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Mamluk Historical *Rajaz* Poetry: Ibn Dāniyāl's Judge List and Its Later Adaptations

It is commonly held that one of the major sources for the study of the institution of judgeship in medieval Islam is Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's (d. 1449) biographical dictionary *Rafʿ al-Isr ʿan Quḍāt Miṣr*.¹ Little attention, however, has been paid to the fact that it was inspired by, and based on, a poem: Ibn Dāniyāl's (d. 1311) "The Ode on the Judges of Egypt,"² which consists of a roster of judges from the Muslim conquest of Egypt to his own time. "Commissioned" by Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Jamāʿah (d. 1333), the Shafīʿi chief judge in Mamluk Egypt and Syria,³ the poem became hugely popular among later historians writing on the subject. Ibn al-Mulaqqin (d. 1401), for example, in his *Nuzhat al-Nuẓẓār fī Quḍāt al-Amṣār*, and al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), in his *Ḥusn al-Muḥāḍarah fī Akhbār Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*, all made direct use of it as a source and, more importantly, as a model of presentation. It is no surprise to have a chief judge commission an homage to law enforcement, and by extension, to his own legacy. But Ibn Dāniyāl's *urjūzah* is not a typical panegyric: with little verbal fanfare, it is basically a list of names in strict chronological order. Moreover, its success among historians of no less stature than Ibn Ḥajar and al-Suyūṭī is not the kind of reception a normal panegyric would usually command. To the modern student, the *urjūzah* in question amounts to no more than a laundry list wrought in formulaic, and mostly dull, verses. But the reception of Ibn Dāniyāl's poem in its own time must have been quite different.⁴ So it boils down to two related questions: why did Ibn Dāniyāl's *rajaz*

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¹ Joseph Escovitz, *The Office of Qāḍī al-Quḍāt in Cairo under the Bahrī Mamlūks* (Berlin, 1984), especially 5–7, 17–19; Rhuvon Guest, *The Governors and Judges of Egypt; or, Kitāb el ʿumarāʾ (el wulāh) wa Kitāb el quḍāh of el Kindī, together with an appendix derived mostly from Rafʿ el isr by Ibn Ḥajar* (Leiden, 1912); Mathieu Tillier, *Vies des cadies de Miṣr 237/851–366/976: Extrait du Rafʿ al-ʿisr ʿan quḍāt Miṣr d'Ibn Ḥaḡar al-ʿAsqalānī*, edition with annotated translation (Cairo, 2002).

² Various "titles" are given: *Rajaz fī Dhikr Man Waliya al-Qaḍāʾ bi-al-Diyār al-Miṣriyah* (Ibn Ḥajar), *Urjūzah fī Man Waliya Qaḍāʾ Miṣr* (al-Suyūṭī), and *Jawharat al-Niẓām (al-nazzām) fī Man Waliya Miṣr min al-Ḥukkām* (Ibn al-Mulaqqin).

³ For his career and the prominent Ibn Jamāʿah "dynasty" of jurists, including his son ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 1366) and grandson Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm (d. 1388), see "Ibn Djamāʿa" (K. S. Salibi), in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.; also Escovitz, *passim*.

⁴ In some ways, our poet's legacy became the victim of his own success: he was erroneously identified as a "prominent judge" by medieval scribes; see Istanbul, Ayasofya MS 4880, fol. 131a, a *diwān* attributed to "al-qāḍī al-ajall Muḥammad Ibn Dāniyāl." I thank Alidost Numan and Bruce



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become popular among historians, and what do we know about historical *rajaz* poetry produced during the time? In the following pages an attempt will be made to answer these questions in the context of Mamluk historiography and literary culture. We will examine the historians' experimentations with new forms of presentation and trace possible traits, or trends, in the development of *rajaz* poetry as a narrative tool for historical discourse.

NAME-DROPPING IN STYLE: IBN DĀNIYĀL'S URJŪZAH:

The poem opens with a prologue (verses 1–15) in praise of the patron, Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'ah, and concludes with more praise of him (verses 105–112). The main content, the judge list, begins as follows:

16. The first man to preside over the judgeship was
Qays, the servant of 'Adī ibn Sahn.

17. It was then passed on to Ka'b 'Abs,
then to 'Uthmān, without any doubt.⁵

The roster runs up to Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'ah, who rose to become Shafi'i chief judge of Egypt for three terms, starting from the year 1291, under the Mamluk sultan Khalīl Ashraf, for whom Ibn Dāniyāl served as a court panegyrist.⁶ The poem in question was, therefore, most likely composed during this time. Altogether, one hundred fifty names—some with multiple appearances—are enumerated in one hundred twelve verses. Overall, the list is straightforward. As a panegyric, its functionality is accompanied by some, albeit minimal, rhetorical embellishments. Some textual devices are employed, and they involve some kind of wordplay between personal names and laudatory descriptions. Typical is the following:

93. Then Muḥyī al-Dīn held the office,
and then Ibn Razīn, with a judicious mind (*dhū al-ḥijā al-razīn*).⁷

Craig, of the University of Chicago, for helping me obtain a digitized version of the manuscript.

