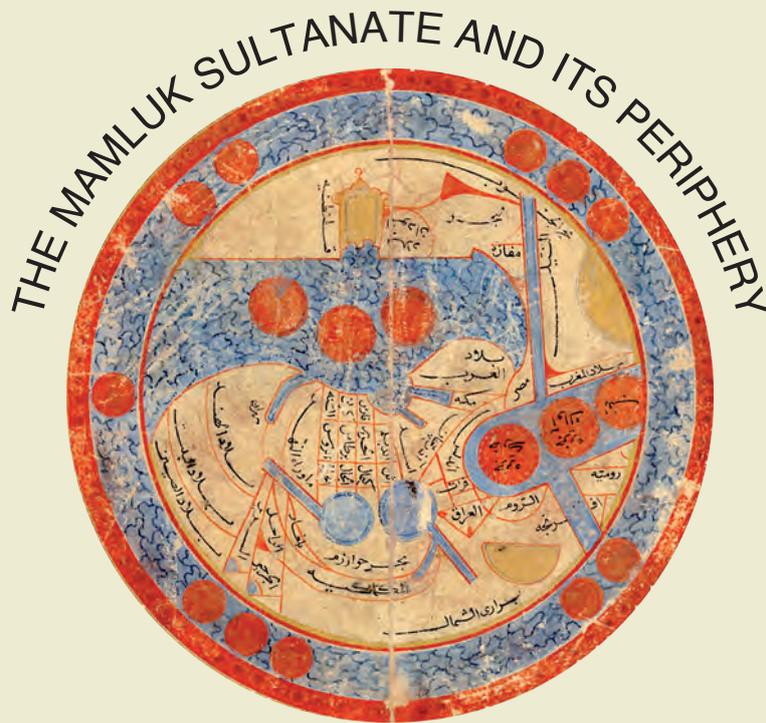


Association pour la **P**romotion de l'**H**istoire et de l'**A**rchéologie **O**rientales  
Université de Liège

*mémoires n° 14*



Edited by

Frédéric BAUDEN

PEETERS

## The Mamluk Sultanate and Its Periphery

Cover image: Representation of the world in a copy of Ibn al-Wardi's (d. after 822/1419)  
*Kharīdat al-'ajā'ib* (copy of the tenth/sixteenth c., private collection).

A.  
P.H.A.

Association pour la Promotion de l'Histoire et de l'Archéologie Orientales  
Université de Liège

*mémoires n° 14*



Edited by

Frédéric BAUDEN

PEETERS  
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In loving memory of  
Riccardo (1997–2022)



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This volume gathers a selection of papers presented during the first day of the second conference of the School of Mamlūk Studies that was held at Liège Université (June 25–8, 2015). Over the years, the School has proven to be successful at enabling all those interested in Mamluk studies to share and challenge ideas as well as new methods. From its inception, the annual conference has included an intensive course dedicated to a field or discipline rarely taught at universities, a day of panels based on themes, followed by two days<sup>1</sup> devoted to preorganized panels. The theme chosen for the second conference was “The Mamluk Sultanate and Its Periphery.” It attracted eleven papers; of these, seven were submitted for publication in this volume. In addition, an article by the editor of this volume was included, as it fits well into the theme, though it was written later and read on another occasion.<sup>2</sup>

The organization of the conference was made possible thanks to the generous financial support of various institutions. It is not only a duty, but above all a pleasure to express my deepest gratitude to them: first and foremost the Fonds de la recherche scientifique (F.R.S.-FNRS, Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles), then the Patrimoine and the Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres of Liège Université. Over the years, the collaboration with Marlis Saleh (University of Chicago) and Antonella Ghersetti (Ca’ Foscari University, Venice), co-founders and co-organizers of the School, has proven fruitful, effective, and, more than anything else, friendly. Their help and moral support on this occasion, and others, were essential. For practical matters, I also greatly benefited from the assistance of two of my former students: Élise Franssen, who was at the time a postdoctoral researcher at the F.R.S.-FNRS, and Alessandro Rizzo, who held a research fellowship from the same institution to complete his doctoral dissertation. During the conference, several colleagues kindly agreed to chair and participate as discussants in the sessions. I give them my warmest thanks for their time and efforts: Doris Behrens-Abouseif, Mounira Chapoutot, Antonella Ghersetti, Carole Hillenbrand, Yaacov Lev, Tetsuya Ohtoshi, Dwight Reynolds, and Marlis Saleh. Several colleagues also accepted the task of assessing the articles published here. Their work was generally under-appreciated,

---

<sup>1</sup> In the case of the second conference, the School was a victim of its own success: given the number of submissions and, in the absence of fair criteria to decline some of them, we had to make an exception and allow for a third day of panels.

<sup>2</sup> It was part of the panel “The Versatile Approach to the Diplomatic Dialogue” organized by Alessandro Rizzo for the Sixth Conference of the School of Mamlūk Studies (Waseda University, Tokyo, June 15–7, 2019).

as the blind peer review process is anonymous, preventing me from naming them here. I hope that these few words will suffice to express to them how much this volume owes to them. Last but not least, this volume would not exist without the trust the authors put in this endeavor. Their (almost) endless patience allowed me to overcome, with serenity and relief, many of the unexpected issues generated by the challenges the world faced over the last three years. Without their continuous support and understanding, this volume would not lie in the reader's hands.

The editor

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>EI<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition</i> , ed. C.E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2007), 11 vols.
<i>EQ</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān</i> , ed. J. Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2001–2006), 6 vols.
<i>IJMES</i>	<i>International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>
<i>ILS</i>	<i>Islamic Law and Society</i>
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal asiatique</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>JSAI</i>	<i>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</i>
<i>MSR</i>	<i>Mamluk Studies Review</i>
<i>REI</i>	<i>Revue des études islamiques</i>
<i>SI</i>	<i>Studia islamica</i>
<i>SIr</i>	<i>Studia iranica</i>
<i>WI</i>	<i>Die Welt des Islams</i>



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**YEMENI-EGYPTIAN DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES ABOUT THE  
MECCAN SHARIFATE**

**A RECONSTRUCTED RASULID LETTER ADDRESSED TO AL-MU'AYYAD SHAYKH  
IN 817/1415**

Frédéric BAUDEN

Moreover, no example of an original diplomatic letter has yet been identified in Yemeni archives or libraries. [...] The only surviving full-length epistolary testimonies are three copies of late documents from the Rasūlid Sultanate, preserved in non-Yemeni works dating from the early ninth/fifteenth century. [...] Three letters for 225 years of rule, the documentary haul is quite poor!<sup>1</sup>

## **1. Introduction**

The holograph manuscripts of the Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442) are now recognized as an unexpected repository of documents that were issued or received by the Mamluk chancery. So far, two studies have been published in which two kinds of documents were analyzed: a diploma granting land revenues to a Bedouin from al-Karak datable to 744/1344<sup>2</sup> and a Qara Qoy-unlu letter addressed to the Mamluk sultan datable to 818/1415.<sup>3</sup> These two documents reveal that al-Maqrīzī had access to two distinct sources of scrap paper: in the case of the first document, a family archives that was disposed of in the early ninth/fifteenth century, and for the second document, the Mamluk chancery or, rather, those working for it who disposed of diplomatic letters almost immediately after their receipt.<sup>4</sup> Among al-Maqrīzī's twenty-five holograph or autograph manu-

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<sup>1</sup> Vallet, Mūsā b. al-Ḥasan al-Mawṣilī 131–2 (“Plus encore, aucun exemple de lettre diplomatique originale n’a été pour l’heure repérée dans les fonds d’archives ou de bibliothèques yéménites. [...] Les seuls témoignages épistolaires intégraux ayant survécu sont trois copies de documents tardifs émanant du sultanat rasūlide, conservées dans des ouvrages non yéménites datant du début du ix<sup>e</sup>/xv<sup>e</sup> siècle. [...] Trois lettres pour 225 ans de règne, la moisson documentaire est bien maigre !”).

<sup>2</sup> Bauden, *The recovery*; Id., *Mamluk diplomatics* 10.

<sup>3</sup> Bauden, *Diplomatic entanglements*.

<sup>4</sup> It should be stressed that other fragments belong to a third source: documents related to al-

scripts identified so far, totaling 5,191 leaves, 616 fragments can be traced back to original documents.<sup>5</sup> This repository is unusual not only in its essence but also in the nature and contents of the documents partially preserved. The fragmentary documents published so far show that they were linked to dramatic events that render their survival in al-Maqrīzī's manuscripts even more thrilling. The eighth/fourteenth century diploma was delivered to a Bedouin in exchange for his betrayal of al-Nāṣir Aḥmad (d. 745/1344), the most maverick sultan the Mamluk sultanate ever counted, while the Qara Qoyunlu letter was related to a Timurid prince who had defected to the Qara Qoyunlu ruler. Far from being trivial, these written witnesses provide historians with tangible evidence and details regarding events reported by contemporary chroniclers through—sometimes biased—lenses.

In the present study, I tackle a group of other fragments all belonging to the same document that can be identified as a Rasulid letter dated 817/1415. Once again, the letter's contents relate to a critical event that had deep repercussions well beyond just the Mamluk-Rasulid sphere. It will also be seen that, contrary to the documents studied so far, the fragmentary state of the Rasulid letter is counter-balanced by the fact that a full copy of its text has been identified in a collection of documents composed by the secretary who was in charge of the composition of diplomatic letters and deeds at the time of its arrival in Cairo. Thus, in contrast to other fragments preserved in al-Maqrīzī's holograph manuscripts, those pertaining to the Rasulid letter can be placed in the correct order without recourse to complicated calculations.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, given our poor knowledge of Rasulid diplomatics, the fragments offer a unique opportunity to study elements related to the issuance of diplomatic letters in Yemen at the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century, like the support (paper), the calligraphy, the writing rules, the formulary, and so on.

## 2. Fragments of a Rasulid letter and its full copy

No fewer than twenty-two leaves (see figs. 9.17–38), containing a total of thirty-seven lines of text, are preserved in three holograph manuscripts (see table 9.3). Nineteen leaves can be found in two volumes of *al-Khabar 'an al-bashar* (henceforth *al-Khabar*). This six-volume work on pre-Islamic history was planned by al-Maqrīzī as an introduction to his biography of the Prophet entitled *Imtā' al-*

---

Maqrīzī's professional activities.

<sup>5</sup> See the list in Bauden, *Diplomatic entanglements* 412. Since the publication of this study, I gained access to the last manuscript of which I had no copy (Calcutta, The Asiatic Society, MS I 774) and at that time I did not know if al-Maqrīzī had used documents as scrap paper to produce it. It appears that it is only composed of blank paper. Thus, the total of the fragments (616) mentioned can be considered definitive pending the discovery of new holographs from this historian.

<sup>6</sup> See the method described in Bauden, *Diplomatic entanglements* 418–20.

*asmāʿ* which he completed at the very end of his life.<sup>7</sup> Of these nineteen leaves, two are in the first volume (MS Aya Sofya 3362, Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi) where they were foliated 142 and 143 respectively. The remaining seventeen leaves found their way to the fifth volume of the same work (MS Fatih 4340, Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi), where they are placed consecutively in what appears to be two quires, the first one corresponding to a quinion (fols. 115–24) and the second to a trinion (fols. 125–30) with one additional leaf inserted at the end (fol. 131) (see fig. 9.1). Finally, three more leaves were identified in MS Or. 1366c (Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek), which contains one part of *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr al-muqaffā li-Miṣr* (henceforth *al-Muqaffā*), a biographical dictionary of Egyptians—Egyptians being understood here in the widest sense, i.e., those who settled or passed through the country and played a role in its history.<sup>8</sup> These three fragments are separated from each other in the volume (fols. 20, 77, 103).

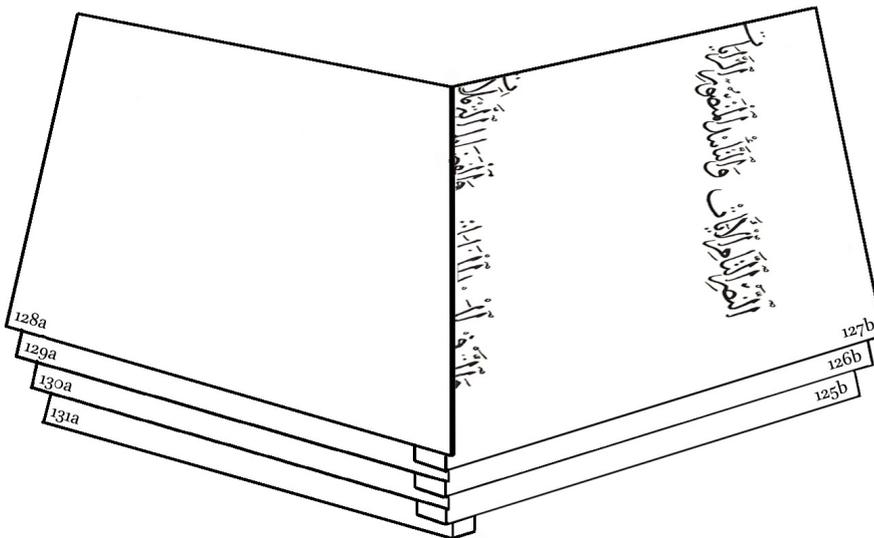


Figure 9.1: A composite quire (trinion with one additional folio)  
composed of single folios mounted on counterfoils  
ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS FATİH 4340, FOLS. 125b–31a

Scrap paper consisting of pieces of documents were reused by al-Maqrīzī in a manner that depended on the nature of the manuscript into which they were

<sup>7</sup> Al-Maqrīzī started to work on *al-Khabar* when he completed *Imtāʿ al-asmāʿ*, i.e., in 836/1433. He finished the draft of *al-Khabar* before 844/1440, which is the date of the fair copy of the first and the third volumes. See Bauden, Maqriziana XIV. It is worth noting that al-Maqrīzī died in Ramaḍān 845/February 1442.

<sup>8</sup> On this work, see Bauden, Maqriziana X.

inserted: in the case of notebooks and drafts, he used them in the form of quires, while for limited additions to fair copies, he favored single leaves.<sup>9</sup> This is the system that we observe here in part: the additions that needed to be made to the fair copy of *al-Muqaffā* were made on separate pieces of the document. As for *al-Khabar*, which is also a fair copy (datable to the year 844/1442), the situation is more complicated. In MS Aya Sofya 3362, two pieces of the document were inserted consecutively (fols. 142–3), the two pieces were detached and pasted one after the other on a counterfoil of the second. In fact, the text they contain is not an addition, rather it was a part of a previous draft dealing with a single subject (Shīth, i.e., Seth). Al-Maqrīzī probably found that this draft could be reused with limited additions, which he put in the margins and at the end of text. These additions to the draft section are clearly visible due to the change in al-Maqrīzī's handwriting.<sup>10</sup> The draft was obviously copied at a time when al-Maqrīzī was younger, while *al-Khabar*'s fair copy was carried out at the end of his life (al-Maqrīzī was 76 or 77 years old at that time).<sup>11</sup>

The same observation is true in relation to the other volume of *al-Khabar*, into which fragments of the document found their way. MS Fatih 4340 includes the largest number of reused leaves (seventeen) in two contiguous quires of unequal size (one quinion followed by one trinion with an additional folio). The two quires were filled with the text of a section covering the life of Alexander and Aristotle.<sup>12</sup> It is important to stress that the section ends with the second quire and is thus complete. If one looks at the handwriting in this section and compares it with what precedes and follows it in the same volume, one is struck by the discrepancy that characterizes the handwriting in this section: it dates from an earlier period. Here again, al-Maqrīzī reused a text that stems from a draft that he felt he did not need to modify substantially in order to recycle it for *al-Khabar*. Thus, he just extracted it from the draft and inserted it in his fair copy of this volume of *al-Khabar* (what could be defined nowadays as a copy-paste operation), limiting his interventions to some marginal additions.

In conclusion, the presence of quires made from a reused document in this fair copy does not contradict the statement made above: separated fragments were used in fair copies while full quires were limited to drafts. A close examination of

<sup>9</sup> Bauden, *Diplomatic entanglements* 418.

<sup>10</sup> Compare the text on fols. 142 and 143 (see figs. 9.37 and 9.30).

<sup>11</sup> For the differences noted in al-Maqrīzī's handwriting over the years, see Bauden, *Maqriziana* XV.

<sup>12</sup> This section was edited and translated. See al-Maqrīzī, *al-Maqrīzī's al-Ḥabar* 236–331. The text regarding Aristotle is in fact almost completely copied from a résumé al-Maqrīzī took from Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a's *'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'* in his notebook preserved in Liège, MS 2232 (Bibliothèque ALPHA), fols. 4a–31b (Aristotle's biography is found on fols. 22b–26b). See Bauden, *Maqriziana* I 29–33 and al-Maqrīzī, *al-Maqrīzī's al-Ḥabar* 10.

the additional leaves in both volumes of *al-Khabar* reveals that we have a text that was copied several years before the redaction of *al-Khabar*, as corroborated by the differences in the handwriting; this means that al-Maqrīzī recycled a full section from the draft of a different text because he considered that it did not need to be reworked.

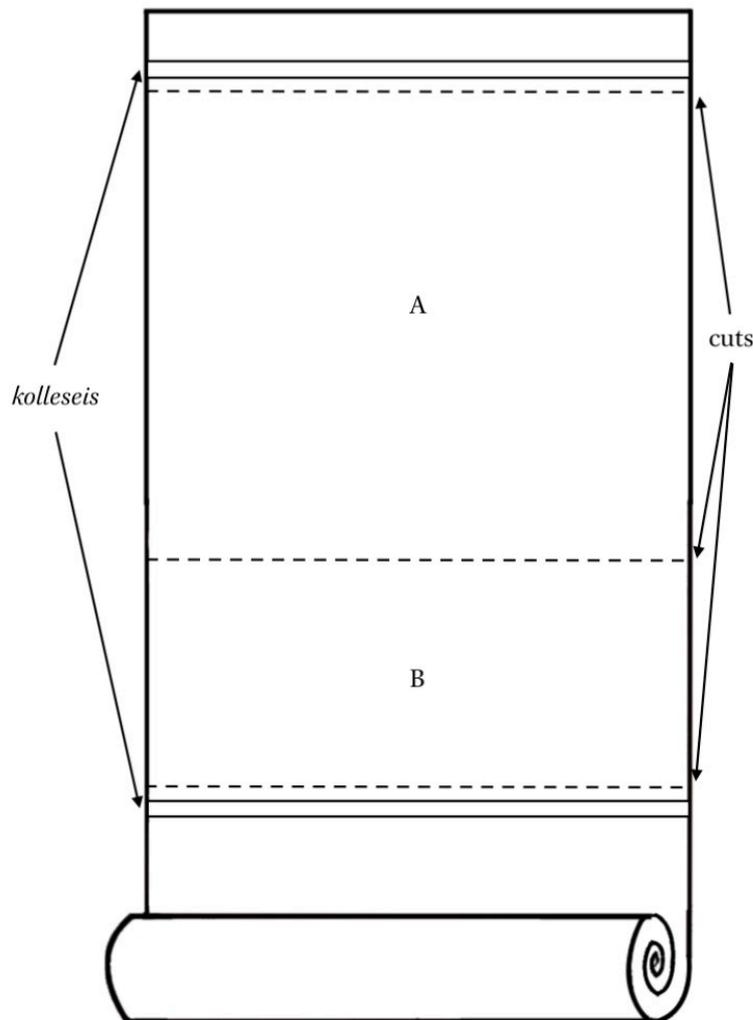


Figure 9.2: Representation of a roll with indication of the *kolleseis* and the places where the document was cut. The fragments obtained allowed al-Maqrīzī to reuse the first as a bifolio (A) and the second as a small sheet (B)

The composition of the quires also reveals how al-Maqrīzī reused the document. In the case of the quinion in MS Fatih 4340 (fols. 115–24), al-Maqrīzī took fragments that corresponded to the size of a bifolio that could then be folded in

two. As a consequence, the inscriptions of the original document run from one side of the bifolio to the other. The bifolio placed in the middle of the quire (fols. 119b–120a) thus shows three continuous lines (see figs. 9.17–8). With regard to the second quire in the same manuscript (fols. 125–31), a trinion with one additional folio, the situation is completely different as it shows that al-Maqrīzī reconstructed bifolia with fragments of the size of one folio. For this, he used fragments slightly longer, which offered some space (a counterfoil) to paste the other folio in order to form a bifolio (see fig. 9.34). In some cases, the inscription of the original text lies in this space and can be partly deciphered if unstuck (fol. 128b; see fig. 9.35). The reason for this discrepancy between full and reconstructed bifolia must be established from the original document.

Being in the form of a roll composed of sheets glued one below the other over a small surface (roughly half a centimeter)—the joining section (overlap) is called *kollesis*—, the document was cut into pieces to match a bifolio of a standard size for al-Maqrīzī’s manuscripts. What was left of the original sheet in the roll up to the *kollesis* was too small to fit the size of a single folio (see fig. 9.2). Al-Maqrīzī could still reuse these fragments for other purposes though.<sup>13</sup> Beside these, al-Maqrīzī also cut some fragments that coincided with the size of a single folio, and left some of them a bit longer in order to get the counterfoil on which to paste another fragment to form a bifolio. This practice explains why none of the fragments have a *kollesis*: al-Maqrīzī clearly disposed of this part of the document because it would have made the surface uneven and his reed pen could have been snagged, causing an outpouring of ink and a stain.

The twenty-two leaves can be singled out as belonging to the same document on the basis of several internal (textual) and external (codicological, paleographic, diplomatic) characteristics they all share, as in the case of the other two documents reconstructed so far.<sup>14</sup> These characteristics include the paper, the ink, the writing, the interlinear space, the width of the right margin, and finally the text. The analysis of all these elements together is decisive if one wants to identify the nature, the issuer, and the addressee of the document. If essential sections of the text have been preserved, they allow a very precise contextualization of the document thanks to the use of contemporary or later sources. In the case of the document that is at the core of this study, a stroke of luck greatly facilitates our task: the full text of the document was copied by a contemporary key actor within the Mamluk chancery.

The person in question is none other than Ibn Ḥijja (d. 837/1434), the famous belletrist who filled the position of composition secretary (*munshi*’) in charge

<sup>13</sup> For instance, as slips to be pasted in the margin, near the spine, as evidenced by other examples in his holographs. None of those slips could be identified as belonging to our document though.

<sup>14</sup> See Bauden, *The recovery* 61–2; Id., *Diplomatic entanglements* 416–20.

of the redaction of the sultan's correspondence and some other categories of official documents.<sup>15</sup> Active at the state chancery between al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh's accession to the throne (r. 815–24/1412–21) and his dismissal around 827/1424, he later gathered his documentary production in a collection entitled *Qahwat al-inshā'*, in which he took note of the letters received from foreign rulers and his answers to them and other deeds.<sup>16</sup> Thanks to his work, we know that the letter, of which twenty-two fragments were singled out in three volumes of al-Maqrizī's holographs, was issued by the chancery of the Rasulid sultan of Yemen, al-Ashraf Aḥmad (r. 803–27/1400–24). Ibn Ḥijja took a copy of it upon its arrival in Cairo and later penned the answer that he composed at the request of the chief secretary.<sup>17</sup> Compared with the partially accessible original, his copy proves to be a faithful, verbatim reproduction. The existence of the full text of the Rasulid letter relieves us from the burden of painstakingly reconstructing the original letter on the basis of the characteristics identified above. Nevertheless, these characteristics prove essential for the study of Rasulid diplomatics of which almost nothing is known.

