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The *Kitāb al-idrāk li-lisān al-atrāk* (literally, 'the book of the grasp of the language of Turks') is an outstanding work from many points of view. On the one hand, it can be regarded as the first true grammar of the Turkish language (previous books which include grammatical notes are mainly lexicographic in character)¹. On the other hand, it is the only case of a work written by a major Arab grammarian (Abū Hayyān al-Ġarnāṭī, the teacher of Ibn 'Aqīl and Ibn Hišām) which is not concerned with Classical Arabic. The importance of such a choice is hard to overestimate. Arab grammarians did not confine themselves to the study of Arabic language for lack of knowledge of other languages: many of them, including prominent scholars like Sībawayhi or az-Zamahšarī, came from a Persian stem, and had a good command of Farsi². Rather, this self-limitation stems from an epistemological choice. The aim of *naḥw* and *taṣrīf* was mainly to get a better understanding of the Qur'ān and to choose among alternative readings: far though the vertiginous theoretical constructions of Arab grammarians went, this basic assumption always lay in the background. Consequently, only the data relevant to the reconstruction of the Purest Arabic language (*al-'arabiyya al-fuṣḥā*) were taken into account: the rejection of suspicious material went so far to give *ḥadīth* only a marginal role (mainly limited to cases where no evidence from more reliable sources was available) owing to the risk of linguistic contamination through the chain of transmitters³.

Why did a grammarian as Abū Hayyān so blatantly deviate from this basic theoretical tenet? The sources, as usual, give an anecdotal account, and explain everything by appealing to the curiosity of the author towards foreign languages, an account strengthened by Abū Hayyān's own statements⁴.

Modern scholars, both Easterners and Westerners, generally accept this explanation with unbelievable lack of criticism; the only exception is Mansuroğlu (1977-88) who views the *Idrāk* as an answer to the desire, widespread among Egyptian 'ulamā',

¹ Even Kaşgari's *Dīwān*, in spite of many scattered grammatical remarks (especially in the introductory section devoted to word structure), remains basically a Turkish-Arabic dictionary, or rather a lexicographic encyclopedia.

² az-Zamahšarī composed one of the first Arabic-Persian dictionaries (*Lexicon*), see Haywood 1965: 107, 118-19, for a discussion.

³ See Bohas, Guillaume & Kouloughli 1990:18 ff.

⁴ See Abū Hayyān, *Idrāk* 5.

to understand the language of the Egyptian ruling class: under this view, the *Idrāk* would be just a little more than a practical handbook.

Both views are trivially true, both do not really explain anything: obviously, Abū Ḥayyān could not write his treatise if he had no interest and curiosity for foreign languages; obviously as well, the *Idrāk* has a teaching function too. But the latter is mainly confined to the lexicographic section, whereas the *taṣrīf* and *naḥw* sections are grammatical treatises on their own: their concern is much more theoretical than a practical handbook could ever need.

Further, two statements by Mansuroğlu are likely to be false: that the knowledge of Turkish⁵ could be useful to Egyptian 'ulamā' getting in touch with the ruling class, and that the grasp of such a knowledge was so important to urge a famous grammarian as Abū Ḥayyān to write a grammar of the Turkish dialects spoken in Egypt.

First, there is no evidence that Turkish was used as a medium of communication outside the Mamlūk barracks (and even there, most curriculum studies were held in Arabic): 'ulamā' speaking Turkish were so rare that this ability is explicitly noted in the texts⁶. Second, if the demand for Turkish handbooks was really so large, it is not clear why no other Arab grammarian but Abū Ḥayyān wrote Turkish grammars: for instance, Ibn 'Aqīl who, as both a pupil of Abū Ḥayyān's and a leading 'ālim in the Egyptian judiciary (he reached the office of *qāḍī l-quḍāt* in 759/1358, even if for just a few months), seems the ideal candidate for such a task, never did.

The hypothesis I propose in this paper gives a rather different account. I think that the production of *Idrāk* can only be explained within the cultural policy of the Mamlūk regime. The essential reason of this cultural policy was a need for legitimacy: Mamlūks had the usual legitimacy problems which every non-Arab ruler (that is, virtually every ruler in Abū Ḥayyān's times) met, with the addition of the obvious lack of a viable genealogy (Mamlūks were kidnapped from their lands and eradicated, so the genealogical artifacts built for other non-Arab rulers were impossible for them) and the contemptuous attitude most Egyptian 'ulamā' shared towards Turks. The latter aspect is convincingly shown by Haarmann's seminal article about the Arab image of the Turk (Haarmann 1988b). The sources depict Abū Ḥayyān as an independent man, who fiercely refused every compromise with the power and obtained appointments owing to his intellectual capacities only. But many episodes in his life and career are clearly counterfactual to this image, and show the tight ties Abū Ḥayyān had with the Mamlūk court. In the next sections, I shall examine the

⁵ The label 'Turkish' is used here to refer to the bundle of dialectal varieties spoken by Turks in Mamlūk Egypt, that is mainly (but not only) Qipčaq and Turkman.

