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Ubi Sumus? Mamluk History and Social Theory

I

The critical mass of scholarly attention now gravitating around late medieval Syro-Egypt has begun to necessitate for the first time an evaluation of the current state of knowledge within the field of Mamluk history, that is, the interpretive significance of the questions historians have so far posed of their documentary and artifactual evidence. There is bound to be dissatisfaction with the way in which many scholars have so far used their empirical research to address fundamental questions of structure and change in Mamluk society. Yet, this problem is perhaps only typical of the general shortfall in critical thinking within Middle East history as a whole. Even in such a relatively modern field as Ottoman history, for instance, scholars have only recently begun to call for a ″critical revaluation″ of historical methodology, especially with regard to modeling rather than merely assuming the structures of early modern social formation.[1] As the Ottomanist Suraiya Faroqhi has observed candidly: ″The intellectual framework within which Ottoman history is practised is as yet poorly developed and this state of affairs has made us susceptible to the ´occupational disease´ of being overwhelmed by our documents.″[2] Indeed, Faroqhi´s colleague, Halil Berktay, has reified this problem in Ottoman history as ″document-fetishism.″ Obsession with the practices of traditional historical methodology, Berktay charges, has diverted scholars from the ″intellectual sources which could inform them about the proper questions to ask of their documents.″[3]

This emerging reorientation in Ottoman history has stimulated some scholars to conceive of social formation as a dialectic between the state and peasant. The historian John Haldon, for instance, has theorized about a tributary mode of surplus appropriation from peasants as the principal dynamic in the rise of ″feudalist″ states like the Ottoman Empire. Rejecting the class reductionism and economism of traditional Marxism, Haldon has tried to draw attention to the anthropological content of Marx´s early writings and the extent to which macroeconomic production may have been affected by microsocial processes of abstraction, self-reflection and intentionality. Haldon´s view is, of course, speculative since Marx never produced a social psychology able to demonstrate how individual consciousness might have achieved such autonomy from collective order.

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[1]Rifaʿat ʿAli Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), ix, 2.

[2]Suraiya Faroqhi, ″In Search of Ottoman History,″ in *New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History*, ed. Halil Berktay and Suraiya Faroqhi (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 235.

[3]Halil Berktay, ″The Search for the Peasant in Western and Turkish History/Historiography,″ in *New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History*, ed. Halil Berktay and Suraiya Faroqhi (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 109, 157.

Nevertheless, Haldon has sought, as he himself has said, to advance a macrotheory with ″the possibility of nesting a multiplicity of meso- and micro-structural analytical approaches within the overall [neo-Marxist] paradigm.″[4] Clearly, Ottoman history, at least, has become fertile ground for an appreciation of how ″change is structured, and structures change″ over time.[5]

By comparison, medieval Islamicists have seemed less conscious of the need for developing intellectual frameworks within which their empirical research might be embedded in larger issues of social process. Indeed, more than a quarter of a century ago the Mamlukist Ira Lapidus warned that ″studies of Muslim social structure are few and incomplete.″[6] He extolled the need to ″expose social relationships,″ to examine their ″total configuration″ and ″the forces which shaped their interaction.″ Lapidus later reiterated and expanded his position, urging scholars to begin ″to explore not only social action but the concepts and values that bear on the ordering of social relationships, the . . . symbols of social order, and the mentality of peoples.″[7] Yet, as R. Stephen Humphreys, another Mamlukist, has been obliged to remind us recently, little interim progress has been made in demonstrating how action may have been linked to order in medieval Middle East society. Indeed, in his omniscient critique of medieval Islamic history, Humphreys has specifically criticized this analytical shortfall in the secondary literature and has gone so far as to call for new ″lines of inquiry″ and even entire ″research strategies″ to trim this interpretive deficit. Humphreys has focused particularly on the failure of Islamicists, including Mamlukists, to explicate the ″patterns of behavior through which people structure their relations with one another, define common goals, and allocate resources.″[8]

What Humphreys has described in so many words is the need for middle range theories of social interaction, culture, ideology, and economic relations for medieval Islamic civilization, in which the Classical Mamluk state was perhaps the premier social formation. However, the gravitational pull of traditional research methods based on philology, chronology, and historiography has tended to inhibit scholars from making the necessary intellectual transition from description to analysis. Only in rare instances has Mamluk scholarship managed to model the ″patterns″ and ″structure″ of society to which Humphreys has alluded—most notably in the work of Lapidus himself, as well as his student, Michael Chamberlain. Indeed, the work of these two scholars, separated by nearly three decades, reflects to an interesting degree the development of social theory itself from a synchronic, normative, systems perspective to one with a more diachronic, materialist, and post-structural outlook.

Yet, if most Mamlukists have not been able to interpret social process, that is, demonstrate ways in which social action and order were linked, they have at least shown an

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[4]John Haldon, *The State and the Tributary Mode of Production* (London: Verso, 1993), 3.

[5]Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 2; see also, Gordon Leff, *History and Social Theory* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1969); William A. Green, *History, Historians, and the Dynamics of Change* (Westport: Praeger, 1993).

[6]Ira M. Lapidus, ″Muslim Cities and Islamic Societies,″ in *Middle Eastern Cities*, ed. Ira M. Lapidus (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 49.

[7]Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), xiv-xv, 3.

[8]R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), ix.

interest in social actors. Scholars, indeed, have taken an essentially positivist view of Mamluk history in their Weberian focus on political and cultural elites as sources of social formation and reproduction. In this they have no doubt been influenced by Lapidus′s own social anthropology of late medieval Syro-Egypt. Yet, if scholars have sometimes acknowledged Lapidus′s ideas they have generally been unable either to develop or engage them dialectically. This may be due in part to the failure of Lapidus himself to explicate the *isnād* of his own social thought. Lapidus has acknowledged the influence of at least two luminaries—Max Weber and Talcott Parsons—but only in passing.[9] And even this admission has not been entirely helpful given the problematic relation between the works of Weber and Parsons, particularly Parsons′s evolutionary and deterministic reading of Weber′s more developmental and contingent concept of social action. Ultimately, though, Lapidus has been indebted to Parsons′s adaptation of Weberian social action. For Parsons′s functional analysis of the evolution of Western society from traditionalism to modernism has provided Lapidus with an important framework for understanding the process through which late medieval Syro-Egyptian society achieved integration.[10]

Certainly, Lapidus′s interpretation of the nature of action and order in Mamluk society bears many of the hallmarks of the kind of systems analysis typical of the normative functionalism practiced especially by Parsons. He has incorporated into his own analysis many of the same functional concepts employed by Parsons—″system,″ ″function,″ ″values,″ ″equilibrium,″ ″adaptation,″ ″atomization,″ ″differentiation,″ etc. Indeed, Lapidus has identified the ″substance″ of his work as a description of the process by which a ″system″ of social relations was structured to achieve social ″equilibrium″—an essentially Parsonsian perspective. For Lapidus, like Parsons, was trying to address ultimately the long-standing Hobbesian problem of social order by advancing a model of society based on consensual rather than coercive social practices. Both sought to describe a social system which legitimated the hierarchical stratification of status groups on the basis of value consensus. Parsons′s focus on values was embedded ultimately in Weber′s emphasis on the cultural context of social action. Weber maintained that social action had to be explained in terms of its cultural meaning for social actors. Action and structure were mediated, Weber believed, through the individual′s subjective interpretation of his own social environment. Social actors were therefore inspired by cultural values to engage in contingent practices which reproduced but sometimes transformed society. Indeed, Weber′s legendary study of the rise of capitalism was essentially an inquiry into why rational social practices emerged in tenth/sixteenth century Europe from irrational religious

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[9]Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, viii.

