CHAPTER 8

Christian commerce and the solidification of the fondaco *system*

Throughout the later middle ages, *fondacos* for European merchants prospered in Muslim port cities alongside a variety of commercial facilities for local traders. *Fondacos* continued to be a critical factor in negotiating relations between European and Muslim traders, and both Islamic and Christian sources attest to the presence of these western facilities. The progress of cross-Mediterranean trade in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries cannot be charted as a simple rising curve, however. Intermittent war, piracy, religious censure of interaction, and diplomatic breakdowns, together with other international and local events, produced a more jagged profile. The numbers of western merchants doing business in Muslim ports could vary significantly from year to year, as could the volume of their trade. Yet despite fluctuations in business traffic through individual facilities or in particular regions, the *fondaco* system survived and flourished into the sixteenth century. At the same time, the older form of the *funduq* was becoming less common, especially in Mamlūk cities. Indeed, the solidification of the *fondaco* system for mediating Christian–Muslim commercial affairs in the Maghrib, Egypt, and Syria may have contributed to the decline of its parent institution. This chapter will examine the reasons for the continuing success of the *fondaco* in the late middle ages, and consider its role as a facilitator of cross-cultural trade in the Mediterranean until the early Ottoman period.

In many ways, late medieval *fondacos* were very similar in form and function to their earlier counterparts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[1] Their political and economic context, however, was often quite different. For example, many of the factors that contributed to the decline of the *funduq* in the late Mamlūk period – imposition of government controls over trade, shifting patterns of trade routes in Egypt and Syria – supported

[1] For this reason, many basic aspects of the *fondaco* that were discussed in chapter 4 will not be covered in this chapter. The focus here, instead, will be on new developments in the function and administration of *fondacos* in Muslim ports in the later medieval period.

the growing importance of the *fondaco*, as did the increase in European commerce and maritime hegemony in the Mediterranean. There were also differences in the administration of *fondacos* in the eastern and western Mediterranean, created by the distinct political and diplomatic climates in lands under Mamlūk administration and in regions under Ḥafṣid, Marīnid, and Naṣrid rule.

In the later medieval period, *fondacos* remained highly desirable and profitable to both governments and their merchants, whether Muslim or Christian. Western traders needed access to the markets of the Islamic world, where they could buy luxury items imported from India and the Far East, as well as local products (cotton, flax, sugar, etc.). They exchanged these for European goods, cash, arms, and slaves brought from the region north of the Black Sea. Western governments promoted this traffic, despite the occasional hiatus in response to papal sanctions, since they profited from trade and tariffs, as well as benefiting from the *fondacos* themselves. The annual sums accruing to the Genoese from their *fondaco* in Alexandria were equal to something more than half the income from Pera, their own colony on the Black Sea, and worth more than a quarter of tax revenues from the port of Genoa itself.[2] The Mamlūk government also profited from the foreign *fondacos*, both from the taxes levied on international trade and from the fact that the *fondaco* system limited western merchant access to markets in the interior and protected Muslim merchants from competition in their Red Sea and Indian Ocean traffic.

Alexandria, and to some extent Tunis and Damascus also, were endpoints for the European commercial diaspora. Western merchants traded to and from these markets, but rarely proceeded further into Muslim lands, and the *fondaco* system was a crucial factor in the maintenance of this pattern. Alexandria was the most important commercial destination for European merchants trading in the eastern Muslim world, in large part because the Mamlūk government worked to channel Christian mercantile activity through the city and its *fondacos*. European merchants in Egypt were discouraged from traveling to Cairo, and there were no western *fondacos* in the Mamlūk capital. The Flemish pilgrim Joos van Ghistele, who came through Alexandria in the early 1480s, emphasized the mediating commercial role of the city, which was both a focal point and a terminus for cross-cultural trade. It was "a merchant city, situated on the coast. It forms a frontier, and it teems with wealthy merchants coming from all

[2] R. S. Lopez, *Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages, 950–1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 100.

nations, including Turks, Moors, Spaniards, Genoese, Venetians, Italians, Catalans, Abyssinians, Tatars, Persians, idolaters, Arabs, and every other nation imaginable."[3]

The western *fondaco* buildings in Alexandria were owned and administered by the Mamlūk government, and there is much clearer evidence of official influence and oversight in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries than in earlier periods. European merchants were supposed to stay in the *fondacos*, as were western pilgrims, and they ought not to venture beyond their walls without the presence of an approved guide or interpreter (*turjumān* or dragoman). The oversight of a dragoman restrained Europeans from wandering freely through the city, perhaps seeing areas which might be off-limits for religious or military reasons (some western pilgrims and merchants served as spies). A dragoman was also responsible for ensuring the safety of the foreigners in his charge. On occasion, unescorted Christian travelers were stoned, robbed, or harassed by local people, or they might become lost in the maze of unfamiliar streets, as when Felix Fabri had to appeal for help in finding his *fondaco*.[4] In 1323, the Irish pilgrim Simon Semeonis described the process whereby he "obtained the mediation of the sultan's dragomen or interpreters, who procured from him a permit authorizing me . . . to travel freely and safely throughout all the Holy Land and Egypt. In testimony of this the sultan handed us a passport adorned with the sultan's special sign, which was about an arm's length and a half long."[5]

Diplomatic treaties and the records of exchanges between western consuls and Mamlūk sultans all stress these strictly regulated parameters of European activity in Alexandria, Damietta, and other cities where there were *fondacos*. This prescriptive information is what might be expected from official documents. However, there are indications that some Europeans were more integrated into Egyptian life, and lived and worked outside the confines of the *fondaco* enclaves. In 1285, for instance, the Pisan Sigerio Malpilio apparently occupied his own house in Damietta.[6] A few Genoese are also known to have been employed at the Mamlūk court in the early

[3] Joos van Ghistele, *Le Voyage en Egypte de Joos van Ghistele, 1482–1483*, trans. Renée Bauwens-Préaux (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1976) 113 [176–177].

[4] Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, III, 174 [134b], *Voyage en Egypte*, II, 715.

[5] Semeonis, *Itinerarium*, 97. Later, in 1384, Giorgio Gucci similarly noted that the Mamlūk authorities required pilgrims to travel with dragomen "for the security of Christians and pilgrims that they may not be killed on the way or robbed" (Frescobaldi et al., *Visit to the Holy Places*, 95).

[6] Otten-Froux, "Les Pisans en Egypte et à Acre," 189 (doc. 15). This house was located near another *funduq*, called the *fundachum Bederi* (*ibid.*, 188–189 [docs. 14, 15]). It is not clear from its name whether this latter establishment belonged to a Christian or a Muslim.

fourteenth century, and a century later, Emmanuel Piloti's knowledge of colloquial Arabic and Egyptian daily life, and his wide travels and holding of property in Egypt, prove that his experiences were not confined to life within a *fondaco*.[7] The fact that the Mamlūk historian al-Maqrīzī mentioned a special facility (either a jail or a barracks) in Cairo for housing Frankish soldiers is also indicative of a western presence in Egypt.[8] These Europeans may have been the exception to the rule, but they are an important signal that *fondaco* walls were permeable and gates were not always locked. Our understanding of what appears to have been a highly regulated *fondaco* system must always be tempered with a recognition of the pragmatism of commerce and human nature.

A LITTLE PIECE OF EUROPE? DESCRIPTIONS OF BUILDINGS, PRIVILEGES, RESTRICTIONS, AND PROCESS

The narratives of western pilgrims provide vivid eyewitness descriptions of the *fondacos* in Alexandria in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the unanimity of much of their information supports its veracity. Their reports marvel at the *fondacos*' size and number, but they often closely echo the observations of earlier travelers, suggesting that despite shifts in politics and the overall growth of European trade, the basic features of the Egyptian *fondaco* system persisted over time. Visitors to Alexandria noted not only *fondacos* for western merchants, but also ones for Muslim, Jewish, and pagan merchants trafficking in the city. Possibly, their use of the term *fondaco* reflected the fact that the Arabic *funduq* could apply to facilities for both local and foreign traders.[9] More likely, however, is that by the later middle ages the word *fondaco* had become the standard term in European usage for all facilities for overseas lodging and commerce. In 1481, the western Jewish traveler Meshullam ben Menahem of Volterra noted "four large *fondacos* of the Franks: one for Catalan merchants, another for the Genoese and their consul, and two for the Venetians and their consul, and they are all on the

[7] M. T. Mansouri, "Les Communautés marchandes occidentales dans l'espace mamlouk (XIIIe–XVe siècle)," in *Coloniser au moyen âge*, ed. Michel Balard and Alain Ducellier (Paris: Armand Colin, 1995) 99; Piloti, *Traité*, xx, xxiii–xxvi, 181 (50v). Piloti's book, which contains a wealth of information on Egyptian trade, was addressed to Pope Eugene IV, and written to urge the pope to launch a new crusade. The work was completed in 1438.

[8] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭāṭ*, II, 188. My thanks to Carl Petry for this citation.

[9] Bilingual treaties indicate that *funduq* and *fondaco* were understood as direct translations. See, for example, the 1429 treaty between Sultan Barsbay and Alfonso V of Aragón (R. Ruiz Orsatti, "Tratado de paz entre Alfonso V de Aragón y el sultán de Egipto, al-Malik al-Ashraf Barsbāy," *al-Andalus* 4 [1936] 343, 363) and the 1489 treaty between Florence and the sultan Qāyit Bay (Amari [ed.], *Diplomi arabi*, 208–209).

right hand of one street as your approach Alexandria, and opposite them in the middle is the great *fondaco* of the Ishmaelites."[10] The contemporary German visitor Felix Fabri also mentioned four main western *fondacos* – one each for Catalans and Genoese and two for the Venetians – as well as ones for Turks, Moors, and Tatars, in 1483. Other accounts mention many more European *fondacos*, citing facilities for merchants from Pisa, Cyprus, Palermo, Ancona, Naples, Marseille, Gaeta, Montpellier, Candia, Narbonne, Avignon, Castile, Florence, and elsewhere.[11]

Some of these nationalities had a more fleeting presence than others. While certain merchant groups (notably the Genoese and Venetians) maintained a relatively steady community in Alexandria over several centuries, traders of other nationalities came and went according to the varying winds of diplomacy, politics, warfare, and commercial success. The shift from Ayyūbid to Mamlūk rule in 1250 left many European states – including Genoa and Venice – scrambling to establish commercial relations with the new Egyptian government, despite the fact that this was a stressful time of military losses as the remaining crusader states fell to Mamlūk armies. In 1254, as soon as initial turmoil following the establishment of Mamlūk rule had settled, Venice entered into negotiation with Sultan Aybak, arranging for exclusive access to two *fondacos* in Alexandria, to be run by a consul and *fundicarius*, all according to the established "use and custom" under Ayyūbid rule.[12] Other merchant powers were somewhat slower off the bench. James I of Aragón waited until 1262 to dispatch a merchant from Montpellier to negotiate (successfully) for the first Aragonese *fondaco* in Alexandria – though a dozen years later, in 1274, he temporarily stopped traffic with Egypt in acquiescence to papal prohibitions.[13] The ongoing nature of commercial relations between the Arago-Catalan realms and Mamlūk Egypt are documented by a series of fourteenth-century Arabic letters preserved in the Aragonese archives.[14] No Genoese–Mamlūk treaty survives from before

[10] Meshullam ben Menachem, *Masa'*, 49; trans. in Adler (ed.), *Jewish Travellers*, 162. Meshullam referred to the *fondacos* as *fōnīkī*, presumably adapting the Italian version *fonnechi* into Hebrew. Elsewhere he also used *funduqi*.

[11] Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, III, 149–150 [126b], 163–164 [130b–131a], *Voyage en Egypte*, II, 668, 694–697. The French diplomat and traveler Ghillebert de Lannoy, who visited Alexandria in 1422, distinguished between larger facilities, which he called *fondachi*, belonging to the Venetians, Genoese, and Catalans, and smaller *conchiers* for merchants from Marseille, Naples, Ancona, Palermo, and Constantinople (this last one currently unoccupied) (*Oeuvres de Ghillebert de Lannoy*, ed. Charles Potvin [Louvain: Imprimerie de P. et J. Lefever, 1878] 109–110).

[12] Tafel and Thomas (eds.), *Urkunden*, II, 483–489.

[13] Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) 12.

