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New Source, New Debate: Re-evaluation of the Mamluk-Timurid Struggle for Religious Supremacy in the Hijaz (Paris, BnF MS ar. 4440)

Introduction

As the spiritual center of Islam, with the two holy cities, the Hijaz always was a highly-esteemed place for the Muslim community in general and a strategic stronghold for rulers in particular. Indeed, every year, believers from all over the Muslim world gathered in Mecca for the pilgrimage. Mecca thus served as a powerful medium of legitimization and supremacy for rulers seeking the supreme leadership of the Muslim community. In early times, this role was reserved to the caliph only, since he held both spiritual and secular power. However, over time, with Islamic unity disintegrating, Hijazi reality tended toward more complexity. This is particularly striking with the establishment of a dynasty of sharifs in Mecca during the mid-fourth/tenth century. From that date onwards, the Hijaz developed into a nearly independent territory that symbolically recognized the caliphate's authority during the pilgrimage. Mecca hence became, more than ever, the arena in which rulers competed for religious supremacy and this under the aegis of the sharifs, who frequently moved from one allegiance to another by selling their recognition to the highest bidder.¹

This pattern is well illustrated throughout the period of Mamluk rule (648–922/1250–1517). With the destruction of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad (656/1258), the Hijaz, and especially Mecca, gained in significance for nascent dynasties seeking to legitimate their rule. Rulers would thus expend substantial efforts there to impose themselves as supreme representatives of the Muslim community. This competition is best seen during the pilgrimage, when the sharifs bestowed recognition in front of the community of believers gathered for the occasion. If the Mamluk sultans would eventually win this competition, their position, however, would never stay unchallenged.

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¹A. J. Wensinck, “Makka,” *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 6:148.



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Exchanges between the Mamluks and the Timurids in the aftermath of Timur's death (807/1405) have always been seen through this particular lens of struggle for religious supremacy in the Hijaz based on Shāh Rukh's desire to send the *kiswah* for the Ka'bah. The *kiswah* is the veil the supreme representative of the Muslim community sent every year on the occasion of the pilgrimage to cover the Ka'bah. It constituted, along with the *khuṭbah* and the *maḥmal*, the most powerful symbol of a ruler's ascendancy or claim for ascendancy over the holy cities. For this reason, it was the most contested prerogative among Muslim rulers.

Since Baybars' first dispatch of the sacred veil in 661/1263, Mamluks made clear their claim to send the *kiswah*. This prerogative would even be sanctioned in a treaty signed by the sharif Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad Abū Numayy (r. 652–701/1254–1301) and sultan Qalāwūn in 681/1282.² Despite the Mamluks' attempt to keep this prerogative exclusively theirs, however, many Muslim rivals (i.e., Rasulids, Ilkhanids) would send the *kiswah* over time, thus trying to assert their own claim for religious supremacy in the Hijaz. Shāh Rukh's request to sultans Barsbāy and Jaqmaq has therefore been read from this perspective.

Yet this assumption now requires re-evaluation based on the recent revelation of an unpublished source that sheds new light on the event, namely MS ar. 4440 (Paris, BnF).³ This manuscript is a collection of copies of letters (*munsha'ah*) that was made by an anonymous secretary working at the chancery of Cairo during the second half of the fifteenth century. Of the sixty-two letters it contains, ten concern the exchanges between the Mamluks and the Timurids, among which four deal with the Timurid sending of the *kiswah*: letters XLI (fols. 171b–172b: from Shāh Rukh to Jaqmaq), XLII (fols. 172b–175a: Jaqmaq's response to Shāh Rukh), LXII (fols. 210a–210b: Jaqmaq's response to Muḥammad Jūki), and XLIV

²A copy of this treaty is contained in al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā fī Ṣinā'at al-Inshā'* (Cairo, 1913–14; repr. 1963), 13:318–19; also in Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā bi-Akḥbār Umm al-Qurā*, ed. F. M. Shaltūt (Mecca, 1983–90), 3:114–15.

³The manuscript was revealed in 2007 by Frédéric Bauden, "Les Relations diplomatiques entre les sultans mamlouks circassiens et les autres pouvoirs du *Dār al-Islām*: L'apport du ms. ar. 4440 (BNF, Paris)," *Annales Islamologiques* 41 (2007): 1–29. Though known in the past, it seems to have fallen into oblivion. See G. S. Colin, "Contribution à l'étude des relations diplomatiques entre les musulmans d'Occident et l'Égypte au xve siècle," *Mélanges Maspero*, vol. 3, Orient islamique (Cairo, 1935–40), 197–206; Aḥmad Darrāg, "Risālatān bayna sultān Mālwah wa-al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy," *Revue de l'Institut des manuscrits arabes* 4 (1377/1958), 97–123; Ḥabīb Zayyāt, "Athar Unuf: Nuskhāt Qiṣṣah Waradat ilā al-Abwāb al-Sharīfah al-Sultānīyah al-Malakīyah Īnāl min al-Muslimīn al-Qāṭīnīn Lishbūnah," *Al-Machriq* 35 (1937): 13–22. Darrāg, in his monograph devoted to Barsbāy, also used the Mamluk-Timurid material preserved in the MS ar. 4440; however, his processing of the data is somewhat incomplete. See Darrāg, *L'Égypte sous le règne de Barsbāy 825–841/1422–1438* (Damascus, 1961).



(fols. 177a–178b: Jaqmaq’s response to ‘Alā’ al-Dawlah).⁴ The corpus shows that Shāh Rukh’s request did not, in fact, concern the traditional *kiswah*, the black veil covering the Ka‘bah, but rather the inner one (*ilbās dākhil al-ka‘bah; kiswat dākhil al-ka‘bah*). While most secondary sources seem to ignore this fact, some primary sources (i.e., Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Taghrībirdī, al-Sakhāwī, Ibn Iyās, and the Meccan historian Ibn Fahd) reported the event with several details confirming the data found in MS ar. 4440.

In the present article, I will use this new source to reopen the debate on the so-called religious struggle between the Mamluks and the Timurids in the first half of the fifteenth century. After presenting the general context surrounding Shāh Rukh’s request and the facts described by both the corpus of letters and the chronicles, I will concentrate my analysis on the study of the meaning and use of the inner *kiswah* within the larger context of religious supremacy as seen by Muslim rulers themselves, especially during the Mamluk period. For each section, I will review the main struggles for religious supremacy that were scattered throughout Mamluk history and present the different actors and their claims as well as Mamluk responses to these challenges. Investigating the details of such claims, I will attempt to determine the meaning of Shāh Rukh’s request and re-evaluate the extent of his Hijazi pretensions.

The Facts

By the time Shāh Rukh sent his first embassy to Barsbāy to request his sending of the *kiswah* (828/1424), Mamluk sultans had already established strong links with the Hijaz and the sharifs. It seems clear that the Mamluks originally aimed at imposing a true sovereignty over the Hijaz. The first two treaties concluded with the sharif Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad Abū Numayy in 667/1269 (Baybars)⁵ and in 681/1282 (Qalāwūn) ordered both the *sikkah* to be minted and the *khuṭbah* to be delivered in the Mamluk sultan’s name. However, the sultans soon realized the difficulty of the task. In fact, due to the “principle of political isolation” that characterizes Mecca and the Hijaz,⁶ the sharifs were able to keep themselves from complete submission. The Mamluk sultans, moreover, had to recognize that they

⁴The letters’ numbers follow those assigned by F. Bauden in his article “Les Relations diplomatiques.”

⁵Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:93. In exchange, Abū Numayy received a *taqlīd* granting him the amirate. The sharif had previously written the Mamluk sultan to ask him for the grant of the amirate for himself, over his uncle Idrīs.

⁶C. Snouck Hurgronje, “Qatadah’s Policy of Splendid Isolation of the Hijaz,” *A Volume of Oriental Studies Presented to Edward G. Browne*, ed. T. W. Arnold and R. A. Nicholson (Cambridge, 1922), 440. Also in John L. Meloy, *Imperial Power and Maritime Trade: Mecca and Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago, 2010), 12.



needed the sharifs to deal with the complex environment of the region (in particular the factions and tribes). This is directly connected to another feature of the region's politics that also explains the sharifs' acceptance of occasional foreign interventions in their affairs, a feature John L. Meloy describes as the principle of brokerage.⁷

Because of the presence of the holy cities in the Hijaz, the sharifs could not completely break every tie they had with the caliphs or Muslim rulers nor deny them their role as religious representatives of the Muslim community. As already mentioned, they even took advantage of this situation by selling their recognition to the highest bidder among rival rulers. On the other hand, reliance on a nominal authority proved to be of some appeal for the sharifs. Indeed, if Muslim rulers needed the sharifs to maintain stability in the regions, the sharifs needed the recognition of a higher power to acknowledge their supremacy over other Hijazi factions. The principle of brokerage thus acted as a pact of mutual recognition for each party's prerogatives in the region. This dynamic became particularly striking during the period of Mamluk rule. Despite their initial attempts at imposing true sovereignty over the Hijaz, the Mamluk sultans came to tolerate the brokerage principle as long as their interests in the Hijaz were protected.

