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A Comparison of al-Maqrīzī and al-‘Aynī as Historians of Contemporary Events

My paper was written on the assumption that the aim of a conference on the legacy of al-Maqrīzī is to put him in his proper place. Such a goal may well involve demoting him from the lofty heights to which some of our scholarly forebears have raised him, but may well not. There can be no doubt, however, that several eminent scholars of a generation or two ago were lavish in their praise. Philip Hitti, for example, announced that "beyond doubt the most eminent of the Mamluk historians" was al-Maqrīzī." Of *Al-Khiṭaṭ* A. R. Guest writes that al-Maqrīzī

has accumulated and reduced to a certain amount of order a large amount of information that would, but for him, have passed into oblivion. He is generally painstaking and accurate, and always resorts to contemporary evidence if it is available . Also he has a pleasant and lucid style, and writes without bias and apparently with distinguished impartiality.¹

To this latter tribute, the translator, R. J. C. Broadhurst, adds that these words "can equally be applied to the *Sulūk*."² The views of these Western scholars were shared, and magnified, by Arab academicians, most prominently M. M. Ziyādah, editor of the *Sulūk*, which he declared "deserves without dispute to occupy the first place among the historical works of his era."³ Furthermore, al-Maqrīzī himself, according to Ziyādah, "was indisputably in the forefront of the Egyptian historians in the first half of the ninth century *hijrī*."⁴ "Sufficient proof of this," Ziyādah goes on, is the fact that Ibn Taghrībirdī and al-Sakhāwī were his students. Two other contemporaries, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī and al-‘Aynī, are disqualified from the first prize, he says, "because they did not devote themselves fully to history as

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¹Both quotes cited by R. J. C. Broadhurst, *A History of the Ayyūbid Sultans of Egypt* (Boston, 1980), xvi–xvii.

²*Ibid.*, xvii.

³*Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma‘rifat Duwal al-Mulūk* (Cairo, 1934), 1:waw.

⁴*Ibid.*



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al-Maqrīzī did, but were traditionists more than historians.”⁵ Recently, in a typically stimulating and nuanced article, Ulrich Haarmann compares al-Maqrīzī, who “has always, rightly or not, been held in highest esteem for his precision, factualness and learnedness,” with his “sloppy” and “not very smart” disciple, Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī, who nevertheless may have been a “‘truer’ witness to his time than the sober, maybe even impeccable, yet in his way inevitably also myopic al-Maqrīzī?”⁶

But in the same volume of conference papers in which Haarmann’s paper was published, Amalia Levanoni takes al-Maqrīzī to task for his inaccuracy in the presentation of facts and interpretations, particularly regarding the supremacy of the Circassians under Barqūq and his successors. In this respect she echoes Ibn Taghrībirdī’s judgment of al-Maqrīzī’s shortcomings as a historian “‘with his known nonconformities every now and then.’”⁷ Be that as it may, she concedes that Ibn Taghrībirdī stressed “al-Maqrīzī’s original contribution to history . . . [saying that he] ‘did not stop to be an accurate and careful observer of the events and history until his death. . . .’” Further, Levanoni acknowledges that al-Maqrīzī “gained fame as an historian of considerable authority in the scholarly circles of his own time. . . .”⁸ More fully, Ibn Taghrībirdī states, in Popper’s translation quoted by Anne F. Broadbridge:

. . . Shaikh Taqī ad-Dīn (God have mercy on him) had certain aberrations for which he was well known, though he is to be forgiven for this; for he was one of those whom we have met who were perfect in their calling; he was the historian of his time whom no one could come near; I say this despite my knowledge of the learned historians who were his contemporaries. . . .⁹

Ibn Taghrībirdī goes on to say that al-Maqrīzī lost his status when Barqūq died and he failed to receive the patronage of subsequent sultans, “so he on his part took to registering their iniquities and infamies. . . .”¹⁰

⁵Ibid.

