan. See: Richard, J., "Les Prisonniers de Nicopolis". in *Annales de Bourgogne*, T. 68, 1996, p. 82.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Tahawi Hatem, *The Ottomans and the Mongols in the Memoirs of the Prisoner of War*, Johan Schiltberger 1396–1427, published paper in the Journal of the Arab historian, No. 18, March 2010, p. 339.

<sup>21</sup> Ibn Iyas, *Badae' Al-Zuhur* (Wonderful Flowers), p 1, s 2, p. 547; Schiltberger, *The Bondage*, pp.18–19.

toman Sultan to send an embassy to the Mamluk Sultan to face that risk. However, the latter feared the alliance with the Ottomans<sup>22</sup>.

Apparently, results of the battle of Ankara in 1402, and the ensuing turmoil and internal conflict in the Ottoman Empire imposed a state of peace between the two forces, as well as anticipation of the outcomes of Tamerlane's plans. When Murad II (AD 1421–1451) ascended to the throne, peace prevailed between both parties, especially when the Ottoman Sultan sent an embassy to the Mamluk Sultan Bersbay (1422–1437) to congratulate him on his accession to the throne with luxury gifts. This embassy was received with great happiness. The Mamluk Sultan responded to it<sup>23</sup> and sent another embassy inquiring about the Ottoman Sultan's wars against the Hungarian kingdom. The Ottoman Sultan's response was that God had granted them victory over the Hungarians<sup>24</sup>. Embassies went on between both parties expressing goodwill and the news of conquests. But the Mamluk Sultan Bersbay, when in Syria received two fleeing brothers of Sultan Murad II, dealing with them with comfort in Cairo. Attempts by the Ottoman Sultan to retrieve his brothers failed<sup>25</sup>, and this created animosity against Sultan Bersbay. However, matters changed by the ascension of Sultan Jaqmaq (1438–1453) who promptly sent an embassy to the Ottoman Sultan (1438)<sup>26</sup>. Sultan Murad II responded the following year giving condolences on the death of Bersbay and presenting some gifts and antiques. He also congratulated him on ascending to the throne and news of the conquests of the Ottomans on the Danube River and their raids against the Kingdom of Hungary<sup>27</sup>. This news pleased the Mamluk Sultan who responded with a message expressing his joy to the victories of Murad II on Hungarians and their

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<sup>22</sup> On the takeover of Malatya by the Ottoman sultan. See: Mamluk and Ottoman Sources: Ibn Iyas, *Badae' al-Zuhur*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 547; Al-Serafi, *Picnic of Souls and People in the Dates of Time (Nuzhet El-Nfos w Al-Abdan fi Tawarekh El-Zaman)*, p. 2, edited by Hassan Habashi, (*darul-kutub*) House of Book, 1971 AB, part 2, p. 55; Aşik paşaoğlu, *Aşik paşa Tarihi*, Hazirlayan, NihalAtsız, Ankara, 1985, p. 75. The fear of the Mamluk Sultan of the alliance with Bani Osman (Ottomans) is affirmed by the saying of the judge of the Maalikis in Egypt, Wali El-Din bin Khaldun, "Do not be afraid about the kingdom of Egypt, but from Ottomans (children of Bani Osman) the most powerful of whom is Bayazid who became the king", see: Ibn Eyas, *Badae' Al-Zuhur*, p 1, s 2, p. 476. The Mamluk Sultan said, "...I am not afraid of Tamerlane, everyone helps me against him... but I am afraid of the children of Osman." See: Ibn Iyas, *Badae' Al-Zuhur*, p 1, s 2, p. 476. It seems that Ibn Tagharbardi had a broader vision than the Mamluk Sultan if he strongly criticized his position. He saw the necessity of the alliance of the Mamluk and Ottoman forces. The density of the Egyptian armies and experience of Ottoman armies gave the victory. He said: "... the benefit required reconciliation with Ibn Othman". See: Ibn Tagharbardi, *Al-Nujum Al-Zahira*, part 12, p. 217.

<sup>23</sup> Ibn Hajar al-Askalani, *Anbaa El-Ghamr B'Abnaa El-Ghomr (news of the era)*, part 4, editing and commentary by Hassan Habashi, Cairo, 1998, p. 43; El-Qarmout Abdul Razek, *Egyptian-Ottoman Relations*, Cairo, 1995, p. 48–49; Ahmed Nafe Ghaithaa', *Ottoman–Mamluk Relations*, Beirut, 2005, p. 58.

<sup>24</sup> Fereydoon Bey, *Establishments of the Kings and Sultans*, Revised by Mohammed Labib Bey, Istanbul, 1275 AH, p. 195–205; Abdel Razik al-Qarmout, *Relations*, p. 49–50.

<sup>25</sup> El-Qarmout, *Relations*, p. 49–50.

<sup>26</sup> For the text of Sultan Jaqmaq's letter to Sultan Murad II. See: Fereydoon Bey, *Establishments Monshaat*, p. 207–208; El-Qarmout, *Relations*, p. 54–55.

<sup>27</sup> For the text of the letter of the Ottoman sultan to Sultan Jaqmaq. See: Fereydoon Bey, *Establishments Monshaat*, p. 209–211; Ahmed Nafi Ghaithaa, *Relations*, p. 60.

allies<sup>28</sup>. These victories resulted in the Ottoman's seizure of Sibiu after a forty-five-day siege during which, according to some accounts, more than seventy thousand prisoners were captured<sup>29</sup>. Another account estimated them at 40,000 prisoners<sup>30</sup>. This prompted Ottoman sources to exaggerate the Sultan's successes – before his failing to capture Belgrade – in the vicinity of Belgrade where thousands of prisoners, near the Sava River, were captured by the Ottomans. One historian mentioned that he bought a slave for a hundred Akga only<sup>31</sup>; “prisoners’ crowds exceeded those of soldiers”<sup>32</sup>. This illustrates that the markets for the sale of prisoners as slaves were filled reducing their prices. The Slave traders had to search for external markets for those amounts of prisoners. Egypt was the destination of these traders, as well as the Italian commercial cities, represented by Genoa. Egypt was primarily dependent on this resource to build up its military strength in that period.

