

What was there in a Mamluk *Amīr*'s Library?

Evidence from a Fifteenth-Century Manuscript

Élise Franssen

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:

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 arabes 150–8, and in Franssen, A *magribī* 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.



FIGURE 15.1
Folio 1.

Kitāb majmū‘ | fīhi manāfi‘ asmā’ Allāh al-husnā | wa-manāfi‘ al-ism al-a‘ẓam wa-kalām | al-ṣahāba rādiya 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-fīhi al-arba‘īn [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-‘ālī al-mawlawī al-amīrī al-kabīrī | al-ghāzī al-dhukhrī Taghibarmish⁷ shādd al-silāḥ khānā al-sharīfa al-malakī al-ashrafi a‘azzahu Allāh

⁶ About notes of patronage, see Gacek, *Arabic manuscripts: A vademecum* 197. On commissioned and non-commissioned manuscripts, see *ibid.*, 78, 173; Deroche et al., *Islamic codicology* 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 Allāh fortify him]

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

bi-rasm al-janāb al-ālī al-sayfi Taghribarmish shādd al-silāh khānā

[Intended for his excellency, the elevated, Sayf al-Dīn⁸ Taghribarmish, superintendent of the armory],

and under this, in red ink, as well, a *hamdala* (*hamdu li-lلāh ta‘ālā*). 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:

hadhā mā wujida fi l-nuskha al-manqūl minhā hadhihi al-nuskha | wa-l-hamdu li-lلāh 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:

Kitāb fīhi al-arba‘īn [sic] isman wa-sharḥuhā⁹

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

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

⁸ “al-Sayfi” stands for Sayf al-Dīn, 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.



FIGURE 15.2
Folio 156b.

*wa-hadhā mā tayassara min khawāṣṣ al-arbaīn ism wa-na‘ūdhu bi-Allāh
min al-ziyāda wa-l-nuqṣān wa-min al-khaṭa’ wa-l-zalal. Ghafara Allāh
li-muṣannifihi wa-qāri‘ihi wa-l-‘āmil bihi wa-kātibihī wa-man da‘ā lahum
bi-l-rahma wa-l-maghfira wa-li-jamī‘ al-muslimīn wa-ṣallā Allāh ‘alā
sayyidinā Muḥammad wa-[ā]lihi wa-ṣaḥibihī wa-sallama*

[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

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.¹¹ 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.¹² The binding was made at a later date than the copy of the manuscript, during the Ottoman period.¹³

An inscription in black ink is legible on the tail and reads *Kitāb Sharḥ al-Ism al-Ażam* (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.¹⁴

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).¹⁵ The chain-lines are horizontal and as far as I can tell on such

¹¹ This decoration is similar to the NA6 type in François Déroche's typology of central almond-shaped panels. See Déroche, *Catalogue* 18; and Déroche et al., *Islamic codicology* 302.

¹² Part of the watermark is visible in the fold of f. 192. It is the lower part of a shield, with a star and a moon crescent beneath, on its vertical axis of symmetry, which corresponds to a chain-line of the paper. Chain-lines are horizontal and distributed very regularly every 30 mm; 20 laid lines occupy 24 mm. Note that f. 191 is not the second part of the original sheet of f. 192, although it is made of the same paper.

¹³ As was commonly the case: Islamic bindings are fragile and need to be replaced or fixed relatively often. The decoration here is clearly Ottoman. Furthermore, the watermarked paper of the penultimate guard leaf was not in use before the seventeenth century. For more information, see Guesdon, *Reliures* 142 or Berthier, *Reliures ottomanes* 153. Regarding the watermark, see Nikolaev, *Watermarks*.

¹⁴ Evidence of this arrangement can be found in illustrated manuscripts, such as a thirteenth-century manuscript of al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt* preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France [ar. 5847], f. 5b (see [<http://mandragore.bnf.fr/jsp/rechercheExperte.jsp>] and the image on [<http://visualiseur.bnf.fr/CadresFenetre?O=COMP-1&I=8&M=imageseule>] last consultation: 27 October 2014). See also Rosenthal, *Technique and approach* 11; Déroche et al., *Islamic codicology* 316, fn. 9; Gacek, *Arabic manuscripts: A vademecum* 37–8 (illustration 38); Déroche and Sagaria Rossi, *I Manoscritti* 198, fn. 20.

