
Denise Aigle. *Rédaction, transmission, modalités d'archivage des correspondances diplomatiques entre Orient et Occident (XIII^e-début XVI^e siècle)*

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- 1 This article is the introduction to the volume *La Correspondance entre souverains. Approches croisées entre l'Orient Musulman, l'Occident Latin et Byzance (XIII^e-début XVI^e s.)*, which gathers eight contributions dealing with the comparative and interdisciplinary study of diplomatic practice in the Islamic, Latin and Byzantine worlds in the late Medieval period. More specifically, the volume concentrates on the writing and the exchanges of official letters between sovereigns of different courts and traditions, and analyzes the diverse aspects peculiar to this enterprise, such as the language, process of drafting, transmission and conservation of the documents, as well as the various actors involved in the process. Beyond the mere presentation of the volume and its goals, the author also addresses the practices related to the drafting, transmission and archiving of official correspondences in both Latin west and Islamic east. As Denise Aigle correctly shows, the disparity between both fields as for the available material (nature and number) has greatly influenced the state of research: compared to their

“European” counterparts, historians of the Islamic world experienced greater challenges due the lack of archival materials. This imbalance, however, does not prevent successful attempts for comparative studies since many alternative sources exist for the Islamic world. The case of the Mamluk period, taken as an example, is particularly relevant given the great amount of collection of documents (copies) kept. In the last part of the article, D. Aigle focuses on a specific case study of drafting, transmission and archiving as practiced by the Mongols in the 13th-14th century. The “Mongol corpus” is according to the author an excellent *observatoire* for inquiry, since it kept a great variety of sources and forms both in the Latin west and the Islamic east. This corpus attests of the intense diplomatic activity, as well as an efficient chancery practice in the different Mongol courts (especially regarding their multilingualism). Though the corpus kept in the Islamic world (i.e., Mamluk) in the form of copies, raises many problems regarding its authenticity, the great number of narrative sources (e.g., chronicles, chancery manuals) often comes to corroborate the discrepancies. Furthermore, those sources provide us with a context otherwise missing as well as with valuable information concerning the actors involved in those exchanges of missives. The original corpus kept in papal archives on the other hand, is of great significance for the material study of the documents (i.e., paper, ink, seals). More than a mere overview, D. Aigle’s article truly sets a number of relevant research questions to be addressed in the future by scholars in the field of Islamic diplomatic history.

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