This is supported by some accounts and stories in countries of the world on the conditions of the Mamluks in Egypt and reported wealth of people in Cairo causing many people of those countries to sell their children to be in the entourage of the Sultan, especially girls<sup>33</sup>. Thus, the Great Cairo Market through the ports of Damietta and Alexandria used to receive nearly two thousand Mamluks a year. The Sultan used to estimate their values through competent experts<sup>34</sup>. The merchants of the Slave had two advantages; the first their

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<sup>28</sup> El-Qarmout, *Relations*, p. 56.

<sup>29</sup> Among those captured was George, known as George the Hungarian (*El-Magari*), who had been in captivity for twenty years 1438–1458. When he succeeded in returning to his country, he wrote a book on the Ottoman customs, and about Islam. It was subjects of his experience in captivity, and bearing great bitterness towards the Ottomans. This book has three editions in different languages: Latin, German and French. See: Georgius de Hungaria, des Turcs: *Traite sur Les moeurs les contumes et la perfidie des Turcs*, Trad. Joel Schnapp, Toulouse, 2003. For George the Hungarian (*El-Magari*) see :Babinger, F., *Mehmed the Conqueror and his time*, trans., From German by, R. Manheim, ed. By. William, C.H., Princeton, 1978, p. 17.

<sup>30</sup> Le Reulx De Laville, *La France*, Tome I, pp. 228–231, 265.

<sup>31</sup> Akega means whitish, its origin is Mogul meaning: white coin, a small piece of silver coined for the first time in 729 AH during the reign of Sultan Orhan (1326–1362). Saban Sohel, Al-Moagam El-mawesoey Ilmostlahat Othman's Historical, ed. Abdelrazek Barakat, El-Reyad, 2000, pp. 20–21.

<sup>32</sup> Aşik paşaoğlu, *Aşik paşa Tarihi*, p. 191. However, he noted that the price of the servant who served horses was more expensive; sold for 150 agakas. It is a clear indication that the Ottomans needed such prisoners to equip their horses. See: Aşik paşaoğlu, *Aşik paşa Tarihi*, p. 119. The Ottoman state's markets were filled with prisoners sold as slaves. Witnesses said that the Ottoman Turks were seen leading a queue of Byzantine prisoners stranded in chains and driven to the slave market in Gallipoli, 1447, See: Setton, K.M., *The papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)*, Vols. II, Philidelphia, 1978, Vol II, pp. 95–96.

<sup>33</sup> Hyde, *History of Trade in the Middle East in the Middle Ages*, 4 parts, edited by Ahmed Mohamed Reda, Revised and introduced by Ezz-El-Dine Fouda, Egyptian General Book Organization, 1985, part 4, p. 52. Alsayed Ali, *Female-slaves*, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Hyde, *History of Trade*, part 4, p. 55. Traveler Tafur states that the Tartar slaves in Caffa were paying to buy them three times as much as other slaves from other destinations. See: Tafur, *Tafur journey in the fifth century AD*, translation to Arabic by Hassan Habashi, p. 134. This difference, of course, is due to the special nature of these Tartars. They are distinguished by these attributes, including their loyalty to their masters and their attachment to them. In addition, we have their strength and great similarity between them and the Mamluks of Egypt in customs, traditions and language. This is noticed by all those interested in Mamluk studies.

huge profits, and the second was gaining the kindness of the Sultan for the services they performed to Islam<sup>35</sup>.

This shows the proportion of slaves of both sexes in different countries than in Egypt. Despite the high demand for female slaves to fill the harem of palaces, male slaves were more wanted because they made up the bulk of the army. In the West, on the contrary, people preferred to buy females for many reasons<sup>36</sup>. Youth and good health were the dominant attributes over all other qualities, and if slaves had beauty, it would increase their value<sup>37</sup>. Hence, the conflict that the Ottoman Empire fought with the Kingdom of Hungary and its neighboring kingdoms made a slave surplus that was received by the Egyptian markets.

Fabri said that the members of the journey were preparing to leave from Gaza towards Sinai. Meanwhile, an impediment occurred, namely the arrival of a Mamluk army of 8.000. "When they learned of our presence, many of our soldiers entered, and they were Hungarians, to ask whether some of us were pilgrims. Hungarians? Or not? They found our friend John<sup>38</sup>, so they were very pleased. They sat with us in our tents, ate and drank wine with us, but in secret."<sup>39</sup> The reason for this campaign was the siege of Malatya by the states of Amir Delgar<sup>40</sup>, with the help of the Ottoman Sultan Beyazid II (1481–1512). He resented the help of the Mamluk Sultan Qaytbay (1468–1496) to Prince Jamm during his rivalry to his brother Bayezid. So, he provided Ali with huge forces to attack Malatya that belonged to the Mamluk Sultanate<sup>41</sup>, but this event confirmed the presence of the Hungarians in the Mamluk army and their great position in it.

This was not the last time that the Hungarian Mamluks came. "They came again and talked with us a lot until we had familiarity with them, so we asked them to see their armies, horses, tents, and their war equipment. They took us to the city to see their stables where the most beautiful horses stood. Then we saw their tents and got impressed. Despite all this, no one looked at us as we walked with them." This shows that they were strong men and had strong power within the Mamluk army<sup>42</sup>. This is a clear indication of the status of the Hungarian Mamluks within the Mamluk army. That enabled them to move and roam in the camp accompanied by European travelers without worry or fear, which was not

<sup>35</sup> Hyde, *History of Trade*, part 4, p. 55.

