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Data Overload and Information Management in the Mamluk Period (1250–1517)

Abstract: Scholars of the Mamluk period were weighed down by a vast abundance of texts and had to develop strategies to cope with such data overload. In this article, a series of tools (lists, indexes, summaries, and notebooks) devised by those scholars to condense and cope with the information have been analysed from various points of view. Several examples of these tools have been topologically detailed. The external features of the manuscripts containing them have then been considered before turning to their usefulness for the people who conceived them. Even though these tools were made primarily for personal use, they proved useful to other scholars, who, in acquiring or copying them, avoided repeating the same task. As the manuscripts under scrutiny here are largely holographs, they were of some interest to bibliophiles as well.

1 Introduction

In a seminal study published more than a decade ago, Ann M. Blair tackled the issue of information management as addressed by scholars of early modern Europe wishing to produce reference books designed to help them and their readers manage the overload of data.¹ Processes such as note-taking, to aid memory and help writing, and preparing tools such as dictionaries, florilegia, commonplace books, encyclopaedias, lists and indexes, were some of the strategies developed by scholars in premodern Europe who faced the overabundance of texts which by the sixteenth century and the spread of printing increased exponentially.

The idea of *multitudo librorum* was no stranger to Islamic civilization.² In an article devoted to this question in Islam, Franz Rosenthal chose the first part of the title of his article in the *Ecclesiast* ('Of Making Many Books There Is No End')

1 Blair 2010. See also her earlier work: Blair 2003; Blair 2004.

2 As expressed by Seneca in one of his letters to Lucilius: *distingit librorum multitudo* ('the abundance of books causes distraction'), cited by Chatelain 2008, 146.

to emphasize the vertigo caused by the overabundance of texts in Islam.³ While this phenomenon could be cast unfavourably, by some scholars it was in fact regarded as a blessing to be attributed to the virtues of Islam, a blessing an Ottoman scholar, al-Ġazzī (d. 984 AH / 1576 CE), expressed in the following terms:

Our master, the imam Abū ‘Abd Allāh at-Tilimsānī al-Ābilī – May God have mercy upon him –, was questioned about the abundance of texts [produced by] this community and its engagement with writing and he answered: ‘This is one of the benefits of the prohibition of [consuming] wine that was imposed on it.’⁴

Be that as it may, scholars in Islam had to cope with the same dilemma as their peers in Europe but faced it a few centuries earlier. Due to several factors the number of works composed in the period starting from the fourth AH / tenth CE century significantly increased:⁵ the blossoming of all fields in general, the adoption of a new support far cheaper to produce (paper) from the third AH / ninth CE century,⁶ the creation and spread of colleges (*madrasa*) from the fifth AH / eleventh CE century,⁷ the progress of alphabetization,⁸ the institutionalization of charitable foundations (*waqf*) with philanthropic goals (libraries linked to various institutions, e.g. colleges, mosques, mausolea, convents for mystics, hospitals) from the third AH / ninth CE century,⁹ the Abbasid empire’s splitting into (semi-)autonomous powers with competing courts, each patronizing arts, culture, and scholars. The combination of these factors provided a fertile ground for the growth of writing and the proliferation of books. Aside from the quantity of books composed during this period, one notices an expansion of the size of the books. Compared with earlier periods, multi-volume works, some comprising thousands of pages, were no longer an exception. Manuals in which

3 Rosenthal 1995.

4 al-Ġazzī, *al-Durr*, 293: *su’ila šaiḥunā al-imām Abū ‘Abdallāh at-Tilimsānī raḥimahu Allāh al-Ābilī ‘an kaṭrat taṣānīf ḥādīhi al-umma wa-ištiḡālīhā bi-t-ta’līf. Fa-qāla: ḥādā min fawā’id taḥrīm al-ḥamr ‘alaihā. At-Tilimsānī (Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Marzūq, d. 781 AH / 1379 CE) was from Tlemcen. He was active as a diplomat and scholar composing works in various disciplines: see Hadj-Sadok 1971.*

5 Gruendler 2020.

6 Bloom 2001.

7 Makdisi 1981; Makdisi 1990.

8 Hirschler 2012.

9 Eche 1967; Hirschler 2016; Behrens-Abouseif 2018.

authors explained how books should be composed with details on their *modus operandi* began to flourish.¹⁰

To manage the ever-growing literature, both in terms of quantity and size, scholars had no choice but to develop similar strategies to those that would be applied by their European peers a few centuries later. If memory continued to play an important role here, it could not replace the process of note-taking, even though clearly both systems applied together are more efficient. The quantity and size of books led scholars to summarize and select the texts that interested them. At the same time, the need for quick access to the information led scholars to prepare tools, such as lists and indexes, to help organize the material in a more effective way. Encyclopaedias as a tool enabling a scholar to embrace the amount of knowledge required in a specific field (mainly for those willing to work for the chancery) also emerged in Egypt and Syria in the eighth AH / fourteenth CE century, a geographical area and period coinciding with the emergence of the Mamluk sultanate.¹¹

The Mamluk period covers approximately two and a half centuries of rule (1250–1517) over an area that included, broadly speaking, Egypt, Syria and the Hijaz (the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula where the holy cities of Mecca and Medina are located). Political power was characterized by a military elite made up of freed slaves drafted in very early youth from the outer borders of the Muslim world (mainly of Turkish and Circassian origin). Converted to Islam and educated as military men, they controlled the local population composed of common people and a religious elite. The religious elite contributed to the management of power by running the state in cooperation with the Mamluks to whom they were subjugated. At the same time, the Mamluks strengthened their grip on the population by fostering the arts and education through charitable foundations to which they contributed part of their wealth.¹²

On this basis, it comes as no surprise that during this period there is an increase in the variety of tools scholars could implement for dealing with data overload. Several witnesses of the influx of tools from this period have survived. The Mamluk period is an excellent case study for those interested in this phenomenon. In what follows, I propose to follow a set of issues linked to such tools. Firstly, the various categories of tools used by Mamluk period scholars to help them retain or gain easier access to information will be discussed. The external features of these tools will be introduced and just how they would be

10 Rosenthal 1947.

11 van Gelder 1997; Muhanna 2012; Van Berkel 2013.

12 For a general and up-to-date overview of the Mamluks, see Petry 2022 and Loiseau 2014.

useful to those conceiving them. The focus will then turn to the fate of the preserved manuscripts: Why were these manuscripts preserved over time? How could they be identified as belonging to a specific author if his name does not appear in the text? A study of the paratextual elements will also reveal the use made of these texts, not only during the author's lifetime but also after his death.

2 Tools for information management

In the Islamic Middle Ages, a would-be scholar would have to broaden his interests beyond his primary and secondary education very early on.¹³ Obtaining access and reading huge quantities of sources was the prerequisite for writing original works. While some canonical texts were accessible in numerous libraries or on the book market, others were more difficult to obtain. Were a copy located in a public library or known to be owned by a collector or scholar, access to it may well have been restricted. In such circumstances, it is no small wonder scholars strove to keep track of their reading. Note-taking was made in various ways according to how a scholar planned to use his notes. The best way to keep track of information was to prepare a summary in more or less detail according to its intended use. These summaries could take various forms. Indexes and lists also proved useful.

To obtain a better idea of the tools scholars used to cope with the accumulation of knowledge, I propose to look at works produced by a leading scholar of this period: Ibn Ḥaḡar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852 AH / 1449 CE). Ibn Ḥaḡar was born in Cairo to a wealthy family of merchants but was orphaned in infancy. This, however, did not prevent him from receiving a good education and becoming one of the most renowned scholars of his time and beyond. In his early years, he roamed the Mamluk realm, living in Syria and the Hijaz for some years, and on several occasions visiting Yemen. He wrote more than 270 works of various lengths.¹⁴ His intellectual output is particularly well documented as a detailed biography of him was written by one of his students, as-Saḡāwī (d. 902 AH / 1497

¹³ Primary education consisted mainly in learning to read and write while memorizing the whole Qur'an, a goal the pupil usually attained between the age of 8 and 12. Secondary education followed which would be completed by examination. See Bauden 2020, 150–151 and the references quoted there.

¹⁴ Jaques 2009.

CE), which provided valuable information on his methodology.¹⁵ According to as-Saḥāwī, Ibn Ḥaḡar was renowned for his ability to read and write quickly.¹⁶

As-Saḥāwī did his best to enumerate his master's production as a scholar, detailing most of the works he authored. From the list compiled, I have selected some titles that point to works that correspond to tools that helped Ibn Ḥaḡar manage the information he needed to become a scholar and a prolific author:¹⁷

1. *at-Taḍkira al-adabiya* ('The *aide-mémoire* covering literature')¹⁸
2. *at-Taḍkira al-ḥadiṯiya* ('The *aide-mémoire* covering the science of prophetic traditions')¹⁹
3. *Muntaqan min Tārīḥ Ibn 'Asākir* ('Selections from Ibn 'Asākir's *History*')²⁰
4. *Muntaqan min Tārīḥ Ibn Ḥaldūn* ('Selections from Ibn Ḥaldūn's *History*')²¹
5. *Muntaqan min Mu'ḡam as-Subkī* ('Selections from as-Subkī's *Dictionary of masters*')²²
6. *Muntaḥab Riḥlat Ibn Rušaid* ('Excerpts from Ibn Rušaid's travel relation')²³
7. *Talḥiṣ Maḡāzī al-Wāqidi* ('Epitome of al-Wāqidi's military expeditions')²⁴

15 as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ġawāhir*.

16 as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ġawāhir*, vol. 1, 161–165, 167–169.

17 The list of Ibn Ḥaḡar's works (completed or not) was prepared by as-Saḥāwī. Cf. as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ġawāhir*, vol. 2, 659–696.

18 40 vols. Cf. as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ġawāhir*, vol. 2, 694–695.

19 10 vols. Cf. as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ġawāhir*, vol. 2, 680–681 (no. 178).

20 as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ġawāhir*, vol. 2, 690 (no. 219). The work in question, *Tārīḥ madīnat Dimašq*, a multi-volume biographical dictionary of Damascenes, was composed by Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571 AH / 1176 CE). The work is available in print (80 vols), cf. Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīḥ madīnat Dimašq*.

21 as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ġawāhir*, vol. 2, 690 (no. 220). This work, titled *al-'Ibar wa-dīwān al-mubtada' wa-l-ḥabar fi tāriḥ al-'Arab wa-l-Barbar wa-man 'āṣarahum min ḍawī aš-ša'n al-akbar*, consists of a history of Islam preceded by a long methodological introduction and an account of the Arabs and other peoples in Antiquity. Its author is Ibn Ḥaldūn (d. 808 AH / 1406 CE). The work is available in print (14 vols), cf. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*.

22 as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ġawāhir*, vol. 2, 668 (no. 67). A dictionary of authorities with whom the author, as-Subkī (d. 771 AH / 1370 CE), studied. The work is available in print (1 vol.), cf. as-Subkī, *Mu'ḡam*.

23 as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ġawāhir*, vol. 2, 690 (no. 221). The work, entitled *Mil' al-'aiba bi-mā ḡumi'a bi-ṭūl al-ḡaiba fi al-wiḡha al-waḡiḥa ilā al-ḥaramain Makka wa-Ṭaiba*, is a multi-volume travel diary where the author, Ibn Rušaid (d. 721 AH / 1321 CE), lists the places he visited and persons he met during the journey he made from Almeria to Mecca for the pilgrimage. The work has been partly preserved and has been published (4 vols.), cf. Ibn Rušaid, *Mil' al-'aiba*.

24 as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ġawāhir*, vol. 2, 690 (no. 218). Al-Wāqidi's (d. 207/823) *al-Maḡāzī* is a biography of the Prophet focusing on his military achievements after his installation in Medina. It is available in print (3 vols): al-Wāqidi, *al-Maḡāzī*.

8. *Muḥtaṣar al-Bidāya wa-n-nihāya li-Ibn Kaṭīr* ('Summary of Ibn Kaṭīr's *al-Bidāya wa-n-nihāya*')²⁵
9. *Taḡrīd al-Wāfi liṣ-Ṣafadī* ('Outline of aṣ-Ṣafadī's *al-Wāfi*')²⁶
10. *Tartīb Ṭabaqāt al-ḥuffāz liḍ-Ḍahabī* ('Index of aḍ-Ḍahabī's *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥuffāz*').²⁷

The main characteristic of these titles is that the majority of them contains the title of a work composed by another author. The title in question is preceded by a word that refers to the category to which the tool belongs:

1. *Taḍkira*: a text meant to sustain memory (*ḍakara* means 'to remember')
2. *Muntaqan*: a text that is the result of a selection (*intaqā* means 'to purify, clean')
3. *Muntaḥab*: a text that consists of a choice (*intaḥaba* means 'to pick, choose')
4. *Talḥīṣ*: a text that epitomizes (*ḥallaṣa* means 'to explain, expound')
5. *Muḥtaṣar*: a text that shortens, abridges (*iḥtaṣara* means 'to curtail the words of a text preserving its meaning')
6. *Taḡrīd*: a text that abstracts (*ḡarrada* means 'to peel, strip, bare')
7. *Tartīb*: a text that arranges in a regular and given sequence (*rattaba* means 'to set in order').

