The *Kitāb al-īdrāk* li-īṣān al-ʿatrāk (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 Ḥayyān al-Garnāṭī, the teacher of Ibn ʿAqīl and Ibn Hisām) 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 Sibawayhi or az-Zamahsari, came from a Persian stem, and had a good command of Farsi2. Rather, this self-limitation stems from an epistemological choice. The aim of *nahw* and *tasrif* was mainly to get a better understanding of the Qurʾān 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-carabiyya al-fusha*) were taken into account: the rejection of suspicious material went so far to give *hadīṯ* 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 Abu Ḥayyān 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 Abu Ḥayyān’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 *Īdrāk* as an answer to the desire, widespread among Egyptian ʿulamāʾ, who ...

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1 Even Kağari’s *Diswān*, 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 lexicographical encyclopedia.

2 az-Zamahsari 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 Ḥayyān, *Īdrāk* 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 Hayyān 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 *tāriḍ* and *nabūw* 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 Turkish could be useful to Egyptian *uílāma* getting in touch with the ruling class, and that the grasp of such a knowledge was so important to urge a famous ulama' of Turkish could be useful to Egyptian *uílāma*.

First, there is no evidence that Turkish was used as a medium of communication outside the Mamluk barracks (and even there, most curriculum studies were held in Arabic): *ǘlāma* speaking Turkish were so rare that this ability is explicitly noted in the text. Second, if the demand for Turkish handbooks was really so large, it is not clear why no other Arab grammarian but Abū Hayyān wrote Turkish grammars: for instance, Ibn 'Aqīl who, as both a pupil of Abū Hayyān's and a leading *ẖālīm* in the Egyptian judiciary (he reached the office of qāḍī 'l-ṣudūr 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 Mamluk regime. The essential reason of this cultural policy was a need for legitimacy: Mamluks had the usual legitimacy problems which every non-Arab ruler (that is, virtually every ruler in Abū Hayyān's times) met, with the addition of the obvious lack of a viable genealogy (Mamluks 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 *ǘlāma* 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 Hayyān 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 Hayyān had with the Mamluk 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 Mamluk Egypt, that is mainly (but not only) Qipchaq and Turkman.


### The sources

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

al-Maqqārī's compilation is based on several previous sources, among which are Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī, al-Kutubi (who on its turn draws extensively from as-Safādī), Ibn Rāǧīḥ, and so on. Many of these sources are still extant, notably the *Durar* by Ibn Ḥaǧar, and the *Fawā'id* by al-Kutubi. Additional information is provided by as-Zarkašī's *Taʿrîḫ* and as-Suyūṭī's *Bugyā*.

Just a few information come from Abū Hayyān'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 Hayyān's work is Glazer, the editor of Abū Hayyān's unfinished commentary on the *Alīyya*, 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 Abu Hayyān from the shadow his more celebrated pupils, Ibn 'Aqīl and Ibn Ḥişām, cast upon him. Glazer is also the author of the article "Abū Hayyān" in the new edition of *Encyclopedie de l'islam*, which is basically a résumé of the introduction to *Manbaḥ*.

A monograph on Abū Hayyān has been more recently published by the Iraqi scholar al-Hāḍīṭi (1960); this work is useful in that it gathers what the sources relate on the grammarian, which al-Hāḍīṭi groups in chapters devoted to single aspects, but it shows unfortunately almost no critical attitude. Moreover, nor Glazer nor al-Hāḍīṭi give much room to the *Idrāk*, since both are mainly interested in Abū Hayyān's works on Arabic language. al-Hāḍīṭi also co-edited with Ahmad Maṭlūb the *Tadhkira*, a shorter treatise by Abū Hayyān on lexicographic rarities in the Qurʿān; the short introduction to the treatise does not add significant information to our knowledge. Another grammatical work by Abū Hayyān, 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.
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First, there is no evidence that Turkish was used as a medium of communication outside the Mamluk barracks (and even there, most curriculum studies were held in Arabic): *ūlamā* 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 Hayyān wrote Turkish grammars: for instance, Ibn 'Aqīl who, as both a pupil of Abū Hayyān’s and a leading *ālim* in the Egyptian judiciary (he reached the office of qādi l-qudāt in 759/1358, even if for just a few months), seems the ideal candidate for such a task, never did.

