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## Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt: al-‘Aynī, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī

### INTRODUCTION

In fifteenth-century Mamluk Cairo the ‘*ulamā*’ and the military elite were interdependent. The elite provided financial and material patronage to the learned in return for legitimation and integration into Cairo’s dominant Islamic cultural environment. In *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350*, Michael Chamberlain suggests that the “natural” environment for the ‘*ulamā*’ was one of constant competition, in which scholars jockeyed both for proximity to powerful members of the military elite, and for the salaried positions (*manṣib*, pl. *manāṣib*)<sup>1</sup> they could attain through such proximity. Indeed, for the ‘*ulamā*’ it was often within an intimate web of simultaneously personal and professional ties that the road to material and financial success lay. Nevertheless the long-held Islamic societal ideal of intellectual success—that is, the scholar untainted by the corrupting hand of government—still held firm both in Chamberlain’s Damascus and in Cairo throughout the Mamluk period. As Chamberlain is quick to point out, the sources provide us with plenty of references to the notion of the polluting aspect of the *manṣib*, as well as to those who refused such positions and consequently earned praise from other scholars for it.

In this paper I will examine the lives of three fifteenth-century historians, al-Maqrīzī, al-‘Aynī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī. The story of these men offers us a case study of the dynamics of Chamberlain’s arena of scholarly competition for access to the military elite, as well as the workings of Mamluk patronage practices. We may also investigate the ways in which the manipulation—or lack thereof—of patronage opportunities affected not only the careers of all three historians, but also their relationships to and with each other and, ultimately, their writing of history, the ramifications of which are perhaps most significant for scholars today.

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<sup>1</sup>I use *manṣib* rather than *manṣab*, the form used by Chamberlain in his *Knowledge and Social Practice* (Cambridge, 1994), for the same concept—a salaried position or stipendiary post; for a discussion of the differences between the readings, see Li Guo, “Mamluk Historiographic Studies: The State of the Art,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 1 (1997): 24-25, esp. note 46.



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### THE EARLY YEARS

Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī was born into a scholarly family in Cairo in 766/1364. As a youth he studied *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, grammar, and *qirā’āt*, in addition to history and *adab*; soon he was competent enough to practice jurisprudence in the Ḥanafī tradition. In his early twenties, however, al-Maqrīzī renounced his affiliation with the Ḥanafīs and became a Shāfi‘ī like his father. The reasons for this change are unclear, although they may be related to his father’s death in 786/1384. Ayman Fu’ād Sayyid suggests that al-Maqrīzī became aware of the strategic preeminence of the Shāfi‘ī school in Cairene intellectual and political circles and changed his *madhhab* accordingly.<sup>2</sup> Sayyid’s source for this information, however, is not made clear; nor does this explain the lifelong bias that al-Maqrīzī maintained against Ḥanafīs, which was strong enough to prompt Ibn Taghrībirdī to point out its presence in al-Maqrīzī’s writing.<sup>3</sup>

The Ḥanafī scholar who was to become one of al-Maqrīzī’s rivals and academic foes, Maḥmūd al-‘Aynṭābī or al-‘Aynī, was born in ‘Aynṭāb (modern Gaziantep) in 762/1360, also into a scholarly family. Like al-Maqrīzī, al-‘Aynī studied history, *adab*, and the Islamic religious sciences; in addition, he was fluent in Turkish and knew a degree of Persian.<sup>4</sup> Al-‘Aynī’s knowledge of several languages was to make a significant difference to his later career.

The youngest of the three scholars, Aḥmad ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī was born in 773/1372 in Egypt, the only son of one of the Kārimī merchants, Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī. Ibn Ḥajar and his younger sister Sitt al-Rakb were left orphans by the time Ibn Ḥajar was four years old. Consequently, they were brought up and educated by a guardian, al-Zakī al-Khurūbī. Ibn Ḥajar began studies at an early age and was a precocious student; as a child he went to Mecca with his guardian, and in his twenties embarked on a study tour in Egypt, followed by another in Yemen and the Hijaz. Ibn Ḥajar also visited Syria more than once; indeed, on one of his trips to the Syrian cities in 802-3/1400 he was forced to make a hurried retreat to Cairo

<sup>2</sup>Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā’iz wa-al-I’tibār fī Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār*, ed. Ayman Fu’ād Sayyid (London, 1995), 39.

<sup>3</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Manhal al-Ṣāfi fī-al-Mustawfā ba’da al-Wāfi*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo, 1984), 1:417.

