

# Egypt and Syria under Mamluk Rule

*Political, Social and Cultural Aspects*

*Edited by*

Amalia Levanoni



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# *Ikhwāniyyāt* Letters in the Mamluk Period: A Document (*Muṭāla‘a*) Issued by al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh’s Chancery and a Contribution to Mamluk Diplomatics

*Frédéric Bauden*

## 1 Introduction\*

The field of Mamluk diplomacy has recently witnessed a rejuvenated interest as demonstrated by several publications and research projects.<sup>1</sup> We hope that these initiatives will improve our knowledge of Mamluk chancery and notarial practices and that manuals describing those practices as they were defined by some authors and applied by the actors (secretaries, notaries) will soon be available. The present publication is a contribution to the understanding of a practice operative at the chancery in the Mamluk period: the official correspondence exchanged by the various levels of state officers. So far, studies have mainly been devoted to the correspondence issued in the name of the sultan, with a particular focus on the letters exchanged with foreign rulers. Our concern here is to analyze the everyday correspondence that circulated between officials; we can now undertake this analysis thanks to a document preserved in the State Archives of Venice. With the help of the contemporary chancery manuals, those published or still unpublished, I will try to demonstrate that this kind of correspondence belonged to the category of the *ikhwāniyyāt* letters. The document being studied will be placed in its historical context. From this, it becomes clear that the Mamluk sultan was eager to see the Venetian merchants and their representative, the consul, treated well in a context dominated by his wish to secure his power both in Egypt and in Syria.

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1 See Bauden, Mamluk diplomacy. For official correspondence, the most recent contribution is Richards, *Mamluk administrative documents*. For the private documents, one can mention Christian Müller’s research project entitled *ILM (Islamic Law Materialized)*.

## 2 Description

The document under study is to be found in a file (*busta*) belonging to the series of the Procurators of Saint Mark (*Procuratori di San Marco*), under the subheading *Commissarie miste*. The file in question contains several folders. Folder no. 9 holds papers that belonged to Biagio Dolfin, the Venetian consul in Alexandria from 1408 to 1410 and again from 1418 to 1420, when he died of the plague while in Cairo. This folder is composed of eleven documents in Arabic, most of which are linked to Biagio Dolfin in one way or another, but some of these date to the terms of previous consuls, a fact that demonstrates that they were kept in the archive of the consulate in Alexandria and that they were taken away somehow.<sup>2</sup> If this happened and the documents were removed, it was thanks to Dolfin's nephew, Lorenzo Dolfin, who took over the dispatch of his uncle's belongings to Venice where probate of the estate took place. In doing so, Lorenzo Dolfin preserved part of these documents, which would otherwise have remained in the archive of the consulate in Alexandria, an archive that disappeared at an unknown date.<sup>3</sup> We are thus indebted to him for preventing these documents from sinking into oblivion.<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding, the document under study must have been brought back to Venice through another route because it was originally found unnumbered in another collection, the *Documenti turchi* (Turkish documents), and placed in the actual file by the Egyptian scholar S. Labib.<sup>5</sup>

Originally, the document had the shape of a scroll (*rotulus*, i.e., unrolled vertically, not horizontally) consisting of three sheets (from now on referred to as sheet 1, 2, and 3) of Oriental laid paper measuring all in all 57.5 by 12.4–12.5 cm, each sheet being 19.5 cm long with the exception of the first one that is half a centimeter shorter. Sheets 2 and 3 are glued to one another at a height of

2 For the Arabic documents of the Mamluk period held in the Venetian State Archives, see Bauden, *The Mamluk documents*. The following documents that were unpublished have been so far studied by me: no. v, Bauden, *D'Alexandrie à Damas et retour*; nos. VII–IX, idem, *“Lam baqā yu’āriḍkum”*: Analyse linguistique de trois lettres; nos. x and XI, idem, *L'Achat d'esclaves et la rédemption des captifs*; no. XI, Idem, *Le Transport de marchandises et de personnes sur le Nil*; no. XIII, idem, *The role of interpreters in Alexandria*.

3 See particularly Pedani, *The Mamluk documents of the Venetian state archives*; Christ, *Trading conflicts* 6–7.

4 For Biagio Dolfin's activity in Alexandria and his archives, see Christ, *Trading conflicts*.

5 Labib, *Handelsgeschichte* 349–350 (note 37: “Ich habe das Dokument in der unnummerierten und nicht katalogisierten Sammlung der ‘Dokumenti Turchi’ gefunden. Um es nicht zu verlieren, habe ich es in ‘Busta Nr. 180, Misti, Procuratori di San Marco’ zusammen mit einer arabischen Dokumentensammlung eingeordnet.”).

approximately 0.5 cm (the juncture corresponds to what is called a *kollêsis* in papyrology). Sheet 1, now separated from the rest of the document, was originally glued to the top of sheet 2:<sup>6</sup> the large stain of dampness that almost completely covers sheet 2 and the beginning of sheet 3 and the end of sheet 1 shows that the two pieces match perfectly and that nothing is missing. Given that most of the Arabic documents preserved in the same file are affected by similar stains, one can conclude that they were all in contact with water at the same time. Sheet 2 was folded in the middle to prevent the document from going beyond the file where it is preserved. This fold damaged the document, and consequently, the words situated at the end of the line are hardly legible now. It is difficult to assert when the cut was made, but the shape of the stain demonstrates that the document was precisely folded at this level when the cut happened.

With the exception of the stain of dampness, which did not damage the ink, and the wrinkle, the state of conservation of the document is rather good. One just notices that a small part of the paper was consumed at the beginning of the roll, on the left side of sheet 1, and at the end of the roll, on the right side of sheet 3. Sheet 1, as photographed, must be turned over because it bears the address which was added on the verso of the scroll (see the virtual reconstruction below). Once this is done, we notice that both sides were consumed together. This is an additional element that proves that the scroll was folded in the middle, at the level of the wrinkle that affects sheet 2, and that the stain and the sections of paper that were eaten happened after the document had been preserved in that way, a long time ago. All in all, the only negative aspect is in the deterioration of the paper in the middle of the second sheet, as this impedes the reading of the end of the line concerned by the fold. The scroll also features some holes in sheet 1 and sheet 3 (between lines 15–16 and 16–17).

We know that the paper is Oriental based on many aspects: it has no watermark; it is of poor quality (long fibers are still visible); it is yellowish in color; and it is slightly smoothed. The chain lines, perpendicular to the text, are present in groups of two (distance within the group: 0.9 cm; distance between groups: 4.5 cm) and are askew. The laid lines, parallel to the text, look large (20 of them = 3.4 cm). This kind of paper belongs to the type 2/2 as described by G. Humbert.<sup>7</sup> Though her analysis is solely based on paper found in manuscripts, the

6 They were catalogued with two different numbers in the folder (no. 3 and no. 13). For a first description and analysis, see Bauden, *The Mamluk documents* 151 (no. VI) and 154 (no. XVI). The document was mentioned for the first time in Labib, *Handelsgeschichte* 349–350.

7 See Humbert, *Papiers non filigranés* 20–21 and 31–32.

conclusions she reached are confirmed for the paper used by the Mamluk chancery.<sup>8</sup> The text is written in dark black to grey ink and was written by the same hand, with the exception of the signature (*‘alāma*) between lines 3 and 4 and the three lines on the left side of sheet 1. These were written by the person in the name of whom the document was issued and the ink is of a dark black color slightly different from the one used for the text. The right margin is about 3 cm wide. The space between the lines is roughly 1 cm and the *basmla* starts at 1.1 cm from the top of sheet 2.

Once issued by the chancery, the document was rolled up and sealed.<sup>9</sup> During the dispatch, on its way to the recipient, it was probably crushed, as is shown by the traces of folding in strips of about 2.5 cm wide.

### 3 Analysis

On 13 Dhū al-Ḥijja 816/6 March 1414 the supervisor of the privy funds (*nāẓir al-khāṣṣ*), Ḥasan ibn Naṣr Allāh, wrote to the viceroy in Alexandria, Badr al-dīn Ḥasan ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ṭarābulusī, to notify him that the Venetian consul and the merchants belonging to his community informed the chancery (*al-dīwān*) that decrees were issued in their favor after inquiring about the actions against them by the prefect of police in Alexandria. In answer to their petition, the sultan asked that a rescript (*mithāl*) be released requesting that the governor seek out the prefect and forbid him from exercising his office as well as asking him to pronounce an oath (*qasāma*), in which he would refrain from trying to regain his office, or he would have to pay the amount of 1,000 dinars. The viceroy was asked to execute the decree issued earlier with respect to the rescript, keeping in mind the recommendations that he behave in the best manner toward the Venetian consul and the merchants under his authority.<sup>10</sup>

8 See, for another document copied on the same kind of paper found in the same file, Bauden, *The Role of Interpreters* 35–36.

9 On the process of rolling-up documents in the Mamluk chancery, see al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā* vi, 352. On the various ways to seal a document, see *ibid.*, 356–358. Our document was sealed according to its category: rolled up, then wrapped in a narrow band of paper glued at its extremity (see below).

10 Labib misunderstood the meaning of the document: “Es handelt sich um einen Brief, in dem der Sultan al-Mu‘ajjad Šaiḥ den Gouverneur von Alexandrien aufforderte, von dem venezianischen Konsul 1000 Dinare zu verlangen. Darüber hinaus setzte sich der Sultan in seinem Schreiben für eine angemessene Behandlung der venezianischen Kaufleute ein.” See Labib, *Handelsgeschichte* 350, note 37. See also note 112 below.

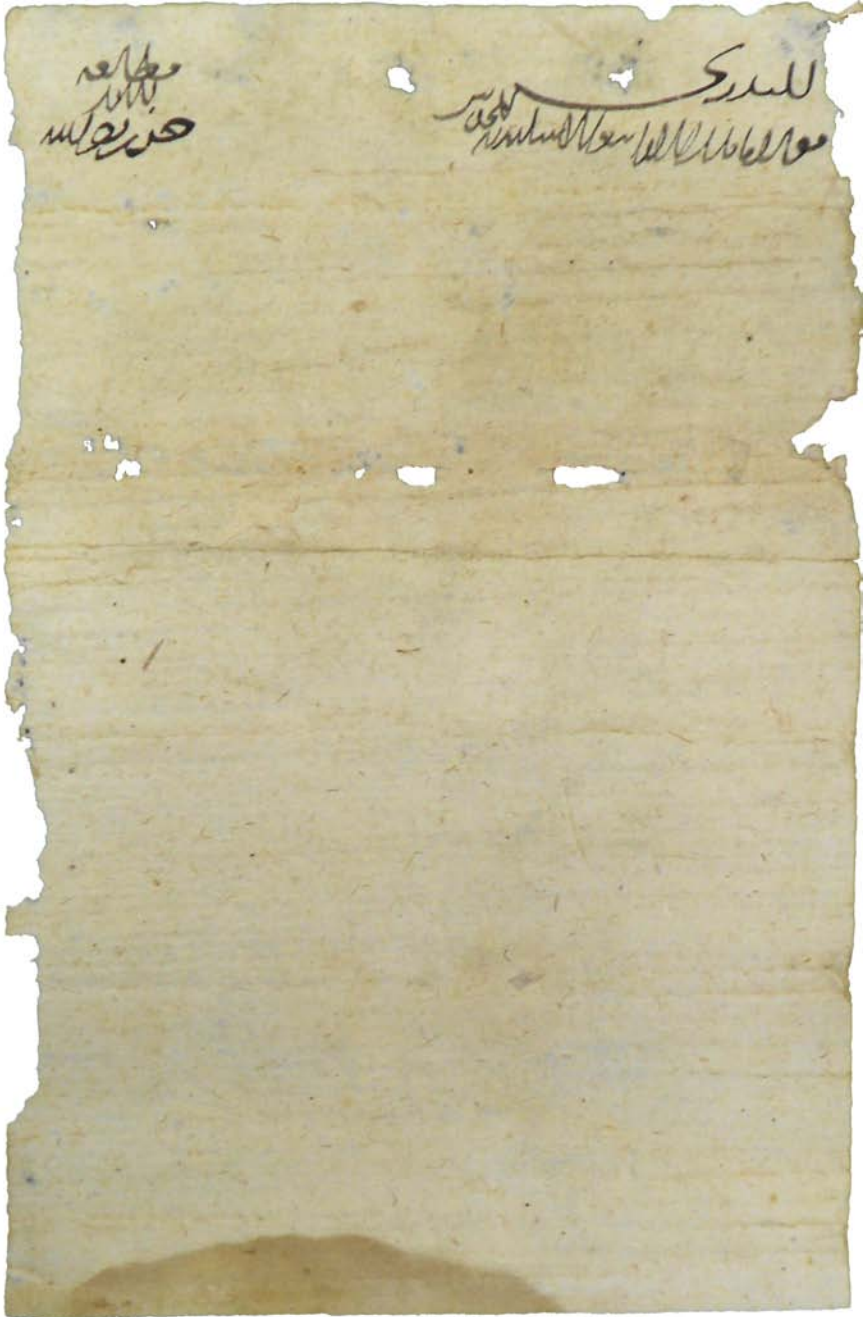


FIGURE 7.1 Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste, busta 18o, fascicolo IX, no. 3  
© ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI VENEZIA (ASVE)





