CHAPTER 15

What was there in a Mamluk Amīr’s Library?
Evidence from a Fifteenth-Century Manuscript

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The image of the Mamluks as coarse barely islamicized brutes who were only interested in archery and horses has been invalidated for several years now. We know that some, in all layers of society, were learned and had an interest in various scholarly disciplines ranging from the noble religious sciences, to court poetry, and the more popular adab works.¹ Some were even book collectors.² This contribution to the fascinating question of the education and cultural level of the Mamluks, which is one of Prof. Levanoni’s concerns, discusses a manuscript intended for a Mamluk amīr. It aims at being holistic and thus will not only deal with the text, but also with its container: the manuscript is described here as an archeological object that will be subjected to a thorough codicological analysis, and as a text whose content, language and history will be analyzed. Precise descriptions of dated and localized manuscripts are required to make advances in codicology, and for our practical knowledge of books.

The library of the University of Liège, Belgium, possesses nearly 500 manuscripts in Arabic.³ One of these is the small Mamluk codex that constitutes the subject of this article.⁴ The manuscript is a majmū‘ containing two texts,⁵ and consequently two title pages, on ff. 1 and 157. F. 1 is very damaged (Figure 15.1). One reads there, on 5 lines, the first two in red ink, the next ones in black ink:

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¹ Flemming, Literary activities 249–60; Haarmann, Arabic in speech 81–114; Berkey, The transmission of knowledge; idem, Mamluks and the world of higher Islamic education 93–116; idem, The Mamluks as Muslims 163–73.
² Flemming, Literary activities 260; Haarmann, Arabic in speech 93–4.
³ An insight into the collection can be found in Bauden, Les Manuscrits arabeles 150–8, and in Franssen, A mağribī copy 61–4. F. Bauden and I are working on a detailed catalogue of the collection. A handlist was recently published by Bauden, Catalogue.
⁴ Université de Liège, ALPHA (Bibliothèque d’Architecture, Lettres, Philosophie, Histoire, Arts), Fonds Dargent [ms 5029].
⁵ Additions by readers and/or owners are found after these two texts, see below, “Glimpses into the manuscript’s history.” Using the spare space of the guard leaves to record more or less anything—poetry, the birth of a child, an earthquake, talismanic or magical formulae, etc.—is a very common practice. See Déroche et al., Islamic codicology 331, 335, 350–1; Gacek, Arabic manuscripts: A vademecum 20, 127.
Kitāb majmū’a | fihi manāfi’ asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā | wa-manāfi’ al-ism al-
a’zam wa-kalām | al-ṣaḥāba raḍiya Allāh ‘anhum fī | l-ikhtilāf fīhi wa-
manāfi’ al-Qur’ān

[Book of miscellanies in which are the benefits of the beautiful names of God, the benefits of the supreme name in its variety and statements of the companions—may God be pleased with them—and the benefits of the Qur’ān].

After these words, an inscription by the same hand, in red ink was added, going up almost vertically and saying:

wa-fihi al-arba‘in [sic] isman wa-manāfi‘uhā lil...

[and in which are the forty names and their benefits for ...—lacuna]

Under this inscription is a note of patronage,6 in red ink, reading:

bi-rasm al-janāb al-ʿālī al-mawlawī al-amīrī al-kabīrī | al-ghāzī al-dhukhrī
Taghribarmish7 shādd al-silāh khānā al-sharīfī al-malakī al-ashrafī
a‘azzahu Allāh

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6 About notes of patronage, see Gacek, Arabic manuscripts: A vademecum 197. On commissioned and non-commissioned manuscripts, see ibid., 78, 173; Déroche et al., Islamic codiology 191–4.
7 Vocalized like this in the manuscript, see below.
[Intended for his excellency, the elevated, the lordly, the great master, the warrior champion, the treasure [of the community] Taghribarmish, superintendent of the noble royal armory of al-Ashraf—may Allâh fortify him]

The dedication is repeated under the colophon (f. 156b, Figure 15.2) in red ink, on one line going up:

\[\text{bi-rasm al-janâb al-ʿālî al-sayfî Taghribarmish shâdd al-silâh khânâ}\]

[Intended for his excellency, the elevated, Sayf al-Dîn \(^8\) Taghribarmish, superintendent of the armory],

and under this, in red ink, as well, a ḥamdala (ḥamdu li-llāh taʿālā). These dedication notes were added during a second phase, as suggested by the lack of space to write the full dedication horizontally. The colophon of the first text, two lines in black ink, reads:

\[\text{hadhā mā wujida fī l-nuskha al-manqūl minhā hadhihi al-nuskha | wa-l-ḥamdu li-llāh waḥdahu}\]

[This is what is found in the copy from which this copy was made—praised be God—Praise be to God].

The title page of the second text (f. 157) simply reads, in red ink on two lines:

\[\text{Kitāb fīhi al-arbaʿīn [sic] isman wa-sharḥuhā}\]

[Book in which are the forty names and their commentary];

its colophon (f. 188b) is not informative and does not present any dedication note:

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\(^8\) “al-Sayfî” stands for Sayf al-Dîn, the most frequent laqab for Mamluk amīrs by the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century and until the end of the Mamluk period; see Ayalon, Names 192 and fn. 11.

\(^9\) Under the title, another hand added Kitāb fīhi in black ink, without any dots and in a very compact way (superscripted letters and word). This is a kind of calligraphic exercise.

[This is what was made available of the particularities of the forty names, may God protect us from the additions and the losses, from the mistakes and the errors. May God forgive its composer, its reader, its maker, its scribe and whoever prays for them, by clemency and forgiveness, and all the Muslims. May God pray for our master Muḥammad, his kin and companions, and preserve [them]].