⁵ Qays: Ibn Abī al-Āṣī; Ka'b 'Abs: Ibn Yasār ibn Ḍabbah; 'Uthmān: Ibn Qays ibn Abī al-Āṣī. The focus here is on artistic features of the poem; therefore references to the persons, especially those prior to the Mamluk era, will be kept to a minimum. Brief biographical information for the Mamluk judges will be supplied when necessary. Verse numbers have not been given in the editions.

⁶ For Ibn Dāniyāl's association with Khalīl, see Li Guo, "Reading *Adab* in Historical Light: Factuality and Ambiguity in Ibn Dāniyāl's 'Occasional Verses' on Mamluk Society and Politics," in *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer and Sholeh A. Quinn (Wiesbaden, 2006), 387–89.

⁷ Muḥyī al-Dīn: 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn 'Ayn al-Dawlah (Fustāt



The name Ibn Razīn is paired with the adjective *razīn*, “judicious.” More often, one finds the following:

59. Qāsim, then Abū al-Faṭḥ, held the office;
he was by no means isolated, even without the divider (*bi-ghayr qāsim*).⁸

The name Qāsim and the word *qāsim*, “divider,” are punned, but with a twist. Oftentimes one verse contains more than one name, and the adjectives then end up being applicable to other persons who happen to be “close by.” In this case, the praise is actually for Abū al-Faṭḥ, but the pun is on Qāsim. Again, consider the following:

23. After him, the office was held by ‘Abd al-A‘lá,
then Ibn Ḥudayj, who commanded the highest esteem (*dhi al-fakhr al-a‘lá*).⁹

The reason for the use of *a‘lá*, “the highest esteem,” for Ibn Ḥudayj seems only to be that it rhymes with the name of ‘Abd al-A‘lá, who appears earlier. In a similar vein, we read the following:

32. Then the post went to Ismā‘īl, the son of al-Yasa‘,
succeeding him was Ghawth, again, the best successor (*khayr taba‘*).

33. After that he who occupied the office was al-Mufaḍḍal,
then it was Abū al-Tāhir; he was the best (*al-afḍal*)!

34. After him it was al-Tujībī,
and then al-‘Umarī; how excellent he was (*najīb*)!

35. Succeeding him was al-Bakrī, and Ibn al-Bakkā,
then Ibn ‘Īsá; he was the most pious (*azká nuská*)!¹⁰

only, 665–76 A.H.); Ibn Razīn: Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan (al-Qāhirah only, 665–76 A.H., then Egypt, 676–78 A.H.); see Escovitz, *The Office of Qāḍī al-Quḍāt*, 62, 121.

⁸ Qāsim: Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn al-Nu‘mān; Abū al-Faṭḥ: ‘Abd al-Ḥākim ibn Sa‘īd al-Fāriqī.

⁹ ‘Abd al-A‘lá: Ibn Khālid al-Fahmī; Ibn Ḥudayj: ‘Abd al-Wāḥid ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Mu‘āwiyah.

¹⁰ Ismā‘īl ibn al-Yasa‘ ibn al-Rabī‘; Ghawth: Ibn Sulaymān al-Ḥaḍramī; al-Mufaḍḍal: Ibn Faḍālah;



Even someone who does not read Arabic can see the rhyme pattern here. Of the *urjūzah muzdawijah* type, the poem consists of rhyming couplets;¹¹ as a result, a concluding adjective is often used to describe any person's name that rhymes with it, no matter what. This kind of randomly-generated praise abounds.¹² All sorts of additional phrases and words are inserted to fill in the space with the rhyming scheme. An example can be seen in line 17, cited above, between the name 'Abs and the word *labs*, "[without any] doubt." The following are also typical:

19. His successor was 'Ābis al-Murādī,
and then Ibn al-Naḍr, in the country (*fī al-bilādi*).¹³

29. During the time of the Abbasids (*banī 'abbās*),
Na'im¹⁴ returned to enforce law and order (*al-asās*).

75. Then it was Ibn Badr; and Abū al-Faḍl ruled (*qadā*),
prior to al-Ṣiqillī. This Abū al-Faḍl did a satisfactory job (*al-riḍā*).
76. After him Ibn Zāfir was in charge of the office (*tawallā*),
and Ibn al-Ḥusayn, who enjoyed the highest esteem (*al-a'lá*).¹⁵

