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THE CUSTOMS ADOPTED IN THE TREATIES CONCLUDED BETWEEN THE MAMLUK SULTANS AND THE VENETIAN DOGES (13TH-15TH CENTURIES)

Pierre Moukarzel

Venice’s economic and diplomatic relationship with the Mamluk sultanate dated back to the thirteenth century. It became the Mamluk’s main and favorite European trading partner during the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. As international trade grew and commercial exchange intensified, Venice concluded treaties with the sultans and obtained privileges for its nationals. These privileges were at least equal and often superior to those adopted in trade among European merchant cities. The Venetian privileges in Egypt and Syria did not mean an agreement between two States, but a concession made by the sultan for a group of foreign traders living on his territories. This concession protected them as far as it recognized them legally, not only granted the protection, but especially gave a legal and social existence to the traders. Regular negotiations became established and embassies were sent to Cairo to protect a climate of good agreement indispensable to the realization of fruitful exchanges between Venice and the East. If the claims of the Venetians did not stop from the thirteenth till the fifteenth centuries and occupied the largest part of treaties with the sultans, it was because they constituted means to exercise a certain pressure on the sultan and to oppose to his commercial policy.

In my article, I will try to analyze the customs adopted in the treaties concluded between Venice and the sultans: the forms that were followed for the conclusion of these treaties, the repartition of the treaty’s parts, the writing of clauses and their classification, the series of titles used while presenting the sultan and the Venetian doge, the recognition of the fellow

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nobility and religious prestige of the Venetian doge, the use of Arabic words and expressions in the Latin and Italian versions of the treaties.

During the thirteenth century, the Venetians sent an embassy to Cairo in 1254 and concluded a treaty with the Mamluk sultan Aybak renewing and confirming their privileges already granted by the Ayyubid sultans in 1208, 1238 and 1244. The recurring incidents, and even more and more frequent in the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries till the end of the Mamluk era, entailed the departure of sixteen embassies from Venice to Cairo between 1302 and 1490, and five between 1502 and 1516. Nineteen treaties were concluded during that period.

Many copies of the treaties concluded between the Venetian doges and the Mamluk sultans are preserved in the archives center in Venice. They allow studying the relations that existed between the Mamluk authorities and the Venetians settled in Egypt and Syria from the thirteenth century till the end of the fifteenth century. The Arabic was the language of the original texts issued by the chancellery of the sultans then translated to provide a copy for the Venetian envoys. The preserved Venetian treaties with Mamluks are only copies written in Latin and Italian, therefore we cannot compare them with their Arabic versions. The fact is disputed whether the versions which completely replaced the Arabic texts gave in reality the Venetians the sole perspective of translation by providing a clear, exact and enough complete meaning of the original Arabic for all the needs of relations and trade between Venetians and Mamluks. But a comparison between the Florentine treaty written in Arabic concluded with the sultan in 1497, which was a copy of the Italian version of the Venetian treaty concluded in 1442, shows that these translated texts maintained the original and accurate terms of the treaties concluded with the sultans, and were a sufficient accurate reproduction of all the measures and guarantees mentioned in the Arabic texts without isolating them from the milieu and traditions which they were to be applied, or from the use and general practice that made up for all that there was not literally expressed (Wansbrough 1965: 483-523).

The Latin or Italian copies of the treaty were composed and written formally, in the presence of negotiators and with the use of translators, on the basis of a previously written Arabic, following the practice of earlier centuries. The translation took place in the castle of the sultan in Cairo². Till the middle

² For example, the treaties concluded between Venice and the sultan in 1415 and 1422: « Scripta al CAYRO in lo castello del Cayro… » (Thomas 1966, II: 315).
of the fourteenth century the texts were translated into Latin, but later they were translated into Italian. The treaties did not show so formal attestations of the original Arabic versions, but the reference to the interpreter outlined at the end indicated that we should have proceeded here as in the previous cases and that the Venetian text was compiled on a first Arabic writing. It seemed that Venetian envoys at the court of the sultan in Cairo were provided with authentic and full texts of ancient treaties that they had to obtain their revision or confirmation so many clauses contained the expressions secundum quod est usus et costume (according to the use and custom) or chomo se contien entro le paxe antige de I soldani passadi (as the ancient pacts of the former sultans contained). This circumstance was not strange for such a regular government and as well organized as that of Venice. It is undeniable that there was a great attention and a certain solemnity while writing and interpreting the texts, primitive acts as well as their authentic copies. Clauses that had ensured for longtime considerable profits to the Venetian merchants were renewed. It was not impossible that the ceremony of the conclusion of a treaty was about the same from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, although the adopted formulas at the chancellery noting the negotiation and completion of the act have varied.

As soon as the Venetian ambassadors arrived in Cairo carrying a letter from their sovereign, who accredited them and gave them authority to negotiate, they were received by the sultan. The narratives of the official reception offered by the sultan in the citadel of Cairo extended for a long time over the grand of the sultan and the magnificent architecture of its palace, on costumes, decorations, carpets, rites, music and exchanges of presents. The sultan welcomed solemnly the ambassadors, sitting on his throne and putting a sword and a shield on his right, surrounded with armed men, with all his councilors, secretaries, clerks and other scribes, all of them staying in order according to their ranks. Slaves played lute and flute, sang and beat kettledrums and drums (Catellacci 1881: 172; Thenaud 1864: 183-184).

3 In the treaty concluded in 1422 between the Venetian doge Tomaso Mocenigo and the sultan Barsbay, the name of the translators was indicated at the end of the text, the first one is Sain (probably is a deformation of Shāhin in Arabic), the great interpreter of the sultan who was a Spanish Jew converted to Islam and the scribe Zanon Saimben whose name was a deformation of Johannes Saiben (a Genoese converted to Islam and known as sungur) (Apellániz 2004: 297); «Transactada in latin per trucimanno Sain, grando trucimanno del soldan, e Zanon Saimben, scriptor de la fe sarainescha...» (Thomas 1966, II: 327).
When they arrived in front of the sultan, the ambassadors and all those who accompanied them, knelt down several times, and kissed the ground. And when they had approached the sultan in twelve steps, he made them stand up straight calmly, giving them the permission to speak loudly the message they came for. As soon as the ambassadors had made their communication, the chief interpreter of the sultan repeated the speech in Arabic (Catellacci 1881: 172; Thenaud 1864: 185). At the beginning of the negotiations, the ambassadors presented a copy of the previous treaties or a letter containing a series of articles forming the clauses of a new agreement, and once the sultan heard the requests of the ambassadors, he gave an answer in a loud voice either took time to deliberate the new proposed articles with his administrative officers or listened without giving any answer. Later, the ambassador had to leave by walking backwards and to kiss repeatedly the ground as well as they had made it by arriving. While leaving the citadel, the ambassadors were escorted with great pomp and ceremony to their lodging house by diverse Mamluk officers (Catellacci 1881: 172; Thenaud 1864: 186); (Van Ghistele 1976: 45-46). All these gestures showed the respect which the ambassador professed for a so great sovereign and aimed at giving satisfaction to the sultan. The main purpose of their mission was to honor the sultan, in words and in acts, to obtain from him a favorable answer to their requests and to reach the desired end of their purposes. For his part, the sultan showed to the ambassadors that he was a great sovereign, symbol of justice and power, and that his consent to answer their requests was needed.