[10]Functional thought was foundational even in the conventional Orientalist scholarship upon which Lapidus drew; see especially, G. E. von Grunebaum, ″The Structure of the Muslim Town,″ *Islam: Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition*, Memoir no. 81 (n.p.: American Anthropological Association, 1955), 141-158, who observed, among other things, that ″. . . the unity of the [Muslim] town is functional, not civic.″ Grunebaum in turn seems to have been influenced by the writings of French urbanists attempting to evaluate the social solidarity of the Muslim town in terms of Durkheim′s distinction between the ″mechanical″ solidarity of the traditional/archaic city and the more ″organic″ solidarity of the modern/classical type. That is, they sought to distinguish between an holistic society based on a religious and socially ritualized collective consciousness with undifferentiated forms of social solidarity and a rational society in which social interaction was sufficiently differentiated and diverse to individuate a self-conscious political discourse.

beliefs, that is, how the traditional world developed into the modern through the transformation of social meaning.

To demonstrate this ″contingent acceptance″ of such ″societal values″ Parsons suggested a mechanism—″internalization.″ Drawing on development psychology, Parsons argued that individuals were socialized from an early age through natural interactions with family and peers to assimilate (internalize) symbolic codes of social morality, to accept normative constraints on social action in ways conducive to the reproduction of social order. The concept of internalization allowed Parsons to link social action to the structure of social order in a way that seemed more autonomous and purposeful than, for instance, Durkheim′s concept of mechanical solidarity. Individuals reproduced society because they were socialized to do so. Yet, internalization also allowed Parsons to reinterpret Weber′s concept of social action in a way more conducive to his own belief about the integrative nature of social evolution. For Weber believed that contingent action was historical not teleological; it was meant to analyze changes from patriarchal and patrimonial forms of social organization, not to reify the process of modernization itself. Indeed, Weber felt that modern social action did not lead ultimately to greater social integration, as Parsons believed, but, as Marx believed, to the increased isolation and alienation of the individual from society. In the end structural controls imposed especially by modern bureaucratic structures vitiated individual autonomy and intentionality. Social order depended in the end, Weber believed, on hierarchical coercion not socialization after all.

Parsons attempted to counter Weber′s pessimism by narrowing, though not entirely closing, the gap between social process and social actors themselves. Action was determined ultimately by larger structural issues which tended toward equilibrium in modern society. Indeed, Parsons suggested that there was an evolutionary trajectory from traditionalism to modernism—a ″convergence″ of modern industrial societies toward a common form of internal organization. The functional requirements for that convergence determined historical process. Parsons suggested, in fact, a predictable sequence of social systems each more complex and functional than the last, a process which could not in the end be affected by human agency. This sequencing of social systems was an ″adaptive upgrading″ of society from traditional to modern organization. In this ″directional″ development social relations were determined functionally by the adaptive needs of the social system. Values provided the legitimating control which facilitated the ″adaptive upgrading″ of societies toward modernism. Parsons′s search, therefore, was for the ″core″ of a society, that is, its integrated social subsystems where those values were formed and practiced. Although these subsystems were drawn together through the sharing of common values, a ″consensus of values″ needed to be reflected only among social elites, who then used their power to ″persuade″ other social groups to conform to those values. The power to persuade was based on what Parsons euphemistically called ″confidence″ in the social system, that is, the expectation that force could be used to impose conformity should value orientation prove insufficient.

Clearly Parsons′s inquiry into the boundary between social action and order provided Lapidus with a comprehensive if deterministic model of social process. Lapidus suggested a Weberian condominium between socialized political and cultural elites, following Parsons, as a rationalizing factor in the integration of late medieval Syro-Egyptian society. Lapidus accepted Weber′s focus on cultural values as the source of social action but in his own functional analysis subsumed Weber′s emphasis on autonomy and

contingency just as Parsons had. The teleology of ″convergence″ made value orientation and adaptation functional requirements in the integrative evolution of late medieval Islamic society. Indeed, Lapidus proclaimed that his study of the ″system of [social] relations″ would demonstrate exactly how Muslim urban society adapted itself to ″Mamluk domination″ in order to create ″one political and social whole.″[11] Lapidus thought this sort of collective order was possible precisely because Muslim society ″tended to be relatively undifferentiated,″ and so various social strata ″rarely reflected the autonomous interests of their members.″[12] Clearly Lapidus shared with functionalist anthropology the belief that, the further down the social hierarchy, the more readily individuals were prepared to adopt the values of social elites.

By calling attention in this way to the lack of autonomy enjoyed by urban social groups, Lapidus was challenging traditional beliefs about the autonomy and dynamism of the medieval Islamic city itself. From Marx, who saw history as the ″urbanization of the countryside,″ to Anthony Giddens, who views cities as ″power containers″ engaged in the ″elimination of the countryside,″ social theorists have long attempted to privilege the city as an autonomous engine of social transformation.[13] Indeed, Weber had argued that the origins of Western capitalist society lay precisely in the struggle waged by urban communes to ″usurp″ political and juridical autonomy from patrimonial elites. Naturally enough, Weber saw the failure of capitalism in Oriental societies as the failure of local urban autonomy in the face of patrimonial control, much as Marx had explained the failure of the Asian countryside to resist its ″princely camp″—the Asian city. Yet, Lapidus did not want to privilege the issue of urban autonomy, arguing: ″We must look more deeply into the urban constitution, behind . . . the struggle for local autonomy. . . .″[14] In fact, Lapidus wanted to use his analysis of urban social groups to break down the entire conceptual urban/rural dichotomy upon which traditional Orientalist social history had been based: ″. . . . we should eschew the urban-rural dichotomy and avoid using ″city″ and ″village″ as absolute categories . . . we should think in terms of *pays*, districts, and regions, including both urban and rural units, as a natural form of settlement organization in the medieval Muslim world.″[15]

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[11]Ibid., viii, 191.

[12]Ibid., 185.

[13]Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* (New York: International Publishers, 1965), 78; Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence: Volume Two of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 22.

[14]Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, 3.

[15]Lapidus, ″Muslim Cities,″ 67, 68. Lapidus was, of course, rejecting the use made by Orientalists of the Western urban communal model in interpreting medieval Islamic cities as ″chaotic, formless, collections of villages,″ a series of self-regulating cells based on corporate institutions unique to urban life (quarters, guilds, militias, etc.), p. viii. See, for instance, Louis Massignon, ″Les corps de métiers et la cité islamique,″ *Revue internationale de sociologie* (1920): 473-489; idem, ″La ′futuwwa′, ou ′pacte d′honneur artisanal′ entre les travailleurs musulmans au Moyen Âge,″ *La nouvelle Clio* 4 (1952): 171-198; Jean Sauvaget, ″Esquisse d′une histoire de la ville de Damas,″ *Revue des études islamiques* 8 (1934): 421-480; idem, *Alep* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1941); Bernard Lewis, ″The Islamic Guilds,″ *Economic History Review* 8, no. 1 (1937): 20-37; Georges Marçais, ″La conception des villes dans l′Islam,″ *Revue de la Méditerranée* [Algiers] 2 (1945): 517-533; Robert Brunschvig, ″Urbanisme médiéval et droit musulman,″ *REI* (1947): 127-155; Nicola A. Ziadeh, *Urban Life in Syria under the Mamlūks* (Beirut: American University in Beirut, 1953; Westport: Greenwood Press, 1970); Franz Taeschner, ″Futuwwa, eine Gemeinschaftsbildende Idee im Mittelalterlicher Orient und ihre Verschiedene Erscheinungsforme,″ *Schweizerisches Archiv für*