[14] A. S. Atiya, *Egypt and Aragon: Embassies and Diplomatic Correspondence between 1300 and 1330 AD* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhans, 1938). The kings of Aragón, like their contemporaries in southern Europe, pursued commercial ties with regions all over the Mediterranean, not merely in Egypt (although

1290, when Genoa dispatched an ambassador to Sultan Qalāwūn, explicitly seeking reinstatement of earlier privileges.[15] Most other cities waited even longer to establish commercial relations with the Mamlūks, and their *fondacos* only appeared in the fourteenth century or later. Florence was a particularly late entry into the game, and may not have had a *fondaco* in Alexandria until 1422.[16]

Not only events in the Islamic world, but also political changes in Europe and papal dictates could affect trade. In 1267, for example, ten years after Marseille came under Angevin rule, Charles of Anjou reaffirmed the city's franchises *in partibus transmarinis*, including both Acre and Alexandria.[17] Military activities also influenced commerce, one of the most notable examples being the crusade (really little more than a "hit and run" incident, in the words of Jonathan Riley-Smith) launched by Peter I of Cyprus against Alexandria in 1365.[18] The contemporary Muslim chronicler al-Nuwayrī (d. 1372) described Peter's attack on the city, noting that the "cursed Franj" burned not only Muslim facilities but also the *funduqs* of the Catalans (*Kaytalānīyyīn*), Genoese (*Januwīyyīn*) and Marseille merchants (*Marsīlīyyīn*). They also started a fire in the Venetian *funduq* and looted goods from these buildings.[19] Peter's incursions resulted in immediate reprisals against European traders in Egypt, despite the fact that they had themselves suffered from the attack. Within a few years, however, most nations had reestablished their trade with Mamlūk realms.[20]

It is difficult to estimate actual numbers of merchants active in the *fondacos* of Alexandria, although Eliyahu Ashtor has attempted to

Alexandria was a preeminent destination). Charles Dufourcq has cataloged acts of the Aragonese chancellery from the period 1360–1386, mentioning Aragonese consuls in many different foreign cities ("Catalogue chronologique et analytique du registre 1389 de la chancellerie de la Couronne d'Aragon, intitule 'Guerre Sarracenorum 1367–1386' [1360–1386]," *Miscelánea de Textos Medievales* 2 [1974] 65–166). See also López de Meneses, "Los Consulados catalanes." Although an Aragonese consulate appears in Alexandria under James I, the first reference to a separate Catalan facility (or the same facility under a new name) does not occur until 1347 (López de Meneses, "Los Consulados catalanes," 93).

[15] Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, 1, 416–417; Jacoby, "Les Italiens en Egypte," 86.

[16] Amari (ed.), *Diplomi arabi*, 333. Florence did not have *fondacos* in Egypt under the Ayyūbids. A number of Florentine–Mamlūk treaties have been published by Amari (*ibid.*), and by John Wansbrough (for example, J. Wansbrough, "A Mamlūk Commercial Treaty Concluded with the Republic of Florence 894/1489," in Stern [ed.], *Documents from Islamic Chanceries*, 39–79).

[17] Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, 1, 329. Marseille had *fondacos* in Alexandria in the thirteenth century, and retained these in the next century (Lesage, *Marseille angevine*, 152).

[18] Jonathan Riley-Smith, *Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 272.

[19] Al-Nuwayrī, *Kitāb al-ilmām*, 11, 171. Another building, the Funduq al-Mūzah, was also looted, despite the fact that this *fondaco* has sometimes been identified as the Cypriot hostelry (see Combe, "Inscription arabe," 115).

[20] Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, 24; López de Meneses, "Los Consulados catalanes," 99–100.

reconstruct population figures based on notarial materials. He calculated that there may have been twenty-five to thirty-five Venetian merchants working in the city in the 1450s, and nine or ten Genoese. Two decades later, in the 1470s, there were perhaps thirty-five to fifty Venetians and ten to fifteen Genoese.[21] These numbers seem somewhat low, especially when compared with pilgrim reports of burgeoning traffic, but there is very little information to go on. Merchant numbers would obviously have fluctuated, depending on the time of year and the arrival and departure of ships, as well as the vicissitudes of economic shifts, diplomacy, and war. Ashtor's figures may not account for longer-term residents, such as the consul and various support staff (bakers, notaries, priests, etc.), or transient European pilgrims.

Although merchants usually stayed in particular *fondacos* based on their national community, there was considerable interaction and exchange between the different facilities. If a particular merchant were unaffiliated with an existing *fondaco*, then he might arrange lodging with a friendly power, as when traders from Florence and San Gimignano claimed to be Pisans, in around 1270, in order to have access to the Pisan *fondaco* and take advantage of Pisa's preferred trading status in Egypt.[22] Later another Florentine merchant, staying in the Pisan *fondaco* in Alexandria in 1336, used this as a delivery address for a shipment of wine and cheeses sent by a Pisan partner based in Candia.[23] Although the merchants in Alexandria (as elsewhere) were a fairly litigious lot, accounts of hostility and aggressive behavior within the foreign Christian community are rare. This is in contrast to outbreaks of rioting and looting between competing merchant groups in Christian cities such as Messina and Acre. It is reasonable to assume that the ever-present fact of minority status, and possible threat from the local Muslim majority, built solidarity among the western *fondaco* communities.

Felix Fabri's description of the *fondacos* in late fifteenth-century Alexandria is exceptionally detailed, and justifiably famous.[24] During his sojourn in the city, Felix and his companions stayed in the Catalan *fondaco*, "in which the Catalan merchants have their merchandise and lodgings. In effect, this is the *fondaco* (*fonticus*) of the Catalans and the hospice of all Christian

[21] Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 483–484.

[22] Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 14–15.

[23] R. Morozzo della Rocca (ed.), *Lettere di mercanti a Pignol Zucchello (1336–1350)* (Venice: Comitato per la Pubblicazione delle Fonti Relative alla Storia di Venezia, 1957) 9.

[24] Several other pilgrim accounts from this period (particularly those of Breydenbach and Arnold van Harff) may have drawn on Felix's information: Bernard de Breydenbach, *Les Saintes pérégrinations de Bernard de Breydenbach (1483)*, ed. F. Larrivaz (Cairo: Imprimerie nationale, 1904) 31 (Latin), 67–68 (French); Arnold von Harff, *The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff*, trans. M. Letts, Hakluyt Society, second series, 94 ([1946]; repr. Millwood, NJ: Kraus, 1990), 93.

pilgrims, unless by a particular favor of the Venetians or Genoese they are granted the hospitality of the latter's *fondacos*."[25] He went on to say that the building "was spacious, with many rooms [and it] had a large courtyard, with numerous chambers all around like a monastery." After the consul showed them their chambers, which were evidently on an upper floor, "we descended to the courtyard and carried our baggage to our rooms."[26]

Once they were settled, Felix and his fellow pilgrims set forth to tour the other European *fondacos* in the company of their dragoman.

> After leaving the *fondaco* of the Catalans, we went to the *fondaco* of the Genoese. This is a large and beautiful house with a sizeable courtyard, next to which there is a garden planted with many rare plants. Within the *fondaco* we saw many merchants, an enormous heap of merchandise, and a number of animals running about which we were not familiar with.[27]

Felix's wonderment increased when he came next to the two Venetian *fondacos*, first the smaller then the larger, and found them likewise stuffed with goods, merchants and – as in the Genoese trading house – with exotic animals. After seeing the second Venetian *fondaco*, they "left to go see the *fondaco* of the Turks from Constantinople ['fonticum Constantinopolitanum Turcorum' – the former Byzantine capital had been in Ottoman hands for thirty years by this time]. Here we saw many different types of merchandise, and the Turks themselves, who were tall, with a serious and venerable expression. Next we went to the *fondaco* of the Tartars (*fonticum Tartarorum*), where we entered and saw, in truth, the most precious merchandise." This last establishment, as he went on to relate, was basically a slave-market.[28]

This Tatar *fondaco* for slaves also caught the attention of Arnold von Harff, who supposedly traveled through Alexandria in the 1490s, and later wrote with indignation verging on prurience that "there are also sold daily Christian men and women, boys and young girls, who have been captured

[25] Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, III, 149 [126a], *Voyage en Egypte*, II, 666–667. It seems to have been common for one or more of the *fondacos* in Alexandria to lodge pilgrims. A century before Felix's travels, ordinances made in Barcelona in 1381 had established that although non-Catalan merchants could not take advantage of the Catalan *fondaco* in Alexandria, the facility was always open to pilgrims and other travelers (Capmany, *Memorias*, II, 321). Other reports indicate that the *fondacos* of Marseille and Narbonne housed pilgrims, perhaps because pilgrim ships frequently set sail for Egypt from southern France. See Mas Latrie, *Histoire de l'Île de Chypre*, II, 294 (n. 1); Bernard Doumerc, "Les Marchands du Midi a Alexandrie au xve siècle," *Annales du Midi* 97 (1985) 271.

[26] Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, III, 149–150 [126b], 163 [130b], *Voyage en Egypte*, II, 668, 694.

[27] Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, III, 163 [130b], *Voyage en Egypte*, II, 694. This is a rare confirmation of the standard diplomatic grant of a garden along with *fondacos* and other facilities.

[28] Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, III, 164 [131a], *Voyage en Egypte*, II, 697. Lapidus confirms that the Ottomans maintained a *funduq* in Alexandria in this period (*Muslim Cities*, 42).

in Christian lands, for very little money, fifteen, twenty, or thirty ducats, according as they are rated. First all their limbs are inspected, whether they are healthy, strong, sick, lame, or weak, and so they buy them."[29]

Slaves, especially young boys, were critical to the Mamlūk social, economic, and political system, and many did indeed come from Tatar lands in Russia, Circassia, and the Caucases. Many were pagan, but some were orthodox Christians. Genoese merchants came to be heavily involved in slave traffic, much of which went via the Genoese colony in Caffa, then across the Black Sea, through Anatolia, and finally by sea to Egypt. According to Piloti, the Genoese in Caffa inquired into the religion of these slaves, sorting out any whom they recognized as Christian, before releasing the rest to Mamlūk agents (some of whom were also Genoese) for transport.[30] This traffic was facilitated by the existing network of Seljuq and early Ottoman *khāns* in Anatolia, and also by *fondacos*. A Genoese notary working in Sivas, an inland city on the route southward from Trebizond, wrote two contracts in a "*fondico*" belonging to a Muslim (*sarrazeni*) merchant in 1274, and another contract from Sivas, dated 1280, was drawn up "in fondico Camaladini [Kamal al-Dīn] quo habitant Januenses."[31]

Returning to Felix's tour, his comments on the Venetian *fondaco* and the animals that it contained are worth further consideration. His observations are not unprecedented, since other travelers also noted the presence of exotic animals in *fondacos*. A decade earlier, for instance, Anselm Adorno had marveled at a gazelle and an ostrich in the Genoese *fondaco* in Sūs.[32] Some of these ostriches, leopards, and parrots may have been destined for European menageries, while other types of animals could have provided food for *fondaco* residents. In Felix's account, at least one animal seems to have been as much intended to annoy the local populace as to feed the Venetian inhabitants.

According to Felix, in the larger Venetian *fondaco* they encountered

[29] Arnold von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 95. Von Harff's travels may be largely fictitious. See C. F. Beckingham, "The *Riḥla*: Fact or Fiction?" in *Golden Roads: Migration, Pilgrimage, and Travel in Medieval and Modern Islam*, ed. Ian R. Netton (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1993) 92–93.

[30] Piloti, *Traité*, 143 (39r–v).

[31] George I. Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce génois dans la Mer Noire au XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1929) 166, 168; also 301–302 (docs. 1, 2); 314–315 (docs. 12, 13). Other contracts mention Genoese merchants inhabiting ordinary houses (*domus*), so apparently they were not required to lodge in these *fondacos*. However, when Ibn Baṭṭūṭa visited the Seljuq city of Antalya (on the Mediterranean coast at the end of the overland route from the Black Sea) in the early 1330s, he noted that Christian merchants had their own residential area near the port, surrounded by a wall, with gates that were locked at night and during Friday prayer services – restrictions reminiscent of the *fondaco* system elsewhere (*The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, 418).

[32] Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 142–145.

a beast which for us is a domestic animal, but which is a horror to the Saracens. A huge pig (*porcus grossus*) was promenading the courtyard – which astonished us greatly, since the Saracens have a mortal hatred of pigs and hold them an abomination, as do the Jews. They cannot bear to have a pig among them, which is why we had not seen one on our entire journey until this one here. It was explained to us that the Venetians had paid a large sum to the sultan for a safe-conduct for this pig, otherwise the Saracens would not have allowed it to live and even worse, would have destroyed the house on account of the pig.

He went on to say that this animal was very fierce and aggressive towards Muslims, but invariably gentle with Christians, even if they were strangers.[33]

The presence of this beast, together with the reiteration of laws against keeping pigs in western *fondacos*, opens the possibility that this was an ongoing issue.[34] Like the restrictions on the importation and drinking of wine, it hints at the pragmatism and economic interests inherent in the Muslim–Christian relationship. From the earliest period, one of the functions of the *fondaco* system was to ensure that foreign visitors (particularly European Christians) would have access to their own law, religion, and food-ways while in a Muslim city. The latter concern was generally expressed in terms of permission to drink and sell wine within the *fondaco*. This was discussed in chapter 4, and we will return to it again below. The ubiquitous mention of ovens for baking bread was also related. Although there was nothing objectionable about Christians and Muslims sharing an oven if it were used exclusively for bread, some Muslim jurists were concerned about the possibility that Christians might contaminate ovens by cooking pork in them, or by introducing dishes containing pork fat. Despite the risk of fire, it was safer, overall, to locate Christian ovens within the *fondacos*, and also more convenient for the inhabitants when the buildings were locked at night. Over and above convenience and segregation, all of these privileges had economic ramifications. Swine, wine, and ovens could be taxed, or licensed, thus rendering considerable revenues to the local Muslim government.[35]

The Venetian pig also had potent symbolic value. Its presence evoked the power and immunity of Venice within the walls of the *fondaco*, while

[33] Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, III, 163–164 [130b–131a], *Voyage en Egypte*, II, 695.

