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**China in the Mamluk Sultanate:**

**Connections and Knowledge**

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**Contents**

[Introduction 1](#_Toc158111019)

[Historical Background 1](#_Toc158111020)

[After the Mongol Era 4](#_Toc158111021)

[The Image of China in the Muslim World 5](#_Toc158111022)

[Research Questions and Sources 10](#_Toc158111023)

[Layout 12](#_Toc158111024)

[Expected Contribution 14](#_Toc158111025)

[Chapter One: Mongol Rule in China 15](#_Toc158111026)

[Qubilai in Mamluk Texts 17](#_Toc158111027)

[Qubilai’s Successors 22](#_Toc158111028)

[Other Accounts of Qubilai 26](#_Toc158111029)

[The Great Khan’s Khanate in China 30](#_Toc158111030)

[Ilkhanid Contributions to the Updates 35](#_Toc158111031)

[Chapter Two: Mutual Perceptions and Contacts 40](#_Toc158111032)

[China in Mamluk Geography 41](#_Toc158111033)

[Mamluk Merchants and Yuan China 47](#_Toc158111034)

[Ibn al-Ṣayqal: Qārā versus Qara-Qota/Khara-Khoto 53](#_Toc158111035)

[Egypt in Yuan Sources 59](#_Toc158111036)

[Maps and Geographic Accounts 65](#_Toc158111037)

[Ming-Mamluk Interactions 68](#_Toc158111038)

[First Chance 69](#_Toc158111039)

[Later Contacts 75](#_Toc158111040)

[Chapter Three: Sino-Egyptian Trade 85](#_Toc158111041)

[Trade Routes 86](#_Toc158111042)

[Goods and Commodities 89](#_Toc158111043)

[Knowledge of Chinese Material Culture: A Case Study on a Mamluk Tile 99](#_Toc158111044)

[Conclusion 109](#_Toc158111045)

[Plates 112](#_Toc158111046)

[Bibliography 118](#_Toc158111047)

[Primary sources 118](#_Toc158111048)

[Studies 125](#_Toc158111049)

# Chapter Two: Mutual Perceptions and Contacts

The preceding chapter delved into information about China provided by Mamluk authors, including insights into Qubilai Qa’an, his conflicts with Chinggisid rivals and his descendants, as well as the hierarchy within the Chinese ministry. Alongside these details, which reveal both Jochid and Ilkhanid influences, the Mamluk authors also provided descriptions of Chinese geography, some of which, however, were outdated. Similarly to their knowledge of Qubilai Qa’an, updates regarding Chinese geography were not obtained through direct information exchange with the inhabitants of China. Instead, they were sourced from informants who claimed to have visited China.

Among these informants, merchants played an instrumental role that cannot be overlooked. Three of al-ʿUmarī’s five informants—al-Isʿirdī, al-Karbalāʾī and al-Baghdādī— were known merchants, while some information provided by the others was also commercial in nature, such as details about the market in Hangzhou, as well as paper money and cook-shops (*maṭābikh*) in northern China (*mudun al-khiṭā*).[[1]](#footnote-1) In the grand scheme of things, however, the role of the Mamluk merchants in providing updated information about China was rather marginal. This issue will be discussed as we delve into the Mamluks’ knowledge of Chinese geography further on in this chapter.

Although the central aim of this thesis is to explore the Mamluks’ knowledge of China, to obtain a more comprehensive picture of official and unofficial interactions between the Mamluks and the Chinese, particularly after the Mongol period, we must also examine non-Mamluk sources, especially Chinese accounts of the Mamluk Sultanate, which we shall also do in the present chapter.

## China in Mamluk Geography

Abū al-Fidāʾ’s geographic compendium, *Taqwīm al-Buldān*, includes a compilation of primary knowledge about Chinese geography. However, its account of the major places in China and beyond references outdated sources such as al-Bīrūnī (973-1048), a renowned geographer in Islamic history, and Ibn Saʿīd (1213-1286), an Arab geographer from al-Andalus.[[2]](#footnote-2) These places include Khānqū (read Khānfū, modern-day Guangzhou), Khānjū (likely Ganzhou/Zhangye), Yanjū (Yangzhou), Zaitūn (Quanzhou),[[3]](#footnote-3) Khansā (Hangzhou, here confused with Guangzhou), Sīllā (an outdated name for the Goryeo dynasty in Korea under Mongol rule), Jamkūt, Khājū and Sawkjū (Suzhou).[[4]](#footnote-4) Fortunately, Abū al-Fidāʾ made phonetic notes for most of these names, making it easier to identify their equivalents in the local tongue.

In addition to Arabic sources, Abū al-Fidāʾ likely also referred to Persian sources, some of which were oral and indirect, and which included both outdated and updated information. For example, Abū al-Fidāʾ wrote that Khānjū was a “gate of China [*al-ṣīn*].” This description and the place name evoke a similar place name in Persian, Khāmchū, which indicates Ganzhou 甘州 in modern-day Gansu. According to an earlier anonymous world geography written in Persian in 372/982, entitled *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam*, half of Khāmchū was owned by the Chinese and another half by the Tibetans.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Secondly, *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam* also mentioned Khājū and Sawkjū. Despite the dissimilarities between its accounts of the two cities and Abū al-Fidāʾ’s, it cannot be ruled out that Abū al-Fidāʾ heard of the names from the contemporary Ilkhanids. Other place names mentioned in *Taqwīm al-Buldān*, such as Khansā, Yanjū, and Zaytūn, as well as the previously mentioned Khanbaliq (modern-day Beijing), align with those found in contemporary Persian works such as *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh* by Rashīd al-Dīn (1247-1318).[[6]](#footnote-6) Thus, these names were likely derived from Ilkhanid sources, or at least the same source on which the Persian works were based.

Similarly, other Mamluk works probably also drew knowledge about China from Ilkhanid sources. Shams al-Dīn al-Dimashqī (d. 1327), another contemporary Mamluk geographer, divided China into outer China and inner China. He called the latter *ṣīn al-ṣīn*, literally “China of China.”[[7]](#footnote-7) The term probably refers to *māchīn*, the Persian name for Southern China under the Southern Song dynasty that quickly came into widespread use. Just as Abū al-Fidā cites outdated sources, al-Dimashqī repeats the recurring stereotypes about the Chinese in Arabic literature, namely that the Chinese are descendants of Noah and excel at industry and painting.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Al-ʿUmarī also used the term *ṣīn al-ṣīn*. *Masālik al-Abṣār fī Mamālik al-Amṣār* contains a world map. It is reportedly the copy of a world map dedicated to Caliph al-Maʾmūn (r. 813-833).[[9]](#footnote-9) Nevertheless, it appears that this copy does not exactly duplicate the information on the original map but provides a few updates. It presents both *al-ṣīn* and *ṣīn al-ṣīn* within the borders of China. The former term must have appeared on the original map, while the latter is unlikely to have been featured on it.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Regarding the designations for China, in the section on Chinese history in *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh*, Rashīd al-Dīn explains that, in the past, Khitai and Ṣīn (*chīn*) were perceived as two distinct places. Only in his time, did the two terms come to be recognized as the same place—Northern China. Meanwhile, Māchīn, as mentioned earlier, was the name used to refer to Southern China.[[11]](#footnote-11) Nevertheless, Rashīd al-Dīn still occasionally mentions Khitai and Ṣīn together, seemingly referring to different locations.[[12]](#footnote-12)

While Mamluk authors also called Northern China Khitai, they never equated it with the term Ṣīn (*al-ṣīn*). Both Abū al-Fidāʾ and al-ʿUmarī located Khanbaliq in Khitai, while al-Dhahabī regarded Khanbaliq as the capital of Khitai.[[13]](#footnote-13) However, Khanbaliq is not included in *Taqwīm al-Buldān*’s section on the land of Ṣīn; rather, it is featured in the section on Transoxiana and the adjoining areas.[[14]](#footnote-14) Al-ʿUmarī wrote that Khanbaliq was associated with both Ṣīn and Khitai,[[15]](#footnote-15) implying that the terms referred to separate places. Similarly, his Ilkhanid informants mentioned both the lands of Ṣīn and Khitai in relating information about China. The latter was mentioned in connection with northern cities such as Ganzhou (*qāmḥū/qāmjū*) and Khanbaliq and in the general context of Northern China.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Despite their reliance on Ilkhanid and traditional sources, Mamluk geographic works sometimes reflected a worldview that differed from them distinctively. As mentioned earlier, al-ʿUmarī included new information about China in his updated version of the ancient map of the world. He also employed several other methods to describe the world’s geography, some of them unique and innovative in comparison with older and contemporary authors. One such approach was to divide the world into thirty-three smaller spheres (*dawāʾir ṣighār*), each centered around a king’s capital (*qāʿidat malik*), such as Khanbaliq. In his introduction of each sphere, al-ʿUmarī listed the distances between the central metropolis and other important cities.[[17]](#footnote-17) Another innovation consisted of his inclusion of a tree diagram (Figure 1) and a chart (Figure 2) to illustrate the distances between kingdoms and their longitudes and latitudes within the climates (*al-aqālīm*).[[18]](#footnote-18)



Figure 1 Al-ʿUmarī’s tree diagram.

(King 2021, p. 25)



Figure 2 Al-ʿUmarī’s chart.

(King 2021, p. 93)

Neither approach depicts the shapes of landmasses or oceans, nor does it specify the precise locations of cities; instead, they divide the world into minor spheres centering around cities. Comparing these spheres to distribution centers, Tao Hua sees this worldview as analogous to today’s conceptualization of logistics systems.[[19]](#footnote-19) This comparison seems plausible because, on the one hand, by the tenth century, long voyages across the breadth of the Indian Ocean were replaced by shorter, segmented trips from the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf to Gujarat or Malabar, and from the Indian coasts to the Indonesian archipelago.[[20]](#footnote-20) In the Mongol era, the relay method still dominated maritime trade, while overland transportation inherently operated through various intermediary stations.

On the other hand, by promoting international exchanges and transportation developments that facilitated travel from one place to another, the Mongol rule over most of Asia promoted also made it easier for people to sojourn abroad. For the Muslim diaspora community, the local metropolises of the nations where they took up long-term residency were important. In my opinion, therefore, the spheres depicted by al-ʿUmarī around the local capitals and encompassing local cities implicitly reflected how diaspora Muslims and sojourners perceived the geography of the world.

It is important to note that al-ʿUmarī appears to be rather confused about the locations of Khanbaliq and Qaraqorum, the latter being located to the north-west of the former. His spheres approach wrongly locates Khanbaliq to the north-east of Qaraqorum, while the chart (Figure 2) places the former to the north-west of the latter. Moreover, an additional approach developed by al-ʿUmarī’s, which regards Mecca as the center of the world and lists the distances of other cities around the world to it, locates Mecca to the south-west of Khanbaliq and in the south-east of Qaraqorum.[[21]](#footnote-21)

It must be mentioned that, in their attempts to acquire accurate and up-to-date information about Chinese geography, Mamluk authors were aware of the difficulties involved in accessing credible sources. Abū al-Fidāʾ attributed the challenge of updating Chinese geography to the absence of travelers (*al-musāfirīn*) from China to the Mamluk Sultanate, from whom Mamluk scholars could obtain the relevant information. Nevertheless, while he mentions the absence of travelers in particular, he does not exclude the presence of other types of informants. Furthermore, he immediately provides a piece of up-to-date information about the West Lake (*saykhū*, Xihu 西湖) in Khansā (*al-khansāʾ*, namely Hangzhou), submitted by someone “who came to us from that country [China]” (*waʿan baʿḍ man qadim ilaynā min tilka al-bilād*).[[22]](#footnote-22) This unnamed individual could have been a Mamluk subject, an inhabitant of the Yuan dynasty, or a foreign migrant. Since the last of these options is more similar to the profile of al-ʿUmarī’s other informants, as discussed in the preceding chapter, it is thus considered more likely. However, the former two possibilities remain hitherto unexplored. The following section will discuss the first of these by delving into four Mamluk merchants, while the second, which seems the least probable, is scheduled for later discussion.

