

## The Book in Mamluk Egypt and Syria (1250–1517)

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# The Book in Mamluk Egypt and Syria (1250–1517)

*Scribes, Libraries and Market*

By

Doris Behrens-Abouseif



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Cover illustration: Book dealer in Cairo, early twentieth century (Photo by Rudolf Franz Lehnert).

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Behrens-Abouseif, Doris, author.

Title: The book in Mamluk Egypt and Syria (1250-1517) : scribes, libraries and market / by Doris Behrens-Abouseif.

Description: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, 2018. | Series: Islamic history and civilization : studies and texts ; volume 162 | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018036408 (print) | LCCN 2018041602 (ebook) |

ISBN 9789004387058 (ebook) | ISBN 9789004387003 (hardback : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Books--Egypt--History--400-1450. | Books--Egypt--History--1450-1600. | Books--Syria--History--400-1450. | Books--Syria--History--1450-1600. |

Libraries--Egypt--History--400-1400. | Libraries--Egypt--History--1400-1600. |

Libraries--Syria--History--400-1400. | Libraries--Syria--History--1400-1600. |

Scribes--Egypt--History. | Scribes--Syria--History. | Calligraphers--Egypt--History.

| Calligraphers--Syria--History.

Classification: LCC Z8.E4 (ebook) | LCC Z8.E4 B44 2018 (print) |

DDC 002.095691--dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018036408>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: [brill.com/brill-typeface](http://brill.com/brill-typeface).

ISSN 0929-2403

ISBN 978-90-04-38700-3 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-38705-8 (e-book)

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Not only books but also copies of books have their fates.

—WALTER BENJAMIN





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## Acknowledgments

My gratitude goes to Husam al-Din Isma'īl for his generous help with my field-work in Cairo in libraries and in my search for khizanat kutubs in Mamluk buildings, and for many other favors. I am also grateful to Richard Goldthwaite for inspiring ideas about the book as a commodity and Konrad Hirschler for precious advice and comments on the manuscript, Alison Ohta for generously sharing her knowledge and experience with Mamluk manuscripts, Bernard O'Kane for his photographs, Rosalind Wade Haddon and Rudolf Abraham for their stylistic corrections, Leonor Fernandes, Bora Keskiner, Ladan Akbarnia and Tim Stanley for help and favors that facilitated my work.

I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewer of the manuscript for his/her very pertinent and useful comments and suggestions.

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## **Note to the Reader**

Due to the great number of proper names in the text, I have preferred not to transliterate them for the sake of clarity. Transliteration is used only in the bibliography and for Arabic terms at their first appearance in the text.

The transliteration follows the system commonly used in publications in the English language.

To facilitate the identification of named persons, the year of their death, converted into the Christian era, has been added to their names. Whenever the month is not indicated in the source, the two alternative years are given.

# Introduction

Walking through historic Cairo, from the northern gates of Bab al-Futuh or Bab al-Nasr, and proceeding toward the southern gate of Bab Zuwayla and further south to the Citadel, via Saliba Street and the al-Darb al-Ahmar quarter, I found myself reading Mamluk architecture, behind the facades and between the lines. The density of monuments along the way inspired wonder and provoked questions about their meanings and purposes, the connection between their stated role and their implicit symbolism, between their pious dedication as mosques and madrasas and their worldly display of power and prestige. Returning home to my library and looking at the shelves stacked with thousands of pages of Mamluk books, more questions came to mind about the connection between these books and the monuments built to house scholars, students, and their libraries.

This experience is the motivation behind the present study. The subject is the impact of the philanthropic and monumental patronage of the Mamluks as a significant expression of their government and their identity on the production of the book as a commodity. It focuses on commissioning and copying books, their material value, and their circulation between market and libraries and between the private and the institutional domain, the formation and function of libraries, and the “who’s who” of the Mamluk circles involved. No such study has been available to date. Much has been written about the culture of the book in the classical age of Islamic history, which is also valid for the Mamluk period. Studies on the history of libraries and the culture of the book in earlier periods by Pedersen, Eche, Touati, Sayyid, Déroche, and others are relevant to the Mamluk period as well.<sup>1</sup> Eche’s book on libraries in medieval Iraq and Syria, particularly its emphasis on the endowment or *waqf* system, is largely endorsed in this book. Although the material culture of the book continued to show many common features across periods and regions of the Muslim world, there are still many reasons to explore this subject with a focus on the specific context of the Mamluk sultanate (1250–1517).

Although this book is not about intellectual history and reading practices, studies on this subject have significantly contributed to stimulate the issues and questions I address here. Among the studies on Mamluk intellectual and academic life, Jonathan Berkey’s and Michael Chamberlain’s have touched on reading practices. More recently Konrad Hirschler explored the transmission

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1 For studies by the authors mentioned in the introduction, see the bibliography.

of the written text and its reading circles in Syria during the Zangid and Ayyubid periods and, with his publication of the catalog of the Ayyubid Ashrafiyya mausoleum library in Damascus, contributed to our knowledge of libraries in the Arabic-speaking world of this period.

Epistemological studies on the Mamluk period inspire further curiosity regarding the material culture of the book. Elias Muhanna's monograph on Mamluk encyclopedism focusing on Nuwayri's opus raises questions regarding the technicalities and practical management of this author's massive book production.<sup>2</sup> Frédéric Bauden's codicological research on Maqrizi's autographs deals with such technicalities and provides insight into some of his methods for writing down his voluminous compilations.

Research based on *waqf* documents initiated by 'Abd al-Latif Ibrahim, and continued by Ulrich Haarmann, Muhammad Amin, Leonor Fernandes, and myself have elucidated some material aspects regarding the functioning of academic institutions and their endowed libraries.

Apart from David James's art historical work on Bahri Mamluk Quran manuscripts and his articles on scribes and calligraphers, very little has been dedicated specifically to Mamluk scribes and physical book production. Khaled Yusuf's list of Mamluk scribes accompanied by references to some of their manuscripts in library holdings is a recent useful contribution. Sheila Blair, in her book on Islamic calligraphy, dedicates a chapter to the Mamluk period with an art historical and paleographic documentation that draws largely on James's work on Quran manuscripts and Adam Gacek's study of Mamluk authors on calligraphy. Apart from art historical publications on luxury Quran manuscripts and Alison Ohta's studies of late Mamluk book bindings, not much has been written on the Mamluk physical book. A recent article by Elise Franssen provides a rare codicological analysis of a Mamluk manuscript, which does not belong to the category of objet d'art but to that of an ordinary commodity.

The primary sources available to the present investigation are far more limited than for the Ottoman period. In the absence of opulent archival material of the kind used by Ismail Erünsal and others for libraries in Ottoman Turkey and by Nelly Hanna for Ottoman Egypt, and in the absence of a Mamluk library catalog, the sources for this book are mainly biographic literature alongside chronicles and *waqf* documents. A search through manuscripts has provided valuable information on library practices.<sup>3</sup> A Mamluk codicological

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<sup>2</sup> E. Muhanna, *The World in a Book*, 122.

<sup>3</sup> Manuscripts from the Dar al-Kutub and al-Azhar in Cairo, the British Library, the Topkapı and the Aya Sofia in Istanbul have been consulted.

database is needed to provide a wider scope of the physical book and add a new dimension to the subject of the Mamluk manuscript.

Although the chronicles and biographies provide occasional information on libraries, they also leave us with wide gaps. Many questions remain open about the impact of the economy on the Mamluk book trade, as books do not figure among the price lists provided in the chronicles or elsewhere. Little is reported on a royal library, although the physical evidence of the collections in the Topkapı palace and other Turkish libraries reveal that manuscripts were produced for the late Mamluk sultans, which points to the existence of a royal library at that time. However, the narrative sources discuss other matters that open up new avenues for investigation. For example, they provide information on the chain of transmission of calligraphy, which enabled me to outline the Mamluk cultural context for the art of calligraphy and trace a chain of its great masters.

Although biographies of Syrian scholars occupy a prominent place in this research, it is not surprising that due to the concentration and magnitude of the royal foundations in Cairo and their role as magnets for academic careers, Mamluk historians are more informative on the institutional libraries of emirs and sultans and the book market in Cairo than those in Syrian cities.

Chapter 1 follows the tradition of library patronage prior to the Mamluk sultanate, referring to the dispersal of the Fatimid palace library and other collections and their survival in its aftermath. While Salah al-Din's successors tried to replace the Fatimid palace library, their use of the *waqf* system to found learning institutions on a large scale introduced a new era in book patronage.

Chapter 2 brings together the available sporadic information on the libraries in the Mamluk religious institutions. It examines what *waqf* documents stipulate, as well as what they omit, about the function and status of libraries and librarians in these institutions. Chapter 3 reveals that the institutional libraries were not the sole or even the main resource for books. Private initiatives contributed significantly to the compilation and production of books. While endowing their collections to religious institutions, scholars and bibliophiles contributed to their growth as well as to their profile. The private book domain and its market were an indispensable resource for scholars and students. Private collections often exceeded the size of institutional libraries.

Chapter 4 is about the circulation and habitat of the physical book. Borrowing practices had been discussed widely and regulated in earlier periods, and a lively debate on this subject continued under the Mamluks. Students and scholars depended on borrowing books from institutional libraries and private ones. Although it was common practice for books to be written and copied on the premises of mosques and madrasas, these did not necessarily include a dedicated scriptorium space, as was the case in contemporary European religious

institutions,<sup>4</sup> but were merely a space for the storage of books. The volume of Mamluk collections varied between hundreds and thousands. The different categories of book formats, which can vary between large bound codices and fascicles, make it difficult to assess the actual size of a library with precision.

Chapter 5 is concerned with the book market and its multiple and complex commercial activities and networks, its intellectual environment, and the manifold role of the book dealers. A number of factors defined the value and price of books, notably the edition and authenticity of scholarly texts, besides the material production of the volume and the copying fees, depending on the scribes and calligraphers.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to the complex role of the scribe in the authorship, editing, dissemination, and trade of books. Authors and students usually wrote and copied their own books and even whole libraries. Not all scribes were calligraphers and vice versa. However, calligraphic education was common to all, and it was provided commercially or through religious institutions.

Chapter 7 concentrates on calligraphers as an elite category of artists who taught the art of writing, set its norms, and designed new styles. Their main field of activity was the chancery and other bureaucratic institutions. Teaching and copying luxury manuscripts were other aspects of a calligrapher's career. The discipline of calligraphy had a singular status in Mamluk society, enjoying the patronage and the active participation of the court and the aristocracy. This patronage included the establishment of a scriptorium in the soldiers' barracks in the mid-fifteenth century.

Although it is not within the scope of this study to address the technical or artistic aspects of Mamluk calligraphy, by exploring the modalities of teaching writing and calligraphy, it has been possible to trace the chain of the master calligraphers from Syria and Egypt throughout the entire Mamluk period, which is the subject of chapter 8.

This volume dedicated to the material culture of the Mamluk book is intended to serve as an introduction to more detailed codicological research on this subject.

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4 Gameson, "Medieval Library," 28. The term *scriptorium* will be used here merely in its literal sense, meaning a copy workshop, without any association with the European scriptoriums.

# The Legacy

## 1 The Classical Heritage

The high status of the written word goes back to the emergence of Islam and its revelation in the Quran, which describes itself as a *kitāb* or “written book.” Islam acknowledges only those religions that are based on a scripture, calling their communities *ahl al-kitab*, or people of the book. This confirms the centrality of the written word in Islam in both a religious and a cultural context. Much has been and continues to be written and debated about the relationship between oral and written transmission,<sup>1</sup> which does not ultimately deny the fact that the literary output of Islamic culture is extraordinary. While the early Muslims collected, transmitted, and canonized the traditions of the Prophet as a means to consolidate and disseminate the new faith, they also spread their written word between the Atlantic Ocean and the borders of China to cope with the needs of the emerging state administration and the ideology it propagated. Conquests included the appropriation of knowledge. From the outset, princely patronage played an active role in the creation of libraries and academies, promoting the acquisition and translation of ancient texts from East and West. The universal libraries of the caliphs of Baghdad, Cordoba, and Cairo, whose collections were reported in legendary figures of hundreds of thousands and even millions of books, were a regal symbol of mastering the universe by collecting and possessing its knowledge and its history while cultivating an Islamic heritage.

At an early stage of Islamic history, religious scholarship branched off in a large variety of secular disciplines, creating what has been described as “an Arabic book revolution.”<sup>2</sup> Secular books flourished alongside religious ones. A book dealer and calligrapher in Baghdad, Ibn al-Nadim, in 987 compiled the first catalog of books available in the Arabic language, the *Fihrist*.<sup>3</sup> It covered all known books written in Arabic or translated, religious and secular disciplines, with information about authors and their histories.

By Maya Schatzmiller’s estimation, between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries, the price of a book calculated in days of work for an Egyptian callig-

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1 Schöler, *Genesis*.

2 Gruendler, “Aspects.”

3 See Dodge, *Fihrist*.

rapher went down from 130 to 8, and the number of books owned in the same time span rose from one to seventy-four.<sup>4</sup> Although the reasons lay in various economic factors, including the price of paper, this development must have had significant cultural implications.

Europe had to wait for the rise of humanism with the spread of universities and the consolidation of vernacular languages to emancipate the book from clerical authority and enable the establishment of a noteworthy urban market for the secular book, whereas in the Muslim world the book market was a significant symbol of the urban quality of life from its early history. As noted by Houari Touati, while antiquity associated the book with truth, Islamic culture discovered the association of the book with delectability.<sup>5</sup> This is largely explained with the specifically Islamic urban associations of knowledge. The Islamic concept of the *madīna* is defined by associating an urban agglomeration with the Friday mosque, where the religious and political Friday sermon is given, which characterized knowledge as an urban privilege. The book became a form of urban lifestyle.<sup>6</sup> Like the bazaar, the Islamic book market was transregional, covering the entire Muslim world across political and regional borders. As did merchants, scholars traveled in search of scholarly experiences and apprenticeship and consequently contributed to the circulation of books. From the ninth century, collectors and bibliophiles were a phenomenon associated in literature with emotions like “love,” “passion,” and “infatuation.”<sup>7</sup> As documented by Franz Rosenthal, the fast proliferation of the book had already brought about its “trivialization” in the ninth century, leading some authors to complain about the diminishing quality of books produced and the fact that more books were written than could be handled.<sup>8</sup> Scholars pondered on how to increase their selections in a rational way.<sup>9</sup> Handbooks and digests became necessary to provide overviews to spare readers the consultation of too many books on any specific subject. Poetry was collected and written down to prevent its loss and to address audiences beyond scholarly and social elites.

Although the significance of late Abbasid Baghdad has been contested in recent scholarship,<sup>10</sup> the foundation of the Madrasa Mustansiriyya in 1227 by caliph al-Mustansir as a universal academy—teaching all four Sunni schools of law, and thus addressing scholars and students from the entire Muslim world—

4 Schatzmiller, “Early Knowledge,” 1–15.

5 Touati, *L'armoire*, 21.

6 Touati, *L'armoire*, 206–212.

7 Touati, *L'armoire*, 30–31, 43.

8 See Rosenthal, “Of Making Many Books.”

9 Rosenthal, “Of Making Many Books,” 37.

10 Cooperson, “Baghdad,” recently supported by E. Muhanna, *The World in a Book*, 17.

contradicts this view. The ambitions for the Abbasid capital to be a hub of orthodox scholarship inspired Ayyubid and Mamluk patronage. The history of the Mustansiriyya, its scholars, and its librarians have been documented and celebrated. The Mustansiriyya was endowed with a major library, for which books were brought from the palace collection. At this stage, the glamour of the palace library gave way to the virtue of the madrasa library.

The scholarship of the scientist and encyclopedist ‘Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi (d. 1231), attests to a vibrant culture in late Abbasid Baghdad. Also in these last days of the caliphate, the great calligrapher Yaqut al-Musta‘simi (d. 1298) developed a new style of calligraphy that had a vast and long-lasting impact on the written word in the Muslim world.<sup>11</sup> The written word was not only found in books, it was a ubiquitous feature in material culture and all artistic manifestations.

## 2 The Fatimid and Ayyubid Legacies

The palace library of the Fatimid caliphs left a legendary memory in medieval Arabic literature not only because of the superlative number of its books but also because of its willful dispersal at the hands of Salah al-Din.<sup>12</sup> A Fatimid source cited by later historians, Ibn Abi Tayy, estimated the Fatimid book collection to amount to as many as two million volumes. Maqrizi, who mentions 1.6 million volumes, refers at the same time to Ibn Wasil’s less exaggerated estimation of the library as containing about 120,000 volumes.<sup>13</sup> Even the lowest of these figures is greatly exaggerated and should be interpreted symbolically. Like other palace libraries, its extensiveness was due to its inclusion of all disciplines known at that time. Many books consisted of multiple volumes that might have included up to fifty or sixty bound *juz’* (volumes) each, and major works were represented in multiple copies or editions as, for example, Tabari’s historical compendium, of which 1,200 copies are reported. Moreover, luxury copies are likely to have been produced in a large format, which would have increased the number of volumes. The library was reported to have included hundreds of Quran manuscripts penned by the great calligraphers. The library was described as consisting of forty *khizānas*, or individual rooms or sections, dedicated to specific subjects, one of which was said to have housed 18,000 vol-

11 S. Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 242–249.

12 Walker, “Libraries,” 14–15.

13 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, II, 355–359; Abu Shama, *Rawdatayn*, II, 138, 292–293; Ibn Kathir, *Bidaya*, XIV, 213; Pedersen, *Arabic Book*, 118–119; Walker, “Libraries.”

umes on the ancient sciences. The books were divided between two sections, an outer (*barrāniyya*) and an inner (*dākhiliyya*), less accessible one. There was a bench for the caliph to sit on and read during his visits; he also borrowed books. Besides the palace main library, the academy known as Dār al-ʿIlm (also called Dār al-Ḥikma like its Abbasid prototype) was founded by caliph al-Hakim bi Amr Allah as a center for the study of all known disciplines and endowed with a dedicated library. Some of its books came from the collections of the palace. The Dar was said to be open to the general public and its books available to all for reading and copying. Its lavish endowment even provided its users with writing tools and paper.<sup>14</sup>

Prior to Salah al-Din's actions, the Fatimid library had suffered setbacks that led to the dispersal and loss of books. The years of famine (1065–1072) caused by a sequence of low floods of the Nile, led to unrest and military rebellion. The Turkish corps of the army looted the palace treasures and dispersed their collections, including the books that were reportedly torn to extract their leather bindings to make shoes for the soldiers. The leaves were dumped in heaps that were eventually known as “book mounds.” During this crisis twenty-five camels loaded with books were carried to the palace of vizier Abu 'l-Faraj al-Maghribi to pay the salaries of his staff in lieu of the money the caliph owed him. The salaries due amounted to some 5,000 *dinars*, whereas the books were worth 100,000 *dinars*. The vizier's collection was looted at a later date.<sup>15</sup>

Along with the other Fatimid treasures, Salah al-Din sold the library mainly at auctions that took place twice a week; camel loads of books went to Syria. One of the main buyers of the library's collection was the former head of the Fatimid chancery and later vizier of Salah al-Din, al-Qadi 'Abd al-Rahim b. 'Ali al-Baysani, known as al-Qadi al-Fadil (d. 1199–1200). Before the sales, he was given the opportunity to view the books. To acquire them at a low price, he selected some and stripped them of their bindings before dumping them into a container to make them look like waste, which he could buy more cheaply. According to al-ʿImad, or ʿImad al-Din al-Katib al-Isfahani, a secretary in Salah al-Din's service, al-Fadil was exempted from paying for the books he wished to acquire.<sup>16</sup> Abu Shama reports in his chronicle that Salah al-Din also gave al-Qadi al-Fadil the formidable library of Amid (Diyar Bakr) following his conquest of the city from the Artukids in 1183, which is said to have

14 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, II, 460–461, 502–508.

15 Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, II, 294–295.

16 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, IV/2, 462–465.

contained 1,040,000 volumes, from which al-Fadil selected and carried away seventy camel loads.<sup>17</sup> Their destination—whether Cairo or Damascus—is not reported. It can be presumed that they somehow ended up in Ayyubid and Mamluk collections.

Al-Fadil, who was a bibliophile, was able to establish for himself an extraordinary library said to have included 124,000 volumes. Some titles were represented in up to thirty copies or editions. This library did not consist exclusively of books from Salah al-Din's booty; al-Fadil was an avid buyer of books and he employed a scriptorium to work for him. Among those who copied for him was Asad al-Din b. al-Muhsin, known as al-Mu'ayyad *al-Nasikh*, whose career continued under the Ayyubids.<sup>18</sup> When Salah al-Din's physician al-Muwaffaq As'ad b. al-Mutran (also the head of the physicians of Damascus), died in 1191, his library was offered for sale, and al-Fadil showed interest in acquiring books from it. Ibn al-Mutran was a convert of Christian heritage and a scholar who authored a number of medical books. His library, estimated to have contained some 10,000 volumes, included a large collection of autographed drafts. He used to employ three scribes, one of whom was a renowned calligrapher named Jamal al-Din b. al-Jammala to transcribe and copy books for him. Al-Fadil requested to be shown a sample of the collection in a container (*khizana*), but ultimately did not purchase any. The library was eventually sold for 3,000 *dirhams*.<sup>19</sup>

Al-Fadil endowed an important share of his collection to the madrasa he founded in Cairo (1184–1185), which was described as being a major foundation. There, his son al-Ashraf studied and his grandson, 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Ali al-Baysani (d. 1296), who was a scholar and calligrapher, held the post of librarian.<sup>20</sup> During the famine of 1294–1295 the library was dismantled by its students, who sold the books to buy bread: a book for a loaf.<sup>21</sup> The books were eventually dispersed among the scholars who could afford to buy them. An early Quran manuscript in Kufic, popularly attributed to the caliph 'Uthman, which was purchased for the high sum of 30,000 *dinars* and kept in a dedicated chest, was among the library's losses during these events. Although the library was lost as a collection, its books continued to circulate on the market. The scholar 'Umar b. 'Ali b. al-Mulaqqin (d. 1401) is reported to have possessed

17 Abu Shama, *Rawdatayn*, III, 96.

18 Safadi, *Wafi*, IX, 7.

19 Safadi, *Wafi*, IX, 40–43; Ibn Abi Usaybi'a, *Uyūn*, II 178–181.

20 Safadi, *Wafi*, XVIII, 198; Eche, *Les bibliothèques*, 253; James, "Qur'ans and Calligraphers," 354. Eche, based on a manuscript, indicates a century later.

21 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, IV/2, 462.

among his large collection books that had been endowed to various madrasas, including that of al-Qadi al-Fadil.<sup>22</sup>

Al-Fadil also founded a madrasa or *dār al-ḥadīth* in the quarter of Kallasa in Damascus, which continued to thrive well into the Mamluk period and benefited from supplementary endowments of books.<sup>23</sup> Thus his book collection remained under the family's control for a while. Al-Afdal's son, al-Ashraf Ahmad (d. 1245), who held the office of vizier under al-Malik al-'Adil (r. 1200–1218) in Cairo and was later appointed by his successor al-Kamil (r. 1218–1238) as envoy to the caliph in Baghdad,<sup>24</sup> endowed some of his father's collection to a sanctuary dedicated to his memory in Damascus. The building was later incorporated into the Ashrafiyya mausoleum and its book collection merged with its library.<sup>25</sup> This collection may well have included books that al-Qadi al-Fadil was given by Salah al-Din when he dismantled the Artukid library of Amid.

Salah al-Din seems to have generously distributed books to the scholars who surrounded him, not only from the Fatimid booty but even from libraries endowed to Syrian mosques. After his capture of Aleppo from the Zangids, he allowed the scholar Muhammad al-Banjadihi to help himself from the great mosque's endowed library, carrying away a large number of books. Muhammad eventually endowed his library to a Sufi foundation (*ribāṭ*) in Damascus.<sup>26</sup>

Books from the palace collection continued to be available on the market decades after the fall of the Fatimids. Zayd b. al-Hasan Abu 'l-Yumn al-Kindi (d. 1217), who migrated from Baghdad to Syria and was in the service of a nephew of Salah al-Din, with whom he traveled to Egypt, acquired precious books from the palace collection.<sup>27</sup> Besides the caliphs' collection, other major libraries collected by members of the elite survived the fall of the Fatimid caliphate as dispersed books that continued to circulate.<sup>28</sup>

Al-Qadi al-Fadil had a brother, 'Abd al-Karim b. 'Ali (d. 1224), who according to the date of his death must have been much younger. He held an administrative post in Alexandria and was likewise a bibliophile said to have owned a library larger than his brother's. Consisting of 200,000 volumes that included

22 Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, iv, 350–351; Ibn Hajar, *Inba'*, v, 41–46.

23 Nu'aymi, *Tarikh al-madaris*, I, 67–71.

24 Safadi, *Wafi*, vii, 57–78.

25 Eche, *Les bibliothèques*, 203–204; Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus*, 32–34.

26 al-Qifti, *Nuhah*, III, 166.

27 al-Qifti, *Nuhah*, II, 11.

28 Sayyid, *al-Kitab*, I, 269–270.

many books in multiple editions, it was reportedly exceptional outside royal circles. Safadi noted without further detail that this library still existed in his own day, the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>29</sup>

After the great famine of al-Mustansir's reign, the vizier al-Afdal Shahinshah (d. 1121) tried to prevent libraries from leaving Egypt. Having heard that the physician Ifra'im b. al-Zaffan, who owned a library of some 20,000 volumes for which he had established a scriptorium, intended to sell 10,000 volumes from his holdings to a buyer from Iraq, al-Afdal stepped in to buy them and had his name inscribed on them. Ibn Abi Usaybi'a (d. 1270), who reported this event, wrote that many medical books from this collection were still circulating in his own time, more than a century later.<sup>30</sup>

Although the Fatimid library collection was dispersed and may have been partly damaged by Salah al-Din when he dismantled the palaces, it was not liquidated. Salah al-Din's main concern was to dismantle the library of the Fatimid caliphs, as he did with their palaces and treasures, as a regal symbol of their identity and pride and for the badly needed financial profit from their sale. His intention was not the liquidation of the books, since he generously invited al-Fadil and others to help themselves to volumes from the collection.<sup>31</sup> Although Abu Shama mourned the fate of the glorious, well-organized, and well-cataloged library having fallen prey to the greedy brokers, who also purchased on their own account,<sup>32</sup> the library's content ended up as a bonanza for the book market, to the satisfaction of scholars and bibliophiles, who used the opportunity of good bargains that such chaotic circumstances offered to replenish their libraries. Considering that the Fatimid library covered a wide range of subjects with books available in multiple copies, it must have continued for a while to provide a pool for scholars and scribes to use for reading and copying. Books from other Fatimid libraries, such as the collection of Ibn Fatik, a bureaucrat under caliph al-Amir (r. 1101–1130), continued to circulate in the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>33</sup>

As long as there was a market for books and avid buyers, books would be sold rather than wasted, changing hands and nurturing other collections. As Fozia Bora noted,<sup>34</sup> the Mamluk historians, who always integrated past histories in

29 Dhahabi, *Tarikh*, XLV, 67–68; Safadi, *Wafi*, XIX, 82.

30 Ibn Abi Usaybi'a, *Uyun*, II, 105.

31 See also F. Bora's article "Did Salah al-Din?" based on historiographical arguments.

32 Abu Shama, *Rawdatayn*, II, 292.

33 Ibn Abi Usaybi'a, *Uyun*, II, 99.

34 Bora, "Did Salah al-Din?"

their compendia, must have had at their disposal Fatimid texts, which they copied and forwarded in new compilations.

Unlike fire, termites,<sup>35</sup> floods, or other forms of natural calamities, the plundering of libraries did not imply the loss of the books altogether but their redistribution. An exceptional case may have been the library of Taj al-Din Muhammad b. 'Umar b. Abi Bakr, a scholar and calligrapher (d. 1435), who used to take notes and write down comments on the lectures he attended, gradually accumulating a substantial library. This was eventually plundered by some of his relatives, who dismantled the bound volumes and sold the fascicles for their scrap paper value by weight, without regard for order or classification, losing forever their scholarly worth.<sup>36</sup> Paper inscribed on both sides could not have been reused for writing, but it may have been used for the production of book bindings that required pressed and lacquered paper. Paper was also used for wrapping foodstuffs, as noted by Persian scholar and traveler Nasir-i Khusraw, who visited Egypt in 1047–1050.<sup>37</sup> 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi, the physician and scholar who wrote a remarkable description of Egypt around 1204, mentions that the linen wrapping of ancient mummies was much sought after by the paper makers to be recycled into wrapping paper for merchants of spices and medical drugs (*attārīn*).<sup>38</sup>

Certainly books from of the Fatimid library contributed to the fledging Ayyubid palace library. In the early thirteenth century, al-Malik al-Kamil took the initiative to re-create a royal library on the Citadel. To supplement this, he ordered the confiscation of al-Qadi al-Fadil's library, that is, the return of part of the Fatimid library! These books, which might have belonged to the vizier's private collection held by his heirs rather than to his madrasa, were estimated to number 68,000 volumes. They were reported to have been loaded on fifty-nine camels in three installments to be transferred to the Citadel. Maqrizi reports, however, that a month after the arrival of al-Fadil's books, al-Malik al-Kamil returned 11,800 volumes, among them an anthology by poet Abu 'l-'Ala' al-Ma'arri in sixty volumes. It seems that al-Malik al-Kamil made a selection among the confiscated books of al-Fadil and returned those for which he had no need, perhaps duplicates. Al-Kamil's Citadel library burned down in 1292, and its damaged paper was sold at the lowest prices.<sup>39</sup> It was described as belonging to the "treasure of kings."<sup>40</sup>

35 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, IX, 30.

36 Ibn Hajar, *Inba'*, VIII, 408.

37 Nasir-i Khusraw, *Book of Travels*, 71.

38 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi, *Kitāb al-ifāda*, 162–163.

39 Maqrizi, *Suluk*, I, 271. 11, 366; Maqrizi, *Khitat*, III, 683.

40 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, III, 683; Maqrizi, *Suluk*, I, 1777.

The library belonging to Syrian physician and vizier Abu 'l-Hasan b. Ghazal should be mentioned here. Abu 'l-Hasan had an unusual career, having been the court physician to the Ayyubid sultan of Damascus, al-Salih Isma'il, and then his vizier during his second reign (r. 1239–1245). During his vizierate, he accumulated an enormous fortune, said to have been acquired through controversial means. When al-Malik al-Salih seized power in Syria, his property was confiscated and he was imprisoned in the Citadel of Cairo. In the course of the intrigues following the Mamluk grab for power, he was executed along with other Ayyubid dignitaries by sultan al-Mu'izz Aybak (r. 1257–1259). Abu 'l-Hasan owned a library of 20,000 volumes for which he used to employ a scriptorium. Among the books he commissioned was Ibn 'Asakir's eighty-volume history of Damascus that occupied ten copyists for two years.<sup>41</sup> The scale of this library was a special case because its patron combined his career as a prominent physician with the princely status of vizier. The flourishing of sciences under Ayyubid patronage, documented by Ibn Usaybi'a's biographical dictionary,<sup>42</sup> contributed to the creation of numerous significant scientific libraries mentioned by this author. Under Ayyubid rule, the continuity of careers of Fatimid bureaucrats, who belonged to the intellectual elite, entailed the continuity of libraries and book culture. Calligraphers' careers also continued, as will be shown later.

Under Zangid and Ayyubid rule in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, Syria saw a cultural and artistic florescence despite this being a period of utmost challenge. With the Crusaders in the Levant and a Shi'i Fatimid caliphate in Cairo, Sunni Islam had experienced a critical phase of its history, requiring military and ideological initiatives to restore its supremacy. The Sunni madrasa introduced by the Saljuk vizier Nizam al-Mulk to Iran in the eleventh century soon spread to Arab territories to consolidate orthodoxy. Following the first evictions of the Crusaders from Arab cities, the Zangid governors of the Saljuks, followed by the Ayyubids, made great use of the *waqf* system to establish pious foundations to restore Muslim rule. Although practiced earlier, the *waqf* system was now systematically applied as a major instrument of government policy for religious and political restoration.<sup>43</sup> It was used to channel the resources of the enemies' confiscated and appropriated estates into charity in the form of institutions that would shape the religious and intellectual elite of the future. The *waqf* was meant to secure the durability of a foundation forever. The pious endowment system was not just applied to colleges, monasteries,

41 Ibn Abi Usaybi'a, *Uyun*, II, 235–236.

42 See Brentjes, "Ayyubid Scholars."

43 On Salah al-Din's endowments, see Frenkel, "Saladin."

hospices, hospitals, and public fountains, it also acquired a new dimension by supporting military installations for the holy war, ransoming prisoners of war, and providing stipends for scholars deprived of other resources. It was Salah al-Din who introduced in Egypt the first state-sponsored Sunni college (madrasa) and the first monastery for Sufis, the *khanqāh*.

# Mamluk Libraries

## 1 Patronage of the Mamluk Book

Just as the destruction of imperial libraries did not annihilate individual books and their contents, the sack of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 did not terminate its culture. The caliphate of Baghdad fell eight years after the Mamluks seized power, and it was the Mamluks who were able to halt a further Mongol advance into their territory. With the inclusion of Syria in the sultanate, the Mamluks inherited the culture fostered by the Zangids and Ayyubids in Syria and the Jazira while leading the transition from caliphate to sultanate. After the victory against the Mongols and Crusaders, al-Zahir Baybars (r. 1260–1277) created an Abbasid-Mamluk or Baghdad-Cairo formal continuity by establishing a symbolic ceremonial Abbasid caliphate in the Egyptian capital. This initiative contributed to maintaining the memory of the “glorious age” to the end of the Mamluk sultanate. Baybars also took over the Abbasid supremacy as guardian of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Through their religious and charitable patronage, perhaps inspired by the madrasa of caliph al-Mustansir, the Mamluk sultans sought to legitimate their rule by confirming Cairo’s succession to Baghdad as the center of Sunnism and Arabic Islamic culture. However, the Mamluk sultans were not renowned for their command of the Arabic language and its literature, unlike the caliphs and the Ayyubid rulers. Their background did not equip them for such a role. The military establishment, based on continuous fresh recruitment from abroad, lacked cultural continuity. Few were deeply Arabicized or absorbed in Arabic culture in the same manner that their contemporaries, the Mongol Ilkhanid and Timurid dynasties, appropriated Persian culture in Iran. Unlike the Ayyubid ruling class in Syria and Egypt, who demonstrated affinity to the Arabic *adab* culture, promoting literati and poets in the Abbasid tradition, the Mamluk sultans were not native Arabic speakers and were not inclined to Arabic literary aesthetics. Instead they sponsored academic institutions, through which they could address communities even beyond the Arabic-speaking world. By the same token, the promotion of Sufism played a major role in the Mamluk state. Most sultans showed an inclination to Sufism, which they promoted almost to the extent of making it the state religion. Instead of poetry, Sufism was the intellectual and spiritual link to their Arabic-speaking subjects.

The word *mamluk*, meaning “owned,” identifies the men it designates as being of non-Muslim origin and recruited by purchase in Asia, Crimea, and the Caucasus to man a military corps. With this recruitment initiative, the last Ayyubid sultan, al-Salih Najm al-Din (r. 1240–1249), was able to successfully fight the campaign led by Louis XI in Egypt. Following their victory and their master al-Salih’s death, the Mamluks maintained this recruiting system under their own rule. Although the principle of nonhereditary succession was invalidated by the Qalawunid dynasty between the late thirteenth and late fourteenth centuries, and later again by several sultans who tried to enthrone their sons, no formal entitlement to hereditary succession was acknowledged. Consensus among the aristocracy continued to be required for the investment of a new sultan. The absence of an entitlement by birth applied not only to sultans but to the whole military ruling establishment. With the renewal of the aristocracy, its legitimacy was renewed as well. The extensive pious patronage of the Mamluk establishment reaffirmed and extended the legitimacy they initially earned through their military victories.

Under Ayyubid rule, the concept of a madrasa to which the patron’s mausoleum was attached, already practiced in Syria, was introduced to Cairo by the widow of the last Ayyubid sultan, al-Salih Najm al-Din, who succeeded him in 1250 for a few months as the first Mamluk sultan.<sup>1</sup> The characteristic Mamluk association of a pious foundation—be it mosque, madrasa, *khanqah*, or a multifunctional institution<sup>2</sup> including a mausoleum—declared a founder’s aspiration to be commemorated as a pious patron. As was already the case under the Ayyubids, scholars figure as patrons of madrasas and Sufi foundations. The dissemination of libraries thus increased. The great mosques always had their own libraries, which were considered to be an essential part of their liturgical furnishings.<sup>3</sup> Sultans, emirs, the bureaucratic and religious elite, and commoners used the advantages of the *waqf* system, which allowed the combination of charity with personal interests. The administration of the *waqf* and its resources became a major economic and political issue that regularly occupied the chroniclers.

The combination of generous philanthropic services with the well-known mobility of medieval Muslim scholars in search of knowledge and access to authoritative academic figures contributed to the status of Mamluk institutions as academic and intellectual magnets. This was particularly the case

1 Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 113–116.

2 The phrase “religious institution” will henceforth be used to refer to madrasa, *khanqah*, mosque-madrasa, mosque-*khanqah*, and mosque-madrasa-*khanqah*.

3 Sakhawi, *Raf‘ al-asr*, 449–450.

for Cairo, where the highly endowed royal foundations were concentrated. Although many of the Mamluk funerary foundations were as much commemorative as they were philanthropic, their number and scale created a vast scholarly environment that inevitably affected book production by providing scholars with opportunities to study, compile, and copy books. The mass production of books, notably on religious subjects, is evident in the commentaries on al-Bukhari's collection of the prophetic traditions that were written supposedly by the hundreds under Mamluk rule.<sup>4</sup> Authors such as Dhahabi (d. 1348), Nuwayri (d. 1333), Maqrizi (d. 1442), Ibn Hajar (d. 1449), Ibn Taghribirdi (d. 1473), Sakhawi (d. 1497), Suyuti (d. 1505), and many others wrote several massive compendia in double-digit numbers of volumes in their printed form. Maqrizi is reported to have written 116 and Ibn Hajar 150 volumes.<sup>5</sup> These are not exceptional but representative examples of the major figures of Mamluk literature. The urge of pursuing, collecting, and preserving Islamic knowledge did not remain confined to religious sciences; many of these compilations also encompassed the encyclopedic lore of the earlier age.

Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) deplored the detrimental effect of too many compilations and commentaries that ultimately limited reading to selections and to the proliferation of abridgments and digests.<sup>6</sup> This volume of production presupposes the existence of a library infrastructure.

## 2 A Palace Library?

The descriptions of the Citadel and its royal residence written by 'Umari, Maqrizi, and Ibn 'Abd al-Zahir do not give any indication of the role of a library as a regal representative institution, as had been the case in the caliphs' courts and under the Ayyubids. Maqrizi dedicates only a couple of lines mentioning a fire in 1292 that destroyed the royal library established by the Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-Kamil at the Citadel.<sup>7</sup>

The Mamluk sultans, who were soldiers and horsemen, represented themselves through their stables rather than through libraries. Sultan Barquq (r. 1389–1399) held audiences in the *Iṣṭabl* (literally "stable"), which must have been a palace or a hall in the vicinity of the royal stables.<sup>8</sup> The residence of one

4 On Bukhari's significance in the Mamluk sultanate, see Blecher, *So Said the Prophet*, chap. 5.

5 Biqa'i, *Inwan*, I, 110.

6 Rosenthal, "Of Making Many Books," 45; Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, 587–588.

7 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, III, 683.

8 Behrens-Abouseif, "Citadel," 61–64.

of the most important emirs of the fourteenth century was called *Istabl Qawsun*.<sup>9</sup> Their residences in the Citadel and in the city displayed their political and military power, but the sultans and emirs marked their presence in the city with commemorative and charitable foundations dedicated to worship and study. It was essentially there, rather than in the palaces, that the Mamluk contribution to book culture took place.

In spite of the scarcity of information about a Mamluk royal library some sultans were acknowledged for their interests in intellectual matters and scholarship, and some are reported to have acquired books for their private use, as did emirs. Some sultans were more intellectual than others. Sultan Hasan (r. 1347–1351, 1354–1361) sponsored the poet Ibn Nubata (d. 1366). Sha‘ban (r. 1363–1377) ordered magnificent manuscripts. Jaqmaq (r. 1438–1453), generally described as having an austere lifestyle and a puritanical attitude toward the arts, was a bibliophile who paid extravagant prices for rare books.<sup>10</sup> He was probably the founder of the scriptorium in the Citadel barracks.<sup>11</sup> His son Muhammad was highly praised for his culture and intellectual refinement.<sup>12</sup> Some sultans promoted Turkish literature, such as Tatar (1421), who owned a large collection of Turkish books, some of which were translated into Arabic.<sup>13</sup> Sultan ‘Ala’ al-Din ‘Ali (r. 1377–1381) commissioned the Anatolian poet Mustafa Darir (d. after 1400) to write a biography of the Prophet in Turkish (*Siyer-i Nebi*) that was eventually presented to his successor, Barquq.<sup>14</sup> Sultan Qaytbay composed religious poetry, some of which has survived in manuscripts;<sup>15</sup> Sultan al-Ghawri was interested in Persian and Turkish literature, composed poetry, and commissioned an illustrated manuscript of the first rhymed Turkish translation of Firdawsī’s *Shahnameh*. His intellectual interests are reflected in the literary gatherings he convened.<sup>16</sup>

The present collections of Mamluk manuscripts in Turkish libraries, which were found in the Citadel and looted by Sultan Selim during his military campaign, consist largely of manuscripts produced in the late Mamluk period, many of which were dedicated to Sultans Qaytbay (r. 1468–1496) and al-Ghawri (r. 1501–1516). It is noteworthy that books from earlier periods are scarce among these collections. Because no disaster is reported to have destroyed a library on

9 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, III, 235–238.

10 Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, IV, 299.

11 See Chapter 6, on books from the barracks.

12 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, VII, 210–212.

13 ‘Ayni, *Iqd*, IV (ed. Qarmut), 157.

14 Tanindi, “Two Bibliophile,” 267.

15 Ibn Iyas, *Bada’i’*, III, 326; Yusuf, “Ahl al-‘ilm,” 76.

16 See ‘Azzam, *Majalis*.

the Citadel, this absence raises questions. A rare reference to a library in the Citadel indicates that Sultan al-Mu'ayyad transferred books from this collection to his newly founded religious complex.<sup>17</sup> Did other sultans act similarly, thus depleting the royal library?

As has been documented by Ulrich Haarmann, members of the Mamluk aristocracy, in particular the second generation, included several scholars and intellectuals.<sup>18</sup> Among the bibliophile emirs was the son-in-law of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad, Baktimur al-Saqi (d. 1332), who owned a fabulous estate with a library that included several editions of Bukhari's Hadith commentary.<sup>19</sup> Emirs employed their own staff of scribes to work for their private and endowed libraries.

