THE MAMLUKS IN EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN POLITICS AND SOCIETY

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE RECOVERY OF MAMLUK CHANCERY DOCUMENTS IN AN UNUSUSPECTED PLACE

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I

The discovery of an unknown manuscript of al-Maqrizi (d. 845/1441) has always been considered as an important event. When it proves to be a specimen of his note-books, which necessarily implies that it is a holograph copy, it becomes even more exciting and fascinating. Specialists of the history and historiography of Islam, particularly during the last decades, have considered the question of the working method of the medieval historians. Al-Maqrizi's unpublished note-book represents a missing link between the moment when a historian hit upon the idea of writing a book and the final result, and so will help to fill a gap which hitherto has puzzled us. The discovery is all the more important as the author acquired such a reputation that he is better known as shi'ah al-ma'arifhim.

This paper is the shortened version of a booklet to appear under the provisional title "Maqriziana III. Scraps of paper to the rescue of History: the reconstruction of Mamluk chancery documents from the reign of Sultan 'Abd al-latif bin Sa'id (745/1342-746/1343)."

1 The manuscript was discovered in the holdings of the library of the University of Liège, Belgium, where it is preserved under the shelfmark 2273. For an accurate description of the contents of the manuscript and its history, see my "Maqriziana I. Discovery of an autograph manuscript of al-Maqrizi. Towards a better understanding of his working method. Description Part 1", Mélanges Studia Reina vol. VIII (2003) to appear. The present writer is currently preparing a critical edition of this note-book, which should be published by the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale in Cairo.

2 This theme will be the subject of a paper to be presented at a conference on the legacy of the medieval Egyptian historian al-Maqrizi, to be held at Notre Dame University on 29-30 September 2001. It should be published in the proceedings of this conference under the title "Maqriziana II. Discovery of an autograph manuscript of al-Maqrizi. Towards a better understanding of his working method. Analysis".
Moreover, texts such as the manuscript in question shed new light on matters which are only imperfectly known through other sources. Some of the epitomes made by al-Maqrizī as well as his notes preserve the unique versions of texts which are otherwise lost, or, at least, of which we had merely brief excerpts thanks to the quotations of later historians, like al-Maqrizī himself. These resurrected texts finally deal with historical facts sometimes unknown. And so any historian should be delighted when new data come to light as a result of the discovery and analysis of texts such as that under investigation here. However, the manuscript in itself, I mean as a codex and in the name of codicology, can bring us much more than is conceivable.¹

II

When I discovered the manuscript in question, I became deeply intrigued by some inscriptions in larger characters than those of al-Maqrizī’s script, sporadically written at different places on various folios. These had nothing to do with al-Maqrizī: on the pages where such inscriptions appear, it is clear that he endeavored to fill in the blanks, writing around them as closely as possible (see picture at the end of this study). This demonstrates conclusively that the paper had already been used for another purpose prior to al-Maqrizī and that, at some stage of its history, it was treated as, in effect, scribbling paper. But what had this paper been before? After some time, it became clear to me that the script was a chancery one, and that therefore I had found fragments of chancery documents utilized by al-Maqrizī as scrap paper. It remained to be determined what kind of documents these were (either munānī, or umnī, or itbī, or itibānī, or umnūshir, or ‘dālī, etc.) and to which period they belonged. As al-Maqrizī lived most of his life in Egypt, it seemed logical to surmise that they were most likely issued by the Egyptian chancery. But from which

¹ A codicological analysis of the manuscript has permitted me to understand its internal organization and particularly how it was constituted with time by al-Maqrizī. The results were presented in a paper at the 3rd International Conference on Palaeography and Codicology of Middle Eastern Manuscripts (Bologna, 4–6 October 2000) and will appear in the proceedings of the conference under the title “Maqriziana IV: Le contenu de nos al-Maqrizī, l’apport de la codicologie à une meilleure compréhension de sa constitution”, Manuscripta arabica (to appear).
III. Method developed for the reconstruction of the documents

First, it was necessary to put the manuscript back in order, on the basis of both textual analysis and external evidence. Quires were not at all in the right places; some folios that had become detached over time had been inserted at the wrong places. Once this chore was completed, it was still necessary to reconstruct the inscriptions. For this, I used a scanner which allowed me to put the beginning of each inscription appearing on a folio together with its end, which, of course, is not to be found on the immediately opposite leaf, but rather on the opposite leaf in the second half of the quire. I then produced a list of reconstructed sentences, which demonstrated that there are such inscriptions in only nine quires of the manuscript.4