¹⁵ To date, there is still no best practice for describing the color and pulp of papers. A very good study of medieval Arabic papers, especially the quality and nature of their pulp, can be found in Kropf and Baker, *A conservative tradition* 1–48.

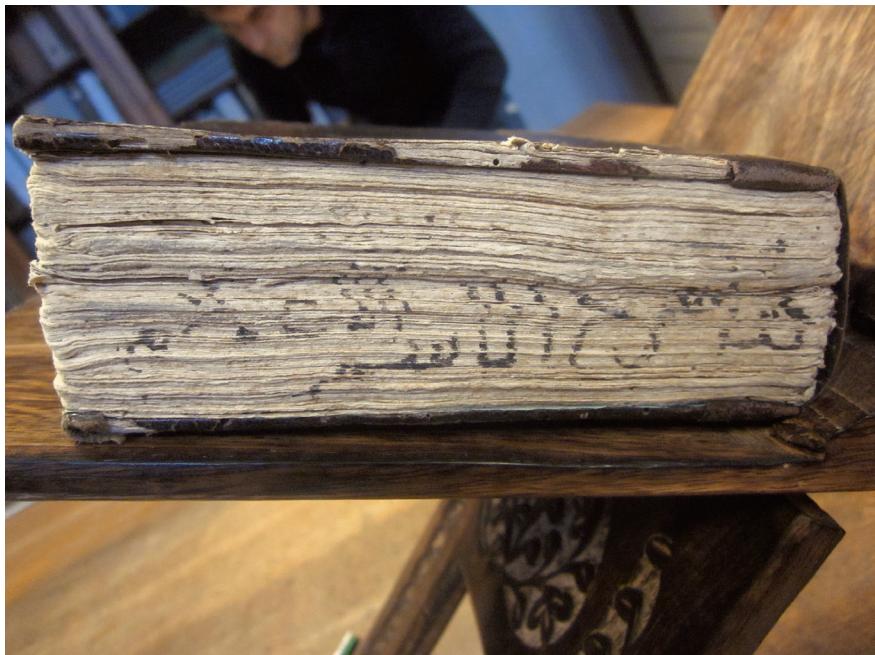


FIGURE 15.3 *Inscription on the Manuscript's Tail which reads Kitāb Sharḥ al-Ism al-A'ẓam.*

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

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.

territory is the delamination of some sheets. This is the case, among others, for f. 140.¹⁷

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 × 270 mm. Since the chain-lines are horizontal, bifolios are actually half of an original sheet¹⁸ and thus measure 344 × 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,¹⁹ yielding 354/364 × 280/290 mm. These measurements correspond to the small format of paper described by Irigoin: 320/370 × 235/280 mm.²⁰

The folios are bundled in twenty quires, mainly quinions, with the exception of two quaternions and one ternion.²¹ 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.²² The presence of two quaternions among the majority of quinions is not

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.

²⁰ Irigoin, *Les Papiers non filigranés* 303–4.

²¹ Here is the complete sequence of quires: 1 (A) + [V-1 (9) + 2V (29) + IV (37) + 11V (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.



FIGURE 15.4
Folio 128.

unusual either.²³ The two texts were copied by the same scribe, on the same paper, with the same inks and in accordance with the same *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 راجع are clearly legible, on f. 118 (thirteenth quire), there is a succession of undotted letters, most probably ثلاث 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.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 *mīm* (Figure 15.5, f. 29b) traced in the outer margin facing

²³ Ibid., 88; Deroche and Sagaria Rossi, *I Manoscritti* 104.

²⁴ Deroche et al., *Islamic codicology* 91; Gacek, *Arabic manuscripts: A vademeum* 213–5; Deroche and Sagaria Rossi, *IManoscritti* 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, *La numérotation des cahiers* 101–15 (esp. 105–6).



FIGURE 15.5
Folio 29b.

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 vademeicum* 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 vademeicum* 51. See also Déroche and Sagaria Rossi, *I Manoscritti* 117–9.

²⁷ System attested in Guesdon, *Les Réclames* 69–70.



FIGURE 15.6

Folio 126b.