⁶ See Haarmann 1988a.

sources and their contradictions, and shall propose an alternative explanation for some doubtful episodes.

The sources

The main primary source for our knowledge of the life and career of Abū Ḥayyān is *Nafḥ* (I, 823-862), the history (and literary history) of Muslim Spain by al-Maqqarī. al-Maqqarī includes a biography of Abū Ḥayyān in the fifth book of his work, entirely dedicated to the scholars who travelled eastwards to fulfil their intellectual achievements, *ar-rāḥilun min al-Andalus ilā l-Maṣriq*; as Glazer points out in his introduction to *Manḥağ* (Abū Ḥayyān's commentary on Ibn Mālik's *Alfiyya*), al-Maqqarī gives much room to this biography, which shows to be the longest among the *tarāğim* of grammarians.

al-Maqqarī's compilation is based on several previous sources, among which are Ibn Ḥağar al-ʿAsqalānī, al-Kutubī (who on its turn draws extensively from as-Ṣafadī), Ibn Rāğih, and so on. Many of these sources are still extant, notably the *Durar* by Ibn Ḥağar, and the *Fawāt* by al-Kutubī. Additional information is provided by az-Zarkašī's *Ta'riḥ* and as-Suyūṭī's *Buğya*.

Just a few information come from Abū Ḥayyān's own works. His *muqaddimāt* are usually scanty, the rare autobiographical statements are scattered.

Secondary literature is not much extended. The most dedicated Western scholar to the study of Abū Ḥayyān's work is Glazer, the editor of Abū Ḥayyān's unfinished commentary on the *Alfiyya*, who, in the introduction of his edition and in a couple of previous articles as well (Glazer 1941 & 1942), devoted himself to the respectable task of separating Abū Ḥayyān from the shadow his more celebrated pupils, Ibn ʿAqīl and Ibn Hišām, cast upon him. Glazer is also the author of the article "Abū Ḥayyān" in the new edition of *Encyclopedie de l'Islam*, which is basically a *résumé* of the introduction to *Manḥağ*.

A monograph on Abū Ḥayyān has been more recently published by the Iraqi scholar al-Ḥadīṭī (1966); this work is useful in that it gathers what the sources relate on the grammarian, which al-Ḥadīṭī groups in chapters devoted to single aspects, but it shows unfortunately almost no critical attitude. Moreover, nor Glazer nor al-Ḥadīṭī give much room to the *Idrāk*, since both are mainly interested in Abū Ḥayyān's works on Arabic language. al-Ḥadīṭī also co-edited with Aḥmad Maṭlūb the *Tuhfa*, a shorter treatise by Abū Ḥayyān on lexicographic rarities in the Qurʾān; the short introduction to the treatise does not add significant information to our knowledge. Another grammatical work by Abū Ḥayyān, the *Tadkira*, has also been edited; in this case too, the 22-page general introduction (fifteen more pages are devoted to the description of the manuscripts and principles of the edition) is a summary of the data supplied by primary sources.

On the Turkish side, we first have the remarkable edition of the *Idrāk* by Caferoğlu, which is much better than the former edition by Mustafa Bey (1309/1891, for which see the note in the quoted article "Ebū Ḥayyān" in *Islam Ansiklopedisi*). If the critical apparatus of the edition is noteworthy, however, Caferoğlu adds just a few more remarks in his introduction: so, he says nothing about such a crucial matter as the process by which Abū Ḥayyān adapted the tools provided by *'ilm an-naḥw wa-t-tasrīf* to the description of the far different Turkish language. In general, the Turks who studied Abū Ḥayyān did it in a way which is exactly specular to the approach of Arab scholars: they were uniquely interested in the works the grammarian wrote on Turkish (apart from the *Idrāk*, three lost treatises are mentioned in medieval bibliographies, and some remarks can be found in the *Manḥağ*).

