

THE MELKITE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM DURING THE MAMLUK PERIOD

PIERRE MOUKARZEL
(Lebanese University)

Abstract

In 1250, the Mamluks overthrew the Ayyubid dynasty and took power in Egypt, and in 1260, they managed to repel the Mongol invasion decisively at the Battle of 'Ayn Jâlût, and subsequently ruled Syria (including Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon) from 1260 to 1516. During the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, the Melkite (Orthodox) patriarchate of Jerusalem faced two problems: the first one was the return of the Franciscans to Jerusalem between the years 1335-1337 and their possession of the Cenacle and the right to officiate at the Holy Sepulchre, the Grotto of Bethlehem and the Tomb of the Virgin. The second problem was the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the loss of the support provided by the Byzantine emperors who were expected to intercede on behalf of the Melkite community in the Mamluk Sultanate.

In my paper I will study the relations between the Melkite patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Mamluk authorities through the military, political and economic changes which occurred during the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries.

INTRODUCTION

During the period extending from the Arab conquest in 636 until the arrival of the Crusaders in 1099, the Melkite patriarchate of Jerusalem was the guardian and the possessor of the Holy Places in Palestine.¹ In 1099, during the first crusade, the Franks seized Jerusalem from the Fatimid Caliphate and laid the foundations for the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. They expelled Melkites and all Eastern-rite Christians from the Holy Sepulchre and reserved the church of the Resurrection exclusively for the use of Latin clergy.² The Melkite patriarch fled to Constantinople and was substituted by a Latin patriarch.³ The Melkites kept their own churches in Jerusalem but the Latins did not admit other confessions to the shrine churches of Jerusalem which they restored.⁴ But since the capture of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem by Salâh al-Dīn (r.1174-1193) in 1187, the Melkite patriarchs returned to Jerusalem and recovered their own churches and

¹ The patriarchate of Jerusalem was founded in 451. In a decree issued from the seventh session of the Fourth Ecumenical Council (The Council of Chalcedon) in 451 the bishop of Jerusalem was elevated to the rank of patriarch, ranked fifth after the sees of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch. The period from the fourth to the seventh century was the golden age of the Church of Jerusalem. Pierre Maraval, *Le Christianisme de Constantin à la conquête arabe*, (Paris : Nouvelle Clio, puf, 2001), 74-78, 201. Its jurisdiction covered the territories of the three Byzantine provinces of Palestine until the Muslim Arab conquests of the seventh century: Palaestina Prima, Palaestina Secunda and Palaestina Tertia (which correspond in the political situation of today to Palestine and Jordan).

² The Russian pilgrim Daniel who visited Jerusalem in 1106-1107 said that on the Holy Saturday the Latins allowed the Melkite clerics and the monks of Saint Sabbas monastery to participate to the ceremony in the church of the Resurrection by putting their lamps on the Holy Sepulchre. Sofïa Petrovna Khitrovo, 'Vie et pèlerinage de Daniel, Hégoumène russe 1106-1107', *Itinéraires russes en Orient*, (Genève : Imprimerie Jules-Guillaume Fick, 1889), 76.

³ From 1099 to 1187 Melkite patriarchs continued to be appointed but resided in Constantinople.

⁴ Bernard Hamilton, *The Latin church in the Crusader states. The secular church*, (London: Variorum publications LTD, 1980), 161-163.

monasteries. The Melkites formed a majority among native Christians of Jerusalem and enjoyed a privileged position.⁵

In 1229, by signing a treaty with the sultan al-Kâmil (r.1218-1238), Jerusalem came into the hands of the emperor Frederick II (r.1220-1250) and Latin clergy returned to the city and recovered the Holy Sepulchre and other places which had belonged to them during the Frankish period. In 1244, however, the Khwarizmians took Jerusalem and massacred 5000 Christians; because of this the Latins lost the city.⁶ In 1250, the Mamluks took power in Egypt, and in 1260, the sultan Baybars (r.1260-1277) occupied a large part of Syria.⁷ Under the Mamluks, Jerusalem declined in political and economic importance and its population decreased. For much of this period the city remained unfortified, with the exception of the Tower of David, the seat of the Mamluk governor of the city. The Holy Places in Jerusalem returned again to the Melkite Church, but the Latins did not wait long to petition the sultan Baybars for the recovery of all their places in Jerusalem. The sultan promulgated a decree (*firmân*) ordering the authorities in Jerusalem not to allow the Melkites to occupy the place belonged to the Latins in the church of the Resurrection, or to discomfort the Latin clerics. He also authorized the Latin clerics to restore the terraces and the walls of their convent in Bethlehem. These privileges granted to the Latins were renewed during the reign of the sultan Qalâwûn (r.1279-1290).⁸ It seemed, however, that the presence of the Latin clergy in Jerusalem and Bethlehem became a source of conflicts: on the one hand, the Franciscans competed with the Dominicans for the service of the Holy Places and on the other hand the Melkites considered themselves to be the exclusive owners of rights over churches in Jerusalem and Bethlehem and other places in Palestine; this referred to the Pact of the caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattâb given to Sophronios the Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem in 636.⁹ It seemed that the presence of the Latins in Jerusalem and Bethlehem was not permanent, and according to the testimony of western pilgrims who visited Palestine at the end of the thirteenth century, except for the Holy Sepulchre, all of the shrine churches of Jerusalem were in ruins. In 1288, the Dominican friar Riccoldo Da Monte di Croce visited Jerusalem and described it as a “city of ruin and destruction” (*ciuitas ruine et destructionis*). Most of the churches were abandoned and placed under the control of Muslims including the church of the Resurrection. Even in Bethlehem, the Latins were absent.¹⁰

JERUSALEM AFTER 1291: THE RETURN OF THE FRANCISCANS AND THEIR SETTLEMENT IN SOME HOLY PLACES

In 1291, the Mamluks defeated the Crusader states and the Latins left the Levant for good.¹¹ From Cyprus, where they took refuge at the end of the Latin Kingdom, the Franciscans started planning

⁵ René Grousset, *Histoire des croisades. II. 1131-1187. L'équilibre*, (Paris : Perrin, 2006), 775-776.

⁶ René Grousset, *Histoire des croisades. II*, 329-333, 419-421.

⁷ Syria means a geographical space called by the Arabs Bilâd al-Shâm including the actual countries: Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan.

⁸ Eutimio Castellani, *Catalogo dei firmani ad altri documenti legali emanati in lingua araba e turca concernenti i Santuari le proprietà i diritti della Custodia di Terra Santa conservati nell'Archivio della stessa Custodia in Gerusalemme*, (Gerusalemme: Tipografia dei PP. Francescani, 1922), 4-5.

⁹ Nicéphore Moschopoulos, *La Terre Sainte. Essai sur l'histoire politique et diplomatique des Lieux Saints de la chrétienté*, (Athènes, 1956), 91-95. For more information about the pact of the caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattâb, see: Antoine Fattal, *Le statut légal des non-musulmans en pays d'Islam*, (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1995), 60-69.

¹⁰ Riccoldi De Monte Crucis, 'Liber Peregrinationis', *Peregrinatores medii aevi quatuor Burchardus de Monte Sion, Ricoldus de Monte Crucis, Odoricus de Fore Julii, Wilbrandus de Oldenborg*, J.C.M. Laurent, ed, (Leipzig, 1864), 108-110.

¹¹ The Mamluk Sultanate became a great realm which included Egypt, Syria, Cilicia, Little Armenia, and the oriental part of the Arabic peninsula up to Yemen, giving birth to one of the most powerful Muslim states during the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries.

a return to Jerusalem and to the coastal cities where they had convents, taking advantage of the good political relations between the Christian governments and the Mamluk sultans of Egypt.¹² It seemed that the intervention of the King of Aragon James II (r.1291-1327) with the sultans al-Nâsir Muhammad (r.1293-1294, 1299-1309, 1309-1341) and Rukn al-dîn Baybars (r.1308-1309) for the resumption of pilgrimage to the Holy Land resulted in the promulgation of a decree (*firmân*) from the sultan Rukn al-dîn Baybars on 1 Safar 709/11 July 1309 authorizing the Franciscans to settle exclusively in Mount Sion, in the Holy Sepulchre and in Bethlehem.¹³ Between 1300 and 1330, eight embassies were sent by the king of Aragon James II to the sultan al-Nâsir Muhammad.¹⁴ King James II, concerned about the regular presence of the Latin religious in Jerusalem, quickly obtained from the sultan the authorization for his nationals to move freely in the Holy Land. In 1322, he asked the sultan al-Nâsir Muhammad for the custody of the Holy Sepulchre for twelve Catalan Dominicans, but it was doubtful that they actually settled there since King James II sought the same privilege five years later for the Franciscans, but it seems that it was without effect.¹⁵ The papacy was also interested in this matter: in 1328, Pope John XXII (r.1316-1334) conceded to the Provincial Minister of the Holy Land, based in Cyprus, the power to send two brothers and a servant to Jerusalem every year.¹⁶ On the other hand, the intervention of the King of Naples, Robert of Anjou (r.1309-1343), and his wife Sancha of Majorca (r.1304-1345) with the Mamluk sultan arrived in the early 1330s, thanks to costly negotiations with the sultan led by friar Roger Guérin, to obtain custody of the Holy Places for the Franciscans and their establishment in Mount Sion at which a convent was then established with its guardian. In 1335, the French friar Roger Guérin succeeded in buying from the judge (*al-qâdî*) Sharaf al-Dîn Muhammad, the administrator of the public treasury, land with the surface area of “484 *picchi quadrati*” (about 280,72 square metres) next to the church of Mount Sion including the Cenacle to the north for a price of 1400 silver *dirhams* to build a convent nearby for the friars, using funds provided by the king and queen of Naples.¹⁷ Official agreements led to this result in 1337; the exact date of installation of the Franciscans is not known because the text of the agreements was lost after 1427, when it was still preserved to that date in the convent of Saint Saviour in Jerusalem. However, two papal bulls issued by Pope Clement VI (r.1342-1352), both dated in Avignon 21 November 1342 summarize the essential content of the agreements.¹⁸ With these two papal bulls, *Gratias Agimus* and *Nuper Carissimae*, Pope Clement VI approved and created the new entity which would be known as the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land (*Custodia Terrae Sanctae*). The Franciscans, “not without great expenses and hard work”, found themselves in