As for the Mamluk sultans' interests, Meloy has further shown that during the first part of their sultanate (Turkish period), the sultans were essentially concerned with ensuring the safety of the pilgrimage itself. Their domination of the Hijaz was thus only seasonal in nature during this period.⁸ So long as their prerogative was respected, the sultans accepted the sharifs' autonomy during the remainder of the year. In return, the sharifs were granted a decree (*marsūm*) that sanctioned their own supremacy over rival factions. The Mamluk sultans' prerogative, however, was sold by the sharifs many times to other pretenders, provoking retaliations from the sultans and a progressive expansion of their control in the region. During the second period of their sultanate (from the 820s/1420s), the sultans actually began interfering with the sharifate's own politics, expanding their control by seizing more and more resources (taxes) while drastically reducing the sharifs' share.⁹ They also established a permanent military garrison in Mecca from Barsbāy's reign onward (r. 825–41/1422–38).¹⁰ If this action allowed the sultan to acquire substantial new income, he nevertheless failed to dominate the sharifs, who continued to play with the Mamluks' dearest prerogative: religious supremacy in the holy cities.

⁷Meloy, *Imperial Power*, 81–112.

⁸Ibid., 94–102.

⁹Ibid., 113–39.

¹⁰Ibid., 125–31.



Shāh Rukh's first embassy to Barsbāy coincided with the period of the Mamluks' increasing control over the Hijaz. Moreover, the nature of his request was a sensitive issue since it dealt with the sultans' prerogative and thus constituted a threat to their nominal supremacy in Mecca. For this reason, the events related to the twenty years (828–48/1424–44) of diplomatic exchanges between the Timurids and the Mamluks is well documented by contemporary sources. My own comparison of the literary sources and the letters of MS ar. 4440 shows that, of the twenty embassies listed, half actually did concern the Timurid sending of the *kiswah*. I will now recapitulate these exchanges.

Already the first account related to exchanges between Shāh Rukh and Barsbāy (Muḥarram 828/December 1424) concerns the *kiswah* matter, mentioning Shāh Rukh's special request to send the inner *kiswah* (*kiswat al-ka'bah min dākhil al-bayt*).¹¹ Although Barsbāy's response to this first embassy is not reported, the events of the year 833/1429–30 show he refused the request. In fact, that year alone, Shāh Rukh sent no less than four separate embassies to Cairo, at least one of which clearly dealt with the matter of the *kiswah* (Muḥarram 833/October 1429).¹² Although the authors reporting the event do not mention which *kiswah* was meant, they do inform us that in his letter Shāh Rukh was also asking to repair the springs of Mecca. Along with these two requests, Shāh Rukh also asked Barsbāy whether he could acquire books for the Royal Library.¹³ Apparently, Barsbāy not only refused the three queries but also completely neglected the Timurid envoy. Accordingly, when Shāh Rukh sent his third embassy to Cairo (on 23 Ramaḍān 833/15 June 1430),¹⁴ he plainly showed his discontent. His letter was not sealed, and instead of the *basmalah*, it began with *sūrat al-fīl*—a clear reference to the Abyssinians, who tried to seize Mecca during the *jāhiliyah* and were destroyed by God.¹⁵ Shāh Rukh further addressed Barsbāy as *amīr*, thereby indicating his first claim over the Mamluks since Timur's death (807/1405).¹⁶

¹¹Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr bi-Abnāʾ al-ʿUmr*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1972), 3:342.

¹²On 21 Muḥarram: al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-Ḥumām fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṭaṭṭāwī (Cairo, 1989), 2:370–71. On 24 Muḥarram: al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Maʿrifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. Saʿīd ʿĀshūr (Cairo, 2nd ed., 2007), 4:2:818; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Cairo, 2006), 14:336; al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-al-Abdān fī Tawārīkh al-Zamān*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1970–94), 3:178.

¹³In his letter Shāh Rukh asks Barsbāy to obtain two books: Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's commentary on al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* and al-Maqrīzī's *Kitāb al-Sulūk*.

¹⁴Al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-Ḥumām*, 2:376; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 4:2:833; al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs*, 4:197; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr*, 3:440.

¹⁵Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 4:2:833; Quran 105:1–5.

¹⁶From the time of Shāh Rukh's accession to the Timurid throne, he had never indicated any claims over the Mamluk sultanate; on the contrary, he maintained good relations with Barsbāy's predecessors, al-Muʿayyad Shaykh and Ṭaṭar. See Malika Dekkiche, "Diplomacy at Its Zenith: A



Five years later (Muḥarram 838/August–September 1434),¹⁷ the Timurid ruler undertook a new effort to provide the inner *kiswah* (*min dākhil al-bayt*).¹⁸ The letter brought by his emissary, the *sayyid* Tāj al-Dīn ‘Alī, may date from Dhū al-Ḥijjah 836/July–August 1433, but its arrival was delayed because of the *sayyid*’s travel on the pilgrimage.¹⁹ Barsbāy received him during the *dār al-‘adl* session in the *īwān* at the Citadel, with the judges and the notables. Apparently, Shāh Rukh had already made the precious veil, valued at 12,000 dinars.²⁰ In spite of such efforts and intentions (he sent Barsbāy many precious gifts, worth 3000 dinars),²¹ Shāh Rukh was once again denied the privilege of sending the inner *kiswah*. After deliberation, the judges justified their decision on the pretext that this prerogative belonged only to the sultans of Egypt.²²

This new affront aroused enmity in Shāh Rukh. As a result, his last two embassies to Barsbāy had no other aim but to assert his claim over the Mamluk sultanate. First, on 4 Shawwāl 838/5 May 1435,²³ he sent a threatening letter to Barsbāy, revealing his intention to enter the Mamluk lands on his way to Jerusalem and complaining about the sultan’s customs policies in Jeddah as well as the bribes given to the judges.²⁴ Second, in the following year (late Jumādā II 839/mid-January 1436),²⁵ he sent Barsbāy a robe and crown and ordered him to mention his name both at the Friday *khuṭbah* and on the coins.²⁶ Barsbāy’s rage was such that the messenger, Shaykh Ṣafā/Safar Shāh,²⁷ was beaten and thrown into freezing water. While such a serious deterioration in relations could have led to a significant military confrontation, internal troubles in the Timurid realm, as

Case Study of Mamluk and Timurid Agreement on the Dispatch of the Kiswah,” in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society* (forthcoming).

¹⁷On 24 Muḥarram/30 August: Al-‘Aynī, *‘Iqd al-Ḥumān*, 2:454. On 27 Muḥarram/2 September: Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 4:2:927; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 15:48.

¹⁸Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 15:49; Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 4:2:927.

¹⁹Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 15:49.

²⁰Al-‘Aynī, *‘Iqd al-Ḥumān*, 2:454.

²¹Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 15:48–49.

²²Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 4:2:932.

²³Ibid., 4:2:946; *ibid.*, 4:3:1187; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 15:59.

²⁴Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 15:59. Unclear is whether Shāh Rukh refers here to the judges involved in the *dār al-‘adl* session earlier that year.

²⁵On 28 Jumādā II/18 January: al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 4:2:968. On 29 Jumādā II/19 January: al-‘Aynī, *‘Iqd al-Ḥumān*, 2:471.

²⁶Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 4:2:969; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 15:73. Earlier that year (Ṣafar 839/September 1435), Shāh Rukh had also sent robes to the Ottomans, Qaramanids, Dulqadirids, and Aq Qoyunlu. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 4:2:957; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 15:63.

²⁷Safar Shāh: al-‘Aynī, *‘Iqd al-Ḥumān*, 2:471. Shaykh Ṣafā: al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 4:2:968; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 15:72.



well as Barsbāy's death soon after, ultimately quelled hostilities. Thus, with Jaqmaq's accession to the throne (r. 842/1438), relations between the Mamluks and the Timurids greatly improved.

The chroniclers' accounts we possess for early exchanges between Jaqmaq and the Timurids (842–45/1438–42) provide a considerable contrast to those of his predecessor. Furthermore, the letters preserved in MS ar. 4440 not only confirm these portrayals but also increase our knowledge of such exchanges substantially. On the one hand, they mention embassies not recorded by historians; on the other hand, they contain information regarding the motive and purpose of the missions unknown from chroniclers. This difference emerges, for example, with the inauguration of contacts between Jaqmaq and Shāh Rukh. MS. ar. 4440 provides the first letter Jaqmaq sent to Shāh Rukh after his accession to the throne: letter V (fols. 44a–45b), written in Ramaḍān 842/February 1439. The tone of the letter as well as the delegation sent to Herat (led by the great *dawādār* of Syria, Jijukbughā) clearly indicate Jaqmaq's wish to reconcile the two realms (*an takūn al-mamlakatānī ka-rūḥaynī fī jasad aw sā'idaynī fī 'aḍud*).²⁸ The Timurid historian al-Samarqandī, who reported the Mamluk embassy's arrival at Herat in 843/1439, confirms the good state of relations between the two sovereigns.²⁹

It seems Shāh Rukh had similar intentions, for a Timurid embassy apparently reached Cairo at the same time (in Jumādā I 843/October 1439³⁰ or on 5–6 Jumādā II 843/14 November 1439³¹) to congratulate the new sultan.

The first mention of Shāh Rukh's request to furnish the inner *kiswah* for the Ka'bah appears in the corpus of MS ar. 4440 and dates to Sha'bān 846/December 1442 (letter XLI, fols. 171b–172b).³² According to the letter's contents, Shāh Rukh had ostensibly expressed his wish—however unsuccessfully—as early as 843/1439.