⁶“Al-Maqrīzī, the Master and Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī, the Disciple—Whose Historical Writing Can Claim More Topicality and Modernity?” in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt (c. 950–1800)*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden, 2001), 151.

⁷“Al-Maqrīzī’s Account of the Transition from Turkish to Circassian Mamluk Sultanate: History in the Service of Faith,” in Kennedy, *Historiography*, 101–2.

⁸Ibid., 93–94.

⁹“Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt: al-‘Aynī, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 92.

¹⁰Ibid., 93.



Finally, if you will indulge me in citing myself, in my salad days I proved, to my own satisfaction at least, that for the Bahri period al-Maqrīzī was not as faithful or full a recorder of his sources, which he rarely named, as was his contemporary, al-‘Aynī, who did. More trenchantly, David Ayalon demonstrated that al-Maqrīzī egregiously misrepresented al-‘Umarī and thereby, in my own paraphrase, “inflated and distorted the influence of Mongol law on Mamlūk administrative justice.”¹¹ More judiciously, I concluded that

[u]nfortunately, until such time as the contemporary annals of *al-Sulūk* have been compared with those of other historians, especially of al-‘Aynī, al-Maqrīzī’s significance as a historian will remain as a compiler and preserver of the work of others.¹²

Which brings me, almost, to the subject of this paper. First, however, let it be noted that such comparative study has already begun with the publication of an article by Irmeli Perho on “Al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taghrībirdī as Historians of Contemporary Events.”¹³ Perho argues that the former’s background as a scholar and the latter’s as one of the *awlād al-nās* are evident in their attitudes toward events involving the common people. As the son of a mamluk Ibn Taghrībirdī shows practically no interest in the *‘āmmah* at all, whereas the scholarly civilian al-Maqrīzī occasionally shared and reported the hardships of the commoners.¹⁴

This distinction does not obtain in the present case, for both al-Maqrīzī and al-‘Aynī were scholar bureaucrats of substantial though aberrant rank in Mamluk judicial positions, as has been documented recently by Broadbridge.¹⁵ The main differences are, one, that al-Maqrīzī was a native Egyptian while al-‘Aynī, being from ‘Ayntāb in northern Syria, was not; two, al-‘Aynī capitalized on his fluent knowledge of Turkish to maintain the patronage of more than one Mamluk sultan (al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh, al-Zāhir Ṭaṭar, and Barsbāy) as a history teacher, ambassador, unofficial advisor, and biographer (granted, al-Maqrīzī also enjoyed the patronage and friendship of two sultans—Barqūq and Faraj); and, three, al-‘Aynī remained in public service until two years before his death in 855/1451, while al-Maqrīzī took early retirement around 820/1417, as is well known, having “decided to give

¹¹Little, “Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamluk Epochs,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 1, *Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge, 1998), 437, referring to Ayalon, “The Great *Yāsā* of Chingiz Khān: A Re-examination: Al-Maqrīzī’s Passage on the *Yāsā* under the Mamlūks,” *Studia Islamica* 38 (1973): 121–23.

¹²Little, “Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Epochs,” 437.

¹³In Kennedy, *Historiography*, 107–20.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁵“Academic Rivalry,” 85–107.



up an unsatisfactory public career and devote himself full-time to historical scholarship (instead of part-time as he had done before).¹⁶

