

The Epistemic Environment of Historical Writing and the Impact of Verbatim Transmission on Its Formation among Mamluk Historians: A Study of *Zubdat Al-Fikrah Ft Tārīkh Al-Hijrah*

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the epistemic environment of historical writing among Mamluk historians through an analysis of the role of verbatim transmission in shaping it. The fifth volume of *Zubdat al-Fikrah ft Tārīkh al-Hijrah* by Baybars al-Manṣūrī al-Dawādār, covering the period from 866 to 942 CE, is adopted as a case study. The study argues that verbatim transmission was not merely a means of preserving historical reports but an epistemic practice that contributed to the production and organization of historical knowledge through the selection of narratives, the use of earlier sources, and the reproduction of historical discourse in accordance with the scholarly conventions of Mamluk historiography. It addresses the limited number of applied studies examining the relationship between verbatim transmission and the epistemic environment of historical writing, as previous scholarship has largely described or evaluated the phenomenon without investigating its epistemic functions. Using a descriptive-analytical approach based on textual comparison, the study identifies patterns of verbatim transmission, traces their probable sources, and examines the extent of Baybars' intervention in transmitted texts. The findings demonstrate that verbatim transmission constituted one of the principal components of the epistemic environment of Mamluk historical writing, serving not only to preserve historical material but also to organize and reproduce it within a coherent annalistic framework. The study also reveals that Baybars drew upon a diverse range of sources, and that his interventions ranged from verbatim quotation to abbreviation and selective omission. The study offers an applied model for investigating the epistemic environment of historical writing and contributes to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which historical knowledge was produced in medieval Arabic historiography.

Keywords: Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah*, Mamluk historiography, verbatim transmission, epistemic environment.

INTRODUCTION

Verbatim transmission is a defining feature of medieval Arabic historiography and has attracted considerable scholarly attention, particularly in studies of the Mamluk period, which witnessed unprecedented growth in historical writing. Historiography expanded beyond political events to encompass social, cultural, and religious life, creating a dynamic epistemic environment characterized by the circulation of historical texts, extensive use of earlier authorities, and the reorganization of historical materials into new compilations.

Medieval Arabic-Islamic historians rarely produced wholly original narratives. Instead, they compiled reports from earlier works, abridged lengthy accounts, reorganized dispersed materials, and integrated them into chronological or thematic narratives. Reliance on earlier historians was therefore not regarded as a weakness but as an accepted scholarly practice within the epistemic environment of historical writing, where compilation, abridgement, arrangement, and preservation served the production, organization, and transmission of historical knowledge.

Verbatim transmission denotes the incorporation of passages from earlier historical works into later texts without explicit attribution. Rather than evaluating this practice through modern citation standards, it should be

understood within the medieval epistemic environment that governed historians' engagement with their sources and shaped the production and reproduction of historical knowledge. In this study, the epistemic environment refers to the scholarly framework in which historical sources, textual transmission, and source-use practices interacted to shape historical writing.

A representative example is *Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah* by the Mamluk amir and historian Baybars al-Manṣūrī al-Dawādār (d. 1325 CE). Combining political experience with historical scholarship, Baybars produced a work that illustrates the construction of historical texts. Part Five, covering 866–942 CE, is particularly valuable because it documents major Abbasid developments while drawing extensively on earlier historical sources.

This study investigates patterns of verbatim transmission in Part Five, identifies its probable sources, and examines their role in shaping the epistemic environment of Mamluk historiography. It also evaluates Baybars' intervention in transmitted texts, his relationship with earlier sources, and the contribution of verbatim transmission to the reproduction of historical knowledge.

Rather than merely identifying Baybars' sources, the study explains how verbatim transmission shaped the historian's epistemic environment, organized historical material, and ensured the continuity of historical knowledge through new textual contexts—an aspect that has received limited attention in applied studies of Islamic historiography.

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach based on systematic textual comparison between Baybars' narratives and corresponding passages in earlier sources. It examines literal correspondence, structural similarity, shared omissions, and transmitted material to identify degrees of verbatim transmission, assess authorial intervention, and clarify its role in historical knowledge production during the Mamluk period.

The Epistemic Environment of Mamluk Historiography

Mamluk historiography developed within one of the richest epistemic environments of Islamic civilization, witnessing exceptional growth in historical writing. Historiography expanded beyond political events to encompass administrative, social, cultural, and religious life, creating an intellectual environment characterized by diverse historical sources and multiple forms of preserving, transmitting, and circulating historical knowledge. Modern scholarship recognizes the historical works produced in Egypt, Syria, and the Hijaz during this period as one of the most prolific and intellectually diverse phases of Islamic historiography (Donner, 2019).