Codicological Features

The manuscript (172 mm high, 135 mm wide, 192 ff.) is protected by a simple dark brown leather binding, without a flap.¹⁰ The two covers, on the upper and lower board, are identical and decorated with a blindstamped polylobed

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¹⁰ Nevertheless there could have been a flap and envelope earlier in the history of the manuscript: one of the board covers is cut along its entire height, as though a yapp cover and flap had been cut out. The fact that the upper board has this particularity, though the flap and yapp cover are normally attached to the lower board, is not a decisive argument against this hypothesis since oriental bookbindings were often re-mounted upside down by poorly informed restorers. On the fragility of Islamic bookbindings, see fn. 13 below.
mandorla (62 mm high, 48 mm wide), filled with whirling *tchi* clouds, vegetal and floral motifs. The mandorla is centered in a rectangular frame formed by a double fillet following the limits of the covers. Several restorations are observable, mainly on the spine, which is flat. The headband and tailband are no longer visible. Many wormholes make the reused sheets of paper pasted to each other to form the boards visible. There are three guard leaves, one before the text and two after it. The first and last ones (A and D) are made of modern green paper, and the penultimate and antepenultimate guard leaves (foliated 191 and 192, but which should be referred to as B and C) are made of European watermarked paper. The binding was made at a later date than the copy of the manuscript, during the Ottoman period.

An inscription in black ink is legible on the tail and reads *Kitāb Sharḥ al-Iṣm al-ʿAzīm* (Figure 15.3). The Arabic manuscripts were stored horizontally, one upon the other, the tail being often the only edge visible when the manuscripts were on the shelf. This is why an indication of the title and/or author and/or volume number was often written there.

The 192 ff. are made of whitish-beige paper (a warm color, tending more toward yellow than grey), with a fairly homogenous pulp (only a few fibers per page are visible). The chain-lines are horizontal and as far as I can tell on such...
a small surface as a folio, they seem to be clustered in threes. Within a group, the three chain-lines are distributed every 8–10 mm. The groups are spaced out every 40 mm, so that two groups and the first chain-line of the third one are generally visible on a folio. The laid lines are vertical, thin, close to each other and hardly distinguishable—I could scarcely count them: 20 of them seem to occupy more or less 20 mm.

This type of paper, with chain-lines in groups of threes, was very common from the fifth/eleventh century in a vast geographical area (Bilād al-Shām, Egypt, Asia Minor, Iran, Mecca) and was still in use, practically without any competition, up to the ninth/fifteenth century; therefore, it is not helpful for dating or localizing the production of the manuscript, unfortunately.16 Another very common feature of the paper manufactured in the Mamluk period and

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16 Humbert, Le Manuscrit arabe 64; Humbert, Les Papiers non filigranés 21–2, 33–8 (tableau IV), especially 37, ms Arabe 3423 (8–11 mm between chain-lines within a group, 38 to 46 mm between 2 groups, 20 laid lines on 20 mm); nevertheless the original format of the paper does not fit the example, as we will see.
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The format of the original sheet of paper can be estimated: folios measure 172 mm high and 135 mm wide, bifolios are twice as wide: $172 \times 270$ mm. Since the chain-lines are horizontal, bifolios are actually half of an original sheet and thus measure $344 \times 270$ mm. The folios were trimmed in the course of the binding operations, so we need to add 10 to 20 mm to each side, yielding $354/364 \times 280/290$ mm. These measurements correspond to the small format of paper described by Irigoin: $320/370 \times 235/280$ mm.

The folios are bundled in twenty quires, mainly quinions, with the exception of two quaternions and one ternion. For the first text (ff. 1–156), there are seventeen quinions, the first and last ones are missing one folio, and one quaternion. The second text (ff. 157–190) is made up of four quires: two quinions, one quaternion and one ternion, and followed by three singletons: the guard-leaves (ff. 191–192 = B–C + D). The lack of a folio in the last quinion of the first text (ff. 146–156) can be easily explained: having finished the copy of the text before the end of the quire, the copyist cut the last folio of the quire to reuse it elsewhere; this was a very common practice due to the relatively high price of paper. Irregular quires in the beginning of a text are typical as well: quires of a different type (such as the last ternion of the second text, ff. 185–90) or irregular quires are commonly found in the first and last position of a manuscript.

The presence of two quaternions among the majority of quinions is not

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17 On paper delamination, see Irigoin, Les Papiers non filigranés 293; Beit-Arié, Quantitative typology 41–53; Loveday, Islamic paper 46, Figures 7, 50; Kropf and Baker, A conservative tradition 34, fn. 68.

18 Chain-lines are parallel to the small side of the original sheet, see for example Muzerelle, Vocabulaire codicologique, accessible online: http://vocabulaire.irht.cnrs.fr/pages/vocab2.htm or http://codicologia.irht.cnrs.fr, 133.12, 133.13, and Figure 24 (last consultation October 18th, 2014); Irigoin, Les Papiers non filigranés 283–94, 299, Figure 37; Déroche et al., Islamic codicology 54–6 (Figure 13); Gacek, Arabic manuscripts: A vademecum 187, 189, 191 (Figure 137).

19 The exact quantity of paper trimmed off in the course of binding operations is still subject to question. Irigoin estimates a minimum of 10 mm (Irigoin, Les Papiers non filigranés 302), but some remains of trimming have been preserved and measure around 20 mm wide.


21 Here is the complete sequence of quires: 1 (A) + [V-1 (9) + 2V (29) + IV (37) + nV (147) + V-1 (156)] + [V (166) + IV (174) + V (184) + III (190)] + 1 (191 = B) + 1 (192 = C) + 1 (D).