Among these words, five (2–6) refer to the idea of choice made during the process of note-taking. They correspond to what would be termed an epitome, a resumé, or a summary, with the last (6) actually indicating an abstract but in the sense that what is left of the text is what has been peeled off (i.e. very basic information). One category (7) is linked to the previous with a more specific meaning: the idea of organization, i.e. ordering the original text in a different manner. Finally, one category (1) clearly refers to the idea of sustaining the memory without indicating the type of text (summary or full text, own text or by someone else).

²⁵ as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ġawāhīr*, vol. 2, 690 (no. 217). *Al-Bidāya wa-n-nihāya*, a multi-volume chronicle of Islam from the Prophet up to the author's lifetime, was composed by Ibn Kaṭīr (d. 774 AH / 1373 CE). The work is available in print (21 vols), cf. Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāya*.

²⁶ as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ġawāhīr*, vol. 2, 689 (no. 213). *Al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt* is a multi-volume dictionary of famous people from the beginning of Islam up to the author's lifetime. It was composed by aṣ-Ṣafadī (d. 764 AH / 1363 CE) and is available in print (30 vols), cf. aṣ-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi*.

²⁷ as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ġawāhīr*, vol. 2, 684 (no. 200). The *Taḍkirat al-ḥuffāz* by aḍ-Ḍahabī (d. 748 AH / 1348 CE) is a biographical dictionary of traditionists. The work is published (4 vols), cf. aḍ-Ḍahabī, *Taḍkirat*.

Despite its usefulness for our purpose, this list calls for two remarks. Firstly, some summaries were meant for publication (in the etymological sense of the verb, i.e. ‘to make public’)²⁸ from their inception and not for a scholar’s exclusive use. With the development of colleges, there was a great proliferation of several categories of texts aimed at providing students with tools enabling them to access sources essential for their education. Aside from summaries – commentaries, glosses and super glosses became available,²⁹ the didactic function of which is indisputable. For obvious reasons, these texts are not under consideration here. In the list provided above, none of the summaries was prepared by Ibn Ḥaḡar in the notion of being produced for someone else: each of these texts is the result of his necessity to create personal tools to obtain and retain information from these texts. Naturally, it does not exclude the fact that they could later on prove useful to other readers.

Secondly, the terms used to describe these tools, as exemplified in the above-mentioned list regarding Ibn Ḥaḡar, do not necessarily reflect the scholar’s terminology. When these tools were preserved in the scholar’s handwriting, at times the term chosen by the scholar appears different to that mentioned by one of his pupils in describing the same text. For instance, as-Saḡāwī states that Ibn Ḥaḡar wrote a *Muntaqan min Tārīḡ Ibn ‘Asākir* (see under (3) in the aforementioned list). However, the copy of the text, in Ibn Ḥaḡar’s handwriting,³⁰ shows that Ibn Ḥaḡar’s description of the summary is *ta‘liq* (the result of jotting down, taking notes) not *muntaqan*. This example clearly demonstrates how several such terms were interchangeable and did not necessarily refer to a specific kind of tool.³¹ It is thus hazardous to attempt systematically distinguishing some of these terms.

To gain a better understanding of how a scholar prepared himself to become a specialist in a given field, I will now consider another case from a different perspective, i.e. no longer based on what we are told this scholar’s output was and instead taking into account those of the scholar’s manuscripts that have survived to this day. Al-Maqrīzī (d. 845 AH / 1442 CE) was born in Cairo as was Ibn Ḥaḡar, with whom he struck an acquaintance and with whom he became a colleague and a friend. Al-Maqrīzī was educated first as a traditionist (a specialist of the Prophet’s traditions) and worked in various capacities for the

²⁸ This is the meaning that will be referred to in this article.

²⁹ Arazi and Ben Shammai 1993; Gilliot 1997; Rosenthal 1971.

³⁰ Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriya, 522 Tārīḡ.

³¹ A similar assessment is made by Jürgen Paul and David Durand-Guédy in their contributions to this volume regarding various terms widely used in the Persianate world.

government (chancery, legal positions) until his early fifties when he decided to retire from public life and devote his time to writing the history of Egypt, an activity curtailed by his death at the age of 78.³² Of his work as a scholar, some twenty-four holograph volumes, totalling 5,000 leaves, have reached us, which is rather uncommon.³³ Most of these volumes correspond to fair copies and drafts of his own works, but some cases reflect his note-taking activities.³⁴ Of these, three volumes can be identified as summaries of single works. Regarding the first two summaries, the texts deal with *ḥadīṭ* (the Prophet's traditions) and the colophons indicate that al-Maqrīzī produced them in his early career, when he was already working for the government but was still specializing to be a religious scholar. The third summary, based on a text on history, was made after he had decided to retire from public life and devote himself entirely to writing history. Of the other volumes in holograph form, another category emerges with features not yet considered: three volumes can be identified as notebooks, i.e. single volumes made of selections from other sources, various notes, and drafts of parts of his own texts. It has been established that the notes of the summaries – be they independent or inserted in his notebooks – were taken when al-Maqrīzī was reading from the source. In other words, it is not a fair copy of selections made at a different time, but the immediate result of the process of note-taking. He was thus progressively reading a source, sentence by sentence, and successively jotting down a verbatim or paraphrased version of the passage.³⁵

Ibn Ḥağar and al-Maqrīzī's examples provide us with tangible evidence of the way scholars in the Mamluk period tried to manage the flow of information they were required to know should they wish to establish themselves as scholars of their community. They took great pains in obtaining access to books, buying or borrowing them and, should a text be deemed indispensable for their work or knowledge, they made a summary of it or limited themselves to jotting down the most useful or pertinent passages. Unsurprisingly, such scholars are often described as compulsive copyists.³⁶ Some would leave a consultation note in the book they had implemented to their own ends. As will be shown below, such practice indicated just how they benefitted from the text.

³² Bauden 2014; Rabbat 2003.

³³ Bauden 2020.

³⁴ To be compared with what two contributors to this volume report about later authors, respectively Karimi Zanjani-Asl about Mullā Ṣadrā and Nazlı Vatanserver about Es'ad Efendi.

³⁵ Bauden 2008.

³⁶ Aş-Saḥāwī says of al-Maqrīzī that he wrote copiously in his own hand (*ḥaṭṭa bi-ḥaṭṭihi al-kaṭīr*): as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ḍau'*, vol. 2, 22.

2.1 Listing and indexing

In the biography devoted to Nağm ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd (d. 885 AH / 1480 CE), as-Saḥāwī warmly praised a Meccan traditionist and historian with whom he was well acquainted, for one distinct scholarly aspect:

He arranged (*rattaba*) in alphabetical order the names of the biographees [appearing in] *al-Ḥilya*,³⁷ *al-Madārik*,³⁸ *Tārīḥ al-aṭibbā'*,³⁹ *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila* by Ibn Rağab,⁴⁰ [*Ṭabaqāt al-ḥuffāz* by ad-Dahabī and its supplements,⁴¹ indicating in which section and under which generation a given name is to be found to make it easy to find it and check. This is the most important and useful thing he did.⁴²

Scholars in the Mamluk period also prepared outlines, sometimes identifiable as lists and/or indexes, to quickly access a source difficult to handle due to its size, particularly when the order the author followed was chronological and not exclusively alphabetical.⁴³ These lists and indexes also helped them to know if a given person or fact had been dealt with in a given source as indicated by the aforementioned passage.

In the above list of tools prepared by Ibn Ḥağar, such outlines are referred to by the words *tağrīd* ('to remove all the superfluous data from a text to keep the basic information') and *tartīb* ('to organize, arrange in a given order'). One example quoted, the *Tağrīd al-Wāfi liṣ-Ṣafadī*, has been preserved, though not in the hand of its author but by one of his students, [redacted] Ibn Fahd (d. [redacted]).

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³⁷ *Ḥilyat al-auliya' wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiya'*, a multi-volume biographical work including individuals involved in the development of mysticism, by Abū Nu'aim al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430 AH / 1038 CE).

³⁸ *Tartīb al-madārik wa-taqrīb al-masālik ilā ma'rifat a'lām maḏhab Mālik*, a biographical dictionary of Mālikī scholars composed by al-Qāḍī 'Iyād (d. 544 AH / 1149 CE).

³⁹ *'Uyūn al-anbā' fi ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, a biographical dictionary of physicians from Antiquity to the author's lifetime composed by Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'a (d. 668 AH / 1270 CE).

⁴⁰ *Aḍ-Ḍail 'alā ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, a biographical dictionary of Ḥanbalī scholars conceived by its author, Ibn Rağab (d. 795 AH / 1393 CE), as a supplement to a previous work.

⁴¹ *Taḍkirat al-ḥuffāz*, already mentioned above, and its supplements composed by the same author (see above, n. 27).

⁴² as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ḍau'*, vol. 6, 129 (*wa-rattaba asmā' tarāğim al-Ḥilya wa-l-Madārik wa-Tārīḥ al-aṭibbā' wa-Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila li-Ibn Rağab wa-l-Ḥuffāz liḍ-Dahabī wa-d-ḍuyūl 'alaihi 'alā ḥurūf al-mu'ğam ḥaitu yu'aiyinu maḥall ḍāka al-ism min al-ağzā' wa-ṭ-ṭabaqa li-yusahhala kaṣfuhu wa-murāğā'atuhu*).

⁴³ The organization of biographical works according to generations (*ṭabaqa*) prevailed for a long time. See Hafsi 1976; Hafsi 1977a; Hafsi 1977b.

AH /  CE).⁴⁴ In the introduction Ibn Ḥağar explains the function of this list precisely:

I started to abstract (*tağrīd*) the book *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt* by the Sheikh Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn aṣ-Ṣafadī, except that I limited myself to write down from the biography of a person his name, his genealogy, the name under which he was known, his birthdate, if I found it, and his date of death.⁴⁵

The source (*al-Wāfi*) is a biographical dictionary containing some 15,000 entries composed by aṣ-Ṣafadī and covering 30 volumes in print. In his *tağrīd*, Ibn Ḥağar's aim was to list the name of each biographee to which he also added basic data (birthdate, if known, and date of death). In this listing, each entry generally fills one line of text, with the first name (*ism*) in red ink and the date of death indicated twice: in full letters at the end of the entry and in figures above the name in red: for example, on the first line of fol. 10a we read 'Muḥammad 700' (see Fig. 1). The following order adhered to the arrangement aṣ-Ṣafadī gave (the alphabetical order starting, however, with the Muḥammads, to show respect to the Prophet). Ibn Ḥağar worked systematically, indicating where a volume of *al-Wāfi* ended and a new one began, which helped him, when necessary, to localize the biography in the correct volume. At the end of the section corresponding to the first volume of *al-Wāfi*, he even specifies the date he completed the abstract: during the month of Ṣafar 795 AH / December 1392 – January 1393 CE (see Fig. 2), i.e. when he was 20 years old.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Istanbul, Millet Genel Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah 1413.

⁴⁵ Ibn Ḥağar al-'Asqalānī, *Tağrīd*, vol. 1, 46.

⁴⁶ Istanbul, Millet Genel Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah 1413, fol. 10b: *Intahā hunā al-ğuz' al-auwal min al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt fi at-tārīḫ liš-šaiḫ Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn aṣ-Ṣafadī ġarradahū al-faqr ilā Allāh Abū al-Faql al-'Asqalānī fi ṣafar sanat ḥams wa-tis'īn wa-sab'imi'a*.



Fig. 1: Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Taḡrīd of aṣ-Ṣafadī's al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, copied by XXXXad-Dīn Ibn Fahd; Istanbul, Millet Genel Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah 1413, fol. 10a.

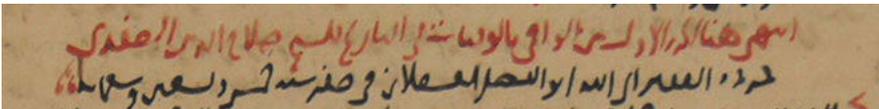


Fig. 2: Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Taḡrīd of aṣ-Ṣafadī's al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, copied by XXXXad-Dīn Ibn Fahd; Istanbul, Millet Genel Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah 1413, fol. 10b (detail).

At the end of the following section (fol. 22b), he also clearly states how his intent is to focus on those biographees not mentioned in al-Mizzi's (d. 742 AH / 1341 CE) *Tahḍīb al-kamāl*. The reason for such limitation being that aḍ-Ḍahabī's (d. 748 AH / 1348 CE) *al-Kāšif* is already a *taḡrīd* of the latter.⁴⁷ Ibn Ḥaḡar was clearly trying to save time by not repeating work already done by other scholars.⁴⁸ Thanks to his list (*taḡrīd*) of aṣ-Ṣafadī's *al-Wāfi*, Ibn Ḥaḡar could quickly discover whether or not a person's biography was contained in the source and refer to it in when necessary. The index also provided him with basic information on each biographee to check against his own works (e.g. to find the death date of a given person or to verify his full name).