This epistemic environment should not be understood merely in terms of the abundance of historical works or historians. Rather, it comprised the intertextual relationships among historical writings, the circulation of historical knowledge, and the historiographical practices through which earlier works were incorporated into later compositions. Historical knowledge was thus produced through the continuous interaction of historians, textual sources, historiographical methods, and patterns of transmission.

Medieval Arabic-Islamic historians commonly compiled reports from earlier works, abridged lengthy narratives, reorganized dispersed accounts, and integrated them into coherent chronological or thematic structures. Reliance on earlier authorities was therefore not regarded as a weakness in authorship but as an established historiographical practice through which historical knowledge was produced, preserved, and transmitted.

Many Mamluk historians also occupied influential administrative or military positions, enabling them to combine first-hand observation with information derived from earlier written sources. This dual experience shaped both the content of their narratives and the organization of historical materials (Mustafa, 1981)

Among the foremost historians was the amir Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Manṣūrī al-Dawādār (d. 1325 CE), whose career illustrates the close relationship between state service and historical authorship. His works provide an illuminating case for examining the epistemic environment of Mamluk historiography through their systematic engagement with earlier historical sources and the reorganization of inherited historical material. Such practices

reflected established historiographical conventions in which preserving, reorganizing, and transmitting historical knowledge constituted essential principles of historical composition (Abd al-Qadir, 2014).

Against this background, the present study examines verbatim transmission in Part Five of *Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah* not merely as textual dependence on earlier sources but as an epistemic practice that reveals the mechanisms governing the production and reproduction of historical knowledge. By reconstructing the epistemic environment in which this practice evolved, the study explains how verbatim transmission contributed to the construction of historical narratives and the continuity of historical knowledge within Mamluk historiography.

Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah

One of the most renowned and significant historical works of Baybars al-Dawādār is his comprehensive universal history of Islam, which is arranged chronologically by year from the beginning of creation to the year 1324 CE. There has been scholarly disagreement regarding the original number of volumes, with some authorities holding that it consisted of eleven volumes (al-Nuwayri, 2004; al-Maqrizi, 1997; al-Suyuti, 2007), while others maintain that it extended to fifteen volumes (al-Safadi, 1998; Ibn Hajar, 1966). Unfortunately, the complete work has not survived intact; only a number of fragments have come down to us, and these are the portions currently known to specialists.

The extant portions comprise the following:

- Volume Three, covering the period from 622 to 740 CE, preserved in manuscript form in the British Museum (Brockelmann, 1993).
- Volume Four, covering 750–866 CE, preserved in the Uppsala University Library (Sweden). It records the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate, the career and death of Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī, and the reigns of al-Saffāh, al-Manṣūr, al-Mahdī, and al-Mustaʿīn. A photographic copy is preserved in the Cairo University Library (MS 24027), while a negative copy of the original manuscript is held in the Manuscripts Department of the Egyptian National Library (MS 535) (Brockelmann, 1993).
- Volume Five, covering 866–942 CE, which constitutes the primary source for the present study. It is preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France and covers the period from the reign of al-Muʿtazz to the deposition of al-Qāhir bi-llāh. A photographic copy is available in the Cairo University Library (MS 24027).
- Volume Six, covering 942–1018 CE, preserved in the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. It includes the reign of al-Rāḍī bi-llāh and the Frankish incursions into al-Andalus. A photographic copy is preserved in the Cairo University Library (MS 24026). This volume has not yet been critically edited or published (Zaydan, n.d.).
- Volume Seven, covering 1010–1096 CE, preserved in the Fayzullah Efendi Collection (MS 1459) (Brockelmann, 1993).
- Volume Nine, covering 1257–1309 CE, which documents the period of the Baḥrī Mamluk sultans in Egypt (Baybars al-Mansuri, 1989).

The encyclopaedic scope of *Zubdat al-Fikrah*, spanning from the Creation to the author's lifetime, required Baybars to draw on diverse written sources that varied by historical period. In the earlier sections, particularly the fifth volume examined here, he relied mainly on universal chronicles and earlier historical works to reconstruct periods preceding his lifetime. By contrast, the later sections increasingly reflect eyewitness observation and personal experience, giving them a distinctive contemporary character.

Baybars' historical perspective was shaped not only by written sources but also by his cultural background, military career, and official travels across the Mamluk Sultanate. These experiences broadened his intellectual

outlook and are reflected in *Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah*, where earlier written authorities are combined with contemporary observation (Sidarus, 2020).