<sup>36</sup> Hyde, *History of Trade*, part 4, p. 59.

<sup>37</sup> Hyde, *History of Trade*, part 4, p. 58.

<sup>38</sup> He is John Lazineus, chief Archbishop of Transylvanian Churches in Hungary and archbishop of SiebenKirchen Church. He is gentleman and has a trust of Falix Fabri. He is a pure Hungarian and he wouldn't know German. He is proficient in Latin, Slovenian, Italian and Hungarian. He was cultured and had many skills, familiar with mathematics, he was a skilled orator and poet. For his personality, see: Fabri, *The Wandering*, Vol. II, pp. 104–105, 194, 613.

<sup>39</sup> When Hungarian Mamluks came, some Sicilian and Catalan Mamluks came to be members of the journey for the same purpose as the Hungarian Mamluks. This was inquiring about their citizens, and then asked to sit with us. So we received them and spoke with love and familiarity. See: Fabri, *The Wandering*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 442.

<sup>40</sup> Delgar is located in the border area between Mamluk land in the Levant and Ottoman Empire in Anatolia, today's "Lowaa Alexandrona". Some of its vicinity in Syria and Turkey are included. The Principality of Delgar was affiliated to its founder Keraja bin Delgar the Torkmani (1353 AD). See: Huwairi, M., *The History of Ottoman Empire in the Middle Ages*, Cairo, 2001, p. 195, footnote (1).

<sup>41</sup> Ibn Iyas, *Badae' Al-Zuhur*, part 3, Istanbul edition, p. 157, 200, 205.

<sup>42</sup> Fabri, *The Wandering*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 442.

easy to do under the military regulations established by the Mamluk Sultanate since its establishment, until it fell into the hands of the Ottomans and got weakened shortly before the end.

“They helped us to see the landmarks of Gaza City, which we could not have seen on our own. Guides were not pleased. The most important reason is that the guides were afraid that Hungarian, Sicilian and Catalan Mamluks might rebel against the Mamluk sultan more and more, let alone trials to restore them to Christianity.”<sup>43</sup> They were, also, aware of the danger that foreigners were aware of the Mamluk camps. They might be arrested by the Mamluk spies, and then imprisoned.

It is noteworthy that when the traveler Fabri arrived in Egypt, he stated that there was no Christian group in the Mamluk court that included a number of Christians, such as the Hungarian Mamluks<sup>44</sup>. Surely, this is related to the time when Fabri reached Cairo<sup>45</sup>. This followed victories of Ottomans over the Hungarian kingdom over the subsequent five decades. A large number of them were captured and arrived in Egypt either as a gift or sold through slave merchants. Egypt used to host many foreign communities of varied numbers, Armenians, Abyssinians and Greeks as well Eastern and Western Europeans. This large number of foreigners in Cairo upon the arrival of Fabri, plus the numbers of Hungarian armies that were on their way to fight the Bani Delgar, it can be concluded that the Hungarian community was the biggest and most important in the Mamluk community at that time.

When he arrived on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 1483, a large number of Christian Mamluks, including a number of Sicilians, Aragonese and Catalonians visited him. Only one of them was a German; from the province of Pal. “He had long talks with me on several topics, he assured me that he would like to return to Christianity. He spoke much about customs and nature of Mamluks.”<sup>46</sup> It seems that this Mamluk was like many Mamluks who converted to Islam without conviction and declared their desire to get out of it and return to their old beliefs<sup>47</sup>. According to Islamic law the Mamluks tried to offer Islam or tribute to foreign captives. When the Ottoman sultan brought a gift to Sultan al-Mu’ayyad Shaikh (1412–1421), he offered them Islam, and they voluntarily accepted it. So, he distributed some of

<sup>43</sup> Fabri, *The Wandering*, Vol. II, Part I, pp. 442–443.

<sup>44</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 431; Bernhard von Breydenbach, *Bernhard von Breydenbach and his journey to the Holy Land 1483–1484*, compiled by Hugh W.H. Davies, London, 1911, p. xvi. When the twenty pilgrims left Gaza, and before entering Sinai, they divided themselves into three groups. For more on these three groups, see: Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome I, pp. 31–32; Fabri, *The Wanderings*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 104.

<sup>45</sup> When the foreign pilgrims arrived in Egypt, they were greeted by the Sultan’s Guards, took a look at the goods without registering anything and then entered from the door to be received by officials who registered their names and gave them numbers. They got searched and luggage was assessed for paying an amount of tax to enter. See: Frescobaldi, *A Journey to the Holy Land*, translated into Arabic by Shirin Ibish, Revised by Ahmed Ibish, National Library, Abu Dhabi, 2010, p. 70.

<sup>46</sup> Fabri, F., *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 431., Tome III, pp. 4–7., 913–914. The other German traveler Arnold von Harff said that when he arrived in Cairo on his journey between 1496–1499, he found two Germans, took him and provided him with great services. About this see: Arnold Von Harffi, *The pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff Knight*, trans by. Malcomletts, London, 1946, p. 102.

<sup>47</sup> Fabri, F., *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 431.



them to work in the *Diwan*, and some to princes to serve them with specific salaries<sup>48</sup>. Those who refused Islam or tribute seemingly faced prison. This is confirmed by the arrival of the Deputy of Alexandria to Cairo with a number of Frank prisoners in 1472. The Sultan offered them Islam. A group agreed and the Sultan imprisoned the rest<sup>49</sup>.

