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An Unpublished Decree of Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī Regarding Administrative Matters in the Port of al-Ṭūr

INTRODUCTION

As I emphasized in my “state of the art” article on Mamluk documentary studies twenty years ago, historians of the Mamluk period who express frustration about the dearth of available archives should prioritize studying the existing documents.¹ In my assessment of the collections that contain documents from the Mamluk period, I indicated that documents held by museum collections are seldom catalogued. I also briefly referenced the Oriental Institute in Chicago (now the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures) for two documents that had already been published.² During a research visit to Chicago in 2013, I was gratified to observe that the Museum’s collections included four rolls identified as originating from the Mamluk period. Of these, two were unpublished. Of particular interest is document no. E13788, which merited further attention due to its contents.³ The roll contains a decree that was issued by the sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī on 28 Jumādā I 907/9 December 1501. The decree was addressed to the administrators of the port of al-Ṭūr in the Sinai Peninsula.

The earliest references to the port of al-Ṭūr in both narrative and administrative sources date back to the late seventh/thirteenth century. It appears that the location was utilized intermittently by merchants and pilgrims, with the ports of ‘Aydhāb and al-Quṣayr handling the majority of the maritime traffic from and to Egypt. In the ninth/fifteenth century, the port in question experienced a period of significant growth and prominence, particularly in the latter half of the century, at the expense of the two aforementioned ports. This development is corroborated by the documents preserved in the archives of the St. Catherine Monastery. The preservation of these documents at the monastery

The author would like to thank the authorities of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures (Chicago), particularly Helen McDonald, Registrar, and Susan Allison, Associate Registrar, for allowing him to publish this document, letting him consult it, and for providing him with a reproduction.

¹Frédéric Bauden, “Mamluk Era Documentary Studies: The State of the Art,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 9, no. 1 (2005): 15–60.

²*Ibid.*, 34.

³In June 2014, I attended the First Conference of the School of Mamlūk Studies, held in Venice, where I presented a research paper based on this document. It was entitled “Bandar al-Ṭūr, a Harbor on the Red Sea and its Significance for the Mamluks.”



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not only demonstrates the significance of the connections between this institution and the port, but also illustrates the role of the monks in the management of the port through assets, including warehouses and storehouses, that they owned there.⁴

In what follows, the reader will find an edition with annotated translation of document no. E13788. This study is dedicated to Reuven Amitai, whose contribution to the field of Mamluk studies has been invaluable.

DESCRIPTION

The document (no. E13788) has been part of the holdings of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures (West Asia & North Africa)—previously known as the Oriental Institute—in Chicago since 1929. Prior to that date, it was in the possession of Bernhard Moritz (1859–1939), a German Orientalist who pursued his studies in Berlin until he graduated in 1882. In the period between 1883 and 1885, he undertook a journey to the Middle East. Upon his return, he assumed the role of professor of Arabic at the Seminar for Oriental Languages in the German capital, a position he held until his appointment as director of the Khedival Library in Cairo in 1896. He led this institution until 1911. At this juncture in his career, he returned to Berlin, where he was appointed director of the library of the Seminar for Oriental Languages until his retirement in 1924.⁵ During his tenures in Cairo and in Berlin, he continued to undertake research trips to Egypt and Syria, amassing material for his publications. During his travels in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, he was able to collect a considerable quantity of artifacts spanning from antiquity to the Islamic period. In 1925, he offered his collection for sale to James Henry Breasted, the founder of the Oriental Institute in Chicago. The handlist comprised over 350 items and included manuscripts in a range of languages, including Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Syriac, Ethiopian, Coptic, and Samaritan. It also encompassed documents on papyrus, parchment, and paper in Arabic, Coptic, and Samaritan, as well as Islamic bookbindings, Mesopotamian and Palestinian seals, clay stamps and tesserae from Egypt and Palmyra, Babylonian clay tablets, gold, silver, and bronze coins, and Arabic stone inscriptions. The negotiation process spanned several years. In 1929, the collection was

⁴A forthcoming article by the present author will examine the development of the port of al-Ṭūr in the Mamluk period based on an analysis of documentary, administrative, and narrative sources.

⁵On Moritz, see Helmut Scheel, “Bernhard Moritz,” *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 15 (1939): 391–92.



finally procured for the sum of \$12,500.⁶ The collection was received by the museum in March of the same year.⁷

The significance of some of the Islamic artifacts drew the attention of scholars in Chicago, and some of them formed the basis of studies and doctoral dissertations. The three Arabic stone inscriptions were promptly studied and published following their arrival.⁸ In 1938, Nabia Abbott published her study of the manuscripts of the Quran.⁹ Approximately twenty years later, she followed suit with the Arabic papyri.¹⁰ The Islamic bookbindings constituted the focus of Gulnar Kheirallah Bosch's doctoral dissertation, which she defended in 1952.¹¹ In 1961, Miroslav Krek prepared a comprehensive catalog of the Arabic manuscripts, primarily sourced from the Moritz collection.¹²

During his tenure in Egypt, Moritz procured four scrolls from the Mamluk period, all of which were part of the sale concluded with the Oriental Institute. One of the four scrolls was published by Moritz, who identified it as a decree is-

⁶See John Carswell, "Introduction: The Moritz Collection," in *Islamic Bindings & Bookmaking: A Catalogue of an Exhibition, The Oriental Institute, The University of Chicago, May 18–August 18, 1981*, ed. Gulnar Bosch, John Carswell, and Guy Petherbridge (Chicago, 1981), ix–x.

⁷The correspondence between Breasted and Moritz, along with the handlist and other material related to the purchase, can be consulted at the Museum Archives: Directors Correspondence: Moritz, B., Folders 10 and 12. It can be established that Moritz did not sell his entire collection to the Oriental Institute Museum. Some objects, including some Islamic bookbindings, were given or sold to the Islamische Museum in Berlin. Other bookbindings were sold to Chester Beatty Library in Dublin and to an Italian private collector from Milan. See Carswell, "Introduction," xi.

⁸William M. Randall, "Three Engraved Stones from the Moritz Collection at the University of Chicago," in *The Macdonald Presentation Volume: A Tribute to Duncan Black Macdonald, Consisting of Articles by Former Students, Presented to Him on His Seventieth Birthday, April 9, 1933* (Princeton, 1933; reprint New York, 1968), 327–30. Some of the readings were revised by Martin Sprengling, "The Arabian Nights Stone of the Oriental Institute," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 51, no. 4 (1935): 217–32; idem, "Arabic Tombstones in the Oriental Institute: A New Reading," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 52, no. 3 (1936): 192–95. The three inscriptions are also to be found in the *Thesaurus d'épigraphie islamique*, dir. Ludvik Kalus, co-dir. Frédéric Bauden, dev. Frédérique Soudan (Genève and Liège, 2024), records nos. 99, 40633, 40727 (<https://www.epigraphie-islamique.uliege.be>).

⁹Nabia Abbott, *The Rise of the North Arabic Script and Its Qur'ānic Development, with a Full Description of the Qur'ān Manuscripts in the Oriental Institute* (Chicago, 1939).

¹⁰Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri, I: Historical Texts* (Chicago, 1957); idem, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri, II: Qur'ānic Commentary and Tradition* (Chicago, 1967). Papyri from other collections were also included.

¹¹Gulnar Kheirallah Bosch, "Islamic Bookbindings: Twelfth to Seventeenth Centuries" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1952).

¹²Miroslav Krek, *A Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in the Oriental Institute of Chicago* (New Haven, 1961). Fifty-nine manuscripts from the Moritz collection are listed.



sued by the Ottoman sultan Selīm (r. 918–26/1512–20) in favor of the Venetian merchants, dated 923/1517.¹³ The item is currently preserved under the catalog number E13789. As Gladys Frantz-Murphy has recently demonstrated, the document was in fact issued by the last Mamluk sultan, Ṭūmānbāy (r. 922–23/1516–17), during his continued resistance against the Ottoman army from a base situated within the Delta region. It may, therefore, be considered one of the final documents of the Mamluk sultanate.¹⁴ A second scroll (no. E13787) comprises a decree issued by Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī in 919/1513 and directed towards various officials operating at Tripoli regarding commercial practices associated with Frankish merchants. The text was published by Donald S. Richards in 1999.¹⁵ In addition to the third document at the core of the present study, there remains one unpublished Mamluk scroll dated to al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy's reign (no. E13786).¹⁶

The provenance of these four documents is uncertain, and Moritz did not provide any clue as to where he had found them. Nevertheless, it is evident that they were obtained during his tenure as director of the Khedival Library. Document no. E13789 was already in his possession when he published it in 1915.¹⁷ In 1918, Moritz published a study on the Monastery of St. Catherine, wherein he edited several documents to which he had access during his visit there.¹⁸ It is not possible to ascertain whether the acquisition of these documents and his visit to the monastery were mere coincidence.¹⁹ As Richards observed in his analysis

¹³ Bernhard Moritz, "Ein Firman des Sultans Selim I für die Venezianer vom Jahre 1517," in *Festschrift Eduard Sachau zum siebenzigsten Geburtstage gewidmet von Freunden und Schülern*, ed. Gotthold Weil (Berlin, 1915), 422–43. A German translation of the decree was prepared by Martin Hartmann, "Das Privileg Selims I für die Venezianer von 1517," in *Orientalistische Studien: Fritz Hommel zum sechzigsten Geburtstag* (Leipzig, 1918), 201–22.