<sup>4</sup>Al-‘Aynī, *al-Sayf al-Muḥannad fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Mu’ayyad*, ed. Fahīm Muḥammad Shaltūt (Cairo, 1967). Several pieces of circumstantial evidence in the text suggest that al-‘Aynī knew some Persian: he was familiar with Firdawsī’s “Shāhnāmah” (109) and the work of Bayhaqī (127); he also included a long list of Persian royal titles in the text (5). Also see his analysis of the name “Jārkas” as a Persian phrase (“four people” *chahār kas*) in Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Manhal al-Ṣāfi*, 4:207.



for fear of the approaching armies of Timur.<sup>5</sup> He later visited Yemen and the Hijaz several more times.

While Ibn Ḥajar was travelling in search of knowledge, so was al-‘Aynī, whose itinerary led him south from his home city of ‘Ayntāb. It was in Jerusalem in 788/1386 that al-‘Aynī made the first contact that gained him an entrée into Cairene academic circles. This was the Ḥanafī shaykh al-Sayrāmī, then visiting Jerusalem, who was head of the Zāhirīyah *madrasah* and *khānqāh* complex in Cairo, which had just been established by al-Zāhir Barqūq. Al-Sayrāmī had emigrated from Central Asia to eastern Anatolia, where he settled in Maridin before Barqūq invited him to Cairo. Thus he may have shared linguistic and cultural ties with al-‘Aynī, although the sources are not explicit. As the spiritual leader of an institution with ties to the highest level of the ruling elite, al-Sayrāmī was a good contact for promising young members of the ‘*ulamā*’. Al-‘Aynī must have made a favorable impression on the older scholar, for al-Sayrāmī invited the twenty-six year old to accompany him to Cairo. There al-‘Aynī became one of the Sufis of the Zāhirīyah; he also took classes and became better known in Cairene circles.<sup>6</sup>

The third of these historians, al-Maqrīzī, was also embarking upon his career in 788/1386. He began as a scribe in the chancellery, as had his father, and was subsequently designated deputy *qādī*. Following this he became the *imām* at the mosque of al-Ḥākīm and the *khaṭīb* at the mosque of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and at the *madrasah* of Sultan Ḥasan. We may assume that it was prior to and during this period that al-Maqrīzī was making some of those personal contacts necessary to the achievement of financial and material success within the parameters of the Mamluk patronage system. However it is difficult to identify the exact channels through which al-Maqrīzī may have gained access to the higher levels of patrons, or to the sultan himself, although we may set forth some suggestions.

One possibility is Ibn Khaldūn, who arrived in Cairo in 784/1382 and whom Barqūq made Chief Mālikī *qādī* in 786/1384. Competition soon caused Ibn Khaldūn to lose the position—his enemies succeeded in ousting him in 787/1385, and he was only reappointed years later in 801/1399. Nevertheless, he managed to remain an instructor at several institutions in Cairo, and was appointed the head of the Baybars *khānqāh*, which was arguably the most important Sufi establishment in Egypt.<sup>7</sup> An important player on the academic and intellectual scene, Ibn Khaldūn

<sup>5</sup>Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Izz al-Dīn, *al-Tārīkh wa-al-Manhaj al-Ta’rīkhī li-Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī* (Beirut, 1404/1984), 129.

<sup>6</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Beirut, 1992), 15:287.

<sup>7</sup>M. Talbi makes this claim, although the reasons for it are not specified. Was it merely because of the *khānqāh*’s link to the illustrious al-Zāhir Baybars? Was it the relative age of the *khānqāh*, established at the beginning of Mamluk patronage of Sufi institutions? See M. Talbi, “Ibn Khaldun,”



was not only acquainted with the sultan, but also had other patrons from among the amirs, including the amir Altunbughā al-Jubānī or al-Jawbānī, who had first introduced him to Barqūq.<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to determine the exact degree of closeness between al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Khaldūn; we do know, however, that al-Maqrīzī studied history with the Mālikī scholar and learned the use of different instruments for measuring time from him. He later repaid his teacher by writing a lengthy biography of him.<sup>9</sup>

Al-Maqrīzī may also have reached the higher levels of the royal court through his contact with Yashbak al-Sha‘bānī, the *dawādār* and tutor to Barqūq’s son Faraj. Al-Maqrīzī seems to have known Yashbak fairly well, although it is unclear how they met.<sup>10</sup> At any rate, in some way al-Maqrīzī gained access to the very pinnacle of the patronage hierarchy. Al-Sakhāwī reports that al-Maqrīzī was on good terms with Sultan Barqūq, while Ibn Taghrībirdī goes so far as to describe al-Maqrīzī as one of Barqūq’s boon companions (*nadīm*, pl. *nudamā’*).<sup>11</sup> Thus far, al-Maqrīzī’s story is one of successful advancement within the framework of patronage practices, and achievement of not only a respectable amount of professional success, but also direct access to the sultan himself.