At this stage, in order to reconstruct the text as coherently as possible, it was necessary to analyze the script. Of course, it was easier to discern various scripts once each line had been reconstructed. A thorough study of them led me to differentiate five distinct groups: nine lines for group I, twenty-one for group II, five for group III, five for group IV, and finally three for group V. It thus became easier to reconstruct each document, through comparison with examples in the preserved chancery manuals.5 However, this task could not have been successfully carried out without taking into account other important factors, such as the space left blank when the documents were originally written (in other words the size of the space between the lines), and also the width of the right margin.6 As the

4 The ms. is composed of 21 quires.

5 For the Mamluk period, these are: Ibn Nujayr al-Jaysh, Kitâb Tahqîq al-tâhib li-ta’alât al-shufî, R. Versly (ed.), Cairo, 1985; Em Fadl Allah, Al-Umarî Ahmad b. Yashib, al-’Ulfâ’at min masâ’il al-shufî, al-Qâqishanî, Shâhâb al-Dîn Ahmad, Sâdh al-’Ufî al-ma’lû, Cairo, 1913-1919.

6 It is a well-known fact that the space between two lines as well as the width of the right margin, which was left blank too, varied in chancery practice according to the importance of the person for whom the document was issued. See al-Qâqishanî, Sâdh al-’Ufî, VI, p. 196.
original documents had been cut in smaller pieces of paper, it was necessary to be satisfied with the measurement of the space between the top edge of the handwriting and that of the inscription, as well as that separating the bottom of the inscription from that of the leaf. These measurements have stood me in good stead for the reconstruction, since an average value could be established for each document. Any significant big discrepancy compared with this average value might indicate that the proposed ordering of the leaves was not the correct one; alternatively, I had to consider the possibility that there were sometimes lacunae and that some parts of a document were missing in the manuscript. Considering all these factors, my textual and physical analysis suggests that the following reconstruction is accurate.\(^3\)

IV. Reconstruction of the documents

A. Group 1

1. Text


\(^3\) For instance, in group IV, the extreme values for the spacing between the lines are 12-13.8 cm. We could not imagine that the inscription on ff. 187b-190 would come after the one on ff. 188b-190, just because the value obtained in this case would have been of 21.3 cm, which is completely inconsistent with the preceding extreme values.

\(^4\) For reasons of space, only documents I, II and III are transcribed and analyzed in this paper. Documents IV and V are by far less consistent and could not be linked to a particular event, even though their contents give some indications which permit us to guess why they were issued. The most interesting ones are indeed the first three documents which seem to be closely connected to the same historical fact, as I shall try to prove it. The texts of the five documents in Arabic characters will be found in the full version of this paper.

\(^5\) Line 5 consists only in the article followed by a la'if and a sa'.
Translation

[When] (1) his essence, the most splendid and the grand amir, the
fighter, (2) the conqueror, the lover, the favorite, the mightiest,
the most perfect, the appreciated, (3) the sword of the Faith, the
glory of Islam, the splendor of mankind, the aid of the fighters,
(4) the ornament of the tribes, the support of the Kings and the
Sultans,
(5) Bâlâgh b. Yûsuf ibn [. . .]

(6) [. . .] the abundance of this assistance, that is why the (7) noble
and exalted order of our Lord, the Sultan, the King (8) al-Sâlih
Irâm [al-dîn]—he never ceases to give profusely and to [do favor?—,
as decreed (9) [. . .]