It happened that the negotiations did not end in a single audience, and the ambassadors appeared several times in front of the sultan. The sultan Qaytbay received the Venetian ambassador Pietro Diedo twice, and the Venetian ambassador Domenico Trevisan, for more than two months, responded to seven audiences with the sultan Qanṣū al-Ghūrī. The duration of every audience varied between one and three hours and each audience was in a different place, inside rooms in the citadel, or in the garden of the sultan outside the citadel, near its wall (Catellacci 1881: 171, 173, 180; Thenaud 1864: 189, 190, 194, 197, 203, 205). When they arrived to fix by common agreement the bases of the new treaty, a draft was written, almost always in Arabic, and the Venetian text was a solemnly executed translation and an authentic layout on a separate parchment. The texts were written on papers of specific formats: according to the books of the Mamluk chancellery, the
secretaries used papers of half-format (qaṭ' al-nisf) with big characters of
writing called the third (al-thulth) when sending letters to the kings of Aragon
or signing a treaty with them, but for the other European rulers, they used
papers of third-format (qaṭ' al-thulth) (Ibn Nāzir al-Jaysh 1987: 29, 31-32,
35-36; Al-Qalqashandī 1915, VIII: 36, 46-48). The paper formats varied
according to the importance of the sovereigns who were classified into orders:
the big format and complete paper called al-baghdādī was used for the first
order of kings including the highest class of kings such as the khans of the
East. The half-format paper was used when writing to the kings of the second
order whereas the third-format was used for the kings of the fourth order (Al-
Qalqashandī 1913, VI: 190-191). Also for the kings of the fourth order, the
secretaries of the chancellery used quarto papers on which were written the
decrees (al-marāṣīm) of the sultan called fourthly decrees (al-marāṣīm al-
murabba'a) (Pedani Fabris 1994: 59). So according to the Mamluk sultans,
the Venetian doges like other European rulers had a lower rank than the kings
of Aragon. The text took a juridical form or a decree (al-maṣūm) composed
from orders containing the claims of the Venetians and the privileges granted
to them in the Mamluk sultanate. The decree of the sultan was similar to
a circular sent to all the emirs, the governors and the high officials of the
Mamluk provincial administration to adopt it and to execute the orders of
the sultan. But whatever the forms of the texts might be, the essences of their
contents were on the whole clear, and usually were composed of three parts:
the first part started with the titles of the rulers with a reference to the names
of the ambassadors or the messengers charged of the mission⁴; the second
part emphasized the reciprocity of the friendship and the atmosphere of trust
and good understanding between both sovereigns; the third part presented
the privileges granted by the sultan, the requests of the Venetian doge, or the
decision of the sultan about the affair under discussion.

The treaties concluded during the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries
were a new revision of the previous agreements which had merely been limited
to reproduce and copy almost literally the Ayyubid models. They were safe-
conducts (amān) more than real treaties. There were two types of amān given
to the Non-Muslims: general (ʿāmm) and particular (khāṣṣ). The first was
granted to an unlimited number of persons, such as the inhabitants of the same

⁴ In the treaties and the correspondences the term « safr » (ambassador) was not used; the messenger
or the ambassador was designed by « qāṣid » or « rasīl ».
region, and it was only given by the sultan or his deputy (*al-nāʾib*), as in the case of truce, while the second was given to one person or a limited number of persons by any taxpayer Muslim even those who did not have the ability to fight as the slave, the woman, the old man, the stupid and the insolvent (Al-Qalqashandī 1918, XIII: 322). The *amān* corresponded to the term *sint salvi et securi* which appeared in the first clause of these treaties (Tafel and Thomas 1964, II: 484; Thomas 1966, I: 5, 292; II: 19). It offered an easier basis for the establishment of commercial relations with the European states than the law of armed truce. It was valid when there was a declaration of war between Muslims and the community to which the non-Muslim in question belonged or when the war had been temporarily suspended by a treaty or truce. With the development of the trade between the Christian powers and the Muslim world since the end of the twelfth century, the institution of the *amān* was in practice replaced by treaties concluded between the sultan and the main European merchant cities, particularly the Italians, which offered to the foreigners, the traders or the pilgrims, more security and more rights. The *amān* given by the sultan did not have its origin in the Muslim notion of *amān*. It was not about a protection for a limited period of time once it was expired the protected would be in danger; it looked like more as a kind of bilateral treaty between the sultan and the European merchant cities. In the treaty of 1254, Venetian traders were allowed to leave Alexandria in time of war without any obstacles with their goods and all other persons travelling with them on board of their ships (Tafel and Thomas 1964, II: 484). And because the development of trade since the thirteenth century, treaties had not been limited to ten years claimed by Islamic jurists (Al-Māwardī 1989: 69). A comparison between the treaties concluded with Venice in 1254 and those ones in 1344, 1355 and 1366 shows that the form and the style of writing the texts were the same but the clauses order was different even though their contents were similar. The clauses were repeated in all the texts but slight changes were only made to the conditions of trade. Several articles indicated that neither the Venetian community nor the Venetian consul could be made collectively or separately responsible for the acts of others whatever the pretexts and the circumstances were, and that the debts and offences remained personal expenses. The ability to see the sultan and speak to him about what interested Venetian trade was guaranteed for all cases where the consul would think necessary to appeal to the sultan himself.

