

THE MAMLUKS IN EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN POLITICS AND SOCIETY

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE RECOVERY OF MAMLUK CHANCERY DOCUMENTS IN AN UNSUSPECTED PLACE

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I

The discovery of an unknown manuscript of al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1441) has always to be considered as an important event. When it proves to be a specimen of his note-books, which necessarily implies that it is a holograph copy, it becomes even more exciting and fascinating.¹ Specialists of the history and historiography of Islam, particularly during the last decades, have considered the question of the working method of the medieval historians. Al-Maqrīzī's unpublished note-book represents a missing link between the moment when a historian hit upon the idea of writing a book and the final result, and so will help to fill a gap which hitherto has puzzled us.² The discovery is all the more important as the author acquired such a reputation that he is better known as *shaykh al-mu'arrikhūn*.

This paper is the shortened version of a booklet to appear under the provisional title "Maqriziana III. Scraps of paper to the rescue of History: the reconstruction of Mamluk chancery documents from the reign of sultan 'Imād al-dīn Ismā'il (743/1342-746/1345)".

¹ The manuscript was discovered in the holdings of the library of the University of Liège/Belgium, where it is preserved under the shelf-mark 2232. For an accurate description of the contents of the manuscript and its history, see my "Maqriziana I. Discovery of an autograph manuscript of al-Maqrīzī. Towards a better understanding of his working method. Description: Part 1", *Mamlūk Studies Review* vol. VIII (2003) (to appear). The present writer is currently preparing a critical edition of this note-book, which should be published by the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale in Cairo.

² This theme will be the subject of a paper to be presented at a conference on the legacy of the medieval Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī, to be held at Notre Dame University on 29-30 September 2001. It should be published in the proceedings of this conference under the title "Maqriziana II. Discovery of an autograph manuscript of al-Maqrīzī. Towards a better understanding of his working method. Analysis".

Moreover, texts such as the manuscript in question shed new light on matters which are only imperfectly known through other sources. Some of the epitomes made by al-Maqrīzī as well as his notes preserve the unique versions of texts which are otherwise lost, or, at least, of which we had merely brief excerpts thanks to the quotations of later historians, like al-Maqrīzī himself. These resurrected texts finally deal with historical facts sometimes unknown. And so any historian should be delighted when new data come to light as a result of the discovery and analysis of texts such as that under investigation here. However, the manuscript in itself, I mean as a codex and in the frame of codicology, can bring us much more than is conceivable.³

II

When I discovered the manuscript in question, I became deeply intrigued by some inscriptions in larger characters than those of al-Maqrīzī's script, sporadically written at different places on various folios. These had nothing to do with al-Maqrīzī: on the pages where such inscriptions appear, it is clear that he endeavored to fill in the blanks, writing around them as closely as possible (see picture at the end of this study). This demonstrates conclusively that the paper had already been used for another purpose prior to al-Maqrīzī and that, at some stage of its history, it was treated as, in effect, scribbling paper. But what had this paper been before? After some time, it became clear to me that the script was a chancery one, and that therefore I had found fragments of chancery documents utilized by al-Maqrīzī as scrap paper. It remained to be determined what kind of documents these were (either *marsūm*, or *amān*, or *taxwīq*, or *man-shūr*, or *'ahd*, etc.) and to which period they belonged. As al-Maqrīzī lived most of his life in Egypt, it seemed logical to surmise that they were most likely issued by the Egyptian chancery. But from which

³ A codicological analysis of the manuscript has permitted me to understand its internal organization and particularly how it was constituted with time by al-Maqrīzī. The results were presented in a paper at the 3rd International Conference on Palaeography and Codicology of Middle Eastern Manuscripts (Bologna, 4–6 October 2000) and will appear in the proceedings of the conference under the title "Maqrīziana IV: Le carnet de notes d'al-Maqrīzī: l'apport de la codicologie à une meilleure compréhension de sa constitution", *Manuscripta orientalia* (to appear).

period: the Fāṭimid, Ayyūbid, or Mamluk? I was not at all sure, due to the complexity of the task, that I could reach a satisfying result, i.e., reconstruct a consistent text and afterwards date it exactly or even approximately.

III. *Method developed for the reconstruction of the documents*

First, it was necessary to put the manuscript back in order, on the basis of both textual analysis and external evidence. Quires were not at all in the right places; some folios that had become detached over time had been inserted at the wrong places. Once this chore was completed, it was still necessary to reconstruct the inscriptions. For this, I used a scanner which allowed me to put the beginning of each inscription appearing on a folio together with its end, which, of course, is not to be found on the immediately opposite leaf, but rather on the opposite leaf in the second half of the quire. I then produced a list of reconstructed sentences, which demonstrated that there are such inscriptions in only nine quires of the manuscript.⁴

At this stage, in order to reconstruct the text as coherently as possible, it was necessary to analyze the script. Of course, it was easier to discern various scripts once each line had been reconstructed. A thorough study of them led me to differentiate five distinct groups: nine lines for group I, twenty-one for group II, five for group III, five for group IV, and finally three for group V. It thus became easier to reconstruct each document, through comparison with examples in the preserved chancery manuals.⁵ However this task could not have been successfully carried out without taking into account other important factors, such as the space left blank when the documents were originally written (in other words the size of the space between the lines), and also the width of the right margin.⁶ As the

⁴ The ms. is composed of 21 quires.

⁵ For the Mamluk period, these are: Ibn Nāzīr al-Jaysh, *Kitāb Tathqīf al-taʿrīf bi'l-muṣṭalah al-sharīf*, R. Vesely (ed.), Cairo, 1987; Ibn Faḍl Allāh, Al-ʿUmarī Aḥmad b. Yahyā, *al-Taʿrīf bi'l-muṣṭalah al-sharīf*; al-Qalqashandī, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā fi ṣnāʿat al-inshāʿ*, Cairo, 1913–1919.