Fabri confirmed that the Hungarian Mamluks came from amongst those who held power and dignitaries who came to meet John, his companion, who was known to them<sup>50</sup>. Fabri asked John about the large number of Hungarians in Cairo. He replied that the Ottoman Empire had captured many Hungarians<sup>51</sup>. The Ottoman Empire fought against the Kingdom of Hungary in a major conflict in which the latter, especially during the reign of Sultan Murad II, was defeated. Large numbers of 70.000 troops were captured when they seized Sabiu, as well as thousands of prisoners around the Said River<sup>52</sup>, as we have already explained. These confrontations between the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary did not end. The two forces fought a strong struggle until it reached its peak in the Battle of Varna (1444)<sup>53</sup>, in which the Ottomans took many Christians as prisoners. Sources say that the merchants of Constantinople bought some of them and redeemed many Hungarian nobles in the city of Edirna<sup>54</sup>. In addition, Ottomans captured many Hungarians in the battle of Kosovo II (1448)<sup>55</sup>. It is clear that the large number of prisoners led the Ottoman Sultan to send gifts from the prisoners to the Mamluk Sultan<sup>56</sup> led by sixteen princes<sup>57</sup> of the Hungarians in order to express victory. Also, Genoa played a major role in transferring prisoners to sell them in the Egyptian market<sup>58</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> Ibn Iyas, Cairo edition 1972–1983, edited by Mohammed Mustafa Ziadeh, part 5, pp. 37–38; El-Salawi Samah, *Foreign communities in Egypt in the Mamluk era*, Arab Horizons (*afaaq*), vil. 1, Cairo, 2014, p. 74.

<sup>49</sup> Ibn Iyas, edition of Istanbul, edited by Mohammed Mustafa, part 3, p. 72; Serafi, News of the era (*Anbaa El-Asr B'Abnaa El-Asr*), edited by Hassan Habashi, Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 1970, p. 444.

<sup>50</sup> John Lazineus was one of the members of the third group, which included Lord Heinrich von Schauenburg; lord Caspar von Siculi, lord Peter von Morspach, Master Velsch and Master John Lazineus. Fabri, *F. The Wanderings*, Vol. II, pp. 104.

<sup>51</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 432. Felix Fabri stated that he trusted John Lazineus; so he stayed with him constantly. Fabri, *The Wandering*, Vol II, pp. 104–105.

<sup>52</sup> For this conflict, see: *Byzantine and Turkish source.*: Doukas, Decline, pp. 177–178; Aşik paşaoğlu, *Aşik paşa Tarihi*, p. 119; Müneccimbaşı Ahmed b. LütFullh, *Camiü D Düvel Osmanli Tarihi (1299–1481)*, Yayına Hazir Layan Doç. Dr. Ahmet Ağırakç a, Istanbul, 2002, p. 150.

<sup>53</sup> For that period of conflict, see: Wavrin de Jehan, “From the Anciennes chroniques d’Angleterre” in *The Crusade of Varna, 1443–45*, ed. By Colen Imber, Manchester, 2006; Anonim, *Gazâvat-1-Sultan Murâd b. Mehammed Hân. İzladi Ve Varna Savaşlari (1443-1444)*. Hazirlayan, Inalcik, H., and Oguz, M, Ankara, 1989; There is a study in Arabic; valuable in its aspects under the title: Abdul Ati Abdul Ghani, *Crusade of Varna 1444 AD. The last Crusade in the Middle Ages*, published paper, Journal of Education, Damietta University, No. 17, part 2, 1992.

<sup>54</sup> Wavrin, *From the Anciennes*, p. 133.

<sup>55</sup> DŁugosz, J., *The Annals of Jan DŁugosz: Annales seu Cronicae inliti regni Polonia*, trans. by Maurice Michael, London, 1997, pp. 502–505; Aşik paşaoğlu, *Aşik paşa Tarihi*, pp. 130–132.

<sup>56</sup> The Ottoman sultan sent gifts from the Hungarian prisoners to the Mamluk Sultan. See: Aşik paşaoğlu, *Aşik paşa Tarihi*, p. 129.

<sup>57</sup> El-Sakhawy, *El-teber el-masbk fi zayel al-selouk*, Bolaq, 1896, pp. 98–99.

<sup>58</sup> The Egyptian markets were a large forum where slaves from all countries were displayed. Before the sale began, the sultan should be notified until he sent someone of his merchants to buy what he

The arrival of the Hungarian prisoners in Egypt was confirmed by Fabri's statement that for the Ottoman state's unwillingness to kill them, it sent them to the Sultan. This is in order not to keep them in Constantinople, where they could easily find a chance to flee and return to their homelands, which would have been difficult for them to do in Egypt<sup>59</sup>. The information mentioned by Felix Fabri illustrates the extent to which John the Hungarian was an educated man familiar with the past news and aware of the political sense of how the Ottoman Empire was able to deport Hungarians to Egypt. This also confirms another fact which is the confidence of Monk Felix Fabri and his contact with John the Hungarian. It was not denied by Fabri himself. It also confirms that many Hungarians were there in the Mamluk society.

Among those Hungarians in Cairo was a great figure in the court of the Sultan, a man with a beautiful appearance and a slim figure. Without a doubt he was of a great honesty. It was said that when captured by the Ottomans he resisted the whole Ottoman army, and killed quite many of them. But in the end, he was taken captive and presented to the Sultan as a supernatural phenomenon<sup>60</sup>. Fabri's was impressed by hosting of this Hungarian man. He drew for him, with the artist's feather and the writer's pen, an artistic image. It was title of a poem on his epics that were semi-legendary. Fabri was excused in this, he did not realize the policy of tolerance followed by the Mamluk sultans with foreign communities, a policy that was the reason for the arrival of many foreigners to Egypt in abundant numbers and different nationalities. The researcher tried to scrutinize the statesmen surrounding the Sultan Ashraf Qaitbay (1468–1496) to reach the Hungarian personality close to the Sultan. But, it was, however, difficult to identify him.