Ibn Ḥajar, meanwhile, was still involved in his travels. As for al-‘Aynī, despite al-Sayrāmī’s initial favor, the young ‘Ayntabī ran into trouble after the shaykh’s death in 790/1388 when Barqūq’s *amīr akhūr*, Jārkas al-Khalīlī, attempted to run the scholar out of Cairo.<sup>12</sup> It seems that the two personalities clashed, for al-‘Aynī characterized Jārkas as proud, arrogant, and tyrannical—a man pleased by his own opinion.<sup>13</sup> Al-‘Aynī had managed to make enough contacts among the ‘*ulamā’* to be saved from physical expulsion from the city through the intervention of one of his teachers, the well-known Sirāj al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī, but nevertheless decided to leave for a short time.<sup>14</sup> After a brief stint teaching in Damascus, where he was appointed *muḥtasib* through the auspices of the amir Baṭā’,<sup>15</sup> al-‘Aynī returned to

*The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 3:827.

<sup>8</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Manhal al-Ṣāfi*, 7:208.

<sup>9</sup>Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’ al-Lāmi’ li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi’* (Cairo, [n.d.]), 2:24. Also see Aḥmad al-Jalīlī, “Tarjamat Ibn Khaldūn lil-Maqrīzī,” *Majallat al-Majma’ al-‘Ilmī al-‘Irāqī* 13 (1965): 215-42.

<sup>10</sup>Al-Sakhāwī goes so far as to report a rumor that al-Maqrīzī entrusted Yashbak with an unspecified amount of money at an unspecified date, although other sources make no mention of this. See *al-Ḍaw’*, 2:22.

<sup>11</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 14:270.

<sup>12</sup>Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*, 10:132.

<sup>13</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, quoting al-‘Aynī, in *al-Manhal al-Ṣāfi*, 4:207.

<sup>14</sup>Al-‘Aynī, *al-Sayf al-Muḥannad*, editor’s introduction, page h.

<sup>15</sup>Al-‘Aynī, *‘Iqd al-Jumān fī Ta’rikh Ahl al-Zamān*, ed. ‘Abd al-Rāziq al-Ṭanṭāwī al-Qarmūt



Cairo, presumably older and wiser. There he lost no time in establishing ties with four amirs: Qalamtāy al-‘Uthmānī, Taghrībirdī al-Qurdamī or al-Quramī, Jakm min ‘Awḍ and Tamarbughā al-Mashṭūb; al-‘Aynī went on the pilgrimage with this last amir. Of these four men only one—Jakm min ‘Awḍ—seems to have attained any significant station.<sup>16</sup> Jakm was one of Barqūq’s *khāṣṣakīyah*, and was eventually promoted to the position of *dawādār*. Following Barqūq’s death in 801/1399, he rebelled against Barqūq’s son and successor al-Nāṣir Faraj (801-15/1399-1412) and set himself up as an independent ruler in Northern Syria and Southern Anatolia in 809/1406-7; shortly thereafter, however, all his promise went for naught when he was killed in battle by the Ak Kuyunlu Turkmen. Despite his ultimate defeat and death, however, it was clear during Barqūq’s reign that Jakm was a powerful man, and as such a desirable patron for a talented and ambitious scholar like al-‘Aynī.<sup>17</sup>

#### THE MUHTASIB INCIDENT

Al-‘Aynī and al-Maqrīzī came into direct competition during the two years of the famous *muhtasib* incident. In Rajab 801/March 1399, Barqūq appointed al-Maqrīzī *muhtasib* of Cairo, an important and prestigious *manṣib*, the duties of which included the regulation of weights, money, prices, public morals, and the cleanliness of public places, as well as the supervision of schools, instruction, teachers and students, and attention to public baths, general public safety and the circulation of traffic. In addition to being prestigious, the position of *muhtasib* offered direct contact with the sultan.<sup>18</sup> Like many such *manṣibs*, however, it was not a particularly stable position; *muhtasibs* could be and frequently were appointed, dismissed, reappointed, and redissmised several times in a short period.

Indeed, this is what happened to al-Maqrīzī. His acquaintance with Barqūq had suggested a promising career; he must, presumably, have been troubled on both personal and professional levels by the death of his patron in Shawwāl 801/June 1399. Within the Mamluk system, the death of a sultan provoked shifts in the power relations within the military elite and, by extension, could alter the patronage relations between the elite and the ‘*ulamā*’. Barqūq’s death, therefore,

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(Cairo, 1985), 2:18.