The fifth volume therefore provides an ideal case study for reconstructing the epistemic environment in which Baybars composed his narrative. It enables the identification of his principal sources, analysis of how he used them, and assessment of both the extent of verbatim transmission and the degree of editorial intervention in shaping the historical narrative.

The Influence of the Epistemic Environment on the Mamluk Historical School and the Documentary Method of Volume Five of *Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah*

i. The Beginning and Chronological Scope of Volume Five

Volume Five of *Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah* by Baybars al-Manṣūrī represents a historical source of considerable significance, as the author continues the narrative of the Abbasid caliphate from the year 866 CE, having concluded Volume Four with the caliphate of al-Mustaʿīn. Baybars adopts an annalistic approach in tracing the successive caliphates, from al-Muʿtazz to al-Muqtadir, extending to the year 942 CE, with particular emphasis on major political events such as the rise and fall of the Qarmatians, the emergence of the Daylamite state, and the deposition of Caliph al-Qāhir bi-llāh. The volume was composed at the behest of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn, which imbued it with the political and military concerns of the ruling authority, while also reflecting a method that combined reliance on written sources with direct observation in the construction of historical narrative (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998; Sidarus, 2020). The significance of this volume is further enhanced by evidence of its circulation among scholars and students during the Mamluk period, with some sources indicating that it formed part of the curriculum at the school of Sultan al-Zāhir Barqūq—a testament to the work's scholarly standing, the author's meticulous effort in compiling its material, and his breadth of knowledge regarding the accounts of earlier generations (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998). *Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah* is the most comprehensive of Baybars al-Dawādār's works and the richest in content, representing the culmination of his project in universal history, arranged chronologically from the Creation to his own lifetime. Volume Five stands at the forefront of these volumes as the subject of this study, covering the period from 866 to 942 CE, a time that witnessed profound transformations in the trajectory of the Abbasid state..

ii. The Scholarly Value of Volume Five

The scholarly value of Volume Five lies in its coverage of 866–942 CE, a pivotal period in Abbasid history. Its annalistic structure facilitates the reconstruction of historical developments.

The volume also provides an important corpus for examining the epistemic environment of Mamluk historiography through analysis of Baybars al-Dawādār's sources, their transmission, and the extent of verbatim reproduction and editorial intervention.

Al-Sakhāwī's principles of faithful transmission, explicit attribution, accurate terminology, and impartiality provide an appropriate framework for evaluating Baybars' treatment of his sources (Baybars al-Mansuri, 1989; Al-Sakhawi, 2017)

iii. General Characteristics of Baybars' Style

Baybars' style in Volume Five reflects key features of the Mamluk epistemic environment. His narrative is characterized by clear language, chronological organization, a predominantly reportorial style, and limited personal commentary. Narrative detail varies according to the significance of events and the availability of sources.

iv. Universal History and the Annalistic Method as Manifestations of the Epistemic Environment

Baybars did not introduce a new method of historical writing but followed the established Islamic historiographical tradition, particularly universal history and the annalistic method. Universal history presents the history of the world or Islam within a continuous chronological framework, from the Creation to the author's

own time. By adopting this model in *Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah*, Baybars placed his work within a well-established historiographical tradition (Qasim, 2001).

Volume Five reflects Baybars' adherence to the epistemic environment in which universal history and annalistic writing predominated. He adopted the year as the basic unit for organizing historical reports in chronological order, continuing the Islamic historiographical tradition of collecting and systematically arranging historical material, while varying narrative detail according to the significance of events and the availability of sources (Rosenthal, 1968).

v. Baybars' Sources in Volume Five

Volume Five reflects an epistemic environment characterized by extensive reliance on earlier historical sources. Baybars generally incorporated historical reports without explicitly identifying their sources, although these relationships can be established through comparative textual analysis. Universal chronicles, particularly al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, constitute his principal source, especially for Abbasid political history and regional revolts (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998; Al-Tabarī, 1967). Textual comparison, however, indicates that al-Ṭabarī's material often reached Baybars through later intermediary works in which reports had been abridged, chains of transmission omitted, and narrative details condensed.

Among the most probable intermediaries is Ibn al-Jawzī's *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam*. Baybars shares with this work numerous political and military reports, accounts of the pilgrimage and its commanders, and similar omissions and abridgements. Its combination of annalistic narrative with biographical notices also closely resembles the structure of Volume Five.

Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* represents another major point of comparison. Similarities appear in abbreviated reports, accounts of peripheral regions, obituary notices, and administrative appointments, reflecting the circulation of historical material within the Mamluk epistemic environment. Nevertheless, direct dependence cannot be assumed in every case, since similarities may derive from shared or intermediary sources (Ibn al-Athir, 1997).