¹⁴ Gladys Frantz-Murphy, "Negotiating the Last Mamluk-Venetian Commercial Decree (922–3/1516–7): Commercial Liability from the Sixth/Twelfth to the Early Tenth/Sixteenth Century," in *Mamluk Cairo, a Crossroads for Embassies: Studies on Diplomacy and Diplomatics*, ed. Frédéric Bauden and Malika Dekkiche (Leiden, 2019), 741–81.

¹⁵ Donald S. Richards, "A Late Mamluk Document Concerning Frankish Commercial Practice in Tripoli," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 62 (1999): 21–35.

¹⁶ It is a letter addressed to the governor of Alexandria and dated 892/1487. It will be the subject of a forthcoming article by the present author.

¹⁷ See note 14. now note 13

¹⁸ Bernhard Moritz, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Sinaiklosters im Mittelalter nach Arabischen Quellen* (Berlin, 1918).

¹⁹ It is not my intention to suggest that he obtained them through illicit means. Nevertheless, it is useful to mention the case of an Arabic manuscript currently held by the Chester Beatty Library (MS Arabic 4113). The text, "Nathr al-jumān fī tarājim al-a'yān," is attributed to a certain Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Muqrī' al-Fayyūmī (d. after 770/1368). The manuscript bears seal imprints of the Khedival Library in Cairo (see part 1, fols. 2a, 90b, 422b, and part 2, fols. 1a, 278a, 326b, particularly part 2, fol. 278a, where the inscription around the center is still



of document no. E13787, the link to be established between it and the monastery is tenuous at best. Nevertheless, three documents pertinent to affairs in Tripoli are extant in the monastery archives, although only one pertains to a *waqf* property of the monastery in Tripoli.²⁰ This indicates that the monastery's archives may contain documents that initially appear to be unrelated to the monks. It can, however, be reasonably assumed that the monastery's authorities were likely involved in some capacity, as evidenced by the document published here.

Be that as it may, the document under consideration is currently located in Chicago, where it can readily be accessed. The scroll (Ar. *darj*) has a total length of 2,300 mm. As is customary for this format, it is composed of sheets (*waṣl*)—in this case ten—that are glued one below the other over a narrow surface area (a few millimeters). The width of the sheets exhibits a range of 160–164 mm, with the majority of them measuring 164 mm (see Table 1). The length of the sheets varies between 236 and 240 mm. The initial sheet exhibits slight damage, with the upper right corner torn apart, resulting in the loss of approximately one-third of the text located at the top. Two sheets, the third and the fourth, are notably smaller in size, measuring 234–230 and 224–216 mm respectively. The scroll terminates with a full sheet: the remainder of the scroll was excised just below the section where the subsequent sheet was affixed. This procedure was carried out at the chancery. The paper is a typical oriental paper (without watermark) with thick laid lines (20 laid lines occupy a space of 37 mm). The chain lines, which are barely visible, are parallel to the text and grouped in pairs. They are spaced 12 mm apart within the group and 47 mm apart between groups.

legible: “Bibliothèque khédiviale au Caire”), together with shelf numbers that are consistent with those typically used by this library: “nimrah khuṣūṣīyah 1745 tāriḫ, nimrah ‘umūmīyah 32863” (see part 2, fols. 1a, 278a). At the end of part 2, a brief letter dated 4 June 1900 and signed by Bernhard Moritz can be found: “Dear Guest, I send you herewith in 2 parcels your Arabic manuscript, with which we have finished a month ago. I hope to see you here before starting. Yours truly, B. Moritz.” A copy of the aforementioned manuscript is housed in the Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah in Cairo, where it is catalogued under the shelf mark 1746 tāriḫ, i.e., it was shelved immediately after the original manuscript. This copy was created by multiple copyists and is dated 1307/1889–90, which preceded the appointment of Moritz as director of the Khedival Library by six years. See *Fihris al-kutub al-‘arabīyah al-mawjūdah bi-al-dār* (Cairo, 1924–63), 5:383. The addressee of Moritz’s letter was Arthur Rhuvon Guest (1870–1946), a prominent British Arabist. Guest publicly disclosed his purchase in 1901, indicating that it occurred in Egypt between 1898 and 1900. See A. R. Guest, “Description of an Arabic Manuscript Bought in Egypt 1898–1900 A.D.,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 33 (1901): 91–95. In light of the numerous seal imprints and shelf numbers, Guest could not claim to be unaware of the manuscript’s provenance. The manuscript was purchased by Chester Beatty after Guest’s death.

²⁰Richards, “A Late Mamluk Document,” 21.



Sheet no.	Width (mm)		Height (mm)		Sheet no.	Width (mm)		Height (mm)	
1	Top	74	Left	237	6	Top	164	Left	240
	Bottom	162	Right	167		Bottom	164	Right	240
2	Top	163	Left	234	7	Top	164	Left	240
	Bottom	160	Right	230		Bottom	164	Right	240
3	Top	160	Left	224	8	Top	164	Left	239
	Bottom	162	Right	216		Bottom	164	Right	239
4	Top	164	Left	239	9	Top	164	Left	238
	Bottom	164	Right	239		Bottom	164	Right	238
5	Top	164	Left	240	10	Top	164	Left	236
	Bottom	164	Right	239		Bottom	164	Right	237

Table 1. Measurements of the scroll. Measurements of the width were taken at the top and bottom of each sheet. Measurements of the height were taken at the left-hand and right-hand parts of each sheet.

The text is written in what appears to be the calligraphic style known as *riqāʿ*. For examples of comparison, one may refer to the third volume of al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshá*.²¹ The layout of the invocation (*basmalah*; see fig. 2) can be compared with the model provided by al-Qalqashandī for this calligraphic style, which serves to corroborate the identification.²² The *alif* can be linked to the following letter, but this remains exceptional. While diacritical points are rarely absent, the text is otherwise devoid of any other orthoepic signs (short vowels, absence of a vowel, doubling of a consonant). The fifth and seventh lines are the only exceptions.

The text is arranged in parallel lines with a slight curve towards the end, with the majority of the text separated from the right edge of the document by a space of 33–35 mm on average.²³ This is not the case for the initial four lines, where the text is written from one side to the other, and for lines 5–7 and 27–34, where the text is centered. The line spacing is 65–75 mm on average, with the ex-

²¹ Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshá fī šināʿat al-inshāʾ* (Cairo, 1913–19; repr. 1963), 3:119–31.

²² Ibid., 3:142 (closer to the first example on the page indicated).

²³ For letters, ibid., 6:195 and 314, recommends leaving a blank space in the right margin corresponding roughly to one fourth or one third of the width the scroll. This is not the case here, but our document is a decree.



ception of the first four lines, which are narrower in width. In accordance with the prescribed regulations, the invocation is situated beneath the junction between the second and third sheets. The sheets that precede the one bearing the invocation were designated by the secretaries as the *ṭurrah*. Depending on the nature of the document, it could consist of several sheets that were left blank. In the case of our document, the *ṭurrah* is composed of two sheets.²⁴ At the top of the *ṭurrah*, the scribe inscribed a generic indication of the subsequent order's nature and intended recipients. A considerable amount of space was allocated between the second and third lines for the sultan's signature (*ʿalāmah*), which, in the case of decrees like this one, corresponded to his name. The document was signed by the sultan, thereby attesting to its legitimacy. Aside from a small section at the top of the scroll, on the right, which was torn apart, thereby destroying the beginning of the first three lines, the document is, generally speaking, in a satisfactory state of preservation. The missing section can be reconstructed on the basis of other examples of similar decrees.

ANALYSIS

The decree (*marsūm*) bears the date 28 Jumādā I 907/9 December 1501. It was issued in response to a request from the personnel of the port of al-Ṭūr, whose wages were paid from the revenues of the aforementioned port. They appealed to the executive secretary (*dawādār kabīr*) Uzdamur (min ʿAlī Bāy al-Ashrafī), requesting that henceforth their primary representative on all matters pertaining to the revenues generated by the camel rental (*mutaḥaṣṣil al-tarkīb*) and other activities connected with the sultan's treasury (*al-dhakhīrah al-sharīfah*) be a certain Naṣr ibn Badr the Melkite Christian. The decree is addressed to the officials of the port, the inspector (*nāẓir*), the superintendent (*al-shādd*), and the administrators (*al-mutaḥaddithūn*), who are requested to comply with the instructions sent to them by the inspector of the Privy, who was also the agent of the State Treasury (*wakīl bayt al-māl*). It says that it is imperative that no impediment be placed in the path of Naṣr ibn Badr, acting in his capacity as the designated representative, in his efforts to collect the aforementioned revenues, and further states that, in accordance with the requirements of his function, he is obliged to maintain the accounts in a timely manner, ensuring the veracity of the amounts received and facilitating their disbursement to the appropriate recipients.