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5 For more information, see Wansbrough 1971: 20-35.
In the case of death or shipwreck, the Venetians obtained the inviolability of their wealth, the respect and the fulfillment of the will of a merchant by giving his property to the person designated by him. Venetians enjoyed a series of privileges that allowed them to have a *fondaco* (lodging house) in the cities, a bath, an oven, a water tank, and even to maintain a church. They also obtained the freedom of buying and selling without any obstacles and the Venetian consul enjoyed privileges facilitating the performance of his duties.

Some documents provide us the opportunity to talk about some technical or paleographic feature that does not have too much importance, but we would not want to neglect: it is the separation of the clauses and their numbering as they were written in the text. Even while the writing of treaties between the thirteenth and the middle of the fourteenth century was divided neither in numbers nor by paragraphs, the successive resolutions of the act had between them a precise and well determined rank: the first one usually began with *Imprimis* then it was followed in order by the others using at the beginning of each article the terms *Capitulum* or *Item* or started by a capital letter. The articles were divided into indented lines and their number was thirty three or thirty six. The clauses of the treaties in 1344 and 1355 were numbered but it seemed that this tradition was not yet regular and customary. During the fifteenth century, the adopted protocol knew some changes. The term *sint salvi et securi* was not used anymore in the first clause of the treaties. The forms of the texts changed. They did not appear like a safe-conduct as it was the case previously, but became an agreement focusing on the consent of the sultan to provide the necessary means to facilitate the trade and abolish the obstacles which might trouble or cause difficulties to the Venetian activities in Egypt and Syria. They became divided into numbered paragraphs that each one of them began with the term *Anchora* and contained the request of the Venetians and the decision of the sultan. In every paragraph appeared the expression «*Perché nui commandemo*» to confirm the consent of the sultan and provide a guarantee that the granted privileges would be respected and put into practice. In addition, since the treaty concluded in 1415, the texts were divided into parts concerning the Venetian traders in every city of the Mamluk realm. The clauses of these texts were instructions to Mamluk administrators. The sultan in accordance with a customary use commanded to make a copy

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6 The treaties concluded in 1254, 1355 and 1366 were composed of thirty six clauses, whereas the treaty concluded in 1302 contained thirty three clauses.
of the agreement for each of the cities where the Venetians usually traded and to be sent for the Mamluk governors and high ranked officers to execute his orders (Thomas 1966, II: 331). In the treaties of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there was generally no mention of the presence of Venetian and Muslim witnesses and their names, the name of the copyist, the fact of the translation and the name of the translator. These observations which were still rare during this period were almost constant in the fifteenth century: the protocols took longer extension and provided a kind of historical narrative of the negotiation and a drafting of original pieces of the agreement.

The secretaries of the Mamluk chancellery left us a number of works and manuals of chancellery and formularies in which they revealed to us the practices of chancellery adopted in that period and presented to us numerous copies of treaties and letters exchanged between the Mamluk sultans and the European rulers. The preserved documents allowed to approach several matters connected to the diplomatic correspondences between the sultans and the European rulers. Documents issued by the Mamluk chancellery were authenticated by means of the sultan’s name, his tughra or his mark (al-alāma) affixed with his own hands. On every document, at the beginning of the text, there was the mark of the sultan and below it the expression « in the name of God the Merciful the Compassionate » (al-basmala) followed by the name of the sultan, by the titles (al-alqāb) and the honorary expressions (al-nu‘ūt) which were attributed to him, and by calls made for God (al-ad‘iya) in his favor. Every sultan had his own mark with which he signed letters and decrees sent by him personally. This mark authenticated the text and confirmed the position and the consent of the sultan toward the concerned European ruler7.

There was a sophisticated protocol followed in the form and the style of the written texts exchanged between the Venetian doges and the sultans. Diplomatic style had its own peculiarities in which phrases, sentences and words were selected to show the grandiose of the rulers and express the mutual respect.

7 Ibn Nāţir al-Jaysh (d.1377) quoted in his book of chancellery that the sultans did not use their mark in their correspondences with the European rulers; they only used their titles instead of it (Ibn Nāţir al-Jaysh 1987: 27). But it seemed that this custom had changed during the fifteenth century: for example, in the Arabic copies of the treaties concluded with Florence in 1497, the mark of the sultan Qaytbāy was «His brother» (akhi‘hu), and with Ragusa in 1515, the sultan Qansū al-Ghūrī adopted the mark «From the servant of God and his follower» (min ‘abd Allāh wa walíyihī) (Wansbrough 1965: 497; Korkut 1969: 23).
The sultans adopted a series of titles of Arabic, Turkish and Persian origins, while presenting themselves to the Venetian doges. The number, the variety and the significance of the titles changed from a century to another according to the circumstances and the events which had been occurring during the reign of the Mamluk dynasties from the middle of the thirteenth century till the beginning of the sixteenth century, in particular with the ending of the threat from the Crusaders and the Mongols and with the evolution of the sultanate itself into an unchallenged, stable, and pacific monarchy. In the thirteenth century, the first Mamluk sultans adopted twelve titles to present themselves while negotiating with the Venetian rulers: in the treaty concluded with Venice in 1254, the titles of the sultan Aybak were « the consolidator king (al-mu'iz), the lord of the free men, the connoisseur of all good, the great, the savior, the skirmisher, the precious in law and in the world, the sultan of the Muslims, the sultan of all the sultans, the king of the Bedouins and the non-Arabs (al-'ajam /Persians), who holds by hands the house of Mecca and of its appurtenances, the lord and the sultan of Egypt and Jerusalem » (Tafel and Thomas 1964, III: 490).