In fact, it was the Turks who first re-discovered the works of Abū Ḥayyān, whom Arab scholars almost forgot⁷. Köprülüzade, whose importance for contemporary Turkish culture is hard to overestimate (Caferoğlu, himself a pupil of Köprülüzade's, dedicates to the latter his edition of *Idrāk*), in his History of Turkish Literature gives Abū Ḥayyān a key role in the history of Turkish literary self-consciousness (Köprülüzade 1926:366 ff.). This way, most Turkish studies on Abū Ḥayyān shared this 'nationalist' attitude, which led them to overlook other works by Abū Ḥayyān. Thus, Mansuroğlu (1977-88) only examines works about Turkish. The leading interpretative hypothesis in the article, as already mentioned, is that Abū Ḥayyān answered to a demand for Turkish-learning material. The core of the article (apart from the introductory, not too accurate and sometimes mistaken, biographical section, and the final notes on the editions of the *Idrāk*) is devoted to an analysis of the historical and sociolinguistic background of the emergence of Turkish language in Egypt.

We may conclude these remarks on the sources by stating that doubtless Abū Ḥayyān has not yet obtained the interest he deserves. Most scholars who studied him often show an unbelievable carelessness. Let us just see a couple of cases.

Mansuroğlu (1977-88: I, 30) closes the introductory biographical sketch by stating that "Abū Ḥayyān died in the Mataḥsara borough of Granada". Now, this statement holds two mistakes: first, the name of the borough in the source is Mataḥsāras, and not Mataḥsara (which moreover gets no diacritics); second, and worse, Abū Ḥayyān was born in Granada, and, after he fled al-Andalus, never came back. He definitely died in Cairo.

Another incredible mistake can be found in Glazer's introduction to the edition of *Manḥağ*. After telling the break in the relationship among Abū Ḥayyān and Ibn Taymiyya, an episode to which we shall return below, he makes some hypotheses

⁷ Although we should not forget the pages Goldziher devoted to Abū Ḥayyān in his study on the Zāhiri *madḥab* (Goldziher 1884:187-193).

about the date of the break. Since Abū Ḥayyān is reported by Goldziher to have answered a pilgrim who called him to declaim his *madīḥ* of Ibn Taymiyya that he deleted the poem from his *dīwān*, and since the latter episode took place during Abū Ḥayyān's pilgrimage to Mecca in 737/1336, Glazer concludes that "it must have taken place some time before 1336" (Abū Ḥayyān, *Manḥağ* xx). The statement is trivially true, since Ibn Taymiyya died in the Citadel of Damascus in 1328, and the quarrel presumably took place before his death.

Finally, an omission should be signalled in the otherwise magnificent study by Haarmann on *awlād an-nās* (Haarmann 1988a), the descendants of Mamlūks who were themselves banned from entering the army. Haarmann dedicates a part of the article to the few '*ulamā*' who mastered Turkish: Abū Ḥayyān, whose *Idrāk*, apart from three other lost treatises of his on aspects of Turkish language, should be regarded as having some knowledge of Turkish, is missing from the list. Curiously enough, two Egyptian '*ulamā*' are said in footnotes to have been pupils of Abū Ḥayyān.

This carelessness does not seem to be casual: the sensation is that the fact that Abū Ḥayyān was not just an Arab grammarian, not just the author of the first grammar of Turkish, not just the only dissenting commentator of Ibn Mālik, not just a Zāhirī scholar who fled eastwards and became a Šāfi'ī, makes people disoriented and creates a feeling of annoyance.

The sources and their contradictions

If we give a closer examination to the biography of Abū Ḥayyān provided by the primary sources, some important facts remain unexplained. Let us briefly examine the biographical data, focusing on the problematic points.

Aṭīr ad-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. 'Alī b. Yūsuf b. Ḥayyān Abū Ḥayyān al-Garnāṭī al-Ġayyānī an-Nafzī al-Andalusī (other *kunan* include an-Nahwī, and, significant enough as we shall see, aš-Šāfi'ī) was born (and did not die) in Granada, or in its township (both possibilities are related by al-Maqqarī, depending on whether Maṭahšāras is regarded as a borough of Granada or a town on its own), in 654/1256.

After some years of study under some of the most renowned Zāhirī scholars in al-Andalus, Abū Ḥayyān left his motherland in 679/1280. The sources provide various reports to explain this departure: they share the composition of a libel by Abū Ḥayyān against a teacher of his, and the subsequent flight of the young student (he was only 24). Whatever the contingent reason which led Abū Ḥayyān, both the desire to acquire a better instruction and to look for fortune have probably been decisive. al-Andalus in the end of 13th century, with its restricted bounds and the inescapable pull of the *Reconquista*, was by no means a land of opportunity, and

travels in the Mašriq are a commonplace in the biographies of Hispano-Arabic scholars.