## Mamluk Merchants and Yuan China

Mamluk texts notably mention four great merchants who are said to have visited China: ʿIzz al-Dīn Abū Bakr Maḥfūẓ ibn Maʿtūq (1232/3-1294/5), Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf ibn Abi al-Badr al-Baghdādī Majd al-Dīn ibn al-Ṣayqal *al-tājir al-saffār* (the traveling merchant, d. 1301),[[23]](#footnote-23) Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥman ibn Ismāʿīl al-Jazīrī Jamāl al-Dīn al-Jīlī (d. 1302/3) and ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Manṣūr (d. 1314). None of these merchants were involved in overland trade, engaging instead in maritime trade through the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. While one of these merchants claimed to have resided in China for ten years, the others made between three and five repeated entries and exits. Eventually, they all returned to the Mamluk Sultanate with substantial wealth, but there is almost no information about the Chinese goods that they traded, apart from the mention of porcelain and various unspecified curiosities, likely including Chinese silks. All of them were active in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

It is worth noting that Mamluk texts provide hardly any details about merchants trading with China after this period. The limited occurrence of Mamluk merchants engaging in trade with China is understandable, given their geographical disadvantage compared to Ilkhanid traders based in the Persian Gulf. Before reaching the Islamic world in Iran and Egypt, Chinese goods would have been initially transported to the West Indian coast, and from there, they would have been dispatched to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Although the goods could have been shipped directly to the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf was the preferred route. This preference was not only due to the close commercial ties between the two Mongol polities—the Ilkhanate and Yuan China—but also, as mentioned earlier, because global trade operated via relays to mitigate the risks associated with lengthy voyages.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Primarily involved in the spice trade between Egypt and Yemen, the dominant mercantile group of the Mamluk Sultanate, known as Kārimī, operated in the Red Sea.[[25]](#footnote-25) Meanwhile, some Mamluk traders, most of whom were referred to with the title *khwājā* (sir/Mr.), conducted business with Eurasia through the Mediterranean and Black Seas, focusing primarily on the slave trade with the Golden Horde.[[26]](#footnote-26) Although ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Manṣūr, sometimes called “al-Kūlamī” (the man who traveled to Kūlam, the well-known seaport in Malabar, India), is also described as a Kārimī merchant, this identity seems to have been acquired after his return as a wealthy man to the Mamluk Sultanate,[[27]](#footnote-27) namely Egypt, where he decided to settle. This is suggested by his *khwājā* title, which may hint at a disreputable background in slave trading as opposed to the Kārimī group.[[28]](#footnote-28)

By contrast, the other three mentioned merchants did not belong to either of the aforementioned groups, and all four ventured into waters that were unfamiliar to the Mamluks, namely the Indian Ocean and the China Seas. Notably, none of the four hailed from the political center in Egypt; rather, they resided in Syrian regions before commencing trade with China and originated from foreign or minority backgrounds. Al-Kūlamī was born to a Jewish family in a majority-Muslim society.[[29]](#footnote-29) ʿIzz al-Dīn Abū Bakr Maḥfūẓ ibn Maʿtūq was an Abbasid refugee of Baghdadi origin, esteemed by the Syrian literati as a *ḥadīth* transmitter.[[30]](#footnote-30) Following the conquest of Baghdad in 1258, he was captured and brought to Central Asia (*bilād al-turk*) by the Mongol army along with other Abbasids.[[31]](#footnote-31) Similarly, the *nisba*s of Ibn al-Ṣayqal and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Jīlī imply that they too must have been Abbasid refugees, although this is not mentioned explicitly in the text. Ibn al-Ṣayqal had the same *nisba* as ʿIzz al-Dīn Abū Bakr Maḥfūẓ ibn Maʿtūq—al-Baghdādī.[[32]](#footnote-32) Jamāl al-Dīn al-Jīlī’s *nisba*, al-Jazīrī, likewise reveals an origin in al-Jazīra, originally located inside the Abbasid territory.[[33]](#footnote-33) Furthermore, their dates of death suggest that they or their fathers could have experienced the Mongol invasions of the Abbasid Caliphate.

It is also significant that, except for al-Kūlamī, the other three had no prior mercantile background before entering into trade with China. ʿIzz al-Dīn Abū Bakr Maḥfūẓ ibn Maʿtūq served as an Abbasid chamberlain (*ḥājib*). Jamāl al-Dīn al-Jīlī might have had a scholarly background, as his uncle, Zakī al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī, was the *ustādh* (master/teacher) of ﻿the Baḥriyya leader ﻿Fāris al-Dīn Aqṭāy al-Jamdār (*al-fāris aqṭāy*, d. 1254), who was murdered by the first Mamluk sultan, Aybak (r. 1250, 1254-1257).[[34]](#footnote-34) Ibn al-Ṣayqal’s background is not extensively elaborated upon in the text.

In summary, although the pursuit of trade with China seemed to offer an opportunity for al-Kūlamī, and possibly Jamāl al-Dīn al-Jīlī, to overcome their disrespectful backgrounds, it was not a common career choice among Mamluk merchants. Individuals who, like ʿIzz al-Dīn Abū Bakr Maḥfūẓ ibn Maʿtūq and Ibn al-Ṣayqal, could utilize their Baghdadi backgrounds to engage in trade with China through Ilkhanid channels and eventually return to the sultanate, were even more scarce.

Abū al-Fidāʾ’s information about the West Lake is unlikely to have come from any of these four merchants, otherwise, he would have probably made reference to them by name as authoritative informants. Furthermore, the information is enclosed in square brackets in the 1850 print edition of *Taqwīm al-Buldān*, suggesting that it was added in later revisions after the work’s initial completion in 1321. It is plausible that this supplement occurred after 1323, when Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, under whom Abū al-Fidāʾ, al-Nuwayrī and al-ʿUmarī served, signed a peace treaty with Ilkhan Abū Saʿīd. The accord not only secured East-West continental routes but also made Ilkhanid inland and maritime routes accessible to the Mamluks. Thus, after this date, Abū al-Fidāʾ would have had more opportunities to meet travelers who had been to China.

That being said, the treaty did not incite a surge of Mamluk merchants willing to embark on long, risky voyages to trade with China. Instead, it appears that Mamluk merchants no longer found it necessary to personally venture into India and China; they began hiring Indian employees to handle trade on their behalf instead.[[35]](#footnote-35) Furthermore, Mamluk merchants could establish collaborations with Ilkhanid merchants and extend loans to the latter to pursue both maritime and overland trade. Ibn Baṭṭuṭa narrated an anecdote about a merchant from Karbala who attempted an unsuccessful suicide due to his inability to repay a loan borrowed from a Syrian merchant. Eventually, the merchant took his own life after arriving in China. He received information that his slave, who was responsible for transporting his merchandise, had deceived him by keeping all the profits from the goods exchanged and then disappearing.[[36]](#footnote-36)

In addition to Indian employees and Ilkhanid collaborators, Yemenis also played an active role in both commodity and information exchanges between the Mamluk Sultanate and China. They feature in a noteworthy instance regarding the mourning of Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) as reported by travelers (*al-musāfirūn*) in the work of Ibn Rajab (d. 1393). In 1328, Ibn Taymiyya, a renowned Syrian scholar of the Hanbali school, passed away in prison in the Citadel of Damascus.[[37]](#footnote-37) Throughout his life, he had faced multiple imprisonments, primarily due to his controversial views on Islamic jurisprudence and theology, leading authorities to label some of his opinions as heretical. Nevertheless, the public showed strong support for him by gathering at the Citadel to mourn his loss.

Ibn Rajab wrote that Muslims in most parts of the Islamic world also performed the Islamic funeral prayer (*ṣalāt al-ghāʾib*) for Ibn Taymiyya, including those in Yemen and China. Muslims in the distant reaches of China (*bi-aqṣā al-ṣīn*) held “a prayer for the exegetist of the Quran” (*al-ṣalā ʿalā turjumān al-qurʾān*)—ostensibly Ibn Taymiyya—on the Friday.[[38]](#footnote-38) There is a Yuan-period record of a Yemeni Muslim in Quanzhou,[[39]](#footnote-39) suggesting that among the Muslim communities in China, there were likely migrants or itinerant merchants from the Red Sea. During their sojourns or residence in China, they, therefore, likely attempted to maintain contact with their home communities. Nonetheless, we cannot rule out the possibility that Ibn Rajab’s statement is merely a hyperbole intended to elevate Ibn Taymiyya’s reputation.

In short, despite the scarcity of direct trade between Mamluk merchants and China, the global trading system under Mongol rule facilitated the indirect exchange of goods and information between Mongol China and Egypt via relays. This exchange reached its peak during the third reign of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.[[40]](#footnote-40) Modern archeologists have found plenty of Chinese-style artifacts, such as ceramic shards and textiles bearing the sultan’s name,[[41]](#footnote-41) dating back to the fourteenth century inside the territory of the Mamluk Sultanate—in Damascus, Fustat (modern-day Cairo), Qus (north of Luxor), Aswan, Nubia (south of Aswan), Quseir (eastern Egypt, located on the Red Sea west coast), Aydhab (south of Quseir on the Red west coast), and Jeddah (near Mecca on the Red Sea east coast).[[42]](#footnote-42) Among the excavated artifacts, in addition to local copies, a considerable number are commodities or gifts originating from China. We shall have more to say about Chinese commodities in the next chapter, but for now, we shall examine the topic of the Mamluk merchants’ knowledge about Mongol China.

### Ibn al-Ṣayqal: Qārā versus Qara-Qota/Khara-Khoto

As we have established, few documented Mamluk merchants traveled to China, and the documented information provided by them regarding Mongol China is scarce. While both Ibn al-Ṣayqal and al-Kūlamī were known to recount many tales of wonder, we have no mention of the contributions of ʿIzz al-Dīn Abū Bakr Maḥfūẓ ibn Maʿtūq and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Jīlī in transmitting any information or anecdotes related to China. Al-Kūlamī specifically mentioned “junk” (*zaw*) as a form of maritime transportation during his voyages. A “junk” was a type of Chinese sailing ship. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (1304-1378) noted, “On the sea of China travelling is done in Chinese (junk) ships only,” and described three types of Chinese junk ships in his travelogue.[[43]](#footnote-43) Nevertheless, despite this information about the ship, al-Nuwayrī regards the marvels recounted by al-Kūlamī as rationally implausible.[[44]](#footnote-44)

The effort to submit new information about Mongol China is explicitly mentioned solely in the case of Ibn al-Ṣayqal, who claimed to have traveled extensively across the territory of China during his ten-year residence in the region (*dakhaltu ilā iqlīm al-ṣīn wa-aqamtu bihi muddat ʿasharat sanawāt wa-taftuhu jamīʿahu*). According to al-Yūnīnī, Ibn al-Ṣayqal spent over twenty years traveling in India and China, ten of which he spent in China. This statement in the Arabic text provided by Li Guo could also be interpreted to mean that he had spent over twenty years exclusively in China; however, this interpretation contradicts Ibn al-Ṣayqal’s own claim of a ten-year stay.[[45]](#footnote-45)

Regarding China, Ibn al-Ṣayqal provides only a brief account of a city (*madīna*) called Qārā, as documented by al-Yūnīnī. However, aside from the length of Ibn al-Ṣayqal’s residence in China, the text presents additional perplexing details. First, the city’s name “Qārā” does not sound like Chinese but rather resembles the Mongolian word for “black”, “Qara”, calling to mind names like Qara Khitai, Qaraqorum, etc.[[46]](#footnote-46) Moreover, Ibn al-Ṣayqal placed Qārā within “*iqlīm al-ṣīn*”, namely the province of (Southern) China, without clarifying its accurate location. Second, Ibn al-Ṣayqal starts his account with a short yet baffling sentence: “*wahiya shāriʿ wāḥad qaṣaba mamdūda*,”[[47]](#footnote-48) which literally translates s “it [Qārā] is a road, a large/extended county seat.” While the first phrase, *shāriʿ wāḥad*, literally means “a road,” the sentence’s lack of a verb after the subject “it” (*hiya*) suggests that, rather than the city having only one main road, which would ostensibly be more logical, the city *is* a road.

In my opinion, Ibn al-Ṣayqal did not intend to indicate a literal road or street but the Chinese term for administrative division, “*lu*” (路). In the Yuan dynasty, the Chinese word for “road,” namely *lu*, also referred to the second-level administrative division of China, translated by David Farquhar as “circuit.”[[48]](#footnote-49) Claiming Qārā as “*shāriʿ wāḥad*”, Ibn al-Ṣayqal probably intended to describe it as a circuit. This idea is reinforced by the succeeding nominal phrase, *qaṣaba mamdūda,* which means “a large county seat” or “an extended capital of a district.”[[49]](#footnote-50) There are no additional elements in the sentence, apart from these two nominative phrases, suggesting that the latter is an appositive of the former.

There is no mention of a circuit sounding anything like “Qārā” or called “Hei” (黑, “black” in Chinese) in the *Yuan Shi*, which systemically lists the provinces (*sheng* 省), circuits and prefectures (*fu* 府 or *zhou* 州) of the Yuan dynasty.[[50]](#footnote-51) Nevertheless, alongside Chinese and Mongolian names, some circuits had Tangut names transcribed in Chinese, such as the Yijinai Circuit (亦集乃路),[[51]](#footnote-52) referred to as “Edzina” in Marco Polo’s (1254-1324) famous travelogue.[[52]](#footnote-53) Both “Yijinai” and “Edzina” represent the same Tangut place name, meaning “black water.”[[53]](#footnote-54) Initially, Yijinai, or Edzina, was a Tangut city founded in the middle of the Northern Song period (960-1127). The archeological site of this city is located in the western corner of modern-day Inner Mongolia, near a river called the “black river” in various languages, such as Hei He 黑河in Chinese, and Edzin Gol in Mongolian, a transcription of “Edzina.”[[54]](#footnote-55)

The *Yuan Shi* refers to the same city as “Heishuicheng” (黑水城), namely the city of Black Water,[[55]](#footnote-56) retaining the same meaning as the Tangut name. In 1226, toward the end of the Western Xia (1038-1227), the Tangut Empire, the city was conquered by the Mongols.[[56]](#footnote-57) After the establishment of the Yuan dynasty, as mentioned earlier, the circuit retained its Tangut name, “Yijinai,” with its administrative office remaining in the same city.[[57]](#footnote-58) However, today, the local Mongols do not refer to the site by its Tangut name but rather by the Mongolian name, Qara-Qota/Khara-Khoto, meaning “black city” (Hei Cheng 黑城 in Chinese).[[58]](#footnote-59)

Therefore, if this Mongolian place name was used during the Yuan dynasty, the Qārā city mentioned by Ibn al-Ṣayqal could be Qara-Qota, namely Yijinai/Edzina, his version being a possible misinterpretation of the Mongolian designation as “a city (Qota) named Qara (black)”. Unfortunately, there is a lack of explicit textual evidence in Chinese, Persian or Mongolian for the usage of “Qara-Qota” during the Yuan dynasty. Nonetheless, Ibn al-Ṣayqal’s account may serve as evidence, considering the similarities between Qārā and Qara-Qota, or Edzina, in addition to the similarities between their names and functions as the chief city of a circuit.