American social theory by Lapidus′s day had of course been subjected already to many conceptual antinomies: status/contract, mechanical/organic, *Gemeinschaft/ Gesellschaft*, industrial/folk. The foundation of American urban sociology at the University of Chicago helped to establish one more—urban/rural. To Chicago sociologists, the modern city was an unparalleled source of both liberation and challenge to the individual. On the one hand, the spatial segregation created by urbanization emancipated the individual from the social control of traditional intimate groups. However, this weakening of bonds of kinship and folk tradition left the individual isolated, living in a Durkheimian social void. As Louis Wirth observed in his legendary comments about urbanization: ″Nowhere has mankind been further removed from organic nature than under the conditions of life characteristic of great cities.″ The city both initiated and controlled the economic, political and cultural life ″of the most remote parts of the world″ weaving ″diverse areas, peoples, and activities into a cosmos.″ The fact of urban concentration, Wirth believed, naturally invited ″the study of the differences between the rural and the urban mode of living.″ City and country were ″two poles″ around which ″all human settlements tend to arrange themselves.″ For these reasons Wirth saw the ″urban-industrial and rural-folk society as ideal-types of communities . . . for the analysis of the basic models of human association. . . .″[16]

Lapidus, like many sociologists and social anthropologists of his generation, questioned whether Wirthian ″ideal-type constructs″ of the urban and the rural corresponded to actual differences in socioeconomic structures, functions or values.[17] Urban organization seemed too diverse to be typed meaningfully. Possibly there was a condominium, even a continuum between urban and rural forms of social organization; even Wirth finally qualified his own idealized urban/rural dichotomy, admitting before his death that ″cities represent a vast continuum shading into non-urban settlements.″[18] In any case Lapidus did not view urban society as integrated only through what Wirth had called the ″pecuniary nexus . . . [leading] to predatory relationships.″ Man was not freed from moral order by the biotic competition of urban human ecology. Urban life provided the same sort of ″primary″ contacts which traditional socialization had, not just the ″secondary″ kind Wirth had described as ″impersonal, superficial, transitory, and segmental.″ Lapidus believed that informal social networks like families, fraternities, factions, neighborhoods,

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Volkskunde [Basel] 52 (1956): 122-158; Eliyahu Ashtor, ″L′administration urbaine en Syrie médiévale,″ *Rivista degli studi orientali* 31 (1956): 73-128; idem, ″L′urbanisme syrien à la basse-époque,″ *RSO* 33 (1958): 181-209.

[16]Louis Wirth, ″Urbanism as a Way of Life,″ *American Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 1 (1938): 1-24.

[17]See for instance, Oscar Lewis, ″Urbanization without Breakdown: A Case Study,″ *Scientific Monthly* 75, no. 1 (1952): 31-41; Gideon Sjoberg, ″Folk and ′Feudal′ Societies,″ *AJS* 58 (1952): 231-239; William L. Kolb, ″The Social Structure and Function of Cities,″ *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 3, no. 1 (1954): 30-46; O. D. Duncan and Albert J. Reiss, Jr., *Social Characteristics of Urban and Rural Communities, 1950* (New York: Wiley, 1956); Charles T. Stewart, Jr., ″The Urban-Rural Dichotomy: Concepts and Uses,″ *AJS* 64 (1958): 152-158; Joseph A. Kahl, ″Some Social Concomitants of Industrialization and Urbanization: A Research Review,″ *Human Organization* 18, no. 3 (1959): 53-74; Philip M. Hauser, ″Observations on the Urban-Folk and Urban-Rural Dichotomies as Forms of Western Ethnocentrism,″ in *The Study of Urbanization*, ed. P. M. Hauser and L. F. Schnore (New York: Wiley, 1965): 503-517.

[18]Louis Wirth, ″Rural-Urban Differences,″ in *Community Life and Social Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956): 172-176.

tribes, schools of law, and religious communities transcended both the segmentation and spatiality of the classic urban/rural dichotomy; they provided regional ″social solidarities″ which urban communal institutions like guilds could not. Indeed, Lapidus believed ″religious-communal bonds″ rather than ″urban-rural divisions″ were the ″rule″ throughout all Islamic social organization.[19]

Rather than the autonomous city with its formal coordinating agencies Lapidus, like Parsons, saw the real source of social formation residing in the family-based household. Parsons had associated the rise of industrialism with the emergence of a dynamic ″family firm,″ a result of the separation of property rights from feudal control and their association with intimate or ″sib″ groups. The family firm, not the city, was the early engine of industrial capitalism. The family ″emancipated″ itself from the political structure, it did not try to take it over from patrimonial elites as Weber′s urban agents were expected to do. Lapidus saw the Mamluk ″military household″ similarly as the dynamic center of social power in Syro-Egyptian society, primarily because of its informal domination of the regional economy.[20] Private households rather than statist bureaucracies controlled the economic ″surplus″ of Mamluk society. This control over the economic base of society gave the Mamluk *umarā*' control over the superstructure of ″communal and religious life of the towns″ as well. Yet, because the Mamluk household was not an ″alien military establishment,″ that is, it was a functional subsystem of ″regional″ integration, there was no overt struggle over surplus. ″Regime and society did not confront each other . . . ,″ therefore, social equilibrium was maintained.[21]

The informal network of patronal relationships which the Mamluks established with other social groups did not create the sort of anomic predatory relationships suggested in Wirth′s ideal-typification. Through such patronage networks the Mamluk political elite functionally exchanged economic benefits for social validation from the cultural elite. Lapidus interpreted this Mamluk ″self-interest″ as functional, not, in contradistinction to Parsons, as a source of ″atomism,″ which concerned Parsons about all utilitarian behavior. Indeed, Lapidus saw such self-interest as a form of social control by which the Mamluks actually ″atomized the common people.″[22] Mamluk military households were functionally inhibited from using their power in ways which threatened social reproduction; even their paramilitary squabbles did not, until the final decades, vitiate their ″vital″ function in the socioeconomic integration of ″regional″ Syro-Egyptian society.[23] Other social groups undifferentiated by horizontal class interests, indeed unified through vertical clientelistic structures, merely internalized the reality of Mamluk domination, ″. . . bending, accommodating, assimilating . . . Mamluk powers and actions in ways which created an over-all political and social pattern [of equilibrium].″[24] Only when Mamluk extraction of economic surplus exceeded social norms did ″confidence″ in Mamluk authority fail. The

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[19]Lapidus, ″Muslim Cities,″ 57.

[20]Household is different from family, though the two are often used interchangeably. Lapidus′s use of the term ″military household″ seems meant to convey the fact that the Mamluk family was surrounded by a constellation of ″personal dependents and clients of the emirs,″ not to imply that the military household was only a unit of co-residence without the capacity to generate normative relationships.

[21]Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, 48-78.

[22]Ibid., 190.

[23]Ibid., 35-43, 51.

[24]Ibid., 78.

Ottoman conquest of Syro-Egypt in the early tenth/sixteenth century was merely the pushing over of a social system in classic disequilibrium.