[34] It is possible that the Venetian pig was a product of Fabri's imagination. Although his pilgrimage account is generally considered truthful, he was not above a certain amount of exaggeration to make a point. However, restrictions on pigs in *fondacos* were repeatedly cited in diplomatic materials, and this reiteration may have been in response to an actual and ongoing problem. In Hafṣid Tunisia, pigs were strictly prohibited in Christian *fondacos* (Brunschvig, *La Berbérie orientale*, II, 225). In the thirteenth century, the administrators of the *fondacos* for merchants from Marseille had also been banned from keeping pigs ("nec possint ibi tenere fundegarii porcos") (Méry and Guindon [eds.], *Histoire de Marseille*, I, 352).

[35] Labib, "Egyptian Commercial Policy," 74.

the fact that the animal was tolerated only by a grant of safe-conduct from the sultan emphasized that the Venetian *fondaco* existed at his pleasure. The building itself belonged to the Mamlūk government, which maintained its fabric and provided some of its staff. Outside its walls was a potentially dangerous local population, capable of destroying the *fondaco* were it not for its royal protection. For Felix, the aggressiveness of the pig itself mirrored the ever-present latent hostility between Christians and Muslims. Yet this hostility had been overcome in the cause of commerce, and the economic interests of both the Venetian and Mamlūk governments had long worked to ensure that the *fondaco* system survived and flourished. The Venetians, after all, had the resources to shell out *multis pecuniis* to buy a safe-conduct, or license, for their pig – and to pay for many other things also.

The story of the Venetian pig exemplifies the complex network of privileges and restrictions which characterized the daily life of the European *fondacos* in Alexandria. Inhabitants were permitted to import a variety of items to make their lives comfortable and familiar, and personal belongings (as opposed to commodities) were specifically exempted from tax. Consuls and merchants could bring clothes, bedding, boxes, and small gifts in and out of the *fondaco* without any restrictions.[36] They could also bring considerable quantities of duty-free wine into the *fondaco* – ostensibly for personal consumption.

The evidence for wine is much better attested, over a much longer period, than evidence for the Venetian pig. Access to wine for sacramental purposes had always been permitted in the Christian *dhimmī* communities, and this allowed an easy loophole for its import to the *fondacos*. In the late thirteenth century, as we have seen in chapter 4, the sale of wine already represented a recognized commercial concession in the European *fondacos* of Ḥafṣid Tunis, although its consumption and sale were much more closely regulated in Egypt. Nonetheless, at least some wine was imported into the western *fondacos* of Alexandria during the Ayyūbid period, and this practice continued under Mamlūk rule. In 1254, for example, a Venetian treaty with the newly established government of Sultan ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybak granted the Italians permission to "import wine to their two *fondacos*, according to prior usage and custom," and to sell it in these establishments.[37]

By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Egyptian restrictions appear to have eased, at least in practice, so that while alcohol was still officially prohibited, it was in fact widely available both inside and outside the *fondacos*

[36] John Wansbrough, "A Mamlūk Ambassador to Venice in 913/1507," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 26 (1963) 529.
[37] Tafel and Thomas (eds.), *Urkunden*, II, 483–489.

in Alexandria. As with the pig, European merchants could obtain permission to have wine in their *fondacos* in return for payment of duties (or perhaps more accurately, a bribe) to Mamlūk officials.[38] Thus, when Sultan al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ reiterated traditional prohibitions against Christians selling wine in 1354, it is likely that he was reacting to a common practice.[39] The same was probably true in 1381 and 1386, when Aragonese consuls appointed to the *fondaco* in Alexandria had to swear not to import or sell wine on the premises (nor allow women or boys of dubious reputation to live in the building).[40] A notarial act from 1362 mentions a tavern in the Marseille *fondaco*, and in 1384 the pilgrim Frescobaldi bought wine in the Venetian *fondaco* in Alexandria.[41] In Cairo, his Muslim interpreter often "came to drink" in the house where Frescobaldi lodged, and even – the pilgrim author added indignantly – "sent our barrel of malmsey to his own house, leaving us only two small barrels."[42]

Malmsey (or *malvasie*) from Crete was the wine of choice in Egypt. In 1420, Emmanuel Piloti claimed that great quantities were imported to Alexandria, where people "drank it in secret," despite the fact that "their law prohibits drinking."[43] Piloti had been born on Crete, in about 1371, and spent his career as a merchant in Egypt in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. His writing indicates that he must have known colloquial Arabic, and he was apparently in favor with Sultan Faraj ibn Barqūq and his successor, Sultan al-Mu'ayyad. The latter granted him the personal right to import "five butts (*bottes*) of malmsey into Alexandria each month without paying any duties" on the wine.[44] Others sometimes enjoyed similar privileges, as when Sultan Barsbay allowed Florentine merchants and their consul to bring in wine, grain, and cheese for their own use, without paying any fee, in 1422.[45]

[38] Jacoby, "Les Italiens en Egypte," 83; Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, II, 434.

[39] Mentioned by Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*, XIII, 378–379.

[40] Capmany, *Memorias*, II, 321 (Nov. 19, 1381), II, 337–338 (Jan. 9, 1386). López de Meneses, "Los Consulados catalanes," 103–104, 131.

[41] Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 85; Frescobaldi et al., *Visit to the Holy Places*, 42.

[42] Frescobaldi et al., *Visit to the Holy Places*, 52. Many pilgrims carried wine, for personal consumption or sacramental use, and their stocks were often either confiscated or taxed by Muslim officials. Thomas Byrgg mentioned a charge of 35 ducats on two bottles of wine from Candia that they brought to Cairo in 1392 ("Itinerarium ad Sanctam Sepulcram," ed. P. Riant, *Les Archives de l'Orient Latin* 2 [1882] 387) and Felix Fabri, a century later, described how, after disembarking in Jaffa, "we took two small jars of wine, which we hid in sacks lest the Saracens should see them, for they do not suffer wine to be openly carried about, but if they see it they break the jars, if they are able" (*Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, I, 193–194 [74b]).

[43] "Nonobstant que leur lois commande qu'i n'en boivet . . . mais en boivent secrètement": Piloti, *Traité*, 158–9 (42r).

[44] Piloti, *Traité*, 209 (60v).

[45] Amari (ed.), *Diplomi arabi*, 339.

At times, even retail sales of wine appear to have been condoned. In the same year (1422), a contract drawn up in the larger of the Venetian *fondacos* mentioned a Jewish merchant shipping sixty butts of Cretan wine to three Christian merchants (one from Naples, two from Ancona) who were retailers in Alexandria. The seller promised to keep this cargo on shipboard were he to arrive during the month of Ramadan. This last provision indicates that such sales were still very sensitive, as does the fact that in 1429 another Jewish merchant was forced to return to Crete with his cargo of wine because the sultan had banned its import.[46] Nevertheless, association with wine was not necessarily a bar to success, and perhaps the reverse. A man appointed as consul for Neapolitan merchants in Alexandria from 1427 to 1434 was earlier recorded as running a tavern in that city in the early 1420s.[47]

Early in the next century, in 1512, Venetian merchants paid different tariffs on wine imported to Alexandria, where it might legitimately have been intended for the *fondacos*, and on wine sent to Cairo, where it more likely went to Muslim consumers.[48] Muslims may also have come to the *fondacos* of Alexandria to indulge their fondness for malmsey, since as Breydenbach reported, "Muslims and Christians ate and drank together [in the *fondacos*] without any difference between them."[49] Certainly, the *fondacos* were open for cross-cultural business activities during the day, and it is conceivable that these transactions were sealed over a congenial glass of malmsey, but their doors were locked at night – effectively separating Muslim and Christian communities – when drinking was more likely to have occurred. Thus Piloti's report of "secret" Muslim drinking (in other words within their own homes), or Frescobaldi's earlier account of his dragoman taking home a barrel of wine, seem more likely than open consumption in the *fondacos* during daylight hours.

While it would be misleading to make too much of the privileges granted to the western *fondacos*, it is clear that the bilateral negotiating power of Christian governments and the Mamlūk state allowed the evolution of a uniquely privileged yet restricted institution, very unlike its more laissez-faire cousin the *funduq*. The special concessions enjoyed by *fondacos* went hand in hand with targeted restrictions, and together these two forces

[46] Eliyahu Ashtor, "New Data for the History of Levantine Jewries in the Fifteenth Century," *Bulletin of the Institute of Jewish Studies* 3 (1975) 77–79, 94–97.

[47] Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 354.

[48] M. Reinard, "Traités de commerce entre la République de Venise et les dernièrs sultans mameloucs d'Egypte," *Journal Asiatique* series 1, 4 (1829) 44.

[49] Breydenbach, *Saintes pérégrinations*, 35–36 (Latin), 74–75 (French). Breydenbach does not specifically note that Muslims drank wine.

created an invisible retaining wall around the premises. This conceptual barrier was reflected in the very tangible reality of the building's walls and its gate, which was securely locked at night and during Friday prayers. As has been noted before, locked gates were nothing unusual in a medieval city, and security was always important in both *funduqs* and *fondacos* (not to mention other facilities for storing valuable commodities). Nevertheless, there is good evidence that the practices of the Ayyūbid period became more rigid under Mamlūk rule, and *fondaco* gates that had been secured from the inside in the twelfth century were routinely locked from the outside by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Already in the late thirteenth century, the Sultan Qalāwūn (1280–1290) wrote to the governor (*wālī*) of Alexandria, that "as regards the guarding of the *funduqs* of the Franks, take charge of their keys at night and during the time of Friday prayer."[50]

Repeated reports by Europeans in Egypt show that Qalāwūn's instructions were not unique. In 1323, Simon Semeonis reported that the "Saracens" in Alexandria protected their city "with the utmost care, especially on Fridays, when during prayer-time Christians of all classes are absolutely forbidden to come forth from their houses, which the Saracens close and bolt from without."[51] Simon presumably witnessed a version of this himself, from within the walls of the Marseille *fondaco* in which he stayed, though his knowledge of the indigenous Christian community's treatment may be less reliable. A century-and-a-half-later, Felix Fabri provided a similar picture, describing how he went downstairs early one morning to say his prayers, and found that

> the door of the house [*domus*, i.e. the Catalan *fondaco*] was still closed. It is the Saracens who open and close it, from the outside, at their will, just as elsewhere with all of the other Christian houses [presumably here he also intends *fondacos*] of which they hold the keys rather than the Christian inhabitants. The same thing happens wherever there are Venetian merchants. They close all houses in which there are Christians during the night hours so that nobody is able to enter or exit in order to protect against nocturnal harms (*nocturni insultus*). As I was sitting there, the Saracen doorkeeper arrived who opened the bolt and the bars on the two hinged doors.[52]

Felix's contemporary, the Flemish pilgrim Joos van Ghistele, similarly reported that "each evening at dusk servants of the amir and governor of the

[50] Bodleian, MS Marsh 424, 86r–v. The text has been attributed to Shāfiʿibn Alī; it is titled "Digna Gloria Virtus (anonymous author)" in the 1787 Bodleian catalogue. My thanks to Colin Wakefield of the Bodleian Library for his help with this manuscript.

[51] Semeonis, *Itinerarium*, 51.

[52] Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, III, 154 [128a], *Voyage en Egypte*, II, 677.

city come to close up the *fondacos*," and this information was repeated in many other European accounts.[53] The security of the *fondacos* even led to their doubling as jails (as had long been the case with ordinary *funduqs*), and a lengthy Arabic treaty between Alfonso V of Aragón and Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Barsbay, in 1430, included the provision that Aragonese merchants should not be confined in Muslim prisons, but instead would be imprisoned in the *funduq*, or somewhere else habitable. They were to be well treated, and not chained or handcuffed.[54]

Christian sources frequently mention local people engaged in the day-to-day operations of the *fondaco* buildings, from the local governor down to the doorkeepers and interpreters. Building and repair costs were shouldered by the Mamlūk government, although foreign Christians could often supervise placement and construction to suit their needs. Although this arrangement may have been common in earlier centuries, it is most clearly attested during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The same Aragonese–Mamlūk treaty noted above, for example, included a clause to the effect that "our lord, the sultan, has conceded the right to the Catalan merchants to found and erect a *funduq*, [but] there will be no expenses to either the consul or to the merchants resulting from this."[55]

Some Europeans apparently operated concessions outside the *fondaco* premises, although it is not clear what happened to these during periods of curfew. Piloti, who presents himself as a special case, had his own warehouse (*magazin*) next to the official customs house (*douane*) in 1420.[56] A few years earlier, a notarial contract from 1416 mentioned the payment of 600 florins, from the Venetian consul to a local official, to cover annual rent of a large shop located near the entrance of the Venetian *fondaco*.[57] It is also possible that other references to shops, houses, warehouses, and *botigas* may sometimes apply to facilities rented from the Mamlūk government, but located beyond the *fondaco* walls.

Foreign Christians in Alexandria thus enjoyed considerable liberties and latitude, yet they were ultimately under the oversight of the Mamlūk

[53] Joos van Ghistele, *Voyage en Egypte*, 113–114 [177]. Descriptions of the nocturnal curfew are common, especially in the fifteenth century. In the 1480s, the Jewish traveler Obadiah da Bertinoro gave similar information on the confinement of Christians during the night and on Fridays (see Adler [ed.], *Jewish Travellers*, 223). Half a century earlier, the diplomat Ghillebert de Lannoy also noted the confinement of Christians in *fondacos* at night and during Friday prayers (*Oeuvres*, 109–110).