⁶ It is a well known fact that the space between two lines as well as the width of the right margin, which was left blank too, varied in chancery practice according to the importance of the person for whom the document was issued. See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*, VI, p. 196.

original documents had been cut in smaller pieces of paper, it was necessary to be satisfied with the measurement of the space between the top edge of the leaf and that of the inscription, as well as that separating the bottom of the inscription from that of the leaf. These measurements have stood me in good stead for the reconstruction, since an average value could be established for each document. Any significant big discrepancy compared with this average value might indicate that the proposed ordering of the leaves was not the correct one; alternatively, I had to consider the possibility that there were sometimes lacunae and that some parts of a document were missing in the manuscript.⁷

Considering all these factors, my textual and physical analysis suggests that the following reconstruction is accurate.⁸

IV. *Reconstruction of the documents*

A. *Group I*

1. *Text*

(1) *al-majlis al-sāmī al-amīr al-ajall al-kabīr al-mujāhid* (2) *al-ghāzī al-muḥibbī al-mukhtār al-aʿazz al-akmal al-murtadā* (3) *ḥusām al-dīn majd al-islām bahāʾ al-anām nuṣrat al-mujāhidīn* (4) [*zayn al-qabāʾil . . . ʿumdat al-mulūk*]k [wa] *al-[salā]t[īn]* (5) *Bāligh ibn Yūsuf ibn [. . .]* (6) *jazīl hādhā al-isʿāf fa-li-dhālika kharaja al-amr* (7) *al-sharīf al-ʿālī al-mawlawī al-sultānī al-malakī* (8) *al-Ṣāliḥī al-ʿImādī lā bariḥa yuʿtī jazīlan wa-yū[lī maʿrūfan?]*.⁹

⁷ For instance, in group IV, the extreme values for the spacing between the lines are 12–13.8 cm. We could not imagine that the inscription on ff. 187b–1a would come after the one on ff. 188b–195b, just because the value obtained in this case would have been of 21.5 cm, which is completely inconsistent with the preceding extreme values.

⁸ For reasons of space, only documents I, II and III are transcribed and analyzed in this paper. Documents IV and V are by far less consistent and could not be linked to a particular event, even though their contents gives some indications which permit us to guess why they were issued. The most interesting ones are indeed the first three documents which seem to be closely connected to the same historical fact, as I shall try to prove it. The texts of the five documents in Arabic characters will be found in the full version of this paper.

⁹ Line 9 consists only in the article followed by a *kāf* and a *rāʾ*.

2. *Translation*

[When] (1) his eminence, the most splendid and the grand amir, the fighter, (2) the conqueror, the lover, the favorite, the mightiest, the most perfect, the appreciated, (3) the sword of the Faith, the glory of Islam, the splendor of mankind, the aid of the fighters, (4) [the ornament of the tribes, the support of the] Kings and the Sultans, (5) Bāligh b. Yūsuf ibn [. . .].

(6) [. . .] the abundance of this assistance, that is why the (7) noble and exalted order of our Lord, the Sultan, the King (8) al-Šālīḥ ‘Imād [al-dīn]—he never ceases to give profusely and to [do favor?]—, was decreed (9) [. . .].

B. *Group II*1. *Text*

(1) *wa-ja‘ala ḥarama-nā al-ghālib maṣūran bi’l-mu‘minīn min [. . .]* (2) *la-hu shahāda yazīd ikhlāṣuhā al-qulūb yaqīnan* (3) *wa-yahdī tikrānuhā ahl al-walā’ ilā al-‘amal al-nājih [. . .]* (4) *wa-shayyada ṣallā Allāh ‘alayhi wa-‘alā ālihi wa-ṣaḥbihi* (5) *alladhīna lam yazālū fī intūhāl amr Allāh wa-amrihi ‘alā* (6) *amr jāmi‘ wa-alladhīn qāmū bi-nuṣrat dīnihi fa-mala’ū bi-faḍlihim* (7) *al-qulūb wa-aqarrū al-‘uyūn wa-shannafū al-masāmi‘ [. . .]* (8) *man ḥajara al-awṭān wa’l-awṭād fī maḥabbat abwābinā al-sharīfa* (9) *bi-ḥamd al-suwā fī ṣabāḥ al-najāḥ ulā’ika lahum ‘uqbā [. . .]* (10) *udkhlū bāb man ṣajada [. . .]* (11) [. . .] *wa-lahum lisān al-‘afw [. . .]* (12) *ma‘āqid al-ma‘āqil al-islāmiyya bi-tā‘at imām al-mahdiyyīn [. . .]* (13) *al-kabīr al-ghāzī al-naṣīr al-akmal al-muqaddam* (14) *al-awḥad al-naṣīr ḥusām al-dīn majd al-islām* (15) *bahā’ al-anām zayn al-qabā’il ‘umdat al-mulūk wa’l-salāṭīn* (16) *Bāligh ibn Yūsuf ibn Ṭayyī’—adāma Allāh ta‘ālā iqbalahu* (17) *huwa alladhī shahādha sayf al-naṣr wa-shahara [. . .]* (18) *wa-badhala nafsahu fī marāḍī Allāh wa-marāḍīnā al-sharīfa [. . .]* (19) *‘al[ā] al-tā’a min birrinā ḥazzahu wa-nūfuru [. . .]* (20) *fa-hājara li-abwābinā wa-li-awṭānihi ḥajara fa li-dhālika* (21) *kharaja al-amr al-sharīf al-‘ālī al-mawlawī [. . .]*

2. *Translation*

(1) [. . .] and He let triumph our victorious sacred precinct with the help of the believers from [. . .].