II

Lapidus did not see the Syro-Egyptian city as an autonomous force in late medieval society, separated from and transforming the countryside. Certainly there were no emergent Weberian middle class agents attempting to ″usurp″ power from the traditional Mamluk elite; in fact, ″the development of a unified and independent middle class was impossible.″[25] Yet, neither did Lapidus view the city as a social void. Indeed, it seems to have been his principal goal in *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* to demonstrate that social integration depended on the reduction of isolation and tensions among social groups, not only between urban and rural groups, but also among different social subsystems within cities themselves. Mamluk cities, therefore, were complex units held together more by the functional socioeconomic interdependence of status groups than traditional coercive controls. And a society moving away from traditional beliefs and customs was, definitionally in the early 1960s, a society moving toward modernity. Certainly from a functionalist perspective the likelihood of an ″adaptive upgrading″ of Egyptian society from traditionalism to modernism would be easier to envision if late medieval society was already, as Lapidus seemed to suggest, a coherently organized social system whose subsystems were closely interdependent and relatively stable.

Lapidus′s reconstruction of the social system of late medieval Syro-Egypt clearly ought to have been groundbreaking. Yet, this expectation has gone almost entirely unfulfilled. For one thing, the slow collapse of expectations about modernization over the course of the 1960s made Lapidus′s functionalist macrosociological approach seem problematic. Lapidus′s work had been essentially synchronic, a study of the structure of the functional linkages of Mamluk urban society rather than the mechanisms which affected various social subsystems. Yet, in the developing world of thirty years ago these subsystems did not seem especially stable or interdependent, and there seemed to be little real socio-economic integration in light of the failures of industrial capitalism and pluralistic democracy. In the aftermath of modernization theory, American social scientists began to turn away from the study of functionalism to embrace that of dysfunctionalism. They began to study in earnest the microsociology of conflict, inequality and oppression—a trend which has been accelerated by postmodernist obsession with social pessimism and cultural implosion.

In this degraded theoretical environment, Lapidus gradually changed his own functionalist approach to late medieval Syro-Egyptian society. He recognized that his focus on collective order, regulation, and stability left little room finally for microprocesses of individual socialization and even autonomy. In *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* social action had been dictated by a socialized environment rather than individual intentionality. Autonomy from collective control suggested the sort of fundamental social change which classic functionalism feared as destabilizing to the entire social system. Lapidus may have been reluctant to model microprocesses of social change because they suggested the sort of internal conflict upon which Marxist social theory thrived and for

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[25]Ibid., 190.

which functionalism had long been a preferred alternative among mainstream American social scientists. For such theorists, the pathway to modernity was better through internal value-orientation than internal conflict, through developmental prosperity rather than class struggle.

Although Lapidus continued to identify Muslim urban society as the set of ″informal relations among individuals, classes and groups,″ he no longer felt that those relations ought to be functionally assumed by scholars. He has called instead for works which can actually model ″social action,″ that is, ″the social processes underlying the functioning of urban societies″ as well as the ″concepts and values that bear on the ordering of social relationships. . . .″ Accordingly, Lapidus has suggested microsociologies of ″loyalty, discipleship, patronage, friendship, clientage, politics, and religious education to reveal the patterns of human behavior that make . . . societies.″ Lapidus′s appeal has been essentially for middle range theories which, one suspects, can be retrofitted to support his original functionalist insights. The results have been mixed. In the first place, though Lapidus′s appeal has struck a chord among various Mamluk scholars, their work has reflected generally only low-level theorization, that is, empirical research with generalizations based on repeated observation. On the whole, these social historians have tended to avoid unifying their results into middle range theories where such empirical generalizations could be used to differentiate between material and cultural explanations of human behavior.

Lapidus′s early focus on informal social networks rather than communal institutions as the source of social formation has remained, however, the basic thrust line of Mamluk history. Most of that attention, though, has been focused on isolated descriptions of the social origin, organization, and function of social elites. Thus, we possess a variety of informational studies about religious dignitaries, chancery scribes, judges, *wazīr*s, market inspectors, civil administrators, and law court and police officials.[26] A few scholars have

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[26]See, for instance, Kamāl Sulaymān al-Ṣalībī, ″The Banu Jamāʿa: A Dynasty of Shāfiʿite Jurists in the Mamluk Period,″ *Studia Islamica* 9 (1958): 97-109; Clifford E. Bosworth, ″Christian and Jewish Religious Dignitaries in Mamluk Egypt and Syria: Information on Their Hierarchy, Titulature and Appointment,″ *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3 (1962): 59-74; Jon Elliott Mandaville, ″The Muslim Judiciary of Damascus in the Late Mamluk Period″ (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1969); Donald S. Richards, ″The Coptic Bureaucracy under the Mamluks,″ *Colloque international sur l′histoire du Caire* (1969) (Cairo: Ministry of Culture, n.d.), 373-381; Joseph H. Escovitz, ″Vocational Patterns of the Scribes of the Mamluk Chancery,″ *Arabica* 23 (1976): 42-62; idem, ″Patterns of Appointment to the Chief Judgeship of Cairo during the Bahri Mamluk Period,″ *Arabica* 30 (1983): 147-168; idem, *The Office of* Qâḍî al-Quḍât *in Cairo under the Baḥrî Mamlûks* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1984); Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Rāziq, ″Le *ḥisba* et le *muḥtasib* en Égypte au temps des Mamlūks,″ *Annales islamologiques* 13 (1977): 115-178; idem, ″Les muḥtasibs de Fosṭāṭ au temps des Mamlūks,″ *AI* 14 (1978): 127-146; idem, ″Le vizirat et les vizirs d′Égypte au temps des Mamlūks,″ *AI* 16 (1980): 183-239; Joan E. Gilbert, ″Institutionalization of Muslim Scholarship and Professionalization of the ʿUlamāʾ in Medieval Damascus,″ *Studia Islamica* 52 (1980): 105-135; Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Secular Justice in an Islamic State: Maẓālim under the Baḥrī Mamlūks, 662/1264-789/1387* (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1985); Peter M. Holt, ″A Chancery Clerk in Medieval Egypt,″ *English Historical Review* 101 (1986): 671-679; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Amīn Ṣādiq Abū Rās, *Shaykh al-Shuyūkh bi-al-Diyār al-Miṣrīyah fī al-Dawlatayn al-Ayyūbīyah wa-al-Mamlūkīyah* (Cairo: Maktabat ʿĀlam al-Fikr, 1987); Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Salām Nāṣif, *al-Shurṭah fī Miṣr al-Islāmīyah* (Cairo: al-Zuhrāʾ lil-Iʿlām al-ʿArabī, 1987); Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Ṭāsān, ″al-Qaḍāʾ fī Makkah fī al-ʿAhd al-Mamlūkī,″ *al-ʿUṣūr* 6, no. 2 (1991): 299-318; Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, *Les civils et l′administration dans l′État militaire Mamlūk (IXe/XVe siècle)* (Damascus: Institut

attempted to introduce some interpretive content, focusing especially on the mediatory role of these elites in urban social structure. Carl F. Petry, for instance, has observed that while civil elites generally failed to mediate proactively on behalf of other social groups, they at least helped to symbolize ″communal cohesion″ in the non-institutionalized social environment of late Circassian Mamluk society.[27] Jonathan Berkey has drawn attention to the role of educators, working through an ″informal system of instruction and . . . personal relationships,″ in helping to level social divisions within Mamluk society.[28] Ulrich Haarmann, for his part, has argued that Mamluk offspring (*awlād al-nās*) were a critical social, political, and even cultural link between the Mamluk ruling elite and other social subsystems.[29]

Unfortunately neither these subsystems nor, indeed, the ruling elite itself have received meaningful analysis. Though urban gangs, rural notables, merchants, peasants, tribal peoples, and even amirs have all been described in some way, they remain little understood as components of social formation.[30] Some scholars, again, have attempted to

français de Damas, 1992). See more generally on social life, Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ ‘Āshūr, *al-Mujtama‘ al-Miṣrī fī ‘Aṣr Salāṭīn al-Mamālīk* (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍah al-‘Arabīyah, 1962; revised edition, 1993); Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, *al-Awqāf wa-al-Ḥayāh al-Ijtimā‘īyah fī Miṣr, 648-923 H./1250-1517 M.* (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍah al-‘Arabīyah, 1980); Ḥayāt Nāṣir al-Ḥajjī, *Aḥwāl al-‘Āmmah fī Ḥukm al-Mamālīk, 678-784 H./1279-1382 M.* (Kuwait: Sharikat Kāẓimah lil-Nashr wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Tawzī‘, 1984).