Unlike the Ilkhanids, Timurids, Safavids, and Ottomans, the Mamluk sultans, with the exception of al-Ghawri at the end of the Mamluk sultanate, are not known to have been patrons of illustrated manuscripts, which can probably be explained by their orthodox concerns. Following the fall of Abbasid Baghdad, the art of illustrated manuscripts was perpetuated for a while under early Mamluk rule, but no royal patronage can be established in connection with this production. The patronage of illustrated manuscripts remained anonymous, and its significance was not far-reaching.<sup>20</sup>

Patronage of artistic book production concentrated on Quran manuscripts and religious books for princely or institutional use, whereby dazzling masterpieces were produced. Lavish Quran and other religious books formed an essential component of princely religious monuments, which continued to be established, seemingly hardly affected by economic crises. The art of the book thus flourished as un-iconic art with calligraphy and illumination.

### 3 The Libraries of Religious Institutions

The chronicles provide only random information about the libraries endowed to the religious institutions. In his description of Cairo's madrasas, Maqrizi mentions in passing their equipment with libraries, while emphasizing some significant collections, often adding the attribute *jalīla* to the *khizānat kutub* or library.

17 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, IV, 343.

18 Flemming, "Literary Activities"; Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech," 88–101; Irwin, "Mamluk Literature."

19 Safadi, *Wāfi*, X, 194.

20 There are two known exceptions: see Atıl, "Mamluk Painting" and *Renaissance of Islam*, 250–265.

Regarding the use and production of books, there was a difference between the various forms of Mamluk pious foundations, at least in the earlier Mamluk period. In her study of the evolution of the Mamluk *khanqah* or Sufi monastery, Leonor Fernandes has demonstrated how this institution emerged with specific features and functions and a curriculum distinct from those in contemporary madrasas or colleges. This is also reflected in the use of libraries. *Waqf* documents do not stipulate the presence of libraries or librarians in early *khanqahs*. They merely refer to Quran manuscripts for Sufis to practice their worship and exercise. Usually an attendant appointed from the Sufi community and described as *khādim rub'ā* or *khādim muṣḥaf* was in charge of this task. The activities of the communities in these early *khanqahs* seem to have focused on worship and Sufi exercises rather than the study and research of jurisprudence. The foundation deed of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad's *khanqah* at the village of Siryaqus north of Cairo (1316),<sup>21</sup> which describes in great detail the generous maintenance of its Sufi community, lacks a reference to a library or a librarian apart from a servant listed as being in charge of carrying the Quran volumes to the Sufis at the time of their gatherings.<sup>22</sup> This did not preclude that the *khanqah* owned books, perhaps from donations. For example, Safadi reports having seen in this *khanqah* a precious copy of the book *Qūt al-qulūb* authored by the Sufi Muhammad b. 'Ali Abu Talib al-Makki (d. 899–990), penned by the famous calligrapher al-Waliy al-'Ajami.<sup>23</sup> Unlike his *khanqah*, the madrasa of al-Nasir Muhammad endowed earlier on in 1304 in the city had a distinguished library mentioned by Maqrizi, and its endowment deed in Nuwayri's chronicle mentions the post of a librarian.<sup>24</sup>

Gradually during the fourteenth century, the *khanqah* evolved to acquire more academic features matching a madrasa-style curriculum, eventually acquiring the status of a Friday mosque as well. In the first half of the fifteenth century, these institutions merged into one integrated curriculum.<sup>25</sup> Unlike the early *khanqah*, the combined madrasa-*khanqah* included a library served by a librarian. At the same time, some *khanqahs* continued to maintain an exclusive Sufi program. While Barsbay's madrasa-*khanqah* in the city (1425) had a library,

21 Williams, "The Khanqah of Siryaqus"; Ibn al-Hajj, *al-Madkhal*, 183–281.

22 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, IV/2, 767–770; Fernandes, *Khanqah*, 71–72; *waqf* deed published by al-Hajji and by Muhammad Amin as an appendix to his edition of Ibn Habib, *Tadhkira*, II, 427–448.

23 Safadi, *Wafi*, IV, 116.

24 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, IV, 530; Nuwayri, *Nihaya*, XXXII, 68.

25 On this subject, see Fernandes, *Khanqah*.

the *waqf* deed of his funerary *khanqah* in the cemetery (1436), which consisted of a Friday mosque and a *khanqah* alongside a mausoleum for the founder and members of his clan, does not mention a library or a librarian but merely an attendant in charge of the Quran manuscripts.<sup>26</sup>

While Sultans Barquq and Barsbay (r. 1422–1438) marked their presence in the city with academic foundations that also included a domed mausoleum, they preferred to be buried in the cemetery in their predominantly Sufi funerary monuments.

The madrasa-*khanqah* gave the Sufis academic respectability, allowing them to integrate into society and acquire qualifications that enabled them to hold juridical and administrative posts. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, when Sufism had completely penetrated religious and cultural life, the sponsorship of combined madrasa-*khanqahs* receded.<sup>27</sup> The endowment deeds of later princely foundations describe them mostly as Friday mosques with Sufi services, without boarding facilities or a specified madrasa curriculum. Some of these foundations are reported to be equipped with libraries, others not. The absence of a stipulated curriculum may be interpreted perhaps as a more flexible approach, abandoning the program to the community's needs and predilections. The Friday mosque of Emir Azbak min Tutukh, one of the mightiest and wealthiest emirs of the reign of Sultan Qaytbay (r. 1468–1496), which included a salaried staff of Sufis and Quran readers, but no curriculum for students or boarding facilities, employed a librarian with a monthly salary of 300 *dirhams*.<sup>28</sup> How exactly such foundations functioned in practice is difficult to establish.

According to their *waqf* documents, many foundations in the cemeteries were exclusively dedicated to funerary functions, which included hosting a group of Sufis appointed to worship in the premises to bestow blessings on the dead. The monumental funerary complex of Emir Qurqumas, the chief of the army of Sultan al-Ghawri, is described in its deed dated 917/1511 as a *madrassa sufiyya*, that is, a Sufi madrasa, although its foundation deed does not mention a madrasa curriculum. It hosted a community of Sufis whose duty was to worship and practice their rituals. The endowment did not provide for a library or a librarian, merely for an attendant of the Quran volumes whose monthly salary amounted to 150 *dirhams*.<sup>29</sup> The endowment of the small funerary *khanqah* of Emir Azdumur min 'Ali Bay (d. 1507), which provided for a Sufi service, Quran

26 Fernandes, *Khanqah*, 84.

27 Behrens-Abouseif, "Change."

28 Fernandes, *Khanqah*, 89.

29 Fernandes, *Khanqah*, 92; *Waqf* deed of al-Ghawri, 72, 74.

recitation, and a primary school, allocated a small salary of 150 *dirhams* for a librarian, which equaled half the salary of the gardener and the cleaners.<sup>30</sup>

Although the Mamluk *waqf* documents for religious institutions regularly mention the post of a librarian and sometimes an assistant to take care of the books and serve the library users, and although books to serve the curriculum must have been available from the outset in all learning institutions, the *waqf* stipulations do not provide details about the configuration of the library, its holdings, or its role regarding the acquisition or production of books. Neither do the *waqf* deeds refer to a budget for buying or commissioning books or for writing materials. However, they mention a budget for the purchase of incense, oil for the lamps, and various household utensils for the water supply and maintenance of the premises. We may therefore assume that for further acquisitions, the supervisor of the endowment, the *nāẓir*, was the person to decide about the library's needs. The absence of regulations in the deeds regarding library acquisitions might also mean that the mechanisms were obvious, following well-established practices for which it was explicit stipulated in the documents was unnecessary. One may also speculate that these matters were left open in anticipation of private writing activities and initiatives in the form of endowments and donations, which would contribute to the growth of the institutional collections. Indeed, the libraries expanded subsequently through donations and bequests from alumni and affiliated scholars.

Notes on Mamluk manuscripts indicate that books were regularly copied in the religious institutions, as well as in private homes or in the market. It is very likely that books copied within the religious institutions were dedicated to their own libraries. Also outsiders might have acquired permission to copy books there for the market. It is important to add that I could not find any indication about the use of textbooks specifically dedicated to the curriculum of madrasas, as was the case in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>31</sup>

The earliest mention of a significant institutional library is brief and concerns the mausoleum (*qubba*) of Sultan Qalawun (r. 1279–1290), which was part of his complex alongside a hospital and a madrasa. Nuwayri described the library as being substantial, including not only lavish Quran manuscripts, but also books on the religious sciences, medicine, poetry, and belles-lettres; he also mentions a librarian.<sup>32</sup> It is not clear, however, whether this library also served the hospital or if it was a separate one. (See Fig. 1.)

30 Ramadan, "Munsha'at Azdumur."

31 Erünsal, *Ottoman Libraries*, 3, 4, 13, 21.

32 Nuwayri, *Nihaya*, XXXI, 111; Sayyid, n. 2 in Maqrizi's *Khitat*, IV/2, 520.

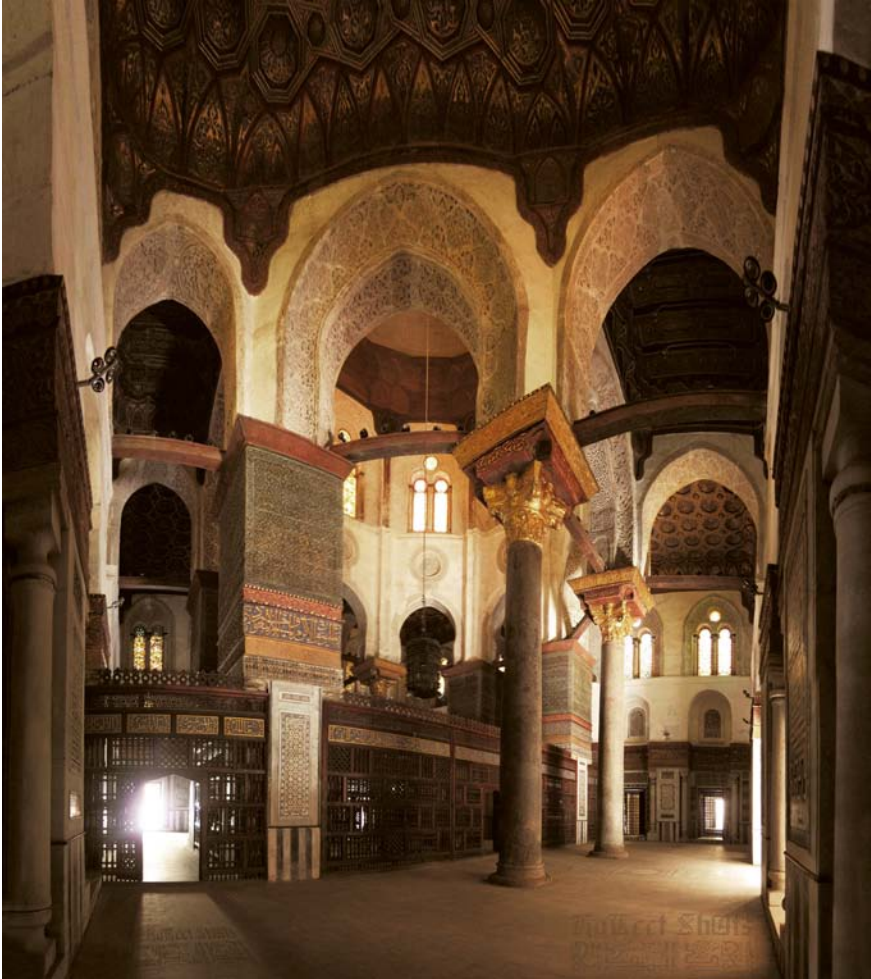


FIGURE 1 The mausoleum of Sultan Qalawun

Blessed with peace and prosperity after more than half a century of warfare against the Mongols and the Crusaders, the long and brilliant reign of al-Nasir Muhammad b. Qalawun (r. 1293–1341, with interruptions: 1294–1296 and 1309–1310), is viewed as the zenith of the Mamluk sultanate. It was an age of extensive and unprecedented pious and artistic patronage, with reforms and progress reaching almost all aspects of economic and cultural activity. The many mosques, madrasas, and *khanqahs* founded by the ruling establishment during his reign must have had an impact on the dissemination of reading and writing skills at academic and elementary levels. According to the physical evidence and *waqf* documents, all forms of religious institutions included a *maktab aytām*, or primary school for orphan boys.

Paradoxically, the impact of al-Nasir's reign on the culture of libraries remains disappointingly unclear. There is not much information regarding the foundation of outstanding library collections in this period. However, when during al-Nasir's second reign the Emir Baybars al-Jashnakir restored the Fatimid mosque of al-Hakim after the earthquake of 1303 and endowed it with a madrasa curriculum, he gave it a library of 500 volumes. It covered various disciplines including history and belles-lettres.<sup>33</sup>

Although little is known about library collections during the long and productive reign of al-Nasir Muhammad, there is evidence that among the florescence of the visual arts of this period, calligraphy was cultivated, particularly in the context of lavish Quran manuscripts endowed to religious institutions.

No information is available regarding the library of Sultan Hasan's gigantic mosque-madrasa, although it was the most ambitious endowment made in the Mamluk period, dedicated to more than 400 students. The building itself was the largest religious monument commissioned in the fourteenth-century Muslim world.<sup>34</sup>

The next significant library to be mentioned in the chronicles as being endowed to a religious foundation was that of the projected madrasa-*khanqah* with Friday mosque of Sultan al-Ashraf Sha'ban (r. 1363–1377). The sultan died before the completion of his extravagant monument, with which he intended to rival that of Sultan Hasan.<sup>35</sup> The project was eventually abandoned, the building quarried, and its contents scrapped. The library was acquired by Sha'ban's son and successor al-Malik al-Salih al-Mansur Hajji, along with other valuable furnishings, for a mere 600 *dinars*, far below their actual value.<sup>36</sup> The library was praised for its lavish calligraphed Quran manuscripts, including some by Yaqut and Ibn al-Bawwab wrapped in silk. There were 10 large *mushafs* and 500 valuable bound volumes (*mujallada*) worth 500 *dinars*. The provenance of these rare books is not mentioned. It is likely that Sha'ban's library did not emerge out of a void but was partly inherited or built on the legacy of his predecessors. Moreover, Sha'ban ordered lavish Quran manuscripts for both his and his mother's foundations.

Sha'ban's library was eventually purchased by his successor, Sultan Barquq's majordomo (*ustādār*) Jamal al-Din Yusuf, who endowed it to his own madrasa-*khanqah*, completed in 1408. When Jamal al-Din Yusuf fell into dis-

33 Nuwayri, *Nihaya*, xxxii, 85.

34 Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 201–213; Kahil, *Sultan Hasan Complex*.

35 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, iv/2, 661–666.

36 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, iv/2, 636, 666.

grace and Sultan Faraj (r. 1399–1405) confiscated his estate, many of the books from his madrasa were transferred to the Citadel.<sup>37</sup> However, the confiscated books are likely to have been returned along with other confiscated endowments restituted to the madrasa by legal verdict following the sultan's death.<sup>38</sup>

It is interesting that within a decade, two royal majordomos founded a major library for their respective religious foundations. The library of Jamal al-Din Mahmud al-Ustadar (d. 1397), the majordomo of Sultan Barquq, slightly preceding that of Jamal al-Din Yusuf, is praised in the chronicles as being the most important one in Cairo (see Figs. 2 and 3). Maqrizi and Ibn Hajar describe it as unparalleled in Egypt and Syria and state that it included all books known at that time in Islam: *la yakhruju li-ahadin kitāb illā an yakūna fi 'l-madrasa*.

Initially this library had been the private collection of the Shafi'i chief judge, Burhan al-Din Ibrahim b. 'Abd al-Rahim b. Jama'a (d. 1388), renowned for collecting only the finest of manuscripts, preferably autographs.<sup>39</sup> Mahmud acquired this library from Burhan al-Din Ibn Jama'a's heirs<sup>40</sup> and endowed it to his funerary madrasa. It contained some 4,000 volumes, which is among the highest figure given for a library at that time.<sup>41</sup> Although its founder stipulated in the endowment deed that no book should be allowed to leave the premises, 130 volumes were already missing during the tenure of its first librarian. These losses from the Mahmudiyya prompted scholar and historian Suyuti to write a small treatise on the borrowing of books, titled *Badhl al-majhūd fi khizānat Maḥmūd*, which may be translated as "Striving for the Library of Mahmud."<sup>42</sup>

In his biographical entry for Suyuti, historian Sakhawi accuses him of having plagiarized books from the Mahmudiyya library, to which he made slight changes and modifications to claim authorship.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, Suyuti had acknowledged that the Mahmudiyya library had been of great help to his research and that many of the books he used were anonymously authored.<sup>44</sup>

The library belonging to the funerary complex of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh (r. 1412–1421) consisted of books from various sources. Some were taken from

37 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, IV/2, 645.

38 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, IV/2, 647.

39 Ibn Hajar, *Inba'*, II, 293–294; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, I, 39–40; Maqrizi, *Suluk*, III, 586; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, I, 97–98; Jawhari, *Nuzha*, I, 179.

40 Not to be confused with the better-known jurist Badr al-Din Ibn Jama'a. A number of scholars belonged to the clan of the Ibn Jama'a.

41 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, IV/2, 590–593, 594; Ibn Hajar, *Inba'*, VIII, 4–5; Sakhawi, *Daw'*, V, 143–144.

42 The text is published by Sayyid, "Nassan."

43 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, IV, 66.

44 Sayyid, "Nassan," 129.



FIGURE 2  
The madrasa of Jamal al-Din Mahmud al-Ustadar, the Mahmudiyya, exterior view

the Citadel's collection, which raises questions about the ownership of the collection and the legal procedure regarding the transfer of books. To these, an additional 500 books worth 1,000 *dinars* were donated by Nasir al-Din Muhammad al-Barizi (d. 1420), the sultan's private secretary. Al-Barizi's son was given the combined post of preacher and librarian to this mosque; he was to be succeeded by his descendants, perhaps in acknowledgment or exchange for this donation. This appointment is stipulated in the endowment deed.<sup>45</sup> The sul-

45 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, IV/1, 343.



FIGURE 3 The madrasa of Jamal al-Din Mahmud al-Ustadar, the Mahmudiyya, interior view

tan also acquired valuable new books for this library, including a copy of the voluminous world history *Mir'āt al-Zamān* compiled by Ibn al-Jawzi, for which he paid as much as 700 *dinars*.<sup>46</sup>

The origins of the libraries of Mahmud al-Ustadar and Sultan al-Mu'ayyad reveal the significance of private collections in the formation of libraries in religious institutions. It is also interesting to note that the founders did not content themselves with the donation of ordinary functional books, but as a token of charity and piety, they endowed particularly lavish copies. No significant

46 Martel-Thoumian, *Les Civils*, 250–251; Ibn Iyas, *Bada'i*, 11, 47.

information is available in the literary sources concerning later libraries in religious institutions.

The sultans were less involved in the foundation of religious institutions in Syria, delegating this task to the emirs, who were sent as governors in the provinces. Throughout this period, emirs alongside members of the religious establishments and other members of the elite founded a significant number of educational institutions housed in fine monuments in Syrian cities. However, because Mamluk *waqf* documents regarding Syria are scarce, so is our information about their libraries. This scarcity of information even in *waqf* documents should not necessarily be interpreted as absence of books. Rather the endowment mechanisms regarding institutional libraries seem to have been complex and random.

The narrative sources, such as Mujir al-Din, Ibn ‘Abd al-Hadi, Nu‘aymi, and Ibn Tulun, rarely mention libraries or the office of a librarian in their enumeration and description of Mamluk religious foundations in Syria. In Mujir al-Din’s description of Qaytbay’s madrasa in Jerusalem and in the madrasa’s *waqf* document itself, there is no mention of a library or a librarian. Neither is a library mentioned for this sultan’s mosque in Ghazza.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, Ellen Kenney’s detailed documentation of Emir Tankiz’s religious foundations in Jerusalem and Damascus does not refer to a library or a librarian.<sup>48</sup> Of course this does not mean that these foundations had no books. Biographical sources indicate that unlike in Cairo, where the academic elite tended to concentrate in the Mamluk princely foundations, the numerous Ayyubid madrasas in Syria maintained their prestigious status and continued to thrive under Mamluk rule, attracting prominent scholars and supplementary endowments. Moreover, the great mosques, which maintained their central role in Syrian cities, continued to hold major book collections and attract supplementary endowments. As was the case with the Mamluk institutions and other earlier mosques and madrasas in Egypt, the sultans or their officials had the prerogative of appointing the major academic staff of the foundations of their Ayyubid predecessors.

#### 4 The Librarians in Religious Institutions

The *waqf* deeds of the great princely foundations usually indicate the salaries to be paid to their staff and the stipulations associated with their tasks. The

47 Mujir al-Din, *al-Ums*, II, 328–330, 333–334; Ibrahim, “Wathiqat al-sultan Qaytbay.”

48 Kenney, *Power and Patronage*, 106–108 and “Mamluk Monument Reconstructed.”

salary of a librarian in a religious foundation was not considerable, being at the same level as what was paid for menial tasks.<sup>49</sup> It can be assumed that even when not explicitly stated, the post of librarian was mostly a part-time job. Ibn Hajar dedicated one day a week to his position as the librarian of the madrasa of Mahmud al-Ustadar.<sup>50</sup> In some cases the librarian's post was divided between two people. For example, the scholar Muhammad b. 'Umar (d. 1481) shared the librarian's post of the madrasa of Qadi 'Abd al-Basit, the Basitiyya, with Ibn Abi 'l-Tayyib al-Suyuti.<sup>51</sup>

It was common practice for the librarian and his assistant to belong to the student community or the Sufis attached to the foundation. Calligraphy skills may have been a desirable qualification for a librarian, as was the case with the librarian for the madrasa of al-'Ayni, Muhammad Urkumas al-Yashbaki (born 842/1437–1438), who learned calligraphy and worked as a copyist.<sup>52</sup>

The monthly salary of the librarian at the madrasa of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad was thirty *dirhams*,<sup>53</sup> at the madrasa of Emir Sarghitmish fifty *dirhams*; the doorkeeper there received thirty and the cleaner twenty-five *dirhams*.<sup>54</sup> At the mosque-madrasa of Sultan Hasan, the librarian was paid 100 *dirhams*, which was double the cleaner's salary.<sup>55</sup> It was stipulated that the librarian of the madrasa-*khanqah* of Sultan Barquq was to be selected from among the Sufis in the foundation, who already received a monthly stipend of 150 *dirhams*, to which a remuneration of 15 *dirhams* was added for the librarian's tasks.<sup>56</sup> The librarian at the complex of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad received forty *dirhams* while the cleaner was paid thirty *dirhams*. In this case, the task was assigned to the preacher, who was none other than the sultan's secretary (*katib al-sirr*), Qadi Nasir al-Din al-Barizi; he was to be succeeded by his descendants.<sup>57</sup>

The pronounced rise in the salary figures of the later period was due to the devaluation of the currency.<sup>58</sup>

49 For the salaries, I consulted the *waqf* documents or printed editions as there are divergences in the secondary sources. Berkey writes that the librarian of al-Ghawri's complex was also a cleaner, which is not what the *waqf* document states.

50 Sakhawi, *Jawahir*, 609.

51 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, VIII, 270 f.

52 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, VII, 131–132.

53 Nuwayri, *Nihaya*, XXXII, 68.

54 *Waqf* deed of Sarghitmish, 31, 32, 33.

55 *Waqf* deed published by Amin, *Watha'iq waqf al-sultan Hasan*, 70; al-Harithy, *Waqf Document*, 160.

56 *Waqf* deed published by Jaritz, "Auszüge," 129.

57 *Waqf* deed of al-Mu'ayyad, 50, 52.

58 On the currency crisis in the fifteenth century see Allouche, *Mamluk Economics*, appendix 2, 95–98; Ashtor, *Histoire*, 277–278.

- The librarian of the madrasa-*khanqah* of Barsbay in the city received a salary of 300 *dirhams*, the doorkeeper 400 *dirhams*.<sup>59</sup> At the madrasa-*khanqah* of Jamal al-Din Yusuf al-Ustadar, which was endowed during the same period with a particularly valuable library, the librarian earned ten *dirhams*, as much as the cleaner. In both foundations the task was to be assumed as a part-time activity by a member of the Sufi community, who already had the benefit of a stipend of thirty *dirhams*.<sup>60</sup>
- At the madrasa of Emir Jawhar al-Lala (1430), an imam-*cum*-librarian received a salary of 400 *dirhams*, of which 100 *dirhams* was his remuneration for taking charge of the books.<sup>61</sup>
- The librarian of Qaytbay's mosque in the cemetery received a salary of 300 *dirhams*, the doorkeeper 350 *dirhams*.<sup>62</sup>
- At the funerary complex of Sultan al-Ghawri, built in the first decade of the sixteenth century, the librarian received a monthly salary of 1,500 *dirhams*. By comparison, the preacher of the Friday sermon received 1,200 *dirhams*, each of the sixteen muezzins 30 *dirhams*, the calligraphy teacher of the primary school 300 *dirhams*, and the Quran teacher of the primary school 600 *dirhams*. The highest salary was that of the secretary or financial administrator of the foundation, amounting to 2,000 *dirhams*. According to the stipulations in this endowment deed, the librarian was to take care of the books, keep a list of them, and serve the users two days a week, not allowing any book to be taken out of the premises. He was also expected to restore books. Although some endowments provided for a deputy librarian, in this case the librarian was allowed to hire one only at his own expense.<sup>63</sup>

Many religious foundations, beside the librarian and his assistant, employed an attendant for the Quran volumes described as *khādīm rub'a* or *khadīm mushaf*, meaning "attendant of the Quran volumes," who would be in charge of keeping, maintaining, and carrying back and forth only Quran volumes or fascicles for the use of the Sufis, the Quran reciters, and the worshipers.

Although the librarian's salary in any institution was modest, the post was prestigious and highly sought after.<sup>64</sup> Evidently any interest in these posts was not a matter of material benefit or career but that of the privilege of having easy access to an academic library. The librarians were usually scholars, and some

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59 Fernandes, *Khanqah*, 84.

60 Fernandes, *Khanqah*, 58; the *waqf* deed is published by 'Uthman *Wathiqat waqf*.

61 *Waqf* deed of Jawhar al-Lala, 51.

62 Fernandes, *Khanqah*, 86.

63 *Waqf* deed of al-Ghawri, 202–209.

64 See Petry, "Some Observations."

were copyists and calligraphers, such as Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah al-‘Ibadi, who copied over one hundred Quran manuscripts and worked for a while at the Mahmudiyya.<sup>65</sup> Renowned scholars often held the post of librarian in major religious institutions, which may have contributed to attracting donations and endowments to the collections.

For the sake of the library, patrons and *waqf* supervisors usually took care of appointing distinguished academic personalities to the post of librarian.<sup>66</sup> The prominent judge and scholar Zakariyya al-Ansari tried to succeed the historian Ibn Hajar as librarian at the madrasa Mahmudiyya, without success.<sup>67</sup> Emir Jamal al-Din Yusuf explicitly stipulated that his brother Shams al-Din b. ‘Abd Allah Muhammad and his descendants should occupy the post of the librarian of his madrasa-*khanqah*.<sup>68</sup> This brother was a scholar and rector of the eminent *khanqah* of Baybars al-Jashnakir.<sup>69</sup>

In families of scholars, sons succeeded their fathers in their positions, as was the case with ‘Ali b. Ahmad al-Qalqashandi (1418), the son of the *Subḥ al-a‘shā*’s author (d. 1452). Among several other positions, he occupied that of the librarian of the madrasa of al-Ashraf Barsbay, where he was succeeded by his son Ibrahim.<sup>70</sup> The prolific scholar and rector of Sultan Khushqadam’s funerary complex, Muhammad b. Qurqumas al-Aqtamuri (d. 1478), was at the same time its librarian. He was also a calligrapher who copied a large number of books, which he endowed to a funerary madrasa of his own.<sup>71</sup>

It was not unusual for librarians to misuse their privilege. The judge Nasir al-Din Muhammad al-Faqqusi (d. 1438), a distinguished scholar, had a collection of rare books described by the historian Biqa‘i as “owned and endowed” (*milkan wa waqfan*). This seems to imply that the librarian took the liberty of acquiring books from endowed collections for himself. Muhammad was the librarian of the Madrasa Sabiqiyya, founded by Emir Mithqal in 1362 and equipped with a valuable library.<sup>72</sup>

The librarian was to be held personally accountable for loss or damage and could be dismissed if he failed to perform his duties adequately.<sup>73</sup> Those attached to major institutions answered to the highest authorities—an emir or

65 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, VIII, 113.

66 Eche, *Les bibliothèques arabes*, 217.

67 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, III, 237.

68 ‘Uthman, *Wathiqat waqf*, 164.

69 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, IV/2, 646; ‘Uthman, *Wathiqat waqf*, 150, 163–164.

70 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, v, 162, II, 78.

71 Petry, “Some Observations,” 19; Sakhawi, *Daw’*, VIII, 292–293.

72 Biqa‘i, *Inwan*, v, 120.

73 Amin, *al-Awqaf*, 357–358.

even the sultan. The unnamed great secretary of Sultan Qaytbay, who should be identified as Yashbak min Mahdi, is reported to have ordered that an elderly retired librarian who had served at the complex of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad should endure the humiliation shortly before his death in 1478 of having a written charge posted on his door. This held him responsible for the books that were found to be missing in the library and ordered him to return them. The task proved almost impossible.<sup>74</sup>

In 1423 Sultan Barsbay summoned the librarian Fakhr al-Din 'Uthman, the second to hold the office of librarian at the Mahmudiyya, and had him beaten because some precious books were found to be missing. An inventory was eventually made, which revealed that 400 volumes from a total of 4,000 were missing.<sup>75</sup> 'Uthman had to pay compensation to the value of the lost books, estimated at 400 *dinars*, that is, a *dinar* per volume. To manage this debt, 'Uthman was forced to sell his house and other property. He was accused of bribery although he had the reputation of being extremely strict, as his nickname *al-ṭāghī* (the tyrant) indicates. He would not allow even the mightiest grandees to borrow books in spite of the great bribes they offered him. This did not prevent others from describing him as too lenient with students and too weak toward the powerful. Following 'Uthman's dismissal, the historian Ibn Hajar held the post of the Mahmudiyya librarian with the intention of rescuing its holdings, and he kept this position until his death. He was praised for setting up a catalog (*fihrisṭ*) of its contents arranged in alphabetical order and by discipline.<sup>76</sup> One wonders whether the library had been without a catalog before that point. Sakhawi writes that when Ibn Hajar took over this library, he made an inventory and managed to retrieve some of the missing books.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, he donated some of his own books to the library.<sup>78</sup>

Whereas detailed catalogs are known from contemporary Europe,<sup>79</sup> no Mamluk catalog is known to have survived to date; only a couple of inventory lists of books are documented in *waqf* deeds. That of Shaykh 'Isa b. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Zawawi does not follow any order, whereas that of Abu 'l-Tayyib is ordered by subject, such as Shafi'i or Hanafi legal schools, Sufism, history, and medicine.<sup>80</sup> The *waqf* deed of Sultan al-Ghawri stipulates that the librar-

74 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, VI, 252. The exact date of this episode and the identity of the sultan and his secretary are not indicated.

75 Ibn Hajar, *Inba'*, VIII, 4–5; Sakhawi, *Daw'*, V, 143–144.

76 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, II, 39; Sakhawi, *Jawahir*, 69–70.

77 Sakhawi, *Jawahir*, 609–610.

78 Sakhawi, *Jawahir*, 1018.

79 Sharpe, "Medieval Librarian," 228.

80 See Chapter 3.

ian should hold a list of the books in his custody, but it is not clear to what extent this was a catalog. The library of a late Mamluk scholar and judge in Aleppo, who died only seven years after the Ottoman conquest, ‘Ubayd Allah b. Ya‘qub (d. 1524), had a catalog of the 5,000 volumes with information about their authors in a dedicated volume.<sup>81</sup> Whether the compilation of this catalog was due to Ottoman influence is not easy to establish. According to İsmail Erünsal, cataloging seems to have been common practice already at an early stage in the history of Ottoman libraries.<sup>82</sup> The catalog of the library of the Ayyubid Ashrafiyya mausoleum in Damascus, which was compiled during the early Mamluk period in 1270, remains an exceptional case, as revealed in Konrad Hirschler’s study on this subject.

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81 Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, 11, 189.

82 Erünsal, *Ottoman Libraries*, 37.

## Private Libraries and Endowments

The endowment of books was already common practice in the eighth century. It began with the bequest of Quran manuscripts to mosques; eventually collectors donated their books to academic institutions and private beneficiaries.<sup>1</sup> By alienating libraries as *waqf*, donors ensured their books would continue to be accessible to those who needed them and not dispersed through individual sales. Before the age of the madrasa, some jurists opposed the principle of endowing books for the exclusive use of a limited circle of beneficiaries, particularly books based on transcripts of public lectures. Their argument was that this would restrict the dissemination of knowledge that was initially dedicated to the general public.<sup>2</sup> According to this school of thought, the endowed book should be used without constraints, in the modern sense of copyright.<sup>3</sup>

In his seminal book on the history of medieval Arab libraries, Youssef Eche demonstrated how private endowments generated significant public libraries in the major Muslim cities. Before the spread of madrasas, the great mosques, such as the Umayyad mosques in Damascus and al-Azhar, received major endowments from scholars and other members of the elite. The biographical sources refer to endowments of private libraries almost as the norm among scholars and bibliophiles. Eventually the cumulative effect of these endowed libraries was the development of a substantial resource of books available to scholars and students.

The practice of endowing a private library was not merely a matter of philanthropy. Rather, it was rooted in the very nature of the private library as a means of its preservation. Because not all natural heirs valued books as much as cash, real estate, or luxury items, bibliophiles and scholars had good reason to fear that their cherished collections and life's work would be wasted and scattered after their death.<sup>4</sup> Sakhawi explained how a library was embezzled because the owner did not endow it.<sup>5</sup> The Damascene scholar Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350), who enjoyed prestige and princely patronage, collected books throughout his life, covering all the classics and all disciplines, often in

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1 Touati, *L'armoire*, 55–56.

2 Sayyid, "Nassan," 131.

3 Eche, *Les bibliothèques*, 379.

4 For the earlier period, see Touati, *L'armoire*, 47–50.

5 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, v, 243.

multiple copies. He owned valuable editions, described as mostly *karandāt*.<sup>6</sup> Because the library was not endowed, after his death his children spent months selling what they did not want to keep for themselves.

Fear of confiscation, which the elite frequently experienced under Mamluk rule, may have been a good reason to endow these libraries as charity. The author of a manuscript of essays dedicated to Sultan al-Ghawri praised the library of the sultan's religious complex, saying that its valuable collection had previously belonged to two private estates. One of them included a large number of outstanding and rare manuscripts that were carried on twenty camels and mules. The other one was loaded on ten camels. The author does not specify how the estates came into the sultan's possession, but he commented that it required a considerable number of years to gather such collections.<sup>7</sup> Considering the academic requirements of authenticated editions before the age of printing, it must have indeed taken a long time to assemble a scholarly library. It was therefore convenient for institutions and individuals to acquire existing collections and estates. The grammarian 'Abd Allah b. Ahmad b. Abi 'l-Karam al-Nahawi (d. 1172) used to buy the books of all the deceased scholars he knew of, and he eventually endowed his collection.<sup>8</sup>

The *waqf* system made it possible to circumvent the rigid inheritance law that in some cases might have been detrimental to a library's existence or survival. Frequently the collector made a private endowment, that is, the endowed item was for his sole personal benefit throughout his lifetime, usually to be succeeded by his heirs; only ultimately, when no heir remained, should it be made available as a charity for a nominated beneficiary institution.<sup>9</sup> The patron usually nominated himself and his heirs as the overseer of the endowment, or he might designate a trusted person.<sup>10</sup> Scholar and book dealer Shu'ayb b. Mika'il al-Jakiri (d. 1332) made his entire property as private *waqf* to himself to be inherited by the Madrasa Hanbaliyya in Damascus.<sup>11</sup>

The endowment of books, however, could not always prevent their loss, embezzlement, and neglect, as frequently mentioned in the context of libraries. The eminent patron of the Madrasa Sahibiyya Baha'iyya (founded

6 Safadi, *Aṣyan*, IV, 368. I could not find the definition of *karandat*. The singular *karand* usually means a horse of red-brown color. The term seems to designate a luxury edition. Elsewhere Safadi uses again the term *karand* in the sense of luxury volumes. Safadi, *Aṣyan*, IV, 559.

7 'Abd al-Basit, *Kitab al-majmu'*, 7–8.

8 Safadi, *Wāfi*, XVII, 15.

9 Eche, *Les bibliothèques*, 206, 369–370.

10 Dhahabi, *Tarikh*, XLIX, 235.

11 Nu'aymi, *Tarikh al-madaris*, II, 62.

by al-Zahir Baybars' vizier Baha' al-Din b. Hanna in Fustat in 1256) appointed himself rector with the stipulation that he was to be succeeded by his descendants. This foundation included a substantial library. By the time the last rector and his heir died in 1410, the madrasa's endowed assets had been exhausted, its buildings had become derelict, and the library, which he had appropriated for his private use, was eventually dispersed. The marble of the madrasa was appropriated by Sultan Faraj.<sup>12</sup>

Books were endowed not only as collections but also as individual manuscripts. Authors often did this to promulgate their work and encourage its copying and dissemination.<sup>13</sup> For example, Shihab al-Din al-'Ayni, the lesser-known brother of the famous historian Badr al-Din Mahmud al-'Ayni (d. 1453), endowed a chronicle he authored to the Azhar mosque with specific stipulations formulated in the *waqf* text inscribed on the manuscript. These stipulations ruled that the book should be read on a daily basis in the Azhar mosque and in the madrasa of his brother Badr al-Din, located in the same neighborhood. The reading sessions should be followed by a recitation of the first chapter of the Quran (the *fātiḥa*) in dedication to him. Furthermore, the book should remain in the possession of the author throughout his lifetime and only after his death be transferred to al-Azhar's library. The book was allowed to be borrowed for copying and recitation.<sup>14</sup> This meant that during the author's lifetime, the manuscript had to be carried back and forth from his home to the mosques for audition sessions. Such an endowment was an opportunity for the author to propagate his work through charitable means. The reading implied an addition to the curriculum of both mosques, which had to host these sessions.<sup>15</sup> This example shows that by donating their books to academic institutions, the authors were effectively publishing them. Also scholars in the Maghreb sent their works to Mamluk institutions in Cairo to propagate them in the East.<sup>16</sup>

Some supplementary endowments tied donations of books with the introduction of new courses, which probably served such interests.<sup>17</sup> In the case of the madrasa 'Asruniyya, founded in Damascus in the late twelfth century, the founder, Sharaf al-Din b. 'Asrun, stipulated that the teachers should be selected from among his descendants and that his works should be the main

12 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, IV/2, 476; Hirschler, *Written Word*, 133.

13 Hirschler, *Written Word*, 143.

14 Nakamachi, "Life in the Margins," 107.

15 Hirschler, *Written Word*, 140.

16 Paper by Victor de Castro Leon: "Ibn al-Khatib and his Mamluk reception" at the 5th SMS (School of Mamluk Studies) conference in Gent 5th July 2018.

17 Nu'aymi, *Tarikh al-madaris*, II, 59.

subject of the curriculum.<sup>18</sup> The common practice of supplementary endowments could lead over time to a gradual mutation in the profile of the religious institutions and their library collections. As they grew through endowments of private collections, the institutional collections were open-ended. Endowed private libraries frequently encompassed a large variety of subjects that were not necessarily confined to, nor even conformed with, the religious topics on the teaching curriculum, thus adding a secular dimension to the collections.<sup>19</sup> For example, libraries collected and endowed by wealthy merchants would not necessarily be tailored to the curriculum of a madrasa. The profile of an institutional library was thus not static; instead, it evolved in a dynamic process. In the absence of stipulations or guidelines regarding the acquisition of books in a religious institution, only the supervisor of the endowment might interfere in preventing additions to the library's holding.

The endowment of private libraries reflects the significance of private collections. When the private secretary of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad, Nasir al-Din al-Barizi, donated 500 of his books to the library belonging to the sultan's mosque, he may not have made such a tremendous sacrifice that would have substantially depleted his own formidable collection. He belonged to a dynasty of distinguished scholars of Aleppine origin,<sup>20</sup> who held high administrative and juridical positions in the Mamluk state. Already in the fourteenth century, one of their ancestors, an Aleppine judge and descendant of a dynasty of judges, Sharaf al-Din Hibat Allah b. 'Abd al-Rahim (d. 1338), had collected a considerable library for which he used to acquire two or three duplicates of each title. Whenever he heard of a new book, he would immediately commission a copy. He eventually endowed his collection, which had an estimated value of 100,000 *dirhams*. The beneficiary is not mentioned.<sup>21</sup> His son and successor to his office, Kamal al-Din Muhammad, who served Sultans Barsbay and Jaqmaq and was the latter's father-in-law, was a bibliophile who collected a legendary library, "like no one in his time had the privilege of possessing in terms of quality, quantity and calligraphy," according to Biqa'i's description.<sup>22</sup> He would pay any price for a precious book, and was generous in lending volumes from his library. His collection probably also included books inherited from his father.

18 Nu'aymi, *Tarikh al-madaris*, 1, 303.

19 The same phenomenon is documented in the case of Ottoman libraries, as the example of a private endowment of books of folk tales and love epics to the mosque of Gihangir shows; Erünsal, *Ottoman Libraries*, 39 ff.

20 Martel-Thoumian, *Les Civils*, chap. 7.

21 Safadi, *A'yan*, v, 534.

22 Biqa'i, *Izhar*, 1, 188–190; 'Ayni, *Iqd* (ed. Qarmut 1985), 389–390; Sakhawi, *Daw'*, 1x, 237–239; Sakhawi, *Tibr*, 420.

After his death, Sultan Jaqmaq who was his son-in-law, appropriated his estate, and the library was put on sale. People competed to acquire his books by making the highest bids at auction (*haşala 'l-taghālī*), which helped repay his debts. However, Nasir al-Din was accused of having unlawfully acquired the library of a chief judge after his death by violating the heirs' rights to the estate with the help of legal manipulations provided by the deputy Hanafi judge al-Labudi. Al-'Ayni commented "what was acquired by sin (*ḥarām*) was taken away by sin."<sup>23</sup>

The fact that many scholars of this period belonged to families and dynasties of academics contributed to the growth of private collections through inheritance. A relative of Kamal al-Din al-Barizi, Yahya b. Muhammad, known as Ibn Hajji, had a large library said to have been acquired by inheritance, purchase, and commission (*istiktāb*).<sup>24</sup> Prominent collectors did not depend entirely on what the market offered to create their libraries; they commissioned copies in the market or had their own copyists to work for them. The judge, Jamal al-Din b. Rayyan,<sup>25</sup> encouraged the calligrapher Badr al-Din Muhammad b. Baktut al-Qarandali (d. 1334) to practice his craft by employing him and providing him with maintenance and cash.<sup>26</sup>

The Damascene scholar, historian, and prolific author al-Qasim b. Muhammad b. Yusuf al-Birzali (d. 1339), copied and collected as many books as to fill four containers (*khaza'in*), which he made available to others and eventually endowed as a charitable *waqf*.<sup>27</sup> The poet and calligrapher Sha'ban b. Muhammad al-Athari (d. 1417) endowed his library, including his own works, to the madrasa of Qadi 'Abd al-Basit.<sup>28</sup> The judge 'Ala al-Din 'Ali b. Mahmud al Mughli (d. 1425) bequeathed his library of fifty books to the madrasa of Barsbay.<sup>29</sup> The scholar and deputy judge 'Abd al-Wahhab b. 'Umar al-Husayni al-Dimashqi (d. 1471), endowed his valuable library to the madrasa of Shaykh Abu 'Umar in the Salihyya quarter in Damascus.<sup>30</sup> The Syrian scholar and historian Yusuf b. 'Abd al-Hadi (d. 1503),<sup>31</sup> endowed his library of 600 titles to the

23 Sayrafi, *Nuzha*, II, 374; 'Ayni, *Iqd* (ed. Qarmut 1985), 274.

24 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, x, 254.