²⁴ On the *ṭurrah*, see Jørgen S. Nielsen, "A Note on the Origin of the *Ṭurra* in Early Mamlūk Chancery Practice," *Der Islam* 57 (1980): 288–92.



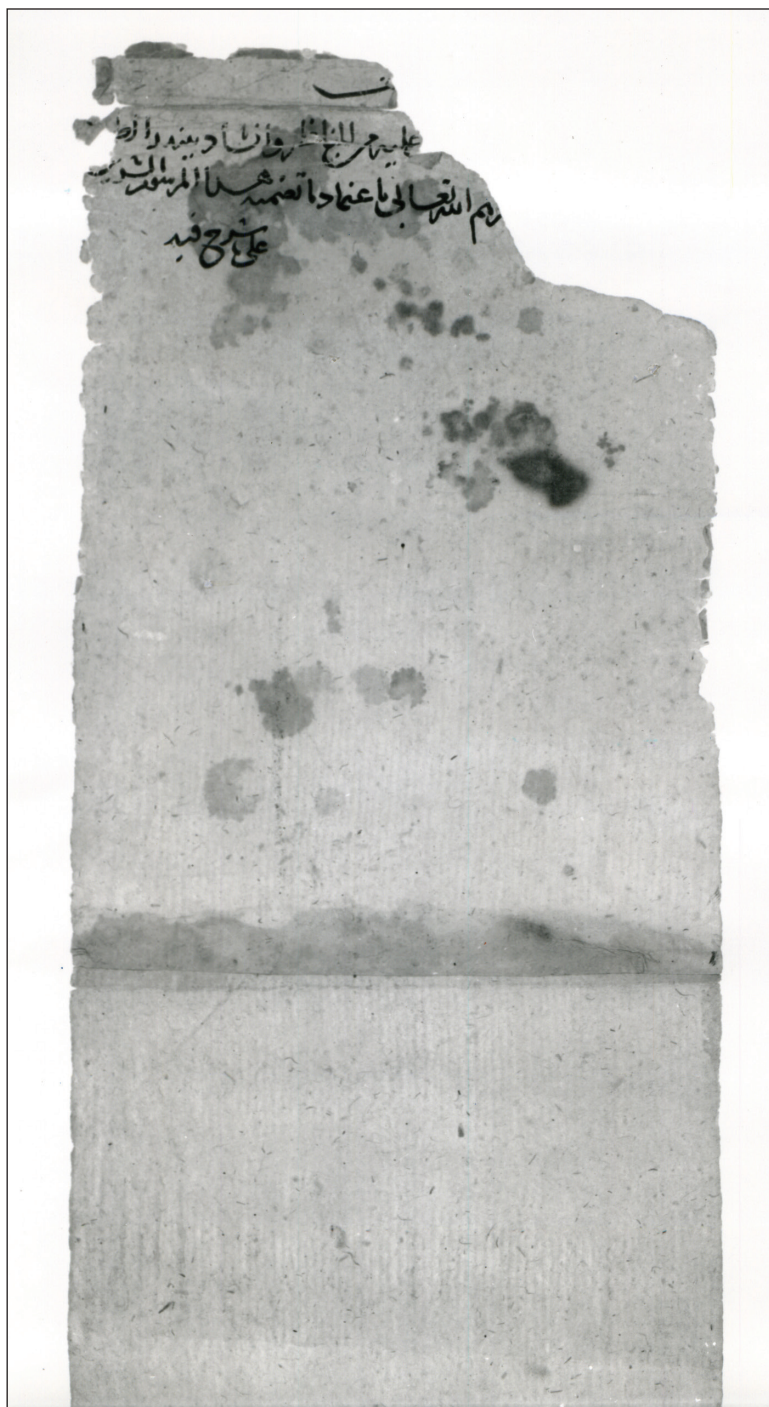


Figure 1: The decree (sheets 1–2) (ISAC, no. E13788). Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, Chicago.



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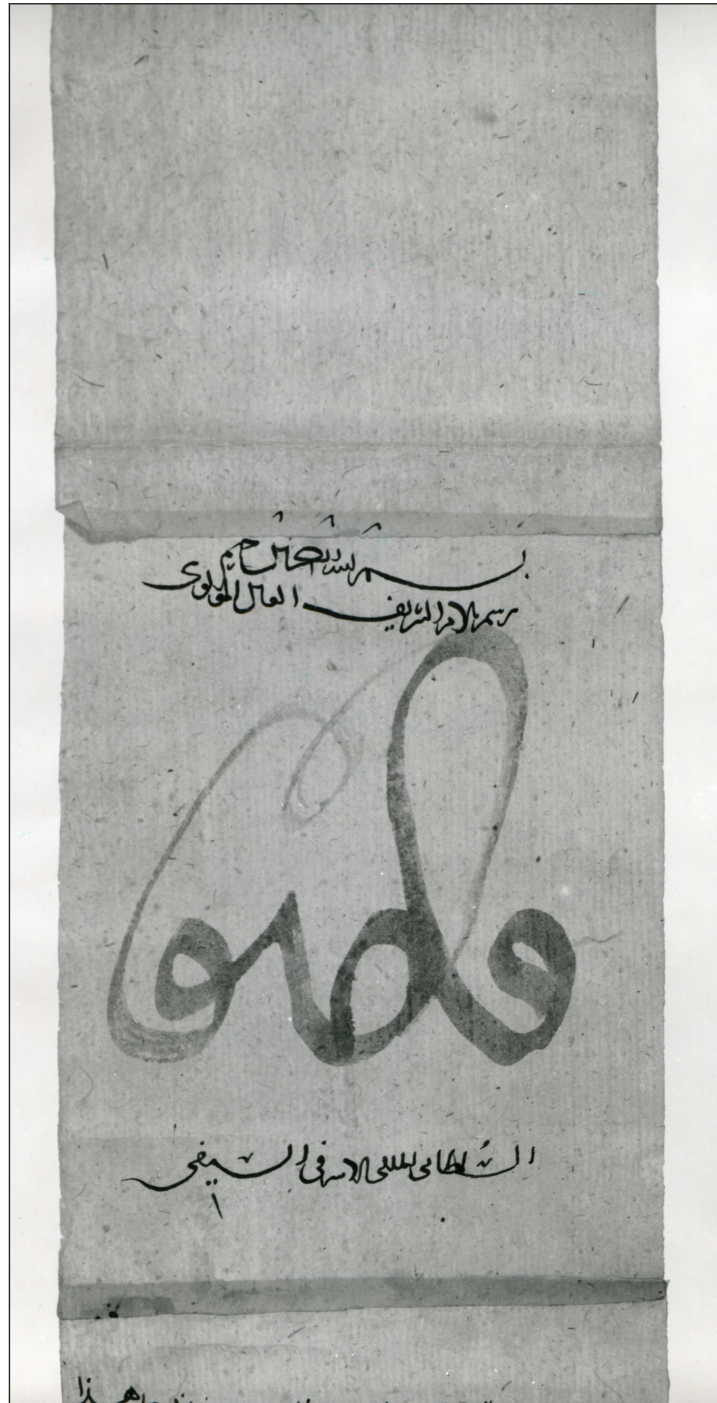


Figure 2: The decree (sheets 2–3) (ISAC, no. E13788). Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, Chicago.