Baybars also consulted regional and biographical works according to the subject matter. He made selective and highly condensed use of al-Balawī's *Sīrat Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn* for events relating to Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn's rule in Egypt, transforming detailed biographical accounts into concise annalistic reports (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998; Abd Allah ibn Muhammad, n.d.). Likewise, he drew on Ibn 'Asākir's *Tārīkh Dimashq* for Syrian events and biographical notices, as illustrated by his account of Mālik ibn Ṭawq al-Taghlibī (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998; Ibn Asakir, 1995).

Baybars also appears to have drawn on al-Ḥumaydī's *Jadhwat al-Muqtabis fī Dhikr Wulāt al-Andalus* for material relating to *al-Andalus*, particularly reports on its governors and biographical notices. Comparative analysis suggests that he selectively abridged this material and incorporated it into his annalistic framework (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998; Al-Humaydi, 1966).

By contrast, al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* is better regarded as a comparative source for genealogical and biographical material than as a direct source for Volume Five. Its genealogical structure differs fundamentally from Baybars' annalistic organization, and preliminary comparison reveals no close textual correspondences (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998; Al-Humaydi, 1966; Al-Baladhuri, 1996).

Some works occasionally identified as sources of Volume Five should likewise be treated with caution. Their direct influence is either not supported by clear textual evidence or belongs mainly to periods extending beyond the chronological scope of this volume. These include the chronicles of Thābit ibn Sinān and Hilāl al-Šābi', *Takmilat Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī* by al-Hamadḥānī, and Miskawayh's *Tajārib al-Umam* together with its continuation (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998; Al-Qifti, 1950; Ibn Kathir, 1996).

Overall, Baybars relied on both universal annalistic chronicles, represented chiefly by al-Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Jawzī, and Ibn al-Athīr, and specialized regional or biographical works, including al-Balawī, Ibn 'Asākir, and al-

Humaydī. Among these, al-Ṭabarī remained the most influential source for Volume Five. Baybars' engagement with these works extended beyond compilation to careful selection, abridgement, and integration into a coherent annalistic narrative.

vi. Baybars' Method of Transmitting Material from His Sources in Volume Five of *Zubdat al-Fikrah* within the Context of the Mamluk Epistemic Environment

In light of the Mamluk epistemic environment, Baybars did not merely compile earlier material but employed different methods of transmission, most notably verbatim or near-verbatim reproduction alongside omission, abridgement, and reordering. These practices reflect the prevailing historiographical conventions of the period, which combined faithful transmission with refinement and condensation. Verbatim transmission predominates in Volume Five, especially in political and military reports, where Baybars often reproduces his sources with only minor verbal variations, reflecting the encyclopaedic historiographical ideal of accuracy and fidelity (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998).

Consistent with Mamluk historiographical practice, Baybars occasionally identified his sources but more often relied on general expressions such as "he said" or "it was related," making textual comparison the principal means of identifying his sources. His verbatim transmission is evident in the preservation of chronological structure, names, and numerical data, whereas longer reports were condensed through the omission of chains of transmission and secondary details. At the same time, he introduced occasional revisions, corrections, and brief evaluative remarks that reveal his editorial role (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998).

Baybars himself states in the introduction to Volume Five that his treatment of historical reports was based on selection and abridgement (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998). This approach remained fully consistent with the annalistic tradition while enabling him to integrate material from multiple sources into a more coherent historical narrative.

a. Complete and Near-Verbatim Transmission

Complete and near-verbatim transmission represents one of the principal ways in which Baybars al-Dawādār used his sources in Volume Five. This is evident in numerous reports whose wording closely follows earlier authorities, especially al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, his principal source for Abbasid history, although some material may have reached him through later intermediaries. Similar patterns appear in reports corresponding to Ibn al-Athīr, including the rebellion of al-ʿAbbās ibn Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, as well as accounts relating to *al-Andalus*, pilgrimage, and obituary notices.

This practice demonstrates Baybars' commitment to preserving either the wording or the substance of his sources with minimal intervention. Complete and near-verbatim transmission therefore reflects not only his dependence on earlier historical works but also the limited extent of his editorial role in constructing his historical narrative.

A clear example is his account of the killing of *Sharīḥ al-Ḥabashī*, whose wording and sequence of events correspond closely to al-Ṭabarī's version, illustrating Baybars' faithful reproduction of the source (Al-Tabari, 1967). A similar pattern appears in the report concerning *Bughā* and *Waṣīf*, where the narrative structure, principal actors, and essential wording likewise remain almost identical to al-Ṭabarī's account (Al-Tabari, 1967). Together, these examples demonstrate that complete or near-verbatim transmission constituted a defining feature of Baybars' treatment of political reports in Volume Five.