25 Safadi, *A'yan*, III, 426.

26 Safadi, *Wafi*, II, 256–257; Safadi, *A'yan*, IV, 349–351; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, IV, 16.

27 Safadi, *A'yan*, IV, 49–54.

28 Ibn Hajar, *Inba'*, VIII, 82–84; Maqrizi, *Suluk*, IV, 701–702; Qalqashandi, *Subh*, III, 14; Sakhawi, *Daw'*, III, 301–303; Müstaqim-Zade, *Tuhfa*, 226.

29 'Ayni, *Iqd* (ed. Qarmut 1989), 290.

30 Ibn al-Himsi, *Hawadith*, 124.

31 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, x, 308; Ibn al-'Imad, *Shadharat*, VIII, 43.

madrasa 'Umariyya in Damascus.<sup>32</sup> This library received subsequently many other endowments from scholars.<sup>33</sup>

As had been also the case in the Ayyubid period, madrasas or oratories founded by scholars included their libraries. The madrasa founded by a distinguished scholar, Diya' al-Din al-Maqdisi at Salihyya in Damascus (d. 1245), known as the Diya'iyya, included his excellent library in a dedicated room (*khalwa*). Although the library suffered considerable losses, Ibn Tulun wrote in the early sixteenth century that he and a fellow scholar helped return nearly 2,000 *juz'* of missing books.<sup>34</sup>

The scholar Ibrahim b. Musa al-Ibnasi (d. 1399) founded an oratory (*zāwiya*) on the outskirts of Cairo with a teaching curriculum and a library.<sup>35</sup> The historian Badr al-Din al-'Ayni, who had been market inspector besides other major appointments and enjoyed a high standing at Sultan al-Mu'ayyad's court, built a madrasa in Cairo to which he endowed his books; notes on the manuscripts of his historical compendium at the Egyptian National Library confirm their *waqf* status.<sup>36</sup> The madrasa founded by the eminent scholar 'Umar b. Raslan al-Bulqini (d. 1403) near his home may have included his library,<sup>37</sup> as must have been the case with the religious foundations of many other scholars.

An interesting case is that of the historian Ibn Taghribirdi, who as the son of an emir was a member of the Mamluk aristocracy. His great fortune allowed him to build a family mausoleum in the cemetery near the funerary complex of Sultan Inal. It included a primary school, a public fountain—*cum*—primary school (*sabil-maktab*), and his library with his own numerous works.<sup>38</sup> The endowment deed, completed immediately before his death in 1466, stipulated that his personal servant and secretary, Zayn al-Din Muhammad al-Jamali, should combine the tasks of librarian and doorkeeper for the funerary complex, which entitled him to a generous combined salary of 600 *dirhams*, 200 for the former and 400 for the latter positions.

In the endowment or donation practice, affiliation and alumni culture played an important role. Donors favored the institutions to which they were

32 See Talas, in the introduction to his edition of Ibn 'Abd al-Hadi's *Thimar*, 15–16.

33 Ibn Tulun, *Qala'id*, 273–274.

34 Safadi, *Wafi*, IV, 65–66; Ibn Tulun, *Qala'id*, 138–140; Nu'aymi, II, 73; Ibn 'Abd-al-Hadi, *Thimar*, editor's note, 153, n. 1.

35 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, I, 173.

36 Maqrizi, *Suluk*, III, 1108; Sakhawi, *Daw'*, X, 133.

37 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, VI, 89.

38 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, X, 308; Sayrafi, *Inba'*, 182; *waqf* deed of Ibn Taghribirdi, published by 'Abd al-Laṭif Ibrāhīm, *al-Mu'arrikh*.

attached or connected, as alumni do nowadays,<sup>39</sup> or those located in their neighborhood. The famous physician ‘Ali b. al-Nafis al-Qurashi (d. 1288), who worked at the hospital of Sultan Qalawun, endowed his lavish residence in Cairo and his library with all his medicinal autographs to the hospital.<sup>40</sup> Other physicians who worked at this hospital must have done likewise, as was the case with Abu Zakariyya, head of the surgeons and orthopedists in the late fifteenth century, who endowed a third of his estate to the hospital.<sup>41</sup> The Sufi scholar Safiy al-Din Mahmud b. Muhammad al-Qarafi (d. 1323), who was affiliated to the Khanqah Shumaysatiyya in Damascus, endowed it with his library.<sup>42</sup>

Only few *waqf* documents are known so far to include lists of endowed libraries. These cases are therefore of particular interest. The following late Mamluk cases provide an insight regarding the size and profile of private collections. Sharaf al-Din Abu ‘l-Rawh ‘Isa b. al-Zawawi, a scholar who adhered to the Maliki school of law, which prevailed in North Africa, endowed his library to the school or department (*riwāq*) of the Maghrebi students at the Azhar mosque in 1474. The list provided in his endowment deed, published by ‘Abd al-Latif Ibrahim, included 107 bound titles (*mujallad*) and two folders (*maḥfaẓa*) with fascicles or quires (*karārīs*) of miscellanea. It shows that besides subjects of direct religious relevance, his interests covered history, medicine, arithmetic, and belles-lettres.<sup>43</sup> A book on the beauty of boys, *maḥāsīn al-fityān*, was also included in this collection.

A later private library was endowed in 1513 by ‘Ali b. Sulayman al-Abshadi, a Maliki scholar attached to the Azhar mosque.<sup>44</sup> He was among those deported to Istanbul by Sultan Selim during his Egyptian campaign of 1517, as indicated in a note added by his son on the endowment deed. He is probably the same as the Maliki judge named Shaykh Shahab al-Din al-Abshadi, mentioned by Ibn Iyas in his list of dignitaries deported by Selim,<sup>45</sup> most of whom returned when Sultan Sulayman ascended the throne in 1520.

The endowed assets consisted of the patron’s house and his library, including writing utensils and two wooden containers (*khizana*) for books. The endowment was a family *waqf* for the patron himself to be the beneficiary of his

39 Eche, *Les bibliothèques*, 214.

40 Safadi, *Wafi*, xx, 489–493; Eche, *Les bibliothèques*, 261.

41 Behrens-Abouseif, *Fathallah*, 30–36.

42 Ibn Shakir, *Fawat*, iv, 98.

43 Ibrahim, “Wathīqa bi-istilam kutub,” in *al-Maktaba ‘l-mamlukiyya*, 14–17; Sakhawi, *Daw’*, vi, 159.

44 Published by Ibrahim, “Maktaba fi wathīqa.”

45 Ibn Iyas, *Bada‘i’*, v, 230, 398. Ibrahim presumes the *waqf* patron, ‘Ali, to be the brother of Shahab al-Din. However, the deportation to Istanbul suggests that it is the same person.

house and library during his lifetime and then have them passed to his heirs at his death. The *waqf* deed stipulated that the library should be located in the Azhar mosque for the exclusive use of the patron and his family. When no heir remained, the library was to be made available to students and scholars at al-Azhar who had no means to purchase books. The endowment included provision for a librarian at a monthly salary of six silver *nisfs* (the new Ottoman silver currency) to be selected from the needy at the Azhar mosque.

The collection included rare Quran manuscripts alongside some books in valuable and luxurious editions. Its subjects covered the religious sciences, calligraphy, grammar, rhetoric, history, geography and cosmology, land survey and arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, chemistry and alchemy, zoology, geology, medicine and hygiene, music, horsemanship, pedagogy, geomancy, and other occult sciences. It also included a copy of the *Isagoge*. Compiled by Porphyry, this book is based on Aristotle's concepts of logic, and it was a classic in Arabic culture.

The list provided in the endowment deed had no systematic order. Although I counted 179 titles, the number of volumes cannot be indicated with precision because most items are listed as *juz's*, some items are listed as including several *mujallads*, and some of the *mujallads* are described as large or enormous. A considerable number of titles cover *majmū's* or collections of several works by several authors, with only one author named alongside "and others" (*wa ghayruhu*). The books were to be stacked in the two endowed containers, a larger and a smaller one, and the surplus to be housed in a dedicated room for endowed books located within the Azhar mosque complex.

The deed further stipulates that no other books could be included in the collection apart from those pertaining to this endowment. These books should be used only within the confines of al-Azhar. Names of borrowers were to be registered and crossed out on the return of the books. In an interesting stipulation, the patron prohibited any official or high-ranking person from using the library, otherwise legal action should be taken!<sup>46</sup> The books were to be inscribed with a note identifying them as *waqf*. The insertion of an endowment text on books was common practice, confirmed by the physical evidence of the books themselves, especially lavish manuscripts. It was a necessary measure for security aimed at preventing the commercial circulation of the books.

Another rare *waqf* document describes the library of Muhibb al-Din Abu 'l-Tayyib, who like 'Ali al-Abshadi was among the dignitaries deported to Istanbul by Sultan Selim. He was a prominent merchant and scholar, whose father

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46 Ibrahim, "Maktaba fi wathiqā," 37.

had been the head of the orthopedic surgeons at the hospital of Qalawun.<sup>47</sup> Muhibb al-Din returned to Egypt eleven years after the Ottoman conquest, in 1528, and founded a Friday mosque that he endowed with his library. His foundation deed provides a list of 239 books, the majority of which deal directly or indirectly with religious subjects alongside books on history and poetry, and 18 volumes on medicine. As some books were made up of multiple volumes, the number of actual volumes must have been higher. This collection also included a copy of the *Isagoge*. The medical books and the inclusion of medical instruments among the endowed items indicate that at least part of the collection was inherited from Abu 'l-Tayyib's father. The staff of the mosque included a librarian to be paid five *nisfs* monthly, the same amount as al-Abshadi's librarian. The preacher, who received the highest salary, was paid twenty *nisfs* and the doorman ten *nisfs*.

The fact that Muhibb al-Din appointed himself as the foundation's first librarian shows how interweaving personal interests with charity contributed to the practice of library endowments. In the case of Muhibb al-Din, the library endowment was dedicated to his own religious foundation.

The inventories mentioned here show that not only the cultivated merchant Muhibb al-Din but also dedicated scholars collected books covering a wide variety of secular subjects, including lifestyle, and that such collections ended up as endowments to mosques. What Hirschler noted about the Ayyubid princely library of the Ashrafiyya mausoleum in Damascus as reflecting the diverse interests of the period's elite<sup>48</sup> continued to be valid in the late Mamluk period. A recent study on the polymath Suyuti documents the manifold subjects of his writings that included erotica, as an aspect of Mamluk culture.<sup>49</sup>

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47 Behrens-Abouseif, "The Waqf of a Cairene Notable."

48 Hirschler, *Written Word*, 147–149.

49 Hämeen-Anttila, "Al-Suyūṭī and Erotic Literature."

## Book Circulation and Storage

### 1 Borrowing Practices

As a consequence of the flourishing book culture, in the eighth century an extensive correspondence had already developed to deal with issues arising from exchanging and borrowing books,<sup>1</sup> any consequences, and legal aspects. Even cursing formulae evolved, aimed at the villains who stole or damaged books. The issue of intellectual property played a role when dealing with lending autographs or notes taken at lectures. A tenth-century judge recommended that an author would be advised to hire a copyist for two *dirhams* a day to copy any text in his presence before lending a manuscript of his unpublished lectures to a student, if there was a risk that he might disappear with it.<sup>2</sup>

The discourse on the ethical, practical, and legal aspects of lending books continued in the Mamluk period. With the dissemination of the madrasas, the borrowing of books was institutionalized while also being practiced privately. In his treatise on the ethics of learning and study, eminent jurist and scholar Badr al-Din Muhammad Ibn Jama'a (d. 1333) warned that students should not think, as many academic impostors did, that knowledge relied merely on collecting books. Those who could not afford to purchase books should rent or borrow them. They should not spend too much of their time copying and transcribing unless necessary, neither should they make an exaggerated effort to beautify their writing; they should concentrate their endeavors on the accuracy of the text instead.<sup>3</sup>

*Waqf* documents pertaining to religious institutions show various patterns for lending library books depending on the patrons' wishes. They often stipulated that the use of library books should be restricted to the premises, even forbidding the students from carrying them to their cells. Others permitted the students to use borrowed books within their institutions but not off the premises. Some foundations permitted book borrowing for a limited period to be read on the premises. In general, outsiders were allowed to use the library

1 On borrowing regulations and practices in medieval Islamic libraries, see Eche, *Les bibliothèques*, chapter 11; Touati, *L'armoire*, 238–240.

2 F. Sayyid, "Nassan," 131.

3 Ibn Jama'a, *Tadhkira*, 241–242; see also Rosenthal, *Technique*, 6–10.

for a limited time during the day on the condition that they returned the books to the librarian before closing time.<sup>4</sup> They were subjected to certain conditions, such as the payment of a returnable deposit. Users were generally allowed to copy the books they needed from the library. This would have allowed freelance writers and commercial scribes to acquire access to academic books.

Because the library of the madrasa of Jamal al-Din Mahmud al-Ustadar was a most prestigious and prominent institution, historians have dedicated great attention to the practices associated with it. Although its endowment stipulations did not allow loaned books to be taken off the premises, scholars like 'Alam al-Din al-Bulqini and Sharaf al-Din al-Manawi continued to borrow books from its library collection.<sup>5</sup> Ibn Hajar recalls in his chronicle that the madrasa's endowment deed stipulated that no books should be taken out,<sup>6</sup> which did not prevent him from doing so! As his death approached, he searched his library for books that belonged to endowments to return them. Those whose source could not be traced, he stipulated that they should be divided among his students. It is interesting that he believed that it was not wrong to keep these books because he always made them available to whosoever needed them. Sultan Jaqmaq confirmed that he was sufficiently trustworthy to have these endowed books in his custody.<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to note that Ibn Hajar was reported to have taken away "loads" of books from the Madrasa Diya'iyya during his visit to Damascus!<sup>8</sup> At his death, the task of the Mahmudiyya librarian was entrusted to a high official, Abu 'l-Khayr al-Nahhas, who delegated the work to a judge; he was succeeded by one of the madrasa's students.<sup>9</sup>

The practice of paying a deposit against a borrowed book was already mentioned in ninth-century Iraq.<sup>10</sup> However, the legality of paying a deposit on a charitably endowed item was contested by some jurists with the argument that an endowed item, which cannot be appropriated, should not be subject to a deposit. The standard *waqf* stipulations state that the object of an endowment should not be sold, exchanged, or pawned (*lā yurhan*). Such formulae are often written on endowed manuscripts. To lend a book against a deposit was considered the equivalent of pawning it. However, as usual in such cases, the jurists found ways to circumvent this rule by describing the deposit as a

4 'Uthman, *Wathiqat waqf*, 164.

5 F. Sayyid, "Nassan," 134.

6 Ibn Hajar, *Inba'*, VIII, 4.

7 Sakhawi, *Jawahir*, 986–987.

8 Ibn Tulun, *Qala'id*, 138.

9 Sakhawi, *Tibr*, II, 102–103.

10 Touati, *L'armoire*, 238.

*tadhkira*, meaning a “reminder.”<sup>11</sup> The fourteenth-century historian and theologian Taj al-Din al-Subki recommended the practice of a deposit equal to the book’s worth.<sup>12</sup> This was the usual practice to allow for replacing it in the case of its loss. A lavish Quran manuscript endowed to the madrasa of Sultan Sha‘ban’s mother in Cairo was allowed to be borrowed against a deposit amounting to its value, which would have been a considerable sum.<sup>13</sup> Ibn Jama‘a recommended that the person who borrowed a book should not make corrections or add notes in the margins or copy the text without the owner’s permission. For endowed books in institutional libraries, permission to copy should be sought from the supervisor of the *waqf*. It was mandatory that the borrowed book be handled with great care.<sup>14</sup>

On a private level, book lending was a common practice, and it is regularly mentioned in the biographical sources as a criterion for assessing a scholar’s ethical character. Scholars were expected to lend their books to colleagues and students.<sup>15</sup> Because lending was part of the book culture among the elite, odd behavior was noted and criticized. Those who refrained from lending their books were viewed as obstructing people’s interests. Sakhawi blamed a scholar who owned a substantial library in Damascus for not lending his books and thus standing in the way of people’s interests. He guarded his books so jealously that he even thought of destroying them before his death. As it happened, when he died his books were sold at way below their value.<sup>16</sup>

Ibn Hajar describes someone as being stingy because he preferred to borrow endowed books rather than spend money on purchasing his own copies.<sup>17</sup> Kamal al-Din al-Barizi, al-Mu‘ayyad’s private secretary who was generous with his books, never reminded a borrower to return a volume unless it was absolutely necessary or someone else needed it.<sup>18</sup> Burhan al-Din Ibrahim al-Arihawi (d. 1538–1539), a scholar and Sufi from Aleppo who collected many precious books on Hadith and medicine, was praised for making them available to borrowers.<sup>19</sup>

11 Eche, *Les bibliothèques*, 384–388.

12 He was the son of the chief judge Taqiyy al-Din al-Subki. Subki, *Mu‘id*, 111.

13 James, *Qur‘ans*, 182.

14 Ibn Jama‘a, *Tadhkira*, 243.

15 Sakhawi, *Jawahir*, 1018–1019; F. Sayyid publishes a tenth-century text about the conflicts related to the borrowing of books, “Nassan,” 130–133.

16 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, I, 13.

17 Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, v, 76.

18 Biqa‘i, *Izhar*, I, 190.

19 Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, II, 78, see also III, 132.

Ibn Hajar was praised by his biographers for lending his books to students whose names he did not even know and would not ask for. When his books were not returned or were sold by the borrower, he would simply buy them again in the market without imposing a punishment or refraining from lending his books again. As a result of his generosity, he lost as many as 150 books, some of which turned up in scholars' estates at their death.<sup>20</sup>

Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Kinani b. al-Qattan (d. 1475), a scholar who held several positions in religious institutions (among others, that of librarian of the *khanqah* Baybarsiyya) had the bad habit of not returning the books he borrowed from endowments or individuals. He was accused of possessing 500 endowed volumes from the estates of Ibn Hajar and 'Alam al-Din al-Bulqini; the latter was mentioned earlier as having wrongfully borrowed books from the Mahmudiyya.<sup>21</sup>

It was believed that borrowing should not be a regular practice, but a last resort. Scholars were supposed to have their own books and students were, as well. For the poor who could not afford buying, there were dedicated endowments: a *waqf* to the benefit of the Azhar mosque's library states that the books were dedicated to those who did not have the means to acquire books for themselves.<sup>22</sup>

Private book lending was an important aspect of Mamluk book culture. This is significant in showing that the readers' community had an autonomous presence separate from the religious institutions, reliant on its own resources. Scholars and professionals working on nonreligious subjects were more dependent than others on these private libraries.

## 2 The Size of Libraries

In the late twelfth century, the Syrian prince and poet Usama b. Munqidh deeply mourned the loss of his library during the Crusades, which in his own words amounted to 4,000 volumes.<sup>23</sup> Seen in the context of Mamluk culture, the size of this princely library represents an average for a prime scholar's collection. Few libraries are reported to exceed this number. Although an Ayyubid vizier could own a library of 20,000 volumes, collections on this scale are rare. The library of the Mahmudiyya Madrasa with its 4,000 volumes is described as

20 Biqa'i, *Imwan*, I, 152; Sakhawi, *Jawahir*, 1018–1020.

21 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, IX, 250–251.

22 Amin, *Awqaf*, 255.

23 Ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-I'tibar*, 36.

the “greatest of the period”; it provides a scale for this period. The library added by the emir Baybars al-Jashnakir to the restored mosque of al-Hakim, which was to follow a madrasa curriculum, consisted of 500 volumes.<sup>24</sup> Otherwise, little is known about the size of institutional collections. However, historians give some figures regarding private collections.

The historian Nasir al-Din Shafi‘ b. ‘Ali (d. 1330), who was of Syrian origin and was also a poet and calligrapher working in the Cairo chancery, owned a substantial library of eighteen *khizanas* of belles-lettres volumes. After his death, for nine years his wife continued to sell the books to survive until she left Cairo.<sup>25</sup> The total number of his collection was not given, nor is it possible to estimate the capacity of a *khizana*.

Badr al-Din b. Ghanim (d. 1340), a scholar in Damascus, secretary in the chancery, and a bibliophile, had a library of 2,000 volumes.<sup>26</sup> ‘Ali b. Ibrahim al-Wasiti al-Baghdadi al-Dimashqi (d. 1349), a poet and preacher who migrated from Baghdad to Damascus, owned a library of the same size.<sup>27</sup>

The library of Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Umar al-Qazwini (d. 1338), a scholar and chief judge in Damascus and later Cairo, who held a life-long close relationship with Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad, had a library of more than 5,000 bound volumes.<sup>28</sup> The collection of the poet and book dealer Ibrahim b. Abi Bakr was lost in a fire in the book market of Damascus but had numbered 5,000 volumes.<sup>29</sup> The same number of books is given for the library of a late Mamluk scholar and judge in Aleppo, who died a few years after the Ottoman conquest, ‘Ubayd Allah b. Ya‘qub (d. 1524).<sup>30</sup> The figure of 5,000 volumes seems to represent a maximum and, at the same time, a collector’s achievement worthy of mention as a credential, even in a short biographical entry.<sup>31</sup> The Maghrebi historian b. Sa‘id (d. 1286) described a library of 5,000 volumes as being of royal proportions (*khizana mulūkiyya*).<sup>32</sup>

The highest exceptional figure I have found for a Mamluk private book collection refers to Ibn Hajar’s. Biqa‘i, in his very long and highly laudatory biographical entry of sixty-eight printed pages for Ibn Hajar, writes that his library was larger than any other one known at that time, containing 10,000 volumes:

24 Nuwayri, *Nihaya*, xxxii, 85.

25 Safadi, *Wafi*, xvi, 77–85; Safadi, *A‘yan*, ii, 501–503; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, ix, 285.

26 Safadi, *Wafi*, iv, 222.

27 Safadi, *A‘yan*, iii, 250; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, iii, 76.

28 Safadi, *A‘yan*, iv, 492–499.

29 Safadi, *A‘yan*, i, 66–67; Safadi, *Wafi*, v, 338–339.

30 Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, ii, 189.

31 Ibn al-Himsi, *Hawadith*, i, 86.

32 Safadi, *Wafi*, xiv, 235.

“owned and endowed” (*milkan wa waqfan*), including books he kept at the madrasa of Mahmud, where he was librarian.<sup>33</sup>

This figure is not representative. The average significant library was far more modest. With a library of 1,000 books, the prominent judge and scholar ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Bulqini, who held many important positions in the late fifteenth century, regarded himself as a privileged man.<sup>34</sup> The majority of individual libraries are more likely to have contained hundreds rather than thousands of books. Important collections could amount to hundreds of volumes. Muhammad b. Mufaddal b. Fadl Allah al-Qibtī al-Misri, known as Katib Qibjaq (d. 1319), head of the office (*dīwān*) of Emir Tankiz and later head of the chancery in Damascus, was a passionate collector of Quran manuscripts, of which he owned 400 copies.<sup>35</sup>

Abu Bakr b. Ahmad b. Dhu’ayb al-Asadi al-Dimashqi (d. 1448), a distinguished scholar and historian who copied over 200 volumes in fine calligraphy, left an estate with 700 books.<sup>36</sup> During a fire at the Prophet’s mosque in Medina in 1473, the historian al-Samhudi (d. 1533) lost 300 volumes that were part of his library, kept in a room at the rear of the mosque.<sup>37</sup>

Less prominent scholars owned smaller collections. The library of an undistinguished scholar from Jerusalem (d. 1388), who was not recorded in contemporary biographies but whose estate record has been discovered accidentally, did not exceed 138 titles.<sup>38</sup>

Scholars’ libraries included books and drafts as well. These were equally valued and endowed.<sup>39</sup> Ibn al-Shihna acquired drafts by Ibn Hajar that were in the possession of Sakhawi, which had not yet been given to the copyist (*nasikh*) for penning the final version (*tabyīd*).<sup>40</sup>

Although the available material in Mamluk narrative sources is patchy, the figures they provide concerning library sizes are more realistic than the exaggerated, legendary numbers given for earlier periods. This realism is significant in showing the status of the library at that time—as having lost its fabulous associations and becoming a matter of common usage. The institutional libraries were open-ended because they could be expanded through donations and endowments. From the few figures available, it seems that their size did

33 Biqa’i, *Inwan*, I, 152.

34 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, IV, 113.

35 Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, V, 30.

36 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, XI, 23.

37 Samhudi, *Wafa’*, II, 635.

38 Haarmann, “The Library,” 329.

39 Sublet, “Le manuscrit,” 177.

40 Sakhawi, *Tibr*, IV, 8.

not reach that of the major private libraries. We may assume that the majority of the institutional libraries housed hundreds rather than thousands of books, and in the case of thousands these would be mostly in the low range. In the fifteenth century, Ottoman madrasa libraries included books totaling hundreds or less than a hundred.<sup>41</sup> The size of a library varied according to the patron's status and geographical location. According to Erünsal, the figures appear modest in comparison with the Mamluk ones, but they are more reliable because they were taken from archives rather than narrative sources. In 1561 Sultan Süleyman sent fifty-five books from the palace to the Süleymaniye college for the teachers' use, suggesting that the library was created after the madrasa was founded.<sup>42</sup> As in the Mamluk sultanate, the size of contemporary Ottoman private libraries might exceed those in the religious institutions. In Bursa, during the reign of Mehmet the Conqueror (r. 1432–1481), the renowned scholar Molla Yegân owned 2,900 volumes.<sup>43</sup> The private library of exceptional size owned by the famous scholar Müeyyedzâde (d. 1516) included 7,000 books, which he financed with heavy loans he could not ultimately repay.<sup>44</sup> The Ottoman sultans established palace libraries that are documented in catalogs and inventories. The catalog of Bayazid II's (r. 1447–1512) library lists approximately 7,200 titles, which was almost triple that of the famous library of Mátyás (r. 1458–1490), king of Hungary, which consisted of 2,500 volumes.<sup>45</sup>

A comparison between Mamluk and European libraries is difficult, because of the radical changes introduced by the rise of universities and the separation between the ecclesiastical and the academic domains, and in the character of the European readership and the quality of the book produced and read between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. However, it is evident that the holdings of monasteries and colleges in the period preceding printing in France, Britain, and Germany did not exceed the hundreds.<sup>46</sup> This seems consistent with the fact mentioned earlier that book production was more onerous in Europe than in the Mamluk sultanate. Unlike the Mamluk case, however, numerous catalogs have survived from medieval and Renaissance European libraries. With 1,722 volumes, the collection of the Sorbonne in 1338 was exceptional.<sup>47</sup> In 1452 King's College at Cambridge University possessed 175 volumes,

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41 Erünsal, *Ottoman Libraries*, 36.

42 Erünsal, *Ottoman Libraries*, 35.

43 Erünsal, *Ottoman Libraries*, 24.

44 Erünsal, *Ottoman Libraries*, 28.

45 Maroth, "Library of Sultan Bayazid II," 112.

46 Thompson, *Medieval Library*, 398–400, 434–437; Padover, "German Libraries," 472–473; Leedham-Green, "University Libraries," 322.

47 Thompson, *Medieval Library*, 257, 439.

and in 1472 Queen's College library had 224 volumes.<sup>48</sup> Also in Renaissance Italy, the figures are given in hundreds; in 1407 the Gonzaga library at Mantua included 400 manuscripts.<sup>49</sup> In the private domain, the famous library of Petrarch, renowned for having been a bibliophile and avid collector, has been estimated at 200 volumes.<sup>50</sup>

### 3 The Size of Books

Problems of terminology make it difficult to estimate with precision the size of a library. In the list of the books endowed by Muhibb al-Din Abu 'l-Tayyib to his mosque, the term *kitab* is used to designate a book with an individual title, and the term *juz'* (pl. *ajzā'*) is used for a volume. Some *ajza'* are described as paper without bindings (*waraq bi-ghayri jild*). Only three items in this collection are described as *mujalladāt*, which literally means "leather-bound volumes." Likewise, Abu 'l-Rawh 'Isa's endowment deed lists *ajza'*. However, al-Abshadi's list mentions *mujallads* throughout. In Eche's lists of endowments, the *ajza'* seem to be the most current form of book endowed by scholars.<sup>51</sup> According to him, the *juz'* is a kind of quire or fascicle covering a section of a bigger subject and generally consisting of ten leaves.<sup>52</sup> The term *juz'* thus refers to a volume smaller than the *mujallad*,<sup>53</sup> but probably larger than the *karrāsa* (*karārīs*), a booklet.<sup>54</sup> Although today Mamluk books in library and museum collections are usually bound, some of these bindings are of a later date than the book itself, and it cannot be ruled out that books in Mamluk libraries were not always in the form of bound volumes. Likewise, Ottoman libraries included bound and unbound volumes.<sup>55</sup> Biographical entries specify the format in which an author wrote his subject. The historians usually specify whether an author wrote a *mujallad*, a *karrasa*, or a *juz'*.<sup>56</sup> The latter two were quite common.

48 Thompson, *Medieval Library*, 398.

49 Robathan, "Libraries of the Italian Renaissance," 534.

50 Robathan, "Libraries of the Italian Renaissance," 526–527.

51 Eche translates the term as "brochure," *Les bibliothèques*, 219 ff.; Robathan, "Libraries of the Italian Renaissance," 526–27.

52 Eche, *Les bibliothèques*, 165.

53 Gacek, *Arabic Manuscript*, p. 23.

54 Hirschler interprets the term *juz'* in the Ashrafiyya catalog as quire; *Medieval Damascus*, 83–84; see Humbert, "Le ġuz," 84–86.

55 Erünsal, *Ottoman Libraries*, 22.

56 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, III, 146.

Safadi writes in his biographical entry for Ibn al-Fuwati, the librarian at the Mustansiriyya in Baghdad and later of the Maragha observatory, that the latter is said to have included 400,000 *mušannaf*, that is, individual authored works. He interprets this seemingly legendary figure as referring to *mujallads* or volumes rather than to book titles, thus suggesting that the individual compilation was copied in multiple volumes. He further explains that a *mujallad* included twenty *karrasas*,<sup>57</sup> which gives an idea of the relationship between the formats.

In his biography of Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 1200), the same author lists his works partly as *juz*'s and partly as *mujallads*.<sup>58</sup> The term *mujallad* always refers to a large form of book or folder that includes a number of fascicles. The *mujallads* were of different formats varying between *ḍakḥm* (meaning enormous) and smaller ones.<sup>59</sup> Sakhawi describes Maqrizi's *Suluk* as consisting of four *mujallads*, which form twelve volumes in the printed edition. The *juz*' might also refer to a division according to content. The *juz*' in Maqrizi's *Suluk* corresponds to a chronological period in the book. Likewise in his *Khitat*, the division into *juz*'s, was thematic.

The *waqf* document of al-Abshadi stipulates that if a book consisted of multiple *juz*'s, *mujallads*, or *karrasas*, the students should be allowed to borrow only individual fascicles, not the entire book (*kitab*).<sup>60</sup>

According to the Ashrafiyya catalog, unbound books in the collection were the exception; there were only 3 out of a total of 2,000.<sup>61</sup> However, this was a royal library; scholars or ordinary individuals, who might not always have been able to afford to bind their books, may have collected fascicles. The estate of a scholar is reported to have included a library of 100 *karrasas*.<sup>62</sup>

In the early nineteenth century, Edward Lane wrote that the books in the market were seldom sewn together, but were enclosed in a cover bound with leather, sometimes in an outer case of board and leather. A *karrasa* was composed of five sheets or double leaves, which corresponds to Eche's observation. The leaves were not sewn to allow several people to use the book at the same time.<sup>63</sup>

57 Safadi, *A'yan*, III, 63.

58 Safadi, *Wafi*, XVIII, 191.

59 Sakhawi, *Jawahir*, 160–161.

60 Ibrahim, "Maktaba fi wathiqā," 37.

61 Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus*, 70.

62 Biqa'i, *Izhar*, I, 215–216.

63 Lane, *Manners and Customs*, 211.

There were compilations in the shape of articles (*maqāla*), which were usually included in a *majmūʿ*, which is a collection of miscellanea that could be assembled in the form of a *mujallad*.<sup>64</sup>

Luxury editions represented a larger number of volumes, for example, the copy of the *Suluk* commissioned by the great emir Yashbak min Mahdi.<sup>65</sup>

#### 4 The Physical Setting

The monumental Fatimid library was lodged in a dedicated structure in the palace complex. Maqrizi writes that its space consisted of numerous *khizanas*. In this context, the term refers to rooms or cubicles that could take hundreds of volumes. They included shelves divided into compartments that could be closed with doors and locked. A list of each *khizana*'s contents was hung on its door. There were copyists attached to each *khizana*, suggesting the existence of a scriptorium as well as a staff of cleaners.

In spite of the significance of book collections, no building is mentioned in the Mamluk sources as fulfilling the function of a library, in either a private or an institutional context. Neither is there any mention of independent libraries. This was not unusual at that time; the Ottomans did not have dedicated library buildings before the seventeenth century. Instead, it was common to have a space in the building dedicated to books or book shelves scattered in different places.

The endowment deeds do not reveal any special location or layout for this room, except that it is usually found in the vicinity of the prayer hall, which was the principal gathering place and classroom, rather than in the vicinity of the students' living quarters. This location was convenient for transporting the large and heavy Quran manuscripts to and from the sanctuary, where they were needed.

In smaller foundations, like the madrasa of Emir Jawhar al-Lala (1435), which was mainly a Sufi institution with hadith teaching and no residential facilities, there were book shelves in the prayer hall but no dedicated library room. The imam, that is, the man who led the prayer, fulfilled the function of librarian simultaneously.<sup>66</sup>

In *waqf* deeds the library was called *khizanat kutub*, literally meaning a place to store books; *khizana* was also used to describe a small room used for any kind

64 Ibn Abi Usaybi'a, 'Uyun, II, 178–179.

65 See Muhammad Mustafa Ziyada's prologue to the second *juz'* of Maqrizi's *Suluk*.

66 *Waqf* deed of Jawhar al-Lala, 51.



FIGURE 4 A pair of *kutubiyas* at the madrasa of Jawhar al-Qunuqba'i in Cairo (1440)

of storage.<sup>67</sup> The documents also refer to *kutubiyas*, which are rectangular recesses in the walls or wall cupboards with shelves with or without wooden doors that can still be seen today in various rooms in religious buildings (Fig. 4).<sup>68</sup> However, the term *kutubiyya* seems to be rather generic, not necessarily associated with books but for shelving other things as well. The endowment deed of Sultan Qalawun mentions four recesses with doors in the prayer hall of the madrasa dedicated to containing books.<sup>69</sup> At the hospital of Nur al-Din in Damascus, the medical scholars studied and were taught in the main hall, where the books were shelved in two cupboards against the main wall.<sup>70</sup>

The *waqf* deed of the mosque-madrasa of Sultan Hasan, which includes only a brief description of the premises, mentions a *khizana* for books with an entrance on the eastern wall of the prayer hall (Figs. 5, 6, and 7).<sup>71</sup> This room covers

67 Amin, *Awqaf*, 255–256.

68 Amin and Ibrahim, *Mustalahat*, 93.

69 A fragmentary *waqf* document is published by Abu 'l-Fath, "Madrasat al-sultan al-Man-sur."

70 Safadi, *Wafi*, IV, 24.

71 Harithy, *Waqf Document*, 149.

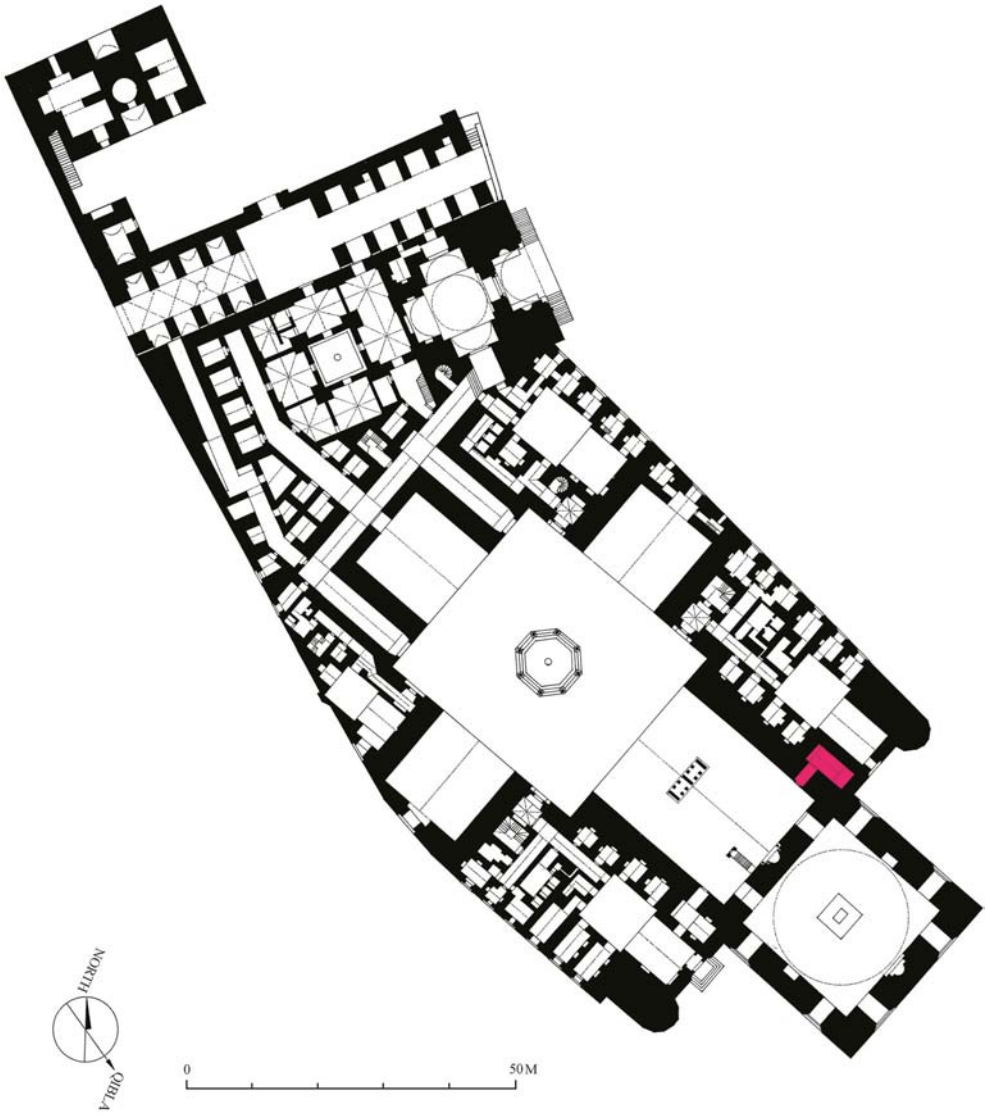


FIGURE 5 The mosque of Sultan Hasan, ground plan with the *khizana* marked in red



FIGURE 6 The mosque of Sultan Hasan, prayer hall showing entrance to the *khizana* to the left



FIGURE 7  
Interior view of the *khizana* in the mosque  
of Sultan Hasan

a space similar to that of the preacher's room, which is slightly larger than a student's cell, located on the opposite side of the sanctuary. The room has no windows. Considering the superlative monumentality of the complex, it can only be described as "modest." Similarly, the *khizana* of Sultan Barquq's *madrasa-khanqah* is a room accessed from the mausoleum, which is accessible from the prayer hall (Figs. 8, 9, and 10). Without another opening on the exterior, the library has no daylight and can only be described as a large walk-in closet.<sup>72</sup>

The library of the *madrasa-khanqah* of Jamal al-Din Yusuf had a dedicated space called a *riwaq*, which is a flexible term used to describe a variety of spaces, including the main room in a house, an entire apartment, or an arcade in a mosque.<sup>73</sup> It was located above an elevated passage (*sabāṭ*), which does not survive.<sup>74</sup> A lithograph published by Edward Hay shows the street with part of the mosque and the lower part of that passage (Fig. 11). The original structure may have looked like the one that can still be seen today at the mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi (1479–1481) (Fig. 12). The specific stipulation that its librarian should protect the books from humidity suggests that the location above an elevated passage was not accidental, but was intended to keep the books far from contact with any water.

<sup>72</sup> Mostafa, *Kloster und Mausoleum*, 121.

<sup>73</sup> Amin and Ibrahim, *Mustalahat*, 57–58.

<sup>74</sup> 'Uthman, *Wathiqat waqf*, 163.