¹² Franciscan friaries were present at Acre, Tyre, Sidon, Beirut, Antioch, Tripoli, Tortosa, Jaffa, and Jerusalem between 1220 and 1240. Jean Richard, *La papauté et les missions d'Orient au Moyen Âge (XIII-XVe siècles)*, (Rome: École française de Rome, 1977), 38.

¹³ Eutimio Castellani, *Catalogo dei firmani*, 5.

¹⁴ Aziz Suryal Atiya, ‘Egypt and Aragon, Embassies and diplomatic correspondence between 1300 and 1330 A.D.’, *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, (Leipzig: F.A.Brockhaus, 1938), 17-60.

¹⁵ Heinrich Finke, *Acta Aragonensia. Quellen zur deutschen, italienischen, französischen, zur spanischen korchen – und kulturgeschichte aus der diplomatischen korrespondenz Jaymes II (1291-1327)*, vol.i, (Berlin-Leipzig: W. Rothschild, 1908), 472, 756.

¹⁶ Girolamo Golubovich, *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente francescano*, vol.iii, (Firenze: Quarrachi, 1919), 345.

¹⁷ Eutimio Castellani, *Catalogo dei firmani*, 5-6 ; Isabelle Heullant-Donat, ‘Les martyrs franciscains de Jérusalem (1391) entre mémoire et manipulation’, *Chemins d'outre-mer. Études sur la Méditerranée médiévale offertes à Michel Balard*, vol. ii, (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2004), 445-446. As the Crown of Aragon, the Kingdom of Naples seeks to develop an influential policy in the Mediterranean. Apart from these political issues, Robert of Anjou and his wife Sancha were interested in helping the Franciscans and in ensuring their influence: the two sovereigns had among their family members in the community of the Brothers of the Order of Saint Francis.

¹⁸ These two bulls are published in: Girolamo Golubovich, *I frati minori nel possesso de Luoghi Santi di Gerusalemme (1333) e I falsi firmani posseduti dai Greco-Elleni, Note e Documenti per la soluzione della questione de Luoghi Santi*, (Firenze, 1921), 52-56.

possession of the Cenacle and the right to officiate at the Holy Sepulchre, the Grotto of Bethlehem and the Tomb of the Virgin, “without prejudice to the rights of the other Christian communities who already had rights over these places which were already guaranteed to them”. Eastern Christian communities present in Jerusalem listed by the pilgrims of that time were as follows: the Melkites, the Georgians, the Indians (the Christians of Abyssinia), the Armenians, the Nestorians (Christians of the belt), and the Jacobites.¹⁹ The possession and control of these sites was not complete, but the Franciscans were no longer in the precarious situation that they had known in the thirteenth century, having acquired a right of possession in the Holy Places. According to Greek sources, Pope Clement VI asked the Byzantine emperor John Kontakouzenos (r.1347-1354) to protect the Franciscans in Jerusalem. The emperor instructed Lazaros (r.1334-1368), the Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem, to intercede with the sultan in order to facilitate the settlement of the Franciscans in the city. The patriarch received an order from the sultan to the governor of Jerusalem demanding that he “accept personal guarantee of the Melkite patriarch in favor of the Friars Minor”.²⁰ It seems that the Melkite patriarch had accepted the return of the Franciscans to Jerusalem and other places for two reasons: to restore the ruined shrines and churches so that their services might continue, and to encourage the pilgrimage to Palestine in order to benefit from revenues.²¹ According to the Dominican friar Jacopo da Verona who visited Jerusalem in 1335, only the church of the Cenacle and a small chapel for the Armenians in Mount Sion were still preserved, while all other churches and shrines were ruined and uninhabited.²² Through the agreements with the Mamluk sultan, the policy of the two sovereigns of Naples led to the sultan’s recognition of the Franciscan presence in the Holy Land as the sole representatives of the Latin Church and of the restoration of Christian worship in the Holy Places, including the encouragement of western pilgrimages.²³ During the first half of the fourteenth century the Custody of the Holy Places was therefore an important issue for the Crown of Aragon, the Kingdom of Naples, the papacy and the Franciscans.²⁴ The political and financial support which

¹⁹ It should be noted that the Maronites were not settled in Jerusalem until the second half of the fifteenth century: in 1461, Louis de Rochechouart was the first pilgrim who mentioned the presence of the Maronites at the Holy Sepulchre. Béatrice Dansette, ‘Journal de voyage de Jérusalem de Louis de Rochechouart’, *Croisades et Pèlerinages. Récits, chroniques et voyages en Terre Sainte XIIIe-XVIIe siècle*, Danielle Régnier-Böhler, ed. (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1997), 1154. The presence of the Maronites in Jerusalem was not regular and they did not have their own altar, they celebrated mass in the churches served by the Franciscans. Agustín Arce, ‘Maronitas y Franciscanos en el Líbano 1450-1516’, *Miscelánea de Tierra Santa*, 2, (Jerusalem: *Estudios críticos y documentos*, 1973), 184. Melkites, Georgians, Indians, Armenians, Nestorians, Jacobites, and Franciscans (Latins) had their own altars in the church of the Resurrection but the greatest altar was for the Melkites. «*All’altare maggiore uficia lo patriarcha de’Greci*». Lucia Gai, ‘La Dimostrazione dell’andata del Santo Sepolcro di Marco di Bartolomeo Rustici fiorentino (1441-1442)’, *Toscana e Terrasanta nel Medioevo*, Saggi raccolti e ordinati a cura di Francesco Cardini, (Firenze: Alinea, 1982), 229.

²⁰ Nicéphore Moschopoulos, *La Terre Sainte*, 147.

²¹ Franciscans also returned to Beirut. Sources do not give an exact date of their return, but it is very likely that it was at the beginning of the 1330s (between 1333 and 1335) in parallel with their settlement in Palestine. They established their convent in Beirut which at that time became a city frequented by Europeans, merchants and pilgrims. For more information see: Pierre Moukarzel, ‘La présence des franciscains à Beyrouth sous la domination des Mamelouks (1291-1516) d’après les récits de pèlerinage’, *Revue d’Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 103(2008), 50-84.

²² «*...quia super montem Syon est solum Cenaculum Domini; et prope Cenaculum Domini, ad jactum unius lapidis, est una capella Armeniorum cum uno loco satis parvo, ubi stant III^o calogeri Armeni; omnia autem edificia totius montis Syon et intra et circumcirca sunt dirupta, et non habitantur ...*». Jacopoda Verona, ‘Liber peregrinationis Fratris Jacobi de Verona’, Reinhold Röhrich, ed. *Revue de l’Orient Latin*, 3(1895), 193.

²³ Béatrice Dansette, ‘Les pèlerinages occidentaux en Terre Sainte: une pratique de la “Dévotion moderne” à la fin du Moyen Âge? Relation inédite d’un pèlerinage effectué en 1486’, *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, 72 (1979), 109-110.