(2) [and we testify that there is no god but God alone, without associate, that] being a creed which, when faithfully observed, increases

the heart in certainty and, (3) when frequently uttered, guides those who are loyal to act successfully [. . .].

(4) [. . .] and he erected (?), God bless him, his family and his companions (5) who never ceased complying with God's command and his one [of the Prophet] on (6) a gathering matter,¹⁰ and who attended to support His Faith, thus pleasing, (7) comforting and delighting their merit [. . .].

(8) [. . .] Those who abandon their homes and their children for the sake of our noble portals, (9) with patient endurance, those will be rewarded [. . .].

(10) [. . .] They were let in [through] the door of whom prostrate himself [. . .].

(11) [. . .] apologizing [. . .].

(12) [. . .] of the fortresses of Islam by obeying the leader of the rightly guided [. . .].

[When his eminence], (13) the most splendid and grand amir, the conqueror, the defender, the most perfect, the commander, (14) the unique, the supporter, the sword of the Faith, the glory of Islam, (15) the splendor of mankind, the ornament of the tribes, the support of the Kings and the Sultans, (16) Bāligh b. Yūsuf ibn Ṭayyī²—may God, how exalted He is!, make lasting his welfare—(17) was the one who whetted the sword of victory and unsheathed [the scimitar. . .].

(18) [. . .] and sacrificed himself for God's favors and our noble favors [. . .].

(19) [. . .] the obedience . . . his prosperity and we give abundantly [. . .].

(20) [. . .] Thus he emigrated to our portals and left behind him his home, (21) and that is why the noble and exalted order of our Lord, [. . .], was decreed [. . .].

C. Group III

1. Text

(1) *li-yuthbat bi-dūwān al-naẓar 'alā al-mamlaka al-Karakīyya wa 'l-Shawbakīyya in shā'a Allāh ta'ālā* (2) *uthbīta al-ḥamd li-Allāh li'l-mustaḥiqq al-ḥamd* (3) *akhṣaba li-awliyā' dāwlatinā al-marām wa-aksa[ba]* [. . .] (4) *ṣallā Allāh*

¹⁰ Cf. Koran XXIV, 62.

'alayhi wa-^ʿalā ālihi wa ṣahbihi alladhīna aff[rada] (5) Allāh minhum al-sāda al-ghurr al-amjād wa [...] (6) wa-baʿdu fa-inna awlā man sajaʿat hamāʾim al-ni[ʿam] [...] (7) mulhid fa-mā ʿadala ʿan nuṣrat hādihā al-dīn wa-mā ha[basa ʿan?]

2. Translation

(1) Let it be registered in the Office of Supervision on the District of al-Karak and al-Shawbak, if God, how exalted He is!, wills.

(2) It has been registered, praise be to God! Praise be to Him who deserves it.

(3) He made the desire abundant for the friends of our state and let gain (?) [...].

(4) God bless him, his family and his companions from among whom (5) God set aside the generous and illustrious lords and [...].

(6) Now then, he who deserves the more that the doves of favors coo [for him...].

(7) [...] a heretic for he did not turn away from supporting the Faith and did not withhold from (?) [...].

V. Analysis

Let us now proceed to the analysis of these documents. Just a few lines have survived for the first document, but these nonetheless provide us with two titles. The first one is royal (ll. 7-8): *al-sultānī al-malakī al-ṣāliḥī al-ʿimādī*. The last two words are the only ones that can help us to identify the ruler. This ruler must have had as ruling name al-Ṣāliḥ and as *laqab* ʿImād al-dīn. In the complete list of all the rulers of Egypt, there were only two who bore these two elements: either the Ayyūbid al-Ṣāliḥ ʿImād al-dīn, who reigned from 635/1237 to 635/1238 and from 637/1239 to 643/1245,¹¹ or the Mamluk sultan Ismāʿīl, son of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn,¹² whose complete titulature was al-Sultān al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ ʿImād al-dīn Abū al-Fidāʾ Ismāʿīl.¹³ He ruled only for three years, from

¹¹ C.E. Bosworth, *The Islamic Dynasties*, Edinburgh, 1980, 59.

¹² *Ibid.*, 63.

¹³ Al-Ṣafadī, Khalīl b. Aybak, *al-Wāfi bi'l-wafayāt*, J. Van Ess (ed.), Damascus-Wiesbaden, 1931-1983, vol. IX, 219-20.

743/1342 to 746/1345, the date of his death. Thus the first document could be dated quite precisely to one of two periods. But to which ruler did the text refer? For this, the document provides us a major clue. In the chancery manuals, titles such as those found in this document typically end with a name. On line 5 of the present document, this name is almost illegible; yet we can barely decipher the name "Ibn Yūsuf ibn". Here document II, for which twenty-one lines are preserved, provides further evidence. We find in ll. 13–16 almost the same royal titles as in document I, but this time, the name is clearly legible: Bāligh b. Yūsuf b. Ṭayyī'. This name is rarely attested in the sources. However, this same name appears in some chronicles of the Mamluk period, during the reign of the sultan Ismā'īl.