B. Group II

1. Text

(1) wa-jîlâhu harâran-nâ al-qâlî-b mâsâras bâl-munârin min [. . .] (2) la-hu
shaklûn yâsîf tâbhâshûl al-qâtî-l yâyânîm (3) wa-yâhshî tâhshûl ahr al-adâlî
îlâ al-lâmâ ilal-nâji [. . .] (4) wa-yâhshû al-âlih Alî!/ al-qâlî-l yâsîf ahr al-âlih
wa-qâlîhî (5) al-dâhlîn la-am yâsîf bî al-fîlâhî al-mâhrî b. 'lâ (6) amîn jâmis
wa-annâlâshîru qânam bi-muçîm dîmîh fudîlî-làb;î bî-jâdâlikâm (7) al-
âlihî al-qâlî-l uqârîrî al-tûyân wa-annâalâshîru wa-mâsârî al-mâsîrîn (8) [. . .] (3) hâmî al-
muâthîn wa-l-qâlî-l uqârîrî fî mdâlîlîhu umdîl-bînîn al-shârîfî (9) bi-hâmî al-
âlihî fî uqârîrî al-tûyân wa-qâlîhî bînîn al-mâyâm b. [. . .] (4) mîshîlî bâh mu-mâhrî [. . .]
(11) [. . .] wa-lhoam ilân al-'lâfî [. . .] (12) mlâqîd al-munâshîyân al-dâhlîn al-
âlihî al-qâlî-l amâlîna la-bî al-nâshîyân [. . .] (13) al-kâhir al-qâlî-l adâlî al-
shârîfî [. . .] al-shâmî-l wâlî ilal-âmâl al-
mâsârî (14) al-tâhshî al-nâjî-l bûsâîn ilal-dîn wâlî ilal-âlîhî [. . .] (15) bâhî al-
Tâyîr—adâmâ Alî!/ al-tâhshî ilâbîlâhî (17) hâmî al-muâthîn al-adâlî al-
man wa-shãlûhû [. . .] (18) wa-buddhû al-muâthîn wa-mâsârî al-
shârîfî [. . .] (19) 'lâfî al-dîn bâh bûsâîn wa-annâlâshû [. . .] (20) fû-tëbârî al-
uqâlî-hî muqâmî fînîn al-tûyân fî al-dîn al-dîn [. . .] (21) bâhî al-
muâthîn al-dîn al-dîn al-dâhlî [. . .] al-muâthîn [. . .]

2. Translation

(1) [. . .] and He let triumph our victorious sacred precinct with the
help of the believers from [. . .]

(2) [and we testify that there is no god but God alone, without
associate, that] being a creed which, when faithfully observed, increases
the heart in certainty and, (5) when frequently uttered, guides those who are loyal to act successfully [. . .].

(4) [. . .] and he erected (?), God bless him, his family and his companions (3) who never ceased complying with God’s command and his one [of the Prophet] on (6) a gathering matter,10 and who attended to support His Faith, thus pleasing, (7) comforting and delighting their merit [. . .].

(8) [. . .] Those who abandon their homes and their children for the sake of our noble portals, (9) with patient endurance, those will be rewarded [. . .].

(10) [. . .] They were let in [through] the door of whom prostrate himself [. . .].

(11) [. . .] apologizing [. . .].

(12) [. . .] of the fortresses of Islam by obeying the leader of the rightly guided [. . .].

[When his eminence], (13) the most splendid and grand amir, the conqueror, the defender, the most perfect, the commander, (14) the unique, the supporter, the sword of the Faith, the glory of Islam, (15) the splendor of mankind, the ornament of the tribes, the support of the Kings and the Sultans, (16) Bâlâh b. Yâsuf b. ⵜⴰⵢⵜⵉ¹ — may God, how exalted He is, make lasting his welfare— (17) was the one who whetted the sword of victory and unsheathed [the scimitar . . .].

(18) [. . .] and sacrificed himself for God’s favors and our noble favors [. . .].

(19) [. . .] the obedience . . . his prosperity and we give abundantly [. . .].

(20) [. . .] Thus he emigrated to our portals and left behind him his home, (21) and that is why the noble and exalted order of our Lord, [. . .], was decreed [. . .].

C. Group III

1. Text


10 Cf. Koran XXIV, 62.
Translation

(1) Let it be registered in the Office of Supervision on the District of al-Karak and al-Shawbak, if God, how exalted He is, wills,

(2) It has been registered, praise be to God Praise be to Him who deserves it.

(3) He made the desire abundant for the friends of our state and let gain (?) [ ... ]

(4) God bless him, his family and his companions from among whom (5) God set aside the generous and illustrious lords and [ ... ].

(6) Now then, he who deserves the more that the doves of favors coo [for him ... ].

(7) [ ... ] a heretic for he did not turn away from supporting the Faith and did not withhold from (?) [ ... ].

V. Analysis

Let us now proceed to the analysis of these documents. Just a few lines have survived for the first document, but these nonetheless provide us with two titles. The first one is royal Il. 7-8: al-sultan al-malik al-fatih al-Imād. The last two words are the only ones that can help us to identify the ruler. This ruler must have had as ruling name al-Salih and as title 'Imād al-dīn. In the complete list of all the rulers of Egypt, there were only two who bore these two elements: either the Ayyubid al-Salih 'Imad al-dīn, who reigned from 635/1237 to 635/1238 and from 637/1239 to 643/1245, or the Mamlik sultan Ismā'īl, son of al-Nāṣir Muhammad b. Qalawwān, whose complete titulature was al-Salih al-Malik al-Salih 'Imād al-dīn Abū al-Fida' Ismā'īl. He ruled only for three years, from