In terms of architecture, Ibn al-Ṣayqal described the entire city as a tiled quarter (*wa-jamīʿuhā muballaṭat ḥayy*), with all the timber, doors, and ceilings painted in red and black using some special oil (*duhn al-awkrdāt/al-ūkrdāt*), suggesting that the Qārā of his day was characterized by tile-roofed wooden structures.[[59]](#footnote-60) Similarly, according to Aurel Stein’s report, most structures within the walls of Qara-Qota, excavated by the British archaeologist in 1913-1916, were built of stamped clay and timber walls, which deteriorated rapidly once abandoned.[[60]](#footnote-61)

Furthermore, Aurel Stein’s findings suggest that all the structures within the walls were likely private dwellings. Ibn al-Ṣayqal described the buildings in Qārā’s as having shops in the front of houses (*dār*), with small back gardens irrigated by a large river.[[61]](#footnote-62) However, there is little mention of roof tiles in the archeological studies of the site. To be fair, however, the tile-roofed wooden structure is typical of classic Chinese architecture, so even identical descriptions of buildings do not necessarily prove a direct connection between Qārā and Qara-Qota.

Nevertheless, Qārā also resembles Qara-Qota in terms of topography and land use. Qara-Qota is situated within the Juyan Lake basin, surrounded by mountains, such as the Qilian Mountains to the south, which is the origin of Edzin Gol.[[62]](#footnote-63) During the Yuan Dynasty, a large workforce was deployed in the region to dig canals, aiming to utilize local water resources and flat terrain for garrison farming.[[63]](#footnote-64) Correspondingly, Ibn al-Ṣayqal writes that in Qārā, the large river irrigated not only the gardens but also the crop fields (*al-muzdaraʿāt min al-ḥubūb*). Furthermore, it seems that the river did not directly irrigate the gardens and fields. Instead, there was another irrigation river formed by a stone-lined ditch (*al-ṣuffa*), which ran parallel to the large river (*al-ṣaff al-muqābil lihā*) behind the gardens and flushed sewage out to the crops until it reached the mountain slope. The top of the mountain ridge in Qārā appears to have been lined with a wall (*wa-yajurru al-awsākh wa-yasqī al-muzda[ra]ʿāt hākadhā ilā al-jabal wal-sūr fī aʿlā jibālihā*).[[64]](#footnote-65)

In addition to garrison farming, the locals made concerted efforts to fulfill the requirement set by the Yuan government that every adult expand silk cultivation by planting twenty mulberry trees a year. As a result, “there was a small patch of mulberry fields every two steps” in Qara-Qota.[[65]](#footnote-66) However, the local soil was alkaline and hard, making it unsuitable for planting mulberry trees and other crops. Thus, during times of famine, the region of Edzina Circuit still needed government relief.[[66]](#footnote-67) Ibn al-Ṣayqal happens to mention that the wealth in Qārā is vast although the local crop is poor due to the difficult land conditions (*wa-khayruhā kathīr ghayr anna* *al-zarʿ ʿindahum qalīl li-ṣuʿ[ū]bat al-arāḍī*).[[67]](#footnote-68)

This evidence of harsh soil and Marco Polo’s observation that the inhabitants of Edzina were not men of trade do not necessarily imply that Qara-Qota was an impoverished or backward city.[[68]](#footnote-69) At least during the Western Xia period, agriculture, animal husbandry, sericulture, and commerce flourished in the region.[[69]](#footnote-70) Despite the Yuan Dynasty’s ineffective attempts to further develop agriculture and sericulture, this city remained an important hub for the distribution of goods along the Silk Road.

The local population was diverse. Archaeological findings in Qara-Qota not only include Buddhist structures and stucco reliefs but also a Muslim mausoleum located outside the southeastern corner of the walls. It implies the presence of Muslims in the city, thereby increasing the probability that Ibn al-Ṣayqal heard of the city from other Muslims, or indirectly, the probability that he visited the region in person.[[70]](#footnote-71)

This evidence notwithstanding, if Qārā was indeed Qara-Qota in North-West China, we must inquire why Ibn al-Ṣayqal describes its location with a phrase comprising the traditional term for Southern China, namely “the province of Ṣīn” (*iqlīm al-ṣīn*), instead of the customary term for northern China, “Khitai.” In Ibn al-Ṣayqal’s words, “upon the province of Ṣīn, which the Mongols ruled, there is a sole model.”[[71]](#footnote-72) Entering and leaving China by sea, Ibn al-Ṣayqal was probably impressed by the similarities between the administrative model in Qārā and that of the southern port cities. Hence, the phrase either reflects this impression, or he had heard it from someone else who held such a view.

## Egypt in Yuan Sources

The number of contemporary Chinese inhabitants who reached Egypt was even fewer than the number of Mamluks to visit China. Among the residents of Yuan-dynasty China, we know of only two individuals who reputedly travelled to Egypt. The *Yuan Shi*, the official Chinese history of the Yuan dynasty, states that Guo Kan 郭侃 (1217-1277), a Chinese general ﻿who ﻿took part in the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258, was involved in the Mongol invasion of Egypt (Mixier 密昔儿) that same year. According to this account, Guo encountered Sultan Baybars (Ba’er Suantan 巴儿算滩, r. 1260-1277) and left an impression on Sultan Quṭuz (Kenai Suantan 可乃算滩, r. 1259-1260) as a “general of the eastern heaven” (Dongtian Jiangjün 东天将军) and a “holy man” (*shenren* 神人).[[72]](#footnote-73)

The source of this account, in all likelihood, dates after 1260 as it refers to the Mamluk General Baybars, who seized the throne only in late 1260, as a sultan. It also appears to be fictitious, contradicting the historical defeat of the Mongols at the hands of Baybars in 1260 at the battle of ʿAyn Jālūt, which halted their expansion into Syria and beyond.[[73]](#footnote-74) The portrayal of Guo Kan as a holy man further demonstrates the fabricated nature of this biographical account. Florence Hodous noted that the emphasis on Guo Kan’s spiritual power could either be an attempt to paint the supposed conquests as predestined or justified or represent the superiority of the “eastern heaven” over the “western” (Muslim and Christian) one.[[74]](#footnote-75)

Despite the lack of historical accuracy, this account is a unique example in Chinese texts attesting to the Yuan court’s knowledge of Mamluk sultans. Irrespective of its accuracy, moreover, this account is a rare instance of Yuan-dynasty literature concerning itself with military conflicts involving the Mamluks. After the Mongol Empire disintegrated into separate local polities in 1260, although Qubilai Qa’an was still nominally the Great Khan, he could not be involved in expansion campaigns conducted by the other Mongol khans, except for a few exceptional cases of providing military assistance to the Ilkhanate. As a result, after Guo Kan, the chances of encountering Chinese soldiers fighting in West Asia were slim.

Contrary to the questionable authenticity of Guo Kan’s exploits in Egypt, most Chinese scholars are convinced that a Chinese voyager named Wang Dayuan 汪大渊 (﻿1311-?) visited Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula. After he returned from his second and last voyage in 1339, Wang Dayuan started to compile a travelogue.[[75]](#footnote-76) It seems that the final draft of the travelogue was completed in 1349, when Wu Jian 吴鉴 (c. 1290-1360), a highly esteemed literati tasked with editing Quanzhou’s official gazetteer, attached the travelogue—under the title of the *Daoyi Zhil﻿üe* ﻿岛夷志略 (﻿*A Shorten Account of Island Peoples*)—to the gazetteer. Wu believed Wang to be the most capable author to pen a comprehensive account of island peoples due to his extensive experience sailing alongside mercantile vessels spanning “half the world”.[[76]](#footnote-77)

The geographical places Wang refers to around the Red Sea, such as Tefanli 特番里(利), Lijiata/Heijiata 哩伽塔, and Asili ﻿阿思里, are mostly unfamiliar to modern scholars, except for one—Tiantang 天堂, which scholarly consensus has determined to indicate Mecca.[[77]](#footnote-78) Toyohachi Fujita’s speculation on the location of Tefanli convinced many Chinese researchers that Wang had visited Damietta, a port city about 200 kilometers north of Cairo, by 1339.[[78]](#footnote-79) However, Jiqing Su disagrees with Fujita because Wang mentions the presence of huge pineapples, which are not native to Egypt but are endemic to India and the South China Sea region. In Yunzhong Zhou’s opinion, similarly, Tefanli cannot have been located in Egypt, considering the mention of local springtime irrigation through water storage. Damietta, in Northern Egypt, enjoys a Mediterranean climate, typically characterized by rainy winters and springs, making water storage unnecessary.[[79]](#footnote-80)

In my opinion, Tefanli was possibly located near Aden. First, Tefanli does not seem to correspond to Damietta in terms of topographical features. Wang describes Tefanli as having a government-established “deep market” (*guanchang shensui* 官场深邃) with cliffs serving as a gateway in the front and the surrounding caves serving as dwellings in the rear.[[80]](#footnote-81) The description is not reminiscent of Damietta Beach. However, it is reminiscent of Bāb al-Mandab which connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, because the coastline there features capes, and the Red Sea is narrow, long, and deep.[[81]](#footnote-82) Second, Aden has a typical desert climate, with consistently high temperatures throughout the year and minimal precipitation, so local people may resort to water storage for irrigation needs. Moreover, Aden was a hub between the East African coastline and the Indian Ocean, so the pineapples mentioned by Wang may have been imported there from India. Finally, Wang notes that Tefanli was also called Letu (乐土), which means paradise. According to the *Ming Shi* 明史, the official history of the Ming dynasty composed by the Qing dynasty (1636-1912), Aden (Asu 阿速) earned the elegant appellation of Letu thanks to its abundant resources and peaceful living conditions.[[82]](#footnote-83)

While Su regards Asili as al-Quṣīr in Egypt, Zhou considers that its location should be in North Somalia.[[83]](#footnote-84) Furthermore, Zhou indicates that Wang could not have confused Cape Comorin with Calicut if he had arrived at the cape and reached the west of India, even supposing that his geographic knowledge about Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula could have originated not from his own voyages but past records or contemporary Muslims.[[84]](#footnote-85) If so, to this day, we have not one single piece of unequivocal evidence of Yuan inhabitants visiting Egypt.

Despite the low probability of the two aforementioned Chinese individuals personally travelling to Mamluk Egypt, three out of the thirty-nine gravestone inscriptions of Yuan Muslims in Quanzhou were dedicated to pilgrims of Yuan origin.[[85]](#footnote-86) This demonstrates that some Muslim inhabitants of the Yuan dynasty had certainly travelled to Mecca, which was under the suzerainty of the Mamluk Sultanate. Thus, some hubs in the Arabian Peninsula, such as Mecca or Aden, could have served as places for information exchanges between Yuan merchants or pilgrims and the Mamluks.

Whether Wang truly sailed beyond the west of India or not, his travelogue demonstrates that Yuan inhabitants had knowledge about overseas states, which undoubtedly originated from maritime commercial activities in Quanzhou, a chief international port of the Yuan dynasty predominated by Muslim merchants.[[86]](#footnote-87) Wang spent a decade of his life at sea,[[87]](#footnote-88) making him unique among the Chinese. However, it is doubtful if his experience could be considered outstanding in comparison with the merchant partners of the Mongol princes, mainly Muslims. Their trade partnerships with the Yuan royalty and court were referred to as *wotuo* 斡脱 in Chinese or *ortogh* in Mongolian, designating “partner.”[[88]](#footnote-89) In contrast to private merchants, the *ortogh* merchants played an increasingly dominant role in overseas trade starting in 1286 when the Yuan court first attempted to ban all private foreign trade. This development led to an unpopular perception of *ortogh* merchants among Chinese literati.[[89]](#footnote-90) In addition to language difficulties, this may be another reason why Wu did not seek the expertise of experienced Muslim merchants for information about overseas areas, and exaggeratedly compared Wang to Sima Qian (c. 145-c. 86 BC), the early Han historian considered the father of Chinese historiography.[[90]](#footnote-91) Moreover, even if Wu did interrogate the Muslims in Quanzhou about the Mamluk Sultanate, the latter probably could not tell him much because most of them did not originate from Egypt or Syria.