87. Then Ibn 'Aṣrūn took over (*tawallā al-ḥukmā*),
then Ṣadr al-Dīn was re-appointed; he was the most superb (*al-asmá*).¹⁶

95. Then Ibn Razīn was re-appointed to the office (*fa-ḥakam*),

Abū al-Ṭāhir: 'Abd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Ḥazm; al-Tujibī: Muḥammad ibn Masrūq; al-'Umari: 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd Allāh; al-Bakrī: Hāshim ibn Abī Bakr ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bakrī; Ibn al-Bakkā: Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Bajalī; Ibn 'Īsā: Lahī'ah ibn 'Īsā ibn Lahī'ah.

¹¹ With regard to rhyme requirement, the *rajaz* comes in two types: conventional monorhyme (*a a a . . .*) and rhyming couplet (*muzdawij*, *a a b b c c . . .*); see "Radjaz" (M. Ullmann and W. Heinrichs), in *EP*; "Rajaz" (W. Stoetzer) in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ed. Julie Meisami and Paul Starkey (New York, 1988).

¹² For examples, lines 28 (Khayr / *khayr*), 38 (Shaddād / *jād*), 65 (Asad / *dhū al-ḥukm al-asad*), 70 (al-Yazūri / *bi-ghayr zūri*), 72 (al-Qāsim / *khayr ḥākīm*), 74 (Dhakā / *dhū dhakā*), 80 (al-Ru'aynī / *bi-lā maynī*).

¹³ Ibn Rabī'ah al-Murādī; Ibn al-Naḍr: Bashshār ibn al-Naḍr al-Muzanī.

¹⁴ Khayr ibn Na'im.

¹⁵ Ibn Badr: Muḥammad al-Ḥurrānī; Abū al-Faḍl: Ni'mah ibn Bashīr al-Nābulṣī; al-Ṣiqillī: Aḥmad ibn Qāsim ibn Yazīd; Ibn Zāfir Muḥaffar.

¹⁶ Ibn 'Aṣrūn: Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥbir; Ṣadr al-Dīn: 'Abd al-Malik.



after Ṣadr al-Dīn; both did a superb job for the state (*al-umam*).¹⁷

Taken together, it is hard to judge whether this kind of “commentary” bears any significant weight. Occasionally, though, statements like the following seem to reveal something substantial:

21. Yūnus was then put in charge (*waliya al-qaḍā*),
and then it was Aws, with a relentless grip (*bi-‘azmin muntaḍá*).¹⁸

26. Then ‘Iyāḍ had a second go (*thāniya*),
then it was ‘Abd Allāh, in a tireless fashion (*ghayr wāniya*).¹⁹

60. They replaced him with Abū Muḥammad,
and, prior to him, with Abū ‘Alī, the Fixer (*al-musaddid*).²⁰

88. Al-Sukkarī, to be followed by Abū Muḥammad,
before Ibn ‘Ayn al-Dawlah, the Glorious One (*al-mumajjad*).²¹

91. Then they brought back Yūsuf al-Sanjārī;
succeeding him was Tāj al-Dīn, the Magnificent (*dhū al-fakhāri*).²²

The glowing adjectives and flattering nicknames seem to suggest some kind of appraisal and judgment, but in light of the overall tendency of putting prosodic needs over narrative functionality, it is safe to say that they are more collective, formulaic, and generic than individual, genuine, and personal. In this connection, it is noted that the last part of the poem, covering the Mamluk period, is more “chatty” in that some details about the circumstances surrounding the judges’ appointments and dismissals are provided (for example, verses 97–101; see Appendix). But overall, the historical value of the poem is, by today’s standards,

¹⁷ Ibn Razīn, see note 6 above (reappointed for the third time, 679–80 A.H.); Ṣadr al-Dīn: Ibn Bint al-A‘azz (678–79 A.H.).

¹⁸ Yūnus: ibn ‘Aṭīyah; Aws: ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Aṭīyah.

¹⁹ ‘Iyāḍ: ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Azdi; ‘Abd Allāh: ibn Yazīd ibn Khudhāmīr.

²⁰ Abū Muḥammad: al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Yāzūrī; Abū ‘Alī: Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥākīm Ibn Sa‘īd al-Fāriqī.