The Meccan scholar Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd and father of the aforementioned Naḡm ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd was a prolific author who built a rich library which he left as an endowment upon his death, and he produced similar tools for his own use.⁴⁹ One such example is preserved in a manuscript now at al-Azhar, though not mentioned in the sources listing his works.⁵⁰ It has been wrongly identified as a summary (*muḥtaṣar*) of an unknown text.⁵¹ It actually relates to a *taḡrīd* of Ibn al-Aṭīr's (d. 630 AH / 1233 CE) *Usd al-ḡāba*, a biographical dictionary of 7,714 men and women who met the Prophet and transmitted traditions from him.⁵² The manuscript is dated precisely (17 Raḡab 817 AH / 2 October 1414 CE) showing that Taqī ad-Dīn prepared this outline when he was 29 years old. Due to it being a holograph, one is able to get a glimpse of the way Taqī ad-Dīn arranged the

⁴⁷ *Al-Kāšif fi ma'rifat man lahu riwāya fi al-kutub as-sitta*, an abridgement of al-Mizzi's *Tahḍīb al-kamāl*, a biographical dictionary of transmitters. Ibn Ḥaḡar al-'Asqalānī, *Taḡrīd*, vol. 1, 285 (aqūl: *iḥtaṣartu min al-aṣl ḡālib mā kāna fi Tahḍīb al-kamāl min asmā' ar-riḡāl fa-inna al-Kāšif liḍ-Ḍahabī tawallā taḡrīd ḍālika*).

⁴⁸ In fact, Ibn Ḥaḡar was not able to proceed much further than a few volumes due to some impediment that he does not detail. He thus asked one of his colleagues to complete the abstract applying the rule that he had set. Ibn Ḥaḡar al-'Asqalānī, *Taḡrīd*, vol. 1, 46 (*wa-laḡad 'araḡa lī ba'da an katabtu min hādā al-ḡuz' qit'a 'āriḡ fa-sa'altu ṣāḡhibanā Badr ad-Dīn al-Baštakī fi takmilat taḡrīdihi 'alā aṣ-ṣarḡ al-laḡi qaddamtuhu fa-fa'ala*).

⁴⁹ On Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd and his library, see as-Saḡāwī, *al-Ḍau'*, vol. 9, 281–283 (no. 727).

⁵⁰ Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Azharīya, MS 10667.

⁵¹ The manuscript is acephalous (it probably lacks two leaves) and the introduction of the text where Ibn Fahd indicated the nature of his work is missing. A later owner, the famous scholar az-Zabidī (d. 1205 AH / 1790 CE), indicated on the opening page the following description: *Kitāb muḥtaṣar asmā' aṣ-ṣaḡāba liṣ-ṣaiḡ Taqī ad-Dīn Muḡammad ibn Muḡammad ibn Fahd wa-bi-ḡaṭṭihi*. The entry for this manuscript found in the catalogue was based on this short description. See *Fihris maḡṭūṭat maktabat al-Azhar aṣ-ṣarīf* 2016, vol. 18, 610 (no. 37128).

⁵² Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Usd al-ḡāba*. A comparison of the contents of the manuscript with Ibn al-Aṭīr's text confirms that both are similar.

material (see Fig. 3): the text follows the structure of the source (alphabetical order according to the name (*ism*) within several categories of transmitters), each entry largely limited to one line with the given name written in red ink. Such a presentation served two purposes: one to help Taqī ad-Dīn to easily find the basic information and the other in case it was necessary to consult the source for more details about a transmitter.

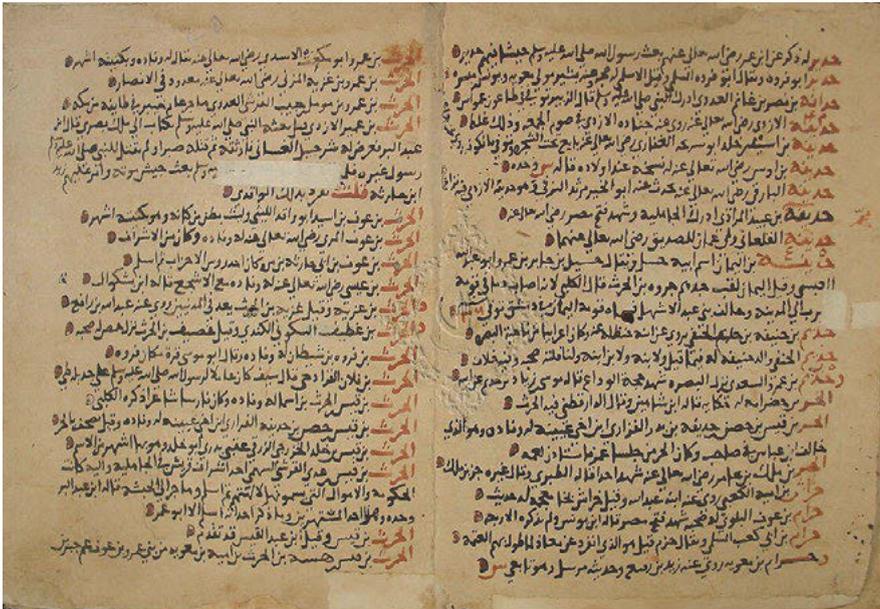


Fig. 3: Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd, *Taḡrīd of Ibn al-ʿAṭīr's Usd al-ḡāba*; Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Azharīya, MS 10667, fols 24b–25a.

If the outlines described as *taḡrīd* in the abovementioned examples remained faithful to the organization of data in the original source (resembling, to a degree, a table of contents) it seems scholars also resorted to another type of tool to gain easier access to the data available in multi-volume works. This tool is usually defined in Arabic as *tartīb*, a word referring to how the data is arranged in a particular order. Of course, not all the data is indicated here, only basic information as in the *taḡrīd*. The *tartīb* could in some cases resemble what is usually defined as an index. As detailed earlier, Naḡm ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd, was commended by as-Sahāwī for his work preparing alphabetical listings (*tartīb*) of various texts. Despite as-Sahāwī’s appraisal of their usefulness, none appear to

have survived. To gain some idea of how this category of text functioned, one example remains from the sixth AH / twelfth CE century. The Damascene traditionist Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 571 AH / 1176 CE) compiled a list of all the companions who transmitted traditions from the Prophet mentioned in Ibn Ḥanbal’s (d. 241 AH / 855 CE) *al-Musnad*, a canonical collection of almost 30,000 *ḥadīṭs*. The author’s son organized the *musnad* according to several criteria related to the virtues and qualities of the companions. Ibn ‘Asākir titled his work *Tartīb asmā’ aṣ-ṣaḥāba al-laḏīna aḥraḡa ḥadīṭahum Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal fī al-Musnad* (‘Index of the names of the [Prophet’s] Companions whose traditions Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal selected in his *al-Musnad*’). In the introduction, he explains how the consultation of *al-Musnad* has been complicated by its internal organization, hence his decision to prepare an alphabetical list of all the companions mentioned therein with clear indication of the different parts where a given name appears.⁵³ Ibn ‘Asākir took the opportunity to add some clarifications, additions, and corrections regarding the names or the place where a person settled, thus transforming his *tartīb* into a useful tool. Interestingly, Ibn ‘Asākir characterizes his work in the introduction as an index (*fahrasa*).⁵⁴

Tools such as the *taḡrīd* and the *tartīb* proved indispensable to the scholar needing to quickly navigate through voluminous texts. This is a clear indication that the scholar who prepared them had direct access to the original text, and therefore could afford an extensive library and owned a copy of the text that was the subject of the outline or the index. Either that or he had easy access to a copy for consultation whenever he wished. In other instances, a book may have been of such rarity that its owner would keep it jealously guarded and scholars had no choice but to request its borrowing. Should the book-owner comply with the request and the book proved to be of great use for the scholar, the latter may feel compelled to copying either the entire text – always a costly and time-consuming enterprise – or selections considered essential for their work.

2.2 Summarizing and excerpting

When describing Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd’s output as a scholar, as-Saḥāwī emphasized how ‘he copied a lot in his own hand, created notebooks, summarized and

⁵³ Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tartīb*, 33.

⁵⁴ Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tartīb*, 33.

excerpted [texts]'.⁵⁵ This describes the very essence of what a scholar had to do to broaden his knowledge. First he had to make copies of the whole text of sources as far as was possible. This he expresses in Arabic as *kataba bi-ḥaṭṭihi al-kaṭīr*. Here, *kataba* does not mean 'to write', i.e. 'to compose', but 'to copy'.⁵⁶ An additional example found under as-Saḥāwī's pen regarding another scholar who did not author works confirms this interpretation: *kataba bi-ḥaṭṭihi al-kaṭīr bi-ḥaiṭu mu'zam kutubihī bi-ḥaṭṭihi* ('he copied a lot in his own hand to such an extent that most of his books are in his hand').⁵⁷ When copying the entire source was impossible, the scholar had to select the passages he thought most useful, the selection process as-Saḥāwī expressed by two verbs (*iḥṭaṣara* and *intaqā*) has already been encountered at the beginning of this article. In some cases, the result of this process could be gathered (*ḡama'a*, 'to collect') by the scholar in notebooks (*maḡāmi'*, pl. of *maḡmū'*, 'collection of notes') as Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd apparently did.

At times scholars indicated how they benefitted from the manuscript they accessed. Some of the most prolific scholars of this era, such as aṣ-Ṣafadī (d. 764 AH / 1363 CE), Ibn Duqmāq (d. 809 AH / 1407 CE), al-Maqrīzī, Naḡm ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd, and as-Saḥāwī have left such notes. These notes provide us with primary information on the nature of the scholar's interaction with the text (usually not found anywhere else) as evidenced by the samples in Table 1.

55 as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ḍau'*, vol. 9, 282 (*kataba bi-ḥaṭṭihi al-kaṭīr wa-ḡama'a al-maḡāmi' wa-iḥṭaṣara wa-intaqā*).

56 See also Florian Sobieroj's contribution in this volume.

57 as-Saḥāwī, *al-Ḍau'*, vol. 6, 112 (no. 353).

Table 1: Example of consultation notes

al-Şafadī's consultation note in Yāqūt al-Rūmī's *Mu'ğam al-buldān* (see Fig. 4):

Ḥalīl ibn Aibak aṣ-Şafadī read it and the one that precedes it making excerpts (*muntaqīyan*) from it praising God and asking Him to bless and grant salvation to His prophet.

طالعه وما قبله منتقيا / خليل بن أيبك الصفدي حامدا ومصليا.

Ibn Duqmāq's consultation note in Şafadī's holograph copy of *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt* (see Fig. 5):

Ibrāhīm ibn Duqmāq – May God forgive him – read it.

طالعه إبراهيم بن دقماق عفا الله عنه
طالعه إبراهيم بن دقماق / ثانيا واستفاد منه.

Ibrāhīm ibn Duqmāq read it a second time and took notes (*istafāda*) from it.

al-Maqrīzī's consultation note in Ibn Waḥṣīya's *al-Filāḥa al-nabaṭīya* (see Fig. 6):

Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī – May God be kind to him – finished to read it and to made excerpts (*intiqa*) of its useful notes (*fawā'id*) during the month of Rabī' II 806 [October–November 1403 CE] invoking God to provide its owner a protracted life and a prolonged fame.

أنهاه مطالعة وانتقاء من / فوائده داعيا لمالكة بالبقاء / والعز المديد أحمد بن علي / المقرئ لطف الله به في شهر ربيع / الآخر سنة ست وثمان مائة.

al-Maqrīzī's consultation note in Ibn Faḡl Allāh al-'Umarī's *Masālik al-abṣār* (see Fig. 7):

Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī made excerpts (*intaqa*) from it in 831 [1427–1428 CE] invoking God in favour of its lender.

انتقاه داعيا لمعيره / أحمد بن علي المقرئ / سنة ٨٣١.

Nağm

al-Dīn Ibn Fahd's consultation note in al-Maqrīzī's *Durar al-'uqūd al-farīda* (see Fig. 8):

Praise be to God. The servant Muḥammad – called 'Umar – ibn Muḥammad ibn Fahd al-Hāšimī al-Makkī read it in it [Mecca] in 839 [1435–1436 CE] from the beginning to the end taking notes (*mustafīdan*) from it and asking God to provide its author a protracted life and a lasting progress.

الحمد لله / طالعه من أوله إلى آخره مستفيدا منه / داعيا لمؤلفه بالبقاء ودوام الارتقاء العبد / محمد المدعو عمر بن محمد بن فهد الهاشمي المكي بها سنة ٨٣٩.

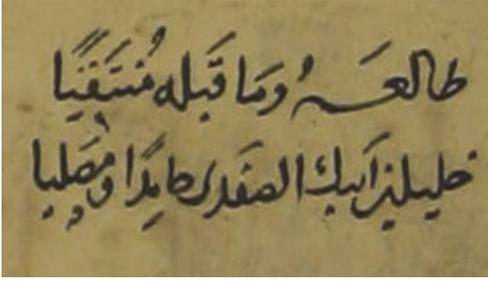


Fig. 4: aṣ-Ṣafadī's consultation note in *Yāqūt al-Rūmī's Muḡam al-buldān* (vol. 2); Istanbul, Köprülü Kütüphanesi, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa 1161, fol. 1a (detail).