Although the early Mamluk sultans were pre-eminently leaders in war, defending their countries against external enemies, achieving victories and expanding their authority to the peoples and lands bordering their realm, they were also the mainspring of government and their governmental functions grew in importance with time after imposing their authority on large surfaces and succeeding in defending their borders. In respect of the new circumstances of the sultanate which occurred in the fourteenth century and the evolution of the sultan functions, the sultans adopted a long list of titles most of them different from those of their predecessors. In 1344, the sultan al-Sāliḥ Isma‘īl adopted fourteen titles: « the great lord of the land of all lands, lord of the just people who is the concern of every perfect justice, the victorious in all things, upholder of the world and religion, sultan over all the sultans of the Muslims to whom God gives life, separator of the right from the wrong, king of the Arabs and non-Arabs(al-'ajam /Persians) and Turks, the Alexander of the time, observer of all faiths, lord of the king of Nubia, king of the two seas, servant of Mecca and Medina, lord of the kings and of the sultans, father of the orphans and widows » (Thomas 1966, I: 290). In 1366, the sultan Sha'bān adopted twenty-eight titles some of them were different from those of his predecessors depicting the sultan as the rescuer and the helper: « the great, the
reigning of the honored reign, the noble lord, provider, the just, the learned, 
the victorious, the holder of the universe and of the religion, sultan of rescue 
and rescuers, proceder of the justice in the centuries, rescuer of the injured 
from the hands of those who were abusing, successor of the reign, sultan 
of the Arabs, the Persians and the Turks, Alexander of the time, lord of the 
grases, congregator of the word of the faith, possessor of the secrets and of 
the crowns, conqueror of the centers, securer of the reign, of the provinces 
and of the borders, reigning of the two seas, conductor to the ways of the 
two inclining (Qiblas), servant of the two reverend temples, shadow of God 
on the earth, maintainer of his statutes and his commandments, sultan of the 
map of the earth, confident of the populated earth, lord of the kings and of 
the sultans, prosecutor of the believers» (Thomas 1966, II: 113). The sultan 
Sha’bān used the longest series of titles among the Turkish dynasty while 
writing to the European sovereigns: maybe could it be related to the invasion 
and the sack of Alexandria in 1365 by the king Peter I of Cyprus; using a great 
number of titles in his negotiations with the Venetians, formed an efficient 
mean for the sultan to present himself focusing on his grandiose, his power 
and his capacity to face dangers and to assure the protection and the rescue of 
the inhabitants of his realm.

With the beginning of the Circassian dynasty since the reign of the 
sultan Barqūq in 1382 till 1517, the sultans used a long series titles in their 
correspondences with the European rulers reflecting the increase of their 
position and power. They adopted some of the sultans’ titles of the previous 
dynasty and they added new ones. In 1415, in the treaty concluded with the 
Venetians, the sultan Shaykh Maḥmūd presented himself with twenty-eight 
titles: « the excellent sultan, the possessor, the victorious king, the glorious 
lord, learned, just, conqueror, consolidator and governor of the rivers, 
conqueror of his enemies, sword of the world and of the law, sultan of Islam 
and Muslims, reviver of justice in the human generation, adjudicator and 
mediator between who are wrong and those who are right, heir of the realm, 
sultan of the Arabs, the Persians and the Turks, Alexander of this time, sower 
of justice and goodness, congregator of the words of truth, king over those 
who sit in pergolas with crowns on heads, king of the two seas (the Red Sea 
and the Mediterranean), securer of the ways from the east to the west, servant 
of the two holy places Mecca and Medina, who fulfills the commandments 
of God and the prophet, sultan who sits on honorable and powerful throne,
securer of the universal earth, liege-lord of kings and sultans, companion of the caliph the emir of faithful » (Thomas 1966, II: 306). In 1422, the sultan Barsbây used the same titles of his predecessor in the treaty signed with Venice (Thomas 1966, II: 328), and in 1449 some of the titles of the sultan Jaqmaq changed: « the powerful sultan, the great lord, very learned, just, contrastable of pagans, happy foundation of lands and citadels, very powerful victorious, sword of the world and of the law, sultan of Islam and Muslims, holder of justice in all the world, connoisseur of the wrong and of the right, opponent of patarini⁸ and idolatrous, persecutor of the tyrants, the traitorous and those who do not have any faith, heir of the Muslim kingship, king of the Arabs, the Persians and the Turks, Alexander of the present, lord of justice, of alms and of courteousness, picker of good Muslims, lord of the two seas, the one who with his uprightness secures the east and the west, governor of the two holy houses, Mecca and the land of the prophet, victorious of the prophet’s faith, defender of the Abbasid caliphs the parents of the prophet, shadow of God on earth, executor of the law, liege-lord of kings and sultans, companion of the saint caliph » (Thomas 1966, II: 373).

In the Mamluk era, the titles were an extension of the Ayyubids’ titles depending on the new State administration and systems. The fall of the Abbasid caliphate in 1258 by the Mongols and its transfer from Baghdad to Cairo was as a knockout to the authority of the Caliph in granting titles which resulted in increasing the number of titles attributed to the sultans. The great number and variety of insignias and titles reflected the grandiose, the position and the power of the sultan appearing as the only defender and protector of Islam and of all the Muslims. Some titles indicated the authority of the sultan and showed him as a possessor of great surfaces of lands covering Tripoli on the North African coast, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and the south of the Arabic peninsula. In addition, the sultans used titles to legitimate their precarious origins, their position and their government, by insisting on their nobility, their religious and high secular rank as being the companion of the caliph, their leadership of the Muslim world and their superiority over all the sultans and kings. They wanted to present themselves the supreme representatives of