²⁸MS ar. 4440, fol. 44b.

²⁹Samarqandī, *Maṭla'ī Sa'dayn va Majma'ī Baḥrayn*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Navā'i (Tehran, 2004), 2:1:483–87.

³⁰Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 15:336–37; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'i' al-Duhūr*, ed. M. Muṣṭafā (Cairo, 2nd ed., 2008), 2:221.

³¹Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 4:3:1175–76; al-'Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān*, 2:529; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, 4:132; al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs*, 4:164; 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalīl, *Nayl al-Amal fī Dhayl al-Duwal*, ed. 'Uthmān 'Abd al-Salām Tadmurī (Beirut, 2002), 5:106.

³²On 14 Sha'bān/18 December, according to MS ar. 4440 (the letter was written on 2 Rabī' I 846/11 July 1442). Chroniclers report the arrival of a Timurid embassy in Sha'bān (without any specification of the day): Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith al-Duhūr fī Maḍā al-Ayyām wa-al-Shuhūr*, ed. F. M. Shaltūt (Cairo, 1990), 49 (*quṣṣād min 'indi Shāh Rukh*); 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalīl, *Nayl al-Amal*, 5:164–65 (*qāṣid awlād Shāh Rukh*); al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Dhayl al-Sulūk*, ed. Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāh 'Ashūr (Cairo, 2002–7), 1:118 (*quṣṣād min 'indi awlād Shāh Rukh*); Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr*, 2:236. On 6 Sha'bān/10 December: al-'Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān*, 2:584 (*quṣṣād min 'indi awlād Shāh Rukh*); al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs*, 4:256 (*quṣṣād ibn Shāh Rukh*).



Indeed, as Jijukbughā was leaving Herat that year (18 Rajab/25 December), he was joined by a Timurid envoy, Mawlānā Ḥusām al-Dīn Mubārakshāh.³³ This embassy arrived in Cairo on 27 Rabīʿ I 844/August 1440³⁴ or 26 Rabīʿ II/24 September 1440,³⁵ but Mubārakshāh had died in Gaza just before (13 Rabīʿ II 844/11 September 1440)³⁶ and was thus unable to deliver his message. Letter XLI confirms this reconstruction³⁷ and mentions, in addition, the sending of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Majdī to complete the mission. In this letter, Shāh Rukh reminds the Mamluk sultan of his past wish to supply the inner veil (*ilbās dākhil al-kaʿbah*).

A similar letter sent by Shāh Rukh's son, Muḥammad Jūkī (d. 848/1444), reached Cairo as well, probably in the same period.³⁸ Although Jūkī's initial letter has not survived, MS ar. 4440 records Jaqmaq's answer, which summarizes its original content (letter LXII, fols. 210a–b). Even more, the corpus preserves Jaqmaq's response to Shāh Rukh's request: letter XLII (fols. 172b–175a). Both letters (LXII and XLII) attest Jaqmaq's agreement concerning the Timurid dispatch of the inner *kiswah*. From his response to Shāh Rukh (letter XLII), we learn that Jaqmaq was answering two letters brought by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Majdī: one regarding the inner *kiswah* request and a second on the subject of Shāh Rukh's desire to distribute money generated by the *awqāf* of his realm to the poor in Mecca.³⁹

Whether al-Majdī brought the two letters in 846/1442 or came back to Cairo with the second the following year, in 27 Jumādā II 847/22 October 1443, remains uncertain;⁴⁰ nevertheless, Jaqmaq undoubtedly accepted both requests, and in the following year (Shaʿbān 848/November 1444 or Ramaḍān 848/December 1444),⁴¹

³³ Samarqandī, *Maṭlaʿ-i Saʿdayn*, 2:1:483–87.

³⁴ Al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-Ḥumān*, 2:559–60.

³⁵ Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr*, 4:157; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 4:3:1208; al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs*, 4:198–99; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 15:342–43; ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalīl, *Nayl al-Amal*, 5:122 (he does not mention the day).

³⁶ Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 4:3:1231; al-Sakhāwī, *Wajīz al-Kalām fī al-Dhayl ʿalā Duwal al-Islām*, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf, ʿIṣām al-Ḥarastānī, Aḥmad al-Khaṭīmī (Beirut, 1995), 2:570.

³⁷ MS ar. 4440, fol. 172a.

³⁸ As shown in note 32 above, Mamluk authors mentioned several Timurid embassies that reached Cairo in Shaʿbān 846/December 1442. Though letter XLI explicitly states that this embassy refers to that of Shāh Rukh, an embassy from Jūkī probably arrived in the Mamluk capital soon thereafter (if not in the same month), which could explain the confusion made by the several authors.

³⁹ MS ar. 4440, fol. 173b.

⁴⁰ A Timurid embassy reached Cairo on this date to discuss the *kiswah* matter, though there is no specification as to whether it was the inner or outer one: al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-Ḥumān*, 2:600; al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs*, 4:277; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Ḥawādith al-Duhūr*, 64; al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 1:164.

⁴¹ Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr*, 2:244–45 (in Shaʿbān); al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-Ḥumān*, 2:627 (on 14 Shaʿbān/26 November); Ibn Taghribirdī, *Ḥawādith al-Duhūr*, 76, and idem, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 15:364 (15



the *kiswah* arrived in Cairo with a huge Timurid delegation led by two shaykhs, Nūr al-Dīn ibn al-Shaykh Junayd al-Kāzarūnī and Ibn al-Mawlā al-Abharī.⁴² While chroniclers demonstrate great familiarity with the reception given to the delegation and those troubles which the amirs and people of Cairo caused the emissaries,⁴³ they ignore almost completely the nature of the *kiswah*, neglecting the inner one altogether.

To avoid additional trouble with the amirs and the people, Jaqmaq soon prepared the shaykhs to leave for the pilgrimage, and he sent the inner *kiswah* to Mecca in secret (*fī al-dassi*).⁴⁴ In addition, he gave the emissaries a response to Shāh Rukh's grandson, 'Alā' al-Dawlah (letter XLIV in MS ar. 4440, fols. 177a–178b). 'Alā' al-Dawlah had apparently sent a letter earlier that year to inform Jaqmaq of the upcoming arrival of the shaykhs, who were bringing the inner *kiswah*. In his reply, the Mamluk sultan maintains he honored his promise to Shāh Rukh with respect to the inner *kiswah*, and he further describes the emissaries' progress to Mecca with the veil, as well as the instructions he gave to the sharif. Jaqmaq also stresses the unique character of this agreement owing to his respect for the Timurid ruler.

Accordingly, the inner *kiswah* arrived in Mecca with the Egyptian caravan and was hung inside the Ka'bah on the Day of the Sacrifice (*yawm al-naḥr*).⁴⁵ Yet Shāh Rukh's inner *kiswah* was not hung alone: it rested alongside that of Barsbāy, which had been hung in 826/1423. Both *kiswahs* stayed there until Ramaḍān 856/September 1452,⁴⁶ when sultan Jaqmaq promulgated an edict (*marsūm*) ordering that they be replaced by his own.⁴⁷ The Meccan historian Ibn Fahd likewise reports that the Timurid envoys were bringing money from the Timurid *awqāf* to

Sha'bān/27 November); al-Sakhāwī, *Wajīz al-Kalām*, 2:594–95, and idem, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 1:215–17 (14 Ramaḍān/ 25 December); 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalīl, *Nayl al-Amal*, 5:194–95 (Ramaḍān/December).

⁴²The whole delegation reportedly totalled one hundred persons, among whom was Timur's widow. According to Ibn Taghribirdī, however (*Ḥawāḍith al-Duhūr*, 76), and al-'Aynī (*Iqd al-ḡumān*, 2:627), she stayed in Damascus to join the Syrian caravan.

⁴³The amirs and the people were very upset about Jaqmaq's agreement with Shāh Rukh's sending of the *kiswah*, so that despite Jaqmaq's effort to hide the veil from them, they attacked the Timurid envoys and plundered their residence (the total amount of their loss was 20,000 dinars). When he heard the news, Jaqmaq punished the rebels and made it up to the emissaries by giving them presents for a larger amount than what they actually had lost.

⁴⁴Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr*, 2:245.

⁴⁵Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā'*, 4:238–39; al-Sakhāwī, *Wajīz al-Kalām*, 2:594–95.

⁴⁶Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr*, 2:296; al-Sakhāwī, *Wajīz al-Kalām*, 2:665.

⁴⁷Al-Sakhāwī, *Wajīz al-Kalām*, 2:665.



be given to the poor of Mecca, thereby confirming the data found in letter XLII. Given the small sum of money, however, only a few people benefited from it.⁴⁸

This episode that finally closes twenty years of negotiations between the Mamluks and the Timurids concerning the dispatch of the inner *kiswah* also seems to mark the end of their contact, at least according to Mamluk historians. After 848/1444, Mamluk sources mention no more Timurid embassies in Cairo. Moreover, Shāh Rukh's death soon afterwards (850/1447) inaugurated a new phase of conflict within the Timurid dynasty so that the several opponents for power were much less concerned with the Hijazi region and its patronage. The notion of the absence of contact between the two rulers, though, requires further correction: MS ar. 4440 contains three additional and otherwise unknown letters later sent by Sulṭān Abū Sa'īd (r. 855–73/1451–69) to the Mamluk sultan Khushqadam (r. 865–72/1461–67).⁴⁹ These letters all concern the request for protection of Timurid pilgrims on their way to the holy cities.