²⁴ For more information about the presence of the Franciscans in Jerusalem during the Mamluk period, see: Pierre Moukarzel, ‘The Franciscans in the Mamluk Sultanate: A privileged community subject to the politico-economic balance between Europe and the East’, *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras VIII, Proceedings*

the European rulers provided to the Franciscans allowed them to increase their possessions by buying lands and houses in Jerusalem between 1335 and 1392.²⁵

THE BYZANTINE EMPERORS AND THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

The Arab conquests of the seventh century affected the relationship between the Melkites in Syria and the greater Orthodox community. Contacts between Constantinople and Jerusalem became irregular but were never really interrupted.²⁶ With the beginning of the Fatimid era links were reestablished, and contacts between Fatimid caliphs and Byzantine emperors became numerous. Several times patriarchs were sent by Fatimid caliphs as envoys to Constantinople and in the middle of the eleventh century the emperor Constantine X (r.1059-1067) showed his concern for the Holy Places in Jerusalem by sending subsidies for the rebuilding of the church of the Resurrection. He was the first Byzantine emperor who had done so since the reign of the emperor Heraclius (r.610-641).²⁷ It was probably from this time that Byzantine emperors began to show interest in the affairs of the Melkite patriarchate of Jerusalem.²⁸ After the capture of Constantinople by the emperor Michael Palaeologus (r.1259-1282) in 1261, the Byzantine emperors took an interest in the shrines of the Holy Land.²⁹ They intervened with the Mamluk sultans to maintain privileges granted to the Melkite community in Jerusalem and to defend their rights over the Holy Places. To the Melkites, the Byzantine emperor was both the imperial and the secular leader of their communities. During the second half of the thirteenth century and throughout the fourteenth century, the Byzantines and the Mamluks had exchanged at least fifteen embassies.³⁰ The Byzantine emperors intervened on several occasions with the sultans to ensure the exercise of Christian worship, the protection of acquired rights of the Melkite community in the Mamluk Sultanate and to solve problems facing the patriarchs. Even they presented themselves as the protectors of other Christian communities such as Georgians. The emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus (r.1282-1328) was the first Byzantine emperor who sent an envoy accompanied by a Georgian messenger to Cairo with a letter to the sultan al-Nâsir Muhammad in which he requested the reopening of the church (*al-kanîsat al-musallaba*) in Jerusalem.³¹ His request was accepted in 705/1305-1306.³² It was important for Melkites and Georgians to have

of the 19th, 20th, 21st and 22nd International Colloquium organized at Ghent University in May, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013, U.Vermeulen, K.D'Hulster and J.Van Steenberghe, eds, (Leuven-Paris-Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2016), 441-462.

²⁵ Eutimio Castellani, *Catalogo dei firmani*, 5-7.

²⁶ Nicéphore Moschopoulos, *La Terre Sainte*, 103-104.

²⁷ Hugh Kennedy, 'Byzantine-Arab diplomacy in the Near East from the Islamic conquest to the mid eleventh century', *Byzantine diplomacy*, Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin, eds, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1992), 142-143.

²⁸ Hugh Kennedy, 'The Melkite Church from the Islamic conquest to the Crusades: continuity and adaptation in the Byzantine legacy', *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East*, vi, (Ashgate: Variorum, 2006), 330.

²⁹ Constantinople was captured by the Crusaders in 1204. The leaders of the fourth crusade founded the Latin Empire of Constantinople which lasted until 1261.

³⁰ Mohamed Tahar Mansouri, *Recherche sur les relations entre Byzance et l'Égypte (1259-1453) (d'après les sources arabes)*, (Tunis : Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de la Manouba, Université de Tunis 1, 1992), 234-237.

³¹ It is the church of the monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem founded in the eleventh century by Georgians. For information about Georgians in Jerusalem during the Mamluk period, see: Butrus Abu-Manneh, 'The Georgians in Jerusalem in the Mamluk period', *Egypt and Palestine: a millennium of association (868-1948)*, Amnon Cohen, ed, (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Ben-Zvi institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East, 1984), 102-112 ; Christian Müller and Johannes Pahlitzsch, 'Sultan Baybars I and the Georgians in the light of new documents related to the monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem', *Arabica*, 51(2004), 258-290. Ibn Fadlallh al-'Umarî quoted that the church *al-Musallaba* was converted into a mosque. Shihâb al-dîn Ahmad Ibn Fadlallah al-'Umarî , *Al-ta'rif bil-mustalah al-sharîf*, Muhammad Husayn Shams al-dîn, ed, (Beirut: Dâr al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1988), 79.

³² Taqî al-dîn Abî al-'Abbâs al-Maqrîzî, *Al-Sulûk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulûk*, vol.ii, Muhammad 'Abd al-Qâdir 'Atâ, ed, (Beirut: Dâr al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1997), 391. The chronicler Ibn Abî al-Fadâ'il gave another date for the arrival of the Byzantine ambassador with the Georgian envoy to Cairo. He quoted that in 710/1311-1312, the

places in Jerusalem in which Orthodox Christian pilgrims could stay while visiting the city. In 710/1311-1312, the emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus sent another embassy to the court of the Mamluk sultan in Cairo asking to reopen the churches, guaranteeing the liberty of cult and abolishing the severe measures taken against the Christians in the Sultanate by allowing them to ride their mounts astride instead of making it compulsory for them to ride sitting askew.³³ Another embassy was sent by the emperor Andronicus III (r.1328-1341) to the sultan al-Nâsir Muhammad to discuss, among other issues, some internal matters of the Church of Jerusalem. The sultan replied about the year 1340 by a letter recognizing the election of Lazarus (r.1334-1368) the Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem, already confirmed by the emperor but contested by a monk called Gerasimos a competitor of the patriarchal see.³⁴ After May 1347, the emperor John VI Kontakouzenos (r.1347-1354) sent an embassy with a letter to the sultan al-Malik al-Nâsir Hasan (r.1347-1351) composed of Lazarus and Manuel Sergopoulos (a Byzantine citizen). Their mission was to ask the sultan for the reinstatement of Lazarus to the patriarchal see of Jerusalem instead of Gerasimos, for the protection of the churches, monasteries and the Christians of Jerusalem, and that pilgrims visiting the church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem to be made free from any harassment. They also requested the sultan to exchange Byzantine slaves, to provide protection and security to Byzantine merchants visiting Egypt for trade and to give permission to the Christians of Cairo to restore the ancient church of Saint Georges located in « Hârat al-Rûm ».³⁵ In addition, the emperor sent an important sum of money for the restoration of some parts of the church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem and the basilica of Nativity in Bethlehem.³⁶ The emperor obtained favorable answers from the sultan. It seems that good relations existed between the Byzantine emperors and the Mamluk sultans. Political and commercial relations had always existed between Byzantium and the Muslim world throughout history, but the emperors were also in constant contact with the Muslim rulers because of the links that kept the Byzantine Empire with the Melkites, living in Egypt, Palestine and Syria. The policy of friendship and understanding which had existed between the Mamluk sultans and the Byzantine emperors concerning the patriarchate of Jerusalem were based on anterior customs adopted in diplomacy by Muslim rulers and Byzantium: sultans recognized the right of the Byzantine emperors to protect the Holy sites of Christianity in Palestine, and to give the investiture to the patriarchs of Jerusalem. The Melkite patriarch elected in Jerusalem by the local church hierarchy was authorized by Muslim authorities to go to Constantinople to receive the investiture from the Byzantine emperor confirming this appointment. Melkite patriarchs were usually allowed to travel to Constantinople and had representatives at the Byzantium court. Furthermore, the emperors had their men in residence at the patriarchates.³⁷ On the other hand, every time the political circumstances were favorable, the Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem participated in the religious life of the Byzantine world.³⁸ He even

messengers of the Byzantine emperor and the king of Georgia presented a request to the sultan to restitute the church of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem and obtained what they asked for from the sultan. Al-Mufaddal Ibn Abî al-Fadâ'il, 'Histoire des sultans mamlouks', Étienne Blochet, ed, *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol.xx, 96 (Turnhout : Brepols, 1985), 195.

³³ Al-Mufaddal Ibn Abî al-Fadâ'il, 'Histoire des sultans mamlouks', 196.

³⁴ Nicéphore Moschopoulos, *La Terre Sainte*, 149 ; Marius Canard, 'Une lettre du sultan Malik Nâsir Hasan à Jean VI Cantacuzène (750/1349)', *Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales*, iii, (Paris : Librairie Larose, 1937), 28-30 ; Johannes Pahlitzsch, 'Mediators between East and West: Christians under Mamluk rule', *Mamluk Studies Review*, 9/2 (2005), 36-39. Lazaros was elected patriarch in Jerusalem according to customs and went to Constantinople to obtain the imperial investiture.

³⁵ Marius Canard, 'Une lettre du sultan', 45-52.

³⁶ Nicéphore Moschopoulos, *La Terre Sainte*, 149.

³⁷ Steven Runciman, *The Orthodox Churches and the Secular State*, (Aukland: Aukland University Press, 1971), 29.