Before going further, we must study the political events that followed al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death, events soundly described as "ceaseless power struggles".¹⁴ Indeed, we remark that between al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death (741/1341) and 762/1361, no fewer than eight of his sons succeeded him to the throne. Aḥmad, being twenty-four years old in 742, was the eldest of his sons. His accession to the throne followed the short reigns of two of his brothers: Abū Bakr (twenty years old) and Kuḥuk (seven years old).¹⁵ But unlike his two brothers, Aḥmad was not merely a puppet in the hands of the emirs. He had spent most of his life since the age of eight in al-Karak, following the customs of the local Bedouin, dressing himself like them and hunting with them. Informed that he had been chosen as sul-

¹⁴ A. Levanoni, *A Turning point in Mamluk history: the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn (1310–1341)*, Leiden, 1995, 81. The presentation of these events is based on the following primary sources: al-Shujā'ī, Shams al-Dīn, *Ta'rikh al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn al-Ṣāliḥi wa-awladihī*, B. Schäfer (ed.), Wiesbaden, 1978, Part I; al-Maqrīzī, Aḥmad b. 'Alī, *al-Sulūk li-ma'rīfat duwal al-mulūk*, M.M. Ziyāda (ed.), Cairo, 1941, vol. II; *Idem*, *al-Muqaffā*, M. Ya'lāwī (ed.), Beirut, 1991, vol. I, 627–36 (biography of Sultan Aḥmad); al-Ṣafadī, Khalīl b. Aybak, *al-Wāfi bi'l-wafayāt*, vol. VIII, 86–90 (biography of Sultan Aḥmad); *Idem*, *A'yān al-'aṣr wa-a'wān al-naṣr* (facsimile by F. Sezgin), vol. I, 114–16 = ff. 57b–58b); Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, Aḥmad b. 'Alī, *al-Durar al-kāmina fi a'yān al-mi'a al-thāmina*, M.S. Jād al-Haq (ed.), Cairo, n.d., vol. I, 314–16 (biography of Sultan Aḥmad); Ibn Taghrī Birdī, Abū al-Mahāsīn Yūsuf, *al-Niḡūm al-zāhira fi mulūk Miṣr wa'l-Qāhira*, Cairo, 1963–1972, vol. X, 68 sqq; *Idem*, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi wa'l-mustawfi ba'da al-wāfi*, M.M. Amīn (ed.), Cairo, 1984, vol. II, 158–64 (biography of Sultan Aḥmad); Ibn Ḥabīb, al-Ḥasan b. 'Umar, *Tadhkirat al-nabiḥ fi ayyām al-Manṣūr wa-banīhi*, M.M. Amīn (ed.), Cairo, 1976–1986, vol. III (*ḥawādiṯ wa-tarājīm* 741–70).

¹⁵ A. Levanoni, *op. cit.*, pp. 81–82.

tan by some emirs, he took his time before coming to the capital in order to receive the oath of allegiance. He did not leave al-Karak without his faithful Bedouin. The struggles for influence made him change his mind quickly, and two months later he decided to return to al-Karak, where he intended to rule, taking with him the main dignitaries of the *dīwān* together with all the money and the treasures kept in the citadel of Cairo. Under such conditions, having declined the offer to come back to Cairo, his position as sultan was clearly untenable. His brother Ismā'īl, then seventeen years old, succeeded him. However, he could not rule peacefully, since his brother Aḥmad at al-Karak refused to return the treasury and scoffed at him. During the short reign of Ismā'īl (743/1342–746/1345), the outstanding event was the siege of al-Karak, for which successive expeditions (seven or eight, according to the sources), in which all the emirs of Egypt and Syria took part, were necessary.¹⁶ Indeed, the city and the fortress of al-Karak were reputed to be impregnable, as long as food was supplied to the inhabitants, a task generally fulfilled by the local Bedouin, and this was still the case during this siege. When the city was built, a network of cisterns was developed in order to collect rainwater, so the defenders had a steady supply of water.¹⁷ Even though the Mamluk troops surrounding the city succeeded in imposing a more or less efficient blockade, the siege was brought to an end only by perfidy of some of the most trusted persons in Aḥmad's entourage, in other words of those he considered as his loyal friends and fellows: the Bedouin and the local Arabs.

The best historical source for the period that has come down to us is the chronicle of al-Shujā'ī (adhuc viv. 756/1356–7), who was an eyewitness of the events in question.¹⁸ The following passage,

¹⁶ Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, vol. X, 71.

¹⁷ For a general history of the city of al-Karak under Mamluk rule, see M. 'A. al-Bakhīt, *Mamlakat al-Karak fī al-'ahd al-mamlūkī* (1976); translated in German by A. Scheidt, under the title *Das Königreich von al-Karak in der mamlukischen Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992).

¹⁸ Another contemporary source must have been even more accurate: Mūsā b. al-Shaykh Yaḥyā al-Yūsufī (d. 759/1358), who wrote *Nuzhat al-nāzīr fī sirat al-Malik al-Nāṣir*. This history covered, as it seems, the years that followed al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's reign. Unfortunately, the fragments preserved deal only with the years mid-733 to mid-738. See on this D.P. Little, "The Recovery of a Lost Source for Bahārī Mamluk history: al-Yūsufī's *Nuzhat al-nāzīr fī sirat al-Malik al-Nāṣir*", *JAOS*, vol. XCIV (1974), 42–54. For al-Shujā'ī's indebtedness to al-Yūsufī, see B. Schäfer, *Beiträge zur*

quoted in full because of its importance for my analysis of the chancery text, refers to an event dating to 744, a few months before Aḥmad's surrender to his brother's troops.

The Sultan [Ismā'īl] had corresponded with Bāligh, the *muqaddam* of the foot soldiers who was at al-Karak, making him promises and tempting him because it was he who led the prince Aḥmad to resistance. So he tried to win his confidence and wrote him. He answered favorably to this and betrayed the prince Aḥmad. He left al-Karak, fleeing Aḥmad, and he presented himself to the noble portals on Monday 6th *Dhū al-Qa'da* of that year [744/21st March 1344]. The Sultan honored him and rewarded him and those of his friends who came with him. He guaranteed to the Sultan the capture of al-Karak saying: "O Lord! All the people in the fortress of al-Karak are my friends and those in the city are my family and my kinfolk. No one among them contradicts me. Send with me whom you trust and I will surrender him al-Karak". The Sultan sent with him eight mamluks chosen from among the royal ones and they set out on Thursday [9th *Dhū al-Qa'da* 744/24th March 1344].¹⁹

This passage must be compared to the following one, from the same source:²⁰

Al-Karak could not be seized because those who were in al-Karak were, for the greater part, Arabs and Jabaliyya, and their *muqaddam* was Bāligh b. Ṭayyī' and Mas'ūd.