⁸ Probably it means al-khawārij (the Kharijites) who supported the authority of the caliph Ali and later rejected his leadership. Patarini is the name of those who were involved in the pataria, an eleventh-century religious movement in the Archdiocese of Milan in northern Italy, aimed at reforming the clergy and ecclesiastic government in the province and supportive of Papal sanctions against simony and clerical marriage. For more information, see Cowdrey 1968: 25-43.
the Islam as well in the eyes of the Muslims as the Christians of Europe, and
they depicted their military and religious duties showing themselves as great
conquerors and commanders of armies with the main charge of bearing the flag
of Islam and defeating the enemies. Also in many variants, they emphasized
their function as a supreme judge ruling and differentiating the right from the
wrong. Since the beginning of the fifteenth century till the end of the Mamluk
era, as a result of the development of the commercial exchanges between the
Mamluk sultanate and Europe, the sultans used some titles as « consolidator
and governor of the rivers », « king of the two seas », « securer of the ways
from the east to the west » to reassure the Venetians that all the trade routes
in Egypt and Syria, the rivers, the traffic and the transport of merchandises
through the Mediterranean and the Red sea are safe and under the direct control
of the sultans providing favorable conditions for the commercial activities, so
the Venetian traders can travel with their merchandises through the Mamluk
sultanate to purchase the products they need without fear or danger. Offering
more juridical guaranties for the Venetians, the sultans presented themselves
as « the just », « the sword of the world and the law », « sower of justice and
goodness », « congregator of the words of truth », « reviver of the justice
among mankind », « holder of justice in all the world », « connoisseur of
the wrong and of the right », « adjudicator and mediator between who are
wrong and those who are right », « lord of the just people who is the concern
of every perfect justice », « father of the orphans and the widows », to show
themselves the only guarantors of the restoration and preservation of justice
and their main interests were to seek justice, to correct oppression, to give
justice to the weak persons, protect them and plead their causes. Since the
second half of the fourteenth century, with the beginning of the change in
the trade balance between Europe and the Mamluk sultanate, the sultans
developed secular juridical structures concerning the relations with the
European traders, particularly the Italians, who obtained from the sultan the
privilege that their cases did not come under the religious jurisdiction. The
Mamluk sultan’s judicial function was of greater significance and was so
institutionalized and so closely associated with the prerogative of the ruler,
as to result in the creation of what was in effect a royal court of justice with a
known and regular procedure: it was the justice court of mazālim. The sultan
presided over this court applying justice to give the Europeans their rights,
to protect them and be attentive to them. It was a form of international law
resulting from the combination of the *sharī'a* provisions regarding relations with non-Muslims territories and the treaties concluded with European rulers, which governed the relations between the Mamluk authorities and the European traders settled in the ports and the cities of Egypt and Syria (Nielsen 1985: 112-113; Holt 1975: 247). Among the titles that depicted the sultans as good rulers and judges, there were two titles that showed them as the defender of Islam and the Islamic law: « the sword of the world and the law » and « the sword of the world and the religion ». These two titles were adopted by ten of the seventeenth Circassian sultans. The sword was the symbol of the power and the justice but it could be interpreted also as the symbol of temporal and spiritual power. We cannot exclude the idea that these titles were the result of the influence of Christian thought with the appearance of « the two swords » doctrine enunciated by the Pope Gelasius I (492-496) in his famous letter to the emperor Anastasius in 494 propounding a clear institutional distinction between the civil and ecclesiastical powers which « both are from God and have distinct purposes » (Van Drunan 2010: 33).

The sultans used titles as « Alexander of the time », « liege-lord of kings and sultans » to express their power and their superiority over all the sultans and kings. The title « Alexander of the time » was firstly used by the sultan Baybars then it was adopted by the other sultans till the end of the Mamluk era. It indicated that the Mamluk sultan was the only legitimate ruler in his time and the most powerful king in all centuries (Al-Qalqashandī 1915, VI: 16).

One of the titles widely used by the sultans was « the servant of the two noble sanctuaries » or « the servant of the two holy places », Mecca and Medina (*khādīm al-ḥaramayn al-sharīfayn*). This title was used by Šalāhāl-dīn then was adopted by the Mamluk sultans. On one hand, this title reflected the deterioration of the religious authority of the Abbasid caliphate and on the other hand, depicted the emergence of power and influence of the ruling dynasty (Al-Basha 1989: 268). In addition, the sultan used the title « lord of the two Qiblas » and « conductor to the ways of the two Qiblas (Mecca and Jerusalem) » to emphasize the expansion of his sovereignty over the Muslim world as the supreme representative of Islam, the defender of the Muslim faith and the preserver of the Holy places. The Circassian sultans used the title « companion of the saint caliph », « companion of the caliph the emir of faithful », « defender of the Abbasid caliphs the parents of the prophet », to present themselves as rulers of the Muslim community paying allegiance to
the Abbasid caliph and ready to defend him. This shows that the caliph, even though weak, was still recognized as the head of the Muslim community and the official administration of the holy law. But some of the sultans used also the title « shadow of God on earth » to show that they were charged from the caliph to expand their authority over all the Muslims, and to enhance the closeness between the sultans and the religious sphere represented by the four chief judges⁹. The power of the sultan was seen by some jurists as the effect of the divine providence (Garcin 1986: 269).

Some titles as « the victorious king », « the conqueror », « the conqueror of his enemies », « the conqueror of the centers », « persecutor of the tyrants, the traitorous and those who do not have any faith », were related to dangerous and important events which had marked the Islamic history. Furthermore, the similar events contributed to the creation of similar titles: the Crusades and the Mongols invasion were the basic reason of the appearing of titles depicting the war and the courage of the sultan and his duty to protect the Muslims. But even after the end of these threats, the sultans continued adopting these titles considering themselves the only defender of the Muslims, and even more when the circumstances changed and new threats appeared caused by some of the European powers (the Cypriotes, the Catalans) during the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, the Ottomans, the Safavids and the Portuguese at the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century, the number of these titles became greater progressively.

After presenting themselves, the sultans addressed the Venetian doges using terms and titles expressing recognition of the fellow nobility and magnificence, the power and the courage, and the religious prestige followed by calls made for God in their favor. It was a protocol adopted by the chancellery of the sultans since the thirteenth century till the end of the Mamluk reign based on the use of a definite series of titles but which might vary in number and in significance. In the treaty of 1254, the titles of the Venetian doge Reniero Zeno were « the great, the noble, the most honest and virtuous, the just, the dearest captain, the upright and learned ». In addition, the dominion of the doge, his territories and possessions, were added to his titles: the doge of Venice, Dalmatia, Croatia, Constantinople, Crete, Negroponte. These titles came with a series of calls made for God in the favor of the Venetian doge in the beginning of the titles list asking God to « give

⁹ For information about the Abbasid Caliphate of Cairo, see Holt 1984: 501-507.
life to the doge», and at the end « God increases his life and his dominion, God be with his decisions and let him be with all those who are satisfied in God» (Tafel and Thomas 1964, III: 490). In the treaty of 1344, the titles of the doge of Andrea Dandolo changed and increased focusing on the religious prestige of the doge « The most powerful and magnificent Doge, the most indulgent and great, the most Christian among the lovers and the worshippers of Jesus Christ, the ornament of all Christianity and Cross worshippers, Doge of Venice, Dalmatia and Croatia, the lord of the four parts and the half of the whole empire of Romania¹⁰, friend of the kings and the emperors, whom God gives long life and let be again lord of Venice» (Thomas 1966, I: 290).

The customs adopted at the sultan chancellery knew some changes during the reign of the Circassian dynasty. In the beginning of the fifteenth century, the titles of the Venetian doge Tomaso Mocenigo in the treaties concluded in 1415 and 1422 changed but were still focusing on the religious prestige of the doge « The glorious, the magnificent and of great authority, the very ancient in nobility, the honor of the generation of Jesus Christ, the congregator of those who adore the Cross, Doge of Venice, Croatia, Dalmatia and Romania, the ornament of the sons of baptism, the friend of the kings and sultans» and followed by various calls made for God in his favor (Thomas 1966, II: 306, 329). In 1449, different titles were attributed to the doge Francesco Foscari expressing his high nobility without any mention of his religious prestige « Excellent, great, magnificent and powerful, affectionate gentleman, great of his nation, honor of the aristocratic presence, eye of his own and of all the Venetian nation, friend of kings and sultans» (Thomas 1966, II: 373).