### Maps and Geographic Accounts

We have no surviving maps from the Yuan dynasty at our disposal. Nevertheless, the *Kangnido*, a Korean world map completed in 1402, cites geographic information from Yuan period maps and depicts Western Central Asia, Iran, the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, and Anatolia in detail.[[91]](#footnote-92) Notably, the map accurately outlines Africa in the shape of a triangle, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the continent. The place names in northwestern Eurasia on the map correspond to the territories of the Ilkhanate and the rival Golden Horde respectively, suggesting an Ilkhanid source of information. Moreover, the map depicts the shape of the Nile River similarly to Abbasid maps.[[92]](#footnote-93)

Although it showcases knowledge of thirty-five African and West Asian place names, including Tripoli in modern-day Libya, Baghdad, Mecca, and Aden, the map does not record the names of major cities in the Mamluk realm, such as Cairo and Damascus. Some place names in the Mamluk realm, however, appear in a thirteenth-century Song Dynasty work by Zhao Rukuo (赵汝适, 1170-1231), titled *Zhu Fan Zhi* (诸蕃志, *Description of the Foreign Lands*). This work transcribes the Arabic name for Egypt—“Miṣr”—as Mixujia (蜜徐篱) or Wusili (勿斯里/勿厮离), Cairo as Qiye (憩野), Alexandria as Egentuo (﻿遏根陀), and Mecca as Majia (麻嘉).[[93]](#footnote-94) However, these transcriptions do not appear on the Korean world map, indirectly indicating that cartographers of the Yuan dynasty probably did not incorporate references from Zhao Rukuo’s work. Moreover, the map does not include Yuan transcriptions, such as “Mixier” (Egypt) mentioned in the account of Guo Kan, either. Its transcriptions of Baghdad and Mecca, “Baheda” (八合打) and “Mahe” (马喝) respectively, are different from both Yuan and Song transcriptions.[[94]](#footnote-95) This transcription probably stemmed directly from a Ilkhanid informant who submitted information about West Asia and Africa to Chinese cartographers without mentioning Mamluk Egypt and Syria.

By contrast, in comparison with Guo Kan’s account, the *Xishi Ji* (西使记, *The Record of an Embassy to the Regions in the West*), compiled by Liu Yu (刘郁, fl. 1260s) in the early Yuan dynasty (1263), reveals a deeper understanding of Egypt. The work documents the insights and experiences of Chang De (常德, fl. 1260s), the Chinese envoy of Möngke Qa’an, during his journey to visit Hülegü, coinciding with the Mongol conquest of Iran.[[95]](#footnote-96) The text offers a concise depiction of Egypt, referred to as “Miqier” (密乞儿), detailing its location and its distance from Baghdad.[[96]](#footnote-97)

A later source from the Yuan dynasty, the *Nanhai Zhi* (南海志, *The Record of the Southern Sea*) compiled in 1304, seems to have drawn upon the place names recorded in the *Zhu Fan Zhi*. Identically to the latter, the former likewise refers to Baghdad as Baida (白达).[[97]](#footnote-98) Moreover, the place name, “勿斯离” (or 勿厮离, *wù sī lí*), also appears in both texts. In the *Zhu Fan Zhi*, this name indicates Mosul, while another similar name, “勿斯里” (*wù sī lǐ*), refers to Egypt.[[98]](#footnote-99) The two names sound almost the same, but the tones of their last characters differ—*lí* as opposed to *lǐ*.

While the *Nanhai Zhi* mentions only the former name (勿斯离, *wù sī lí*) without reference to the latter one, their similarity can lead the readers to mistakenly interpret the Wù-sī-lí in the *Nanhai Zhi* as referring to Egypt.[[99]](#footnote-100) The *Nanhai Zhi* also mentions additional place names found in the *Zhu Fan Zhi*, such as Bipaluo (弼琶啰, Basra) and Lumei (芦眉, Rum/Asia Minor).[[100]](#footnote-101) Wù-sī-lí is listed between Bipaluo and Lumei in a sequence similar to how the *Zhu Fan Zhi* arranges the accounts of the three places. Therefore, the Wù-sī-lí in the *Nanhai Zhi* should be interpreted similarly as the one mentioned in the *Zhu Fan Zhi*, indicating Mosul rather than Egypt.

It is worthwhile to consider why the *Nanhai Zhi* omits Egypt, while the *Zhu Fan Zhi* places it immediately after Lumei. The compilers of the *Nanhai Zhi* could have drawn its place names either directly from the *Zhu Fan Zhi* or from a mix of updated and outdated sources.[[101]](#footnote-102) It is possible that, like Park, either the compilers or their sources mistook Wù-sī-lí and Wù-sī-lǐ to be the same place, leading to the omission of the latter, as it appears later in the sequence. Furthermore, the *Nanhai Zhi* does not refer to Alexandria, mentioned by the *Zhu Fan Zhi* as a country belonging to Egypt,[[102]](#footnote-104) indicating a general tendency of the *Nanhai Zhi* to overlook information about the Egyptian region from the *Zhu Fan Zhi*.

Overall, the Mamluk and the Chinese sources we have consulted so far provide no sufficient evidence of direct contact between the Yuan dynasty and the Sultanate but reveal that Ilkhanid sources and informants played a key role in transmitting updated information between the two poles of Asia.

## Ming-Mamluk Interactions

In contrast to the Yuan dynasty, official interactions between the Ming dynasty and Mamluk Egypt are evident in Chinese texts. Unofficial interactions, on the other hand, were on the decline. A decade after signing the Mamluk-Ilkhanid peace treaty, the Ilkhanate disintegrated in 1335, and later the Mongol polities in Central Asia and China collapsed too. With regard to the Mamluk Sultanate, ﻿the death of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in 1341 signaled the beginning of at least four decades of acute political instability in the Mamluk empire.[[103]](#footnote-105) In the late 1340s, moreover, much of Eurasia was ravaged by the Black Death. Depopulation associated with the plague reduced the overall size of the market throughout Eurasia. In the second half of the fourteenth century, Cairo similarly suffered depopulation and urban decay. The quantity and quality of Egypt’s manufactured goods declined accordingly, probably because of plague-induced losses among master craftsmen and their apprentices. It wasn’t until 1400 that relative political stability was reestablished along the route from Egypt to China, which would endure until the last decade of the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, the Ming dynasty closed off overland trade routes and ended the presence of large foreign merchant communities in China.[[104]](#footnote-106) Therefore, overall global trade declined after the collapse of the Mongol polities.

In parallel with the decline of global exchange in general, after the fall of the Yuan dynasty, there was little information regarding China coming into Mamluk hands. Mamluk texts do not show knowledge of the fall of the Yuan dynasty nor the rise of the Ming dynasty. Nevertheless, the disintegration of the Ilkhanate was somewhat helpful in the transmission of news about China to the Sultanate—it would appear that al-ʿUmarī’s updated information about China was submitted by migrants from the disintegrated Ilkhanate. Although migrants from both the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanate contributed to the updates in Mamluk texts, as we saw in the last chapter, the contributions of the former were limited to information about the Mongol rulers in China, while the latter also transmitted information about other aspects of China. Hence, the Ilkhanate’s close ties with Mongol China contributed to improving the Mamluks’ knowledge of China even after its disintegration.

More surprisingly, during the Ming dynasty, particularly in the first half of the fifteenth century, although global interactions did not resume to the extent seen during the Mongol era, there were at least three documented instances of direct contact between the Chinese and Egyptian courts.[[105]](#footnote-107) However, before them, the earliest opportunity for potential interaction between the two sides did not occur on either of the two sides’ territories but in Samarqand, the capital of the Timurid Empire (1370-1507), in 1404.

### First Opportunity

In the last three decades of the fourteenth century, in parallel with the rise of the Ming dynasty in China, the Timurid Empire was founded by Tamerlane (r. 1370-1405) from Chaghadaid Transoxiana. By September 1393, the Timurid army occupied Baghdad, which was the capital of the Jalayirid Sultanate (1335-1432), one of the Ilkhanate’s successor states. Three years later, Tamerlane controlled most of the former Ilkhanid territory in Iran, Iraq, and Azerbaijan.

While Tamerlane had previously considered war against the Mamluks,[[106]](#footnote-108) whose sultan Barqūq (r. 1382-9, 1390-9) granted asylum to the Jalayirid sultan Aḥmad Jalāyir (r. 1382-1410) it was only in 1399, with Barqūq deceased and his ten-year-old son Faraj (r. 1399-1405) on the throne, that he began preparations for continuing to extend his conquests westward. After the Mamluks had executed the Timurid ambassadors in Cairo, in the autumn and winter of 803 A.H. (1400-1), Tamerlane launched his campaign in Syria.[[107]](#footnote-109) Before Tamerlane’s arrival, ﻿Sultan Faraj had arrived with his forces from Cairo in nearby Damascus. However, he did not have the occasion to join the battle since he was forced to turn back immediately after hearing rumors of an impending coup in Cairo. His abrupt withdrawal damaged the Damascenes’ morale and they soon surrendered. ﻿As a result, the city was not only made to exhaust its resources in tribute payments but was subjected to three days of general pillage. Considering the economic ruin caused by the Syrian campaign and the political instability in Egypt, Tamerlane now regarded the Mamluks as a lesser threat than the Ottomans. Thus, instead of waging further war against Egypt, he turned his attention to Anatolia.[[108]](#footnote-110) When Tamerlane left Damascus in 1401, however, he made the Mamluk sultan, Faraj, his governor. This severely harmed the latter’s legitimacy as he was forced to send tribute missions to the former.[[109]](#footnote-111)

In 1404, a Mamluk tributary ambassador from Egypt arrived at the Timurid court in Samarqand, where he met other ambassadors including those coming in from Ming China. According to Roy González de Clavijo (d. 1412), Henry III of Castile’s (r. 1390-1406) ambassador to Tamerlane,[[110]](#footnote-113) on 8 September 1404, Tamerlane hosted the Mamluk and Castilian ambassadors:

The Meerzas [Tamerlane’s servants] made them sit below an ambassador, ﻿whom the emperor Chayscan, lord of Cathay, had sent to Timour Beg to demand the yearly tribute which was formerly paid. ﻿When the lord saw the ambassadors seated ﻿below the ambassador from the lord of Cathay, he sent to order that they should sit above him, and he below them. ﻿As soon as they were seated, one of the Meerzas of the lord came and said to the ambassador of Cathay, that the lord had ordered that those who were ambassadors from the king of Spain, his son and friend, should sit above him; and that he who was the ambassador from a thief and a bad man, his enemy, should sit below them; and from that time, at the feasts and entertainments given by the lord, they always sat in that order. The Meerza then ordered the interpreter to tell the ambassadors what the lord had done for them.[[111]](#footnote-114)

This humiliated ambassador was most likely Fu An 傅安, an ambassador of the Hongwu Emperor (r. 1368-1398), the founder of the Ming dynasty. In 1395, Fu An led a delegation of 1,500 people to Tamerlane, carrying a letter and tribute gifts from emperor. He was then detained by Tamerlane and did not return to the Ming court until 1407.[[112]](#footnote-115) Hence, Fu An, who was still in Samarqand in 1404, would have been the ambassador of Cathay seated originally above Clavijo and his fellows. This also means that the Mamluk ambassador, who was present at the gathering, probably witnessed the whole incident, and even learned something about the Ming emperor, similarly to Clavijo, who mentioned: “﻿This emperor of Cathay is called Chuyscan, which means nine empires; but the Zagatays (Chaghadaids) called him Tangus, which means ‘pig emperor.’ He is the lord of a great country, and Timour Beg used to pay him tribute, but he refuses to do so now.”[[113]](#footnote-116)

 “Tangus” takes its origin from Turkic languages, probably resembling the Turkish word for pig, “domuz”. The Yakuts, a Turkic ethnic group native to North Siberia, used this designation to humiliate neighboring tribes. Today, this designation is used for the speakers of Tungusic languages who are native to Siberia, North-East China, and Mongolia.[[114]](#footnote-117)

According to the explanations provided by Clavijo, the designation “Chuyscan” seems to originate from Chinese, calling to mind the Chinese character for nine, *jiu* (九), and the title “khan” used by the Mongol rulers (usually transcribed as *han* 汗 in Chinese).[[115]](#footnote-118) The association with “khan” is not merely a phonetic conjecture but has a certain historical basis. Although the emperors of the Ming dynasty were Chinese, a Timurid envoy referred to Emperor Yongle (r. 1402-1424) as “the Dayming khan” (the khan of the Great Ming), “khan” being the Turkic title designating the highest political office.[[116]](#footnote-119) This was part of the political legacy left by the Mongol Empire, which had a profound influence on the identities of the imperial families who inherited its territory.

Indeed, Yongle, who returned the Chinese capital to Khanbaliq,[[117]](#footnote-120) is depicted by Clavijo as demanding tribute as the self-proclaimed successor to Qubilai, ruling over not only the Chinese but various other Mongol realms.[[118]](#footnote-121) Accordingly, he would have regarded Tamerlane as his subject. Yongle’s aspirations to present himself as the Yuan successor,[[119]](#footnote-122) together with the rumors that he was a descendant of the Mongols,[[120]](#footnote-123) his title of “khan,” and the fact that under him Khanbaliq (“Cambalu” in Clavijo’s account)[[121]](#footnote-124) was reinstated as the capital of China, which it used to be under the Yuan dynasty, can explain why Mamluk authors did not show an awareness of the dynastic change in China.

