INTRODUCTION

While the influence of Turkic rulers on subject societies certainly made its clearest mark in Iran and Anatolia, it also had an impact in the Near East. This region underwent four periods of legitimate Turkic rule that could serve as cases for comparison: the periods of the Tulunids and Ikhshidids, the Saljuqs and their Atabegs, the Qipchaq Mamluks, and the Ottomans. I shall single out the Qipchaq Mamluks, who held sway in 648-784/1250-1382 and again in 791-2/1389-90. The fact that the impact of Turkic rule can be discerned particularly clearly from changes in the spatial organisation of power is referred to in various ways virtually throughout the present volume. In this chapter, I shall apply this perspective to Egypt and Syria, asking specifically: How did the Qipchaq Mamluks’ rule impact on urban, rural and steppe spaces? What spatial strategies brought about that impact? And lastly, what is the long-term historical significance of their sort of spatial organisation?

The spatial fabric of the Mamluk sultanate has so far mostly been broached as a secondary, if not accidental, consequence of events in...
poli—to-military, administrative, commercial or urban architectural history. Even less attention has been given to how contemporaries conceived it. Some scholars, however, have in fact ventured to consider these issues in their own right. E. Akarlı has investigated the relationship between the commercial transportation network, military-administrative organisation and human agglomeration in eighth/fourteenth-century Syria;\(^5\) J.-C. Garcin has provided an exemplary model of regional geography in his in-depth study of the town of Qūṣ and its environs, and has inspiringly sketched a major change in the spatial organisation of Egypt in the latter half of the eighth/fourteenth-century, which was related in no small way to a change in the géographie de l’attention, i.e. coeval notions of how each of Egypt’s regions was embedded within the country and/or linked to the outside;\(^6\) A. Fuess has examined the Mamluks’ devastation of the Levantine coast out of fear of a return of the Franks, and the consequent strategic shift inland;\(^7\) Y. Frenkel has explored the change in Muslim spatial thinking that was induced by the Crusaders’ sanctification of Palestine and the way in which Sultan Baybars I used this to legitimise his rule;\(^8\) using as an example Jerusalem and its surroundings, N. Luz has revealed the impact of conversion to Islam on urban building activities and the changes in the broader cultural landscape that might ensue from it;\(^9\) and I myself have outlined the Ayyubids’ and early Mamluks’ re-evaluation and restructuring of the steppe hinterland, as well as the long-term rapport between state territories and tribal domains.\(^10\) Furthermore, the findings of archaeologists and historians of architecture concerning settlement, land use and landscapes also have special importance. Here, Palestine in particular has been intensively researched. In addition to the knowledge that has been acquired through Crusades studies, notably the works of R. Ellenblum,\(^11\) a research group on ‘The Formation of Muslim Society in Palestine’ is now working at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, focusing, among other things, on the Islamisation of the architectural landscape to 1500.\(^12\) Also, B.J. Walker’s ongoing Northern Jordan Project is identifying the multi-faceted composition of a rural landscape with an emphasis on the Mamluk and Ottoman

\(^5\) Akarlı 1978.
\(^6\) Garcin 1976, 437, Fig. 3, 438, 445-6; Garcin 1980 passim.
\(^7\) Fuess 2001, esp. chapter 2. See also Ayalon 1965.
\(^8\) Frenkel 2001.
\(^9\) Luz 2002.
\(^12\) http://islamization.huji.ac.il/programs.html (accessed 11 July 2013).