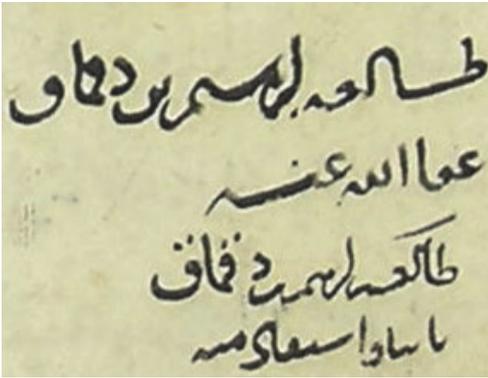


Fig. 5: Ibn Duqmāq's consultation note in aṣ-Ṣafadī's holograph copy of *al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt* (vol. 1); Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Süleymaniye 841, fol. 193b (detail).

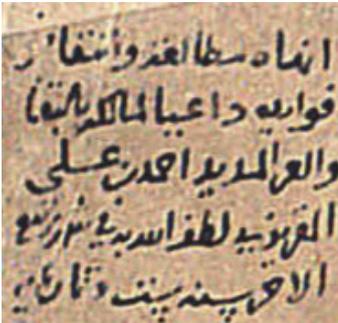


Fig. 6: al-Maqrīzī's consultation note in Ibn Waḡṣīya's *al-Filāḡa an-nabaṭīya* (vol. 1); Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Fatih 3612, fol. 1a (detail).

Al-Maqrīzī seems to have been quite systematic in writing such consultation notes on each manuscript given that thirty-nine of them, corresponding to sixteen works, have been identified so far.⁵⁸ To describe how he took advantage of a work, al-Maqrīzī resorted to two verbs: *intaqā* and *istafāda*. While the first verb refers to the action of excerpting, the second verb means ‘to take advantage of’, the *fā’ida* – deriving from the same root – indicating a useful note. The result of the note-taking process may be expressed differently (*muntaqan*, *muhtaṣar*, *talḥiṣ*, *ta’liq*, *muḥtār*, etc.), the term used varying with no clear definition in mind as if all terms used were synonyms or could be used indiscriminately. This can be observed in a collection of three summaries prepared by Ibn Ḥaḡar preserved in his handwriting.⁵⁹ The volume opens with a summary of Ibn Kaṭīr’s *al-Bidāya wa-n-nihāya* (fols 1a–77b), proceeds with excerpts from al-Wāqidi’s *al-Maḡāzī* (fols 78a–149b), and ends with selections from Ibn ‘Asākir’s *Tārīḡ Madīnat Dimašq* (fols 150a–194b). The terms Ibn Ḥaḡar used to designate these notes differ completely to those his student, as-Saḡāwī, chose to describe them. For the first, Ibn Ḥaḡar calls it *Mā warada min ar-riwāya fī al-Bidāya wa-n-nihāya li-Ibn Kaṭīr* (‘Reports that appear in Ibn Kaṭīr’s *al-Bidāya wa-n-nihāya*’) while as-Saḡāwī referred to it as *Muḥtaṣar al-Bidāya wa-n-nihāya li-Ibn Kaṭīr* (‘Summary of Ibn Kaṭīr’s *al-Bidāya wa-n-nihāya*’). In the introduction to the latter, Ibn Ḥaḡar explains that he limited his selections to those reports that concern the prophets who preceded Muḡammad but left aside the remainder of the text because this is already available in plenty of other histories. The second text, with no title page, starts immediately after three lines, the first two corresponding to the *basmala* and the *ḡamdala* (religious formulae traditionally starting any text, respectively ‘In the name of God the Compassionate the Merciful’ and ‘Praise be to God’), with a description of what the text that follows consists: *Ta’liq min Maḡāzī al-Wāqidi* (‘Notes from al-Wāqidi’s *al-Maḡāzī*’).⁶⁰ In as-Saḡāwī’s rendition, this became *Talḥiṣ Maḡāzī al-Wāqidi* (‘Epitome of al-Wāqidi’s *al-Maḡāzī*’). Finally, the third text has a title page in which Ibn Ḥaḡar indicates that the text following is a *Ta’liq min Tārīḡ Ibn ‘Asākir* (‘Notes from Ibn ‘Asākir’s *Tārīḡ*’). For as-Saḡāwī, it was a *Muntaqan min Tārīḡ Ibn ‘Asākir* (‘Excerpts from Ibn ‘Asākir’s *Tārīḡ*’).

When note-taking of a particular text ended, the scholar sometimes concluded his notes with a colophon mentioning his name, the date when he com-

⁵⁸ Bauden 2022.

⁵⁹ Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriya, 522 Tārīḡ. See *Fihris al-kutub al-‘arabiya al-mauḡūda bi-d-Dār* 1924, vol. 5, 143, 322.

⁶⁰ The text was recently published, cf. Ibn Ḥaḡar al-‘Asqālānī, *al-Muntaqā*.

pleted the work and occasionally the place where it had been carried out. These indications sometimes mirror those mentioned by scholars in their consultation notes. After al-Maqrīzī read Ibn ‘Adī’s (d. 360 AH / 971 CE or 365 AH / 976 CE) *al-Kāmil fī aḍ-ḍu‘afā’*, a multi-volume biographical dictionary of transmitters of the Prophet’s traditions considered to be of weak authority, in each of the volumes he read a consultation note was added stating he had taken notes from it: *istafāda minhu dā‘iyan li-mālikihī Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī laṭāfa Allāh bi-hi* (‘Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī – May God be kind to him – took notes from it invoking God for its owner’). The result of his note-taking was a summary where he disclosed the date of completion: the first day of the year 795 AH / 17 November 1392 CE.⁶¹ This colophon tells precisely when he consulted Ibn ‘Adī’s text and also the date he prepared his summary. Upon studying some of his surviving summaries and his handwriting, it is clear he took notes while reading from his source. As a result, the copies of these summaries are not the preparation of a draft followed by a fair copy, but the result of an instantaneous process.⁶²

Al-Maqrīzī’s summary of Ibn ‘Adī’s *al-Kāmil* fills a whole volume. Obviously, the length of the summaries depended on two factors: the length of the text to be summarized and the degree of interest the scholar had in the text itself. A scholar may make a copy of the entire text if deemed sufficiently significant to his education or work. Some summaries would fill only a few quires whereby the scholar could gather several summaries in one volume as was the case with Ibn Ḥaḡar’s above-mentioned summaries of three sources. Elsewhere, scholars had recourse to notebooks as witnessed by Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd’s tools detailed by as-Saḡhāwī: ‘he created notebooks’ (*ḡama‘a maḡāmi‘*, literally ‘he gathered [notes] in miscellanies’⁶³).

2.3 Note-taking

To date, notebooks have received little attention from modern scholars.⁶⁴ This may be down to the fact that notebooks are usually anonymous largely because the author rarely writes down his name in the volume. One notorious example

⁶¹ Bauden 2022, 230.

⁶² Bauden 2008, 60–67.

⁶³ Note that *maḡmū‘* is a generic word usually translated as compilation, miscellany, collection, etc.

⁶⁴ See Friedrich and Schwarke 2016.

of a thorough study of a Mamluk scholar's notebook is that of al-Maqrīzī.⁶⁵ The volume I identified in the collection of the University of Liège is entirely in his handwriting, enabling me to recognize al-Maqrīzī as the author of the notebook. Comprising several short summaries and excerpts of various sources al-Maqrīzī put to good use, the manuscript also contains drafts of personal texts he inserted in his books and various notes regarding his contemporaries. Even though some summaries begin with brief introductions explaining the goal pursued by the compiler, al-Maqrīzī does not write his name anywhere, which can be taken as evidence the volume was intended for his own personal needs. On the rare occasion al-Maqrīzī made reference to his notebooks, he dubbed them his miscellanies (*mağāmī*),⁶⁶ the same term as-Saḥāwī used to designate Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd's notebooks.

Though Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd's notebooks have not yet been discovered, a volume of his grandson's notebook, Muḥyī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd (d. 885 AH / 1481 CE; he died the same year as his father, Nağm ad-Dīn), has been preserved.⁶⁷ Somewhat thin (97 fols), this volume opens with selections (*muntaḥab*) (fols 1a–34b) of ad-Dīnawarī's (d. 310 AH / 922 CE) *al-Muğālasa*. Ibn Fahd explains how he decided to omit the chains of transmitters – mentioned in full at the beginning of each account in the original work – for the sake of clarity. He also says his selections do not follow the original order of *al-Muğālasa* (see Fig. 9).⁶⁸ These selections are followed by excerpts from Ibn Ḥağar's *tağrīd* of aṣ-Ṣafadī's *al-Wāfi* (fols 35a–38a) (see Fig. 10).

⁶⁵ On this notebook, see Bauden 2003; Bauden 2006. For what the notebook reveals about al-Maqrīzī's working method, see Bauden 2008; Bauden 2009a; Bauden 2010.

⁶⁶ Bauden 2008, 104–107.

⁶⁷ Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Arabic 3857. See Arberry and Lyons 1955, vol. 4, 38. On Muḥyī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd, see al-Hila 1994, 160 (no. 63) who was not aware of the notebook's existence.

⁶⁸ Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Arabic 3857, fol. 1a (*wa-hāḍiḥi al-aḥbār muttaṣila bi-s-sanad ḡamī'uhā ḥaḍaftuhu taḥfifan wa-hiya 'alā ḡair tartīb aṣlihi*).

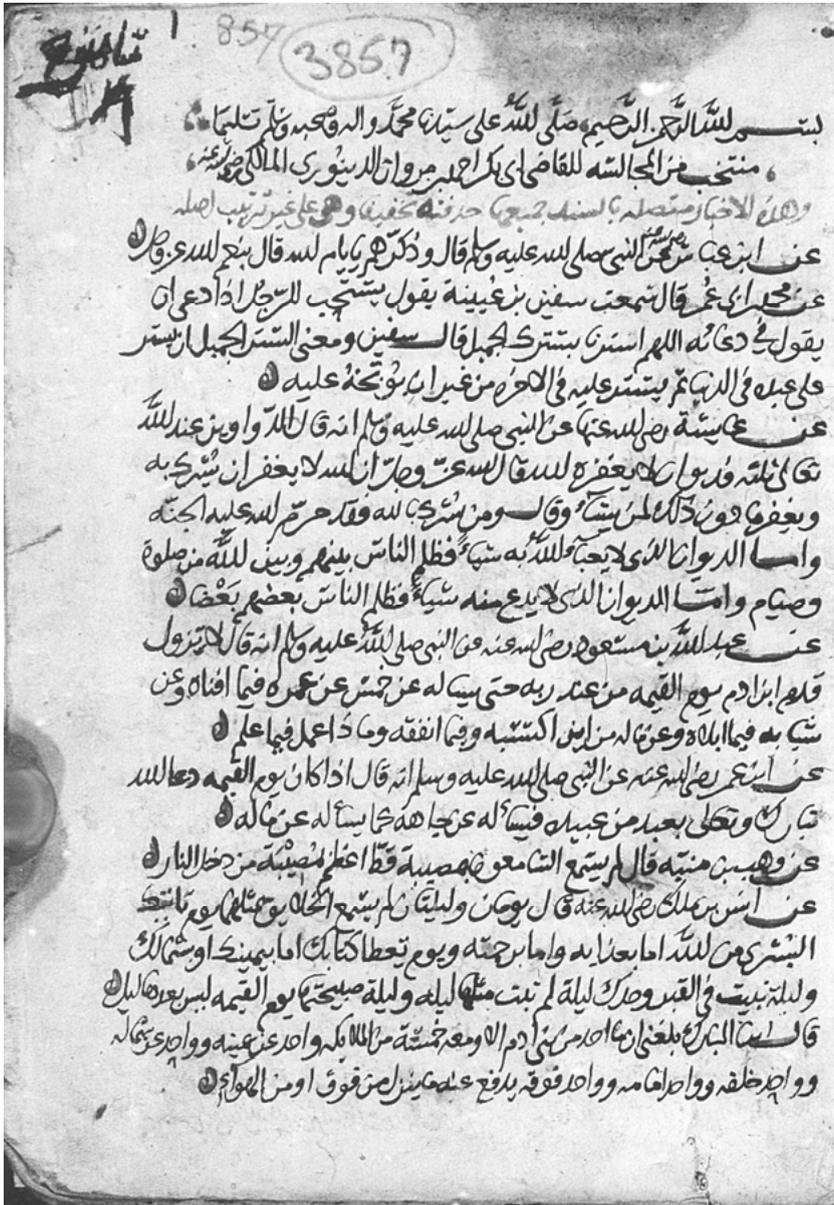


Fig. 9: Muḥyī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd's notebook; Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Arabic 3857, fol. 1a.