These texts identify Bāligh as the *muqaddam*²¹ of the soldiers (Arabs and Jabaliyya) of al-Karak.²² Incidentally, al-Maqrīzī describes him as "[Aḥmad's] most important confidant among the people of al-Karak".²³ At first he set his hopes on his master, hoping upon the return of Aḥmad to the throne to obtain a reward for his loyalty. However, he must have changed his mind as Aḥmad's position became more fragile.²⁴ In 744, Bāligh took the decision to betray his master on

mamlukischen Historiographie nach dem Tode al-Malik an-Nāṣir's (Freiburg, 1971); D.P. Little, "An Analysis of the Relationship between Four Mamluk Chronicles for 737-45", *JSS*, vol. XIX (1974), pp. 252-68.

¹⁹ Al-Shujā'ī, *Ta'rikh*, 264. Cf. al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. II, 654 and 661.

²⁰ Al-Shujā'ī, *Ta'rikh*, 258.

²¹ One must understand here that his title was probably *muqaddam al-ḥalqa*. On this title and its implications, see D. Ayalon, "Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army", *BSOAS*, vol. XV/iii (1953), 448-51.

²² See D. Ayalon, "The Auxiliary-Forces of the Mamluk Sultanate," *Der Islam*, vol. LXV (1988), 31-32.

²³ Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. II, 661 (*ajall thiqāṭihi min al-Karakiyyīn*).

²⁴ This is confirmed by al-Maqrīzī (*ibid.*) who says "due to the abundance of his

behalf of the legitimate sultan. First he wrote a letter to the emirs besieging the fortress, in which he promised that he would facilitate their capture of the town; but before doing so he requested to be allowed to go to Cairo and speak to the sultan Ismā'īl. The sultan agreed and gave an order for an *amān* to be delivered to him. Bāligh escaped from al-Karak and went to the capital where he arrived on the 6th *Dhū al-Qa'da* 744²⁵ with other dignitaries of the city. As a reward for his treason and his help, he solicited *iqṭā'c*s and lands with an average revenue of 450,000 dirhams per annum, while his fellow conspirators received a similar amount (these details are not provided by al-Shujā'ī). They all left Cairo three days later and went back to al-Karak, which surrendered on the 22nd *Ṣafar* 745 [15th July 1344].²⁶

Here are the facts. What links can we establish between these and documents I and II? The Bāligh b. Yūsuf b. Ṭayyī' who is mentioned there is undoubtedly the same as the one about whom the sources speak concerning the aforementioned events, even though these sources simply name him as Bāligh or Bāligh b. Ṭayyī'. The period in question (the first document clearly indicates now that it goes back to sultan Ismā'īl's reign) and the singular name of Bāligh, rarely found in chronicles and biographical dictionaries, make this identification certain. It remains to be determined what kind of documents these are? Here again, it is al-Maqrīzī who helps us as he indicates²⁷ that Bāligh and his fellows received from the sultan *man-shūrs* for the *iqṭā'c*s they asked for. Originally, the word *man-shūr* meant in the chancery terminology an unsealed document, an open decree.²⁸ For the Mamluk period, the use of this term was reserved for documents issued on the occasion of the grant of *iqṭā'c*, or land tenure.²⁹

expenses, al-Nāṣir Aḥmad's wealth came to depletion and a cruel need for money was rife. Bāligh began to work upon him".

²⁵ According to al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. II, 654, they arrived in Cairo on the 8th of the same month [23rd March 1344] and that they set out for al-Karak the 11th [26th March 1344].

²⁶ Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. II, 660–62; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, vol. X, 71.

²⁷ Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. II, p. 661.

²⁸ See S.M. Stern, *Fāṭimid Decrees: Original Documents from the Fāṭimid Chancery*, London, 1964, 85–90 and 116.

²⁹ See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'ṣhā*, vol. XIII, 157; S. Imamuddin, "Diwān al-inshā' (Chancery in Later Medieval Egypt)", *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, vol. XXVIII (1980), 76.

Several elements prove that documents I and II are these famous *manshūrs* which were given to Bāligh in exchange for his betrayal and his assistance for the surrender of the fortress.

First, there is the textual evidence, mostly in document II. Lines 8–9 and 20 and even 12 seem to be as a direct allusion to the role played by Bāligh, his flight from al-Karak to Cairo, and his submission to the authority of sultan Ismā'īl: "Those who abandon their homes and their children for the sake of our noble portals with patient endurance, those will be rewarded" (ll. 8–9); "Thus he emigrated to our portals and left behind him his home" (l. 20).

Secondly, there are the rigid rules of the chancery, as they are described in the manuals and other sources:

(1) In the Mamluk period, the formula "*fa li-dhālika kharaja al-amr al-sharīf*" was exclusively reserved to the *manshūrs*.³⁰

(2) As we have seen, Bāligh received *iqṭā'a*'s annual revenue of which was 450,000 dirhams. The sources do not tell us what title he received on that occasion, except al-Ṣafadī³¹ who simply indicates that he received an *imrat mi'a*, which means the title of *amīr mi'a* and *muqaddam alf*. However, everything leads us to believe that this information provided by al-Ṣafadī is erroneous.³² On the one hand, it is known that the highest title received by the emirs of Arab tribes was the rank of *ṭablkhāna*.³³ Now, there is no doubt that Bāligh was an Arab Bedouin, but certainly not an emir of his tribe.³⁴ On the other hand, the revenue of an *amīr mi'a* was by far superior to the rev-

³⁰ Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī Aḥmad b. Yāḥya, *Masālik al-abyār fi mamālik al-amṣār*, A.F. Sayyid (ed.), Cairo, 1985, 45; al-Maqrīzī, *Khūṭaṭ*, Būlāq, 1270/1853, vol. II, 211.