<sup>16</sup>Qalamtāy al-‘Uthmānī, Taghrībirdī al-Qurdamī or al-Quramī and Tamarbughā al-Mashṭūb were all amirs of ten under Barqūq. See Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Manhal al-Ṣāfi*, 4:54 (Taghrībirdī al-Quramī); 4:100 (Tamarbughā al-Mashṭūb). For Qalamtāy al-‘Uthmānī, see Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma’rifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. Sa’īd ‘Āshūr, 3:2:740. For Jakm min ‘Awḍ, see Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Manhal al-Ṣāfi*, 4:313-22.

<sup>17</sup>Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*, 10:132.

<sup>18</sup>Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A‘shā fi Ṣinā‘at al-Inshā’* (Beirut, 1407/1987), 4:38.



meant that the position of *muḥtasib* lay open to the immediate ambitions of other scholars and their patrons.

It was at this moment that al-‘Aynī’s cultivation of the ruling elite began to show fruit. In Dhū al-Ḥijjah 801/August 1399 al-‘Aynī replaced al-Maqrīzī in the post of *muḥtasib* through the intervention of none other than the amir Jakm.<sup>19</sup> Historians, both contemporary and modern, view this moment as the starting point for the antipathy between the two scholars. Ibn Taghrībirdī states, “From that day on, there was hostility between the two men until they both died.”<sup>20</sup> Al-‘Aynī did not enjoy the post for long, for one month after his appointment he was dismissed (Muḥarram 802/September 1399) and reappointed two months later in Rabī‘ I/November. He managed to remain *muḥtasib* until Jumādā I 802/February 1400, when al-Maqrīzī succeeded in replacing him for almost a year. Then, again by the intervention of the amir Jakm, al-‘Aynī resumed the post in Rabī‘ I 803/October 1400, which marked the end of al-Maqrīzī’s brief *muḥtasib* career. Al-‘Aynī himself did not remain *muḥtasib* for long, for he was dismissed once again four months later in Rajab 803/February 1401.

It was also during this period that the struggle for power between Jakm, al-‘Aynī’s patron, and Yashbak al-Sha‘bānī, al-Maqrīzī’s second patron after the late Sultan Barqūq, was approaching its height. In brief, this struggle included the imprisonment of Yashbak in 803/1401, while Jakm took his position as *dawādār*, then Yashbak’s release and the imprisonment in turn of Jakm in 805/1402, and culminated in a pact that included both amirs, the amir and future sultan Shaykh, and Kara Yūsuf of the Kara Kuyunlu Turkmen, all of whom attempted but ultimately failed to overthrow al-Nāṣir Faraj in 807/1405.<sup>21</sup> If we assume that this rivalry extended to the protégés of the respective amirs, this would help account in part for the rapidity with which the two scholars replaced each other as *muḥtasib*. Certainly the hostility that generated from the *muḥtasib* incident was to have discernible repercussions in the later works of both al-‘Aynī and al-Maqrīzī, particularly in their treatment of each other.

Meanwhile Ibn Ḥajar, who was travelling during al-‘Aynī’s and al-Maqrīzī’s *muḥtasib* struggles, returned to Cairo in 806/1403-4. He seems to have spent the next ten years establishing himself in Cairene intellectual society under the new order of Barqūq’s son and successor, al-Nāṣir Faraj. This he did through a number

<sup>19</sup>His appointment was through Jakm alone, according to al-Maqrīzī in *Kitāb al-Sulūk* (Cairo, 1973), 3:3:1038. According to Ibn Taghrībirdī in *al-Nujūm*, 15:287, it was through all three amirs: Jakm min ‘Awd, Qalamtāy al-‘Uthmānī, and Taghrībirdī al-Qurdamī.

<sup>20</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 15:287.

<sup>21</sup>See Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Manhal al-Ṣāfi*, 4:313-19.



of different positions, including *mufī* of Dār al-‘Adl in 811/1408-9, a post he held until his death.<sup>22</sup>

After the *muḥtasib* incident, al-‘Aynī’s career remained relatively stable, and even included a brief stint in the lucrative and prestigious position of *nāzir al-aḥbās* (overseer of pious endowments) in 804/1401. Al-‘Aynī spent the next several years teaching in various *madrasahs* in Cairo, then succeeded in being appointed again, briefly, as *muḥtasib* and *nāzir al-aḥbās* near the end of Faraj’s reign.<sup>23</sup> He was appointed and dismissed from the latter post several more times during his long career, which is reflected in the wealth of economic detail he includes in his chronicle.