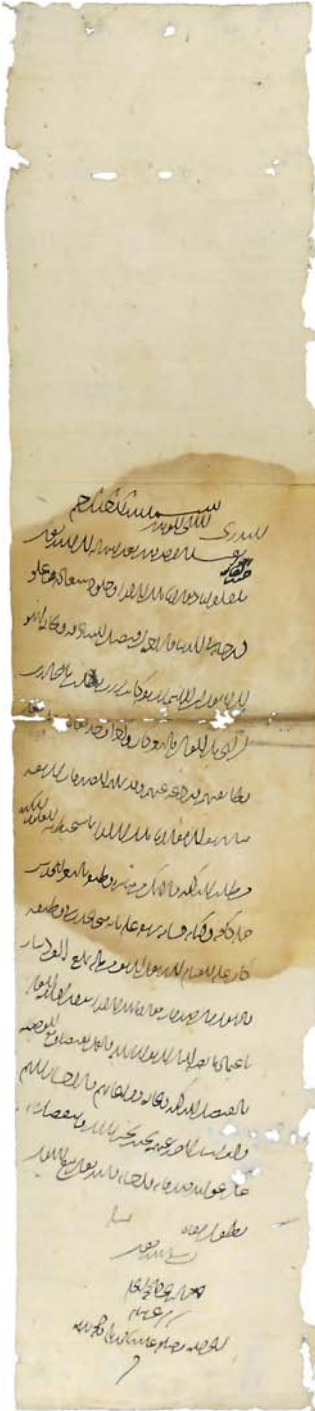


FIGURE 7.3  
The document virtually reconstructed (recto)



FIGURE 7.4  
The document virtually reconstructed (verso)

Oriental laid paper. 57.5 × 12.4–12.5 cm.

Folded in strips of 2.5 cm.

Right margin: 3 cm.

Dated 13 Dhū al-Ḥijja 816 [6 March 1414].

#### 4 Text

Recto

- (١) بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
- (٢) البدرى الملكى المويدي
- (٣) يقبل الارض وينبى بعد ابتاله الى الله تعالى  
المملوك  
نصر الله  
حسن بن
- (٤) بدوام ايام مولانا ملك الامرا وخلود سعادته وعلو
- (٥) درجاته في الدنيا والاخرة ان قنصل البنادقة وتجاره انهو
- (٦) الى الديوان ان المراسيم الشريفة كانت برزت بطلب تاج الدين
- (٧) ابن ابي بكر الوالى بالثغر كان واذا وجد بقاءه [ودوام] فعله
- (٨) بطايفتهم فيردعه عنهم وقد شملتهم الصدقات الشريفة
- (٩) بمثال شريف الى مولانا ملك الامرا بما ستحيط به العلوم الكريمة
- (١٠) من طلب المذكور والا يمكن من مباشرة وظيف[ت]ه بالثغر المحروس
- (١١) جملة كاف[ي]ة وكفاة قسامة شريفة عليه بانه متى تحدث في وظيف[ت]ه
- (١٢) كان عليه القيام للديوان الشريف من ماله بمبلغ الف دينار
- (١٣) والمرسوم بالصدقات مولانا ملك الامرا ينفذ اوامره العالية
- (١٤) باعتماد ما ترض[من]ه المثل الشريف المشار اليه والعمل بمقتضاه مع الوصية
- (١٥) بالقنصل المذكور وتجاره ومراعاتهم والاحسان اليهم
- (١٦) وكف اسباب الضرر عنهم بحيث يخبر بذلك ويتفضل
- (١٧) على عوايد صدقاته واحسانه والله تعالى يمتع المملوك

بمنه وكرمه	(١٨) بطول بقاءه
ان شا الله تعالى	(١٩)
كتب في ثالث عشر ذي الحجة الحرام	(٢٠)
سنة ست عشر [ة] وثمانم [اي] اية	(٢١)
الحمد لله وصلوته على سيدنا محمد واله وصحبه وسلامه	(٢٢)
ح	(٢٣)

## Verso

مطالعة	(١) البدرى
المملوك	(٢) مولانا ملك الامرا بئغرا الاسكندرية المحروس
حسن بن نصر الله	(٣)

## Diacritics

## Verso:

(٣) حسن.

## 5 Transcription

## Recto

- 1) *Bi-smi Allāhi al-rahmāni al-rahīm*
- 2) *al-Badrī al-Malakī al-Muʿayyadī*
- 3) *yuqabbilu al-arḍ wa-yunhī baʿda ibtihālihi ilā Allāh taʿālā*  
*al-Mamlūk*  
*Naṣri Allāh*  
*Ḥasanu bnu*
- 4) *bi-dawāmi ayyāmi mawlānā maliki al-umarāʾ wa-khulūdi saʿadatīhi wa-*  
*ʿuluwwi*
- 5) *darajātīhi fī al-dunyā wa-l-ākhirā anna qunṣula al-Banādiqa wa-tujjārahu*  
*anhaw*
- 6) *ilā al-dīwān anna al-marāsīm al-sharīfa kānat barazāt bi-ṭalab Tāji al-*  
*Dīni*

- 7) *bni Abī Bakrini al-wālī bi-l-thaghr kāna wa-idhā wajada baqā'ahu [wa-dawāma] fi'lihi*
- 8) *bi-ṭā'ifatihim fa-yarda'uhu 'anhum wa-qad शामिलthumu al-ṣadaqātu al-sharīfa*
- 9) *bi-mithāl sharīf ilā mawlānā maliki al-umarā' bi-mā sa-tuḥiṭ bi-hi al-'ulūmu al-karīma*
- 10) *min ṭalabi al-madhkūr wa-allā yumakkana min mubāsharati waṣīfatihī bi-l-thaghri al-maḥrūs*
- 11) *jumlatan kāffiyatan wa-kitābati qasāma sharīfa 'alayhi bi-annahu matā taḥaddatha fi waṣīfatihī*
- 12) *kāna 'alayhi al-qiyām li-l-dīwāni al-sharīf min mālihi bi-mablagh alf dīnār*
- 13) *wa-l-marsūm bi-l-ṣadaqāt mawlānā maliku al-umarā' yunafidhdhu awāmirahu al-'āliya*
- 14) *bi-i'timādi mā taḍammanahu al-mithālu al-sharīfu al-mushār ilayhi wa-l-'amal bi-muqtaḍāhu ma'a al-waṣīyya*
- 15) *bi-l-qunṣuli al-madhkūr wa-tujjārihi wa-murā'ātihim wa-l-iḥsān ilayhim*
- 16) *wa-kaffi asbābi al-ḍarar 'anhum bi-ḥaythu yukhbaru bi-dhālika wa-yatafaḍḍalu*
- 17) *'alā 'awā'idī ṣadaqātihī wa-iḥsānihī wa-Allāh ta'ālā yumatti'u al-mamlūk*
- 18) *bi-ṭūli baqā'ihī* *bi-mannihī wa-karamihī*
- 19) *in shā'a Allāh ta'ālā*
- 20) *kutiba fi thālitha 'ashrata Dhī al-Ḥijjati al-ḥarām*
- 21) *sanata sitta 'ashrata wa-thamānīmī'a*
- 22) *al-ḥamdu li-llāh wa-ṣalātuhu 'alā sayyidinā Muḥammad wa-ālihi wa-ṣaḥbihī wa-salāmuhu*
- 23) *ḥ*

## Verso

- 1) *al-Badrī* *Muṭāla'atu*
- 2) *mawlānā maliku al-umarā' bi-thaghri al-Iskandariyyati*  
*al-maḥrūs* *al-mamlūk*
- 3) *Ḥasani bni Naṣri Allāh*

## 6 Textual Notes

The document contains 23 lines of text without taking into account the signature between lines 3 and 4. As will be seen in the diplomatic commentary, the handwriting corresponds to the *riqā'* script, which was used in the chancery

for specific documents, like this one. It may be characterized as very cursive and hardly legible for an unskilled eye. It features several ligatures, particularly between letters that should not normally be connected to the following one—this is almost always the case for the *alif* and the *wāw*—and even between words though, in this case, it is not applied as a general rule. The letters *sīn/shīn* are represented as a long stroke (e.g., l. 9: *ستحيط*). When a word ends with a *hā'* preceded by a letter corresponding to the *ductus* of a *hā'*, the scribe usually overlooks it to write the latter (e.g., l. 10: *وظيفته*; l. 11: *كافية , عليه , وظيفته*; l. 12: *عليه*; l. 14: *تضمنه*). Moreover, the text is entirely deprived of diacritical dots. The only relief for the paleographer comes from the standard formulae found in other documents from the same period, which confirms the interpretation of almost the entire document.

- Line 1: The document opens with the *basmala*, which is written as a cipher, in one word, in particular after *Allāh*. In that sense, it does not respect the rule asserted by Mamluk secretaries, like al-Qalqashandī, who expressly stated that the scribe ought to write it in the most beautiful manner as a demonstration of the glorification of God. Yet, it does observe another norm he provides because the scribe paid attention to the beginning of the formula where the *bā'*, according to al-Qalqashandī, should be slightly enlarged in height—a device for remembering the *alif* of *ism* that disappeared—and the *sīn* fully written (i.e., with its three teeth) and then moderately elongated before the *mīm*.<sup>11</sup>
- Line 3: *ta'ālā*. The word is written as a cipher and is similar to the other two occurrences (lines 17 and 19).
- Lines 3–5: *ba'da ibtihālihi ilā Allāh ta'ālā bi-dawāmi ayyāmi mawlānā maliki al-umarā' wa-khulūdi sa'ādātihi wa-'uluwwi darajātihi fī al-dunyā wa-l-ākhirā*. A similar expression is given in a short treatise attributed to Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī.<sup>12</sup>
- Line 5: *anhaw*. The verb does not end with the *alif al-wiqāya* normally necessary in such a case. There is a proclivity in early Quranic orthography and mixed Arabic to add the *alif otiosum* at the end of any word ending with a *wāw*, be it part of the root or corres-

<sup>11</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* vi, 221.

<sup>12</sup> See Veselý, *Zwei Opera Cancellaria* 551 (*yuqabbilu al-arḍ mubtahilan ilā Allāh ta'ālā fī baqā'i sa'ādāti mawlānā takhlīdan yasta'īdu bi-hi 'umra al-zamān; yuqabbilua l-arḍ mubtahilan ilā Allāh ta'ālā bi-dawāmi sa'ādātihi wa-khulūdi 'alā'ihī*).

ponding to a suffix.<sup>13</sup> The case discussed here thus deviates with respect to the tendency noticed in general in manuscripts from the same period. Quite interestingly, the same phenomenon is to be observed in the handwriting of the Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442); he overlooked the *alif otiosum* in plural forms of defective verbs like *raʿā*, which exactly tallies with the verb *anhā*.<sup>14</sup>

Line 6: *al-marāsīm al-sharīfa kānat barazat bi-*. This is a standard formula usually found in decrees.<sup>15</sup>

*Tāj al-Dīn*. This is a conjectural reading. If it is correct, the *jīm* is linked to the following *alif*.

Line 7: *Ibn Abī Bakr*. Written at the beginning of a new line, the word *ibn* starts with an *alif*. The *kunya* Abū Bakr is tentatively deciphered here; alternatively, it could stand for a Turkish name ending in Bak, though this solution looks less probable given the *ductus*.