³¹ Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi'l-wafayāt*, vol. VIII, 90.

³² This is even more curious when one thinks that he was working at the *diwān al-inshā'* in 745 and that he must have been well aware of the affairs of the state. See D. Little, "al-Ṣafadī as biographer of his contemporaries," in *Essays on Islamic Civilization presented to Niyazi Berkes* (Leiden, 1976), 208–9.

³³ See M.A. Hiyari, "The Origins and Development of the Amirate of the Arabs," *BSOAS*, vol. XXXVIII (1975), 523.

³⁴ The occurrence of the *ism* Ṭayyi' in his name seems to indicate that he was a member of the Rabī'a tribe which was part of the Ṭayyi'. They were divided into two major clans: the Faḍl and the Mirā. So far, I have not been able to determine to which clan Bāligh belonged. It must be noted that the Arabs who lived around al-Karak up to the borders of Hijāz were the Banū 'Uqba. See A.S. Tritton, "The Tribes of Syria in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *BSOAS*, vol. XII (1947–8), 567.

enues obtained by Bāligh.³⁵ So, we must prefer the title of *ṭablkhāna*. Indeed, according to al-Maqrīzī,³⁶ the bearer of such a title received an *iqṭāʿ* the value of which was 40,000 dinars per annum, in proportion of 10 dirhams for one dinar (that means 400,000 dirhams), if he was a *khāṣṣakī*, or if this was not the case an *iqṭāʿ* the value of which was 30,000 dinars per annum, in proportion of 8 for 1 (that means 240,000 dirhams). Bāligh was not a Mamluk. So he could not have received a revenue superior to 30,000 dinars per annum. Notwithstanding, we know that the values mentioned by al-Maqrīzī refer to a given period and that these values are not valid for the whole Bahārī period. For instance, we know that there was inflation and an exaggeration in the value of the *iqṭāʿ*s during the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.³⁷ My hypothesis is confirmed by the chancery manuals. The width of the sheet of paper used in the chancery varied according to the hierarchical position of the person for whom the document was issued.³⁸ The more important he was, the wider the sheet of paper was. The width reserved for an *amīr ṭablkhāna* was half a cubit (*niṣf dhīrāʿ*).³⁹ The value of the Egyptian cubit (also known as the cloth cubit, *dhīrāʿ al-qumāsh*)⁴⁰ being of about 58 cm.,⁴¹ a document issued in favor of an *amīr ṭablkhāna* could not be wider than about 29 cm. The width of two leaves in al-Maqrīzī's note-book is 27.4 cm, but it must not be forgotten that part of it was trimmed when the documents were cut into pieces, and once more when the manuscript was bound. Moreover, the titles (*alqāb*) reserved to an *amīr ṭablkhāna* who was not a *khāṣṣakī*, or who did not exercise a function (*wazīfa*), were the following: *al-majlis al-sāmī* followed by epithets (*alqāb*) devoid of the emphatic final *yāʿ*.⁴² This is exactly what we have in documents I and II. On the other hand, a *manshūr* did

³⁵ The value of the *iqṭāʿ*s attributed to an *amīr miʿa* ranged from 85.000 to 100.000 *dīnār jayshī*, that is to say from 1 million to 850.000 *dirhams* per annum. See S. Tsugitaka, *State and Rural Society in Medieval Islam: Sultan, Muqtaʿs and Fallahun*, Leiden, 1997, 154.

³⁶ Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭat*, vol. II, 218; S. Tsugitaka, *ibid.*

³⁷ See A. Levanoni, *op. cit.*, 53 sqq.

³⁸ Al-Qalqashandī, *Subḥ al-aʿshā*, vol. VI, 313.

³⁹ Al-Qalqashandī, *Subḥ al-aʿshā*, vol. VI, 191.

⁴⁰ Al-Qalqashandī, *Subḥ al-aʿshā*, vol. III, 443 and VI, 190.

⁴¹ See W. Hinz, *Islamische Masse und Gewichte*, Leiden, 1955, 56.

⁴² Ibn Nāṣir al-Jaysh, *Tathqīf al-taʿrīf*, 190.

not begin with the *ḥamdala* unless it was issued for an *amīr miʿa* or an *amīr ṭablkhāna*.⁴³ Document II contains part of the *ḥamdala*, as it is attested by the presence of the end of *shahāda* (l. 2).⁴⁴

To conclude, all the collected elements clearly indicate that Bāligh received the title of *amīr ṭablkhāna* in reward for his treason, that the value of the *iqṭāʿ*s he received on that occasion was about 450,000 dirhams per annum, that documents I and II must be identified as two *manshūrs* in relation with his obtaining this title. I would like to stress the fact that, until now, we have possessed a single example of a *manshūr iqtāʿī* from Egypt. This unique item goes back to the reign of Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī (916/1511) and concerned an *amīr ṭablkhāna* too.⁴⁵ So, the two documents that I have reconstructed and analyzed perfect our knowledge of this kind of document, considering that they are more ancient than the one preserved hitherto. They will give us the opportunity to study what differences may be detected between them and how the chancery evolved between the Baḥrī and Burjī periods.⁴⁶

What happened to Bāligh after this? Maqrīzī quotes his name once more for the year 745 (*Rabīʿ* II/init. 12th August 1344), but for a murder case:⁴⁷ a certain Ḥasan b. al-Radīnī, a camel merchant, was found murdered in his house in the horse-market, in Cairo. His son charged a ʿIsā b. Ḥasan, who was responsible for the sultan's camels, and Bāligh al-Aʿraj, in other words Bāligh the lame, because of enmity between them and his father. The *nāʾib* ordered that they be arrested and stripped, and he planned to bastinado them, but they succeeded in deferring the punishment for some days, while the *nāʾib* was supposed to make investigations in order to discover the murderer. They took advantage of this to exercise influence on some emirs and to be released only a few days later, against the *nāʾib*'s opinion. Was this Bāligh the same person? I think