However, Tamerlane, too, claimed to be the rightful heir of the Mongol Empire. The Muslims of Central Asian had a deeply entrenched notion that only the descendants of Chinggis Khan were eligible to hold the highest political office.[[122]](#footnote-125) Despite not being a Chinggisid descendant, Tamerlane strategically married two Chaghadaid princesses—to whom Ibn ʿArabshāh (1392-1450) referred as *al-malika al-kubrā* (the Queen major) and *al-malika al-ṣughrā* (the Queen minor)[[123]](#footnote-126)—from the Chaghadaid Khanate and Moghulistan (1347-1462) respectively.[[124]](#footnote-127)

It is noteworthy that Ibn ʿArabshāh, who studied *ḥadīth* in Khitai (*bilād al-khiṭā*) since 1408/9 after being taken to Samarqand following Tamerlane’s conquest of Damascus in 1401, also referred to both queens of Chaghadaid descent as “daughters of the kings of Cathay [Khitai]” in his account of Tamerlane.[[125]](#footnote-128) This statement probably stemmed from the fact that both the Chaghadaid Khanate and later Moghulistan ruled most parts of Qara Khitai. This misled Lucien Bouvat into regarding the two queens as Chinese princesses.[[126]](#footnote-129) Moreover, Ibn ʿArabshāh did not mention Khanbaliq, and it would appear that he was unaware of the other two polities in Northern China and Mongolia: the Ming dynasty and the rump state of the Yuan dynasty in the Mongolian Plateau, also known as the Northern Yuan (1368-1635), although this Chinese-style title was abolished in 1388.

On the one hand, although Tamerlane kept a close relationship with the Chaghadaid royal family, he never called himself “khan” but only “*amīr*”, a title reserved for military commanders.[[127]](#footnote-130) On the other hand, his intention to challenge the Ming court is evident in Clavijo’s accounts of his humiliation of the Chinese ambassador and refusal to pay tribute. Tamerlane detained other Chinese ambassadors, apart from Fu An.[[128]](#footnote-131) The reason for detaining Chinese ambassadors was likely strategic: to prevent them from leaking information about Tamerlane’s intention to attack China. Therefore, the Ming court only became aware of his intention in 1405 when he had set out eastward with his army. It should be noted that the decision to detain envoys and ambassadors as opposed to killing them was also strategic, as it left some room for maneuver.

The tension between Tamerlane and the Ming court not only impacted diplomatic exchanges but also had repercussions on China’s trade with the broader international community. Clavijo mentions that on one occasion Tamerlane, in response to repeated demands for tribute, detained as many as 800 caravan camels from Khanbaliq, extracting intelligence from the men accompanying them.[[129]](#footnote-132)

In February 1405, Tamerlane’s advance into China came to a halt with his death, which led to a bloody struggle over succession. In 1407, Tamerlane’s favored grandson who regarded himself as the new Timurid emperor, Khalīl Sulṭān (r. 1405-9), sent Fu An back to China with tribute.[[130]](#footnote-133) Tamerlane’s fourth son Shāh Rukh (r. 1405-1447), the governor of Herat, who finally seized the throne, also intended to mend the severed relations with the Ming Dynasty.[[131]](#footnote-134) There are no mentions of the detention of Chinese envoys by the Timurid Empire in the Chinese text past this date.

### Later Contacts

With Timurid-Ming relations becoming more cordial, two tributary missions from Egypt (Mixier/Misier 米昔儿/密思儿) arrived in China according to the *Ming Shi*.[[132]](#footnote-135) The first of these occurred during the middle reign of Yongle (around 1413).[[133]](#footnote-136) The second arrived in 1441 (the sixth year of the Zhengtong era) in the name of the Egyptian ruler referred to in the text as Suolutan Ashilafu (锁鲁檀阿失剌福), who is likely to be Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Barsbāy (r. 1422-1438). The record only details the meal provided to the mission and a list of rewards for the tribute in 1441 (mainly Chinese textiles), without any additional accounts.

The episode involving Clavijo and the Mamluk ambassador, who embarked on a joint overland journey to Samarqand, suggests that the Egyptian missions could have reached China overland through the Timurid Empire during peaceful times. However, travelling all the way to China was by no means a routine procedure. According to the *Ming Shi*, the Sharifate of Mecca also dispatched tributary missions to China, which mostly arrived overland through the Jiayu Pass 嘉峪关—the first frontier fortress at the western end of the Ming dynasty’s Great Wall—after reaching Calicut by sea. [[134]](#footnote-137) In 1441, the same year Sultan Barsbāy’s mission arrived in China, two sons of the Sharif of Mecca also brought tribute to China, but they were robbed on the way.[[135]](#footnote-138) It is unclear whether the sultan’s mission and the Meccan mission travelled together.

The *Ming Shi* reports that Egypt never sent another official tributary mission after 1441. While direct contact between the Mamluk and Ming courts remained infrequent, at least eight documented tributary missions reached the Ming court from Mecca, even after the Mamluk period. It is uncertain whether every Meccan mission was connected to the Mamluk court. Nevertheless, the 1490 Meccan mission had been reportedly dispatched by the former Mamluk sultan, al-Muʾayyad Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad (r. 1461), who was the *amīr al-ḥajj* (commander of pilgrimage) and had died on 28 January 1488 in Alexandria.[[136]](#footnote-139) Hence, the Mamluk court was probably aware of at least some of the Meccan tribute missions to China.

#### Zheng He’s Seventh and Last Expedition

Of course, the Mamluk-Ming interactions were not unidirectional. The *Yongle Dadian* 永乐大典 (the *Yongle Encyclopedia*), completed by 1408, briefly records that Ming ambassadors visited Egypt on one occasion without details about the ambassadors, the date, or the purpose of the visit.[[137]](#footnote-140) Additionally, during the period between the two Egyptian missions (around 1413 and 1441), some Ming ambassadors reached the sultanate’s territory by sea, rather than overland. Zheng He (1371-1434), a Muslim eunuch who had served Yongle since 1381, was entrusted by the Ming court to organize maritime voyages on seven different occasions. The final one of these took place in 1431-1433, and it was during this voyage that Zheng He’s vessels might have sailed to Mecca.[[138]](#footnote-141)

According to Ibn Ḥajar, on 2 Shaʿbān 835 (3 April 1432), several Chinese junk ships (*junūk al-ṣīn*) arrived in Mecca laden with treasures (*al-tuḥaf*), which were subsequently sold.[[139]](#footnote-142) Al-Maqrīzī (1367-1442) documented, and Ibn Taghrībirdī (1410-1470) later repeated, that on 22 Shawwāl 835 (22 June 1432), Mecca reported to the Mamluk court that two of several junk ships (*zunūk*) had reached Aden from the Indian coasts, to where the ships had sailed from China (*min al-ṣīn*), and sought permission to continue to Jeddah. Due to the disorders in Yemen, they were unable to sell all their goods, including porcelains, silks, musk, etc. The Sharif of Mecca and the governor of Jeddah sparked the sultan’s interest in the potential profit that could be gained from this incident, and thus, permission was granted.[[140]](#footnote-143) It is worth mentioning that *Qianwen Ji* 前闻记 (*A Record of Things Once Heard*), a miscellany of the Ming dynasty containing details of Zheng He’s last (seventh) voyage, states that the fleet reached Calicut in India from Ceylon on 10 December 1432, a date later than those recorded in the Mamluk texts.[[141]](#footnote-144)

While the dates of these events differ, it does not mean that they are unrelated. Despite the absence of explicit references to Zheng He, the junk ships mentioned in the Mamluk accounts could have been detachments from his fleet. First, even though the days and months vary, all these events occurred in the same year of Zheng He’s final voyage. According to Ma Huan, a Muslim interpreter who participated in the voyage, when the “detached squadron” (*fenzong* 分䑸) of Zheng He’s fleet reached Calicut, some crews were dispatched to Mecca.[[142]](#footnote-145) *Qianwen Ji* specifically mentions that the “major junk ship” (*dazongchuan* 大䑸船) sailed back to China.[[143]](#footnote-146) This details suggest that the fleet did not stick together at all times; instead, detachments would sometimes sail independently. Zheng He’s registrations at the two ports, Liujiagang in Suzhou and Changle in Fuzhou, serve as explicit evidence of the composition of the expeditionary armada and the courses of the individual voyages.[[144]](#footnote-147) Thus, the two groups of Chinese junk ships mentioned by the three Mamluk authors might have both belonged to Zheng He’s fleet, which consisted of more than a hundred great trading vessels with 27,550 men manning smaller ships.[[145]](#footnote-148) Indeed, Ma Huan mentions a detachment of three ships dispatched to Aden, although he does not specify when the detachment was sent nor whether it reached Jeddah.[[146]](#footnote-149)

Second, shipping goods directly from China to the Arabian Peninsula and the Red Sea was not an easy task. Even during the Mongol era, despite the prevalence of maritime trade, most of the time, the transportation of goods was conducted via relays. As mentioned in the previous section, I have found only one explicit exception to this rule in Mamluk texts, namely al-Kūlamī. The texts do not provide a clear answer to the question of whether other individuals attempted to bring Chinese merchandise back to the sultanate personally. By contrast, I have not found any evidence of Chinese-based merchants transporting merchandise from China to the Sultanate. Moreover, in 1371, the Ming court enacted bans both on travel by sea to foreign countries and on private individuals going to sea. Later maritime offices operating in Quanzhou, Guangzhou and Mingzhou served tribute missions arriving from overseas exclusively.[[147]](#footnote-150) Under such conditions, common merchants would have found it too challenging to get their hands on several junk ships and sail to the Red Sea. Zheng He’s expeditions, on the other hand, were the only officially documented maritime project of the Ming dynasty.

However, even if the junk ships in the Mamluk texts did belong to Zheng He’s fleet, there still is no evidence that Zheng He’s fleet ever established direct contact with the Mamluks. Neither these junk ships nor the detachment mentioned by Ma Huan were destined for Egypt. The junk ships mentioned by Ibn Ḥajar were anchored by the coast near Mecca rather than along the Egyptian coastline. Al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taghrībirdī report that another group of Chinese junk ships was anchored along the coast in Yemen, which was probably its initial destination rather than Egypt or Jeddah. In practice, this group only established contact with the Sharīf of Mecca and the governor of Jeddah, who mediated between the group and the Mamluk sultan, rather than directly with the Cairene court. Moreover, the Mamluk texts make no mention of the detachment reported by Ma Huan, nor does Ma Huan mention an ambassador from Egypt, but only a Meccan ambassador who accompanied the detachment sailing back to the Ming court with tribute.[[148]](#footnote-151)

Nevertheless, Sultan Barsbāy had imposed Mamluk hegemony over the Ḥijāz, namely the Sharifate of Mecca, to control the lucrative trade from the Indian Ocean since 1424, forcing the transit trade out of there to pass through Cairo.[[149]](#footnote-152) Hence, when the detachment intended to sail from Yemen to Mecca, they needed special permission from the Sultan. Additionally, Mamluk court representatives were present in Jeddah, collecting taxes on goods.[[150]](#footnote-153) This may explain the documentation of the group of Chinese junk ships, as they likely traded their goods in Mecca.

As we have seen so far, if the dates recorded by the Mamluk and Chinese sources are correct, there were three Chinese detachments that visited Mecca under the Ming dynasty, which raises several questions. First, why did the Mamluks record the first two but overlook the one mentioned by Ma Huan? Second, the *Ming Shi* only mention that Mecca sent envoys to accompany the last detachment on the return trip to China (1433) and the Meccan envoys did not leave China until 1436.[[151]](#footnote-154) If the two earlier groups were also dispatched by Zheng He’s fleet, why Mecca did not send envoys with them? Additionally, why did Zheng He need to dispatch three separate detachments to the same destination one after the other? Did they serve the same purpose?

The *Ming Shi* indicates that the last detachment carried goods,[[152]](#footnote-155) so it could be regarded as a mercantile fleet; however, it did not serve commercial purpose exclusively. It is reported that Zheng He had heard that Calicut dispatched envoys to Mecca. Upon learning this, he promptly decided to send his own detachment to join them.[[153]](#footnote-156) Hence, the Mamluks might have identified it as a pilgrim group from Calicut rather than a mercantile fleet from China.

Regarding the purpose of Zheng He’s voyages, the *Ming Shi* recounts that Emperor Yongle wanted for his soldiers to be present in strange lands as a way of manifesting the wealth and power of China.[[154]](#footnote-157) Consequently, Zheng He’s fleets successively visited various foreign countries with gifts to their rulers, proclaiming the edicts of the Chinese emperor and pacifying by force those who did not submit peacefully. Foreign rulers showed their recognition of the superior status of the Chinese emperor by presenting tributes consisting of the local products of their countries.[[155]](#footnote-158)

Therefore, the foreign policy of the Ming dynasty blended the traditional Chinese tributary concept with the worldview inherited from the Yuan dynasty. Although the Ming court emphasized Chinese identity, Ming emperors did not publicly proclaim the abolition of their designation as “khan” to foreign audiences; instead, they identified themselves as the heirs of the Mongol Empire. Similarly, Zheng He’s fleets followed routes already established during the Yuan dynasty. Beyond these known routes, unfamiliar regions, such as the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt, did nt capture the interest of the Ming emperors. Without the presence of Muslims in Zheng He’s fleet, there might not have been any particular interest in Mecca.