²¹ ‘Imād al-Dīn: ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-‘Alī Ibn al-Sukkarī; Abū Muḥammad: uncertain; Ibn ‘Ayn al-Dawlah: Sīr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan al-Iskandarānī.

²² Badr al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ḥasan al-Sanjārī; Tāj al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Waḥhāb Ibn Bint al-A‘azz (663–65 A.H.).



questionable. What, then, was the use of such a text?

WHY RAJAZ?

In general terms, the goal of Ibn Jamā‘ah’s “commission” of the poem is obvious: a tribute to the institution of the Muslim judicial system, the evolution of the office of the qadi, reaching a milestone upon his own arrival. With regard to its particular contents, name-dropping was important. In an era of no government publications and archives, the record of appointments and dismissals constitutes an integral part of the written history. Considering that these names were associated with the court decisions tendered by the judges involved, the list is, in a way, part and parcel of the medieval Muslim legal tradition.

But why poetry, and why *rajaz* in particular? Our poet, Ibn Dāniyāl, had this to say:

5. I hereby present this poem, to recount
the careers of all who have ruled the court in Egypt;

6. Of all the judges and magistrates (*al-quḍāh wa-al-ḥukkām*)
since the Islamic era;

7. I mean, from the Muslim conquest,
led by ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ, onwards to this day.

8. I have chosen the form of *rajaz*,
making the accounts short and concise (*lafẓan mūjazan*).

“Short and concise,” *lafẓan mūjazan*, says it all. Information contained in rhyming verses is easy to memorize, and the *rajaz* is an ideal vehicle for such purposes, due to its short meter and flexible rhyme requirements. Ibn Dāniyāl’s *urjūzah* went on to become a model of presentation for later Mamluk historians. It has all the trimmings of a panegyric, but with more substance; it is informative, yet compact. Herein lies its popularity, which is attested by at least three later adaptations known so far. While overall the functionality of the *urjūzah* as a genre should be acknowledged, Ibn Dāniyāl’s Shafi‘i-centric model of presentation must be seen here as the key to its appeal to later historians.

Among these historians is Ibn al-Mulaqqin, who, in concluding his biographical dictionary of Egyptian judges, remarked that when he was finishing up this book, he became aware (*ra’aytu*) that someone had put together materials about judges



of Egypt in the form of an *urjūzah*. He then went on to quote its full text.²³ Ibn al-Mulaqqin, nevertheless, did nothing with the material itself: he simply quoted it on the authority of ‘Izz al-Dīn Ibn Jamā‘ah (in office 1340–65), the son of Badr al-Dīn, Ibn Dāniyāl’s patron, who in turn quoted on the authority of Ibn Dāniyāl himself (*anba’nā*). Ibn al-Mulaqqin’s decision to cite the poem is a testimony to its attractiveness, in spite of his candid admission that the poem had come to his attention too late to be incorporated into the main narrative of his work and that its account differs somewhat from his own.²⁴ The appeal of the *rajaz* form, “short and concise,” was good enough for the seasoned historian-cum-hadith scholar.

IBN ḤAJAR’S AND AL-SUYŪṬĪ’S ADAPTATIONS

The other two historians involved in the business of adopting the *urjūzah*, namely Ibn Ḥajar and al-Suyūṭī, apparently intended to do something more with it. Instead of being merely an afterthought, as in the case of Ibn al-Mulaqqin, the poem takes center stage.

Ibn Ḥajar, himself a long time Shafi‘i chief judge, revealed that he once had come across (*waqaftu ‘alā*) a copy of the *rajaz* by Ibn Dāniyāl and was asked to supply biographical sketches (*su‘iltu an utarjima*) of the judges mentioned therein, hence his work.²⁵ In other words, Ibn Ḥajar, the consummate historian, was convinced that the widely circulated poem was a perfect springboard upon which to launch a grand program.

After a brief statement on structure and method, Ibn Ḥajar, a onetime student of Ibn al-Mulaqqin, goes on to list his sources. The bibliography further sheds light on why he decided to embark upon the project: the need to update monographs devoted to the lives and careers of judges. The “classics” of the genre, al-Kindī’s (d. 961) *Kitāb al-Quḍāh* and Ibn Zūlāq’s (d. 997) *Akhbār Quḍāt Miṣr*, a *dhayl*, were all written prior to the fourth/twelfth century. Of the Mamluk authors, only Ibn al-Mulaqqin’s work, arranged in the *ṭabaqāt* fashion, followed the old genre of topical biographical presentation, but with unsatisfactory results in Ibn Ḥajar’s

²³ *Nuzhat al-Nuzẓār fī Quḍāt al-Amṣār*, ed. Madiḥah M. al-Sharqāwī (Cairo, 1996), 211–17. It is arranged in eight *ṭabaqaḥs* in chronological order, ending at the year 1384.