[27]Carl F. Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 325.

[28]Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 20, 217.

[29]Ulrich W. Haarmann, ″Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamluks and Their Sons in the Intellectual Life of Fourteenth-Century Egypt and Syria,″ *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33, no. 1 (1988): 81-114; idem, ″The Sons of Mamluks as Fief-holders in Late Medieval Egypt,″ in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, ed. Tarif Khalidi (Beirut: American University in Beirut, 1984), 141-168.

[30]See, for instance, Eliyahu Ashtor, ″The Karimi Merchants,″ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1956): 45-56; S. D. Goitein, ″New Light on the Beginnings of the Kārim Merchants,″ *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 1 (1958): 175-184; Walter J. Fischel, ″The Spice Trade in Mamluk Egypt: A Contribution to the Economic History of Medieval Islam,″ *JESHO* 1 (1958):157-174; Jacqueline Sublet, ″‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Takrītī et la famille des Banū Kuwayk, marchands Kārimī,″ *Arabica* 9 (1962): 193-196; William M. Brinner, ″The Significance of the *Ḥarāfīsh* and their ′Sultan′,″ *JESHO* 6 (1963): 190-215; David Ayalon, ″The Muslim City and the Mamluk Military Aristocracy,″ *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 2 (1968): 311-329; idem, ″Mamlūk Military Aristocracy during the First Years of the Ottoman Occupation of Egypt,″ in *The Islamic World: From Classical to Modern Times*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1989): 413-431; idem, ″The Auxiliary Forces of the Mamluk Sultanate,″ *Der Islam* 65 (1988): 13-37; Ibrāhīm Aḥmad Rizqānah, ″al-Qabā’il al-‘Arabīyah fī Miṣr ‘inda al-Maqrīzī,″ in *Dirāsāt ‘an al-Maqrīzī: Majmū‘at Abḥāth*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah et al. (Cairo: al-Hay’ah al-Miṣrīyah al-‘Āmmah lil-Ta’līf wa-al-Nashr, 1971), 81-94; M. A. Hiyari, ″The Origins and Development of the Amīrate of the Arabs during the Seventh/Thirteenth and Eighth/Fourteenth Centuries, ″ *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 38 (1975): 509-524; Abdel Hamid Saleh, ″Les relations entre les Mamluks et les bédouins d′Égypte,″ *Annali instituto orientale di Napoli* 30 (1980): 365-393; Amīn al-Nafūrī, ″Ajnād al-Qabā’il al-‘Arabīyah fī Bilād al-Shām fī ‘Ahd al-Mamlūkī,″ *Dirāsāt Tārīkhīyah* 5 (1981): 99-116; Charles Verlinden, ″Marchands chrétiens et juifs dans l′État mamelouke au début du XVe siècle d′après un notaire vénetien,″ *Bulletin de l′Institut historique belge de Rome* 51 (1981): 19-86; Muḥammad ‘Adnān al-Bakhīt, ″The Role of the Ḥanash Family and the Tasks Assigned to It in the Countryside of Dimashq al-Shām,″ in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, ed. Tarif Khalidi (Beirut: American University in Beirut, 1984), 257-289; Barbara

be more interpretive. Petry and Robert Irwin, for instance, have called attention to the social dynamic of clientelistic structures in the shaping of Mamluk political action;[31] focus on such dyadic non-corporate and goal-oriented relationships may serve as a corrective to the more rigid and institutionalized politics of *khushdāshīyah* currently favored by traditional scholarship.[32] Toru Miura has argued that the numerous sub-quarters (*ḥārāt*) of the larger Ṣāliḥīyah quarter in Damascus were integrated into a larger ″political unit″ through the social networks of urban gangs;[33] this suggests that the function of social mediation between rulers and ruled may not have been a monopoly of the *‘ulamā’*. In a more rural vein, William Tucker has noted that natural disasters may have had a significant social psychological effect on religious practices among late medieval Egyptian peasants.[34] Jean-Claude Garcin, following Lapidus′s thematic rejection of an urban/rural dichotomy in late medieval Egypt, has interpreted the rise of the urban center of Qūṣ in terms of the larger regional dynamic of Upper Egypt itself. Garcin′s observation that ″the city can not be separated from the countryside around it″ clearly recalls Lapidus′s injunction to ″think in terms of *pays* . . . as a natural form of settlement organization.″ As a crucial part of that regional dynamic, Garcin has emphasized especially the social role of the bedouin in influencing ″the structure of the establishment of human groups in a region.″[35]

On the whole, scholars have conformed to Lapidus′s functionalist identification of social integration with stasis.[36] Yet, what about change in Mamluk society? Jonathan

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Kellner-Heinkele, ″The Turkomans and *Bilād aš-Šām* in the Mamluk Period,″ in ibid., 169-180; Dorothea Krawulsky, ″al-Badw fī Miṣr wa-al-Shām fī al-Qarnayn al-Sābi‘ wa-al-Thāmin al-Hijrīayn ‘inda al-‘Umarī fī Masālik al-Abṣār,″ *al-Ijtihād* 4, no. 17 (1992): 35-72; Richard T. Mortel, ″The Ḥusaynid Amirate of Madīna during the Mamlūk Period,″ *Studia Islamica* 80 (1994): 97-119; idem, ″The Mercantile Community of Mecca during the Late Mamluk Period,″ *JRAS* (1994): 15-35.

[31]Robert Irwin, ″Factions in Medieval Egypt,″ *JRAS* (1986): 228-246; Carl F. Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamlūk Sultans and Egypt′s Waning as a Great Power* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 131-151.

[32]See also Amalia Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn (1310-1341)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), who has remarked on the collapse of corporate solidarity in the Mamluk system during the first decades of the eighth/fourteenth century.

[33]Toru Miura, ″The Structure of the Quarter and the Role of the Outlaws—the Ṣāliḥīya Quarter and the Zu′r in the Mamlūk Period,″ in *Urbanism in Islam: Proceedings of the International Conference on Urbanism in Islam* (Tokyo: Middle Eastern Culture Center, 1989), 3:402-437. See also, Nawāl al-Messiri Nadim, ″The Concept of the *Ḥāra*: A Historical and Sociological Study of al-Sukkariya,″ *AI* 15 (1979): 313-348; Michael Meinecke, ″The Old Quarter of as-Salihiya/Damascus: Development and Recent Changes,″ *al-Ḥawlīyāt al-Atharīyah al-‘Arabīyah al-Sūrīyah* 35 (1985): 31-47.

[34]William F. Tucker, ″Natural Disasters and the Peasantry in Mamlūk Egypt,″ *JESHO* 24, no. 2 (1981): 215-224. See also, Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ ‘Āshūr, ″al-Fallāḥ wa-al-Iqṭā‘ fī Aṣr al-Ayyūbiyīn wa-al-Mamālīk,″ in *Buḥūth wa-Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh al-‘Uṣūr al-Wusṭá* (Beirut: Jāmi‘at Bayrūt al-‘Arabīyah, 1977), 141-152; Yūsuf Darwīsh Ghawānmah, ″al-Ṭā‘ūn wa-al-Jafāf wa-Atharuhumā ‘alá al-Bī’ah fī Junūb al-Shām (al-Urdunn wa-al-Filasṭīn) fī al-‘Aṣr al-Mamlūkī,″ in *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan*, ed. ‘Adnān Ḥadīdī (Amman: Department of Antiquities, 1985), 2:315-322.