### 3. Rasulid diplomatics

In his assessment of the diplomatic letters exchanged by the Rasulids and the Mamluks of which we are aware, as quoted at the beginning of this study, Vallet stressed the imbalance that characterizes the Rasulid side: just three letters addressed by the sultans of Yemen to their Mamluk counterpart could be identified in Mamluk sources and none have been found in Yemeni sources. Of these three letters, all datable to the very end of the eighth/fourteenth and beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century, none is an original.<sup>18</sup> As shown, our fragmentary letter corresponds to one of these three letters already listed by Vallet. Though it does not expand the list, at least it provides us with the first example of an original—be it fragmentary—letter, the existence of which Vallet so rightly lamented. The almost total absence of original documents or copies further complicates our understanding of Rasulid diplomatics as, contrary to the Mamluk side, almost nothing is known of the practices followed by the Rasulid chancery due to the lack of chancery manuals and collections of letters. In what follows, I review the few elements about diplomatic practices that can be garnered from Yemeni and Mamluk

<sup>15</sup> On him see below, section 5.1.

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk*. On this work, see Veselý, Ein Kapitel; Id., Eine Stilkunstschrift; Id., Eine neue Quelle.

<sup>17</sup> The Rasulid letter bears no. 39 in Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 162–6, and the answer is no. 40 in *ibid.* 167–71.

<sup>18</sup> Vallet, Mūsā b. al-Ḥasan al-Mawṣili 131–2. The three letters are listed in Vallet, Diplomatic networks 586. The third letter is only partially preserved as it is an extract quoted by a contemporary source. On the Rasulid archives, see Vallet, Décrire et analyser.

sources, and then compare these elements with what we can conclude from the fragments of the letter in this respect.

In his encyclopedic chancery manual, al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418) gives a precious clue to start our investigation of the Rasulid chancery practices. Describing the rules followed by the Rasulid chancery when it addresses letters to the Mamluk sultan, he underlines that the Rasulid sultan's correspondence adopted the Egyptian chancery's usages for its correspondence with the sultan.<sup>19</sup> In other words, the Rasulid secretaries imitated the rules applied by their Mamluk peers. Al-Qalqashandī's depiction of the Rasulid chancery's usages with regard to the Mamluk sultan is quite helpful not least because he is contemporary with our fragmentary letter.

All in all, al-Qalqashandī's comment regarding the dependency of the Rasulid chancery rules on the Cairene ones is not surprising. One should not forget that the Rasulid dynasty was founded in 626/1229 by a prominent member of the army of the last Ayyubid sultan in Yemen. From 569/1174, the country had been under the control of an Ayyubid branch. The Rasulids thus inherited a system of government that had strong ties with the two main Ayyubid branches that ruled over Syria and Egypt and contributed to the development of chancery rules in these regions. Another reason that explains the dependence of the Rasulid chancery on the Egyptian one can be found in an event that took place roughly three decades after the establishment of the Rasulid dynasty. Once it managed to impose its control over vast areas of the country, the second sultan, al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf I (r. 647–94/1250–95), received, in 660/1262, an Egyptian who had come from Cairo after a quarrel. His name was Mūsā b. Ḥasan al-Mawṣilī and he was the son of a secretary working for sultan Baybars' chancery. The Rasulid sultan seized the occasion and appointed him head of his chancery. Al-Mawṣilī remained in this position until his death some forty years later (d. 699/1300).<sup>20</sup> Beside his activity as composer of diplomatic letters, particularly those addressed to the Egyptian sultans, he also authored a book, entitled *al-Burd al-muwashshā fī ṣinā'at al-inshā'*, in which he gathered some rules regarding the composition of letters.<sup>21</sup> Though not comparable to the Egyptian manuals of the eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth century, the work offers insightful recommendations on the way to use formulas and titles according to the rank of the addressee.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, unlike its Egyptian successors, examples of full models of letters are lacking. Be that as it may, it can be established that al-Mawṣilī played a decisive role in developing and

<sup>19</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* viii, 72 (rasm al-mukātabāt al-wārida 'an ṣāhib al-Yaman ilā hādhihi al-mamlaka: wa-'ādat mukātabatihi an yaḥdhuwa ḥadhw al-diyār al-miṣriyya fima yuktab ilayhi 'anhā).

<sup>20</sup> His short biography is found in Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Durar al-kāmina* v, 145 (no. 4878).

<sup>21</sup> The text was published in 1990. See al-Mawṣilī, *al-Burd al-muwashshā*.

<sup>22</sup> The work was the object of a thorough study by Vallet, Mūsā b. al-Ḥasan al-Mawṣilī.

enhancing the Rasulid chancery on the basis of the Egyptian practices which he probably learned from his father. Less than fifty years after al-Mawṣilī's death, this state of affairs led Ibn Faḍl Allāh (d. 749/1349) to describe the organization of the Rasulid branches of government (viceroy, vizier, chamberlain, secretary, etc.) as similar to those of the Egyptian system.<sup>23</sup>

### 3.1. Mamluk chancery rules regarding correspondence with the Rasulid sultan

Taking into account these assessments regarding the replication of Egyptian chancery practices, any study aiming to understand the diplomatic rules at play when the Rasulid sultan addressed a letter to his Egyptian counterpart should clearly take into consideration the Egyptian rules applied for the same purpose. In fact, such an approach is indispensable in light of the nearly total lack of information on these issues on the Rasulid side. Fortunately, copies of no fewer than thirteen letters addressed by Mamluk sultans to their Rasulid counterpart have been preserved.<sup>24</sup> At the end of the presentation of the Egyptian rules, we are able to proceed to a comparison with the little we know for the Rasulid side and what can be observed in the evidence at hand, i.e., the copies of the three Rasulid letters preserved and the fragments that are the object of our study.

In the field of Mamluk diplomatics, and more particularly of letters addressed to foreign rulers, a few basic elements need to be contemplated in relation to the status the chancery recognized for a given addressee. The status determined a series of very rigid non-textual and textual—external and internal—elements that conveyed to the addressee a symbolic message beyond the factual message transmitted in the text itself. According to the status of a recipient, a specific format of roll was selected, a roll for which width was the distinctive element. The higher the status, the wider the roll. From this format resulted a cascade of other textual and non-textual rules.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ibn Faḍl Allāh, *Masālik al-absār* iv, 17 (wa-bi-l-Yaman arbāb waḏāʿif min al-nāʿib wa-l-wazīr wa-l-ḥājib wa-kātib al-sirr wa-kātib al-jaysh wa-dīwān al-māl wa-bi-hā waḏāʿif al-shādd wa-l-wilāya ʿalā mā qaddamnā dhikrahu min annahu yatashabbah bi-l-aḥwāl al-miṣriyya); al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* v, 34 (repetition of Ibn Faḍl Allāh's words). See also al-Fifi, *al-Dawla al-rasūliyya* 219–26 for a brief account of the Rasulid chancery.

<sup>24</sup> See the list in Vallet, *Diplomatic networks* 585. Vallet lists thirteen letters but one is a safe-conduct and is not considered here. Moreover, one letter mentioned by Vallet is only available in a very short extract (a few words). Thus, it is disregarded here too. But we still have thirteen letters, as two additional letters of which Vallet was not aware have been identified. The first one is datable to 705/1305–6 and is available in a still unpublished manuscript: Shāfiʿ b. ʿAlī, *Sīrat al-Nāṣir Muḥammad* 48a–54a. The second one is dated 15 Ṣafar 796/20 December 1393 and is also found in an unpublished manuscript: al-Ḥalabī, *al-Tibyān* 16b.

<sup>25</sup> For a brief presentation, see Bauden, *Mamluk diplomatics* 47–54.

Beyond the width of the roll, a number of external features were impacted by the addressee's status: the calligraphic style, the number of sheets left blank at the beginning of the roll (*turra*), the interlinear space, and the width of the right margin. As for the internal features, these were the sultan's signature (*'alāma*), the address (*inscriptio*) composed of the opening formula (*iftitāḥ*) and the honorific titles (*alqāb*), the proem (*arenga*), and the preamble (*narratio*). Let us now consider each of these elements on the basis of the information provided by the various Mamluk authors who wrote manuals, each taken in chronological order.

### 3.1.1. External features

#### 3.1.1.1. Format

The only clear indication regarding the format of the roll, i.e., its width, is given by Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh (d. 786/1384), who was active at the Mamluk chancery during the third quarter of the eighth/fourteenth century. According to him, the format used for the Rasulid sultan was the half one (*qaṭ' al-niṣf*).<sup>26</sup> In an anonymous handbook entitled *Muzīl al-ḥaṣr fī mukātabāt ahl al-‘aṣr* and composed at the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century, an incongruous format is mentioned: the two-third format.<sup>27</sup> This contrasts with what we know of the status granted to the Rasulids by the Mamluk chancery: on a scale of four categories, each subdivided into various levels, the Rasulids belonged to the second category and, within this category, to the second of four levels. Letters addressed to rulers of the second category were written on rolls of the half format.<sup>28</sup> Ibn Ḥijja, who penned the answer to our fragmentary letter of which he provides a complete copy in his *Qahwat al-inshā'*, confirms this piece of data.<sup>29</sup> The information found in *Muzīl al-ḥaṣr* should thus be disregarded.<sup>30</sup> The width of a roll of the half format measured about 290 mm.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh, *Tathqīf al-Ta'rif* 25 (wa-rasm al-mukātaba ilayhi fī qaṭ' al-niṣf). This is confirmed by another contemporary account: al-Ḥalabī, *al-Tibyān* 4a (Ṣāḥib al-Yaman fī qaṭ' al-niṣf).

<sup>27</sup> Anonymous, *Muzīl al-ḥaṣr* 6b (wa-in kāna al-maktūb ilayhi mimman yuktab ilayhi ‘an al-sultān fī qaṭ' al-thulthayn ka-ṣāḥib al-Yaman kutiba ilayhi fī qaṭ' al-thulthayn). On this handbook, see Bauden, *Mamluk diplomatics* 35.

<sup>28</sup> See Dekkiche, *Diplomatics* 208 (table 3.9) and 201 (table 3.4).

<sup>29</sup> Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 167 (wa-katabtu al-jawāb ‘an al-mukātaba al-madhkūra fī qaṭ' al-niṣf).

<sup>30</sup> The author is mainly concerned with the issuance of the *ikhwāniyyāt* (official communication between functionaries) and is not necessarily an expert in diplomatic letters. On the *ikhwāniyyāt* in the Mamluk period, see Bauden, *Ikhwāniyyāt* letters.

<sup>31</sup> The width of the full sheet from which the halves were made was roughly 580 mm. See Bauden, *Mamluk diplomatics* 49.

### 3.1.1.2. *Calligraphic style*

Among the various calligraphic styles used by the chancery for the issuance of documents, the *thulth* was the writing style chosen for the half format of the roll. In the first half of the eighth/fourteenth century, the secretary resorted to two types of *thulth* depending on the nature of the document: the majestic or thick form (*al-kabīr* or *al-thaqīl*) and the light one (*al-khafīf*).<sup>32</sup> At the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century, as stated by al-Qalqashandī, only the light version was used for the half format, the thick version being reserved for the two-third format.<sup>33</sup> When Ibn Hījja penned the sultan's answer to the Rasulid letter preserved in fragments in al-Maqrīzī's holographs, he applied the *thulth* style without specifying the version, but there is no reason to challenge al-Qalqashandī's statement because he was contemporary with our document. As a consequence, Ibn Hījja should have issued the letter with the light version of the *thulth*. The difference between the two versions of this writing style only lay in the size of the letters, which were thinner and a bit smaller in the light version.<sup>34</sup>

### 3.1.1.3. *Ṭurra*

The number of sheets that had to be left blank at the very beginning of the scroll, before writing the text of the letter at the beginning of the sheet that followed these blank sheets called *ṭurra*, also depended on the format of the roll, at least until a certain period. In the case of letters of the half format, al-Qalqashandī mentions two contradicting numbers: four or three,<sup>35</sup> the second number corresponded more to reality, as he insists that this was the practice in his time.<sup>36</sup> As stressed by Dekkiche, the number of blank sheets in the *ṭurra* relied more, in al-Qalqashandī's period, on the type of the sultan's signature than on the format of the roll.<sup>37</sup> We will see that the sultan's signature for the Rasulid sultan was *akhūhu* which required a *ṭurra* composed of three blank sheets.

### 3.1.1.4. *Interlinear space*

The space left blank between two lines of text, starting from the third line,<sup>38</sup> also varied depending on the format of the roll. For the larger formats, to

<sup>32</sup> Ibn Faḍl Allāh, *al-Ta'rif* 126.

<sup>33</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* iii, 52 and 104.

<sup>34</sup> If the standard for the longest and highest letters in the thick version was of seven points traced one next to the other, it was of five points in the light version. Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* iii, 104.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. vi, 195 and 314.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. vi, 314 (al-muṣṭalaḥ 'alayhi fī zamāninā anna al-mukātabāt al-ṣādira 'an al-sulṭān takūn al-ṭurra fihā mā bayna thalāthat awṣāl ilā waṣlayn).

<sup>37</sup> Dekkiche, *Diplomatics* 201.

<sup>38</sup> The first line corresponds to the *basmala* and was immediately followed by the second line, with no interlinear space. The third line was written at the end of the sheet, leaving a large

which belonged the half one, the recommended interlinear space had to correspond to three fingers (*iṣbaʿ*), i.e., between 60 and 70 mm.<sup>39</sup> But al-Qalqashandī underlines that in his time the practice was to determine the interlinear space by the number of lines of text that were allowed for each sheet. In the case of the larger formats, only two lines could be written on one sheet.<sup>40</sup>

### 3.1.1.5. *Right margin width*

The space left blank to the right of the text, called the right margin, was generally left to the judgment of the scribe who penned the letter. Al-Qalqashandī nevertheless recommended that the width of this margin correspond to one-third or one-fourth of the width of the roll.<sup>41</sup> As a consequence, its size varied according to the format. In the case of the half format, the right margin measured approximately 90 or 70 mm depending on the fraction observed (one third or one fourth).

### 3.1.2. *Internal Features*

#### 3.1.2.1. *Sultan's signature*

Once the letter had been prepared, the sultan's signature was added in the space reserved for it (*bayt al-ʿalāma*), i.e., between the second and the third line. The signature consisted of four types, each corresponding to one of the four levels of status recognized by the Mamluk chancery. These were, in descending order, the *ṭuḡhrā* (a kind of convoluted signature including the sultan's titles and name), *akhūhu* (his brother), *wāliduhu* (his father), the sultan's name.<sup>42</sup> With the exception of the first, which was penned by a secretary specifically appointed for this task, the three remaining types were written by the sultan himself. In the case of the Rasulid sultan, the sultan's signature was *akhūhu* (his brother), thus in line with the second level attributed by the Mamluk chancery to the Rasulids. This is confirmed by Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh, al-Ḥalabī, and Ibn Ḥijja.<sup>43</sup>

#### 3.1.2.2. *Address*

The secretaries chose the initial words of the letter, just after the *basmala*, according to a scale that was determined once again by the addressee's status which was further strengthened by the honorific titles composed of a combination of two parts: first the title, then the epithets. The titles were in descending order:

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space between it and the second line which was reserved for the sultan's signature (*bayt al-ʿalāma*). Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* vi, 196.

<sup>39</sup> One finger measured either 2.078 or 2.252 cm. See Hinz, *Islamische Masse* 54.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* vi, 196. See also *ibid.* vi, 314.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* vi, 195 and vi, 314.

<sup>42</sup> See Dekkiche, *Diplomatics* 206–7.

<sup>43</sup> Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh, *Tathqīf al-Taʿrīf* 25 (*wa-l-ʿalāma akhūhu*); al-Ḥalabī, *al-Tibyān* 4a (*akhūhu*); Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 167 (*al-ʿalāma akhūhu*).

*al-ḥaḍra*, *al-maqām*, *al-maqarr*, *al-janāb*, *al-majlis*, while the epithets were *al-ashraf*, *al-sharīf*, *al-‘ālī*, *al-karīm*, *al-sāmī*. Al-Qalqashandī’s chancery manual shows some evolution in this respect with regard to the Rasulid sultans, an assessment that is not surprising given that the addressee’s status could evolve over a long period of time depending on the circumstances.<sup>44</sup> Tab. 9.1 summarizes this evolution.

At the beginning of the Mamluk sultanate, the title attributed to the Rasulid sultan tallied with an inferior status (*al-maqarr*). As indicated by the second line in the table, this status had been raised to *al-maqām* by the time of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn’s reign. The secretary Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir (d. 692/1293) confirms that this decision was taken by Qalāwūn’s predecessor, al-Zāhir Baybars (r. 658–76/1260–77), when the latter received, in 666/1268, an embassy from the Rasulid sultan asking for the acknowledgment of his authority with the formal dispatch of a diploma (*taqlīd*).<sup>45</sup> This embassy helped to normalize relations between the two powers, hence its significance and the reason the Rasulid sultan was elevated to a higher status; this did not change until the end of the dynasty, as the title *al-maqām* found in all subsequent examples confirms. With only one exception, the introductory words (*a‘azza Allāh*) did not vary during the whole period. The four letters that Ibn Ḥijja composed during the reigns of three sultans corroborate this assessment for the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century<sup>46</sup>

Table 9.1: Evolution of the opening formula and honorific titles in the address used for the Rasulid sultan (mid-seventh–mid-eighth/mid-thirteenth–mid-fourteenth century)

Opening formula and honorific titles	Period	Sources
<i>a‘azza Allāh ta‘ālā anṣār al-maqarr al-sharīf al-‘ālī</i>	al-Muẓaffar Quṭuz (r. 657–8/1259–60)	al-Qalqashandī, <i>Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā</i> vii, 360 <sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> See the enlightening example analyzed by D’hulster, Fixed rules.

<sup>45</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *al-Rawḍ al-zāhir* 290 (wa-rasama al-sultān bi-an yukātab bi-l-maqām al-‘ālī al-mawlawī al-sultānī). The author also stresses that Baybars referred to himself in his correspondence with the Rasulid sultan by using the term *al-mamlūk* (wa-kātabahu al-sultān bi-l-mamlūk). Vallet, Du système mercantile 282, misunderstood this passage as he interpreted it to mean that Baybars’s signature was *al-mamlūk*. The practice was still followed by Baybars’ successors: Qalāwūn in four letters (al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā* vii, 354 [*saṭṭara al-mamlūk*], 357 [*al-mamlūk yakhdum*], and 366 [*al-mamlūk yakhdum*]; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh* vii, 223 [*al-mamlūk yakhdum*]); al-Ashraf Khalīl in one letter (al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā* vii 366 [*al-mamlūk yakhdum*]), and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in one letter (Shāfi‘ b. ‘Alī, *Sīrat al-Nāṣir Muḥammad* 48b [*al-mamlūk yakhdum*]).

<sup>46</sup> All start with *a‘azza Allāh ta‘ālā anṣār al-maqām al-‘ālī*. Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 63, 167, 346, and 411.

<sup>47</sup> In the title introducing this formula, al-Qalqashandī makes a mistake in referring to the honorific title as being *al-maqām*, while the letter that he quotes to exemplify this formula

<i>a'azza Allāh ta'ālā nuṣrat al-maqām al-'ālī</i>	al-Mansūr Qalāwūn (r. 678–89/1279–90)	al-Qalqashandī, <i>Ṣubḥ al-a'shā</i> vii, 353, 357, 366; Ibn al-Furāt, <i>Tārikh</i> vii, 223
<i>a'azza Allāh ta'ālā anṣār al-maqām al-'ālī</i>	al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 698–708/1299–1309)	Shāfi' b. 'Alī, <i>Sīrat al-Nāṣir Muḥammad</i> 48a
<i>adāma Allāh ta'ālā ni'mat ayyām al-maqām al-'ālī</i>	al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 709–741/1310–41)	al-Qalqashandī, <i>Ṣubḥ al-a'shā</i> vii, 344
<i>a'azza Allāh ta'ālā jānib al-maqām al-'ālī</i>	al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 709–741/1310–41)	Ibn Faḍl Allāh, <i>al-Ta'rīf</i> 37; al-Qalqashandī, <i>Ṣubḥ al-a'shā</i> vii, 352
<i>a'azza Allāh ta'ālā anṣār al-maqām al-'ālī</i>	al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 709–741/1310–41)	Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh, <i>Tathqīf al-Ta'rīf</i> 25; al-Qalqashandī, <i>Ṣubḥ al-a'shā</i> vii, 363

### 3.1.2.3. Proem and preamble

Both sections of the letter were introduced by specific words also linked to the status of the addressee. In the case of the Rasulid sultans, it appears to have been respectively *aṣḍarnāhā* (“we issued it [the letter]”) and *tubdī li-'ilmihī al-karīm/li-karīm 'ilmihī* (“it brings to his distinguished knowledge”) since at least the second half of the eighth/fourteenth century,<sup>48</sup> which is in line with the second level attributed to the sultan of Yemen.<sup>49</sup>

All these rules broadly tally with the level of status the Mamluk chancery recognized for the Rasulids, as these rules were applied from at least the mid-eighth/fourteenth century. The chancery manuals composed during the century that spans this period to the mid-ninth/fifteenth century as well as the scarce information given by Ibn Ḥijja, corroborate this conclusion.

## 3.2. Rasulid chancery rules regarding correspondence with the Mamluk sultan

We took as a starting point al-Qalqashandī's remark regarding the alignment of the Rasulid diplomatic rules with Mamluk rules when the Rasulid sultan corresponded with Cairo, claiming that thanks to our knowledge of Mamluk diplomatics we would be in a better position to try to reconstruct the Rasulid diplomatic rules, and thus better analyze the fragments of the only original Rasulid let-

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contains *al-maqarr*. That *al-maqarr* was meant here is confirmed by what follows.

<sup>48</sup> Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh, *Tathqīf al-ta'rīf* 25 (*aṣḍarnāhā wa-tubdī*); al-Ḥalabī, *al-Tibyān* 16b (*aṣḍarnāhā mubdiya*); al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* vii, 363 (which repeats Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh). The four letters composed by Ibn Ḥijja follow the rule. Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 64, 167, 346, and 412. Until the second reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, the greetings section was introduced by the expression *yakhḍum al-mamlūk* (see fn 45). On the basis of the evidence, it seems that the shift to another word took place during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third reign: the word used is not yet *aṣḍarnāhā* but *ṣadarat* (“was issued”). See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* vii, 345, 366.

<sup>49</sup> Dekkiche, *Diplomatics* 208.

ter so far identified. Before going forward with this analysis, we should now consider the data that can be gleaned in the literature—be it from the Rasulid or the Mamluk side—about the Rasulid diplomatic rules.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.2.1. Internal features

As we saw, al-Mawṣilī contributed to normalize the diplomatic principles that were already at play in Yemen during the second half of the seventh/thirteenth century. In his work, he does not offer a systematic presentation of all the diplomatic rules to be implemented for each ruler with whom the Rasulid sultan could correspond. Nevertheless, he presents some general conventions related to the letters to be addressed to foreign rulers that show that the Rasulid chancery had its own scale of levels attributed to each ruler. He stresses that four titles, each corresponding to a level, should be used to address foreign rulers in the correspondence issued for them (*mukhāṭabat al-mulūk*). Starting from the highest, these were *al-maqām*, *al-maqarr*, *al-abwāb*, and *al-‘atabāt*.<sup>51</sup> One immediately notices that these four levels differ only in part from the Mamluk’s scale which comprised five levels. The last two levels on the Rasulid side (*al-abwāb*, *al-‘atabāt*) should be seen as equivalent to, respectively, *al-janāb* and *al-majlis* in the Mamluk scale.

A bit further, al-Mawṣilī tackles the way foreign rulers should be addressed; he provides the opening formula reserved to each level as follows: *a‘azza Allāh sulṭān al-maqām al-‘ālī*, *a‘azza Allāh anṣār al-maqarr al-‘ālī*, *a‘azza Allāh anṣār al-abwāb al-‘āliya*, *zāda Allāh al-‘atabāt al-sharīfa*.<sup>52</sup> This description obviously embodies rules that were applicable in his own time. As we noticed for the Mamluk rules, some changes intervened in the way the Rasulid sultan was addressed in the seventh/thirteenth and the first half of the eighth/fourteenth century and the following period with which we are concerned. This was undoubtedly the case, as demonstrated by another Rasulid source, even though the passage in the said source is laconic.