⁴³ *Manshūrs* issued in favor of the sons of the Sultan, the *amīr miʿa* and *muqaddam alf*, and *amīr ṭablkhāna* were to begin by the *ḥamdala* (al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-ʿashā*, vol. XIII, 167, 169 and 184). Inferior titles received *manshūrs* beginning by *ammā baʿdu* and in case of the lowest titles, these began by *kharaja al-amr al-sharīf*. Bedouin could receive *manshūrs* of the three types according to their function (al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-ʿashā*, vol. XIII, 198).

⁴⁴ The *ḥamdala* section comprised three elements: the *ḥamdala* itself, followed by the *shahāda* and beginning by *naḥmaduhu*, then the *baʿdiyya (wa-baʿdu)*. See, for instance, al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-ʿashā*, vol. XIII, 168.

⁴⁵ M.M. Amīn, "Manshūr bi manḥ iqtāʿ min ʿaṣr al-Sulṭān al-Ghawrī," *AI*, vol. XIX (1983), 2-22.

⁴⁶ This comparison will be treated in the full version of this article.

⁴⁷ Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. II, 668.

so. On the one hand, his name was quite rare, and on the other hand, al-Maqrīzī mentions him only a few months later after the facts in connection with al-Karak.⁴⁸ This time, however, he is described as lame, and this is not unlikely. It is again thanks to this historian that we learn that during the fourth expedition an intense fight took place between the people of al-Karak and the Mamluk army, on the 8th *Rabīʿ* II 744 (30th August 1343), a fight during which a lot of people were injured and killed. Maqrīzī gives no name, except that of Bāligh, who, he says, was injured. This happened exactly one year before he was arrested as an accessory to a crime, and we may surmise that he had been hurt in the leg the preceding year. This is the last occurrence of Bāligh in the historical sources. After all these events, in which he played a central role, the chronicles send him back to anonymity.

Let us now proceed to document III. The text of this document can be reconstructed acceptably, despite its many lacunae, especially in those essential parts which might allow us to identify its destination more clearly. That is, it lacks any mention of titles or names. However, the spacing between the lines (18,3 cm) and the width of the document seem to indicate that it was issued for a person of the same rank as documents I and II (*qaṭʿ al-nisf*). The preserved text in itself is quite vague and we could not date it with certainty, were it not for a very important registration mark. This one is to be found at the head of the first leaf and must be read like this: *li-yuthbat bi-dīwān al-naẓar ʿalā al-mamlaka al-karakiyya waʿl-shawbakiyya in shāʿa Allāh taʿālā*, and just below: *uthbita al-ḥamd li-Allāh liʿl-mustaḥiqq al-ḥamd*. These notes require a commentary. It is well known that once written, a document went through the different services of the chancery, where it had to be registered by secretaries. The order was given by a high dignitary who wrote it on the document itself. Once fulfilled, the clerk indicated, just below the order, that it had been executed (*uthbita* in our case) and then he added his personal motto/*ʿalāma*⁴⁹ (here, *al-ḥamd li-Allāh liʿl-Mustaḥiqq al-ḥamd*). So, document III was clearly registered at the *dīwān al-naẓar*, that is the

⁴⁸ Moreover, ʿIsā b. al-Ḥasan and his tribe were among those Bedouin who brought their support to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad when he was at al-Karak (see A. Levanoni, *op. cit.*, p. 182). This link brings us clear evidence that Bāligh al-Aʿraj must be identified as the Bāligh who betrayed al-Nāṣir Aḥmad.

⁴⁹ See S.M. Stern, "Petitions from the Mamluk Period: Notes on the Mamluk Documents from Sinai," *BSOAS*, vol. XXIX (1966), 248-49.

Office of Supervision, in the department responsible for the affairs of the *mamlaka* (the *mamlaka* being a region administered by a *nāʿib*) of al-Karak and al-Shawbak (Montréal). Now then, it may be surmised that document III, is certainly linked to documents I and II and that it must have been a *manshūr iqtāʿī* probably issued in favor of one of Bāligh's fellows.

6. Now we must ask ourselves how al-Maqrīzī had access to these documents and why he used them as writing material. As ever, it is the protagonist himself whom we must consult. It is indeed al-Maqrīzī who gives us the answer in his *Khiṭaṭ*,⁵⁰ where he declares that he worked at the *dīwān al-inshāʿ* as a secretary until about the year 790/1388. Still it is not this passage which is important for us, because we can hardly suspect him to have taken for himself documents in the chancery during this period; however, the following sentence is fundamental for our purpose:

When the reign of al-Zāhir Barqūq came to an end and was afterwards re-established, many things went in confusion. Among them, there was the affair of the room of [the *dīwān*] *al-inshāʿ* at the Citadel [. . .] and the documents (*awrāq*) that it kept were taken, sold by weight (*biʿl-qinṭār*) and the information they contained was forgotten (*nusiya rasmuhā*).

Thus it was during a particularly terrible period (791–2/1389–90) during the reign of sultan Barqūq (784/1382–791/1389 and 792/1390–801/1399), when this sultan had to abandon temporarily Cairo because of a coup d'état organized by certain emirs, that the documents preserved in the room of the *dīwān al-inshāʿ* were sold by weight, probably to the paper merchants.⁵¹ Indeed, some of the documents issued by the chancery in medieval Egypt took the form of rolls (*darj*) made up of several sheets of paper (*wasl*) pasted one to

⁵⁰ Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, vol. II, 225–26; M. Godefroy-Demombynes, *La Syrie à l'époque des Mamelouks d'après les auteurs arabes*, Paris, 1923, LXXI.