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:²⁸ 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,²⁹ 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 (*hā'*-shaped, single or treble, see f. 19b, l. 6), chapter headings (*faṣl*: see f. 56b, for instance;

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*.

qawlūhu taālā, 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 squares³⁰ (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 Deroche'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 *warrāqiyā*.³³ 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 *muhaqqqaqa* (usual shape), it is *rāji'a* 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 Mamlūk *naskh* penned by al-Tayyibī 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,

³⁰ On magic squares see Sesiano, Wafq, *EI*² xi, 28–31; Ährens, Studien über die ‚magischen Quadrate‘ 186–250; Ährens, Die ‚magischen Quadrate‘ 157–77; Bergsträsser, Zu den magischen Quadraten 227–35; Gacek, *Arabic manuscripts: A vademecum* 150–1; Gardiner, *Esotericism*.

³¹ Deroche, *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 Deroche, *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.³⁴ Hence, the term *naskh*, which should be used very cautiously because of its lack of precision since almost any script written by a Mashriqī hand can be said to be *naskh*,³⁵ 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 compiled³⁶—by one of the young military slaves of Taghibarmish, 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.³⁷ 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 *sahha* or *sahiḥ* sign³⁸ (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 *sahha*), comments (see f. 9, two different hands, or f. 11b), and different kinds of annotations (see f. 10: *hikāya*). 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).

34 al-Tayyibī, *Jāmi' maḥāsin 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 Tayyibi).

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.



FIGURE 15.7

Folio 164b.

Content

Textually speaking, two main units can be observed. The first text, which is also the longest (ff. 1–156b), is entitled *Manāfi' asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā wa-manāfi' al-ism al-aḍzam wa-kalām al-ṣaḥāba raḍiya Allāh 'anhūm fi l-ikhtilāf fīhi wa-manāfi' al-Qur'ān* (f. 1). It consists of a collection of information about the different beautiful names of God, and particularly the supreme one (*al-aḍzam*), 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, *hadīths* and Quranic quotations. Several authors are cited, such as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī,⁴⁰ Ibn Ishāq,⁴¹

39 For an overview of the Muslim scholars' main opinions regarding the *ism al-aḍzam*, see Anawati, *Le Nom suprême* 7–58.

40 Abū Sa'īd ibn Abī al-Ḥasan Yasār al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), preacher and theologian, founder of the qadarism movement. Ritter, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, *EI²* iii, 247–8; Brockelmann and Sezgin, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (henceforth *GAL*) i, 66; *GAL Supplement* (henceforth *GAL S.*) i, 102.

41 Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Yasār ibn Khiyār (d. 150/767), one of the three major Arabic historical sources about the *sīra* of Muḥammad. See Jones, Ibn Ishāq, *EI²* iii, 810–1; *GAL* i, 141; *GAL S.* i, 205–6.

Abū Ḥanīfa,⁴² Abū Dāwūd,⁴³ al-Ghazālī,⁴⁴ Abū Bakr ibn al-‘Arabī,⁴⁵ al-Būnī,⁴⁶ and Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī,⁴⁷ 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 kitābihī Shams al-ma‘ārif*” (f. 74), without being necessarily accurate: I have not found any mention of a “*Kitāb al-Muqni‘*,” by “al-qādī Abū al-Ṭayyib” (f. 12a), better known as Muḥammad ibn Salama,⁴⁸ nor a “*Kitāb Marāthī (?) al-zalaf*,” by Abū Bakr ibn al-‘Arabī (f. 31).⁴⁹ Prophets and important Islamic figures (Muḥammad, Ayyūb, Sulaymān, Yaḥyā, Ibrāhīm, Ā’isha, ‘Alī, Mūsā) are referred to as well. Alongside the *hadīths* of the Prophet, ‘Alī and ‘Umar, 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-a‘zam*, 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

⁴² Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu‘mān ibn Thābit (d. 150/767), theologian, founder of the eponymous juridical school. Schacht, Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu‘mān, *EI*² i, 123–4; *GAL* i, 176–7; *GAL S.* i, 284–7.