22 Déroche et al., Islamic codicology 84.
unusual either.\textsuperscript{23} The two texts were copied by the same scribe, on the same paper, with the same inks and in accordance with the same \textit{mise en page}. In any case, they were already in order when a liquid was spilt on the pages (see the stains from f. 137 to the end of the volume).

Different systems are used to indicate the order of the folios. I will not dwell on the foliation, which was done in the 1990s at the University of Liège library; but other marks are worth mentioning. For instance, in the upper corner of ff. 30, 48, 58, 68, 98, 108, 118, 128, 138 and 148, all of which form the first folio of a quire, a short inscription has been partly cut off (Figure 15.4, f. 128). Apparently the number of the quire was written in letters there—on ff. 30 (fourth quire) and 128 (fourteenth quire), the letters رابع are clearly legible, on f. 118 (thirteenth quire), there is a succession of undotted letters, most probably تلث عشر—, and was cut off during (one of the) binding operations of the manuscript.

This practice of numbering quires in full on their first recto was very common from the second half of the fifth/eleventh century.\textsuperscript{24} Another device to indicate the change of quire can be found in the outer margins of ff. 29b and 30, respectively the last and the first folios of two successive quires; this consists of a mark resembling a \textit{mīm} (Figure 15.5, f. 29b) traced in the outer margin facing

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure15_4}
\caption{Folio 128.}
\end{figure}

\begin{thebibliography}{24}
\bibitem{unibib} Franssen, \textit{Manoscritti} 104.
\bibitem{unibib} Déroche et al., \textit{Islamic codicology} 91; Gacek, \textit{Arabic manuscripts: A vademecum} 213–5; Déroche and Sagaria Rossi, \textit{Manoscritti} 109–10. Even though the time span covered does not comprise the epoch of copying of this manuscript, the following article is worth consulting: Guesdon, \textit{La numérotation des cahiers} 101–15 (esp. 105–6).
\end{thebibliography}
the seventh line of the page.25 The same mark can be seen in the outer margin of ff. 42 and 53b, facing the second line of the page; these folios are in the middle of a quire. Mid-quire notations are very frequent in Arabic manuscripts, but are generally double, on each page of the central bifolium of a quire; i.e., respectively on the verso and recto of the first and second folios of the central bifolium. Here, the contrary is true: f. 42 is the first of a central bifolium, but the mark is traced on its recto, and f. 53, the second folio of a central bifolium, bears the mark on its verso. The same mark is observable on ff. 35b–36, which is not and has never been in the middle of a quire. Hence, it is probably another type of mark, resembling a mid-quire mark without being one.

Catchwords are another device to keep the folios in the right order.26 The scribe wrote them in the lower margin, not further than the inner limit of the writing frame, and following a descending line. Catchwords are accurate, generally consist of only one word, and are found on all the versos of the first half of the quires and on the last verso of each quire alone.27 Another hand, probably one of the readers of the manuscript—who was responsible for some marginal glosses too, see below—traced catchwords on the versos of the

25 The letter mīm is known to have been used as a mid-quire mark, see Déroche et al., Islamic codicology 101; Gacek, Arabic manuscripts: A vademecum 159.

26 “The catchword is a word (or phrase) written at the bottom of a page that repeats the first word(s) or phrase(s) of the following page,” Déroche et al., Islamic codicology 97. It is an “[…] isolated word at the bottom of the b-page (verso),” Gacek, Arabic manuscripts: A vademecum 51. See also Déroche and Sagaria Rossi, I Manoscritti 117–9.

27 System attested in Guesdon, Les Réclames 69–70.
second half of the quires. These are written horizontally and lower in the bottom margin.

The layout of the pages is constant throughout the whole manuscript: the text is justified in an untraced rectangular frame 118 mm high by 90 mm wide and has eight lines per page. A few words are superscripted at the end of a line because of lack of space (as on f. 11b). The main part of the text was written in black ink, but some words were enhanced by red details after the text was copied: the scribe left a blank space to be filled in afterwards with the word(s) in red ink. The fact that red ink was added after copying the main text in black ink is obvious on many folios, see f. 56b, for instance, where too much space was left for the word to be written in red, or f. 57b where indications in red are rewritten over the black ink. To remember which words he had to write in red, the scribe would write them as far in the margin of the page as possible and in the smallest writing he could so that these indications would be trimmed away when the book was bound. Parts of these indications remain, see ff. 117, 117b, 119b, 199b or 126b (two occurrences) (Figure 15.6). Textual dividers (ḥā'-shaped, single or treble, see f. 19b, l. 6), chapter headings (faṣl: see f. 56b, for instance;

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28 Except for the later additions after the second text of course, on ff. 189–91, see below, “Glimpses into the manuscript’s history.”

29 It is very difficult to be more precise regarding the nature of the ink (carbon, mixed, metalo-gallic ink) without any further investigation. Its color, very black, resembles a carbon or mixed ink. It does not attack the paper at all, so if it is a mixed ink, it is not very acidic. About black inks, see primarily and among many others: Schopen, Tinten und Tuschen; Rabin et al., Identification 26–30; Zerdoun-Bat Yehouda, Les encres noires; and the classical Levey, Medieval Arabic bookmaking.
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$qawluhu taʿālā$, very frequent from f. 119b to the end of the first text, see f. 124; sura titles, see for instance f. 136b: $sūrat Ibrāhīm$) and charts or magic squares$^{30}$ (ff. 27b, 62, 79–80, 83, 85, 105b, 143b etc.) were traced in red as well.