[54] Alarcón (ed.), *Documentos árabes diplomáticos* 372–390 (doc. 153, art. 13). Also noted by Ruiz Orsatti, "Tratado de paz," 345, 362. These clauses are similar to information on using the *funduq* as a place of confinement in thirteenth-century Seville; see Ibn ʿAbdūn, *Risāla*, 18.

[55] "Min ghair an yukallafū al-tujjār wa lā al-qanṣūl min dhalika": Alarcón (ed.), *Documentos árabes diplomaticos*, 372–390 (doc. 153, article 24). Also noted by Ruiz Orsatti, "Tratado de paz," 349, 366.

[56] Piloti, *Traité*, 181 (50v).

[57] Labib, "Egyptian Commercial Policy," 71.

administration. Unlike a modern consulate or embassy, there was no conception of diplomatic immunity in the *fondaco* system, though there were diplomatic privileges. The *fondaco* buildings were never considered to be "foreign soil," and thus a prisoner held in a *fondaco* might be grateful for the more comfortable location of his confinement, but he was no less a prisoner of the state, and ultimately subject – depending on the offense – to Mamlūk justice.

CONSULS AND SULTANS: THE SPHERES OF FOREIGN AND LOCAL POWER

As well as negotiating for *fondacos*, treaties between Christian states and the Mamlūk government were concerned to define the parameters of economic process and legal power on either side. The outlines of these privileges show remarkable stability over time. This shows more than the inertia of diplomatic protocol, and it suggests that both parties were satisfied with the general model. There were, nonetheless, some new developments evident by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Each foreign Christian community and *fondaco* was overseen by a consul, as had been the case since the first appearance of the *fondaco* system in Muslim ports. Some of these men were appointed and sent out by their home city, but increasingly many were locally appointed by the merchant communities abroad, or even by Muslim administrations. Local endorsement could be critical; one candidate for the post of French consul in Alexandria triumphed over a rival candidate in 1352 by producing Arabic letters of support (*cartas moriscas*).[58] Two years earlier, in 1350, a merchant claiming to be the newly appointed consul for the realms of Aragón in Tunis was rejected by local Muslim authorities, on the grounds that his letter of appointment from the royal chancery was fraudulent since it lacked an official seal. In consequence, Catalan merchants in the city chose their own candidate for the position.[59]

It is probable that the office of consul was often farmed, although there is little hard evidence of this except in the case of James I, who tried – without great success – to administer the Catalan *fondaco* in Alexandria along the same lines as the *fondaci nostri* in Tunis and Valencia.[60] Later Catalan consuls, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, received a salary

[58] Doumerc, "Marchands du Midi," 272.
[59] Robert Brunschvig, "Documents inédits sur les relations entre la Couronne d'Aragon et la Berbérie orientale au XIVe siècle," *Annales de l'Institut d'Etudes Orientales* (Paris) 2 (1936) 244.
[60] Capmany, *Memorias*, II, 37; López de Meneses, "Los Consulados catalanes," 85.

based on the quantity of goods coming through their *fondaco*, levying a certain percentage per hundredweight.[61] Consuls in this period were also regularly paid a stipend (either called *gemechia* in Italian or *ma'lūm* in Arabic) from the Mamlūk government – a noteworthy change from earlier policies to be discussed further below.

A consul's term of office usually lasted no more than two or three years, at least according to the statutes of the European cities that they represented. This relatively brief tenure was perhaps an attempt to prevent a consul from becoming too familiar with the local scene or too integrated within its business affairs.[62] Most, however, already had long experience trading in the eastern Mediterranean, and some, like Emmanuel Piloti (who at one point served briefly as Venetian consul), knew Arabic. Frescobaldi mentioned that one consul whom he encountered in Alexandria in 1384 was French, but had an eastern Christian wife, "and between them they [had] less than one ounce of faith."[63] In the 1480s, the Catalan consul in Alexandria had a Greek Christian wife (this time a woman noted for her pious generosity).[64] Both marriages indicate that it was not unknown for "European" consuls to establish long-term roots in the Near East.

The consul was responsible for organizing the business activities, lodging, and storage within the *fondaco*, and for overseeing its community. When Simon Semeonis arrived in Alexandria in the early fourteenth century, he reported that each *fondaco* was in the charge of a consul, and "without his presence and permission no merchant of the state which he represents is admitted into the city along with his wares. He sits before [the city gate, together with Muslim administrators] . . . and receives only those merchants of the state he represents, and their goods. Of these, he requisitions a certain fixed quantity on their arrival, and on their departure must render an account of this."[65] In the next century, a Mamlūk–Florentine treaty of 1430 stated that the consul was "in charge of the *funduq* and its business, and he discharges this freely without interference from anybody for any reason."[66] Fifty years later, Felix Fabri further explained that "the consuls of the *fondacos* are powerful men. It is up to each of them to return advice, to reduce taxes on merchandise, to provide for their *fondacos*, to keep the peace, and together with the other consuls, to promote by their councils the

[61] López de Meneses, "Los Consulados catalanes," 115, 121.
[62] Capmany, *Memorias*, II, 320; Jacoby, "Les Italiens en Egypte," 83. See also López de Meneses, "Los Consulados catalanes." A limited term also allowed for the frequent resale or reallocation of the office.
[63] Frescobaldi et al., *Visit to the Holy Places*, 38.
[64] Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, III, 203 [144a], *Voyage en Egypte*, II, 771–772.
[65] Semeonis, *Itinerarium*, 49–51.
[66] Ruiz Orsatti, "Tratado de paz," 351, 367 (clause 30).

commerce of the state."[67] Sometimes, the consul was aided by a *fundicarius*, who took charge of some of the more day-to-day concerns of the *fondaco*, and especially the collection of fees and taxes.[68]

Communal justice was another aspects of the consul's domain, and merchants insisted on their right to bring their cases before him. When, for example, "there is within the Florentine nation a dispute or quarrel, or one of them has a claim against another of his nation, no one of the viceroys or magistrates [i.e. Muslim officers] or merchants shall adjudicate between them except the consul of their nation according to their custom."[69] Petty legal disputes between two Italians, or between Europeans of different nationalities, would also come before one of the consuls, unless for some reason a western merchant preferred to take his case to a Muslim court. The latter option appears in several treaties, dating from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, suggesting that western merchants did at times prefer this course of action.[70] In contrast, most disputes between Muslims and Christians, and all cases in which foreign Christians were accused of serious crimes, were brought before a Muslim judge.[71] In some cases, if merchants were not satisfied with the outcome of this decision, the case could be appealed to the sultan.[72]

Merchants sometimes had grievances against the *fondaco* system, and by extension against the consul, usually concerning charges levied on commercial goods stored or sold in the *fondacos*. One case brought by two merchants from Languedoc in 1399 was argued before the Genoese consul, but conducted in the Marseille *fondaco* with the French consul also in attendance. A Genoese ship-owner had refused to hand over the merchants' cargo, on the grounds that they had not paid taxes due to the *fondaco* from non-Genoese traders. The traders, in turn, argued that they should be exempt from tax since two of their fellow merchants, although also from Montpellier, had escaped payment through claiming Genoese citizenship. In the end, they were granted a similar exemption.[73] Another complaint by merchants from

[67] Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, III, 162 [130b], *Voyage en Egypte*, II, 693–694.
[68] Jacoby, "Les Italiens en Egypte," 83.
[69] From a Florentine–Mamlūk treaty of 1430 (Wansbrough, "A Mamlūk Commercial Treaty," 66 [art. 14]).
[70] L. T. Belgrano, "Trattato del sultano d'Egitto col Commune di Genova nel MCCLXXXX," *Atti de la Società Ligure di Storia Patria* (Genoa) 19 (1887) 168; Wansbrough, "A Mamlūk Commercial Treaty," 68 (art. 26).
[71] Belgrano, "Trattato," 168. Another example of this common clause appears in a treaty of 1430 between the king of Aragón and the Mamlūk sultan (Alarcón [ed.], *Documentos árabes diplomáticos*, 383 [doc. 153]).
[72] Wansbrough, "A Mamlūk Commercial Treaty," 67 (art. 20).
[73] Doumerc, "Marchands du Midi," 276.

Marseille against the Genoese consul was lodged in 1406, and drawn up by a Venetian notary in the presence of merchants from Florence, Mallorca, and Valencia. The French traders claimed that the Genoese consul had abused his power by demanding duties (*drets*) from them in the Genoese *fondaco*, although the items in question were not Genoese goods, and thus owed tax only to the French consul in their own *fondaco*.[74] These cases show the consul not only in the role of adjudicator but also as defendant, and indicate that consuls were not above suspicion of using their office for their own profit.

Consuls also represented their community before the Mamlūk government. Treaties included clauses giving consuls the right to journey to Cairo at regular intervals (usually about once a month) to present grievances or requests to the sultan, who would personally consider each case. Alternately, a consul might be peremptorily summoned to the capital, to answer charges of piracy or other actions by his people, and he might suffer retribution personally. Data from the first decades of the fifteenth century illustrate the fragility of the position of the consul as an intermediary in diplomatic relations. A letter from the doge of Venice to the Mamlūk sultan, sent to Egypt in 1411, complained that the Venetian consul and several merchants had been arrested and brought to Cairo in irons the previous year, an event that the doge interpreted as an insult to Venice. His letter reminded the sultan of promises to honor and protect the consul and other Venetian subjects in his realm.[75] In 1420, Piloti reported that the Venetian consul was repeatedly summoned to Cairo on charges of Venetian corsair activity and the selling of Muslim slaves to the duke of Naxos. Piloti was sent to negotiate, and managed to liberate both the consul and the captured Muslims. Both sides appear to have been pleased by this outcome, since it was on this occasion that al-Mu'ayyad allowed him to import the butts of malmsey without charge.[76] Other contretemps ended less happily. Piloti reported the flogging and expulsion of another consul, who was also stripped of his goods and possessions, in reprisal for acts of piracy by Venetian ships and for his secret attempts to warn Venetian merchants that their goods might be seized. Venetian traffic with Mamlūk ports was interrupted for several years following this incident.[77] Official ire sometimes extended beyond the person of the consul, as when Bertrandon de la Broquière saw a messenger

[74] Bernard Doumerc, "Documents commerciaux en langue d'oc enregistrés à Alexandrie par les notaires vénitiens (fin XIVe–début XVe siècle)," *Annales du Midi* 99 (1987) 240.

[75] Henri Lammens, "Correspondances diplomatiques entre les sultans mamlouks d'Egypte et les puissances chrétiens," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 9 (1904) 363–365.

[76] Piloti, *Traité* 201–207 (57v–60r).

[77] Piloti, *Traité* 230–233 (67r–68r).

on a racing camel approaching Damascus in the early 1430s, and his interpreter told him that this man "was coming with a command of the sultan to arrest all Catalans and Genoese who were in Damascus and everywhere else in Syria because a galley and two smaller boats of the prince of Taranto had captured a ship full of Moors near Tripoli in Syria."[78] It is striking that despite these hostilities and reprisals on both sides, the *fondaco* system continued to function and consuls were willing to serve. Evidently, the economic incentives and other benefits of the system sufficiently outweighed its risks.

Although the basic scenario of *fondacos* and their administration seems familiar from earlier times, there was at least one striking change in the financial remuneration for consuls. By the fifteenth century, consuls regularly received a stipend from the Mamlūk sultan, apparently in addition to money that they made from running the concessions within the *fondaco* and to the fees they collected on lodging and trade. Florentine and Aragonese treaties in the fifteenth century, for example, included clauses ensuring that their consuls would be paid the same salary "at the expense of the noble *dīwān*" that was customarily paid to the Venetian and other consuls in Alexandria.[79] It is unclear exactly when this stipend came into being. It may have been one of a number of attempts in the early Burjī period (after 1382) to manipulate and control the Egyptian economy.

The fact that consuls received state stipends added to the fragility of their status and relations with the sultan.[80] The delicacy of the relationship is hinted at by Piloti, in his account of the consul brought before Sultan al-Mu'ayyad to answer charges of Venetian piracy and secret correspondence. When the consul was brought before him, al-Mu'ayyad asked him, "For what reason do you have my protection and remain in my country?" And the consul replied, "My Lord, in order to sustain and comfort the merchants of my nation, and also the opportunity to bring things here to benefit your country." The sultan then produced an intercepted letter written by the consul to Venetians in Damascus, warning them to flee the country with their goods in order to escape confiscation and other reprisals.

[78] La Broquière, *Voyage d'Outremer*, 55 (trans. 31–32). Perhaps because of the tenuous nature of their position, consuls often worked to appease local rulers. In 1498, the foreign consuls in Damascus took an active part in festivities to honor Sultan Ghūrī when he visited the city, meeting him at the gate and presenting him with gifts (Mansouri, "Les Communautes marchandes occidentales," 91).

[79] Amari (ed.), *Diplomi arabi*, 339, 343; John Wansbrough, "Venice and Florence in the Mamlūk Commercial Privileges," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 28 (1965) 514; Wansbrough, "A Mamlūk Commercial Treaty," 65; López de Meneses, "Los Consulados catalanes," 116–117 (art. 28).