⁴³ Sulaymān ibn al-Ashāt̄ Abū Da‘ūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275/889), a traditionalist, author of one of the six main *hadīth* collections of the Sunnites. Robson, Abū Da‘ūd al-Sijistānī, *EI*² i, 114; *GAL* i, 168–9; *GAL S.* i, 266–7. We have evidence that his *Sunan* was read and studied in the Mamluk period, see the biography of the Amīr Taghri Birmish al-Nāṣirī al-Faqīh, in Ibn Taghīrī Birdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi‘* iv, 68–74; *al-Sakhawī*, *al-Daw‘ al-lāmi‘* iii, 33–4. This information is also mentioned in Berkey, Mamluks and the world of higher Islamic education 110, 115.

⁴⁴ Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Tūsī al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), preeminent theologian, jurist, mystic and philosopher. Montgomery Watt, al-Ghazālī, *EI*² ii, 1038–41; *GAL* i, 535–46; *GAL S.* i, 744–56.

⁴⁵ Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ma‘āfirī ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 543/1148), jurist in the Almoravid al-Andalus. Not to be confused with the famous Ṣūfī master Muhyī al-Dīn ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 638/1240). *GAL* i, 525; *GAL S.* i, 663; *GAL S.* ii, 732; Lagardère, Abū Bakr ibn al-‘Arabī 91–102.

⁴⁶ Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Yūsuf al-Qurashī al-Ṣūfī Muhyī al-Dīn al-Būnī (d. 622/1225), author of many works on magic, lettrism and the occult sciences. Dietrich, al-Būnī, *EI*² xii, 156, and above all Gardiner, *Esotericism*, esp. 70–77 for his biography and *passim*; *GAL* i, 655–6.

⁴⁷ Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Muhibb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī (d. 694/1295), important shāfi‘ī jurist and traditionalist. Bauden, al-Ṭabarī, *EI*² x, 16–7; *GAL S.* i, 217–8.

⁴⁸ (Abū al-Ṭayyib) Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl (or al-Mufaḍḍal) ibn Salama ibn ‘Āsim al-Baghdādī (or al-Dubbī) (d. 308/920), was a shāfi‘ī jurisprudent, the son of al-Mufaḍḍal ibn Salama; see Kahhāla, *Mu‘jam al-mu‘allifin* iii, 588; Sellheim, al-Mufaḍḍal ibn Salama, *EI*² xii, 631–2; Ibn Khallikān, *Ibn Khallikan’s biographical dictionary* ii, 610–2.

⁴⁹ This title does not appear in Lagardère, Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabi; nor in *GAL*.

of God will be revealed to you. The importance of the isolated letters beginning some suras⁵⁰ and their numerical value according to *abjad*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),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 *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 (*faṣl*) is given, although their content is not always easily differentiated: they all deal with these same questions.

The second text is entitled *Kitāb fihi al-arbaṭin [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.⁵³ Some of the features attesting to this are: the *nunation* instead of *tanwīn*, the use of the unnecessary epenthetic *alif* (for instance in the end of “*Abū*”), the inaccurate use or inexistence of dual forms (very clear in the considerations about the story of *Hārūt wa-Mārūt*,⁵⁴ ff. 11–12), and the replacement of a fricative by a dental: use of *tā'* instead of *thā'* in many frequent words, such as *thumma*, *akthar*, *mithl*, or even *hadīth*; or *dāl* instead of *dhāl* (like in *dhikr*). These are actually phonological phenomena related to the pronunciation of the scribe, who mentally utters what he is about to write.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

50 Suras 2, 3, 7, 10–15, 19–20, 26–32, 36, 38, 40–6, 50 and 68.

51 On *abjad*, see Doutté, *Magie et religion* 172–95; Anawati, Le Nom suprême 34–5; Weil and Colin, Abdjad; Déroche et al., *Islamic codicology* 96; Gacek, *Arabic manuscripts: A vademecum* 11–3, 245–6.

52 About magic squares, see fn. 29 above.

53 On Middle Arabic, see Blau, *The emergence and linguistic background of Judaeo-Arabic*; Larcher, *Moyen arabe* 578–609; Lentini and Grand'Henry, *Moyen arabe et variétés mixtes de l'arabe*, esp. xxv–lxxxvii; Bettini and La Spisa (eds.), *Au-delà de l'arabe standard*.