After about ten years of wanderings that led him as far as Ethiopia and gave him the possibility to fulfil the *ḥaġġ*, Abū Hayyān finally settled in Egypt, where he had shortly passed by some years before. In the few years elapsed from his arrival at Cairo till 698/1298, he succeeded in a remarkable career: first, he got a position as a head teacher at the *qubba* Manṣūriyya, by reading the Qur'ān in the Aqmar mosque as well, then he obtained a post to teach philology at the Ibn Ṭulūn mosque.

The sources offer no convincing explanation for this extraordinary career. They account for everything by appealing to the ability of the young scholar, and to the fame that preceded him when he arrived at Cairo. Both reasons are insufficient, and moreover doubtful: Abū Hayyān had probably composed none of his most important treatises before his arrival in Egypt (he was not thirty years old); besides, he was not yet regarded as an authority, if he had to pursue his grammatical studies under the Egyptian *naḥwī* Ibn an-Naḥḥās even after his nomination at the Manṣūriyya (Ibn an-Naḥḥās held the position at the Ṭulūniyya which Abū Hayyān was appointed to after the death of the former).

It is highly unlikely that a young, unknown foreigner could pursue such a career without being sponsored by the establishment. As Escovitz showed in his seminal study on the office of *qādī l-quḍāt* under the Bahrī Mamlūks (Escovitz 1984), both the Manṣūriyya and the Ṭulūniyya were among the leading teaching institutions in Mamlūk Cairo. Many of the jurists who were charged with the office of *qādī l-quḍāt* worked there before their appointment to the highest office; some of them held the teaching position even later⁸. The appointment to these positions was strictly under state control: support by the establishment was a *conditio sine qua non* to hope for a teaching career in high-level institutions.

Another unexplained event in the life of Abū Hayyān is strictly tied to his career. Some time after his settlement in Egypt, the grammarian passed from the Zāhirī *madhab* to the Šāfi'ī: the sources relate the information without comments. The date of the conversion is not easy to fix: the *terminus ante quem* is 1312, date of the composition of the *Iḍrāk*, in whose introduction Abū Hayyān is referred to with the *nisba* aš-Šāfi'ī.

I think that the conversion is to be placed in the first years Abū Hayyān spent in Egypt, immediately before his first appointment at the Manṣūriyya, if we just have a look at the developments of appointments to teaching institutions in Egypt (we shall follow the reconstruction in Escovitz's article).

⁸ Teaching was an obligatory stage in a top judge's career: "All the judges held teaching posts before and after they were appointed" (Escovitz 1984:173).

The office of chief judge, originally an ʿAbbāsid institution, was created in Egypt in the second half of 4th/10th century under the Fātimids, among other decisions to mark the proclamation of the caliphate (the provincial chief judge in Egypt was before, at least formally, dependent from the *qāḍī l-quḍāt* in Baghdad).

The Mamlūks introduced a novelty in the mechanism: the sultan az-Zāhir Baybars al-Bunduqdārī (658-676/1260-1277) replaced the single chief judge, always a member of the leading *madhhab* in Egypt, the Šāfiʿīs, with four chief judges, one for each of the four *madāhib* represented in the Near East (Šāfiʿīs, Ḥanafīs, Mālikīs, and Ḥanbalīs). Subsequently, positions in most juridical and academic institutions were occupied according to the share of each *madhhab*.

Shares were not equal, anyway: research by Escovitz shows that "of the four *madāhib*, the Šāfiʿīs were the most successful in acquiring posts, the Ḥanafīs second (but not nearly so successful), the Mālikīs third, and the Ḥanbalīs were far beyond anyone else" (Escovitz 1984:173). Vacancies were usually filled according to *madāhib*, so that only candidates belonging to a certain *madhhab* were eligible to positions granted to that *madhhab*. This way, the passage of Abū Ḥayyān from the Zāhirīs to the Šāfiʿīs finds a natural explanation: belonging to one of the four official *madhhab* was a precondition to get a state-controlled position; Abū Ḥayyān, as a Zāhirī, had no chance to enter the system; thus, he converted, and choose the most promising *madhhab*, the one that controlled more positions⁹.