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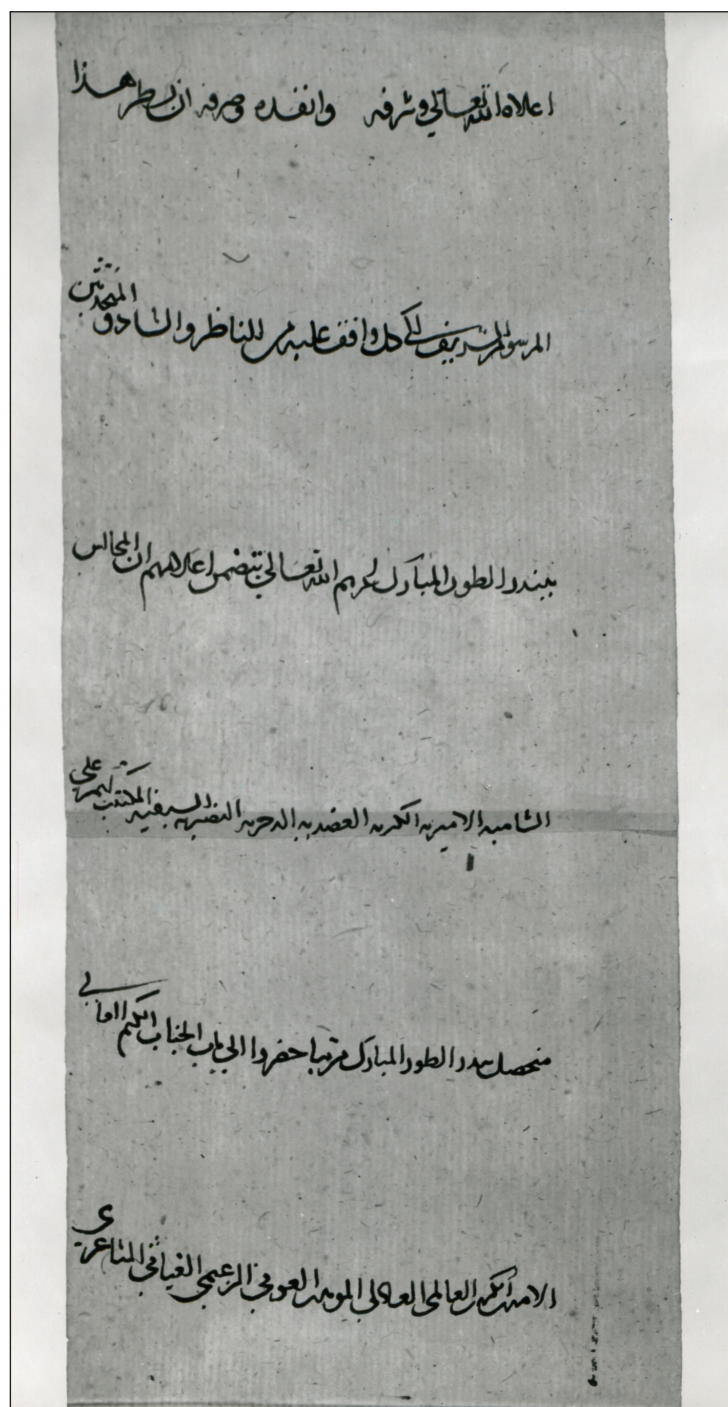


Figure 3: The decree (sheets 4–5) (ISAC, no. E13788). Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, Chicago.



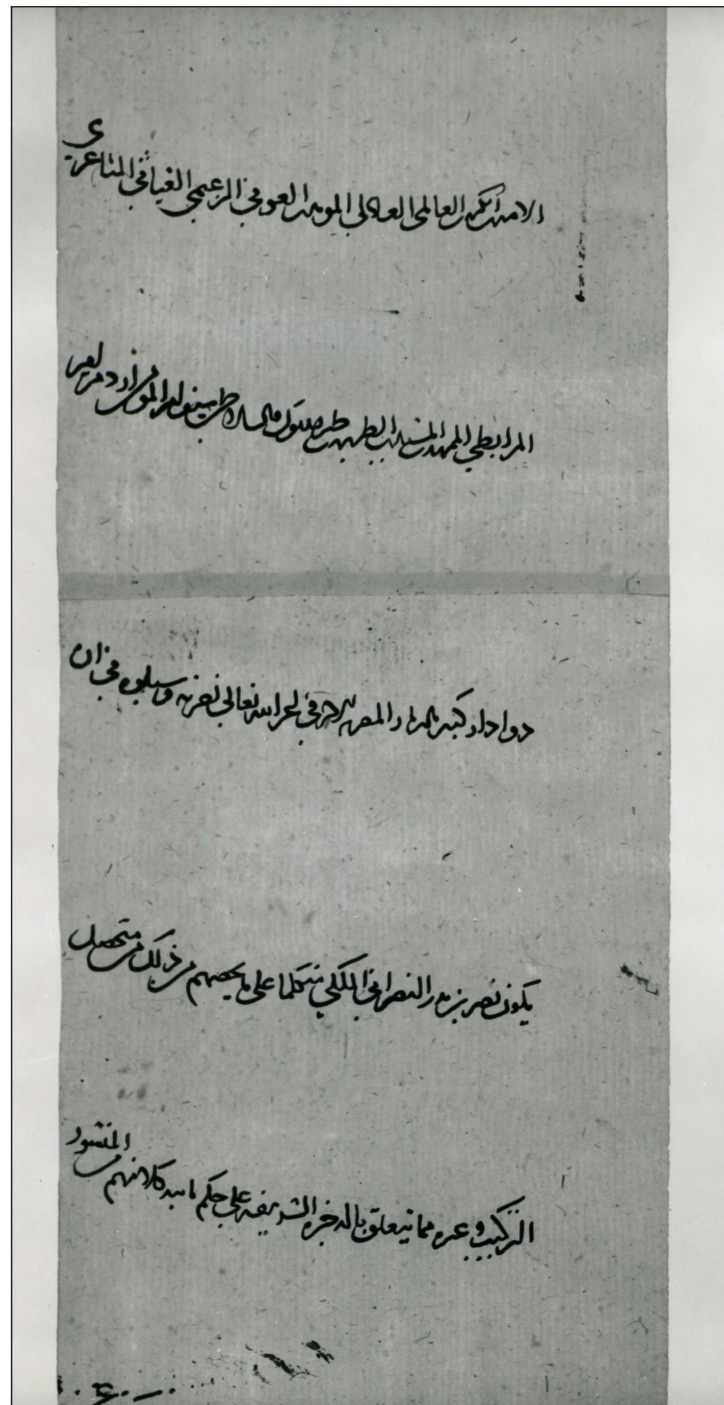


Figure 4: The decree (sheets 5–6) (ISAC, no. E13788). Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, Chicago.



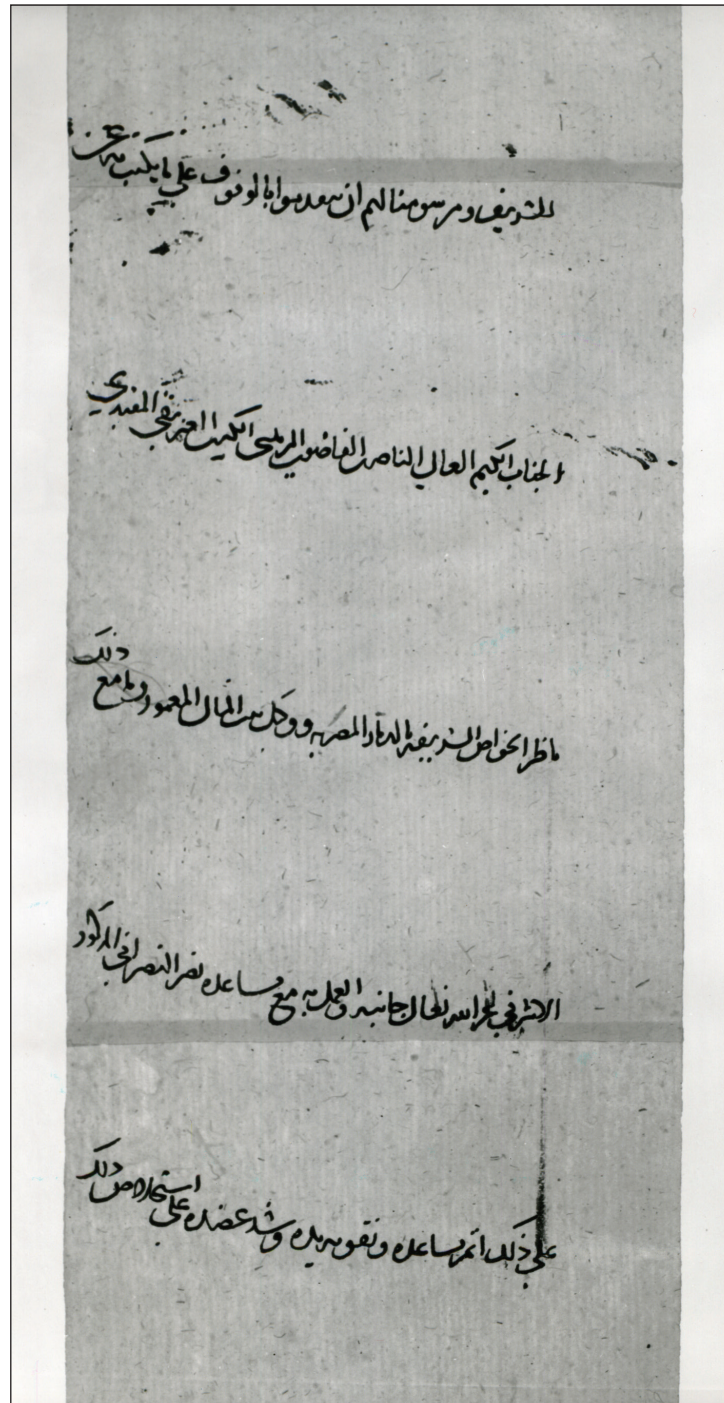


Figure 5: The decree (sheets 7–8) (ISAC, no. E13788). Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, Chicago.