As for al-Maqrīzī, despite his failure to remain in the position of *muḥtasib*, he should be given full credit for the success of his interactions with patrons during this period. Throughout the reign of Faraj, al-Maqrīzī managed to maintain some degree of intimacy with the new sultan, if not as close as that which he had enjoyed with Barqūq and in spite of the rebellious career of Yashbak al-Sha‘bānī. In 810/1408 al-Maqrīzī accompanied Faraj to Damascus. There the sultan appointed the scholar instructor of *ḥadīth* in the Ashrafīyah and the Iqbālīyah *madrasahs*, and also made him the supervisor of *waqf* at the Nūrī hospital. At the same time Faraj offered al-Maqrīzī the position of Chief Shāfi‘ī *qāḍī* in Damascus, but he refused it.<sup>24</sup> The reasons for this are unclear. Perhaps al-Maqrīzī had grown disillusioned with competition, the “corruptive” influence of government, and the patronage system in general, although we must wonder why, since he was doing well according to the norms of the day. Or he may have been reluctant to take on an office that throughout the course of Islamic history had been associated with corruption and hypocrisy. It is possible that he was attracted by the cultural ideal of the historian who abandons political involvement and worldly obsessions in order to produce untainted history, and thus was seeking a more scholarly form of success, uncorrupted by political ties. Al-Sakhāwī suggests in his biography: “Then he relinquished [all] that (i.e., his teaching posts) and abided (*aqāma*) in his home city, obsessed by the occupation of history.”<sup>25</sup>

In 810/1408 al-Maqrīzī returned to Cairo, and appears to have devoted himself to fulfilling the academic ideal of the scholar.<sup>26</sup> Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah

<sup>22</sup>Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Izz al-Dīn, *al-Manhaj*, 152.

<sup>23</sup>Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*, 10:132. Also al-‘Aynī, *al-Sayf al-Muhammad*, editor’s introduction, page h.

<sup>24</sup>Al-Sakhāwī in *al-Ḍaw’* reports that al-Nāṣir Faraj offered al-Maqrīzī the *qāḍī*ship several times (2:22); Ibn Taghribirdī in *al-Manhal al-Ṣāfi* claims only once (1:417).

<sup>25</sup>Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*, 2:22.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.



suggests generously that the time-consuming demands of both a professional academic and an administrative career were a significant factor in al-Maqrīzī's eventual decision to turn away from the exigencies of the competitive arena.<sup>27</sup> While a desire for more leisure time in which to write history may have been a factor in al-Maqrīzī's withdrawal from the fifteenth-century academic rat race, additional evidence suggests otherwise, particularly after the death of Faraj in 815/1412, and the accession, first of the caliph al-Musta'īn (815/1412), then of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh (815-24/1412-21).

Al-Sakhāwī presents two interesting pieces of information. The first is that al-Maqrīzī versified a *sīrah* of Shaykh written by Ibn Nāhid (d. 841/1438). Al-Sakhāwī says nothing about its reception at court, however—if indeed it was received at all.<sup>28</sup> That al-Maqrīzī would take such a step, however, casts doubt upon the image of his voluntary withdrawal from court. Al-Sakhāwī also credits al-Maqrīzī with attaining a teaching position in *ḥadīth* at the Mu'ayyadīyah. This refers, presumably, to the Mu'ayyadī mosque complex, which also included a *madrāsah*, mausoleum, and *khānqāh*. Al-Maqrīzī mentions the complex frequently in *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, although not at all in the *Khīṭaṭ*. Nevertheless in no place does al-Maqrīzī declare that he received a teaching appointment there, although he does take care to identify those scholars who did, among them Ibn Ḥajar. Nor does Ibn Taghrībirdī state that al-Maqrīzī taught at the Mu'ayyadīyah in his biography of his mentor.

We are left, therefore, with a question. What did al-Maqrīzī do after his refusal of the position of *qāḍī* in Damascus? Did he indeed voluntarily withdraw from the world? Perhaps, although the testament of Ibn Taghrībirdī, reporting years later for 841/1437, suggests otherwise:

. . . 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. But with all this is the fact that he was far removed from government circles; the Sultan did not bring him near to himself, although he was an interesting conversationalist and a pleasant intimate companion; in fact al-Malik al-Zāhir Barqūq had brought him near, made him a boon companion

<sup>27</sup>Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyādah, "Ta'rīkh Ḥayāt al-Maqrīzī," in *Dirāsāt 'an al-Maqrīzī* (Cairo, 1971), 16.

<sup>28</sup>Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw'*, 2:23.



and appointed him market inspector of Cairo in the latter days of his rule. But when al-Malik al-Zāhir died, he (al-Maqrīzī) had no success with the rulers who came after him; they kept him away without showing him any favor, so he on his part took to registering their iniquities and infamies—"and one who does evil cannot take offense."<sup>29</sup>

This suggests that al-Maqrīzī's isolation from royal circles may not have been due to an active desire for solitude on his part, but rather to a degree of failure in his attempt to compete for the patronage of powerful men. This later manifested itself in bitter remarks, noticeable biases in his work, and other behavior of the "sour grapes" variety. Of the trio of Cairene historians writing in the first half of the fifteenth-century—al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Ḥajar and al-'Aynī—al-Maqrīzī is decidedly the most critical of Shaykh and, later, al-Ashraf Barsbāy (r. 825-41/1422-38), neither of whom favored him. Al-Maqrīzī called Shaykh:

. . . avaricious, parsimonious, and niggardly, even in eating; opinionated, irascible, harsh, envious, evil-eyed, addicted openly to various abominations, using obscenity and curses . . . the greatest cause of the ruin of Egypt and Syria . . .<sup>30</sup>

Writing later, Ibn Taghrībirdī disagreed with al-Maqrīzī's assessment and responded with, "I could with justice refute all that he says, but there is no call for me to do so; and I refrain from blackening paper and wasting time."<sup>31</sup>

Al-Maqrīzī was hardly any more complimentary to Barsbāy:

His days were [of] calm and tranquillity, except that there were tales about him; [tales] of avarice, stinginess and greed, cowardice, tyranny, distrust and aversion to the people, as well as . . . capriciousness of events and a lack of stability, of the likes of which we had never heard. Ruin prevailed in Egypt and Syria, as well as a scarcity of money; people became poor, and the behavior of rulers and governors worsened, despite the attainment of

<sup>29</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *History of Egypt 1382-1467*, trans. William Popper, University of California Publications in Semitic Philology (Berkeley, 1958), 18:143. Gaston Wiet has already pointed out the usefulness of Ibn Taghrībirdī's habit of commenting on the opinions of al-Maqrīzī, his teacher and mentor in the historical field. See Gaston Wiet, "L'historien Abul-Maḥāsīn," *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 10 (1930): 102-3.

<sup>30</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *History of Egypt*, trans. Popper, 17:87.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.



[Barsbāy's] hopes and goals, and the subjugation of his enemies and their death at the hands of others, [therefore] know that God has mastery of all things.<sup>32</sup>

Ibn Taghrībirdī again took his teacher to task for his criticism, saying:

As for the faults ascribed to him (Barsbāy) by Shaikh Taqī ad-Dīn al-Maqrīzī in his history, I shall not say he was biased in this, but I would quote somebody's words:

And who is the man of whom every trait meets approval?  
It is glory enough that the faults of a man can be  
counted.

It would be more fitting from various standpoints to have withheld these shameful remarks about him.<sup>33</sup>

While an increasingly frustrated al-Maqrīzī was building up bile and bitterness against Shaykh and later Barsbāy, al-'Aynī's career also took an active downward plunge when he was "tested" (*umtuḥina*) at the beginning of Shaykh's reign. It was not long, however, before he was later restored to favor.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, both the reason for and nature of this "test" remain unclear, as does the way in which al-'Aynī regained royal approval. Nevertheless, al-'Aynī managed to overcome his awkward beginning with Shaykh, and within a short span of time had become one of the sultan's boon companions. It was during al-Mu'ayyad's reign that al-'Aynī was again made *nāzīr al-aḥbās*, a post he was to hold—except for a few brief periods—until 853/1449.<sup>35</sup> Al-'Aynī's fluency in Turkish was a distinct asset, which he used to his advantage, for in addition to academic and financial appointments, al-Mu'ayyad made the 'Ayntābī native his ambassador to the Qaramanids at Konya in 823/1420.<sup>36</sup>

By this time, al-'Aynī seems to have acquired a degree of nimbleness in maneuvering within the patronage system, as well as an awareness of the importance of remaining in royal favor. One time-honored method for solidifying one's position was direct praise, which al-'Aynī employed in his biography of al-Mu'ayyad,

<sup>32</sup>Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:2:1066.

<sup>33</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *History of Egypt*, trans. Popper, 18:157.

<sup>34</sup>W. Marçais, "al-'Aynī," *Et*<sup>2</sup>, 2:790; also see al-Sakhāwī, *al-Daw'*, 10:132.

<sup>35</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *History of Egypt*, trans. Popper, 19:118; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Daw'*, 10:132.

<sup>36</sup>Al-'Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān*, 1:377.



*al-Sayf al-Muhannad fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad*.<sup>37</sup> In this one-volume prose work, al-'Aynī legitimized Shaykh by situating him within the context of universal history, Islamic history, and ancient Arab lineage, respectively.