An interesting episode gives some ground to my hypothesis. According to al-Maqrīzī (quoted by Escovitz), in 767/1365-66, the Mamlūk *amīr* Yalbugā al-Ḥaṣṣākī al-ʿUmārī established seven teaching posts in the Ibn Ṭulūn mosque, which were granted to the Ḥanafīs. This decision is said to have caused a wave of conversions to the Ḥanafī *madhhab* among the Šāfiʿīs. The formal character of Abū Ḥayyān's decision is further shown by the otherwise curious statement of Ibn Ḥaḡar that "Abū Ḥayyān was a Zāhirī even in grammar".

In the light of this situation, Glazer's statement that "the real reason for this [that is, the conversion of Abū Ḥayyān] is still unknown"¹⁰ is incredibly naive. *Mutatis mutandis*, it amounts to wonder why a young foreigner without means tears the membership card of a small party of his remote motherland to enter the ruling party of the country.

Of course, becoming a Šāfiʿī was not enough for a career. Abū Ḥayyān needed some powerful support, too. He found it in the person of the *amīr* Sayf ad-Dīn

⁹ It cannot be excluded that a renowned scholar could be appointed to an important academic position outside this mechanism. Escovitz quotes no case, since his research is limited to judges who occupied the office of *qāḍī l-quḍāt*, who were by definition inside the four-*madhhab* system. Anyway, it is highly unlikely that a young scholar as Abū Ḥayyān could overcome his belonging to the 'wrong' *madhhab*.

¹⁰ Glazer's Introduction in Abū Ḥayyān, *Manḥaḡ* xx.

Argūn an-Nāṣirī, *nā'ib* (that is, roughly viceroy) of Egypt, who accepted Abū Hayyān among his intimates.

The client ties with Argūn help to explain the relationship among Abū Hayyān and Ibn Taymiyya, another black spot in traditional reports. Abū Hayyān was for some years a public supporter of Ibn Taymiyya, after the latter's triumphal re-entrance in Cairo with an-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third and definitive ascent to the power. His enthusiasm went till the composition of a *madīh* in his honour.

Some years later, the two definitively broke. The sources give anecdotal explanations, which is understandable; modern scholars accept that, which is much less understandable. Ibn Ḥaḡar (*Durar* IV, 308) attributes the quarrel to the reading of Ibn Taymiyya's *Kitāb al-'arṣ*, which convinced Abū Hayyān of the error of Ibn Taymiyya's anthropomorphism (*taṣbīḥ*). al-Maqqarī, on the other hand, says that "among the causes" of Abū Hayyān's rage was Ibn Taymiyya's alleged statement that "Sībawayhi lies" (*Nafḥ* I, 857).

Now, things must be more complex: both explanations should lead us to a poor idea of Abū Hayyān. If we think of the relationship among the Mamlūk power and Ibn Taymiyya's religious reform, a more reasonable account can be found.

Episodically persecuted in the convulse first decade of fourteenth century, Ibn Taymiyya was finally freed from accusations by the sultan Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn after the latter's third access to the power (709/1310) and became an intimate of his. The *amīr* Sayf ad-Dīn Argūn, the protector of Abū Hayyān, was among the most convinced supporters of Ibn Taymiyya, which helps to explain the enthusiasm of Abū Hayyān, or at least its public manifestations.

For some years, an-Nāṣir Muḥammad endorsed Ibn Taymiyya's movement for the restoration of orthodoxy: it was doubtless a good chance to enhance the Mamlūks' public image as pious Sunnis, an important element of their self-legitimation policy, as we shall see. But eventually the Ḥanbalī reformer fell in disgrace, probably after his involvement in the plots managed by Humayda, *amīr* of Mecca, with the *ilḥān* *Hudābanda*, discovered in 716/1317¹¹.

In the following eleven years, Ibn Taymiyya suffered an alternation of imprisonments and conditional releases, until his death in the Citadel of Damascus in 728/1328. It can be reasonably assumed that the fall of Ibn Taymiyya was the true cause of Abū Hayyān's change of attitude, whatever the accidental reason could be. If the quoted episode of the pilgrim asking Abū Hayyān for his panegyric to Ibn Taymiyya is real, we may conclude that the grammarian made a safe choice by deleting it from his *dīwān*.

Summing up the previous discussion, we may trace a sketch of the biography of Abū Hayyān, which allows to give the traditional story a more logical succession.

¹¹ See Laoust 1960.

Thus, Abū Hayyān arrived at Cairo as a young, foreign scholar; he quickly entered the entourage of Sayf ad-Dīn Arġūn and, approximately in the same time, passed to the Šāfi'ī *madhhab*, which assured him a relatively rapid career. He went on sharing the Mamlūks' choices of cultural policy, by first strongly supporting Ibn Taymiyya's movement, and leaving him (under some occasional quarrelling) after he fell in disgrace.

