I aim to radically reconsider standard views of late medieval Islamic history. Positing that prosopographical research will allow for a welcome reconstruction of the political traditions that dominated the Syro-Egyptian Mamluk sultanate in the 15th century, I endeavour to show how new traditions emerged that were constructed around the criterion of military slavery, and how this actually reflects a process of state formation, which puts this regime on a par with emerging European states.

Mamluk history (1250-1517) tends to be approached through a decline prism, as almost all studies presuppose that a static mamluk/military slavery system was the backbone of the political economy that came under increasing pressures from the 14th century onwards. In my research, I have demonstrated how this view of the 14th century, in particular, is totally incorrect, suggesting that it was only in the 15th century that crucial political transformations took place in the region.

My proposed research now aims to qualify the latter hypothesis and to reconstruct the dynamics of these transformations, via a thorough examination of the interplay between individuals, institutions, and social interactions in the course of 15th-century political events, as detailed in the massive corpus of contemporary source material. Results will be generated in three stages: via prosopographical study; through separate, but inter-related studies on the main research constituents (individuals, institutions, interaction); and in a book-length synthesis on political traditions.
In the longer term, validation of this hypothesis will enable me to address fundamental new questions in pre-modern (Islamic) history, as part of trans-cultural processes common to all Euro-Mediterranean core regions.

Field of Science

/humanities/history and archaeology/history
/humanities/philosophy, ethics and religion/religion/islam

Programme(s)

FP7-IDEAS-ERC - Specific programme: "Ideas" Implementing the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007 to 2013)

Topic(s)

ERC-SG-SH6 - ERC Starting Grant - The study of the human past

Call for proposal

ERC-2009-StG

See other projects for this call

Funding Scheme

ERC-SG - ERC Starting Grant

Principal Investigator

Jo Van Steenbergen (Prof.)

Host institution
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**Benefits**

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**Contact the organisation**

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