[35]Jean-Claude Garcin, *Un centre musulman de la haute-Égypte médiévale: Qūṣ* (Cairo: Institut français d′archéologie orientale, 1976), xvi, 574; idem, ″Note sur les rapports entre bédouins et fellahs à l′époque mamluke,″ *AI* 14 (1978): 147-163; idem, ″Le système militaire mamluk et le blocage de la société musulmane médiéval,″ *AI* 24 (1988): 93-110; Lapidus, ″Muslim Cities,″ 68.

[36]Petry has recently characterized Mamluk society even down to its last days as a ″quagmire of stasis,″ *Protectors*, 225. Problems of social inversion as well have received little attention; see, however, David Ayalon, ″The Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate,″ in *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, ed. Myriam

Berkey, who is perhaps better known for arguing that social integration was advanced through the transmission of social knowledge, has suggested recently that social change did emerge from the fundamental tension between tradition and innovation in Mamluk socio-culture. The late medieval period was, according to Berkey, a period of ″vulnerability and decay″ as well as the introduction of ″new peoples, ideas and models of behavior to the Muslim Near East.″[37] Berkey′s historical dialectic suggests that Mamluk society, like all social organizations, possessed both progressive and conservative tendencies whose contradictions inevitably generated energy for social change. Boaz Shoshan, too, has maintained that confrontation between traditional high culture and innovative popular culture affected the structure of social life in medieval Cairo. The cultic veneration of *shuyūkh* particularly created over time ″a common cultural domain consisting of shared practices and meanings.″[38] Concerning the Mamluk army, Levanoni has argued that it experienced in the early eighth/fourteenth century a radical transformation from disciplined fighting force to military proletariat.[39] Moreover, several architectural studies have also intimated social change through physical changes in both sacred and profane urban spaces.[40] This combination of architectural and documentary evidence serves as a kind of settlement archaeology, not in the sense of theorizing the relationship between social groups and their ecology but rather changes in social and cultural behavior over time as reflected in changing patterns of spatial organization. This includes especially the process of

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Rosen-Ayalon (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1977), 267-295; Fedwa Malti-Douglas, ″Mentalités and Marginality: Blindness and Mamlūk Civilization,″ in *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1989), 211-238; Huda Lutfi, ″Manners and Customs of Fourteenth-Century Cairene Women: Female Anarchy versus Male Shar'i Order in Muslim Prescriptive Treatises,″ in *Women in Middle Eastern History*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 99-121; Shaun Marmon, *Eunuchs and Sacred Boundaries in Islamic Society* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[37]Jonathan P. Berkey, ″Tradition, Innovation and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Near East,″ *Past and Present* 146 (1995): 46.

[38]Boaz Shoshan, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 78.

[39]Levanoni, *Turning Point*.

[40]See, for instance, André Raymond, ″Essai de géographie des quartiers de résidence aristocratique au Caire au XVIIIe siècle,″ *JESHO* 6 (1963): 58-103; idem, ″La localisation des bains publics au Caire au quinzième siècles d′après les Ḫiṭaṭ de Maqrīzī,″ *Bulletin d′études orientales* 30 (1978): 347-60; Layla 'Alī Ibrāhīm, ″Middle-Class Living Units in Mamluk Cairo: Architecture and Terminology,″ *Art and Archaeology Research Papers* 14 (1978): 24-30; idem, ″Up-to-date Concepts of the Traditional Cairene Living Units,″ *Ekistics* 48, no. 287 (1981): 96-100; idem, ″Residential Architecture in Mamluk Cairo,″ *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 49-57; Jean-Claude Garcin, ″Habitat médiéval et histoire urbaine à Fusṭāṭ et au Caire, ″ *Palais et maisons du Caire, I: Époque mamelouke (XIIIe-XVIe siècles),* ed. Jean-Claude Garcin et al. (Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1982), 145-216; Jacques Revault, ″L′architecture domestique du Caire à l′époque mamelouke (XIIIe-XVIe siècles),″ *Palais et maisons du Caire, I: Époque mamelouke (XIIIe-XVIe siècles),* ed. Jean-Claude Garcin et al. (Paris: CNRS, 1982), 19-142; Leonor Fernandes, ″Two Variations on the Same Theme: The *Zāwiya* of Ḥasan al-Rūmī, the *Takiyya* of Ibrāhīm al-Ǧulšānī, *AI* 21 (1985): 95-111; idem, ″Three Ṣūfī Foundations in a 15th Century *Waqfiyya*,″ *AI* 17 (1981): 141-156; idem, ″Mamluk Politics and Education: The Evidence from Two Fourteenth Century Waqfiyya,″ *AI* 23 (1987): 87-98; idem, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution in Mamluk Egypt: The Khanqah* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1988); Doris Behrens-Abouseif, ″Locations of Non-Muslim Quarters in Medieval Cairo,″ *AI* 22 (1986): 117-132; idem, ″The Citadel of Cairo: Stage for Mamluk Ceremonial,″ *AI* 24 (1988): 75-79; idem, ″Change in Function and Form of Mamluk Religious Institutions,″ *AI* 21 (1985): 73-93; idem, ″Gardens in Islamic Egypt,″ *Der Islam* 69 (1992): 302-312.

privatization of public space, a key development which many historical anthropologists have recognized about social transition from the traditional to the modern.

<div align="center">III</div>

Nevertheless, Lapidus´s view of late medieval Syro-Egypt as a society in equilibrium, functionally integrated through normative behavior, has not been fundamentally challenged. That is, until recently by Lapidus´s own student, Michael Chamberlain. Like many before, Chamberlain has adopted Lapidus´s position on ˝institutional˝ history, that an undifferentiated social formation can be better explained in terms of informal social networks than formal communal institutions. Like Lapidus, too, Chamberlain has located that social dynamic among political/cultural elites. Chamberlain´s elites, however, are engaged in a social process which completely transforms Lapidus´s integrated social subsystems into autonomous social units operating in ˝arenas of a never-ending struggle for social power and status.˝[41] Social action is no longer based on internalized values but on the materialist logic of utilitarian strategy and practices. Power now defines culture; value consensus gives way to value manipulation. The perceptions people have of social life are no longer necessarily stable or shared in such a way that social action can be coordinated. Social knowledge, in short, is no longer functionally supportive of social order. Indeed, the reproduction of social order is no longer based on accepting constraints on social action but in exceeding them. Chamberlain´s methodological rejection of Lapidus´s normative functional analysis—˝metaphors derived from functioning bodies˝—appears to be derived largely from his readings in the social psychology of the late German sociologist, Norbert Elias, as well as the cultural anthropology of the French post-structuralist, Pierre Bourdieu.[42]