54 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, *Hārūt wa-Mārūt*, *EI*² iii, 236–7.

55 Dain, *Les Manuscrits* 41–6. Another very frequent orthographic feature is the addition of points to the *alif maqṣūra*. It was so common that it may not be indicative of the level of language.

part of what was recently described as the *corpus bunianum*: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,⁵⁷ whereas Berkey saw it as a “point of contact between Mamluks and locals,”⁵⁸ and Shoshan as a corollary of the growing importance of Sufism in this period.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,”⁶⁰ exactly the kind of people like Taghribarmish. This manuscript coincides with the demand for practical works about letrism;⁶¹ nevertheless, it is not as adorned as some copies of “Būnian works produced for court settings”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 *mamlük* for his *amīr*, like the ones described by Flemming that comprised many anonymous works and abridged versions of authorial texts.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,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.

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 ... Taghibarmish shādd al-silāḥ khāna—Who was the Dedicatee?

The name and function of the dedicatee clearly point to a *mamlūk*.⁶⁵ The vocalization and spelling of the name of the dedicatee are a bit different from what is found in the sources: the manuscript shows تغْرِبَرْمِشْ (see Figure 15.1 and 15.2)—so this is the form in use here—instead of the more common Taghribarmish or Taghribarmash.⁶⁶ This name denotes a Rūmī origin;⁶⁷ since the Arabic alphabet is unable to accurately render some Turkish sounds, these variations of spelling come as no surprise.⁶⁸

Regarding his function, in the *Şubh al-a'shā fi şinā'at al-inshā* (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*.⁶⁹ According to Popper, after Ibn Taghribirdī’s *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fi mulūk Misr wa-l-Qāhira*, the title *shādd al-silāḥkhānā* 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 *nāżir khazā'in al-silāḥ*. Popper notes that this title occupies the thirty-ninth rank after the sultan in the Mamluk society.⁷⁰ This function is under the authority of the *amīr silāḥ*, also called *al-zaradkāsh al-kabīr*, who runs the royal armory, and the *shādd al-silāḥkhāna* is one of the ten *zaradkāshs* (or *zardkāsh*) in the service of the *amīr silāḥ*.⁷¹ Nevertheless, Taghibarmish’s

⁶⁵ Ayalon, Names 193; Yosef, The names of the *Mamlūks* fn. 2 (pagination unknown).

⁶⁶ Even if the vocal harmony of Turkish is not adhered to in this form and hence if this form could be mistaken, my choice is to follow the vocalization of the manuscript, since I have no evidence of the correct vowels. According to Sauvaget, it should be Taghribarmish, see Sauvaget, Noms et surnoms 44, fn. 72. In all the sources consulted, his name is spelled as two words, and with a long ī ending the first. One reads Taghribarmash in Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira* xv, 430; al-Sakhawī, *al-Dhayl al-tāmm* ii, 62; al-Malaṭī, *Nayl al-amal* v, 323. The mīm is not vocalized in Ibn Fahd, *al-Durr al-kamīn* i, 661; or in Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Dalīl al-shāfi* i, 218, whereas the preceding and following entries are vocalized with a *fathā*. This is informative only if the editors followed the vocalization found in the most accurate manuscripts they used, of course.

⁶⁷ Sauvaget, Noms et surnoms 44 fn. 72, who cites Wiet, *Les biographies* 756, 757, 759; Yosef, The names of the *Mamlūks*, part D (“Names of the Mamlūks in the transition period”) and fn. 112 (pagination unknown).

⁶⁸ On this issue and the problems it raises, see Sauvaget, Noms et surnoms 31–32; Ayalon, Names 203–6.

⁶⁹ al-Qalqashandī, *Şubh al-a'shā* iv, 11–2.

⁷⁰ Popper, *Egypt and Syria* 95, 98.