²⁴ *Nuzhat al-Nuzẓār*, 211.

²⁵ I use the edition of *Raf‘ al-Iṣr ‘an Quḍāt Miṣr* by Ḥāmid ‘Abd al-Majid et al. (Cairo, 1957). The more recent edition by ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Umar (Cairo, 1998) was based on different manuscripts and did not fully consult the Fayzullah MS, Istanbul, the only manuscript that contains line-by-line prose gloss of the verse. The poem is not found in Ibn Dāniyāl’s anthology, edited by al-Ṣafadi in his *Al-Tadhkirah al-Ṣafadiyah*. The modern edition of the anthology, titled *Al-Mukhtār min Shi‘r Ibn Dāniyāl*, ed. al-Dulaymī (Mosul, 1979), included the poem, based on *Raf‘ al-Iṣr* and collated with the *Ḥusn al-Muḥāḍarah* as a supplement, 289–99. Al-Dulaymī’s “edition” contains several printing errors, while the biographical notes were largely taken from al-Majid’s edition.



view.²⁶ The remaining sources utilized by Ibn Ḥajar are all of the regional history type, namely the history of Islamic Egypt with bibliographical materials on the side, the likes of Ibn Muyassar (d. 1278), al-Ḥalabī (d. 1334–35), and al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442).²⁷

The appeal of Ibn Dāniyāl's *urjūzah* can be noted at various levels. As far as the roster is concerned, it is far more accurate and complete than others. It fills the huge gap between the Ayyubid historian Ibn Muyassar and later Mamluk authors such as al-Ḥalabī and al-Maqrīzī. For the early Mamluk period, it is *the* most authentic, given Ibn Dāniyāl's personal involvement with the court. Then there is its form: the "short and concise," memorable, and hymn-like *rajaz*. Ibn Ḥajar liked it so much that not only did he quote the text verbatim, but also cited a *dhayl*, or continuation, modeled after it (*alā minwāl*).²⁸ Picking up where Ibn Dāniyāl left off and running all the way to Ibn Ḥajar's time, the end of the eighth/fifteenth century, the *dhayl* attests to the continuing enthusiasm for Ibn Dāniyāl's model. However, if Ibn Dāniyāl's poem is, as the analysis above reveals, mediocre artistically, the continuation is, in my opinion, quite bad. Its author was one Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 1471), of whom little is known. It retains Ibn Dāniyāl's laundry list format, but is even plainer and simpler. Stripped of any embellishments, it is more functional than flowery.

But there is one remarkable development in the *dhayl*, insofar as the verses are divided into four segments, according to the four branches of the judgeship, which had become official during Baybars' time. We may recall that in Ibn Dāniyāl's poem, the representation of the four law schools did not seem to be an issue at all: only the Shafi'i chief judges are listed. One may argue that perhaps this was because it was too soon after the establishment of the four-part judiciary for the poet to have time to observe and reflect upon this new reality. Joseph Escovitz's thesis of an "evolutionary process" of the establishment of the four-judge system is tested here.²⁹ An alternate argument would be that Ibn Dāniyāl wrote the poem this way on purpose, if only because his project was a holistic overview of Egypt's judicial history, crowned at the Shafi'i triumph with the blessing of Baybars. As far as his Shafi'i patron is concerned, there was no need to share the spotlight with others. Given our poet's consistent critical stands regarding Baybars,³⁰ this Shafi'i-centric homage can be read, in my opinion, as yet another indirect critique

²⁶ *Raf' al-Isr*, 3.

²⁷ Ibn Muyassar, *Al-Muntaqá min Akhbār Miṣr*; al-Ḥalabī, *Akhbār Miṣr* (in some 20 volumes, and a four-volume abridged version by "the two Muḥammads" (*Raf' al-Isr*, 2).

²⁸ *Raf' al-Isr*, 14–20.

²⁹ Escovitz, *The Office of Qâḍī al-Quḍât*, 27–28, 258.

³⁰ See Li Guo, "Paradise Lost: Ibn Daniyal's Response to Baybars' Campaign against Vice in Cairo," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121, no. 2 (2001): 219–35.



of the sultan's policy and legacy.