That being said, I shall now turn to what our German colleagues refer to as a *Stichprobe*, which means, quite simply, a random sample, in which I shall compare the annals of one year 824/1421 from al-Maqrīzī and al-‘Aynī. True to the spirit of *Stichprobe*, my selection of this particular year has been truly random, if not arbitrary, and I would be the first to concede that comparison of other annals might yield different results. In any case 824 was a pregnant year for historians if only because it gave birth to the reigns of two sultans after the death of al-Malik Mu’ayyad Shaykh at the beginning of the year, which allowed our historians to descant on the merits and defects of their reigns from their different vantage points. As al-‘Aynī himself points out, it was an unusual occurrence that there were four sultans in this year: al-Malik al-Mu’ayyad; al-Malik al-Muẓaffar, his son; al-Malik al-Zāhir [Ṭaṭar]; and his son, al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ.¹⁷ It should also be pointed out that this is the annal of a partial edition of al-‘Aynī’s contemporary annals, which covers only the years 825–50/1421–47. The author died, out of favor, in 855/1451, nine years after the death of al-Maqrīzī in 845/1442. Limited though my efforts may be, I hope that I am taking a tentative step in the right direction toward characterizing al-Maqrīzī as a historian of the events of his own lifetime by comparing him with his contemporary, al-‘Aynī, and, of course, vice versa. To lend a bit of structure to this undertaking I shall adopt as criteria of comparison the following: format, number and types of events and obituaries recorded, sources, style, and attitudes. If in so doing I betray an old-fashioned approach to historiographical studies, so be it.

Al-Maqrīzī, having left his ten years’ residence in Damascus as teacher and financial administrator around 1417, returned to Cairo as a free-lancer, as far as we know, and stayed there until his sojourn in Mecca in 833/1430. While al-Maqrīzī, according to Ziyādah, was “without work or position,”¹⁸ al-‘Aynī, also in Cairo, was flourishing. A boon companion to al-Mu’ayyad, this sultan reappointed him as

nāẓir al-aḥbās, a post he was to hold—except for a few brief periods—until 853/1449. Al-‘Aynī’s fluency in Turkish was a distinct asset, which he used to his advantage, for in addition to

¹⁶Franz Rosenthal, “Al-Maqrīzī,” *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 6:193.

¹⁷*‘Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān*, ed. ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṭanṭāwī al-Qarmūṭ (Cairo, 1989), 166.

¹⁸Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyādah, *Al-Mu’arrikhūn fī Miṣr fī al-Qarn al-Khāmis ‘Ashar al-Mīlādī, al-Qarn al-Tāsi’ al-Hijrī* (Cairo, 1954), 9.



academic and financial appointments, al-Mu'ayyad made the 'Ayntābī native his ambassador to the Qaramanids at Konya in 823/1420.¹⁹

During the short reign of al-Mu'ayyad's successor, Ṭaṭar, al-'Aynī's career improved "and reached its height during the reign of Barsbāy."²⁰ How were these discrepancies in material circumstances reflected in the two authors' works, if at all?

Before we try to answer that question of subjective attitudes, let us look first to the external forms of their chronicles. Both are cast in the familiar form of annals followed by obituaries. Though they are of about the same length, *Al-Sulūk* covers substantially more events than does *'Iqd*. Both, to be sure, record with more or less the same details the major political events in Egypt and Syria involved in the machinations occasioned by the death of two sultans and the selection and installation of their successors. But perhaps it was in part al-Maqrīzī's obsession with dates and chronology that led him to include events that al-'Aynī did not. Or maybe al-Maqrīzī's state of unemployment left him with time on his hands, which he killed by writing about as many events as possible, whereas the busy bureaucrat and boon companion al-'Aynī had to focus on essentials in the spare time he could devote to his writing? In any case, 824 in the *Sulūk* is a month-by-month, day-by-day diary of events.²¹ Al-Maqrīzī tells us the name of the day on which each month begins and sometimes gives the corresponding date in the Coptic calendar when that is significant—the flood of the Nile, for instance. The demands of chronology are ignored only at the beginning and the end of the annal. The year starts with a list of the principal officers of state both in Egypt and in the provinces and ends with undated happenings such as the wars in al-Andalus which had reached the author's attention during this year. The format of *'Iqd al-Jumān* is similar: its annal also begins with a list of members of the ruling circles, virtually the same and in the same order, in fact, as al-Maqrīzī's, and ends with undated events—in this case a report on the prices of commodities and currencies of the year, plus mention of the annual hajj and the flooding of the Nile, but not the wars in Spain. In the middle, al-'Aynī also follows a chronological path, complete with dates but less ostentatiously, without al-Maqrīzī's meticulous detail. Speaking of dates, I should point out that quite often the two versions are out of kilter by a day or two. Why? Is one historian more accurate in this respect than another? Given al-Maqrīzī's preoccupation with dates, we might expect him to be careful in recording them, but obsessions are no guarantee of precision, I would submit.