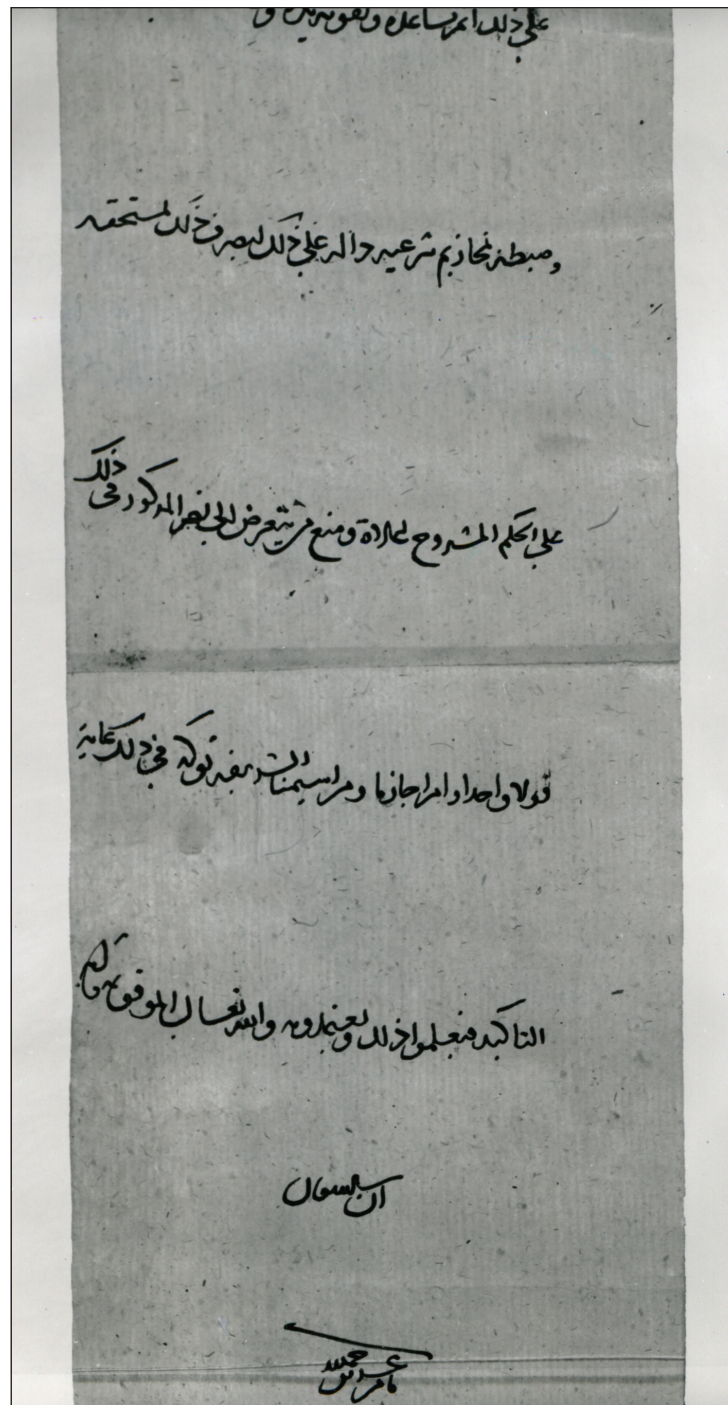


Figure 6: The decree (sheets 8–9) (ISAC, no. E13788). Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, Chicago.



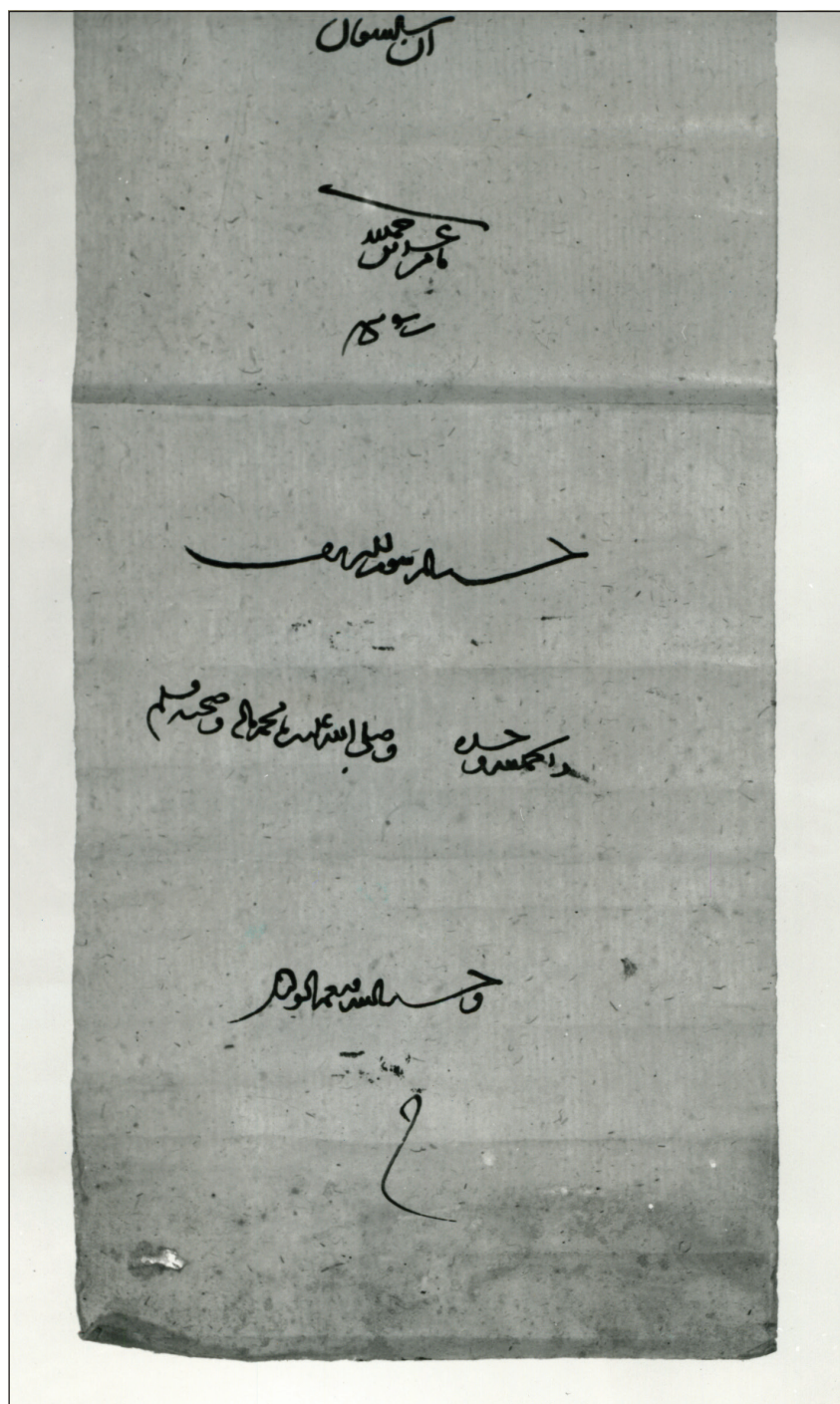


Figure 7: The decree (sheets 9–10) (ISAC, no. E13788). Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, Chicago.



EDITION

Recto

١. [الاسم الشريف]
٢. [مرسوم شريف بان يتقدم كل واقف عليه من الناظر والشاد ببندر الط[ور]
٣. [المبارك ... اعزهم الله تعالى باعتماد ما تضمنه هذا المرسوم الشريف]
٤. [والعمل به] على ما شرح فيه
٥. بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
٦. رسم بالامر الشريف العالي المولوي

قانسوه

٧. السلطاني الملكي الاشرفي السيفي
٨. اعلاه الله تعالى وشرفه وانفده وصرفه ان يسطر هذا
٩. المرسوم الشريف الى كل واقف عليه من الناظر والشاد والمتحدثين
١٠. ببندر الطور المبارك اعزهم الله تعالى يتضمن اعلامهم ان المجالس
١١. السامية الاميرية الكبيرة العضدية الذخيرة النصيرية السيفية المكتتب لهم على
١٢. متحصل بندر الطور المبارك مرتبا حضروا الى باب الجنب الكريم العالي
١٣. الاميري الكبير العالمي العادلي المويدي العوني الزعيمي الغياثي المئاغري
١٤. المرابطي الممهدي المشيدي الظهيري ظهر الملوك والسلطين سيف امير المومنين ازدمر امير
١٥. دوادار كبير بالديار المصرية الاشرفي اعز الله تعالى نصرته وسيلوه في ان
١٦. يكون نصر بن بدر النصراني الملكي متكلما على ما يخصهم من ذلك من متحصل
١٧. التركيب وغيره مما يتعلق بالذخيرة الشريفة على حكم ما بيد كلا منهم من المنشور
١٨. الشريف ومرسومنا لهم ان يتقدموا بالوقوف على ما يكتب به عن
١٩. الجنب الكريم العالي الناصري القاضي الرئيسي الكبير العريقي المفيدي
٢٠. ناظر الخواص الشريفة بالديار المصرية ووكيل بيت المال المعمور وما مع ذلك
٢١. الاشرفي اعز الله تعالى جانبه والعمل به مع مساعدة نصر النصراني المذكور
٢٢. على ذلك اتم مساعدة وتقوية يده وشده عضده على استخلاص ذلك
٢٣. وضبطه بمخازيم شرعية دالة على ذلك ليصرف ذلك لمستحقه
٢٤. على الحكم المشروح اعلاه ومنع من يتعرض الى نصر المذكور في ذلك
٢٥. قولاً واحداً وامراً جازماً ومراسيمنا الشريفة تؤكد في ذلك غاية
٢٦. التاكيد فيعلموا ذلك ويعتمدونه والله تعالى الموفق بمنه وكرمه