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11 C. E. Bosworth, The Islamic Dynasties, Edinburgh, 1969, 96
12 Ibid., 63.
743/1342 to 746/1345, the date of his death. Thus the first document could be dated quite precisely to one of two periods. But to which ruler did the text refer? For this, the document provides us a major clue. In the chancery manuals, titles such as those found in this document typically end with a name. On line 5 of the present document, this name is almost illegible; yet we can barely decipher the name "Ibn Yusuf ibn". Here document II, for which twenty-one lines are preserved, provides further evidence. We find in II. 13–16 almost the same royal titles as in document I, but this time, the name is clearly legible: Bâilîg b. Yusuf b. Tâyî. This name is rarely attested in the sources. However, this same name appears in some chronicles of the Mamluk period, during the reign of the sultan Isma'il.

Before going further, we must study the political events that followed al-Nâṣir Muhammad's death, events soundsly described as "ceaseless power struggles". Indeed, we remark that between al-Nâṣir Muhammad's death (741/1341), and 762/1361, no fewer than eight of his sons succeeded him to the throne. Almâyad, being twenty-four years old in 742, was the eldest of his sons. His accession to the throne followed the short reigns of two of his brothers: Alâb Bakr (twenty years old) and Kâjûk (seven years old). But unlike his two brothers, Almâyad was not merely a puppet in the hands of the emirs. He had spent most of his life since the age of eight in al-Karak, following the customs of the local Bedouin, dressing himself like them and hunting with them. Informed that he had been chosen as sul-
tan by some emirs, he took his time before coming to the capital in order to receive the oath of allegiance. He did not leave al-Karak without his faithful Bedouin. The struggles for influence made him change his mind quickly, and two months later he decided to return to al-Karak, where he intended to rule, taking with him the main dignitaries of the Ilkhan together with all the money and the treasures kept in the citadel of Cairo. Under such conditions, having decided the offer to come back to Cairo, his position as sultan was clearly untenable. His brother Isma‘il, then seventeen years old, suc-
cceeded him. However, he could not rule peacefully, since his brother Aḥmad at al-Karak refused to return the treasury and scoffed at him. During the short reign of Isma‘il (743/1342-746/1345), the outstanding event was the siege of al-Karak, for which successive expeditions (seven or eight, according to the sources), in which all the emirs of Egypt and Syria took part, were necessary.18 Indeed, the city and the fortress of al-Karak were reputed to be impregnable, as long as food was supplied to the inhabitants, a task generally fulfilled by the local Bedouin, and this was still the case during this siege. When the city was built, a network of ditches was developed in order to collect rainwater, so the defenders had a steady supply of water.19 Even though the Mamluk troops surrounding the city succeeded in imposing a more or less efficient blockade, the siege was brought to an end only by perjury of some of the most trusted persons in Aḥmad’s entourage, in other words of those he considered as his loyal friends and fellows: the Bedouin and the local Arabs.

The best historical source for the period that has come down to us is the chronicle of al-Shujā‘ī (Ahmad b. 736/1336-7), who was an eyewitness of the events in question.20 The following passage,

20 Another contemporary source must have been even more accurate: Mān b. al-Shuwayh Yahyā al-Yusufī (d. 729/1330), who wrote Nuzhār al-dā‘īf fi shat al-Malik al-Nāṣir. This history covered, as it seems, the years that followed al-Nāṣir Muhammad’s reign. Unfortunately, the fragments preserved deal only with the years mid-730 to mid-733. See on this D.P. Lipman, “The Recovery of a Lost Source for Bahīr Mamluk History: al-Yusufī’s Nuzhār al-dā‘īf fi shat al-Malik al-Nāṣir”, JCS IV (1974), 42-54. For al-Shujā‘ī’s indebtedness to al-Yusufī, see R. Schäfer, Beitrag zur
quoted in full because of its importance for my analysis of the chancery text, refers to an event dating to 744, a few months before Ahmadr's surrender to his brother's troops.

The Sultan [Imam] had corresponded with Bâligh, the muqaddâm of the foot soldiers who were at al-Karak, making him promises and tempting him because it was he who led the prince Ahmad to resistance. So he tried to win his confidence and wrote him. He answered favorably to this and betrayed the prince Ahmad. He left al-Karak, fleeing Ahmad, and he presented himself to the noble portals on Monday 6th Dîkâ al-Qirîdî of that year [744/21st March 1344]. The Sultan honored him and rewarded him and those of his friends who came with him. He guaranteed to the Sultan the capture of al-Karak saying: "O Lord! All the people in the fortress of al-Karak are my friends and those in the city are my family and my kinsfolk. No one among them contradicts me. Send with me whom you trust and I will surrender him al-Karak". The Sultan sent with him eight mamluks chosen from among the royal ones and they set out on Thursday [9th Dîkâ al-Qirîdî 744/25th March 1344].