Lines 7–8: *kāna wa-idhā wajada baqāʾahu* [*wa-dawāma*] *fiʿlihi bi-ṭāʾifatihim fa-yardaʾuhu ʾanhum*. This is the most problematic passage in the document. Due to the fact that the end of line 7 is damaged, our reconstruction of the text can only be conjectural. The verb *kāna*, clearly decipherable, might be connected to the words that precede it, as suggested to me by Werner Diem. In this case, the sentence should be understood as: “Tāj al-dīn Ibn Abī Bakr, the former prefect of police in the harbor. If he finds him still around ...” The second part of the sentence is composed of a hypothetical clause introduced by *idhā*. What follows seems to be read *wajada baqāʾahu* or *wujida baqāʾuhu*. A tentative reconstruction of the words in the missing parts could be *dawām*. The last word on line 7 looks like *fʿlh* (*fiʿlihi*), which fits well with *bi-ṭāʾifatihim*. The apodosis must certainly be identified on line 8 with the verb

13 For the Quran, see Diem, *Untersuchungen zur frühen Geschichte* 392–393. For the papyri, see Hopkins, *Studies in the grammar* i, 50a. For the manuscripts, see Blau, *A grammar of Christian Arabic* i, 127–128.

14 See Bauden, *Maqriziana* VIII, 31–32.

15 Risciani, *Documenti e firmani* 72 (decree dated 869/1464: *tabruzu al-marāsīmu al-sharīfa bi-iḥḍārihi ilā al-abwābi al-sharīfa* / si emaneranno i nobili rescritti per condurlo alle nostre nobili porte); Richards, *Mamluk administrative documents* 73, ll. 11–12 [a letter dated 877/1472: *wa-qad barazati al-marāsīmu al-sharīfa bi-kitābati mithāl sharīf muṭlaq / li-kulli wāqif ʾalayhi bi-l-thaghri al-maḥrūs bi-ṭalab* (the noble decrees [of the sultan] have gone forth that a noble open rescript should be issued / to all whom it may concern in Damietta, enjoining)].



*rada'a*. This verb cannot be read as a passive because the two objects are expressed. It looks like the verb is preceded by a *wāw* or a *fā'*. If this is the apodosis, the *fā'* would be expected if it is followed by an imperfect (*fa-yarda'uhu 'anhum*). In any case, it is difficult to adopt one translation over another with certainty.

Line 8: *shamilathumu al-ṣadaqāt al-sharīfa bi-marsūm sharīf*. This is a formula often found in official correspondence.<sup>16</sup> It must be noted that the expression *al-ṣadaqāt al-sharīfa* refers to the sultan and that it is often used in the context of petitions addressed to him.<sup>17</sup>

Line 11: *jumla kāffīyya*. The two words appear in three documents issued by the Mamluk chancery to strengthen the negation.<sup>18</sup>

*matā taḥaddatha fī waẓīfatihī*. This is one of several possible readings. On the one hand, it is preferred to *matā yuḥdith fī waẓīfatihī* (whenever he should introduce an innovation) because one should rather expect here a formula like *matā yuḥdith ḥādithan* as it appears in an official letter datable to the Mamluk period.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the document explicitly requests that the governor ban him from office, in which case it is impossible to

16 See Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk der Stilkunst oder Qahwat al-inshā'* 79, ll. 12–13 (*wa-shamilatnī al-ṣadaqātu al-sharīfa bi-tashrif sharīf*); Risciani, *Documenti e firmani* 36, ll. 2–3 (*anna al-ṣadaqāti al-sharīfa shamilathum bi-marsūm sharīf* / che le munificenze nobili sono state estese ad essi con un rescritto nobile), 66, ll. 2–3 (*anna al-ṣadaqāti al-sharīfa shamilathu bi-tawāqī' sharīfa* / che le munificenze nobili sono state estese a lui con nobili firmani), 74, ll. 8–9 (*anna al-ṣadaqāti al-sharīfa sharrafahā Allāh ta'ālā wa-'azzamahā shamilathu bi-tawāqī' sharīfa wa-karīma* / che le munificenze nobili,—le nobiliti l'altissimo Dio e le magnifici—, sono state estese a lui con nobili e munifici rescritti).

17 See Stern, *Petitions from the Mamlūk period* 239 (note 22).

18 See Risciani, *Documenti e firmani* 148 (*wa-lā yuṭālabū wa-lā yukallaḥū bi-shay' jumlatan kāffīyyatan 'alā jāri 'adatihimī al-qadīma* / nè si dimandi, ne si esiga da loro, assolutamente, alcuna cosa, secondo il corso della loro antica usanza); Richards, *Mamluk administrative documents* 73, l. 18 (*wa-lā yuḥwījū fī dhālika ilā mu'āwada thāniya jumlatan kāffīyyatan* / Let them not require further communication concerning this matter, not at all); Diem, *Arabische Briefe* 148, l. 13 (*fa-lā tahtajja 'alayya bi-ḥujja jumlatan kāffīyyatan* / Führe gegen mich also auf gar keinen Fall ein Argument an). The same construction also appears in a memorandum redacted by Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir (d. 692/1292). See Moberg, *Regierungspromemoria eines ägyptischen Sultans* 417 (note 1). Diem (*Arabische Briefe* 151) suggests that the adjective must be considered a *nisba* built on the substantive *kāffa* (totality, entirety) rather than corresponding to the more expected *kāfin/kāfiya* (sufficient).

19 See Diem, *Arabische amtliche Briefe* 1, 166, l. 17 (*lā yuḥdath 'alayhim ḥādithun fī ayyāmi mubāsharati al-mamlūk* / und daß gegen sie in der Zeit, in der der Sklave [hier] als Verwaltungsbeamter tätig ist, keine Neuerung eingeführt wird). Diem mentions other occurrences (ibid. 169).

consider that he could still be active after that. Consequently, the reading *matā yahduth fī waẓīfatihi* must also be rejected. I opted for the reading *tahaddata fī*, which is attested in a variety of Mamluk sources as meaning “to administer, to supervise, to have authority over.”<sup>20</sup> If I am right, the context implies that the prefect would seek to regain his position.

- Line 16: *Wa-kaffi asbābi l-ḍarar ‘anhum*. This is a standard expression that often appears in documents requesting that harassment against a group who petitioned the intervention of the sultan should stop.<sup>21</sup>
- Line 19: The formula *in shā’a Allāh* must be written centered on a single line, according to the rules. If the script adopted is the *riqā’*, which is the case here, the formula is written almost in one block.<sup>22</sup>
- Line 23: This sign corresponds to the letter *ḥā’* followed by a small stroke and not a *rā’* as believed by some scholars.<sup>23</sup> It is tentatively explained by al-Qalqashandī as an abbreviation of the *ḥasbala*, which in most cases preceded in full letters, though it is not the case here.

## 7 Translation

Recto

- 1) In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.
- 2) al-Badrī al-Malakī al-Mu’ayyadi
- 3) kisses the ground and reports, after he supplicated God Almighty  
The Slave  
Naṣr Allāh  
Ḥasan ibn
- 4) for [granting] our Lord, the Chief Emir, a long life, eternal felicity, and high ranks
- 5) in this life and the Hereafter, that the consul of the Venetians and his merchants communicated

<sup>20</sup> See Quatremère, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks de l’Égypte* ii/2, 108 (note 46).

<sup>21</sup> See, for instance, a rescript of Barqūq dated 790/1388 in Risciani, *Documenti e firmani* 30, ll. 6–7 (*wa-kaffi asbābi al-ḍarar ‘anhum* / e si allontanino da essi le cause del danno).

<sup>22</sup> See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a’shā* vi, 233–234.

<sup>23</sup> See Björkmann, Diplomatic 302 on the basis of al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a’shā* vi, 270, where it is typographically badly reproduced by the editors of the text.

- 6) to the chancery that the noble decrees were emanated to seek out Tāj al-Dīn
- 7) Ibn Abī Bakr, the former prefect of police in the harbor. If he establishes that the latter is still around and continues to act
- 8) against their community, he should deter him from them. The noble bounties have just encompassed them
- 9) with a noble rescript for our Lord, the Chief Emir, of which he will take eminent cognizance, [i.e.,] to seek out
- 10) the aforesaid [the prefect], to forbid him from exercising his office in the protected harbor
- 11) under any circumstances, and to issue a noble oath against him, according to which, whenever he [seeks to] administer his office,
- 12) he will have to pay the noble *dīwān*, from his resources, the amount of 1,000 dinars.
- 13) The decree including the bounties, our Lord, the Chief Emir, will enforce its exalted orders
- 14) and do what the aforementioned noble rescript contains, and execute it in accordance with the provisions thereof, together with the recommendation
- 15) for the abovementioned consul and his merchants, respecting them, treating them well
- 16) and refraining from annoying them inasmuch as this will be reported. He [the Chief Emir] will confer
- 17) his customary bounties and his beneficence. May God Almighty bestow upon the slave
- 18) a long life with His grace and munificence
- 19) if God Almighty wills
- 20) Written on the thirteenth of the sacred Dhū al-Ḥijja
- 21) in the year eight hundred sixteen
- 22) Praise be to God and His blessing be upon our lord, Muḥammad,
- and his family and his companions, and also His peace
- 23) [God is our sufficiency, and an excellent Steward is He!]

## Verso

- 1) al-Badrī Report
- 2) Our Lord, the Chief Emir in the protected harbor  
of Alexandria of the slave
- 3) Ḥasan ibn Naṣr Allāh

## 8 Diplomatic Commentary

Documents may be divided into two categories: official and private. By its nature, this document belongs to the first category.

The term *muṭālaʿa* that appears on the verso of sheet 1 allows the identification of the document with others already described. In his catalogue of the documents discovered in the Ḥaram of Jerusalem, D. Little classified them as *muṭālaʿāt* (reports) in the section regarding decrees (*marsūm*) and petitions (*qiṣṣa*). The format and the phrasing of this kind of documents, which, he noticed, tally with those of the petition, convinced him that the *muṭālaʿa* had to be considered together in the same section.<sup>24</sup> According to Little, the *muṭālaʿa*, like the petition, contains a text that is “spaced on the page in the same way, that is to say with a wide margin at the right in which a *tarḡama* introduced by *al-mamlūk* appears, usually opposite the blank space between the top lines of the text.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover, both texts usually begin with the formula “*yuqabbilu al-arḡa wa-yunhi*” (he kisses the ground and reports) and, in some cases, the *muṭālaʿa* contains a request, as does the petition.<sup>26</sup> The *muṭālaʿa* can, however, be distinguished from the petition provided that the document is completely preserved because it bears on the top of the scroll, on the back, an address (*ʿunwān*) providing the name of the addressee and that of the sender preceded by the term *muṭālaʿa*. On the basis of this characteristic, Little classified all the documents that were written in the format of the petition as *muṭālaʿa*. Fragmentary documents where this characteristic was not more visible were considered as *muṭālaʿa* if the content looked more like a report than a petition.<sup>27</sup> In the Ḥaram documents, Little identified 22 documents as *muṭālaʿāt*, of which only four bear the word *muṭālaʿa* in the address.<sup>28</sup>

Little’s description of this category of documents is problematic given that some specimens that do not feature the address are regarded as belonging to the category and are not necessarily reports of something. In some cases, they should rather be considered as letters.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the question arises: did there exist a specific category of documents called *muṭālaʿa* (report)?

24 Little, *A catalogue of the Islamic documents* 50–58.

25 Ibid. 51.

26 For the evolution of the petition up to the Mamluk period, see Khan, *The historical development*.

27 Little, *A catalogue of the Islamic documents* 51.

28 We can add to these the following document published by Diem, *Arabische amtliche Briefe* 164–170, no. 35 (A. Ch. 10291) where the last word at the end of the first line in the address, on the verso, should be read *muṭālaʿa* and not *wa-aʿlā amrahu*.