Another example of complete or near-verbatim transmission appears in Baybars' account of *al-ʿAbbās ibn Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn's* rebellion against his father. His text shows a close correspondence with that of Ibn al-Athīr in both the sequence of events and their principal elements. Baybars records:

"... In this year, *al-ʿAbbās ibn Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn* rebelled against his father (Ibn al-Athir, 1997). The reason was that when his father departed for Syria, he appointed his son *al-ʿAbbās* as his representative—as mentioned earlier. After his departure from Egypt, a group of those around *al-ʿAbbās* encouraged him to seize the wealth and proceed to Barqah. He did so and went to Barqah. When news reached his father, he returned to Egypt, sent

messengers to his son, and sought to treat him with kindness and persuade him to return..." (Al-Tabari, 1967; Abd Allah ibn Muhammad, n.d.; Ibn Taghri Birdi, 1993).

This report shows that Baybars preserved both the narrative structure and the sequence of events found in the transmitted account. Nevertheless, establishing his direct dependence on Ibn al-Athīr requires detailed textual comparison, since the possibility of a common source or an earlier intermediary cannot be excluded.

Complete or near-verbatim transmission in Baybars' work was not confined to political and military reports. It is also evident in a number of brief reports and obituary notices. One example corresponds closely to Ibn al-Athīr's account:

"In this year, the Bedouins killed *Ja' lān*, known as *al- 'Ayyār* (Ibn al-Athir, 1997). A force was sent in pursuit of them, but they were not overtaken, and a number of those who had been dispatched died because of snowfall."

Similarly, Baybars records the following obituary notice:

"In this year, Ismā'īl ibn Yūsuf al-Ṭālibī died, who had previously committed what is well known in Mecca." (Al-Tabari, 1967).

These examples show that complete and near-verbatim transmission in Baybars' work encompassed both lengthy and concise reports and was not confined to a single category of historical material.

The same pattern may also be observed in Volume Five in a number of pilgrimage reports, administrative appointments, and successive brief notices, where Baybars transmitted reports in wording closely corresponding to that of his earlier sources. One example appears in the events of 251 AH concerning the dispatch of Abū al-Sāj to the Meccan route (Al-Tabari, 1967). The same approach is also evident in certain reports for the year 261 AH, including the appointment by al-Mu'tamid 'alā Allāh of Muḥammad ibn 'Umar ibn 'Alī al-Ṭā'ī al-Mawṣilī over Ādharbayjān (Ibn al-Athir, 1997). In this report, Baybars wrote the numeral in the form *thalatha*, rather than *thalāthah*, as it appears in Ibn al-Athīr's text (Ibn al-Athir, 1997). This minor orthographic variation does not affect the substance of the report and does not detract from its classification as complete or near-verbatim transmission, since the correspondence lies in the narrative structure and its essential content rather than in a minor orthographic detail.

The same pattern also appears in the report concerning the appointment of al-Khiḍr ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Umar al-Taghlibī over al-Mawṣil (Ibn al-Athir, 1997) and in the account of al-Ḥasan ibn Zayd's return to Ṭabaristān, where the report corresponds verbatim to Ibn al-Athīr's text (Ibn al-Athir, 1997). It is therefore possible that Baybars relied on Ibn al-Athīr at this point. The same pattern is evident in the pilgrimage reports. Baybars recorded the names of those who led the pilgrimage in several successive years, including 252 AH (Al-Nuwayri, 2004, (Al-Tabari, 1967; Ibn al-Jawzi, 1938), 253 AH (Al-Tabari, 1967), 254 AH (Al-Tabari, 1967; Ibn al-Athir, 1997; Ibn al-Jawzi, 1938), 255 AH, where al-Ṭabarī records the name as 'Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Ismā'īl ibn al-'Abbās (Al-Tabari, 1967; Ibn al-Jawzi, 1938; Al-Masudi, 2005), 257 AH (Ibn al-Athir, 1997; Ibn al-Jawzi, 1938), 258 AH, where the report appears in both al-Ṭabarī and al-Mas'ūdī, while al-Nuwayrī records the name as al-Faḍl ibn al-'Abbās rather than Ibn Ishāq (Al-Nuwayri, 2004, (Al-Tabari, 1967; Al-Masudi, 2005), and 259 AH (Al-Nuwayri, 2004; Ibn al-Jawzi, 1938) For the year 260 AH, Baybars transmitted the report almost verbatim from Ibn al-Athīr (1997) in a similarly concise form. These examples suggest that complete or near-verbatim transmission in his work was not limited to extended narratives but also included successive brief reports and the names of the commanders of the pilgrimage caravan.