In a compendium of documents of various natures, sometimes described as an archival repository, and composed at the request of the Rasulid sultan al-Afḍal al-‘Abbās (r. 764–78/1363–77), the anonymous compiler took note of some rules that described the way foreign rulers in official correspondence should be addressed.<sup>53</sup> The rulers are divided, as in the Mamluk chancery tradition, into Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>54</sup> The section opens with the ruler of Egypt (*ṣāhib*

<sup>50</sup> We will start with the internal features given that the Rasulid sources provided limited indications of these.

<sup>51</sup> Al-Mawṣilī, *al-Burd al-muwashshā* 54–5.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 75.

<sup>53</sup> See Vallet, Mūsā b. al-Ḥasan al-Mawṣilī 138–9.

<sup>54</sup> Al-Afḍal al-‘Abbās, *The manuscript* 390.

*Miṣr*) who occupies the highest level together with the Khan of the Golden Horde (*ṣāhib al-takht*), the ruler of Iraq—at that time the Jalayirids—, the sultan of Delhi (*ṣāhib al-Hind*), and the *dā'ī* (probably of the Ismailis). The text states that rulers belonging to this level must be addressed in the following way: *a'azza Allāh anṣār al-maqām al-'ālī*. It also establishes which signature the Rasulid sultan must pen on the document after its issuance. In the case of the Mamluk sultan, the Yemeni sultan must write *mamlūkuhu*. The other levels appear to be *al-maqarr*, *al-janāb*, *al-majlis*—i.e., the same as those attributed by the Egyptian chancery—, to which are added *al-sulṭān*, *al-shaykh*, *al-ṣadr*, and *al-amīr* for some other addressees. Most interestingly, the text also lists the addresses and the signatures for various office holders of Egypt and Syria with whom the Rasulid sultan could directly exchange correspondence.<sup>55</sup>

While we know that the compendium was realized during al-Afḍal al-'Ab-bās' reign, thus during the last quarter of the eighth/fourteenth century, we do not know the period to which the data recorded in it date. The volume clearly gathers material from the beginning of the dynasty, as some documents from the late seventh/thirteenth century are recorded in it. Because the material related to the chancery practices certainly predates the moment when the compilation was made, it is impossible to say which period it refers to exactly. Be that as it may, it provides us with essential clues to the development of the Rasulid chancery rules as the addresses and the levels for the status noticeably deviate from those outlined about a century earlier by al-Mawṣilī. The alignment with the Mamluk rules seemed to have been completed by the time these principles were in use—at the earliest in the mid-eighth/fourteenth century—as the four titles *al-maqām*, *al-maqarr*, *al-janāb*, and *al-majlis* had been introduced into the Rasulid scale, albeit with other ones. Moreover, the address for the Mamluk sultan matches the form reserved to the Rasulid sultan by the Mamluk chancery at that time (*a'azza Allāh anṣār al-maqām al-'ālī*), thus giving substance to al-Qalqashandī's remark about the similarity between the rules of these two chanceries when each ruler corresponded with his counterpart. As we saw, the formula in question is attested on the Mamluk side from the beginning of the eighth/fourteenth century. Although the rules of these two chanceries aligned, this does not mean that the rulers considered themselves on the same level. While the Mamluk sultan's signature for letters issued to the Rasulid sultan (*akhūhu*, 'his brother') was in line with the second level, putting him on a par with him, the Rasulid sultan implicitly recognized his inferior status by using a signature that translated his dependency on the Mamluk ruler (*mamlūkuhu* 'his slave, possession'), though on a symbolic level.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. (umarā' Miṣr al-kibār al-ḥājib wa-l-nā'ib wa-ra's al-nawba wa-zamīluhu yukhaṭabū al-maqarr wa-l-'alāma akhūhum wa-kadhā ṣāhib Dimashq wa-Ḥalab wa-bāqī al-umarā' 'alā qadr ṭabaqātihim al-ṣaghīr wāliduhu wa-l-kabīr muḥibbuhu wa-ṣaghīr al-manzila al-shākīr li-llāh 'alā na'mā'ihī fulān wa-l-wazīr al-mukhaṭaba lahu al-maqarr wa-l-'alāma muḥibbuhu).

The alignment was complete in terms of chancery rules, a fact that is strengthened by al-Qalqashandī's details of his own period of activity at the chancery in Cairo, which started at the beginning of the last decade of the eighth/fourteenth century. In the chapter dealing with letters received from the Rasulid sultan, where he stresses the parallelism between the rules of the two chanceries, he details the basic elements of the Rasulid correspondence.<sup>56</sup> The letter opens with the address, which is *a'azza Allāh anṣār al-maqām al-sharīf al-ʿālī*, then proceeds with the proem introduced by *aṣḍarahā min makān kadhā* and the *narratio*, then concludes with the blessings for the addressee.<sup>57</sup> As an example of his description, he then quotes a letter received from al-Ashraf Ismāʿīl (r. 778–803/1377–1400) in 798/1395–6.

### 3.2.2. External features

So far, it has been established that al-Qalqashandī's note about the equivalence of chancery rules for letters exchanged between the Mamluk and the Rasulid sultans respectively is confirmed by evidence at hand, though it is limited. These rules concern the internal features which should be now validated by the external characteristics of the documents. Unfortunately, neither al-Mawṣilī nor al-Afḍal al-ʿAbbās' compendium inform us about these features. On the Mamluk side, the only author to mention some of these features is, once again, al-Qalqashandī. In the same section dealing with the Rasulid correspondence received in Cairo, he refers to the format of the roll and the writing style. The roll was composed of full sheets of Syrian paper and the text was written in the *thulth* style.<sup>58</sup>

#### 3.2.2.1. Format

The information about the format proves essential for the issue of the Mamluk sultan's status in the Rasulid chancery rules and for the parallelism of the practices of both chanceries. For the Mamluk side, we know that the half roll format, which was roughly 290 mm wide, was used for the Rasulid sultan. Such a measure can be calculated in modern times thanks to the precise description that al-Qalqashandī gave of the papers used by the chancery in Cairo in his own time.<sup>59</sup> But despite his meticulousness, he failed to indicate the measures of the papers produced and used in Syria.<sup>60</sup> Among the various types he lists, the first is pre-

<sup>56</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* viii, 72.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. (fa-yabtadi' al-mukātaba bi-lafẓ a'azza Allāh ta'ālā anṣār al-maqām al-sharīf al-ʿālī al-mawlawī al-sultānī al-fulānī bi-laqab al-saltāna thumma yaqūl aṣḍarahā min makān kadhā wa-yadhkur al-maqṣid wa-yakhtum bi-l-du'ā' wa-naḥwahu).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. (wa-yaktubūn fī qaṭ' al-shāmī al-kāmil bi-qalam al-thulth).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. vi, 190–3. The standard he uses for the measures of the paper is the local cubit for fabrics (*dhirā' al-qumāsh*). The measure of this cubit was calculated as equaling 581.87 mm. See Hinz, *Islamische Masse* 56.

<sup>60</sup> For the papers produced and used for chancery purposes in Syria, see al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-*

cisely the one he refers to for the letters sent by the Rasulid sultan to the sultan of Cairo: the full sheet (*qaṭʿ al-shāmī al-kāmīl*), which was the largest format. He limits his description to indicating that the full sheet (*al-ṭūmār al-shāmī al-kāmīl*) is put lengthwise in the roll<sup>61</sup> and that this format of roll is used in Syria for a very specific purpose.<sup>62</sup> About half a century after al-Qalqashandī completed his work, another secretary active at the chancery, al-Saḥmāwī (d. 868/1463), composed an updated version of the manual. In the section concerning the papers used by the chancery in Egypt and in Syria, al-Saḥmāwī provides an interesting clue, one that helps us calculate the measures of the full sheet of this Syrian paper. According to him, beside the Syrian chanceries that used it on a daily basis for their documents, the chancery in Cairo also resorted to using this paper for the issuance of ‘square decrees’ (*murabbaʿāt*), instructions for the ambassadors (*tadhākir*), and accounting documents and lists (*qawāʿim*). He further stresses that the registers (*daftar*), in particular, were made of this paper. In some rare circumstances, the chancery in Cairo could resort to this paper for other kinds of documents (diplomatic letters and deeds of appointment); but such a use was only allowed when the sultan was traveling and the Egyptian paper was not available.<sup>63</sup>

The reference to the use of this type of paper for some categories of documents is extremely important with regard to the issue of the measurement of sheets because some examples of these documents have been preserved in the collection of al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem. Some of these belong to the category of the ‘square’ decrees and are dated between 766/1365 and 886/1481.<sup>64</sup> They are written on a single sheet of paper folded in two. The measurements of the sheet vary between 370–90 × 277–90 mm for the largest and 275–85 × 190–200 mm for the smallest.<sup>65</sup> The comparison of the two formats is evidence that the smallest one corresponds to the exact half of the largest. The full sheet, which measured at the minimum 390 × 290 mm, could thus be cut into two parts which could be used to

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*aʿshā* vi, 192.

<sup>61</sup> The width of the roll thus corresponds with the smallest side of the sheet. The sheet is used completely, i.e., in its full length. Ibid. (wa-huwa l-ladhī yakūn ʿarḍuhu ʿarḍ al-ṭūmār al-shāmī l-kāmīl fī ṭūlihi).

<sup>62</sup> For deeds of appointment (*tawāqīʿ*) and decrees (*marāsīm*) issued by Syrian governors for the highest office holders. Ibid. (wa-fīhi yuktab ʿan al-nuwwāb li-aʿlā al-ṭabaqāt min arbāb al-tawāqīʿ wa-l-marāsīm laysa illā).

<sup>63</sup> Al-Saḥmāwī, *al-Thaḡhr al-bāsīm* ii, 548.

<sup>64</sup> The documents are listed in Little, *A catalogue* 31–5.

<sup>65</sup> These are in *ibid.*: no. 1 (375 × 290 mm), no. 3 (285 × 200 mm), no. 5 (280 × 192.5 mm), no. 6 (380 × 287.5 mm), no. 14 (275 × 190 mm), no. 303 (282 × 195 mm), no. 304 (370 × 284 mm), no. 308 (371 × 277 mm), no. 309 (390 × 290 mm). To these examples, we can add another, dated to a much earlier period (733/1333) published by Richards, A Mamlūk emir’s ‘square’ decree. Its measurements are 270 × 180 mm.

produce two small ‘square’ decrees.<sup>66</sup> The original size of the full sheet as it was produced by the paper mill extended a bit further beyond the above-mentioned measurements (400 × 300 mm) because the irregular edges of the sheet had to be trimmed before it could be put into service for documents. Before we compare these measurements to the fragments of our document, we must note another piece of information provided by al-Saḥmāwī. As he claims, the Syrian paper just described was also employed outside the Mamluk realm in regions in the vicinity of or connected to Syria: these were Iraq and Persia (*bilād al-Mashriq*), Yemen, Anatolia (*al-Rūm*), and the Hijaz. The said paper was thus exported to Yemen at the time al-Saḥmāwī was active at the chancery but also well before as confirmed by al-Qalqashandī who first attested that the Rasulid sultan wrote to his Egyptian counterpart on a roll made of full sheets of Syrian paper.

With these elements in hand, we can proceed to compare the preserved fragments and check whether the measurements of the Syrian paper tally with those of the Rasulid letter. As the fragments show (see figs. 9.17–38), the lines of the text of the Rasulid letter are parallel to the spine. This indicates that the height of the leaves corresponds with the width of the roll on which the letter was written. The height of the leaves oscillates between 233 and 238 mm.<sup>67</sup> The maximum (238 mm) should not be considered the real width of the document. It is worth recalling that al-Maqrīzī cut the fragments to make them fit the format of the other type of (blank) paper that he used to make his fair copies. Moreover, al-Maqrīzī’s manuscripts were trimmed when they were bound and this led to the loss of an average of ten millimeters on each side. Thus more than twenty millimeters need to be added to the actual measures. Another way to approach the real width of the document is by considering a fragment in which a significant part of the text of the document at the end of one line was cut out; the measurement of this part can be broadly calculated. This is the case with the fragment preserved in MS Fatih 4340, fol. 118b (see fig. 9.23). The word at the end of the two lines (*al-muṣādaqa* and *al-mukhālaṣa* respectively) is almost completely missing. Compared with the other words, similar in length, that appear in the same fragment (*al-muwādada*, *al-muṣāfāt*), it can be calculated that approximately 30 mm are missing on the left side. In this case, the width can be calculated to have been at least 270 mm (238 + 30 mm). This brings us closer to the above-mentioned 290 mm of the sheet of Syrian paper if we take into consideration the parts that were trimmed first to make the roll, then again when the manuscript was bound. As for the length of the sheet, which was placed lengthwise in the roll, we just need to calculate the width of a bifolio, like fols. 119–20 in MS Fatih 4340, i.e., 310 mm, to which the average 10

<sup>66</sup> Little, *A catalogue* 29–30, classified the larger format as “royal square decrees,” because they were issued in the sultan’s name, and the smaller ones as “ordinary square decrees,” because they were issued by local amirs.

<sup>67</sup> See tab. 9.3, under column W.

mm that were trimmed should be added. As explained in fig. 9.2, once the equivalent of a bifolio was cut from the roll, al-Maqrīzī was still left with the remainder of the sheet. If the full sheet of Syrian paper was placed vertically in the roll (390 mm), as explained by al-Qalqashandī, the remaining part (less than 70 mm) was indeed too small to be reused by al-Maqrīzī.<sup>68</sup> Such a demonstration is useful to show that al-Qalqashandī's remark regarding the use of the full sheet of Syrian paper by the Rasulid chancery writing to the Mamluk sultan is validated by the reconstructed measurements of our document. The analysis of the paper further corroborates this statement: the chain lines are parallel to the inscriptions (see fig. 9.3), meaning that the sheet was indeed placed lengthwise to create the roll because the chain lines are always parallel to the smaller sides of the sheet of paper.

Going back to the question of parallelism between the Mamluk and the Rasulid chancery rules, we now understand that the Rasulids wrote their correspondence on rolls that perfectly matched the size of those on which the Mamluk correspondence was addressed to them, i.e., 290 mm more or less. For the Mamluks, this size was equal to the half format (*qaṭʿ al-niṣf*), the second one in the hierarchy of the status according to which the chancery acknowledged other rulers, while for the Rasulids it corresponded to the highest format available to them, the one they reserved for rulers of the first level, like the Mamluk sultan, as corroborated by al-Afdal al-ʿAbbās' compendium. In formal terms, it means that they both exchanged correspondence on rolls of the same width (290 mm) but with two different types of paper. In the case of the Mamluks, the roll was produced from larger sheets of Egyptian paper that were cut in two to make a roll of the half format. As for the Rasulids, they used the full sheet of the Syrian paper they imported, placed lengthwise in the roll, to get the same width.

The analysis of the paper reveals that the chain lines are organized by threes with a space of 13 mm (26–7 mm for three lines) between two lines and of 53 mm (see fig. 9.3) between two groups of chain lines, while twenty of the laid lines take a space of 26 mm. This type of paper is well attested in manuscripts copied in the whole Near East between the fifth/eleventh and mid-ninth/fifteenth century. Within a corpus of about two hundred manuscripts, Humbert established that this type was the most represented during the whole above-mentioned period (37%), with a prevalence during the ninth/fifteenth century, when it became profuse.<sup>69</sup> In a study based on a corpus of manuscripts produced in Yemen during roughly the same period, d'Ottone even refined the data for this particular area, stating that this type of paper featured in 70% of her corpus composed of about one hundred seventy manuscripts. Her detailed assessment even allowed her to indicate that its use in Yemeni manuscripts abruptly dwindled during the second

<sup>68</sup> See fn 13.

<sup>69</sup> Humbert, *Papiers non filigranés* 21–2.

half of the eighth/fourteenth century, before shortly increasing in the next fifty years, after which period it almost vanishes.<sup>70</sup> From this information, it appears that, in the early ninth/fifteenth century, the type with chain lines grouped by threes was almost exclusively used in the Near East while at the same time it started to disappear in Yemen, where it was overwhelmed by a locally produced paper.<sup>71</sup> It is also interesting to note that the measures provided above (400 × 300 mm) for the Syrian paper mentioned by al-Qalqashandī and al-Saḥmāwī tally with those of manuscripts copied on a paper sharing the same characteristics (chain lines grouped by threes) at the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century.<sup>72</sup>

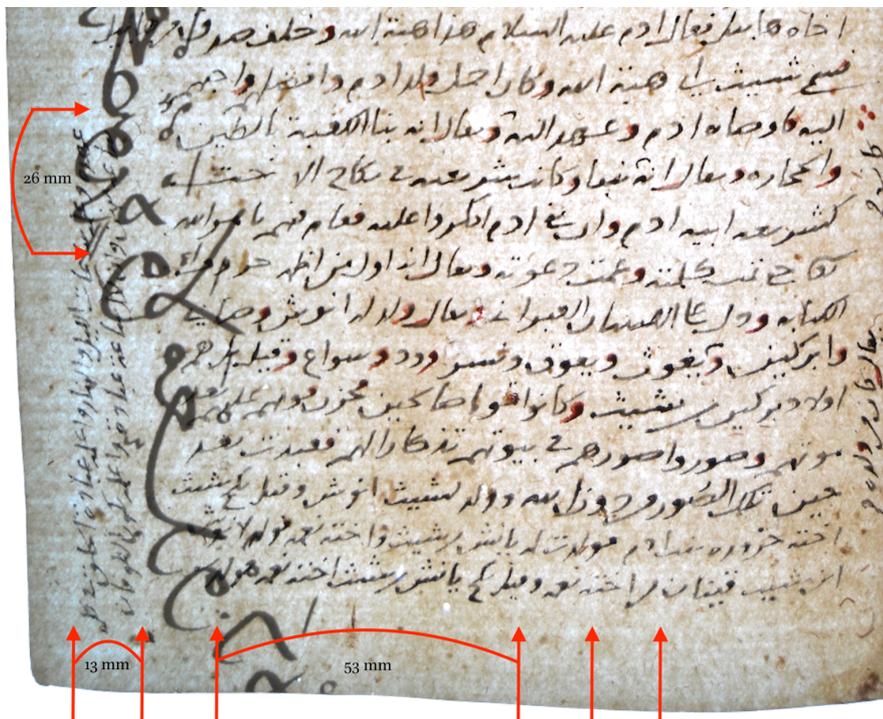


Figure 9.3: The structure of the paper with indication of the chain (below) and laid lines (left)

ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS AYASOFYA 3362, FOL. 143a

<sup>70</sup> d'Ottone, La produzione 46–7; Id., *I manoscritti arabi* 57.

<sup>71</sup> A paper with no visible pattern. See d'Ottone, La produzione 47–8; Id., *I manoscritti arabi* 57–8.

<sup>72</sup> Humbert, *Papiers non filigranés* 35–6: 356–70 × 255–84 mm (minimum and maximum). The distance between the chain lines and the two groups as well as the space covered by twenty laid lines also agree with those given by Humbert. Similar results were reached for Yemeni manuscripts, leading d'Ottone to conclude that this type of paper was an imported product (d'Ottone, *I manoscritti arabi* 66). The format in question also corresponds with the small one identified by Irigoin in manuscripts from Egypt to Iran, for which he gave the following intended measurements after trimming: 320–70 × 235–80 mm (minimum and maximum). Irigoin, *Les Papiers* 303.

On the basis of what precedes, it can be said that the paper used for the Rasulid letter is indeed the same as the Syrian type described by al-Qalqashandī and al-Saḥmāwī at the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century. Even though it seems to have been less widely used in Yemen for manuscripts at that time, it was apparently still imported from Syria for chancery use as our document confirms. This could indicate that the Rasulid chancery gave preference to paper of better quality than the locally produced paper found in manuscripts and which began to prevail over the imported paper.

### 3.2.2.2. Calligraphic style

According to al-Qalqashandī, when writing to the Mamluk sultan the Rasulid chancery adopted the *thulth* style.<sup>73</sup> Studies of the writing styles featuring in documents, particularly those issued by the Mamluk chancery, are still lacking. Any identification of a style of script for the Mamluk period must largely rely on the descriptions and samples given by calligraphers and chancery secretaries from the eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth century.<sup>74</sup> Among them, al-Qalqashandī stands out from the rest because he presented, for each of the calligraphic styles used by the chancery, various forms for each letter—and sometimes groups of two letters or more. Thanks to his detailed presentation of the *thulth* style, it is easier to compare the script appearing in our document with the samples he lists in his chancery manual.<sup>75</sup> This is not the place to present a complete comparison of all the letters of the alphabet but one example regarding the typical “lion’s jaw” (*fakk al-asad*), where the *alif* is connected to the following ‘*ayn*, can serve as a sample (see figs. 9.4–5). It is thus safe to ascertain that the script used to produce our document is indeed identical to al-Qalqashandī’s description.



Figure 9.4: The lion’s jaw (*fakk al-asad*)  
ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS FATİH 4340, FOL. 115b



Figure 9.5: The lion’s jaw (*fakk al-asad*)  
AL-QALQASHANDĪ, *ŞUBḤ AL-A’ŞĤĀ* iii, 80

<sup>73</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Şubḥ al-a’şĥā* viii, 72 (wa-yaktubūn fī qaṭ’ al-shāmī al-kāmil bi-qalam al-thulth).

<sup>74</sup> For these references, see Bauden, *Mamluk diplomatics* 50.

<sup>75</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Şubḥ al-a’şĥā* iii, 62–203.

Besides the identification of the *thulth*, we must also consider its size as two sub-types existed: the thick (*thaqīl*) and the light (*khafīf*) forms. As we saw, the latter was reserved for the half format of the roll (*qaṭʿ al-niṣf*), and thus for correspondence to the Rasulid sultan. When describing the style of script used by the Rasulid chancery for its correspondence with the Mamluk sultan, al-Qalqashandī neglected to specify to which of the two forms it belonged. If we consider the element that differentiates each form, i.e., the proportion of the *alif* as is usual for the proportionate scripts of which the *thulth* is part,<sup>76</sup> its size had to be equal to seven dots placed one on top of the other in the thick version and five in the light version. As fig. 9.6 shows, the size of an *alif* in the letter amounts to seven dots,<sup>77</sup> thus implying that the *thulth* used by the Rasulid chancery in correspondence to the Mamluk sultan was the thick version.



Figure 9.6: Size of an *alif*

ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS FATİH 4340, FOL. 131a

The person who penned the letter was a secretary who was undoubtedly trained in calligraphy. Besides the mastery of the pen, we can also observe that the secretary who prepared the letter paid great attention to indicate the presence of the *hamza* as well as all the orthoepic signs with little exceptions. These include, besides the vowels and the diacritical dots, the *sukūn*, the *tashdīd*, and the *waṣla*. The *sukūn* is placed above the letter *wāw* and *yāʾ* to indicate their value as long vowels. Given that the text is in rhymed prose (*sajʿ*), the *sukūn* also surmounts letters at the end of words to denote the pausal form.<sup>78</sup> In one case, the pause is additionally marked by a symbol looking like a circle with a dot in the middle.<sup>79</sup> The secretary also resorted to contrivances to specify the value of a consonant, mostly but not exclusively in the case of homographic pairs where one of the two homo-

<sup>76</sup> According to al-Qalqashandī himself. See fn 34.

<sup>77</sup> It is not easy to find in the document a perfectly square dot that should be used as the standard in such a case. This leads to some differences in the measurements. Some *alifs* can amount to six dots—or even eight—rather than seven, depending on the dot selected.

<sup>78</sup> For instance, figs. 9.17 (*arkānih/ayyāmiḥ*), 9.21 (*al-ikrām/al-jisām*), 9.29 (*ḥimāyatih/nikāyatih*), 9.30 (*maḥmūdah/maʿdūdah*).