³⁸ After the conquest of Jerusalem by Muslims, Melkite patriarchs of Jerusalem continued to participate in Church councils to discuss doctrine. They were either in attendance themselves or sent representatives at the Sixth Oecumenical Council of Constantinople in 680-681, the Council of Nicaea of 787 and at the Synod of Constantinople in 867. Steven Runciman, *The Orthodox Churches*, 29.

took part in political and religious quarrels that disturbed the Empire. In 1346, John VI Kontakouzenos was crowned emperor at Adrianople³⁹ by Lazarus the Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem.⁴⁰ Despite all the privileges and facilities offered by the Mamluk sultans, the Melkites encountered difficulties. Their place in the Mamluk Sultanate remained fragile and unstable, and this varied according to the circumstances and the political and military changes. They were expected to ask regularly for the confirmation of their privileges through a protector and influential sovereign such as the Byzantine emperor. After the death of the sultan al-Malik al-Nâsir Hasan in 1361, the Melkites suffered violent persecution during the reign of the sultan al-Ashraf Sha‘bân (r.1363-1376). Many died in such instances, and many others abjured. The sultan sent troops to Antioch and Jerusalem, sacked the churches and barred their doors with stones. Lazarus, the Melkite Patriarch of Jerusalem, was sentenced to be whipped and imprisoned. Christians were excluded from public offices and forced to wear different color clothing to distinguish them from Muslims.⁴¹ These measures taken by the sultan against the Christians were the consequences of the attack and sack of Alexandria for three days in 1365 by the king of Cyprus Peter I. Christians in the Mamluk Sultanate were accused of collaboration with the assailants.⁴² The successor of the patriarch Lazarus, Arsenios, travelled to Constantinople in 1367 to attend the Council held for the union of the Churches.⁴³ He had probably asked the Byzantine emperor to intervene in favor of the Melkites. In 770/1368-1369, the emperor John V Palaeologus (r.1341-1376, 1377-1390, 1390-1391) sent an envoy to the court of the Mamluk sultan in Cairo accompanied by the Melkite patriarch. Al-Maqrîzî, who reported this event, didn’t give any information about the purposes of the embassy but the presence of the patriarch was likely indispensable for translation and for negotiating matters concerning the Melkite communities living in the Mamluk Sultanate.⁴⁴ According to a Russian chronicle the main objective of that embassy was to propose peace and to convince the sultan to abolish all measures taken against the Christians. The sultan accepted the petitions of the emperor and set the patriarch of Jerusalem and the bishops free, and returned the churches to them after receiving gifts and a sum of money.⁴⁵ The patriarch Lazarus died in 1368 and the patriarchal see of Jerusalem remained vacant from 1368 to 1376: it seems that his successor Arsenios didn’t come back from Constantinople to his see in Jerusalem.⁴⁶ During the fifteenth century, the scholars have continued to protest against the policy pursued by the sultans towards non-Muslims in the Mamluk Sultanate concerning the administration and trade. Arab sources report that crowds moved in the streets of cities and attacked Christians. A decree (*firmân*) was issued by the sultan in 1401 to appease the crowd, but it seemed that the situation did not improve and Christians later experienced similar problems in the following years.⁴⁷ On 27 Safar 814/20 June 1411, the emperor Manuel II Palaeologus (r.1391-

³⁹ It is Edirne today, a city in the northwestern Turkish province of Edirne.

⁴⁰ Marius Canard, ‘Une lettre du sultan’, 29.

⁴¹ Marius Canard, ‘Une lettre du sultan’, 31-33 ; Nicéphore Moschopoulos, *La Terre Sainte*, 150.

⁴² The most complete account of this event is presented in the book of al-Nuwayrî: Muhammad bin Qâsim al-Nuwayrî al-Iskandarânî, *Waq‘at al-Iskandariyya min kitâb al-ilmâm lil-Nuwayrî al-Iskandarânî*, Suhayl Zakkâr, ed, (Damascus: Dâr al-takwîn, 2008).

⁴³ Khalil Ibrahim Qazaqia, *Târikh al-kanîsa al-rasûliyya al-ûrshalimiyya*, (Cairo: Matba‘at al-muqtataf wal-muqattam, 1924), 85; Shehade Khoury and Nicolas Khoury, *Târikh kanîsat Ûrshalîm al-Urthûdhuksiyya*, (Amman: Matba‘at al-sharq al-awsat, 1925-1992), 93.

⁴⁴ Taqî al-dîn Abî al-‘Abbâs al-Maqrîzî, *Al-Sulûk*, vol.iv, 325.

⁴⁵ Nicéphore Moschopoulos, *La Terre Sainte*, 150.

⁴⁶ There are some doubts concerning the travel of the patriarch Arsenios to Constantinople. The main purpose of his travel was not only to take part in the Council but he probably fled to Constantinople asking the emperor for protection and safety.

⁴⁷ Many decrees were promulgated by the sultans in 1419, 1426, 1445, 1448, 1463.

1425) sent a letter to the Mamluk sultan Faraj (r.1399-1412) asking him to show kindness to the patriarchs and the Christians who lived under his authority as well as their churches.⁴⁸

The intervention of the Byzantine emperors in favor of the Christians in Jerusalem, and those living in the Mamluk Sultanate in general, occurred several times during the fourteenth century. The Mamluk Sultanate saw an anti-Christian propaganda launched by jurists and Muslim theologians: this included an incisive pamphlet against the Christians of Ghâzî Ibn al-Wâsîf (d.1312) about 689-693/1290-1293, as well as books and fatwas of Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328) about 721/1321, the fatwa of Ibn al-Naqqâsh (d.1363) in 757/1357, and the pamphlet against the Christians of al-Asnawî (d.1370) about 755-760/1355-1360, which contributed to the promotion of hatred against Christians followed by a wave of persecution and destruction of churches.⁴⁹ This anti-Christian attitude was the result of the reaction of the people against the power and influence of certain members of the Christian community who had reached a high status and held important administrative posts.⁵⁰ In addition, they were accused of collaborating with the Europeans, who had not ceased their attacks against the ports and coastal cities of the Mamluk Sultanate. It was in this climate created by the scholars ('*ulamâ*'), muftis and preachers in mosques that sultans issued decrees in 1300-1301, 1321, 1354, 1356, 1364, 1365 to 1366, against the *dhimmi*s, especially Christians, to force them to submit to the Caliph Omar pact which set conditions (*shurût*) on Christians to distinguish them from Muslims and show their inferiority.⁵¹ This number of decrees cannot be explained by a growth of fanaticism of the sultans towards non-Muslims in the Sultanate. By following the course of events, we notice that the measures taken against Christians, and *dhimmi*s in general, were related to the general situation in the countries of the sultan and were the result of pressure from people that came out in the streets encouraged and led by jurists and men of religion with whom the sultans disagreed. They were also the consequences of the deterioration of political, economic and military relations with Europe. Christians were often victims of strategic reprisals: war or piracy or breach of treaty.

During the fourteenth century, the decline of diplomatic exchanges and the absence of treaties between Byzantium and the Mamluk Sultanate revealed the impotence of the Byzantine emperors and their inability to intervene in support of the Melkites in the Mamluk Sultanate. No doubt the relations between the emperors and the sultans were very limited during the period of civil war in Byzantium between 1321 and 1354.⁵² At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Byzantium appeared considerably reduced, and Constantinople was limited to an isolated town and became a vassal of the Turks who besieged it in 1422. The fifteenth century marked the decline of relations between Byzantium and the Mamluk Sultanate, although these would in time gradually accentuate.⁵³ Later, when the Byzantine emperors could not send aids to Jerusalem because of their wars with Turks, it was the emperors of the Komnenos dynasty in Trebizond who were in charge of the Melkite patriarchate of Jerusalem. Alexios IV of Trebizond (r.1417-1426) repaired

⁴⁸ Abî al-'Abbâs Ahmad al-Qalqashandî, *Subh al-a'shâ fî sinâ'at al-inshâ*, vol.viii, (Cairo: Dâr al-kutub al-Khidyawiyya, 1915), 121-122.

⁴⁹ Moshe Perlmann, 'Notes on Anti-Christian propaganda in the Mamlūk Empire', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 4, 10(1942), 844.

⁵⁰ Edmond Strauss Ashtor, 'The social isolation of ahl adh-dhimma', Otto' Komlos, ed, *Paul Hirschler Memorial Book*, (Budapest: 1950), 73-94.

⁵¹ For information about these decrees, see: Taqî al-dîn Abî al-'Abbâs al-Maqrîzî, *Al-sulūk*, vol.ii, 337-338 ; vol.iii, 41-44; vol.iv, 201-202. See also Urban Vermeulen, 'The rescript of al-Malik as-Sâlih against the Dimmīs (755 A.H./1354 A.D.)', *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*, 9(1978), 175-183.

⁵² Donald M. Nicol, *Les derniers siècles de Byzance 1261-1453*, (Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 2005), 173-274.