⁵¹ We are aware that original documents were normally given to their beneficiaries and that only copies of them were kept in registers. However, we don't understand what use the paper merchants could have made of such registers as these were not suitable for their purposes once filled (see a unique example of these registers, although from the Fāṭimid period, in G. Khan, "A copy of a decree from the archives of the Fāṭimid chancery in Egypt", *BSOAS*, vol. XLIX (1986), 439–453). Moreover, al-Maqrīzī clearly states in the passage quoted above that these *awrāq* were documents and not just blank paper. It remains to be proven if original documents could be kept by the chancery, as it seems to be implied by those studied here.

the other on a margin of about 1–2 cm.⁵² The secretaries of the chancery had to leave spacing between the lines, which spacing varied according to the width of the sheet, and so according to the person for whom the document was issued. This waste of paper was the sultan's prerogative.⁵³ The *warrāqūn* made haste to cut the documents at the most convenient size in order to transform them into scraps of paper,⁵⁴ which they offered for sale in the shape of quires of 5 sheets.⁵⁵ This could explain why documents connected to the same event and period are to be found in our manuscript. During the critical period mentioned, it may be presumed that paper had become a luxury product. In this respect, Qalqashandī informs us that the price of paper had risen during the 8th/14th century.⁵⁶ It was clearly after these events that al-Maqrīzī took in a supply of scribbling paper in order to write down on it his reading notes, but also his personal works, because the Liège manuscript is not the only one to contain such paper. It is possible that other autograph manuscripts of al-Maqrīzī were written on the same kind of paper.⁵⁷ So,

⁵² See Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *La Syrie*, LXX–LXXI.

⁵³ See St. Heidemann, Chr. Müller and Yū. Rāḡib, "Un décret d'al-Malik al-ʿĀdil en 571/1176 relatif aux moines du Mont Sinaï", *AI*, vol. XXXI (1997), 84.

⁵⁴ In the case of our documents I to III, the spacing between the lines was of at least 18 cm.

⁵⁵ This is proven by the internal organization of al-Maqrīzī's note-book. See our article entitled "Maqrīziana IV: Le carnet de notes d'al-Maqrīzī: l'apport de la codicologie à une meilleure compréhension de sa constitution", *Manuscripta orientalia*, to appear.

⁵⁶ Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*, vol. XI, 132 (it must have taken place sometime after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn, as the text seems to imply it). E. Ashtor (*Histoire des prix et des salaires dans l'Orient médiéval*, 366) dates also this increase of the price of paper from the beginning of the 15th c. A.D. He noticed that this price doubled in the lapse of one century (early 14th–early 15th c. A.D.).

⁵⁷ At this time, I have identified such fragments of chancery documents, the Liège ms. apart, in the following autograph mss. of al-Maqrīzī: 1) *al-Khabar ʿan al-baṣhar*, Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi (ms. Fāṭiḥ 4340), see F. Tauer, "Zu al-Maqrīzī's Schrift *al-Habar ʿan al-Baṣar*", *Islamica*, vol. I (1925), 359; 2) *Musawwadat al-Mawāʿiz wa'l-ʿiṭibār*, Istanbul, Topkapı Saray (ms. Ahmet III 1472), Ayman Fuʿād Sayyid (ed.), London, 1995; 3) *al-Muqaffā*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale (ms. 2144), see G. Wiet, "Kindī et Maqrīzī" (*BIFAO*, vol. XII (1915), 61–73), 62 (note 1), Leiden, University Library, mss. or. 1366a, 1366b, 3075, 14533. To date, this kind of scrap paper has not been found for the Islamic world but in the autograph manuscripts of al-Maqrīzī. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that a link between the genre of inscriptions and chancery documents could not be established prior to my discovery, although it was already noticed almost a hundred years ago (G. Wiet, *ibid.*) that some leaves found in an autograph manuscript of al-Maqrīzī had been used for another purpose before this author scribbled them.

one would only have to gather the inscriptions preserved on the leaves, sort them out, and analyze them, as I have been doing, in order to reconstruct documents coming from the Mamluk chancery; documents, it is needless to say, that historians terribly miss. These would allow us to throw a new light on this institution, but also on historical facts sometimes reported in the chronicles. These scraps of paper would then come to the rescue of History.

عليه كان
 رأس المولد حسن لنا كان رأس العرافه سواننا اذا
 امرا فابعد عنك الاستوار فان مع عيونه من يديه اليك
 حيوا الامور واسطها الصبر يعين كل عمل من اسرع
 بوسنلان يكثر عثاه اذا لم تر عثا الرجل اعلى الاشيا
 عليه كان هلا كذا في اعلى الاشيا عليه كون مع والديت
 كما يجب ان يكون منو اعلى نيف
 للعاملان كما طبا كما طبا
 كما طبا الطبيب للرض
 طالب الدنيا قبح العركشيو
 الفكر العنيفة بخدومه ومن علم
 عنوداته فليس بحر وسيل ما قرب شي فعال الاجل وما
 في فعال الاط وما النوت في فعال صاحب النوات وما
 او حيثوثه فاللوت من كان شررا فالوت بسبب راج
 العالم منته انما جعل للانسان لسان واحد وادمان
 ليكون ما يسه اكثر ما يكثر به الالاشيا استفاد الادب
 واستماع احبنا ولكن سمعت افجع ما افتناه الانسان
 الصدق المحم الصامت نسب الي العي والمكر نسب
 الفضول يندم العنيفة الخوله ما يمو اعلا الاتفاق التلوه
 كتر من اسرتمه وامن استلمه سيرا فذلك واجب عليه
 الخ

بالغزالي يوسف