Moreover, Muslim interest in Mecca would have been objectionable to the Ming court, which doubted the loyalty of foreigners and subjects deviating from Chinese traditions.[[156]](#footnote-159) The distance between China and Mecca was compounded by the Ming Dynasty’s maritime prohibitions, creating significant obstacles for Muslims wishing to embark on the pilgrimage to Mecca. On the one hand, sailing overseas on official ships and representing the court, Zheng He and his Muslim companions could dispatch detachments to various places, including Aden. Although, they might have hesitated about utilizing official sources to fulfill their personal interest in sailing to Mecca. On the other hand, they did not undertake such a journey during the first six voyages, probably due to concerns about raising official suspicion and being held accountable for undertaking a voyage beyond the official arrangements. To some extent, the mission from Calicut to Mecca was a way to avoid such problems, providing these Muslims with an opportunity to make a pilgrimage to Mecca outside the official means of the Chinese imperial court.

As for the two cases of Chinese ships mentioned by the Mamluk authors, they might both have been official detachments dispatched by Zheng He’s fleet to Jeddah and Aden. Although the primary purpose of Zheng He’s voyages was political, they also served economic interests to enrich the royal treasury. The scale of the detachment dispatched to Aden, a familiar tributary country of great reputation, described by some as a paradise, was naturally larger than that sent to Jeddah, an unfamiliar market not visited during the previous voyages. This may explain why the record regarding the latter consists of just one sentence, while a stronger reaction from the Mamluks is evident in the longer record of the former.

Finally, I would like to speculate about the potential correlation between Egypt’s tribute in 1441 and Zheng He’s final expedition. The Egyptian mission proclaimed itself to be in the name of Sultan Barsbāy rather than the contemporary Mamluk sultan, Jaqmaq (r. 1438-1453), suggesting that the mission was likely dispatched by Barsbāy before his death on 7 June 1438. After the Meccan ambassadors accompanied Zheng He’s fleet on its return journey and reached the Ming court, they returned to Mecca in 1436.[[157]](#footnote-160) As mentioned earlier, the second documented mission from Mecca, led by the two sons of the Sharif of Mecca, arrived in the same year Sultan Barsbāy’s mission arrived in China (1441).[[158]](#footnote-161) Barsbāy, who proclaimed himself sultan in April 1422, must have been the sultan interested in the potential profits from the goods carried by the junk ships in 1432. Hence, he would have been aware of the official contacts between Mecca and China, as well as the gifts of the Ming emperor to the Meccan ambassadors.

Before his demise, the sultan had spent years trying to replenish his treasury and expand his empire.[[159]](#footnote-162) Driven by economic interests, he might have dispatched ambassadors to China with the Meccan mission to explore opportunities for regular commercial interactions with the Ming dynasty. However, the Ming dynasty did not exhibit a strong interest in the tribute of the sultan’s ambassadors. There is no record of it in the *Ming Shi*, indicating that the ambassadors might have been robbed. The sultan’s death probably prevented the dispatch of any further missions.