⁵³ During the fifteenth century, contacts between Mamluk sultans and Byzantine emperors were almost absent. Sources only quoted a letter sent by the sultan Barsbây (r.1422-1438) to the emperor John VIII Palaeologos (r.1425-1448) between 1425 and 1438. Dimitri Korobeinikov, 'Diplomatic correspondence between Byzantium and the Mamluk sultanate in the fourteenth century', *Al-Masâq*, 16/1 (2004), 65.

at his own expense the roof of the basilica of Bethlehem in 1435.⁵⁴ Princesses of the royal house of Komnenos embarked on pilgrimages to the Holy Places where they had a convent in Jerusalem which was founded by the princess Anna Komnene (d.1153), daughter of the emperor Alexios I Komnenos (r.1081-1118).⁵⁵ But it seemed that the support provided by the Komnenos dynasty did not last very long. During the reign of the patriarch Joachim (r.1431- 1450?), an earthquake caused severe damages to the dome of the church of the Resurrection. The patriarch Joachim offered the Mamluks precious jewels and 6500 Venetian ducats to prevent them from taking the church and converting it into a mosque.⁵⁶ In addition, the patriarch Joachim sent his brother Joseph to Russia to collect donations, and it was said that the patriarch travelled in person and died on the road.⁵⁷

During the second half of the fifteenth century, Melkites in Jerusalem were increasingly deprived of the protection and assistance of the Byzantine emperors. Their situation became precarious. The Mamluk government was unable to prevent popular excesses organized by extremists or to resist against the pressure of the jurists who insisted on increasingly vexatious interpretations of the law regarding the *dhimmis*. The Mamluks treated Christians harshly. In 856/1452, after a petition to the sultan Jaqmaq (r.1438-1453) by Shaykh Muhammad al-Mushmir a decree was issued containing orders to inspect the monasteries and churches in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The new constructions in Bethlehem and the church of the Resurrection were destroyed. The Mamluks removed the balustrade recently placed in the church of the Resurrection and transported it to al-Aqsa mosque. These measures were not only limited to Melkites but also applied to other Christian communities in Jerusalem. The tomb of David was taken from the Franciscans in Mount Sion. Shaykh Muhammad al-Mushmir claimed that the Franciscans buried their dead in a basement covering the tomb of David: the cemetery of the Franciscans was excavated, and the bones of dead monks were unearthed. He also took the convent church of Saint Mark in Jerusalem belonging to the Syriac and converted it into a *zâwiya*.⁵⁸

On 29 May 1453, the Ottoman sultan Muhammad II (r.1444-1446, 1451-1481) conquered Constantinople. The capture of Constantinople marked the end of the Byzantine Empire and the Melkite communities in the Mamluk Sultanate lost their protector. The Ottoman sultan sent an envoy to Cairo on *Shawwâl* 857/October 1453 to announce the victory. The Mamluk sultan Înâl (r.1453-1461) ordered Cairo to be decorated and sent an envoy to the court of the ottoman sultan to congratulate him on his great victory. There was cooperation between the two courts and once again in 860/1456 they exchanged ambassadors.⁵⁹ In 1458, Athanasios IV (r.1452-1460), the Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem arrived in person at the court of the sultan Muhammad II. The patriarch was asking for the Ottoman sultan to confirm certain protections guaranteed for the

⁵⁴ Shehade Khoury and Nicolas Khoury, *Târikh kanîsat Êrshalîm*, 99.

⁵⁵ Nicéphore Moschopoulos, *La Terre Sainte*, 151.

⁵⁶ Khalil Ibrahim Qazaqia, *Târikh al-kanîsa*, 86. In the Arabic sources there is no mention of an earthquake that stroke Jerusalem between 1431 and 1450. The sources give only an indication about an earthquake that happened in 1458 and destroyed many places between Jerusalem and al-Khalîl, in particular the city of Karak. Furthermore, they didn't mention the destruction of a part of the church of the Resurrection. Zayn al-Dîn 'Abd al-Bâsit bin Khalîl Ibn Shâhîn al-Zâhirî, *Nayl al-amal fî dhayl al-duwal*, vol.vi, Omar 'Abd al-Salâm Tadmurî, ed, (Beirut-Sayda: Al-Matba'a al-'asriyya, 2002), 48 ; Muhammad bin Ahmad Ibn Iyâs al-Hanafî, *Badâ'i' al-zuhûr fî waqâ'i' al-duhûr*, vol.ii, Muhammad Mustafa, ed, (Cairo: Al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-'Âmma lil-kitâb, 1984), 350 ; Jamâl al-Dîn Abî al-Mahâsin Yûsuf Ibn Taghrî Birdî al-Atâbikî, *Al-Nujûm al-zâhira fî mulûk Misr wal-Qâhira*, vol.xvi, Muhammad Husayn Shams al-Dîn, ed, (Beirut: Dâr al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1992), 102.

⁵⁷ Shehade Khoury and Nicolas Khoury, *Târikh kanîsat Êrshalîm*, 99.

⁵⁸ Mujîr al-dîn al-Hanbalî al-'Alimî, *Al-Uns al-jalîl bi-târikh al-Quds wal-Khalîl*, vol.ii, Mahmûd 'Awda al-Ka'âbna, ed, (Al-Khalîl-Amman : Maktabat Dandîs, 1999), 171. According to Islamic doctrine, it is forbidden to build new churches in important cities and towns of the Muslim world. But *dhimmis* are allowed to restore or rebuild old churches or those which have fallen into ruin. Antoine Fattal, *Le statut légal*, 174.

⁵⁹ Muhammad Bin Ahmad Bin Iyâs, *Badâ'i' al-zuhûr*, vol.ii, 316, 332.

Melkites in a series of documents drawn up by the Prophet Muhammad, ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattâb and later, unnamed Muslim sovereigns. He was also seeking the recognition of the Ottoman sultan of the Melkites claims for control over the Holy Places of Palestine over claims of other Christian communities, in particular the Franciscans, supported by the European rulers and the Mamluk sultans.⁶⁰ It was within the frame of good relations between Mamluks and Ottomans that the patriarch of Jerusalem made his journey to Constantinople. Arabic sources did not report information about the event so it seems that the patriarch travelled secretly or took the permission from the sultan on pretext of visiting the Greek Orthodox community in Constantinople to look after its situation following the conquest. These two hypotheses cannot be excluded since the Mamluk sultan could not accept any foreign interference in the matters of his Sultanate. The patriarch likely visited the Ottoman sultan asking him help in protecting the Melkites in Palestine because after the fall of the Byzantine emperor the patriarch considered the Ottoman sultan as the new ruler of Constantinople, a position which came to fill the function of the emperor and took charge in defending the rights of the Orthodox communities and supported their claims. One factor that must be taken into consideration is that after the conquest of Constantinople, George Scholarios known as Gennadios II (r.1454-1456, 1462-1463, 1464-1465) was chosen as patriarch of the city in 1454 by the local clerics, and the sultan Muhammad II played a major role in his selection and installation. He also granted the patriarch certain symbols of authority.⁶¹

The Ottoman sultan issued a decree recognizing the claims of the patriarch of Jerusalem but in fact the decree did not have any effect on the situation of the Melkites in Jerusalem. Palestine was not a part of his Empire and the patriarch of Jerusalem was neither a subject of the Ottoman sultan nor under his authority. The patriarch of Jerusalem came to the court of the Ottoman sultan asking for help because the latter was the new ruler of Constantinople who had to protect the interests of Orthodox Christian communities as the Byzantine emperors did before him.⁶² It seems that the difficulties the Melkite patriarchate of Jerusalem encountered, as well as the city’s weakness, forced the patriarchs to contact the Ottoman sultan again: in 1484, the patriarch Gregory III (r.1468-1493) sent Joseph, the Metropolis of Chalcedon, to Constantinople to take part in a Council. Sources do not mention whether the representative of the patriarch of Jerusalem met the Ottoman sultan Bayezid II (r.1481-1512) or not, but we cannot exclude the possibility that he asked the sultan to support the Melkite Church in Palestine.⁶³ The patriarchs of Jerusalem had benefited from the new circumstances and changes which had occurred after the fall of Constantinople and contributed to provide a good atmosphere for agreeable relations and cordiality between Mamluks and Ottomans. But this situation did not last long and exchanges of embassies between the two Empires were interrupted. The attempts of the Melkite patriarchs of Jerusalem to obtain support and help from the Ottoman sultan to settle the problems facing the patriarchate and improve its situation were ultimately in vain.

THE MAMLUK SULTANS AND THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

The Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem, as other Melkite patriarchs and Jacobite patriarchs in the Mamluk Sultanate, was bound in an essential and formal fashion to Mamluk authorities. It was a regular practice for the appointment of a Melkite patriarch to be confirmed by the sultan, and an official diploma (*tawqî‘*) was addressed to the Melkite patriarch using terms of nobility and titles

⁶⁰ Ralph S.Hattox, ‘Mehmed the Conqueror, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Mamluk authority’, *Studia Islamica*, 90(2000), 107-109 ; Nicéphore Moschopoulos, *La Terre Sainte*, 152-153.

⁶¹ Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and his Time*, William C.Hikman, ed, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 104-105.

⁶² For more information, see: Ralph S.Hattox, ‘Mehmed the Conqueror’, 115-117.