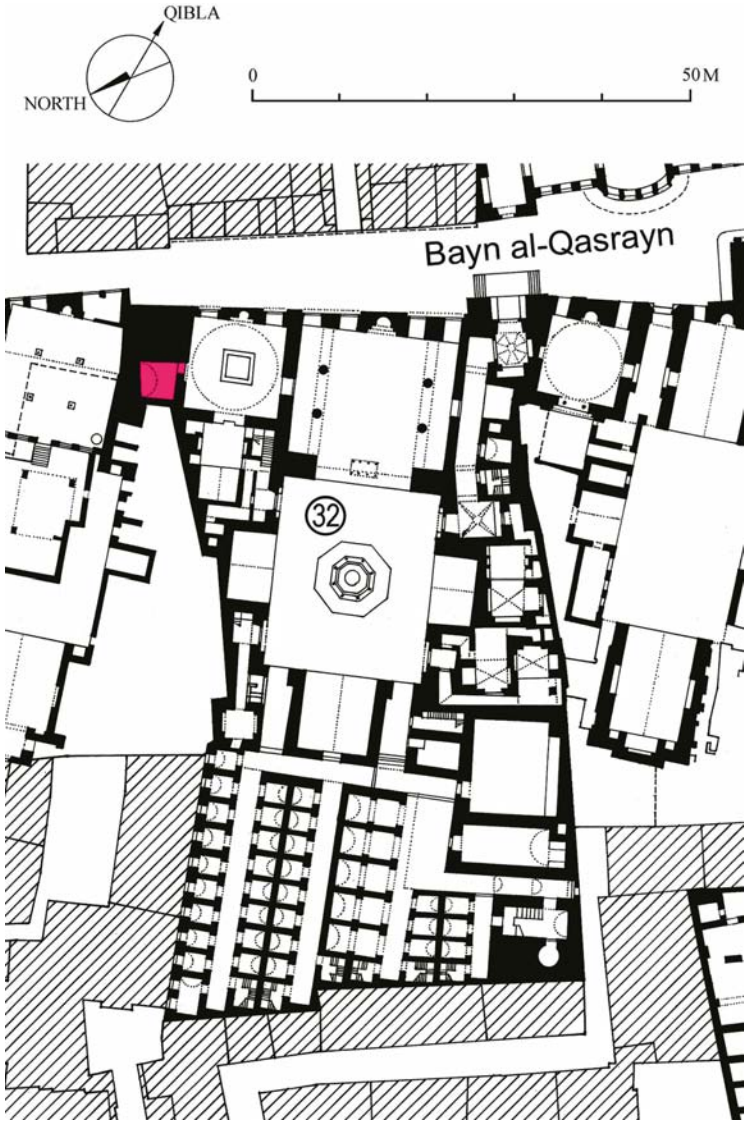


FIGURE 8 Ground plan of the complex of Sultan Barquq with the *khizana* marked in red



FIGURE 9 Interior view of the complex of Sultan Barquq



FIGURE 10 Interior view of the *khizana* in the complex of Sultan Barquq

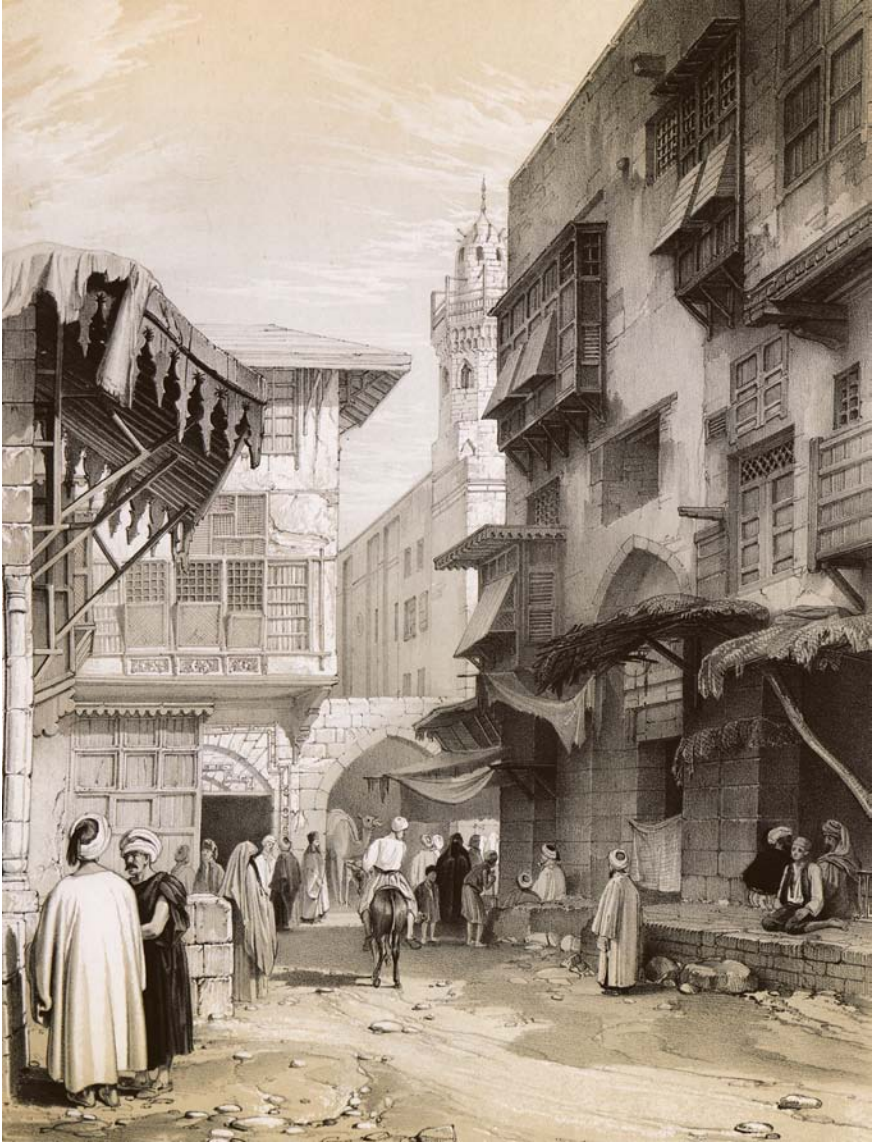


FIGURE 11 Street view of the Jamaliyya quarter with the remains of the elevated passage that above which was the *khizana* of the madrasa of Jamal al-Din Yusuf al-Ustadar



FIGURE 12 Room over an elevated passage at the Mosque of Qijmas al-Ishaqi

The library in the complex of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh is the largest among those I was able to identify (Figs. 13, 14, and 15). It is accessible from the entrance vestibule of the mosque and has the configuration of a *riwaq* or apartment, with one hall leading into a room, both with large windows overlooking a side street.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup> *Waqf* deed of al-Mu'ayyad, 2.

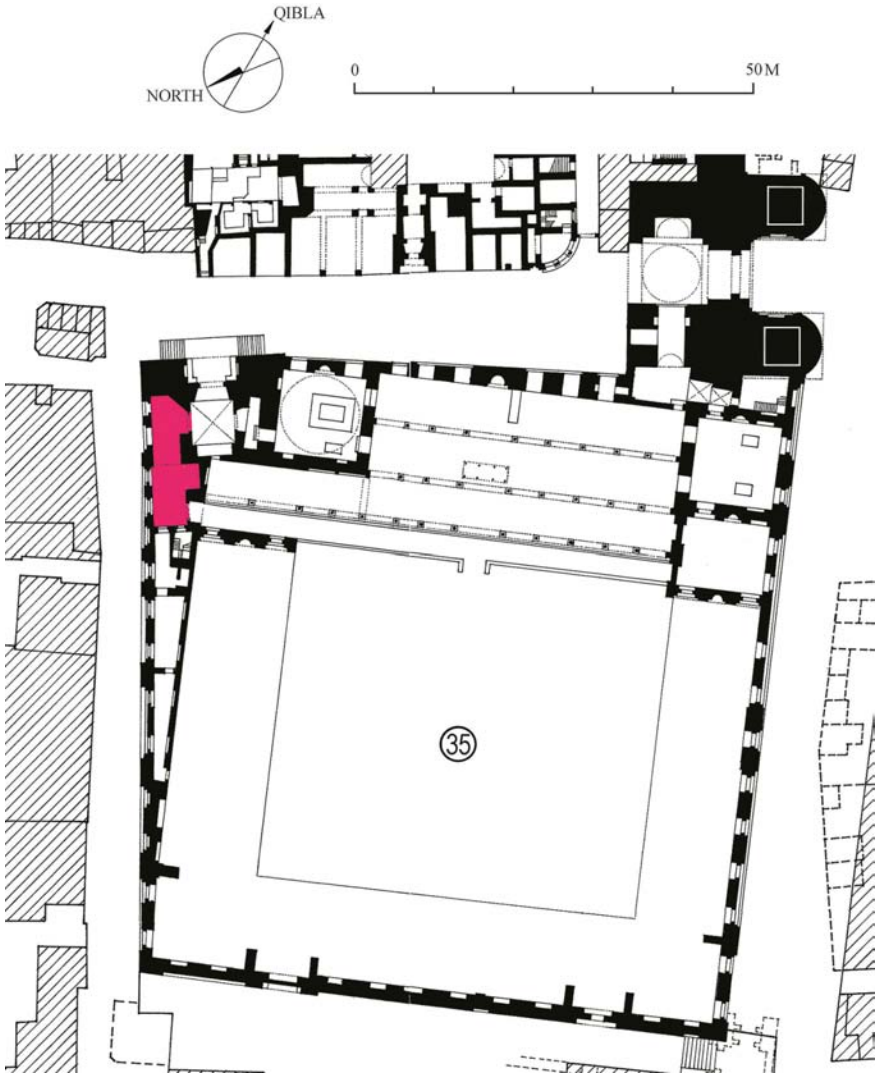


FIGURE 13 Ground plan of the complex of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh with the *khizana* marked in red



FIGURE 14 Interior view of the complex of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh

The library of Sultan Barsbay's *madrasa-khanqah* in the city may have been similar, but I had no access to it. This part of the building has undergone changes. The *waqf* document describes it as being located behind the public fountain (*sabil*), with windows overlooking a side street (Fig. 16). It had a vestibule roofed by a lantern and connected to a latrine, leading to a large recess containing shelves for the books (*kutubiyya kubrā*), *khalwa* being the term used for a student's cell.<sup>76</sup>

The library of Sultan Qaytbay's funerary mosque, praised by Sakhawi, is described in the *waqf* deed as a cell (*khalwa*) reached from the northwestern iwan of the mosque (Figs. 17 and 18).<sup>77</sup>

The endowment deed of Sultan al-Ghawri's complex mentions "a large cell" (*khalwa kubra*), described as being accessible from the southern wing of the

76 *Waqf* deed of Barsbay, 1–2.

77 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, VI, 208; *Waqf* deed of Qaytbay, 23–24.



FIGURE 15 Interior view of the *khizana* in the complex of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh

sanctuary and equipped with wooden shelves fixed to its side walls and built-in shelves on the front wall (Figs. 19 and 20). It included a special recess with inlaid wooden doors carved with geometric star patterns.<sup>78</sup> Today all that remains is a type of walk-in cupboard without shelves, used for storage.

As the ground plans reveal and the term indicates, the *khizanat kutub* was a walk-in cupboard used for storing and stacking books, which would be carried to the readers, rather than libraries in the current sense of the word. Reading, copying, and restoring books would have taken place elsewhere in the building.

78 *Waqf* deed of al-Ghawri, 9.



FIGURE 16 Ground plan of the complex of Sultan Barsbay with the *khizana* marked in red

This arrangement had the advantage of protecting the book collection from fire that elsewhere might have been in close proximity to lighting units. At the Ashrafiyya mausoleum library in Damascus, there were no windows in the library room.<sup>79</sup> Teaching and reading might have taken place in the funerary chamber, which had a window. It is likely that the Ashrafiyya, with no provision for students but being close to the Umayyad mosque and other teaching institutions, was intended to make its books available for their scholars rather than serving an own community.<sup>80</sup> *Waqf* documents indicate that in Mamluk Cairo, mausoleums were used for worship and teaching, and they could have served as reading rooms.

The word *khizana* was also used for a book container that might be portable. A scholar in Damascus who dwelt near the Umayyad mosque held a *khizana* of

79 Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus*, 93.

80 Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus*, 23, 95.



FIGURE 17 Ground plan of the complex of Sultan Qaytbay with the *khizana* marked in red

books in its sanctuary.<sup>81</sup> It can be assumed that to acquire the authorization to do so, he would have authorized its access to other users.

In Islamic miniature paintings, scribes, painters, or illuminators are depicted seated cross-legged on the floor or a bench, holding a board with paper in one hand and a pen in the other. They could thus work itinerantly, anywhere. A number of Orientalist painters in the nineteenth century have depicted market scribes, mostly in a Cairene context, seated in this manner with a wooden chest in front of them containing their writing tools, but no desk. In some cases the chest is shown as being used as a desk to work on. Unlike in Europe, where in the fourteenth century the library already had a dedicated space, sometimes even a building, furnished with desks and shelves, no Mamluk furniture is mentioned in connection with writing. However, Sakhawi mentions a *kursī* used for reading, which had to be climbed (*ṣaʿada ilayhi*).<sup>82</sup> Such *kursis* can

81 Safadi, *Wafi*, IV, 261.

82 Sakhawi, *Jawahir*, 1003.



FIGURE 18 Northwestern *iwan* at the mosque of Qaytbay leading to the *khizana*



FIGURE 19 Ground plan of the complex of Sultan al-Ghawi with the *khizana* marked in red



FIGURE 20 The complex of Sultan al-Ghawri

be seen today in Mamluk mosques, but their date is not documented (Fig. 21). We do not know of any X-shaped wooden folding stand, commonly known as a Quran stand, dating from the Mamluk period. However, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has such a specimen from Isfahan dated 1360.<sup>83</sup> Such stands cannot have been exclusively used for Quran volumes but for any book.

One may assume that the books were arranged as depicted in various illustrated manuscripts of the famous *Maqamat al-Hariri*, produced in thirteenth-century Iraq and Syria, showing walls paneled with book shelves, displaying piles of books one above the other, behind a wooden facade of open arches. Ibn Jama'a confirms that in a Mamluk library, books were not ordered in a horizontal row as is done today, but in vertical piles. This was also the case in the Ashrafiyya mausoleum in Damascus.<sup>84</sup> Ibn Jama'a confirms and explains this arrangement when he recommends that scholars and students should store their books in hierarchical order following the status of their content, the

83 Accession number 10.218.

84 Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus*, 70.



FIGURE 21 *Kursi* or reading bench at the mausoleum of Sultan Qaytbay

Quran at the top followed further down by books of hadith, exegesis, law, grammar, and finally poetry and other subjects. In cases where two books were of the same status, the superior edition should be placed above the other, and in cases where editions had the same value, the oldest had priority. The book should be laid with the title page at the top. The title should be repeated at the bottom of the last page to facilitate identifying these piled volumes.<sup>85</sup> The same arrangement is described by Edward Lane for Cairene libraries in the early nineteenth century.<sup>86</sup> This is the system adopted by traditional librarians until recently when selling books in the Azhar quarter in Cairo (Fig. 22). The librarian's memory played a crucial role in locating the books.

85 Ibn Jama'a, *Tadhkira*, 244–245.

86 Lane, *Manners and Customs*, 210.



FIGURE 22 Book dealer in Cairo, early twentieth century

# The Market

## 1 Location and Environment

As in all major cities in the Muslim world, the book market of Damascus was located near the Great Mosque, in the vicinity of the gate called Bab al-Barid (Post Gate), where also the paper-makers (*warrāqūn*) were settled.<sup>1</sup> An older market mentioned in the 13th century was located near the eastern gate Bab al-Sa'at (Gate of the Clocks).<sup>2</sup> A market of the book-binders is mentioned in the same area.<sup>3</sup> The Great Mosque or Umayyad Mosque maintained its liturgical and cultural preponderance in the city throughout the entire premodern age. Because several major madrasas were built during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods in its vicinity, the book market maintained its location in this neighborhood into the nineteenth century.

In Cairo the situation was different. The first mosque founded by 'Amr Ibn al-'As following his conquest of Egypt and the foundation of his capital, Fustat, lost its central significance under the Mamluks, who favored the Fatimid city Qahira instead. There, the Fatimid Azhar mosque had already lost its status as congregational mosque under Salah al-Din. Even after al-Zahir Baybars restored its former status by reinstating the *khutba* (Friday sermon) previously abolished by Salah al-Din, al-Azhar remained academically overshadowed by the sultans' religious foundations.

Maqrizi writes that the *sūq al-kutubiyyin* was initially located in Fustat, near the mosque of 'Amr, until Sultan Qalawun moved it near his complex in the center of al-Qahira, known as Bayn al-Qasrayn, formerly the heart of the Fatimid capital with the caliph's palace. It faced the madrasa of al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub and adjoined the prestigious goldsmiths' market. The book market was called the *suq al-warraqin* or *suq al-kutubiyyin*, or simply *warraqin* or *kutubiyyin*.

Qalawun appropriated the book market to endow it as *waqf* to his hospital. The fact that the book market was included in the investment assets of this hospital—a major charitable foundation, perhaps the most lavish and

1 Ibn 'Abd al-Hadi, *Thimar*, pp. 22, 26; Qasimi, *Qamus*, p. 383.

2 Vigouroux, "Dictionnaire", pp. 496, 503.

3 Ibn 'Abd al-Hadi, *Thimar*, 22, 26; Qasimi, *Qamus*, II, 383.

beneficent in the history of Mamluk patronage<sup>4</sup>—clearly indicates its lucrative potential. The transfer of the market to al-Qahira came at a time when Fustat was losing prestige with the dismantling of the citadel and the residence of the last Ayyubid sultan, al-Salih Najm al-Din (r. 1243–1250), located on the island of Rawda on the Nile. Qalawun had dismantled these buildings to use their stone and marble in his own complex. There, the Ayyubids had built Sunni madrasas on the site of the home of the Isma‘ili caliphate already, notably the madrasas of al-Kamil (1225) and al-Salih (1245), followed by the Mamluk madrasa of al-Zahir Baybars (1263) and the funerary complex with madrasa and hospital of Qalawun (1285), all in close vicinity to each other, making the presence of a book market in this area necessary.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, by restoring the Friday sermon at the Azhar mosque, located not far from there, Baybars contributed to the enhancement of its significance as a religious and academic center, making it a magnet for a book market. A later initiative to transfer the book market further north near the Aqmar mosque failed because humidity from the neighboring dwellings proved harmful to the books, so the market had to be returned to its initial location. Maqrizi also mentions that the *suq al-warraqin*, which included a covered commercial complex (*qaysariyya*), was pulled down in 1429 to be renovated.<sup>6</sup> Three years later, after Sultan Barsbay built his own funerary complex in the same area, he replaced the *qaysariyya* with a new luxurious building for the book dealers and others, and the area regained prestige.<sup>7</sup>

According to Pedersen, the early medieval *warraq* was a publisher and the “connecting link between men of letters and the general public.”<sup>8</sup> The term *warraq*, deriving from *waraq* (meaning paper), was also used for the copyist. The *warraq* was usually a scholar or littérateur and the market of the *warraqin* was a meeting place for intellectuals of various orientations.<sup>9</sup> In the early history of Islam, books were published mostly by being read in public by the author and transcribed by copyists. The role of the *warraq* was more pivotal than in the later period because it included the transmission of the text, often based

4 Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 132–142.

5 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, III, 338–339.

6 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, III, 300; Maqrizi, *Suluk*, IV, 802; Raymond and Wiet, *Marchés*, 124–125, 164, 189.

7 Raymond and Wiet, *Marchés*, 91, n. 6; Denoix et al., *Khan al-Khalili*, 11, 14–15; Maqrizi, *Khitat*, III, 323, 338–339; Maqrizi, *Suluk*, IV, 885.

8 Pedersen, *Arabic Book*, 43, 49; Toorawa, *Ibn Abi Tahir Tayfur*, 56–57; Gruendler, “Book Revolution” 39, 50–60.

9 Zayyat, “Wiraqa”, 7–35.

on notes taken by several auditors from the oral text, which then had to be approved by the author or an authorized transmitter. This resulted in several versions of the same lectures.<sup>10</sup>

Ibn Khaldun dedicated a chapter of his *Muqaddima* to the *warraq*. He describes his role as originally connected with the proliferation of scientific writing, the development of bureaucracy and the increasing need for transmission. The *warraq*'s task was to transcribe, edit, and check the transmitted texts and bind the books. The *warraq* was also involved in the bureaucratic and archival work for various branches of the administration, including diplomatic correspondence and the mint. This description of the traditional *warraq* craft indicates that it was not confined to the sale of books but included the task of penning and calligraphing books and documents and even designing fonts for the mint and other official institutions. Ibn Khaldun went on to deplore the fact that with the proliferation of the book in his day, the transcription of texts, with all it should involve in terms of editing and establishing the transmission's authenticity, had declined in the Maghreb and even in Egypt. Otherwise he did not spare praise for Egypt and its Mamluk rule having enjoyed the patronage of Sultan Barquq and his son Faraj.<sup>11</sup>

Subki praised the craft of the *warraq* as being noble because it made Quran manuscripts and other books of knowledge accessible and at the same time provided people with the documents they needed. He recommended that the *warraq* should help scholars and students and that he should refrain from producing books on wine, erotic and hedonistic topics, or popular epics, which were only a waste of time, although he admitted these subjects were more lucrative than books of knowledge!<sup>12</sup> More puritanical recommendations are expressed by Maliki jurist Ibn al-Hajj in his manual on market ethics, where he required the book dealer to refrain from selling unorthodox books or books to non-Muslim or nonorthodox buyers.<sup>13</sup> Subki's words reiterated Ibn Khaldun's definition of the *warraq* as being more than merely a dealer who produced and sold books, but also as a publisher and owner of a "copy-office" working on commissions.<sup>14</sup> Thus the market also fulfilled the function of a scriptorium, which may explain the absence of institutional scriptoria in religious foundations. The *warraq* is referred to as a professional with high expertise.<sup>15</sup>

10 Leder, "Understanding," 60.

11 Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, chap. 31, 467–469.

12 Subki, *Mu'id*, 131.

13 Ibn al-Hajj, *Madkhal*, iv, 83–84.

14 Subki, *Mu'id*, 132.

15 Biqa'i, *Izhar*, I, 209.

The term *kutubi*, literally meaning book maker, is used to describe people involved in one way or another with the book trade. Shams al-Din Abu 'l-'Abbas Muhammad *al-Kutubi* was a scholar who made high-quality book bindings.<sup>16</sup> Although both terms *warraqin* and *kutubiyyin* are used in Mamluk texts, the latter is more common and seems to belong to the Mamluk vocabulary, whereas *warraqin* then belonged to an older vocabulary and a more traditional context.

Although the term *warraq* means literally "paper maker," there is no clear indication that the book market included paper mills. Maqrizi reports that in his time, these were located in Fustat near a canal. Proximity to a water source was a prerequisite for this industry.<sup>17</sup> A passage in Ibn Iyas's chronicle mentioned a gang of bandits looting the markets of the *warraqin* and that of the Hormuz merchants, which dealt with valuable fabrics.<sup>18</sup> One may wonder whether the fact that the *warraqin* market was also a victim of theft can be explained by the textiles required for paper production that would have been stored there. However, linen rags were usually used for this purpose.

Biographical literature names many scholars with the title *al-warraq* or *al-kutubi* without providing information on related trade activities. Some also worked as brokers (*dallāl*) in the book market.<sup>19</sup> The *dallal* played an active role in the mediation between clients in search of specific titles and dealers.<sup>20</sup> He seems to have been a kind of dealer without a shop.<sup>21</sup>

Auctions of various goods were common in the markets of the Mamluk period; this also included the book market, in particular the sale of estates of the deceased that could be acquired at wholesale prices, which made them particularly attractive to dealers. Sakhawi deplored that following the death of a book dealer, due to the large number of his books and 'people's ignorance', they were offered at wholesale prices.<sup>22</sup> Auctions of the deceased's estates offered good bargains also for individual buyers, particularly during times of crises or disasters.<sup>23</sup> 'Umar b. 'Ali b. Ahmad b. al-Mulaqqin (d. 1401), a renowned scholar, acquired his library at a low price at an auction during the plague. He reported

16 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, VI, 275.

17 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, II, 34.

18 Ibn Iyas, *Bada'i'*, III, 434.

19 Biqa'i, *Imwan*, I, 97.

20 For the earlier periods, see Touati, *L'armoire*, 214–215.

21 Subki, *Mu'id*, 143.

22 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, III, 150.

23 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, V, 163.

that he entered the *ḥalqa* (circle) of bidders with a purse full of silver *dirhams* and purchased a copy of the *Musnad* of Ibn Malik for only thirty *dirhams*, far below its value.<sup>24</sup>

‘Ali b. Ahmad al-Qalqashandi, mentioned earlier, reported how he attended the auction of an estate library, where a copy of *Lisān al-‘Arab* that he wanted to acquire was sold at a price he could not afford. Later, when he took on the post of librarian at the madrasa of Barsbay, he was delighted to find that the book had ended up in this collection.<sup>25</sup>

Beside the need of scholars and students to find or commission specific books, the book markets of Cairo and Damascus functioned like a public library and even a literati club, providing an intellectual environment where scholars were regularly seen spending the day browsing, taking notes, and meeting with colleagues and peers.<sup>26</sup> Sakhawi mentions a polymath he used to meet regularly at the book market.<sup>27</sup> Muhammad b. Bahadur al-Zarkashi (d. 1392), an eminent scholar of Turkish origin who dwelt in Cairo, rarely left his home except to visit the book market. There he would not buy books; rather, he would spend the whole day reading and taking notes on draft paper he carried with him to be transcribed in his books later.<sup>28</sup> Some scholars combined their frequent visits to the market with trade without being tied to a shop.<sup>29</sup> At the end of his entry on the Cairo book market, Maqrizi adds that it was “a meeting place for people of knowledge” (*majma‘ li-ahl al-‘ilm*) and inserted a poem saying that “socializing in the market is reprehensible because of the bad elements that tend to gather there. Only the markets for horses, weapons and books are worth frequenting; one by the sensible, and the other by the refined.”<sup>30</sup>

The book market provided scholars with the opportunity of earning their living working in shops as notaries (*shuhūd al-‘adl*)<sup>31</sup> and copyists.<sup>32</sup> Established calligraphers offered their services in shops.<sup>33</sup> Not all authors penned their own works as final texts for further dissemination. Drafts could be given or dictated

24 Ibn Hajar, *Inba‘*, v, 41–46; Sakhawi, *Daw’*, vi, 100–105.

25 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, v, 162; Sakhawi, *Tibr*, iv, 49.

26 Safadi, *A‘yan*, v, 164, iv, 473.

27 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, i, 240.

28 Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, iv, 18.

29 Sakhawi, *Tibr*, ii, 138.

30 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, iii, 339.

31 Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 225–227.

32 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, ii, 216, iv, 432, vii, 42, viii, 268, ix, 70.

33 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, vii, 41–42.

to professional scribes to produce the final copy.<sup>34</sup> The market also offered opportunities to students to find assistance and guidance.

The following account sheds light on the various activities of the book market, such as the paper trade, book binding, restoration, and brokerage to mediate between sellers and buyers and assist clients in their search for specific books.<sup>35</sup> In a conversation with the doyen of the book dealers in Cairo, the historian al-Biqā'i was told that one day while in the market, the head of the calligraphers, Ibn al-Sayigh, watched one of his colleagues called Mubarak Shah negotiating with a client who requested to have three fascicles copied. Seeing that Mubarak Shah was asking for a fee the client could not afford, Ibn al-Sayigh tried to intercede and persuade him to be more flexible, arguing that it was an easy job that could be done in one afternoon by a scribe standing on one foot! Mubarak Shah's response was: "I myself would not, why don't you do it yourself?" Ibn al-Sayigh took on the assignment, and while standing on one foot and leaning the other against the wall of the shop, he copied the three fascicles in less than one afternoon.

Another episode reported in the same context indicates that calligraphers and scribes were assisted in their work by their pupils. The scholar 'Izz al-Din Ibn Jama'a<sup>36</sup> went to the book market to ask Ibn al-Sayigh to copy a book consisting of seventeen fascicles for him. The job had to be done as soon as possible because Ibn Jama'a had borrowed the original and was not allowed to keep it any longer, so he suggested that Ibn al-Sayigh assigned the task to seventeen of his students to save time. The calligrapher replied that he preferred to deliver the entire book penned in the same hand. To comply with the urgency of the task, the calligrapher went to a mosque, where he sat in a cell with some bread, cheese, and water, and completed copying all seventeen fascicles in the same day.

## 2 Dealers and Publishers

Biqā'i reported how the doyen of the book dealers in Cairo was attracted to his trade. 'Izz al-Din Muhammad b. Ahmad b. 'Uthman al-Takruri (d. 1453), whose family was of West African origin (Ghana), was a scholar and a calligrapher who on one occasion, while visiting a book auction acquired a volume on alchemy for twenty-five *dirhams*. At home he put the book on a shelf and forgot about it

34 See Sublet on such drafts, "Le manuscrit autographe."

35 Biqā'i, *Inwan*, v, 28–29.

36 Not to be confused with Burhan al-Din and Badr al-Din Ibn Jama'a, mentioned elsewhere.

until one day he discovered it had been damaged by a pigeon that used it as a nest. Some time later, as he was on one of his visits to the book market, he met a paper dealer selling batches of leaves, among which he spotted a book page written with a hand very similar to that of his damaged alchemy book. When he asked to buy it, the dealer gave it to him as a gift. On his return home, he was delighted to realize that this page corresponded to the one in his alchemy book that had been ruined by the pigeon! He eventually brought the book to be restored and rebound by a book-binder and broker named Badr al-Din b. Sadaqa, who used the opportunity to inform him that he knew a person who was very keen to obtain a copy of this specific book. Eventually the book was auctioned and sold for more than 400 *dirhams*. In the course of this conversation, 'Izz al-Din went on to tell the historian another episode about a copy of an autographed book he could not sell because sixteen pages were missing. One day, these same pages were offered to him for sale in the market. He eventually inserted them back into the book, which enabled him to finally sell it at a good price. In his biographical entry by Sakhawi, 'Izz al-Din al-Takruri al-Ghani is described as being highly educated in the religious sciences, having learned calligraphy from al-Wasimi and Ibn al-Sayigh and practiced copying. Some of his teachers were his clients, so his shop was a meeting point for scholars. He became wealthy through this trade.<sup>37</sup>

Through the market authors could publicize their thoughts, as in the case of an author who sent brokers to advertise to the book dealers a polemic he wrote against a colleague.<sup>38</sup>

The book market was the place for antiquarian trade and for repair and restoration of manuscripts and texts. An antiquarian dealer was 'Izz al-Din 'Abd al-Mu'min b. 'Abd al-Rahman, known as Ibn al-'Ajami *al-Nasikh* (d. 1340), a scholar, Sufi, and calligrapher who had moved from Aleppo to work in the book market of Cairo, where he used to buy worn manuscripts that he restored and sold at high profit. Part of his business was to export large quantities of books to Aleppo.<sup>39</sup>

Regarding the restoration of texts, book dealer Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Salah Abu 'l-Fath (d. 1459), imam at the madrasa of Emir Sarghitmish and a scholar, used his knowledge to that purpose.<sup>40</sup> Sakhawi accused him of greed and dishonesty and pretending to recognize scholars' handwriting, so he could

37 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, VII, 2–3.

38 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, VII, 231.

39 Safadi, *A'yan*, III, 181–182; Safadi, *Wafi*, XIX, 245–246; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, III, 33; Maqrizi, *Suluk*, II, 553.

40 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, IX, 148.

take the liberty of inscribing, often mistakenly, authors' names on anonymous manuscripts to sell them at high prices. Furthermore, he would falsify texts by filling gaps in damaged manuscripts. He exploited people's urgent needs for specific books by renting them for an exorbitant daily fee that exceeded the book's actual price, with the excuse that they did not belong to him and he himself had to borrow them. At his death a huge collection of books was found in his possession.

As in the classical age, book dealers were often bibliophiles, scholars, and intellectuals, persons of high social standing or at least worthy of a biographical entry.<sup>41</sup> The doyen of the book market in Aleppo, Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Nashi, was well connected to Sultan al-Ghawri.<sup>42</sup> Book dealers were also scribes and calligraphers who produced the books they sold. In his biographical work on scholars and literati, the *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, Yaqut al-Hamawi (d. 1229), himself a dealer in Baghdad, commented regularly on the writing and copying skills of the writers he dealt with. Calligraphy and copying skills were useful qualifications for the trade as in the case of book dealer ʿAbd Allah b. Ahmad b. ʿAbd al-ʿAziz al-Bashbishi (d. 1417), a scholar, judge, historian, deputy market inspector, calligrapher, and prolific copyist.<sup>43</sup>

It was common among scholars to combine intellectual activities with trade and manual crafts, the book trade was prone to attract intellectuals and seems to have been generally a highly lucrative business. *Adab* culture and academic knowledge enhanced the qualifications and opportunities of dealers, some of whom were praised by historians for providing assistance to students.<sup>44</sup>

- Saraj al-Din ʿUmar *al-Warraq* (d. 1295–1296), a prominent poet and a book dealer, was the subject of jokes ridiculing his poetry, which would have been lost had he not himself published them.<sup>45</sup>
- Abu Ishaq Ibrahim b. Abi Bakr al-Jazari *al-Kutubi* (d. 1296) from Damascus was a prominent book dealer and a poet, knowledgeable in history and renowned for being helpful and keen to serve people's needs.<sup>46</sup>
- Muhammad b. Ibrahim *al-Kutubi*, known as al-Watwat (d. 1318) was an Egyptian poet, littérateur, and encyclopedist who collected and commissioned literary compendia by prominent authors, including the famous shadow-

41 See Zayyat, "Wiraqa."

42 Ibn Iyas, *Badaʿiʿ*, v, 66.

43 Maqrizi, *Durar*, II, 357–358; Sakhawi, *Dawʿ*, v, 7.

44 Sakhawi, *Dawʿ*, III, 144.

45 Ibn Iyas, *Badaʿiʿ*, I/1, 388–389.

46 Safadi, *Wafi*, v, 338–339; Safadi, *Aʿyan*, I, 66–67; al-ʿAyni, *Iqd*, IV (1992), 150–151.

play author Ibn Danyal.<sup>47</sup> Watwat was the author of major books, including a treatise on astrolabes. He had a great impact on other thinkers of his time, notably al-Nuwayri.<sup>48</sup> This did not prevent him from being proud of his commercial activity; Zayyat read in one of his autographs in the National Library in Cairo how Watwat took pride in being an excellent *warraq*, as craftsman and dealer (*ṣinā'a wa buḍā'a*) and as editor of texts.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Safadi boasted of having a copy of Watwat's transcription of Ibn al-Athir's compendium, *al-Kāmil*, with his added valuable and critical comments in the margins.

- Musa b. Sulayman, known as Ibn 'Abd al-Karim (d. 1434), was a scholar who moved from Damascus to Cairo, where he successfully traded in books.<sup>50</sup>
- Muhammad b. Muhammad b. *Isa al-Kutubi* b. *al-Kutubi* (born 1446, d. unknown), was a polymath, knowledgeable in religious disciplines as well as medicine and astronomy, while being a book-binder, illuminator, and book dealer and a master in making scales.<sup>51</sup>
- Burhan al-Din Ibrahim b. al-Bitar al-Qudsi *al-Kutubi* (d. 1456), who moved from Jerusalem to settle in Cairo, specialized in history and jurisprudence, which was a great advantage to his business.<sup>52</sup>
- The Damascene Muhammad b. 'Uthman *al-Kutubi* (d. 1462) was a distinguished scholar and a prolific author who owned a bookshop near the Umayyad mosque.<sup>53</sup>

Some abandoned their scholarly careers for the book trade, among them Damascene Salah al-Din Muhammad b. Shakir *al-Kutubi* (d. 1363), who was a historian and the author of various books including the biographical dictionary *Fawāt al-wafāyāt*.<sup>54</sup> He lived in extreme poverty until his life took a lucky turn after he joined the book trade, which eventually enabled him to make a great fortune.<sup>55</sup> Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Abd al-Karim (d. 1372–1373), of Mawsili origin, worked in various Syrian cities. He was a poet, scholar, preacher at the Umayyad mosque, calligrapher, and scribe. He preferred to dedicate himself to the book trade, where he amassed a fortune of 3,000 *dinars*.<sup>56</sup> Likewise, Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Abd al-Rahman al-Sunbati *al-Kutubi*

47 Safadi, *A'yan*, IV, 201–207; Safadi, *Wafī*, II, 16–18; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, III, 385–386.

48 E. Muhanna, *World in a Book*, 43–47.

49 Zayyat, "Wiraqa," 21.

50 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, X, 182.

51 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, IX, 179.

52 Biqa'i, *Izhar*, II, 157.

53 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, VIII, 141–142.

54 See bibliography.

55 Dhahabi, *Dhuyul*, IV, 206; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, IV, 72.

56 Ibn Hajar, *Inba'*, I, 68–69; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, IV, 306–307.

(d. 1483) began his career as scholar and scribe but preferred working in the book trade, selling estate books to grandees at exorbitant prices.<sup>57</sup>

Nur al-Din ‘Abd al-Karim *al-Kutubi* (d. 1416) was a qualified judge but did not practice as such, preferring to earn his living as a book dealer. Ibn Hajar describes him as the last of the book dealers in the market (*ākhir man baqīya fī sūq al-kutub*), while praising him for his generosity with students. He owned several shops, where scholars were allowed to browse at their leisure, and he traded in used books. Students were allowed to return at any time the books they had purchased against a fee that he would deduct as his profit, which was the equivalent to borrowing books for a fee. Once they had finished with these books, the students usually tried to resell them on the market at the maximum possible price. If they failed to get the full purchase price or possibly more, they would return them to ‘Abd al-Karim. His son, ‘Ali (d. 1437–1438), was a scholar and a deputy judge and also dealt in books, but not as his main occupation.<sup>58</sup>

Ibn Hajar’s remark that ‘Abd al-Karim *al-Kutubi* was the “last book dealer in the market” is not easy to interpret. Neither is it easy to assess whether it should be taken seriously in the first place. Was he referring to a temporary crisis in the book trade, or was there a more radical development? Did the dealers prefer to work on a part-time basis, as was the case with ‘Ali, the son of ‘Abd al-Karim?

Ibn Hajar’s intriguing remark may refer to a development that took place in the book trade around the mid-fifteenth century. This was during the reign of Sultan Jaqmaq, when for the first time manuscripts appear with a reference to the barracks where they were written added to the scribe’s signature.<sup>59</sup> This implies that a scriptorium was formally established in the barracks at that time. Was this scriptorium created to fill a gap in the book production of the late fifteenth century? Although barracks culture is not well documented and the military recruits’ education was separate from that of the city, the foundation of a scriptorium with the appointment of master calligraphers as teachers points to a court initiative to consolidate the participation of the Mamluk aristocracy in the production of books. This might have been a reaction to the increased penetration of local elements in administrative offices that previously had been a prerogative of the military establishment. Or was it an attempt to fill a gap in the book trade? The library belonging to al-Ghawri’s complex consisted of two private collections that had taken a number of years to put together, rather

57 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, IX, 92–93; Ibn Iyas, *Bada’i’*, V, 319.

58 Ibn Hajar, *Inba’*, VII, 234, IX, 81–82; Sakhawi, *Daw’*, IV, 305–306, V, 243.

59 See chapter VI.

than individual books commissioned or selected on the market, and this indicates that it was not easy in the late Mamluk period to supply a large number of books to fill the library of a princely religious institution.<sup>60</sup>

One may speculate whether the freezing of private collections as *waqf* had a detrimental effect on the market. Instead of changing hands, a substantial book resource was a mortmain, which resulted in limiting the availability of books on the market. Although it is difficult to document, this might have pressured the market to concentrate its activity and be dependent on copying and commissioning books to cope with demand. At the end of the Mamluk period, such cumulative effects in real estate tied in *waqf* in the center of Cairo had significant consequences on the property market and the *waqf* administration.<sup>61</sup>

### 3 Value, Prices, and Fees

Obviously the price of a book varied widely according to numerous criteria, including the merit and edition of the text, its calligraphic quality, and the size and the quality of the production material, such as paper and binding. Alongside the aesthetic qualities of its calligraphy and binding, the price of a book was measured according to the authenticity of the text, which explains why autographs were particularly sought after by academics and bibliophiles.<sup>62</sup> Even incomplete autograph drafts were valuable, especially when their authors were prominent scholars. In the case of old texts, the chain of transmission of the original text, that is, the identity of the copyists or the chain of copyists between the author and the copy in question, was also a decisive factor in its value. This applied to religious sciences and other subjects, including belles-lettres. A text transcribed from the author's copy, or dictated and approved by him, which would be indicated in the colophon, was more valuable than a copy from another copy.<sup>63</sup> Among the multiple editions of scholarly books based on many transmitters and their chains, some were more highly valued than others, depending on the quality and reputation of the editor-copyist. In this context, the chain of ownership might have played a role regarding the evaluation of a copy. Sale and acquisition transactions of academic books were often recorded in the manuscripts. For this purpose, a number of empty pages were included at the end of the manuscript, dedicated to the future insertion

60 'Abd al-Basit, *Kitab al-majmu'*, 7–8.

61 Fernandes, "Istibdal," 205.

62 Eche, *Les bibliothèques*, 276.

63 See Sublet, "Le manuscrit autographe."

of such notes. Manuscripts included the names of those who had attended the book's reading sessions and their comments.<sup>64</sup> These notes, which are highly valued as a major source for modern historians and codicologists, were also acknowledged in their own time, enhancing the pedigree and the price of the book, particularly when they included comments by prominent figures. The age or secondhand status of an academic manuscript enhanced its value. To reward one of the scholars, Sultan Inal promoted him, bestowed on him a robe of honor offered him cash and an ancient and rare copy of the *Sahih* of Bukhari that had belonged to the estate of the historian Ibn Hajar.<sup>65</sup> Al-Biqā'i, who reported this episode, mentioned elsewhere a scholar who was taught Bukhari's Hadith by Ibn Hajar from a special manuscript that may well be this one.

Although historians agree that the fifteenth century was a period of currency instability and economic problems, they say little about the impact of economic factors on the book trade. Neither is it clear how the import of Italian paper from the fourteenth century onward affected the book market. Neither books nor paper are included in the commodity lists that figure regularly in the chronicles to report the cost of living. It seems that on the whole the European imports reduced the price of paper but did not prevent continued Syrian and Egyptian paper production.<sup>66</sup> The Egyptian paper seems to have been of a lower quality. The product of the city of Fuwa was coarse and used for wrapping. However, Qalqashandi describes European paper as being inferior.<sup>67</sup>

Qalqashandi also mentions briefly that paper became expensive in the period following the reign of al-Nasir Muhammad.<sup>68</sup> In 1389–1390, during the reign of Sultan Barquq, documents from the chancery were sold by weight to the paper markers, who cut them to scraps and sold them, indicating that paper was a highly valuable item. Maqrizi used such paper to write his notes.<sup>69</sup>

In the late thirteenth century, Ibn al-Hajj mentioned that a quire (*dast*) of paper was worth three *dirhams*. Al-'Ayni, who occupied the his office of market inspector for a while, defined a *dast* or a *laffa* as consisting of twenty-five

64 A. Sayyid, *al-Kitab*, I, 118–145; Görke and Hirschler, "Introduction," 10.

65 Biqā'i, *Izhar*, III, 260; Biqā'i, *Inwan*, II, 175. On Ibn Hajar's commentary of al-Bukhari, see Blecher, *So Said the Prophet*, 6.

66 Labib, *Handelsgeschichte*, 255, 317–318, 488; Arbel, "Last Decades," 60–62; Ashtor, "Levan-tine Sugar Industry," 266–272.

67 Qalqashandi, *Subh*, II, 487–488, VI, 190–193.

68 Qalqashandi, *Subh*, XI, 132.

69 Bauden, "Recovery," 75.

sheets (*farkha*).<sup>70</sup> He reported a price fall in 1403, bringing the price of a *dast* of twenty-five large sheets (*farkha*) down to sixteen *dirhams* for the *shāmī* (from Damascus) paper and twenty for the *ḥamawī* (from Hama).<sup>71</sup> In 1414 the Syrian *dast* rose to 100 *dirhams*, the Egyptian *baladi* to 50 *dirhams*, and the Egyptian *mansuri* to 70 *dirhams*.<sup>72</sup> In 1420 he mentioned an improvement in book prices bringing a *laffa* consisting of twenty-five sheets of Syrian Damascene paper to thirty *dirhams*.<sup>73</sup> Although the figures in *dirham* show an increase over a short period of time, the price drop in 1403 and 1420 may be explained as relative and due to a preceding dramatic rise in a period of extreme currency instability. Therefore, this information does not allow for conclusions about the prices and availability of books over these years.