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**The sources**

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In fact, it was the Turks who first re-discovered the works of Abû Hayyân, whom Arab scholars almost forgot. Köprülüzâde, whose importance for contemporary Turkish culture is hard to overestimate ( Çaferoğlu, himself a pupil of Köprülüzâde's, dedicates to the latter his edition of *İdrâk*), in his *History of Turkish Literature* gives Abû Hayyân a key role in the history of Turkish literary self-consciousness (Köprülüzâde 1926:366 ff.). This way, most Turkish studies on Abû Hayyân shared this 'nationalist' attitude, which led them to overlook other works by Abû Hayyân. Thus, Mansuroğlu (1977-88) only examines works about Turkish. The leading interpretative hypothesis in the article, as already mentioned, is that Abû Hayyân 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 *İdrâk*) 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 Abû Hayyân 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 (1977-88:1, 30) closes the introductory biographical sketch by stating that "Abû Hayyân died in the Matahşara borough of Granada". Now, this statement holds two mistakes: first, the name of the borough in the source is Mataşhârâs, and not Mataşhâra (which moreover gets no diacritics); second, and worse, Abû Hayyân 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 *Manbaḫ*. After telling the break in the relationship among Abû Hayyân and Ibn Taymiyya, an episode to which we shall return below, he makes some hypotheses about the date of the break. Since Abû Hayyân 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 diyâân, and since the latter episode took place during Abû Hayyân’s pilgrimage to Mecca in 737/1336, Glazer concludes that “it must have taken place some time before 1336” (Abû Hayyân, *Manbaḫ* 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 *awâdîd an-nâs* (Haarmann 1988a), the descendants of Mamlûks who were themselves banned from entering the army. Haarmann dedicates a part of the article to the few ‘ulama’ who mastered Turkish: Abû Hayyân, whose *İdrâk*, 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 ‘ulama’ are said in footnotes to have been pupils of Abû Hayyân.

This carelessness does not seem to be casual: the sensation is that the fact that Abû Hayyân was not just an Arab grammarian, not just the author of the first grammar of Turkish, not just the only dissenting commentator of Ibn Mâlik, not just a Zâhirî scholar who fled eastwards and became a Şâﬁ‘i, makes people disoriented and creates a feeling of annoyance.

The sources and their contradictions

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

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Ağır ad-Dīn Muhammad b. Yusuf b. ‘Alī b. Yusuf b. Hayyān Abū Hayyān al-Garnāṭi al-Gayyānī an-Nafzī al-Andalusî (other *kunān* include an-Nahwī, and, significant enough as we shall see, aš-Sāfī’ī) was born (and did not die) in Granada, or in its township (both possibilities are related by al-Maqṣari, depending on whether Mataḥšaras 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 Zāhiri scholars in al-Andalus, Abū Hayyān left his motherland in 679/1280. The sources provide various reports to explain this departure: they share the composition of a libel by Abū Hayyān against a teacher of his, and the subsequent flight of the young student (he was only 24). Whatever the contingent reason which led Abū Hayyān, 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

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travels in the Maṣriq 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 ḥaggā, Abū Ḥayyān 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 Mansūriyya, by reading the Qur’ān in the Aqmar mosque as well, then he obtained a post to teach philology at the Ibn Tulun 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 Ḥayyān 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 nahwi Ibn an-Nahhās even after his nomination at the Mansūriyya (Ibn an-Nahhās held the position at the Tuluniyya which Abū Ḥayyān 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-qudat under the Bahri Mamluks (Escovitz 1984), both the Mansūriyya and the Tuluniyya were among the leading teaching institutions in Mamluk Cairo. Many of the jurists who were charged with the office of qādī l-qudat worked there before their appointment to the highest office; some of them held the teaching position even later. The appointment to these positions was strictly under state control: support by the establishment was a condition sine qua non to hope for a teaching career in high-level institutions.