But with Ibn Ḥajar, this must have been a trickier endeavor. Despite his own Shafi'i favoritism, there was the savvy side of Ibn Ḥajar when it came to preserving his own legacy: his self-projection as a "consensus builder" among all the Sunni legal scholars.³¹ The *dhayl* starts with the Shafi'is and proceeds to deal with each group separately. Altogether, thirty-eight names—some with multiple appearances—of the Shafi'is are listed in nine verses, thirty-five Hanafis in eight, thirty-eight Malikis in nine, and eighteen Hanbalis in merely four. And, lo and behold, after the list in verse come the biographies in prose.

Ibn Ḥajar wrote that he had arranged the material in the *ṭabaqāt* fashion, "dividing them according to annals (*alá al-sinīn*),"³² in accordance with the poem. A quick check, however, reveals that the organization of the biographical material is actually alphabetical. This obvious discrepancy was so scandalous that al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497) found it necessary to attach a note to the colophon of several manuscripts, which he personally copied (or supervised their copying).³³ According to the note, one of Ibn Ḥajar's students named 'Izz [al-Dīn] al-Ḥanbalī was responsible for rearranging the entries from an earlier draft (*musawwadah*) by the author—who was too ill to revise it—into the current form, with Ibn Ḥajar's approval.³⁴ If this episode tells us anything, it is the fact that the *Raf' al-Iṣr* was completed near the end of Ibn Ḥajar's career, before his sudden death.

The *Raf' al-Iṣr* itself is a well-known and often-cited work that needs no introduction. It is the little-studied verse portion that interests us here. The first *dhayl* begins where Ibn Dāniyāl left off, that is, at Ibn Jamā'ah:

1. Al-Zar'ī and al-Badr and al-Qazwīnī
and al-'Izz and al-Bahā and 'Izz al-Dīn.

The verse reads like a riddle, with nothing but a barrage of shorthanded honorifics. Even for those who might have some familiarity with the first-name-only celebrity status of the judges, this verse may prove to be a little too enigmatic.

³¹ To this day we still do not have a monograph treatment of Ibn Ḥajar's life and work in a Western language. The most detailed account remains "Ibn Ḥadjar" (F. Rosenthal), in *EP*.

³² *Raf' al-Iṣr*, 1.

³³ The 1998 Cairo edition, by 'Alī Muḥammad 'Umar, is based on, among others, a manuscript hand-copied by al-Sakhāwī; see the editor's introduction, 22.

³⁴ Al-Sakhāwī's explanation should be viewed as credible insofar as not only was he a protégé of Ibn Ḥajar, but also, more importantly, the author of a continuation of *Raf' al-Iṣr* entitled *Bughyat al-'Ulamā' wa-al-Ruwāh*. Judging from the title alone, al-Sakhāwī's continuation, in prose only, expanded Ibn Ḥajar's original scope to a much broader canvas. The question of sources and the "incompleteness" of *Raf' al-Iṣr* was discussed in Guest, 42–44.



Ibn Ḥajar was therefore compelled to supply, in at least one manuscript, a parallel text in prose underneath each verse. For the above verse, we have the following explanation:

Sulaymān *al-Zarʿī* was put in charge [of judgeship], replacing Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamāʿah, for a year. Then he resigned, and *Badr* [al-Dīn] returned. Then Jalāl al-Dīn *al-Qazwīnī* ruled, then he was dismissed and ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn Jamāʿah ruled instead. Then he, too, was dismissed, and *Bahāʾ* al-Dīn Ibn ʿAqīl decided [the cases] for eighty days, then ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn Jamāʿah was brought back.³⁵

Things got much worse later on. The revolving-door turnovers in the office of chief judge, which had intensified during this period, play out right in front of us,³⁶ in a repetitive verbal tango:

5. Then al-Ṣāliḥī with Jalāl al-Dīn,
And al-Ṣāliḥī with Shams al-Dīn.

6. Then Jalāl al-Dīn and al-Ikhnāʾī,
Then Jalāl al-Dīn and al-Ikhnāʾī.

7. Then Jalāl al-Dīn and al-Shams.
Then Jalāl al-Dīn and al-Shams.

Only four men, in fact, are involved here: (1) Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ṣāliḥī (d. 1403), who was replaced by (2) Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bulqīnī (d. 1421), of the famous al-Bulqīnī clan,³⁷ who was replaced, for the second time, by the same al-Ṣāliḥī, who suddenly died and was succeeded by (3) Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ikhnāʾī (b. 1356), who was replaced by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī, and made it back again, for the second, third, and fourth time, each time against

³⁵ *Rafʿ al-Isr*, 14. The manuscript is MS Istanbul, Feyzullah. The years these judges occupied the office are as follows (after Escovitz, *The Office of Qādī al-Quḍāt*, 62): Jamāl al-Dīn al-Zarʿī (710–11 A.H.), Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamāʿah (711–27 A.H.), Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (727–38 A.H.), ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn Jamāʿah (738–59 A.H.), Bahāʾ al-Dīn Ibn ʿAqīl (759 A.H.), ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn Jamāʿah (759–66 A.H.).