The description of exchanges between Shāh Rukh and the Mamluks shows several striking examples of Timurid interests in the Hijaz. Indeed, beside the request relating to the inner *kiswah*, Shāh Rukh expressed other queries significant for religious involvement in the holy cities. As early as 833/1429, he had asked Barsbāy for permission to repair the wells of Mecca. In his letter that arrived in Cairo on 6 Shawwāl 838/5 May 1435, he complains about the customs policy and the *mukūs* (illegal taxes) established by the sultan in Jeddah. Finally, his last request to Jaqmaq concerned not only the inner *kiswah* but also the distribution of the money generated by the Timurid *awqāf* to the people of Mecca. We now turn to the meanings and stakes of Shāh Rukh's requests—especially with respect to the inner *kiswah*—as well as an analysis of them within the larger framework of religious supremacy.

Religious Supremacy

As already mentioned, since the Mamluks could not assert true sovereignty over the Hijaz, their domination there was only seasonal, during the period of the pilgrimage. At that time, Mamluks made numerous efforts to assert their religious supremacy over other Muslim rivals. Beyond its religious nature, the pilgrimage represented the arena in which Muslim rulers competed for recognition as supreme leaders of the community of the believers. On this occasion, rulers generally sent a representative, the *amīr al-ḥajj*, who would not only lead the pilgrims to the holy cities but also ensure that the interests and prerogatives of his ruler would be maintained. In earlier periods, the *amīr al-ḥajj* was the caliph himself,

⁴⁸Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 4:238–39.

⁴⁹MS ar. 4440, fols. 167a–169b, 184b–187a, 187b–191a.



but over time, due to constant instability, rulers tended to designate a representative to attend the pilgrimage on their behalf.⁵⁰ This was the case during the Mamluk period, when only four sultans (Baybars; al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, three times; al-Ashraf Shaʿbān, and Qāyṭbāy) performed the pilgrimage.⁵¹ For the occasion, the sultan gave the *amīr al-ḥajj* full political and executive powers, which he could exercise as he wished to maintain his ruler's supremacy in Mecca.⁵²

Several patterns of religious supremacy in the holy cities emerge as either concrete markers of sovereignty, like the *khuṭbah* or the *sikkah* (both taking place outside the strict period of the pilgrimage), or symbolic efforts aimed at showing the role rulers intended to play in the Hijaz, like sending the *kiswah* and *maḥmal*. All these patterns were claimed early on by the Mamluk sultans, as illustrated by the two aforementioned treaties signed between the sharif Abū Numayy and Baybars (in 667/1269, concerning the *khuṭbah* and *sikkah* in the sultan's name as well as the annual payment of 20,000 dinars) and Qalāwūn (in 681/1282, dealing with not only the *khuṭbah* and *sikkah* but also the Mamluks' monopoly over supplying the *kiswah* in addition to the precedence of the Egyptian flags on Mount ʿArafah). According to the accounts preserved in contemporary sources, the sending of the *kiswah* and *maḥmal* represented the two domains most sought among rulers. I will now look at the details of these two practices alongside that of the *khuṭbah* and then evaluate the stakes of Shāh Rukh's request concerning the inner *kiswah*, further sketching the extent of his Hijazi pretensions more broadly.

Kiswah

The *kiswah* is the veil that the supreme representative of the Muslim community sent each year during the pilgrimage to cover the Kaʿbah. Inherited from the pre-Islamic period, this practice continues to the present day. Because of its great importance, we are quite well informed about its development throughout Islamic history.⁵³

In earlier times, *kiswahs* sent over the years were accumulated on the Kaʿbah, whose roof frequently threatened to collapse, though previous *kiswahs* were still

⁵⁰On the earlier practice, see M. E. McMillan, *The Meaning of Mecca: The Politics of Pilgrimage in Early Islam* (London, 2011).

⁵¹ʿAbd Allāh ʿAnkawī, "The Pilgrimage to Mecca in Mamlūk Times," *Arabian Studies* 1 (1974): 151–52.

⁵²Ibid., 153.

⁵³Maurice Gaudet-Demombynes, "Le Voile de la Kaʿbah," *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954): 5–21; Richard Mortel, "The Kiswah: Its Origins and Development from Pre-Islamic Times until the End of the Mamluk Period," *Al-Uṣūr/Ages* 3, no. 2 (1988): 30–46; ʿAbd Allāh ʿAnkawī, "Kiswat al-Kaʿbah fi al-ʿAṣr al-Mamlūkī," *Majallat Kulliyat al-Ādāb wa-al-ʿUlūm al-Insānīyah* 5 (1985): 1–22; Abdelaziz Gouda, "Die Kiswah der Kaʿba in Mekka" (Ph.D. diss., Berlin, 1989).



removed randomly up until at least the third/ninth century.⁵⁴ The order of removing the *kiswah* generally came from the ruling caliph, who then left the task itself to the Banū Shaybah. The Banū Shaybah, the guardians of the Kaʿbah since the time of the Prophet, generally sold the old veil as a relic to pilgrims.⁵⁵ Over time, the *kiswah* encountered many changes pertaining to the dates of its hanging on the Kaʿbah,⁵⁶ its color,⁵⁷ and its fabrics.⁵⁸ Its role and meaning as the symbol of religious ascendancy, however, never changed: rather, it increased and even climaxed during the Mamluk period.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Baybars' first action with respect to the Hijaz was to send the sacred veil in 661/1263. During the entire Mamluk period, sultans devoted particular attention to the *kiswah*, and a special officer, the *nāzir kiswat al-Kaʿbah*, was even given the task of overseeing its manufacture in the *dār al-kiswah*.⁵⁹ While the *kiswah* of the early Turkish period was relatively simple—made of black silk with some white bands of calligraphy—its design and decoration developed considerably during the Circassian period, when the veil was embroidered with precious material (gold) and was constituted of a *ṭirāz* of white

⁵⁴Mortel, "The Kiswah," 35.

⁵⁵Ibid., 36; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, "Le Voile de la Kaʿbah," 11; Janine Sourdel-Thomine, "Clefs et Serrures de la Kaʿba: Notes d'Épigraphie arabe," *Revue des études islamiques* 39 (1971): 29–86.

⁵⁶During the period of Umayyad and early Abbasid rule, several *kiswahs* were sent and hung at different times of the year (end of Ramaḍān, day of ʿĀshurāʾ, in Dhū al-Ḥijjah). It is only during the fourth/tenth century that the *kiswah* became more closely associated with the pilgrimage. See Mortel, "The Kiswah," 32–35.

⁵⁷Nowadays, the *kiswah* is traditionally black, which traces back to the Abbasid period, but this was not always the case: earlier, the *kiswah* was white, and during Abbasid rule, sources even mention other colors (see Mortel, "The Kiswah," 32–34). The *kiswah* was white again under the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim (r. 386–411/996–1021), yellow in 466/1073–74 under the sultan Sebūktigin, and black and green during the caliphate of al-Nāṣir (r. 575–622/1180–1225). See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā*, 4:277–84; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, "Le Voile de la Kaʿba," 5–21; al-Fāṣī, *Al-Zuhūr al-Muqtaṭafah min Tārīkh Makkah al-Musharrāfah* (Riyadh, 1997), 52; idem, *Shifāʾ al-Gharām bi-Akhhbār al-Balad al-Ḥarām* (Beirut, 2000), 1:164–73. Regarding the *kiswah*'s size, see ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ṭabarī, *Al-Araḥ al-Miskī fī al-Tārīkh al-Makkī* (Mecca, 1996), 159.

⁵⁸Since the time of the *rāshidūn* caliphs, the Kaʿbah was customarily provided with a *kiswah* made in Egypt, and this practice seems to have persisted over time. See Mortel, "The Kiswah," 32–34. While the preferred material was Egyptian linen in earlier periods, silk soon became the preferred material (starting from Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiyah, r. 60–64/680–83, or al-Ḥajjāj according to other traditions). See the aforementioned citations.

⁵⁹William Popper, *Egypt and Syria Under the Circassian Sultans, 1382–1468 A.D.: Systematic Notes to Ibn Taghrī Birdī's Chronicles of Egypt* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955), 1:101. During the Turkish period, though, the veil was apparently made in the *dār al-ṭirāz* in Alexandria. See Mortel, "The Kiswah," 44.



or yellow silk on the eastern side.⁶⁰ Sultan Baybars inaugurated another feature followed by his successors: embroidery of the sultan's insignia.⁶¹ The funds devoted to the preparation of the *kiswah* were provided by *waqf* money;⁶² in fact, the sultan al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl, son of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 743–46/1342–45), bought the village of Baysūs and turned it into a *waqf*.⁶³ The veil was sent with the Egyptian *maḥmal* and hung on the Kaʿbah during the pilgrimage (on the 10th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah: *yawm al-Naḥr*)⁶⁴ so the entire Muslim community could witness the ascendancy of the Mamluks.⁶⁵

The prerogative theoretically given to the Mamluk sultan would be challenged by many foreign rulers over the course of the entire Mamluk period. From the beginning of their rule, the Mamluks faced a major threat in the sending of the *kiswah* from the Rasulid dynasty of Yemen. Indeed, the vacancy left by the Abbasid caliph after the Mongols' conquest had already been filled in Mecca by the Rasulid sultans. From 629/1232, ʿUmar ibn ʿAlī ibn Rasūl had made clear his interest in controlling the city. After ten years of campaigns, he was even able to seize it and control its resources, distributing them as he pleased.⁶⁶ Even though Mecca finally went back to its sharif in 652/1255, the Rasulids nevertheless maintained their influence there, inheriting the Abbasids' prerogative for the pilgrimage ceremonial (and the sending of the *kiswah*) as well as their role as protectors of the holy cities.