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7. Al-Dimashqī, *Nukhbat al-Dahr*, pp. 167-169, 265-266. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Park, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds*, pp. 147-148. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid, p. 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid, p. 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh (The History of the Khutāy Kings’ Family)*, edited by Muḥammad Rūshan (Tehran: Miras Maktoob, 2000), p. 1; Yidan Wang, *Bosi Lashite Shiji Zhongguoshi Yanjiu yu Wenben Fanyi* (Beijing: Kunlun Chubanshe, 2006), p. 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, Vol. 1*, p. 59; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Rashiduddin*, pp. 139, 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
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14. Abū al-Fidāʾ, ibid, p. 483. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. A-ʿUmarī, *Masālik, Vol. 2*, p. 315. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik, Vol. 3*, pp. 114-116; Lech, *Das Mongolische Weltreich*, pp. 30, 32-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik, Vol. 2*, pp. 305, 313-333. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
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19. Hua, “Guanyu Wumali ‘Shuxing Dilitu, pp. 36-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
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23. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Al-Durar al-Kāmina fī Aʿyān al-Miʾa al-Thāmin*a*, Vol. 1* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī), pp. 338-339. See also Li Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography: Al-Yunini’s Dhayl Mir’al al-Zaman, Vol. 2* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 262-263. In practice, al-ʿAsqalānī cited from al-Jazarī (d. 1338), but I cannot manage a comparison between the two narratives because the manuscript of al-Jazarī’s narrative for 701/1301-2 has not been found, see Donald P. Little, *An Introduction to Mamluk Historiography: An Analysis of Arabic Annalistic and Biographical Sources for the Reign of al-Malik an-Nasir Muhammad Ibn Qala’un* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1970), p. 54. Regarding al-Maʿbar, see Forbes, A.D.W., “Maʿbar”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 17 November 2023 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_SIM\_4721> and Ed., S. Maqbul Ahmad, Mayer, A.C., Burton-Page, J., Nizami, K.A., Ahmad, Aziz and Jairazbhoy, N.A., “Hind”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 17 November 2023 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_COM\_0290> [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
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26. Tsugitaka Sato, “Slave Traders and Kārimī Merchants during the Mamluk Period: A Comparative Study”, *Mamlūk Studies Review*, 10:1 (2006), p. 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Although the king of Yemen (*ṣāḥib al-yaman*) took a portion of his money, along with Chinese curiosities and porcelain, surpassing the customary payment, he came to Egypt still with enormous valuable goods in 1305 and settled in Cairo for a while. In Yemen, al-Kūlamī’s wealth impressed locals, see Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī bil-Wafayāt, Vol. 2* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth, 2000), p. 204; *Aʿyān al-ʿAṣr wa-Aʿwān al-Naṣr, Vol. 4* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1418/1998), p. 372. Al-Nuwayrī (1279-1333) mentioned the value of the goods as 400,000 *dīnār*, see al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab, Vol. 32*, p. 160. However, Ibn Taghrībirdī (1410-1470) mentioned 1,000,000, see Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal, Vol. 7*, pp. 292-293. See also al-ʿAsqalānī, *Al-Durar al-Kāmina*, *Vol. 2*, pp. 383-384. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal, Vol. 7*, pp. 292-293; Sato, “Slave Traders, p. 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab, Vol. 32* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-*ʿ*Ilmiyya, 2003), p. 160; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk li-Maʿrifat Duwal al-Mulūk, Vol. 2* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1997), p. 492; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal al-Ṣāfī wa-l-Mustawfī Baʿd al-Wāfī, Vol. 7* (Egypt: Al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Kitāb, 1984), pp. 292-293. See also E. Ashtor, “The Kārimī Merchants”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1:2 (1956), p. 56. Regarding *khawājā* or *khwājā*, see Tsugitaka Sato, “Slave Traders and Kārimī Merchants during the Mamluk Period: A Comparative Study”, *Mamlūk Studies Review*, 10:1 (2006), p. 141; Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (edited by J. Milton Cowan. Ithaca, N.Y: Spoken Language Services, 1976), p. 305. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Aḥmad al-Shaybānī al-Baghdādī ibn al-Fuwaṭī﻿, *Madjmaʿ al-Ādāb fī Muʿjam al-Alqāb, Vol. 1*. (Tehran: Muʾassasat al-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1995), p. 288. Al-Dhahabī, who read three volumes of the history written by ʿIzz al-Dīn Abū Bakr Maḥfūẓ ibn Maʿtūq, stated that the work supplements *Al-Muntaẓam* written by Ibn al-Jawzī (1126-1200), see al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, pp. 231-232. Other Mamluk records regarding ʿIzz al-Dīn Abū Bakr Maḥfūẓ ibn Maʿtūq, see al-Birzālī, *Al-Muqtafī ʿalā Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn al-Mʿrūf bi-Taʾrīkh al-Birzālī, Vol. 2* (Beirut: Al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2006), pp. 382-3; Muḥammad Abū al-Maʿālī ibn Rāfiʿ al-Sallāmī, *Ta’rīkh ʿUlamāʾ Baghdād al-Musammā Muntakhab al-Mukhtār* (Beirut: Al-Dār al-ʿArabiyya li-l-Muwasūʿāt, 2000), pp. 133-134. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Regarding *bilād al-turk*, see Yāqūt ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān, Vol. 3* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1990), p. 440; Mantanya Gill, “Merchants and Ilkhanid Trade according to the Biographical Dictionary of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī (1244-1323)” (M.A. Thesis, The Hebrew University, 2015), p. 19 (note 70). Ibn al-Fuwaṭī did not clarify when Ibn al-Buzūrī left (*khalaṣa*) Central Asia and where he went, see Ibn al-Fuwaṭī﻿, *Madjmaʿ*, p. 288. See also Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām wa-Wafayāt al-Mashāhīr wal-Aʿlām, Vol. 52* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1990), pp. 231-232. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Ibid; al-ʿAsqalānī, *Al-Durar al-Kāmina, Vol. 1*, pp. 338-339. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Al-ʿAsqalānī, *Al-Durar al-Kāmina*, *Vol. 3*, p. 496. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Linda Northrup, “The Bahrī Mamlūk Sultanate, 1250-1390”, in Carl F. Petry (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Volume 1: Islamic Egypt, 640-1517* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 250. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ashtor, “The Kārimī Merchants, pp. 54-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
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40. Hassan al-Basha, “Chinese Impact on Mamluk Minor Arts”, in Umesao Tadao and Sugimura Toh (eds.), *Significance of Silk Roads in the History of Human Civilizations* (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1992), p. 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Albert Frank Kendrick, *Catalogue of Muhammadan Textiles of the Medieval Period* (London: The Board of Education, 1924), pp. 39-40; Louise W. Mackie, “Toward an Understanding of Mamluk Silks: National and International Considerations”, *Muqarnas*, 2 (1984), pp. 131-132. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Tsugio Mikami, “Chinese Ceramics from Medieval Sites in Egypt”, in Prince Takahito Mikasa (ed.), *Cultural and Economic Relations between East and West: Sea Routes* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1988), p. 8; John Carswell, “A Fourteenth Century Chinese Porcelain Dish from Damascus”, in Fûad Sarrûf and Suha Tamim (eds.), *American University of Beirut Festival Book (Festschrift)* (Beirut: The American University of Beirut, 1967), p. 39. See also al-Basha, “Chinese Impact, p. 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa* (Beirut: Dār Aḥyāʾ al-ʿUlūm, 1986), pp. 576-577; *The Travels of Ibn Battuta A.D. 1325-1354. Translated with Revisions and Notes from the Arabic Text Edited by C. Défrémery and B. R. Sanguinetti, Vol. 4*, translated, revised, and annotated by H. A. R. Gibb and Charles Buckingham (Cambridge: The Hakluyt Society, 1958-2000), p. 813. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab, Vol. 32*, p. 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography*, pp. 262-263. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. There is a Syrian city also called Qārā in the east-north of Damascus, see e.g. al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab, Vol. 30*, p. 186. See also Noël Giron, “Notes Épigraphiques”, *Journal Asiatique*, 19 (1922), p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography*, p. 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. The first-level division was provinces, called *sheng* (省) in Chinese, see David M. Farquhar, *The Government of China under Mongolian Rule: A Reference Guide* (Stuttgart, Germany: Steiner, 1990), p. 393; Song Lian, *Yuan Shi, Vol. 58*, paragraph 2, retrieved on 23 January 2024. <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=692933> [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. A. Miquel and G. Deverdun, “Ḳaṣaba”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 24 January 2024 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_COM\_0455> See also A. Miquel, “al-Muḳaddasī”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 24 January 2024 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_SIM\_5451> [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. See Song Lian, *Yuan Shi, Vols. 58-63*. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. Song Lian, *Yuan Shi, Vol. 60*, paragraph 254, retrieved on 23 January 2024. <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=363480> Other instances include Wulahai Circuit (兀剌海路), see Tong Bao, “Wulahaicheng Diwang he Chengjisihan Zheng Xixia Junshi Dili Xi”, *Ningxia Shehui Kexue*, 06 (1994), pp. 63-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. Marco Polo, *The Description of the World*, translated by Sharon Kinoshita (U.S.A: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2016), p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. Weirong Shen, Masayoshi Nakawo and Jinbo Shi (eds.), *Heishuicheng Renwen yu Huanjing Yanjiu: Heishuicheng Renwen yu Huanjing Guoji Xueshu Taolunhui Wenji* (Beijing: Zhongguo Renmindaxue Chubanshe, 2007), pp. 497, 518. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. Shihua Mu, “Xixia Heishui Mingyi Kao”, *Xizang Minzu Daxue Xuebao (Zhexue Shehui Kexue Ban)*, 39:05 (2018), pp. 84, 93 (note 1); Shen, Nakawo and Shi, *Heishuicheng*, p. 497. See also Song Lian, *Yuan Shi, Vol. 129*, paragraph 23; *Vol. 130*, paragraph 1, retrieved on 11 August 2023. <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&res=434890> [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. *Yuan Shi, Vol. 1*, paragraph 49; *Vol. 60*, paragraph 261. 太祖四年，由黑水城北兀剌海西關口入河西，獲西夏將高令公，克兀剌海城。 [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. Ruth Dunnel, “The Hsi Hsia”, in Herbert Franke and Denis C. Twitchett (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. Song Lian, *Yuan Shi, Vol. 60*, paragraph 254, retrieved on 23 January 2024. <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=363480> Shen, Nakawo and Shi, *Heishuicheng*, pp. 604, 625. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. Shihua Mu, “Xixia Heishui Mingyi Kao”, *Xizang Minzu Daxue Xuebao (Zhexue Shehui Kexue Ban)*, 39:05 (2018), pp. 84; Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), p. 432 (note 12); Weirong Shen, Masayoshi Nakawo and Jinbo Shi (eds.), *Heishuicheng Renwen yu Huanjing Yanjiu: Heishuicheng Renwen yu Huanjing Guoji Xueshu Taolunhui Wenji* (Beijing: Zhongguo Renmindaxue Chubanshe, 2007), pp. 518, 604, 625. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography*, p. 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. Aurel Stein, *Innermost Asia: Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia, Kan-Su and Eastern Iran, Vols. 1* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1928), pp.439-440. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography*, p. 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. Shen, Nakawo and Shi, *Heishuicheng*, p. 463. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. *Yuan Shi, Vol. 13*, paragraph 21; *Vol. 14*, paragraphs 2, 22; *Vol. 15*, paragraph 5; *Vol. 60*, paragraph 254; *Vol. 100*, paragraph 71. See also Shen, Nakawo and Shi, *Heishuicheng*, pp. 463-464. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography*, p. 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. Shen, Nakawo and Shi, *Heishuicheng*, pp. 413-428, 466-467. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. *Yuan Shi, Vol. 20*, paragraph 11; *Vol. 30*, paragraph 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography*, p. 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. Marco Polo, *The Description of the World*, translated by Sharon Kinoshita (U.S.A: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2016), p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. Shen, Nakawo and Shi, *Heishuicheng*, pp. 467-468. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. Aurel Stein, *Innermost Asia: Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia, Kan-Su and Eastern Iran, Vols. 1* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1928), p. 452; Nancy Steinhardt, “China, Islamic architecture in”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, Edited by: Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Devin J. Stewart. Consulted online on 22 January 2024 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_ei3\_COM\_26219> [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography*, p. 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. See paragraphs 3-4 in the section of Guo Kan in Song Lian, *Yuan Shi, Vol. 149*, paragraph 4, retrieved on 9 November 2023. <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=299184> 丁巳正月，至兀里兒城⋯⋯又西行三千里，至天房，其將住石致書請降，左右以住石之請為信然，易之不為備，侃曰：「欺敵者亡，軍機多詐，若中彼計，恥莫大焉。」乃嚴備以待。住石果來邀我師，侃與戰，大敗之，巴兒筭灘降，下其城一百八十五。又西行四十里，至密昔兒。會日暮，已休，復驅兵起，留數病卒，西行十餘里頓軍，下令軍中，銜枚轉箭。敵不知也，潛兵夜來襲，殺病卒，可乃筭灘大驚曰：「東天將軍，神人也。」遂降。戊午，旭烈兀命侃西渡海，收富浪。 See also Florence Hodous, “Guo Kan: Military Exchanges between China and the Middle East”, in Michal Biran, Jonathan Brack, and Francesca Fiaschetti (eds.), *Along the Silk Roads in Mongol Eurasia: Generals, Merchants, and Intellectuals* (California: University of California Press, 2020), pp. 27, 35-36, 40-41. Regarding Kenai Suantan, E. Bretschneider thought that ﻿*nai* was probably a misprint for *to* (*tu*), without clarifying which character *tu* it is. Based on this speculation, Dezhi Chen thinks it is 秃, but I think Bretschneider meant 凸. See E. Bretschneider, “﻿IV. Si Shi Ki: Record of an Embassy to the Regions in the West”, in *Mediæval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & CO. Ltd, 1910), p. 142; Dezhi Chen, “Liuyu Changde Xishiji Jiaozhu”, *Zhonghua Wenshilun*, 01 (2015), p. 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. Hodous, “Guo Kan, pp. 27, 35-36, 40-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. Hodous, “Guo Kan, p. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. Yingsheng Liu, *Hailu yu Lulu: Zhonggu Shidai Dongxi Jiaoliu Yanjiu* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2011), p. 225. See also Cheng Xiong and Ronglin Xia, “Daoyi Zhilüe Banben Shulue”, *Mudanjiang Xueyuan Xuebao (Zhexue Shehui Kexue Ban)*, 01 (2015), p. 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. Jiqing Su, *Daoyilüezhi Jiaozhu* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1981), pp. 5, 388-9. 然欲考求其故實，則執事者多祕其說，鑿空者又不得其詳。唯豫章汪君煥章，少負奇氣，為司馬子長之遊，足跡幾半天下矣。 [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. Ibid, pp. 346-354. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. See the section of Tefanli 特番里 in Wang Dayuan, *Daoyilüezhi*. <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=232328> retrieved on 11 November 2023. 特番里國居西南角，名為小食。官場深邃，前有石崖，當關以守之；後有石洞，周匝以居之。厥土塗泥，厥田沃饒。臨溪，溪又通海，海口有閘，春月則放水灌田耕種，時雨降則閉閘，或歲旱則開焉。民無水旱之憂，長有豐稔之慶，故號為樂土。氣候應節。俗淳，男女椎髻，系青布。煮海為鹽，釀老葉為酒，燒羊羔為〔食。地產〕黃蠟，綿羊高四尺許，波羅大如斗，甜瓜三四尺圍。貿易之貨，用麻逸布、五色綢鞋、錦鞋、銅鼎、紅油布之屬。See also Toyohachi Fujita, *Daoyilüezhi Jiaozhu* (Peking: Wendiange Shuzhuang, 1936), p. 113. Regarding the Chinese scholars, see Yuanpeng Wu, “Hanghai Youlijia Wangdayuan yu Daoyilüezhi”, *Zhongguo Gangkou*, S1 (2018), pp. 50-51; Suhuai Zheng and Bei Wang, “Chongwen Wangdayuan de Lanse Wenming zhi Lü: Guanyu Wangdayuan yu Daoyizhilüe de Zairenshi”, *Difang Wenhua Yanjiu*, Vol. 10, no. 01 (2022), pp. 97-98. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. Yunzhong Zhou, “Hanglu yu Songyuan Nanyang Xingshi Zhuanbian”, in *Zhongguo Nanyang Gudai Jiaotongshi* (Xiamen: Xiamen University Press, 2015), p. 328. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. Su, *Daoyilüezhi*, p. 250. See also Wang Dayuan, *Daoyilüezhi*. 官場深邃，前有石崖，當關以守之；後有石洞，周匝以居之。 [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. Su, *Daoyilüezhi*, p. 351. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. *Ming Shi, Juan 332*, paragraph 60, <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=104693> retrieved on 1 November 2023. 阿速，近天方、撒馬兒罕，幅員甚廣。城倚山面川。川南流入海，有魚鹽之利。土宜耕牧。敬佛畏神，好施惡鬥。物產富，寒暄適節，人無饑寒，夜鮮寇盜，雅稱樂土。 [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. Su, *Daoyilüezhi*, pp. 346-347. See also Zhou, “Hanglu, p. 381. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. Zhou, “Hanglu, pp. 389-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
85. John W. Chaffee, “The Mongols and Merchant Power”, in *The Muslim Merchants of Premodern China: The History of a Maritime Asian Trade Diaspora, 750-1400* (United States: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