Physical evidence of al-'Aynī's successful competition for patronage also exists in the form of the *madrasah* he commissioned to be built next to his house, which was near al-Azhar. The majority of endowed religious buildings constructed during the Mamluk period were sponsored either by the sultan and his family, or other high-ranking and wealthy members of the military elite. Some civilian officials in the administration also funded the construction and maintenance of smaller projects. As Chamberlain has pointed out, however, the '*ulamā*', by contrast, tended to be the beneficiaries of building projects, usually by obtaining a *manṣīb* in the form of a teaching, financial or administrative post within a religious institution. Relatively fewer members of the '*ulamā*' endowed buildings. The exact date of construction of al-'Aynī's *madrasah* is unknown, but must have been during al-Mu'ayyad's reign, since, in a clear indication of his favor for al-'Aynī, the sultan himself had it restored and a dome added before his own death in 824/1421.<sup>38</sup>

At the same time Ibn Ḥajar was also increasingly coming to Shaykh's attention. Ibn Ḥajar had been appointed *khaṭīb* at al-Azhar by 819/1416, and in 820/1417 was reading notices of the sultan's campaign in Anatolia to the populace at that mosque. In 822/1419 Shaykh asked Ibn Ḥajar as *mufī* of Dār al-'Adl to judge in the case of the Chief Shāfi'ī *qāḍī* al-Harawī, who had been accused of embezzlement. After Ibn Ḥajar's successful resolution of the case, he was appointed instructor of Shāfi'ī *fiqh* at the Mu'ayyadī mosque, which, unsurprisingly, was one of the two most important mosques of Shaykh's reign in terms of patronage (the other was al-Azhar).

After Shaykh's death in 824/1421 both al-'Aynī and Ibn Ḥajar remained in favor; al-Maqrīzī's career seems to have been going nowhere, as demonstrated by his apparent failure in the competitive arena. Al-'Aynī's professional life in particular only improved during the brief reign of al-Mu'ayyad's successor, al-Zāhir Ṭaṭar (824/1421), and reached its height during the reign of Barsbāy. It was under Barsbāy's rule that al-'Aynī's personal relationship with a Mamluk ruler became most developed, and it is this reign more than any other that contemporary historians cite when describing his closeness to the sultans in general. Continuing in what seems to have been a profitable exercise in praise, al-'Aynī wrote biographies of both Ṭaṭar and Barsbāy. Again his command of Turkish proved useful, for he translated a legal treatise of al-Qudīrī into Turkish for Ṭaṭar, and would read

<sup>37</sup>See footnote 4.

<sup>38</sup>Layla Ali Ibrahim and Bernard O'Kane, "The Madrasa of Badr ad-Dīn Al-'Aynī and Its Tiled Mihrāb," *Annales islamologiques* 24 (1988): 267.



history aloud to Barsbāy in Arabic and then explain it in Turkish.<sup>39</sup> Later al-Sakhāwī wrote:

Our teacher Badr ad-Dīn al-‘Aynī used to lecture on history and related subjects before al-Ashraf Barsbāy and others. (His lectures impressed) al-Ashraf so much that he made something like the following statement: “Islam is known only through him.” Al-‘Aynī and others, such as Ibn Nāhid and others, compiled biographies of the kings . . . since they knew that they liked to have it done.<sup>40</sup>

The relationship between al-‘Aynī and Barsbāy was not merely that of sovereign and entertaining historian, however, for it was to al-‘Aynī that Barsbāy turned for advice on religious matters, to the extent that he reportedly said on more than one occasion, “If not for al-‘Ayntābī there would be something suspect in our Islam” (*law lā al-‘ayntābī la-kāna fī islāminā shay’*).<sup>41</sup> Nor was this the extent of al-‘Aynī’s success within the outlines of established patronage practices, for he was made Chief Ḥanafī *qāḍī* in 829/1426. It was also during Barsbāy’s reign that al-‘Aynī became the first to hold the offices of *muḥtasib*, *nāzir al-aḥbās*, and Chief Ḥanafī *qāḍī* at the same time in 835/1431.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to engaging the sultan with anecdotes and instructing him on his religious rights and obligations, al-‘Aynī advised Barsbāy on delicate legal matters.<sup>43</sup> Barsbāy also relied at least once on al-‘Aynī to substitute for him in greeting foreign dignitaries, perhaps in part because of his competence in several languages.<sup>44</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī provides an interesting image of al-‘Aynī’s didactic role when he writes:

. . . frequently he [al-‘Aynī] would read in his [Barsbāy’s] presence the histories of earlier rulers and their good deeds, recounting to him their wars, troubles, expeditions and trials; he would explain this to him in Turkish and elaborate on it eloquently, then began to make him desire to do good deeds and look into the welfare of the

<sup>39</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:2:698; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*, 10:132.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Sakhāwī, “al-‘Iḥṣān bi-al-Tawdīḥ li-Man Ḍamma Ahl al-Tārīkh,” ed. and trans. Franz Rosenthal, in *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden, 1952), 259.

<sup>41</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 15:287; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*, 10:132.

<sup>42</sup> Al-‘Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān*, 2:21. This occurred considerably before the 846/1442-4 date cited by Marçais in his *EF* article (1:790-91).