This passage must be compared to the following one, from the same source:

Al-Karak could not be seized because those who were in al-Karak were, for the greater part, Arabs and Jâhâdiyya, and their muqaddâm was Bâlîgh b. Ṭâyy and Mansûr.

These texts identify Bâlîgh as the muqaddâm of the soldiers (Arabs and Jâhâdiyya) of al-Karak. Incidentally, al-Maqârizî describes him as "[Ahmad]'s most important confidant among the people of al-Karak". At first he set his hopes on his master, hoping upon the return of Ahmad to the throne to obtain a reward for his loyalty. However, he must have changed his mind as Ahmad's position became more fragile. In 744, Bâlîgh took the decision to betray his master on
behalf of the legitimate sultan. First he wrote a letter to the emir besieging the fortress, in which he promised that he would facilitate their capture of the town; but before doing so he requested to be allowed to go to Cairo and speak to the sultan Isma'il. The sultan agreed and gave an order for an aman to be delivered to him. Bâlígh escaped from al-Karak and went to the capital where he arrived on the 6th Dhu al-Qa'da 74426 with other dignitaries of the city. As a reward for his treason and his help, he solicited șapta's and lands with an average revenue of 450,000 dirhams per annum, while his fellow conspirators received a similar amount (these details are not provided by al-Shuja'ī). They all left Cairo three days later and went back to al-Karak, which surrendered on the 22nd Sawr 745 (5th July 1344).27

Here are the facts. What links can we establish between these and documents I and II? The Bâlígh b. Yisâf b. Taşâfī who is mentioned there is undoubtedly the same as the one about whom the sources speak concerning the aforementioned events, even though these sources simply name him as Bâlígh or Bâlígh b. Taşâfī. The period in question (the first document clearly indicates now that it goes back to sultan Isma'il's reign) and the singular name of Bâlígh, rarely found in chronicles and biographical dictionaries, make this identification certain. It remains to be determined what kind of documents these are? Here again, it is al-Maqârif who helps us as he indicates28 that Bâlígh and his fellows received from the sultan mansûr for the șapta's they asked for. Originally, the word mansûr meant in the chancery terminology an unsealed document, an open decree.29 For the Mamluk period, the use of this term was reserved for documents issued on the occasion of the grant of șapta's, or land tenure.30

26 Expenses al-Nâṣir Ahmad's wealth came to depletion and a cruel need for money was felt. Bâlígh began to work upon him.31
27 According to al-Maqârif, al-Sâfâ, vol. II, 654, they arrived in Cairo on the 8th of the same month [23rd March 1344] and that they set out for al-Karak the 11th [26th March 1344].
Several elements prove that documents I and II are these famous zamindars which were given to Bālígh in exchange for his betrayal and his assistance for the surrender of the fortress. First, there is the textual evidence, mostly in document II. Lines 8–9 and 20 and even line 12 seem to be as a direct allusion to the role played by Bālígh, his flight from al-Karak to Cairo, and his submission to the authority of sultan Ismai’il. “Those who abandon their homes and their children for the sake of our noble portals with patient endurance, those will be rewarded!” (II. 8–9): “Thus he emigrated to our portals and left behind him his home” (l. 20).

Secondly, there are the explicit rules of the chancery, as they are described in the manuals and other sources. (1) In the Mamluk period, the formula “ye li-dhikra khargha al-amr al-sherif” was exclusively reserved to the mamluks. 30 (2) As we have seen, Bālígh received sīfāt’s annual revenue of which was ₤30,000 dirhams. The sources do not tell us what title he received on that occasion, except al-Safa’dī 31 who simply indicates that he received an ṣuwar mu’a, which means the title of amir mu’a and mamluk-dim al-f. However, everything leads us to believe that this information provided by al-Safa’dī is erroneous. 32 On the one hand, it is known that the highest title received by the emirs of Arab tribes was the rank of tabīb, 33 Now, there is no doubt that Bālígh was an Arab Bedouin, but certainly not an emir of his tribe. 34 On the other hand, the revenue of an amir mu’a was by far superior to the rev-