[80] Mansouri, "Les Communautés marchandes occidentales," 101.

The consul was subsequently beaten and expelled from Egypt.[81] The sultan's angry reaction is readily understandable in light of the fact that the consul was, to some degree, an employee of his own administration. Consuls found themselves in the difficult position of working for two masters, their own home governments and the Mamlūk state, and both entities expected fiscal returns and other commercial benefits from *fondacos*.

Fondacos provided a commercial setting in which Christian, Muslim, and Jewish merchants could meet and trade, though usually only Christians were allowed to sleep within their walls.[82] Local Muslim traders came to the western *fondacos* to do business. Felix Fabri remarked that in one of the Venetian buildings "Venetian notables were seated . . . in the company of powerful Saracens, discussing commercial matters." Later he witnessed a dispute between a Venetian merchant and a Muslim, in which the Christian hit the Muslim repeatedly and drove him from the *fondaco*. This incident was followed by no reprisals, an indication – at least according to Felix – of the unprecedented power of the Venetians.[83] European Jews also traded in the *fondacos*, as shown in a 1422 contract recording the sale of wine by a Jewish merchant in one of the Venetian *fondacos* in Alexandria, and another contract dated three years later, made between Venetian merchants and a Jewish trader from Apulia drawn up in the "fontico Anconitanorum."[84]

Although Jews with Venetian citizenship may have been able to stay in the Venetian *fondaco*, not all western *fondacos* extended this privilege to their non-Christian citizens. Some European Jews apparently took up residence in Alexandria.[85] In 1380, Peter IV of Aragón wrote to the Catalan consul asking him to locate a certain Jew, Astruch Saladi from Castellón de Ampurias, who had abandoned his wife in Spain and was thought to be in Egypt. The implication here is that this man was likely to be in contact with

[81] Piloti, *Traité*, 231–232 (67r–v).

[82] Ordinances of Barcelona, drawn up in 1381, prohibited the consuls in Alexandria from renting a bedchamber, house, or shop to "any Moor or Jew under any circumstances" (Capmany, *Memorias*, II, 321). Whether this ordinance was reactive or prescriptive is an open question.

[83] Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, III, 163–165 [130b–131a], *Voyage en Egypte*, II, 694–697.

[84] Ashtor, "New Data," 77–79, 94–99; D. Jacoby, "Venice and Venetian Jews in the Eastern Mediterranean," in *Gli ebrei e Venezia (secoli XIV–XVIII) a cura di G. Cozzi* (Milan: Edizione di Comunità, 1987) 36. A 1360 treaty between the Ḥafṣid sultan and Peter IV of Aragón pertained to both Christian and Jewish citizens of the realms of Aragón doing business in Tunis under the jurisdiction of the Aragonese consul (Alarcón [ed.], *Documentos árabes de diplomáticos*, 313 (doc. 140).

[85] The evidence for a separate Jewish *fondaco* is not very strong, though it is not impossible in view of earlier data on Jewish *funduqs* in Egypt. Western travelers sometimes noted *fondacos* for Jews. These were probably for traders from within the *Dār al-Islām*, but may also have housed European Jews. Ashtor noted that a Venetian notary drew up a contract in the "fontico Judeorum" in Alexandria in 1405 ("New Data," 81; Jacoby likewise noted a Jewish *fondaco* in "Venice and the Venetian Jews," 49).

the Catalan community in Alexandria, though not staying in the *fondaco*.[86] There is little evidence that local Egyptian Jews participated in the business life of the western *fondacos*.[87]

As well as Muslim merchants, there would have been a variety of other local people present in the customs houses and *fondacos* to facilitate the commercial process when European ships were loaded and unloaded. Among these were officers to weigh, measure, and assess goods. Commodities needed to be weighed, often repeatedly, to make sure that they had paid the correct duties and that nothing had been added or removed from the bales, boxes, or sacks. When Felix Fabri visited the quays of Alexandria, they "were covered with bales, all of which had been filled with merchandise at the *fondaco*, where they had been weighed in the presence of Muslim authorities, then weighed again and inspected just before they were loaded on board ship in order to verify that the contents had not been tampered with."[88] Goods were also carefully weighed at the time of purchase, before they could be carried to either a *fondaco* for storage or onto a ship for export.[89] Because the process of weighing and re-weighing was usually handled by local people, suspicious European merchants were always on the lookout for shady tricks. A Venetian–Mamlūk treaty of 1507 explicitly addressed the issue, requiring

> that the spices which our merchants buy must necessarily be well sifted as well as weighed with honest scales, our merchants being at liberty to select any Muslim weigher they please; and (further) that our merchants keep the scales in the *funduq* (*fontego*) in order to re-weigh goods and spices to see that they have not been cheated by the weighers, nor may such re-weighing be forbidden them by anyone. Similarly, that Muslim merchants may not keep the sieves in their *funduqs*, but these shall be held by the appointed *machademi* (*muqaddam* [*al-khaṣṣ*]), and sighted and sealed by our consul. And that the spices are to be sifted in open *funduqs* [i.e. in the courtyard] and not in covered magazines, so that the rights of all are to be observed.[90]

Not all goods would have been stored in the European *fondacos*, perhaps because of the sheer quantity of merchandise coming through Alexandria. Some items went instead to warehouses or customs houses (*dīwān* or *duana* – a word that could apply both to a place in which goods were stored

[86] López de Meneses, "Los Consulados catalanes," 102, 151.
[87] A Jewish interpreter in Alexandria in 1470 (see below, n. 99) may have been Egyptian, but is more likely to have had roots in Europe.
[88] Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, III, 170–171 [133a], *Voyage en Egypte*, II, 708.
[89] Tafel and Thomas (eds.), *Urkunden*, II, 485–486.
[90] Wansbrough, "A Mamlūk Ambassador," 528–529.

before duties were paid, and to the office of tax-collection), where they were stored under lock and key. A Genoese–Mamlūk treaty of 1290 specifically treats this situation, noting that the Genoese were to have a scribe in the *dīwān* in order to handle their business and to ensure that all Genoese goods were accurately recorded. Merchants were to have as many storerooms as needed in this building, and they could hold the keys to these.[91]

Mamlūk administrators kept careful track of all goods, and when items arrived at the *fondacos* or warehouses there were officials "present to count and to weigh so that the tax office (*dīwān*) suffer no loss."[92] Disappearances were always possible, despite the fact that the building itself was locked by Muslim officials. In the early fifteenth century, Piloti boasted of how he had once tunneled into the storerooms of the *dīwān* from an adjacent building that had once been the Genoese *fondaco*, "and removed a great deal of merchandise belonging to myself and others without paying any duties." Over and above duties paid on goods, there was often a storage fee simply for the use of the space in a *fondaco* or warehouse – another charge which Piloti eluded by his theft.[93]

Merchants paid duties to the *dīwān*, as well as other fees to various officials, middlemen, and translators. In 1489, Florentine merchants who arrived in Alexandria and other Mamlūk ports were to bring "their goods to their *funduqs* or their warehouses, [where] they may sell their goods by barter or for cash to whom they choose, after which the aforesaid [Florentines] will pay to the noble *dīwān* fourteen dinars per hundred [received for the sale], and they pay in kind to that amount or in cash excluding brokerage and interpreters' [fees]." If the officers responsible for assessing the goods and collecting the appropriate tax were more than three days late in coming to do this job (a delay which might hinder trade), then the Florentines had the right to complain to urban officials.[94] The administrators of the *dīwāns* in Alexandria and other cities, in their turn, were expected to render an accounting of tax revenues to the *dīwān* of the sultan in Cairo.

Muslim and Christian governments both benefited from the revenues of *fondacos*, as did their consuls, their staff, and the merchants who trafficked

[91] "Magasenos in dugana bonos et sufficientes, et claves eorum": Belgrano, "Trattato," 169, 171. In the late twelfth century, the father of the mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci served as a scribe in the Pisan *duana* in Bougie (Fibonacci, *Scritti*, 1).

[92] Wansbrough, "A Mamlūk Commercial Treaty," 63. This treaty dates to 1489.

[93] Piloti, *Traité*, 180–181 (50v); Gual Camarena (ed.), *El primer manual (siglo XIV)*, 132. The fee here is called *fondeguatgue*. Francesco Balducci Pegolotti mentioned similar storage fees (*fondacaggio*) in both European and Muslim ports in the fourteenth century (*La Pratica della mercatura*, 162, 183 ff., 210 ff.).

[94] Wansbrough, "A Mamlūk Commercial Treaty," 63–64.

through these facilities. The only group that lost out financially – and thus the most vocal in their complaints – were the pilgrims who lodged in the *fondacos*. Their reports frequently complain of high prices and demands for bribes and fees encountered at every turn, and they illuminate the various small but profitable ways in which the European consuls could augment their income. One Florentine pilgrim, Giorgio Gucci, kept a meticulous list of his expenses, noting that pilgrims paid a ducat each to the consul for lodging, plus extra "for wine and biscuits supplied by him during our stay."[95] When Felix Fabri's party made ready to depart from the Catalan *fondaco*, the consul demanded 6 ducats from each of the pilgrims, a sum that Felix was unable to supply. After a secret appeal to the consul's Greek Christian wife, she interceded on his behalf and her husband grudgingly excused the fee.[96] Such charges on pilgrims were not universal, however, for when Felix's contemporary Joos van Ghistele lodged in one of the Venetian *fondacos*, he reported that the consul "treated us so well that we had nothing to pay for the whole time that we stayed there."[97]

Virtually all of the business conducted between European and Mamlūk traders must have been conducted with the aid of interpreters, and even westerners who knew some Arabic (or Egyptians who spoke a western language) were probably under pressure to engage the services of middlemen and brokers. The interpreter, or dragoman (*turjumān*), is thus a commonly mentioned figure, and it appears that the men who served in this position came from various walks of life. Some were local people, while others were of European origin.

By treaty, consuls could pick official interpreters for their *fondacos*, to assist with the purchase and sale of goods both inside and outside the buildings, but these men must be chosen from a list pre-approved by the *dīwān*.[98] Christians, Muslims, and Jews all served as interpreters in the *fondacos*, though possibly not on equal footing. In 1470, a Jew called Moses worked as a dragoman in the Genoese *fondaco* in Alexandria, taking 3 ducats a month for his services, while his superior, a Christian named Lodisius (perhaps more experienced at the job), was paid a monthly wage of 4 ducats.[99] Whereas interpreters such as Moses and Lodisius received a fixed salary, those who guided visiting pilgrims were paid on a per-person basis. When

[95] Frescobaldi et al., *Visit to the Holy Places*, 150, 153.
[96] Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, III, 203 [144a], *Voyage en Egypte*, II, 771–772.
[97] Joos van Ghistele, *Voyage en Egypte*, 113 [177].
[98] This from a 1430 treaty between the king of Aragón and Sultan Barsbay (Alarcón [ed.], *Documentos árabes diplomáticos* [doc. 153, art. 29], 376 [Arabic], 387–378 [Spanish]).
[99] Ashtor, "New Data," 89.

Felix Fabri arrived in the city, his party was taken in hand by a Muslim interpreter called Schambek (in Felix's transliteration), who spoke fluent Italian and guided them through the intricacies of immigration. Later, the group was irritated by the fact that Schambek demanded 13 ducats from each pilgrim (more than double the usual rate of 6) for their safe-conduct, yet they grudgingly handed over this sum since he had generally proved himself honest and faithful.[100] One of a dragoman's tasks was to ensure that foreign Christian pilgrims did not wander unattended through the city, especially not in sensitive areas, although Felix apparently eluded his keepers on the day that he lost his way and needed guidance back to the *fondaco*.

Travelers frequently noted that the dragomen whom they encountered in Cairo were of European origin, and usually converts to Islam. In 1323, Simon Semeonis reported that his chief interpreters in the city were a Roman ex-friar and an ex-Templar who had married. Both were "outwardly renegades," though he claimed that they remained secretly Christian. Their two junior colleagues were Italians, both of them Jacobites.[101] Other travelers provided similar information. In 1384, for instance, Giorgio Gucci and Lionardo Frescobaldi hired an interpreter who "was a renegade Venetian, whose wife was the daughter of one of our Florentines, [also] a renegade"; a century later, Felix Fabri was guided by a Sicilian rabbi, who had converted first to Christianity, then to Islam; and Felix's contemporary Joos van Ghistele recorded that the main interpreter for the sultan was a Christian from Valencia who had become a Muslim.[102] In 1501, a Spanish ambassador sent to Egypt by Ferdinand and Isabella lodged in Cairo with a dragoman named Luis de Prat de Montblanch, a Catalan who had converted to Islam.[103] These reports add complexity to the picture of cross-cultural relations in the Mamlūk period, confirming that a number of Europeans did live and work in Egypt, and that conversion was the passport to their success.