Despite his father having made a copy of Ibn Ḥaḡar’s *Taḡrīd*, as seen earlier, it is clear Ibn Fahd has exploited a tool made by another scholar.⁶⁹ The volume proceeds with various notes taken from other sources, including two substantial summaries. The identity of the notebook’s originator would remain unknown had its compiler not mentioned his name in a colophon added at the end of the last summary (fol. 91a) in which he also indicated the year (27 Raḡab 874 AH / 30 January 1470 CE) (see Fig. 11):

This is the end of the selections made from *al-Bulḡa fi tāriḥ a’immat an-naḥw wa-l-luḡa* (‘The means of attaining knowledge of the history of the authorities in grammar and lexicography’), the work of the most learned imam, the authority on lexicography, Maḡd ad-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ya’qūb al-Firūzābādī. The needy of God’s forgiveness and generosity, Yaḥyā ibn ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad ibn Fahd al-Hāšimī – May God be kind to him – made the selections for himself. It was completed on Wednesday 27 Raḡab – the holy the sacred – 874 [28 December 1472 CE]. Praise be to God Alone. May God bless and grant salvation to our lord Muḥammad, his family, and his companions. God is our sufficiency, and an excellent Steward is He!

This detail reveals he was 25 years old at the time and the volume corresponds to his period of preparation in becoming a scholar and author. As-Saḡāwī, one of Muḥyī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd’s acquaintances, confirms the latter prepared miscellanies (*ḡama‘a maḡāmī‘*). The Dublin manuscript is a sample of such miscellanies.⁷⁰

ما آخر المنتخب من البلغة في تاريخ ائمة النحو واللغة
 ما تأليف الامام العلامة امام اللغة مجد الدين محمد يعقوب الفيروز آبادي
 ما انتخبه لنفسه الفقير الى حقول الله وكرمه يحيى بن عمر بن محمد بن فهد الهاشمي الطهراني
 ما و كان الراج منه في يوم الاربعاء السابع عشر من رجب الحرام سنة اربع مائة وسبعة وثمانين
 والحمد لله وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد واله وصحبه وسلم تسليمًا حبسبنا الله نعم الوكيل

Fig. 11: Muḥyī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd’s notebook; Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Arabic 3857, fol. 91a (detail).

⁶⁹ He may have read the copy his [redacted] ad-Dīn made of Ibn Ḥaḡar’s *Taḡrīd*. As mentioned earlier, Taqī ad-Dīn established his library as an endowment.

⁷⁰ as-Saḡāwī, *al-Ḍau‘*, vol. 10, 239.

Notebooks were deeply linked to authorship, for scholars compiled them as preparation for the composing of their own books. Hence, they very often consist of summaries and selections of texts. Aside from this use, scholars also felt the need to write down information from texts for no other reason than to preserve passages they liked, or recall their creators' own prose and poetry. Such collections functioned in a different way to notebooks and rightly received a distinct name as the subsequent section will demonstrate.

2.4 Note-taking continued... but with something else in mind

European scholars used florilegia, i.e. collections of short quotes, and commonplace books, i.e. books in which they would take note of excerpts, quotations, sentences, whether their own or penned by others, contemporary or not.⁷¹ Mamluk scholars also used similar tools to keep a trace of things they read or heard. Such collections may be better defined as collectanea for the material was not arranged in any pre-established order.⁷² The Arabic word used to refer to such collections is usually *taḍkīra* (*aide-mémoire*), referring to their basic function of reminding. First and foremost, *taḍkīra* was a key mnemonic device for the scholar.⁷³ As several examples survive from the early fourteenth century and the sources contain more testimonies, it has become easier to analyse this particular tool and see how the authors conceived it.⁷⁴ What led a scholar to devise a *taḍkīra* has to be emphasized, for it differed from the tools previously described. The purpose of this tool was primarily to note passages and texts the author particularly liked which were not necessarily ones he wished to exploit for his own compositions, although – as will be seen below – some scholars did.

In his detailed biography of Ibn Ḥaḡar, as-Saḡāwī tells of how his master began his own *taḍkīra* at the age of 19:⁷⁵

⁷¹ On commonplace books in Europe, see Lainé 2019; Cazalé Bérard 2019 for two specific cases of the medieval period; Allan 2010 for the modern period. See also Élisabeth Décultot's contributions and those of Mélanie Dubois in the present volume.

⁷² These can be defined as 'extended personal manuscript compilations' as explained by the editors of this volume in their introduction.

⁷³ In one volume of his *taḍkīra*, Ibn Mubārakšāh (see below) in a short preamble states 'this is a *taḍkīra* for what the mind strains' (*hāḡiḡi taḍkīra li-mā imtaḡana al-hāḡir*). Istanbul, Millet Genel Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah 1613, fol. 1b.

⁷⁴ See more recently Franssen 2022, 114–123.

⁷⁵ Ibn Ḥaḡar was born in 773 AH / 1372 CE.

In the course of the year [7]92 [1371 CE], he was fondly inclined towards various branches of literature in which he excelled to the extent that he could not hear a piece of poetry without recalling from where the poet had taken it. He was passionate about and remained obsessed by it until he excelled and became a master [in this field], conversing with littérateurs, declaiming perfect poetry and excellent prose, and composing laudatory poems for the Prophet and epigrams which the leading authorities [in literature] took note of.⁷⁶

For Ibn Ḥaḡar, the *taḏkira* functioned as a repository of selections of nice pieces of poetry and prose he memorized but also wrote down should he have felt the need to refresh his memory. Having begun his *aide-mémoire* when planning to specialize in belles-lettres, the *taḏkira* served as a useful tool for a young student wishing to collate as much material as possible. In only a few years, his *taḏkira* reached forty thin (*liṭāf*) volumes.⁷⁷ Here Ibn Ḥaḡar noted personal poetical compositions that were not necessarily included in his official poetical collections (*dīwān*) published later.⁷⁸ In 796 AH / 1393–1394 CE, aged 22, he became more interested in *ḥadīṭ* studies, a field he was to choose for his future career. Turning increasingly away from literature, he began a new *taḏkira* dedicated to this subject (*ḥadīṭ*) specifically.⁷⁹

Typically such collections of notes had no pre-established order as they were notes taken almost daily. Repetitions were inevitable.⁸⁰ According to Ibn Ḥaḡar, ‘people call things of this sort an *aide-mémoire* (*taḏkira*) but it looks more like it impedes memory (*munsiya*)’.⁸¹ One volume of Ibn Ḥaḡar’s *taḏkira* has been preserved. On the title page he states, in his own hand, that it is the

76 as-Saḡāwī, *al-Ḍauʿ*, vol. 1, 126 (*wa-naẓara fī funūn al-adab min atnāʿ sanat iṭnatain wa-tisʿin fa-fāqa fihā ḥattā kāna lā yasmaʿu šīʿran illā wa-yastahḏiru min aina aḥaḏahu an-nāẓim wa-tawallaʿa bi-ḍālīka wa-mā zāla yatbaʿuhu ḥaṭīruhu ḥattā fāqa fihī wa-sāda wa-ṭaraḥa al-udabāʿ wa-qāla aš-šīʿr ar-rāʿiq wa-n-naṭr al-fāʿiq wa-nazzama madāʾiḥ nabawīya wa-maqāṭīʿ wa-kataba ʿanhu al-aʿimma min ḍālīka).*

77 as-Saḡāwī, *al-Ġawāḥir*, vol. 2, 694.

78 as-Saḡāwī, *al-Ġawāḥir*, vol. 2, 694.

79 as-Saḡāwī, *al-Ġawāḥir*, vol. 2, 680. To differentiate between them, he refers to the first as *at-taḏkira al-adabiya* (‘the *taḏkira* on literature’) and the second as *al-taḏkira al-ḥadīṭiyya* (the *taḏkira* on *ḥadīṭ*), but there is no indication that Ibn Ḥaḡar named them this way. He did, however, give a title to his *taḏkira* on literature: *Masāmīr as-sāḥir wa-masāḥir as-sāmīr* (‘Nightly entertainments for the sleepless partygoer and nocturnal conversations for the restless merry-maker’).

80 as-Saḡāwī, *al-Ġawāḥir*, vol. 2, 695 (*wa-qad yūḡad fihā al-mutakarrir li-kauniḥā ḡair murat-taba*).

81 as-Saḡāwī, *al-Ġawāḥir*, vol. 2, 695 (*an-nās yusammūna mā kāna min ḥaḏā al-qabil at-taḏkira wa-huwa bi-l-munsiya ašbah*).

sixth volume of his new *taḍkira*, begun upon his decision to devote himself to religious studies (see Fig. 12): one reads in Ibn Ḥaḡar’s handwriting *al-muḡallad as-sādis min at-taḍkira al-ḡadīda likātibihi Aḡmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Ḥaḡar ‘afā Allāh ta‘ālā ‘anhu* (‘the sixth volume of the new *taḍkira* by its writer Aḡmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Ḥaḡar – May God the Exalted forgive him’). This volume of 287 fols is replete with various kinds of notes: requests for answers from other scholars, received and inserted in the volume in their own hand with Ibn Ḥaḡar’s drafted answer at the end of each; lists of autograph licenses granted by famous scholars allowing him to transmit their works and those of others they were authorized to circulate; excerpts from various works, short texts copied by someone else, probably for Ibn Ḥaḡar’s use. On fols 25*b–25**a for instance, there is a piece of paper in which four verses have been written in a different hand. Below the verses, Ibn Ḥaḡar penned a note explaining the author’s identity and the circumstances in which that author addressed them to him. ‘Alī ibn Maḡmūd al-Muḡulī al-Ḥanbalī (d. 827 AH / 1423 CE) was that author and he had composed the verses to celebrate the recitation of the Qur’an by Ibn Ḥaḡar’s son, an event marking the completion of his primary education. Al-Muḡulī accompanied that piece of paper with a garment from Baalbek as gift. Ibn Ḥaḡar continues saying he answered with verses and wrote them on the other side of the piece of paper (indeed present on fol. 25**b). At a later date, as the different colour of ink shows, Ibn Ḥaḡar states how this took place at a given date and place that he details (see Fig. 13).⁸²

82 *Hāḡīhi al-abyāt al-arba‘a kataba bi-hā ilaiya qāḡī al-quḡāt ‘Alā’ ad-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Maḡmūd Ibn al-Muḡulī al-Ḥanbalī lammā ḡatama ibnī Badr ad-Dīn Muḡammad al-qur’ān wa-ḡaḡara al-a‘yān wa-ahḡā lī ‘Alā’ ad-Dīn ma‘ahu ṡauban ba‘labakkiyan wa-katabtu ilaihi al-ḡawāb bi-maḡlūbihā wa-kāna al-ḡatm (corrected over ḡālika) fi ṡahr ramaḡān sanat sitt wa-‘iṡrīn wa-ṡamānīmi’a bi-l-ḡānḡāh ar-rukniya al-baibarsiya ‘ammarahā Allāh ta‘ālā* (‘The supreme judge ‘Alā’ ad-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Maḡmūd Ibn al-Muḡulī al-Ḥanbalī wrote these four verses to me when my son Badr ad-Dīn Muḡammad completed the recitation of the Qur’an attended by the leading scholars. Together with these ‘Alā’ ad-Dīn offered me a garment from Baalbek. I wrote him an answer which is on the verso. The completion of the recitation of the Qur’an took place during the month of Ramaḡān 826 [8 August–6 September 1423 CE] at the Sufi convent (*ḡānḡāh*) of Rukn ad-Dīn Baibars – May God the Exalted preserve it’). The exchange did not stop here as a small sheet of paper bearing Ibn al-Muḡulī’s answer in verses to Ibn Ḥaḡar’s follows (fol. 25**a), to whom Ibn Ḥaḡar responded, his versified answer was written on the verso (fol. 25**b).

This kind of volume is difficult to access, for those consulting it are faced with some disarray: the entire volume must be read through to understand its content. Moreover, it is impossible to remember what is in it without a list of these contents. This feature explains how Ibn Ḥaḡar himself felt regarding his own *taḍkira* when stating how this kind of tool impedes rather than assists the memory.

A few scholars were aware how the lack of organization made such texts difficult to consult, particularly for those expressing an interest in reading their *taḍkira*. Ibn Mubārakšāh (d. 862 AH / 1458 CE at the age of 54), a modest scholar who authored some works and was active as a poet, held a *taḍkira* of which thirteen holograph volumes are available.⁸³ In one of these volumes, he states: ‘This twenty-fifth volume of the *safīna* that I am keeping is not divided into sections nor organized. If God grants completion, it will be organized if God the Exalted will’ (see Fig. 14).⁸⁴ Ibn Mubārakšāh may not have been able to attain his wish to organize his *taḍkira*, but others were. Al-Ḥiḡāzī (d. 875 AH / 1471 CE), another of Ibn Ḥaḡar’s students, wrote a *taḍkira* in excess of fifty volumes.⁸⁵ In the knowledge of Ibn Ḥaḡar’s statement on the *taḍkira*, he organized his own *aide-mémoire* concerned he may not be able to retrieve the information he searched. But the order he followed is not known.⁸⁶

It is clear the *taḍkiras* with no preestablished organization – most of them in fact – at least followed a logical chronological order. The scholar penned his notes in the volume according to what he was reading or hearing. When he indicated the time a piece had been written down, the *taḍkira* volumes can be dated to that given period. This is confirmed by as-Saḡāwī’s testimony regarding Ibn Ḥaḡar’s first *taḍkira* dealing with literature. He explains how he would consult about twenty of the original forty volumes during a stay in Mecca. The dates found in the volumes corresponded to the years 794 AH / 1391–1392 CE, 795 AH / 1392–1393 CE, and 796 AH / 1393–1394 CE, i.e. the year when Ibn Ḥaḡar’s scholarly interests shifted increasingly to religious studies and when he started a new – parallel – *taḍkira*, devoted to his readings in this field. Aṣ-Ṣafadī’s

83 Istanbul, Millet Genel Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah 1610-1622. As-Saḡāwī confirms that he kept a *taḍkira*, cf. as-Saḡāwī, *al-Ḍau’*, vol. 2, 65 (*wa-ṣannafa ašyā’ wa-ḡama’a at-taḍkira*).