29 See, for instance, Little, *A catalogue of the Islamic documents* 54, no. 69.

For this matter, as for all those dealing with the Mamluk chancery, al-Qalqashandī's magnum opus, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fī šinā'at al-inshā'*, is the place par excellence to search for an answer. In the chapter dealing with correspondence (*mukātabāt*), al-Qalqashandī devoted a section to the letters sent by Muslims, be they rulers or subjects, to the Mamluk sultan. This section is divided into two parts: one dealing with those who are qualified to write to the sultan from within his territories (i.e., the armed forces, such as governors or the civil servants, including viziers, scholars, and the like) and another dealing with those who write to him from outside his dominion (i.e., foreign rulers). The first part is the one that interests us in this particular case, as the author tackles the correspondence sent by the governors to the sultan. Within this part, al-Qalqashandī considers two categories: letters sent by viceroys (*nuwwāb*) and those who are considered at the same level and the letters sent by the governors (*wulāt*) and the like. The term *muṭāla'a* appears for the first time at this level because in all the titles of the chapter, subchapter, section, etc., specific to this question, al-Qalqashandī always used the term *mukātabāt*. In light of this, it may be said the *muṭāla'a* was a particular category of correspondence. From the examples provided for the viceroys, one might conclude that the *muṭāla'a* designated the letters they sent to the sultan. Thanks to the detailed description he provides, it is understood that the term *muṭāla'a* was specifically coined for these letters because the text must end with the phrase “ṭāla'a bi-dhālika” (he exposed this)—interchangeable with “anhā dhālika” (he reported this)—an expression that is further echoed in the address (*unwān*) with the word *muṭāla'a* (*muṭāla'at al-mamlūk fulān*, “report of the servant so-and-so”).<sup>30</sup>

Al-Qalqashandī does not provide details of the nature of the reports. He simply states that it may contain one or several pieces of information. However, we can form an idea of their nature through the various rules he describes:

- a) the sender may request something from the sultan through two categories of expressions, one of them being reserved for important matters (*yas'alu al-ṣadaqāt al-sharīfa*);
- b) if the topic of the document deals with an important matter (*amr muhimm*), like the nomination of a governor (*istiqrār nā'ib*) or the good news of a victory (*bishāra bi-faṭḥ*), the use of rhymed prose (*saj'*) is compulsory, otherwise not;
- c) the report may be made on the basis of another report (*muṭāla'a*) received from the governor of a city on the border or from afar, like Edessa (al-Ruhā);

<sup>30</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* viii, 55 and 60.

- d) the report may consist of a response to a rescript (*mithāl*) received from the sultan in which the governor quotes the order and explains whether or not the order was put into effect and if not, why.<sup>31</sup>

Our understanding of the nature of the report is improved by the three samples he quotes:

- a) an inceptive report (*ibtidāʿ*, i.e., not an answer to a previous letter or report) from the viceroy of Damascus consisting of a summary of various reports received from several places. These are in regard to diplomatic and military intelligence and internal affairs (like the death of a *mamlūk* and the request to grant his fief to his son);
- b) a report answering (*jawāb*) a decree (*marsūm*) received from the sultan regarding military operations and informing him that the orders were fulfilled;
- c) a mixed report (inceptive and answer) apropos of two matters: the arrival of an envoy from a foreign country for whom the authorization to travel to the capital is expected<sup>32</sup> and the arrival of an agent from the capital to whom a person must be handed over to be brought before the sultan.

From this, it appears that the *muṭālaʿa* was a letter of a particular genre written by a governor who reported to the sultan on various matters dealing with internal and external affairs.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, al-Qalqashandī did not provide any example of this kind of correspondence for the second category of governors (*wulāt*). In a footnote, the editors indicated that the title of the section is followed by a blank space the size of one page.<sup>34</sup>

Notwithstanding, this embryonic definition is corroborated by another passage found in the fourth volume of al-Qalqashandī's manual where, speaking of the prefect of police (*wālī al-shurṭa*), he states that this officeholder used to inquire about events that happened in his district every day (like a big fire or

31 Ibid. 55–57.

32 We find a confirmation of this practice in a particular document emanated by the chancery once the envoy was sent back to his ruler. A *waraqat al-jawāb* was issued to the attention of the governor who was informed of his arrival in the country (hence when the governor sent the report with this piece of information). This document is described by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Saḥmāwī (d. 868/1464) in his *al-Thaḡhr al-bāsim* ii, 731. In the model he gives, reference is made to the report written by the governor the envoy was bearing when he arrived in Cairo (*bi-mā ʿalā yadihi mina al-muṭālaʿati al-mukhtaṣṣa bi-l-mawāqifi al-sharīfa*). Cf. also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* iv, 58.

33 See also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* iv, 59.

34 The copy of al-Qalqashandī's work preserved in Cambridge (University Library, MS Qq.36, corresponding to volume 4) does not display this section either. The scribe specified that there was a blank space the size of one page in the original from which he made his own copy (fol. 69b: *bayāḍ qadruhu ṣafḥa*).

the like). The prefect then wrote a report in which all the events were described. These reports were brought every morning to the sultan.<sup>35</sup> They were in fact dispatched through the postal service (*barīd*) and delivered by the courier to the executive secretary (*dawādār*) who subsequently transmitted them to the sultan. The sultan opened the letter and gave it to the secretary of state (*kātib al-sirr*),<sup>36</sup> who grasped the contents and summarized them to the sultan. Upon their transmission, a formula attesting that it was delivered on that day by the intermediary of so-and-so was inscribed upon them.<sup>37</sup>

Thanks to al-Saḥmāwī, who provides a detailed description of the process of the transmission of the *muṭālaʿa* upon its arrival at the citadel, we know the etiquette respected in these circumstances. According to this author, the secretary of state was responsible for reading to the sultan three categories of documents: firstly, the *muṭālaʿāt*; secondly, the documents dealing with legal matters (like the *waqfs*); and thirdly the petitions (the *qawāʿim* being the term strictly reserved to those presented by the bureaus while those tendered by common folk were called *qiṣaṣ*). As for the *muṭālaʿāt*, it is interesting to quote the full passage: “The messenger or the courier who arrives at the citadel (*bāb al-sultān*) is usually introduced to the sultan (*al-ḥaḍra*) by the *dawādār*, who receives the *muṭālaʿa* from him, strokes it on the face of the carrier, and then conveys it to the sultan who unseals it and gives it back to the *dawādār*. The latter then hands it to the secretary of state who reads it aloud to the sultan.”<sup>38</sup>

35 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* iv, 60.

36 Al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaḡhr al-bāsim* i, 373.

37 Ibid. 365–366, who calls this procedure the *kitābatu al-tawrīd* (to write down an archival caption). The note was: *waradat fī tārikh kadhā wa-kadhā ʿalā yadi fulāni al-fulāni* (it arrived on the date so-and-so by the intermediary of so-and-so), and it was inscribed on the recto of the sheet where the *basmala* appears (i.e., the second sheet, see below), in the right margin beyond the text (*fī zāhiri al-waṣli alladhī fihi al-basmala min jihati al-yumnā khalfa al-kitāba*), though, for the reports sent by Arab and Frankish rulers (*mulūku al-ʿArab wa-l-Firanjā*), the correct place was the first sheet, which is the first onto which the secretary’s glance falls. This author also states that, usually, this operation was entrusted by the secretary of state to one of his substitutes. If my interpretation of another passage (ibid. i, 350: *wa-humu alladhīn yaktubūn awrāqa al-riqāʿ wa-yuwarridūna al-muṭālaʿāt wa-ghayrahā*) is correct, he asserts that those responsible for this operation are the *kuttāb al-dast*, the higher of the two levels of secretaries working in the chancery. The verb *warada* would mean, according to me, “to write down the archival caption” (*kitābat al-tawrīd*) or “to archive.”

38 Al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaḡhr al-bāsim* i, 344. Cf. also al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* i, 59 according to whom the courier was brought before the sultan by the *amīr jāndār*, the *dawādār*, and the secretary of state.

The author then emphasizes the qualities required of the secretary for this part of his function, like the excellence of his language, from which it may be inferred that the reading is not verbatim but rather a summary of the contents, and his ability to decipher the handwritings (*qawī al-malaka fī istikhṛāj al-khuṭūṭ*). Not all of these qualities were possessed by the secretary of state. A notorious case in this respect was recorded by Ibn Taghrī Birdī. In 835/1432, Karīm al-dīn ‘Abd al-Karīm Ibn Kātib al-Munākh, vizier since 826/1423, also became the secretary of state, a first for the Mamluk period as no one before him held these two offices conjointly, and this despite his ignorance of the chancery procedures (*ṣinā‘at al-inshā’*). Among other deficiencies, Ibn Taghrī Birdī pinpoints his poor experience in reading the petitions and the *muṭāla‘at* arriving from everywhere (*mina al-a‘māl wa-l-aqtār*). On top of that, he was blind as a bat, a disability that compelled him to take ridiculous attitudes, his voice was graceless, and he made awful spelling mistakes. Unsurprisingly, the duty of reading these documents fell on his deputy (*nā‘ib kātib al-sirr*). It took only three months before he was discharged from this office.<sup>39</sup>

Physically, the *muṭāla‘a* sent by a viceroy, as described by al-Qalqashandī,<sup>40</sup> looked like a scroll made up of several sheets of the regular format (*qaṭ‘ al-‘āda*).<sup>41</sup>

- a) On the recto of the first sheet,<sup>42</sup> on the top (called the *ṭurra*), the summary (*fihrist*) consisted of, on the right side, the inscription “to the noble doors” (*ilā al-abwābi al-sharīfa*) and, on the left side, the matter which urged the sender to write this report (*bi-sababi kadhā wa-kadhā*).
- b) On the top of the verso of the first sheet, the scribe indicated the address (*‘unwān*), composed of two parts: on the right side, the *laqab* of the addressee, consisting of the title linking him to the sultan (*al-malakī*) and the title corresponding to his personal *laqab* (*al-fulānī*, i.e., *al-sayfī* for someone called Sayf al-Dīn);<sup>43</sup> on the left side, the expression *muṭāla‘at al-mamlūk fulān* on two lines, the *ism* being on the second line.
- c) The text in itself (*ṣadr*, i.e., opening protocol) started on the top of the recto of the second sheet and was made up of the *basmala* with, beneath

39 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira* xiv, 361; Wiet, *Les Secrétaires de la chancellerie* 296–299 (no. xxi).

40 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā* viii, 54–55.

41 For a description of this format, see below.

42 The face that receives the text is considered the recto (*wajh*) while the one that corresponds to the external face where the address is written is the verso (*zāhir*). See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā* viii, 55.

43 From this, it may be inferred that the report is not directly addressed to the sultan but to the official who is in charge of the chancery.



it, the *laqab* of the sender, forming a double title linking him to the sultan if he was an officeholder (*al-malakī al-fulānī*, the latter corresponding to the sultan's *laqab* like al-Zāhirī for al-Zāhir Barqūq for instance) or of a single title connecting him to his emir in other cases (*al-sayfī* for a person whose emir's *laqab* was Sayf al-Dīn). Then, on another line, the text began with the formula *yuqabbilu al-arḍ wa-yunhī*.

The process may be represented as follows:<sup>44</sup>

a) *Turra* (recto of the first sheet):

بسبب كذا وكذا  
إلى الأبواب الشريفة

b) *Unwān* (verso of the first sheet):

مطالعة المملوك  
الملكى الفلانى  
فلان

c) *Ṣadr* (recto of the second sheet):

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
الملكى الظاهري  
يقبل الأرض وينهى ...

The order in which these operations were carried out is exactly the one detailed above, which means the scroll was turned over twice by the scribe: a) recto > b) verso > c) recto.

Notably, our document looks very similar to this description, though there is no inscription on the *turra*. Our document was not destined for the sultan but for the viceroy of Alexandria, and this may explain the discrepancy between it and the description provided by al-Qalqashandī. In any case, it appears this is not a *muṭālaʿa* written by a viceroy, rather it was written by the supervisor of the privy funds (*nāzīr al-khāṣṣ*) for the viceroy of Alexandria. Consequently, the level of the two correspondents is somewhat similar. The question is thus: what kind of document is this?

In another section of his manual, al-Qalqashandī describes a particular kind of letter called *ikhwāniyyāt*, which he defined as what circulated between func-

44 See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* viii, 60.

tionaries.<sup>45</sup> The details provided for the elaboration of this category of letters tally, roughly speaking, with the ones just particularized for the *muṭālaʿa*. The problem is that the *ikhwāniyyāt* have always been considered private letters exchanged by friends—hence the designation (*akh/ikhwān*)—as opposed to official correspondence, though this interpretation hardly stands in view of the fact that they appear in the chancery manuals that normally only deal with the official correspondence.<sup>46</sup> The earliest examples can be found in the collections of letters written by famous Abbasid secretaries like al-Ṣābiʿ (d. 384/994)<sup>47</sup> and al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād (d. 385/995)<sup>48</sup> who worked for the state chancery. For instance, speaking of Ibn ʿAbbād’s compositions, Pomerantz identified his *sulṭāniyyāt* as his official chancery letters and his *ikhwāniyyāt* as his non-official correspondence, his letters of friendship, or even his social letters.<sup>49</sup> Truly, the topics illustrated by the examples that have reached us from this period give the impression that this interpretation is valid, at least for those examples from the tenth century: congratulations, condolences, mutual exchanges of gifts, and acts of benevolence, etc.