BEYOND ALEXANDRIA: CHRISTIAN MERCHANT LODGING IN OTHER MUSLIM CITIES

Thus far, the discussion has concentrated on *fondaco*s in Mamlūk Alexandria, but Christian merchants also visited in Damascus, Tunis, Málaga, and

[100] Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, III, 147–148 [125b], 152–153 [127b], *Voyage en Egypte*, II, 663, 673–674.
[101] Semeonis, *Itinerarium*, 97–99.
[102] Frescobaldi et al., *Visit to the Holy Places*, 44–45, 106; Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae*, III, 20 [80b–81a], *Voyage en Egypte*, II, 401–403; Joos van Ghistele, *Voyage en Egypte*, 16–17.
[103] López de Meneses, "Los Consulados catalanes," 122–123.

other important Muslim markets in the later middle ages. Consideration of the *fondacos* for Christian merchants in these cities illuminates the degree to which the development of commercial spaces in different regions was influenced by the needs and constraints of local politics, specific commercial routes, and particular merchant groups. Overall, the *fondaco* system remained remarkably uniform throughout the Mediterranean, presumably because facilities from Almería to Damascus were patronized by merchants from the same fairly limited number of European Christian states. On the other hand, diplomatic and military relations varied between different powers over time, leading to regional variations in the *fondaco* network.

Syria

The patterns of western merchant activity in Syria were rather different than those in Egypt, although the two regions were closely linked both politically and economically. Differences in geography and communications help to explain the development of trade patterns. Both Egypt and Syria had well-established inland markets by the Mamlūk period, but only Egypt had a direct and unavoidable trade route, along the Nile, linking its main port, Alexandria, with its capital, Cairo (though this city was also served by a limited number of overland routes to other destinations). This circumstance allowed considerable control over traffic through Cairo as well as through Alexandria. The dearth of excellent ports along the Syrian coast, especially after the demise of crusader Acre, and the lack of riverine transport, created a very different situation in Syria. Both Aleppo and Damascus were important markets, on long-established overland routes, and their commercial draw outweighed that of any regional port city during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Nevertheless, merchants could choose to pass them by if their economic climate seemed unfavorable. Unlike a port city, through which the flow of traffic can be strictly controlled, inland markets are more likely to be intermediate points of trade, and to build their success not only on location but also on economic factors and incentives. Overly strict regulation of such markets opens the possibility that merchants will take their business elsewhere.

As we have seen, western consuls in Alexandria were in close communication with their merchant compatriots in Damascus. Although there were usually "sub-consuls" appointed to handle local Syrian business, consuls in Egypt were answerable for the actions of all their nationals throughout Mamlūk lands. Nevertheless, the *fondacos* in Damascus, Aleppo, Tripoli, and Beirut were not so closely regulated as those in Alexandria, nor were

western merchants in Syria subject to the rigid restrictions on trade and movement that prevailed in Egypt.[104] This tendency toward less formal definition and administration may have resulted from the fact that Syrian *fondacos* were further from Cairo, and thus harder to oversee, and from the inland location of Aleppo and Damascus, which made it more difficult to enforce their role as terminal emporia.

In Syria, the term *khān* had become much more common than either *funduq* or *fondaco* by the fourteenth century, and thus Syrian Arabic references to facilities serving western merchants frequently use this word. When Ibn al-Shiḥnah listed twenty-six *khāns* in Aleppo, in the middle of the fourteenth century, he identified one, the Khān al-Shaybānī, as being the "*khān* of the Franks."[105] It may have been this same *khān*, which Ibn al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1564) later described as given "to the Franks and their consul" in Aleppo, in which the residents were accused of draping textiles adorned with crosses on the outer walls of the building, thereby causing a scandalized uproar in the neighborhood.[106] In Damascus, Ibn Ṣaṣrā mentioned *khāns* inhabited by Frankish merchants, and described a fire, "the like of which no one had ever seen," that broke out in the city in 1396, and reached "the *khāns* of the linen merchants and the rope makers . . . the people lost a great deal in it, which no one could compute, and a considerable amount belonging to the people was looted. Many of the possessions of the Franks [*Ifranj*] were burned in it, because they lived [*sākinīn*] in these *khāns*."[107] In the 1430s, Bertrandon de la Broquière remarked that western merchants in Damascus put their goods in the Khān Barqūq (*Kan Berkoc*) for safekeeping, adding that this particular building had been spared the ravages of Tīmūr out of respect for its founder, the Sultan Barqūq.[108]

It is striking that by the later fifteenth century, references to *fondacos* in Syria and regions further east only occur in European writings, not in Arabic sources. This suggests that the term was increasingly an imported western usage, as the Venetian ambassador Giosafat Barbaro recognized when he described "un caversera, cioè secondo noi fontego" in Tabriz in

[104] Almost all of our information concerns Aleppo and Damascus; there are few references to *fondacos* in Syrian port cities. On the informality of the Syrian trading network in the fifteenth century, see E. Congdon, "Venetian Merchant Activity within Mamlūk Syria (886–893/1481–1487)," *al-Masāq: Studia Arabo-Islamica Mediterranea* 7 (1994) 1–33.

[105] Ibn al-Shiḥnah, *"Les Perles choisies"*, 193–194 [248–249]. This is probably the "Can Sibani" that appears in early modern Venetian documents, or possibly the "Khān al-Ṣabūn." In the sixteenth century, the latter was used as a hostel for French merchants in Aleppo (Scharabi, *Der Bazar*, 169). The Venetian *khān* in Aleppo was also called the Khān al-Banādiqa (Concina, *Fondaci*, 95).

[106] Sauvaget, *Alep*, I, 173.

[107] Ibn Ṣaṣrā, *Chronicle of Damascus*, I, 173a.

[108] Broquière, *Voyage d'Outremer*, 35–6 (trans. 21). This building was also mentioned by other European travelers in Damascus (Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, II, 462).

1474.[109] In much the same period, both Anselm Adorno, arriving in Damascus in the early 1470s, and Arnold von Harff, coming in the 1490s, referred to a Venetian *fondaco* (probably called a *khān* in local parlance), where Venetians and other western travelers lodged and did business.[110] Likewise, a Venetian–Mamlūk treaty drawn up in 1512 assured the security of Venetian merchants "in our *fondaco*" in Aleppo.[111] This usage was not unlike the Venetian mention of a *fondaco* in Constantinople after the Fourth Crusade, despite the fact that foreign enclaves in the Byzantine capital had never gone by that term in Greek. A similarly out-of-place Venetian usage appeared in the early sixteenth-century Italian translation of Marco Polo's voyages, which included a passage added by Giovanni Battista Ramusio (who died in Venice in 1557) describing "numerous fine *fondacos* [in the Mongol capital] for the lodgment of merchants from different parts of the world, and a special hostelry is assigned to each description of people, as if we should say there is one for the Lombards, another for the Germans, and a third for Frenchmen."[112] Evidently, while *funduq* slipped from use in Islamic lands and beyond, often replaced by the terms *khān* or *caravanserai*, *fondaco* remained the term of choice in Italian (and particularly Venetian) usage to designate an enclave for cross-cultural business activities.

At the same time, it is probable that the Italian term frequently designated a warehouse (as it was understood in contemporary Italy) as much or more than a hostelry. Despite references to western merchants using *fondacos* and *khāns* in Syrian cities, there is also evidence that many traders rented ordinary houses in Damascus and elsewhere by the fifteenth century.[113] Perhaps the *fondacos* and *khāns* were increasingly used for business and storage, rather than lodging, except for very short-term residents. Bertrandon de la Broquière, who traveled in Syria in the early 1430s, indicated that while pilgrims put up in *khāns*, more settled merchants had lodgings of their own. A Venetian merchant in Hama invited Bertrandon to his house ("sa maison"), and when local people discovered that he was lodging in the house of a European ("j'estoye logié à l'ostel d'un Franc") they pestered him to invite them in for a drink. At nightfall, however, Bertrandon and

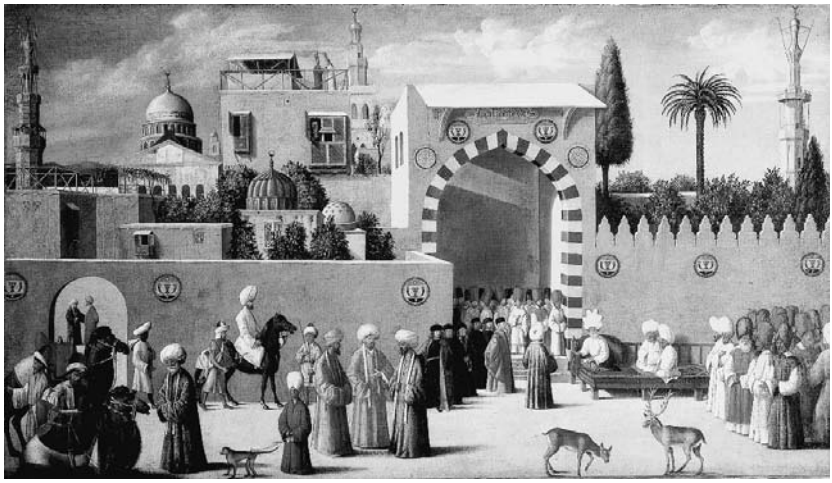
[109] L. Lockhart, R. Morozzo della Rocca, and M. F. Tiepolo (eds.), *I Viaggi in Persia degli ambasciatori veneti Barbaro e Contarini* (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1973) 118.

[110] Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 337; Arnold von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 230. The same anachronistic phenomenon is evident in earlier Italian literature. Thus Boccaccio (d. 1375) reflected Tuscan usage when he set one of his stories in Acre, where the heroine (disguised as a merchant) came upon a stall of some Venetian merchants ("un fondaco di mercanti viniziani") (*Decameron*, I, 246, trans., 216).

[111] Reinard, "Traités," 47.

[112] Marco Polo, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, ed. and trans. Henry Yule (London: John Murray, 1903) I, 96, II, 412, 415.

[113] Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 407.



10 Reception of Venetian ambassadors in Damascus, school of Gentile Bellini, early 1490s. Paris, Louvre Museum. The scene shows the view of Damascus as seen from the Venetian *fondaco*.

his companions "had to return to our *khān*" ("la nuit vint qu'il nous en failly aler à nostre kan").[114]

Adorno also reported the existence of a nocturnal curfew, remarking that Venetian merchants in Damascus "all live together in the same place, and they are shut up in their houses at night by the Muslims."[115] However, rather than being confined to a particular building as was the case in Egypt, Europeans in Damascus and Aleppo apparently inhabited a gated city quarter, that could be locked, such as the foreigners' quarter (*ḥārat al-gharbā'ī*) mentioned by Ibn Ṭūlūn in Damascus in 1510.[116] Perhaps this was an innovation of the late Mamlūk or early Ottoman period, since later in the sixteenth century Ibn al-Ḥanbalī lamented that "although the Franks used to only live in *khāns*, now some Franks live in [ordinary] houses" in Aleppo.[117]

We have a rare and beautiful example of the visual landscape of European life in Syria in a painting, sometimes attributed to Gentile Bellini, depicting the reception of Venetian ambassadors at the gates of Damascus in the late fifteenth century. The painting, which is known to have arrived in Venice in about 1495, shows a view of a particular bath-house and also the Umayyad

[114] Broquière, *Voyage d'Outremer*, 77–80.
[115] Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 333.
[116] Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Les Gouverneurs de Damas*, 211 (Arabic), 127 (French).
[117] Sauvaget, *Alep*, 173. This resembles to the pattern of communal segregation in crusader cities and, later, in the Ottoman *millet* system.

mosque, including a minaret added by Sultan Qāyit Bay in 1488. This dating is confirmed in the costumes and by the Mamlūk blazons depicted on the city walls.[118] Although little is known of the painting, Julian Raby has noted that "whoever painted [it] . . . must have visited Damascus, taking his view of the mosque and the bath house from an upper story of the Venetian *fondaco* which was situated inside the *sūq* to the south of the great mosque."[119] Certainly, the general view is correct, looking from the area where Europeans in the city had their commercial and lodging facilities.[120]

The scene itself depicts a mixture of formality and informality, in both its people and its architecture, reflecting not only the immediate subject but also the realities of European life in a Mamlūk city. The group of six Venetian ambassadors stands before a seated figure in a magnificent turban, perhaps Sultan Qāyit Bay himself, while two groups of courtiers and officials watch the reception. Another standing figure with his back to the viewer, thus facing the ambassadors and the sultan (who looks fixedly back at him), is probably a dragoman, translating the diplomatic exchange. Meanwhile a variety of other people converse and go about their business in the same street, seemingly unaware of the formal tableau. In the distance three more figures appear, possibly women, two conversing on a roof and one looking out of a window. A number of animals also wander through the scene – camels, deer, and a pet monkey – recalling the contemporary exotic beasts observed by Felix Fabri in the Venetian *fondaco* in Alexandria.[121]

The artist combined the random incidentals of local human color with the formalities of the diplomatic reception and the geometric planes and domes of urban architecture. The scene reflects the double nature of commerce and diplomacy between medieval Christians and Muslims. On the one hand, relations were constrained by protocol, regulations, and the barriers presented by language and locked doors. This formal segregation is emphasized by the consciously rendered exoticism and rich color of the painting, in which the Venetians, five of whom are dressed in black, are set apart as the only sober element. On the other hand, pragmatism and commercial reality overcame these restraints, as people – with their animals

[118] It has been suggested that the painting shows a reception by Sultan Ghūrī in 1512, but Jean Sauvaget disputes this ("Une Ancienne representation de Damas au Musée du Louvre," *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales. Institut français de Damas* 11 [1945–1946] 5–6, 8–9). Sauvaget's opinion is seconded and augmented by Julian Raby, *Venice, Durer, and the Oriental Mode* (Totowa, NJ: Islamic Art Publications, 1982) 55–65. See also Sylvia Auld, "The Mamluks and the Venetians Commercial Interchange: The Visual Evidence," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 123 (1991) 91.