<sup>79</sup> See fig. 9.26 (*al-sharīfa/al-laṭīfa*). It is represented in the edited text in tabs. 9.3–4 by the following sign: ⊙.

graphs is normally distinguished from the unpointed one through the use of diacritical dots. Three systems can be identified:

1) a v-shaped or flying bird sign (∨) placed above the *rāʾ* (see fig. 9.7), the *sīn*, and the *ṣād* to differentiate them from their homographic pointed pairs (*zāy*, *shīn*, and *dād*);



Figure 9.7: *Rāʾ*

ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS FATİH 4340, FOL. 115b

2) a *mater lectionis* consisting of the same letter written in a smaller size in the isolated form either below—in the case of the *ḥāʾ* (see fig. 9.8) and the *ʿayn* (see fig. 9.9)—, or above the letter—in the case of the final *kāf* (see fig. 9.10) and the final *hāʾ*;<sup>80</sup>



Figure 9.8: *Ḥāʾ* with *mater lectionis*

ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS FATİH 4340, FOL. 124a



Figure 9.9: *ʿAyn* with *mater lectionis*

ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS FATİH 4340, FOL. 115b



Figure 9.10: *Kāf* with *mater lectionis*

ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS FATİH 4340, FOL. 120a

3) a diacritical dot placed under the letters *dāl* and *ṭāʾ* (see figs. 9.11–2). While the first two systems widely feature in manuscripts and are even described in grammars of Arabic,<sup>81</sup> the phenomenon of inverting the position of the diacritical dot for the *dāl* and the *ṭāʾ* is particularly well attested in manuscripts produced

<sup>80</sup> The final *hāʾ* is less systematic. See fig. 9.18 (*miṣrihi*). For the final *kāf* and the final *hāʾ*, the use of the *mater lectionis* is not linked to the issue of differentiating them from another similar letter.

<sup>81</sup> The first Arabic grammar published in Europe to pay attention to these systems is the one that appeared in 1616: Sionita and Hesronita, *Grammatica arabica* 6. The latest one seems to be Wright, *A grammar* i, 4.

in Yemen (see fig. 9.13) and may represent a distinctive feature that would allow us to identify the origin of a manuscript.<sup>82</sup>

Figure 9.11: *Dāl* with dot below

ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS AS 3362, FOL. 143b

Figure 9.12: *Tā'* with dot below

ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS FATİH 4340, FOL. 123a

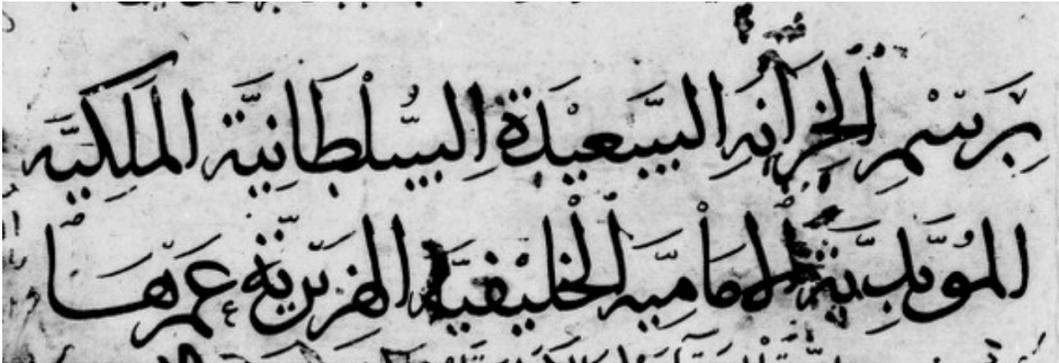


Figure 9.13: Note attesting that the manuscript was commissioned for the royal library of the Rasulid sultan al-Mu'ayyad Dā'ūd (r. 696/1296–721/1321) and illustrating the use of *matres lectionis* for the *dāl*, the *rā'*, the *sīn*, the *ṭā'*, and the *ʿayn* (al-Lakhmī, *Wāsiyat al-ādāb wa-māddat al-albāb*, vol. 3)

PARIS, BNF, MS ARABE 6494, FOL. 2a

Finally, one occurrence of the euphonic *tashdīd* must be noted. The euphonic *tashdīd* is rarely attested in manuscripts, except in copies of the Quran where the text is written with all its orthoepic signs. It consists of noting the assimilation of the *nūn* at the end of a word by the following letter if the latter is a *rā'*, *lām*, *mīm*, *nūn*, *wāw*, or *yā'*.<sup>83</sup> In the document, such a case appears with the *tanwīn in* followed by the coordinating conjunction *wa* (see fig. 9.14): instead of pronouncing *maḥṣūratin wa-*, it should be read *maḥṣūrati wwa-*.<sup>84</sup> The presence of

<sup>82</sup> See Déroche et al., *Islamic codicology* 221 and fn 72 (where the earliest example is dated 327/938 for the Islamic world and 611/1214–5 for Yemen); d'Ottone, *I manoscritti arabi* 30.

<sup>83</sup> The final *nūn* can be part of the root of the word or of the *tanwīn*. See Wright, *A grammar* i, 15–6.

<sup>84</sup> For another occurrence of this system in a document from al-Andalus dated 584/1188 where

this orthoepic phenomenon indicates that the person who penned the document was a lettered man educated in the recitation of the Quran and its readings, qualities that would be expected from a secretary working at the chancery.



Figure 9.14: Euphonic *tashdīd*

ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS AS 3362, FOL. 143b

### 3.2.2.3. *Ṭurra*

If the letter sent to the Rasulid sultan from Cairo opened with three blank sheets, the Mamluk and the Rasulid sources do not provide details regarding the *ṭurra* on the Rasulid side. Even if these blank sheets were reused by al-Maqrīzī, it is difficult to identify them in his holographs. Unfortunately, no indication can thus be derived from his manuscripts regarding this external feature of the Rasulid letter.

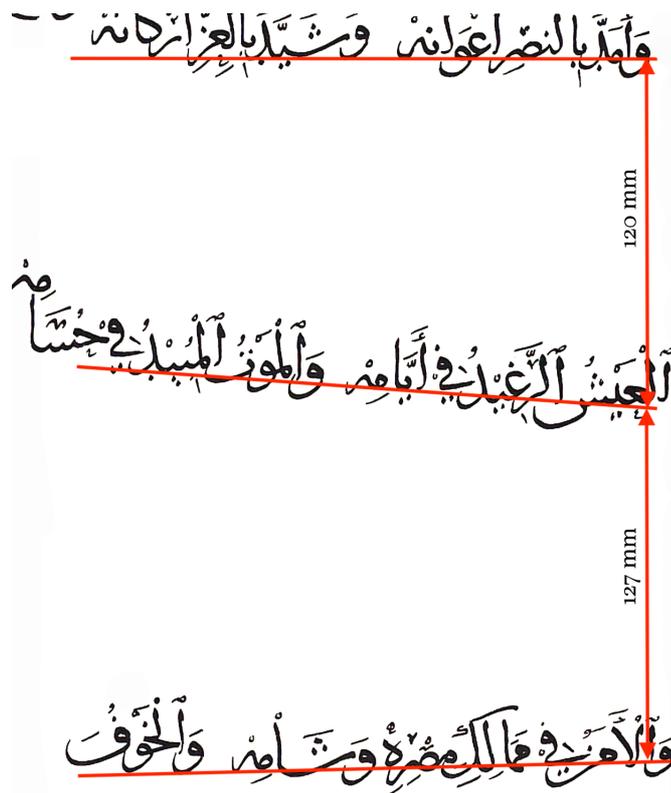


Figure 9.15: Interlinear space

ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS FATIḤ 4340, FOLS. 119b–120a

all the orthoepic signs are also indicated, see Bauden, *Due trattati* 45.

#### 3.2.2.4. *Interlinear space*

In the absence of any rule mentioned by the sources on either side, we are left to extrapolate the data from the document itself. The blank space between two lines must be measured at the beginning of the lines because the baseline is not always parallel from one line to the other, as fig. 9.15 shows. This space oscillates between 94 and 132 mm, with an average of 110–20.<sup>85</sup> The huge variation noticed (about 40 mm) indicate that the secretary applied a rough calculation, by eyeing what must have been a standard measurement for correspondence with the Mamluk sultan. As we saw, the Mamluk chancery applied a rule of two lines per sheet in the roll. In the case of our Rasulid letter, given the format of the sheet (390 × 290 mm) and its vertical position in the roll, and considering the average size of the interlinear space, only three lines appeared on a sheet.<sup>86</sup>

#### 3.2.2.5. *Right margin width*

As in the case of the *turra* and the interlinear space, we are left with no indication in the sources regarding the space devoted to the right margin and thus we are obliged to consider the information conveyed by the document. The maximum width observed in the fragments is 50 mm.<sup>87</sup> The margin was obviously larger than that. As we saw, there is a fragment in which the right margin measures 50 mm and the text on the left side was clearly cut by at least 30 mm (MS Fatih 4340, fol. 118b; see fig. 9.23). Now that we know that the width of the roll was 290 mm and that that fragment measured 270 mm with the missing part on the left, we can estimate that the right margin was about 70 mm. In this case, the right margin tallied almost one-quarter (72.5 mm) of the total width of the roll.

### 3.3. Conclusion

Considering the paucity of the documents and details provided by chancery manuals, particularly on the Rasulid side, any conclusion we reach can, of course, only be valid for the period of time we are concerned with, which is very narrow: as we saw, most of the above-mentioned evidence, which regards a limited sample (copies of three Rasulid letters with original fragments for one of these), corresponds to a span of less than twenty-five years. The conventions identified and partly verified in the preceding pages are summarized in tab. 9.2. On the

<sup>85</sup> See tab. 9.3, under Line space and, for the maximum, under Up. edge, beg.

<sup>86</sup> At the most four if the first line was placed at the top of the sheet (four lines then covered about 360 mm), but this happened only rarely in the whole roll.

<sup>87</sup> There is one example where the right margin reaches 68 mm (MS Fatih 4340, fol. 124a, second line; see fig. 9.33) but this is an exception: it is at the end of a line consisting of a verse of poetry and the secretary wrote it at some additional distance from the right side of the roll in order to differentiate it from the rest of the text. From this, it is understood that verses of poetry were presented on separated lines as in manuscripts.

whole, al-Qalqashandī's statement that the Rasulid chancery replicated the Mamluk rules in dealing with the Mamluk sultan can be regarded as credible. Even though the Rasulids had recourse to paper imported from Syria that differed from that produced in Egypt and used by the Mamluk chancery, the width of the roll matched that of the Mamluk roll. The calligraphic style was equivalent on both sides (*thulth*) even though the Mamluk chancery opted for a slightly smaller version. These indications regarding format and calligraphic style can easily be verified with the preserved fragments. It can also be ascertained, thanks to several copies of letters exchanged between the two sides, that they attributed a similar honorific title (*al-maqām*) to both sides, but that the Rasulid sultan implicitly recognized the higher status of his Mamluk counterpart by means of his signature (*mamlūkuhu*) and the epithet appended to the honorific title reserved to the Mamluk sultan (*al-sharīf*).

Table 9.2: Diplomatic conventions for the issuance of letters addressed by the Mamluk chancery to the Rasulid sultan and vice versa (early ninth/fifteenth century)

Features	Mamluk > Rasulid	Rasulid > Mamluk	
E x t r e m a l	Format (width)	½ ( <i>qaṭ' al-niṣf</i> ) of Egyptian paper = 290 mm	full sheet of Syrian paper ( <i>qaṭ' al-shāmī al-kāmil</i> ) = 290 mm
	Calligraphic style	<i>Thulth</i> (light)	<i>Thulth</i>
	<i>Turra</i>	3 sheets	?
	Interlinear space	60–70 mm or 2 lines of text/sheet	83 mm (min)–128 mm (max); average: 108 mm; 4 lines of text/sheet
	Right margin width	⅓ (96 mm) or ¼ (72.5 mm)	¼ (72.5 mm)
	Sultan's signature	<i>Akhūhu</i>	<i>Mamlūkuhu</i>
	Opening formula	<i>A'azza Allāh ta'ālā anṣār</i>	<i>A'azza Allāh ta'ālā anṣār</i>
	Honorific titles	<i>al-maqām al-'ālī</i>	<i>al-maqām al-sharīf al-'ālī</i>
	Proem	<i>aṣḍarnāhā</i>	<i>aṣḍarahā/ṣadarat</i>
	Preamble	<i>tubdī li-'ilmihī al-karīm/li-karīm 'ilmihī</i>	<i>nuwaḍḍih li-'ilmihī al-karīm</i>

Table 9.3: List of the inscriptions with indication of the measures (mm)<sup>88</sup>

MS	Fol.	Text	H.	W.	M a r g.	Upper edge		Lower edge		Line space
						beg.	end	beg.	end	
Ayasofya 3362	142b	حريز وليكل حساد لا يؤمنون أبدا وقد استعاذ	152	233	24	0	0			128– 125
		سَيِّدُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ مِنْ شَمَاتِهِ الْأَعْدَا فَالْشُّفْرَاءُ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى								
Ayasofya 3362	143b	غَيْرِ مَحْمُودَةٍ وَقَبَائِحُهُمْ غَيْرِ مَحْضُورَةٍ وَلَا مَعْدُودَةٍ	152	233	22	132	120	21	35	
Or. 1366c	20a	لِلنَّصْرِ عَلَى الْأَعْدَاءِ وَنَزَجُوا أَنَّ الْمَقَامَ الْعَالِيَّ خَلَّدَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مَلِكَهُ	156	240	50	118	110	34	45	
Or. 1366c	77b	حَاجُّ الْيَمَنِ وَتِجَارُهُ مِنْ مَوْسِمِ مَكَّةَ الْحَرَامِ وَأَشْتَدَّتْ	158	240	23	32	26			122– 120
		وَوَطْأَتْهُ عَلَى الْخَلْقِ وَأَسْتَعْنَى بِمَا أَنْتَهَبَ مِنْ الْأَمْوَالِ الْعِظَامِ								
Or. 1366c	103a	وَإِصْدَارِهِ إِنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ	159	240	32	65	58			88–95
		كُتِبَ [يَوْمَ] [الـ] [لـ] [ثاء] ثامن عشر شهر ذِي الْقَعْدَةِ الْحَرَامِ [سنة] سَبْعَ عَشْرَةَ [شرة]								

<sup>88</sup> The text reproduces as faithfully as possible the orthoepic signs with the exception of the *matres lectionis*, i.e., signs used by the secretary to specify the value of an unpointed consonant.

MS	Fol.	Text	H.	W.	M a r g.	Upper edge		Lower edge		Line space
						beg.	end	beg.	end	
Fatih 4340	115b	مَا لَمْ يُرَاعِهِ وَرَأَيْنَا أَنْ نُنْتَصِفَ بِيَدِهِ الشَّرِيفَةَ وَلَا	155	238	28	48	34			110– 110
		نَكِيلٌ لَهُ كَمَا كَانَلْنَا بَضَاعَهُ						27		
Fatih 4340	116b	هُوَ الْوَاصِلُ أَرْحَامَ تِلْكَ الْمَوَدَّاتِ الشَّرِيفَةِ ◉ وَالنَّاشِرُ أَعْلَامَ	155	238	15	48	25			110– 123
		تِلْكَ الْوُصْلَةَ اللَّطِيفَةَ ◉ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى صَدَرَتْ						19		
Fatih 4340	117b	اللَّهُ وَعَظَّمَهُ وَعَزَّزَهُ وَأَكْرَمَهُ فَحَمِدْنَا اللَّهَ تَعَالَى	155	238	18	74	58	84	90	83–90
Fatih 4340	118b	بِهَا أَنَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْمُحْيِي مَا كَانَ بَيْنَ السَّلَفِ الْأَوَّلِ مِنَ الْمَصَادِقَةِ	155	238	48	43	28			100– 107
		وَالْمُؤَافَاةِ وَالْمُؤَادِدَةِ وَالْمُصَافَاةِ وَالْمُخَالَصَةِ						50		
Fatih 4340	119b	وَأَمَدٌ بِالنَّصْرِ أَعْوَانُهُ وَشَيْدٌ بِالْعِزِّ أَرْكَانُهُ وَلَا بِرَح	155	238	18	15	0			120– 105
		الْعَيْشُ الرَّغِيدُ فِي أَيَّامِهِ وَالْمَوْتُ الْمُبِيدُ فِي حُسَامِهِ						10		
Fatih 4340	120a	وَالْأَمْنُ فِي مَمَالِكِ مِصْرِهِ وَشَامِهِ وَالْخَوْفُ	155	238	8	105	101	50	50	
Fatih 4340	121a	وَالْمُؤَالَاةِ وَفِي هَذِهِ الْمَنَاشِيرِ الصَّادِرَةِ وَهِيَ كُتُب	155	238	50	113	95	43	55	

MS	Fol.	Text	H.	W.	M a r g.	Upper edge		Lower edge		Line space	
						beg.	end	beg.	end		
Fatih 4340	122a	عَلَى مَا تَضَمَّنَهُ مِنَ النِّعَمِ الَّتِي وَهَبَهَا وَالْفِتَنِ الَّتِي أَذْهَبَهَا	155	238		29	35	22		123– 133	
		وَأُخْمَدَ لَهَا وَالْفُتُوحَ الَّتِي فَتَحَ مَعَالِيْقُ أَبْوَابَهَا				30		0	0		
Fatih 4340	123a	وَالْمَرَاكِبُ سَائِرَةٌ عَلَى تَبَجِ هَذَا الْبَحْرِ كَانَتْهَا لَيَالٍ خَطَّارَةٌ وَكَانَ	155	238		18	127	123	21	41	127– 123
Fatih 4340	124a	وَلَوْلَاكَ مَا أَمْتَدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا يَمِينُهُ وَلَا صَانُهُ مِنَّا حُسَامٌ	155	238		27	0	0			87–68
		وَلَا رُمُحٌ				68		73	85		
Fatih 4340	125b	وَبِاللَّهِ مَا أَخَذَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَمَنِ هَذِهِ السَّنَةَ بِيَمِينِهِ الَّتِي هِيَ يَدُهُ	155	238		17	48	31			106– 106
		بَلْ بِيَمِينِهِ الَّتِي لَمْ يَصْدُقْ بِهَا مَوْعِدُهُ ﴿وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِنَ				25		0	22		
Fatih 4340	126b	سَعْيِكُمْ مَشْكُورًا ۖ وَوَصَلَ مَا وَصَلَ بِهِ مِنْ الْإِكْرَامِ]	155	238		31	45	27			112– 118
		وَأَتْحَفَ بِهِ مِنَ الْأَيْدِي الْجَسَامِ الْمُسْتَقْبَلَةَ				29			0		

MS	Fol.	Text	H.	W.	M a r g.	Upper edge		Lower edge		Line space
						beg.	end	beg.	end	
Fatih 4340	127b	النَّصْرِ التَّامِ الْآيَاتِ وَالْتَأْيِيدِ الْمَنْصُورِ الرَّايَاتِ	155	238	26	40	0			118–128
		وَالْتَوْفِيقِ الْبَعِيدِ الْغَايَاتِ وَالْفَضَائِلِ الَّتِي مَلَأَتْ						33	0	
Fatih 4340	128b	الرَّأْيِ الشَّرِيفِ أَنْ تَبْرُرَ مَرَّاسِيمُهُ الشَّرِيفَةَ بِالْإِذْنِ لِلْسُّفْرَاءِ	155	238	24	61	40			94–105
		فِي شَرَاءِ مَا تَشْهَدُ بِهِ التَّدَكُّرَةَ مِنَ الْمَمَالِيكِ وَالسَّلَاحِ							0	
Fatih 4340	129b	وَصَفْقَةَ أَهْلِ الْبِدْعِ خَاسِرَةَ وَالنِّكَايَاتِ فِيهِمْ مُتَوَاتِرَةَ	155	238	26	57	40			100–115
		وَالْحَاجَةَ إِلَى الْمَسَاعِدَةِ بِالنَّجْدَةِ وَإِلَى شَرَاءِ الْمَمَالِيكِ الْجَلْبِ							100	
Fatih 4340	130b	يَرَى أَنَّهُ فِي حِمَايَتِهِ وَأَنَّهُ مَا بَقِيَ فَوَلَدُهُ عَزِيزٌ لَا تَقْدِيرُ الْمُلُوكِ [على]	155	238	17	28	15			113–110
		نِكَايَتِهِ خَيَالَاتٌ غَرَّتُهُ بِهَا السَّلَامَةُ وَخَدَعَتْهُ بِهَا الْجَرَّاءُ عَلَى						17	17	
Fatih 4340	131a	وَعَبْرَ ذَلِكَ مُضَافًا إِلَى مَا تَجُودُ بِهِ الْيَدُ الشَّرِيفَةُ مِنْ هُنَاكَ	155	238	35	126	106	31	48	

#### 4. The reconstructed letter and its copy

Were it not for Ibn Ḥijja, who noted a full copy of our letter in his collection of documents, *Qahwat al-inshā'*, we would be left with twenty-two fragments and thirty-seven lines of text, most of which are not contiguous. Thanks to the full copy, we know exactly how to reconstruct the original letter and where each fragment belongs (see tab. 9.4). The fragments also prove to be instrumental in calculating the full length of the original letter. The thirty-seven lines include 301 words, which gives an average of 8.13 words per line. On the basis of this average, the text for which no fragment is available was divided into lines in tab. 9.4, with a total of 123 lines. This approximation can also be reached following another calculation: the whole text contains 1,051 words. This amount divided by the average number of words per line (8.13) corresponds to 129 lines. We can then note a slight difference of six lines between this and the other calculation based on the average of words per line. Of course, this division of the text remains approximate but it is still helpful to estimate how long the letter was. On the basis of the average interlinear space reckoned in the previous section (110–20 mm), the length of the letter can be roughly calculated as between a minimum of 13.5 meters (123 lines per 110 mm) and a maximum of 15.5 meters. An alternative way to estimate the length of the letter is to take into consideration another average (the number of lines per sheet, i.e., 3). In such a case, the result is 15.99 meters.<sup>89</sup> One should not forget that the letter opened with blank sheets (*turra*), the number of which is unknown. About 1.20 meters should be added accordingly to the above-mentioned measurements if the Rasulid chancery followed the Mamluk rule.<sup>90</sup>

Beside the physical appearance of the original, the letter found in Ibn Ḥijja's *Qahwat al-inshā'* allows us to assess the reliability of his copy. The status of these copies of documents, mostly diplomatic letters, found in narrative sources (chronicles, chancery manuals, collections of letters) is a concern among historians and diplomatists. In the absence of the original documents, copies cannot be taken at face value. In some cases, it clearly appears that some parts of the document were overlooked by the author. In other cases, the text could have been revised in order to improve its linguistic and/or literary quality. Finally, in some circumstances, the text may have been altered for ideological reasons. Such flaws become clear whenever the text of a letter is available in more than one source.<sup>91</sup> In the case of our letter, we have a rare opportunity to compare fragments representing roughly one-third of the original letter, to question issues such as the

<sup>89</sup> This is 123 lines divided by 3 (lines per sheet), to equal 41. This number is then multiplied by the length of a sheet (390 mm).

<sup>90</sup> The *turra* for letters addressed to the Rasulid sultan was made of three sheets. See above, 195.

<sup>91</sup> For instance, see the case documented by Brinner, Some Ayyūbid and Mamlūk documents.

authenticity and the reliability of Ibn Ḥijja's work. If we can conclude from this comparison that Ibn Ḥijja faithfully copied the original, it would give more weight to his work in general; then historians could regard it as a trustworthy source of documents.