For the Mamluk period, save for some restricted studies dedicated to letters exchanged with European powers, we still lack a thorough study of the correspondence produced by the chancery from the literary or diplomatic points of view.<sup>50</sup> The section devoted to the *ikhwāniyyāt* by al-Qalqashandī in *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* seems to corroborate the traditional view: the topics (*maqṣid/maqāsid*),

45 Ibid. 168–232 (168: *mimmā huwa dāʾir bayna aʿyāni al-mamlaka wa-akābiri ahli al-dawla min nuwwābi al-salṭana wa-sāʾiri al-umarāʾ wa-l-wuzarāʾ wa-man fi maʿnāhum min aʿyāni l-kuttāb wa-man nahaja nahjahum min arbābi al-waḏāʾif*).

46 See Arazi and Ben-Shammay, *Risāla*, who speak of *risāla ikhwāniyya* and *risāla dīwāniyya*, thus considering them as being produced in two different environments. The same holds true for Gully, *The culture of letter-writing* 177 (informal letters) and 187 (for the Mamluk period: formal epistolary category [*risāla dīwāniyya*] as opposed to informal epistolary category [*risāla ikhwāniyya*]).

47 See, particularly, Hachmeier, *Die briefe Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Ṣābiʿs*.

48 For this author, see Pomerantz, *Licit magic*.

49 Ibid., chapter 7 is entirely devoted to the *ikhwāniyyāt*.

50 For the Republic of Venice, see Wansbrough, A Mamluk letter. For the Republic of Florence, see Amari, *I diplomati arabi del R. Archivio fiorentino*. For the Republic of Ragusa (Dubrovnik), see Korkut, *Arapski dokumenti u državnom arhivu u Dubrovniku*. For Castilla and Aragon, see Alarcón y Santón and García de Linares, *Los Documentos árabes diplomáticos del Archivo de la Corona de Aragón*. All these studies provide editions and translations of Mamluk official letters but are devoid of any diplomatic commentary. The material found in al-Qalqashandī’s *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* regarding Christian powers was translated, well before the publication of this source, by Lammens, *Correspondances diplomatiques entre les sultans mamlouks*. The following article mainly focuses on private letters: Diem, *Arabic letters in pre-modern times*.

which may give birth to this genre of correspondence, look similar to those already quoted for the Abbasid period, though al-Qalqashandī expanded their number to 17, offering for the first time a systematic presentation of them.<sup>51</sup> Before him, only two authors tackled the question of this category of correspondence: Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī (d. 749/1349) and Ibn Nāzīr al-Jaysh (d. 786/1384). In his manual *al-Taʿrīf bi-l-muṣṭalaḥ al-sharīf*,<sup>52</sup> the first did not consider them but composed a treatise entitled *ʿUrf al-taʿrīf bi-l-muṣṭalaḥ al-sharīf* devoted to the correspondence in general and dealing with this matter, though he never used the term “*ikhwāniyya*.”<sup>53</sup> In contrast, Ibn Nāzīr al-Jaysh concluded his manual *Tathqīf al-Taʿrīf bi-l-muṣṭalaḥ al-sharīf* with a small section (*Bāb fī al-mukātabāti al-ikhwāniyya*)<sup>54</sup> where he presented, in a schematic manner, the various levels of this kind of correspondence.

However, neither of these authors provide any data regarding the topics for which these letters were issued. This paucity of data and the lack of evidence, since no original letter of this kind has been identified so far, have confused most of the few scholars who have addressed this topic and have led to the general definition already referred to above.<sup>55</sup> Only recently did D. Richards propose a more pragmatic interpretation: “... one may hazard that what is intended by the term [*ikhwāniyya*] is a range of semi-official, on certain occasions almost obligatory, letters, exchanged by the upper ranks of Mamluk society, both military and civilian.”<sup>56</sup> Our knowledge of the *ikhwāniyyāt* would have remained limited were it not for two unpublished treatises specifically dedicated to official Mamluk correspondence of all levels of senders and addressees.

The first one is entitled *Muzīl al-ḥaṣr fī mukātabāt ahl al-ʿaṣr* [The withdrawal of the barrier regarding the correspondence of our contemporaries]. Though its author does not reveal his identity, the treatise can be dated shortly after 815/1412.<sup>57</sup>

51 See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* ix, 5–228.

52 Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *al-Taʿrīf*.

53 Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *ʿUrf al-Taʿrīf*.

54 Ibn Nāzīr al-Jaysh, *Tathqīf al-Taʿrīf* 206–209.

55 It seems the wrong interpretation given by Björkman did lead to this state of affairs. See Björkman, *Beiträge* 135 and note 1.

56 Richards, *Mamluk administrative documents* 14.

57 In the introduction, the author explains that he composed the treatise at the request of the son of the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil I (r. 763–779/1362–1377, 779–785/1377–1383, 791–808/1389–1406). The son in question is named Abū al-Khayr Yaʿqūb. The caliph al-Mustaʿīn (r. 808–816/1406–1414) is also mentioned in the work with regard to his sultanate after al-Nāṣir Faraj’s death. Two manuscripts of this treatise have been identified: Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Orientabteilung, ms Petermann I 299 (see Ahlwardt, *Verzeichnis der arabischen Handschriften* vii, 577–579); Escorial, ms Árabe 566 (see Derenbourg,

The second treatise, whose title is *Qalā'id al-jumān fī muṣṭalah mukātabāt ahl al-zamān* [The pearl necklaces or the protocol of correspondence of the people of our time],<sup>58</sup> was written by one of al-Qalqashandī's sons, namely Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad, also known as Ibn Abī Ghudda (d. 876/1471).<sup>59</sup> Ibn al-Qalqashandī served several emirs as a personal secretary, and his treatise mainly deals with the correspondence exchanged between them.<sup>60</sup>

The *Muzil al-ḥaṣr* is a small work divided into two parts: first, the various categories of official correspondence exchanged by those at all levels of state, and second, the topics that may give rise to the exchange of letters according to these categories.<sup>61</sup> As for the *Qalā'id al-jumān*, the scope is quite similar to that of the father in his *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*, though the data was updated in view of the period in which it was written. As such, they offer little originality in comparison with the more comprehensive *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*, but, given their shorter size, one immediately grasps how the official correspondence was organized in the secretaries' minds. According to *Muzil al-ḥaṣr*, official correspondence was categorized in three levels:

- a) incoming and outgoing letters regarding the caliph and his designated heir (*walī al-'ahd*);<sup>62</sup>
- b) incoming and outgoing letters regarding the sultan and his designated heir (*walī al-'ahd*);
- c) incoming and outgoing letters regarding the various levels of servants of the state and those exchanged between them and local rulers.<sup>63</sup>

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*Les Manuscrits arabes de l'Escurial* 389). References are only made here to the Berlin copy.

58 The text is preserved in a unicum held by the British Library, MS OR 3625. See Rieu, *Supplement to the Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts* 642–643 (no. 1020).

59 The date of his death provided by Richards in *Mamluk Administrative Documents* 13 (867/1462–1463) is erroneous. See al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi'* vi, 322–323. On the author and his treatise, see Bauden, Like father, like son.

60 Almost contemporaneous with Ibn al-Qalqashandī's treatise is Khalīl ibn Shāhīn al-Zāhirī's *Zubdat Kashf al-mamālik wa-bayān al-ṭuruq wa-l-masālik*, the summary of a more comprehensive work composed in 857/1453, published by Ravaisse in Paris in 1894. The author devotes some space to the *ikhwāniyyāt* letters. See Ibn al-Zāhirī, *Zubdat Kashf al-mamālik* 101–102.

61 The anonymous author's aim in writing this book was to detail the topics (*maqāsid*) of the *ikhwāniyyāt* letters, as he reveals on fol. 45b: *al-bāb al-thālith fī maqāsid al-mukātabāt al-ikhwāniyyāt wa-huwa al-maqṣūd bi-waḍ' ḥādḥā al-kitāb* (Chapter III: Topics of the *ikhwāniyyāt* letters that are the reason why this book was composed).

62 It must be noted here that al-Qalqashandī devoted a work to the documents issued for and addressed to the caliphs and their designated heirs. See al-Qalqashandī, *Ma'āthir al-ināfa*.

63 In *Muzil al-ḥaṣr*, the author enumerates the local rulers with whom the viceroy of Damascus exchanged correspondence (fols. 32a–33a) and ranks them in seven levels. The same

The letters were attributed to one of these categories on the basis of a hierarchy starting with the caliph and ending with the officeholders. For example, a letter addressed by the sultan to the caliph was considered a “caliphal” letter, while a letter sent by an emir to the sultan was regarded as a “sultanian” letter (*sultāniyya*). Obviously, if the caliph or the sultan was the issuer of a letter, the latter belonged to his category (i.e., a “caliphal” or a “sultanian” letter). Consequently, and this is the most important point for our reasoning, letters exchanged by persons belonging to the third category (the officeholders, i.e., secretaries, emirs of higher or lower rank, and the like) were held as “fraternal” letters (*ikhwāniyyāt*). The *ikhwāniyyāt* thus designated the correspondence dealing with everyday politics and governing addressed by officeholders to peers, whatever their rank, but also to correspondence that circulated between them and dealt with private matters, like the birth of a child or the death of a wife, which are among the traditional topics listed by al-Qalqashandī and his son for the issue of the *ikhwāniyyāt*.<sup>64</sup>

Several patterns were set for the issue of an *ikhwāniyya*, each of which depended upon the rank of the sender and of the addressee.<sup>65</sup> In chancery terms, the rank was determined by the type of initial protocol (*ṣadr*) the sultan used in his correspondence when addressing himself to the said officeholder. Al-Qalqashandī limited himself to detailing the correspondence for the first (i.e., higher) four ranks, explaining that the remaining ranks have to be written in proportion to the latter.<sup>66</sup> The supervisor of the privy funds (*nāzir al-khāṣṣ*), for instance, who is precisely the addresser of our document, coincided with the third rank to whom the sultan reserved the initial protocol “ḍā’afa Allāh

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was valid for the governor of Aleppo, he says (fol. 34a), but he does not specify whom they were, though we may deduce that they were similar to those in contact with the viceroy of Damascus. That letters were exchanged between persons of lower rank than the sultan and foreign rulers is revealed by a letter sent in 1473 by a *dawādār* to the Venetian authorities. See Arbel, *Levantine power struggles*.

- 64 One also understands that the letters exchanged on private matters by the secretaries who are friends (*al-aṣḍiqā’ wa-l-aṣḥāb min afāḍil al-kuttāb*) and men of letters (*‘uyūn ahl al-adab*) who have talent for the art of composition (*inshā’*) and aptitude for poetry and prose were part of the *ikhwāniyyāt*. Al-Qalqashandī qualifies this kind of correspondence as unsealed responses (*ajwiba mutlaqa*). See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a’shā* viii, 217.
- 65 Ibid. 217–232. For an example of this kind of *ikhwāniyya* exchanged by two scholars (al-Maqrīzī and al-Qalqashandī), see Bauden, *Maqriziana* XIII.
- 66 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a’shā* viii, 232. The hierarchy thus established varied greatly with time. According to several authors, al-Qalqashandī stressed in which order they were placed in the fourteenth century. See *ibid.* 183–185.

ta'ālā ni'mata al-janābi al-'ālī.<sup>67</sup> The other functionaries who belonged to that rank were the vizier, emirs of 1,000 like the *amīr silāh*, the *amīr majlis*, the *amīr ākhūr*, the *ustādār*, the *hājib al-ḥujjāb*, the viceroys of Alexandria and Tripoli, Ḥamā, and Ṣafad for Syria.<sup>68</sup> Thereby, each of these officeholders would write to various categories of peers. For the said rank, al-Qalqashandī lists nine levels, each one described through a classifier that relates to the address or the initial protocol.<sup>69</sup> For example, if the secretary of the privy funds wrote a letter to

- 1) a person of the first level, like the interim viceroy, the commander in chief of the armies, or the viceroy of Damascus, he used the pattern *al-fulānī bi-muṭāla'a*, whose initial protocol was *yūqabbilu al-arḍ wa-yunhī*;
- 2) a person of the second level, like the viceroy of Aleppo, he used the pattern *al-abwāb bi-muṭāla'a*, whose initial protocol was similar to the above pattern.

etc.<sup>70</sup>

Within the same rank, one understands that the officeholders used the highest pattern, which means that if the secretary of the privy funds addressed a letter to a peer who belonged to his rank, like the viceroy of Alexandria, he would do so according to the first pattern (i.e., *al-fulānī bi-muṭāla'a*), which is exactly what we have in our document.