When the historians occasionally mention book prices, they almost always refer to particularly valuable copies that were therefore worth mentioning. Such luxury manuscripts copied by calligraphers, illuminated, and produced in large format were valued in gold *dinars*. The fact that the library of Sultan Shaʿban's madrasa in the 1360s included 500 volumes worth 500 *dinars*, meaning an average price of one *dinar* apiece, cannot be representative of the ordinary market. These books belonged to a princely collection dedicated to a madrasa and were meant to surpass any known so far, including the library in the mosque of Sultan Hasan. Seven decades later, in the 1420s, the 500 books donated by Nasir al-Din al-Barizi to the mosque of Sultan al-Muʿayyad were said to be worth 1,000 *dinars*. This meant an average price of two *dinars* per book for the collection of a high-ranking dignitary donated to a royal foundation.<sup>74</sup> Such valuable copies were designed to be as prestigious and symbolic as the monuments that housed them. Sultan al-Muʿayyad donated a copy of the famous multivolume world history by Ibn al-Jawzi, *Mirʾāt al-Zamān* that cost as much as 700 *dinars* to his library.<sup>75</sup> By comparison, one of this sultan's best horses was worth 2,500 *dinars*.<sup>76</sup> It is not stated whether the value lay in the material production or in the pedigree of the copy (probably both).

Luxury editions worth hundreds of *dinars* were a status symbol for high-ranking personalities among bureaucrats, scholars, and merchants. The library

70 Cited by Zayyat, "Wiraqa", 94, referring to a manuscript. This was also the equivalent of the French *main de papier* or quire.

71 *Dasht* may be a corruption of *dast*, cited by Zayyat, "Wiraqa", 94, based on a manuscript reading.

72 ʿAyni, *Iqd*, ed. Qarmut 1985, 210.

73 ʿAyni, *Iqd*, ed. Qarmut 1985, 388.

74 Ibn Iyas, *Badaʿi*, II, 470.

75 Martel-Thoumian, *Les Civils*, 250–251; Ibn Iyas, *Badaʿi*, II, 47.

76 ʿAyni, *Iqd*, ed. Qarmut 1985, 386.

of Nasir al-Din al-Barizi was sold for more than 6,000 *dinars*, some books for as much as 150 and 250 *dinars* each.<sup>77</sup> At that time an emir's tournament horse was worth 500 *dinars*.<sup>78</sup> The sale of Nasir al-Din al-Barizi son's library at his death in 1452 amounted to a total of 6,050 *dinars*; this included valuable copies that sold for 150 *dinars* and more each: a copy of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhari by Ibn Hajar (*Fath al-Bārī fī Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*) was sold for more than 250 *dinars*.<sup>79</sup> It should be recalled, however, that in the first half of the fifteenth century, the currency fluctuations could be abrupt even within a short time, making reliable parallels of monetary values problematic.

The historian al-Nuwayri, who was also a prolific author and copyist, used to let his pupils in the barracks copy his commentary of al-Bukhari's Hadith, which he would then sell for as much as 700 or 1,000 *dirhams* a copy. He sold his own historical compendium of thirty-two volumes to a judge for 2,000 *dirhams*.<sup>80</sup>

Besides the religious institutions were other examples, such as the wealthy merchant Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Khawaja al-Kilani (d. 1418), who gave his son a private education and bought him books that were worth as much as 100 *dinars* apiece,<sup>81</sup> and scholar Sharaf al-Din Yahya b. 'Ali b. Aqbars (d. 1484), who shifted his career to make a fortune in overseas trade and owned a library worth 1,000 *dinars*.<sup>82</sup> These cases indicate that the combination of mercantile and scholarly careers was propitious to the production of prestigious collections.

These examples of luxurious copies belonging to institutions and bibliophiles were of a different category to the ordinary books used and collected in academic circles, whose prices were indicated in silver *dirhams* rather than gold *dinars*. Information on prices of ordinary books is extremely scarce. Badr al-Din Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Ghanim (d. 1339), a scholar, secretary in the chancery, and teacher at the Madrasa Qilijiyya in Damascus, whose monthly income from his multiple appointments amounted to 1,000 *dirhams*, bequeathed a library of 2,000 books that was sold for 30,000 *dirhams*, giving an average book price of 15 *dirhams*.<sup>83</sup> This price is compatible with the information that in the early fourteenth century an ordinary copyist, 'Abd al-Rahman Musa b. al-Manadili (d. 1315) who was also a broker, earned two *dirhams* for

77 Sayrafī, *Nuzha*, II, 374; 'Ayni, *Iqd*, ed. Qarmut 1985, 274.

78 Biqa'i, *Izhar*, II, 363.

79 Biqa'i, *Izhar*, I, 190; 'Ayni, *Iqd*, ed. Qarmut 1985, 389–390; Sakhawi, *Daw'*, IX, 239; Sakhawi, *Tibr*, 420.

80 Safadi, *A'yan*, I, 281.

81 'Ayni, *Iqd*, ed. Qarmut 1985, 337; Sakhawi, *Daw'*, VIII, 223.

82 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, X, 237.

83 Ashtor, *Histoire*, 439; Safadi, *Wafi*, IV, 222; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, IV, 203–204.

copying a book.<sup>84</sup> In the mid-fifteenth century, al-Biqā'i gave an example of the dishonesty of a book dealer and reported that he would charge 120 *dirhams* for a book worth 100 *dirhams*.<sup>85</sup> For comparison, at that time a rare book on alchemy sold for more than 400 *dirhams*.

In his treaty on the history of inflation, *Ighātha*, Maqrizi described the social class below the ruling aristocracy, the state high officials, and the great merchants, as middle class (*tabaqa wustā*) living on an average monthly income of 300 *dirhams*. Prior to the inflation of 1405, an average middle-class family could have a decent living on ten *dirhams* a day, spending four *dirhams* a day to feed themselves and their servants.<sup>86</sup> On the basis of a monthly income of 300 *dirhams*, even the prices of the cheaper books encountered in this study would be too high to describe the Mamluk book as being a common commodity. If we look instead at the salaries of the academic staff in the religious foundations as indicated in the *waqf* documents, they seem to be at a higher level than Maqrizi's average of 300 *dirhams* prior to 1405. It is important to note that these stipulated salaries were not the sole source of income for an academic member of staff. Scholars, in particular the more prominent among them, combined multiple appointments in a variety of institutions and administrations in addition to part-time jobs and commercial activities.<sup>87</sup> As example I selected two posts on different scales: a rector and a doorkeeper. It is assumed on the basis of the documented practice that both jobs were on a part-time basis; even the doorman shared the task with one or two others and the buildings were not open all the time. In 1307 the rector of the Sufis at the *khanqah* of al-Muzaffar Baybars received 100 *dirhams* and the doorman 12 *dirhams*. In 1316 the same posts at the *khanqah* of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad, Siryaqus, were remunerated with 200 and 20 *dirhams*, respectively. These were royal foundations; the emirs paid less: in 1328 at the *khanqah* of Mughultay al-Jamali, the corresponding salaries amounted to sixty and twenty *dirhams*, respectively.

In 1386, at the madrasa-*khanqah* of Sultan Barquq, the Sufi rector received 200 *dirhams*, the head of the Hanafi school 300 *dirhams*, and the doorman 15 *dirhams*. In 1420 at the madrasa-*khanqah* of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad, the equivalent salaries amounted 500 and 60 *dirhams*. In 1436 at the madrasa-*khanqah* of Sultan Barsbay in the city these were 3,000 and 400 *dirhams*.<sup>88</sup> In 1448 at the madrasa-*khanqah* of Emir Jamal al-din the Majordomo, these were 500 and 50

84 Safadi, *A'yan*, 111, 48; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, 11, 458.

85 Biqa'i, *Izhar*, 11, 158.

86 Allouche, *Mamluk Economics*, 84–85; Maqrizi, *Ighatha*, 160.

87 Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, 139.

88 These salaries are according to Fernandes, *Khanqah*, 69–93.

*dirhams*. In 1479 at the mosque-with-Sufi service of Sultan Qaytbay these were 3,000 and 300 *dirhams* and in 1510 at al-Ghawri's madrasa-*khanqah* 3,000 and 600 *dirhams* were paid for the same positions.

It should be stressed that the increase in the figures was due to the devaluation of the currency. Throughout the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the gold *dinar* was worth approximately twenty silver *dirhams*. Toward the end of that century the *dirham* devalued to twenty-five to thirty per *dinar* and eventually copper replaced silver coins. In 1404 the devaluation of the *dirham* reached 199, and in 1405 it increased to 120. At the time of Sultan al-Ghawri, the devaluation amounted to 1 to 300.<sup>89</sup>

The high production and circulation of books, as indicated by material evidence, suggests that the scholars who managed to attain multiple sources of income through various positions were far more affluent than Maqrizi's description of the situation for the middle classes in 1405.

Although the book was not a cheap commodity, it was available to a large section of society and the book trade seems to have thrived throughout the whole period. The intensive copying activity by the scholars was a means of affording books. In spite of the imported Italian paper, books in Italy and Spain, according to Ashtor's calculations, were far more expensive than their contemporaneous Mamluk ones.<sup>90</sup>

89 Allouche, *Mamluk Economics*, Appendix Two, 95–98; Ashtor, *Histoire*, 277–278.

90 Ashtor, *Histoire*, 509.

# The Mamluk Scribe: Background and Formation

## 1 Terminology and Definition

There is no Mamluk biographical encyclopedia or dictionary specializing in scribes or calligraphers. The general biographies of the Mamluk elite mention scholars who copied books for themselves or for others, that is, those who worked as part-time scribes, and occasionally those professionals who specialized in this craft to earn their living. One may say that calligraphers and scribes were spread among the entire academic elite. Many scribes mentioned in the manuscripts they penned or authored are not recorded in any biographical source and conversely not all scribes mentioned by the historians can be identified in these works.

The word *kitaba* is an ambiguous term in the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods and in earlier sources,<sup>1</sup> as it mostly refers to secretarial or bureaucratic work, while it was also used in the context of copying and calligraphy. *Ishtaghala bi 'l-kitaba* normally referred to secretarial and bureaucratic jobs; sometimes it was also used to describe the activity of copying manuscripts. The term *katib* usually means “secretary in an administration,” as it still does today. However, it also described the scribe calligrapher. The doyen of the calligraphers was called *shaykh al-kuttāb*. Usually context indicates whether we are dealing with a secretary or a scribe. Generally both qualifications were combined in the same person. The secretaries of the chancery were calligraphers. It must be assumed that a secretary who worked for a member of the ruling establishment was required to possess calligraphy skills.

This ambiguity of the word *katib* has led to some misunderstandings. In his biographical compilation on calligraphers, which also deals with the Mamluk ones, the Ottoman historian Müstaqim-zade mentioned people who were not calligraphers in the sense that they earned their living by copying books or teaching or studying calligraphy. He might have included them in his biographical lexicon on the basis of the term *kitaba* or the attribute *katib* used by Mamluk authors to refer to clerks or secretarial activity, or simply because they were credited with having good handwriting.<sup>2</sup> The list of Ayyubid calligraphers

<sup>1</sup> Toorawa, *Ibn Abi Tahir Tayfur*, 60–61.

<sup>2</sup> See also Abbott, *Rise of the North Arabic Script*, 87.

assembled by David James and partly based on Müstaqim-zade, is mostly about secretaries working in the chancery or people described as having good handwriting rather than calligraphers specialized in cultivating and teaching the art of calligraphy or copying luxury manuscripts.

The term *nasakha* is often used in the sense of commercial copying or transcribing, and specialized copyists are described as *nasikhs*.<sup>3</sup> Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Mas'ud *al-Nasikh* (d. 1511), was the head of the calligraphers in Damascus (*mashyakhat al-kitaba*) and, as his title indicates, must have worked as a professional copyist at the same time. He is not associated with other activities except for Quran reading.<sup>4</sup> Like the profession of notary (*shāhid al-'adl*), that of the commercial copyist was a means for educated men without any source of other income to earn a living.

The study of calligraphy or the acquisition of calligraphy skills was widespread, being part of the general education of the elite, but it was also practiced outside academic circles. In the context of this study the term calligrapher will be only applied to those who practiced this craft in a regular manner as their main profession, rather than those who merely possessed the relevant skills. However, there is a large overlapping zone between these categories. For example, the judge and bureaucrat Burhan al-Din Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah (d. 1471) is reported to have learned calligraphy with the great master Ibn al-Sayigh, with no indication that he was active as a professional calligrapher or a copyist.<sup>5</sup>

While looking at copyist practices across the early medieval Muslim world, Déroche has addressed issues that are of interest also to our period.<sup>6</sup> Although the Mamluk period does not figure in his tour d'horizon, some of his observations are relevant: copyists worked mostly as part-time practitioners, not all copyists were calligraphers, and neither were all calligraphers professional copyists.

## 2 Writing and Copying

The activity of copying manuscripts is *naskh* or *kitaba*, although *kitaba* also means secretarial work. Writing skills included the capability of writing at speed. The biographies of scholars and bureaucrats regularly refer to quality

3 See for example Safadi, *A'yan*, 111, 47; Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, 1, 105–106; Ibn al-'Imad, *Shadharat*, v, 108; Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 241–242.

4 Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, 1, 71.

5 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, 1, 150; Müstaqim-zade, *Tuhfa*, 39.

6 Déroche, "Copier."

and speed in the same context, regardless of whether the writer was a specialized professional copyist. The capability of writing quickly was an integral part of the qualifications for an author and scribe.<sup>7</sup>

Although there were copyists whose main source of income was to transcribe texts,<sup>8</sup> manuscripts were not always copied by specialized calligraphers. Rather, there was a large pool of scribes among the literate population and the various religious and administrative institutions, who copied on a part-time basis.<sup>9</sup> Basically all scholars of the Mamluk period were copyists because they had to write down their own texts that might or might not be transcribed in a final version by a specialized copyist or calligrapher.

The biographies and the notes inscribed on manuscripts of academic books usually give the name of the person who copied the text. This indicates that scholars and collectors copied manuscripts for their personal use (*li-nafsihi*).<sup>10</sup> Scholars also used to copy for others and for commercial purposes. The Syrian 'Ali b. Ayyub b. Mansur (d. 1348) had such an excellent writing style that his books were sold at the highest prices during his lifetime.<sup>11</sup>

Copying was a matter of everyday life in academic and intellectual circles. It enabled students and scholars to acquire their study material and build their own libraries. Purchase alone would have been too onerous. Their libraries grew with the accumulation of lecture notes and from books and copies of books. *Imlā'* or dictation was a form of lecturing, which could take place privately in a scholar's home.<sup>12</sup> Copying was an intrinsic part of study exercises and academic work. The intensive teaching activity in madrasas and other institutions of learning stimulated a "recording" culture based on taking notes that were accumulated to create books. Ibn Khallikan mentions information he had written down in a notebook but could no longer remember from where he had copied it.<sup>13</sup> On the basis of Maqrizi's autographs, Frédéric Bauden has shown how drafts of books were based on collections of notes, as had been the case in antiquity.<sup>14</sup> Much of the contact between scholars and literati took place through correspondence and an exchange of texts and manuscripts.

The historian, poet, and polymath Khalil b. Aybak al-Safadi (d. 1363) worked in the chancery, held various offices in Syria and Cairo, and taught in the bar-

7 On the significance of speed in writing based on other sources, see Déroche, "Copyists."

8 Safadi, *A'yan*, III, 47–48.

9 Déroche, "Copier," 134.

10 Sayyid, *al-Kitab*, II, 455–458; Şeşen, "Esquisse d'une histoire," 207.

11 Safadi, *A'yan*, III, 305.

12 Sakhawi, *Jawahir*, 581–584.

13 Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat*, VII, 148.

14 Bauden, "Maqriziana II," 91–93.

racks. He was a calligrapher and is reported to have copied over 500 volumes. He authored hundreds of books, among which is a biographical encyclopedia in thirty volumes, titled *al-Wāfi bi 'l-wafāyāt*, and a shorter one, the *A'yan*. He owned an extensive library that included books he audited and read, all of which were apparently written in his own hand. The library included a large number of other autographs, many of which have survived.<sup>15</sup> Safadi's career and output explain his particular emphasis on writing talents and skills when documenting other scholars' careers. Another scholar and prolific author, Taj al-Din Abu 'l-Qasim al-Sa'di (d. 1332) is likewise reported to have copied 500 volumes.<sup>16</sup>

After Ibn al-Jawzi's death, the number of his authored compilations (*musanaffāt*) was reckoned in relation to his lifetime (ca. 1116–1201), showing an incredible average production of nine *karrasas* or fascicles a day.<sup>17</sup> A scholar who worked as a commercial scribe could achieve even more. Zayn al-Din Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Da'im al-Maqdisi *al-Nasikh* (d. 1270) could fill as many as nine *karrasas* or more a day if he had no other business, and two to three if he had other work to attend to.<sup>18</sup> The historian al-Nuwayri used to copy three fascicles a day.<sup>19</sup> The historian and scholar al-Samhudi (d. 1505) could also compose and copy three fascicles a day.<sup>20</sup> The chief judge Najm al-Din b. Sasari achieved five fascicles a day.<sup>21</sup> The famous theologian Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) could copy two or three fascicles in a session.<sup>22</sup> To describe a man he scorned as being ignorant and an impostor, Sakhawi writes, "he never studied or copied with his own hand or authored or compiled a complete book."<sup>23</sup>

The fluidity of the lines between a professional and an occasional copyist is demonstrated by the case of 'Ali b. Muhammad b. 'Abd al-'Aziz, known as Ibn Durayhim al-Mawsili (d. 1360), to whom Safadi dedicated a lengthy biography, later abbreviated by Ibn Hajar. There is no mention in his biography of his compilation or production in 1354 of the illustrated bestiary manuscript of *Manafi' al-Hayawan*, housed today in the El Escorial library.<sup>24</sup> Neither does his biography mention him being either a calligrapher or a scribe. Were it not for the

15 Sayyid, "Marques," 19; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, II, 175–177; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, v, 241–257.

16 Dhahabi, *Dhuyul*, 92.

17 Safadi, *Wafi*, xviii, 191.

18 Dhahabi, *Tarikh*, xv, 151.

19 Safadi, *A'yan*, I, 281.

20 Ibn al-'Imad, *Shadharat*, vii, 53.

21 Safadi, *A'yan*, I, 327.

22 Safadi, *A'yan*, I, 325.

23 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, iv, 100.

24 Safadi, *A'yan*, III, 521–528; Safadi, *Wafi*, xxii, 67–69; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, III, 181–183; Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 329 ff.; for the illustrations see Contadini, "Kitab Manafi'."

fame of this illustrated manuscript naming him as its scribe, he would not have been known in this capacity. 'Ali was born in Mosul and moved to Syria, then Egypt, making a considerable fortune as a merchant, which earned him the title *khawāja*, an honorific assigned to great merchants in international trade. His biographical entry described him as a genius and polymath, a mathematician, and the author of a long list of books. His interests included astronomy, belletrism, and a treatise on cryptology (now lost) that al-Qalqashandi included in his manual on chancery.<sup>25</sup> Among the books he authored, which fill two pages in Safadi's encyclopedia, there is also a treatise on chess. In Egypt he was well connected with both the ruling and academic elite and was close to three sultans: al-Kamil Sha'ban, al-Muzaffar Hajji, and al-Nasir Hasan. When he encountered trouble with one of the emirs in some commercial business, his property in Damascus was confiscated, including his books. He continued to move between Aleppo and Damascus, where he held a post related to the administration of the Umayyad mosque. He spent the later part of his life in Cairo, from where Sultan Hasan sent him as his envoy to Ethiopia. He did not reach his destination; he died en route in the city of Qus. Like Ibn Durayhim, many copyists and calligraphers were also illuminators and book-binders.<sup>26</sup>

Whereas not all calligraphed books were signed by their calligraphers, academic books required a signature of the copyist, whose contribution was part of the scholarly endeavor. The individual academic book, unlike a mass-produced printed book, was an edition of its own; its scribe or copyist was also the editor, whose task was to check and verify the text. The verification of the text's authenticity is a major concern in the Islamic culture of the book, be it religious, secular, or popular.<sup>27</sup> Some copyists used to take the liberty of changing or omitting words they found unsuitable, although, according to Ibn Hajar's view, such interference was impermissible.<sup>28</sup>

According to Nuwayri, copyists were required to be knowledgeable of or at least familiar with the subjects they copied to qualify for adequate editing. Specific rules and systems, varying according to discipline, required some specialization on the part of the copyists.<sup>29</sup> For the same reason, scholars copied for themselves and others books in their own field. The Damascene Ayyub b. Badr b. Mansur al-Jara'idi (d. 1266–1267) was a scholar, an imam, and a Sufi with a passion for the great Sufi saint Ibn 'Arabi, whose works he copied exten-

25 Van Berkel, "al-Qalqashandi."

26 Déroche, 'Copier,' 137.

27 See Witkam, "High and Low."

28 Sakhawi, *Jawahir*, 386.

29 E. Muhanna, *World in a Book*, 111.

sively. He endowed his books to the Dar al-Hadith al-Ashrafiyya.<sup>30</sup> Another scribe specialized in copying Ibn ‘Arabi’s works was Fakhr al-Din Isma‘il b. ‘Ali (d. 1290), who moved from Damascus to Cairo following the Mongol invasion, but returned to his home city toward the end of his life. He was a scholar, scribe, calligrapher, poet, and ascetic Sufi who belonged to the literati circles in the entourage of al-Malik al-Nasir of Damascus.<sup>31</sup> The calligrapher and copyist Muhammad b. Ridwan, known as al-Sharif *al-Nasikh* (d. 1271), was particularly interested in copying the books of Ibn al-Athir.<sup>32</sup>

Ibn Abi Usaybi‘a credits many physicians and scientist with calligraphy skills. A physician at the hospital of Nur al-Din in Damascus, ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Ali b. Hamid al-Dakhwar al-Tabib (d. 1230), was a calligrapher in the style of Ibn al-Bawwab, and he copied more than 100 works on medicine.<sup>33</sup> Another chief physician and medical scholar in the same hospital, ‘Izz al-Din Ibrahim b. Muhammad Abu Ishaq al-Suwaydi (d. 1291), also a poet, littérateur, and calligrapher in the style of Ibn al-Bawwab and designer of a new Kufic fusion style, copied medical books.<sup>34</sup>

The colophon of an academic book normally included a statement by the copyist giving his name, the date and place of completion, and his comments on the manuscript he had copied.<sup>35</sup> In the case of an autograph, the author provided information on the circumstances of the manuscript’s production.

These notes indicate the date of the original text on which the copy was based and sometimes the chain of copyists reaching back to the original text. In the case of a dictated text, the colophon may indicate the date the content of the book was dictated, by whom and to whom, along with the dates when copying began and was completed.<sup>36</sup> The notes may also indicate whether the copy was made for a patron or for the personal use of the copyist. The owner’s name was also included when the sale or endowment of the book was registered.

Some scribes began the transcriptions of a text in one city and completed it in another. Sometimes only a quarter of the city is mentioned as the place where a book was copied or illuminated, suggesting that it happened in a pri-

30 Dhahabi, *Tarikh*, XLIX, 189.

31 Safadi, *Wafi*, IX, 166–168; James, “Qur’ans and Calligraphers,” 356.

32 Safadi, *Wafi*, III, 70.

33 Safadi, *Wafi*, XVIII, 383–386; James, “Qur’ans and Calligraphers,” 354.

34 Ibn Abi Usaybi‘a, ‘Uyun II, 266–268; Safadi, *Wafi*, VI, 123–125; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, I, 142–145; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum* VIII, 28; Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, I, 301–303; James, “Qur’ans and Calligraphers,” 356.

35 On this subject see Şeşen, “Esquisse.”

36 Şeşen, “Esquisse,” 207.

vate place or a shop rather than an institution. In the late fifteenth century, the Syrian historian Ibn al-Himsi inscribed in the notes to his autographed chronicle his date of birth and the names of his children with their dates of birth. He also indicated that he penned the book in an apartment (*riwaq*) in the quarter of Birkat al-Hajib.<sup>37</sup> A copyist in Cairo in 1275 mentioned in a colophon that this copy was based on a previous copy written by him that was based on the original text he had heard as a lecture given by the author in Baghdad thirty years earlier.<sup>38</sup>

In annotations on the manuscript, the copyist may also include an assessment of the quality of the text he copied and refer to any amendments he made to it, attesting that the text was checked for fidelity and mistakes corrected. For example, in 1231 a Cairene copyist, who penned for his own use the autographed copy of a manual on clock-making, criticized its author for his deficient style in Arabic and his poor presentation while acknowledging his competence as clockmaker.<sup>39</sup> In another case, a reader wrote a devastating comment about the uselessness of a scientific treatise compiled in the eleventh century.<sup>40</sup>

Book owners inscribed their names on volumes and added notes and comments to the text, thus contributing to the content. Ibn Abi Usaybi'a expressed his amusement at reading such notes added by a prominent physician that eventually came into his hands many years later.<sup>41</sup> The notes added by Ibn Hajar to the texts he read were highly valued as part of his oeuvre.<sup>42</sup> Added comments and annotations by scholarly readers were part of the history of an academic book. The notes made by prominent readers and the accumulation of information on the history of the manuscript from one scribe to another and one generation to the next added to the documentary and historic value of an edition. References in academic texts cited not only the author but the copyist. As stated by Houari Touati, every individual edition had "its own life."<sup>43</sup>

As noted by Jan Just Witkam, the physical book gathered a network of those who registered their names as auditors or readers and added their comments, which could be read over centuries.<sup>44</sup> A community, a kind of reading club, took shape around the book. This tradition was not peculiar to the Mamluks, but was common practice in the premodern Muslim world.

37 See editor's introduction to Ibn al-Himsi's *Hawadith* by Harfush, 25–27.

38 Şeşen, "Esquisse," 203.

39 Şeşen, "Esquisse," 203.

40 Serikoff, "Beobachtungen", 169–170.

41 Ibn Abi Usaybi'a, *Uyun*, II, 108.

42 Sakhawi, *Jawahir*, 390.

43 Touati, *L'armoire*, 69.

44 Witkam, "Human Element," 133.

### 3 From Oral to Written Books and Back

Book production and the encyclopedic output of the Mamluk period did not eclipse the pious conviction that the true transmission of knowledge, particularly in religious matters, had to be oral or at least involve competent oral guidance.<sup>45</sup> As in other premodern societies, in Muslim culture, oral transmission never lost its significance, especially in connection with canonical and religious texts whose dissemination was supposed to be entrusted to authorized competent transmitters only.<sup>46</sup> The *masmūʿ* or *masmūʿāt*, literally meaning the subjects heard or orally transmitted, are mentioned as publications.<sup>47</sup> There were authors of oral books, and *ijzas*, or licenses, were granted for *qirāa* and *samāʿ*, that is, for subjects read or heard.<sup>48</sup> It was also common practice for scholars to memorize books by heart and transmit them orally. Ibn Jamaʿa recommended that scholars and students should check the accuracy of the texts they memorized, correct them when necessary, and discuss them with their seniors, adding that knowledge taken from books alone can corrupt the mind.<sup>49</sup>

Beside the Quran and canonical religious texts, classics of various disciplines including the natural sciences and poetry were memorized. A scholar is reported to have learned by heart the *Maqamat* (sessions) of al-Hariri in fifty days and the *diwān* or poetry collection of al-Mutanabbi in one week.<sup>50</sup> The practice was common among physicians as well.<sup>51</sup> The historian Ibn Taghribirdi is reported to have audited (*samaʿa*) a book on horses authored by the *ḥāfiẓ* ʿAbd al-Muʿmin al-Dimyati, which was recited to him by the *hafiz* Muhammad al-Khaydari in dedicated sessions.<sup>52</sup> Ibn Taghribirdi also reported his experience of lending ten fascicles to someone, who returned them to him after a short while saying that he had learned their content by heart (*ḥafaza*).<sup>53</sup> The term *hafiz* literally means “conserver,” and the verb *hafaza* means both “to conserve” and “to memorize.” The *hafiz* is a conserver in memory and a scholar who was able to transmit a book orally. For obvious reasons, the voluminous Mamluk encyclopedias, dictionaries, and compendia could not possibly be memorized, and it can be assumed that the motivation behind this genre’s develop-

45 Berkey, *Transmission*, 26–32.

46 Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 145–149.

47 Ibn al-ʿImad, *Shadharat*, VII, 54.

48 Ibn al-ʿImad, *Shadharat*, VII, 53.

49 Ibn Jamaʿa, *Tadhkira*, 217, 219.

50 Safadi, *Wafi*, IV, 265.

51 Ibn Ibi Usaybiʿa, *Uyun*, II, 263.

52 Sayrafi, *Inbaʿ*, 177.

53 Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, XII, 203.

ment was to provide a solid conservation of the ever-increasing material and academic output of the period. A homily written in a note on an early fifteenth-century manuscript states: “You should learn books by heart rather than collecting them, for books can be destroyed by calamities: water drowns them, fire burns them, mice gnaw at them and thieves steal them.”<sup>54</sup>

In his critique of Suyuti’s scholarship, Sakhawi accused him of plagiarism and lack of substance because he used to study only from books instead of attending lectures and classes.<sup>55</sup> Centuries earlier, physicians had debated about whether knowledge from books or from practice was preferable.<sup>56</sup>

Oral culture did not thwart but promoted the production of the written word and even depended on it, as demonstrated by Alain George for the *Maqamat al-Hariri*.<sup>57</sup> In the Mamluk period popular epics were written down,<sup>58</sup> and the *Tales of 1001 Nights* seem to have circulated in written rather than oral form.<sup>59</sup> One of the tales cited by Garcin tells of a mamluk (here in the sense of a servant) who searches for a tale to bring to his master. He goes to a storyteller in Damascus, who gives him ink, paper, and a quill pen to copy the required text. The mamluk then reads it to the merchant, who corrects it. He brings this text to his master, who in turn copies it clearly in his own hand before he presents it to the king. With this example, Garcin aimed at demonstrating the importance of the written text as a basis for oral transmission even in the popular culture of storytelling. He concludes that a copyist was expected to deliver an exact copy, and this had been the practice in the transmission of the *Tales of the 1001 Nights*, which did not prevent some editors from introducing conceptual alterations (the subject of Garcin’s study). Oral readings or recitations of the tales might have been performed according to the storyteller’s individual interpretations, but they did not alter the fundamental copied texts. Garcin refers to Lane, who in the 1830s noted that the oral transmission of the Nights came to an end due to a lack of available written texts.<sup>60</sup>

Besides the significance of oral transmission, the consumption of a book was not restricted to individual readers; it could also be a shared social event. Books were read to a circle of auditors in academic and private and public circles, addressing a need similar to that which attracts audiences to lectures in the

54 British Library Or. 3005, Salah al-Din Muhammad b. Shakir al-Kutubi al-Darani, *Uyun al-tawarikh*, XIII.

55 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, IV, 66.

56 Ibn Usaybi’a, *Uyun*, II, 102.

57 See for example Alain George’s discussion of the *Maqamat al-Hariri* in “Orality.”

58 Hirschler, *Written Word*, 175 ff.

59 Garcin, *Une Lecture*, 629–630.

60 Lane, *Manners and Customs*, 409.

present day. These auditions could be concerned with mere lectures (work in progress) or finalized books. The reading of the eighty volumes on the History of Damascus compiled by Ibn al-‘Asakir in the twelfth century, which took place in the Umayyad mosque in the following century, attracted scholars as well as a wide popular audience.<sup>61</sup> During his scholarly travels in Syria, the historian Ibn Hajar gave numerous lectures that provided readings or the dictation of source books for auditors and students who either took notes or memorized them.<sup>62</sup>

Oral transmission was also involved in the *ijāza* system or academic licenses given by a teacher to his student to denote that he was qualified to teach a specific book orally or in a transcription.<sup>63</sup> The *ijāza* often required the candidates to take notes from lectures and present a written text to be approved and authorized by the teacher. The manuscript would contain an inscription stating that the book covered the subject for which the license was awarded.

## 4 Books from the Barracks

### 4.1 *Military Scribes*

Calligraphy was regularly practiced and cultivated by members of the Mamluk military aristocracy. Their initiation in calligraphy took place during their education in the barracks located in the Citadel, although many of them refined their skills later, and their children were taught in private classes with prominent calligraphers. The mamluks in the barracks were taught by professional calligraphers and chancery secretaries. Teaching calligraphy in the barracks by a *mukattib* is an activity often mentioned in biographical entries and frequently in connection with secretaries and bureaucrats.<sup>64</sup> These calligraphy courses seem to have gone beyond the basic needs of copying; prominent calligrapher Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Zamlakani taught Kufic in a barracks, a style that was at that time considered archaic and used mainly in artistic contexts.<sup>65</sup> The barracks’ copyist, or other *nasikh*, had no need to be highly educated or knowledgeable in the Arabic language or its grammar as long as he copied faithfully. It was recommended, however, that in all cases of transcription, even when the

61 Hirschler, *Written Word*, chap. 2.

62 Sakhawi, *Jawahir*, 160–165.

63 Vajda, *Transmission*; Vajda, Goldziher, and Bonebakker, “Idjaza”; Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 140–152; Berkey, *Transmission of Knowledge*, 31–33.

64 Safadi, *A‘yan*, IV, 276.

65 Safadi, *A‘yan*, IV, 629.

copyist knew Arabic, the text should be checked for correctness.<sup>66</sup> According to Fleischer, the Ottoman palace scribes at the court of Süleyman the Magnificent did not need to have an academic education.<sup>67</sup>

In his description of the Citadel, Maqrizi included a section on the barracks.<sup>68</sup> The military recruits were confined there, kept remote from urban life, to receive military training and a religious education. Only educated mamluks could be promoted to the rank of emir, according to Maqrizi. Circumstances changed at the beginning of the Circassian period, following the end of the Qalawunid dynasty, when Barquq allowed the mamluks to leave the barracks, marry, and live in the city; his son, Faraj, did not see much sense in giving them an advanced religious education. This was a period of significant changes, which Barquq began with the recruitment of Circassians mamluks instead of the Kipchaq Turks of the earlier Bahri period, thus ushering in the “Circassian Mamluk period.” Maqrizi, who died in 1442, does not mention a scriptorium in the barracks.

Although neither narrative sources nor *waqf* documents provide information regarding the existence of a scriptorium in the barracks, Barbara Flemming has drawn attention to manuscript production in the barracks during the late Mamluk period. This observation was based on the significant number of signatures on manuscripts in Turkish collections bearing names of mamluks accompanied by the names of the barracks where they were garrisoned.<sup>69</sup> All known signatures associated with the barracks date from the late fifteenth century, suggesting that the scriptorium was a later development. Earlier manuscripts signed by copyists of Mamluk background do not refer to a barracks affiliation. This writing activity appears during the reign of Sultan Jaqmaq (r. 1438–1453), as indicated by manuscripts penned in the barracks of al-Qa’a that bear his name.<sup>70</sup> Emir Qijmas al-Ishaqi is reported to have copied the *Burda* of al-Busiri in the barracks during Jaqmaq’s reign.<sup>71</sup> It is therefore likely that Sultan Jaqmaq, who was a bibliophile and a highly educated person, created the scriptorium there. Moreover, his son and designated heir Muhammad, who died prematurely in 1443 and was highly praised for his knowledge and scholarship and his excellent connections with the religious and academic

66 Sakhawi, *Jawahir*, 951.

67 See Fleischer, “Between the Lines.”

68 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, III, 691–695.

69 Flemming, “Literary Activities,” 260.

70 Atanasiu, *Le phénomène calligraphie*, 257, nos. 8, 11; 263, no. 30.

71 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, VI, 213.

establishment, might have contributed to this initiative.<sup>72</sup> Muhammad dwelled in a house in the al-Ghawr barracks at the Citadel, where Ibn Hajar reported that he built a bath, whereas his original residence was beneath the Citadel on the opposite side of Rumayla Square. In his residence at al-Ghawr, he used to hold gatherings with scholars, who had to endure climbing the steep staircases up to the Citadel! These men were eventually known as the barracks scholars (*fuqahā' al-aṭbāq*). The calligrapher Mushaymish belonged to this group.<sup>73</sup> Muhammad also invited one of the great calligraphers of this period, Bilal b. 'Abd Allah al-'Imadi al-Biqā'i (d. 1471),<sup>74</sup> to settle with him in his residence. Bilal was already a teacher in the al-Ghawr barracks under Sultan Faraj.

Unless evidence for earlier book production comes to light, it is likely that the creation of a scriptorium in the barracks, where young mamluks copied books, took place around the mid-fifteenth century. The stipulation in the *waqf* deed of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad to employ a *katib tabaqa mukattib* (a barracks secretary, or copyist, and teacher of writing) does not imply the existence of a scriptorium in the barracks already at that time. It only confirms that calligraphy was taught there. The absence of precise information regarding the barracks activity might be because the Mamluk biographers had little contact with these circles.

#### 4.2 *Manuscripts for Sultans*

Two manuscripts from the Fatih and Aya Sofia libraries in Istanbul provide interesting information about the patronage and use of books in military circles of the late Mamluk period.<sup>75</sup> Although the content of these books is practically identical, one manuscript is titled *Kitāb 'umdat al-mulūk wa tuḥfat al-mamlūk* and the other is *Kitāb tuḥfat al-mamlūk was 'umdat al-mulūk*, which is the same wording in a different order. One of the manuscripts is dedicated to Sultan Qaytbay and the other to Sultan al-Ghawri. Both belong to the "mirror for princes" genre. Being dedicated to a sultan, they do not have notes of readers or users. The *Tuḥfa* includes a passage stating that it was dedicated by the author (*mu'allifuhu*) to the sultan. This sentence was omitted in the *'Umda*.

On its frontispiece, the *'Umda* is dedicated to the library (*khizana*) of Sultan al-Ashraf Qaytbay and signed in an illuminated cartouche at the bottom

72 Ibn Hajar, *Inba'*, IX, 216; Biqā'i, *Inwan*, v, 114–118; Sayrafi, *Nuzha*, IV, 289–292; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum* XV, 502–505; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, VIII, 8–10; Sakhawi, *Daw'*, VII, 210–211.

73 See chapter 8 on the chain of calligraphers.

74 Ibn al-Himsi, *Hawadith*, 125; Sakhawi, *Daw'*, III, 18; Biqā'i, *Inwan*, II, 147–148.

75 *'Umda*: Aya Sofia 2892; *Tuḥfa*: Fatih 3465.

of the last page by Muhammad Ibn Sudun al-Qasrawi. Nothing is known of Muhammad, although his father was an important emir who built a funerary monument in Cairo.<sup>76</sup> No barracks is mentioned here in conjunction with the signature. As son of an emir, Muhammad was a free man and might not have been garrisoned in a barracks like a purchased mamluk. The manuscript is dated at the end of the text Ramadan 896/July 1491. The name of Qaytbay is mentioned again on folio 4 as the sultan to whom the author dedicates the book. In the concluding remarks, the scribe states that the book was completed (*tamma 'l-kitāb*) during the rule of al-Malik al-Ashraf without naming the sultan. The illumination is finely done in the style of the period.

The *Tuhfa* (Fig. 23) is not dated. It is signed in a medallion on the last page by Janim min Qani al-Ashrafi from the Mustajadda barracks, as the one who wrote it (*katabahu*).<sup>77</sup> It is dedicated in the frontispiece to “the library of Sultan al-Ashraf Abi 'l-Naṣr Qansuh.” Two Mamluk sultans were called Qansuh. The first bore the title al-Zahir (r. 1498–1500), which excludes him; the second was al-Ashraf Qansuh al-Ghawri and must be the dedicatee of this manuscript. It is very unusual for this sultan’s name to be inscribed without his *nisba* “al-Ghawri” referring to the Citadel barracks called al-Ghawr. Other manuscripts dedicated to this sultan and inscriptions in his name always name him Qansuh al-Ghawri. A close look at the manuscript explains this oddity and reveals that an original dedication has been effaced to be replaced by the name Qansuh. The name of Qaytbay can be identified underneath that of Qansuh. In the introduction to this book, the author states that he compiled the book as a gift “for the aforementioned sultan,” without repeating his name. As in the previous manuscript, the name of the sultan is mentioned again on folio 3<sup>v</sup>. as Qansuh and in the concluding remark, which states that the text was completed by its author (*mu'alliffuhu*) during the reign of Qansuh Abu 'l-Nasr; Abu 'l-Nasr is a common honorific title.<sup>78</sup> This manuscript includes small explanatory notes for specific terms, which are not found in the *Umda*.

Since the only signature given on the manuscript is that of Janim, it may be assumed that he was not only the scribe but also the author, meaning that this is an autograph. The *Tuhfa* is probably earlier than the *Umda*, dated 1491 since it mentions that it was written by the author. However, a remark in the first person claiming authorship (*hammamtu bi-ta'lifihī*) is found at the beginning of both texts. It thus seems that the manipulated manuscript,

76 *katabahu al-'abd al-faqīr ilā 'l-lāhi ta'ālā Muḥammad b. Sūdūn Qaşrāwī.*

77 *katabahu al-mamlūk Jānim min Qāni min ṭabaqat al-Mustajadda al-Ashrafī.*

78 *fa-liyakmalu hadhā 'l-kitāb wa 'l-'abd al-faqīr wa 'l-khādīm al-haqīr mu'alliffuhu yaqūlu tamma al-kitāb fī dawlat al-malik Qansuh Abī 'l-Naṣr.*



FIGURE 23  
Colophon of *Tuhfat al-Muluk*, Fatih 3465

the *Tuhfa*, which indicates that it is an autograph, is the original one written by Janim in the Mustajadda barracks for Sultan Qaytbay.<sup>79</sup>

A number of men called Janim are mentioned in Sakhawi's biographical encyclopedia. One of them was a nephew of Sultan Qaytbay, who died in his twenties in 1479. He was highly favored and had been given many privileges by the sultan, who married him to his sister-in-law.<sup>80</sup> If he was the author and scribe of the *Tuhfa*, it is likely to have been written between 1468, the date of Qaytbay's enthronement, and 1491. This identification of Janim can only be speculative. Certainly a mamluk named Janim compiled a treaty on kingship in a barracks and dedicated it to Sultan Qaytbay. The book probably served as a type of reference or exercise work, compiled and abridged from various unnamed sources as part of the barracks' teaching curriculum.

The text emphasizes the virtues of the military establishment by praising the army as "the instrument and pivot of power, the vigour of its heart, the apple of its eye, the support of the sultanate and the source of its strength," recommending that those who fight the enemies are the ones most worthy of patronage and material support.<sup>81</sup> The ruler should treat his soldiers according to their merit and with due generosity.

79 The *Tuhfa* is dedicated to Sultan Qaytbay without mention of any library.

80 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, 111, 64.

81 *Tuhfa* fols. 56<sup>v</sup>–57<sup>r</sup>; *Umda* fols. 57<sup>v</sup>: *uddat al-malik wa 'umdatuhu fi mulkihi wa quwwat qal-bihi wa qurrat 'aynihi wa milak amrihi wa rukn sultānihi wa sabab qudratihi*.

The fact that someone manipulated a manuscript's dedication by replacing the name of the original dedicatee throws light on the practices of the scriptorium. The soldier-scribes, by demonstrating their intellectual qualifications, were ingratiating themselves with the sultan, perhaps in hopes of a promotion that would put them in the higher echelons of the Mamluk ruling establishment.