¹⁹Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry," 94.

²⁰Ibid., 95.

²¹*Al-Sulūk*, ed. Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr (Cairo, 1972), 4: 547–600.



Frankly, I do not know how to set a test for accuracy without recourse to independent contemporary sources if available. The most important question is are these minor discrepancies of any significance. I doubt it.

Chronology is also the key to al-Maqrīzī's organization of his obituaries.²² Brief notices of the lives of sixteen notables are arranged in strictly chronological order according to the specified date of death. Sultans and amirs are mixed with *muhtasibs* and qadis. Even a physician of Jewish descent finds his way into the obituaries, between an amir and a *muhtasib*. Al-‘Aynī covers only eleven individuals,²³ two of whom are not mentioned by al-Maqrīzī. Ignoring dates for the most part, al-‘Aynī follows a hierarchical order, beginning with sultans, followed by amirs and a judge. He does not bother with *muhtasibs*, the physician, or the ruler of Rūm. It is interesting that both authors make similar comments about some of the deceased. For example, both observe that al-Amīr Faraj was handsome; according to al-Maqrīzī, his good looks account for his favor with al-Mu‘ayyad.²⁴ Al-‘Aynī adds that he was "a succulent youth (*shābb ṭārī*)."²⁵ Both characterize al-Amīr Badr al-Dīn al-Ṭarābulṣī as a tyrant who deserved the punishment and execution he received from al-Mu‘ayyad and Ṭaṭar, but both give details not mentioned by the other: al-Maqrīzī, that he was the son of a Muslimānī;²⁶ al-‘Aynī, that he was "stupid and foolhardy (*aḥmaq ahwaj*)."²⁷ In any event it would be difficult, but not impossible, to argue on the basis of rare textual similarities that either historian was indebted to the work of the other. Be that as it may, al-‘Aynī's editor, writing from a wider perspective than a single annal, remarks that "al-‘Aynī frequently followed al-Maqrīzī in the *Sulūk* and refutes him without mentioning him by name." In fact, a specific example is cited in which al-‘Aynī brands "a certain historian," i.e., al-Maqrīzī, as a liar on two counts.²⁸

As far as sources are concerned, al-Maqrīzī names none, not one, as was indeed his practice for the annals preceding his lifetime. Al-‘Aynī cites only one source—the sultan Mu‘ayyad himself—twice for information on which the sultan had first-hand knowledge.²⁹ On another occasion, moreover, he writes in the first person to say that al-Malik al-Zāhir Ṭaṭar "had instructed him to cast into the language of the Turks *Kitāb al-Qudūrī fī Fiqh al-Imām Abī al-Ḥanīfah*, may God

²² Ibid., 4:597–600.

²³ *Iqd*, 166–71.

²⁴ *Al-Sulūk*, 4:597.

²⁵ *Iqd*, 167.

²⁶ *Al-Sulūk*, 4:598.

²⁷ *Iqd*, 168.

²⁸ Ibid., 28.

²⁹ Ibid., 101, 168.



be pleased with him, with no changes in meaning or alteration in its chapters.”³⁰ But al-‘Aynī’s intimacy with sultans is well known if only because he wrote biographies of three of them, including al-Mu’ayyad and Ṭaṭar, plus Barsbāy—all three his contemporaries.