A sketch of Mamlūk ideology

The legitimacy of rulers has always been a key question in Islamic political thinking. At least in theory, the caliph, as the leader of the *umma*, had to fulfil mostly religious requirements, but also, under the theoretical conception of the caliphate, to belong to the family of the Prophet, or at least to his tribe.

After the end of the real political control by the 'Abbāsīd caliphs, the split among authority and power became apparent. The caliphs progressively lost the effective control over the state, whereas they were still considered the only legitimate source of power. This new situation was embodied in the institution of sultanate, first established by the Seljuk Tuġril Bey in 1055¹². Turkish rulers had always to accept the paradoxical situation of the true holder of power who receives his formal legitimisation from a weaker, theoretical ruler: their lack of legitimacy could not allow them to assume directly the caliphate, as others (e.g., the Fātimids) could.

Mamlūks felt in a particularly strong way the problem of their legitimisation. As military slaves who reversed in a palace coup their legitimate masters, the only legitimacy of their power was the capacity of holding it, an unbearable situation in the long run. So, they soon introduced the fiction of a formal investiture: after the Mongols took Baghdad in 1258 and killed the last 'Abbāsīd caliph, al-Musta'ṣim billāh, the Mamlūk az-Zāhir Baybars hosted an 'Abbāsīd *amīr*, al-Mustanṣir billāh b. az-Zāhir, who settled in Cairo as the legitimate caliph, and granted to him the title of universal sultan of Islam. These 'Abbāsīd shadow-caliphs continued to formally invest the Mamlūk sultans till the fall of the dynasty.

On the other hand, the Mamlūks lost no occasion to stress their behaviour as legitimate Muslim rulers. They fought the enemies of Islam (first the Mongols, whose rush was stopped at 'Ayn Ġālūt, then the Franks in Palestine, whose last stronghold, Accra, fell in 690/1291); they always behaved as pious rulers, by supporting Sunnī Islam and granting privileges to the '*ulamā*'.

These measures, however, did not ensure full legitimacy to the Mamlūks. The worst obstacle was the pious attitude most Egyptians, and virtually all the '*ulamā*',

¹² See Lapidus 1988: ch. 9.

had towards the Turks. Haarmann (1988b) shows very clearly the strength of anti-Turkish biases in Mamlūk Egypt.

Egyptian *'ulamā'* built what we can call an anti-Turkish ideology. The core of this ideology is represented by a bulk of negative features attributed to the Turks: they are depicted as savage people, uncouth, without any historical background (which was readily granted to other non-Arab peoples, e.g. the Persians), alien to the country, not able to speak Arabic in an acceptable way, and so on.

Even if this anti-Turkish ideology was not directly translated into opposition against the Mamlūk rulers, it was however intrinsically dangerous for them: a sultan who is generally regarded by the intellectual class of his country as the leader of a mass of barbarian, violent foreign slaves, has not much chance to really obtain legitimacy for his power.

The Mamlūks had therefore to develop an alternative ideology, which could on the one hand further legitimate the religious rightfulness of the power, and on the other hand spread a more positive image of the Turks and their culture. The issue comes to a fuller development with the definitive seizure of power by Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn an-Nāṣir.

The latter, in fact, had for the first time a chance to organize the country having neither internal troubles which deprived him twice of the power, nor the external pressure which Mongols and Franks caused to his predecessors. Muḥammad immediately began a program of radical restructuring of the Mamlūk state, together with a cultural policy on his own. The latter is remarkably witnessed by the architectural policy of the period. A tireless builder, Muḥammad an-Nāṣir enlarged the area of Cairo to unprecedented dimensions, writing in stone the signs of his glory.

The religious ideology of the Mamlūks was shortly embodied in the reform movement of Ibn Taymiyya. As we saw before, Muḥammad an-Nāṣir supported from some years the Ḥanbalī theologian. Even if it is difficult to reach a conclusion about the true aims of this support, the Mamlūks were likely to try to enhance their image as champions of Sunnī Islam. Perhaps, if Ibn Taymiyya showed himself more prone to compromise with the power, the religious history of Mamlūk Egypt could have run another way.

Anyway, many episodes, like the remembered equalisation of the four main *madāhib*, reveal the project of Mamlūks to break the compactness of Egyptian *'ulamā'* as an opposition group, although in a masked way. The transformation of a reactionary Ḥanbalī movement in a, more or less officially, state-backed view of Islam seems to fit in this project.