When Baybars sent his first *kiswah* in 661/1263, the Rasulid sultan al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf (r. 647–94/1250–95) already had a strong position in Mecca. Al-Muẓaffar had sent the *kiswah* regularly from 649/1252 onward⁶⁷ and in 659/1261, while performing the pilgrimage, he provided the Kaʿbah with both its outer and inner *kiswahs*.⁶⁸ Despite Baybars' attempts to hinder Rasulid claims over the holy cities (during his pilgrimage in 667/1269, he sent al-Muẓaffar a letter in which he challenged

⁶⁰Mortel, "The Kiswa," 41. This was the case in 798/1396, 810/1408, 819/1417: See Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:402, 459, 536; and in 844/1441, 855/1452, 864/1460, 865/1461: Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 4:164, 307, 410, 420–21.

⁶¹Gaudefroy-Demombynes, "Le Voile de la Kaʿbah," 17.

⁶²Al-Ṭabarī, *Al-Araj al-Miskī*, 155.

⁶³Gaudefroy-Demombynes, "Le Voile de la Kaʿbah," 17. Also in al-Fāsī, *Shifāʾ al-Gharām*, 1:169–70; 2:287.

⁶⁴Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:561. In 820–24: the *kiswah* was hung on the 3rd of Dhū al-Ḥijjah.

⁶⁵Al-Fāsī, *Shifāʾ al-Gharām*, 1:170–73. Various accounts comment on the replacement of the old *kiswah* by the new one, but all agree the old veil then became the property of the Banū Shaybah.

⁶⁶Eric Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande: État et commerce sous les sultans rasulides du Yémen (626–858/1229–1454)* (Paris, 2010), 456–63.

⁶⁷Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:70.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 3:84.



such claims and incited him to fight the Mongols),⁶⁹ this ruler always stood as a significant threat to Baybars' assertions. Moreover, al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf again sent the veil on two later occasions: 666/1268⁷⁰ and 671/1273.⁷¹ Ibn Fahd records that during his reign, his *kiswah* was often hung after the departure of the Egyptian caravan.⁷² His successors did not surrender this right either, as shown by the Rasulid dispatch of the *kiswah* in 742/1342 and 751/1351 by al-Malik al-Mujāhid Dāwūd.⁷³ In 780/1379, the Rasulid sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Ismā'īl initiated yet another failed attempt.⁷⁴ I have found two final reports of *kiswahs* sent by the Rasulids in the years 820/1418⁷⁵ and 833/1430,⁷⁶ none of which succeeded.

If the Rasulids represented the Mamluks' major rival for the *kiswah*, other rulers sought to usurp this prerogative as well. In 718/1319, for instance, the Ilkhanid ruler Abū Sa'īd sent the *kiswah* along with precious rings to be hung on the Ka'bah's door.⁷⁷ The last major threat to Mamluk privilege occurred in 877/1473, when the Aq Qoyunlu ruler Uzun Ḥasan sent his own *kiswah*.⁷⁸ Regardless of the failure of these attempts at providing the Ka'bah with its *kiswah*, these examples show it constituted a strong desideratum for many Muslim rulers. Predictably, then, the Timurid rulers also considered it.

Timur's intentions for the Hijaz when he defeated the Mamluks in Syria may remain unknown, but he certainly had some ambition for the region. After all, he proclaimed himself *quṭb al-islām wa-al-muslimīn*, and most of his campaigns aimed at extending the territory of *dār al-islām*.⁷⁹ The year of his death (807/1405), he was ostensibly planning to send emissaries to Mecca to measure the Ka'bah so he could send an appropriate *kiswah* in the following year, along with 10,000 men.⁸⁰ According to Meccan sources, a similar rumor reached Mecca that same year:

⁶⁹ Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 1:2:581–82.

⁷⁰ Ibn Fahd, *Iṭḥāf al-Warā*, 3:91. That year, he also sent another *kiswah* to cover the Tomb of the Prophet.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 3:102.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 3:84.

⁷³ Both times they were forbidden to hang the *kiswah*, and al-Mujāhid was even sent as a prisoner to Cairo in 751/1351. Ibn Fahd, *Iṭḥāf al-Warā*, 3:221, 245.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:331–32.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:541.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 4:51.

⁷⁷ Ibn Fahd, *Iṭḥāf al-Warā*, 3:160–61; Anne Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (Cambridge, 2008), 102–3; Jacques Jomier, *Le Maḥmal et la caravane égyptienne des pèlerins de la Mecque (XIIIe-XXe siècles)* (Cairo, 1953), 45–48; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 2:1:190.

⁷⁸ Ibn Fahd, *Iṭḥāf al-Warā*, 4:557–58.

⁷⁹ Beatrice Manz, "Tamerlane's Career and Its Uses," *Journal of World History* 13, no. 1 (2002): 4–6; idem, "Tamerlane and the Symbolism of Sovereignty," *Iranian Studies* 21, nos. 1–2 (1988): 105–22.

⁸⁰ Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 3:3:1166.



an Iraqi caravan led by Timur's son and his troops had been sent from Baghdad. When the sharif Ḥasan arrived to welcome them, however, it seems the caravan only included pilgrims, without any troops.⁸¹ Soon afterwards, Ḥasan sent his first embassy to the Timurids, led by Hibat Allāh Aḥmad ibn 'Umayr, to try to win some financial support. The emissary came back empty-handed.⁸²

As for Timur's successor, he evidently planned to send the sacred veil before dispatching his first embassy to Barsbāy in 828/1425. Shāh Rukh had apparently prepared the *kiswah* made of luxurious fabrics already in 822/1419.⁸³ I myself could find no more details concerning this veil, nor its being sent to Mecca. Be that as it may, even if Shāh Rukh had once intended to provide the Ka'bah with its *kiswah* as early as 828/1425, he seems to have abandoned this project for a different one: the inner *kiswah*.

Unlike the outer *kiswah*, the inner one is quite unknown.⁸⁴ Contemporary sources rarely mention it, and when they do, they provide little detail. As for secondary sources, with only a few exceptions, they largely ignore the inner *kiswah*. While the origin of providing the inner *kiswah* remains obscure, it is already attested in the pre-Islamic period.⁸⁵ With the emergence of Islam, the practice persisted, though no clear records are extant. In his description of the inside of the Ka'bah, for example, Ibn Jubayr (d. 577–78/1182) mentions silk fabrics of several colors that covered the ceiling and arch, but he does not speak explicitly of the *kiswah* itself.⁸⁶ The Abbasid caliphs were presumably providing the inner veil for the Ka'bah, since al-Fāsī writes that after their rule collapsed in Baghdad, the practice was restored by the Rasulid al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf in 659/1261.⁸⁷

The first inner *kiswah* sent by the Mamluk sultans came from al-Nāṣir Ḥasan in 761/1359.⁸⁸ It was made of black silk with golden embroidery and the part that covered the vault was in red silk.⁸⁹ Unlike the outer *kiswah*, which was renewed

⁸¹ Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:334–44.

⁸² Ibid., 3:344; al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daw' al-Lāmi' li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi'* (Cairo, 1934–36), 10:208 (quoting al-Fāsī); Darrāg, *L'Égypte*, 162, wrongly dated this embassy 817/1414.

⁸³ According to Ja'farī, "Tārīkh-i Kabīr," 69/311a, cited in John E. Woods, "Shahrukh's caliphate," 7 (unpublished). I am grateful to John Woods for letting me use his paper for this study.

⁸⁴ Besides the outer and inner *kiswah*, two other *kiswahs* existed: one for the Tomb of the Prophet in Medina, which was theoretically changed every five years: al-Fāsī, *Shifā' al-Gharām*, 1:170; and one for the *maqām Ibrāhīm*: Gaudefroy-Demombynes, "Le Voile de la Ka'bah," 7. The *kiswah* for the Tomb of the Prophet was provided in 792/1390 by Khawand Umm Baybars 'Ā'ishah, the sister of the sultan Barqūq: Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:378.

⁸⁵ Gaudefroy-Demombynes, "Le Voile de la Ka'bah," 7.

⁸⁶ Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Le Pèlerinage à la Mekke: Étude d'histoire religieuse* (Paris, 1923), 52–55.

⁸⁷ Al-Fāsī, *Shifā' al-Gharām*, 1:170.

⁸⁸ Ibid.; Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:280: it arrived in Mecca in a box made of acacia wood.