The presentation of these reports demonstrates Baybars' concern for fidelity in transmission and for preserving both the structure and the essential content of the historical report. This, in turn, facilitates tracing his relationship with his sources and assessing the extent of his intervention in the transmitted material. Such reliance on complete or near-verbatim transmission, however, does not diminish the scholarly value of his work. Rather, it reflects the established conventions of Islamic historical writing, which were based on collecting reports, arranging them, and linking successive events within a continuous historical narrative. This is consistent with the view held by a number of Muslim scholars that the value of authorship is not confined to originality but also

includes gathering dispersed material, arranging disordered accounts, abridging lengthy works, and clarifying difficult passages. Baybars' reliance on earlier texts therefore does not diminish the significance of his work; instead, it illustrates his place within this historiographical tradition and his effort to select and arrange historical material within a coherent annalistic structure. In this connection, al-Muḥibbī attributes to Shams al-Dīn al-Bābilī (d. 1666 CE) the view that the forms of authorship are not limited to innovation but also include completing what is incomplete, explaining what is obscure, abridging lengthy works, arranging disordered material, correcting errors, and bringing together dispersed material (Muhammad Amin ibn Fadl Allah al-Muhibbi, n.d.)

b. Modification of Transmitted Material by Omission, Abridgement, and Reordering

Baybars al-Dawādār did not adhere to verbatim transmission in every instance in Volume Five. Rather, in some reports taken from earlier sources, he modified the transmitted material through omission, reordering, or by retaining only the substance of the report while preserving its overall meaning. This approach is especially evident in passages where the narrative context did not require lengthy treatment or where extensive detail did not accord with the method he adopted for presenting his historical material.

Baybars himself referred to this tendency in the introduction to Volume Five, where he explained that he had deliberately avoided excessive detail in view of the preference of the people of his time for conciseness. One example is his account of the Zanj expedition to al-Baṭīḥah and the district of Maysān in 262 AH, where he appears to have reworked al-Ṭabarī's more detailed narrative into a shorter version (Al-Tabari, 1967), retaining only the elements necessary for the sequence of events without reproducing all of its details. This approach is supported by his statement in the introduction to Volume Five:

"... Nevertheless, I deliberately avoided excessive detail because the people of our time prefer conciseness." (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998).

c. Applications of Baybars' Method in Selected Topics of Volume Five

• The Epistemic Environment in the Accounts of the Zanj Rebellion

This feature is clearly evident in Baybars' treatment of the Zanj Rebellion, an armed political and social movement that lasted from 869 to 883 CE and came to control extensive areas of southern Iraq and Khūzistān, eventually posing a serious threat to Baghdad. His presentation of these events illustrates his use of the prevailing epistemic environment in constructing and presenting the historical narrative (Sakhinini, 2007).

Baybars appears to have relied extensively on earlier sources in recounting the rebellion, particularly al-Ṭabarī, apparently because he regarded him as an eyewitness to many of the events, especially the movements of the Abbasid army, as al-Ṭabarī himself states (Al-Tabari, 1967). His narrative, however, does not seek to analyse the internal structure of the rebellion or its social motivations. Instead, it focuses on the position of the Abbasid state and the military and administrative measures adopted by the caliphate, while highlighting the role of its commanders and armies in confronting the Zanj, particularly in the events of 257 AH. One example is the account of al-Mutawakkil's campaign against the leader of the Zanj. This presentation reflects Baybars' adoption of the official Baghdadi perspective, as even in abridging the reports he retained those elements that reinforced the viewpoint of the central authority in portraying the conflict.

Baybars did not merely transmit these reports. He also included evaluative judgments in his narrative, reflected in the negative descriptions attached to the leader of the Zanj and his followers. In many passages, he refrained from mentioning the leader by name, referring to him instead as *Ṣāhib al-Zanj* ("Leader of the Zanj") or "the leader of the Zanj." He further applied pejorative descriptions such as "the immoral" (*al-fāsiq*), "the wicked" (*al-fājir*), "the traitor" (*al-khā'in*), "the vile" (*al-khabīth*), and "the enemy of God," particularly in his account of the events of 270 AH describing the death of the Zanj leader (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998). Likewise, the followers of *Ṣāhib al-Zanj*, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds or social circumstances, are described simply as "the vile" (*khubathā'*) (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998). It is also noteworthy that several of the descriptions applied by al-Ṭabarī to the leader of the Zanj recur in Baybars' account, especially the epithet *al-khabīth* ("the vile")

(Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998), while Baybars applies the designation *al-fāsiqūn* ("the immoral") collectively to the participants in the rebellion (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998), corresponding to al-Ṭabarī's frequent use of the designation *al-fujjār* ("the wicked") (Al-Tabari, 1967).