Fabri went on praising the Hungarian host, saying: "The Ottomans urged him to convert to Islam and deny his faith in Jesus Christ and accept circumcision. They insisted on it several times and threatened him with death, but he refused and was not subject to threats. He was sent to the Mamluk Sultan, who soon offered him the same offers with the liberal bestowal in advantages. Despite all this, the man was solid – got exempted from circumcision and converting to Islam. He was asked to behave the way the Arabs do in his clothing and the way he behaved, he did so."<sup>61</sup>

In view of what Fabri said, it was not surprising to the Mamluk sultans. They, in accordance with Islamic law and principles, did not force anyone to convert to Islam, but they forced those who did not convert to Islam to respect the customs and traditions of their society. They had rights and duties, and if they broke it, reaction of the Mamluk sultans was strong either by arresting them, imprisoning them or confiscating their property and limiting their period of stay. This stresses the fact that the Ottoman Sultan sent Hungarian prisoners as gifts to the Mamluk Sultan.

The Mamluks used male slaves according to their sex. White slaves were often employed in the army and cavalry, and they were chosen on the basis of physique, rigidity and wellness. Those who were found unfit for military service were given various functions

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wanted before the people. Then, the slave was displayed naked. The buyer examined the slave to ensure his physical safety. See: Gaston Viet, *Cairo, The City of Art and Commerce*, edited by Mustafa El-Abadi, (*akhbar al-yum*) Today News Foundation, 1990, p. 110.

<sup>59</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 432.

<sup>60</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 432.

<sup>61</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 432–433.

such as *Tawashi* (a Turkish word which means a castrated butler)<sup>62</sup>. Those castrated butlers have worked in the Royal houses of Sultan's Harem i.e. Sultan's wives. The Mamluks have also purchased another type of emasculated males, called "Eunuchs"<sup>63</sup>.

Fabri resumed talking about John and his magnificent works in Egypt. He regarded climbing Mount Moses in Sinai at noon at the height of the high temperature as a brave deed<sup>64</sup>. Fabri also showed John's poetic skill when he wrote a poem in praising of St. Catherine<sup>65</sup>. Moreover, he was one of the chosen three who were to preside the Mass respectively in daily<sup>66</sup> turns and it seemed that John was energetic and enthusiastic about this task. While everyone was tired on the fifteenth Sunday after the Trinity, they heard a mass read from John, which makes clear the vigor of John<sup>67</sup> and his religious and culture as shown in the previous lines and confirmed by the following lines.

"Being a Hungarian who has the qualities mentioned earlier, Mr. John was able to deal with the Hungarians in Cairo in a pleasant way. He did them a great good whether when being as an example or by his sermons that made many of them swear to return to Christianity, and to provide appropriate atonement for their conversion from religion. He also signed marriage contracts for them in Arabic, adding to them a Western hue. He also baptized some children."<sup>68</sup> Assuming what Fabri alleged about John's work with the Hungarian community in Cairo, it would confirm that the Mamluk state was following different methods with the foreign communities living in its territory. Especially if they stayed in Egypt permanently. They had a social life of their own and different qualities and attributes from the Egyptian society. However, it confirms that the Hungarian community got involved in the Mamluk society and followed its moral code. They converted to Islam – either they were convinced or lest they should get imprisoned. They were also married according to the Islamic law one wife or two, which is forbidden in the Christian faith. Being able to express their desire to return to what they were before they came to Egypt, emphasized that they were no longer afraid because of their power and domination within the Mamluk communi-

<sup>62</sup> El-Kalakashndi, (On Composition) "*Sobh El-Asha fi Sena'et El-ensha*", 14 Vols., Cairo, 1913–1918, Vol. 5, p. 456; Ibn Khaldun, *The history of scholar ibn Khaldun, known as Al-Ibar* (Lessons and Beginnings and Endings of news in the annals of the Arabs, Ajams and the Berbers with contemporary powers), Vol. 5, Beirut, 1968, p. 362; Ashour, S., *Society*, p. 135.

<sup>63</sup> The word emasculation means a man who is not sexually masculine, but is closer to femininity. It is equal in the sense of the word *Tawashi*. See: *Alwaseet Dictionary*, Academy of Arabic Language, Cairo, 1985, Vol. 1, p. 248, Vol. 2, p. 591; Ibn Manzoor, *Lesan* (The language of the Arabs), (*dar al-ma'aref*) House of Knowledge, Vol. 2, p. 1178.

<sup>64</sup> Fabri, *The Wanderings*, Vol. II, p. 563. Fabri added that they had reached a decision that elderly and weak pilgrims would climb early in the morning, but ten could have risen to the top of the heat, including John. Fabri, *The Wandering*, Vol. II, pp. 562–563; Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome I, pp. 196–198.

<sup>65</sup> For this poem, see: Fabri, *The Wandering*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 613; Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome I, pp. 274–275.

<sup>66</sup> These three were Father Paulus of Minorite, John the Head of the Deaconess of Transylvania and Felix Fabri of the Dominican hostage. See: Fabri, *The Wanderings*, Vol. II, 2, pp. 433–434; Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome I, p. 14, Tome II, p. 964.

<sup>67</sup> Fabri, *The Wanderings*, Vol. II, 2., p. 447; Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome I, p. 38.

<sup>68</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 433. The traveler Frescobaldi states that when he came to Cairo, there were 25.000 Christians who converted to Islam. Christians like us (on the Catholic doctrine) were few and the number of Christians doctrines residing were more. See: Frescobaldi, *A Journey*, p. 80.

ty and that they had become a center of power capable of changing the course of political life within Mamluks' society.