32 This is even more curious when one thinks that he was working at the dual al-adhar in 745 and that he must have been well aware of the affairs of the state. See D. Little, “al-Safa’dī as biographer of his contemporaries,” in Essays on Islamic Calligraphy presented to Sayfuddin Bâlî (Leiden, 1996). 208–9.
34 The occurrence of the term ṣuwar in his name seems to indicate that he was a member of the Rājī tribe which was part of the Ṣayﬁ tribe. They were divided into two major clans the Faḍl and the Minī. So far, I have not been able to determine to which clan Bālígh belonged. It must be noted that the Arabs who lived around al-Karak up to the bridges of Hijz were the Banū ‘Ujba. See A.S. Tritton, “The Tribes of Syria in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,” BSOAS, vol. XII (1947–48), 567.
ennues obtained by Bāligh. So, we must prefer the title of ḥabbāna. Indeed, according to al-Maqrīzī, the bearer of such a title received an iqṭa' the value of which was 40,000 dinars per annum, in proportion of 10 dirhams for one dinar (that means 400,000 dirhams), if he was a ḥabbānī, or if this was the case an iqṭa' the value of which was 30,000 dinars per annum, in proportion of 8 for 1 (that means 240,000 dirhams). Bāligh was not a Mamluk. So he could not have received a revenue superior to 30,000 dinars per annum. Notwithstanding, we know that the values mentioned by al-Maqrīzī refer to a given period and that these values are not valid for the whole Bahri period. For instance, we know that there was inflation and an exaggeration in the value of the iqṭa's during the reign of al-Nāṣir Muhammad. My hypothesis is confirmed by the chancery manuals. The width of the sheet of paper used in the chancery varied according to the hierarchical position of the person for whom the document was issued. The more important he was, the wider the sheet of paper was. The width reserved for an amīr ṭabḥānī was half a cubit (naṯ ḍanī'). The value of the Egyptian cubit (also known as the cloth cubit, dīhrī' al-qamāsh) being of about 58 cm, a document issued in favor of an amīr ṭabḥānī could not be wider than about 29 cm. The width of two leaves in al-Maqrīzī's note-book is 27.4 cm, but it must not be forgotten that part of it was trimmed when the documents were cut into pieces, and once more when the manuscript was bound. Moreover, the titles (al-qālī) reserved to an amīr ṭabḥānī who was not a ḥabbānī, or who did not exercise a function (nasīfī), were the following: al-muṣṭaṣir al-nāṣir followed by epithets (al-qālī) devoted to the emphatic final jē. This is exactly what we have in documents I and II. On the other hand, a musnad did

19 The value of the iqṭa's attributed to an amīr al-ne's ranged from 85,000 to 100,000 dhūr mālī, that is to say from 1 million to 1.25 million dirhams per annum. See S. Tugaytik, State and Rural Scrup in Medieval Islamic States, Mupfit's and Fatimid, Leiden, 1992, 124.
21 See A. Levassori, op. cit., 33 sqq.
22 Al-Qalqashandi, Jalāl al-dīn, vol. VI, 313.
26 Ibn Nāṣir al-Ṣaḥābā, Taʾrīḫ al-tārīḵ, 190.
not begin with the "humudul unless it was issued for an amir na'a or an amir tabbûtah. Document II contains part of the "humudul, as it is attested by the presence of the end of ahabihū. 1, 2, 3.

To conclude, all the collected elements clearly indicate that Bāligh received the title of amir tabbûtah in reward for his treason, that the value of the 'īpal he received on that occasion was about 450,000 dirhams per annum, that documents I and II must be identified as two mādāmin in relation with his obtaining this title. I would like to stress the fact that, until now, we have possessed a single example of a mamluk 'īpal from Egypt. This unique item goes back to the reign of Qansuh al-Ghawri (916/1511) and concerned an amir tabbûtah too. 4, 5, 6

So, the two documents that I have reconstructed and analyzed perfectly our knowledge of this kind of document, considering that they are more ancient than the one preserved hitherto. They will give us the opportunity to study what differences may be detected between them and how the chancery evolved between the Bahri and Buji periods. 7

What happened to Bāligh after this? Maqrīzī quotes his name once more for the year 785 (Rabi‘ II/initi. 12th August 1344), but for a murder case. 8 A certain Ḥasan b. al-Rudnī, a camel merchant, was found murdered in his house in the horse-market, in Cairo. His son charged a Ḥāš b. Ḥasan, who was responsible for the sultan’s camels, and Bāligh al-‘Aṣrājī, in other words Bāligh the same, because of enmity between them and his father. The māliḥ ordered that he be arrested and stripped, and he planned to bastinado them, but they succeeded in deferring the punishment for some days, while the māliḥ was supposed to make investigations in order to discover the murderer. They took advantage of this to exercise influence on some emirs and to be released only a few days later, against the māliḥ’s opinion. Was this Bāligh the same person? I think

1) Mamluks issued in favor of the sons of the Sultan, the amir na’a and mādāmin off, and amir tabbûtah were to begin by the humudul al-Qiyahpānāhī, Shibh al-dā’ā, vol. XIII, 167, 169 and 184. Inferior titles received mamluks beginning by awlad bālu and in case of the lowest titles, three begin by ḥājaj al-mir al-shabbī. Bedouins could receive mamluks of the three types according to their function (al-Qiyahpānāhī, Shibh al-dā’ā, vol. XIII, 198).