Another unexplained event in the life of Abū Ḥayyān is strictly tied to his career. Some time after his settlement in Egypt, the grammarians passed from the Zāhirī madhhab to the Šāfī‘īs: 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 Ḳitāb, in whose introduction Abū Ḥayyān is referred to with the nisba aš-Šāfī‘ī. I think that the conversion is to be placed in the first years Abū Ḥayyān spent in Egypt, immediately before his first appointment at the Mansūriyya, 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).

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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 ‘Abbāsid 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 qādī l-qudat in Baghdad).

The Mamluks introduced a novelty in the mechanism: the sultan az-Zahir Baybars al-Bunduqdārī (658-676/1260-1277) replaced the single chief judge, always a member of the leading madhhab in Egypt, the Šāfī‘īs, with four chief judges, one for each of the four madhhab represented in the Near East (Šāfī‘īs, Hanafīs, 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 madhhab, the Šāfī‘īs were the most successful in acquiring posts, the Hanafīs 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 madhhab, 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 Šāfī‘īs 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 positions.

An interesting episode gives some ground to my hypothesis. According to al-Maqrizī (quoted by Escovitz), in 767/1365-66, the Mamluk amīr Sayf ad-Dīn al-Murrūjī established seven teaching posts in the Ibn Tulun mosque, which were granted to the Hanafīs. This decision is said to have caused a wave of conversions to the Hanafī madhhab among the Šāfī‘īs. The formal character of Abū Ḥayyān’s decision is further shown by the otherwise curious statement of Ibn Hāgār 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” 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 Šāfī‘ī 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
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After about ten years of wanderings that led him as far as Ethiopia and gave him the possibility to fulfill the ḥaggū, Abū Hâyyân 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 Mansûriyya, by reading the Qur'ān in the Aqmar mosque as well, then he obtained a post to teach philology at the Ibn Tulun mosque.

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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 qâḍî l-quḍât under the Bahri Mamlûk (Escovitz 1984), both the Mansûriyya and the Tulunîyya were among the leading teaching institutions in Mamlûk Cairo. Many of the jurists who were charged with the office of qâḍî l-quḍât worked there before their appointment to the highest office; some of them held the teaching position even later. 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 Hâyyân is strictly tied to his career. Some time after his settlement in Egypt, the grammarian passed from the Zâhirī madhâbih to the Šâfî‘îs: 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 Idrâk, in whose introduction Abû Hâyyân is referred to with the nisba ʿâl-Sâfî‘î.

I think that the conversion is to be placed in the first years Abû Hâyyân spent in Egypt, immediately before his fist appointment at the Mansûriyya, 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 “Abbâsid institution, was created in Egypt in the second half of 4th/10th century under the Fâtimids, among other decisions to mark the proclamation of the caliphate (the provincial chief judge in Egypt was before, at least formally, dependent from the qâḍî l-quḍât in Baghdâd).

The Mamlûk introduced a novelty in the mechanism: the sultan az-Zâhir Baybars al-Bunduqdârī (658-676/1260-1277) replaced the single chief judge, always a member of the leading madhâbih in Egypt, the Šâfî‘îs, with four chief judges, one for each of the four madhâbih represented in the Near East (Šâfî‘îs, Hanafîs, Mâlikîs, and Hanbalîs). Subsequently, positions in most juridical and academic institutions were occupied according to the share of each madhâbih.