The scribe’s handwriting is very regular. This writing can be described as a composed script, in Déroche’s classification:$^{31}$ the words follow a horizontal axis and the movement of the hand from one letter to the next is not discernable. The writing module is rather large: the height of the lines is between 21.2 and 23.4 mm;$^{32}$ as previously noted, there are only eight lines per page; as often the case with large module script, the counters are open. Almost no serifs are observed, or unconventional ligatures. The ascenders are larger than the descenders and are slightly inclined towards the left. The nib used to trace the script was bevelled—as was usual in the Mashriq—but the contrast between upstrokes and downstrokes is not very pronounced. Many words are vocalized, but not always by the scribe. Most of the letters bear their diacritics.

Unsurprisingly, the $lāmalif$ is always $warrāqiyya$. The $kāf$ is most of the time $mashkūla$ (traced in two strokes, the upper one, diagonal, was written in the later stroke), but can be $mabsūta$ too (one stroke, flattened). The final $hā'$, when attached to the previous letter, is always $mardūfa$ (traced in two moves: one oblique stroke to the left, and then a loop in the shape of a drop); median, most of the time $mulawwaza$ (two loops). The final $mīm$ is normally $maqbūla$ $makhtūfa$ (its descender tends to be oblique towards left), but when there was not enough space, it can be $musbala$ (vertical descender) or even have a curved tail towards the right. The same occurs with the final $yā'$: normally $muḥaqqaqa$ (usual shape), it is $rājiʿa$ at the end of the lines, in order to respect the writing frame. The final $nūn$ is very open and bears its dot above its right upstroke and not above the center of its bowl. Actually, this handwriting is very similar to the Mamlûk $naskh$ penned by al-Ṭayyibī in his holograph work about the bookhands written on 12 Rajab 908/11 January 1503, which is only barely more than fifty years after the copying of the manuscript we are interested in,

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$^{30}$ On magic squares see Sesiano, Wafḳ, $E/I$ xi, 28–31; Åhrens, Studien über die ‘magischen Quadrate’ 186–250; Ahrens, Die ‘magischen Quadrate’ 157–77; Bergsträsser, Zu den magischen Quadraten 227–35; Gacek, Arabic manuscripts: A vademecum 150–1; Gardiner, Esotericism.

$^{31}$ Déroche, Les Études de paléographie 376–8.

$^{32}$ A good way to accurately measure line height is to divide the distance between the first and last lines of writing by the number of lines plus one. See Déroche, Les Études de paléographie 375.

$^{33}$ This is the form of $lāmalif$ used by professional scribes, with its typical triangular base. See Gacek, Arabic manuscripts: A vademecum 139–40.
and was commissioned for Sultan Qanṣūh al-Ghawrī. Hence, the term naskh, which should be used very cautiously because of its lack of precision since almost any script written by a Mashriqi hand can be said to be naskh, is perfectly appropriate for qualifying this script.

The identity of the scribe is unknown: the colophon is not signed. Nevertheless, one reasonable supposition is that this manuscript was copied—or even compiled—by one of the young military slaves of Taghribarmish, the dedicatee, during his training. Flemming showed that this practice was widespread, and had a double purpose: besides the pedagogical goal of the exercise, its result would fill the master’s library. The fact that the dedication notes were added afterwards is not a decisive argument refuting this hypothesis.

Some marginal glosses are found; they comprise corrections and additions by the scribe, ending with the typical saḥha or saḥīh sign (there are many instances, see Figure 15.7, f. 164b, with a reference mark in the text, in red: during the rubrication, the scribe noticed that this word was unclear and decided to rewrite it clearly; he crossed it out with the nib and ink he was using at that moment, but went back to black ink to rewrite the word in the margin) or by a reader (f. 124b, ending with saḥḥa), comments (see f. 9, two different hands, or f. 11b), and different kinds of annotations (see f. 10: ḥikāya). In several places, a “qif” (“stop”) was added in the margin to call the reader’s attention to a certain passage in the text (f. 98b). In sum, in addition to the scribe’s hand, two other hands are observable: an “Eastern” hand, the same reader who added catchwords, and a maghribī hand, and pen: not bevelled as in the Mashriq, but cut into a point (f. 11b).

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34 al-Ṭayyibī, Jāmiʿ mahāsin kitābat al-kuttāb 64–6 (illustrations of naskh hand; the text penned is transcribed by the editor p. 25). For a very clear and precise description of this writing, see Gacek, Arabic manuscripts: A vademecum 163 (who erroneously cites pages 63–7 of Ṭayyibī).
35 As eloquently shown in Witkam, Seven specimens 18.
36 This is doubtful since the verb naqala (in the form manqūl), to copy (see Gacek, The Arabic manuscript tradition: A glossary 144), was used in the colophon. For the reading of the colophon, see above.
37 Flemming, Literary activities 249–60, esp. 260.
38 Gacek, The Arabic manuscript tradition: A glossary 82; Gacek, Taxonomy 217.
Textually speaking, two main units can be observed. The first text, which is also the longest (ff. 1–156b), is entitled *Manāfiʿ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā wa-manāfiʿ al-ism al-aʿẓam wa-kalām al-ṣaḥāba rađiya Allāh ‘anhum fī l-ikhtilāf fīhi wa-manāfiʿ al-Qurʾān* (f. 1). It consists of a collection of information about the different beautiful names of God, and particularly the supreme one (*al-aʿẓam*), which is in some dispute.\(^{39}\) presenting the different opinions on the question is precisely one point of the book. It is composed of texts, *ḥadīth* s and Quranic quotations. Several authors are cited, such as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī,\(^{40}\) Ibn Isḥāq,\(^{41}\)

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\(^{39}\) For an overview of the Muslim scholars’ main opinions regarding the *ism al-aʿẓam*, see Anawati, *Le Nom suprême* 7–58.

\(^{40}\) Abū Saʿīd ibn Abī al-Ḥasan Yasār al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), preacher and theologian, founder of the qadarism movement. Ritter, Hasan al-Baṣrī, *EI* iii, 247–8; Brockelmann and Sezgin, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (henceforth *GAL*) i, 66; *GAL Supplement* (henceforth *GAL S.*) i, 102.