Like every document that Ibn Ḥijja wrote in his collection, the letter is introduced by a few words of presentation. In this case, three lines establish the circumstances in which it reached Cairo: it is said to be a copy (*nuskha*) of a letter from the ruler of Yemen (*ṣāhib al-Yaman*) that reached the Mamluk court (*al-abwāb al-sharīfa*) by the intermediary of Amīn al-Dīn Ibn al-Mufliḥ, the Rasulid envoy, on 16 Rabī' I 819 (/14 May 1416).<sup>92</sup> Following this information, Ibn Ḥijja introduces the letter with the words "and it is" (*wa-huwa*) followed by the beginning of the text which corresponds to the address (*a'azza Allāh...*). Ibn Ḥijja skipped the *basmala*, an element that was taken for granted, and also failed to indicate the sultan's signature (*'alāma*) and its place in the document. As we saw, it must have been *mamlūkuhu* and it should have been placed between the second and the third line if the Rasulid chancery followed the Mamluk practice. The collation of the copy with the fragments reveals only a few differences: one minor orthographic detail,<sup>93</sup> the addition of the *taṣliya* after the evocation of the Prophet,<sup>94</sup> the presence of a formula at the very end of the text,<sup>95</sup> and the absence of full vocalization.

One last discrepancy needs to be addressed: the date of the letter. Ibn Ḥijja does not quote this date in his copy. He only mentions the date the letter reached Cairo (i.e., 819/1416), and this piece of information appears in his presentation of the document. Fortunately, the section where the date appears has been preserved among the fragments reused by al-Maqrīzī (see figs. 9.16 and 9.38). Even though only the upper part of the line giving the date is visible, it is still possible to reconstruct most of the basic information. We proceed from the end, as this is the place where the date is most readable.

We find the year at the end of the line. The letters that one observes in the left part suffice to realize that this is the year seventeen (*sab' 'ashara*). The men-

<sup>92</sup> Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 162 (wa-mimmā warada 'alā al-abwāb al-sharīfa nuskhāt al-kitāb al-wārid min ṣāhib al-Yaman 'alā yad al-qāḍī Amīn al-Dīn Ibn al-Mufliḥ fī sādis 'ashar min shahr rabī' al-awwal sanat tis' 'ashara wa-thamānīmī'a).

<sup>93</sup> The absence, in the edition, of the *alif otiosum* at the end of *narjū* (line 33), a characteristic that is not uncommon in manuscripts but that is usually corrected in editions to adhere to modern orthographic rules.

<sup>94</sup> *Sayyid al-mursalīn* (line 113). Veselý mentions in his apparatus that the *taṣliya* is missing in the Berlin MS, which appears to be the most faithful to Ibn Ḥijja's text. See Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 166 (lines 6–7).

<sup>95</sup> In *shā'a Allāh ta'ālā bi-mannihi wa-karamihi*. This formula is missing in two manuscripts, including the Berlin one, that give the best readings. *Ibid.* (line 14).

tion of the century (*thamānīmi'a*) must appear at the beginning of the next line due to the lack of space at the end of the preserved line. It is worth noting here that in letters issued by the Mamluk chancery, the date was always centered, with the same amount of blank space on each side, unlike the text of the letter that was justified with a fixed right margin and no space at the end of the lines. By contrast, the date in the Rasulid letter is written exactly as the rest of the text, with the same right margin and no space at the end, on the left.

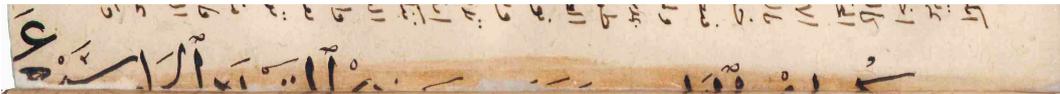


Figure 9.16: The date of the letter

LEIDEN, UNIVERSITEITSBIBLIOTHEEK, MS OR. 1366C, FOL. 103a

The name of the month is almost clear and rather easy to decipher: the two letters of the first word can quickly be made out (*dhī*). Given that there are only two months that begin with *dhū* (Dhū al-Qa'da and Dhū al-Ḥijja) and that the upper part of the letters of the second word have been well preserved in the fragment (*alif-lām*, then a letter with two diacritical dots and vowel *a* followed by a letter that is not visible but surmounted by *sukūn*, then another letter with the vowel *a* and, finally, a *hā'*), then Dhū al-Ḥijja can thus be ruled out. The name of the month was accompanied by an epithet (in this case *al-ḥarām*, of which the definite article with the end of the *lām* leans toward the left to join with the *hā'*, that is no longer visible). The name of the month was presumably preceded by the word *shahr*. This word has completely disappeared apart from the *fathā*.

For the day, we must now consider the beginning of the line. It starts with the letter *ku* that stands for *kutiba* ('It was written'). If it were a Mamluk letter, we would expect the word *fī* ('on') next to it, followed by the date, but in the case of this Rasulid letter we can see that the word that follows does not correspond to *fī*: the first letter is clearly not a *fā'*, rather the homograph *u* followed by the next letter, of which only the top is visible as well as the sign indicating the absence of a vowel (*sukūn*). The word is tentatively read *yawm* (day). If this is correct, the name of the day came after it and before its number. This name starts with an *alif* with a *waṣla* and then a *lām*, i.e., the definite article. The first following consonant has almost completely vanished but the vowel, a *fathā*, and the tip of what might be the letter or a diacritical dot are still visible. It was followed by an *alif* or a *lām* while the end of the word no longer appears. Given the possible combinations with the names of the days of the week, this leaves only one match: *al-thalāthā'*, written in its archaic form *الثلاثاء*, i.e., with an *alif maḥdhūfa* not indicated in the document. The consecutive word corresponded to the number of the day. This number did not include any tall letter and was surmounted by three narrowly written *fathas* that are still conspicuous. This leaves only one possibility: '*ashara*, i.e., the word 'ten.' This reading is still problematic because the number of the day is

expressed through an ordinal, not a cardinal number. It would mean that we should consider the presence of a unit between this number and the name of the day. In such a case, Tuesday fell on the eleventh and the eighteenth of the month of Dhū al-Qa‘da 817. The space between the name of the day and the ten is rather small and would rule out the first alternative (*al-ḥādiya*). *Al-Thāmina* could still fit in that space, so it is tentatively proposed here as the date. The date of the document can thus be approximated as Tuesday 18 Dhū al-Qa‘da 817, which corresponded to 29 January 1415.

As we saw, the collation of the text available in the edition published by the late Rudolf Veselý with the text found in the fragments reveals that both tally exactly, the aforementioned small differences excepted. Thus, Ibn Ḥijja’s rendition of the text of the letter—and its edition by a scholar who made the right choices when the manuscripts presented diverging readings—can be characterized as faithful to the original as far as the fragments are concerned, and there is no reason to doubt that this was not the case for the remainder of the letter. Yet we cannot extend this assessment to all the documents found in *Qahwat al-inshā’* given that we do not have another case in which we can collate the original with Ibn Ḥijja’s copies. Nevertheless, it certainly strengthens the historical and diplomatic value of this work.

Table 9.4: The reconstructed letter

Text	Manuscript	Line no.
أعز الله أنصار المقام الشريف العالي السلطاني الأعظمي		1
الإمامي الهمامي المالكي الملكي المؤيدي وأيد سلطانه		2
وَأَمَدَّ بِالنَّصْرِ أَعْوَانَهُ وَشَيَّدَ بِالْعِزِّ أَرْكَانَهُ وَلَا بَرَحَ	Fatih 4340, fol. 119b	3
الْعَيْشِ الرَّغِيدِ فِي أَيَّامِهِ وَالْمَوْتِ الْمُبِيدِ فِي حُسَامِهِ	Fatih 4340, fol. 119b	4
وَالْأَمْنِ فِي مَمَالِكِ مِصْرِهِ وَشَامِهِ وَالْخَوْفِ [مِنْ خَلْفِ]	Fatih 4340, fol. 120a	5
عدوه وقدامه وخص بسلام لا أطيب منه إلا		6
أخلاقه ولا أزكى منه إلا أعراقه ولا أثمر منه		7
إلا عهده وميثاقه ورد المثل الشريف شرفه		8
اللَّهُ وَعَظَّمَهُ وَعَزَّزَهُ وَأَكْرَمَهُ فَحَمَدْنَا اللَّهَ تَعَالَى	Fatih 4340, fol. 117b	9
عَلَى مَا تَضَمَّنَهُ مِنَ النِّعَمِ الَّتِي وَهَبَهَا وَالْفِتَنِ الَّتِي أَذْهَبَهَا	Fatih 4340, fol. 122a	10
وَأَحْمَدَ لَهَا وَالْفُتُوحِ الَّتِي فَتَحَ مَعَالِيْقَ أَبْوَابِهَا	Fatih 4340, fol. 122a	11
ورد بها حقوق الإسلام من غصابها والملك		12
الذي ابتهج به الدين الحنيفي سرورا والسعد الذي كان		13
له في الأزل مذخورا ﴿إِنْ هَذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جِزَاءً وَكَانَ﴾		14

Text	Manuscript	Line no.
سَعَيْكُمْ مَشْكُورًا ﴿ وَوَصَلَ مَا وَصَلَ بِهِ مِنَ الْإِكْرَامِ ]	Fatih 4340, fol. 126b	15
وَأَتْحَفَ بِهِ مِنَ الْأَيْدِي الْجَسَامِ الْمُسْتَقْبَلَةَ	Fatih 4340, fol. 126b	16
بالإجلال والإعظام والمحدثنة عن خلق عظيم وفضل		17
عميم فما أهل مصر على القرب بأعرف من أهل		18
اليمن على البعد بما انتشر من محاسن المقام		19
العالي وفضله وسياسته وعدله وما خصه الله به من		20
النَّصْرِ أَلْتَامَ الْآيَاتِ وَالْتَأْيِيدِ الْمَنْصُورِ الرَّايَاتِ	Fatih 4340, fol. 127b	21
وَالْتَوْفِيقِ الْبَعِيدِ الْغَايَاتِ وَالْفَضَائِلِ الَّتِي مَلَأَتْ	Fatih 4340, fol. 127b	22
القلوب بمحبته وأكدت الأشواق إلى رؤيته وعلمنا		23
بِهَا أَنَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْمُحْيِي مَا كَانَ بَيْنَ السَّلَفِ الْأَوَّلِ مِنَ الْمَصَادِقَةِ	Fatih 4340, fol. 118b	24
وَالْمُؤَاظَةِ وَالْمُؤَادَّةِ وَالْمُصَافَاةِ وَالْمُخَالَصَةِ	Fatih 4340, fol. 118b	25
وَالْمُؤَالَاةِ وَفِي هَذِهِ الْمَنَاشِيرِ الصَّادِرَةِ وَهِيَ كَتَبَ	Fatih 4340, fol. 121a	26
من الملوك المتأخرة إلى صاحب اليمن الملك		27
الأشرف تغمده الله برحمته وأسكنه بحبوح		28
جنته ما يشهد بما بينهم من المحبة الصادقة		29
والطبائع المتوافقة والألفة التي انتظمت عقودها		30
وصدقت عهودها ووشيت برودها وما تضمنته من		31
الاهتمام بنصره الأوداء وبذلته من بعث الجيوش		32
لِلنَّصْرِ عَلَى الْأَعْدَاءِ وَنَزَجُوا أَنَّ الْمَقَامَ الْعَالِي خَلَّدَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مَلِكِهِ	Or. 1366c, fol. 20a	33
هُوَ الْوَاصِلُ أَرْحَامَ تِلْكَ الْمَوَدَّاتِ الشَّرِيفَةِ ۞ وَالنَّاشِرُ أَعْلَامَ	Fatih 4340, fol. 116b	34
تِلْكَ الْوُصْلَةَ اللَّطِيفَةَ ۞ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى صَدَرَتْ	Fatih 4340, fol. 116b	35
وَالْمَرَاقِبُ سَائِرَةٌ عَلَى تَبِجِ هَذَا الْبَحْرِ كَأَنَّهَا لِيَالٍ خَطَّارَةٌ وَكَأَنَّ	Fatih 4340, fol. 123a	36
ما فوقها من القلوع أيام مواراة وكارمها وتجارها مثقلون		37
من المكارم ممتثلون من المغانم سالمون من المغارم		38
إذا سكتوا من الثناء نطقت به حقايبهم وإذا قصروا فيه		39
طولت زواملهم وركائبهم والرعايا باليمن تحت ظل الأمن		40
وادعه والمعدلة لأركان الباطل صادعه ويد العدل		41
والإنصاف لشميل الحقوق جامعهم ولسطوات أرباب		42
الأهواء قامعه إلا أن الشريف حسن بن عجلان		43
قد أخاف العباد في الحرم الذي جعله الله آمنا وأصبح		44
يتخطف الناس من وسطه ومن حوله مقيما وظاعنا حتى انقطع		45

Text	Manuscript	Line no.
حَاجُّ الْيَمَنِ وَتِجَارُهُ مِنْ مَوْسِمِ مَكَّةَ الْحَرَامِ وَأَشْتَدَّتْ	Or. 1366c, fol. 77b	46
وَطَأَتْهُ عَلَى الْخَلْقِ وَأَسْتَعْنَى بِمَا أَنْتَهَبَ مِنَ الْأَمْوَالِ الْعِظَامِ	Or. 1366c, fol. 77b	47
وبقي كالقاطع وقته الحاضر غير مراعاة لرياسة ولا ملتفت		48
على سياسة لا يدخل تحت طاعة ولا يقارب ما دخلت		49
فيه الجماعة وقنع منه ملوك مصر بسلامة حاجهم من		50
شره ووكلوا غيرهم من الحاج والتجار إلى أمره فاستباح		51
الأموال واستحلها ونقض معاهد شرائع الإسلام وحلها		52
وما أخذ الولاية لولده إلا تكبرا عليها وأنهفة أن تكون		53
على يده يد تمتد إليها فقدم ولده كالبيدق في الصدر وهو		54
يَرَى أَنَّهُ فِي حِمَايَتِهِ وَأَنَّهُ مَا بَقِيَ فَوَلَدُهُ عَزِيزٌ لَا تَقْدِرُ الْمُلُوكُ [على]	Fatih 4340, fol. 130b	55
نِكَايَتِهِ خَيَالَاتٌ غَرَّتَهُ بِهَا أَلْسَلَامَةٌ وَخَدَعَتْهُ بِهَا الْجَرَّاءُ عَلَى	Fatih 4340, fol. 130b	56
أرباب الزعامة ومن جمع ما جمع من الذهب وحاز ما حاز		57
من النشب تعدى طوره واستخف غيره ورأى أنه بالملك		58
أولى وترقب لأعمال الحيلة فيه حولاً فحولاً فعواقبهم		59
غَيْرُ مَحْمُودَةٍ وَقَبَائِحُهُمْ غَيْرُ مَحْضُورَةٍ وَلَا مَعْدُودَةٍ	Ayasofya 3362, fol. 143b	60
وَبِاللَّهِ مَا أَخَذَ أَمْوَالِ الْيَمَنِ هَذِهِ أَلْسَنَةَ بِيَمِينِهِ الَّتِي هِيَ يَدُهُ	Fatih 4340, fol. 125b	61
بَلْ بِيَمِينِهِ الَّتِي لَمْ يَصْدُقْ بِهَا مَوْعِدُهُ ﴿وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِينٌ﴾	Fatih 4340, fol. 125b	62
الناصحين ﴿وراعينا من حقوق المقام العالي خلد الله ملكه		63
مَا لَمْ يُرَاعِهِ وَرَأَيْنَا أَنْ نَنْتَصِفَ بِيَدِهِ الشَّرِيفَةَ وَلَا	Fatih 4340, fol. 115b	64
نَكْتِيلُ لَهُ كَمَا كَالْنَا بَضَاعَهُ	Fatih 4340, fol. 115b	65
وَلَوْلَاكَ مَا أَمْتَدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا يَمِينُهُ وَلَا صَانَهُ مِنَّا حُسَامٌ	Fatih 4340, fol. 124a	66
وَلَا رُمُحٌ	Fatih 4340, fol. 124a	67
تركنا له من خوف عتبك ما لنا وإن كان لا يرضيك من		68
مثله الصفح		69
ونحن على علم بأن ليس عندكم أمان لمن يبغى الفساد		70
ولا صلح		71
وإن لنا في رفع شكوى تجارنا إلى عدلك الإنصاف في		72
الحكم والنجح		73
وقد سلط الله عليه ابن أخيه وهو رميته بن محمد بن		74

Text	Manuscript	Line no.
عجلان فإن العم ظلم حقوقه ويره الولد فأكثر عقوقه		75
فخرج منه مغاضباً فغضب لغضبه القواد والسبب أن ذلك		76
صادف هوى في الفؤاد وقد ترشح لطلب الولاية في البلاد		77
وقويت شوكته وزادت على عصبته عمه عصبته وقد دخل		78
اليمن مسترفداً فرأينا من أخلاقه اللينة ومنطقه الذي		79
هو منه على بينة ما يصلح أن يكون به أهلاً للولاية وموضعا		80
للكفاية فإن انقضى الرأي العالي كسر شوكة حسن بإقامة		81
هذا الكفؤ الكريم مع ولده في نصف البلاد اتسق الحق		82
وافترقت كلمة الفساد واجتهد كل في بذل الطاعة والانقياد		83
وهذه سياسة بل فرصة تغتنم لا ينبغي أن يعرض عنها فما		84
تقطع الشجرة إلا بعود منها وقد عمر حسن بن عجلان		85
مراكب في البحر صيرها على الناس ألباء يقطع السيارة عن		86
الطور ويأخذ كل سفينة غصبا ولأجلها شحنا مراكب الكارم		87
من المقاتلة بكل باسل ومن أنواع السلاح بكل ما		88
يعتصم به المقاتل من سيوف ورماح وسهام يطير منها		89
الموت بجناح وقسي كلما اشتدت اتسعت خطا سهامها		90
الفساح ومدافع لا يدفع عذابها عنهم ترس ولا		91
سلاح وأمرناهم أن يستكثروا من ظروف الماء وأوعيته		92
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لهم بجموعه على موارد الماء وأن يحول بينهم وبين الاستقاء		94
والله الكافي وأما أخبار أهل اليمن فكلمة أهل السنة ظاهرة		95
وَصَفَقَةُ أَهْلِ أَلْبَدَعِ خَاسِرَةٌ وَالنِّكَايَاتُ فِيهِمْ مُتَوَاتِرَةٌ	Fatih 4340, fol. 129b	96
والحاجة إلى المساعدة بالنجدة وإلى شراء المماليك أَلْجَبُ	Fatih 4340, fol. 129b	97
الجياد مشتدة وإلى السلاح فإنه نعم العدة فإن اقتض		98
الرَّأْيُ الشَّرِيفُ أَنْ تَبْرَزَ مَرَّاسِيمُهُ الشَّرِيفَةُ بِالْإِذْنِ لِلشُّفْرَاءِ	Fatih 4340, fol. 128b	99
في شراء ما تشهد به التذكرة من المماليك والأسلح	Fatih 4340, fol. 128b	100
وَعَبْرَ ذَلِكَ مُضَافًا إِلَى مَا تَجُودُ بِهِ أَيْدُ الشَّرِيفَةِ مِنْ هُنَالِكَ	Fatih 4340, fol. 131a	101

Text	Manuscript	Line no.
كما جرت عوائد السفراء في أيام الملك الشهيد برفوق		102
فإن أيامه كانت أيام خير وسلامة وسكون واستقامة ولكن		103
خلفه من قطع ما وصل وأخذ ما حصل ونفر التجار		104
وأخلى من المراكب البحار حتى أيد الله الإسلام		105
بهذه الدولة المؤيدية فحقت الدماء في أهبها وقرت		106
الرؤوس في كواهلها وحفظت الأموال على أربابها		107
والحمد لله رب العالمين وقد صدر المجلس السامي الأثري		108
الكبير الأجل القاضوي الأميني أمين الدين مفلح التركي		109
سلمه الله والسفراء وما بأيديهم بجواد المقام العالي خلد الله تعالى		110
ملكه ونصره وفي ذمامه وجلالته واحترامه فجواره عزيز وذمامه		111
حريز ولكل حساد لا يؤمنون أبدا وقد استعاذ	Ayasofya 3362, fol. 142b	112
سَيِّدُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ مِنْ شَمَاتِهِ الْأَعْدَا فَالسُّفْرَاءُ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى	Ayasofya 3362, fol. 142b	113
لا ينقطعون كل عام من النزول ببابه والتعلق بجنابه فما		114
انقطعوا في أيام فرج إلا لما سد دون معروفه الفرج وأما هذه		115
الأيام فإنها تواريخ الخيرات وتذاكر الحسنات ومما		116
اقتضاه الإدلال على مكارمه والتبسط في مواهبه التصدق		117
بما أمكن من السناقير الملكية وهي التي تسمى بالشواهين		118
البحرية فللمحج إدلال وقد يكون من المحبوب الاحتمال		119
والله تعالى يسمع الخير من أخباره ويحسن الكفاية في إيراده		120
وَإِضْدَارُهُ إِنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ	Or. 1366c, fol. 103a	121
كُـ[تب] يُو[م] أـ[ل]ـ[ش]ـ[ل]ـ[ث]ـ[اء] ثامن عشرة شهر [ذي القعدة الحرام سنة]	Or. 1366c, fol. 103a	122
سَبْعَ عَشْرَةَ		
[وثماني مائة]		123

## 5. Secretaries in dialogue

Besides the diplomatic analysis the Rasulid letter allows, it provides a rare case study of an exchange of diplomatic correspondence between two secretaries whose identities are known. Taken together with other partially preserved letters, it gives us the opportunity to analyze how two celebrated men of letters engaged with one another via the official correspondence they were asked to maintain. In what follows I briefly tackle the subject to highlight the kind of dialogue these two secretaries could enter into in such circumstances. I will however refrain from car-

rying out a thorough analysis of the literary devices they could resort to, as this article is not the time or place to examine this.<sup>96</sup>

### 5.1. The identity of the Mamluk secretary

As it has already been revealed in the preceding pages, we know that Ibn Ḥijja was the secretary responsible for the composition of the diplomatic correspondence as well as some administrative deeds during the period considered—al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh’s reign. Born in Hama in 767/1366 as the son of a craftsman, he dedicated himself to learning and soon became renowned for his talent in poetry which he perfected first in Damascus, then in Cairo, before returning to Syria. During the following years, he struck up an acquaintance with a fellow countryman, Nāṣir al-Dīn Ibn al-Bārīzī (d. 823/1420), who later became the secretary of the chancery in Hama. When the then governor of Hama and future sultan, Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī, started his ascent to power in Syria, Ibn al-Bārīzī had already established a strong relationship with him. After Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī’s accession to the throne in 815/1412, the new sultan nominated Ibn al-Bārīzī to the position of head of the state chancery in Cairo. Thanks to his links to these two men, Ibn Ḥijja followed suit and was designated as a composition secretary (*munshi*’),<sup>97</sup> a position he retained until a few years after the deaths of Ibn al-Bārīzī and al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh (d. 824/1421). In 830/1427, he was back in his hometown where he died a few years later (d. 837/1434).

During his permanent residency in Cairo, he strengthened his ties with some of the most prominent men of letters and scholars of his time. Lauded for his poetry, Ibn Ḥijja composed several works mostly dealing with stylistics, poetics, and rhetoric.<sup>98</sup> As stressed by the Czech scholar Rudolf Veselý, “Ibn Ḥijja was not a bureaucrat, rather a poet and a man of letters.”<sup>99</sup> The years he spent drafting documents and letters on behalf of the sultans offered him the opportunity to spread his style through the Mamluk realm and beyond. When he retired to his hometown, one of his tasks was to collect the letters and documents he had authored<sup>100</sup> during his service at the chancery. The collection, which he entitled *Qahwat al-inshā’*, also includes some personal correspondence and other literary pieces as

<sup>96</sup> For a very brief assessment of Ibn Ḥijja’s literary prowess, see Stewart, *Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī* 145.