Shares were not equal, anyway: research by Escovitz shows that “of the four madhâbih, the Šâfî‘îs were the most successful in acquiring posts, the Hanafîs second (but not nearly so successful), the Mâlikîs third, and the Hanbalîs were far beyond anyone else” (Escovitz 1984:173). Vacancies were usually filled according to madhâbih, so that only candidates belonging to a certain madhâbih were eligible to positions granted to that madhâbih. This way, the passage of Abû Hâyyân from the Zâhirîs to the Šâfî‘îs finds a natural explanation: belonging to one of the four official madhâbih was a precondition to get a state-controlled position; Abû Hâyyân, as a Zâhirî, had no chance to enter the system; thus, he converted, and choose the most promising madhâbih, the one that controlled more positions.

An interesting episode gives some ground to my hypothesis. According to al-Maqrîzî (quoted by Escovitz), in 767/1365-66, the Mamlûk amîr Yalbugâ al-Ḥâsâkî al-ʿUmârî established seven teaching posts in the Ibn Tulûn mosque, which were granted to the Hanafîs. This decision is said to have caused a wave of conversions to the Hanafî madhâbih among the Šâfî‘îs. The formal character of Abû Hâyyân’s decision is further shown by the otherwise curious statement of Ibn Ḥâǧar that “Abû Hâyyân was a Zâhirî even in grammar”.

In the light of this situation, Glazer’s statement that “the real reason for this [that is, the conversion of Abû Hâyyân] is still unknown” is incredibly naïve. 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 Šâfî‘i was not enough for a career. Abû Hâyyân needed some powerful support, too. He found it in the person of the amîr Sayf ad-Dîn...
Arğün an-Nâşirî, naʿīb (that is, roughly viceroy) of Egypt, who accepted Abû Hayyân among his intimates.

The client ties with Arğün help to explain the relationship among Abû Hayyân and Ibn Taymiyya, another black spot in traditional reports. Abû Hayyân was for some years a public supporter of Ibn Taymiyya, after the latter's triumphal re-entrance in Cairo with an-Nâşir Muhammad's third and definitive ascent to the power. His enthusiasm went till the composition of a madīḥ 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 Haṣar (Durur IV, 308) attributes the quarrel to the reading of Ibn Taymiyya's Kitâb al-ʿars, which convinced Abû Hayyân of the error of Ibn Taymiyya's anthropomorphism (tasbîh). al-Maqqari, on the other hand, says that "among the causes" of Abû Hayyân's rage was Ibn Taymiyya's alleged statement that "Sibawayhi lies" (Nafh I, 857).

Now, things must be more complex: both explanations should lead us to a poor idea of Abû Hayyân. If we think of the relationship among the Mamlûk 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 Muhammad b. Qalâwûn after the latter's third access to the power (709/1310) and became an intimate of his. The amīr Sayf ad-Dîn Arğün, the protector of Abû Hayyân, was among the most convinced supporters of Ibn Taymiyya, which helps to explain the enthusiasm of Abû Hayyân, or at least its public manifestations.

For some years, an-Nâşir Muhammad endorsed Ibn Taymiyya's movement for the restoration of orthodoxy: it was doubtless a good chance to enhance the Mamlûk's public image as pious Sunnis, an important element of their self-legitimation policy, and Ibn Taymiyya's alleged statement that "Sibawayhi lies" (Nafh I, 857).

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 Abû Hayyân's change of attitude, whatever the accidental reason could be. If the quoted episode of the pilgrim asking Abû Hayyân for his panegyric to Ibn Taymiyya is real, we may conclude that the grammarian made a safe choice by deleting it from his diwan.

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

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11 See Laoust 1960.

Thus, Abû Hayyân arrived at Cairo as a young, foreign scholar; he quickly entered the entourage of Sayf ad-Dîn Arğün and, approximately in the same time, passed to the Śâflī madīḥb, which assured him a relatively rapid career. He went on sharing the Mamlûk's 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 Mamlûk 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 'Abbāsid 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 Tuğrîl 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.

Mamlûks 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 'Abbâsid caliph, al-Musta'sim billâh, the Mamlûk az-Zahir Baybars hosted an 'Abbâsid amīr, al-Mustânisir billâh b. az-Zâhir, who settled in Cairo as the legitimate caliph, and granted to him the title of universal sultan of Islam. These 'Abbâsid shadow-caliphs continued to formally invest the Mamlûk sultans till the fall of the dynasty.