⁷¹ Ibid., 91, 93–4; Ayalon, Studies III 60 fn. 1; Har-El, *Silāḥdār*, *EI* ix, 609–10.

chain of *laqabs* as it appears in the manuscript⁷² reflects a very high rank: only very important persons are called *al-mawlawī*,⁷³ or *al-janāb*.⁷⁴ According to al-Qalqashandī, *al-janāb* is the second degree *laqab* for *arbāb al-suyūf*, “men of the sword” (after *al-maqarr*), and *al-‘ālī*, 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 al-Yashbakī⁷⁷ Yashbak min Uzdumur⁷⁸ 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-Ashrafi*” mentioned in the dedication note on f. 1. Ibn Fahd (812–85/1409–80),⁷⁹ Ibn Taghrī Birdī (812–74/1411–70),⁸⁰ al-Sakhāwī (831–902/1427

⁷² This chain of *laqabs* 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.

⁷³ al-Bāshā, *al-Alqāb al-islāmiyya* 516–22, esp. 518.

⁷⁴ Gully, *The culture of letter-writing* 169, 182–3; al-Bāshā, *Alqāb al-islāmiyya* 241–7. 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-‘ālī al-sayfī* was even used to refer to Sultan Barsbāy, see al-Bāshā, *al-Alqāb al-islāmiyya* 246 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 Südün 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-‘ālī* 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-Qalqashandī, *Şubḥ al-aşhā* vi, 136.

⁷⁶ This filiation is only found in Ibn Taghrī Birdī; see Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi* iv, 65; idem, *Hawādith al-duhūr* 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-Daw’ al-lāmī* iii, 34. In Ibn Taghrī Birdī’s *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi* 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 Taghrī Birdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi* iv, 65–8 (record number 768); idem, *al-Dalīl al-shāfi* i, 218–9 (record number 766); idem, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira* xv, 430–1; idem, *Hawādith al-duhūr* i, 314.

or 1428–97)⁸¹ and al-Malaṭī (844–930/1440–1514)⁸² give biographical information about him, although Ibn Taghṛī Birdī's *Manhal* is the most profuse. This tall redhead⁸³ *mamlūk* was *zaradkāsh ṣaghīr* "for a long period"⁸⁴ under al-Ashraf Barsbāy (825–42/1422–38), who appointed him *zaradkāsh kabīr* in 833/1429–30, and *amīr* of ten. Under Jaqmaq (842–57/1438–53), Taghribarmish was appointed *amīr* of *ṭabikhāna*, that is *amīr* of forty,⁸⁵ and received a new *iqtā'* on this occasion. He took part in numerous military campaigns and is said to have been brave and courageous.⁸⁶ He travelled to the Hijāz in Rajab 854/August–September 1450, fell ill and died in Mecca during the night of 24 Shawwāl 854/30 November 1450.⁸⁷ 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 bank⁸⁸—and all the sources agree that he was miserly.⁸⁹

The sources do not say anything about Taghribarmish's level of education.⁹⁰ Since the works of Flemming, Haarmann, Berkey, and recently Mauder,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 *samā'* or *ijāzāt* statements. These Turkish name bearers could be slaves, like Asanbughā ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Turkī, who attended the reading of *al-Fadl al-Munīf fi l-Mawlid al-Sharīf* by al-Ṣafadī, finished on 23

81 al-Sakhawī, *al-Daw' al-lāmī* iii, 34–5; idem, *al-Dhayl al-tāmm* ii, 62; idem, *Kitāb al-tibr al-masbūk* iii, 59.

82 al-Malaṭī, *Nayl al-amal* v, 323, fn. 2232; idem, *al-Majma' al-mufannan*, ed. al-Kandarī, ii, 760–1, fn. 1071.

83 Ibn Taghṛī Birdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi* iv, 67; idem, *Ḩawādith al-duhūr* i, 314.

84 Idem, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi* iv, 66 (where one reads he was "part of the *jumla zaradkāshiyā*," instead of "*zaradkāsh ṣaghīr*").

85 Ayalon, Studies 11 469.

86 al-Malaṭī, *al-Majma' al-mufannan* ii, 761.

87 The precise date is given by Ibn Fahd, *al-Durr al-kamīn* i, 661; al-Malaṭī, *al-Majma' al-mufannan* ii, 761, says end of Dhū al-Hijja 854/January 1451.

88 This is the first information cited after the mention of his death in al-Sakhawī, *al-Dhayl al-tāmm* ii, 62. Mentions of this mosque are also found in Ibn Fahd, *al-Durr al-kamīn* i, 661; Ibn Taghṛī Birdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi* iv, 66; idem, *Ḩawādith al-duhūr* i, 315; al-Sakhawī, *al-Daw' al-lāmī* iii, 35; idem, *Kitāb al-Tibr al-masbūk* iii, 59.