The other aspect of Mamlūk ideology is the reaction to the anti-Turkish bias which was widespread among Egyptian intellectuals. This reaction is clearly witnessed from both the curriculum of Mamlūk education, in which literary culture took an important weight, far more than what the formation of a military elite could require, and the cultural activities of the *awlād an-nās*, the descendants of Mamlūk soldiers,

who were rigidly excluded from the army¹³. The latter became to assume a growing role in fourteenth-century Egyptian culture. Many of them entered the '*ulamā*' institutions, and contributed to the fight against the anti-Turkish ideology by depicting Turks in a more favourable way in their works.

The *Idrāk* can be considered a contribution to the pro-Turkish, Mamlūk ideology. In its deliberately linguistic-theoretical shape, it seems addressed to the '*ulamā*' more than to people wishing to learn the language. Under this aspect, it clearly differs from other previous or contemporary works which had more practical aims. The quoted hypothesis by Mansuroğlu, according to which the *Idrāk* is a product of the need of Egyptian intellectuals to master the Turkish language, can be applied to the lexicographic part only, which, much more accurate though, does not essentially differ from other Turkish-Arabic word-lists. But the same cannot absolutely be said for the *taṣrīf* and *naḥw* sections.

Abū Ḥayyān himself is aware of that. In the introduction to the *Idrāk*, he says: "The aim of this book is to fix (*dabt*) a large part of the language of Turks, lexicon, morphonology and syntax. I have fixed this language letter by letter and have ordered the treatment of the lexicon according to the letters of the alphabet in the Turkish language: I give the Turkish form and let it be succeeded by its analogous in the Arabic language; then, I make it be followed by morphonology (*taṣrīf*), and then by syntax (*naḥw*). Lexicon is taken from people I trust, masters in the art of translation: the amazing arrangement and the marvellous abridgement are mine. In morphonology and syntax, I have imitated nothing: rather, I brought them from power to reality by enquiring and asking" (Abū Ḥayyān, *Idrāk* 6-7).

What are the ideological aims of Abū Ḥayyān? We must keep in mind the linguistic side of the anti-Turkish ideology: Turks are regarded as barbarians in the etymological sense, their language is not given any dignity. The answer to this bias is indirect, yet powerful: by describing within a theoretical approach the structures of Turkish morphonology and syntax, Abū Ḥayyān supports the view that Turkish is a language on its own, which has the same expressive power than Arabic. Thus, the *Idrāk* addresses itself more to '*ulamā*' than to learners. It is more a scholarly demonstration than a handbook for students.

The rhetoric of the *Idrāk*

If the *Idrāk* is the vehicle of an ideology, its formal shape and its descriptive means are to be regarded as the rhetoric that expresses that ideology. We are accustomed to speak of rhetoric in a narrower meaning, but in a broader sense we can

¹³ See Haarmann 1988a.

label rhetoric every means of expression of an ideology. This use of the term is close to the definitions given by Eco (1975).

The rhetorical means employed in the *Idrāk* show the typical features of acculturation: Abū Ḥayyān fits his description of Turkish within the categories elaborated by Arabic *‘ilm an-naḥw wa-t-taṣrīf*, rather than creating new categories, more appropriate for a language deeply different from the original pattern.

This choice can be disapproved of, but Abū Ḥayyān had in fact simply no alternative. He had a theoretical instrument at his disposal, namely the grammar as had been elaborated in about six centuries of Arabic linguistic thinking, and an ideological aim, namely showing that Turkish is a language with the same expressive power than Arabic. Given these data, he could do nothing but try to describe Turkish with the tools provided by Arabic grammar: if he chose to formulate new theoretical principles, expressly designed to describe Turkish language, he would demonstrate exactly what his opponents claimed, namely that Turkish is *not* on the same plane as Arabic.

Let us see some samples of Abū Ḥayyān's descriptive strategy. The first section of *taṣrīf*, after a short description of the letters (*ḥurūf*, that is, consonants, or more properly graphemes) of the Turkish language, is dedicated to the patterns (*awzān*) of Turkish words (Abū Ḥayyān, *Idrāk* 101-104). These patterns are described by employing the metalinguistic forms of *fa‘ala*. This way, all possible patterns of Turkish words, from two to six letters, are catalogued, with a taxonomy that strictly parallels Arabic *taṣrīf* works like Ibn ‘Uṣfūr's *al-Mumtī‘*. Abū Ḥayyān reaches the goal to show that Turkish words are not arbitrary, but fit into a (relatively) small number of patterns; the strangeness of some of these patterns (the structure of Turkish words needs metalinguistic forms like *fa‘ullulul* and *fa‘illilal*) is not relevant to this goal.