This was likely true with regard to what was allowed for the foreign communities under the rule of the Mamluk Sultanate. They had been subject to certain rules and obligations and enjoyed a degree of freedom and security within the Egyptian houses. The State allocated them certain places to live in, and provided them stability and comfort in purchase, touring and travelling<sup>69</sup>.

Fabri relates, "John did all this secretly and helped me inside the house of our Hungarian man. I was thrilled to have worked fruitfully with John, as but for my encouragement and support, he wouldn't have come. Thanks to John the Hungarian, who is close to the Sultan, and our host who is very familiar to us. He guided us through many places in Cairo and he had made us see things we would not have seen without his presence, because most of them were secret!"<sup>70</sup>

This was achieved due to the decline of the intelligence system in the late Mamluk state, which was entrusted to internal and external surveillance of enemies and arresting their spies. It played a major role in maintaining the power of the state until the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Contemporary Mamluk sources provided a lot of information on managers, travelers, ambassadors, traders and consuls<sup>71</sup> who were spies and confirmed the high position of this Hungarian man within the Mamluk community. Dragoman<sup>72</sup> seems to have had a major role in the relations of Westerners with the Mamluks in Cairo, as confirmed by other travelers<sup>73</sup>, and they often met in his presence. Fabri recalled that after the mass of Sunday, the 11<sup>th</sup> of October, when everyone had sat to eat, the Hungarian Mamluks – those who met John before – arrived on the backs of their horses loaded with grants and gifts to honor Mr. John and us all<sup>74</sup>. It was clear that the Hungarian Mamluks enjoyed a great position within the Mamluk community. They were not commoners, but a cavalry class of leverage, power and influence which is proved by the picture painted by the traveler Fabri for their arrival, and what they carried with them of many things that indicated the luxury they lived in.

The Hungarian also gave them dates, grapes and many things from the Egyptian soil<sup>75</sup>. The Egyptian lands were confirmed by other travelers before and after Fabri to have many lands planted with fruits and many dates, lemon, orange, cinnamon, carob, figs and wheat.

<sup>69</sup> Al-Salawi, *Communities*, p. 100.

<sup>70</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 433.

<sup>71</sup> EL-Noueiri Alskandri, *Kitabu Al-Ilmam* (Book on the events and matters in the Alexandria incident, 15 volumes, edited by Aziz Sorial Attia, Ayten Komb, India, 1969–1973, part 2, p. 107–108; AL-Salawi, *Communities*, p. 82–85.

<sup>72</sup> Dragoman: "The translator who was one of two assisting the consul in his work on an annual salary. He was usually a native speaker of the foreign language or a foreigner who was fluent in Arabic. He had several tasks, including the dependence of foreign travelers on moving from one place to another in exchange for a sum of money. He had to obtain the consent of the Sultan and enjoy the trust of all parties dealing with him." See: Zaki Naim, *Methods of Trade*, p. 324; Labib Sobhi, *Hotel is a Political, Economic and Legal Phenomenon, Egypt and the World of the Mediterranean Forum, daru al-fikr* House of Thinking, Cairo, 1985, p. 295–296.

<sup>73</sup> Frescobaldi, *Trips*, p. 85.

<sup>74</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, pp. 433–434.

<sup>75</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, pp. 434.

They also had melons grown alongside sugar cane as well as bananas<sup>76</sup>. They brought bread made in various ways and many such things and served them in precious dishes<sup>77</sup>, which was emphasized by the traveler Frescobaldi. He said: “They prepare food in pots of tin which are Beautiful.” The same thing attracted traveler Simone Sigoli<sup>78</sup>. This gives a crystal-clear picture on the living standards of the Hungarian Mamluks’ life in Egypt as well as the position of respect and esteem enjoyed by Mr. John among them, were issues which Felix Fabri himself did not set aside.

In response to the generosity of the Hungarian Mamluks towards Mr. John and his companions, the latter took out the rest of the wine with them, and prepared food for the Hungarian Mamluks to eat with them. They did so happily. They also drank wine which is not only forbidden in the Islamic religion<sup>79</sup>, but also this event, according to the date on which Fabri and his companions arrived, was the month of Ramadan, during which it is forbidden for Muslims to eat and drink during the daytime.

This is confirmed by his statement that the Hungarian Mamluks spent the day with the members of the trip in pleasure and happiness. After they ate and drank together, they left with the promise to come the next day to take the members of the trip on a tour in Cairo, after all the forbidden stuff that we did on this holy day in Islam. They spoiled their fasting, drank alcohol and mocked Islam in public converting to Christianity in all defiance<sup>80</sup>. In fact, Fabri was unaware of the nature of the Mamluk society in which alcohol was spreading. He didn’t know that some Mamluk sultans resorted to spilling alcohol and forbidding it throughout the country to show repentance. However, these regulations lasted only a spell after which the Mamluk elites retreated to demonstrate drinking wine<sup>81</sup>.

This was not confined to the Hungarian community. Certain classes of Egyptians bottled and purchased it for ceremonies, anniversaries and birthday parties in all defiance for the Sultans’ decree that ordered to prohibit wine drinking and punishing its providers and demolishing the inns and to strike the corrupt. It was a decree which more or less was nothing but an ink on paper. So people quickly went back to wine, selling and drinking it<sup>82</sup>, which is highly clear in Fabri’s words: “We gave the Hungarian Mamluks a great opportunity to do many things prohibited under Islamic law. They did so while disappearing in our dwelling. They weren’t able to do that even for all the gold in the world lest someone might report it<sup>83</sup>!