<sup>97</sup> Besides this function, he himself could prepare the document to be sent, as in the case of a letter addressed to the Khan of the Golden Horde. See Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 119–20.

<sup>98</sup> The most detailed study of Ibn Ḥijja’s life, works, and style is by al-Rabdāwī, *Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī*. See also Salīm, *Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Ḥijja*.

<sup>99</sup> Veselý, Vorwort, in Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 25 (“Ibn Ḥiğğa war kein Bürokrat, sondern ein Dichter und Literat”).

<sup>100</sup> On the perception of authorship regarding diplomatic correspondence and official deeds, see Veselý, *Eine Stilkunstschrift*.

well as some foreign correspondence that prompted the answers he composed. Ibn Ḥijja can rightly be regarded as “the last of the great secretaries of the medieval chanceries of Egypt and Syria.”<sup>101</sup>

In his *Qahwat al-inshāʾ*, Ibn Ḥijja recorded two letters he authored, both addressed by al-Muʾayyad Shaykh to the Rasulid sultan, each of them being an answer to a Rasulid letter.<sup>102</sup> While he provides a copy of the second Rasulid letter, he failed to do so for the first one which must have reached Cairo shortly before Ibn Ḥijja started to work at the state chancery. There seems to be evidence that he did not keep an accurate record of all the correspondence, including his answers, as we know that another Rasulid letter was received in Cairo to which the Mamluk sultan replied. There is no trace in *Qahwat al-inshāʾ* of this Rasulid letter or of the Mamluk letter that was drafted in answer to it.<sup>103</sup>

## 5.2. The identity of the Rasulid secretary

We would not know the name of the Rasulid secretary who penned at least one of the letters addressed to the Mamluk sultan if it were not for a Meccan historian, al-Fāsī (d. 832/1429), who gained access to this diplomatic correspondence. In the long and well-informed biography he devoted to the Meccan Sharīf Ḥasan b. ʿAjlān in his biographical dictionary of Meccan personalities, *al-ʿIqd al-thamīn*, he quotes an extract of the letter Ibn Ḥijja composed in 819/1420 (see tab. 9.5, no. 13) in answer to the Rasulid letter received a few months before (see tab. 9.5, no. 12). Al-Fāsī indicates that he was aware that the author of the Mamluk letter was Ibn Ḥijja, whom he presents as the brilliant man of letters (*al-adīb al-bārīʿ*).<sup>104</sup> He then cites an excerpt of the Rasulid answer to Ibn Ḥijja’s letter (see tab. 9.5, no. 15), stating, at the end, that it is “the composition of the one and only man of letters, culture, and refinement of Yemen, the judge Sharaf al-Dīn Ismāʿīl b. Abī Bakr, known as Ibn al-Muqriʿ.”<sup>105</sup> Even though the identity of the Rasulid secretary is only revealed with regard to a letter that Ibn Ḥijja did not take note of in his *Qahwat al-inshāʾ*, in what follows I argue that, like Ibn Ḥijja, Ibn al-Muqriʿ was in charge of the diplomatic correspondence, at least with the Mamluks, and that he can be rightly regarded as the author of the letter whose fragments are the subject of our study.

<sup>101</sup> Stewart, *Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī* 138.

<sup>102</sup> See tabs. 9.5, nos. 7 and 12 (Rasulid letters), 9 and 13 (Mamluk letters). He also copied one of his answers to a Rasulid letter received under Ṭaṭar’s reign.

<sup>103</sup> A short extract of the Rasulid letter is quoted by al-Fāsī in his *al-ʿIqd al-thamīn*. See tab. 9.5, no. 15.

<sup>104</sup> Al-Fāsī, *al-ʿIqd al-thamīn* iv, 133.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* iv, 132.

Ibn al-Muqri' (b. 755/1354; d. 837/1433) was born in the Tihama region, in one of those places locally known as "fortresses of wisdom." Such places were renowned for the transmission of science that took place in these remote mountainous villages where scholars enjoyed protection and support.<sup>106</sup> After his primary education, he moved to Zabid where he established bonds with the Rasulid sultan. In his early career, his preference was poetry and prose, his poetry being highly appreciated and earning him lavish gifts from the rulers of Yemen. Despite the fame he built in this field in a short period of time, his father urged him to dedicate his time to the religious sciences. Hence, he specialized in jurisprudence and enjoyed a successful career as an administrator of various institutions and as a professor in Zabid and Taiz. Yet he could not refrain from his love of poetry and he continued to compose poems inspired by a wide variety of circumstances. One of these poems relates to his opposition to Yemeni partisans of Ibn 'Arabī's thought whom he fought by pouring forth a string of abusive verses. At his death, his poems were gathered on two occasions,<sup>107</sup> and the sources that included an entry on him usually quote some of them. Apart from Mecca, where he went on several occasions to perform the pilgrimage, he did not leave Yemen; yet this did not prevent him from meeting famous scholars, like Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449), when they visited Yemen.<sup>108</sup>

On at least two occasions, Ibn al-Muqri' was designated as an envoy by the Rasulid sultan. The first time, he brought a letter to the Meccan Sharīf in 814/1412 (see tab. 9.5, no. 2). The second time, he was supposed to travel as an envoy to Cairo but his mission was postponed and he was eventually replaced. According to Ibn Ḥajar, the reason of the deferral could be found in Ibn al-Muqri''s eagerness to be appointed supreme judge.<sup>109</sup> Indeed, on 20 Shawwāl 817/2 January 1415, the great lexicographer Majd al-Dīn al-Fīrūzābādī, who held the position of supreme judge, died.<sup>110</sup> Some authors asserted that Ibn al-Muqri' yearned to become his successor out of fear that a judge adhering to Ibn 'Arabī's views would get the

<sup>106</sup> On these, see al-Akwa', *Hijar al-'ilm* i, 34–48 where the author speaks of Abyāt Ḥusayn, Ibn al-Muqri''s birthplace, and 38–41, where he mentions him.

<sup>107</sup> One of the two versions of his *dīwān* is published: al-Muqri', *al-Dīwān*.

<sup>108</sup> On him, see al-Burayhī, *Ṭabaqāt ṣulaḥā' al-Yaman* (1994 ed.) 302–7; al-Khazrajī, *al-'Aqd al-fākhir* i, 510–21 (no. 228); al-Ahdal, *Tuḥfat al-zaman* ii, 324–5; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-ghumr* iii, 521; Id., *al-Majma' al-mu'assis* iii, 86–8; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'iyya* iv, 109–10 (no. 765); Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi* ii, 386–90 (no. 426); Id., *al-Dalīl al-shāfi* i, 122; al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyat al-wu'āt* i, 444 (no. 909); al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi'* ii, 292–5 (no. 914); Id., *al-Jawāhir wa-l-durar* i, 147–8; al-Shawkānī, *al-Badr al-ṭāli'* i, 174–7 (no. 89); Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* ix, 321–2; al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām* i, 310–1. The most detailed study on Ibn al-Muqri' is Abū Zayd, *Ismā'il al-Muqri'*.

<sup>109</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Majma' al-mu'assis* iii, 87 ('uyyina lil-sifāra ilā al-Qāhira thumma ta'akhhara dhālika).

<sup>110</sup> On him, see now Strotmann, *Majd al-Dīn al-Fīrūzābādī*.

job.<sup>111</sup> Whatever the case may be, this event helps to precisely date the moment when Ibn al-Muqri' was designated to deliver the Rasulid letter in Cairo. The letter that is the subject of this study is indeed datable to the month following al-Firūzābādī's death (18 Dhū al-Qa'da/29 January). Thus, Ibn al-Muqri' was supposed to deliver a letter that he had also likely composed. As stressed above, we know with certainty that he authored the answer to Ibn Ḥijja's answer to the Rasulid letter dated 817/1415. There is now little doubt that he was the author of the latter too.<sup>112</sup> This designation would have given him the opportunity to stay in Cairo for a while and to meet scholars and luminaries in the field of belles-lettres, like Ibn Ḥijja. Ultimately, his ambition or his commitment to preventing a partisan of Ibn 'Arabī from occupying a high position prevailed and changed his mind.<sup>113</sup> An analysis of the poetry that features in the two letters provides further elements corroborating the identification of the author of the Rasulid letter with Ibn al-Muqri'.

### 5.3. Secretaries in competition

If diplomatic letters were first and foremost a mode of pragmatic communication (they convey a message that must be understood by the addressee), they also engaged with literary communication by virtue of their stylistic features and their polyvalence: they could be appreciated out of context and become part of anthologies as exemplified by Ibn Ḥijja and his *Qahwat al-inshā'*.<sup>114</sup> Composition secretaries were fully aware that the letters they were asked to write would be read by a peer once it reached the addressee. Even though the ruler who received a diplomatic letter could appreciate both its meaning and the way this meaning was conveyed, it was the composition secretary, tasked with preparing the answer, who would prize the literary devices and engage with them to show his skills. As noted by al-Qalqashandī, the style of the reply could be viewed as more challenging than the style of the initial letter that prompted it. In fact, in the reply, the secretary was

<sup>111</sup> The medieval sources agree on the first reason while Abū Zayd, *Ismā'il al-Muqri'* 50, defends the second.

<sup>112</sup> Al-Burayhī, *Ṭabaqāt ṣūlahā' al-Yaman* (ed. 1994) 306, confirms that al-Muqri' composed official correspondence and that he mentioned some of the poetry the latter inserted in it in the longer version of his work (wa-qad dhakartu min ash'ārihi fi al-uḥjiyyāt wa-l-risālāt wa-l-inshā'āt ba'dahā fi al-aṣl). The editor of the text, al-Ḥibshī, later found a manuscript containing a longer text but Ibn al-Muqri''s biography does not feature in it. See al-Burayhī, *Ṭabaqāt ṣūlahā' al-Yaman* (ed. 2015).

<sup>113</sup> Yet he ultimately failed, as al-Firūzābādī's successor was a judge known for adhering to Ibn 'Arabī's ideas. See Abū Zayd, *Ismā'il al-Muqri'* 50.

<sup>114</sup> On pragmatic and literary communication in Mamluk literature, see Bauer, Mamluk literature 24–6.

constrained by protocol and compelled to enter into the conversation with his peer.<sup>115</sup>

This form of dialogue is best evidenced by a study of the poems found in the letters. Theoreticians of chancery diplomatic protocol deemed the use of poetry in letters exchanged by rulers a secondary, nevertheless acceptable, form of communication in comparison with prose.<sup>116</sup> In such circumstances, composition secretaries limited the inclusion of their own poetry to a few verses. Independently from their usual jobs, both Ibn Ḥijja and Ibn al-Muqri' were praised for their poetic compositions. The Meccan historian al-Fāsī offers an example of Ibn Ḥijja's artistry in a letter addressed by the Mamluk sultan to the Sharīf of Mecca in 817/1414 (see tab. 9.5, no. 10).<sup>117</sup> The letter's goal was to communicate that al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh had defeated his opponent Nawrūz in Syria and had returned victoriously to Cairo. Al-Fāsī limits himself to stress that the letter included two verses composed by Ibn Ḥijja that said (*tawīl* meter):

*a-yā malikan bi-Allāhi šāra mu'ayyadan*      *wa-muntašiban fī mulkihi našba tamyīzī*  
*kasarta bi-misrā nīla mišra wa-tanqaḏī*      *wa-ḥaqqika ba'da al-kasri ayyāmu nawrūzī*

O Ruler who came to be supported by God

firmly and distinctively established in his rule!

In the month of Misrā you opened the Nile of Egypt

By your truth! The days of *nawrūz*/Nawrūz came to an end after the opening/  
 defeat

Al-Fāsī praised Ibn Ḥijja's skill (*kiyāsa*) in conveying the news by deploying the concluding *tawriya* (double entendre) punning on the name of the defeated opponent. At first, this epigram<sup>118</sup> celebrates the sultan's victory (*mu'ayyad* "supported" echoing the sultan's title) and parallels it with the opening (*kasr*) of the canal in Cairo, which took place during the Coptic month of Misrā and whose ceremony coincided with the days of celebration—known as Nawrūz—famous for the loosening of people's social behavior.<sup>119</sup> The name and demise (*kasr* also means "defeat") of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh's opponent was thus subtly evoked at a second level.<sup>120</sup> Al-Fāsī could not refrain from expressing his wonder at such a

<sup>115</sup> See Gully, *The culture of letter-writing* 22, 155–6.

<sup>116</sup> See *ibid.* 31–9.

<sup>117</sup> The same epigram appears in a letter of good tidings (*bishāra*) that Ibn Ḥijja composed after 1 Ramaḏān 817/14 November 1414 (Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 81). The letter addressed to the Sharīf of Mecca was probably a copy of it.

<sup>118</sup> On epigrams in the Mamluk period, see Talib, *How do you say "epigram" in Arabic?*.

<sup>119</sup> Nawrūz died on 21 Rabī' II 817/10 July 1414. Misrā was the last month of the Coptic year and fell in August when the canal was opened and the festivities ensued.

<sup>120</sup> Ibn Ḥijja also plays with other words evoking metalinguistic language (*našba tamyīz*, the first

poem and the strange and perfect concomitance of both events which Ibn Ḥijja made full use of.<sup>121</sup> Ibn Ḥijja would not have failed to deploy such skills in a reply to a letter composed by an expert in poetry like Ibn al-Muqri’.

Ibn al-Muqri’’s letter indeed includes four verses of the *ṭawīl* meter.<sup>122</sup> It features in the section of the letter where the Rasulid sultan expresses his contempt for the Sharīf of Mecca whose past actions compelled him to establish a boycott of trade and pilgrimage. After explaining that as a result of this decision the Sharīf was unable to lay his hand (*yamīn*) on the money of the Yemenis this year, the Rasulid sultan stresses that he safeguarded the sultan’s interests (literally, “taxes,” *ḥuqūq*). At the same time, he preferred to seek redress for his actions from the Mamluk sultan. At this point the poem reads (*ṭawīl* meter):

<i>law lāka mā intaddat ilaynā yamīnuhu</i>	<i>wa-lā ṣānahu minnā husāmūn wa-lā rumḥū</i>
<i>taraknā lahu min khawfī ‘atbika mā lanā</i>	<i>wa-in kāna lā yurḍika min mithlihi al-ṣafḥū</i>
<i>wa-naḥnu ‘alā ‘ilmin bi-an laysa ‘indakum</i>	<i>amānun liman yabghī al-fasāda wa-lā ṣulḥū</i>
<i>wa-inna lanā fī raf’i shakwā tujjārīnā</i>	<i>ilā ‘adlika al-inṣāfu fī al-ḥukmi wa-l-nujḥū</i>

Were it not for you, he could not have stretched out his right hand toward us

and neither sword nor spear would have protected him from us

We left him what he owes us out of fear of your rebuke

even if you cannot be satisfied with pardoning someone of his kind

We are aware that there cannot be from you

neither a safe conduct nor peace for the one who covets viciousness

By raising our merchants’ complaint to your justice, we are entitled

to seek a right and favorable outcome in the judgment

In the first hemistich, the poet evokes the hand (*yamīn*) which he refers to in the preceding lines. There he also played on the second meaning of the word

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word also referring to the accusative case—noticeable in the first hemistich—, and the second to the complement of specification—the grammatical function of both words). This kind of double entendre, in which the second-order meaning belongs to a terminological or technical field, is known as *istikhdām*.

<sup>121</sup> Al-Fāsī, *al-Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 118–9 (wa-fi hādhayn al-baytayn min al-kiyāsa al-tawriya bi-l-nawrūz al-ladhī yakūn bi-ithra kasr al-nīl wa-huwa yawm mashhūr ‘inda al-Miṣriyyīn limā yaqa’ fīhi min al-mujūn wa-Nawrūz al-ladhī kāna amīran bi-l-Shām wa-qatalahu al-sulṭān wa-yuqālu lahu Nawrūz wa-fihimā min al-kiyāsa ayḍan ṣiḥḥat al-ittifāq al-maqūl fa-innahū qad lā yatimmu al-zafar bi-nayrūz fa-tamma).

<sup>122</sup> These verses do not appear in the version of his *dīwān* that has been published. See al-Muqri’, *al-Dīwān*. There is another version that remains unpublished but I was not able to consult any of the manuscripts. See Abū Zayd, *Ismā’il al-Muqri’* 90–9.

*yamīn* (“oath”) by stating that it was not to be trusted. This second-order meaning is also intended here. Apart from that, the meaning of the verses is straightforward and the author does not resort to rhetorical devices, though he was known for his keen interest in them.<sup>123</sup>

Before considering Ibn Ḥijja’s answer, it should be duly noted that Ibn al-Muqri’ started his poem with a variant in the meter: the initial foot begins with two long syllables (*law lā*) instead of a short one followed by a long one as in the following verses. The poet explicitly made this choice because a question of rhythm and poetic effect is allowed in prosody and belongs to the categories of variants called *ziḥāf*. When it regards the initial foot of a verse of the *ṭawīl* meter, as it does here, the variant is called *kharm* (“retrenchment”) and two options are available: either the foot starts with two long syllables, as in the case of Ibn al-Muqri’’s poem (this sub-variant is called *thalm*, “a notch”), or with a long syllable followed by a short one (this sub-variant is called *tharm*, literally “a gap between two incisors”). Specialists of prosody of the sixth/twelfth century, moved by aesthetic concerns, classified the variants (*ziḥāfāt*) into three qualitative categories: good (*ḥasan*), acceptable (*ṣāliḥ*), and ugly (*qabīḥ*). According to some of them, the *kharm* as exemplified by Ibn al-Muqri’’s poem belonged to the last one.<sup>124</sup> Even though this may have been the case in the classical period, poets of the ninth/fifteenth century were less concerned by such a characterization as evidenced by Ibn al-Muqri’ in the case we are dealing with.

In his answer, Ibn Ḥijja explains that the Mamluk sultan heard his Rasulid counterpart’s grievance regarding the Sharīf of Mecca and that action was taken to remove the Sharīf from his position. At this point, he proceeds with his poem that is clearly a reply to Ibn al-Muqri’’s poem, as the meter (*ṭawīl*), the rhyme (*-ḥū*), and the contents show:

<i>wa-yumsī al-yamānī nā’iman miḥa jafnihi</i>	<i>wa-min kathrati al-ṭawīl yukhtaṣaru al-rumḥū</i>
<i>ka-dhāka madīdu al-baḥri yamḍī ziḥāfuhu</i>	<i>bi-taqī’ihi qahran wa-yattaḍihu al-sharḥū</i>
<i>wa-fi jiddatin yumsī al-surūru mujaddadan</i>	<i>wa-lil-ṭayri fi afnānihā bi-l-hanā ṣadhū</i>
<i>wa-ta’dhubu min ‘Aydhāba aryāqu thaghrihā</i>	<i>wa-shāribuhā min ladhdhati al-rashfi mā yaṣḥū</i>
<i>wa-a’dā’unā a’dā’ukum ghayra annahum</i>	<i>ḡalāmum maḥāhu min sadāqatinā al-ṣubḥū</i>

<sup>123</sup> Besides the classical devices, like double entendre (*tawriya*) and riddles (*luḡz*), he also composed poems in which the verses could also be read backwards (starting from the last word of the verse back to the first) or vertically (i.e., reusing the words of the first verse at the beginning of the following verses in the order in which they appeared). See Abū Zayd, *Ismā’īl al-Muqri’* 256–67.

<sup>124</sup> See Paoli, *De la Théorie à l’usage* 143–5, 268–9.

The Yemeni falls asleep profoundly  
     and the bridle is slackened so much that the spear is leaned upon  
 Just as the stretch of the sea whose crawling advances  
     due to its forcible division and the opening becomes visible  
 In a beaten way delight appears renewed  
     and the birds on their branches sing happiness  
 The saliva of their mouth becomes sweet from ‘Aydhāb  
     and the drinker cannot recover from the pleasure of sipping it  
 Our enemies are your enemies, yet  
     they are a darkness that dawn erased from our friendship

The first-order meaning is plain: the Rasulid sultan could be reassured as the Sharif was no longer a threat. Ibn Ḥijja also chose to use a metaphor linked to a Mosaic event: the opening of the sea that exposes a track, a way out. By doing so, he announces the message he conveys after the poem: the Sharif made amends and beseeched the Mamluk sultan’s pardon in order to be reinstated to his position in Mecca. For this, Ibn Ḥijja refers to the same image: like Moses, the Sharif went to the Mount (*al-Ṭūr*, i.e., Mount Sinai) where he was told “and the sea swarming, surely thy Lord’s chastisement is about to fall.”<sup>125</sup> As a consequence, trade can proceed uninterruptedly between Yemen, the Hijaz, and Egypt: the well-trodden path (*jidda*) is a reference to the port of Jeddah and the mouth (*thaghr*) is a word also used to indicate a port, in this case the port of ‘Aydhāb on the Egyptian coast. The final verse underlines the profound nature of the relations between the Mamluk sultan and his Rasulid counterpart and strengthens the idea that the exchange of information is crucial: *ṣubḥ* (“dawn” but also “truth”) eliminates *ḡalām* (“darkness” but also “vexation”), meaning that by exposing the reason of his concern, the Rasulid sultan acted in a constructive way. The last word of the poem, *ṣubḥ*, also echoes the first one (*yumsī* “to enter into the evening” but also “to become,” is used as a synonym of *aṣbaḥa* “to enter the morning” and also “to become”), thus offering a conclusion to the dark period of the day, i.e., the night.

The second-order meaning is even more subtle. Ibn Ḥijja could not refrain from leaving Ibn al-Muqri’s above-mentioned poetic variant unnoted. His second verse indicates his perception of this irregularity that he expressed in a complex and paronomastic mode embodied in his use of *istikhdām*, i.e., the double meaning of words, one of which is specific to terminology (in this case prosody): *madīd* (stretch) designates another type of meter; *baḥr* (sea) is the meter in prosody; *ziḥāf* (crawling) refers to the variants in the meter; *taqtīʿ* (division) also means the scan-

<sup>125</sup> Quran 52:6–7; the sura is titled The Mount (Arberry’s translation).

sion of the meter. The presence of the word “forcible” (*qahran*) reinforces Ibn H̄ijja’s perception of this irregularity.

In his poetic reply, Ibn H̄ijja clearly engaged with Ibn al-Muqri’'s verses in such a way that they posed a much greater challenge to the latter. Unfortunately, we cannot know how Ibn al-Muqri’ took up the challenge given that we lack his answer.<sup>126</sup>

## 6. Diplomatic to and fro between Taiz, Cairo, Mecca, and... Herat

The Rasulid letter at the center of this study also offers a unique opportunity to delve more deeply into the diplomatic relations between the surrounding powers (the Mamluks, the Rasulids, and, to a lesser extent, the Timurids) with regard to the Sharif Ḥasan b. ‘Ajlān’s efforts to consolidate his power in the Hijaz at the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century. Over the last decade, John Meloy and Éric Vallet addressed numerous issues linked to the Hijaz, from the point of view of the Mamluks and the Rasulids respectively.<sup>127</sup> Their studies are largely based on literary sources, with a limited use of documents. Taking into consideration their studies, I focus on the embassies and the letters that the three actors exchanged during this period, without neglecting another regional actor (the Timurids), to illustrate the issues at stake.<sup>128</sup> Before doing so, let us summarize the contents of the Rasulid letter.

In his letter, the Rasulid sultan al-Nāṣir Aḥmad (r. 803–26/1400–24) starts by acknowledging receipt of a letter al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh addressed to him with lavish gifts. This is in fact the letter that Ibn H̄ijja must have penned at the end of 815/beginning of 1412 in which al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh announced to his Rasulid correspondent that he had been enthroned a few weeks before (see tab. 9.5, no. 9). He also confirmed that he noted al-Nāṣir Aḥmad’s letter in which the latter

<sup>126</sup> Al-Fāsi only quoted a short extract which did not include any poetry. See tab. 9.5, no. 15. The fact that al-Fāsi did not quote the verses Ibn al-Muqri’ inserted in his answer may be an indication that he was not impressed by them.