\(^{41}\) Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq ibn Yāsār ibn Khiyār (d. 150/767), one of the three major Arabic historical sources about the *sīra* of Muḥammad. See Jones, *Ishāk*, *EI* iii, 810–1; *GAL* i, 141; *GAL S.* i, 205–6.
Abū Ḥanīfa, Abū Dāwūd, al-Ghazālī, Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī, al-Būnī, and Muḥīb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī to mention only a few of the most important ones. Interestingly, the titles of their works are sometimes mentioned, as for instance, quoting al-Būnī “...fi kitābihi Shams al-maʿārif” (f. 74), without being necessarily accurate: I have not found any mention of a “Kitāb al-Muqni,” by al-qāḍī Abū al-Ṭayyib” (f. 12a), better known as Muḥammad ibn Salama, nor a “Kitāb Marāthī (?) al-zalaf,” by Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī (f. 31). Prophets and important Islamic figures (Muḥammad, Ayyūb, Sulaymān, Yahyā, Ibrāhīm, ʿĀʾisha, ʿAlī, Mūsā) are referred to as well. Alongside the hadīths of the Prophet, ʿAlī and ʿUmar, for instance, are cited as well. No author or compiler is mentioned.

A leitmotif of this first text is that invoking God using the ism al-aʿẓam, under certain circumstances (you should be pure, fast or eat certain foods for a certain time, write the correct letters, do so at a certain time of night, etc.), is always efficient: you will obtain what you are praying for—this is actually part of the definition of this supreme name of God—or primordial secrets, secrets...
of God will be revealed to you. The importance of the isolated letters beginning some suras\textsuperscript{50} and their numerical value according to \textit{abjad}\textsuperscript{51} is also mentioned, with magic squares (for instance on f. 27b according to al-Būnī; magic squares may include letters or figures, see f. 85 for example of both),\textsuperscript{52} and combinations of letters. The efficacy of a certain name, seen as the supreme one for the person(s) cited, is highlighted with stories, and its value according to the \textit{abjad} system is recorded. Different prayers are mentioned, as well as procedures to follow to make efficient talismans and to use them proficiently. A division into chapters (\textit{faṣl}) is given, although their content is not always easily differentiated: they all deal with these same questions.

The second text is entitled \textit{Kitāb fīhi al-arbaʿīn [sic] isman wa-sharḥuhā} (ff. 157b–188b). It deals with the same issues, but looks more thoroughly at forty of the most important names of God, systematically arranged and numbered. As with the first text, no author or compiler is mentioned.

The level of language used throughout the manuscript is Middle Arabic, which comes as no surprise.\textsuperscript{53} Some of the features attesting to this are: the \textit{nunation} instead of \textit{tanwīn}, the use of the unnecessary epenthetic \textit{alif} (for instance in the end of “\textit{Abū}”), the inaccurate use or inexistence of dual forms (very clear in the considerations about the story of \textit{Hārūt wa-Mārūt},\textsuperscript{54} ff. 11–12), and the replacement of a fricative by a dental: use of \textit{tāʾ} instead of \textit{thāʾ} in many frequent words, such as \textit{thumma}, \textit{akthar}, \textit{mithl}, or even \textit{ḥadīth}; or \textit{dāl} instead of \textit{dhāl} (like in \textit{dhikr}). These are actually phonological phenomena related to the pronunciation of the scribe, who mentally utters what he is about to write.\textsuperscript{55}

The content of these texts deserves a closer look by a specialist in this kind of literature. What can be said at this stage is that this manuscript seems to be

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Suras 2, 3, 7, 10–15, 19–20, 26–32, 36, 38, 40–6, 50 and 68.
\item On \textit{abjad}, see Doutté, \textit{Magie et religion} 172–95; Anawati, \textit{Le Nom suprême} 34–5; Weil and Colin, \textit{Abdjad}; Déroche et al., \textit{Islamic codicology} 96; Gacek, \textit{Arabic manuscripts: A vademecum} 11–3, 245–6.
\item About magic squares, see fn. 29 above.
\item On Middle Arabic, see Blau, \textit{The emergence and linguistic background of Judaeo-Arabic}; Larcher, \textit{Moyen arabe} 578–609; Lentin and Grand’Henry, \textit{Moyen arabe et variétés mixtes de l'arabe}, esp. xxv–lxxxvii; Bettini and La Spisa (eds.), \textit{Au-delà de l'arabe standard}.
\item Fallen angels who sinned while on Earth for a test. They could choose their punishment: eternal hell or a punishment on Earth; they chose the latter. Cited in Q 2:102. See Vajda, \textit{Hārūt wa-Mārūt}, \textit{EI2} iii, 236–7.
\item Dain, \textit{Les Manuscrits} 41–6. Another very frequent orthographic feature is the addition of points to the \textit{alif maqṣūra}. It was so common that it may not be indicative of the level of language.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
part of what was recently described as the *corpus bunianum*;\(^\text{56}\) without pretending to be by al-Būnī the manuscript nonetheless deals with matters placing it fairly well within this frame of Būnian literature. There was a peak in the production of works about magic and particularly the science of letters in the ninth/fifteenth century; Haarmann linked this interest in magic, alchemy and divination to the shamanistic background of the Mamluks,\(^\text{57}\) whereas Berkey saw it as a “point of contact between Mamluks and locals,”\(^\text{58}\) and Shoshan as a corollary of the growing importance of Sufism in this period.\(^\text{59}\) Gardiner states: “Būnian works thought to deal specifically with the science of letters were sought after by the kind of people who could expend great wealth on books, which is to say people at the upper end of the social ladder;”\(^\text{60}\) exactly the kind of people like Taghribarmish. This manuscript coincides with the demand for practical works about lettrism;\(^\text{61}\) nevertheless, it is not as adorned as some copies of “Būnian works produced for court settings”\(^\text{62}\) in that there is no chrysography or blue ink. This is a carefully copied, partially vocalized manuscript, but it remains in the category of common manuscripts. This may be because it is an anonymous miscellany, which is less prestigious than an authorial text. As mentioned earlier, this *codex* could be one of these manuscripts copied as an exercise by a young *mamlûk* for his *amīr*, like the ones described by Flemming that comprised many anonymous works and abridged versions of authorial texts.\(^\text{63}\) In this case, in addition to showing a beautiful hand, the exercise would have been to gather documentation about the names of God, and their usefulness for magic purposes, an important concern at the time. If Taghribarmish was really miserly, as suggested by the chronicles,\(^\text{64}\) this was a good way of widening, or even setting up his library at a reasonable cost since he only had to pay for paper and ink.