This indicates that Baybars reworked these reports within the framework of the epistemic environment of his own age and in light of his military and legal background. As a result, his narrative acquired moral and political dimensions that go beyond a purely descriptive narrative. At the same time, he was not merely a transmitter of earlier material but exercised a measure of guidance and evaluation, drawing upon his experience and learning in shaping the historical narrative (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998). Nevertheless, his account remained largely framed by the perspective established in the official sources, placing greater emphasis on the threat posed by the Zanj to the Abbasid authority and the consequences of their rebellion than on explaining their motives. His treatment of the rebellion therefore represents an example of the interaction between transmitted historical material and Baybars' own perspective and evaluation of movements that challenged the state.

Echoes of Baybars al-Dawādār's account may also be found in the work of Ibn al-Zamalkānī. The latter's narrative, however, is brief and selective. Rather than presenting the successive stages of the rebellion in detail, it is confined to scattered references to its beginning, one of its military defeats, and the death of its leader. Even so, his account conveys a markedly negative portrayal of the rebellion through the inclusion of reports and stories that may have been circulating about it, reflecting the scale of the crimes attributed to the movement and the extent to which it was portrayed as violating the social order and prevailing moral values (Ibn al-Zamalkani, n.d.).

• The Epistemic Environment in the History of al-Andalus

Applications of Baybars' method in transmitting the history of al-Andalus are evident in his adherence to the annalistic method. He included events from al-Andalus within the record of each year before the obituary notices, so that they formed part of the overall structure of the work. This arrangement reflects his comprehensive view of the Islamic world and his concern to maintain a balance between the history of the Mashriq and the Maghrib. Throughout *Zubdat al-Fikrah*, Baybars included scattered references to events in al-Andalus. Among the recurring themes is the phenomenon of high prices, which is frequently mentioned in the historical sources of the period (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998; Al-Tabari, 1967; Ibn Kathir, 1996; Ibn Taghri Birdi, 1993; Ibn al-Jawzi, 1938).

A comparison of Baybars' text with earlier sources indicates that, in his treatment of the history of al-Andalus between 866 and 942 CE, he relied extensively on Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* (1997). His transmission remained close to the original text, although with a tendency towards abridgement. He omitted many chains of transmission and the names of transmitters, while refining the reports and incorporating them into the annalistic structure of his work. This indicates a method based on reworking historical material into a more concise and coherent form rather than simply repeating it.

This approach is evident in a number of reports concerning the cities of al-Andalus, their governors, and their rebellions, including his accounts of the revolt of certain inhabitants of al-Andalus, the movements of al-Mundhir ibn Muḥammad, the rebellion of ʿUmar ibn Ḥafṣūn, and the conflicts between the local powers and the Franks (Ibn al-Athir, 1997).

Baybars' treatment of the history of al-Andalus shows his concern to preserve the principal elements of each event while maintaining the substance of the historical narrative without elaboration. This reflects his method of drawing upon earlier sources through the selection, refinement, and incorporation of reports into a concise annalistic structure that served his purpose of composing a continuous universal history.

• Biographical Notices and the Principles of Their Selection within the Epistemic Environment

Applications of Baybars al-Dawādār's method are also evident in Volume Five in his treatment of biographical notices and the principles of their selection. His work was not confined to recording historical events; it also includes a considerable number of biographical notices devoted to prominent figures, intellectuals, military

commanders, political leaders, and women. This gives Volume Five additional value as a historical source that extends beyond recording events to preserving individual biographies associated with those events.

Baybars did not follow a single pattern in these biographical notices. Their length varies according to the importance of the individual concerned and the historical material available to him. Some are very brief, consisting of no more than one or two lines, such as his notice on Sulaymān ibn Ḥafṣ ibn Abī 'Aṣfūr al-Ifrīqī (Ibn al-Athīr, 1997). Others extend over several pages, as in his biographical notice of Ibn Ṭūlūn, which is not found in either Ibn al-Athīr or al-Ṭabarī in this form. In this case, Baybars devoted a much fuller treatment to the subject. Further evidence of his interest in biographical notices is provided by the account of the death of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, which al-Ṭabarī records merely as a brief report without a biographical notice (Al-Tabari, 1967). By contrast, Baybars combined lineage, early life, personal qualities, major achievements, and death within a single biographical notice. This indicates that, in selecting these biographical notices, he took into consideration the individual's status, his influence on the course of events, and his scholarly or political standing.