2) The humudul section comprised three elements: the humudul itself, followed by the abdul and beginning by abdulhād, then the befit (as-slāhī). See, for instance, al-Qiyahpānāhī, Shibh al-dā’ā, vol. XIII, 168.


5) This comparison will be treated in the full version of this article.

6) Can this backcharal be a result of a "VH?"
so. On the one hand, his name was quite rare, and on the other hand, al-Maqrizi mentions him only a few months later after the facts in question with al-Karada. This time, however, he is described as lame, and this is not unlikely. It is again thanks to this historian that we learn that during the fourth expedition an intense fight took place between the people of al-Karada and the Mamlik army, on the 8th Rabi' II 744 (= 30th August 1343), a fight during which a lot of people were injured and killed. Maqrizi gives no name, except that of Baligh, whom he says, was injured. This happened exactly one year before he was arrested as an accessory to a crime, and we may surmise that he had been hurt in the leg the preceding year. This is the last occurrence of Baligh in the historical sources. After all these events, in which he played a central role, the chronicles send him back to anonymity.

Let us now proceed to document III. The text of this document can be reconstructed acceptably, despite its many lacunae, especially in those essential parts which might allow us to identify its destination more clearly. That is, it lacks any mention of titles or names. However, the spacing between the lines (18,3 cm) and the width of the document seem to indicate that it was issued for a person of the same rank as documents I and II (qaf al-waj). The preserved text in itself is quite vague and we could not date it with certainty, were it not for a very important registration mark. This one is to be found at the head of the first leaf and must be read like this: li-ṣaydihi bi-dilihun al-naẓar 'uth al-mamiya al-karada bi-wa'l-khsobakyzin in ahli a Allāh ta'āla, and just below: aththija al-madh fi-Allāh bi-T-Mustahqiq al-banat. These notes require a commentary. It is well known that once written, a document went through the different services of the chancery, where it had to be registered by secretaries. The order was given by a high dignitary who wrote it on the document itself. Once fulfilled, the clerk indicated, just below the order, that it had been executed (aththija in rā fi-Ṣāl'ar) and then he added his personal motto 'al-dhilla' (here, al-madh fi-Allāh bi-T-Mustahqiq al-banat). So, document III was clearly registered at the 'al-wṣāl al-naẓar, that is the

48 Moreover, a.b. al-Husayn and his tribe were among those Bedouin who brought their support to al-Nāṣir Muṣṭakī, who was the son of al-Karada (for A. Ālā, pp. 32, p. 102). This link brings us a little evidence that Baligh al-Aṣ'ūj must be identified as the Baligh who betrayed al-Nāṣir Ahmad.

Office of Supervision, in the department responsible for the affairs of the manadu (the manadu being a region administered by a nīzām of al-Karak and al-Shawbak (Montreal). Now then, it may be as-
sumed that document III, is certainly linked to documents I and II and that it must have been a manadu iṣbuatī probably issued in favor of one of Bāligh’s fellows.
6. Now we must ask ourselves how al-Maqrizi had access to these documents and why he used them as writing material. As ever, it is the protagonist himself whom we must consult. It is indeed al-Maqrizi who gives us the answer in his Khitaż,30 where he dedicates that he worked at the dinārat al-iṣbuatī as a secretary until about the year 790/1388. Still it is not this passage which is important for us, because we can hardly suspect him to have taken for himself doc-
uments in the chancery during this period; however, the following sentence is fundamental for our purpose:

When the reign of al-Zahir Barqiq came to an end and was afterwards re-established, many things went in confusion. Among them, there was the affair of the room of [the dinārat] al-iṣbuatī at the Citadel [...] and the documents (ṣa‘ādarj) that it kept were taken, sold by weight (quṣaṣ-ṣiḥār) and the information they contained was forgotten (ṣajjāt nazimāt).