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\(^{56}\) This expression was coined by Witkam, Gazing at the sun 183 and is so accurate that it has had great success. See, for example, two recently defended PhD dissertations: Coulon, *La Magie islamique*; and Gardiner, *Esotericism*.

\(^{57}\) Haarmann, Arabic in speech 97.

\(^{58}\) Berkey, The Mamluks as Muslims 170.

\(^{59}\) Shoshan, *Popular culture* 18.

\(^{60}\) Gardiner, *Esotericism* 261; see also Chart 1, 347.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 263–8.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 261.

\(^{63}\) Flemming, Literary activities 260.

\(^{64}\) See fn. 89 Below.
Bi-rasm ... Taghrībarmish shādd al-silāḥ khāna—Who was the Dedicatee?

The name and function of the dedicatee clearly point to a *mamlūk*. The vocalization and spelling of the name of the dedicatee are a bit different from what is found in the sources: the manuscript shows شْمِرُ بُرِّتْ (see Figure 15.1 and 15.2)—so this is the form in use here—instead of the more common Taghrī Birmish or Taghrī Barmash. This name denotes a Rūmī origin, since the Arabic alphabet is unable to accurately render some Turkish sounds, these variations of spelling come as no surprise.

Regarding his function, in the *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā fī šināʿat al-inshāʿ* (completed in 814/1412), al-Qalqashandī (756–821/1355–1418) defines the silāḥkhāna as the “bayt al-silāḥ” and notes that it is often called the zaradkhāna. According to Popper, after Ibn Taghrī Birdī’s *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, the title shādd al-silāḥkhāna means “superintendent of the armory.” This is a regular office for a “man of the sword” (an *amīr* or a simple trooper), linked to the bureau of the nāẓir khazāʾin al-silāḥ. Popper notes that this title occupies the thirty-ninth rank after the sultan in the Mamluk society. This function is under the authority of the *amīr silāḥ*, also called al-zardkāsh al-kabīr, who runs the royal armory, and the shādd al-silāḥkhāna is one of the ten zardkāshs (or zardkāsh) in the service of the *amīr silāḥ*. Nevertheless, Taghrībarmish’s
chain of *laqab* as it appears in the manuscript\(^72\) reflects a very high rank: only very important persons are called *al-mawlawī*,\(^73\) or *al-janāb*.\(^74\) According to al-Qalqashandi, *al-janāb* is the second degree *laqab* for *arbāb al-suyūf*, “men of the sword” (after *al-maqarr*), and *al-ʿālī*, the third category in this second degree (after *al-sharīf* and *al-karīm*).\(^75\) Therefore we can assume Taghribarmish was actually the *amīr silāḥ* when the manuscript was copied.

Taghribarmish (ibn ’Abd Allāh)\(^76\) Yashbak min Uzdumur\(^78\) was a *mamlūk* of the Amīr Yashbak min Uzdumur, and was placed under the authority of Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy after the death of his master. This explains the *nisba* “*al-Ashrafī*” mentioned in the dedication note on f. 1. Ibn Fahd (812–85/1409–80),\(^79\) Ibn Taghri Birdī (812–74/1411–70),\(^80\) al-Sakhāwī (831–902/1427–1508)

\(^72\) This chain of *laqab* coincides with what is found in Mamluk diplomatics; see Dekkiche, *Le Caire*. Her conclusions are exposed more briefly in eadem, Correspondence 131–60, esp. 149–52.


\(^74\) Gully, *The culture of letter-writing* 169, 182–3; al-Bāshā, *Alqāb al-islāmiyya* 241–2. The *laqab* “*al-janāb*” was used to address third class sovereigns in the Circassian period. See Dekkiche, *Le Caire* 363, 365 and idem, Correspondence 150. According to al-Bāshā, the expression *al-janāb al-ʿālī al-sayfī* was even used to refer to Sultan Barsbāy, see al-Bāshā, *Alqāb al-islāmiyya* 226 fn. 6, where van Berchem, *Matériaux* fn. 202 is cited. Nevertheless, this is a mistake: the inscription in question (on the portal of the Amīr Sūdūn Mir Zādeh’s mosque in Cairo) does not comprise any *laqab* or name. See the reproduction of its text in Kalus and Soudan, Thésaurus d’épigraphie islamique number 1272, online http://www.epigraphie-islamique.org/epi/consultation.php. All the persons referred to as *al-janāb al-ʿālī* in this database are important officials of the Mamluk state, see for instance number 1402, the text commemorating the restoration of a hospital in Aleppo by the *shādd al-awqāf*, dated 819/1416.

\(^75\) al-Qalqashandi, Ṣuḥḥ al-aʾshā vi, 136.