٢٧.	ان شا الله تعالى
٢٨.	كتب في
٢٩.	ثامن عشرين جمادى الاولى
٣٠.	سنة سبع وتسعمائة
٣١.	حسب المرسوم الشريف
٣٢.	والحمد لله وحده وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد واله وصحبه وسلم
٣٣.	وحسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل
٣٤.	ح

DIACRITICAL DOTS

Recto

(١) [الشريف؛ ٢] عليه، من، الناظر، والشاد، ببندر؛ ٣) تعالى، باعتماد، تضمه، الشريف[ف]؛ ٤) شرح، فيه؛ ٥) بسم، الرحيم؛ ٦) الشريف؛ ٧) السيفي؛ ٨) تعالى، وشرفه، وانفده، وصرفه، ان، يسطر، هذا؛ ٩) الشريف، واقف، عليه، الناظر، والشاد، والمتحدثين؛ ١٠) ببندر، المبارك، تعالى، يتضمن، ان؛ ١١) الساميه، الاميره، العضديه، النصيره، السيفيه، المكتتب، علي؛ ١٢) متحصل، المبارك، مرتبا، حضروا، الي، ناب، الجنا ب، العالي؛ ١٣) العادلي، العوني، الزعيمي، الغياثي، المئاعري؛ ١٤) المرابطي، المشدي، الطهيري، سيف، ازدمر، امير؛ ١٥) كبير، الاسرفي، تعالى، نصرته، وسيلوه، في، ان؛ ١٦) يكون، نصر، بن، النصراني، الملكي، متكلما، يحصرهم، من، ذلك، متحصل؛ ١٧) التركيب، يتعلق، بالدخيره، الشريفه، علي، بيد، منهم، المنشور؛ ١٨) الشريف، ومرسومنا، ان، بالوقوف، علي، يكتب، عن؛ ١٩) الجنا ب، الكريم، العالي، الناصري، القاضي، الكيري، العريقي، المفيدي؛ ٢٠) باظر، الخواص، الشريفه، المصريه، ذلك؛ ٢١) الاشرفي، تعالى، جانبه، به، نصر، النصراني؛ ٢٢) علي، ذلك، اتم، وتقويه، يده، وشد، عضده، علي، استخلاص؛ ٢٣) وصبطه، بمخازيم، شرعيه، علي، ذلك، ليصرف، ذلك، لمستحقه؛ ٢٤) علي، المشروح، ومنع، من، يتعرض، الي، نصر، ذلك؛ ٢٥) قولاً، جازماً، ومراسيمنا، الشريفه، تؤكد في، عاية؛ ٢٦) التاكيد، فيعلموا، ذلك، ويعتمدونه، تعالى، الموفق؛ ٢٧) ان؛ ٣٢) وصلي.

TRANSLATION

Recto

1. The noble name
2. Noble decree to the effect that all who may peruse it, the inspector and the superintendent in the blessed port of al-Ṭūr
3. ...—may God the Sublime fortify them—should command that reliance be placed on the contents of this noble decree
4. and that action should be taken accordingly, following the details given therein.
5. In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate.



6. The noble order of the high lord,

Qānṣūh
7. the sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Sayf al-Dīn
8. —may God the Sublime exalt and ennoble him, grant him the power to perform and confer on him unrestricted power—is decreed so that
9. this noble decree is drawn up to the effect that anyone from among the inspector, the superintendent, the administrators
10. in the blessed port of al-Ṭūr—may God the Sublime fortify them—be informed of its contents which are [as follows].
11. The exalted Presences, the great amirs, the strong arms, the treasures, the supporters, depending on Sayf al-Dīn [Qānṣūh], for whom wages are recorded as being taken from
12. the revenues of the blessed port of al-Ṭūr, presented themselves to the gate of the gracious and high Honor,
13. the great amir, the knowledgeable, the just, the supporter, the succor, the leader, the helper, the protector of the frontier regions,
14. the defender of the border fortifications, the facilitator, the builder, the backer, assistant of the rulers and the sultans, sword of the Commander of the Faithful, Uzdamur, chief
15. executive secretary in the Egyptian lands, al-Ashrafī—may God the Sublime strengthen his support. They conveyed him a request to the effect that
16. Naṣr ibn Badr the Melkite Christian will be their administrator for anything that regards them in terms of the revenues
17. generated by the lending [of camels] and other things that are connected with the noble [sultan's] Treasury in compliance with the noble diploma that is in the hand of each of them.
18. Our order to them [the authorities of the port] is that they command that what is written on behalf
19. of the gracious and high Presence, the helper, the judge, the great chief, of noble descent, the beneficial,
20. inspector of the noble Privy in the Egyptian lands, the agent of the thriving State Treasury, and the like,
21. al-Ashrafī—may God the Sublime strengthen his presence—be read and acted upon together with helping the aforementioned Naṣr the Christian
22. with this in the utmost manner, by emboldening him and bolstering him to claim the payment of this
23. and seize it with [the provision of] legal fiscal accounts proving this so that he can disburse it to the one who is entitled to it



24. according to the rule detailed above and by restraining all who could trespass against the abovementioned Naṣr in this [regard]
 25. unanimously and decisively. Our noble decrees lay on this the fullest
 26. emphasis. Let them take cognizance of this and place reliance on it. God is the One who gives success by His grace and favor.
 27. If God the Sublime wills.
 28. Written on
 29. the twenty-eighth of Jumādā I
 30. in the year nine hundred and seven [9 December 1501].
 31. According to [the terms of] the noble decree.
 32. Praise be to God alone, and His blessing be upon our lord, Muḥammad, his family and his Companions, and His peace.
 33. God is our sufficiency and an excellent Steward is He!
 34. ḥāʾ.

NOTES

- L. 1. **al-ism al-sharīf**: this is a reference to the fact that the sultan's signature (*alāmah*) is added by the sultan himself between lines 6 and 7.²⁵ Even if the majority of this part of the text is lost due to the tear, it can be restored thanks to similar documents from the Monastery of St. Catherine.²⁶
- L. 2. **marsūm sharīf bi-an yataqaddam**: this part of the text, which is missing due to the tear affecting the top right corner of the scroll, can be retrieved by comparison with other examples of decrees.²⁷
- L. 3. **al-mubārak...**: the proposed epithet for the port of al-Ṭūr is consistent with the one used for it in the text (see l. 10). It seems that there was still room for one additional word, for which no proposed hypothesis can be formulated.
- L. 4. **wa-al-ʿamal bi-hi**: this is also a standard formula for decrees and it can be restored accordingly.²⁸
- L. 9. **al-nāẓir**: Ibn Iyās states that the office of inspector of the port of al-Ṭūr had been granted to ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Ḥasan al-Imām in Ramaḍān 906/ March–April 1501, but it is impossible to ascertain whether or not he still

²⁵ See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*, 13:161.

²⁶ See, for a document from 910/1504, Hans Ernst, *Die mamlukischen Sultansurkunden des Sinai-Klosters* (Wiesbaden, 1960), 210 (no. LVIII).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.



held this position when this document was issued.²⁹ This same person was also appointed inspector of the Privy sometime later.³⁰

al-mutaḥaddithīn: the verb *taḥaddatha* followed by the preposition *fī* or *‘alā* takes the meaning “to have authority, inspection, jurisdiction over something.”³¹ Its use is largely attested in Mamluk sources, mainly from the ninth/fifteenth century, both in documentary and narrative sources. Among the documents held at the Monastery of St. Catherine, its first occurrence (the *maṣḍar taḥadduth*) is attested in a decree dated 863/1459.³² In another document from the same collection, dated 911/1506, the term *al-mutaḥaddithūn* is used to refer to office holders who were active in the port of al-Ṭūr.³³ In the narrative sources, the same word is combined with a wide variety of terms indicating things to be managed (endowed lands, revenues, offices, regions).³⁴ The exact function of this category of office holders is hard to define. In al-Ṭūr, they probably were at the lower level of the administrative ladder as they are mentioned after the inspector (*nāẓir*) and the superintendent (*shādd*), who supervised the activities of the port and were assisted in this by various administrators (*mutaḥaddithūn*). The same person could be appointed to the two functions of inspector (*nāẓar*) and administrator (*taḥadduth*).³⁵

- L. 14. **Uzdamur:** the person who occupied the position of chief executive secretary (*dawādār kabīr*) was named Uzdamur min ‘Alī Bāy al-Ashrafī. He had been appointed to this position on Thursday 14 Muḥarram 907/30 July 1501, a few months before the document was issued, in replacement of Miṣr Bāy.³⁶ He seems to have remained in this position continuously until his death, which occurred on 15 Jumādā I 913/22 September 1507.³⁷ As indicated in another decree issued in 910/1505, the monks of St. Catherine

²⁹ Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-zuhūr fī waqā’i’ al-duhūr*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā (Beirut, 1960–75), 3:474.