⁸⁹ Al-Fāsī, *Shifā' al-Gharām*, 1:170.



every year, the inner one did not require continued replacement since its location protected it from damage.⁹⁰ When al-Fāsī (d. 832/1429) wrote his work, the *kiswah* sent by al-Nāṣir Ḥasan was still hanging inside the Kaʿbah, though not in its entirety.⁹¹ Furthermore, infrequent replacement of this veil stems from financial reasons, for unlike the outer *kiswah*, which was financed by the money of the *waqf*, the inner *kiswah* came as a personal gift from the ruler, paid for with his personal funds.⁹² Moreover, being inside the Kaʿbah, this *kiswah* was not on public display. Contrary to the custom of opening the Kaʿbah on specific days,⁹³ the Banū Shaybah only opened it on rare occasions, and even then not without cost to the viewers.⁹⁴

The inner *kiswah* sent by al-Nāṣir Ḥasan was replaced in 826/1423⁹⁵ by sultan Barsbāy after a storm had destroyed the Kaʿbah's roof the previous year and hence damaged the contents inside significantly.⁹⁶ Through his amir ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ, the *nāzir al-jaysh*, the sultan also sent the materials necessary for repair of the sanctuary. The *kiswah* sent by Barsbāy was made of red silk and decorated with a golden inscription. As already noted, Shāh Rukh's inner *kiswah* was hung alongside that of Barsbāy in 848/1444, both ultimately replaced by Jaqmaq's in 856/1452. The final replacement of that inner veil dates to 883/1478–79, at the hand of sultan Qāyṭbāy.⁹⁷ No foreign ruler apart from Shāh Rukh (and before him al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf) either asked or sought to provide the inner *kiswah* during the period of Mamluk rule.

The description of the outer and inner *kiswahs* outlined above clearly shows major differences regarding the use and practice of both veils. If both relate to

⁹⁰ Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshāʾ*, 4:276.

⁹¹ Al-Fāsī, *Shifāʾ al-Gharām*, 1:170.

⁹² Al-Ṭabarī, *Al-Araḥ al-Miskī*, 155.

⁹³ Al-Fāsī, *Shifāʾ al-Gharām*, 1:176–79: According to Ibn Jubayr, the Kaʿbah was opened every Monday and Friday, except in the month of Rajab, when it was opened every day. Al-Fāsī confirms its access on Fridays, but it was allegedly cancelled on Mondays during his time (except during the year 801, when it was also opened on Mondays during the months of Ramaḍān, Shawwāl, and Dhū al-Qaʿdah). He cites additional days when the Kaʿbah was supposed to be opened: 12 Rabīʿ I, 29 Rajab (for women), on the ʿĪd al-Fiṭr, and on 26 Dhū al-Qaʿdah (for notables).

⁹⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Al-Araḥ al-Miskī*, 156–57; al-Fāsī, *Shifāʾ al-Gharām*, 1:178; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Le Pèlerinage*, 62. The time the Kaʿbah was opened for free is generally mentioned in the source as being a great event, like in 662/1264, when the Mamluk amir al-Saḍr Jamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn ibn al-Mawṣili was even given the keys of the Kaʿbah for free (*bi-ghayr shayʾ yuʾkhadhu minhum*) so that the Egyptians pilgrims could visit the Kaʿbah over the course of three days: al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 1:2:504–5.

⁹⁵ Ibn Fahd, *Iṭḥāf al-Warāʾ*, 3:596.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3:588–89.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4:638.



Muslim rulers and further contain undeniable symbolic value, each was considered differently. As for secondary literature, only two sources refer to the Timurid dispatch of the inner *kiswah*: Mortel reports the event without offering any further details or analysis,⁹⁸ while Darrāg alludes to it as a concession from both Mamluk and Timurid sovereigns, though he supposes it to be Shāh Rukh's initial request for providing the outer veil.⁹⁹ Were this interpretation correct, the inner *kiswah* would certainly convey lesser status than its outer counterpart. As my study has demonstrated, however, Shāh Rukh had hoped to provide the Ka'bah with its inner veil since his first embassy to Barsbāy in 828/1424. Even if concessions did arise (i.e., Jaqmaq's agreement to the request), they indicate no decreased importance attributed to the inner *kiswah*. With regard to the significance of this request from the Mamluk perspective, such an offering was considered a personal gift of devotion to God. Jaqmaq's response to Shāh Rukh's letter highlights this conception: “*wa-annakum ja'altum li-kiswati dākhil al-ka'bah thawban nawaytum bi-hi al-taqarruba ilā allāh ta'ālā.*”¹⁰⁰

If the religious role of the inner *kiswah* represented a major aspect of the practice, its political role cannot be underestimated. After all, why should Barsbāy so fiercely oppose Shāh Rukh's request if he had not considered it a threat to his religious supremacy in the Hijaz? While the specific data pertaining to the inner *kiswah* does not permit further conclusions at this particular stage of the investigation, I would suggest other spheres converged in these patterns for religious supremacy within the holy cities, which then demand evaluation of Shāh Rukh's pretensions and claims over the Hijaz.

Maḥmal

Within those patterns of competition developed among Muslim rulers for religious supremacy in the Hijaz, the *maḥmal* bore great importance. Jacques Jomier identified this tradition in his famous study *Le Maḥmal et la caravane égyptienne des pèlerins de La Mecque (iiie-xxe siècles)*, published in 1953, and others have since extended the analysis of this tradition as well as its stakes in the Mamluk politics of the hajj.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸Mortel, “The Kiswa,” 46.

⁹⁹Darrāg, *L'Égypte*, 190, 404.

¹⁰⁰MS ar. 4440, fol. 173b.

¹⁰¹John Meloy, “Celebrating the Maḥmal: The Rajab Festival in Fifteenth Century Cairo,” in *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East*, ed. J. Pfeiffer and S. Quinn (Wiesbaden, 2006), 404–27; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, “The Maḥmal Legend and the Pilgrimage of the Ladies of the Mamluk Court,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 1 (1997): 87–96. Many other studies include reference to the *maḥmal* but within the different topical contexts.



Sultan Baybars putatively inaugurated the Egyptian *maḥmal* tradition by sending the first palanquin in 664/1266,¹⁰² yet this tradition already appears with the Abbasid caliphs, in connection with the pilgrimage.¹⁰³ Baybars would have thus re-established this practice in Cairo, which, after all, had become the new seat of the caliphate in 660/1262. More concretely, the *maḥmal* was a richly-decorated palanquin borne by a camel. Though again, origins remain unclear,¹⁰⁴ its significance is quite plain. The *maḥmal* symbolized the role the Mamluks were intending to play in the Hijaz, especially in Mecca during the period of the pilgrimage.

An impressive ceremonial was attached to the *maḥmal* in both its departure from Cairo and its arrival in Mecca. In Cairo, this palanquin was paraded on several occasions following a fixed itinerary, which then gave rise to great festivities—the most famous being the *rajab* festival. This occasion allowed the sultan to present himself to his people as a true Muslim ruler and, above all, a Muslim man. At the same time, the Egyptian people could associate themselves with the *maḥmal*, which thus became a kind of proxy that would perform the pilgrimage on their behalf.¹⁰⁵ Upon its arrival in Mecca, another type of ceremonial was on display, and though different from that in Cairo, it was no less meaningful. The ceremonial was begun outside the holy city itself, where the sharif welcomed the sultan's *maḥmal* somewhere on the city's outskirts. He would kiss the camel's hoof¹⁰⁶ as though it were the sultan's hand, an action of great significance insofar as it conveyed the sharif's recognition of Mamluk supremacy.

A second *maḥmal* was also sent from Damascus to accompany the Syrian caravan. Sources first mention it in the year 692/1293.¹⁰⁷ If this *maḥmal* likewise exhibited Mamluk power, its importance did not match that of the first. Other *maḥmals* from Syria appear occasionally throughout the sources, like that of Aleppo (742/1342, 787/1386, 797/1395),¹⁰⁸ Ṣafad (742/1342),¹⁰⁹ Gaza (841/1438: *rakb*),¹¹⁰ and Kerak (844/1441, 869/1465, 884/1480).¹¹¹

Closely associated with the Mamluk sultans, whose presence it represented, the *maḥmal* served as a powerful symbol of their pretensions as supreme Muslim

¹⁰² Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 1:2:544.

¹⁰³ Behrens-Abouseif, "The *Maḥmal* Legend," 89.

¹⁰⁴ Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Le Pèlerinage*, 157–61. Also in Jomier, *Le Maḥmal*, 21–26.

¹⁰⁵ Meloy, "Celebrating the *Maḥmal*," 409–10.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, 4:277.

¹⁰⁷ Jomier, *Le Maḥmal*, 55.

¹⁰⁸ Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:221, 349, 396.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 3:221.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4:117–18.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4:165, 461, 644. For the year 869/1465, sources diverge as to whether the *maḥmal* came from Kerak or Kufa.



rulers. For this very reason, the Mamluks' greatest rivals adopted the practice as well. In 696/1297, the Yemeni *maḥmal* of the Rasulids was sent to Mecca for the first time,¹¹² followed by the Iraqi *maḥmal* in 718/1318–19, sent by the Ilkhanid Abū Sa'īd.¹¹³ These two competing palanquins forced the Mamluks to reevaluate their position in Mecca, and an agreement was finally reached: the Egyptian *maḥmal* would be granted pre-eminence over all the other palanquins. It would then be followed by the Syrian one and only afterwards by that of the Iraqis and the Yemenis. Part of this agreement also stipulated that the Iraqi *maḥmal* would carry, along with its own banner, that of the Mamluk sultan.¹¹⁴

Sources give prominence to the presence of these rival *maḥmals* at regular intervals: beside the two coming from Yemen and Iraq, they also mention a *maḥmal* coming from Shiraz on four occasions (705/1306, 757–58/1356–57, 785/1384)¹¹⁵ and from Baṣrah (in 785/1384).¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, the precedence of the Mamluk *maḥmal* was recognized by all:¹¹⁷ apart from 876/1472,¹¹⁸ when Uzun Ḥasan sent his *maḥmal* (for the fourth time),¹¹⁹ no major incidents seem to have arisen.