Thus it was during a particularly terrible period (792-2/1389-90) during the reign of Sultan Barqiq (784/1382-791/1389 and 792/
1390-91/1390), when this sultan had to abandon temporarily Cairo because of a coup d’etat organized by certain emirs, that the doc-
uments preserved in the room of the dinārat al-iṣbuatī were sold by weight, probably to the paper merchants.31 Indeed, some of the doc-
uments issued by the chancery in medieval Egypt took the form of rolls (ṣagī) made up of several sheets of paper (ṣa‘ādarj) pasted one to

31 We are aware that original documents were normally given to their beneficiaries and that only copies of them were kept in registers. However, we don’t understand what use the paper merchants could have made of such registers as these were not suitable for their purposes once filled (see a unique example of these registers, although from the Fatimid period, in G. Khan, “A copy of a decree from the archives of the Fatimid chancery in Egypt”, ARDA, vol. XLII (1986), 439-439). Moreover, al-Maqrizi clearly states in the passage quoted above that these aṣwāq were documents and not just blank paper. It remains to be proven if original documents could be kept by the chancery, as it seems to be implied by those studied here.
the other on a margin of about 1-2 cm.26 The secretaries of the chancery had to leave spacing between the lines, which spacing varied according to the width of the sheet, and so according to the person for whom the document was issued. This waste of paper was the sultan's prerogative.27 The amarnās made haste to cut the documents at the most convenient size in order to transform them into scraps of paper,28 which they offered for sale in the shape of quires of 5 sheets.29 This could explain why documents connected to the same event and period are to be found in our manuscript. During the critical period mentioned, it may be presumed that paper had become a luxury product. In this respect, Qalqashandi informs us that the price of paper had risen during the 8th/14th century.30 It was clearly after these events that al-Maqrīzī took in a supply of scrabbling paper in order to write down on it his reading notes, but also his personal works, because the Liḳe manuscript is not the only one to contain such paper. It is possible that other autograph manuscripts of al-Maqrīzī were written on the same kind of paper.31 So, 26 See Gaudin, Documentographie, II 2, LXXI-LXXII. 27 See St. Brandt, Chr. Mühl and Yi. Răghi, "Un discurs d'al-Malik 'Abd al-Adīn en 52/1176 relatif aux moeurs du Mont Sinaï", M, vol. XXXII (1997), 84. 28 In the case of our documents I to III, the spacing between the lines was of at least 18 cm. 29 This is proven by the internal organization of al-Maqrīzī's note-book. See our article entitled "Maqrīzīna IV: Le carnet de notes d'al-Maqrīzī: l'apport de la codicologie à une meilleure compréhension de sa constitution", Manuscripta orientalis, to appear. 30 Al-Qalqashandi Sīhā 'd-dīnī, vol. XI, 132 (it must have taken place sometime after the Nāhir Nūhammad b. Qalqashānī, as the text seems to imply it). E. Ashtor (Histoire des prés et du sultan dans l'Orient musulman, 3rd ed. dates also the increase of the price of paper from the beginning of the 13th c. A.D. He noticed that this price doubled in the lapse of one century (early 12th-early 13th c. A.D.). 31 At this time, I have identified several fragments of chancery documents, the Liḳe ms. apart, in the following autograph ms. of al-Maqrīzī: I: al-Rūhān 'in al-baḥr, Istanbul, Süleymaniye Rönkapisi (ms. Filhā 4430), see T. Tauer, "Zu al-Maqrīzī's Schrift al-Maqrīzī 'in al-Bahr" (Istanbul, 1925), 3592; Manuscriptul Minot' al-Islām, 17th Century, Istanbul, Topkapı Saray (ms. A.1472), Ayman Fa'īl Sayyid (ed.), London, 1995; 3 al-Maqrīzī, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale (ms. 2114), see G. Witt, "Kölb et Maqrīzī", ARICO, vol. XII (1912), 63-73, 62 (note 1), Leiden, University Library, ms. or. 196b, 136b, 3075, 1533. To date, this kind of scrap paper has not been found for the Islamic world but in its autograph manuscripts of al-Maqrīzī. This is comprehensible due to the fact that a link between the genre of inscriptions and chancery documents could not be established prior to my discovery, although it was already noticed about a hundred years ago (G. Witt, ibid.) that some leaves found in an autograph manuscript of al-Maqrīzī had been used for another purpose before this author scribbled them.
true would only have to gather the inscriptions preserved on the scrolls over them and analyze them to verify dates in documents. It is needless to say that historians today must also refer to the historical facts themselves reported in the chronicles. These scraps of paper would then come to the rescue of history.