

## Mameluke Slave Soldiers

Ludovico Verthema, a Portuguese merchant and traveler, from his book about his travels in Southwest Asia and India, 1503 CE

The Mamelukes or slave soldiers who inhabit Damascus live in a most licentious (improper) manner. They are all men who have forsaken the Christian faith, and who have been purchased as slaves by the governor of Syria. Being brought up both in learning and warlike discipline, they are very active and brave; and all of them whether high or low, receive regular wages from the governor, besides meat and drink for themselves and servants, and provender for their horses; and as they show themselves valiant and faithful their wages are increased. They never walk singly about the city, which would be deemed dishonorable, but always by two or three together; and if they chance to meet with two or three women in the streets, for whom even they are in use to wait in the neighborhood of such houses as the women frequent, license is granted to such as first meet them to carry them to certain taverns where they abuse them.

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