None of my research has produced any reference to a *maḥmal* sent by the Timurid rulers, though caravans did leave Shiraz on several occasions. In 813/1411, for example, pilgrims arrived from Shiraz, despite the absence of an Iraqi caravan¹²⁰—a situation repeated in 814/1412 and 815/1413.¹²¹ Additionally, in 816/1414, people from Khorasan accompanied the Iraqi *maḥmal* as well.¹²² Regardless of

¹¹²Ibid., 3:129; Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande*, 439–41.

¹¹³Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:160–61; Broadbridge, *Kingship*, 102–3; Jomier, *Le Maḥmal*, 45–48; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 2:1:190.

¹¹⁴Broadbridge, *Kingship*, 103; Jomier, *Le Maḥmal*, 47; Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:170–71; al-Fāsī, *Shifā' al-Gharām*, 2:244.

¹¹⁵Al-Fāsī, *Shifā' al-Gharām*, 2:293; Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:143, 270, 272, 342.

¹¹⁶Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:342.

¹¹⁷Mamluk involvement in the hajj will undergo more detailed analysis in Malika Dekkiche and Jo Van Steenbergen, “The Politics of the Hajj: Networks and Meanings from Shaykh to Khushqadam (815–872 A.H.),” a paper presented at the conference: *Everything is on the Move: The “Mamluk Empire” as a Node in (Trans-) Regional Networks*, University of Bonn/Annemarie-Schimmel-Kolleg, December 6–9, 2012.

¹¹⁸John Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Salt Lake City, 1999), 107–8; Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 4:542. Ibn Fahd only mentions Uzun Ḥasan's *maḥmal* in the years 875/1471, 876/1472, and 877/1473. Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 4:532, 542, 557–58. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr*, 3:88, refers to the Iraqi *maḥmal* for the year 877/1473.

¹¹⁹He had already sent three *maḥmals* before that date, in 873/1469, 874/1470, and 875/1471. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 107–8. Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:532, references the *maḥmal* of the year 875/1471.

¹²⁰Al-Fāsī, *Shifā' al-Gharām*, 2:307.

¹²¹Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 4:491, 500.

¹²²Al-Fāsī, *Shifā' al-Gharām*, 2:309; Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 4:510.



these instances, caravans from Timurid lands (Khorasan, Shiraz, Persia) generally joined those from the Iraqi caravan in Baghdad or, less frequently, those of the Syrian one in Damascus, thereby travelling under Mamluk protection.¹²³ Such was the case in 848/1444, when one group of the Timurid pilgrims—including one of Timur's widows—joined the Syrian caravan¹²⁴ while the other group continued on to Cairo to bring the inner *kiswah* to Jaqmaq.

In later periods, when the pilgrim road in Iraq became too dangerous due to the Bedouin attacks and the rise of the Musha'sha' sect, the Timurid ruler would often send his famous notables to Cairo so they could travel under the protection of the sultan's caravan. This arrangement took place, for instance, in 845/1441–42, when Shaykh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥāfi al-Ḥanafī¹²⁵ arrived in Cairo from Samarqand. The sample of letters from Sulṭān Abū Sa'īd, preserved in MS ar. 4440, confirm this practice as well.¹²⁶ Indeed, all three requested from the sultan Khushqadam protection for important Timurid figures who desired to perform the pilgrimage.

Despite the lack of information available in Timurid sources, analysis of Mamluk and Meccan sources suggests no threats came from Shāh Rukh in the form of organizing the pilgrims' caravan or sending a Timurid *maḥmal*.¹²⁷ Shāh Rukh, if concerned with the safety of his people, made no attempts to challenge Mamluk ascendancy with the *maḥmal* tradition. After all, Mamluk ascendancy had long been recognized in this regard, as evident in previous, failed attempts by the Rasulids and the Ilkhanids as well as, later on, the Aq Qoyunlu Uzun Ḥasan. While the *maḥmal* proves relatively less significant for the study of Shāh Rukh's pretensions in the Hijaz, another practice plainly reveals such efforts: the *khutbah*.

Khutbah

The *khutbah* is the address or sermon pronounced before or after important prayers, i.e., that of the Friday service or the feasts. The *khutbah* made during the Friday service betrays special importance, since the name of the ruling sovereign would be mentioned, thereby exhibiting the imam's recognition of this ruler over

¹²³S. A. al-Rashid, *Darb Zubaydah: The Pilgrim Road from Kufa to Mecca* (Riyadh, 1980), 60–61.

¹²⁴Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith al-Duhūr*, 76; al-'Aynī, *ʿIqd al-Ḥamān*, 627.

¹²⁵Belonging to the court of Shāh Rukh's son, Ulugh Beg, he was a figure highly esteemed by Shāh Rukh. Al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs*, 4:239–40; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 15:350; idem, *Ḥawādith al-Duhūr*, 35; al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 1:62–63.

¹²⁶MS ar. 4440, fols. 167a–169b, 184b–187a, 187b–191a: these letters comprise XXXIX, XLVII, and XLVIII.

¹²⁷Sources only mention rumors of troops accompanying the caravan led by Timur's son in 807/1405—rumors that appear to be false. See above.



every other.¹²⁸ Invoking a ruler's name during the Friday service, along with the minting of coins, was considered as a sign of allegiance to that ruler. While assessment of actual coin production bearing Mamluk sultans' names proves difficult through narrative sources,¹²⁹ these materials furnish considerable information with regard to the *khuṭbah*.

Meccan sources allude to *khuṭbahs* pronounced in the Egyptian ruler's name already before Baybars' first claim to supremacy. In 637/1240, the *khuṭbah* in Mecca invoked the name of the Ayyubid al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ (r. 637–47/1240–49).¹³⁰ Later, in 652/1255, when the sharif ended the Rasulid hold on Mecca, the name of al-Ashraf Mūsá arose in the Friday sermon, along with his atabeg, the Mamluk Aybak.¹³¹ Although Mamluk sources state Baybars' name was invoked as early as 662/1264,¹³² the Meccan sources do not confirm such reports, recounting the *khuṭbah* for Baybars only from the year of his pilgrimage (667/1269).¹³³

In his *Shifā' al-Gharām*, al-Fāsī clearly establishes that most rulers of Egypt after Baybars had their names invoked in the *khuṭbah* in Mecca.¹³⁴ He goes on to provide a list of those not mentioned, like Baybars' sons (al-Sa'īd Barakah and al-Ādil Salāmish) and, after them, al-Ādil Kitbughā, Lājīn, and al-Manṣūr 'Abd al-Āzīz ibn Barqūq.¹³⁵ Further, al-Fāsī refers to several cases in which the *khuṭbah* in the Mamluk sultan's name was interrupted for that of another ruler: in 691/1292 the *khuṭbah* in al-Ashraf Khalīl's name was replaced by that of the Rasulid al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf,¹³⁶ and in 717/1317–18 the name of the Ilkhanid Abū Sa'īd was invoked instead of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's.¹³⁷

Extant sources indicate the Rasulids remained a constant adversary for most of the Mamluk period, as their names were invoked in the *khuṭbah* or during the *maghrib* prayer at Zamzam on many occasions. Mamluk amirs often had to inter-

¹²⁸ A. J. Wensinck, "Khuṭba," *EI2*, 5:76–77.

¹²⁹ On the *sikkah*, see John Meloy, "Money and Sovereignty in Mecca: Issues of the Sharifs in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53 (2010): 712–38.

¹³⁰ Al-Fāsī, *Shifā' al-Gharām*, 2:286.

¹³¹ Al-Fāsī, *Shifā' al-Gharām*, 2:286–87; Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:76.

¹³² Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk*, 1:2:504–5.

¹³³ Al-Fāsī, *Shifā' al-Gharām*, 2:287; Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:93.

¹³⁴ Al-Fāsī, *Shifā' al-Gharām*, 2:287–88. This group also includes the Abbasid caliph al-Musta'īn (r. 815/1412), whose name was invoked in the *khuṭbah* on 22 Jumādā II 815/29 September 1412: al-Fāsī, *Shifā' al-Gharām*, 2:308. Also in Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:497.

¹³⁵ Al-Fāsī, *Shifā' al-Gharām*, 2:288.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* Also in Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:122–23. In the following year (692/1293), the *khuṭbah* was made again in al-Ashraf Khalīl's name, as was the *sikkah*: Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:123.