<sup>127</sup> Meloy, *Imperial strategy*; Id., *Imperial power*; Id., *Mecca entangled*; Id., *The judges of Mecca*; Vallet, *L’Arabie marchande*; Id., *Le Marché des épices*; Id., *Panique à La Mecque*; Id., *Diplomatic networks*; Sadek, *Custodians*. A first attempt to study the relations of the Rasulids with other powers was made by Aḥmad, *Banū Rasūl*, particularly 430–3 (embassies and gifts exchanged under Barqūq and al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh) and 446–60 (control of the Red Sea trade by the Mamluks). Al-Fifi, *al-Dawla al-rasūliyya* is useful for an overview of al-Nāṣir Aḥmad’s reign. For the relations between the Hijaz and the Mamluks, see also al-Sulaymān, *al-‘Alāqāt*, particularly 41–58. For the financial means of the Sharifs of Mecca, see al-Shahrī, *al-Mawārid al-māliyya*, particularly 61–78 and 104–23. For the commercial importance of the Red Sea ports, see al-‘Amāyira, *Mawānī’ al-Baḥr al-aḥmar*, particularly the section on duties and taxes (237–310).

<sup>128</sup> Over a decade the sources identify some seventeen embassies and/or letters between the four actors in relation to the Hijaz (see tab. 9.5).

brought the Yemeni merchants to his attention. Al-Nāṣir Aḥmad also insists on maintaining the good relations that have prevailed between the two powers since the reigns of their predecessors and expresses his hope that the newly installed sultan in Cairo will maintain the status quo. He then tackles more serious matters. Among these, he confirms that the ships arrived from Asia loaded with merchandise. He also complains about the Sharīf of Mecca, Ḥasan b. ‘Ajlān, who had hindered the movements of pilgrims and merchants in the recent past and whose actions threaten the stability of the region. In order to counterbalance the disruptions generated by the Sharīf, al-Nāṣir Aḥmad welcomed the Sharīf’s nephew, Rumaytha, who had fled to southern Hijaz, and decided to grant him support in his leadership contest against his uncle’s power. Al-Nāṣir Aḥmad consequently asks the sultan to endorse his policy in this respect. He also stresses that the Sharīf built a fleet that impedes the circulation of boats from the port of Ṭūr (Sinai) and that he takes a share from each boat. To thwart the Sharīf’s actions, he armed the boats of the Kārimī merchants with fighters and weapons (swords, spears, bows and arrows, cannons). The shipmasters were also recommended to provide their passengers with sufficient water to avoid having to anchor in the ports under the Sharīf’s control. The letter proceeds with the Rasulid sultan’s request for the acquisition by his envoy of various goods, including but not limited to, arms, *mamlūks*, and other commodities. He concludes his message by recommending his ambassador, Amīn al-Dīn Mufliḥ al-Turkī, and his fellow envoys, and by making a last request, that he send gyrfalcons (*sanāqīr*).<sup>129</sup>

The main concern that the Rasulid sultan wanted to report to al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh was clearly related to the Meccan Sharīf’s actions. Ḥasan b. ‘Ajlān’s rule started at the end of the eighth/fourteenth century (797/1395), during Barqūq’s sultanate. After a short interlude during which he lost power, he regained his powerful position in 809/1416. As John Meloy demonstrated, the Meccan Sharīf Ḥasan b. ‘Ajlān, who was officially appointed by the Mamluk sultan as *amīr Makka* (amir of Mecca), enjoyed relative autonomy during most of the year. It was mainly during the pilgrimage period, when a Mamluk amir was sent to lead the caravan of pilgrims accompanied by a detachment, that the Mamluk sultan exerted a kind of hegemony that Meloy characterized as seasonal.<sup>130</sup> Ḥasan b. ‘Ajlān continually sought to strengthen his authority not only over Mecca, but more generally over the whole Hijaz. To reach this goal, he instituted a customs house in Jedda in 806/1403, drawing his inspiration from Aden.<sup>131</sup> By so doing, he was able to levy taxes on the merchants who called at the port. Thanks to the control of the collection and distribution of resources, he managed to place himself above his contenders to the throne, and moved from the position of a *primus inter pares* to

<sup>129</sup> On these, see Alkhateeb Shehada, *From the Far North*.

<sup>130</sup> Meloy, *Imperial power* 81–112.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* 74; Vallet, *L’Arabie marchande* 629–33.

that of a real governor, not to say a ruler.<sup>132</sup> It is not surprising that it is during this period at the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century, that he reached the peak of his power and was even granted by al-Nāṣir Faraj, in 811/1408, the title of *nā'ib al-sultān lil-aqtār al-ḥijāziyya* (Viceroy in the Hijazi territories), a title that effectively recognized his rise to power.<sup>133</sup> The same year he ventured to conquer Medina.<sup>134</sup> From then on, and during the whole second decade of the ninth/fifteenth century, Ḥasan b. 'Ajlān's efforts to consolidate his power continued, on a par with his exactions and confiscations of goods belonging particularly to Yemeni and other foreign merchants who called at the port of Jedda or visited the Holy City on a yearly basis. His behavior triggered a harsh reaction from the Rasulid sultan, the outcome of which deeply and negatively impacted the power of both rulers to the benefit of the Mamluk sultan.

The relations between the Meccan Sharīf and the Rasulid sultan cooled after the former sent a poem to the latter, an offer that the Yemeni ruler did not reward as expected. As a result, at the end of 811/Spring 1409, Ḥasan b. 'Ajlān confiscated a huge amount of money from the merchant who represented the Rasulid sultan while he was in Mecca.<sup>135</sup> The Sharīf probably seized this opportunity to openly express his intent to consolidate his power on a regional level. The Rasulid response was economic and political.<sup>136</sup>

On an economic level, al-Nāṣir Aḥmad imposed a series of boycotts of the port of Jedda; this brought about repeated compromises by the Meccan Sharīf. The conflict also staggered on with tit-for-tat confiscations. In 812/1410, Wajīh al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Jumay', another merchant working for the Rasulid sultan who had family ties with the one who had fallen victim to the Sharīf's exactions the preceding year, impounded part of the belongings of a representative that the Sharīf had sent to Yemen in an attempt to make amends. The Sharīf retaliated the next year and seized the goods of Ibn Jumay's agents who performed the pilgrimage. He also wrote to the Rasulid sultan explaining the reason he acted this way and attached to his message a letter he had received from al-Nāṣir Faraj (see tab. 9.5, no. 1) in which the Mamluk sultan expressed his discontent with Ibn Jumay's behavior, and urged his Yemeni counterpart to place Ibn Jumay' under arrest and dispatch him to Cairo as a prisoner.<sup>137</sup> Al-Nāṣir Aḥmad's answer to Ḥasan b. 'Ajlān (814/1412; see tab. 9.5, no. 2) was unambiguous, as it opened with the Qur'anic verse "Very hateful is it to God, that you say what you do not."<sup>138</sup> The envoy

<sup>132</sup> Meloy, *Imperial power* 81–2.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. 94.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. 100.

<sup>135</sup> Al-Fāsī, *al-'Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 106.

<sup>136</sup> The various steps of this state of affairs are detailed by Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande* 635–40.

<sup>137</sup> Al-Fāsī, *al-'Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 110.

<sup>138</sup> Quran 61:3 (trans. Arberry).

he chose to send was none other than Ibn al-Muqri'. The words went along with facts: a boycott of Jeddah by Yemeni merchants ensued, causing a dearth of pepper on the Egyptian market. Recently enthroned, al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh wrote to al-Nāṣir Aḥmad (see tab. 9.5, no. 9) urging him to reopen the gates of trade and inviting him to deter Ibn Jumay' from harming the interests of Muslims and to threaten him.<sup>139</sup> The Mamluk sultan specifically chose for this mission two envoys active in trade, nevertheless, they returned empty-handed.<sup>140</sup>

On a political level, the Rasulid sultan tried his best to interfere in the leadership contest the Meccan Sharif was permanently engaged in. In 816/1413, Rumaytha, a nephew of Ḥasan b. 'Ajlān, took the lead of the struggle for power and temporarily occupied Mecca.<sup>141</sup> Forced to flee by the Sharif, Rumaytha took refuge in southern Hijaz and was approached by a representative of the Rasulid sultan. A meeting was organized in order to gain financial and military support. The restive sultan of Yemen saw in this request an opportunity to cause disruption in Mecca by siding with Rumaytha against his uncle Ḥasan and he decided to seize the occasion.<sup>142</sup> This is the decision al-Nāṣir Aḥmad transmitted to the Mamluk sultan in his 817/1415 letter preserved in al-Maqrīzī's holographs (see tab. 9.5, no. 12). A year or so before the letter arrived in Cairo, al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh had reached the same conclusion as his Yemeni counterpart. The disruptions caused by the Meccan Sharif had convinced al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh that it was time to change course in the Hijaz: in Rabī' I 818/May-June 1415, Ḥasan b. 'Ajlān was informed that he had been dismissed from his position of amir of Mecca and that his nephew Rumaytha would replace him.<sup>143</sup> All in all, the Rasulid and the Mamluk policies took the same direction, though not contemporarily. However, al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh's decision was not followed up with the necessary reinforcements that would have strengthened the position of the new appointee. Ḥasan b. 'Ajlān noticed this and quickly regained control of the region and tried to win back al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh's support. To show his goodwill, he sent his son Barakāt to Cairo with a mission to seek his reappointment. The diplomatic mission was successful as Ḥasan recovered his position in Ramaḍān 819/November 1416.<sup>144</sup> The Rasulid envoy, Amīn al-Dīn Muflīḥ al-Turkī, was still in Cairo at that time.<sup>145</sup> In his answer to the Rasulid letter of 817/1415 (see tab. 9.5, no. 13), the

<sup>139</sup> Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 66 (wa-yurda'u Ibn Jumay' lā jama'a Allāh lahu 'alā ḍarar al-muslimīn shamlan wa-yuhaddadu bi-l-saṭawāt al-nāṣiriyya fa-in āba ilā al-tawba wa-illā).

<sup>140</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-ghumr* iii, 18 (fa-lam yanal minhu gharāḍan).

<sup>141</sup> Meloy, *Imperial power* 103.

<sup>142</sup> Al-Fāsī, *al-'Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 117; Anonymous chronicle fol. 40a = Anonymous, *A chronicle* 94 = Anonymous, *Tārīkh al-dawla al-rasūliyya* 172; al-Ḥāsib al-Miṣrī, *al-Kitāb al-zāhiri* 183 = al-Ḥāsib al-Miṣrī, *Tārīkh al-Yaman* 218–9.

<sup>143</sup> Al-Fāsī, *al-'Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 121; Meloy, *Imperial power* 105.

<sup>144</sup> Meloy, *Imperial power* 105–6.

<sup>145</sup> On him, see Yajima, *Yemen Rasūl-chō Jidai*; Id., *Kaiiki kara Mita Rekishi* 452–77 (I am

Mamluk sultan stressed that he was aware of the situation in the Hijaz and that he had taken the necessary measures by dismissing Ḥasan b. ‘Ajlān from his position. But he also informed his correspondent that he had to review his decision and that he reappointed Ḥasan b. ‘Ajlān after the latter promised to avoid creating disruptions to pilgrimage and trade—and to pay 30,000 *mithqāls*, a detail that he passed over in silence in his letter.<sup>146</sup> Al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh thus pleaded in favor of the Sharīf. In the answer the Rasulid sultan sent to Cairo in 821/1418—partly preserved in al-Fāsī’s biographical dictionary (see tab. 9.5, no. 15)—, he agreed with al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh’s decision to restore Ḥasan b. ‘Ajlān as amir of Mecca because the latter had dispatched his son to Yemen to confirm the commitments made by his father. He also stressed to the Mamluk sultan that he relied on him to ensure that the Sharīf would protect envoys and merchants in the future and that the amir leading the pilgrimage caravan would check if the Sharīf fulfilled his obligations.<sup>147</sup>

During these years, the Meccan Sharīf also appears to have made efforts to court the Timurid ruler, Shāh Rukh (r. 807–50/1405–47), who was struggling to consolidate his power and who, at the same time, faced potential rivals from inside his own family as well as from foreign rulers encroaching on Timurid territories, like the Qara Qoyunlu Qarā Yūsuf (r. ca. 792–823/ca. 1390–1420).<sup>148</sup> We know that Ḥasan b. ‘Ajlān sent at least two embassies to Herat, the first one in 817/1414 (see tab. 9.5, no. 11), and the second in 824/1421 (see tab. 9.5, no. 17).<sup>149</sup> Even

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grateful to Kaori Otsuya for providing me with a translation of the relevant pages in both studies); Vallet, *L’Arabie marchande* 722, no. 151. Yajima, *Kaiiki kara Mita Rekishi* 454 and Vallet (*L’Arabie marchande* 642) interpret a passage in al-Khazrajī, *al-‘Uqūd al-lu’lu’iyya* ii, 310 to mean that Mufliḥ came to Yemen as an envoy of the sultan of Delhi in 802/1400. The passage is obscure and al-Khazrajī might have simply said that Mufliḥ came back from his mission together with the gifts from the sultan of Delhi. This was also Yajima’s understanding of the text in his first study (Yemen Rasūl-chō Jidai 83).

<sup>146</sup> On the amount of money he agreed to pay the Mamluk sultan, see Meloy, *Imperial power* 106.

<sup>147</sup> Al-Fāsī, *al-‘Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 130.

<sup>148</sup> On these events enlightened by a fragmentary Qara Qoyunlu letter addressed to al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh in 818/1415 found in some of al-Maqrīzī’s holographs, see Bauden, *Diplomatic entanglements*.

<sup>149</sup> Dekkiche, *Diplomacy at its zenith* 120, mentions four embassies: in 817/1414, 819/1416, 822/1420, and 823/1421. The second one is in fact the same as the first and results from a misunderstanding of the source (al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’ al-lāmi’* x, 208). As for the third one, there is no indication in the sources that this was an embassy. Al-Fāsī, *al-‘Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 139, indicates that Ḥasan b. ‘Ajlān’s son, Aḥmad, traveled to Hormuz with a caravan of merchants and came back a year later empty-handed. This travel probably had more to do with commercial transactions than with diplomatic issues. Hormuz was famous as a trading port where boats arrived from the Indian Ocean and China. The local rulers reigned autonomously, and paid an irregular tribute to the Timurids. See Williamson, *Hormuz*; Fiorani Piacentini, *Hormuz* 341–5. As a matter of fact, shortly before his father’s death (829/1426), Aḥmad went once again to Iraq with a brother and came back, along with the same caravan as in 822/1420,

though support and financial help might have been sought by the Sharīf, as maintained by Malika Dekkiche,<sup>150</sup> the Timurid sources fail to indicate the purpose of these embassies, limiting themselves to mention that the envoys paid their master's respects to Shāh Rukh.<sup>151</sup> In 817/1414, Shāh Rukh had not yet become the uncontested ruler of the entire Timurid polity (this only took place in the early 820s/1418–23). However, Shāh Rukh was progressing in his attempts to crush his rivals; in the same year he overcame his nephew Iskandar b. ʿUmar Shaykh. Moreover, he had not yet overtly declared his pretensions to the caliphate, something that he only did two years later, as attested by coins struck in his capital, Herat.<sup>152</sup> At about that time, he also claimed to have his titles proclaimed during the sermon in the two holy sanctuaries.<sup>153</sup> Roughly ten years later, he repeatedly asked for the Mamluk sultan's permission to send the *kiswa* to Mecca, though it has been demonstrated that his request was limited to the less prestigious inner *kiswa*.<sup>154</sup> The envoys Ḥasan b. ʿAjlān sent to Herat in 824/1421 included the famous scholar Shams al-Dīn al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429), a prominent intellectual born and raised in Damascus but who had been in Timurid territory since the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century, and was a resident of Shiraz.<sup>155</sup> It is not improbable that the aim of this second embassy was to catch Shāh Rukh's attention, given his now undisputed power as the Timurid ruler and his growing interest in the holy cities for ideological and political reasons. Yet there are no indications in the sources that this attempted rapprochement, if confirmed, was successful.

In the Hijaz, the situation did not necessarily improve, but al-Muʿayyad Shaykh's demise in 824/1421 allowed Ḥasan b. ʿAjlān to prepare his succession by promoting his son Barakāt.<sup>156</sup> The greatest impact of his actions during this decade regarded the issue of trade. Quite significantly, the Rasulid and Mamluk sultans instated a practice of direct contacts between the merchants representing their commercial interests, as Éric Vallet demonstrated.<sup>157</sup> Muflīḥ al-Turkī engaged in transactions with ʿAlī al-Jilānī, one of al-Muʿayyad Shaykh's merchants, with al-Nāṣir Aḥmad's benediction.<sup>158</sup> These contacts intensified to the detriment of the

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with a huge amount of money that he plundered once he knew that his father had died in the meantime. See Ibn Fahd, *al-Durr al-kamīn* i, 444. The fourth embassy mentioned by Dekkiche left, according to al-Fāsī, shortly after the pilgrimage of 823/1421, thus it was more likely in early 824/1421.

<sup>150</sup> Dekkiche, *Diplomacy at its zenith* 120; Id., *New source* 269.

<sup>151</sup> See the references for nos. 11 and 18 in tab. 9.5.

<sup>152</sup> See Binbaş, *Intellectual networks* 260.

<sup>153</sup> Dekkiche, *New source* 268, quoting an unpublished article by John Woods.

<sup>154</sup> Dekkiche, *Diplomacy at its zenith*; Id., *New source*; Binbaş, *Intellectual networks* 62–4.

<sup>155</sup> On his place in the Timurid intellectual network, see Binbaş, *Intellectual networks* 91–3.

<sup>156</sup> Meloy, *Imperial power* 108–9.

<sup>157</sup> Vallet, *L'Arabie marchande* 640–9.

<sup>158</sup> Fragments of a second Rasulid document preserved in another of al-Maqrīzī's holographs (the

Meccan Sharīf whose power was constrained by the Mamluks. In the following years, the Mamluk sultans strengthened their hold over the revenues generated by the customs house in Jedda and instituted a monopoly on the spice trade.<sup>159</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, a contemporary witness who made extended stays in Mecca on multiple occasions, captured the gist of the situation in which Ḥasan b. ‘Ajlān had put himself as well as his successors: after praising him as a political leader, al-Maqrīzī moderates his assessment by stating that troubles with the sultans in Cairo increased because of Ḥasan b. ‘Ajlān’s actions and that the Mamluk sultans obliged him to send money to Cairo, thus reversing the flow of money.<sup>160</sup> As for the Rasulids, it is clear that after al-Nāṣir Aḥmad’s death in 827/1424, the dynasty entered a time of economic and political turbulence that led to its collapse by the middle of the century.<sup>161</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

The fragmentary letter with its full copy preserved by Ibn Ḥijja offers a rare opportunity to shed light on the power brokers in the Hijaz by the two powerful neighbors—the Mamluks and the Rasulids—during the second decade of the ninth/fifteenth century. The full corpus of letters exchanged by these two sultans regarding issues linked to trade and politics constitute a remarkable example of the constant diplomatic communication that was maintained at the highest level. The Meccan Sharīf, who tried to consolidate his grip over the Hijaz in an unprecedented way, by carrying out actions that caused disruption to pilgrimage and trade, could not be left unchallenged. The correspondence, examined in light of contemporary testimonies transmitted by local historians, shows how the Rasulid sultan decided to tackle the issue. First, he pressured the Sharīf by imposing boycotts of the port of Jedda. Second, he began to maneuver the political scene in the Hijaz to suit his own agenda by supporting the Sharīf’s nephew and contender,

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Dushanbe manuscript) and related to ‘Alī al-Jilānī, bears witness to these direct economic relations between the two powers.

<sup>159</sup> A little known decree that Barsbāy addressed to Barakāt in 830/1427 is still visible above the entrance of the oldest mosque of Jedda. It proclaims that only the legal taxes could be levied on merchandise brought to Jedda by Indian merchants and others who wanted to avoid Aden and that their proceeding to the port of Ṭūr should not be impeded. The decree confirms the Mamluk sultan’s control of taxation in Jedda. See Juvīn, Two unpublished Mamluk decrees 6–7 as well as the improved reading of the inscription by the present author in *Thesaurus*, no. 43492 (last modified on 11 April 2022).

<sup>160</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-‘uqūd al-farīda* ii, 23 (illā annahu tanawwa‘at bi-hi al-miḥan ma‘a mulūk Miṣr wa-kallafūhu ḥaml al-māl min Makka ilayhim ba‘damā kānat mulūk Miṣr taḥmil ilayhi wa-ilā salafihī al-amwāl al-jamma). See also *ibid.* ii, 18 (wa-min ḥīna’idh ṭama‘a mulūk Miṣr fī umarā’ Makka wa-ṣārū yuṭālibūnahum bi-ḥaml al-māl ba‘damā kānat al-mulūk taḥmil ilayhim al-māl wa-l-ghilāl min Miṣr).

<sup>161</sup> Vallet, *L’Arabie marchande 672–83*.

Rumaytha. Such a move could not be made without keeping the Mamluk sultan informed: the latter was indeed considered by the Rasulid sultan the Meccan Sharīf's hierarchical superior. But this does not mean that the decision to support Rumaytha was made by the Rasulid sultan before he eventually informed his Mamluk counterpart. Of course, the pace of diplomacy differed from the pace of economic and political actions that needed to be taken in the wake of evolving local situations: between the issuance of the Rasulid letter and its arrival in Cairo, one year passed.<sup>162</sup> It took another year before the Mamluk answer reached Yemen. By sending the letter, the Rasulid sultan wanted to see his choice validated by the Mamluk sultan. As we saw, the political game played by the Meccan Sharīf eventually led to a reversal of his removal from office. Besides the dramatic value of the fragmentary letter, the original document is a testimony to the practice of diplomacy prevailing in this area of the world. Not only does it inform us about the diplomatic rules applied by the Rasulid chancery, it also provides us with a unique witness of the role of the belletrists who were responsible for drafting these pieces of literature. All in all, these few fragments convey a full array of elements pertaining to the complex diplomacy that is seldom grasped from the available literature. Taken altogether they represent a very tangible way to study diplomacy in the medieval period.

Additionally, the fate of the Rasulid letter dispatched to Cairo raises the question of the Mamluk chancery's disposal of diplomatic letters in particular and of official documents in general. Thanks to al-Qalqashandī, we know that the head of the chancery during al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh's reign, Ibn al-Bārīzī, had restored the practice of copying incoming and outgoing letters in a register in his own hand, a tradition that had apparently been disrupted after 791/1389.<sup>163</sup> Ibn Hījja, who worked under his supervision as the composition secretary, also took for his personal use copies of the letters to which he was asked to write a response, copies that he included in his *Qahwat al-inshā'*. Al-Maqrīzī's connection with both men might explain the circumstances by which he got hold of the Qara Qoyunlu and the Rasulid letters that he reused as scrap paper.<sup>164</sup> As far as we know, the letters were quickly discarded because al-Maqrīzī almost immediately made the most of them for his ongoing works.<sup>165</sup>

<sup>162</sup> We know that at the end of Muḥarram or in Ṣafar 818/April 1415 Mufliḥ al-Turkī, the envoy, stopped in Jedda on his way to Cairo with the aim of supporting Rumaytha as well as replenishing the many boats in his convoy with pure water. He then proceeded to Yanbu'. See al-Fāsī, *al-Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 120.

<sup>163</sup> See Bauden, Mamluk diplomatics 8.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.* 8–9.