⁶³ Khalil Ibrahim Qazaqia, *Târikh al-kanîsa*, 90.

which recognised his religious prestige and his preeminence, insisting on his role and his duty towards his community.⁶⁴ The sultan did not intervene in any way in the election of the patriarch by the bishops, but the elected patriarch was able to exercise authority only after receiving the act of confirmation from the sultan or his representative (*nâ'ib*) in Damascus.⁶⁵ The dismissal of patriarch also depended on the sultan. In addition to the official diploma of confirmation, there was an official diploma of recommendation (*wasiyya*) issued by the chancellery of the sultan to the patriarch asking him to care for churches, convents and hermitages under his authority, to visit them and inspect their states and affairs.⁶⁶ He had to conscientiously serve the believers entrusted to him, and to do so in accordance with their own laws. The patriarch was also warned to avoid suspicious relations with foreign rulers, in particular Byzantine emperor and European sovereigns. He should not permit to host suspicious strangers in religious edifices dependent on his authority, and not to hide from authorities the problems or disorders related to the internal situation of the Sultanate which he may be informed, and especially not to keep the letters he received from foreign rulers' secret and neither was he to write them. The patriarch was also warned against using the mail carrier pigeons to exchange information with foreign rulers and to avoid travelling by sea to contact them.⁶⁷

There was a sophisticated protocol followed in the form and the style of the written texts issued by the chancellery of the sultan addressed to the Melkite patriarchs. The style had its own peculiarities: phrases, sentences and words were selected to show the grandiose of the patriarch and express the respect. The Arabic documents were full of flowery and superfluous phrases, and words were forced into the texts for the sake of rhythm and artificial beauty in accordance with the modes and conventions of writing adopted in that period. The sultans addressed the Melkite patriarch using terms and titles expressing recognition of mutual nobility and magnificence, and the religious prestige followed by calls made for God in his favor. It was a protocol adopted by the chancellery of the Mamluk sultans based on the use of a definite series of titles. The chronicler Ibn Nâzir al-Jaysh (d.1384) quoted the titles used in the texts addressed by the sultans to the Melkite patriarch: "the august patriarch, the saint, the chaste, the pious and the good example of Christianity".⁶⁸ The chronicler al-Qalqashandî (d.1418) quoted another series of titles adopted when writing to the Melkite patriarch: "the sublime presence, the master, the leader, the honorable, the venerable, the proper, the supported, the glorified, the saint, the sun of leadership, the pillar of the Baptists, the treasure of the community of the Cross, the choice of kings and sultans". He also mentioned that in his time there were two series of titles for the Melkite patriarch used by Mamluk chancellery: "the virtuous patriarch, the honorable, so-and-so, the connoisseur of the matters of his religion, the instructor of his community, the fund of Christianity, the greatest of community of followers of Jesus, the intelligent who deserves acknowledgement by kings and sultans, May God the Almighty achieve his ambition" and "the assembly of priests, the august, the spiritual, the very great, the chaste, son of the bishop, the straight, the pious, the glorified, the good example of Christianity, the proud of community of followers of Jesus, the pillar of the Baptists, the beauty of his confession, the best for kings and sultans, so-and-so: May God the

⁶⁴ Abî al-'Abbâs Ahmad al-Qalqashandî, *Subh al-a'shâ*, vol.xi, 392-393.

⁶⁵ Nicolas Ziadeh, *Dimashq fî 'asr al-mamâlîk*, (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnân, 1966), 164.

⁶⁶ During the Mamluk period, the Melkite patriarchate of Jerusalem possessed twenty two monasteries and churches in Palestine. Ali al-Sayyid Ali, *Al-Quds fî al-'asr al-mamlûkî*, (Cairo: Dâr al-fikr lil-dirâsât wal-nashr wal-tawzî', 1986), 82-83.

⁶⁷ Shihâb al-dîn Ahmad Ibn Fadlallah al-'Umarî, *Al-ta'rîf*, 183-184; Abî al-'Abbâs Ahmad al-Qalqashandî, *Subh al-a'shâ*, vol.xi, 394-395; Marius Canard, 'Une lettre du sultan', 41. The warning concerning the use of pigeons and the travel by sea was addressed to the patriarch by adopting a sentence full of imagery: "he should avoid the sea because if he goes through he will sink and he should not receive what may come to him on a crow wing because it croaks the separation."

⁶⁸ Ibn Nâzir al-Jaysh, *Kitâb tathqîf al-ta'rîf bil-mustalah al-sharîf*, Rudolf Veselý, ed, (Cairo: IFAO, 1987), 37.

Almighty perpetuate his delight".⁶⁹ These changes in the titles show that there were no fixed customary titles and expressions in addressing the Melkite patriarchs. The formula of address of the Melkite patriarch reveals that titles of the patriarch were composed by the secretaries of the chancellery. The titles reflected the traditional perception of the patriarchs in the Mamluk Sultanate. Their uses were related to circumstances and situational changes inside the Mamluk Sultanate; they were not haphazard titles. The sultans adopted prestigious titles and formulas to address the Melkite patriarch and always presented him as honorable and noble, the head of a respectable and venerable religion. All this was done for the interest of the Sultanate: on the one hand, the sultans used the patriarchs as instruments of their policy by sending them as ambassadors to Constantinople to serve as intermediaries between the two Empires; on the other hand, sultans were interested in the progress of business and the growth of trade with the Byzantine Empire because the transport of slaves across the Black sea via Constantinople to Egypt was dependent on the good relations between the sultans and the Byzantine emperors. The attention of the Mamluk sultans at this time was focused on the Black sea area and its important markets. For these reasons, from the second half of the thirteenth century and the re-establishment of Byzantine authority in Constantinople, the Mamluk sultans sought to maintain friendly diplomatic relations with the Byzantine emperors. The Mamluk sultans were aware that caring for the Melkite communities in the countries under their authorities was a basic factor in the maintenance of good relations with the Byzantines who controlled the sea route connecting Crimea with Egypt via the Bosphorus.⁷⁰

Until the end of the fourteenth century, the Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem was the most favored and privileged figure among the religious chiefs of other Christian communities in the city. The Melkite patriarch was authorized by Mamluks to collect money from pilgrims who entered the church of the Resurrection on Holy Saturday: in 1400, the Russian archimandrite Grethenios visited the church of the Resurrection and said that every visitor should pay seven ducats for Mamluks while the patriarch collected two ducats from every monk and nun who entered into the church.⁷¹ The collection of money by the patriarch was not limited to religious persons who desired to visit the church of the Resurrection but included every pilgrim in Jerusalem; this right was confirmed officially by the sultan. The treaty concluded in 1403 between the sultan Faraj (r.1399-1412) and Philibert de Naillac (r.1396-1421), the Great Master of the Hospitallers of Rhodes, contained a clause indicating that every Rhodian pilgrim should pay 63 *dirhams* (about 3 ducats) for the visit of the church of the Resurrection and 2,5 *dirhams* to the Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem.⁷² It is not known whether the collection of money applied only to the Orthodox pilgrims or to all pilgrims of any nationality. Whatever the case was, pilgrims most likely paid higher amounts of money to the patriarch than Rhodians because in the treaty of 1403 these latter were more privileged in Jerusalem than other pilgrims.⁷³ It seems, however, that during the fifteenth century the collection of money from pilgrims for the Melkite patriarch was abolished; it was not mentioned anymore in the pilgrims' accounts. On the other hand, since 1349

⁶⁹ Abî al-'Abbâs Ahmad al-Qalqashandî, *Subh al-a'shâ*, vol.xi, 173; vol.xii, 294. Al-Qalqashandî copied also the titles of the Melkite patriarch mentioned by Ibn Nâzir al-Jaysh: "the august patriarch, the saint, the pious and the good example of Christianity".

⁷⁰ Andrew Ehrenkreutz, 'Strategic implications of the slave trade between Genoa and Mamluk Egypt in the second half of the thirteenth century', *The Islamic Middle East: 700-1900. Studies in Economic and Social History*, Abraham L.Udovich, ed, (Princeton: Darwin Press, Princeton Studies on the Near East, 1981), 341.

⁷¹ Sofîia Petrovna Khitrovo, 'Pèlerinage de l'Archimandrite Grethenios du couvent de la Sainte Vierge', *Itinéraires russes en Orient*, (Genève : Imprimerie Jules-Guillaume Fick, 1889), 174.

⁷² Sebastiano Paoli, *Codice diplomatico del sacro militare ordine gerosolimitano oggi di Malta, raccolto da vari documenti di quell'archivio, per servire alla storia dello stesso ordine in Soria e illustrato con una serie cronologica de'gran maestri, che lo governaro in quei*, (Lucca : Salvatore e Giandomenico Marescandoli, 1737), 109.