A comparison between the Venetian doges' titles which appeared in the texts of treaties with those quoted in the Arabic chancellery books shows that they were different. Ibn Nāṣir al-Jaysh (d.1377) copying the judge Nāṣir al-dīn bin al-Nashā’ī quoted that the titles used to address the doge of Venice Francesco Dandolo (1329-1339) were « the glorious, the honorable, the magnificent, the respectable, the courageous hero, the brave lion, honor of Christianity, glory of Christian nation, pier of the baptism sons, asset to the Pope of Rome, friend of kings and sultans, duke of the Venetians, Durrazo, Romania and Constantinople » (Ibn Nāṣir al-Jaysh 1987: 36). He gave

¹⁰ These titles were adopted by the Venetian doges between 1206 and 1358 (Lazzarini 1903: 296-298). Romania was the name given by the Italians to all regions which were part of the Byzantine Empire: the Balkan Peninsula, the Aegean world, Constantinople and its territories.
another list of titles used when addressing the doge of Venice « the virtuous, the glorious, the magnificent, the respectable, the venerated, the honored, the lionhearted, the powerful of the Christian nation, the beauty of Christianity, the asset to the cross confession, the friend of kings and sultans » (Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh 1987: 36). Reading these two lists leads to note some observations:

Firstly, among these titles appeared the title « the asset to the Pope of Rome » (dhukhr bābā rūmā). Al-Qalqashandī (d.1418) copied the title « consolidator of the Pope of Rome » (muʿiz bābā rūmā) (Al-Qalqashandi 1915, VIII: 47). This title did not appear in any of the treaties and correspondences between the Mamluk sultans and the doges of Venice. The kings of Aragon were the only ones designated as the defenders and the protectors of the Pope and the Church of Rome (Alarcon y Santón and García de Linares 1940: 370); they were considered higher than the other European sovereigns.

Probably because Francesco Dandolo was one of the most successful Venetian diplomats whom during his reign Venice began its policy of extending its territory on the Italian mainland and maintaining good relations with Rome, the sultan used a title of higher rank showing a great respect to the doge.

It seemed that the Mamluk administration was well informed about the situation in Venice. These changes in the titles show that there were not fixed customary titles and expressions in addressing the doges. Their uses were related to incidents and important events attributed to every doge; they were not haphazard titles.

Secondly, the version used to enumerate the dominion of the Venetian doge and his possessions quoted by Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh did not appear in any of the preserved treaties and correspondences between the sultans and the Venetian doges: « duke of the Venetians, of Durazzo, of Romania and

11 The first king of Aragon who had this title was Jaime II (1291-1327). He had acquired from Pope Boniface VIII the title « Standard-bearer, Captain and Admiral of the Roman Church ». This title was used in the letter sent by the sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad to the king Jaime II in 1314: (muqaddam al-bahr wa amīr ʿalam kanīsat rūmīya) (Atiya 1938: 36).

12 According to the book of chancellery of Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh, the Pope (al-bāb) was considered the greatest European king « the greatest king of the infidels » (akbar mulūk al-kuffār) (Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh 1987: 27).

13 We can wonder if this title is related to what the doge Francesco Dandolo did as an Ambassador to the Pope in Rome in order to restore the relations between Rome and Venice. He was nicknamed cane (the dog) after an incident happened in 1323 in which he presented himself to the pope Clement V in Avignon wearing a chain around his neck in an attempt to get the pope to revoke the excommunication of Venice.
Constantinople » (dīk al-banādiqa wa diyārqa wal-rūsā wal-ıṣṭanbuliyya). According to Michele Amari, diyārqa derives from Dyrrachium the Latin name of Durazzo, probably rūsā is a distorted Arabic form of Romania and ıṣṭanbuliyya is the Greek name of Constantinople (Amari 1886: 11). The title « duke of Durrazo » did not appear in the list of the Venetian dominion mentioned in the other treaties concluded between the sultans and Venice. This honorific title was only used for Francesco Dandolo. According to the customs adopted at the sultan chancellery, there was a mention of Dalmatia instead of Durazzo when enumerating the Venetian possessions. Durrazo was transferred to Venice in 1205 after the fourth crusade which formed the Duchy of Durazzo. But in 1213, the city was taken by the Byzantines and it was in 1392 that Venice retained Durazzo and controlled it till 1501 when it fell to Ottoman forces.

In addition the title « duke of Constantinople » appeared in the treaty concluded in 1254, during a period the city was under the Latin rule (1204-1261). Later it was not used any more in the treaties and correspondences but it reappeared among the titles attributed to the doge Francesco Dandolo.

We can wonder about the use of the three titles « asset to the Pope of Rome », « duke of Constantinople » and « duke of Durrazo » especially for the doge Francesco Dandolo and not for others. We have to take into consideration that in the first half of the fourteenth century the Venetian trade with the dominions of the Mamluks did not know an important development because of the papal prohibitions but Venetian traders continued to carry out their activities in Egypt and Syria and even some of them were engaged in the trade of war material with the Muslims (Ashtor 1983: 47). It seemed that excellent relationship existed between the sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and the doge Francesco Dandolo, so the use of specific titles by the sultan to honor the doge was to distinguish him from his predecessors as a great sovereign extending his authority and influence on vast lands of the Byzantine Empire and on regions where Venetian communities settled, for this reason he was the only doge designated by « duke of the Venetians » instead of « duke of Venice ».

Comparing the titles of the Venetian doges with titles of other European rulers, we can notice that the style and the titles used when addressing the Venetian doges were adopted in writing to the other European sovereigns during the fifteenth century: the governor of Florence in 1422, the king of
France in 1447, the governor of Ragusa in 1515 (Wansbrough 1961: 204; Amari 1863: 166; Korkut 1969: 23; D’Escouchy 1863, I: 121-124). There was no distinction among them, all were considered the head of the Christianity, noble, venerable and valiant, courageous as the lion and all had the same call made for God in their favor: they were all considered « friends of the kings and the sultans ». It seemed that attributing the Venetian doge titles to other European rulers became with time a custom at the Mamluk chancellery, but the Venetian doges were more designated by a variety of titles expressing religious prestige and insisting on their great nobility followed by the dominion of the doge including all his territories and possessions. This form of addressing the Venetian doges reflected the particular respect of the sultan for the doge addressing him as a great and ambitious ruler exercising his authority over a large part of the Byzantine Empire including the capital Constantinople. The use of special and distinguished honorific titles and expressions for the doge when concluding a treaty formed a basic diplomatic mean to make the negotiations succeed.