³⁶ Escovitz has identified nepotism, *nāʾib* succession, patronage, and merit as the four main factors in a judge's appointment; among the reasons for end of tenure are death, retirement, resignation, and dismissal through political intrigue (*The Office of Qādī al-Quḍāt*, 250, 259–60). His study deals with the early period (ending with Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Jamāʿah, 781–84 A.H.), but his findings should apply here as well.

³⁷ See “al-Bulqīnī,” (H. A. R. Gibb), in *IE²*.



In this respect, the rising status of the profession of the historian and the growing demand for teaching material might well be viewed as yet another driving force behind the efforts. The Mamluk era is renowned for producing major historical-administrative manuals catering to the practical needs of the ever-expanding state bureaucratic apparatus. Within this context, the historical *urjūzahs* might have been designed as textbook material, similar to the *urjūzahs* produced at the time on Arabic grammar, *fiqh*, and medicine,⁵³ among other subjects.

More research is needed with regard to Mamluk patronage of literary activities. In our case, the circumstances under which Ibn Jamā‘ah “commissioned” Ibn Dāniyāl to write the *urjūzah* remain unclear; the verb used here, *sa‘ala*, does not reveal much, if anything. But it is curious that he was the person responsible for putting *rajaz* as a historical/educational tool on the map, insofar as several historical *urjūzahs* known to have existed are associated with him: in addition to the poem in question, Ibn Jamā‘ah also “commissioned” an *urjūzah* on Damascene judges (reported, again, by Ibn al-Mulaqqin), and another one on caliphs.⁵⁴ To think of the Shafi‘i chief judge as a history buff might be a stretch, but there is good reason to believe that the practical purposes of such a demand or request, other than the need for some ceremonial panegyric, could not be ruled out. Among these, his Shafi‘i-centric presentation of historical facts was apparently one major draw. After all, knowledge of, and schooling in, history was becoming essential for one’s bureaucratic career advancement as far as the Mamluk era is concerned. Al-Nuwayrī (d. 1332?), a contemporary of Ibn Dāniyāl, names five “arts” (*funūn*), or expertise in five areas, as the qualifying requirements for a candidate applying for lucrative state job such as the *kātib*-clerk. Among the five, history tops all as the crown jewel. “The *kātib* [needs to know history],” al-Nuwayrī writes, “because he draws from it precedents and examples (*yastashhidu bihi*) in drafting communiqués and correspondence; also, he expands the scope of his writing by using it as a narrative tool.”⁵⁵ Going through al-Nuwayrī’s job description for a *kātib*,⁵⁶ one thing becomes clear: all the five “arts” were technical in nature; thus the *rajaz* was an ideal, and proven effective, narrative tool for transmitting knowledge in these fields.

However, as our analysis has amply shown, the *urjūzah* as a historical narrative mode has serious limits. It is evidently more effective and functional in displaying

⁵³ For example, Ibn Dāniyāl’s own *urjūzah* on medicine: Istanbul MS Ayasofya 3645, fols. 84b–114a.

⁵⁴ GAL S2:80–81.

⁵⁵ *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* (Cairo, 1964–98), 13:1.

⁵⁶ The other four “arts” are: geography (*fī al-samā‘ wa-al-āthār al-‘alawīyah wa-al-arḍ wa-al-ma‘ālim al-suflīyah*, namely astrology and astronomy, climate, seasons, etc.), humanities (*fī al-insān*, including language, physiology, etc.), zoology (*fī al-ḥayawān al-ṣāmit*), and botany (*fī al-nabāt*).



simple facts, such as names, but less so in in-depth discourse. Perhaps this is why the *rajaz* as a didactic narrative tool was largely confined to fields other than “history.” In other words, the *rajaz* verse alone never really took off to rival prose historical narrative. Of the more than one hundred *urjūzahs* listed by Carl Brockelmann,⁵⁷ only a handful can be perhaps categorized as of a historical nature. Among these, three were associated with Ibn Jamā‘ah, whereas the others were all written in the pre-Mamluk era: one is a versified history of the Abbasids,⁵⁸ one a biography of the Prophet Muḥammad,⁵⁹ and one a list of the prophets.⁶⁰ Our present case study has proved that it is Ibn Dāniyāl, through the patronage of Ibn Jamā‘ah, who revived the interest in using the *rajaz* form for historical narrative purposes, and that the later hybrid mode inspired by it, combining *rajaz* and prose—as seen in Ibn Ḥajar’s and al-Suyūṭī’s adaptations—became a popular form for “name dropping,” a continuation of the thematic preoccupation of the lives and careers of the notables in medieval Muslim historiography.