³⁰ Ibid., 4:22; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān wa-wafayāt al-shuyūkh wa-al-aqrān*, ed. ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salām Tadmurī (Sidon and Beirut, 1999), 2:140.

³¹ Reinart P. A. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* (Leiden, 1881), 1:257.

³² Ernst, *Die mamlukischen Sultansurkunden*, 134 (no. XXVII, ll. 15 and 30).

³³ Ibid., 222 (no. LXIII, l. 11).

³⁴ See the detailed list in Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-zuhūr, al-fahāris*, 2:349–53.

³⁵ Ernst, *Die mamlukischen Sultansurkunden*, 144 (no. XXX, l. 9): in this case, it is the patriarch who is designated as the inspector and administrator of some of the endowments held by the monks of St. Catherine.

³⁶ Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-zuhūr*, 4:18 (ll. 1–2); Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān*, 2:133.

³⁷ Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-zuhūr*, 4:119 (l. 19)–420 (l. 5). However, the information provided by Ibn Iyās is contradicted by documentary evidence. Decrees related to the Monastery of St. Catherine show that, from the year 911/1506, the position of chief executive secretary was held by



regarded themselves as being under his protection, which indicates that the monastery and its possessions, including those at the port of al-Ṭūr, were placed under his direct supervision.³⁸

- L. 16. **al-malakī**: the epithet, following *al-naṣrānī* (the Christian), should not be understood as the usual one linked to the sultan, but rather as meaning “the Melkite.” It is used in some documents of the Monastery of St. Catherine together with *al-yaʿqūbī* (the Jacobite).³⁹ No information could be found in the documentary and narrative sources about Naṣr ibn Badr.

mutakalliman: the word is synonymous with *mutaḥaddith*.⁴⁰

- L. 17. **al-tarkīb**: all the diacritical dots are indicated in the document, which leaves little doubt about its correct reading. The second verbal form *rakkaba* can mean “to assemble different parts into one piece.” It is known that boats could be transported and assembled for placement at sea, and the verb *rakkaba* was used to designate this operation.⁴¹ Nevertheless, this is not the meaning that was chosen here as there is no evidence to suggest that boat assembly was a regular activity in al-Ṭūr, nor that it generated a revenue. Furthermore, it can by no means be interpreted as being a reference to the loading or unloading of the boats, an activity that was expressed through the verbs *shaḥana* and *wasāqa*. Preference has thus been given to another meaning of the verb: “to lend a horse/a camel to someone.”⁴² Goods unloaded in al-Ṭūr were then transported on the backs of pack animals.

Ṭūmān Bāy, the future sultan. See Ernst, *Die mamlukischen Sultansurkunden*, 224 (no. LXIII, year 911/1506), 228 (no. LXV, year 912/1506), 232 (no. LXVI, year 913/1507).

³⁸ Ernst, *Die mamlukischen Sultansurkunden*, 216 (no. LX, ll. 16–8: *wa-annahum jārin fi ḥimāyat al-janāb...Uzdamur*). This is confirmed by a later decree dated one year later: *ibid.*, 224 (l. 24: *kawn anna al-dayr al-madhkūr mashmūl bi-naḥarihi*).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 230 (no. LXV, l. 22: *al-ruhbān wa-al-ruhbānāt al-malakīyīn wa-al-yaʿqūbah*).

⁴⁰ Dozy, *Supplément*, 2:486.

⁴¹ In 707/1307–8, it was decided to send unassembled parts of boats to al-Ṭūr and Suez, where they were to be assembled with the intent to attack Rasulid Yemen. See Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikrah fi tārikh al-hijrah*, ed. Donald S. Richards (Beirut, 1998), 396 (*wa-tasfīrīhā ilā jihat al-Ṭūr wa-al-Suways ʿalā al-zahr li-turakkab hunāk wa-turmā al-baḥr wa-tusaffar*). It is only with the incursions of the Portuguese in the Red Sea from 1502 that we can discern a resurgence of the practice of sending boat parts to al-Ṭūr for assembly. This occurred in 1503 (see Marino Sanudo, *I diarii* [Venice, 1879–1903], 5:1000), in 1508 (*ibid.*, 8:80) and 1509 (see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 4:151). All of the aforementioned cases pertain to a period subsequent to the date of the document published here.

⁴² Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London and Edinburgh, 1863–93), 1142; J. G. Hava, *Arabic-English Dictionary* (Beirut, 1899), 258.



al-dhakhīrah: the term is here translated as “the [sultan’s] treasury.” In his study of the development and evolution of this term and the reality it covered over time in the Circassian period, Daisuke Igarashi stressed that it corresponded to the sultan’s sources of income, particularly various forms of official financial resources directly controlled by the sultan. At the outset of the Circassian period, the bureau’s remit initially encompassed the sultan’s leasehold lands.⁴³ However, during the reign of Qāyṭbāy, its scope was expanded to incorporate additional revenue streams, including those derived from the sultan’s transactions in spices, the proceeds of certain taxes, and other commercial activities.⁴⁴ As evidenced by the document, the sultan also had commercial interests in al-Ṭūr. This is corroborated by other documents housed in the archives of the St. Catherine Monastery. In a decree dated 891/1486, it is stated that a monk and his superior possessed storehouses (*ḥawāṣil*) that had been converted into endowments (*awqāf*) and where the spices belonging to the sultan’s treasury (*al-dhakhīrah al-sharīfah*) were stored. Furthermore, it is noted that some local Bedouins unjustly requested money that they were not entitled to receive.⁴⁵ In 892/1487, the storehouses owned by the monks, as well as by other individuals, including Muslims and Christians, in the port were requisitioned for the purpose of storing spices intended for the sultan’s treasury. This resulted in a loss of income from the rent, which was consequently suspended.⁴⁶ Such grievances were repeated almost annually. As early as 894/1489, another decree was issued in response to the monks’ repeated complaints that their courtyards and storehouses, which were typically used to store the spices for the sultan’s treasury, had been taken over by individuals who had stored wheat, beans, and flour in them without paying the rent.⁴⁷

mā bi-yad kullān minhum: the expression is recurrent in decrees, usually under the form ‘*alā ḥukm mā bi-yadi(hi, him) min al-marsūm/al-marāsīm*’.⁴⁸ It is therefore reasonable to conclude that a designation of a person or persons following the term *bi-yad* would be expected. The proposed reading is the most convincing, with *kullān* interpreted as a mistake for the correct

⁴³Daisuke Igarashi, “The Evolution of the Sultanīc Fisc and *al-Dhakhīrah* during the Circassian Mamluk Period,” *MSR* 14 (2010): 89.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 99–102.

⁴⁵Ernst, *Die mamlukischen Sultansurkunden*, 184 (no. XLVI).

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 188 (no. XLVIII).

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 196 (no. LI).

⁴⁸For instance, *ibid.*, 194 (l. 30).



kullin made by the scribe who wrote the decree. The word cannot be read as *kilá*, as no dual subject precedes in the text. Furthermore, *kilá* would not be followed by *min* in such circumstances (the correct formulation would be *kilāhumā/kilayhimā*, “each of the both of them”).⁴⁹

- L. 20. ***nāẓir al-khawāṣṣ...wa-wakīl bayt al-māl***: the person who held both the positions of inspector of the Privy and agent of the State Treasury in 907/1501 was Nāẓir al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf al-Ṣafadī al-Ḥanbalī (d. 4 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 907/15 June 1502).⁵⁰ He was first appointed agent of the State Treasury in 903/1498, after the death of the previous holder.⁵¹ He was dismissed sometime later until he was reinstated in the same position on 6 Shaʿbān 904/19 March 1499.⁵² The function of inspector of the Privy was added to that of agent of the State Treasury on 14 Jumādā I 907/25 November 1501, after he had offered sixty thousand dinars to secure it. His predecessor, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Ḥasan al-Imām, who seems to have also been inspector of the port of al-Ṭūr, was dismissed. His appointment took place two weeks before the document was issued.⁵³ He kept both positions until his death—apparently a suicide caused by the sultan’s request for more money.⁵⁴
- L. 23. ***bi-makhzīm***: this is the plural of *makhzūmah*, a type of document of account attested in various sources from the late Fatimid period. The term appears for the first time, both in its singular and plural forms, in al-Makhzūmī’s (d. 585/1189) *Al-Minhāj*. In a first occurrence, it refers to documents of account to be prepared by the secretary who manages the im-

⁴⁹The word can certainly not be read *kilām* as a plural of *kalīm* (the one to whom one speaks), which plural in the dictionaries is given as *kulamāʾ*. See Hava, *Arabic-English Dictionary*, 656. The plural form *kilām* is only attested for the term *kalīm* (wound, injury) in Manfred Ullmann, *Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache*, vol. 1: ٢ (Wiesbaden, 1970), 332. However, this form does not align with the passage in the document under examination. In the same work, the form *killām* is also found, which means “talking, speaking” (ibid., 336). It appears that this form is not applicable to the passage under discussion either.