Four main patterns, each one divided into several levels and sublevels, were in use. These were categorized according to the initial protocol corresponding to each rank of officeholder:

- 1) *taqbīlu al-arḍ*;
- 2) *taqbīlu al-yad*;
- 3) *invocatio (du'ā')*;
- 4) various formulae like *aṣḍarnā*, *ṣadarat*, *hādhihi al-mukātaba ...*

To each pattern and its subdivisions, a different address was fixed. The manuals used, to a certain extent, the various kinds of address like classifiers. The first pattern (*taqbīlu al-arḍ*) was divided into five levels:

67 At least, this was the situation when al-Qalqashandī was writing, and he indicates that this was recent (ibid. 229: *'alā mā istaqarra 'alayhi al-ḥāl ākhiran*), because earlier this function was graded at the fourth rank (ibid., 231: *wa-'alā dhālika kāna nāziru al-khāṣṣ fī al-zamāni al-mutaqaddim*).

68 Ibid. 229.

69 Ibn al-Qalqashandī, *Qalā'id al-jumān* fols. 130a–b, only lists eight levels for this rank, which probably reflects the evolution of the system during the decades that separate him from the practice in use during his father's life.

70 The other patterns were: 3) *al-abwāb bi-ghayr muṭāla'a*; 4) *al-bābu al-karīm*; 5) *yūqabbilu al-arḍ bi-l-maqarri al-sharīf*; 6) *yūqabbilu al-yada al-'āliya*; 7) *ḍā'afa Allāh ta'ālā ni'mata al-janābi al-'ālī*; 8) *adāma Allāh ta'ālā ni'mata al-majlisi al-'ālī*; and 9) *ṣadarat wa-l-sāmī*.

- a) *al-fulānī bi-muṭāla'a* because the address starts with the personal *laqab* of the addressee and ends with the word *muṭāla'a* followed by the word *al-mamlūk* and the name of the sender;<sup>71</sup>
- b) *al-abwābu al-karīma bi-muṭāla'a* because the addressee is referred to as *al-abwābu al-karīma* followed by his titles, an *invocatio*, and his function, and the address ends as above;
- c) *al-abwābu al-karīma bi-ghayr muṭāla'a* like b) but without any reference to the sender;
- d) *al-bābu al-karīm bi-ghayr muṭāla'a* like c) but with the reference to the addressee in the singular;
- e) *al-maqarru al-sharīf bi-ghayr muṭāla'a* like c) but the addressee is referred to through the title *al-maqarru al-sharīf*.

The main features of the *ikhwāniyya* letter corresponding to the first pattern (*taqbīl al-arḍ*), and as they were outlined by al-Qalqashandī and his son, were as follows.<sup>72</sup>

External features:

- a) Paper. Whatever the category of the *ikhwāniyya*, the paper format (*qaṭ'*) was of the regular type (*al-āda*), also called the small format (*al-ṣaghīr*), whether the report was produced in Egypt or Syria and whatever the level of the sender and addressee. Because the sultan wrote to his subjects on this format of paper, they were precluded from writing on a format larger than this one. The paper used is always the one produced locally (*baladī* for Egypt and *shāmī* for Syria).<sup>73</sup> For Egypt, the regular format (*qaṭ' al-āda*) was the smallest of all formats used by the chancery, excluding the one reserved to correspondence by carrier pigeons.<sup>74</sup> Its usage was restricted to the issue of the ordinary correspondence addressed by the sultan's chancery to the governors (*ḥukkām*) and the subjects of the sultanate, as

71 See Ibn al-Qalqashandī, *Qalā'id al-jumān* fol. 123a, where he added two levels superior to this one (*al-fulānī al-makhdūmī* and *al-fulānī al-akhawī*). This author witnesses that, in his time, the third level (*al-fulānī* alone) was considered the highest and he vilifies those who think like this, quoting his father in favor of his interpretation.

72 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* viii, 168–232; Anonymous, *Muzīl al-ḥaṣr* fols. 14b–34a; Ibn al-Qalqashandī, *Qalā'id al-jumān* fols. 122b–128a.

73 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* viii, 168–169; Anonymous, *Muzīl al-ḥaṣr* fol. 13a (*wa-ī'lam annahu yajibu al-tanbīh hunā li-umūr aḥaduhā anna jamī'a ahli al-mamlaka mimman yukātabu 'ani al-abwābi al-sultāniyya mimman yuktabu la-hu 'ani al-sultān yuktabu la-hu fī qaṭ'ī al-āda wa-huwa al-qaṭ'u al-ṣaghīr*).

74 In fact the latter consisted of a different kind of paper, very thin for obvious reasons, produced in Syria. See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* vi, 192.

well as the rulers of neighboring territories subjected to the sultanate,<sup>75</sup> and for the issue of the answers to petitions (*tawāqīʿ*) and the smallest of the rescripts (*marāsīm*).<sup>76</sup> For Syria, the regular format was similar to the Egyptian one except that the paper used was produced in Syria, and it was a prerogative of the governors of Damascus and al-Karak to make use of a red tinted variety.<sup>77</sup> As for Egypt, its usage was limited to the issue of the lowest level of answers to petitions and of rescripts, as well as to the ordinary correspondence addressed by the governors to the sultan and his subjects. It is thus not a surprise to learn that the regular format was the one most commonly used by the chancery of Cairo, in addition to the local ones.<sup>78</sup> As with most formats handled by the chancery, its size corresponded, according to al-Qalqashandī, to one-sixth of the *baghdādī* format, which was one of the largest sheets used by the chancery. As a matter of fact, the steward of the paper (*warrāq*), one of the functionaries working at the chancery, produced the various formats of scrolls requested according to the rules by cutting a sheet of the *baghdādī* format. The size of one sheet of paper (*wasl*) is always provided for the width that corresponded to the width of the scroll and in accordance with the cloth Egyptian cubit, a measurement of reference for cloth equivalent to 58.15 cm.<sup>79</sup> A sheet of the *baghdādī* format was one cubit wide (58.15 cm) and one cubit and one-half in length (87.225 cm). Consequently, the regular format (one-sixth of a cubit) had to be 9.69 cm wide.<sup>80</sup> Considering the documents identified as *mutālaʿāt*, we get the following measures: Vienna (10 cm); Venice and Ḥaram no. 600 (12.5 cm); Ḥaram nos. 841 and

75 This is how I interpret the passage: *wa-l-mukātabāt ilā ḥukkāmi al-bilād bi-l-mamālik*.

76 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* vi, 191.

77 Ibid. 192–193. This custom went back to the Ayyubid period. Fragments of documents written on red-colored paper are preserved in some of al-Maqrīzī's and al-Ṣafadī's holograph manuscripts where they were reused as scrap paper. On this practice, see Bauden, *The recovery of Mamlūk chancery documents*.

78 Al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaḡhr al-bāsim* ii, 550 (*wa-huwa akthar mā yustaʿmalu bi-l-dōwān*).

79 See Hinz, *Islamische Masse und Gewichte* 56; idem, *Dhirāʿ* 232. For Mamluk chancery paper formats, see Humbert, *Le Manuscrit arabe et ses papiers* 68–74 (Humbert relied on the measure of the Egyptian cubit given by Karabacek in 1887 as being almost 48.8 cm, which is erroneous).

80 However, a few decades later, al-Saḥmāwī, itemizing the various formats of paper found in the chancery, referred to the regular format as being almost one-fourth plus one inch (*qīrāt*) of the same measurement. Here we need to take into account a change that intervened, he says, from the middle of the fourteenth century, as, in his time, the standard sheet of paper had lost one current inch (*qīrāt dāʿir*). Al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaḡhr al-bāsim* ii, 550.



23 (13.5 cm); Ḥaram no. 599 (13.6 cm). With the exception of the Vienna item, which is close to the standard measure given by al-Qalqashandī, we notice that the average is 13 cm, a little less than one-third superior to the size provided by al-Qalqashandī. It is not possible to detail here the reasons why this happened, but this will be dealt with in a forthcoming study I have devoted to paper sizes and paper formats available in the Mamluk period.

- b) Script. A defined style of handwriting is applied to every paper format. For the regular format, the text was written in *riqāʿ* style.<sup>81</sup> Within this style, there remained the possibility of giving a thicker or thinner effect to the handwriting, and this varied according to the level of the addressee: if he was of a high level, the script would be given a thinner effect and the contrary for a person of a low level.<sup>82</sup> This practice was applied in agreement with the interlinear space (see below).
- c) Spaces. Given that the number of sheets (*waṣl*) in a scroll for letters sent in the name of the sultan was never fewer than two, the first one remaining blank, letters sent by his functionaries could not be fewer than that number. As a consequence, the *ikhwāniyyāt* letters were written on a scroll of at least three sheets.<sup>83</sup>

The first sheet, called *ṭurra*, remained blank.<sup>84</sup> By this, it was meant that the text of the letter began on the second sheet, but in fact the *ṭurra* did not remain blank, as the secretary wrote the address on the top of it, on the verso.

The secretary left a blank margin on the right of the scroll equivalent to one-fourth of the width of the sheet for this kind of document.<sup>85</sup> Here,

81 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* vi, 194; viii, 169; Anonymous, *Muzīl al-ḥaṣr* fol. 15a.

82 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* viii, 170; Anonymous, *Muzīl al-ḥaṣr* fol. 15b.

83 Obviously, it could be higher depending on the number of reports to be written. See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* viii, 169; Anonymous, *Muzīl al-ḥaṣr* fol. 15a.

84 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* vi, 195 (*al-mukātabātu al-ṣādira ʿan sāʾiri arbābi al-dawla miṣran wa-shāman yutraku fī jamīʿihā qabla al-basmala waṣl wāḥid faqaṭ wa-fī kitābati al-adnā ilā al-aʿlā yutraku baʿdu waṣl*); *ibid.* 314 (*mina al-nuwwāb wa-manḥi maʿnāhum takūnu waṣl wāḥid*); *ibid.* viii, 169 (*al-waṣlu al-abyaḍ fī aʿlā al-mukātaba*); Anonymous, *Muzīl al-ḥaṣr* fol. 15a.

85 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* viii, 169 (*yutraku li-l-kitāb ḥāshiya bayḍāʾ takūnu bi-qadri rubʿi al-darj*); Anonymous, *Muzīl al-ḥaṣr* fol. 15a. According to chancery practices, the size of the right margin was left to the secretary's discretion but it was never inferior to one quarter of the width of the sheet. See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* vi, 195. In another place, al-Qalqashandī reports on something he heard from a respectable secretary that the margin should be nearly one third (*ibid.* vi, 314), but this practice is not confirmed by him in the rest of his manual.

the margin measures roughly 3 cm, which tallies with this rule.

The interlinear space varied according to the level of the addressee. The higher he was, the narrower the space between lines. On the contrary, the interlinear space became wider if the level of the addressee was lower. The general effect given to the handwriting, which was always of the *riqā'* type, accorded with this practice.<sup>86</sup>

It happened that a report letter contained several pieces of information. In this case, it is stipulated that they must be separated one from another by a blank space equal to the width of a fingertip (*ra's iṣba'*).<sup>87</sup>

Between the sender's *laqab* or *laqabs* (*intitulatio*) placed under the *bas-mala* and the first line of the text, a space could be left blank according to the level of the addressee: no space in the case of the higher levels, a space of two fingers for the lowest. This space is called the *bayt al-'alāma* (in this particular case, the space left for the signature), though it remained blank when the rule was applied as the signature was in fact added by the sender in the right margin, in its upper part for the higher levels and in its lower part for the lower. This is seen as a mark of the sender's tactfulness with regard to the addressee.<sup>88</sup>

Internal features:

- a) the address was written on the verso of the first sheet (*turra*) of the scroll, at the top, in two parts:
  - 1) first, the identification of the addressee. Depending on the pattern applied, this could be done through his *laqab* (title) or an expression like *al-abwāb al-karīma al-'ālīya ... al-sayfiyya*. It was written on one line and beneath it, on one line, the identification (*ta'rīf*) of his function (*wazīfa*) or his status (*shuhra*) followed by an *invocatio* (*du'ā'*) separated from the previous by a small blank. This part of the address could not exceed one-quarter of the width of the sheet for the first line and two-thirds of the width of the sheet for the second line.
  - 2) second, the identification of the sender on two or three lines depending on the level of the addressee (i.e., whether the term *muṭā-la'a* was added or not). This part of the address could not go beyond one-third of the width of the sheet.<sup>89</sup>

86 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* viii, 170; Anonymous, *Muzil al-ḥaṣr* fol. 15b.