Next follows a series of small chapters, each devoted to a category of flexional or derivational morphology. The chapters are organised in a way which strictly corresponds to the subdivisions of Arabic *taṣrīf*. Thus, categories like *ism al-makān* (place-nouns), *taf‘īl* (comparatives), or *maṣdar* (verbal nouns) are given a role which is perhaps not fully justified by their usage in Turkish (Abū Ḥayyān, *Idrāk* 107-109). But even in this case, one must keep in mind the ideal reader, an Arab scholar who looks for the morphological categories of Arabic and discovers, perhaps to his dismay, that all these categories can be found, and aptly translated, in Turkish.

If we pass to syntax, the process of adaptation is more complex, given the deep difference in syntactic structure between the two languages. We shall only examine the treatment of the relative order of verb and agent-subject (*al-fi‘l wa-l-fā‘il*) (Abū Ḥayyān, *Idrāk* 129-130).

Within the concept of Arabic grammar, the underlying order (at the level of base-form, *asl*) of verb and subject cannot be but one and the same. Since one of the basic principles of Arabic grammar states that the regent (*‘āmil*) always precedes the governed word (*ma‘mūl*), the verb must precede its subject.

Given this underlying order, utterances that happen to show a different ordering must be explained by some reordering operation. If Turkish *usually* shows subject-verb order, the natural explanation is that Turkish-speaking people prefer, by what nowadays would be called a stylistic rule, the anteposition of the subject. In fact, Abū Hayyān defines the anteposition (*taqdīm*) of the subject to the verb 'more eloquent' (*afsal*), which puts it on a stylistic, rather than structural, plane.

This attitude should not be blamed. Modern generative linguistics shares it, when it assumes that Universal Grammar invariably has subject—verb—object order at an adequate level of representation (D-structure in most analyses). Under the most rigid, and highly influential, version of this assumption, proposed by Kayne (1993), SVO order is a theoretical necessity, established by tree structure requirements.

Now, any analysis of Turkish within Kayne's framework (no extensive one has been put forth, for the tremendous difficulties it would show) should assume that the underlying order of Turkish sentences is SVO, and that actual sentences are obtained by upward movements of the object (and of the subject too, since the verb is assumed to move upwards to some higher functional projection).

As one can see, the change in the attitude to regard one's linguistic habits as universal is slight, if any. If we think that generative linguistics is one branch of social sciences more open to cultural diversity, we can measure the difficulty to escape the traps of acculturation and inculturation.

Conclusions

Let us briefly sum up the main conclusions reached in this paper.

First, I have proposed to re-interpret the known data about Abū Hayyān's life and works in the light of his ties with the Mamlūk power. This interpretation offers a natural explanation for many otherwise unclear episodes reported by the sources.

Then, I tried to consider the *Idrāk* within the cultural policy of Mamlūk sovereigns, especially Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn, by showing the ideological aims of such a policy and the function of the treatise as a rhetorical support for such an ideology.

Finally, a sketch has been given of the tools Abū Hayyān employed. They show typical acculturation features, as the adaptation of patterns and structures created for the analysis of Arabic language to a very different context.

A conclusive remark is in order about the success of Abū Hayyān's work, and indirectly the success of the Mamlūks' cultural policy. As far as we know, the path began by Abū Hayyān has not been continued. No other major Arab grammarian studied foreign languages (except for lexicographic works), nor the pro-Turkish ideology seems to have gained much support to the Mamlūks. The reasons for that can be many; I think that a key reason is the internal troubles that immediately followed the death of sultan Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn (741/1341). A cultural policy

is possible and effective only if the power can hold the control. The decadence of Bahrī Mamlūks is likely to have hindered further developments of this policy.

The fact that Arabic grammar ignored the possibility to be applied to other languages was probably one of the causes of its decadence. It is a pity for the history of culture, since Arabic grammar in the 13th-14th centuries was still in a powerful age. As many studies are clearly showing,¹⁴ the so-called Late Arab Grammarians are to be regarded among the most important representatives of the Arabic linguistic thinking.

An age which produced such grammarians as Ibn Yaʿīš, Ibn Mālik, Abū Ḥayyān, Ibn ʿAqīl and Ibn Hišām certainly had remarkable chances of development. If the *Idrāk* had been followed by other works in the same spirit, the importance of Arab grammarians in the history of linguistics could have been far greater.

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¹⁴ See especially Bohas, Guillaume & Kouloughli 1990.

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