These are not the only exercises on kingship written in the barracks. Another undated short compilation in this genre was written in the Mustajadda barracks by a mamluk called Bardabak al-Ashrafi.<sup>82</sup> Other subjects have been transcribed by mamluks in the barracks' scriptoria to supply the libraries of the sultans and perhaps the libraries of their religious foundations.<sup>83</sup> They included the Quran and religious texts such as an abridged biography of the Prophet and stories of the Prophet, mirrors for princes, and religious poetry, including the *Burda* of al-Busiri.<sup>84</sup> This edifying literary genre, usually presented in thin volumes, was part of the barracks' curriculum serving to train the mamluks as future emirs and possibly sultans.

The medallions in the colophons of barracks' manuscripts usually included the name of a mamluk preceded by *katabahu* (has written), followed by the name of the barracks. In some cases the term *khidmat* (literally meaning "service") was used before the name, probably in the sense of "given" or "offered." This is the case in a manuscript containing poems by al-Busiri said to have been offered (*khidmat*) by the mamluk Yunus, son of the defunct Barsbay al-Yusufi,<sup>85</sup> and bearing the signature of the scribe (*min kitabat*) Abul 'l-Fadl al-A'raj, who was a head of the scribes mentioned below, during al-Ghawri's reign.<sup>86</sup>

Sometimes a mamluk and scribe added the name of his teacher alongside his signature. Santabay of the Hawsh barracks added that he was a pupil of Shaykh Shihab al-Din Ahmad al-Fayyumi, who is mentioned on another manuscript as teacher (*mukattib*).<sup>87</sup> Another scribe, Duqmaq of the Rafrat barracks, was a pupil of Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Farnawi,<sup>88</sup> who was the head of the copyists in the service of the great secretary Yashbak min Mahdi.<sup>89</sup> A reference to

82 See text in M. Muhanna, "Adab"; Flemming, "Literary Activities," p. 257.

83 Flemming, "Literary Activities," 253 f.

84 Atanasiu, *Le phénomène calligraphie*, 256–260.

85 Barsbay al-Yusufi, recruited by Jaqmaq, was emir of the pilgrimage and died in 1497. Ibn Iyas, *Bada'i*, III, 367.

86 Manuscript at Christie's, *Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds, King Street 26 October 2017*, cat. no. 62, 66–67.

87 Flemming, "Literary Activities," 254, 256.

88 Atanasiu, *Le phénomène calligraphie*, 263, no. 28.

89 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, VIII, 229. See also chapter 7.

a teacher and prominent calligrapher bestowed prestige on the scribe. It also created the same kind of chain of transmission cultivated in academic circles.

The dedication of books as a means of ingratiation with the sultan was not confined to the barracks. It is remarkable that Ahmad b. Hasan al-Tuluni al-Mi‘mar, who had been the court architect during the reign of al-Ghawri and was deported by the Ottomans to Istanbul, from where he eventually returned,<sup>90</sup> compiled a book of Sufi homilies, which he dedicated to the sultan.<sup>91</sup> A scholar named ‘Abd al-Basit al-Hanafi likewise dedicated an undated anthology (*majmu‘*), including a selection of fourteen essays to this sultan.<sup>92</sup> In his introduction, the author writes that he selected and abridged various texts making sure that they were easy to read. According to his words, ‘Abd al-Basit wrote his book while ill and bedridden at home, and he might have been expecting a donation as recognition for his gift.

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90 Ibn Iyas, *Bada‘i‘*, v, 5, 52, 134, 188, 229; Flemming, “Literary Activities,” 254.

91 *Kitab ‘aja‘ib al-qalb wa ma ma‘ahu*, ms Ahmed III no. 1452.

92 *Kitab al-majmu‘ al-bustan*.

# The Mamluk Master Calligraphers

## 1 The Art and Practice of Calligraphy

In the chapter on calligraphy in his *Muqaddima*, Ibn Khaldun describes calligraphy as an expression of civilization that evolved as both an art and a craft in the propitious economic environment of sophisticated urban societies that flourished thanks to royal patronage in Abbasid Baghdad, al-Andalus, and Cairo. Unlike Qalqashandi, in his manual on the chancery, the rationalist and enlightened Ibn Khaldun rejected the attribution of the origins of the art of calligraphy resting with the Prophet's companions.<sup>1</sup>

Calligraphy was the only visual art in Arabic culture that was considered a scientific discipline and the subject of specialized academic discourse in teaching and literature. It was the only visual art whose transmission has been traced by the historians with reference to masters and designers and to their styles and acknowledgment of their innovations. Fine writing was viewed as quintessential to expression, the written word being the static equivalent to the “mobile” spoken word, the pen equivalent to the tongue.<sup>2</sup> Calligraphy therefore had an academic status, mastered by those who worked for the chancery and other state offices and those who produced the lavish and artistic Quran manuscripts commissioned by sultans and emirs in the pursuit of divine favor. These calligraphers built on inherited practices and created new designs and fonts. Calligraphy was also the only Mamluk visual art that was widely practiced by individuals of mamluk background, such as soldiers and members of the ruling military aristocracy.

Mamluk sources described calligraphy as being *khatt mujawwad* or “refined writing.” The calligrapher is often described as *katib mujawwid* or a “scribe of quality,” sometimes simply *mujawwid*, which translates as “perfectioner.” This term is also used for those who recited the Quran. Alongside *khatt mujawwad*, and used more frequently, was the term *khatt mansūb* (“proportional script”). According to Sheila Blair, based on Nadia Abbott, the term *khatt mansūb* referred to the rounded or cursive script introduced by the great innovator and vizier at the Abbasid court, Ibn Muqla, in the tenth century.<sup>3</sup> This style rev-

1 Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, 463–467.

2 Qalqashandi, *Subh*, III, 5–6.

3 Abbott, *Rise*, 33–36; Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 158–159; Eche, *Les bibliothèques*, 279.

olutionized the Arabic script and henceforth became the canonical form of writing. However, *khatt mansub* or simply *mansub* used in the Mamluk sources in connection with scribes and calligraphers cannot refer to Ibn Muqla's innovation of the cursive script, which at that time, more than four centuries after Ibn Muqla, was the standard way of writing, having been refined in Baghdad by Ibn al-Bawwab (d. 1022) and again by Yaqut al-Musta'simi (d. 1298).<sup>4</sup> The fact that the definition of *khatt mansub* according to Mamluk sources cannot refer to a specific script is further confirmed by its absence in Qalqashandi's list or any other list of the classical styles. Seen in its textual contexts, the term *khatt mansub* is instead a generic definition of aesthetic or calligraphic writing. Mamluk calligraphers were reported to write *mansub* in all script styles, whether they belonged to the Ibn al-Bawwab or the Yaqut schools. The activity of writing *mansub* is regularly used by historians to indicate that a person wrote in calligraphic quality.

Although Ibn al-Bawwab's style created in Baghdad was also adopted in Fatimid Egypt, where the palace library included his works, among others, by the great calligraphers of the time, little is known about the calligraphic interaction between Cairo and Baghdad in the Fatimid period (969–1171). When Salah al-Din sent gifts to his master, Nur al-Din Zangi in Damascus,<sup>5</sup> taken from the Fatimid treasure vaults, they included five Quran manuscripts penned by Yanis (thirty volumes), Rashid (fourteen volumes), al-Hakim al-Baghdadi (one volume), Ibn al-Bawwab (one volume), and his pupil Muhalhil (one volume).<sup>6</sup>

The biographies of the Ayyubid and early Mamluk calligraphers say little about the Fatimid school of calligraphy. Until the first half of the fourteenth century, Baghdad was acknowledged as being the center of calligraphic learning. Many Syrians, who eventually played a leading role in shaping Mamluk calligraphy, were trained there. The narrative sources and material evidence indicate that the Mamluk school of calligraphy in Cairo continued to follow the style of Ibn al-Bawwab without adopting Yaqut's innovations, as was done in Syria and in the eastern Muslim world. The last Mamluk calligraphic authority, Tayyibi, repeatedly referred to Ibn al-Bawwab in his manual but said little about Yaqut. Perhaps this Egyptian calligraphic orientation was due to the persistence of local structures established under Fatimid rule. As Petra Sijpesteijn points out regarding conventions and standardization in the chancery practices in early Islamic Egypt, administrative traditions tended to be persistent

4 See below.

5 Abu Shama, *Rawdatayn*, I, 243–244.

6 Muhalhil Ibn Ahmad was a pupil of Ibn Muqla and worked in Baghdad in the tenth century; see A. Sayyid, "Marques," 16.

and continuous.<sup>7</sup> The issue of whether the persistence of the Ibn al-Bawwab style was due to traditionalist and conventional choices is more the preserve of paleographers.

The end of the Fatimid-Isma'ili political and ideological supremacy did not prevent cultural continuity in the domains of the arts and sciences as well as in the administration.<sup>8</sup> A most prominent example is the career of al-Qadi al-Fadil, mentioned earlier, and there were other cases. For example, Fakhr al-Kuttab (the Pride of the Scribes), Hasan b. 'Ali b. Ibrahim al-Juwayni (d. 1190), was originally from Baghdad, where he was taught calligraphy by a master called Ya'qub al-Ghaznawi. He traveled to Syria, where he served Mahmud al-Zangi before he finally settled in late Fatimid Cairo, where he was known by the nisba al-Baghdadi. His career continued under Salah al-Din. He was credited with being Egypt's best calligrapher, for copying hundreds of Quran manuscripts and other books, and teaching many pupils.<sup>9</sup>

Among Hasan's pupils was a scholar from Damietta: Zayn al-Din Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. Fath b. Muhammad (d. 1224), known as Ibn Zayn al-Kuttab. He worked as secretary in the chancery of Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil, with whom he had a close relationship. He wrote in several script styles and was considered outstanding to the extent of surpassing his teacher.<sup>10</sup>

The Egyptian calligrapher Asad b. al-Muhsin, known as al-Mu'ayyad *al-Nasikh* (b. 1159, date of death unknown), spent time in Baghdad and Damascus, where he served al-Qadi al-Fadil and Salah al-Din's son al-Afdal 'Ali.<sup>11</sup> Another Egyptian poet and calligrapher, Abu 'l-Fadl Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Afdali (d. 1225), whose family had been prominent under the Fatimids, became an emir in the service of Salah al-Din and his son al-'Aziz and was given several assignments in Syria.<sup>12</sup>

Calligraphy flourished in Syria in the thirteenth century under the patronage of the Ayyubid rulers in their courts and chanceries. According to the image of the Ayyubid calligraphers conveyed by Safadi, they were closely attached to the ruling aristocracy, either employed privately or in the higher bureaucracy, mainly the chancery and the vizirate. Some were attached to religious institutions, and others worked on a freelance commercial basis.

7 Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, 233, 262–263.

8 Safadi, *Wafi*, I, 281–282; James, "Qur'ans and Calligraphers," 354.

9 Yaqut, *Mu'jam*, 933–935; Ibn Abi Usaybi'a, *Uyun*, II, 11; Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat*, II, 131; Safadi, *Wafi*, XI, 127–128; James, "Qur'ans and Calligraphers," 351.

10 Safadi, *Wafi*, IV, 314; Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, VI, 502–503.

11 Safadi, *Wafi*, IX, 7.

12 Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat*, I, 113 f.; Safadi, *Wafi*, XI, 143–146.

- Khalid b. Muhammad b. Nasr b. Saghir *al-Katib* al-Makhzumi (d. 1192) moved from Acre to work in Damascus, where he was time-keeper and attendant of the clocks at the Umayyad mosque before he went to Aleppo to work as librarian of the *khizanat al-kutub*, probably the royal library. He excelled particularly in *muḥaqqaq* style, which earned him a commission to copy a Quran manuscript (*rubʿa*) in this style for the ruler of Syria, Nur al-Din al-Zangi. The sultan provided him with board and lodging for a whole year to support his work on the manuscript. When the calligrapher returned home after completing the assignment, he found that the sultan had extended his generosity to allow him to continue working in ease and comfort. He continued to serve Nur al-Din in high administrative positions, as head of the chancery. Nur al-Din sent him on a mission to Egypt to check on the financial situation under Salah al-Din. He rejected the latter's offer to work for him after Nur al-Din's death.<sup>13</sup>
- ʿAbd al-Rahman b. ʿAli b. Husayn al-Qurashi, known as Qadi Jamal al-Din, born in Qus (d. 1227), private secretary of the Ayyubid ruler al-Muʿazzam ʿIsa of Karak, worked in Alexandria and Jerusalem and died in Damascus. He authored a book on penmanship titled *Maʿālim al-kitāba wa maghānim al-iṣāba*.<sup>14</sup>
- Muhammad b. Khazraj, Shaykh Abu ʿl-Saraya al-Ansari *al-Katib* also known as Saraya al-Dimashqi (d. 1256), an eminent scholar and calligrapher, produced a lavish manuscript that was endowed to the Ashrafiyya mausoleum in Damascus.<sup>15</sup>

Ayyubid and early Mamluk calligraphers traveled frequently between Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. From the thirteenth century on there was a continuous influx of calligraphers trained in Syria and influenced by Baghdad who came to work in Cairo. The Damascene scholar and calligrapher Muhammad b. Yusuf b. Yaddas (d. 1300), originally from Seville, studied calligraphy in Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo.<sup>16</sup> The circles of Mamluk calligraphers documented in the literature seem to be more confined geographically to this region than were the scholarly circles in general, which encompassed a wider area of the Eastern and Western Muslim world. The reason may be in the close association of this discipline with the specific chancery bureaucratic traditions.

The practice of calligraphy outside the bureaucracy depended on the commission of luxury manuscripts by the ruling class for themselves and their reli-

13 Safadi, *Wāfi*, XIII, 282–283; Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, III, 740–745.

14 James, “Qurʾans and Calligraphers,” 354.

15 Safadi, *Wāfi*, III, 37; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, x, 42.

16 Safadi, *Aʿyan*, v, 221–222.

gious foundations. Although little is known about books and libraries during the reign of al-Nasir Muhammad, the intensive patronage of religious foundations during his rule and the flourishing of the visual arts strongly suggest that the art of calligraphy must have benefited from princely commissions. Among those who penned royal manuscripts was Shadhi b. Muhammad b. Shadhi b. Dawud b. 'Isa b. Abi Bakr b. Ayyub (d. 1341), whose genealogy suggests an Ayyubid aristocratic background in Syria.<sup>17</sup> Names of Iraq-trained calligraphers and illuminators also appear on manuscripts produced in Cairo during this period.<sup>18</sup> A Quran manuscript penned in Cairo in 1345 bears the signature of calligrapher Mubarak Shah al-Suyufi, who came from either Iran or Iraq and wrote in the Yaqut style.<sup>19</sup> A spectacular Quran manuscript made for the Ilkhanid ruler of Iran, Öljaytü (1304–1306), completed in 1313, was sent to Cairo under unknown circumstances, where it was endowed to the *khanqah* of the eminent emir Baktimur al-Saqi in 1326, a son-in-law of the sultan. The Mamluk endowment text inscribed on the manuscript gives the explicit authorization for copying it. This suggests that the patron intended the manuscript to be a model for copyists and illuminators.<sup>20</sup>

During the reign of al-Nasir Muhammad, an Egyptian chain of master calligraphers was established with Ibn al-'Afif (see chapter 8). Although his father and teacher came from Aleppo, Ibn al-'Afif had settled in Cairo, where he taught the next generation of master calligraphers who eventually consolidated the Egyptian school. Hitherto the masters mentioned in the sources had been Syrians who moved to work in Cairo.

An extraordinary homage to the art of the book, calligraphy, and illumination is expressed in the architectural decoration of the mosque of Sultan Hasan. This can be explained by the fact that the supervisor of the construction project, Emir Ibn Biylik al-Muhsini, was also a calligrapher who had penned a Quran manuscript that he dedicated to Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad.<sup>21</sup> The reign of Hasan's successor, Sha'ban, has been described by David James as "the greatest era of Mamluk Qur'an production."<sup>22</sup>

17 James, *Qur'ans*, 68; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, II, 281; A. Sayyid, *al-Kitab*, II, 320.

18 James, *Qur'ans*, 103–104.

19 James, *Qur'ans*, 150–152.

20 James, *Qur'ans*, 116–126.

21 Rogers, "Kairo," 327; Kahil, *Sultan Hasan Complex*, 152, 176; James, "More Qur'ans," 7, n. 12; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 211.

22 James, *Qur'ans*, 178; on endowed Qur'an manuscripts for this sultan, see A. Sayyid, *al-Kitab*, II, 429–430; Maqrizi, *Khitat*, IV/2, 661.

In the second half of the fifteenth century, the activity of a scriptorium in the barracks confirms the interest of the ruling establishment in the art of writing. Royal commissions are evidenced in luxury manuscripts from the period. The reign of the last major sultan, al-Ghawri, seems to have been propitious for the cultivation of calligraphy, as can be seen in the prominent place it occupies in the decoration of his funerary complex. The inscriptions on the facades show a fine and novel style, and the inner decoration in the mausoleum displays remarkable inscriptions in an elaborate Kufic. According to the complex's endowment deed, it included a calligraphy course in the curriculum. It may not be a coincidence that the rector of al-Ghawri's madrasa, Nur al-Din 'Ali al-Jarihi, was a calligrapher<sup>23</sup> and that Tayyibi dedicated his manual on calligraphy to this sultan.<sup>24</sup>

## 2 Teaching Writing and Calligraphy

Elementary schools (*maktabs*) were attached to major mosques and madrasas already before the Mamluk period, to teach boys reading and writing and Quran recitation.<sup>25</sup> According to the Mamluk *waqf* documents, these schools were called *maktab aytam* and, as the term indicates, were dedicated to orphaned boys. Their teacher was called *mu'addib* and in the great foundations he was usually assisted by a *'arif*.<sup>26</sup> Both normally belonged to the community of the madrasa or *khanqah* as students or Sufis or staff members. Scholars worked as teachers in primary schools. The pupils were given a stipend, maintenance and clothing, and the writing and reading material required for their classes.

From the second half of the fourteenth century the *maktab-aytam* became a visual characteristic and an eye-catcher among Mamluk religious buildings, occupying a corner above the waterhouse (*sabil*) and accessed through a separate entrance. The earliest extant example is that of the madrasa of Uljay al-Yusufi, built in 1373.<sup>27</sup> In the late fifteenth century it became common to build a *sabil* with *maktab* independent from a religious building. The one of Sultan Qaytbay in Saliba Street is a monumental and remarkable example. The waterhouse was usually richly decorated for the passers-by who came close to

23 Ibn al-'Imad, *Shadharat*, VIII, 182.

24 See chapter 8.

25 Amin, *Awqaf*, 264–270.

26 Amin, *Awqaf*, 26–75.

27 Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 221–225.



FIGURE 24 The complex of Emir Qanibay (1504) with a primary school or *maktab* (*kuttab*) on the upper left side

get water, while the school above it, configured as an open loggia, was characterized by wooden awnings and balustrades and columns. The practice of erecting separate *sabil* and *maktab* buildings spread widely under Ottoman rule. The *sabil-maktab* of ‘Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda at Bayn al-Qasrayn is one of the many remarkable examples of such architecture meant to combine charity with urban adornment.

The number of pupils in the primary schools, as stipulated in the *waqf* deeds, varied. The madrasa of Sultan Hasan had fifty,<sup>28</sup> the complex of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad had fifty, of Sultan Barsbay in the city had thirty, of Sultan Qaytbay in the cemetery had twenty, and of Sultan al-Ghawri in the city had forty.<sup>29</sup>

Biographers have attached great importance to documenting the teacher–pupil identity or the source of the calligrapher's knowledge that legitimated him, as was normally the case in academic circles with the *ijaza*, which certified the transmission of a specific subject from one scholar to another, and as in Sufi circles, where the gown of Sufism (*khirqat al-tasawwuf*) was given from one master to the next in a chain believed to reach back to Caliph 'Ali.<sup>30</sup>

The chain of Egyptian master calligraphers in the late fifteenth century shows that the authorities in the discipline did not always belong to the core of the academic elite but to a specialized professional artistic group headed by a doyen. They issued *ijazas* according to academic tradition and disseminated their knowledge in private schools and private courses for the upper class. They stood somewhere between the culture of the madrasa and that of the artists and craftsmen who remained outside the historians' scope.

It is not easy to define the exact functions associated with the title *shaykh al-kuttāb* (chief of the scribes) held by many master calligraphers. It might be merely an honorific title, in the sense of doyen, rather than the description of a specific leading position in any kind of institution. However, we know little about the modalities of calligraphic transmission. There is no evidence so far to prove that the *shaykh al-kuttāb* assumed a role comparable to that of the head of the physicians, *ra'īs al-ṭībā'*, who was at the same time was attached to the sultan's court and in charge of authorizing the licenses granted to physicians to practice their craft while simultaneously supervising their performance.<sup>31</sup> In a comparable way, the *mu'allim al-mu'allimīn* in the late fifteenth century was the court architect and overseer of the building craft.

Although little information is available about *ijaza* in calligraphy, the *ijaza* system was applied. Safadi mentions 'Umar b. Ibrahim b. 'Abd al-Rahman *al-Nasikh* in Cairo from whom he received an *ijaza*.<sup>32</sup> Sakhawi mentions someone who received *ijazas* from Ibn al-Sayigh for all styles (*aqlām*) of calligraphy.<sup>33</sup> Elsewhere he mentions someone who successfully studied calligraphy

28 Harithy, *Waqf*, 163.

29 Fernandes, *Khanqah*, 84, 87, 90; Amin, *Awqaf*, 261–275.

30 Safadi, *A'yan*, v, 475–476.

31 Qalqashandi, *Subh*, iv, 194, 222, v, 467.

32 Safadi, *Wafi*, xxii, 416.

33 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, i, 16.

with the master al-Wasimi, who gave him an authorization (*udhina lahu*).<sup>34</sup> Ibn Hajar acquired *ijzas* in calligraphy by authorities such as al-Bidmasi, al-Ziftawi, and Ibn al-Sayigh authorizing him to “write in the manner of the scribes.”<sup>35</sup>

Although the biographies often mention teaching advanced calligraphy to adults in religious institutions, the major *waqf* documents do not mention it as a discipline integrated in the official curriculum. Sometimes, however, a *mukattib* post was included among the staff. The endowment deed of Sultan al-Ghawri is a rare case where a calligraphy course (*taktib*) by an expert calligrapher is stipulated to be held twice a week.<sup>36</sup> The endowment deed of Sultan al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh briefly mentions the post of a *katib tabaqa mukattib*,<sup>37</sup> and it seems from the use of the word *tabaqa* that this position may have been intended to be filled from among the barracks staff. It also states that his salary should amount to thirty *nisfs*, the same as that for the plumber and builder in charge of the maintenance of the premises. The librarian received forty *nisfs*. A prominent *mukattib* who worked in this institution was Sulayman b. Dawud al-Hindi (d. 1481), who also worked at the complex of Sultan Khushqadam.<sup>38</sup> He learned calligraphy from ‘Abd Allah b. Hajjaj al-Barmawi, a pupil of al-Wasimi.<sup>39</sup> Another *mukattib* at the complex of Sultan Barquq, ‘Abd al-Qadir Ibn Muhammad al-Mahyawi al-Tukhi, was a distinguished scholar who studied calligraphy with Ibn al-Sayigh.<sup>40</sup> However, the endowment deed of Barquq does not include a *mukattib* post among the staff.<sup>41</sup> The endowment deed of Sultan Barsbay mentions a post for a *mukattib* to teach writing “according to usual practice” in the sultan’s funerary complex in the city, which combines a madrasa, a *khanqah*, and a Friday mosque. His salary of 300 *dirhams* was equal to that of the librarian; the preacher received 500 the imam’s 1,000 *dirhams*.<sup>42</sup> The deed specifically names Shaykh Sharaf al-Din Musa al-*Mukattib* al-Rumi as holding this position. As his *nisba* ‘al-Rumi’ suggests, Musa might have been Anatolian.<sup>43</sup>

34 Sakhawi, *Tibr*, I, 231.

35 Sakhawi, *Jawahir*, I, 167.

36 Amin, *Awqaf*, 270.

37 *Waqf* deed, 50, 55.

38 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, III, 264.

39 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, V, 17.

40 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, IV, 294–295.

41 Jaritz, “Auszüge.”

42 *Waqf* 880, 191; Fernandes, *Khanqah*, 83–84.

43 I could not find a biographical reference for him.

The curriculum defined in the foundation deeds may have represented merely the basic functions and requirements of the institution, rather than conveying the full picture of the activities happening there. For example, the fact that some endowment deeds do not mention any curriculum, although they do mention a library and students, indicates that the documents do not always record the full reality.<sup>44</sup> Parallel to the official curriculum of the religious foundations, other disciplines such as calligraphy that are not specified in the stipulations of the endowment might have also been cultivated, according to needs and means or on the basis of supplementary endowments. For example, one of the most prominent Egyptian calligraphers, Ibn al-Sayigh, is reported to have established a *maktab* in several madrasas; this may imply a course of advanced calligraphy for adults,<sup>45</sup> rather than a primary class. It is not clear whether these classes were a charitable or commercial enterprise.

Courses in calligraphy would have boosted the activity of copying and transcribing the books needed in the institutions. Suyuti mentions a student who spent a year in his cell in the *khanqah* of Emir Shaykhu copying thirty academic books.<sup>46</sup> Supplementary endowments may have provided for such services. It thus seems that the private and commercial domain played a significant role in cultivating calligraphy. It can be assumed that apprenticeship within the chancery and other bureaucrats contributed to the training of calligraphers.

In Mamluk society, scholarship was often practiced in families and dynasties over generations, while men of other social background such as craftsmen and tradesmen, encouraged by the philanthropic patronage of academic institutions, continuously joined the ranks of scholars. It can be assumed that within scholarly families, academic knowledge and experience were exchanged and transmitted. Teaching calligraphy very often took place within the family.

Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al-Khatib al-Ba'albaki (d. 1371), a scholar, preacher, and governor of Baalbak, and his brother Baha' al-Din Mahmud (d. 1335) learned calligraphy from their father, Badr al-Din (d. 1343),<sup>47</sup> as did one of the major Egyptian calligraphers, 'Imad al-Din b. al-'Afif.<sup>48</sup> Muhammad b. Baktut (d. 1334) taught his children and relatives.<sup>49</sup> Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Musa (d. 1480), a scholar in Damascus born in Jerusalem who earned his living as secretary and a calligrapher of Quran manuscripts, used to write in the

44 Berkey, *Transmission*, 17–18.

45 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, IV, 162.

46 Cited by Berkey, *Transmission*, 25.

47 Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, IV, 304, V, 104–105; Safadi, *A'yan*, IV, 407–409.

48 Safadi, *Wafi*, I, 238; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, III, 213; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, IX, 237–238.

49 Safadi, *Wafi*, II, 257.

“style of his father.”<sup>50</sup> His father, Ahmad (d. 1461), who moved from Jerusalem to Damascus, was a scholar, Quran teacher, and a calligrapher attached to the service of a Mamluk dignitary. He earned his living copying Quran manuscripts, for which he was so famous that he received commissions from far afield.<sup>51</sup>

Besides teaching within the family, private lessons played a major role in the scribe’s profession. Scribes and calligraphers taught in private schools, which could sometimes be in the form of shops in the market. Most likely they were located in the book market in the vicinity of mosques and madrasas.

Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Numayr (d. 1346), a scholar and calligrapher, taught calligraphy to a large circle of pupils.<sup>52</sup> Badr al-Din Hasan b. ‘Ali b. al-Muhaddith al-Hamadani (d. 1333), poet and littérateur, who along with al-Zamlakani was the best student of master calligrapher Ibn al-Busays, declined a position in the chancery, where he would have to endure being given orders for a poor salary, preferring instead to give private courses to wealthy students in Damascus.<sup>53</sup>

The Damascene Jamal al-Din Muhammad b. ‘Uthman (d. 1357), a major figure in calligraphy, made a fortune of 5,000 *dinars* in Egypt by teaching and copying. He taught at the madrasa of al-Zahir Baybars and had many pupils among the aristocracy, such as Ahmad, the son of Emir Baktimur al-Saqi, who paid him 200 *dirhams* monthly.<sup>54</sup>

Apprenticeship played a similar role in calligraphy as in other manual crafts. The master may have been assisted by an apprentice who learned through practice. As in many other technical and manual disciplines, calligraphy shows a divided tradition between compilers and practitioners.<sup>55</sup> Calligraphers might have acted similarly to the masters of certain other crafts, who according to Sakhawi used to hold regular gatherings to exchange their knowledge and experiences in their fields.<sup>56</sup>

50 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, VI, 292.

51 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, I, 224.

52 Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, IV, 350–351.

53 Safadi, *A‘yan*, II, 212; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, II, 108.

54 Safadi, *A‘yan*, III, 660–661; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, III, 265.

55 Gacek, “Al-Nuwayri’s Classification,” 126, citing A.D.H. Bivar.

56 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, IV, 44.

### 3 The Social and Cultural Contexts

The practice of calligraphy was not confined to the art of the book; rather, the bureaucracy, notably the chancery, was the main domain for recruiting calligraphers. Prominent calligraphers were sought after by the chancery and other administrative offices.<sup>57</sup> The chancery was a highly distinguished institution closely connected with royalty. Qalqashandi attributed its origins to the time of the Prophet.<sup>58</sup> It had always been the major recruitment pool for calligraphers and simultaneously a center, where calligraphy styles and fonts were created and developed. It can be assumed that the chancery recruited the best calligraphers, who were probably able to transmit their skills to novices and apprentices there, although no evidence for this is available. Qalqashandi's manual on the workings of the chancery compiled in the early fifteenth century and based on Ibn Fadl Allah al-'Umari (d. 1349), is at the same time a record of calligraphy alongside its material and intellectual culture. The chancery was connected to the sultan through the dawadar or royal secretary.<sup>59</sup>

The description of the qualifications of the head (*sāhib*) of the Mamluk chancery stipulated that he should be a highly cultivated and eloquent person, with a refined character and impeccable demeanor and appearance.<sup>60</sup> Although he should master the art of the pen, the actual penning was not his own task but that of the secretaries (*katib*), who would write down and correct (*tastīr*, *tabyid*) the final version of the draft text provided by the sahib.<sup>61</sup> These scribes were required to be calligraphers, and they probably could be promoted to the post of the head of the chancery.

All major calligraphy styles were used in the chancery. There was an order ruling the relationship between the writing style and the context or purpose of a chancery document. There was also a distinction between the scripts used in the chancery, in Quran manuscripts, or in the book market. The latter was described as *khatt al-warraqin* or "style of copyists." However, these styles might overlap.<sup>62</sup>

The great Ibn Muqla had developed his skills as secretary in the Abbasid chancery of the tenth century before he became vizier. The Mamluk sultan's

57 Safadi, *Wafi*, VI, 1422–1423.

58 Qalqashandi, *Subh*, I, 56–57.

59 There is no study so far regarding the role of the chancery in the culture of calligraphy. Holt, "A Chancery Clerk," documents a secretary's career.

60 Qalqashandi, *Subh*, I, 135.

61 Qalqashandi, *Subh*, I, 132; Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 202–205.

62 Gacek, "Arabic Scripts," 144.

private secretary (*katib al-sirr*)<sup>63</sup> and other secretarial posts in the households of the sultan and the emirs, or any other post associated with diplomatic correspondence, required skills in calligraphy.

Fakhr al-Din Ibrahim b. Luqman (d. 1291), who was born in Siirt and worked in Amid, was recruited for the chancery of the Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-Kamil in Cairo for his calligraphic skills. This happened following al-Kamil's conquest of the city, when the chief of his chancery came across a document beautifully penned by Ibn Luqman. His career continued under both Ayyubid and Mamluk rule. He assumed the office of vizier under al-Malik al-Sa'id Baraka (r. 1277–1279), the son of Baybars, the highest administrative post at that time; he died during the first reign of al-Nasir Muhammad.<sup>64</sup> A similar recruitment took place when Sultan Lajin (r. 1296–1299) read a text beautifully penned by a scholar; he said "this one should be in the chancery" and offered him a position there. When the scholar, Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Ishbili, declined this offer, the sultan nevertheless granted him a regular stipend.<sup>65</sup>

Secretaries were often praised by their biographers for the beauty of their writing. Some of them used their skills to earn money privately as scribes or teachers. A calligrapher in one of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad's offices had the talent of imitating his superior's writing so well that he took the liberty of falsifying his notes and signatures on official documents, earning him a jail sentence for many years when this was discovered.<sup>66</sup>

Not all acknowledged calligraphers who worked in the chancery were necessarily involved in penning books. For example, the biographical entry for Majd al-Din 'Ali b. Muhammad b. al-Mutallib (d. 1165–1166) describes him as a scholar and secretary who had fine handwriting and worked for the ruler of Hama, 'Umar b. Shahinshah, but it does not indicate that he practiced calligraphy otherwise.<sup>67</sup> The biography of Shakir b. Abd Allah, known as Abu Yusr (d. 1185–1186), a secretary in Nur al-Din al-Zanki's chancery, does not mention that he used his calligraphy qualifications for producing books.<sup>68</sup>

A calligrapher's traditional habitat was thus within the bureaucracy rather than the religious milieu. Although Sufism became the mainstream religious approach in the Mamluk sultanate, and most of the religious foundations included Sufi services, there is no indication of a particular association of calli-

63 Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 205–207.

64 Safadi, *Wafi*, I, 97–98; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, I, 136–137; Müstaqim-zade, *Tuhfa*, 38.

65 Safadi, *A'yan*, v, 207.

66 Safadi, *A'yan*, III, 721.

67 Safadi, *Wafi*, XXII, 135–136; James, "Qur'ans and Calligraphers," 354.

68 Safadi, *Wafi*, XVI, 85–86; James, "Qur'ans and Calligraphers," 354.

graphic activities with mysticism. The state-sponsored Sufism of the Mamluks promoted in the *khanqah* and *madrasa-khanqah* was not affiliated to specific orders and was neither ascetic nor esoteric, but juridical.<sup>69</sup> The fusion of *khanqah* and *madrasa* qualified the Sufis to be professionally integrated within the state apparatus, thus promoting the Sunni Sufi-and-scholar career and personality.<sup>70</sup> They provided what was called a remunerated Sufi position, *waz-īfat tasawwuf*. The prevailing independent Sufi orders of the *zāwiyas* outside the state institutions, such as the Shadhiliyya, Rifa'iyya, and Qadiriyya orders, adhered more closely to an orthodox, pious lifestyle concerned with the veneration of the saints rather than esotericism and asceticism. The image of the Mamluk Sufi is that of a bourgeois in appearance and lifestyle while being a mystic in beliefs and thinking.<sup>71</sup>

Neither Qalqashandi nor other Mamluk authors of calligraphy manuals associate the letters of the Arabic alphabet with mystical meanings or esoteric values or occultism. This kind of symbolism, expressed in Ibn Sina's philosophy and popular in Persian and Turkish calligraphic traditions,<sup>72</sup> does not seem to have had the same kind of impact on Mamluk calligraphic culture. Neither is it articulated in the biographies of calligraphers, in calligraphy manuals, or in other sources consulted in this study. Calligraphy was rather associated with skills and aesthetic concerns and calligraphers were praised for the quality of their work and teaching. Some iconic calligraphers were not even good Muslims. The famous calligrapher Ibn al-Wahid, who earned an exceptionally detailed biographical entry and who copied royal Quran manuscripts for mosques, is described as being dishonest in his invoicing practices and having composed poetry on wine and hashish. He was even accused of mixing wine with ink to copy Quran manuscripts!<sup>73</sup> Hasan b. 'Ali al-Juwayni, acknowledged as being the best calligrapher in Egypt between the late Fatimid and the early Ayyubid periods, was a renowned alcoholic who did not refrain from drinking even while copying Quran manuscripts.<sup>74</sup>

Like poetry, with which it was often combined, calligraphy was a noble hobby among the civilian elite, both disciplines being viewed as attributes and adornments of the cultivated gentleman. Many, if not the majority of, freelance calligraphers were also poets, poetry being common among the intellectual

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69 Hofer, *Popularisation*, 79.

70 Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme*, 149 ff.

71 Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme*, 359.

72 Schimmel, *Calligraphy*, chap. 3.

73 See n. 92.

74 Safadi, *Wafi*, 111, 127.

elite in general. The scarce information available for Yaqut al-Mustaʿsimi indicates that he was a prominent poet. One of the greatest calligraphers of his time in Ilkhanid Baghdad, Ahmad b. Yahya al-Suhrawardi (d. 1340), was also famous for being a musicologist and a *littérateur*.<sup>75</sup> Although he penned an important number of Quran manuscripts, his career was not connected to the religious establishment. However, conforming with the Mamluk elite in general, many calligraphers were Sufis and attached to *khanqahs*, or they were attached to madrasas, mosques, and multifunctional institutions.

The Azhar mosque is often mentioned as an affiliation for calligraphers and al-Azhari is a frequent *nisba* in their names. Piety might well have been a motivation for some of those calligraphers who specialized in copying Quran manuscripts. This specialization may be explained in connection with the technical and stylistic requirements associated with Quran manuscripts, which usually included illumination. J.J. Witkam has demonstrated how the layout of a luxury Quran manuscript was a complex operation in multiple stages that might require a division of labor,<sup>76</sup> which implies the need for specialized crafts. However, technical and professional grounds may not be the sole reason for calligraphers dedicating their lives and careers to copying the Quran. The transcription of the Quran as the word of God is the equivalent of devotion and piety. For this reason, Quran copyists are required to perform their ablutions before beginning work.<sup>77</sup> Muhammad b. Ismaʿil al-Muqriʾ al-*Nasikh* (d. 1411) spent decades as a sojourner (*mujāwir*) in Mecca, where he dedicated himself to reading and reciting the Quran and copying Quran manuscripts. He copied hundreds of them, some of which were in the “style of ʿUthman” (*al-rasm al-ʿuthmānī*), which may refer to early Kufic. He could complete a copy within eighteen days.<sup>78</sup> Other calligraphers preferred to copy specific religious texts that appealed to their inclinations.

Unlike Persian and Ottoman literature, Mamluk literature does not include a biographical dictionary dedicated to calligraphers, and this may be due the fact that calligraphy was rarely practiced as a sole occupation. Those who did so belonged to the class of artists and craftsmen who occupied a rather negligible place in the biographical encyclopedias of the elite. This picture stands at odds with the significant calligraphic production of this period, evident in the magnificent Quran and other luxury manuscripts of this time. However, the

75 Safadi, *Aʿyan*, I, 414–417.

76 See “The Art and Practice of Calligraphy,” earlier in this chapter.

77 Ibn al-Hajj, *Madkhal*, IV, 83.

78 Sakhawi, *Dawʿ*, VII, 143–144.

Mamluk period produced many studies on the art of calligraphy.<sup>79</sup> Among the authors of these manuals and treatises, besides Qalqashandi, are the historian and calligrapher Kamal al-Din b. al-‘Adim (d. 1262),<sup>80</sup> al-Nuwayri, and the calligraphers Ibn al-Wahid, al-Athari (d. 1425), al-Ziftawi (d. 1403–1404), Ibn al-Sayigh (d. 1442), al-Hiti (d. 1486), and al-Tayyibi (early sixteenth century).

Some scholars have been acknowledged as not merely being scribes who could write beautifully but as qualified calligraphers, such as Kamal al-Din Abu ‘l-Qasim ‘Umar b. Ahmad b. al-‘Adim, a judge from Aleppo who taught there as well as in Damascus, Jerusalem, the Hijaz, and Iraq, before he moved to Cairo to escape the Mongol invasion. He was a prominent scholar in many disciplines, author of a famous history of Aleppo, and compiler of a manual on calligraphy. He related that he had learned calligraphy without a teacher. He excelled in the *naskh* style, and Ibn Taghribirdi credits him with the invention of the *hawāshī* style<sup>81</sup> and with surpassing Ibn al-Bawwab’s skills.<sup>82</sup> His son Muhammad Abu Ghanim (d. 1296), who accompanied him to Baghdad and returned to live in Hama, where he was chief judge, was likewise a polymath and a great calligrapher.<sup>83</sup>

Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah b. Musa al-‘Ibadi (d. 1490), was a Quran reader attached to the Azhar mosque, poet, calligrapher, and copyist, credited with copying more than 100 Quran manuscripts. He also worked as temporary librarian at the madrasa of Mahmud the majordomo for a while, albeit without much success.<sup>84</sup>

Muhammad b. Ahmad, known as al-Amshati al-Kajkawi al-‘Ayntabi (d. 1480), earned a long laudatory entry by Sakhawi, who described him as being a prominent scholar and judge who learned calligraphy from the famous Ibn al-Sayigh. He used to copy academic books for himself and his colleagues and penned Quran fascicles, endowing them as charity. He offered copies of his Quran manuscripts to Sultan Qaytbay and to the emirs Yashbak al-Dawadar and Janibak, refusing any remuneration.<sup>85</sup> A chief judge of Jerusalem and scholar, Abu ‘l-Khayr Muhammad (d. 1489), who had worked in Cairo, was an excel-

79 See Gacek “Arabic Scripts,” and “Al-Nuwayri’s Classification,” 130.

80 Safadi, *Wafi*, xxii, 422, 423; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, vii, 208 ff.

81 On *hawashi* see Gacek, *Arabic Manuscript*, 33.

82 Safadi, *Wafi*, xxii, 421–426; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, vii, 208–210; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, viii, 270–273. Ibn Taghribirdi refers to his calligraphic skills in the *Nujum* but not in the *Manhal*.

83 Safadi, *Wafi*, iv, 263; Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, vi, 405–406.

84 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, viii, 112–113.

85 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, vi, 301–304; Sakhawi, *Raf’ al-asr*, 210 f.

lent calligrapher and scribe and spent his retirement in worship and study. He created a new design for Quran manuscripts, such as having the same letter at the end of one line being identical to the first letter of the following one, both written in red ink. He calibrated the text to fit into exactly thirty fascicles. The design was described as sensational (*uĵūba*) and its achievement as a prodigious task. The manuscript became famous in the sultanate and beyond in Iraq and Anatolia.<sup>86</sup>

#### 4 Calligraphers and Craftsmen

Although the historians mentioned scholars who practiced manual crafts, they rarely documented those who were exclusively practitioners, and neither do they discuss artistic or aesthetic issues. The commercial calligraphers, who made a living from their manual work, like the craftsmen, did not belong to the historians' league, as was the case with all those who created what is known as "Mamluk art." It is remarkable how little Mamluk historians recorded on the great Yaqut al-Musta'simi, who in his lifetime had acquired legendary fame as a calligrapher and was revered in princely circles worldwide, although at the time of his death (1298) so much biographical documentation was being produced. The longest Mamluk biography concerning him is of a later date, compiled by Ibn Taghribirdi in the second half of the fifteenth century. He described Jamal al-Din Abu 'l-Majd Yaqut as a Greek eunuch in the service of the last Abbasid caliph, al-Musta'sim, who had raised him and educated him as calligrapher and poet. After the Mongol sack of Baghdad in 1258, he continued to live in Baghdad until the end of his long life, celebrated as a poet and the greatest calligrapher of all time. On this occasion Ibn Taghribirdi lists several other thirteenth-century calligraphers with the name Yaqut.<sup>87</sup>

Another prominent calligrapher who is not mentioned in Mamluk literary sources, as far as we can tell, is Mubarak Shah al-Suyufi,<sup>88</sup> a master of the *rayḥān* script, who worked for Mamluk patrons in Cairo and is known to art historians through his multiple signatures. Neither are the following calligraphers documented in the biographical literature: Ya'qub b. Khalil b. Muhammad, who wrote and signed a magnificent Quran manuscript for Sultan Hasan;<sup>89</sup> and

86 Mujir al-Din, *al-Uns*, II, 240.

87 Safadi, *Wāfi*, xxviii, 37–38; Dhahabi, *Tarikh*, xv, 888; Ibn Kathir, *Bidayā*, xv, 617–618; Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayāt*, vi, 119; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, viii, 187–188.