⁵⁰Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 4:29; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān*, 2:152.

⁵¹Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān*, 2:43; Ibn Ṭulūn, *Mutʿat al-adhhān min al-tamattuʿ bi-al-aqrān bayn tarājīm al-shuyūkh wa-al-aqrān*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khālīl al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣilī (Beirut, 1999), 2:611.

⁵²Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān*, 2:70. According to the documentary evidence, he was dismissed once again before Jumādā II 905/January 1500 and reinstated in 906/1501. See ʿImād Badr al-Dīn Abū Ghāzī, “Mulāḥazāt ʿalā ikhtiṣāṣāt al-ʿāmilīn fī bayt al-māl wa-musammayātihim fī ʿaṣr al-mamālik al-jarākisah,” *Annales islamologiques* 33 (1999): 31 (nos. 29, 31, 33, 35).

⁵³Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 4:22; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān*, 2:140.

⁵⁴He died after swallowing a diamond. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 4:29; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān*, 2:152.



ported goods kept in the bonded warehouse of Alexandria.⁵⁵ In another passage, the term is mentioned in relation with daily lists detailing the names of the merchants, the staples they brought, and the taxes to be paid to the Treasury once they arrive in the port of Tinnīs.⁵⁶ From both passages, it is understood that this category of document is related to the day-to-day administration of commercial operations related to the activities carried out in Egyptian ports. The *makhāzīm* also features in Ibn Mammātī's (d. 606/1209) *Al-Qawānīn wa-al-dawāwīn* among the types of documents that the collector of state revenues (*jahbadh*) had to establish.⁵⁷ Al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333) also provides details for the *makhzūmah* in relation to the revenues generated by cultivated lands.⁵⁸ In his chancery manual, Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī (d. 749/1349) evokes the *makhāzīm* among recommendations addressed to a person appointed as inspector of the State Treasury: the recommendation is to extract from the *makhāzīm* on a daily basis the information he will need to provide if he is asked about the available revenues.⁵⁹ This type of document was also used by notaries. When addressing the issue of the sale of a deceased's estate in his manual, al-Asyūṭī (d. sometime after 903/1498) explains that a *makhzūmah* is to be drafted for each auction that takes place in a given market, one for each market depending on the nature of the goods sold. Once all the goods of the deceased have been sold, a summary statement of the proceeds of the sales (*jāmiʿah*) is drawn up.⁶⁰ *Makhāzīm* linked to the sale of estates have been preserved among the collection of the Ḥaram al-Sharīf documents.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Al-Makhzūmī, *Al-Minhāj fī ʿilm kharāj Miṣr*, ed. Claude Cahen (Cairo, 1986), 46–47; Claude Cahen, *Makhzūmiyyāt: Études sur l'histoire économique et financières de l'Égypte médiévale* (Leiden, 1977), 140–41.

⁵⁶ Al-Makhzūmī, *Al-Minhāj*, 58; Cahen, *Makhzūmiyyāt*, 152.

⁵⁷ Ibn Mammātī, *Al-Qawānīn wa-al-dawāwīn*, ed. ʿAzīz Sūryāl ʿAṭīyah (Cairo, 1943), 304 (*wa-ʿalayhi ʿamal al-makhāzīm wa-al-ruẓnamajāt wa-al-khatamāt wa-tawālīhā*). See also Cahen, *Makhzūmiyyāt*, 29, n. 1.

⁵⁸ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab* (Cairo, 1923–97), 8:260, 274.

⁵⁹ Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *Al-Taʿrīf bi-al-muṣṭalaḥ al-sharīf*, ed. Samīr al-Durūbī (al-Karak, 1992), 1:164. See also in al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr wa-aʿwān al-naṣr*, ed. ʿAlī Abū Zayd et al. (Beirut and Damascus, 1997–98), 1:654, the example of a governor of Damascus to whom the *makhāzīm* were read when he visited his bureau after his absence for a hunting game.

⁶⁰ Al-Asyūṭī, *Jawāhir al-uqūd wa-muʿīn al-quḍāh wa-al-muwaqqiʿīn wa-al-shuhūd*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiḳī (Cairo, 1955), 1:466. At the time of al-Makhzūmī, the summary statement was made after a period of ten days (called *rūznāmaj*). Another summary statement was made at the end of the month (called *khatmah*) and of the year (called *ʿamal*). See Cahen, *Makhzūmiyyāt*, 20.

⁶¹ Donald P. Little, *A Catalogue of the Islamic Documents from al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem* (Beirut, 1984), 335–36. See also idem, “Documents Related to the Estates of a Merchant and His Wife in



This review of a wide variety of sources demonstrates that the *makhzūmah* was a document of account used in specific circumstances that were quite broad and drafted by various categories of appointees. The main feature of this type of document consisted in listing the revenues for a single operation (a sale for one part of an estate in a given market) or on a daily basis. The document served to establish a summary document later on. The etymological meaning of the word *makhzūmah* is something that is pierced, perforated. As Little noticed, some of the documents containing the word *makhzūmah* have one or two holes, and he surmised that a string was passed through these holes to join several documents together in a bunch for filing purposes.⁶² In his study on the documents of the Ḥaram al-Sharīf, Müller argued that not all the *makhāzīm* that are part of this collection have signs of perforation, and that the word *makhzūmah* is never written with the diacritical dots. In his view, the term should rather be read *maḥzūmah*, and the meaning would be a document where the transaction is “tied up.”⁶³ As can be seen in our document, the word is clearly written with all the diacritical dots and must undoubtedly be read *makhāzīm*. Even in narrative sources, the word is written in an unquestionable manner: four examples are provided—three from al-Makhzūmī’s *Al-Minhāj* and one from al-Maqrīzī’s first version of the *Khiṭaṭ* in his own hand (see figs. 8–9). Even if the etymology of the word implies that this category of documents used to be perforated in order to be joined together, it does not mean that this was always the case or that, with the passing of time, other types of documents could not also be joined with these, as evidenced by the documents of the Ḥaram al-Sharīf.⁶⁴ The presence or the absence of perforation should thus not be considered as a definitive proof that documents belong to the *makhāzīm*. It is rather the presence of the word in the text of the document that should be the criteria for its identification.

Late Fourteenth Century Jerusalem,” *MSR* 2 (1998): 118–21.

⁶²Little, *A Catalogue*, 335.

⁶³Christian Müller, *Der Kadi und Seine Zeugen: Studie der mamlukischen Ḥaram-Dokumente aus Jerusalem* (Wiesbaden, 2013), 112–13. MacGuckin de Slane had already reached this conclusion in his translation of Ibn Khaldūn’s *Al-Muqaddimah*. Dozy, *Supplément*, 1:368, underlined that his correction of the manuscripts was wrong.

⁶⁴See Little, *A Catalogue*, 335.



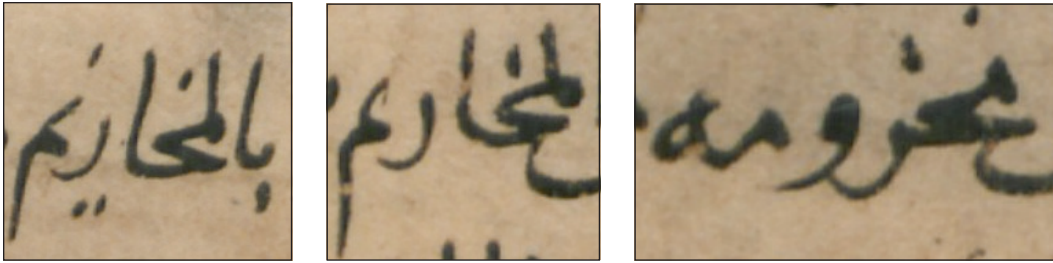


Figure 8: The word *makhzūmah*, *bi-makhāzīm*, and *bi-al-makhāzīm* in al-Makhzūmī's *Al-Minhāj* (British Library, MS Add. 23483, fols. 88a and 97a). Courtesy of the British Library.

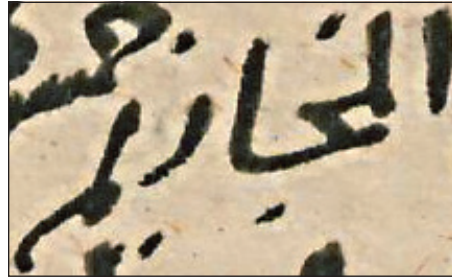


Figure 9: The word *al-makhāzīm* in al-Maqrīzī's first version of *Al-Mawā'iz wa-al-i'tibār* (Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Müzesi, MS H1472, fol. 69a). Courtesy of Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Müzesi