Like Parsons, Elias had studied at Heidelberg University not long after the death there of Weber. Like Parsons, too, Elias was fascinated by psychoanalysis and admired Parsons´s ability to psychologize the macrosocial process. However, Elias disagreed with Parsons´s Weberian focus on action, particularly his view that social systems could only be comprehended as abstractions in which there existed a logical necessity that action always be integrated. Elias charged that this made society seem too much like a ˝medley of disembodied actions˝ rather than ˝networks of human beings in the round.˝ Elias and, after him, Bourdieu sought to close the interpretive gap between the individual and society, suggesting that social action possessed its own dynamic, one unpredictable even to social actors themselves. In place of Parsons´s immutable, functionally integrated society, Elias and Bourdieu suggested a collation of interdependent human networks forming autonomous spheres of action structured by their own immediate histories and internal logic. Importantly, these spheres were subject to processes not only of integration but disintegration as well. For Elias these spheres or ˝figurations˝ were the result of the ˝interweaving of countless individual interests and intentions˝ into autonomous outcomes. These ˝relational dynamics˝ were created by constantly changing power balances among these human networks, although there was ultimately an historical trajectory from violent

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[41]Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 175.
[42]Ibid., 21-22.

figurations to more pacific ones. For Bourdieu such spheres or ″fields″ are spaces for competition and conflict rather than socialization and cooperation. The structure of the field in turn is determined by the state of the relations of force between various social actors or ″players.″

Elias′s figuration theory and Bourdieu′s field theory share with Parsons′s functionalist systems theory, however, a common focus on differentiation and autonomy in social organization, though as a source of change rather than equilibrium, as process rather than stasis. There are no deterministic relationships among the subsystems, no organic cohesion or self-regulation as in a functionally interdependent social system; coherence is achieved only accidentally and temporarily. Even the imagery is quite different. Whereas Parsons sought a ″boundary″ between action and order in the social system, Bourdieu has conceived of the social field as a ″fluid″ process.

These theories, moreover, are all tied to linear models of social evolution which depend heavily on distinguishing dialectically between pre-industrial and industrial types of social organization. Parsons had described the process of modernization as a series of structural differentiations facilitating the ″directional″ development of early modern rational socioeconomic organization into modern bureaucratic industrialism. Elias attempted similarly to tie his process of *Zivilisation* to the evolutionary expansion and internalization of social control as a form of rational behavior. As webs of interdependent social networks expanded and became more dense, social action became correspondingly more controlled and society more differentiated. The constant division and subdivision of social functions transformed social control from external compulsion to internal self-discipline, part of the emergence of rational behavior.

Bourdieu, unlike Parsons and Elias, has been interested not in Weberian rational action but practical logic—what it makes sense to do—which may in fact be irrational; he has tried, however, to draw the same distinction between ″material″ and ″symbolic″ power in society that Weber once drew between ″economic order″ (wealth) and ″social order″ (honors). In his search for what is essentially the cultural process underlying (intra)class conflict Bourdieu has distinguished pre-industrial (pre-capitalist/doxic) from industrial (capitalist/discursive) social formations in terms of their autonomization of symbolic power. Pre-capitalist societies, being insufficiently developed economically to differentiate the material from the symbolic, were unable to produce an explicit symbolic system capable of generating the sort of competitive discourse leading necessarily to class struggle. The rise of capitalist societies, however, autonomized a discursive symbolic sphere capable of providing the dominated with ″symbolic means of rejecting the definition of the real″ hitherto imposed by the dominant material class. The producers of symbols (artists, writers and other intellectuals) are seen to struggle on a ″field of opinion″ with the dominant material class ″for the power to impose the legitimate mode of thought and expression″ in modern class societies; the dominant class eventually turns to symbolic power as well in order to continue its dominance. In this intellectual field of struggle for position, capital is no longer just accumulated but differentiated into economic and cultural types, each mutually convertible. The dominant class in capitalist society must, for a variety of reasons, convert some of its economic capital into cultural capital. The center of this conversion is the educational system, which is tied to the need to provide a market for cultural capital. Here class struggle is replicated and legitimated through the conversion of social position

into educational merit; the cultural capital produced was then later reconverted into economic power by the dominant class to preserve its position.[43]

Bourdieu figures significantly in Chamberlain's explanation of the effect of such unconstrained competition on social order in a medieval Muslim city. Part of Bourdieu's appeal may be that his theory of social strategies is extrapolated from his own anthropological observations about modern Muslim village life among the Algerian Kabyle. For Bourdieu, the Kabyle village was a center of eternal competition for status fought out by kinship groups using symbolic taxonomies. In such pre-capitalist societies, where a ″system of mechanisms . . . ensuring the reproduction of the established order by its own motion″ has not yet emerged, these strategies of ″symbolic violence″ were often more important and ″economical″ than ″overt (physical or economic) violence″ as *elementary forms of domination.*[44]

To some degree, then, Chamberlain's Damascus is Bourdieu's Kabyle village writ large. Damascene social life was similarly consumed by the constant and largely symbolic struggle for control of knowledge (*'ilm*) as a way of achieving power and status, ultimately of ensuring ″social survival.″ Sixth/twelfth through eighth/fourteenth century Damascus was a suitably ″precarious″ and ″turbulent period″ in which elite social competition (*fitnah*) ″imposed its own logic″ on the strategies and practices by which medieval Damascenes acquired economic and cultural capital.[45] Chamberlain's vision of a turbulent *high* medieval period is of course consistent with the belief common to both Elias and Bourdieu that the medieval period antedated the civilizing/modernizing process. Whereas Weber had envisaged the movement toward rational action beginning in the tenth/sixteenth century, Elias had seen already in the ninth/fifteenth century standards of control being imposed on society by political elites who were themselves making the transition from warrior violence to courtly manners. The high medieval period by contrast was a sinkhole of personality development. In language reminiscent of Johan Huizinga's ″violent tenor of life,″ Elias suggested that social relations in the medieval period were violent, impulsive, aggressive, cruel, and without conscience.

The ninth/fifteenth century was also an important benchmark in Bourdieu's analysis of the cultural process of modern class struggle. It was the beginning of the historical autonomization of a symbolic system in which the intellectual/artist freed himself culturally from the political and religious agencies of pre-capitalist legitimation in order to produce a competitive ethical/aesthetic discourse. In arguing that this process of autonomization was already underway in Damascus well before the ninth/fifteenth century, however, Chamberlain has modified Bourdieu's model of historical development. Chamberlain's focus on the social competition to control knowledge (*'ilm*) presupposes already in the high medieval period a social elite (*a'yān*) as a specialized group of symbolic producers, attempting to monopolize the objectified instruments of symbolic struggle (i.e., reading, writing, certification). This further supposes, following Bourdieu, that that struggle was part of a larger social competition with the dominant economic class (*umarā'*) for control of the ″hierarchization of the principles of hierarchization.″ Chamberlain argues, in effect, that medieval Damascus was already sufficiently developed in terms of exchange relations to

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[43]Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 159-197.

[44]Ibid., 190-197.

[45]Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 4-9.

generate an explicit symbolic system autonomous enough to engender class struggle. Yet, it is difficult to see how that struggle might have occurred since Chamberlain does not believe that there was a ″division of social and political labor″ between the *a'yān* and *umarā*' of Damascus.[46] Moreover, while Chamberlain speaks of the medieval Middle East generally as possessing a ″relatively high monetization of its economies,″ it is unclear if this could have constituted the sort of capitalistic development that Bourdieu has in mind.[47] Finally, according to Chamberlain, medieval Damascus had ″no educational system to reproduce existing social divisions,″ another limitation on Bourdieu's thinking.[48]

Despite these qualifications, Chamberlain remains fundamentally indebted to Bourdieu's basic understanding of social structure as a product of radically contingent action by self-reflective individuals rather than an ″institutionalized call to order,″ though even Bourdieu has admitted that rules can facilitate the generation of such action.[49] This has allowed Chamberlain to interpret the ″continuous reshuffling of power and resources″ by practical, self-indicating elite households (*buyūt*; sg., *bayt*) as the ″fundamental dynamic of political and social life″ in medieval Damascus.[50] Damascus, in effect, is no longer a society—the locus of social cooperation—merely a social space dedicated to unlimited ″struggle for social power and status.″ [51] And yet, Chamberlain's observation that elite social competition (*fitnah*) was responsive to mediation seems to recognize ultimately a limitation to the radical contingency of social practice and strategy. Members of the Damascene elite negotiated among themselves for complementary shares of social and economic capital. Rulers (*salāṭīn*, *nuwwāb*) especially, able only ″to frustrate other social bodies' independent possession of power or wealth,″ were obliged to negotiate both with the *a'yān* for ″use of the sacred″ and with the *umarā*' for political power.[52] One might infer that the aggregation of such bargaining created in effect a ″negotiated order″ in which differences could be neutralized, if not resolved, in such a way that necessary connective social operations might occur. Individuals could bond at least temporarily, adopting complementary or even similar values, which could become the basis of an occasionally unified social system.