87 Anonymous, *Muzil al-ḥaṣr* fol. 14a.

88 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* viii, 170.

89 Ibid. 172–173; Anonymous, *Muzil al-ḥaṣr* fol. 16a; Ibn al-Qalqashandī, *Qalā'id al-jumān* fol. 123b.

The address may be represented as below for the level known as *al-fulānī bi-muṭālaʿa*, which tallies with the document studied here (see figs. 7.5 to 7.7):

مطالعة المملوك فلان	السينفي مولانا ملك الأمراء بالشام المحروس عز نصره
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- b) Once the address had been written, the scroll was turned over.
- 1) Then, the secretary wrote the *basmala* on the top of the second sheet and, just beneath it, the *intitulatio*, i.e., the title(s) of the sender (*laqab*) composed of two *laqabs* if he was one of the sultan's officeholders (*al-malākī al-muʿayyadī* if the sultan's title was al-Muʿayyad) or one *laqab* if he was one of an emir's officeholders (*al-ʿalāʾī* if his master's *laqab* was 'Alā' al-dīn), the whole starting between the *sīn* and the *mīm* of the first word of the *basmala*.
  - 2) The title of the addressee, limited to his personal *laqab*, was then inscribed in the right margin, on another line, in such a manner that the first half of the word was located in the right margin and the second half fell below the initial of the *basmala*.<sup>90</sup> This was applied only in the case of the first two levels of this pattern (*al-fulānī bi-muṭālaʿa* and *al-abwābu al-karīma bi-muṭālaʿa*).

This may be illustrated as follows for our type (see figs. 7.8 to 7.10):

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
الملكي الفلاني  
السينفي

- c) The letter could then be written, starting with the initial protocol that varied according to the patterns applied in compliance with the rank of the addressee:
- 1) *al-fulānī bi-muṭālaʿa*: *yuqabbilu al-arḍ wa-yunhī* without *invocatio* and praise (*thanāʾ*);
  - 2) *al-abwābu al-karīma bi-muṭālaʿa*: as above but with *invocatio* without praise;

<sup>90</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* viii, 174; Anonymous, *Muzil al-ḥaṣr* fol. 16b; Ibn al-Qalqashandī, *Qalāʾid al-jumān* fol. 124a.

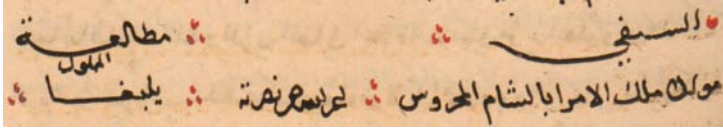


FIGURE 7.5 Anonymous, *Muzil al-ḥaṣr* fol. 16a

Note: The text reads on the right: *al-Sayfi / Mawlānā malik al-umarā' bi-l-Shāmi al-maḥrūs a'azza Allāh ta'ālā nuṣratahu*; on the left: *muṭāla'atu / al-mamlūk / Yalbugā*.

COURTESY OF STAATSBIBLIOTHEK ZU BERLIN—PREUSSISCHER KULTURBESITZ, ORIENTABTEILUNG, MS PETERMANN I 299

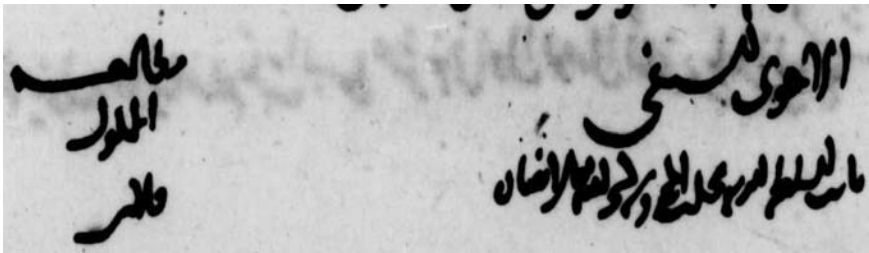


FIGURE 7.6 Ibn al-Qalqashandī, *Qalā'id al-jumān* fol. 123b

Note: The text reads on the right: *al-Akhawī al-Sayfi / nā'ibu al-salṭanati al-sharīfa bi-Ḥalaba al-maḥrūsa kaththara Allāh ta'ālā anṣārahu*; on the left: *muṭāla'atu / al-mamlūk / Fulān*.

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FIGURE 7.7 Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste, busta 180, fascicolo IX, no. 3

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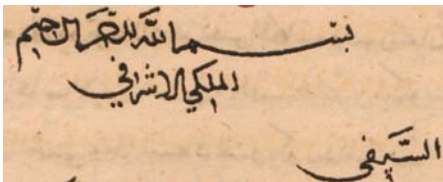


FIGURE 7.8

Anonymous, *Muzil al-ḥaṣr* fol. 16b

COURTESY OF STAATSBIBLIOTHEK ZU BERLIN—PREUSSISCHER KULTURBESITZ, ORIENTABTEILUNG, MS PETERMANN I 299

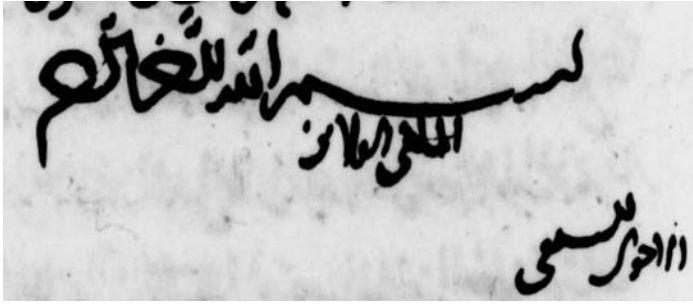


FIGURE 7.9 Ibn al-Qalqashandī, *Qalā'id al-jumān* fol. 124a  
COURTESY OF BRITISH LIBRARY, LONDON, MS OR. 3625

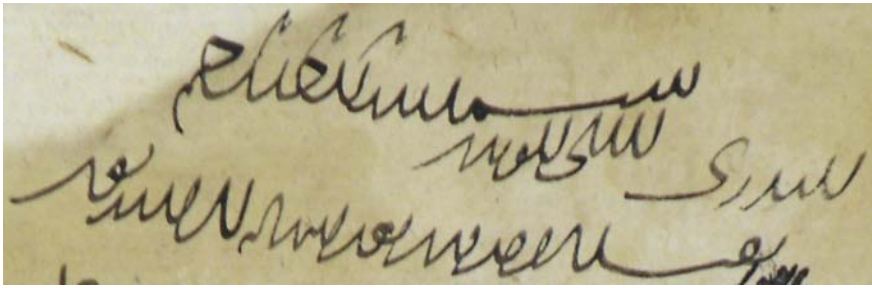


FIGURE 7.10 Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste, busta 180, fascicolo IX, no. 3  
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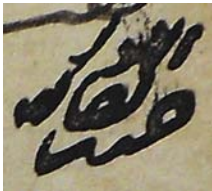


FIGURE 7.11  
Procuratori di San Marco, Commissarie miste, busta 180, fascicolo IX,  
no. 3  
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- 3) *al-abwābu al-karīma bi-ghayri muṭāla'a*: as above but with *invocatio* and praise with rhyme;
- 4) *al-bābu al-karīm bi-ghayri muṭāla'a*: as 3);
- 5) *al-maqarru al-sharīf bi-ghayri muṭāla'a*: *yuqabbilu al-arḍ bi-l-maqarri al-sharīf*.

The text ended with the formula *ṭāla'a bi-dhālīka* or *anhā dhālīka*.<sup>91</sup>

91 See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* viii, 172 (for the first level of the *taqbil al-yad: wa-yakhtimu al-kitāb bi-qawlihi anhā dhālīka aw ṭāla'a bi-dhālīka*); 175 (for the second level of the latter: *thumma yaqūlu ṭāla'a bi-dhālīka wa-l-ra'yu al-'ālī a'lāhu Allāh ta'ālā a'lā*); 177 (for

- d) The document was then submitted to the sender for his approval, and he added, in the right margin, his sign of validation (in this case his signature, *‘alāma*) on two lines composed of *al-mamlūk* on one line and his name (*ism*) on the second line. Depending on the level of the addressee, the signature was placed either at the height of the first word of the first line of the text (*yuqabbil*), so that the stroke of the *kāf* in the word *al-mamlūk* appeared under the *yā*’ of *yuqabbil*—as is the case here—or at the end of the text. He signed with a thin pen if the level of the addressee was elevated and with a thicker pen if the addressee was lower.<sup>92</sup> This may be depicted as follows for our document (see fig. 7.11):

(٣) يقبل الارض وينبي ...  
 المملوك  
 نصر الله  
 حسن بن

Our document roughly follows the rules provided by the chancery manuals mentioned, but it also demonstrates that some parts could be added by the sender depending on his level. In the case of the supervisor of the privy funds, the second part of the address dealing with the sender’s identification was added by him once the document was redacted and submitted for his approval, as is proven by the contrast one notices in the handwriting and the color of the ink. In this way, it served as an additional mark of validation.<sup>93</sup>

This kind of document was rolled up and wrapped in a narrow band of paper (called *quṣāṣa*) and glued at its extremity before being dispatched.<sup>94</sup>

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the third level of the latter: *ṭāla’a bi-dhālīka aw anhā dhālīka aw wa-l-mamlūk yasta’riḍu al-marāsīma al-‘āliya ...*). Al-Qalqashandī did not provide the concluding formulae for the other levels of this pattern or for the other patterns.

92 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a’shā* viii, 173; Anonymous, *Muzīl al-ḥaṣr* fol. 17a; Ibn al-Qalqashandī, *Qalā’id al-jumān* fol. 123b; Ibn al-Zāhirī, *Zubdat kashf al-mamālik* 101 (*‘alāmatu al-ikhwāniyya wa-ghayrihā al-mamlūk fulā[n] ṣaghīra jiddan tahta yuqabbilu*).

93 Quoting an earlier author still unidentified, Abū al-Faḍl al-Ṣūrī, al-Qalqashandī stated that the address of the letter issued by a bureau had to be penned by the person in charge of the bureau. In this way, he showed that he read the letter and approved its contents. See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a’shā* vi, 198. This practice, though referring to an earlier period, echoes the one observed in this document with regard to the second part of the address.

94 See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a’shā* vi, 357 (*wa-yakūnu dhālīka fī al-riqā’i al-ṣaghīra al-mutaraddida bayna al-ikhwān*).

Thanks to these details, it is possible to identify our document as an *ikhwāniyya* of the first pattern and, within this, as an example of the first classifier (*al-fulānī bi-muṭālaʿa*). As for all types of correspondence (caliphal or sultanian), the *ikhwāniyyāt* were divided into two main varieties: the inceptive letters (*ibtidāʿāt*) (i.e., letters that do not constitute an answer to a previous letter) and responses (*jawābāt*), the main difference between them lying in the fact that, in the response, reference had to be made to the arrival of the letter.<sup>95</sup> The analysis of our document demonstrates that it must be regarded as an inceptive letter.