84 Istanbul, Millet Genel Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah 1618, fol. 1b (*wa-hādā al-ḡuz’ al-ḡāmis ba’da al-’išrīn min as-safīna min ḡam’ī ḡair mubauwab wa-lā murattab wa-in manna Allāh bi-l-farāḡ ruttiba in šā’a Allāh ta’ālā*).

85 as-Saḡāwī, *al-Ḍau’*, vol. 2, 148 (*balaḡat taḍkiratuhu azyad min ḡamsīn muḡallada*).

86 as-Saḡāwī, *al-Ġawāhir*, vol. 2, 695 (*wa-lifrār al-Ḥiḡāzī min hādā kānat taḍkiratuhu murattaba*).

taḍkira, said to have consisted of fifty volumes,⁸⁷ shares the same chronological characteristics of Ibn Ḥaḡar’s *taḍkira*. Of the surviving volumes, the first contains pieces at times dated 728 AH / 1327–1328 CE whereas the forty-ninth is dated 762 AH / 1360–1361 CE, i.e. two years before his death.⁸⁸ From which it can be asserted that aṣ-Ṣafadī began collecting data in his *taḍkira* in his thirties and continued till the end of his life. As for the content, aṣ-Ṣafadī’s *taḍkira* does not appear to be organized either and includes literary selections by other poets and belletrists as well as quotations of literary pieces (poetry, letters, documents) composed by himself or received from colleagues.

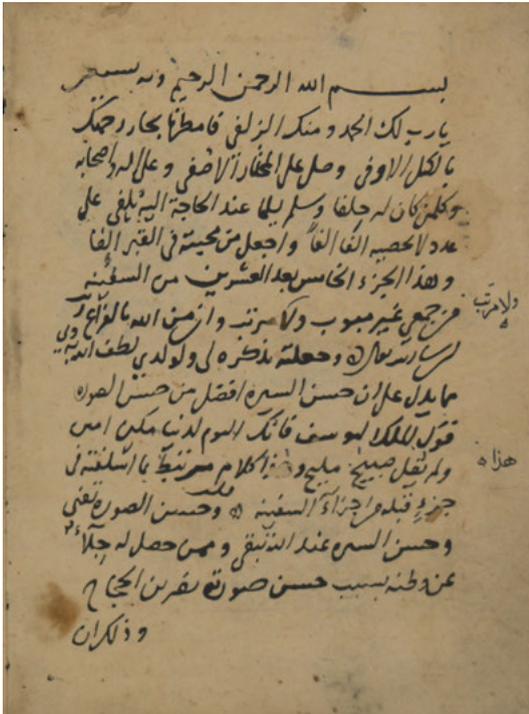


Fig. 14: Ibn Mubārakshāh’s *Taḍkira* (vol. 25); Istanbul, Millet Genel Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah 1618, fol. 1b.

⁸⁷ Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Arabic 3861, fol. 54a (*taḡzi’at ḥamsin*).

⁸⁸ See Franssen 2022, 120–121 as well as her article in this volume.

3 Material features

The tools' material features have also, thus far, only ever been poorly investigated. It is unfortunate because the physical characteristics of this kind of manuscript are helpful in identifying other manuscripts. Several of the features described in the following pages refer to holograph manuscripts in general, whether drafts or clean copies of a scholar's own works or texts that can be identified as tools they fabricated. The nature of the text helps differentiate between these two categories.

Most of the examples surveyed in this chapter share one characteristic up to now: they are a holograph and this is quite predictable. The scholars produced them primarily to serve their personal needs and most of these texts were not intended for publication. Whenever such tools are spotted in a library's collection, the scholar's handwriting usually serves to identify them. Nevertheless, some such texts were copied at a later date by one of the scholar's students wanting a copy for their own use if they were unable to acquire the scholar's holograph, as witnessed with Ibn Ḥaḡar's *Tağrīd al-Wāfi* copied by  ad-Dīn Nağm Ibn Fahd.⁸⁹ In such cases, the question arises as to whether these copyists retained some of the physical features of these holograph manuscripts and which they actually ignored. In the case of Ibn Ḥaḡar's *Tağrīd al-Wāfi*, the difficulty arises from the fact that Ibn Ḥaḡar's holograph has been lost impeding any comparison between the original and its copy. Nonetheless,  ad-Dīn Nağm Ibn Fahd wrote the first name of each biographee in red ink (see Fig. 1). The red ink makes for an easy perusal of the text. Regarding an outline, such as *Tağrīd al-Wāfi*, it allows the user to navigate through the text. There is no reason to believe the use of red ink was  ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd's decision: Ibn Ḥaḡar most likely resorted to this stratagem to expedite consultation of the outline. Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd behave no differently when producing his own outline of Ibn al-Aṭīr's *Usd al-ğāba* (see Fig. 3). The advantages of red ink were proved when al-Maqrīzī decided to carry out a summary of *al-Wāfi*: each entry starts with the name of the biographee in red ink, enabling rapid navigation of the text. Another method to improve the browsing of a text were various visual marks, such as titles for sections, keywords in the margins, and signs of separation, red ink often plays a central role here too. Keywords added in the margin feature in the summary of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam's *Futūḥ Mişr* that al-Maqrīzī inserted in his

⁸⁹ He executed his copy in 862 AH / 1458 CE, nine years after Ibn Ḥaḡar's death. Cf. Ibn Ḥaḡar al-'Asqalānī, *Tağrīd*, vol. 5, 629.

notebook: in the example (see Fig. 15), he points to the contents of a passage that makes brief reference (respectively *ḥaliḡ Miṣr* ‘the canal of Egypt’ and *ḥaliḡ Sardūs* ‘the canal of Sardūs’) surmounted by a sign meaning *qif* (‘stop/read’) and further drawing his attention.

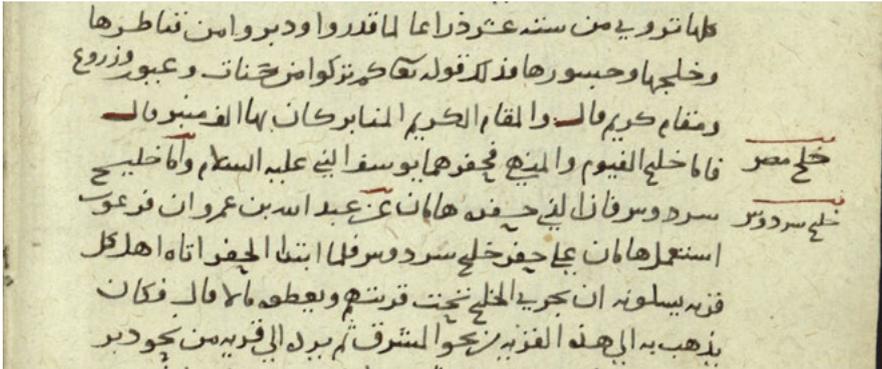


Fig. 15: al-Maqrīzī’s summary of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s *Futūḥ Miṣr* in his notebook; Liège, Université de Liège. Bibliothèque ALPHA, 2232, fol. 39b (detail).

As has been seen, the scholars making these tools could reveal their name in the colophon or not. Ibn Ḥaḡar did not write his name in his volume comprising three summaries and al-Maqrīzī did likewise in his notebook. However, Muḥyī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd did mention his name in the colophon of one of the summaries in his notebook. When a scholar did include his name, he stated a certain form of his name and always invoked specific religious formulas enabling the reader to detect he is writing in the first person.⁹⁰ Taken alongside with others and the above-mentioned features, these elements provide further evidence confirming the text to be a holograph.⁹¹

The layout of the text is also a feature worthy of attention. Should the text be a holograph, it usually contains marginal additions, cancellations, erasures, all in the same handwriting as the main text. The justification of the text can be erratic depending on the scholar. While al-Maqrīzī took note of his summaries in neat handwriting applying regular justification, Ibn Ḥaḡar, on the contrary,

⁹⁰ He always left out his agnomen (*laqab*), an honorific composed of an adjective and the word *ad-dīn* (‘religion’), like Muḥyī ad-Dīn in the case of Ibn Fahd.

⁹¹ On this, see Gacek 2020, 72–75.

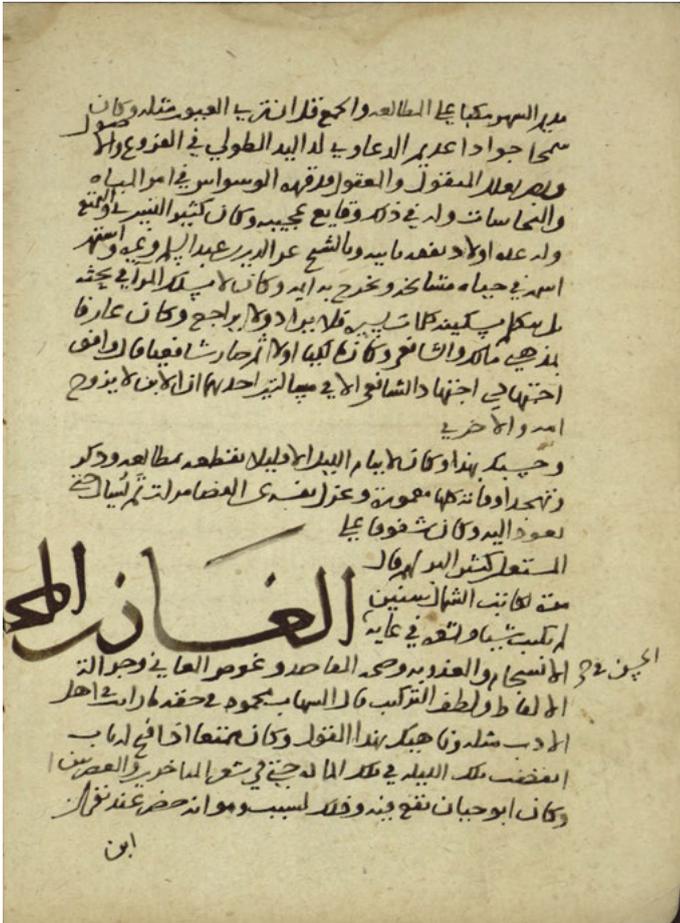


Fig. 17: al-Maqrīzī's notebook; Liège, Université de Liège. Bibliothèque ALPHA, 2232, fol. 114b.

Considering such tools were essentially to serve the scholar's own needs, now and then it appears scholars chose not to waste costly blank paper, choosing scrap paper instead. During the Mamluk period, scrap paper – perhaps not uniquely – derived from chancery documents provided sufficient blank spaces for scholars to reuse for their own purposes. These documents bore the following main characteristics: they were rolls made of several pasted sheets of paper; the text of the official document would be copied by a secretary and leaving large blank interlinear spaces of several centimetres; the script size was usually large and only the recto was put to good use. Such documents were often reused

by cutting the sheets that made up the roll and building quires with them. One of the scholars who reused this kind of scrap paper was al-Maqrīzī as a great amount is found in his notebook (see Fig. 17) but also in several drafts of his own works.⁹² Other uses of scrap paper have been identified in Mamluk scholars' holograph manuscripts such as Ibn Ḥaḡar.⁹³

In fabricating their notebooks and commonplace books, scholars used various kinds of paper seeming to wish to reuse any paper they found as optimally as possible. In this respect Ibn Ḥaḡar's *taḏkira* volume is quite idiosyncratic. Naturally, it is composed of quires of blank paper but not throughout the entire volume. As noted earlier, Ibn Ḥaḡar inserted in this volume texts received from others who used their own paper that was usually blank and from different places of production. Wherever possible Ibn Ḥaḡar also fitted in slips as well as small quires of tinted paper (see Fig. 18). Such red-tinted paper was normally reserved for chanceries in Syria and it may be deduced here that Ibn Ḥaḡar was reusing pieces cut out from documents issued by these chanceries.⁹⁴ The holograph volume of aṣ-Ṣafadī's *taḏkira* held in Princeton shows that some were made using a combination of different kinds of paper, as well as the red-tinted paper.⁹⁵ These volumes demonstrate how he prepared quires with remains of paper probably taken from the chancery in which he was employed.