88 Müstaqim-zade, *Tuhfa*, 370–371; James, *Qur'ans*, 150–155.

89 James, *Qur'ans*, 180.

Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Kamal al-Mutatabbib, who signed many manuscripts of high artistic quality during the reign of al-Ashraf Sha‘ban.<sup>90</sup> One of the teachers of the famous al-Tayyibi was a master calligrapher and author of a treatise on the subject; he was an obscure Mamluk emir and in a brief entry is mentioned as having been a governor of Damietta for a short period.

Another eminent calligrapher whose skills are mentioned in different contexts but not in a dedicated biographical entry is al-Waliy al-‘Ajami, whose name figures in the chain of thirteenth-century master calligraphers. He was acknowledged in calligraphy manuals and reported to have taught many others; however, his own career and the date of his death are unknown.

Some calligraphers made fortunes through their craft. Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Hibat Allah al-Shirazi (d. 1283), a well-connected calligrapher in Damascus who learned his craft from the master al-Waliy, earned 2,000 *dirhams* for a copy of the Quran, at that time worth around 100 *dinars*.<sup>91</sup> The famous calligrapher of Baybars al-Jashnakir’s Quran manuscript, Ibn Yusuf al-Zur‘i, known as Ibn al-Wahid, earned 1,000 *dirhams* (50 *dinars*) for calligraphing a manuscript.<sup>92</sup> Exploiting his prominence and celebrity, to save time he used to pay his students 400 *dirhams* to make a copy, which he would then sign himself and sell for 1,000 *dirhams*.<sup>93</sup> The Damascene Isma‘il b. ‘Ali *al-Nasikh* (d. 1403), a scholar and calligrapher, penned a copy of the *Sahih* of al-Bukhari that sold for more than 20 *dinars*, although it was partly damaged in a fire.<sup>94</sup> Ibrahim b. ‘Ali al-Ibnasi al-Khunani (d. 1468), a scholar who learned calligraphy from the master Ibn al-Sayigh, earned as much as fifty *dinars* for a copy of al-Bukhari’s *Sahih*.<sup>95</sup>

At a lower level, we find calligraphers taking on notary work (*shahāda*), an activity regularly mentioned as being a part-time job practiced by modest scholars, calligraphers, and scribes, usually in shops. Badr al-Din Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Maqsi, known as al-Mas‘udi (d. 1481), was a calligrapher and copyist who could earn as much as one *dinar* for a fascicle and worked simultaneously as a notary in various shops in the city.<sup>96</sup>

90 James, *Qur’ans*, 133–137.

91 Safadi, *Wafi*, I, 201 f.; Safadi, *A‘yan*, V, 195–196; Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, VII, 98–99; Maqrizi, *Suluk*, I, 718; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, XI, 39–40; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, VII, 359.

92 Safadi, *Wafi*, III, 150–153; Safadi, *A‘yan*, IV, 468; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, IV, 73–75; Müstaqimzade, *Tuhfa*, 4124 f.; Ibn Habib, *Tadhkira*, II, 43 f.; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Hawadith*, X, 82 f.; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum* IX, 220; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, X, 823; James, *Qur’ans*, 37.

93 Not *dinars*, as stated mistakenly by James.

94 Ibn Hajar, *Inba’*, V, 165; Sakhawi, *Daw’*, II, 303.

95 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, I, 82.

96 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, IX, 180.

‘Ali b. Ahmad b. Sulayman *al-Nasikh* (d. 1479), was a distinguished scholar who earned his living as a copyist, as indicated by his title, and simultaneously as a notary and a merchant.<sup>97</sup> ‘Ali b. Hasan al-Sarmini (d. 1523) had a shop in Aleppo for notary business. After the Ottoman conquerors ordered the transfer of all notary activities to the tribunals, he used his shop to copy Quran manuscripts instead.<sup>98</sup>

Other calligraphers belonged to the circles of artists and craftsmen. Many if not most calligraphers were also illuminators and book-binders.

The famous calligrapher Ibn al-Bawwab (d. 1022) began his career as an interior decorator, then moved to the illustration and illumination of manuscripts (*taṣwīr wa tadhīb al-kutub*) before he specialized in calligraphy. It is interesting that Safadi interprets the singularity of ‘Ali b. Hilal b. al-Bawwab as being due to the fact that he had the rare skill of being both an illuminator and painter!<sup>99</sup> On more than one occasion, Safadi made the distinction between theory and practice in calligraphy. He described the famous physician Ibn al-Akfani as being weak (“more miserable than the patients of his hospital!”) in language and writing although he was knowledgeable of the discipline of calligraphy.<sup>100</sup> Referring to the master calligrapher Shihab al-Din Ghazi, he commented that his knowledge of calligraphy was stronger than his handwriting.<sup>101</sup>

The great Damascene calligrapher Ibn Busays (d. 1316) designed epigraphic bands (*tirāz*) for the facades of monuments in Damascus, including one at the Bab al-Tarima, a gate to the Citadel of Damascus; at the gates to the Dar al-Sa‘ada palace on the Citadel; at the palace of Emir Bahadur; and at the madrasa Zahirīyya Juwānīyya. He drafted inscriptions on metal vessels and inlaid them with silver for one *dirham* a line.<sup>102</sup>

Shihab al-Din Ahmad b. Hasan al-Rubat (born in the 1370s and active in the 1430s), a scholar and calligrapher who had learned calligraphy in less than a month, was one of the leading book-binders.<sup>103</sup> Musa b. ‘Abd al-Ghaffar (born c. 1443), who was a scholar and a judge, learned calligraphy from a master named Ibn Sa‘d al-Din, who was probably the calligrapher Muhammad b. Sa‘d al-Din al-Khazin, the librarian at the complex of Emir Shaykhu in Cairo.<sup>104</sup> He

97 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, II, 20.

98 Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, I, 268–269.

99 Safadi, *Wafi*, XXII, 291–292.

100 Safadi, *Wafi*, II, 25–27.

101 Safadi, *Wafi*, XXIII, 576.

102 Safadi, *A‘yan*, v, 481–482; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, v, 147; Ibn Habib, II, 76; Maqrizi, *Suluk*, II, 170; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, XI, 306; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum* IX, 233; James, “More Qur’ans,” 7.

103 Biqa‘i, *‘Inwan*, I, 66–67.

104 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, X, 102.

taught calligraphy at al-Azhar and other places, also practicing the crafts of bookbinding and illumination.<sup>105</sup> Ahmad b. Mas‘ud al-Makki al-Mutaybir (or Mutaybiz) (d. 1460) excelled in calligraphy and illumination, and his writing was so minute that he could inscribe a chapter of the Quran (*Sūrat al-ikhhlās*) on a grain of rice. He worked for the emirs Abu Bakr b. Muzhir and Azbak min Tutukh.<sup>106</sup> Zayn al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Ibrahim, who lived in the fifteenth century, was a master calligrapher and illuminator as well as a mathematician.<sup>107</sup> Muhammad b. Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah Abu ‘l-Tayyib b. al-Taj al-Nastarawi (d. 1467),<sup>108</sup> who had an academic background, worked as a secretary and calligrapher and illuminator. He illuminated a Quran manuscript ordered by Sultan al-Zahir Khushqadam for an oratory (*zawiya*) in Damascus in 1464, adding notes to the manuscript to facilitate the reading for beginners.<sup>109</sup>

Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Ahmad b. ‘Ali al-Ibyari (d. 1479), known as Ibn al-Saddar, was a calligrapher, illuminator, and book-binder. He learned his craft from his uncles, Nur al-Din ‘Ali al-Saddar and ‘Abd al-Rahman,<sup>110</sup> the latter was a pupil of Ibn al-Sayigh and a mathematician. Muhammad excelled at preparing his own pigments for illuminations. His success and wealth allowed him to collect artwork and donate writing materials to orphan children.<sup>111</sup>

Some calligraphers were universal artists and craftsmen. Perhaps the most extraordinary calligrapher and polymath of the Mamluk period was Jawad b. Sulayman (d. 1355), who earned a long biographical entry despite the fact that his achievements were mainly in the manual crafts.<sup>112</sup> The enumeration of the many skills he mastered is unbelievable or highly exaggerated. He was of noble Arab descent and dwelled in Beirut. Safadi describes him as an excellent calligrapher in all styles. He could write the Throne Verse on a grain of rice and copy a Quran manuscript on such thin paper that it only weighed seven *dirhams*, with its binding weighing five *dirhams*.<sup>113</sup> He was a blacksmith and produced high-quality spears, arrows, complex military equipment, and security locks.

105 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, x, 183.

106 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, II, 226.

107 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, IV, 44. No date of death is indicated in his entry.

108 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, IX, 230.

109 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, III, 65; Royal Ontario Museum, 905.8.2. On this manuscript see Abou-Khatwa, “Lens.”

110 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, v, 161.

111 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, VII, 22; IV, 44; x, 183.

112 Safadi, *Wafi*, x1, 213–214; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, III, 77–78; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, v, 31–33.

113 According to Hinz, *Islamische Masse*, (3–5), the weight of the medieval *dirham* in Egypt and Syria is about 3.125 grams.

He decorated steel and inlaid metal ware. He also practiced as a goldsmith and jeweler specializing in enamel, and was a weaver, embroiderer, tailor, carpenter, veterinarian, and haberdasher. He practiced equestrian sports, was knowledgeable in literature, and knew the Quran by heart. The governor of Syria, Emir Tankiz, offered him a post in his arsenal, which he occupied for a while.

Another polymath was Shams al-Din Abu 'l-Fath Muhammad al-Azhari, who lived in the second half of the fifteenth century and combined the activities of a muezzin, poet, and scholar affiliated to the Ghanamiyya madrasa with being a calligrapher, illuminator, book-binder, and designer (*rassām*). He was also an expert in paper cuts, *muzahharāt* (floral patterns? arabesques?), and the repair (?) of porcelain (*lasq al-ṣīnī*). He created the design of the *burqu'* of the Ka'ba curtain for the year 1481, which continued to be used for years after.<sup>114</sup>

## 5 Calligraphers and the Aristocracy

Besides the chancery calligraphers, there were scribes in religious institutions and commercial calligraphers and scribes working in shops to copy documents and books or teach pupils. Some others were associated with the personal scriptoria of members of the ruling elite, as was the case with Emir Yashbak min Mahdi, whose name figures many times in the biographies of scribes and authors as a patron who commissioned books on a significant scale.<sup>115</sup>

Usually the intellectuals among the emirs were the dawadars or secretaries of the sultans and the emirs. Some were also acknowledged calligraphers who copied luxury manuscripts.<sup>116</sup> Aqush al-Iftikhari (d. 1299–1300), a mamluk in the service of the treasury of the Citadel of Damascus, was a scholar and a calligrapher and expert in this field.

A prominent case is that of Emir Muhammad b. Biylik al-Muhsini, who had been governor of Cairo under al-Nasir Muhammad and was in charge of the construction of the mosque of Sultan Hasan. He copied a Quran manuscript for Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad, now in the Keir collection.<sup>117</sup> His interest in the art of the book is reflected in several decorative features in the mosque of Sultan Hasan, which reveal influences from both the calligraphy and illumina-

114 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, IX, 6–7.

115 Flemming, "Literary Activities," 255.

116 Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech," 105; see list by Yusuf, "Fann," 153–157.

117 James, *Qur'ans*, 71, cat. 12; James, "More Qur'ans," 224, n. 12.

tion of contemporary Quran manuscripts. Arghun al-Nasiri (d. 1331), a deputy of al-Nasir Muhammad, was an educated man who copied books himself and owned an important library for which he commissioned and purchased books, even from abroad, sending his agents to buy from estate sales.<sup>118</sup> Emir ‘Ali b. Amir (d. 1338), governor of Cairo and a bibliophile, penned Quran manuscripts to be endowed for mosques. His library included ninety-five volumes of the Prophet’s panegyric genre.<sup>119</sup> Aydumur al-Dawadar (d. 1339), a secretary of al-Nasir Muhammad, was a calligrapher.<sup>120</sup> Sayf al-Din Uljay, a secretary of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad (d. 1332), was a man of culture, closely attached to the chief judge Taqiyy al-Din al-Subki. He had a fine handwriting and owned a valuable library.<sup>121</sup> Another secretary of al-Nasir Muhammad, Taybugha al-Anuki (d. 1351), was a calligrapher and a bibliophile who was known for borrowing books and keeping them as long as he needed to thoroughly read them.<sup>122</sup> Buzlar (d. 1389), governor of Damascus whose career began with Sultan Hasan, was a cultivated man and a calligrapher.<sup>123</sup> Baydumur al-Badri (d. 1348), governor of Tripoli and Aleppo, used to copy Quran manuscripts and illuminate and bind them lavishly.<sup>124</sup> Emir Shaykhu al-Qazani al-Nasiri (d. 1351), supervisor of the Umayyad mosque in Damascus, had a sound religious education and was a bibliophile who collected books in all disciplines as well as being a calligrapher. He penned a large *rub‘a* in the *muhaqqaq* style, which he endowed to the Umayyad mosque.<sup>125</sup> Aybak b. ‘Abd Allah al-Turki, ‘Izz al-Din (d. 1374), was a mamluk of Emir Tughay, who manumitted him. He studied calligraphy with Fakhr al-Din Muhammad b. ‘Uthman al-Sunbati al-Hanafi and excelled in this craft, which he taught to Mamluk emirs besides giving courses at the madrasa of Sultan Sha‘ban’s mother.<sup>126</sup> It is not known where or with whom his teacher Fakhr al-Din al-Sunbati (d. 1360), a scholar, poet, and calligrapher, studied.<sup>127</sup> Emir Sarim al-Din Ibrahim, son of Emir Nasir al-Din Muhammad b. al-Husam al-Saqri (d. 1430), who was for a while market inspector, was a man of letters and

118 Safadi, *Wafi*, VIII, 359; Safadi, *A‘yan*, I, 453; Ibn Habib, *Tadhkira*, II, 211 f.; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, II, 306–308; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, IX, 299.

119 Yusuf, “Fann,” 157; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, III, 98–99.

120 Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, II, 361.

121 Safadi, *Wafi*, IX, 353–354; Safadi, *A‘yan*, I, 591–592; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, III, 39.

122 Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, II, 331–332.

123 Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, III, 361.

124 Safadi, *A‘yan*, II, 98.

125 Safadi, *A‘yan*, II, 530–531; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, VI, 362.

126 Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, I, 450; Ibn Hajar, *Inba‘*, I, 114.

127 Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, VI, 223.

a calligrapher.<sup>128</sup> Emir Mankalibugha al-Zahiri (d. 1432), who was sent by Sultan Faraj as envoy to Timur in Samarkand and subsequently held the post of market inspector, was a highly educated man and a calligrapher.<sup>129</sup> Emir Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Sayf al-Din Qurtay (d. 1438), a grandson of Baktimur al-Saqi, who was an eminent emir during al-Nasir Muhammad's reign, was a wealthy and multitalented man who occupied himself with poetry, scholarship and calligraphy. He was a bibliophile and collected finely calligraphed and bound books as well as calligraphic leaves (*qīṭa'*).<sup>130</sup> Emir Taghribirmish, deputy of the Citadel (d. 1448), was nicknamed al-Faqih because of his knowledge and scholarship. He composed poetry in both Turkish and Arabic, was a bibliophile, and copied books in a fine hand. According to Sakhawi, he was "exceptional among the people of his race."<sup>131</sup> Yahya, the son of Yashbak al-Mu'ayyadi, was a calligrapher trained by the masters Yasin al-Jalali and Burhan al-Din al-Farnawi.<sup>132</sup> Emir Janim al-Sayfi al-Jaddawi al-Khazindari (d. 1483), another student of Yasin, penned and illuminated several fine Quran manuscripts.<sup>133</sup> Emir Qijmas al-Ishaqi, who learned calligraphy in the barracks, copied the famous poem of al-Busiri, the Burda, for Sultan Jaqmaq. It was so well written that he was accused of submitting a copy penned by his teacher.<sup>134</sup> A lavish Quran manuscript commissioned by Sultan Khushqadam is signed by Emir Janibay al-Zahiri as the calligrapher. Janibay, great dawadar and previously governor of Jedda, was one of the mightiest emirs of the fifteenth century and a great patron of architecture.<sup>135</sup> Tayyibi, the last great Mamluk calligrapher and author of a manual on the subject, mentions Emir Muhammad b. Kizil, governor of Damietta, as being his teacher, a person who has hardly been noticed by contemporary historians and entirely unknown as a calligrapher. Although members of the Mamluk establishment were often credited with calligraphy skills,<sup>136</sup> their activity seems to have been a hobby; the biographies rarely mention Mamluk names among those who made their living through copying.

128 Maqrizi, *Suluk*, IV, 843.

129 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, X, 73.

130 Maqrizi, *Suluk*, IV, 1063–1064; Biqa'i, *Inwan*, I, 112–114; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, I, 391–392; Müstaqim-zade, *Tuhfa*, 74.

131 Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, IV, 70–74; Sakhawi, *Daw'*, III, 33–34. See Berkey "Silver Threads."

132 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, X, 264.

133 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, III, 65.

134 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, VI, 213.

135 Behrens-Abouseif, "Qubba," 2–3, and *Cairo of the Mamluks*, 145–147.

136 Safadi, *A'yan*, I, 205–206, II, 585.

## The Chain of Mamluk Calligraphers

### 1 The Syrian School

Partly basing his account on Ibn Fadl Allah al-‘Umari, who wrote a century earlier, al-Qalqashandi attributes the origins of Mamluk calligraphy to the ‘Abbasid tradition of Baghdad. He lists the chain of master calligraphers from there to his own day in fifteenth-century Cairo as follows: Ibn Muqla; Muhammad b. al-Simisimani; Muhammad b. al-Asad; Ibn al-Bawwab; Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik; Shaykha Zaynab called Shuhda; Yaqut al-Musta‘simi; al-Waliyy al-‘Ajami; al-‘Afif; his son, Ibn al-‘Afif; Ibn Ruqayba; and his contemporary al-Ziftawi.<sup>1</sup> Ibn Taghribirdi and Sakhawi repeat this list, excluding Yaqut and Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, thus Ibn Muqla; Ibn al-Bawwab; Ibn al-Simsimani; Ibn Asad; Shuhda; al-Waliyy, al-‘Afif; Ibn al-‘Afif; Ibn Ruqayba; and al-Ziftawi.<sup>2</sup>

The chain of master calligraphers acknowledged in Iranian and Ottoman historiography as being the foundation of their own calligraphic tradition is different:<sup>3</sup> Arghun Ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Kamili; Nasr Allah al-Tabib (al-Mutatabbib); Mubarak Shah Ibn Qutb al-Tabrizi; Yusuf al-Mashhadi al-Khurasani; Sayyid or Mir Haydar; and Ahmad Ibn al-Suhrawardi.<sup>4</sup>

According to the biographical literature, Syrian calligraphers adopted the style of Yaqut al-Musta‘simi (d. 1298). Yaqut and his students worked for Ilkhanid patrons in the decades following the fall of the Abbasid caliphate; as indicated by their *nisbas*, they were associated with Iraq and Iran. Yaqut had been the master of the *rayhan* style, which spread in Iran but was not as popular among Mamluk calligraphers.<sup>5</sup> Although many Syrian calligraphers were active in Cairo, the Cairene calligraphers continued to follow their own distinct style, elaborating on the legacy of Ibn al-Bawwab.<sup>6</sup>

The biographies indicate that prior to the Mongol invasion of 1258 and until the first quarter of the fourteenth century, calligraphers traveled frequently

1 Qalqashandi, *Subh*, III, 13–14.

2 Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, IX, 290; Sakhawi, *Daw’*, IV, 161.

3 James, *Qur’ans*, 77–78.

4 Safadi, *A‘yan*, I, 414–415; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, I, 356. His teacher was Zali al-Din ‘Abd Allah in Baghdad.

5 James, *Qur’ans*, 20.

6 See the list of scribes in the appendix of James, “Qur’ans and Calligraphers,” 354–356.

between Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. Syrians often moved to work and teach in Egypt. Among the Mamluk calligraphers who were reported to have studied with Yaqut was the Damascene Sharaf al-Din b. Yusuf al-Zar‘i Sayyid Muhammad b. Sharif, known as Ibn al-Wahid (d. 1311)<sup>7</sup>, mentioned earlier, an outstanding calligrapher, poet, multilingual littérateur, and bureaucrat. He traveled to Baalbak and Baghdad to study with Yaqut. He taught Baha’ al-Din Mahmud b. Khatib Ba‘albak, mentioned later. He went to Cairo, where he worked for Sultan al-Muzaffar Baybars (al-Jashnakir) and as a secretary at the mosque of al-Hakim in Cairo, which had been restored in 1303 and endowed as madrasa by Baybars when he was still emir. Baybars recruited Ibn al-Wahid for the chancery, but he failed there. He made his career with calligraphy, for which he was highly remunerated. He mastered all styles and was unsurpassed in *naskh*, *muhaqqaq*, and *rayhan*. A famous Quran manuscript he penned for Baybars al-Jashnakir to be endowed to the mosque of al-Hakim is acknowledged as one of the greatest masterpieces of the Mamluk art of the book.<sup>8</sup> It was immediately famous for its illumination, executed by the celebrated illuminator Sandal. Safadi writes that he saw the manuscript on more than one occasion in the chancery on the Citadel, which suggests that it may have been displayed there, perhaps as a model for calligraphers. Ibn al-Wahid authored a treatise on calligraphy titled *Sharḥ Waḥīd ‘alā rā’iyat Ibn al-Bawwāb*.<sup>9</sup>

Another calligrapher from Syria was Jamal al-Din Ibrahim b. Sulayman Abu Ishaq b. al-Najjar *al-Katib* of Sicilian and later Damascene origin (d. 1253) (not to be confused with Shams al-Din b. al-Najjar, d. 1326) a scholar, poet and calligraphy teacher who earned the praise of the master calligrapher Shihab al-Din Ghazi after a bureaucratic career in Alexandria. After a career in Alexandria, he returned to his home town Damascus where he died. Among his students were al-Yaghmuri and Rashid al-Mundhiri, for whom I was unable to find any information.<sup>10</sup> The Mongol invasion contributed to pushing scholars and artists from Iraq to other areas, and the rise of the Mamluk sultanate attracted many of them to work in Syria and later Egypt.

7 Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, iv, 73–75; Ibn Habib, *Tadhkira*, ii, 43 f.; Safadi, *Wafi*, iii, 150–153; Safadi, *A‘yan*, iv, 466–472; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Hawadith*, x, 82 f.; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, ix, 220; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, x, 82–83; James, *Qur’ans*, 37.

8 James, *Qur’ans*, chap. 3.

9 Edited by Hilal Naji (Tunis, 1967), see more in Gacek, “Arabic Scripts,” n. 3.

10 Safadi, *Wafi*, v, 356–358; Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, i, 165; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, i, 65–67.

### 1.1 *Waliyy al-Din al-'Ajami and His Pupils*

Although al-Waliyy has no record in the known dedicated biographies, so his profile remains obscure, but he can be considered the father of Mamluk calligraphy. His name, which appears with the *nisba* al-'Ajami, raises the question as to whether he came from or went to Iran following some of Yaqut's students. Safadi elsewhere also calls him al-Waliyy al-Tabrizi.<sup>11</sup> The scarcity of biographical information about him is surprising considering his fame and his status in a very well-documented period, and the fact that he is mentioned in the biographies of several other calligraphers as being their teacher. He is listed by Qalqashandi and al-Zubaydi among the master calligraphers.<sup>12</sup> The latter gives his name as Abu 'l-Hasan 'Ali b. al-Zangi, also known as al-Waliyy al-'Ajami. The patronym Ibn al-Zangi to his name suggests that he might have been related to the Zangid rulers. The date of his death also remains uncertain. In the biographical entry of Ahmad b. al-Hasan al-Rumi Ibn Hajar writes that he studied calligraphy with al-Waliyy in Anatolia, adding that Waliy died in 1291–1292 at a very advanced age.<sup>13</sup> The date of Waliyy's death in the last decade of the thirteenth century is plausible if he was the teacher of al-'Afif, about whom little is known, except that he was the father and teacher of Ibn al-'Afif (d. 1336–1337), the earliest Mamluk master calligrapher to be mentioned as being based in Cairo and having taught a significant number of specialized calligraphers.<sup>14</sup> Waliyy was thus contemporary with Yaqut al-Musta'simi. He learned calligraphy from his earlier namesake, Yaqut al-Mawsili (d. 1221) and worked in the tradition of Ibn al-Bawwab.<sup>15</sup> Waliyy al-Din had a major impact on the calligraphers of Syria and Egypt in the thirteenth century. In a noteworthy hyperbolic passage praising the calligraphy skills of a scholar, Safadi writes that he dwarfed Ibn Muqla, Ibn al-Bawwab, Ibn al-'Adim, and al-Waliyy al-'Ajami!<sup>16</sup> He does not mention Yaqut al-Musta'simi.

Among al-Waliyy's pupils were:

11 Safadi, *A'yan*, IV, 20.

12 al-Zubaydi, 88; Müstaqim-zade, *Tuhfa*, 573; James, "Qur'ans and Calligraphers," 350–351.

13 Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, I, 126. A reference to a signature of Waliyy on a manuscript in the library of the municipality of Alexandria dated as early as 594/1198 conflicts with Ibn Hajar's information. The manuscript is the *Diwan* of Salama Ibn Jandal no. 835. Bilal, 88–89, n. 9 in Zubaydi, *Hikma*.

14 Qalqashandi, *Subh*, III, 14; Safadi, *Waqf*, I, 238; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, III, 213; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, XI, 57–58; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, IX, 311; Gacek, "Arabic Manuscripts," n. 3.

15 See Bilal, n. 9, 88–89 in Zubaydi, *Hikma*; Tayyibi, *Jami'*, 17.

16 Safadi, *A'yan*, V, 204.

- ‘Imad al-Din Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Hibat Allah al-Shirazi, of Shirazi ancestry, lived in Damascus (d. 1282–1283)<sup>17</sup> where he belonged to a family of scholars and judges and was active as a merchant. He became one of the best calligraphers of his time, credited with having written better *muhaqqaq* than Ibn al-Bawwab. He traveled to Baghdad to copy a *rub‘a* of Ibn al-Bawwab using a thin paper called *waraq al-ṭayr* (literally “birds’ paper”).<sup>18</sup> A *rub‘a* penned by him was worth 2,000 *dirhams*. He moved to Egypt, where he served in the administration of al-Zahir Baybars. His son Muhammad (d. 1323) was a scholar and illuminator.<sup>19</sup>
- Fakhr al-Din Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad b. Baha’ al-Din (d. 1294), had many pupils in Damascus.<sup>20</sup>

Waliyy also inspired the style of Shihab al-Din b. ‘Abd al-Rahman Ghazi, one of the most prominent calligraphers of Damascus.

### 1.2 *Shihab al-Din Ghazi and His Pupils*

Shihab al-Din Ghazi (d. 1310)<sup>21</sup> is described as being unparalleled. He taught at the Madrasa ‘Aziziyya in Damascus for fifty years after keeping a shop “beneath the minaret of Fayruz.” He specialized in *riqā‘* script and taught many prominent calligraphers, including Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Asad, known as Ibn al-Najjar (d. 1326), Ibn al-Busays, and Muhammad b. Najib al-Khalati (or Ibn al-Akhlati) (d. 1327), who is considered Ghazi’s successor. Safadi writes that he pretended to be a pupil of al-Waliyy but was in fact a pupil of Ibn al-Najjar, writing in the style of al-Waliyy.

Not much is written about Muhammad Ibn Asad b. al-Najjar (d. 1326) except that he taught many pupils at the madrasa Qilijiyya, Damascus, and in his home.<sup>22</sup> Among Ghazi’s pupils there were:

- Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Najib al-Khalati or al-Akhlati (d. 1327), who succeeded his master as calligraphy teacher in Damascus,<sup>23</sup> was imam at the madrasa Qaymariyya in Damascus and spent some time in Egypt in “the *khanqah*,” which Safadi does not name. At that time it is most likely that the *khanqah* in question was the one founded by Salah al-Din in Cairo rather

17 Safadi, *Wafi*, I, 201–202; Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, VII, 98f.; Maqrizi, *Suluk*, I, 718; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, XI, 39f.; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, VII, 359.

18 Qalqashandi, *Subh*, VI, 192, 193.

19 Safadi, *A‘yan*, V, 195–196.

20 Ibn Habib, *Tadhkira* I, 173f.; Ibn al-‘Imad, *Shadharat*, V, 424.

21 Ibn Habib, *Tadhkira* II, 22; Safadi, *Wafi*, XXIII, 575–576; Safadi, *A‘yan*, IV, 20–21; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, III, 295.

22 Safadi, *A‘yan*, IV, 320–321; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, III, 472.

23 Safadi, *A‘yan*, V, 294–295.

than that of al-Nasir Muhammad in Siryaqus (1316). He returned to Damascus, where he died. He owned a large collection of calligraphic album leaves (*qitaʿ*). Muhammad al-Khalati is the calligrapher of a famous copy of the *Maqamat al-Hariri* manuscript now in the British Library and may also have been its illuminator.<sup>24</sup>

- Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Numayr al-Sarraj (d. 1346) was a contemporary of Ghazi's pupils. However, it is not mentioned who taught him. He was a calligraphy teacher, Quran reader, and philologist.<sup>25</sup> He taught Ibrahim b. Dawud b. ʿAbd Allah al-Amidi (d. 1395), a Damascene who worked in Cairo. He was a scholar, taught calligraphy in the barracks and specialized in transcribing the works of Ibn Taymiyya whose disciple he was.<sup>26</sup>

### 1.3 *Najm al-Din Ibn al-Busays and His Pupils*

Another of Ghazi's pupils was Najm al-Din Musa b. ʿAli b. Ahmad Muhammad, known as Ibn Busays (d. 1316), a Sufi poet and calligrapher. He was born in Hama and worked in Damascus, where he became the chief calligrapher (*shaykh al-kuttab*) at an early age and was active for nearly fifty years as a teacher. He excelled in all styles, especially the *muzdawaj*, and created a new one that he called *al-mujiz*, meaning the miraculous. He penned a Quran copy dated 710/1310 and one written with gold instead of ink. An interesting aspect of his career was that he designed epigraphic bands for architecture and inlaid metal wares.

The following are named among Ibn al-Busay's pupils:

- Kamal al-Din Muhammad b. ʿAli b. ʿAbd al-Wahad b. al-Zamlakani (d. 1327).<sup>27</sup> He was a prominent scholar, a judge, and a high-ranking bureaucrat in Damascus who earned a long biographical entry. As a calligrapher he surpassed his teachers, Ibn al-Busays and Badr al-Din Hasan b. al-Muhaddith, being credited with being the best in the *taʿliq* style as well as expert in Kufic.
- Along with Kamal al-Din al-Zamlakani, Badr al-Din Hasan b. ʿAli al-Muhaddith was the most prominent of Ibn al-Busays's pupils. He was a great writer in poetry and prose and chose the lucrative career of a private calligraphy teacher for the upper class.<sup>28</sup>

24 Safadi, *Aʿyan*, v, 294–295; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, v, 43; Biqaʿi, *Inwan*, I, 112; Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 329, n. 49; George, “Orality.”

25 Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, IV, 350–351; Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, v11, 148; James, *Qurʿans*, 65–72.

26 Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, I, 27; Ibn Hajar, *Inbaʿ*, 111, 254–255; Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, I, 152.

27 Safadi, *Wafi*, IV, 214–221; Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, VI, 315–318; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, IV, 192–195; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, x, 218–221; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, IX, 270; Müstaqim-Zade, *Tuhfa*, 431.

28 Safadi, *Aʿyan*, II, 210–211; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, II, 109.

- Amin al-Din Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Mihtar, known as Darwish (d. 1348–1349), moved from his native city of Safad, where his father worked in the stables of an emir, to Damascus, where he worked as a doorman at the Madrasa Rawahiyya. There he met Kamal al-Din al-Zamlakani, who promoted him. He then studied calligraphy with several other masters and went to Baghdad to learn the style of Yaqut al-Musta‘simi, excelling in the *naskh faḍḍāḥ*. (The word *faddah*, which literally means “revealing,” refers to a larger version of the *naskh*.<sup>29</sup>) He then traveled to Yemen and India before settling in Cairo, where he worked as a deputy market inspector. He was also a poet. His difficult character stood in the way of his career. Safadi, who admired his writing, described it also as being “strong but not proportioned (*mansub*).”<sup>30</sup>

#### 1.4 Other Syrian Calligraphers

Muhyi ‘l-Din Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Ba‘albaki *al-Mukattib* (d. 1343), a scholar and a calligraphy teacher, as his title indicates, learned this art with Shams al-Din Husayn al-Kurdi, whose biography I was unable to trace. Safadi describes him as *shaykh al-kitaba*.<sup>31</sup> He taught his two sons.

Baha’ al-Din Mahmud b. Muhyi ‘l-Din Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahim, known as Ibn Khatib Ba‘albak (d. 1334), seems to have been the most prominent member of the family. He was a preacher and worked in Damascus, where he was the head of the calligraphers (*shaykh al-kitaba al-mansuba*). He served Emir Tankiz, the governor of Damascus, who would have him beaten up if he neglected his work.<sup>32</sup> His brother, Jalal al-Din Muhammad al-Ba‘albaki Abu Durr (d. 1371), was a scholar, preacher in the mosque of Baalbak, deputy judge, and calligrapher.<sup>33</sup>

Muhammad taught Nasir al-Din Muhammad b. Baktut (d. 1334), who was a Qalandari Sufi.<sup>34</sup> Safadi doubts that he learned calligraphy with Ibn al-Wahid as he pretended, assuming rather that his teacher was Ibn al-Khatib of Baalbak. He worked for al-Mu‘ayyad, the ruler of Hama, and produced a large number of luxury Quran and other manuscripts. He was drawn to calligraphy by Qadi Jamal al-Din Ibn Rayyan, a notable of Aleppo, who provided him with maintenance, money and commissions, including his sons. His style is described

29 Gacek, *Arabic Manuscript*, 110, 132.

30 Safadi, *A‘yan*, IV, 662–664; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, IV, 209.

31 Safadi, *A‘yan*, IV, 509–510; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, IV, 129.

32 Safadi, *A‘yan*, V, 407–409; Ibn Habib, *Tadhkira*, II, 259; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, V, 104–105; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, IX, 308.

33 Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, IV, 304.

34 Safadi, *Wafi*, II, 256–257; Safadi, *A‘yan* IV, 349–351; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, IV, 16; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, IX, 307.

as *muhaqqaq bi-qalam al-faddah*.<sup>35</sup> His mentor, Ibn al-Rayyan (d. 1348), was passionate about calligraphy, compelling his children to practice it. He used to pen large Quran manuscripts just for himself.<sup>36</sup>

Ibn Baktut taught Nasir al-Din Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Ramli (d. 1399), a calligrapher working between Jerusalem and Damascus, specializing in Quran manuscripts. Nasir al-Din taught Badr al-Din b. Qilij al-‘Ala’i and his cousin Abu ‘l-Khayr in Jerusalem.<sup>37</sup> Abu ‘l-Khayr, a chief judge in Jerusalem, created a new layout design for Quran manuscripts.<sup>38</sup>

Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Zayla’i (d. 1400), was head of the calligraphers and a timekeeper and botanist in Damascus. His teachers are not mentioned. One of his pupils was Muhammad b. Muh. al-Jashshi (d. 1458), a prominent calligrapher who copied Quran manuscripts.<sup>39</sup>

Nur al-Din ‘Ali b. Ibrahim al-Jawimi (d. 1452) was of Shirazi origin, studied in Herat, and migrated to Syria. He was an acknowledged scholar who learned calligraphy in Shiraz with a master called Majd al-Din and moved to Medina, where he was appointed rector and calligraphy teacher at the madrasa of Qadi ‘Abd al-Basit.<sup>40</sup>

The consolidation of the Cairene school of calligraphy and the establishment of a chain of calligraphers based in the Egyptian capital from the fourteenth century to the end of the Mamluk period did not exclude sultans continuing to commission manuscripts from Syrian calligraphers. However, as the Egyptian school developed, the biographies became gradually less informative about the Syrian calligraphers, making it difficult to trace their chain.

The career of ‘Ali b. Muhammad *al-Katib*, known as ‘Usfur (d. 1405), is a special case that points to the continuing significance of the Syrian school in the early fifteenth century. ‘Usfur, also called Ibn ‘Usfur, was born in Damascus but worked in Egypt, where he earned the status of *shaykh al-kuttab*. He had studied with Zayn al-Din Ibn al-Harrani, the supervisor of the *awqaf* in Damascus. He wrote *mansub* in all styles but specialized in the Yaqut style prevailing in Damascus, whereas his friend and colleague Ziftawi preferred the mode of Ibn al-‘Afif. However, ‘Usfur did not have a significant impact. It was generally thought that he wasted his talents in pursuing a bureaucratic career. He seems to have been associated with the aristocracy, which might have prevented him from teaching. A pupil of his was Emir Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. Sayf al-Din Qurtay, a

35 I cannot translate this term used by Safadi in the *Wafi* in this calligraphic context.

36 Safadi, *A‘yan*, II, 426.

37 Ibn Hajar, *Inba‘*, IV, 89; Sakhawi, *Daw‘*, x, 15.

38 Mujir al-Din, *al-Uns*, II, 240.

39 Ibn Hajar, *Inba‘*, v, 342–343; Sakhawi, *Daw‘*, x, 38, 111.

40 Sakhawi, *Daw‘*, v, 158–159.

grandson of Emir Baktimur al-Saqi, who was also a scholar, a poet, and a collector of precious calligraphed manuscripts. During the reign of Faraj b. Barquq, 'Usfur was attached to the service of Emir Sudun al-Zahiri, whom he accompanied to Damascus, where he spent a few years in his service until the emir's death in 1400–1401, after which he returned to Cairo.<sup>41</sup> Shortly before his death, 'Usfur penned the investiture document of al-Nasir Faraj when he returned to the throne after a short interregnum in 1405.

'Ali b. Muhammad 'Usfur is probably the same calligrapher who signed his name as 'Ali b. Muhammad *al-Mukattib* al-Ashrafi in 1376 on a Quran manuscript for Sultan al-Ashraf Sha'ban.<sup>42</sup> Considering the date of his death three decades later, this work would have been made before his career shifted to the bureaucracy, to which he owed his title *al-Katib*. His signature with the title al-Ashrafi indicates that his career began during al-Ashraf's reign, and his description as *mukattib* refers to his profession as calligraphy teacher. According to James, he wrote in a very distinctive *muhaqqaq* style, which seems to corroborate the narrative that his style was not in the Cairene tradition of Ibn al-'Afif.

The sources agree that like his Syrian master, Ahmad wrote in the style of Yaqut.<sup>43</sup> Maqrizi writes he studied calligraphy with 'Usfur; Taghribirdi does not mention 'Usfur, but writes instead that he adopted the style of Yaqut al-Musta'simi. These two versions of his biography confirm that 'Usfur's style followed the Yaqut school, implying at the same time that he deviated from the Cairene tradition.<sup>44</sup> The information provided by Ibn Hajar and repeated by Sakhawi suggests that the Syrian Yaqut-derived style was an anomaly at that time in Egypt, where the style created by Ibn al-'Afif prevailed.

Musa b. Isma'il al-Kinani al-Jajjini al-Dimashqi (d. 1441) penned a Quran manuscript for Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh in 820/1417 and is mentioned as being head of the calligraphers in Damascus.<sup>45</sup>

'Ala' al-Din 'Ali al-Halabi *al-Mukattib* (d. 1452) was praised for having surpassed his unnamed masters, although he died young, around the age of thirty. He was buried in the mausoleum of Emir Jamal al-Din Yusuf al-Ustadar, which indicates that he was well connected.<sup>46</sup>

41 Ibn Hajar, *Inba'*, v, 333–334; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, viii, 191–192; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, xiii, 154; Ibn Iyas, *Bada'i'*, 1/2, 754; Sakhawi, *Daw'*, v, 316–317.

42 James, *Qur'ans*, 193, 232. His title is *mukattib* not *muktib*, as read by Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 323.

43 Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, xv, 219f.; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, 1, 371ff.; Maqrizi, *Suluk*, iv, 1063f.; Biqa'i, *Izhar*, 1, 112–114; Müstaqim-zade, *Tuhfa*, 74.

44 Maqrizi, *Suluk*, iv, 1064; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, 1, 392.

45 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, x, 181, A. Sayyid, *al-Kitab*, 11, 322.

46 Biqa'i, *Izhar*, 1, 181–182.

## 2 The Egyptian School

The previous section revealed that the great Mamluk calligraphers during the early period (1250–1300) originated in Syria, and many came to work in Cairo. There is little mention of Egyptian calligraphers at that time. We do not know where the Egyptian Sharaf al-Din Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Abi 'l-Qasm al-Maydumi, a scholar and librarian at the madrasa Kamiliyya in Cairo, studied calligraphy.<sup>47</sup> Although Safadi and Maqrizi indicate the date of his birth as being 611/1214–1215 and his death in 1284, the name Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Qasim al-Maydumi appears on a Quran manuscript dated 701/1302,<sup>48</sup> produced in an unnamed mosque in the goldsmiths market. It is difficult to assume that it is the same person, unless the manuscript was penned earlier but illuminated and completed at the later date. The Kamiliyya is not exactly in the goldsmiths market, but a little further north. In any case the *nisba* Maydumi in both cases refers to an Egyptian town.

During the reign of al-Nasir Muhammad, probably due to the expansion and centralization of the chancery in Cairo, great calligraphers moved from Syria to work in the Egyptian capital. Shadhi b. Muhammad (d. 1341) was a calligrapher of Ayyubid Syrian genealogy and secretary of the chancery, who worked for al-Nasir Muhammad.<sup>49</sup> Another Syrian in Egypt was Jamal al-Din Muhammad b. 'Uthman al-Dimashqi (d. 1357), considered by Safadi to be superior to Ibn al-Busays and Ibn al-Wahid. He worked in Syria and Egypt and died in Damascus but made his fortune in Egypt.<sup>50</sup>

The best *thuluth* calligrapher after al-Waliyy al-'Ajami is said to be his disciple and a follower of Ibn al-Bawwab's style, 'Ali b. Yahya b. Fadl Allah al-'Adawi al-'Umari (d. 1368). From a family of Syrian origin, he was the brother of the better known Ahmad (d. 1349), the head of the chancery and author of the chancery manual *Masālik al-abṣār*.<sup>51</sup> 'Ali made his career in Cairo when Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad, after dismissing and banning Ahmad as head of the chancery, requested their father, Yahya, his private secretary, to send his younger son 'Ali to Cairo to replace him.<sup>52</sup> 'Ali followed the sultan's call and

47 Safadi, *Wafi*, II, 10; Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, v, 114–115.

48 James, "More Qur'ans," 4–5. The manuscript is in the ss Cyril and Methodius National Library in Sofia OP 2707.

49 James, *Qur'ans*, 68; Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 326 f.; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, II, 281.