Moreover, our study allows us to return to our initial question regarding the specificity of the *muṭālaʿa*. We have seen that the letters the viceroys, the governors, and the prefects of police sent to report everyday events to the sultan—thus to be considered as *sultāniyyāt* letters—were defined in the sources as *muṭālaʿāt*. This term was used to recall the formula *ṭālaʿa bi-dhālika* (exchangeable for *anhā dhālika*) with which these letters sent to the sultan concluded. The correspondence exchanged at the various levels of state by the officeholders, to the exclusion of the sultan—and thus viewed as *ikhwāniyyāt*—could also deal with similar matters. This category of letters shared some similarities with the *muṭālaʿāt* addressed to the sultan: format of paper, type of handwriting, shape of the document, address, etc. On the other hand, some of these (those exchanged by the highest ranks) also bore the term *muṭālaʿa* in the address, echoing here again the formula *ṭālaʿa bi-dhālika*, which concluded the text of the letter. Furthermore, Ibn al-Qalqashandī's treatise demonstrates that the *ikhwāniyyāt* of this type (at least those read aloud to the sultan) were also referred to as *muṭālaʿāt*.<sup>96</sup> As a result, letters of this kind (either *sultāniyyāt* or *ikhwāniyyāt*) were referred to as *muṭālaʿāt* through a “relative definition” (i.e., defined in relation) with this term used as a metonymy.

To conclude with this part, it may be said that the official correspondence exchanged by the various levels of the administration was known as *ikhwāniyyāt* provided that the addressee was not the sultan, in which case it fell in the category of the *sultāniyyāt*. Those correlated with the highest ranks, who used the pattern *taqbīl al-arḍ*, either addressed to the sultan or to an officeholder,

95 For the latter, see al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* viii, 212–217. Four levels are detailed, all of which are distinguished on the basis of the reference used to allude to the inceptive letter: 1) *al-mithālu al-karīmu al-ʿālī*; 2) *al-mithālu al-ʿālī*; 3) *al-musharrifa*; and 4) *al-mukātaba*.

96 Ibn al-Qalqashandī, *Qalāʿid al-jumān* fol. 124b: *wa-qurʿati al-muṭālaʿatu al-makhdūmiyya ʿalā al-masāmiʿi al-sharīfa* in an answer issued by the *dawādār* or *qaraʿa al-mamlūku al-muṭālaʿata al-makhdūmiyya ʿalā al-masāmiʿi al-sharīfa faṣṣan faṣṣan wa-aḥḥāṭati al-ʿulūmu al-sharīfa bi-maḍmūnihā fa-barazati al-marāsīmu al-sharīfa li-l-makhdūm bi-kadhā wa-kadhā* in an answer produced by the secretary of state.

were known through the technical term *muṭālaʿa*. Considering that both the sender and the addressee of our document belonged to one of the highest ranks of the administration, this letter must thus be considered as an *ikhwāniyya* which can also be held as a *muṭālaʿa*.

## 9 Historical Commentary

Thanks to the opulence of the sources for the Mamluk period, this document can be contextualized and interpreted quite exhaustively.

The *dramatis personae* are all well-known officials save for the prefect of police.

- a) The sender, whose identity is revealed by the document in the address and in the signature (*ʿālāma*), was Badr al-Dīn Ḥasan ibn Naṣr Allāh, a famous functionary who spent his whole life in the service of the Mamluk administration.<sup>97</sup> Born in 766/1365 in a family originally from Edku, but settled, for the previous two generations, in Fuwwa, he began his administrative career in Cairo, where he arrived at the estimated age of 35. He was soon transferred to Alexandria and then to his native town, Fuwwa, where he held various positions before coming back to the capital. At the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century, his career witnessed a major advance as he reached the highest levels of the administration, as supervisor of the privy funds, vizier, supervisor of the army, secretary of state, and majordomo. He sometimes combined two of these positions and held some of them at several times, as usual in this period. He died in 846/1442.

When this document was issued (16 Dhū al-Ḥijja 816/6 March 1414), he was supervisor of the privy funds (*nāẓir al-khāṣṣ*): he had been appointed to this position a few months before, on 8 Jumādā I 816/6 August 1413, after he had been dismissed from the charge of supervisor of the army.<sup>98</sup>

- b) The addressee's identity is provided both by the address and in the right margin on the verso, in what is for us a laconic way: al-Badrī. It would have been complicated to identify him if it were not for the high posi-

97 On him, see al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd* ii, 8–9 (no. 393); al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʿ al-lāmiʿ* iii, 130–131 (no. 505). On the family, see Martel-Thoumian, *Les Civils et l'administration* 213–225.

98 See al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk* iv, 264; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira* xiv, 8. The deed of his appointment (*taqlīd*) to the same position on 1 Ṣafar 824/5 February 1421 was composed by Ibn Ḥijja and is preserved in his *Qahwat al-inshāʿ*. See Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 324–327 (no. 88).



tion he held: viceroy of Alexandria. Between 816/1414 and 817/1415, the person who held this function was Badr al-Dīn Ḥasan ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ṭarābulusī, known as al-Amīr and Ibn Muḥibb al-Dīn, his father’s *laqab*.<sup>99</sup> As his *nisba* reveals, he was born in Tripoli, from a Christian father who had converted to Islam. His son started his career as secretary (*kātib al-sirr*) of that city, and this is where Badr al-Dīn became acquainted with the future sultan Shaykh who was the viceroy at that time. He struck up a strong relationship with him on that occasion and followed him during his ascension to power. On 8 Shawwāl 816/1 January 1414, Shaykh appointed him viceroy of Alexandria,<sup>100</sup> a position he did not manage to hold for a long time, as less than a year later, on 12 Ramaḍān 817/25 November 1414, he was called back to Cairo to serve as majordomo. Due to his misbehavior, he lost Shaykh’s support, and he was tortured to death in 824/1421.

- c) The letter was written with reference to two persons. The first of these was the prefect of police (*wālin*) of the port of Alexandria. The existence of this position is confirmed by al-Qalqashandī, who listed it among those which depended on the viceroy.<sup>101</sup> This author provides no example of a diploma of appointment for this office, which means he was designated by the viceroy, and his chancery was responsible for the issue of the diploma.<sup>102</sup> According to the letter, his name was Tāj al-Dīn Ibn Abī Bakr. However, none of the sources consulted provide a hint of any sort about his identity.
- d) The second person who is dealt with in the letter was the Venetian consul. This official was nominated by the Senate for a term of two years. Between 1412 and 1414, Pietro Trevisan was on duty. His designated successor, Bartolomeo Storlato, was about to reach the harbor with the spring *muda*, which traditionally left Venice in April or May.<sup>103</sup>

It is understood that the Venetians wrote to the supervisor of the privy funds to complain about the abuses they suffered from the prefect of police. The latter apparently prevented them from doing something they deemed important. The sultan answered their protest by issuing a rescript (*mithāl*), from which we know that the Venetians had submitted a petition to see their grievance redressed. The order consisted of a request to the viceroy of Alexandria to

99 On him, see the references quoted in ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *Les Gouverneurs d’Alexandrie* 145 (no. 59).

100 See al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk* iv, 272.

101 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a’shā* iv, 63.

102 See Müller-Wiener, *Eine Stadtgeschichte Alexandrias* 177.

103 See Ashtor, *Levantine trade in the later middle ages* 552.

investigate whether the prefect was still making nuisance, and if this was the case, he should take all possible measures to put an end to the prefect's behavior toward the Venetians. The viceroy was also asked to dismiss the prefect from his office and make him take an oath (*qasāma*), according to which he would refrain from seeking to regain his office. The oath was accompanied by a penalty of 1,000 dinars, which the former prefect should pay from his personal resources.<sup>104</sup> Our document consists of a letter addressed to the viceroy informing him of this order, asking him to execute it, and reminding him that the Venetians should be well treated.

Obviously, the document must be interpreted in light of the role played by the Venetians in terms of trade. The relations of the European merchants with the Mamluk power at the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century may be characterized as stormy. One of these merchants, Emmanuel Piloti, a contemporary of our document, witnessed the abuses and vexations (like being charged duties twice on the same merchandise) the merchants suffered at the hands of various categories of officials. The treaties concluded by the European rulers with the Mamluk sultans echo these troubles in various ways, and it is understood that each issue must be repeated from one treaty to another in order to secure that they were still in operation. From the Mamluk point of view, it appears al-Nāṣir Faraj had opted for a policy of confrontation with the Venetians, increasing the abuses.<sup>105</sup> When al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh ascended to the throne, the economic situation was bad, and it did not improve with the passing of time or, at least, as long as his rival, Nawrūz, ruled over Syria. Several military expeditions burdened the budget of the state. Al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh adopted a softer policy toward the Venetians, partly due to the receipt of a solemn embassy from Venice in May 1415.<sup>106</sup> On 17 September 1415, he renewed the earlier agreements and promised to enforce them and facilitate the freedom of trade.<sup>107</sup> Dated a year and a half earlier, our document testifies that this new policy was already being enacted. The importance of trade for the state revenues and particularly for the sultan himself is certainly one of the main reasons behind this. On the goods traded in Alexandria, duties were levied for

104 On this kind of oath with financial penalty, see Richards, *The qasāma in Mamlūk society*. A similar oath dated 822/1419 and regarding the interpreters working at the harbor in Alexandria is preserved in the State Archives in Venice and was published by the present writer: Bauden, *The role of interpreters in Alexandria*.

105 See Darrag, *L'Égypte sous le règne de Barsbay* 298.

106 See Ashtor, *Levantine trade in the later middle ages* 248.

107 For this treaty, see Thomas and Predelli, *Diplomatarium veneto-levantinum* ii, 309–315 (no. 168); Ashtor, *Levantine trade in the later middle ages* 248–251; Christ, *Trading conflict* 49–54.

the bureau of the privy funds (*dīwān al-khāṣṣ*). The revenues of this bureau were vital for the sultan as it enabled him, among many things, to supply arms and equipment for the military expeditions, the robes of honor for the officeholders, the funding of the postal service, etc.<sup>108</sup> Consequently, the taxes raised on the goods traded in Alexandria were essential to the sultan. Whenever the Venetians complained of ill-treatment and did not see any positive result, they could raise the specter of a trade embargo, which would have meant a significant economic loss to the Mamluks.<sup>109</sup> The secretary of the privy funds could not ignore this threat, and in this particular case, as probably in many others, he sought to avoid any confrontation. Our document is a valuable witness of this policy.<sup>110</sup>

108 See Ibn al-Zāhirī, *Zubdat kashf al-mamālik* 107–109. For the postal service, see al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaḡhr al-bāsim* i, 366.

109 As, for instance, in 1404, when the Venetian consul threatened that the merchants of his community would all leave Egypt if the bad treatment they received from the Egyptian authorities did not cease. See Ashtor, *Levant trade in the later middle ages* 247 (quoting the testimony of Piloti).

110 It is crucial to mention here that, on two occasions, Francisco Javier Apellániz Ruiz de Galarreta made reference to this document, dating it and interpreting its contents erroneously: Apellániz Ruiz de Galarreta, *Banquiers, diplomates et pouvoir sultanien*; idem, *Pouvoir et finance*. In the first of these publications (298, note 44), he dated the document to 3 Dhū al-Ḥijja 822 instead of 13 Dhū al-Ḥijja 816, making an anachronism because the governor of Alexandria in 822 was Nāṣir al-dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn al-‘Aṭṭār. Accordingly, letters addressed to him by the chancery bore the *laqab* al-Nāṣirī and not al-Badrī. In the second publication, which is based on his doctoral dissertation, he again refers to the document with the same incorrect dating, but more importantly, he uses it to argue a point of his theory though his understanding of the meaning of the document and of the persons involved is completely erroneous (73, note 85): “... lettre signée [sic] al-Badrī al-Malikī [sic] al-Mū‘ayyadī [sic], datée du 3 dhū-l-ḥiǧǧa 822 H. La lettre fut expédiée à l’occasion des problèmes suscités entre les autorités du port d’Alexandrie et les Vénitiens, en raison de l’exigence d’une «contribution» (*al-ṣadaqāt al-sharīfa*) de la part du sultan. Badr al-dīn Ḥasan expliqua au consul vénitien qu’il fallait redistribuer les pertes individuelles sur toute la communauté (... *wa aqarra ithbāt aḥad ‘anhum bi-ḥaithu yaǧbur bi-dhalika [sic] wa yanfaṣil bihi ...*, ibid. ligne 16).” Not only is Apellániz’s reading of line 16 a complete and unintelligible fabrication (it can be compared with my reading above, the validity of which is corroborated by other instances), but it is also used to sustain his interpretation of the said document and, consequently, confirm his theory. He also misunderstands the true meaning of *al-ṣadaqāt al-sharīfa*, as though *ṣadaqa* in this context was a financial contribution; he ignores the reality that this is a technical term that refers to the sultan’s answer to a petition.

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