89 Only Ibn Taghṛī Birdī adds he would secretly give money to the poor. See Ibn Taghṛī Birdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi* iv, 67.

90 On the contrary, we have a great deal of information about his homonym Taghṛī Birmish al-Nāṣirī al-Faqīh's education, see Ibn Taghṛī Birdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi* iv, 68–74; al-Sakhawī, *al-Daw' al-lāmī* iii, 33–4. He is also mentioned in Berkey, Mamluks and the world of higher Islamic education 109–10.

91 Mauder, *Gelehrte Krieger*. For the other authors cited, see fn. 1 above.

Şafar 759/4 February 1358.⁹² Yet they could also be *mamlūks*, as in an audition certificate for ‘Abd al-Mu’min al-Dimyātī’s *Kitāb Faḍl al-Khayl*, in al-Maqrīzī’s presence dated Sha’bān 845/January 1442, where a Taghribi Birmish is cited, among others.⁹³

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 *mashriqī* hand. On f. 191 a *maghribī* hand recorded the *mashriqī 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.⁹⁴ On the verso of this folio, the same reader, al-Hājj Muḥammad Ḥammūda al-Ḥashā’ishī (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-Hājj ‘Abd Allāh the bookseller on 9 Sha’bān 1235⁹⁵/22 May 1820.⁹⁶ Under these four lines, someone drew

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

⁹³ The same as the one already mentioned: Taghribi Birmish al-Nāṣirī al-Faqīh, see fn. 90 above. About this *samā‘*, see Bauden, *al-Maqrīzī’s collection of opuscules* 2, who cites Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Mu’min ibn Khalaf al-Dimyātī, *Kitāb fihi Faḍl al-khayl wa-mā yustahabb wa-mā yukra min al-wānihā wa-shiyāthā wa-mā ghā'a fi karāhat akl luḥūmihā wa-ibāḥatihā wa-mā warada fi sibāqihā wa-sīhāmihā wa-ṣadaqatihā*, Damascus, Maktabat al-Asad, formerly in the Ahmadiyya Library in Aleppo.

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/>

⁹⁴ The *maghribī* reader made good use of this, as attested by the small piece of paper inserted between ff. 187 and 188, where he drew magical squares. On *abjad*, see fn. 48 above.

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

⁹⁶ *Mimmā an’ama Allāh bihi ‘alā al-‘abd al-faqīr ilā rabbīhi al-mu’tarif bi-dhanbīhi al-hājj Muḥammad ibn Ḥammūda al-Ḥashā’ishī bi-l-shirā’ al-ṣāḥīḥ wa-l-thaman al-mundafī wa-qadrūhu riyālāni wa-rub’ alā yad al-ṣaghīr Ibn al-Hājj ‘Abd Allāh al-kutubī yawm 9 Sha’bān ‘ām 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 Taghibarmish. It can be assumed that it remained there for a while; the hand of one of the readers who left *marginalia* has a “ta’līqish” or “nasta’līqish” 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 *Maghribī* 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 Taghibarmish’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 Taghibarmish, 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-fīhi al-arba‘īn [sic] isman wa-manāfi‘uhā lil- ...” on the

confessing his sins, the *ḥājjī* Muḥammad ibn Ḥammūda al-Ḥashā’ishī/the herbseller, [is] th[is] valid purchase, and the price paid, its amount is two riyals and a quarter, in the hand of the poor Ibn al-Ḥājjī ‘Abd Allāh the bookseller, on 9 Sha'bān 1235/22 May 1820).

97 See fn. 5 above.

98 On *nasta’līq* and *ta’līq*, see Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts: A vademecum* respectively 166–7, 263.

99 See the examples of Tunisian Ḥammūda in al-Zirikli, *al-A‘lām* 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.

101 Opsomer-Halleux, *Trésors manuscrits* 11; Bauden, *Les Manuscrits arabes* 152.

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 peregrinations 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 Hammūda.

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 Taghibarmish was stingy.

¹⁰³ See fn. 92 above.