50 Safadi, *A'yan*, III, 660–661; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, III, 265.

51 Ibn Habib, *Tadhkira*, III, 316; Safadi, *Wafi*, XXI, 322–328; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, III, 212–213; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, VIII, 240–241; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum* XI, 102.

52 Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, I, 352–354.

eventually succeeded his father as private secretary to al-Nasir, a post he kept under the next ten sultans. He does not seem to have been involved in teaching. Ibn Hajar described him as not being very knowledgeable, while crediting him with possessing the highest calligraphy skills, including his dexterity to counterfeit Ibn al-Bawwab's and other old masters' hands.

### 2.1 *Ibn al-'Afif and His Pupils*

The reign of al-Nasir also saw the rise of Ibn al-'Afif as a master calligrapher based in Cairo. 'Imad al-Din Ibn al-'Afif Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al-Hasan (d. 1336) was the *shaykh al-kuttāb*, or head of the scribes of Egypt and Syria, and his career marks the beginning of the Cairene school of calligraphy.<sup>53</sup> He was the rector of the *khanqah* of Aqbugha 'Abd al-Wahid in the cemetery, a Quran reciter, and a poet. His remarkably short biography indicates that his career was not involved in academia. He penned a large number of Quran manuscripts, was a good teacher active over a long period, and died at the age of eighty-one in Cairo. Qalqashandi refers to him as one of major calligraphy authorities of his time. He learned his craft from his father, 'Afif al-Din Muhammad al-Halabi, who does not seem to be recorded in any biographical entry.<sup>54</sup> According to Qalqashandi, 'Afif was a pupil of Waliyy, which points to a Syrian background, as is also suggested by his *nisba* "al-Halabi."<sup>55</sup> The later source, al-Zubaydi, refers to him as 'Afif al-Din Muhammad al-Halabi al-Shirazi, a pupil of al-Waliyy and his successor as leader in the discipline.<sup>56</sup>

Ibn al-'Afif taught some major calligraphers in Cairo: Shams al-Din b. Abi Ruqayba al-Misri and al-Ziftawi, who in turn taught Zayn al-Din Sha'ban b. Muhammad b. Dawud al-Athari.

### 2.2 *Ibn (Abi) Ruqayba and His Pupils*

Shams al-Din Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Abi Ruqayba al-Misri *al-Mujawwid* (d. 1376), also called Ibn Ruqayba, was market inspector of Fustat, the second urban agglomeration of greater Cairo. He studied calligraphy with Ibn al-'Afif, from whom he acquired his *mansub* style. He taught Sultan al-Kamil Sha'ban (r. 1345–1346) and was very close to Sultan al-Ashraf Sha'ban (r. 1363–1377), although his name does not appear on any of the famous manuscripts commis-

53 Safadi, *Wafi*, I, 238; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, III, 213; Maqrizi, *Suluk*; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, IX, 237–238; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, XI, 57.

54 Qalqashandi, *Subh*, III, 14; Safadi, *Wafi*, I, 238; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, XI, 57–58; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, IX, 311.

55 Qalqashandi, *Subh*, III, 142.

56 James, "Qur'ans and Calligraphers," 350, citing Zubaydi, 1954, 86.

sioned by this sultan.<sup>57</sup> Sultan Shaʿban's reign is considered to be the greatest era of production for Quran manuscripts in the Mamluk period.<sup>58</sup>

Among Ibn Abi Ruqayba's pupils were: Ghazi b. Qutlubugha al-Turki (not to be confused with his earlier namesake, Shihab al-Din Ghazi) and al-Ziftawi, both leading figures in Mamluk calligraphy. Ghazi *al-Mukattib Shaykh al-kuttab* (d. 1374–1375),<sup>59</sup> head of the calligraphers, had a great impact. He taught at the madrasa of al-Zahir Baybars. His style differed from that of his teacher. He wrote with his own combination of elements from both Ibn al-ʿAfif and al-Waliyy.<sup>60</sup>

A contemporary of the Ibn Ruqayba school was Aybak b. ʿAbd Allah al-Turki (d. 1373–1374). Aybak was a manumitted mamluk of Emir Tughay. He learned calligraphy from Fakhr al-Din al-Sunbati and became head of the calligraphers (*shaykh kuttab al-mansub*). He taught for a long time at the Azhar mosque and established a *maktab* in the madrasa of Sultan Shaʿban's mother.<sup>61</sup> It is not clear whether either Aybak or his teacher were connected to the circle of Ibn Ruqayba.

Aybak's teacher, Fakhr al-Din Muhammad b. ʿUthman al-Sunbati (d. 1360), is mentioned as a scholar, poet, and calligrapher who had many pupils, without reference to where he acquired his calligraphic skills.<sup>62</sup>

### 2.3 *Al-Ziftawi and His Pupils*

Muhammad b. ʿAli al-Ziftawi (d. 1403)<sup>63</sup> studied calligraphy with Ibn Abi Ruqayba. He specialized and excelled in *thuluth* and taught calligraphy at several madrasas at the same time and had a great impact in Egypt. He compiled a highly valued manual on calligraphy, the *Minhāj al-iṣāba fī awḍāʿ al-kitāba*. He used to boast that he was able to write even with an iron measuring ruler! Among his pupils were the historian Ibn Hajar and the calligraphers Zayn al-Din al-Athari and Ibn al-Sayigh.

Zayn al-Din Shaʿban b. Muhammad b. Dawud al-Athari (d. 1425), authored a poem on calligraphy called *al-ʿInāya ʿl-rabbāniyya fī ʿl-ṭarīqa ʿl-shaʿbaniyya*, and

57 Ibn Hajar, *Inbaʿ*, I, 221; Maqrizi, *Suluk*, III, 299.

58 James, *Qurʾans*, chap. 8.

59 Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum*, XI, 142; Ibn Hajar, *Inbaʿ* I, 177; Maqrizi, *Suluk*, III, 262; Ibn Iyas, *Badaʿiʿ*, I/2, 163; Müstaqim-zade, *Tuhfa*, 354; Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 329.

60 Sakhawi mentions Ibn Khatib Baʿalbak instead of Waliyy, but this is probably a mistake. In his *Tibr* he confuses Ghazi b. Kutlubugha with his earlier Syrian namesake, Shihab al-Din Ghazi, *Tibr*, I, 88.

61 Maqrizi, *Suluk*, III, 248; Ibn Hajar, *Inbaʿ*, I, 114; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, I, 450.

62 Maqrizi, *Muqaffa*, VI, 223.

63 Qalqashandi, *Subh*, III, 14; Sakhawi, *Dawʿ*, VII, 24; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, IX, 290; Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 352, n. 4.

he is cited on several occasions by Qalqashandi as being a major authority on calligraphy. Although he began his career as a calligrapher, worked as a market inspector of Fustat under Sultan Barquq, and occupied several other administrative posts, he was best known for being a prolific poet. His *nisba* “al-Athari” derives from the shrine dedicated to the Prophet’s relics, al-Athar al-Nabawī, near Fustat, to which he was affiliated for some time. He is described as an eccentric and even mentally unstable. In his later career he began to compose poetry, which he used as virulent polemics against prominent figures, making himself many enemies. His controversial behavior eventually landed him in trouble with the authorities, and he had to escape to Mecca, from where he moved south to Yemen, from where he was exiled to India by Sultan al-Nasir Ahmad b. Isma‘il (r. 1400–1424). He returned to Yemen and from there to Mecca and back to Cairo. He was a protégé of Qadi ‘Abd al-Basit.<sup>64</sup>

#### 2.4 *al-Wasimi and His Pupils*

Little is known about the career of Nur al-Din Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Wasimi, although he is mentioned as the teacher of a number of renowned calligraphers. Sakhawi dedicated only one line to him, describing him as being *al-katib* without any further information. Ibn Taghribirdi mentions al-Wasimi in two lines reporting that he was the shaykh al-kuttāb and the master of all calligraphers in his time. No date is given for him.<sup>65</sup>

Among his pupils were Ibn al-Sayigh and al-Barmawi. Although ‘Abd Allah b. Hajjaj al-Barmawi *al-Mukattib* (d. ca. 1446) worked as a teacher and copyist, Sakhawi describes him as having lived in poverty.<sup>66</sup>

#### 2.5 *Ibn al-Sayigh and His Pupils*

Zayn al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Yusuf b. al-Sayigh *al-Mukattib* (d. 1442), the son of a jeweler as indicated by his name, was the major calligrapher and teacher of his generation, described as being the undisputed and unsurpassed *shaykh al-kuttāb*. He was also a poet. His biographical entry in Sakhawi’s encyclopedia is the most extensive dedicated by the historian to a calligrapher.<sup>67</sup> He studied *naskh* with al-Wasimi and was also a pupil of al-Ziftawi, who taught him

64 Qalqashandi, *Subh*, III, 14; Maqrizi, *Suluk*, IV, 701–702; Ibn Hajar, *Inba’*, VIII, 82–84; Sakhawi, *Daw’*, III, 301–303; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, VI, 248–249.

65 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, XI, 233; elsewhere he mentions that he was a student of Ghazi, *Daw’*, IV, 161. This should be of Ghazi Ibn Qutlubugha al-Turki, not the Syrian namesake who died earlier; *Manhal*, IX, 312.

66 Yusuf, “*Fann*,” 152; Sakhawi, *Daw’*, v, 17. Dar al-Kutub (Masahif 458).

67 Ibn Hajar, *Inba’*, IX, 176; Sakhawi, *Daw’*, IV, 161–163; Sakhawi, *Tibr*, I, 87–89; Ibn Iyas, *Bada’i’*, II, 232; Tayyibi, *Jami’*, 18.

the style of Ibn al-‘Afif, which he combined with Ghazi b. Kutlubugha’s style. According to Sakhawi, Ibn al-Sayigh’s calligraphic skills were unrivaled, and his impact was great. He was a Sufi attached to the *khanqah* of Salah al-Din and held multiple teaching posts in a number of madrasas. He penned many Quran manuscripts and other books, among them a particularly large Quran manuscript in *muhaqqaq* script dated 801/1398–1399 for Muhammad b. Batut al-Salihi al-Dimashqi, described in the colophon as written “with one pen” in sixty days.<sup>68</sup> He also signed a Quran manuscript for Sultan al Nasir Faraj b. Barquq and another for Sultan al-Mu‘ayyad’s funerary complex.<sup>69</sup> Ibn al-Sayigh authored a manual on calligraphy called *Tuḥfat ūlā ‘l-albāb fī šinā‘at al-khaṭṭ wa’l-kitāb*.<sup>70</sup>

Half a century later, the calligrapher Ibn al-Tayyibi, who had been one of Ibn al-Sayigh’s pupils, praised him as being the major calligrapher of his time. Ibn Hajar, Sakhawi, his father and his uncle studied calligraphy with him.

Ibn al-Sayigh also taught numerous prominent calligraphers of the next generation, including al-Farnawi and al-Hiti. Among his pupils were:

- Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Sa’d al-Din (d. 1450s), a teacher and librarian at the Shaykhuniyya who taught calligraphy at al-Azhar and other places.<sup>71</sup>
- Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Hasan al-Nawaji (d. 1455), scholar and litterateur, author of a famous anthology on wine poetry and books on wine, love and the beauty of boys, was also a calligrapher and a copyist praised for his speed.<sup>72</sup>
- Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Abi Bakr al-Sandali (d. ca. 1466), a pupil of al-Wasimi and Ibn al-Sayigh, belonged to the Sufi community at the mosque of the judge ‘Abd al-Basit, with whom he had a friendly relationship. He taught calligraphy and copied more than 500 Quran manuscripts.<sup>73</sup>
- Ibrahim b. ‘Ali al-Khunani (d. 1468–1469), known as al-Ibnasi, was a scholar, who held several bureaucratic positions, was rector of the *khanqah* of Sultan Inal, and was a prominent calligrapher.<sup>74</sup>
- Ibrahim b. Ahmad b. ‘Uthman al-Dimashqi al-Qahiri, known as al-Raqqi (d. 1480), was a scholar and held several secretarial positions.<sup>75</sup> Born in Damascus, he grew up and made his career in Cairo. He obtained *ijazas* from Ibn

68 Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 323–325; Lings and Safadi, *Qur’an* 57, no. 88.

69 A. Sayyid, *al-Kitāb*, II, 322.

70 See bibliography.

71 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, X, 102.

72 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, VII, 230–232, see also reference in the bibliography.

73 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, VII, 203.

74 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, I, 82.

75 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, I, 16–17.

- al-Sayigh in all styles of script, spent time as a Sufi at the Baybarsiyya,<sup>76</sup> and was a sojourner in Mecca, where he copied Quran manuscripts.
- Shams al-Din Muhammad b. Abi Bakr al-Qahiri al-Hummasani (d. 1492), earned a long biographical entry from Sakhawi,<sup>77</sup> in which he is described as being an eminent scholar and Quran reader and imam at the mosque of Ibn Tulun, with great credentials and virtues. He was the head of the Quran readers at the complex of Emir Shaykhu and taught calligraphy to Zayn al-Din Khattab, among others. He copied books for himself and other scholars, particularly a number of Quran manuscripts that he donated as pious endowments and gifts to the emirs Yashbak min Mahdi and Janibak al-Dawadar and Sultan Qaytbay. He wrote fast, being able to copy a quarter of the Quran in one night.

### 2.6 *al-Hiti and His Pupils*

Jamal al-Din ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Ali al-Hiti al-Azhari (d. 1486) was a scholar and a muezzin who studied calligraphy with Ibn al-Sayigh and Burhan al-Din al-Farnawi. His *nisba*, al-Azhari, indicates that he studied at al-Azhar. He was praised for his excellence, innovations, and for authoritative manual on calligraphy titled *al-Umda: Risāla fi ‘l-khaṭṭ wa ‘l-qalam*.<sup>78</sup>

‘Ali b. Muhammad al-Mushaymish is reported in a short entry by Sakhawi to have been in his advanced age “near the mosque of Maridani,” without specifying whether he dwelled or had a shop there.<sup>79</sup> He belonged to the scholars of al-Sunbuliyya barracks on the Citadel, where he taught calligraphy to Suhayli and others. No date is given for him.

Shams al-Din Muhammad b. ‘Ali b. Zakariyya al-Suhayli (d. unknown), a pupil of al-Hiti and al-Mushaymish, was a prolific scribe who also practiced illumination and *ghasl al-lāzurd* (washing lapis?). He worked for the great emir Yashbak min Mahdi and held a post at his funerary complex. He disappeared at the end of his career after embezzling funds (2,000 *dinars*) that were entrusted to him by some mamluks in the barracks, leaving his son to be arrested and jailed in his place.<sup>80</sup>

Shams al-Din Abu‘l-Fath Muhammad b. Ahmad, mentioned earlier as a designer and a polymath, was also a pupil of al-Hiti.<sup>81</sup>

76 The *khanqah* of al-Muzaffar Baybars (al-Jashnakir) built in 1307.

77 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, VII, 190; Ibn Iyas, *Bada’i’*, III, 292.

78 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, V, 34; Gacek, “Arabic Scripts,” 144 and “Al-Nuwayri’s Classification,” 130. See bibliography.

79 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, VI, 32.

80 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, VIII, 182–183.

81 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, IX, 6–7.

### 2.7 *Ibrahim al-Farnawi and His Pupils*

Burhan al-Din Ibrahim b. Yusuf al-Farnawi (d. unknown) was a pupil of Ibn al-Sayigh and made his career as a calligraphy teacher.<sup>82</sup> Among his pupils were the calligraphers Yasin al-Jalali, ‘Abd Allah al-Haythami, and Yayha, the son of Emir Yashbak al-Faqih and the secretary of Sultan Khushqadam.

His pupils also included his nephew, Shams al-Din Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Farnawi, who was employed as head of the copyists in the service of the great Dawadar Yashbak min Mahdi.<sup>83</sup> Muhammad al-Farnawi is mentioned on a manuscript dated 1483 as Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Hasani al-Farnawi *al-Mukattib*. He also taught at the barracks.<sup>84</sup>

### 2.8 *Yasin al-Jalali and His Pupils*

Yasin al-Jalali *al-Mukattib* (b. 1427, d. unknown) was from Upper Egypt; he was a pupil of Ibrahim al-Farnawi. He excelled in *naskh* and earned his living as a calligraphy teacher at the madrasas of Ibn al-Ji’an, the Ashrafiyya of Barsbay, the Zayiriyya of Barquq, and others.<sup>85</sup>

Yasin taught Yahya b. Yashbak al-Faqih (d. 1471), the grandson of Sultan al-Mu’ayyad, Janim the mamluk of Janim al-Jaddawi, and master calligrapher Shahin al-Nuri. Among his pupils was ‘Abd al-Qadir b. Muhammad al-Khanqi al-Azhari, nicknamed al-Sahsah (born in the 1430s), a polymath and prolific scribe.<sup>86</sup>

Shahin al-Nuri (d. 1483 or before) was a pupil of Yasin and Ibrahim al-Farnawi.<sup>87</sup> He penned a number of Quran manuscripts for Sultan Qaytbay and worked as deputy to the sultan’s secretary. His last manuscript was a monumental volume for the Prophet’s tomb that had to be carried on a camel of its own because of its size. Shahin died before completing his work on this manuscript,<sup>88</sup> which was eventually achieved by Khattab b. ‘Umar al-Danjihi al-Azhari by order of the sultan.

Zayn al-Din Khattab b. ‘Umar al-Azhari (d. 1486) was a Quran reciter, a calligrapher, and connoisseur of literature.<sup>89</sup> He learned calligraphy from Yasin al-Jalali, Shams al-Din al-Hummasani, al-Hiti, and Ibn Sa’d al-Din (who is likely to

82 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, I, 182.

83 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, VIII, 229.

84 Flemming, “Literary Activities,” 253.

85 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, X, 213. The date of his death is not mentioned.

86 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, IV, 296.

87 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, I, 265.

88 Yusuf, “Fann,” 146; Ibn Iyas, *Bada’i’*, III, 204; Sakhawi, *Daw’*, III, 294; A. Sayyid, *al-Kitab*, II, 322.

89 Ibn Iyas, *Bada’i’*, III, 233; Sakhawi, *Daw’*, III, 181; A. Sayyid, *al-Kitab*, II, 322.

be identical with Shams al-Din Muhammad, Ibn Saʿd al-Din al-Khazin, already mentioned). Khattab copied more than fifty Quran manuscripts, and worked as scribe for Yashbak min Mahdi and Sultan Qaytbay. One of the sultan's commissions was the completion of the great *mushaf* that was begun by Shahin al-Nuri. He also gave calligraphy courses at the mosque of Azbak.

Abu 'l-Fadl Muhammad al-Sunbati al-Aʿraj (d. 1517), another pupil of Yasin, was head of the calligraphers and worked for Sultan al-Ghawri. He owned an impressive collection of precious Quran manuscripts and other literature as well as valuable writing implements, which he was able to afford thanks to his substantial earnings as a scribe and teacher.<sup>90</sup>

### 2.9 *The Last Mamluk Calligraphers: al-Tayyibi and Others*

Muhammad b. Hasan al-Tayyibi was the last known master calligrapher and author of a manual on calligraphy dating to the Mamluk period. His name appears on a manuscript dated 1473 accompanied by the *nisba* "al-Azhari."<sup>91</sup>

According to his own words, Tayyibi studied calligraphy with Jamal al-Din al-Hiti, Nur al-Din al-Wasimi, Yasin al-Jalali, and Muhammad b. Kizil al-ʿIsawi. The latter was an emir and governor of Damietta and a companion to Ibn al-Sayigh.<sup>92</sup> Surprisingly, Ibn Kizil is not recorded as being a calligrapher in any literary source. Ibn Iyas mentions him only once, on the occasion of his dismissal from his office as governor in 1462. Ibn Taghribirdi merely reports that he sold his *iqtaʿ*, the right of usufruct on land granted to the Mamluk aristocracy, to acquire his governor post, which he held for only five years, ending up in poverty. It is possible that he turned to calligraphy then.<sup>93</sup>

Tayyibi compiled his manual on calligraphy, titled *Jāmiʿ maḥāsin al-kuttāb*, which he dedicated to Sultan al-Ghawri in 1503, almost four decades after the previous mention of Ibn Kizil. He must have been quite young when he took lessons with Ibn Kizil and at an advanced age when he compiled this book. The book was completed in the same year (908/1502–1503) as the funerary complex of Sultan al-Ghawri. Tayyibi deplored the fact that unlike the other sultanic foundations of Barquq, Barsbay, and al-Muʿayyad, this one did not have a *maktab* in which to teach writing.<sup>94</sup> He was ill-informed; the combined primary school (*maktab aytam*) and public fountain-house (*sabil*) were completed at

90 Sakhawi, *Dawʿ*, XI, 129; Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, I, 88; Ibn Iyas, *Badaʿiʿ*, v, 319; Flemming, "Literary Activities," 254.

91 Flemming, "Literary Activities," 253.

92 Tayyibi, *Jamiʿ*, 18; Yusuf, "Fann," 152–153.

93 Ibn Iyas, *Badaʿiʿ*, II, 397; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Hawadith*, 297, 340, 429.

94 Tayyibi, *Jamiʿ*, 21.

the end of the following year 909/1504, as indicated by their foundation inscriptions. Considering the significance of this complex, it is unlikely that the maktab was not planned from the beginning as in all other royal foundations. It seems that Tayyibi, who was not close to the sultan, hoped to be hired for a teaching position in his religious complex.

Some master calligraphers are mentioned without reference to their teachers. For example, Shihab al-Din Ahmad b. al-Juban al-Dhahabi al-Dimashqi (d. 1414) from Damascus composed poetry and was interested in religious studies. However, his main occupation was commerce, which brought him into contact with Sultan al-Mu'ayyad, who sent him on a commercial mission to Yemen.<sup>95</sup>

Bilal b. 'Abd Allah al-'Imadi al-Biqā'i (d. 1471), of Ethiopian origin, was a Hanbali deputy judge and a calligrapher,<sup>96</sup> who moved from Aleppo to Cairo. He is reported to have written in the Persian (*'ajamī*) style. He was a Sufi and an alchemist who taught the mamluks of Sultan Faraj b. Barquq. He withdrew for a while to lead a more secluded life at the complex of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad, returning later under Sultan Jaqmaq to serve the ruling establishment. He settled with this sultan's son in al-Ghawr barracks, where he taught.

Bilal taught Burhan al-Din Ibrahim b. 'Ali al-Dimashqi *al-Mukattib* known as Ibn al-Mallah (d. 1468).<sup>97</sup> Sakhawi wrote that al-Mallah was the teacher of Badr, who might be Badr al-Din Muhammad al-Mas'udi al-Maqsi, already mentioned.<sup>98</sup>

A calligrapher simply called Yunus (d. 1483) is mentioned briefly by Ibn Iyas as being one-armed and left-handed.<sup>99</sup>

Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah b. Musa al-'Ibadi, mentioned earlier as a poet, scholar, Quran reciter and calligrapher specialized in Quran manuscripts, taught in the barracks, held administrative positions and worked temporarily as librarian of the madrasa of Mahmud al-Ustadar, filling in for Salim b. Khalil b. Ibrahim al-'Ibadi with whom he shared the same *nisba*.<sup>100</sup>

Nur al-Din 'Ali al-Jarihi (d. 1525), the rector of the madrasa of Sultan al-Ghawri, was a calligrapher and teacher at the barracks.<sup>101</sup>

Taj al-Din 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Danjihi (d. 1526) was a Sufi scholar and calligrapher.<sup>102</sup>

95 Ibn Hajar, *Inba'*, VII, 121; Sakhawi, *Daw'*, I, 268.

96 Ibn al-Himsi, *Hawadith*, 125; Sakhawi, *Daw'*, III, 18; it Biqa'i, *Inwan*, II, 147–148.

97 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, I, 100.

98 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, IX, 180.

99 Ibn Iyas, *Bada'i'*, III, 199.

100 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, VIII, 112–113, III, 240.

101 Ibn al-'Imad, *Shadharat*, VIII, p. 182.

102 Ibn al-'Imad, *Shadharat*, VIII, 184.

Al-Ghazzi, the main biographer of the elite during the sixteenth century, mentions a chief of the notaries involved in a tribunal in Damascus, Muhammad b. al-Khattab (d. 1584), who learned the profession of *tawrīq* from his master, Muhammad al-Jaʿfari, both having very similar handwriting.<sup>103</sup> The term *tawrīq* might mean book trade, but here it seems to refer to copying skills.

Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Harastani (d. 1571), was a Sufi who earned his living with copying. He penned seventy Quran manuscripts and other works of literature.<sup>104</sup>

ʿAli b. Amir (d. 1588) was a calligrapher who migrated from Shiraz to Damascus, where he used to sell his Quran manuscripts at high prices.<sup>105</sup>

Information concerning copyists and calligraphers after the Ottoman conquest is rather sparse due to diminished historiographical production. Scholars are mentioned as copyists of Quran manuscripts and other literature, and so are bureaucrats working as calligraphers. Due to the absence of diplomatic activities in Cairo and Damascus, the former prominent role of the chancery in promoting calligraphy is absent. The end of royal patronage for religious foundations and the arts must have caused this break. Considering the significant interest in calligraphy by the Mamluk military establishment, the end of the sultanate had a radical impact. So far, no master calligraphers have been identified from either Egypt or Syria in the century following the Ottoman conquest.

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103 Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, III, 16.

104 Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, III, 48.

105 Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, III, 190.

# Epilogue

Although this study is about the material culture of the book, rather than reading practices in Mamluk society, questions may be raised regarding the kind and meaning of the books whose circulation has been discussed in this book.

The traditional acknowledgment of the Arab contribution to world civilization has focused on the age of the early Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad. In spite of their substantial literary output, the Mamluks are not particularly acknowledged in this context. Although the notion of decline associated with Mamluk culture has been recently revised on multiple levels, there has been no claim regarding the impact of this culture as being of universal significance comparable to the achievements of the Islamic classical age. This is partly due to the very different global maps in both eras. Whereas the Abbasid caliphate produced a cultural renaissance that overtook the world around it, the Mamluk sultanate was overtaken by Renaissance Europe technologically, economically, and culturally. The great Muslim empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals were on their ascendance and increasingly influenced by the West. Most important, the mainly traditionalist character of the Mamluk literary output limited its impact beyond the Muslim world.

The major Mamluk contribution to Islamic culture is generally acknowledged to be in architecture and historiography. Both disciplines were, within their own means, interconnected in their dedication to piety and memory. Architecture was the medium through which the rulers advertised their greatness and commemorated their names with pious causes. However, the book has always been seen as triumphing over the monument. In one of his gatherings with scholars that took place right after the completion of his commissioned Turkish translation of the *Shahnameh*, Sultan al-Ghawri discussed the patronage of the Ghurid Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (r. 971–1030), the patron of Firdawsī's epic. The sultan commented that Mahmud had commissioned the epic to immortalize his name after his councilors alerted him that monuments do not last more than a few centuries,<sup>1</sup> whereas the book, as Firdawsī's *Shahnameh* proved, lasts much longer. This episode confirmed the belief that books served memory more effectively than monuments did. As Sakhawī wrote, the book is a memorial to the people of the past: reading about them is like visiting their tombs or bringing them back to life.<sup>2</sup> In *al-I'ān bi'l-tawbīkh*, which is a critical bibliography that was also a paean to Islamic historical writing, Sakhawī

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1 Husayni, in 'Azzam, *Majalis*, 81.

2 Sakhawī, *I'ān*, 41, 51.

gathered statements from different periods glorifying historiography and by the same token the book itself; his praise of historiography is the statement of a bibliophile. There, the function of a book is described as being didactic, edifying, and entertaining.<sup>3</sup> The book is a safeguard: “words that are not on paper are lost; all what is duplicated is propagated.”<sup>4</sup> The intellect (*‘aql*) combines both forms of knowledge: what is learned (*masmu‘*) and what is documented or recorded (*maṭbū‘*); knowledge is useless unless it is recorded.<sup>5</sup> Historiography was the intellectuals’ alternative to architecture as a means of glorifying and commemorating their circles of thinkers and scholars. “Who keeps writing about history becomes part of it.”<sup>6</sup> Sakhawi boasted that some of his contemporary scholars wished to die during his lifetime so that they might be included in his biographical encyclopedia!

Mamluk books were conceived to conserve the past and document the present. One could say that almost every day of Mamluk history and almost every member of the urban elite thought to be noteworthy have been recorded in the chronicles and biographical encyclopedias and dictionaries. However, as pointed out by Rosenthal, notwithstanding its significance in Mamluk culture, historiography did not belong to the curriculum of religious institutions.<sup>7</sup> It was rather a matter of private scholarship.

The historians wanted to conserve the legacy of their predecessors and simultaneously include the ever-increasing literary production of their own time. The threat of a changing world around them and the end of an era already signaled by the Crusades, the fall of Baghdad, and the ascendance of the Mongols may have contributed to inspire a culture of safeguarding.

Although the Mamluk rulers promoted literary activities with stipends for students and salaries for scholars in religious disciplines, they did not control or shape their literary output. Rather, they sponsored the environment for the intellectuals to work. The fact that the *khanqahs* sponsored by the sultans and emirs did not adhere to specific Sufi orders might be interpreted as a testimony to a certain ideological neutrality of the patrons. Historiography was not court historiography but mainly the product of individual initiatives with a wide variety of approaches;<sup>8</sup> many historians were critical of the ruling establishment, which of course did not exclude the necessity of compromise and ingratiation.

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3 Sakhawi, *I‘lan*, 85.

4 Sakhawi, *I‘lan*, 66.

5 Sakhawi, *I‘lan*, 33.

6 Sakhawi, *I‘lan*, 367.

7 Rosenthal, *A History*, 41–45.

8 Rosenthal, *A History*, 420–444.

Although eulogistic biographies of sultans and panegyrics were compiled, they did not occupy a significant place in Mamluk literature. Princely commissions of specific books were a matter of individual interests and choices, not state policy.

Historians of Mamluk literature have often pointed out the significance of its encyclopedic outlook, which has recently been interpreted as expression of an elite eager to collect knowledge about the world, while discarding earlier judgments of being merely compilatory and decadent.<sup>9</sup> The predominantly religious character of Mamluk princely patronage did not exclude interest in a variety of other secular subjects, such as universal history, epics, tales, shadow plays, geography, medicine, bestiaries, botany, mathematics, accountancy, astronomy/astrology, musicology, chemistry and alchemy, occult sciences, horsemanship, and the description genre dedicated to material things such as the pen or the sword,<sup>10</sup> some with more innovation than others. Poetry was a popular hobby, and it occupied a major place in biographical portraits, serving as anthologies of Mamluk poetry.<sup>11</sup> While maintaining the tradition of celebrating hedonism, wine, and love, the poetry of the Mamluk period was concerned with current events, comments, and opinions; feuds, debates, and protests were voiced in verse. The popular epics and the satirical as well as obscene shadow plays, condemned as trivial and harmful by orthodox men of religion, nonetheless enjoyed a large clientele. During the Mamluk period, the *Tales of 1001 Nights* were assembled, following the example of earlier periods when pre-Islamic lore was written down. This was part of the tradition that was cultivated.

In his *Muqaddima*, Ibn Khaldun lists and describes the major scientific disciplines alongside the religious ones of his era, viewing their study as a manifestation of civilization and urban refinement. Scholars of the religious and administrative establishments studied Greek classics on mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. Euclid, Galen, Hippocrates, Ptolemy, and Porphyry's *Isagoge* belonged to Mamluk libraries.<sup>12</sup> Ibn al-Shatir (d. 1375),<sup>13</sup> whose groundbreak-

9 E. Muhanna, *World in a Book*, 15–19; Gardiner, “Occultist Encyclopedism,” 10–11; Bauer, “Mamluk Literature”; see also the reassessment of al-Suyuti's profile from that of a compiler to a fascinating author in Gueretti's introduction to *al-Suyuti, a Polymath* and other articles in this volume.

10 Safadi, *Wafi*, v, 15.

11 See Bauer, “Mamluk Literature.”

12 Many religious scholars are mentioned as having studied the *Isagoge*, such as the judge Zakariyya al-Ansari (al-Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, I, 202), Suyuti (al-Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, I 227), and Samhudi (Ibn al-'Imad, *Shadharat*, VII, 52).

13 Safadi, *Wafi*, XX, 301–307; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, III, 77; Ibn Hajar, *Inba'*, I, 172–173; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Manhal*, VIII, 28–29; King, “Ibn al-Shatir.”

ing astronomical discoveries may have influenced Copernicus, was employed as timekeeper and chief of the muezzins at the Umayyad mosque in Damascus. He made astrolabes and sundials, and compiled books on mathematics and geometry while he practiced the craft of cabinetmaking, alongside wood and ivory carving and inlay. According to David King, Cairo in the late thirteenth century was one of the major centers of astronomy and was renowned worldwide. Astronomy had a practical significance in Islamic society for calculating the calendar and the schedule for prayer, which were the tasks of the *muwaqqit* in mosques, and astronomy was included in the curriculum of the madrasa of Sultan Hasan.<sup>14</sup> The Mamluk contribution to scientific instruments was considerable,<sup>15</sup> and mathematical sciences continued to be cultivated.<sup>16</sup> The disciplines of arithmetic and *farā'id* (the branch in Islamic law that deals with the distribution of inheritance shares), were always mentioned together by the biographers as being interconnected subjects of learning, the latter requiring complex calculations. Medicine was taught at the hospital of Qalawun and at the mosques of Ibn Tulun (introduced by Sultan al-'Adil Katbugha, r. 1294–1296),<sup>17</sup> as well as the mosque-madrasa of Sultan Hasan.<sup>18</sup> The famous physician Ibn al-Nafis (d. 1288), of Damascene origin, worked at the hospital of Qalawun until his death. He was a polymath credited for being knowledgeable in religious disciplines as well. He earned his place in the world history of sciences with his identification of pulmonary circulation.

Mamluk scientists had a good chance of catching the attention of the biographers if they happened to be, in one way or another, associated with a religious institution or belonged to the circle of traditionalist scholarship. Yet many others remained unmentioned. Scientists and their achievements are more likely to be known to modern scholarship through the manuscripts they compiled or the instruments they produced. Mamluk literature had no equivalent to the biographical dictionaries of al-Qifti (d. 1242) or Ibn Usaybi'a (d. 1269). Compiled in the Ayyubid period, they focused on physicians and other scientists, past and present, whether theoreticians or practitioners, and they included biographies of Christians and Jews. Ibn Usaybi'a's book marked the end of the Zangid and Ayyubid cultural era that preceded Mamluk patronage.<sup>19</sup> Abdelhamid Sabra has pertinently pointed out the late medieval rise of the "jurist-scientist" above

14 Amin, *Wathā'iq waqf*, 111.

15 On this subject see King, "Astronomy."

16 King, "Astronomy," 551.

17 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, IV, 78.

18 Amin, *al-Nasir Hasan*, 99, 102.

19 Brentjes, "Ayyubid Scholars."

the “philosopher-scientist” of earlier periods and interpreted it as hostility toward the non-Muslim nature of the rational sciences that they aimed at adjusting out of pious motives.<sup>20</sup> The encyclopedic outlook of the Mamluk era offered a platform where various secular disciplines merged under the umbrella of jurist-science, and this might be an aspect of this evolution. By organizing and summarizing knowledge in encyclopedias for a greater readership, which some European thinkers viewed as a phenomenon of decline,<sup>21</sup> the authors also revised and contained it.

Mamluk biographers rarely documented non-Muslim subjects; al-Safadi did however, notably when he relied on earlier biographical texts, but not the later historians. The natural sciences were left in the margins of the historians’ perspectives as were the activities of non-Muslims in technical and professional occupations and crafts.<sup>22</sup> A remark in the sense that not much attention should be granted to *dhimmi*’s activities that would merely “blacken the paper” with irrelevant matters, is cited by al-Sakhawi.<sup>23</sup> This attitude was indeed taken by late Mamluk historians who avoided mentioning non-Muslims by name. For example, in the account of the restoration of the Umayyad mosque after the fire of 1479, which named many of the craftsmen involved, the Christian craftsmen were not named.<sup>24</sup> This may perhaps explain why references to Salah al-Din’s hospital, which employed non-Muslim physicians, are difficult to find in the Mamluk sources. Maqrizi mentions this hospital briefly, only in his description of Cairo’s topography, not including it in his list of the city’s hospitals.<sup>25</sup> However, a medical book by Ibn Sina, *al-qānūn fī ’l-ṭibb* copied in 799/1397 by a Jewish physician, Musa b. Ifrayim b. Dawud b. Ifrayim b. Ya’qub, known as Ibn Jami’ al-Isra’ili al-Tabib, indicates that the copyist worked in the hospital of Salah al-Din.<sup>26</sup> This rare mention of the *māristān ṣalāhī* throws light on an aspect of scholarship and book production that remained outside the biographers’ scope. L. Chipman’s study of a manuscript compiled by a Jewish author on pharmacy and its practices reveals a kind of book production that is not detectable in the Mamluk narrative sources.<sup>27</sup>

Thus parallel or even tangential to the traditionalist literary activity, there was a significant informal network for books to circulate, with knowledge being

20 Sabra, “Appropriation,” 240–242.

21 A. Blair, “A Europeanist’s Perspective,” 207–208.

22 See Mazor, “Jewish Court Physicians.”

23 Sakhawi, *I’an*, 85; Rosenthal, *A History*, 336–337.

24 Behrens-Abouseif, “The Fire,” 282.

25 Maqrizi, *Khitat*, II, 350–351.

26 I refer here to a manuscript in a private collection shown to me by Nabil Saidi.

27 Chipman, *The World of Pharmacy*.

transmitted on an individual and private basis. A case in point is the episode of the book dealer mentioned by al-Biqa'i as having made a lucrative deal with a book on alchemy that someone was desperately looking for. It shows the significance of the commercial market for private scholarship and for disciplines outside conventional and religious circles, such as occult sciences. An interesting example is the case of the eminent judge, scholar and author of a manual on the ethics of scholarship, Badr al-Din Ibn Jama'a, who at the time when he was preacher at the Umayyad mosque in Damascus, taught his epistle on astrolabes (*Risālat al-asṭurlāb*) in private classes. Because some people considered the astrolabe to be an instrument of heresy (*ālat al-zandaqa*), he asked his pupil to keep the matter confidential.<sup>28</sup>

The encyclopedic outlook and its individual reception in polymathy were possible because of the existence of a market or a network to supply it with books and knowledge that did not belong to the curriculum of religious institutions. Ibn Hajar is reported to have boasted that he was knowledgeable in fifteen disciplines that were unknown to most contemporary scholars even by name!<sup>29</sup> Another scholar boasted about being knowledgeable in 120 disciplines.<sup>30</sup> Although it is not said what kind of disciplines these were, they obviously could not have been included in a madrasa curriculum or library, but were accessible in books circulating privately and commercially.

In his chapters about the rational sciences, Ibn Khaldun gives a summary of the early Islamic revival of the Greek and Persian legacies, their advance and eventual recession with the general political and cultural decline, and the increasing grip of orthodoxy. The philosopher noted that in the eastern Muslim world (*Mashriq, Irāq al-'Ajam, Bilād Khurāsān, and Mā Warā' al-Nahr*), that is, in the Timurid Empire, these sciences continued to flourish in his time. He added that according to his information, in contemporary Europe (*al-bilād al-ifranjīyya min arḍ rūmā*) the scientific disciplines were flourishing and their legacy was being revived and disseminated on a large scale. He was referring to the Renaissance.<sup>31</sup> Ibn Khaldun's emphasis on the importance of the natural sciences, his praise of past Abbasid and present Eastern contributions at the same time as his allusion to cultural decline in the Islamic West, should be interpreted as containing an implicit critique of Mamluk culture. His criticism of Mamluk scholarship is more explicit when he speaks of book production and the deficient edition of texts. Ibn Khaldun's view of the Mamluks, which also

28 Safadi, *Wafi*, III, 960.

29 Sakhawi, *Dhayl*, 79.

30 Sakhawi, *Daw'*, x, 101.

31 Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, 532; Irwin, Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, 129.

included a great deal of praise, justified Ulrich Haarmann's pertinent description of this period as being a "silver age,"<sup>32</sup> and one may add: "a swan song of Arabic culture."

It is well known that much of what has been written in Mamluk books is repetitive or overlapping; historians often used the same texts multiple times under various titles; they copied literally and at length from their predecessors, and produced digests on a large scale.<sup>33</sup> Although the dissemination of books is not per se equivalent to intellectual creativity, the multiplication or even mass production of texts in the age before printing increased book circulation. As cited by Sakhawi, knowledge that is not recorded is wasted.

The typical biography for a Mamluk scholar documents his career through a list of posts and academic appointments held in the eminent religious institutions. His knowledge and qualifications were documented through the enumeration of his teachers and the subjects he studied to earn *ijazas*. These were not tied to institutions. Princely patronage generated the propitious environment for intellectuals who populate these biographical encyclopedias, but literary activity was not confined to the madrasas. It spilled over to penetrate a broader social circle, placing the book prominently in the zeitgeist. In his study of tenth-century littérateurs and book dealers, Shawkat Toorawa concludes that the widescale availability of books in the classical age, which was facilitated by the access to paper, made it possible for individuals to educate themselves through self-teaching and earn their living without need of court patronage.<sup>34</sup> A similar observation can be made about intellectuals in the Mamluk sultanate.

As scholars were "diffused throughout society,"<sup>35</sup> so was the book. The dissemination of books was based on individual initiatives that relied on a private supply, be it through the venue of the market or through a network of authors, copyists, middlemen, and clients. The widespread copying activity by the learned elite contributed to making the book widely available and affordable. This does not mean that the Mamluk book was a cheap commodity; on the contrary, the whole culture of borrowing and the debates about its modalities indicate that it was a valuable object. It was considered a worthy gift to be dedicated to the sultan by a commoner. The possession of books belonged to the attributes of a gentleman, and books were among the assets confiscated by the sultans. Qalqashandi writes in detail about functionality, aesthetics, and

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32 Haarmann, "Arabische Osten," 256.

33 Ibn al-'Imad, *Shadharat*, VII, 254.

34 Toorawa, *Ibn Abi Tahir Tayfur*, 124.

35 Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, 186.



FIGURE 25 Mamluk pen-box in the name of the Rasulid sultan of Yemen Dawud, dated 1302–1303

the handling of writing tools in connection with calligraphy, with references to earlier sources going as far back as the Greeks.<sup>36</sup> The book belonged to the visual arts, calligraphy was cultivated by the elite, and writing tools were collected as art objects. As elsewhere in the Muslim world, craftsmen fashioned ink pots and pen-boxes inscribed with the names and titles of sultans and emirs and with poetical texts. These represented some of the great artifacts produced under the Mamluk sultanate (Figs. 25 and 26).

The Mamluk book as a manifestation of a refined urban way of life is revealed in the statement made by the prominent judge ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Bulqini in the late fifteenth century. He regarded himself as being a privileged man because he had a high social standing, an exquisite wife, a fine home, and a library of 1,000 select bound books.<sup>37</sup>

36 Qalqashandi, *Subh*, II, 440–448, 487–488.

37 Sakhawi, *Daw’*, IV, 113.



FIGURE 26 Mamluk pen-box, mid-fourteenth century

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