In the above cases, such reuse of documents and paper remains affected the size of the volumes. Shop-bought sheets of paper were of standard sizes. Thus, quires fabricated using such paper would be of a more or less regular size no matter how they were folded. Implementing scrap paper rendered the maintaining of regular sizes impossible. A study of al-Maqrīzī's holographs established the volumes fabricated from scrap paper were smaller than those largely composed of full sheets of blank paper.⁹⁶ The size of aṣ-Ṣafadī's *taḏkira* holograph volume, kept in Princeton, confirms this fact.⁹⁷ Furthermore, the volume's nine-

92 For the list of the fragments identified in all his holograph manuscripts, see Bauden 2020, 163–164. Some of these fragments have been studied: see Bauden 2004; Bauden 2019; Bauden 2022.

93 The practice was not limited of course to Mamluk scholars. In Europe, Giovanni Boccaccio (d. 1375) wrote his *Zibaldone* on a palimpsest (a gradual written on parchment and datable to the end of the thirteenth century). See Cazalé Bérard 2019, 63. See also for Japan Yasufumi Horikawa's contribution in the present volume.

94 On the use of red-tinted paper by the Syrian chanceries, see aḏ-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat*, 132.

95 Princeton, University Library, 3570Y.

96 Bauden 2020, 163 (compare between manuscripts listed under category 1 and categories 2–3).

97 Franssen 2022, 117. It measures 186 × 128 mm.

ty-seven leaves can be described as thin, a recognizing feature of Ibn Ḥaġar's *taḍkira adabiya*.⁹⁸

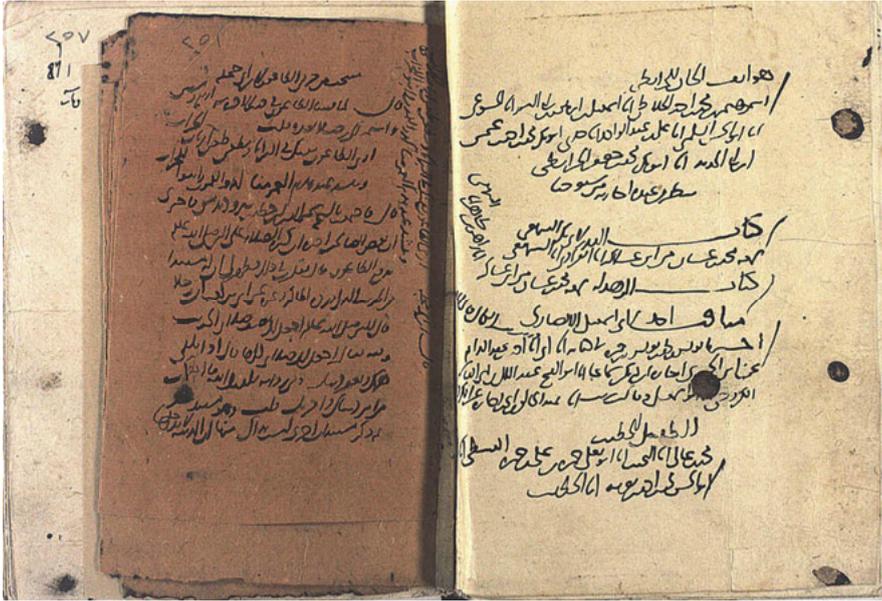


Fig. 18: Ibn Ḥaġar's *Taḍkira* (vol. 6); Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Aya Sofya 3139, fols 250b–251a.

Aş-Şafadī's Princeton volume is also interesting as it exhibits how, at times, a different format was preferred by scholars when collecting notes. Rather than adopting the usual format featuring the quires stitched and bound along the longer side, aş-Şafadī preferred them bound along the short side.⁹⁹ Thus the volume's shape is oblong, and his notes penned parallel to the spine. This shape must have been particularly convenient for carrying volumes in one's

⁹⁸ As-Saḥāwī characterized the volumes that he saw in Mecca as thin (*liṭāf*). See above.

⁹⁹ The word *safīna* (boat) is generally applied to the shape for Arabic manuscripts (*safīna* was also used in Persian but to refer to *maġmūʿas* while the word *bayāḍ* describes the manuscript with an oblong shape; for Ottoman manuscripts, the word *cönk* is more common). It is important to note that the word *safīna* came to be used metonymically for some *taḍkiras*. For instance, even though Ibn Mubārakšāh calls his *taḍkira* a *safīna* (Istanbul, Millet Genel Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah 1612, fol. 1b: *fa-hādā ġuzʿ min aġzāʿ as-safīna*), the surviving eleven volumes are not in an oblong format. See also David Durand-Guédy's contribution in this volume.

sleeves. This provides a clue as to the use of the *taḍkira* which he must have carried with him at all times, so he could instantly take notes of a text of which he wished to keep track. This oblong shape was not always applied to his *taḍkira* volumes as more classical shapes have also been attested.

4 Use and usefulness of the tools

The above-mentioned tools' functions were mainly twofold functioning as a memory aid and to assist in writing. Each tool could serve both functions, but this was not a prerequisite. Scholars often stated the reason for preparing the tools. In his summaries of three sources, Ibn Ḥaḡar told of the purpose of his note-taking in his summary of al-Wāqidi's *al-Maḡāzī*, after the initial sentence 'These are notes (*ta'liq*) from al-Wāqidi's *al-Maḡāzī*, [starting] from the beginning', adding this note: 'from among things I need for my works'.¹⁰⁰ This note was penned at the end of the sentence, vertically, as if an afterthought (see Fig. 16). As for his summary of Ibn 'Asākir's *Tārīḥ*, a title page briefly describes the text's purpose ('Notes from Ibn 'Asākir's *Tārīḥ*'), beneath which is scribbled (see Fig. 19): 'to be inserted in the works I want to compile – May God assist [me] by His grace and His munificence in completing them'.¹⁰¹ The notes are introduced with a short introduction in which Ibn Ḥaḡar tells why he wrote these notes:

These are notes I have taken from *at-Tārīḥ al-kabīr* by the memorizer Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ad-Dimašqī. I have only written down what I was missing or had forgotten without pretending to be exhaustive in my selections.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Fol. 78b: *mimmā aḥtāḡu ilaihi fī taṣānifī*.

¹⁰¹ Fol. 150a: *yudḥal fī mā narūm ḡam'ahu min at-taṣānif a'āna Allāh 'alā ikmālihā bi-mannihī wa-karamihī*.

¹⁰² Fol. 150b: *fa-hāḍihī fawā'id 'allaqtuhā min at-Tārīḥ al-kabīr lil-ḥāfiẓ Abī al-Qāsim 'Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ad-Dimašqī wa-innamā katabtu minhu mā laisa 'indī au ḡāba 'an ḥifẓī lā 'alā sabīl al-istī'āb fī al-intihāb*.

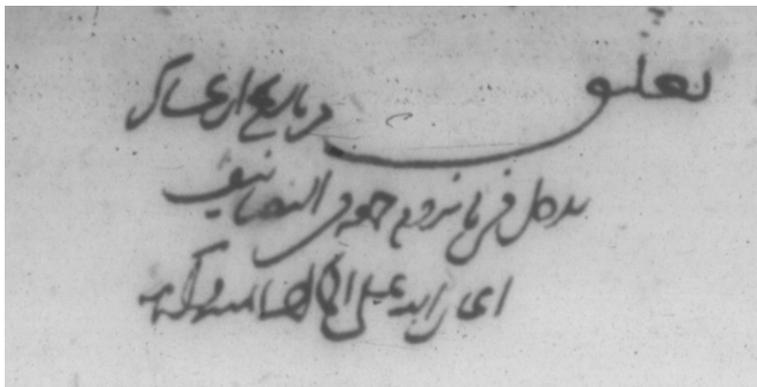


Fig. 19: Ibn Ḥaḡar’s *Ta’līq* of Ibn ‘Asākir’s *Tārīḥ Madīnat Dimašq*; Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīya, 522 *Tārīḥ*, fol. 150a (detail).

These examples reveal Ibn Ḥaḡar’s need to disclose why he took these notes: for his own use, i.e. intending to compose his own works. A tentative explanation for why he and other scholars indicated their goal at the outset for these tools intended for personal use may simply be their conforming to the traditional way of presenting a text in Islam. They may have felt such a compulsion when thinking their texts could be subject to the scrutiny of other scholars.

It is quite evident that scholars made good use of their summaries as quotations can be spotted in their own works. A biography al-Maqrīzī summarized from aṣ-Ṣafadī’s *al-Wāfi* demonstrates he reused the material in three of his works, giving priority to some items of information according to the subject of the text he was composing.¹⁰³ On rare occasions, al-Maqrīzī alludes to his notebooks, telling his reader more information would be found in his *maḡāmī*, i.e. his notebooks, as if these were accessible to anyone.¹⁰⁴ In his texts aṣ-Ṣafadī appears more inclined to refer to material in his *taḍkira*, even indicating which volume contains a certain item of information.¹⁰⁵ It is these references that make it possible to locate a given passage in the chronologically written volumes.

¹⁰³ Bauden 2009b.

¹⁰⁴ Bauden 2008, 104–107.

¹⁰⁵ Franssen 2022, 115.

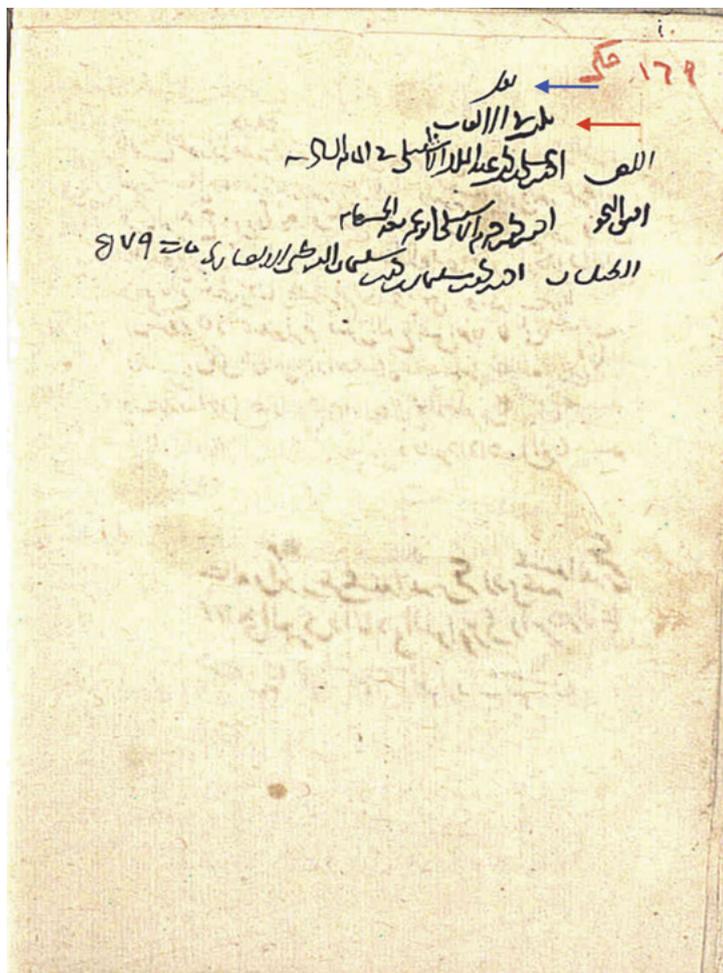


Fig. 20: Ibn Ḥaḡar's *Taḡkira* (vol. 6); Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Aya Sofya 3139, fol. 169b.

As the notebooks were to the greatest extent not organized, with the material written down randomly, authors at times needed to know whether or not they had already taken advantage of some passages or items of data.¹⁰⁶ Al-Maqrīzī

¹⁰⁶ Aṣ-Ṣafādī wrote on volumes of his *taḡkira* that he had consulted for a book he was writing on a literary device. See Franssen 2022, 116.

and Ibn Ḥaḡar, both marked some passages with an expression indicating the necessity to exploit the material in some of their works.¹⁰⁷ In the following example selected from Ibn Ḥaḡar's *taḏkira*, he wrote above three lines of text *yuktab fī al-alqāb* ('to be written in [the book on] the agnomens') (see Fig. 20, second line). If repetitions were hard to avoid, scholars did their best to limit them. Once the information had been inserted in the book indicated, Ibn Ḥaḡar resorted to a cipher he placed above the aforementioned expression (see Fig. 20, first line). This cipher corresponds to the word: *nuqila*, meaning 'copied, transferred'. Upon seeing this cipher, Ibn Ḥaḡar was made aware he had already transferred the data into the said book. Al-Maqrīzī used the same cipher in his notebook.¹⁰⁸

5 Fate of the tools

Although these tools primarily served their users' needs, they were, however, not always intended for their creator's use exclusively. In introducing the twenty-fifth volume of his *taḏkira*, Ibn Mubārakšāh reveals the purpose of an *aide-mémoire* to be, not only for himself, but also for his son.¹⁰⁹ His literary selections were thus served as an educational guide, almost a gift, mirroring similar practices observed for commonplace books in eighteenth-century England.¹¹⁰ The gift could also be intended for an educated ruler. When he decided to turn to religious studies, Ibn Ḥaḡar offered the forty volumes of his literary *aide-mémoire* (*at-taḏkira al-adabiya*) to the Rasulid sultan of Yemen during one of his visits to his territories. As-Saḡāwī was then able to consult half of them in Mecca, meaning that the Rasulid sultan sold or gave the holograph of Ibn Ḥaḡar's *taḏkira* to someone who then brought it to the holy city.¹¹¹ Circles of friends and close colleagues could also show interest in a scholar's tools, particularly a commonplace book reflecting his literary taste. Aṣ-Ṣafadi was known to lend volumes of his *taḏkira* to friends who requested its access.¹¹² Consultation notes left in the manuscripts by such subsequent readers confirm this in-

¹⁰⁷ For al-Maqrīzī, see Bauden 2008, 112.