⁷³ Pierre Moukarzel, 'Le traité conclu entre Rhodes et le sultanat mamelouk en 1403', *Chronos*, 34(2016), 156.

the sultan al-Malik al-Nâsir Hasan (r.1347-1351, 1355-1361) gave orders to the Mamluk guards at the church of the Resurrection to stop mistreating pilgrims, inhabitants of Jerusalem or foreigners, and to provide them all help they needed.⁷⁴ The responsible of collecting money from pilgrims at the entrance of the church of the Resurrection was the *shadd mutahassil qumâma*. In the official diploma of his appointment he was asked to treat pilgrims with firmness and gentleness, and to be tolerant of clerics and monks. His main function was to maintain order on the Holy Saturday and collect money from pilgrims and from monks and priests who served the church.⁷⁵ The sultan orders concerning the Mamluk guards at the church of the Resurrection were not always respected in the posterior period. The Russian pilgrim Zosime who visited Jerusalem in 1419-1421 reported in his account that the Mamluk guards at the entrance of the church of the Resurrection maltreated the pilgrims and extorted money from them and the sultan gave orders to close the church of the Resurrection and all churches in Jerusalem for one year.⁷⁶ But with the accession to the throne of the sultan Barsbây (r.1422-1438) the patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilus II (r.1417-1424) obtained a decree (*firmân*) from the sultan granting him the liberty to do what he found necessary in the church of the Resurrection and other Holy Places and allowing him to open the door of the church of the Resurrection whenever he wanted without obstacles.⁷⁷ This change in the position of the sultan Barsbây towards the Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem was probably related to financial crisis inside the Mamluk Sultanate and was thus necessary to adopt the policy of improving the functioning of pilgrimages in order to increase the sultan's resources, which he obtained by imposing taxes on pilgrims. Sultan Barsbây's policy, moreso than his predecessors, was dominated by the constant need for money, and therefore successive and varied taxes rose heavily during his reign.⁷⁸

With the decline of Byzantium and the loss of support provided to Melkites in the Mamluk Sultanate, the position of the sultans towards the patriarch of Jerusalem changed. The interest of the sultans became focused on increasing trade with European merchant cities and on granting more privileges to the Franciscans in Jerusalem in order to improve contacts with European rulers and to increase revenues from pilgrimage to Palestine. On 17 Dhû-l-hijja 798/ 21 September 1396, the sultan Barqûq (r.1382-1389, 1390-1399) issued a decree (*firmân*) guarantying the rights of the Franciscans over their possessions in the church of the Resurrection against the reclamations of the Melkites to get back the places occupied by the Franciscans.⁷⁹ Despite the conflict between Melkites and Franciscans for the possession of rights over the Holy Places, the circumstances imposed occasional collaboration between the two communities with the inclination of the Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem towards the European rulers. In 813/1410, Mûssa the servant of the Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem asked the sultan Faraj during his visit to the city to authorize Melkites in restoring the basilica of Nativity in Bethlehem. His request was accepted, and he received from the sultan a decree (*firmân*). But it seems that the Melkite patriarchate in Jerusalem could not start the restoration due to a lack of money and materials, so Mûssa sent the decree to

⁷⁴ Marius Canard, 'Une lettre du sultan', 50.

⁷⁵ Abî al-'Abbâs Ahmad al-Qalqashandî, *Subh al-a'shâ*, vol.xii, 336-337. According to the Florentine pilgrim Lionardo Frescobaldi who visited Jerusalem in 1384, the Holy Sepulchre had three keys, "one kept by the interpreter of the sultan, one by the admiral of Jerusalem and one by the church camarlingi (treasurers) of their faith; and there is paid the income which falls to their camarlingi in certain of their ceremonies, that is, of money which the pilgrim pay to enter the Sepulchre." Lionardo Frescobaldi, *Visit to the Holy Places of Egypt, Sinai, Palestine and Syria in 1384 by Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli*, Theophilus Bellorini, Eugene Hoade, tr, (Jerusalem: Franciscan Press, 1948), 76.

⁷⁶ Sofîia Petrovna Khitrovo, 'Vie et Pèlerinage du moine pêcheur Zosime diacre du couvent de Saint Serge', *Itinéraires russes en Orient*, (Genève : Imprimerie Jules-Guillaume Fick, 1889), 211.

⁷⁷ Khalil Ibrahim Qazaqia, *Târikh al-kanîsa*, 86.

⁷⁸ Ahmad Darrag, *L'Égypte sous le règne de Barsbay 825-841/1422-1438*, (Damas : Institut français de Damas, 1961), 57-107. The sultan Barsbay also granted a series of privileges to the Franciscans in Palestine. Norberto Risciani, *Documenti e firmani*, 78-82.

⁷⁹ Norberto Risciani, *Documenti e firmani*, (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1936), 50.

Europe asking for support for the project. In the same year, a vessel arrived at Jaffa in Palestine carrying the craftsmen and equipment needed (wood, stones and carts) for work. Furthermore, orders were given to the local authorities to build a large road to facilitate the transport of materials on carts.⁸⁰ The Franciscans in Bethlehem took the charge of the restoration and obtained a decree (*firmân*) from the sultan Faraj in 814/1411 guarantying all the facilities they needed to accomplish the works.⁸¹

The relationship between the sultans and the Franciscans in Palestine cannot be understood outside of the series of regulations for the good functioning of the trade and pilgrimages networks that linked Europe to the Mamluk Sultanate. From the reign of the sultan Barsbây (r.1422-1438) onward, the sultans confirmed the privileges granted by their predecessors to the Franciscans and added new ones. Through the privileges granted to the Franciscans, the sultans tried to draw some sympathy among European rulers.⁸² The Franciscans obtained the right to present their reclamations to the sultan in Cairo without obstacles. They were free to open their churches and convents, to enter the church of the Resurrection without paying fees, to install thirty-two or forty monks in the church of the Resurrection and to substitute them freely with monks from Beirut, to travel to Europe and return to their places in Jerusalem without paying taxes or fees to the officers at the port of Jaffa and they had the choice to be accompanied by dragomans or not without obstacles. They were free to visit all the sanctuaries and Jordan River without difficulties, and they also obtained the authorization to buy grapes to make wine for their needs and to transport it among their convents and churches.⁸³ The local authority employees in Jerusalem were requested not to impose abuses on the friars and to ensure all facilities which helped the friars to adjust their personal affairs, and to demand their rights. Neither could they prevent the friars from receiving the offerings sent from European countries.⁸⁴

In addition to the Franciscans, from the middle of the fifteenth century the Melkite community in Jerusalem faced a further problem represented by the growth in the property and number of shrines possessed by the Georgians in Jerusalem, or that were under their control. At that time Georgian monks and pilgrims enjoyed at that time a great series of privileges and immunities not enjoyed by other Christian communities. Georgians acquired an eminent position among the Christians in Jerusalem, especially after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453, because Melkites in Jerusalem lost the protection of Byzantine emperors while Georgians benefited from good relations established between Georgian kings and Mamluk sultans to strengthen their position and increase their possessions in Jerusalem. On the other hand, Melkites were suspected by the Mamluks of eventual collaboration with the Ottomans, in particular with the increase in tension between the two Empires at the end of the fifteenth century, so they were threatened with persecution by Mamluks. Georgians intervened on the behalf of Melkites and succeeded in having Melkite shrines and monasteries in Jerusalem placed under their protection.⁸⁵ According to Louis de Rochechouart who visited Jerusalem in 1461, the Melkites possessed many

⁸⁰ Taqî al-dîn Abî al-'Abbâs al-Maqrîzî, *Al-Sulûk*, vol.vi, 266.

⁸¹ Norberto Risciani, *Documenti e firmani*, 66. It seemed that during Mamluk period financial aids were sent regularly from Europe to the Franciscans in Bethlehem. Mujîr al-Dîn al-Hanbalî al-'Alîmî (d.1522) quoted in his book covering the period from 637/1239 to 900/1494 that money from Europe and other countries is sent to the monks settled in Bethlehem in the convent near the church of Nativity. Mujîr al-dîn al-Hanbalî al-'Alîmî, *Al-Uns al-jalîl*, vol.ii, 124.

⁸² Pierre Moukartzel, 'The Franciscans in the Mamluk Sultanate', 452-453.

⁸³ Norberto Risciani, *Documenti e firmani*, 126-170, 282-352.

⁸⁴ The major part of the Franciscans alms came from the European sovereigns: Francesco Suriano quoted that the Duke Philip of Burgundy (r.1419-1467) spent 14000 ducats to rebuild the chapel of the Holy Spirit in Mount Sion, and every year he gave 1000 ducats for the livelihood of the friars who officiated this chapel. Furthermore, Isabella, the queen of Castile (r.1474-1504), gave every year the friars of Mount Sion 1000 ducats for their living as long as she lived: she charged this annual amount of money to the city of Sarogossa. Francesco Suriano, *Treatise on the Holy Land*, by *Fra Fr.Suriano*, T.Bellorini and E.Hoade, eds, (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1949), 123-125.