<sup>165</sup> As we saw (see above, 186–7), the fragments of the Rasulid letter are found in his *al-Muqaffā* (a work he started a few years before 816/1413; see Bauden, Maqriziana X 101) and *al-Khabar* (a work he began shortly after 836/1433, though the quires containing the Rasulid fragments are sections that he wrote many years before for what might have been another

With regard to diplomatic letters, it should also be stressed that these documents, meant to be delivered to a ruler, were not supposed to be opened before their carriers reached their destinations. There is evidence that diplomatic letters were sealed and/or carried in a container (*ja'ba*) itself sealed to guarantee the authenticity of the document and to certify that it had not been read by anyone else.<sup>166</sup> Nevertheless, we saw that a local witness like the Meccan historian al-Fāsī, well-known for his reliance on various kinds of sources (including epigraphy), was not only aware of the identity of the secretaries who composed the letters on the Rasulid and Mamluk sides (respectively Ibn al-Muqri' and Ibn Ḥijja) but he was also able to quote long passages of the letters. In one case, he underlines that most of the quotation is faithful to the original, specifying that only a few words reflected his own wording.<sup>167</sup> In the case of Ibn Ḥijja's response (see tab. 9.5, no. 13), it can be ascertained that it reproduces almost verbatim the original text. This means that al-Fāsī accessed this letter as well as the ensuing Rasulid answer (see tab. 9.5, no. 15) and took notes of their text. Furthermore, these letters had to pass through Mecca where al-Fāsī lived most of the time.<sup>168</sup> If al-Fāsī became aware of their contents, there is a reason to believe that the Sharīf may also have seen them. Thus, the secrecy of diplomatic correspondence was not a sacrosanct principle.

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book; his handwriting is indeed different from the rest of the volumes that were copied in his last years).

<sup>166</sup> See Bauden, Mamluk diplomatics 55, fn 263; Reinfandt, Strong letters 215–6.

<sup>167</sup> Al-Fāsī, *al-Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 110–1 (wa-rubbamā ba'd al-fāz hādihā al-kitāb umliyat hunā bi-l-ma'nā).

<sup>168</sup> Even though he had been in Yemen shortly before, he was unable to access the Rasulid letter issued on 18 Dhū al-Qa'da 817/29 January 1415 which is the subject of our study. We know that he had already left the country by that time, as in Shawwāl and Dhū al-Qa'da/mid-December to early February 817/1414–5 he was in the port of the island of Kamarān (northwest of Yemen) on his way to Mecca. He reached his destination before the end of the same year. He provides this information in the colophon of his *Tuḥfat al-kirām* 291b (fi Shawwāl wa-Dhī al-Qa'da min al-sana al-madhkūra bi-marsā jazirat Kamarān bi-l-baḥr al-milḥ bi-l-Yaman wa-fimā bayna hādihā al-marsā wa-Bāb al-Mandab wa-anā mutawajjih ilā Makka al-musharrafa thumma zidtu fihi ba'da wuṣūlī ilayhā mutajaddidāt munāsiba fi baqiyyat hādhihi al-sana).

Table 9.5: List of embassies exchanged by the Mamluks, the Rasulids, the Timurids, and the Meccan Sharif

No.	Sender	Addressee	Date of redaction of the letter	Date of issuance of the letter	Date of departure of the embassy	Date of arrival of the embassy	Envoy(s)	Ref.
1	al-Nāṣir Faraj	Ḥasan b. ʿAjlān				Bef. Dhū al-Ḥijja 813/Mar. 1411		169
2	al-Nāṣir Aḥmad	Ḥasan b. ʿAjlān		Aft. mid-Dhū al-Ḥijja 813/ Apr. 1411		Bef. end of Ramaḍān or Shawwāl 814/Jan.- Feb. 1412	Ibn al-Muqriʿ	170
3	Ḥasan b. ʿAjlān	al-Nāṣir Faraj			Bef. Ramaḍān 814/Jan. 1412		Miftāḥ al-Ziftāwī	171
4	al-Nāṣir Faraj	Ḥasan b. ʿAjlān				Shortly bef. Ramaḍān 814/Jan. 1412		172
5	Ḥasan b. ʿAjlān	al-Nāṣir Faraj			Aft. mid-Dhū al-Ḥijja 814/ Apr. 1412		Saʿd al-Dīn Jabrūh	173
6	al-Mustaʿīn bi-Allāh	Ḥasan b. ʿAjlān		Aft. 28 Ṣafar 815/9 Jun. 1412		20 Jumādā II 815/27 Sept. 1412	Saʿd al-Dīn Jabrūh	174
7	al-Nāṣir Aḥmad	al-Mustaʿīn bi-Allāh		Aft. 28 Ṣafar 815/9 Jun. 1412				175

<sup>169</sup> No copy available but short summary provided by al-Fāsī, *al-Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 110.

<sup>170</sup> Excerpt quoted in *ibid.* 110–1.

<sup>171</sup> For the embassy, see *ibid.* 111; for the envoy, see *ibid.* vii, 264–5 (no. 2512).

<sup>172</sup> For the embassy, see *ibid.* iv, 111.

<sup>173</sup> For the embassy, see *ibid.*; for the envoy, see *ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> For the embassy, see *ibid.* iv, 112. The date of issuance corresponds with al-Mustaʿīn's nomination as sultan.

<sup>175</sup> No copy available but no. 9 refers to a letter received in Cairo from the Rasulid sultan al-Nāṣir

No.	Sender	Addressee	Date of redaction of the letter	Date of issuance of the letter	Date of departure of the embassy	Date of arrival of the embassy	Envoy(s)	Ref.
8	al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh	Ḥasan b. 'Ajlān		Aft. beg. of Sha'bān 815/Nov. 1412		Shawwāl 815/Jan. 1413		176
9	al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh	al-Nāṣir Aḥmad		Aft. 1 <sup>st</sup> Sha'bān 815/1412/Nov. 1412	Bef. Dhū al-Ḥijja 815/Mar. 1413	Early 816/Spr. 1413	Khawājā Fakhr al-Dīn 'Uthmān and Aḥmad b. al-Jūbān al-Dhahabī	177
10	al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh	Ḥasan b. 'Ajlān	1 Ramaḍān 817/14 Nov. 1414			End of 817/Beg. of 1415		178
11	Ḥasan b. 'Ajlān	Shāh Rukh				Shortly aft. 22 Rajab 817/7 Oct. 1414	Sayyid 'Abd al-Kahf and Hibat Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Ḥasanī al-Makkī	179

Aḥmad to whom al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh answers. The date of issuance corresponds with the moment when the Rasulid sultan was informed of al-Nāṣir Faraj's killing and the designation of the caliph as his successor. See Anonymous chronicle 38a = Anonymous, A chronicle 89; Anonymous, *Tārīkh al-dawla al-rasūliyya* 165–6 = al-Ḥāsib al-Miṣrī, *al-Kitāb al-zāhiri* 176–7 = al-Ḥāsib al-Miṣrī, *Tārīkh al-Yaman* 212.

<sup>176</sup> For the embassy, see al-Fāsī, *al-'Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 112. The date of issuance corresponds with al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh's accession to the sultanate that was announced in this letter.

<sup>177</sup> For the letter and the first envoy, see Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 63–6 (no. 20). Ibn Ḥijja does not provide the date of redaction of this letter except for the mention of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh's accession date in the body of the letter (1<sup>st</sup> Sha'bān 815/1412/November 1412). The letter must have been written and sent in the weeks that followed the accession. Ibn al-Jūbān is said to have travelled to Yemen in 816/end of 1413 passing by Mecca. Up to the Holy City, he was accompanied by Ibn Ḥajar who wanted to perform the pilgrimage that year. Ibn al-Jūbān thus arrived in Mecca for the pilgrimage season, *i.e.* before Dhū al-Ḥijja 815/March 1413. He died in Mecca shortly after his return from Yemen, during the pilgrimage of 816/end of February 1414. See al-Fāsī, *al-'Iqd al-thamīn* iii, 24–5 (no. 530); Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-ghumr* iii, 18 (obituary of Aḥmad b. al-Jūbān).

<sup>178</sup> Excerpt of the letter quoted by al-Fāsī, *al-'Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 118. The letter announced the death of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh's opponent, Nawrūz, who died on 21 Rabī' II 817/10 July 1414. It must have been similar with a letter of good tidings (*bishāra*) that Ibn Ḥijja composed on the date indicated as the date of issuance. See Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 79–81 (no. 26).

<sup>179</sup> For the embassy, see Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū, *Zubdat al-tavārikh* ii/1, 564; Samarqandī, *Maṭla'-i sa'dayn* ii/1, 205. Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū places its arrival after Shāh Rukh's return to Herat on the date

No.	Sender	Addressee	Date of redaction of the letter	Date of issuance of the letter	Date of departure of the embassy	Date of arrival of the embassy	Envoy(s)	Ref.
12	al-Nāṣir Aḥmad	al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh		18 Dhū al-Qa'da 817/29 Jan. 1415		19 Muḥarram 819/19 Mar. 1416	Amin al-Dīn Mufliḥ al-Turkī	180
13	al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh	al-Nāṣir Aḥmad	15 Ramaḍān 819/6 Nov. 1416	Muḥarram 820/18 Feb.–19 Mar. 1417	15 Rabī' II 820/1 Jun. 1417	22 Dhū al-Qa'da 820/31 Dec. 1417	Baktamur al-Sa'dī	181
14	al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh	Ḥasan b. 'Ajlān				End of Dhū al-Qa'da 821/ End of Dec. 1418		182
15	al-Nāṣir Aḥmad	al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh		Ramaḍān or Shawwāl 821/Oct. or Nov. 1418		13 Muḥarram 822/9 Feb. 1419	Baktamur al-Sa'dī	183

indicated and names only the first envoy without indicating whether he was accompanied or not. He brought a letter from the Meccan Sharīf. His name and his title (Sayyid) together with the fact that Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū characterizes him as the brother of a certain Sayyid 'Abd al-Laṭīf, seem to indicate that he came from the Timurid lands. See also Dekkiche, *New source* 268–9; Id., *Diplomacy at its zenith* 120.

<sup>180</sup> For the letter, see Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 162–6 (no. 39). For the embassy, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-ghumr* iii, 88; al-'Aynī, *Iqd al-jumān* 260–1; Vallet, *Du système mercantile* 299–300, no. XXXIII. According to Ibn Ḥijja, the letter was received on 16 Rabī' I 819/15 April 1416, but the chroniclers state that the envoy delivered the letter and presented his ruler's gifts to the Mamluk sultan two months earlier. The date recorded by Ibn Ḥijja might correspond to the moment when the letter was transmitted to him by the chancery for him to prepare the answer.

<sup>181</sup> For the letter, see Ibn Ḥijja, *Das Rauschgetränk* 167–71 (no. 40). Excerpt quoted by al-Fāsī, *al-Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 130–2; Ibn Fahd, *Ghāyat al-marām* ii, 315–7; al-Madanī, *Tuḥfat al-azhār* i, 497–8. For the embassy, see al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk* iv, 395 (date of departure and Mamluk envoy); Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-ghumr* iii, 140 (idem); al-'Aynī, *Iqd al-jumān* 302 (idem); *Anonymous chronicle* fol. 43a (date of arrival of the Rasulid envoy in Ta'izz) = Anonymous, *A chronicle* 102 = Anonymous, *Tārīkh al-dawla al-rasūliyya* 186 = al-Ḥāsib al-Miṣrī, *al-Kitāb al-zāhirī* 195 = al-Ḥāsib al-Miṣrī, *Tārīkh al-Yaman* 231; Vallet, *Du système mercantile* 300, no. XXXIV.

<sup>182</sup> For a summary of the two letters, see al-Fāsī, *al-Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 133–4.

<sup>183</sup> For the letter, see excerpt quoted by al-Fāsī, *al-Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 132; Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-warā* iii, 558–9; Ibn Fahd, *Ghāyat al-marām* ii, 317–8; al-Madanī, *Tuḥfat al-azhār* i, 498–9. For the embassy, see al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk* iv, 479 (return of Baktamur al-Sa'dī with letter and gift from

No.	Sender	Addressee	Date of redaction of the letter	Date of issuance of the letter	Date of departure of the embassy	Date of arrival of the embassy	Envoy(s)	Ref.
16	al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh	Ḥasan b. 'Ajlān				14 Ṣafar 823/29 Feb. 1420		184
17	Ḥasan b. 'Ajlān	Shāh Rukh			Shortly aft. Muḥarram 824/Jan. 1421	16 Rajab 824/17 Jul. 1421	Zayn al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd and Shams al-Dīn al-Jazarī	185

the Rasulid sultan); Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-ghumr* iii, 189 (idem).

<sup>184</sup> Excerpts of the letter quoted by al-Fāsī, *al-'Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 137; Ibn Fahd, *Ithāf al-warā* iii, 571–2; Ibn Fahd, *Ghāyat al-marām* ii, 324.

<sup>185</sup> For the embassy, see Ḥāfiz-i Abrū, *Zubdat al-tavārikh* ii/2, 778 (mentions only the first envoy); Samarqandī, *Maṭla'-'i sa'dayn* ii/1, 309 (idem); al-Fāsī, *al-'Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 139 (mentions only the second envoy); Ibn Fahd, *Ghāyat al-marām* ii, 332; Dekkiche, New source 268–9; Id., *Diplomacy at its zenith* 120. The second envoy was the famous scholar Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429), who was born in Damascus, grew up in the Mamluk territories before he moved to Ottoman lands and, after Timūr's invasion in 1402, followed the Chaghatay leader to Samarqand before definitively settling in Shiraz. See al-Sakhāwī, *al-Daw' al-lāmi'* ix, 255–60 (no. 608). He arrived in Mecca in 823/1420 for the pilgrimage. After the pilgrimage, Ḥasan b. 'Ajlān urged him to take care of his message and gifts to deliver them to Shāh Rukh. See al-Fāsī, *al-'Iqd al-thamīn* iv, 138.

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<sup>186</sup> This anonymous chronicle was published by two different editors: first by H. Yajima (see below under Anonymous, *A chronicle*), then by al-Ḥibshī (see below under Anonymous, *Tāriḫ al-dawla al-rasūliyya*). Al-Ḥibshī later found another copy of the text in the Dār al-Kutub (Cairo) which gave the name of the author and the title of the work. He thus published the text on two different occasions with two different titles (see below under al-Ḥāsib al-Miṣrī). Given that the editions remain difficult to find, I refer to the Paris manuscript as well as to the four editions listed in the bibliography.

<sup>187</sup> The text is not edited but reproduced in facsimile.

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Figure 9.21: ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS FATİH 4340, FOL.

126b



Figure 9.22: ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS FATİH 4340, FOL.

127b





Figure 9.25: LEIDEN, UNIVERSITEITSBIBLIOTHEEK, MS OR. 1366C, FOL. 20a

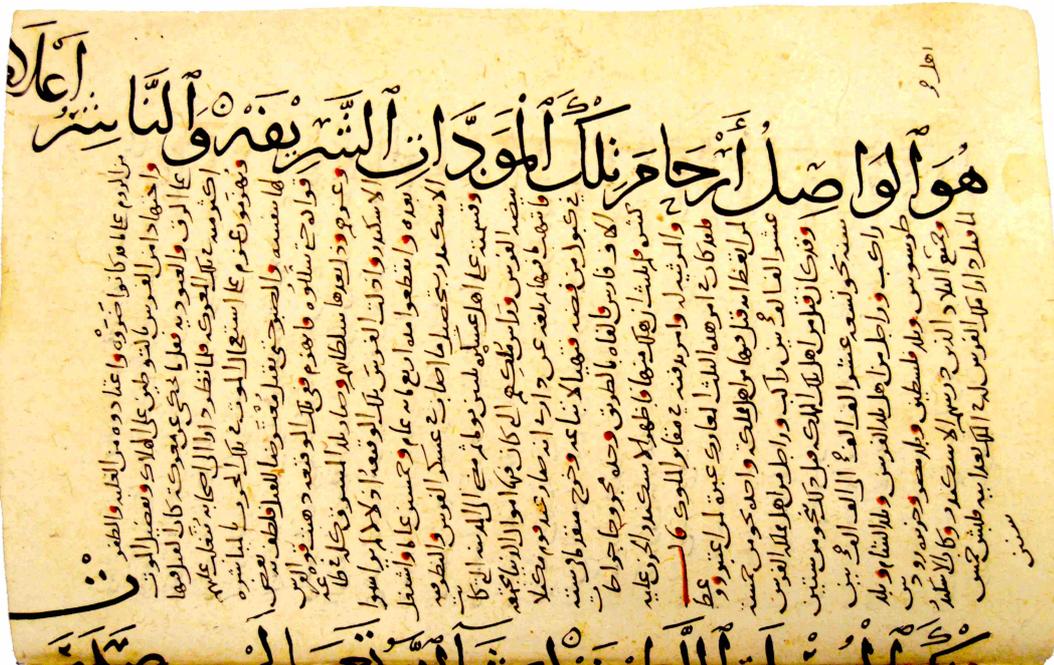


Figure 9.26: ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS FATİH 4340, FOL.

ملك وسيد بصير  
 انسا اسلم ولا نكاح على القدر روح وغير حسن الظن  
 مع الغير ولا منع الماهة التوتة وسالدها من اهل  
 احكامها فكيفها حال الختم برضى حاكمها وسخط  
 الاخر فاستعمل الختم وسخطها وطس على اهلها  
 وارشه فقال هذا يوم لا اعدى عنك وقال سخطي ليط  
 استخى ان انا في ضجانه من اوله هل ورت عليه من انشاء  
 وصفت بانتم منسبه والا في رقيقه والمعزم كما عابه  
 دارا اناه اعلم اوسطا بالنسب حود عا فامرنا حازف  
 باحتضامه من الاوصاف حسننا العودنا وما  
 يدع اليه الجمع فاني في محاربه فان غلبت دارا في داره  
 عا حنتا وكان ناج ناج اب الاستخفاف لغيره لانه  
 اصوات ما معشور اناس التمسك بطاعة عود حبل  
 احسن من لو توفى عا العصبية واسلمنا جردا فان  
 العا مع شحني والعصبية تروى وودظ عا الاستخفاف لغيره  
 الهية فاستحسن كلامه وكان لا تكلم حسن توك كحسب نطقك  
 فقال لها انكرا العلام فاقد عليه والاكسوة فانت  
 انظر ظهها مخاج عليه واحسن له من جيلانه الا حارب  
 دارا انكر الفريز ناج ناج به بين الصديق بالمعشور  
 قد علمنا انتم النباوا كتننا الهوس لان في كان بكر  
 عا الوالنا نعتز فان نرت من الوالنا في غير بعضها  
 معنا واضطر بناوا اخناوه وكلمه كشيته وودظ هذا انك  
 فيه مناهه كشيته يسوي في مقدم ذلك وقالوا فينا فولا بعينه  
 على الصواب فغير بعضهم الى كافي حال دارا روح اروان  
 دارا الا كبروز روح انتم ملك الروم فلما صا حها وصد منها  
 رطام منته فان كل عوا حها فوصفها اله شيته سمها سنده  
 وانا ساعفلسل عا هاج حقا لمتنق فلان فودها الالهها  
 وقد استعمل عا حلالا وارادته علا ما سمته باسم الشجره التي  
 كرمها  
 123

**والملك سايده علي بنج**  
**هذا البحر كاتبا ليا خزانة**

Figure 9.27: ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS FATİH 4340, FOL.

123a

**حاج اليم وتجانة فوعتهم ملكة الحرام**  
**واشتد**

من كرمها  
 على الصواب فغير بعضهم الى كافي حال دارا روح اروان  
 دارا الا كبروز روح انتم ملك الروم فلما صا حها وصد منها  
 رطام منته فان كل عوا حها فوصفها اله شيته سمها سنده  
 وانا ساعفلسل عا هاج حقا لمتنق فلان فودها الالهها  
 وقد استعمل عا حلالا وارادته علا ما سمته باسم الشجره التي  
 كرمها  
 123

**هذا على الخلاوة واشتغني بها انتهت من الاموال الغني**

Figure 9.28: LEIDEN, UNIVERSITEITSBIBLIOTHEEK, MS OR. 1366C, FOL. 77b









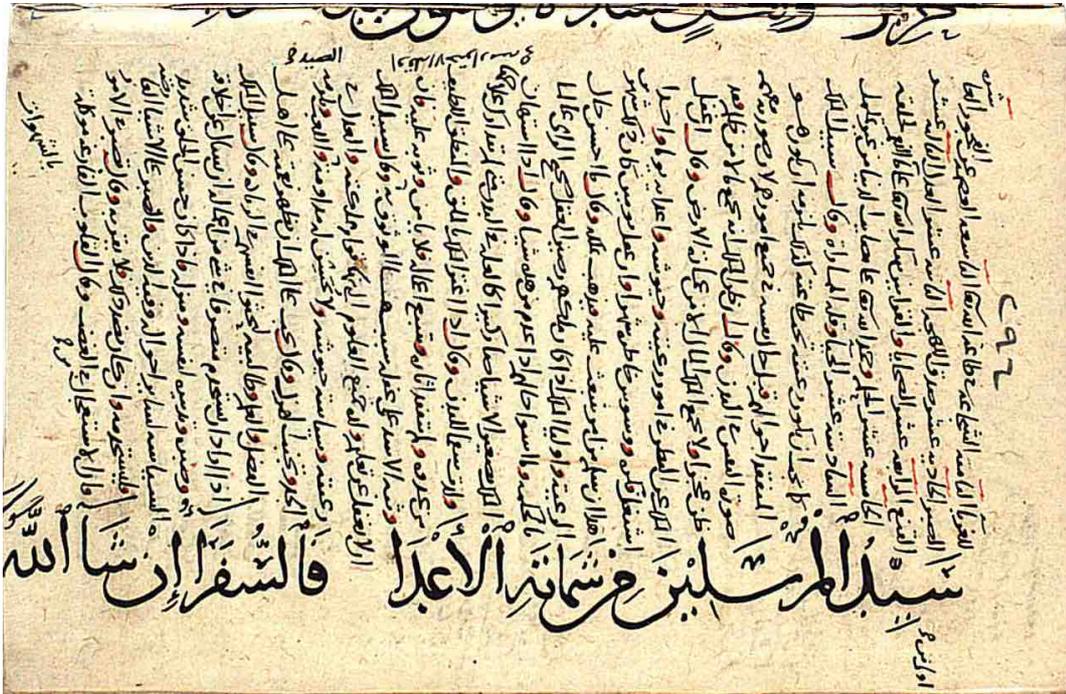
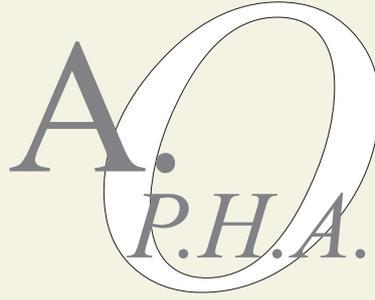


Figure 9.37: ISTANBUL, SÜLEYMANIYE KÜTÜPHANESİ, MS AYASOFYA 3362, FOL. 142b



Figure 9.38: LEIDEN, UNIVERSITEITSBIBLIOTHEEK, MS OR. 1366c, FOL. 103a



This volume is the result of a selection of papers presented at the second conference of the School of Mamluk Studies (Liège, 2015) whose theme was The Mamluk Sultanate and Its Periphery. It is well known that Mamluk studies suffer from a deficit of interest for the peripheral areas because of the centripetal effect played by the main cities of the sultanate, i.e. the political centers (Cairo and Damascus), where most of the historians whose works constitute the lion's share of modern studies lived. Nevertheless, it is still possible to study aspects related to regions, cities, villages by resorting to these classical sources but also and above all to other types of sources (documents, archaeological excavations). Obviously, the concept of periphery can be interpreted in various ways. Above all, it is understood in geographic, political, or economic terms: the periphery is defined in relation to the center of power, whether central or local. It can also be interpreted in sociological and religious terms. In this case, the concept can be applied to practices or parts of the society considered borderline. The eight essays collected in this volume seek to explore this question of the periphery from these various angles.