Which brings us to the respective attitudes of the two historians toward the events and personalities of 824. Being highly placed in the corridors of power, al-‘Aynī can scarcely be expected to be very critical of the reigns of his patrons. In general, he adopts a formal and correct stance toward the complex and volatile affairs of state. For example, despite the fact that al-Mu’ayyad’s successor as sultan, al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Aḥmad, was an infant less than two years old, al-‘Aynī persists in pretending that he was in charge of affairs as long as he held the title of sultan, even though Ṭaṭar was acclaimed as Niẓām al-Mulk wa-al-Mutaḥaddith from an early date.³¹ Thus when Ṭaṭar decided to put Syrian affairs in order, al-‘Aynī tells us that on the 19th of Rabī’ al-Awwal, al-Sulṭān al-Muẓaffar marched out, and with him were Niẓām al-Mulk Ṭaṭar and the troops . . .; “on 19 Jumādā al-Ūlā a group of 500 Syrian troops came to the sultan in Gaza . . .; on 20 Jumādā al-Ākhirah the troops accompanying al-Muẓaffar set out for Aleppo . . .;” on 3 Sha‘bān “the sultan and al-Amīr Ṭaṭar set out with the victorious troops from Aleppo, headed for Damascus.”³² Free from the necessity to observe the niceties of protocol and naming the sultan first, al-Maqrīzī is more likely to reverse the order and refer first to the real holder of power, Ṭaṭar, accompanied by the sultan, or even “Ṭaṭar and those with him.”³³

More substantively, al-‘Aynī’s interest in keeping up appearances is also evident from the way he describes the transference of power from one sultan to another, emphasizing that all the legal niceties of installing a new sultan were observed. Thus, before al-Mu’ayyad had even been prepared for burial, al-‘Aynī reports that

Al-Amīr Ṭaṭar, *amīr majlis*, proceeded to assemble the judges, the caliph, and all other *ahl al-ḥall wa-al-‘aqd*. They sent for al-Mu’ayyad’s son from his mother. He is called Aḥmad, and his age is one year and seven months. They contracted the sultanate for him, giving him the title of al-Malik al-Muẓaffar. The amirs kissed the ground before him.³⁴

³⁰Ibid., 157.

³¹Ibid., 121.

³²Ibid., 136, 138, 142, 144.

³³*Al-Sulūk*, 4: 576, 577, 579, 580.

³⁴*Iqd*, 117.



Although al-Maqrīzī conveys much the same information, his account is both more precise in some respects but general and, at the same time, almost folksy in others:

He was installed in the sultanate on the day his father died, at twenty minutes past midday, Monday, 9 Muḥarram 824, his age being one year, eight months, and seven days. He was mounted on a horse from Bāb al-Sitārah, and he cried as he was led all the way to the castle where the amirs, the judges, and the caliph kissed the ground before him. They gave him the title al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Abū al-Sa‘ādāt.³⁵

However poignant the sight of a bawling sultan may be, it does not find its way into al-‘Aynī’s sober account. If, after all, al-‘Aynī was intent on presenting the legitimacy of the new sultanate, why should he call attention to the tearful inadequacies of the baby sultan? If, on the other hand, al-Maqrīzī was not happy with this turn of events, why should he not call attention to its fatuity? A difference is also apparent in the two historians’ versions of the installation of Ṭaṭar as sultan some eight months later. Al-Maqrīzī comments bluntly that after arresting and/or executing his perceived enemies, “Ṭaṭar decided to depose al-Muẓaffar from the sultanate . . . and sat on the throne of monarchy in the Damascus citadel on Friday, 29 Sha’bān 824, corresponding to Nawrūz of the Copts of Egypt.”³⁶

In contrast, al-‘Aynī takes considerable pains to set the action in an ameliorative context, explaining that a severe sickness had overtaken Ṭaṭar on the march from Aleppo to Damascus, and this gave rise to rumors of possible sedition and even an assassination attempt.³⁷ It was clearly in response to this threat that Ṭaṭar took action against his enemies and assumed the sultanate for himself. Primly, al-‘Aynī makes no mention of the deposition of the infant Aḥmad but gives a (discrepant) date of Ṭaṭar’s accession, complete with an assembly of *ahl al-ḥall wa-al-‘aqd* and their conferral of a black caliphal robe of honor upon him.³⁸