So, despite the reaction of the people and the Muslim jurists against the Europeans considering them infidels (kuffār) and enemies of Islam, and even though the European sovereigns were designated in the books of the chancellery as the kings of the infidels (mulūk al-kuffār), the sultans adopted prestigious titles and formulas to address the Venetian doges and presented them always as honorable and noble kings, head of a respectable and venerable religion: the sultans were interested in the good progress of the business and the growth of the trade with Europe, in particular Venice, because the commercial exchanges in the Mediterranean sea were dependant on the good relations between the sultans and the Europeans.

There are some observations concerning the translation of the treaties. The translators adopted a literal translation although this method had inconveniences. They did not have the same level in translating the texts, so it happened that they deleted in their translation certain phrases and expressions, or they deformed them causing the change of their meanings. The most remarkable was the use of the Arabic words by giving them a Latin or Italian forms so they became suited to their dialects and their pronunciations became easier. In general, the translation was of mediocre quality and also influenced by political and commercial terms and expressions widely spread in the Levant and used in the Mediterranean trade. The translation of the treaties
and correspondences between the sultans and the Venetian doges formed an example and revealed the influence of the Arabic language on the European diplomacy, particularly the Venetian, and its large use in the exchanges across the Mediterranean Sea. Many of the Arabic words and expressions were used in an Italian form by adding the letter « o » to the masculine words as for example the Arabic words « šādir », « wārid », « ḥājib », « turjumān » become « sadro », « wardo », « naibol/naybo », « azebo », « turchimano ». In the plural, they added to these words the letter « i » for example azebo/azebi, turchimano/turchimani. For the Arabic feminine words they added the letter « a » and in the plural the letter « e »: casena/casene, schiba/schibe, etc... Some words were used without any changes in the pronunciation such as chaliffa, diodare, cadhy, mochari, beredi, zemechia, and sometimes they deformed the words, dirham muʿayyidī becomes diremo maidin, cecham/sikka, samsar, sansar/samsār, lochela/wikāla, osora, ossiere/ʿushr, doana del gaban / diwān al-qabbān, and they used composed nouns mixing the Arabic with the Italian, munāẓir al-rubbān becomes miniser nochier and malik al-umarāʾ becomes Milech lo armirai. The most important changes were the transformation of several Arabic verbs into Venetian dialect: the verbs batula/batallar, gharbala/garbellar, zaghal/xagalal which occurred in several forms of conjugation and derived from them nouns and adjectives: batelado/bathelado or bateladi/batheladi, xagalado, gharbelatori, garbalarà. These examples show that there was an obvious difference between the Arabic words and the expressions accustomed to be used by the Venetians and the origin of these words. This difference might be due to two reasons: firstly, some of the Arabic letters didn’t exist in the Venetian dialect so they were substituted by letters which suited the accent and the pronunciation of the Venetians: the Arabic letter « خ » was replaced by the letters « c » and « ch » pronounced as « k », the letters « غ » and « ح » were replaced by « a » and « h », « ژ » and « ڭ» by « d », « ڭ » by « s » and « ۋ ڭ » by « u, v ». Secondly, most of the words used by the Venetians were pronounced, spelled and written according to how they heard them so the words became distorted and different from their origins.

We can wonder about the use of Arabic words in the translation instead of adopting the corresponding words in Latin or Italian which have the same meanings. Probably the use of these forms of words was related on one hand to the traditional literal translation adopted in the chancellery
based on conserving the same model and the same style of the Arabic text, and on the other hand to avoid any misunderstanding or any mistake which might occur and deform the exact meaning of the sentences and phrases. For example, when talking about problems and disagreements between Venetian traders and indigenous the translator kept the Arabic world *gharīm* giving it the Italian form *garimo* but adding that it means adversary\(^{14}\). Also, the Arabic words *ghish* and *maghshūsh* which mean « adulterate » was translated using the Arabic synonym *zaghala* in an Italian form *xagalado* because it was commonly used in trade and preserved the same meaning of the desired word (Wansbrough 1961: 206-207, 208-209). The translators adopted Arabic commercial expressions and they translated them literally: *qat' al-si'r*/*romper pretio* and *qat' al-šawt*/*romper la voce*. Many Arabic words widely used in trade took Italian forms in translation: *cecham/sikka*, *samsar*, *sansar*, *sinsar/samsār*, *magazenos/makhāzin*, *lochela/wikāla*, *osora*, *ossiere/ushr*, *zimichia/djanātīya*, *doana del gaban/dīwān al-qabbān*, etc. In translating the dates, they conserved the Arabic forms of the months written according to the Muslim calendar but they deformed them to suit their dialect: *Jumada al-Awwal/Zamedelauel; Zemedeleuel; Zemedelave, Jumada al-Akhir/Zemethlacher, Rajab/Razebo* and *Rabi' al-Awwal/Rabiel* and the *Hijri* date was followed by the corresponding Christian date (Thomas 1966, II: 315, 327, 361, 374).

The translation of the names and the titles of the sultans or the emirs and the high officers mentioned in the treaties were almost written deformed (*naibo, diodare, azebo, luelli, nadro,...*), some of them kept their forms (*cadi, cadhy, cadi Anafi...*) and sometimes it was difficult to know who the quoted person was: for example *Salai (al-sālihi)*, *Laseraf (al-ashraf)*, *Melechemessor (al-malik al-mansūr)*, *Aseraph Siaba (al-ashraf Sha'bān)*, *Nassier Maemet (al-Nāṣir Muḥammad)*, *Daer Baricoth (al-Zāhir Barqūq)*, etc. There was sometimes confusion so the title was written as if it was a name: for example *Mirus Sabadanus (al-amīr šāḥib al-dīwān)*, *Scheif duniaiwadin (sayf al-dunya wal-dīn)*, *Syriph re Milech or re dil Syriph (al-malik al-ashraf)* (Tafel and Thomas 1964, III: 488); (Thomas 1966, I: 290; II: 168). The writing of the names and the titles in Latin or Italian varied from one text to the other and they appeared more or less deformed and distorted due to the translator who wrote the text or the copyist: for example *al-malik al-mansūr Qalāwūn* was written in several forms as *Melechemessor, Elmelich Almansor Chalaun,*

\(^{14}\) « ... et non comparerà el so garimo, zoè lo so aduersario... » (Thomas 1966, II: 312, 324).
Mansor Chalaon, Monsor Chalaon, and Shams al-dīn ibn al-muḥtasib was written as Semsedi Ebene Elmehettesep, Semsedi Ebene Ilmehettesep, Siemphesin ebene matestep (Thomas 1966, I: 7; II: 314-315, 326-327, 357; Wansbrough 1965: 492).