¹³⁷ Al-Fāsī, *Shifā' al-Gharām*, 2:288, 243; Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:158.



vene, which happened in the years 801/1399,¹³⁸ 804/1402,¹³⁹ 814/1412,¹⁴⁰ 826/1423,¹⁴¹ and 827/1424.¹⁴² But the Rasulids were not the only rivals. In 770/1369, for example, the Jalāyirid ruler Sultan Uvays had his name mentioned at the Friday *khuṭbah* after he had sent new lamps for the Kaʿbah that year.¹⁴³ In 816/1414, moreover, the new rulers of Baghdad, the Qarā Qoyunlu, had their names invoked in the sermon,¹⁴⁴ this being the first time the Iraqi caravan was sent since the end of the Jalāyirid’s rule in Baghdād (813/1411).¹⁴⁵ In 877/1473, Uzun Ḥasan’s name was invoked in the Friday *khuṭbah* in Medina as well, thus provoking the arrest of his *amīr al-ḥajj* during the pilgrimage.¹⁴⁶

As for the Timurids, while no instances of the *khuṭbah* in Timur or Shāh Rukh’s names occur in the Meccan sources, Shāh Rukh at the very least probably aspired to it. In an unpublished paper, John Woods highlights Shāh Rukh’s claim to be “*al-madhkūr alqābuhu ‘alā manābir al-ḥaramayn*,” an expression found in *Majmū’ah-yi Ḥāfiẓ Abrū* (820/1417).¹⁴⁷ According to Woods’ study, Shāh Rukh not only claimed the *khuṭbah* in the holy cities but also, and above all, the caliphate: “*khallada Allāh ta’ālā khilāfatahu wa-sultānahu*,” a phrase found in both narrative and numismatic sources.¹⁴⁸

Whether or not Shāh Rukh’s name was actually invoked at the Friday *khuṭbah*, the sharif of Mecca, Ḥasan ibn ‘Ajlān (r. 797–818/1395–1416; 827–29/1423–26), was definitely turning his attention towards the Timurid ruler during this period. In 817/1414,¹⁴⁹ he sent an embassy to Shāh Rukh led by the *sayyid* ‘Abd al-Kahf/‘Abd al-Malik Mukannif, brother of ‘Abd al-Laṭīf. The letter expressed the sharif’s good feelings toward the Timurid ruler. One might suppose, however, that the sharif was simply trying to seize Shāh Rukh’s attention and finances, which would happen five years later. In 822/1420 and 823/1421, Ḥasan dispatched his relative

¹³⁸ Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:412.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 3:427.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 3:491. The Rasulid sultan apparently stopped sending the gifts to the preacher in Mecca.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 3:600.

¹⁴² Ibid., 3:606. The *khuṭbah* that year began to mention the Rasulid sultan’s name once again.

¹⁴³ Al-Fāsī, *Shifā’ al-Gharām*, 2:302.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 2:309.

¹⁴⁵ Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-Warā*, 3:482. No pilgrims came from Baghdad in 814/1412 or 815/1413: *ibid.*, 3:491, 500. Yet within this timeframe, pilgrims did arrive from Shiraz by way of al-Ḥasā: *ibid.*, 3:491, 500; al-Fāsī, *Shifā’ al-Gharām*, 2:307.

¹⁴⁶ Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 108; Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-Zuhūr*, 3:88.

¹⁴⁷ Woods, “Shahrukh’s Caliphate,” 5, 7–8.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 3–4, 8 (according to the analysis of coins minted between 819/1416 and 825/1422).

¹⁴⁹ Samarqandī, *Maṭla’-i Sa’dayn*, 2:205; Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū, *Zubdat al-Tavārikh*, ed. Sayyid Kamāl Ḥājī Sayyid Javādī (Tehran, 2001), 3:564–65; Woods, “Shahrukh’s Caliphate,” 7.



Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan to request some funds.¹⁵⁰ While we have no further information about Shāh Rukh's response to these embassies, Ibn Fahd writes that Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan, who had led the 822/1420 mission, returned to Mecca empty-handed.¹⁵¹ This turn of events is perhaps unsurprising since the Timurid ruler had given up his claim to the caliphate around 821/1418. Shāh Rukh is then referenced as *mujaddid*.¹⁵² At the same time, he also seems to have abandoned his claim to the Meccan *khuṭbah*. Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū's *Jāmi' al-Tavārikh* (829/1425) goes so far as to employ the expression "*mujaddid marāsīm al-sharī'ah al-gharrā*."¹⁵³

According to Woods' study, Shāh Rukh actually demonstrated a strong pre-tension in the Hijaz, as exemplified in his claim to the caliphate from 807/1405 to 820/1418. Whether or not he was recognized as such in Mecca is difficult to determine, however, since Meccan sources offer no corroborative information in this regard, nor do Mamluk sources. Such a claim would presumably not have gone unnoticed. Be that as it may, even if Shāh Rukh's claims were only addressed and restricted to a Timurid audience, it reveals an ambitious program nonetheless.

Yet this claim was eventually abandoned. Woods dates this shift in Shāh Rukh's politics to the period after his four major western campaigns, "when Shahrukh became more engaged with the Mamluks who, after all, had their own 'caliph.'"¹⁵⁴

Conclusion

Woods' conclusion bears great significance insofar as it suggests Shāh Rukh recognized the Mamluks' rule as well as their important role within the Muslim community, a fact confirmed by the present article.

Availing myself of a new source, MS ar. 4440, I have hoped to re-evaluate Shāh Rukh's so-called struggle for religious supremacy with the Mamluk sultans in the Hijaz. My analysis of the corpus first showed the nature of Shāh Rukh's request, which has, until now, been either misread or ignored. According to this new corpus, he requested permission from the Mamluk sultans to provide the inner *kiswah* to the Ka'bah, not its outer veil. Literary sources provide further confirmation of this interaction (e.g., Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, who reports Shāh Rukh's first embassy to Barsbāy, mentions the inner veil as well). Furthermore, the corpus reveals that Shāh Rukh's request implied the Timurid dynasty more generally since

¹⁵⁰ Ibn Fahd, *Ghāyat al-Marām bi-Akḥbār Saḷṭanat al-Balad al-Ḥarām*, ed. Fahīm Muḥammad Shaltūt (Mecca, 1986–88), 2:332.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2:332.

¹⁵² Woods, "Shahrukh's Caliphate," 8, 10.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 6, 8.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 8–9.



both his son, Muḥammad Jūkī, and grandson, ‘Alā’ al-Dawlah, were involved in the exchanges with Jaqmaq.

While the full significance of this veil persists in obscurity, comparison with its outer counterpart has uncovered considerable differences in their use and practice. Nevertheless, if the inner *kiswah* pertained more to the religious sphere from a Mamluk perspective, the events chronicled also demonstrate its political importance. After all, the sending of the *kiswahs*, both outer and inner, was part of Mamluk prerogatives in the holy cities.

Since the case of the inner *kiswah* could not be solved entirely, I evaluated the wider context of patterns of religious supremacy in order to assess Shāh Rukh’s pretensions in the Hijaz. Thus, if Shāh Rukh originally had strong ambitions of claiming the caliphate for himself, he ultimately withdrew such claims. As for his involvement in pilgrimage affairs (i.e., the *maḥmal*) or with the sharifs, the extant information proves rather disappointing, since he does not seem to have devoted considerable efforts in these two domains; I could find no reference to a Timurid *maḥmal*. As for Shāh Rukh’s relationship with the sharifs, he apparently refused the sharifs’ game of selling recognition, for the Meccan emissaries came back twice from the Timurid lands empty-handed.

Given these facts, even if Shāh Rukh’s claims to supremacy in the Hijaz remain somewhat elusive, he was undoubtedly looking in the direction of the Hijaz and the holy cities. Beyond his request for providing the inner *kiswah*, he also concerned himself with the water supply in Mecca as well as injustices in illegal taxes (*mukūs*) levied on pilgrims and merchants. As for the extent of his pretensions in the holy cities, I believe this matter now requires to be reopened to debate and reevaluated. Further grounds for such reassessment come, moreover, from Shāh Rukh’s attitude and actions towards other rulers who were actually competing with the Mamluk sultans for religious supremacy in the Hijaz, rulers like the Rasulids, Ilkhanids, or Aq Qoyunlu.

These competitors represented a real threat to the Mamluks’ supremacy, and even succeeded at times in establishing themselves as supreme Muslim rulers in Mecca thanks to the sharifs, with whom they maintained a close relationship. However, they never dealt with the Mamluks personally; in contrast, I would argue that Shāh Rukh actually did recognize Mamluk ascendancy in the Hijaz. After all, he did request permission to provide the veil to Barsbāy or Jaqmaq. Indeed, beyond the importance of his requests within the context of religious supremacy, his request sent to the Mamluks is all the more striking. If a struggle did arise between the Mamluks and Timurids, it demands interpretation within a more general framework, beyond the confines of religious supremacy in the Hijaz. At the time of Shāh Rukh’s embassies to Barsbāy concerning his dispatch of the inner *kiswah*, the two rulers fell into opposition on various matters, espe-



cially Barsbāy's international policies vis-à-vis his neighbors. The Mamluk sultan then supported Shāh Rukh's primary rival, the Qara Qoyunlu Iskandar.¹⁵⁵ The inner *kiswah* affair was thus but one element among many that provoked tensions between these two sovereigns. As I have shown, it is not representative of Shāh Rukh's alleged claims over the Hijaz.

¹⁵⁵Ibn Ḥijjah, *Kitāb Qahwat al-Inshā'*, ed. R. Veselý (Beirut, 2005), 359–64, 377–79, preserved copies of the letters exchanged between Barsbāy and Iskandar. On Barsbāy's general attitude towards his Eastern neighbors, see Darrāg, *L'Égypte*, 363–402.