On the other hand, the Mamlûks 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 Ġalût, then the Franks in Palestine, whose last stronghold, Accrâ, fell in 690/1291); they always behaved as pious rulers, by supporting Sunni Islam and granting privileges to the 'ulama'.

These measures, however, did not ensure full legitimacy to the Mamlûks. The worst obstacle was the pious attitude most Egyptians, and virtually all the 'ulama'.
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These measures, however, did not ensure full legitimacy to the Mamlūks. The worst obstacle was the pious attitude most Egyptians, and virtually all the ‘ulama’,...
had towards the Turks. Haarmann (1988b) shows very clearly the strength of anti-Turkish biases in Mamlūk Egypt.

Egyptian 'ulāma' 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 Muhammad 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. Muhammad 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, Muhammad 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, Muhammad an-Nāṣir supported from some years the Hanballi 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 Sunni 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 madhābīn, reveal the project of Mamlūks to break the compactness of Egyptian 'ulāma' as an opposition group, although in a masked way. The transformation of a reactionary Hanballi 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-nāṣ, the descendants of Mamlūk soldiers, who were rigidly excluded from the army. The latter became to assume a growing role in fourteenth-century Egyptian culture. Many of them entered the 'ulama' 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 'ulama' 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 tasrif and nahw 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 (tasrif), and then by syntax (nahw). 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 'ulama' then 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...
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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, Abû Hâyân defines the anteposition (taqdim) 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 Abû Hâyân’s life and works in the light of his ties with the Mamlûk power. This interpretation offers a natural explanation for many otherwise unclear episodes reported by the sources.

Then, I tried to consider the Idrâk within the cultural policy of Mamlûk sovereigns, especially Muhammad b. Qâlûwûn, 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 Abû Hâyân 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 Abû Hâyân’s work, and indirectly the success of the Mamlûks’ cultural policy. As far as we know, the path began by Abû Hâyân has not been continued. No other major Arab grammarians studied foreign languages (except for lexicographic works), nor the pro-Turkish ideology seems to have gained much support to the Mamlûks. The reasons for that can be many; I think that a key reason is the internal troubles that immediately followed the death of sultan Muhammad b. Qâlûwûn (741/1341). A cultural policy
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 Idrak show the typical features of acculturation: Abū Hayyān fits his description of Turkish within the categories elaborated by Arabic 'ilm an-nabw wa-t-tasrif, rather than creating new categories, more appropriate for a language deeply different from the original pattern.

This choice can be disapproved of, but Abū Hayyān 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 Hayyān's descriptive strategy. The first section of tasrif, after a short description of the letters (buraif, that is, consonants, or more properly graphemes) of the Turkish language, is dedicated to the patterns (aswān) of Turkish words (Abū Hayyān, 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 tasrif works like Ibn 'Usfūr's al-Mumti. Abū Hayyān 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'ala and fa'ala) is not relevant to this goal.

Next follows a series of short 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 tasrif. Thus, categories like aswān (place-nouns), ta'fil (comparatives), or masdar (verbal nouns) are given a role which is perhaps not fully justified by their usage in Turkish (Abū Hayyān, 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-fa'il wa-l-falā il) (Abū Hayyān, Idrāk 129-130).

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

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 other unclear episodes reported by the sources. Then, I tried to consider the Idrāk within the cultural policy of Mamlūk sovereigns, especially Muhammad 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 Mamlūk's cultural policy. As far as we know, the path begun 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 Muhammad b. Qalāwūn (741/1341). A cultural policy...

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 (taqdim) 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
is possible and effective only if the power can hold the control. The decadence of Bahri Mamluks 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, 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 Ya‘ïl, Ibn Mâlik, Abu Hayyân, Ibn ‘Aqîl and Ibn Hîsâm certainly had remarkable chances of development. If the İdrâk 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.