[119] Raby, *Venice, Durer, and the Oriental Mode*, 55.

[120] Sauvaget noted this point, and included a map showing the mosque, bath-house, and likely location of the Venetian *fondaco* ("Ancienne representation," 9, also fig. 3).

[121] Ibn Ṣaṣrā told a tale that turned on the presence of a pet monkey in a *khān* in Damascus at the end of the fourteenth century (*Chronicle of Damascus*, 1, 39–40 [9b–10b]).

and baggage – talked, mixed, wandered about, and carried on with their business affairs both in *fondaco* buildings and in the painted scene.

North Africa and Naṣrid Granada

Just as the *funduq* remained the preeminent space for lodging and commerce in Maghribi cities in the later middle ages, so too the *fondaco* persisted as the locus of European merchant activity. References to *khāns*, in contrast, were rare in the western Mediterranean, except in apparently accidental usage by foreigners. As in earlier centuries, European merchants sought to establish trading-houses in any Maghribi ports that looked economically promising, though their commercial activities were sometimes interrupted by local political fluctuations. Unlike the eastern Mediterranean, where Egypt and Syria were under Mamlūk rule for two-and-a-half centuries, the politics of many North African cities were in an almost continual state of flux during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Although Tunis itself remain fairly solidly under Ḥafṣid control, dynastic struggles and divided rule within the Ḥafṣid family could jeopardize treaties and their arrangements for *fondacos*. In cities further to the west, including Tlemcen, Oran, and Hūnayn, territorial shifts between competing dynasties – Ḥafṣids, Zayyānids, and Marīnids – could likewise throw diplomatic negotiations into disarray.[122] In Morocco, the Marīnids held fairly steady control until the second half of the fifteenth century, when they yielded power to the Waṭṭāsids. Meanwhile, in Granada, the Naṣrids kept precarious hold on the last surviving small corner of al-Andalus until 1492. Even though Muslim states in both Granada and Morocco were under frequent military pressure from Castilian armies, they were nevertheless negotiating friendly commercial treaties with Christian merchants. In fact, throughout the Maghribi region there was often very little alignment between the fortunes of war and those of trade.[123]

Christian politics and commercial patterns also influenced arrangements for *fondacos* in the western Mediterranean. Merchants from the realms of Aragón (including Valencia, Barcelona, Mallorca, and Sicily) were especially active in Maghribi ports, as were Genoese and Pisan traders. A Pisan treaty from 1353 cited the existence of Pisan *fondacos* in a number of places (*civitate*

[122] On these ports, see Dufourcq, "Les Espagnols," 5–128; A. Khelifa, "Le port de Hūnayn au moyen âge," in *Histoire et archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord: Actes du Ve Colloque international réuni dans le cadre du 115e Congrès national des sociétés savantes, Avignon, 9–13 avril 1990* (Paris: Editions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 1992) 379–392.

[123] María Dolores López Pérez, "Las Relaciones diplomáticas y comerciales entre la Corona de Aragón y los estados norteafricanos durante la baja edad media," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 20 (1990) 153, 158, 167.

in Latin, *bilād* in Arabic) within the Ḥafṣid realm.[124] Venetians, by contrast, concentrated more of their business in the eastern Mediterranean, although they maintained *fondacos* in a few eastern Maghribi cities, notably Tunis and Tripoli, into the fourteenth century.[125] The Genoese also controlled a large percentage of the traffic through Seville, and thus frequented Granadan *fondacos* on their way to and from the Atlantic via the Straits of Gibraltar.

The instability of North African politics and the growth of Christian naval and military strength often allowed for much more advantageous trade treaties, from a European perspective, than was possible in Mamlūk Egypt. Into the fourteenth century, the kings of Aragón continued to demand from Ḥafṣid rulers the payments of tribute that had been established in the century before under James I. Whether these sums were actually paid is open to doubt, but they certainly made their way into the rhetoric of diplomacy. Catalan *fondacos* in Tunis and Bougie also appear to have continued to be lucrative concessions for the crown, as in earlier times, although texts no longer employed the proprietary usage (*fondaci nostri*) initiated by James I.

Not surprisingly, there is less evidence of an organized *fondaco* "system" (as seen in Alexandria) in the politically chaotic Maghrib, and western merchants may have had more privileges, broader latitude for negotiation, and greater freedom of movement. There were, nonetheless, plenty of *fondacos*, especially in Ḥafṣid lands, and their rules and regulations were not unlike those of *fondacos* in earlier periods. Diplomatic sources show that European merchants continued to receive the traditional access to "*fondaco*, bath, oven, shops, and church" (sometimes also warehouses and a cemetery) in Ḥafṣid cities throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These treaties were explicit in noting that the *fondacos* were residences, in which western merchants would live (*habitare*) according to custom. They mentioned rooms (*camera*) for lodging, as well as storerooms and shops (*poteca*) for merchandise.[126] An Arabic treaty of fairly standard type negotiated between James II of Aragón and the sultan Muḥammad II, in 1301, ensured that Catalan merchants "shall have one consul, or possibly two, to defend their rights in the *dīwān* and outside it, and to do justice among Catalan and Aragonese Christians in their commercial dealings among themselves . . . They shall live in their *funduqs* according to their normal

[124] Amari (ed.), *Diplomi arabi*, 101, 304. Multiple Pisan *fondacos* appear in an earlier treaty, dated 1313 (*ibid.*, 88).

[125] Many of the diplomatic treaties establishing and renewing access to commercial facilities in Maghribi ports in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were published in Amari (ed.), *Diplomi arabi*, Mas Latrie (ed.), *Traités de paix et de commerce*, and Capmany, *Memorias*.

[126] Aragonese–Ḥafṣid treaty from 1360 (Las Cagigas "Un Traité de paix," 71).

practice."[127] The appeal to longstanding custom (*antiqua consuetudine*) still remained strong two centuries later, in 1504, when a Genoese treaty with the Ḥafṣids cited custom in connection with both a *fondico Januensium* and other residences in Tunis.[128]

In contrast to Egypt, where Mamlūk policy strategically channeled western traffic through Alexandria, there were *fondacos* in numerous cities along the North African coast, including Tunis, Bougie, Bône, Sfax, Gabes, Sūs, Tlemcen, Tripoli, and Constantine. Indeed, many Ḥafṣid treaties permitted access to facilities in any city "throughout the realm," where foreign merchants wished to trade. The plethora of *fondacos*, and open-ended nature of their establishment, suggests a much less clearly enforced division between facilities for foreign and local merchants in the Maghrib than in the Near East.

In theory, this allowed European merchants the freedom to choose their destination based on the shifting commercial climate of supply and demand. Tunis was always the most important Ḥafṣid port for European traffic, but Bougie, Tlemcen, and other markets could also be very lucrative. In fact, however, politics frequently interfered with commercial and diplomatic arrangements. The commercial advantages of Bougie and other ports along the western coast could be jeopardized by political squabbles within the Ḥafṣid dynasty, and by competition with the neighboring Zayyānids. This sometimes forced European states to enter into separate negotiations for trade with individual cities.

In Tunis, the *fondaco* buildings continued to be owned and maintained by Muslim authorities in the later middle ages, as had been true in earlier periods. In 1445, for example, it was "the responsibility of the *ṣāḥib* of the *dīwān* to provide [Pisan and Florentine merchants] with their *funduq* . . . and to furnish, repair, and fortify it, without incurring any [financial] obligation upon them [i.e. the Italians] for this."[129] Foreign communities could appoint their own staff, however, including doorkeepers and porters (*bawwabūn*, *porterios*, *ostiarios*) as they saw fit, and could instruct these employees to exclude anybody, including local Muslims, whom they

[127] "Yaskanūn fī fanādiqihim ʿalā ʿādatihim": Alarcón (ed.), *Documentos árabes diplomáticos*, 249–253 (doc. 116).

[128] Emilio Marengo, *Genova e Tunisi 1388–1515* (Rome: Tipografia Artigianelli di San Giuseppe, 1901) 214.

[129] Amari (ed.), *Diplomi arabi*, 174–175 (art. 13). Clauses of this type were common. In 1433, a treaty between Genoa and Tunis likewise stated that any expenses for rebuilding or working on the *fondaco* were to be paid by the *dīwān* (Mas Latrie ed., *Traités de paix et de commerce*, 135). Along similar lines, a response from the sultan of Tunis to a complaint about ovens in 1308 emphasized that the oven was loaned to the Christian community, not given, and thus they could cook in it but not hire it out for profit (Alarcón [ed.], *Documentos árabes diplomáticos*, 266–270 [doc. 120]).

did not wish to enter the building.[130] The relative proximity of Tunis to Italy made it more common than in Egypt for Italian commercial firms to establish partners in the city on a long-term basis. The *fondacos* in Tunis may thus have provided a base for more settled communities than their Egyptian counterparts.[131]

Clauses from Tunisian treaties also suggest greater competition between different Christian trading nations here than in Egypt, perhaps because of larger numbers of merchants, and greater European military and economic leverage with the Ḥafṣid state. Treaties routinely included provisions to ensure exclusive access to *fondacos*, and to prohibit the lodging of others without special permission.[132] Each group wished to be certain that no other nation could negotiate preferable terms. An agreement between James II of Aragón and the Ḥafṣids in 1323 specifically added a clause to the effect that "none shall have better [terms], neither the Genoese nor any other."[133] In 1301, another Aragonese–Ḥafṣid treaty had expressed similar concerns, including a clause to ensure that Catalan merchants should "have a notary (*kātib*) dedicated exclusively to them so that nobody will be able to mix their things with [those of the Catalans]."[134]

Merchants from different regions within the extensive Aragonese empire competed with each other, so that Valencians, Mallorcans, Catalans, and Sicilians jockeyed for commercial privileges and access to their own *fondacos*. Correspondence between Tunis and the Aragonese court sometimes reflected the perplexities of Ḥafṣid administrators as they attempted to balance the claims of these different yet related groups.[135] It was common for competing merchant groups to establish treaties and *fondacos* in rival ports, and thus Mallorcan merchants favored trade with Bougie in the fourteenth century, while Catalans continued to do more business in Tunis.[136]

All of the western *fondacos* in Tunis were located in the same area, east of the central walled city in the region outside the Sea Gate (Bāb al-Baḥr).[137]

[130] Amari (ed.), *Diplomi arabi*, 126, 320, 327, etc.; Mas Latrie (ed.), *Traités de paix et de commerce*, 135.
[131] Fernández-Armesto, *Before Columbus*, 137.
[132] For example, from a Pisan–Ḥafṣid treaty of 1313: "un fondaco particolarmente destinato a loro alloggio": and from a Mallorcan–Ḥafṣid agreement of the same year: "no sera negun companyo sino á lur voluntat" (Mas Latrie [ed.], *Traités de paix et de commerce*, 51–52, 189).
[133] "De mellors ni ha, de genoveses d'altra gent": Capmany, *Memorias*, II, 168 (art. 4).
[134] Alarcón (ed.), *Documentos árabes diplomáticos*, 249–253 (doc. 116).
[135] Alarcón (ed.), *Documentos árabes diplomáticos*, 306–308 (doc. 138). Also, López Pérez, "Las relaciones diplomáticas," 164; Abulafia, *Mediterranean Emporium*, 160–161.
[136] See documents in Antoni Riera Melis, *La Corona de Aragón y el reino de Mallorca en el primer cuatro del siglo* XIV (Madrid and Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1986).
[137] Travelers, including Anselm Adorno and Leo Africanus, mentioned these *fondacos* in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, though without the details which they provided for facilities in Alexandria (Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 103; Leo Africanus, *Description de l'Afrique*, 382).