¹⁰⁸ Bauden 2008, 109–111.

¹⁰⁹ Istanbul, Millet Genel Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah 1618, fol. 1b.

¹¹⁰ Allan 2010, 31–32.

¹¹¹ as-Saḡāwī, *al-Ġawāhir*, vol. 1, 152; vol. 2, 680, 694.

¹¹² Franssen 2022, 115–116. See also Nazlı Vatansever's contribution in this volume regarding a late Ottoman scholar.

terest. When as-Saḥāwī obtained access to Ibn Ḥaḡar’s new *taḏkira*, he wrote the following note on the first page indicating what had led him to consult it (see Fig. 21):

الحمد لله / فرغه مطالعة على كتابه في تراجم المالكية / محمد بن عبد الرحمن السخاوي وراجعه /
غفر الله ذنوبه وستر عيوبه.
ثم فرغه وما بعده ترتيبا / سهل الله إكماله بمنه وكرمه.

Praise be to God. Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān as-Saḥāwī – May God forgive his sins and veil his imperfections – finished to read it [this volume] for his book on the biographies of the Mālikī scholars and went over it again.

Then he finished to prepare an index (*tartīban*) for it [this volume] and for those that follow – May God facilitate its completion by His grace and His munificence.¹¹³

At a distance of several decades or even centuries, such interest did not fade away. It is known that Ibn Ḥaḡar read aṣ-Ṣafadī’s *taḏkira* as he wrote a passage down he was interested in, in his own *taḏkira*, clearly referring to the volume where the information had been found (see Fig. 22): ‘from [volume] 11 of aṣ-Ṣafadī’s *Taḏkira* and from [volume] 12 as well’.

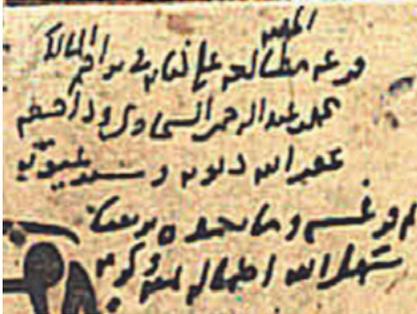


Fig. 21: as-Saḥāwī’s consultation note in Ibn Ḥaḡar’s *Taḏkira* (vol. 6); Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Aya Sofya 3139, fol. 1a (detail).

Even lists and indexes drew the attention of scholars several centuries after they had been drawn up. When az-Zabidī (d. 1205 AH / 1733 CE), a scholar of Indian origin who had settled and was mainly active in Egypt, acquired the holograph of Taqī ad-Dīn’s *Taḡrīd Usd al-ġāba*, he jotted down a note at the end of the

¹¹³ Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Aya Sofya 3139, fol. 1a.

manuscript stating he had read it, checked it, and taken advantage of it, i.e. taken notes from it (see Fig. 23).¹¹⁴

أتمه قراءة ومراجعة / واستفادة مالكة الفقير إلى الله تعالى / السيد محمد / مرتضى الحسيني الزبيدي
/ عفي عنه وذلك في مجالس عديدة / بمصر القاهرة / حرسها الله تعالى / وسائر بلاد / الإسلام.

Its owner, the needer of God the Sublime, the *saiyid* Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Ḥusainī az-Zabīdī – May he be forgiven – finished to read it, to check it and to take advantage of it during several sessions in the old city of Cairo – May God the Sublime protect it as well as all the other Islamic lands.¹¹⁵

Such tools were actually the result of an authorial process unique to its author. They formed part of a scholar's literary archive and his intellectual output.¹¹⁶ These texts were largely published after their author's death (at times, perhaps, even against their will). Occasionally, such a publication helped ensure their preservation either as a holograph or as an apograph. If several volumes of aṣ-Ṣafadī's *taḍkira* remain partly available, it is due to copies being made of it later on, for only a few volumes of the holograph have survived. As for summaries, they provided information that may have become hard to find, if the original work had been lost or destroyed, as was the case regarding al-Maqrīzī whose summaries of Fatimid sources remain essential to this day.¹¹⁷

114 Such an interest in these tools has never really flagged because some are still printed even though their current usefulness is, to say the least, limited. Ibn Ḥaḡar's *Taḡrīd* of aṣ-Ṣafadī's *al-Wāfi* was recently published in seven volumes (cf. Ibn Ḥaḡar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Taḡrīd*), the editor justifying the choice of this text claiming some biographies selected by Ibn Ḥaḡar to now be missing from aṣ-Ṣafadī's *al-Wāfi*. Had that been the case, it would have sufficed to publish the very few biographies in question in an article. The editor even went out of his way to add to the outline biographies Ibn Ḥaḡar had neglected!

115 Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Azharīya, MS 10667, fol. 157b.

116 The literary archive of a scholar is typically composed of his drafts, fair copies, notebooks, reading notes, correspondence, etc. See Chartier 2013, 12–15, where he builds on the concept of literary archives representing an author's intellectual output as developed by Michel Foucault.

117 His summary of Ibn Muḡassar's chronicle still proves all the more useful as no copy of the original text has been located thus far. The holograph of al-Maqrīzī's summary has also been lost, but an apograph, made in the eleventh AH /seventeenth CE century which reproduces al-Maqrīzī's colophon, has been preserved (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 1688). As a proof of its significance for Fatimid history, this summary was published: Ibn Muḡassar 1981.

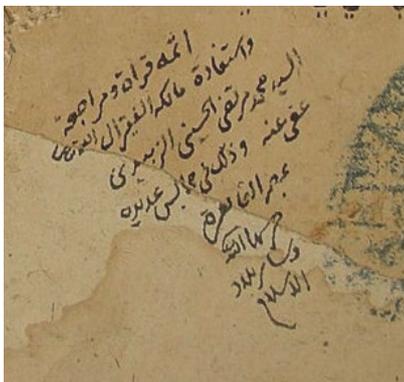


Fig. 23: az-Zabidī's consultation note in Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd's *Taḡrīd* of Ibn al-Aṭīr's *Usd al-gāba*; Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Azhariya, MS 10667, fol. 157b (detail).

Another reason for the preservation of such tools over several centuries is that they were made by scholars of renown. Being holographs, such manuscripts became particularly sought after by bibliophiles. However, the scholar rarely left his name on such tools: al-Maqrīzī did not feature his name in his notebook nor did Ibn Ḥaḡar reveal his identity in the volume containing three of his summaries. As they were tools implemented for their personal use, they did not feel the need to systematically indicate their authorship. That being the case, how could bibliophiles identify the scholar penning these texts? Some scholars and bibliophiles appear to have been able to recognize the handwriting of a given scholar, even from several centuries ago as in the case of al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Ḥaḡar. Their handwriting was sufficiently idiosyncratic for such identification to be possible.¹¹⁸ If several examples of their handwriting remained available, they helped corroborate identification and to confer on the tool prepared by the said scholar its full price. Therefore it is not surprising to see someone like az-Zabidī acquiring several holographs consisting of tools prepared by renowned scholars though their names never occur in these manuscripts. Aside from the holograph of Taqī ad-Dīn Ibn Fahd's *Taḡrīd* of Ibn al-Aṭīr's *Usd al-*

118 A later owner would add *bi-ḥaqq*... ('in the hand of...') somewhere in the manuscript (usually the title page or near the colophon) to indicate he had identified a scholar's handwriting. Internal elements discovered in the text would also help strengthen identification of the originator's identity.

ġāba, az-Zabīdī owned both al-Maqrīzī's notebook (see Fig. 24) and Ibn Ḥaġar's volume comprising three of his summaries.¹¹⁹

ملك الفقير إلى الله تعالى / محمد مرتضى الحسيني عفي عنه / في سنة ١١٧٧ .

Property of the needer of God the Sublime Muḥammad Murtaḏā al-Ḥusaini – May he be forgiven – in the year 1177 [1763–1764 CE].¹²⁰

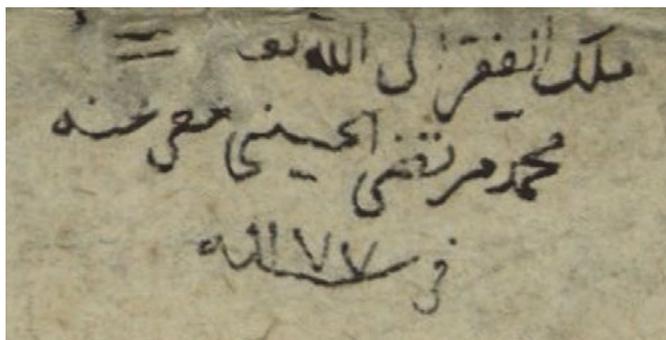


Fig. 24: az-Zabīdī's ownership mark in al-Maqrīzī's notebook; Liège, Université de Liège. Bibliothèque ALPHA, 2232, fol. 4a (detail).

6 Conclusion

A few concluding remarks may be drawn as this study of tools to help cope with information overload prepared by scholars of the Mamluk period comes to an end. First and foremost, it must be kept in mind that the preceding pages are nothing more than a brief synopsis based on a limited number of manuscript witnesses and testimonies in historical and literary sources. Undoubtedly, dozens if not hundreds of other examples of both categories exist and would help refine our understanding of these tools. Naturally, the limitation of this study to the Mamluk period is artificial as scholars from the region focused on here (broadly speaking Egypt and Syria) were part of a long-standing tradition that continued far beyond the Mamluk period. An all-encompassing study should be

¹¹⁹ Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriya, 522 Tārīḥ, fol. 1a. See *Fihris al-kutub al-‘arabiya al-mauḡūda bi-d-Dār* 1924, vol. 5, 322.

¹²⁰ Liège, Université de Liège, Bibliothèque ALPHA, 2232, fol. 4a.

envisaged in the *longue durée* for identifying trends in how scholars managed to cope with the overabundance of texts.

The survey we conducted emphasises how, in accordance with their purposes, scholars had recourse to a wide variety of tools. Faced with the abundance of multi-volume works, above all they had to find a way to navigate such large texts. The preparation of lists and indexes served that purpose. The reading process generated other kinds of tools. These tools varied according to the nature of the reading, that is to say, with a future work in mind or for pleasure. Whenever they needed to keep track of a text that had for them great use, they would either make a copy of it or seek to acquire one. However, when the text was of a limited use, they noted excerpts they thought could prove useful. These excerpts could take the form of a summary the size of which was a condition of its intended use. The size also determined the physical aspect of these summaries: a single volume if detailed, or conversely a few quires. Several short summaries could be gathered in a single volume, thus forming a miscellany. The originators of the summaries referred to them using a wide gamut of terms, some of which have been analysed in the preceding pages. Far from any generalizing, those terms have to be considered in their context, i.e. how they were used by the scholars in describing their summaries and excerpts. The terms appear to have often been interchangeable: we saw how a scholar's student could define his master's summaries with a different term despite his master having in his summary clearly indicated the term he regarded as most convenient for describing the result.

Scholars also made use of notebooks. The few examples studied show that these volumes were composed of units consisting of summaries, excerpts, quotes from various sources to which scholars, at times, added sketches and drafts of parts of their own works and personal notes. No clear organization of these volumes appears at first glance but the scholar who produced them may have had some form of organizational concept that is no longer possible to recognise. The Mamluk period witnessed the development of a different kind of notebook better defined as an *aide-mémoire* or *collectanea* (*taḍkira* or *safīna*) the scope of which diverged from previous examples. The sources provide a few clues as to why a scholar began such a *collectanea*. In most cases, they are initiated in the early career of a scholar eager to gather quotations from works that arouse his interest, in a series of volumes, usually from a literary perspective. Hence, most *taḍkiras* feature poetic and prosaic quotations. Sometimes, the originator may take note of a personal piece composed in the frame of his private or professional life. When the scholar came to the end of one volume, he

started a new one. In doing so, he gave a chronological order to his *taḍkira* and the only type of organization this kind of tool appears to have.

Most of the tools described were primarily intended for scholars' personal use evidenced by the way they exploited them in their own works. Hence, they have often been preserved in the scholar's hand. Another material feature proving these texts were intended for their own use is scholars' use of scrap paper or papers of varying sizes for their documents. Simple thrift probably caused them to refrain from using expensive blank paper. If these texts served one person's own interest primarily, they could nevertheless be borrowed and copied by others, not only after the death but even during the originator's lifetime. Assuming these tools were helpful for those who created them, such usefulness actually extend to other scholars, and lead to the preservation of the manuscripts which contained them. Mainly conceived for personal use, these tools survived their originators and came to be part of their literary archive or *nachlass*. Thanks to them we have a much improved understanding of how these medieval scholars addressed the issue of information overload.

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