By the time the caravan had recognized Dragoman, a Christian from Cairo, his name was Tanquardinus, whom the Sultan had sent to them when they entered the Egyptian border to find out who they were. Where did they come from? After speaking to Sabathy-

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<sup>76</sup> Frescobaldi, *A Journey*, p. 75–76, p. 87; Sigoli Simone, *Journey to Mount Sinai*, translated into Arabic by Shirin Ibish, Revised by Ahmed Ibish, National Library, Abu Dhabi, 2010, p. 119–123; Arnold Von Harf, *The pilgrimage*, p. 99. Arnold Von Harf elaborated on how to extract sugar from the cane crop. See: Arnold Von Harf, *The pilgrimage*, p. 99.

<sup>77</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 434.

<sup>78</sup> Frescobaldi, *A Journey*, p. 82; Simone Sigoli, *Journey*, p. 120; Tafur, *Tafur Journey*, p. 97–98.

<sup>79</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 434.

<sup>80</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 434.

<sup>81</sup> Ibn Tagharbardi, *al-nujum Stars*, Vol. 7, p. 154; Ashour, *Society*, p. 256.

<sup>82</sup> Al-Salawi, *Communities*, p. 117.

<sup>83</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 434.

tanco, their Italian and Latin interpreter, he knew who they were and offered to take them with him to Egypt where they could stay at his home. "Our meeting was full with these good words and promises before his departure and his journey back to Cairo, so we thanked him and asked him to help us to catch the ship heading to Venice from Alexandria the thing that he kindly promised us to do."<sup>84</sup>

Fabri demonstrated the friendship between Tanquardinus and the Hungarian Mamluks<sup>85</sup>. No sooner had they spent the day of Ramadan with the travelers whom John the Hungarian accompanied than they wandered the houses and streets shouting and singing loud and playing musical instruments at a time when Tanquardinus and his two wives came along and then began to sing with satanic movements in clothes that provoke sexual instinct, and they were in exalted euphoria. But for their fear of Tanquardinus and shyness, they would have left themselves submerged in despicable and abominable deeds<sup>86</sup>.

It is clear that the traveler Fabri didn't notice some facts in that night, the most important of which is that in the Mamluk era, once it was established to be the advent of Ramadan, merchants lit candles at their shops<sup>87</sup>. Lights abounded in the streets, paths and mosques<sup>88</sup>, thus turning day into night throughout the month. This was described by one of the travelers. He mentioned from the means of pleasure of the people: singing and drums which are heard throughout the night that he could not sleep<sup>89</sup>. One traveler also noted that shops doors – especially food shops and kitchens – remained open throughout the nights of Ramadan<sup>90</sup>. Moreover, in Cairo, it was customary for a person to roam in every neighborhood with a drum or tambourine on the houses and they beat them calling people in their names<sup>91</sup>.

In addition, foreign travelers agreed in describing women's clothes in the era of the Mamluk sultans as "fine deluxe fabrics"<sup>92</sup>. It is also noted in women's clothes that they did not remain the same style, but dominated by the frequent changing and divergence and the emergence of novelties (fashions), as in the case with today's clothes. Some of the contemporaries blamed women as "they have heresies of evil, caused by the extravagant luxury and opulence those which were neglected until it spread in the circles and parties. They have now made clothes that even the devil wouldn't imagine."<sup>93</sup>

As for Fabri's statement that these two women were wives of Tanquardinus, this is worth thinking about. They may have been neighbors because it is not usual for a man close to the Sultan to let his wives do these shameful deeds. This was contrary to the nature of the

<sup>84</sup> Fabri, *The Wanderings*, Vol. II, Part. I, pp. 148–149.

<sup>85</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 433.

<sup>86</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 434–435.

<sup>87</sup> Ibn Battuta, *Rihlat ibn Battuta; tuhfat al nuzar fi ghara'ib al amsar and aja'ib al asfar*, 4 Vols., ed. By M. Abdelmonem al Eryan, Beirut, 1987, Vol. I, p. 49.

<sup>88</sup> Ashour, *Egyptian Society*, p. 204.

<sup>89</sup> Larrivaz, F., *Le Saintes Peregrination de Bernard de Breydenbach*, Le Caire, 1904, p. 47; Frescobaldi, *A Journey*, p. 83.

<sup>90</sup> Frescobaldi, *A Journey*, p. 82; Simone Sigoli, *Journey*, p. 125.

<sup>91</sup> Sigoli Simone, *Journey*, p. 125; Ashour, *Society*, p. 205.

<sup>92</sup> Ashour, *Society*, p. 241.

<sup>93</sup> Ibn El-Akhwa, *Ma'lem Al-Korba fi Ahkam Al-Hisba*, features of rules of accounting, published by Robin Lewey, Cambridge, 1937, edited by Mohammad Mohammad Sha'ban and Siddiq Ahmad Issa, Cairo, 1976, p. 157; Ashour, *Society*, p. 243.

man, whether Western or Eastern, especially in a time when the Islamic Shari'a (law) allowed non-Muslims to acquire non-Muslim maids on condition that they look after them. There is another thing Fabri missed that foreigners in the Egyptian society in the Mamluk era had a major role in moral corruption and decay. Because of them, there was a spread of multiple types of wines and homosexuality, as well as moral corruption and having sex with prostitutes to the extent that they have allocated certain places to practice prostitution.

The Hungarian community, however, enjoyed great prestige within the Egyptian society. They came back the next morning to take John the Hungarian and his group with Felix Fabri accompanying them to visit many places in Cairo<sup>94</sup>. This is a great indication of the position of those Hungarian Mamluks in the community Egyptian people in the Mamluk era, and to their familiarity with the place where they lived. This reflects their stability for a long time in this community that they coexisted and got immersed in it. So they had a good relation with people over yonder. They became familiar with the slums and districts and reached the sites where only lofty, close Mamluks have reached.