This expansion is also evident in some of Baybars' biographical notices of well-known figures, particularly scholars of religion and language, such as his notice on al-Jāhīz (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998). It is likewise noteworthy that Baybars did not confine his biographical notices to a single geographical region. Rather, they include figures from various regions of the Islamic world, extending from Iraq to Egypt, Syria, al-Andalus, and Ifrīqiyah (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998), a pattern consistent with the nature of his work as a universal history.

Baybars did not seek to maintain a balance in the number of biographical notices from one year to another. Instead, their number depended on the richness of each year's events and the number of notable individuals associated with them. In many instances, he sought to include a number of essential biographical elements, such as the individual's name, honorific title (*laqab*), teknonym (*kunyah*), status, selected accounts from his life, the date of death, and, in some cases, the year of birth (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998), together with notable achievements and personal qualities.

In some notices, Baybars records the date of death without mentioning the year of birth. Thus, in the events of 252 AH, he records the death of 'Alī ibn Salamah ibn 'Uqbah Abū al-Ḥasan al-Qurashī al-Naysābūrī, known as al-Labaqī, stating that he died in Jumādā al-Ūlā, describing him as trustworthy, and quoting a statement transmitted by him from Mūsā ibn Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq concerning Abū Bakr and 'Umar (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998). Likewise, in the events of 254 AH, he records the death of Muḥammad ibn Maṣṣūr ibn Dāwūd Abū Ja'far al-'Ābid al-Ṭūsī, describing him as an ascetic and righteous man, one of the abdāl, originally from Ṭūs but later resident in Baghdad. He also records Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's praise of him, notes that he was known for his *karāmāt*, mentions his age at death, and identifies some of his teachers as well as those who narrated from him (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998). In other notices, however, Baybars records both the year of birth and the date of death, as in his notice on Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, where he states that al-Bukhārī was born after the Friday prayer on the night of 10 Shawwāl 194 AH and died on the night preceding 'Īd al-Fiṭr in the year under discussion, in agreement with the scholars (Baybars al-Dawadar, 1998).

This indicates that biographical notices were not merely incidental additions to Baybars' work but constituted an essential element in the construction of his historical narrative, contributing to the interpretation of events by linking them to the individuals associated with them. His method of composing biographical notices was therefore based on selecting individuals according to their importance, while the length and detail of each notice depended on the historical material available to him and on what he considered worthy of inclusion. Moreover, the integration of these notices into the general historical context made them an integral part of the structure of the work rather than a separate section. This gives Volume Five greater richness in its historical material and reflects Baybars' ability to combine the recording of historical events with the introduction of the individuals connected with them.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that the epistemic environment played a central role in shaping historical writing during the Mamluk period. It also indicates that verbatim transmission was not merely a means of preserving historical material but an established historiographical practice within the Islamic historical tradition. Volume Five of

Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah provides a clear example of this practice. Baybars al-Dawādār relied extensively on earlier sources through complete and near-verbatim transmission, while also employing omission, abridgement, and reworking without disrupting the annalistic structure or the continuity of the historical narrative.

The principal findings of this study are as follows:

1. The Mamluk epistemic environment reinforced verbatim transmission as an accepted historiographical practice intended to preserve and reorganize historical material rather than simply repeat earlier texts.
2. Baybars al-Dawādār relied extensively on earlier sources, particularly Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, while also drawing upon al-Ṭabarī and other historians. He preserved the substance of the transmitted reports and incorporated them into a coherent annalistic structure.
3. Baybars' use of earlier sources extended beyond complete and near-verbatim transmission to include omission, abridgement, and reordering. These methods enabled him to present historical material in a more concise and coherent form while preserving the overall meaning and sequence of the transmitted reports.
4. The case studies of the Zanj Rebellion, the history of al-Andalus, and the biographical notices show that Baybars exercised selection and evaluation in presenting historical material while remaining largely within the interpretive framework established by his principal sources.
5. The biographical notices in Volume Five performed a historical function beyond introducing individuals. They formed an integral part of the historical narrative by linking events with the individuals associated with them, thereby enhancing the value of the work as a source of both universal history and biographical information.

These findings indicate that the significance of *Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah* lies in the way Baybars al-Dawādār selected, reorganized, and incorporated earlier historical material within a coherent annalistic structure. This reflects the historiographical conventions of the Mamluk period and highlights the role of the epistemic environment in shaping historical writing. It also confirms that verbatim transmission was an accepted method of historical composition rather than a mere repetition of earlier texts.

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