\(^76\) This filiation is only found in Ibn Taghri Birdī; see Ibn Taghri Birdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfī* iv, 65; idem, Ḥawādith al-duḥūr i, 314. It is very likely fictitious, see Ayalon, Names 210.

\(^77\) Ibn Fahd gives “Ayshbakī,” see Ibn Fahd, *al-Durr al-kamīn* i, 661.

\(^78\) The precision “min Uzdumur” in the title of the entry is only given by al-Sakhāwī. See his *al-Dawʾ al-lāmiʾ* iii, 34. In Ibn Taghri Birdī’s *al-Manhal al-ṣāfī* one finds “bn Uzdumur”; the editor may have abusively corrected an original “min” into an expression of filiation; on this practice, see Ayalon, Names 223–8, esp. 227.

\(^79\) Ibn Fahd, *al-Durr al-kamīn* i, 661 (record number 572).

\(^80\) Ibn Taghri Birdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfī* iv, 65–8 (record number 768); idem, *al-Dalīl al-shāfiʿ* i, 218–9 (record number 766); idem, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira* xv, 430–1; idem, Ḥawādith al-duḥūr i, 314.
or 1428–97)\textsuperscript{81} and al-Malaṭī (844–930/1440–1514)\textsuperscript{82} give biographical information about him, although Ibn Taghrī Birdī’s \textit{Manhal} is the most profuse. This tall redheaded\textsuperscript{83} \textit{mamlūk} was \textit{zaradkāsh šaghūr} “for a long period”\textsuperscript{84} under al-Ashraf Barsbāy (825–42/1422–38), who appointed him \textit{zaradkāsh kabīr} in 833/1429–30, and \textit{amīr} of ten. Under Jaqmaq (842–57/1438–53), Taghrībarmish was appointed \textit{amīr} of \textit{ṭablkhāna}, that is \textit{amīr} of forty,\textsuperscript{85} and received a new \textit{iqṭāʿ} on this occasion. He took part in numerous military campaigns and is said to have been brave and courageous.\textsuperscript{86} He travelled to the Ḥijāz in Rajab 854/August–September 1450, fell ill and died in Mecca during the night of 24 Shawwāl 854/30 November 1450.\textsuperscript{87} He was more than eighty years old (between 77 and 86 solar years old). He was rich—he commissioned a Friday mosque in Būlāq along the Nile bank\textsuperscript{88}—and all the sources agree that he was miserly.\textsuperscript{89}

The sources do not say anything about Taghrībarmish’s level of education.\textsuperscript{90} Since the works of Flemming, Haarmann, Berkey, and recently Mauder,\textsuperscript{91} we know that the Mamluks—or at least some of them—could have a relatively high level of education. This argument is also supported by the numerous Turkish names mentioned in \textit{samāʿ} or \textit{ijāzāt} statements. These Turkish name bearers could be slaves, like Asanbughā ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Turkī, who attended the reading of al-\textit{Faḍl al-Munīf fī l-Mawlid al-Sharīf} by al-Ṣafadī, finished on 23

\textsuperscript{81} al-Sakhāwī, \textit{al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ} iii, 34–5; idem, \textit{Dhayl al-tāmm} ii, 62; idem, \textit{Kitāb al-tibr al-masbūk} iii, 59.


\textsuperscript{83} Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{Manhal al-sāfī} iv, 67; idem, \textit{Ḥawādith al-duhūr} i, 314.

\textsuperscript{84} Idem, \textit{Manhal al-sāfī} iv, 66 (where one reads he was “part of the \textit{jumla zaradkāshiyā,” instead of “zaradkāsh šaghūr”).

\textsuperscript{85} Ayalon, Studies ii 469.

\textsuperscript{86} al-Malaṭī, \textit{Majmaʿ al-mufannan} ii, 761.

\textsuperscript{87} The precise date is given by Ibn Fahd, \textit{Durr al-kamīn} i, 661; al-Malaṭī, \textit{Majmaʿ al-mufannan} ii, 761, says end of Dhū al-Ḥijja 854/January 1451.

\textsuperscript{88} This is the first information cited after the mention of his death in al-Sakhāwī, \textit{Dhayl al-tāmm} ii, 62. Mentions of this mosque are also found in Ibn Fahd, \textit{Durr al-kamīn} i, 661; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{Manhal al-sāfī} iv, 66; idem, \textit{Ḥawādith al-duhūr} i, 315; al-Sakhāwī, \textit{Daw’ al-lāmi} iii, 35; idem, \textit{Kitāb al-Tibr al-masbūk} iii, 59.

\textsuperscript{89} Only Ibn Taghrī Birdī adds he would secretly give money to the poor. See Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{Manhal al-sāfī} iv, 67.

\textsuperscript{90} On the contrary, we have a great deal of information about his homonym Taghrī Birmish al-Nāṣirī al-Faqīh’s education, see Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{Manhal al-sāfī} iv, 68–74; al-Sakhāwī, \textit{Daw’ al-lāmi} iii, 33–4. He is also mentioned in Berkey, Mamluks and the world of higher Islamic education 109–10.

\textsuperscript{91} Mauder, \textit{Gelehrte Krieger}. For the other authors cited, see fn. 1 above.
Glimpses into the History of the Manuscript

After the two texts, on ff. 189–90 which were originally blank, readers of the manuscript added invocations and formulas to win a woman’s love (f. 189–189b, ending with *tamma wa-kamula*) and recipes for different kinds of talismans (f. 190–190b). These were written by a *mashriqi* hand. On f. 191 a *maghribi* hand recorded the *mashriqi abjad* code; in fact another code is used in the Maghrib, so this key was needed to understand the text and to carry out the practices promoted in the text in the Maghrib. On the verso of this folio, the same reader, al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Ḥammūda al-Ḥashāʾishī (or “the herb seller,” if his *nisba* still refers to his occupation), explained he bought the book for two riyals and a quarter from a certain Ibn al-Ḥājj ‘Abd Allāh the bookseller on 9 Sha’bān 1235/22 May 1820. Under these four lines, someone drew

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92 Ms PUL Garrett 3570 Y, f. 31a. Asanbughā was actually al-Ṣafadī’s slave (“fatāya”). This text was edited: al-Ṣafadī, *al-Faḍl al-munīf*, ed. ‘Āyish (for the *ijāza*, see 19–20).