What confirms that is the words of Fabri: "Then we went back to eat in the palace"<sup>95</sup>, which is inhabited only by princes and people of high-position in societies, whether Eastern or Western. Maybe they lived in palaces owned by them. Unlike foreigners from Europe, for whom Cairo was not a city of attraction by the strength of strict law authorities imposed upon them. They were prevented from roaming inside the Egyptian country freely. Their residence was confined to the coasts such as Damietta, Rashid, Alexandria and Burolos. So there was only a relatively limited number of Europeans and there was no need to build a hotel for them, but they stayed in certain places in Cairo, whether they were merchants, pilgrims or consuls, because their stay was temporary<sup>96</sup>. The evidenced for this is the accommodation of some foreign travelers in the house of the chief interpreter for a limited period until obtaining permission from the Sultan<sup>97</sup>.

After eating in the palace of a Hungarian Mamluks Lord John, Count of Solms who had a desire to go out shopping in Cairo markets came accompanied by three members of the caravan<sup>98</sup>. All went out with a Hungarian Mamluk advancing them as a guide, a protector and a defender with a whip to make an easy way to walk among the masses in streets and lanes<sup>99</sup>.

This explains how the Hungarian community played a big role in facilitating the journey for those accompanying John the Hungarian. They facilitated accommodation, provided food and visited places that would have been difficult to visit without their presence as well as providing a person to facilitate the purchase in markets. This makes it crystal-clear how high the social status the Hungarian Mamluks had in the Egyptian community, a position which is clearly shown in their wealth and their close relationship with the Sultan's family;

<sup>94</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 435.

<sup>95</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 435.

<sup>96</sup> Hyde, *History of Trade*, part 3, p. 309; Derraj Ahmed, *Mamluks and Franks in the 9<sup>th</sup> AH / 15<sup>th</sup> AD century*, House of Arab Thinking, Cairo, 1961, p. 37.

<sup>97</sup> Frescobaldi, *A Journey*, p. 78; Doop, *Le Caire Vu par le Voyageurs Occident du moyen ages*, Le Caire, 1951, Tome 23, p. 149; Thenaud, *Le Voyage d'outremer de Jean Thenaud*, Paris, 1884, p. 83.

<sup>98</sup> The three are: Lord Heinrich von Schauenburg, Master Peter Velsch and Brother Felix.

<sup>99</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, p. 435.

a relationship allowed them to be the largest number of Mamluks in the Mamluk era in Cairo at that time.

This is confirmed by the words of the traveler Fabri: “They talked with John the Hungarian every day, while we were in Cairo, because they knew him well and fetched him wonderful gifts as appropriate to the customs of Muslims.”<sup>100</sup> According to Fabri John the Hungarian had done great work to the members of the caravan, as well as to the Hungarian community since his arrival at the Egyptian border, until his departure. Fabri explained it as he accompanied him throughout the voyage<sup>101</sup>, which began since his entry into Egyptian lands on 9 September 1483, until his departure from Alexandria on 5 November 1483, lasting for nearly two months.

Finally, it is clear that the Hungarian community in the Mamluk Egypt, which arrived either as gifts from the Ottoman sultan or as prisoners sold in the slave markets in Cairo, were more than any other community. I claim that this community replaced As-Salih Ayyub’s Mamluks in the Mamluk army as part of the Royal Mamluk or as part of the Mamluk princes or as part of the princes’ soldiers, for several reasons, the most important of which:

- The choice of Saleh Najm al-Din Ayyub for his regiment stemmed from the availability of large numbers of them in slave markets for a cheap price. Likewise what happened in the case of the Hungarian Mamluks.
- The last mention of the Salih naval Mamluks in Islamic sources was in 1394 when Tamerlane’s threats came to Sultan al-Zahir Barquq. At this period the Hungarian Mamluks began to exist in Egypt after Nicopolis Crusade 1396.
- Tamerlane took over places from which the Mamluk Sultans brought slaves and deprived the Mamluk Sultanate of these sources, especially Caucasia.
- The devastating attacks by Tamerlane on the colonies of the Italian commercial cities on the Black Sea, Genoa and Venice, which were responsible for bringing slaves to Mamluk Egypt.
- The privileges obtained by Genoa in the Ottoman Empire since the reign of Sultan Murad II, and the transfer of Hungarian prisoners and selling them as slaves in the markets of Cairo.
- The good relationship between the Ottoman Sultanate and the Mamluk one throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century.
- The coup d’état and conspiracies that were the characteristic feature in the history of the whole Mamluk state, which created a defect in the Mamluk army regime that the Mamluks used to since the rise of their state. This imbalance is partially due to the racial conflict between the Caucasians, the Turks and the Circassians, the matter which benefited the Hungarians a lot.

Moreover, the study showed that the Hungarian community in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century became the most abundant and the most important. It succeeded in engaging in the Mamluk society and internalized their moral code and lived according to their habits in eating, drinking, clothing and marriage. Some of them reached a high rank within the army and in the Egyptian society in the Mamluk era. This was evident as some of them accompa-

<sup>100</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome III, p. 914.

<sup>101</sup> Fabri, *Le Voyage*, Tome II, pp. 778–779, 786, Tome III, pp. 967, 970.



nied the members of the caravan inside the army camp and the palaces where they lived in Cairo.

Yet, this research showed also the prejudice of some foreign travelers against Islamic religion. Their reports were anti-biased since they mentioned some false information about Islam while those wrong doing were the malpractices of the Mamluk elites and the existence of many non-Muslim foreign communities in the big cities and ports.