Indeed, rhetoric about practice and strategy aside, the *a'yān* and *umarā*' still appear as functionally interdependent in Chamberlain's analysis as in that of Lapidus. In what Chamberlain describes as an ″exchange among surplus-consuming groups″ of status for benefit, amirs engaged in a deterministic exchange of their economic capital for the cultural capital of urban notables. Chamberlain's conclusion that ″the *a'yān* of the city accommodated themselves to the military patronage state″ seems little different ultimately from Lapidus's earlier observations about the functional ″adapting [of] urban Muslim society to Mamluk domination,″ or its ″. . . accommodating . . . Mamluk power and

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[46]Ibid., 8.

[47]Ibid., 1, 40.

[48]Ibid., 154.

[49]Bourdieu, *Outline*, 17.

[50]Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 8, 46.

[51]Ibid., 9, 175; Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), 16: ″. . . Bourdieu explodes the vacuous notion of ′society′ and replaces its with those of field and social space.″

[52]Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 41, 49.

actions.″⁵³ In both cases the *a'yān* appear to have successfully internalized Mamluk domination. Moreover, it was not just the *a'yān* and *umarā'* that were functionally related. According to Chamberlain the *salāṭīn* and *nuwwāb* also had a ″functional dependence on their subjects.″ Rulers, unable to ″penetrate the cities they dominated through intrusive state agencies,″ fit themselves ″into existing social and cultural practices . . . turning them to political use.″⁵⁴

Precisely because such ″social and cultural practices″ were products of urbanization in Damascus, Chamberlain's analysis, unlike that of Lapidus, reflects ultimately an urban rather than a regional perspective on social formation in medieval Syro-Egypt.⁵⁵ Urbanization, moreover, had a more anomic consequence on Chamberlain's Damascenes than on those of Lapidus. Chamberlain's Damascus was, in effect, a social void of secondary contacts possessed of the same ″segmented character and utilitarian accent″ that Wirth originally described. Bourdieu, though, is the real source of Chamberlain's view of urbanization. Like Durkheim before him, Bourdieu believes that urbanization was crucial to the erosion of traditional social solidarity. For Durkheim urbanization led eventually to increased crime and suicide; for Bourdieu it leads to the emergence of a zone of struggle over the symbolic manipulation of the conduct of social reality—the field. It was only in the city that people with sufficiently diverse cultural traditions were sufficiently concentrated to be able to recognize their own formerly misrecognized social domination; it was in the city that their own cultural traditions were exposed, revealing ″their arbitrariness *practically*, through first-hand experience.″⁵⁶ Damascus, according to Chamberlain, experienced a similar process of urbanization at the end of the fifth/eleventh century, when ″pastoralists, professional and slave troops, and urban elites″ found themselves thrown together into an ″empire-building process″ stimulated by external threats to Syro-Egypt.⁵⁷ In that dynamic historic moment, however, socialization gave way to survival. Damascus became a social space without a Parsonsian ″core.″

<div align="center">IV</div>

The integration of social theory and Mamluk history over the last thirty years has achieved only limited results. Much of that achievement, moreover, resides in the work of just two scholars, Lapidus and Chamberlain. Only in their writings do we possess meaningful interpretation of social formation and reproduction in Mamluk Syro-Egypt. Social life is generally understood to be composed of such things as beliefs, norms, laws, knowledge, and ideas. Lapidus's interpretation has been, correspondingly, that of a functional, norm-based, regional society; Chamberlain's view has reflected a utilitarian, knowledge-based, urban space. Yet, both have underscored recent thinking about the necessity of studying informal urban/regional social groups in terms of attitudes based on

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⁵³Ibid., 17, 61; Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, 78, 191.

⁵⁴Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 17.

⁵⁵Lapidus, ″Muslim Cities,″ 56: ″However superior the functions of the towns may have been, Muslim communities were often regional rather than urban bodies.″

⁵⁶Bourdieu, *Outline*, 233.

⁵⁷Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 37-38; this dating is probably derived from Lapidus, see, for instance, Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, xiii-xiv; idem, ″Muslim Cities,″ 52-53, 72; idem, ″The Evolution of Muslim Urban Society,″ *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15 (1973), 38-50.

locality, ethnicity, religion, kinship, etc., rather than categorized class-based attributes.[58] In Mamluk Syro-Egypt household, not class, was the basis of social formation—though not apparently of social change. For Lapidus′s elite households were socialized, their action functionally integrated; even when their behavior became dysfunctional owing to environmental pressures, Mamluk society did not experience structural change or innovation in the relations of power, only collapse. Even Chamberlain′s elite agents of social conflict (*fitnah*) could only manipulate and exploit structure, never consciously question or alter it. Ultimately, Damascus was not a center of macrosocial change, only constant microsocial transformations.

Yet, change is difficult to detect in social processes which appear deterministic or subconscious rather than cognitive. The human capacity for change resides after all in consciousness—the ability to perceive and synthesize many perspectives into one unitary apprehension of reality. Consciousness is formed within the structures of linguistically or symbolically mediated interaction. Society, in effect, is constituted intersubjectively through gestural communication, including language. Gestures are transformed into symbols with meaning understood by both parties. George Herbert Mead′s theory of gestures shows how contingent action by individuals is actually enmeshed within symbolic structures. These gestures are in effect a social institution, what Mead called ″an organization of attitudes,″ which condition social interaction. Individuals behave in terms of potential response by partners in these interactions, internalizing the expectations they have of each other. In this way social norms—by extension social order—become susceptible to change through modifications in communication. Cognition, in short, can have an adaptive affect on action and order through linguistic and symbolic expression.

Social order is, of course, hierarchical, and hierarchy has figured importantly in the discussions of both Lapidus and Chamberlain. The structure of such hierarchization can be seen to depend on superiors, equals, and inferiors developing an intersubjective understanding of one another at the cognitive level—″taking the role of the other″ as Mead once observed. Individual behavior is integrated collectively by means of reciprocal expectations about behavior. Effective communication about these expectations can be seen, therefore, as supportive of social order; understanding a symbolic action after all means understanding about rules. It seems unlikely that social process can ever be demonstrated as either strictly normative or utilitarian, functional or self-indicating as Lapidus and Chamberlain have suggested. It may be possible, however, to fulfill Lapidus′s original mandate about exploring concepts, values, and symbols of social order by demonstrating how action and structure were mediated through the establishment of a communicative order within Mamluk society, and how social order depended ultimately on keeping those lines of communication open.

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[58]See, for instance, R. E. Pahl, ″Is the Emperor Naked? Some Questions on the Adequacy of Sociological Theory in Urban and Regional Research,″ *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 13, no. 4 (1989): 709-720.