Goods had to be carried by stevedores from the port to these *fondacos*, where they were weighed and assessed before being stored.[138] If goods were held up on the quays, then merchants could claim damages from the *dīwān* for any goods lost or damaged before they reached the *fondacos*.[139] When merchants wished "to depart from Tunis . . . then the *dīwān* shall send a testimonial to the *fondaco* . . . which testifies to the fact of having seen the boxes [and other items] of the . . . merchants, and all this having been seen, they ought to be bundled up and loaded, without further examination in the *dīwān* or elsewhere."[140] The inclusion of these clauses in a Genoese treaty in 1433 suggests a concern that the process of departure could be hampered by searches and queries by the *dīwān*. As in Egypt, all of these transactions and written communications were facilitated by interpreters, either dragomen or the scribes working in the *fondacos*. Piero di Pagnuzo, a Pisan citizen and self-described "*torcimanno*" living in the Pisan *fondaco* in Tunis, seems to have filled both offices when he translated and wrote out Latin and Arabic versions of a treaty between Pisa and the Ḥafṣid ruler Abū Fāris in 1397.[141]

European merchants in Tunis may also have conducted business in various commercial spaces, not only in their own residential *fondacos*, but also in the *funduqs* devoted to wholesale transactions of specific commodities (these were still very common in the Islamic west). Many of these *funduqs* were located in the commercial center of the city, rather than its outskirts.[142] An agreement between Genoa and Abū Fāris, dated 1433, condoned earlier practice whereby Genoese merchants sold wool, hides, and other goods to Muslim merchants "in the *fondacos*" where these items "were customarily sold (*vendi consueverunt*)," while taking other goods to their warehouses (*magazenos ipsorum*) for storage.[143] An early fifteenth-century jurist, al-Ubbī (d. 1425), also encouraged sales in markets and *funduqs* within the city, and condemned the custom of doing business in Christian *fondacos* nearer the port. He remarked that Muslim merchants in Tunis ought not to go out to the Christian *fondacos* outside Bāb al-Baḥr to buy imported goods, as was their practice, any more than they ought to meet the Saharan caravans before they reached the city in order to negotiate cheaper prices.[144] These

[138] A fourteenth-century Catalan commercial manual included fees for stevedores (*bestays*) transporting goods to the *fondacos* in Tunis (Gual Camarena, *El primer manual [siglo XIV]*, 175–196).
[139] Mas Latrie (ed.), *Traités de paix et de commerce*, 51–52.
[140] Mas Latrie (ed.), *Traités de paix et de commerce*, 139.
[141] Amari (ed.), *Diplomi arabi*, 325.
[142] See, for instance, the location of the Funduq al-Ḥarīr in fifteenth-century Tunis (Garcin [ed.], *Grandes villes méditerranéennes*, unnumbered maps at end of book).
[143] Mas Latrie (eds.), *Traités de paix et de commerce*, 139.
[144] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿAwn, *Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ubbī wa kitābuhu "al-Ikmal"* (Tripoli: al-Dār al-ʿArabiyah lil-Kitāb, 1983) 418; also noted by Brunschvig, *La Berbérie orientale*, II, 254.

comments not only appear to support commercial fair play, but they also aimed to discourage unsupervised inter-faith business within the western *fondacos*.

Al-Ubbī may also have been concerned about other temptations present in Christian *fondacos*, where wine was still as freely available as it had been in earlier centuries. As in Egypt, commercial treaties with Ḥafṣid lands allowed foreign consuls to import certain quantities of wine, duty free. Though explicitly for use in the *fondacos*, this wine apparently found its way to Muslim buyers.[145] Its sale was legitimized, at least in practice, by the levy of a fine (or a tax), but some rulers tried to put a stop to this lucrative compromise. In 1398, according to al-Zarkashī, one Ḥafṣid sultan (presumably Abū Fāris) "ordered the demolition of a *funduq* located near the Sea Gate which was used for selling wine. In doing so, he forfeited the income of ten thousand [dinars] that it produced." In its place, he built a *madrasa* and *zāwiya*.[146]

Further to the west, there is less evidence of European *fondacos* in Marīnid cities, despite abundant data for *funduqs*. This may be because European merchants were less active in Moroccan markets, most of which were located quite far inland and were thus not easily accessible to Christian traders. Nonetheless, some Christians did business in Marīnid cities, as testified by the last will and testament of a Mallorcan merchant who died in Fez in 1387. Lacking a Latin notary, the text was written out by friar Jacme Olzina, attached to the chapel of "Sancta Maria de la Duana dels mercaders" in the city.[147] There is no mention of any *fondaco* in this text, nor in a roughly contemporary peace treaty between Peter IV of Aragón (1336–1387) and the Marīnid ruler, which merely referred to Aragonese merchants traveling throughout the country and "residing in [Moroccan] cities."[148] A Pisan treaty, drawn up with Abū ʿInān Fāris in 1358, arranged that Pisan merchants were to have a *fondaco*, unless no such facility was available, in which case they should simply have a house (*casa*) as did the other Christians.[149]

Two centuries later, when Diego de Torres arrived in Morocco in the middle of the sixteenth century, then under Waṭṭāsid rule, he found an "alhóndiga de los Christianos" in the port of Safi, where he disembarked, and he later described "alhóndigas de los mercaderes Cristianos" in Fez. He also noted lodging in other *alhóndigas* (though not specified as Christian)

[145] Mas Latrie (ed.), *Traités de paix et de commerce*, 143–144.
[146] Al-Zarkashī, *Chronique des Almohades*, 194.
[147] Gabriel Llompart, "Testamentos de mercaderes mallorquines rogados entre musulmanes (1374–1388)," *Hispania* 44 (1984) 425.
[148] Alarcón (ed.), *Documentos árabes diplomáticos*, 240 (doc. 114).
[149] Amari (ed.), *Diplomi arabi*, 310–311.

throughout the country while he worked to ransom Christian captives between 1546 and 1556.[150] It is possible that the Waṭṭāsids supported the concept of western *fondacos* to a greater degree than their Marīnid predecessors, perhaps in light of heightened military tensions following the fall of Granada in 1492 and the worsening atmosphere of Christian–Muslim relations during the sixteenth century. On the other hand, Diego de Torres' use of the term *alhóndiga* may reflect Spanish usage, or simply translate *funduq*, still the most common type of residential and commercial enclave in Moroccan cities at that time.

In Naṣrid Granada, the *fondaco* system remained alive and well until the conquest of the region by Ferdinand and Isabella in the final decades of the fifteenth century. Ports along the southern Iberian coast were vital stopping points for ships traveling from Italy, southern France, and the realms of Aragón into the Atlantic, or across the Straits of Gibraltar to destinations in Morocco. European merchants also brought grain and eastern goods to Granadan markets, where they purchased silk, dried fruits, and other local products. The earliest surviving Genoese–Naṣrid treaty, drawn up in 1278 or 1279, granted the Italians *fondacos*, baths, ovens, warehouses, and other facilities throughout the kingdom ("in omnibus terris dicti domini regis"), both in port cities and inland.[151] Two decades later, in 1296, Catalan merchants were also granted *funduqs* along with the right to "choose a consul in each place that has a *dīwān*." There were Catalan consuls and *fondacos* in Almería and Málaga through the fourteenth century.[152] The excellent harbors and strategic location of these ports also continued to make them sites for Genoese and Mallorcan *fondacos* in this period.[153] There may have been about twenty Genoese merchants residing in Málaga on a semi-permanent

[150] Diego de Torres, *Relación del origen y suceso de los xarifes y del estado de los reinos de Marruecos, Fez y Tarudante*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno, 1980) 151, 192–193. See also James Monroe, *Islam and the Arabs in Spanish Scholarship (Sixteenth Century to the Present)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970) 18.

[151] Lisciandrelli, *Trattati e negoziazioni* (no. 409); *Liber iurium Reipublicae Genuensis*, 1 (no. 989, cols. 1485–6); Garí, "Why Almería?" 226–228; Rachel Arié, *L'Espagne musulmane au temps des Nasrides (1232–1492)* (Paris: E de Boccard, 1973) 360–361.

[152] Alarcón (ed.), *Documentos árabes diplomáticos*, 1–3 (doc. 1). Much of this treaty was renewed in 1321 and 1326 (docs. 15 and 27) though without the clause pertaining to *funduqs*. See also María Dolores López Pérez, *La Corona de Aragón y el Maghreb en el siglo XIV (1331–1410)* (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1995) 188, noting Catalan *fondacos* in Málaga and Almería in the 1340s and 1350s.

[153] The case of the merchant Jaume Manfré was described in chapter 4. A letter from the same period, written in 1344 from the governor of Mallorca to the Naṣrid ruler, concerned a Mallorcan merchant detained in the *fondech d'Almeria* (Pablo Cateura, "Notas sobre las relaciones entre Mallorca y el reino de Granada en la década de 1339–1349," *Bolletí de la Societat Arqueològica Luliana* 830–831 [1979] 158).

basis in the middle of the fifteenth century.[154] However, in contrast to *fondacos* in the Mamlūk east, facilities in Granada probably did not serve as exclusive or restricted residences, at least not by the fifteenth century, when a list of grievances brought by Genoese merchants to the Naṣrid ruler in 1452 included references to both Genoese houses and warehouses in Granada.[155] Genoese *fondacos* in Málaga (a building later called the Castil de Ginoveses) and in Granada (the *funduq al-jinuyyīn*) may have been mainly intended for secure storage, though possibly also personal safety, since both buildings were heavily fortified.[156] In Granada, the Genoese *fondaco* was converted into a jail shortly after the transition to Christian rule, as observed by a German traveler who visited the city in 1494–1495.[157] After 1492, Genoese and other western merchants continued to acquire land and houses in former Naṣrid territories, just as they had in other regions of Castile, since the coastline remained strategic for access to the Atlantic.[158]

The continuing growth of European trade and shipping in the Mediterranean during the later middle ages realigned spheres of trade and changed the nature of commercial spaces in Islamic cities. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Christian ships had achieved virtual hegemony over most Mediterranean routes, both those linking southern European and Muslim ports and those connecting the Mediterranean with the Atlantic and northern Europe via the Straits of Gibraltar. At the same time, traders in the Islamic world increasingly concentrated on overland traffic, or on shipping routes in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. As a result, by the later thirteenth century the southern Mediterranean rim became a frontier zone to a greater extent than had been the case in earlier periods. Not only in terms of economics and trade, but also from the standpoints of politics and religion, this region was now the interface between two separate spheres.

European *fondacos* in Alexandria, Damascus, Tunis, Almería, and elsewhere represented critical points of contact and exchange between these two spheres, especially in economic terms. There were also other forms of contact, since European pilgrims and travelers were often allowed to travel

[154] Fernández-Armesto, *Before Columbus*, 107.

[155] Gabriela Airaldi, *Genova e Spagna nel secolo xv : il "Liber damnificatorum in regno Granate" (1452)* (Genoa: Università di Genova, 1966) 36, 55, etc.

[156] Calero Secall and Martínez Enamorado, *Málaga*, 252; Lopez de Coca Castañer, "Comercio exterior," 349; Seco de Lucena, *Granada árabe*, 52; Torres Balbás, "Las Alhóndigas hispanomusulmanas," 449.

[157] Jerónimo Münzer, *Viaje por España y Portugal (1494–1495)*, ed. and trans. Ramón Alba (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo, 1991) 135.

[158] J. E. López de Coca Castañer and Maria Teresa López Beltrán, "Mercaderes genoveses en Málaga (1487–1516). Los Hermanos Centurión e Ytalian," *Historia, Instituciones, Documentos* 7 (1980) 103.

through Muslim lands, and westerners sometimes lived and worked in Muslim cities outside the confines of *fondaco* walls. Nevertheless, *fondacos* increasingly controlled foreign trade and channeled European traders to certain markets, while keeping them away from others.

These regulations were not a Mamlūk innovation, since this type of pattern had long been characteristic of *funduqs* and *fondacos*, both of which took advantage of the needs, opportunities, and routes of merchant diasporas. However, the burgeoning of European maritime trade and the demise of the Crusader states, combined with new Mamlūk commercial policies, created a new situation in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. With the loss of *fondacos* in Tyre, Acre, and other crusader cities, western merchants could no longer choose between a variety of destinations in the eastern Mediterranean. Instead, their commercial activities were restricted to a handful of terminal markets, where they did their business in particular *fondacos* and then returned home. Although there is evidence that some traders, particularly Venetians, were able to do business more freely in Syrian markets, European traffic in Egypt was generally limited to Alexandria. Notably, the situation was somewhat different in the Islamic west, where a plurality of political regimes allowed greater leeway to western negotiators, and more freedom for trade and *fondacos* in consequence.

The solidification of function of the *fondaco* as a facilitator for cross-cultural interaction almost certainly had an effect on the understanding of the *funduq* in Mamlūk lands and elsewhere. There was no differentiation between the two words in Arabic, and *funduq* could thus mean either a hostelry and depot for indigenous traders, or a regulated and restricted enclave for foreign merchants. It seems likely that while the latter sense gained importance – as more and more European traders sought access to a now limited number of Muslim ports – the former sense declined. Increasingly, commercial spaces dedicated to housing Muslim merchants, facilitating their business dealings, and storing and taxing their goods went instead by the titles of *khān* and *wakāla*.

The success of the *fondaco* system in Alexandria, Tunis, and other markets not only affected the evolution of commercial spaces in these Muslim cities, but it also had an influence on urban facilities in southern Europe. By the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, *fondacos* began to appear in Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Marseille, Ragusa, and other Mediterranean ports. These facilities were distinct from those in Spain and Sicily, where Muslim cities had been conquered by Christian armies, and their urban forms assimilated into Christian fiscal administrations. Instead, the new *fondacos* that took root in northern Italian cities and elsewhere were a transplanted

phenomenon. Both the idea and the term itself must have been imported by the same merchants who encountered these facilities in an Islamic context.

Although the transplant was successful, and the word *fondaco* (in various forms) took root in European languages, in reference to local facilities, its meaning changed as its crossed the boundary between cultures. In almost all cases, the functions of *fondacos* in southern Europe were different from those in contemporary Muslim ports. Over time, not unlike the modernization of the word *funduq* in Arabic, the European versions lost much of their more complex medieval sense. Thus, the modern Italian *fondaco* and Castilian *alhóndiga* are respectively a warehouse and a granary, no longer hostels, emporia, or points for cross-cultural contact. Their journey away from these meanings is described in the following chapter.