86. Ibid, p. 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
87. Yongzhang Xu, “Wangdayuan Shengping Kaobian Santi”, *Haijiaoshi Yanjiu*, 02 (1997), pp. 99-100. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
88. Michal Biran, “The Mongols in Central Asia from Chinggis Khan’s Invasion to the Rise of Temür: The Ögödeid and Chaghadaid Realms”, in Allen J. Frank, Nicola Di Cosmo, and Peter B. Golden (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 62; Elizabeth Endicott, “﻿The Yuan Government and Society”, in Herbert Franke and Denis C. Twitchett (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 599. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
89. Endicott, “﻿The Yuan Government, p. 600. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
90. Su, *Daoyilüezhi*, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
91. Park, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds*, pp. 104-105. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
92. Park, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds*, pp. 106-107. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
93. It is explicit that Zhao Rukuo’s source of information was the Fatimids, regarding Egypt as the capital of the Arabs (Dashi 大食). They engaged in commerce with Song China. See Chengjun Feng, *Zhufanzhi Jiaozhu* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1956), pp. 45, 48, 52-53, 67-70; Friedrich Hirth and W. W. Rockhill (trans.), *Chau Ju-Kua: His Work on the Chinese and Arab Trade in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, Entitled Chu-Fan-Chï* (St. Petersburg, Russia: The Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1911), pp. 115, 117, 120, 144-146. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
94. Park, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds*, p. 228 (note 49). Both Zhao Rukuo and Chen Dazhen (陳大震, 1228-1307) referred to Baghdad as Baida (白達), see Feng, *Zhufanzhi*, p. 60; Chen Dazhen, *Nanhai Zhi, Vol. 7*, paragraph 157, retrieved on 15 January 2024. <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=322276> Similarly, the *Xishi Ji* referred to Baghdad as Baoda (報達), see Chen, “Liuyu, pp. 96, 100. Regarding Mecca, Tianfang (天房) in the *Xishi Ji* as mentioned in the account of Guo Kan, see Chen, “Liuyu, pp. 99-100; Mojia (默茄) in the *Nanhai Zhi*, see *Nanhai Zhi, Vol. 7*, paragraph 157. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
95. Park, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds*, p. 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
96. Chen, “Liuyu, pp. 100-102; Bretschneider, “﻿IV. Si Shi Ki, p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
97. Feng, *Zhufanzhi*, p. 60; *Nanhai Zhi, Vol. 7*, paragraph 157. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
98. Feng, *Zhufanzhi*, pp. 64, 67-68; Hirth and Rockhill, *Chau Ju-Kua*, pp. 140, 144; *Nanhai Zhi, Vol. 7*, paragraph 157. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
99. For example, Hyunhee Park made this mistake, see Park, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds*, p. 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
100. Feng, *Zhufanzhi*, pp. 61-64; Hirth and Rockhill, *Chau Ju-Kua*, pp. 137-141; *Nanhai Zhi, Vol. 7*, paragraph 157. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
101. Hyunhee Park tends to agree with the latter, see Park, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds*, p. 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
102. Feng, *Zhufanzhi*, p. 609 Hirth and Rockhill, *Chau Ju-Kua*, p. 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
103. Humphreys, “Egypt, pp. 456-457. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
104. Ibid, pp. 457-459. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
105. Scholars have already noticed that the Mamluks and the Chinese had made efforts to establish direct contacts, see Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising Diplomacy in the Mamluk Sultanate: Gifts and Material Culture in the Medieval Islamic World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
106. Manz, Beatrice F., “Tīmūr Lang”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 17 January 2023 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_COM\_1223> [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
107. H. R. Roemer, “Tīmūr in Iran”, in Peter Jackson and Lawrence Lockhart (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 6: The Timurid and Safavid Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 64-5, 74-5. See also Jiaxin Zheng, “Zhenghe Xia Xiyang Shidai Xiya Xingshi ji yu Zhongguo de Guanxi”, *Xiya Feizhou*, no. 02 (2005), p. 48; Walter J. Fischel, *Ibn Khaldūn and Tamerlane: Their Historic Meeting in Damascus, 1401 A.d. (803 A. H.) A Study Based on Arabic Manuscripts of Ibn Khaldūn’s “Autobiography”* (California: University of California Press, 1952), p. 3; Donald Little, “Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Epochs”, in Carl F. Petry (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Volume 1: Islamic Egypt, 640-1517* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 434. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
108. Roemer, “Tīmūr, p. 76. See also Jean-Claude Garcin, “The Regime of the Circassian Mamlūks”, in Carl F. Petry (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Volume 1: Islamic Egypt, 640-1517* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
109. Biran, “The Mamluks, p. 374. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
110. According to the English version, Clavijo mentions the Mamluk sultan as “the sultan of Babylon”, see Ruy González de Clavijo, *Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy González de Clavijo to the Court of Timour, at Samarcand, A.D. 1403-6*, translated by Clements R. Markham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 75, 86 (note 2), 99, 112, 129, 131, 135. The Chinese version does not intend to provide a literal translation of the book and interprets the same designation as “the Egyptian sultan” (埃及苏丹), see *Kelaweiyue Dong Shi Ji*, translated by Zhaojun Yang according to Ömer Riza’s Turkish translation (Beijing: Shangwu Yinshu Guan, 1985), pp. 13, 78, 84, 98, 107, 122, 125, 128, and the translator’s preface. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
111. González de Clavijo, *Narrative*, pp. 133-134; *Kelaweiyue*, p. 127. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
112. *Ming Shi, Juan 332*, paragraphs 5-6, 30. 二十七年八月，帖木兒貢馬二百⋯⋯明年命給事中傅安等齎璽書、幣帛報之⋯⋯永樂三年，傅安等尚未還，而朝廷聞帖木兒假道別失八里率兵東，敕甘肅總兵官宋晟儆備。五年六月，安等還。初，安至其國被留，朝貢亦絕⋯⋯洪武時，撒馬兒罕及別失八里咸朝貢⋯⋯二十八年遣給事中傅安、郭驥等攜士卒千五百人往，為撒馬兒罕所留，不得達。 [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
113. González de Clavijo, *Narrative*, p. 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
114. González de Clavijo, *Kelaweiyue*, p. 134 (notes5). [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
115. Zhang Xinglang 张星烺 (1889-1951) translated the title as Zhusi Han 朱四汗 (Khan Zhu IV) while Yang Zhaojun 杨兆钧 (1909-2003) as Jiuyisi Han 九邑斯汗 (the Khan of nine states), see González de Clavijo, *Kelaweiyue*, p. 127 and notes 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
116. David M. Robinson, “﻿The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols”, in David M. Robinson, (ed.). *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition: The Ming Court (1368-1644)* (United States: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), p. 374. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
117. Robinson, “The Ming Court, p. 374. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
118. Morris Rossabi, “The Ming and Inner Asia”, in Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 8: The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 229; Robinson, “﻿The Ming Court, pp. 369-370. See also González de Clavijo, *Narrative*, p. 172; *Kelaweiyue*, p. 158. According to *Ming Shi, Juan 332* (paragraphs 3, 6, 29, 31), after ascending to the throne, Yongle dispatched ambassadors to inform the Timurid Empire, including Herat: 撒馬兒罕，即漢罽賓地，隋曰漕國，唐復名罽賓，皆通中國。元太祖蕩平西域，盡以諸王、駙馬為之君長，易前代國名以蒙古語，始有撒馬兒罕之名。去嘉峪關九千六百里。元末為之王者，駙馬帖木兒也……成祖踐阼，遣使敕諭其國⋯⋯哈烈，一名黑魯，在撒馬兒罕西南三千里，去嘉峪關萬二千餘里，西域大國也。元駙馬帖木兒既君撒馬兒罕，又遣其子沙哈魯據哈烈……成祖踐阼，遣官齎璽書彩幣賜其王，猶不報命。 [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
119. Moreover, such a notion also influenced even the Chinese. Some Ming-period portrayals drawn by Chinese portrayers reveal the image of Chinese emperors as indistinguishable from a khan of Mongolian nomads, see David M. Robinson, “﻿The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols”, in David M. Robinson, (ed.). *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition: The Ming Court (1368-1644)* (United States: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), pp. 386-393. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
120. Zheng, “Zhenghe, p. 49. See also ﻿Xunzheng Shao, “You Mingchuye yu Tiemuer Diguo zhi Guanxi”, in *Shao Xunzheng Lishi Lunwenji* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1985), p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
121. Clavijo mentioned Cambalu as “the chief city” of China, see González de Clavijo, *Narrative*, p. 173; *Kelaweiyue*, p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
122. Michal Biran, ﻿“The Chinggisid Legacy in the Muslim World”, in *Chinggis Khan* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), p. 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
123. Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿArabshāh, *ʿAjāʾib al-Maqdūr fī Akhbār Tīmūr* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Wādī al-Nīl, 1285/1868), p. 38; Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿArabshāh, *Tamerlane or Timur the Great Amir*, translated by John Herne Sanders (London: Luzac and Co., 1936), p. 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
124. Wende Zhang and Wiewei Jiang, “Zhongya Tiemuer Wangchao Wangquan Hefaxing de Jiangou”, *Jiangsu Shifan Daxue Xuebao (Zhexue Shehui Kexue Ban)*, 47:4 (2021), pp. 33-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
125. Ibn ʿArabshāh, *ʿAjāʾib al-Maqdūr*, p. 228; *Tamerlane*, p. 310. Regarding Ibn ʿArabshāh, see Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal, Vol. 2*, p. 140; J. Pedersen, “Ibn ʿArabs̲h̲āh”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 17 January 2023 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_islam\_SIM\_3081> [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
126. L. Bouvat, *Tiemuer Diguo*, translated by Chengjun Feng (Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshu Guan, 1935), p. 89; L. Bouvat, “Tīmūr Lang”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, First Edition (1913-1936)*, Edited by M. Th. Houtsma, T.W. Arnold, R. Basset, R. Hartmann. Consulted online on 17 January 2023 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-871X\_ei1\_SIM\_5777> [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
127. González de Clavijo, *Narrative*, pp. 128, 133, 155; *Kelaweiyue*, pp. 121, 126, 145. In *Ming Shi, Juan 332* (paragraphs 3, 29), Tamerlane was called Yuan Fuma 元驸马 (Yuan Consort): 元末為之王者，駙馬帖木兒也……元駙馬帖木兒既君撒馬兒罕，又遣其子沙哈魯據哈烈。 See also Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿArabshāh, *ʿAjāʾib al-Maqdūr fī Akhbār Tīmūr* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Wādī al-Nīl, 1285/1868), p. 8; Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿArabshāh, *Tamerlane or Timur the Great Amir*, translated by John Herne Sanders (London: Luzac and Co., 1936), p. 4; Xinglang Zhang, *Zhongxi Tongshiliao Huibian, Vol. 3* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1978), pp. 266-267. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
128. In the section regarding Herat in *Ming Shi, Juan 332* (paragraph 30). （洪武）二十八年遣給事中傅安、郭驥等攜士卒千五百人往，為撒馬兒罕所留，不得達。三十年又遣北平按察使陳德文等往，亦久不還。成祖踐阼，遣官齎璽書彩幣賜其王，猶不報命。 [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
129. González de Clavijo, *Narrative*, p. 173; *Kelaweiyue*, p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
130. *Ming Shi, Juan 332*, paragraph 6. 五年六月，安等還……至是帖木兒死，其孫哈裏嗣，乃遣使臣虎歹達等送安還，貢方物。Regarding Khalīl Sulṭān and how Shāh Rukh seized the throne, see H. R. Roemer, “The Successors of Tīmūr”, in Peter Jackson and Lawrence Lockhart (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 6: The Timurid and Safavid Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 100-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
131. Zheng, “Zhenghe, pp. 49-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
132. Both Mixier and Misier sound like the Arabic name of Egypt *miṣr*, see Zhang, *Zhongxi*, *Vol. 2*, p. 38 (note 1). See also Paul Pelliot, *Zhenghe Xia Xiyang Kao*, translated by Chengjun Feng (Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshu Guan, 1934), pp. 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
133. See the section regarding Egypt in *Ming Shi, Juan 332* (paragraph 57): 米昔兒，一名密思兒。永樂中遣使朝貢。既宴賚，命五日一給酒饌、果餌，所經地皆置宴。正統六年，王鎖魯檀阿失剌福復來貢。禮官言：「其地極遠，未有賜例。昔撒馬兒罕初貢時，賜予過優，今宜稍損。賜王彩幣十表裏，紗、羅各三匹，白氁絲布、白將樂布各五匹，洗白布二十匹，王妻及使臣遞減。」從之。自後不復至。 [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
134. *Ming Shi, Juan 332*, paragraph 62. 天方，古筠沖地，一名天堂，又曰默伽。不道自忽魯謨斯四十日始至，自古里西南行，三月始至。其貢使多從陸道入嘉峪關。One exception occurred in 1487: 成化二十三年，其國中回回阿力以兄納的游中土四十餘載，欲往雲南訪求。乃攜寶物鉅萬，至滿剌加，附行人左輔舟，將入京進貢。抵廣東，為市舶中官韋眷侵剋。阿力怨，赴京自訴。禮官請估其貢物，酬其直，許訪兄於雲南。時眷懼罪，先已夤緣於內。帝乃責阿力為間諜，假貢行奸，令廣東守臣逐還，阿力乃號泣而去。(paragraph 64) [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
135. *Ming Shi, Juan 332*, paragraph 63. 宣德五年，鄭和使西洋，分遣其儕詣古里。聞古里遣人往天方，因使人齎貨物附其舟偕行。往返經歲，市奇珍異寶及麒麟、獅子、駝雞以歸。其國王亦遣陪臣隨朝使來貢。宣宗喜，賜賚有加。正統元年始命附爪哇貢舟還，賜幣及敕獎其王。六年，王遣子賽亦得阿力與使臣賽亦得哈三以珍寶來貢。陸行至哈剌，遇賊，殺使臣，傷其子右手，盡劫貢物以去，命守臣察治之。 [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
136. *Ming Shi, Juan 332*, paragraph 64. 弘治三年，其王速檀阿黑麻遣使偕撒馬兒罕、土魯番貢馬、駝、玉石。 Al-Muʾayyad Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad was appointed by his father as *amīr al-ḥajj*, see André Raymond, *Cairo* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
137. Xie Jin, *Yongle Dadian, Vol. 22182*, https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/永樂大典/卷22182 retrieved on 1 Dec 2023. 宻斯兒麥 國朝遣使者至宻斯兒之地。雲其國有清水江一道。江岸間。古有人種植。今但有雜果木。其所遺小麥種。大如黃豆。常自發生。See also Mingda Ma, “‘Mixidao’ Xiaokao”, *Haijiaoshi Yanjiu*, 01 (2000), p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
138. Edward L. Dreyer, *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405-1433* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007), pp. 33, 158; Ma Huan, *Ming Chaoben Yingyashenglan Jiaozhu*, annotated by Ming Wan (Beijing: Haiyang Chubanshe, 2005), pp. 103-104. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
139. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr bi-Anbāʾ al-ʿUmr, Vol. 3* (Cairo: Wizārat al-Awqāf, 1998), p. 472. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
140. Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, *Vol. 7*, p. 237; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira, Vol. 14* (Egypt: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-ʾIrshād al-Qawmī, 1963), p. 362. See also Shuang Gai, “Guanyu Zhenghe Chuandui de Yiduan Zhongyao Shiliao – Pilan Alabo Guji Zhaji Zhier”, *Huizu Yanjiu*, no. 02 (2007), pp. 141-142. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
141. Zhu Yunming, *Qianwen Ji*, paragraph 195. <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=203549> retrieved on 2 December 2023. 七年正月十一日開船……十一月六日到錫蘭山……十八日到古里。 [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
142. *Ming Shi, Juan 332*, paragraph 63. 宣德五年，鄭和使西洋，分遣其儕詣古里。聞古里遣人往天方，因使人齎貨物附其舟偕行。往返經歲，市奇珍異寶及麒麟、獅子、駝雞以歸。其國王亦遣陪臣隨朝使來貢。宣宗喜，賜賚有加。正統元年始命附爪哇貢舟還，賜幣及敕獎其王。Also see Ma Huan, *Ming Chaoben*, pp. 103-104, and Dreyer, *Zheng He*, p. 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
143. Zhu Yunming, *Qianwen Ji*, paragraph 195. 八年……三月十一日到古里。二十日大䑸船回洋 [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
144. Dreyer, *Zheng He*, pp. 146, 191-199. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
145. Ibid, p. 126. See also Zhu Yunming, *Qianwen Ji*. 官校、旗軍、火長、舵工、班碇手、通事、辨事、書算手、醫士、鐵錨、木艌、搭材等匠、水手、民稍人等共二萬七千五百五十員名。 [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
146. Ma Huan, *Ming Chaoben*,p. 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
147. Chaffee, “The Mongols, pp. 162-163. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
148. *Ming Shi, Juan 332*, paragraph 63. 其國王亦遣陪臣隨朝使來貢。宣宗喜，賜賚有加。 [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
149. Fernandes, Leonor, “Barsbāy, al-Malik al-Ashraf”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, Edited by: Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, Devin J. Stewart. Consulted online on 03 December 2023 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\_ei3\_COM\_23996> [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
150. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
151. *Ming Shi, Juan 332*, paragraph 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
152. *Ming Shi, Juan 332*, paragraph 63. 聞古里遣人往天方，因使人齎貨物附其舟偕行。 [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
153. Ibid. The detached squadron learnt about dispatching people to Mecca only when they arrived at Calicut, see Ma Huan, *Ming Chaoben*, pp. 103-104. 分䑸到古里国时，内官太监洪等**见**本国差人往天方国，**就**选差通事人等七人。 [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
154. Zhang Tingyu, *Ming Shi, Juan 304*, <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=724868> retrieved on 5 December 2023. 成祖疑惠帝亡海外，欲蹤跡之，且欲耀兵異域，示中國富強。永樂三年六月，命和及其儕王景弘等通使西洋⋯⋯以次遍歷諸番國，宣天子詔，因給賜其君長，不服則以武懾之。五年九月，和等還，諸國使者隨和朝見。和獻所俘舊港酋長⋯⋯舊港者⋯⋯其酋陳祖義，剽掠商旅⋯⋯和大敗其眾⋯⋯ [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
155. Dreyer, *Zheng He*, pp. 2-5, 33-35, 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
156. Regarding distrusting foreigners, e.g. see *Ming Shi, Juan 332*, paragraph 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
157. *Ming Shi, Juan 332*, paragraph 63. 正統元年始命附爪哇貢舟還，賜幣及敕獎其王。 [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
158. Ibid. 宣德五年，鄭和使西洋，分遣其儕詣古里。聞古里遣人往天方，因使人齎貨物附其舟偕行。往返經歲，市奇珍異寶及麒麟、獅子、駝雞以歸。其國王亦遣陪臣隨朝使來貢。宣宗喜，賜賚有加。正統元年始命附爪哇貢舟還，賜幣及敕獎其王。六年，王遣子賽亦得阿力與使臣賽亦得哈三以珍寶來貢。陸行至哈剌，遇賊，殺使臣，傷其子右手，盡劫貢物以去，命守臣察治之。 [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
159. Fernandes, “Barsbāy, *EI3*. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)