94 These paratexts—texts found in manuscripts that are not part of the main text to be transmitted—are essential to our grasp and information on many facets of the book culture and intellectual life of the medieval Middle East. They are the subject of the project *Ex(-)Libris ex Oriente (ELEO)*, led by Prof. F. Bauden and myself at the University of Liège. For more details, see http://web.philo.ulg.ac.be/islamo/portfolio-item/ex-libris-ex-oriente/

95 Note that the word for year is *ʿām*, which is more often found than *sanna* in the Maghrib. See Gacek, *The Arabic manuscript tradition: A glossary* (2001) 104.

96 Mimmā anʿama Allāh bihi ‘alā al-ʿabd al-faqīr ilā rābbihi al-muṭarīf bi-dhanbihi al-ḥājj Muḥammad ibn Ḥammūda al-Ḥashāʾishī bi-l-shirā’ al-ṣahīḥ wa-l-ḥamān al-mundafī wa-qadrīhu riyaḍāni wa-rūb’ ‘alā yad al-ṣaghīr Ibn al-Ḥājj ‘Abd Allāh al-kutubi yawm 9 Sha’bān ʿām 1235 (Among what Allāh accorded to the servant, the poor towards his Lord,
a flower inscribed in a circle and several concentric circles; it is very likely a test of a pair of compasses.97

As stated earlier, this manuscript was copied in Cairo for the Amīr Taghribarmish. It can be assumed that it remained there for a while; the hand of one of the readers who left *marginalia* has a “taʿlīqish” or “nastaʿlīqish” style:98 a non-horizontal ductus, with the words descending under the baseline that was in vogue during the Ottoman period. Then the book travelled to the Maghrib. A *Maghrībī* may have bought it in Cairo on his way to or from Mecca. He brought it back home to the Maghrib. A Tunisian—Ḥammūda is a Tunisian name99—bought it, and we may assume the book remained in Tunisia, before it was sold to Juliette Dargent. Dargent was a former librarian of the University of Liège, who then became a civil servant for Unesco and, as such, worked in various Arab countries. She amassed an important collection of manuscripts in Arabic script while working there; she loved books and the look of Arabic writing, but she could not read Arabic. Most of her manuscripts were purchased in Tunisia.100 She bequeathed all of them—four hundred thirty-eight volumes—to the University of Liège library in the 1980s.101 This is how Taghribarmish’s manuscript ended up in Belgium.

**Conclusion**

This manuscript is material evidence from a ninth/fifteenth century Mamluk amīr’s library. It is a book of miscellanies about the beautiful and supreme names of God, a subject in vogue then. It was commissioned by the Amīr Taghribarmish, and probably copied by one of his young *mamlūks* during his training. The latter began working on the beautiful names of God and added his list of the forty names afterwards—as shown by the later addition of the indication “wa-fihi al-arba’in [sic] isman wa-manāfīʿuhā lil- ...” on the

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97 See fn. 5 above.
98 On *nastaʿlīq* and *taʿlīq*, see Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts: A vademecum* respectively 166–7, 263.
99 See the examples of Tunisian Ḥammūda in al-Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām* ii, 282.
100 See the incomplete list of prices and manuscripts bought by her: Université de Liège, Bibliothèque ALPHA [Architecture, Lettres, Philosophie, Histoire, Arts], Fonds Dargent, [ms 5438], 14 ff., 272 cards.
first title page of the volume. Apparently the topic was interesting enough for the manuscript to have been carefully preserved: it is still in an excellent state of conservation six centuries after its production and despite travelling from Cairo to Tunisia, and then from Tunis to Liège—and these are only the per-
egynations we know of. Only its binding had to be replaced: the volume is now protected by an Ottoman binding, with no trace of its genuine Mamluk binding.102 We do not know whether it was made in Egypt or in Tunisia—the watermarked paper of the guard leaves was used in both countries, and we do not know how long the manuscript stayed in Tunisia before being sold to Ḥammūda.

Codicologically speaking this Mamluk codex is not out of the ordinary: typical paper, habitual distribution of the inks, black and red, regular mise en page, and common type of handwriting. It is not an exceptionally beautiful manuscript: there is no gold, but not a careless copy either since the handwriting is conscientious and the very limited number of lines per page, as well as the wide and high margins indicate that the scribe had enough paper at his disposal.

Many manuscripts kept in a Mamluk amīr’s library must have been like this one, both in terms of look and content; paradoxically this is what makes this particular copy interesting. It gives us a glimpse into the “normal” books of an amīr at the end of the Mamluk period.

This manuscript appears in the aforementioned Ex(-)Libris ex Oriente database103 because of its dedication note. Other manuscripts dedicated to Mamluk amīrs are recorded in ELEO as well. This project thus provides a valuable opportunity to get a better picture of different amīrs’ personal libraries, but also those of other individuals such as scholars.

102 If it had one: even if this was the normal thing to do, not all the manuscripts were necessarily bound. We may assume that manuscripts in a wealthy amīr’s library were preserved in beautiful bindings—but this has probably never been a too expensive one, since our Taghrībarmish was stingy.

103 See fn. 92 above.