All these examples show that, in spite of the improvement introduced in the translation during the fifteenth century and the particular selection of words related to the Venetian dialect, the distorted forms of the words and the expressions used in translation into Latin and Italian, and the mistakes in translating and copying, became with the passing of time an unavoidable traditional and customary vocabulary adopted by the sultan chancellery when exchanging correspondences with the Venetians, because there was an intention from both parties, the Venetians and the sultans, to respect the customs adopted in concluding the treaties in order to preserve their forms, models and contents without changes. There was interrelationship between the texts, interdependence in which texts stood in relation to one another, as a result of borrowing and copying terms and words from a prior text without taking into consideration their written forms and orthography: for example, the treaty concluded in 1344 was copied literally in 1355, and the Florentine treaty concluded in 1497 was also a copy of the Venetian treaty concluded in 1442 with the sultan Jaqmaq, and what merits a remark is that it bears the signature of the sultan Qaytbāy six months after his death. In addition, the copyist kept the terms used for Venetian Senate (mashāyikh) and Doge (dūj) to present the Florentine government; he conserved the chancellery custom, born of long transaction with Venice (Wansbrough 1965: 483-523); (Wansbrough 1996: 163). It seemed that the orthographic variants, the forms and the distortion of the words were not important whereas the interest was focused on the content written according to a sophisticated protocol based on copying and adopting specified words in order to avoid any misunderstanding which might cause a change in the meaning, resulting in increasing the number of words originating from Arabic written in an Italian form. The two languages, the Italian and the Arabic, belong to two so different linguistic systems and the exchanges between them were limited to evident assimilations of words. So the Venetians necessarily adopted all the typically Arabic words that describe in a univocal way the Arabic reality. Sometimes borrowed words retained original (or near-original) pronunciation, but underwent a spelling change to represent the orthography of the recipient language, but the language used
in diplomacy between the Italians and the sultans, which was a mixture of vernacular with technical terminology, could only have been understood on the Italian mainland by diplomats and traders with experience of the Levant. The linguistic borrowing in diplomacy was in one way because the case was different in the Mamluk chancellery: in the Arabic texts of the treaties concluded with the Italians, the scribes (al-kuttāb) of the sultan chancellery didn’t use Italian words even if they adopted very limited number of words originating from Persian as jāmakiyya (consular stipend), qunşul (consul) and qurşān (corsair) from Latin, arabūn (deposit) and funduq (lodging house) from Greek which were widely used in political and commercial Mediterranean exchanges. The use of Arabic and its special place in the diplomatic negotiations with the Italians reflected the strong political position of the Mamluk sultanate which was at the height of its power. There was interrelationship between the texts, interdependence in which texts stood in relation to one another, as a result of borrowing and copying terms and words from a prior text without taking into consideration their writing forms and orthography.

Conclusion

Because the successful and fruitful policy adopted by Venice in its negotiations with the sultans, the Venetian treaties in the fifteenth century became standard models to Florence, Ragusa and other new powers entering into orbits of Mediterranean trade. The translated texts depicted that the determinant factor in their writing was not language but format resulting in an inevitable linguistic overlap. Chancellery format insisted on adopting certain words, customary terms and expressions used in diplomacy and required training and adherence to the rules. Chancellery language was devised for a specific purpose. The language of each version belonged to a recognizable type of Arabic and Italian sharing certain structures, turns of phrase and vocabulary. It resulted that diplomatic chancellery language became based upon imperative syntax of juridical, political and commercial origin translated literally. Within that system some words and expressions appeared in distorted forms when they were translated into Latin and Italian and their distortion and deformation increased when copying them: if it was not an aim of chancellery
language and style, it was a consequence of chancellery practice. From this adopted diplomatic language emerged a hybrid vocabulary composed of a mixture between Latin, Italian and Arabic, Turkish and Greek, for some commercial and political terms and expressions, producing an archetype of Mediterranean dialogue adopted by diplomats and traders known as *Lingua Franca* which would be persisting for several centuries (Wansbrough 1996: 147-150; Dakhlia 2008: 31-37).

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In May-June 2015, I was invited by the Confucius Institute and the Beijing Normal University to conduct research on the spread of Nestorian Christianity in China, and I was asked by the Beijing Normal University to give a lecture on the subject. That invitation was the earliest stage of links woven between the Faculty of History at Beijing Normal University (now one of the top five universities in China) and the History department of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Balamand. Close cooperation between the two universities is underway with the enthusiastic support of the Dean, Prof. Georges Dorlian, having in view, among other things, to encourage the exchange of students and teaching staff between our two respective universities. A delegation from a Chinese university was sent to UOB for the first time in April 2016. The delegation was composed of five professors from Beijing Normal University: two of its faculty members agreed to give two lectures on topics chosen jointly by the responsible of the two universities and which were of great significance for both. One was on the history of the Silk Road and the other on the origins of Christianity in China. We are pleased to present these two texts.

The first text, “History of the Silk Road”, is a lecture by Prof. Ning Xin, a renowned specialist in the history of the Tang Dynasty and the Silk Road; Dr. Liao assisted him. The lecture acts as a general reminder of this fundamental theme, and a historical example of the dialogue of civilizations, of the exchanges of goods and ideas. As I had already written\(^1\), it was the trade along the Silk Road that allowed the expansion of Nestorian Christianity to China, as well as, in a second phase, of Islam. But exchanges took place, of course, in both directions. It is well known that the Arabic language was the vehicle that brought to medieval Europe the scientific and philosophical writings of ancient Greece. The role of

\(^1\) See the article I published in *Chronos* 12 (2005), “L’évangélisation de la Chine et des Mongols par l’Église nestorienne”.

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