⁵⁷ The sampling is based on the index entry *urjūzah* in *GAL*. It is by no means conclusive, insofar as some poems might bear titles other than *urjūzah*. But the sampling should be seen as representative of the trend and tendency of the narrative *rajaz*. Understandably, of the twenty *urjūzahs* listed in Sezgin’s *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*—on astrology and astronomy, medicine, *fiqh*, grammar and language, and music—only two, *Urjūzah fī Ahl Badr* by al-Tirmidhī and *Urjūzah fī Tārīkh al-Mu‘taḍid* by Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, are remotely “historical.”

⁵⁸ *Urjūzah fī al-Tārīkh*, by Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Naṣībī (d. 1265); see *GAL* S1:590.

⁵⁹ *Urjūzah fī Sirat al-Nabī*, by ‘Alam al-Dīn ‘Alī al-Hamadhānī (d. 1243); see *GAL* 1:410.

⁶⁰ *Urjūzah fī Ṭabaqāt al-Anbiyā’*, *GAL* SN2:111.



APPENDIX: TRANSLATION OF THE PART OF IBN DĀNIYĀL'S *URJŪZAH* THAT COVERS THE MAMLUK PERIOD⁶¹

91. Then Yūsuf al-Sanjārī was brought back,
succeeding him was Tāj al-Dīn, the magnificent.
92. He was followed by Burhān al-Dīn, namely, al-Khaḍr,⁶²
then Tāj al-Dīn made a comeback.
93. Then Muḥyī al-Dīn held the office,
and then Ibn Razīn, with a judicious mind.
94. After his dismissal, ʿUmar,
I mean al-ʿAllāmī, took over. He ruled for justice.
95. Then Ibn Razīn was re-appointed,
after Ṣadr al-Dīn [ʿUmar]; both men did a super job for the state.
96. Then Wajīh al-Dīn al-Bahnasī⁶³ presided over the court,
having been put in charge to succeed Taqī al-Dīn.⁶⁴
97. When he [the former] resigned, claiming that Cairo was too far
from his hometown, he [the latter] presided over in his stead.
98. Then Shihāb al-Dīn⁶⁵ was promoted,
and was summoned from his post in al-Maḥallah.
99. He stayed on until his death;
[Shihāb al-Dīn] Ibn Aḥmad had been a judge of Syria when
young.
100. Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Khalaf⁶⁶ then held the office,
succeeding the by-now-gone Wajīh al-Dīn and Shihāb al-Dīn.

⁶¹ Cf. Escovitz, *The Office of Qāḍī al-Quḍāt*, 62.

⁶² Al-Khaḍr ibn al-Ḥasan al-Sanjārī.

⁶³ ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn al-Ḥusayn.

⁶⁴ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Abī al-Qāsim Ibn Bint al-Aʿazz.

⁶⁵ Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Khalīl ibn Saʿādah al-Khūbī.

⁶⁶ ʿAbd al-Wahhāb.



101. He was fired from the post in Cairo,
and replaced by the gentleman from al-Sanjār.⁶⁷

102. Then Taqī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān took over,
and it was time for Badr al-Dīn, the full moon, to shine!

103. Badr al-Dīn returned back to Syria,
the young al-‘Allāmī⁶⁸ then presided over the judgeship.

104. He stayed on until his death,
and was succeeded by Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-Faṭḥ.⁶⁹

105. Then all of a sudden he passed way,
Badr al-Dīn rose [again].

* * *

106. A luminous full moon,
a spring of fresh, pure water.

107. The judges’ judge, and magistrates’ magistrate,
the mediator of contracts for the legal system.

108. The window of his rulings remains open.
The flowering days during his tenure will be everlasting.

109. The full moon will never go away,
its crescent will never vanish from sight.

110. Praise be to God for His grace,
for His blessings manifested in just rulings.

111. The best prayers and greetings,
go to the Prophet, the Master of the mankind,

⁶⁷ Burhān al-Dīn al-Khaḍr ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sanjārī.

⁶⁸ ‘Abd al-Waḥhāb Maḥmūd Ibn Badr.

⁶⁹ Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī, known as Ibn Daqīq al-‘Īd.



112. To his household, his companions, and his clan,
to everyone who loves him!



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