And yet, all is not so clear cut and simple, for al-Maqrīzī goes to some lengths to demonstrate the legitimacy of Ṭaṭar’s status as spokesman for the infant sultan. In the presence of the chief qadis, amirs, functionaries, and Royal Mamluks, Ṭaṭar declared that given the dissatisfaction of the Syrian amirs, “it is necessary to have a ruler (*ḥākim*) to take charge of the management of the affairs of the people.”

³⁵ *Al-Sulūk*, 4:563.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 581–82.

³⁷ *Iqd*, 143–46.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 147.



Those present proclaimed, "We want you!" at which point "the caliph delegated all the affairs of the subjects to al-Amīr al-Kabīr Ṭaṭar . . . except the title of sultan, prayers for him from the pulpit, and striking his name on dinars and dirhams, all three of which were reserved to al-Malik al-Muẓaffar." These steps were certified by the four chief justices and the amirs swore allegiance to him. All this, al-Maqrīzī explains, was because a fellow Hanafī jurist had advised Ṭaṭar that "if a sultan was a minor and the power-elite (*ahl al-shawkah*) agreed that a imam should be installed to act as spokesman until he reached majority. . . ." ³⁹ Curiously, al-ʿAynī does not mention this episode in extenuation of Ṭaṭar's action.

Nevertheless, there is clear evidence of al-Maqrīzī's attempt to spin the official version of events as presented by al-ʿAynī in their biographies of sultans, most blatantly those of al-Muʿayyad and, in a later annal, Barsbāy.⁴⁰ Al-Maqrīzī's sketch of al-Muʿayyad is short and very much to the point. It begins in a moderate and judicious vein, conceding full credit to the sultan's virtues:

He was more than fifty when he died, having reigned eight years, five months, and eight days. He was brave and bold. Fond of scholars, he used to meet with them, honoring the prophetic law and submitting to it. He did not disapprove if someone who appealed to his jurisdiction went from him to the judges of the *sharʿ*; indeed, he approved of that. But he disapproved of his amirs who opposed judges in their decisions. He was averse to any innovation and sometimes spent the night in devotions.⁴¹

But then al-Maqrīzī launches into a full-scale diatribe against al-Muʿayyad, pulling no punches:

But he was miserly and grasping, stinting even in what he ate; stubborn, cross, envious, with an evil eye, who paraded various reprehensible deeds. Vituperative, dissolute, intimidating, he was mindful of his companions without indulging them. . . . He was the biggest reason for the ruin of Egypt and Syria, thanks to the evils and strife he stirred up while viceroy of Tripoli and Damascus and then by corrupt deeds of injustice and plunder while he was ruler, empowering his followers over the people, forcing them into

³⁹*Al-Sulūk*, 4:569–70.

⁴⁰For the latter, see Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry," 93–94.

⁴¹*Al-Sulūk*, 4:550.



submissiveness, taking what they possessed without impediment of reason or interdiction of religion.⁴²

In a spiteful aside, revealing that when al-Mu’ayyad’s corpse was being prepared for burial, there was neither towel nor cup to wash and dry the corpse, nor even a sash to hide his genitals, so that the woolen Ṣa‘īdī scarf of one of his slave girls had to be used for this purpose, al-Maqrīzī opines that these circumstances constituted “an exhortation containing the direst of warnings,” since the sultan had died rich.⁴³ Perhaps, it has been suggested, these examples of al-Maqrīzī’s spleen may stem from his unemployment and lack of patronage.⁴⁴ If that is so, then al-‘Aynī’s conventional, temperate, but by no means fawning, biography may well reflect the favor he enjoyed under al-Mu’ayyad. In any case there is no hint of exhortation or warning to be gained in *‘Iqd al-Jumān* from the description of the preparation of his body for burial. Rather, al-‘Aynī focuses on a somewhat clinical explanation of his illnesses, which included “arthritis, retention of urine, diarrhea, and headaches, climaxed by the hiccups which did him in.”⁴⁵ The ministrations of physicians from Ḥamāh and Iran plus a Jew from Damascus were unavailing. Then al-‘Aynī embarks on a matter-of-fact account of al-Mu’ayyad’s ethnic origins and career pattern until he became sultan, whereupon he delivers an appraisal of his character and deeds which, though similar to al-Maqrīzī’s, is much less obstreperous:

He was a resolute and a brave officer, fond of learning and dervishes and good to them. But he was avid in accumulating the goods of this world: he loved money and was not averse to taking bribes, being inclined to pleasure and entertainments. Though not openhanded with money, he gave many alms, especially to scholars and dervishes. He could be impetuous and volatile. Fearsome, he wrote off the Turks.⁴⁶

Striking is the lack of any suggestion from al-‘Aynī that an unscrupulous sultan brought about the ruin of the Mamluk Empire. Even his reservations regarding al-Mu’ayyad’s character are offset by a long, detailed list of the public buildings which he had constructed, so that any defects are buried in the details of his

⁴²Ibid., 4:550–51.

⁴³Ibid., 555.

⁴⁴Broadbridge, “Academic Rivalry,” 93.

⁴⁵*‘Iqd*, 97.

⁴⁶Ibid., 108.



distinctions at the beginning and end of al-‘Aynī’s biography.

Finally we should look briefly at any evidence that al-Maqrīzī’s, and al-‘Aynī’s, plebeian origins emerged in concern for the common people in their annals, as suggested, in al-Maqrīzī’s case, by Perho, in contrast to Ibn Taghrībirdī’s aloofness from the hoi poloi. Well, despite similar backgrounds and again possibly because of their different stations in life in 824, al-Maqrīzī certainly seems more receptive to the plight of the masses and more inclined to mention them from time to time than al-‘Aynī. Thus, although both record the prices of commodities and coinage, only al-Maqrīzī points to the general turmoil, set against the death of the sultan, to which economic and social conditions had deteriorated.⁴⁷ More telling of al-Maqrīzī’s interest in common folk—women even—is his observation, absent from *‘Iqd al-Jumān*, that women were prohibited from holding public obsequies at tombs, despite the fact that wide-spread sickness had resulted in many deaths during this year.⁴⁸

In conclusion, it is difficult to answer the question with which we started, namely, is al-Maqrīzī’s status and legacy as a historian enhanced or tarnished in comparison to al-‘Aynī as historian of contemporary events. While I have tried to show, on the basis of only one year, that al-‘Aynī was a defender and legitimizer of the status quo and that al-Maqrīzī was more critical of it, outspoken and even scathing at times, neither historian is uniformly predictable or, accordingly, rankable. In general I would say that *Al-Sulūk* is invaluable for, one, the candor, sometimes extreme and maybe embittered candor, of al-Maqrīzī’s views, in contrast to the sobriety, perhaps even dull moderation, of al-‘Aynī’s. And, two, al-Maqrīzī’s attention to many “minor” events that do not attract al-‘Aynī’s notice certainly makes his work indispensable. Also, I would suggest that al-Maqrīzī’s casual reference to the exhortatory character of a racy anecdote, and the absence of such in al-‘Aynī, might deserve further study. I make the final observation that the fortuitously early publication of *Al-Sulūk* and the neglect of *‘Iqd al-Jumān* until recently may well have caused distortions in our view of Burji Mamluk history, *pace* Ibn Taghrībirdī, which may, perhaps, be balanced with the publication and study of the rest of al-‘Aynī’s text.

⁴⁷ *Al-Sulūk*, 4:559; *‘Iqd*, 165.

⁴⁸ *Al-Sulūk*, 4:593.