⁸⁵ Butrus Abu-Manneh, 'The Georgians in Jerusalem', 106-109.

houses in the city and still maintained the service of the choir of the Holy Sepulchre inside the church of the Resurrection, and pilgrims slept in the choir stalls when they were locked up inside the church by Mamluk guards.⁸⁶ But it seemed that Melkite patriarchate of Jerusalem was in a dire situation and faced financial problems at the end of the fifteenth century. In 1468, the Melkite churches and monasteries were in a worse situation due to the decrease in the number of pilgrims visiting the Holy Places. Patriarchs were sometimes obliged to work with their own hands to procure the money they needed.⁸⁷ According to a western pilgrim who visited Jerusalem in 1486, Melkite clerics lived in poverty and relied on Venetians, Turks and the Mamluk sultan for help.⁸⁸ In 1492, a heavy rain caused great damages in the church of the Resurrection. Lack of funds delayed its restoration.⁸⁹ Francesco Suriano, the Guardian of the convent of the Franciscans on Mount Sion in Jerusalem from 1493 to 1496, said that Melkite clerics lived in the church where John the Evangelist was born, in Saint George's church and in the church of the Holy Sepulchre in great misery.⁹⁰ It seemed that the presence of Melkite clerics in Jerusalem were reduced and limited to only few places: the possessions of the Melkite patriarchate passed one after the other into the hands of other communities, in particular the Georgians.⁹¹ Their presence in the church of the Resurrection and their rights over the Holy Sepulchre, however, were confirmed by the sultan. In 1505, the sultan Qânsû al-Ghûrî (r.1500-1516) issued a decree (*firmân*) granting the Melkite patriarch Marcus III (r.1503-1505) the privilege of keeping the keys of the church of the Resurrection and ruled that nobody would be allowed to visit the Holy Sepulchre without being accompanied by someone designated by the patriarch.⁹² Later in 919/1513, the sultan Qânsû al-Ghûrî issued a decree (*firmân*), which was inscribed on a stone at the main entrance to the church of the Resurrection, in which he guaranteed the protection of Melkite, Jacobite and Copt monks and nuns who entered the church and abolished all taxes collected from them similar to the Georgian and Ethiopian monks and nuns. The sultan also granted them the liberty to travel by sea from the port of Jaffa and by land from Gaza and Ramleh of Lydda.⁹³

At the end of the Mamluk period, the Melkite patriarchate of Jerusalem regained the upper hand and succeeded in gradually obtaining its rights over the Holy Places in Palestine. On the one hand, the Franciscans, who enjoyed a privileged position in the Holy Places in Palestine because of the continuous support provided by influential European sovereigns, encountered problems after 1500 as a result of economic and political changes as well as the threatening of the Mamluk Sultanate. On the other hand, the Shâh Isma'îl (r.1501-1524) founded the Safavid dynasty in Iran. Furthermore, the international trade with Europe through the Mediterranean and with the Far East through the Indian Ocean was disrupted from 1498 by the discovery of the sea route by the Cape of Good Hope, and later by the arrival of the Portuguese to India and its spices and the threat they might rule over the trading routes in the Red Sea using military force. Essential Protectors of the

⁸⁶ Béatrice Dansette, 'Journal de voyage', 1152.

⁸⁷ Khalil Ibrahim Qazaqia, *Târikh al-kanîsa*, 89.

⁸⁸ Béatrice Dansette, 'Récit anonyme d'un voyage à Jérusalem et au Mont Sinaï en 1486', *Croisades et Pèlerinages. Récits, chroniques et voyages en Terre Sainte XIIIe-XVIe siècle*, Danielle Régnier-Bohler, ed. (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1997), 1184. It seemed that Turks at the end of the fifteenth century sent aids to the Melkite patriarchate of Jerusalem when the circumstances were favorable: in 896/1491 peace was concluded between the Ottoman sultan Bayezid II and the Mamluk sultan Qaytbây (r.1468-1496) and the envoys of the Ottoman sultan visited Jerusalem in Ramadan 896/July 1491. Mujîr al-dîn al-Hanbalî al-'Alimî, *Al-Uns al-jalîl*, vol.ii, 485.

⁸⁹ Mujîr al-dîn al-Hanbalî al-'Alimî, *Al-Uns al-jalîl*, vol.ii, 486. In 1494, snow followed by heavy rain destroyed a great number of houses and buildings in Jerusalem. Mujîr al-dîn al-Hanbalî al-'Alimî, *Dhayl kitâb al-Uns al-jalîl bi-târikh al-Quds wal-Khalîl*, 'Umar 'Abd al-Salâm Tadmurî, ed. (Beirut-Sayda: Al-Maktabat al-'asriyya, 2016), 31.

⁹⁰ Francesco Suriano, *Treatise*, 87.

⁹¹ At the end of the fifteenth and the early sixteenth century the Georgians controlled twelve shrines in Jerusalem. Gregory Peradze, 'An account of the Georgian monks and monasteries in Palestine', *Georgica*, 4/5 (1937), 217-228.

⁹² Khalil Ibrahim Qazaqia, *Târikh al-kanîsa*, 90.

⁹³ Max Van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un corpus inscriptionum arabicarum*, (Cairo, 1922), 378-379.

Franciscans in the East, Venice, and the Mamluks, lost their effectiveness in the face of emerging powers and caused the decline of the Franciscan Custody of the East and the Western pilgrimages to Jerusalem.⁹⁴ Following the Ottoman occupation of Syria in 1516 and of Egypt in 1517, however, the Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem Dorotheos II (r.1505-1537) obtained a decree (*firmân*) from the Ottoman sultan Selim I (r.1512-1520) according to which monasteries and churches occupied by other communities such as Georgians, Latins and Armenians were to be returned to the Melkite patriarchate. Furthermore, Georgians, Serbians, Ethiopians and all Eastern Christian communities in Palestine fell under the protection of the Melkite patriarch.⁹⁵

CONCLUSION

After the occupation of Jerusalem by Salâh al-Dîn in 1187, the Melkite patriarch resumed the administration of the Melkite Church and the safeguarding of the Holy Places again. Under the Mamluks, the Melkite patriarchate of Jerusalem enjoyed privileges and the patriarch was in close contact with the Byzantine emperors. The latter were the protectors of the Melkites and ensured the preservation of the Holy Places. But Mamluks did not always look favorably on the relations of the Melkite patriarchs with foreign rulers. Thus, whatever the nature of the liberty granted to the Melkite patriarchs in their relations with Byzantium, they were scrutinized, and their movements were placed under control.

The Melkites of Jerusalem were the main target of the most embassies sent by the Byzantine emperors to the Mamluk sultans. The answers of the sultans were always favorable, so that their presence served as a means of maintain contacts and relationships between Mamluks and Byzantines. The decline of Byzantium in the fifteenth century, however, reduced the patriarchate of Jerusalem to a very precarious situation. With the loss of protection of the emperors and the weakness of Mamluk sultans during several reigns, the Melkite patriarchate of Jerusalem encountered great difficulties and atrocious persecutions of all kinds. Moreover, the Melkite clerics were plagued by terrible poverty while their interest to contact the Ottoman sultans asking for support worsened their relationship with the Mamluks. The troubles the Melkite patriarchate of Jerusalem faced were closely connected to the troubles which occurred inside the Mamluk Sultanate and to the deterioration of relations between the Mamluk sultans and their contemporary rulers in Byzantium, later the Ottoman Empire, and Europe. Its strength reflected the general prosperity of the Mamluk Sultanate from the middle of the fourteenth century following the growth of trade across the Mediterranean sea with Europe, while its misfortune reflected the decline of the local economy, the weakness and the instability of power, the riots, the epidemics, the plagues which caused great damages to the society in which the patriarchate existed and also disrupted the situation inside the Mamluk Sultanate during the fifteenth century.⁹⁶

On the other hand, however, conflicts intensified with the other Christian communities, particularly the Franciscans, surrounding the rights over the Holy Places. At the end of the fifteenth century the situation of the Melkites of Jerusalem worsened, and yet the conquest of Palestine by the Ottomans in 1516 marked the beginning of a new period in the history of the Melkite patriarchate of Jerusalem. The Ottoman sultans recognized the primacy of the Melkite patriarch among all other Christian communities in Palestine. A new phase began but the question of the Holy Places in Palestine remained the subject of conflicts and claims of the Christian

⁹⁴ Pierre Moukarzel, 'The Franciscans in the Mamluk Sultanate', 461-462.

⁹⁵ Nicéphore Moschopoulos, *La Terre Sainte*, 371-373 ; Khalil Ibrahim Qazaqia, *Târikh al-kanîsa*, 90-91.

⁹⁶ For information about the decrease of the number of population in Jerusalem during the fifteenth century, see: Youssef Darwish Ghawanmeh, *Târikh niyâbat bayt al-Maqdis fil-'asr al-mamlûkî*, (Amman: Dâr al-Hayât, 1982), 115-119; Mujîr al-dîn al-Hanbalî al-'Alîmî, *Al-Uns al-jalîl*, vol.ii, 487.

communities during the entire Ottoman period from 1516 to 1918.⁹⁷ No solution was found and the controversies among Christians continues up to this day.⁹⁸

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⁹⁷ For information, see: Anton Bertam and Harry Charles Luke, *Report of the Commission appointed by the government of Palestine to inquire into the affairs of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1921).

⁹⁸ Shehade Khoury and Nicolas Khoury, *Târikh kanîsat Ūrshalîm*, 469-491.

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