<sup>43</sup> See footnote 74.

<sup>44</sup> Al-‘Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān*, 2:21.



Mohammedans; he deterred him many times from acts of injustice. . . . And because of what he heard through al-‘Ainī’s reading of history to him, al-Ashraf could dispense with the council of the amirs in regard to important matters, for he became expert through listening to the experiences of past rulers.

. . . al-Ashraf when he became Sultan was uneducated and young in comparison with the rulers among the Turks who had been trained in slavery; for at that time he was something over forty years old, inexperienced in affairs, and had not been put to the test. Al-‘Ainī by reading history to him educated him and taught him matters which he had been incapable of settling previously.

. . . For this reason al-‘Ainī was his greatest boon companion and the one nearest to him, despite the fact that he never mixed in government affairs; on the contrary, his sittings with him were devoted only to the reading of history, annals and the like. . . .<sup>45</sup>

Ibn Ḥajar’s relationship with Barsbāy does not seem to have been of the same personal quality. Ibn Ḥajar possessed an enormous amount of what Chamberlain has referred to as “cultural capital”; he was, by all reports, extraordinarily learned in a wide variety of subjects, highly intelligent, and extremely prolific.<sup>46</sup> He acquired significant *manṣibs* in the reigns of five successive sultans, and spent years in the highest and most prestigious *manṣib* in Mamluk realms, that of Chief Shāfi‘ī *qāḍī* in Egypt. Nevertheless, although it was Barsbāy who appointed Ibn Ḥajar to the position in 827/1424, the scholar does not appear to have been one of the sultan’s close personal friends. Certainly Ibn Ḥajar was hampered by a linguistic barrier, for unlike al-‘Aynī he did not know Turkish, and at times went so far as to rebuke those who spoke Turkish to him.<sup>47</sup> Chamberlain has also pointed out that many ‘*ulamā*’ lived in a certain “moral middle ground.”<sup>48</sup> Muḥammad Kamāl ‘Izz al-Dīn depicts Ibn Ḥajar as a man conflicted about his employment as a *qāḍī*, troubled by the demands of being simultaneously just and politic.<sup>49</sup> Certainly this tension emerged in periodic conflicts with more than one sultan.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *History of Egypt*, trans. Popper, 18:158.

<sup>46</sup>Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 6.

<sup>47</sup>‘Izz al-Dīn, *al-Manhaj*, 161.

<sup>48</sup>Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, 104.

<sup>49</sup>‘Izz al-Dīn, *al-Manhaj*, 158.

<sup>50</sup>See al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:3:1181-83, 1203; al-‘Aynī, *‘Iqd al-Jumān*, 2:372 (quoted below).



### RIVALRIES

The relationship between Ibn Ḥajar and al-‘Aynī, both major figures for over twenty years, both successful competitors for patronage, was a changeable one. The two scholars kept up a certain amount of poetic competition, and used the occasion of the collapse of a minaret from the Mu‘ayyadī mosque in 821/1418-19 to make fun of one another in verse. This poetic rivalry goes unmentioned by either scholar or by al-Maqrīzī, although it emerges both in Ibn Taghrībirdī’s *Nujūm* and in works as far removed from Cairo as the *Ṣidq al-Akhhbār* of Ibn Sabāṭ (d. 926/1520), who lived on the northern Syrian coast.<sup>51</sup> This was only the forerunner of a later, more serious rivalry between Ibn Ḥajar and al-‘Aynī over their differing interpretations of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī. Although both scholars had their supporters, Ibn Ḥajar can be viewed as the ultimate victor with his *Fath al-Bārī fī Sharḥ al-Bukhārī*, as well as his *Intiqād al-I‘tirād*, a critique of al-‘Aynī’s critique of *Fath al-Bārī*. Relations between the two sometimes deteriorated significantly, most notably in the period directly preceding 26 Ṣafar 833/24 November 1429, on which date both men were simultaneously removed from their posts as *qādīs*. Ibn Ḥajar provides no explanation, but al-‘Aynī is anxious to point out that the dismissal not only was not his fault, but did not actually impair his association with Barsbāy; in doing so, he inadvertently indicates the tense relationship he had with Ibn Ḥajar:

On Thursday, 26th Ṣafar, the *qādī* ‘Alam al-Dīn Ṣāliḥ al-Bulqīnī was granted a robe, and he became the Chief Shāfi‘ī *qādī* in Egypt, replacing the *qādī* Shihāb al-Dīn Ibn Ḥajar, by virtue of his dismissal (*‘azlih*), and likewise ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Tafahnī was granted a robe, and he became the Chief [Ḥanafī] *qādī*, replacing the author [of this book, *musatṭirih*, i.e., al-‘Aynī] by virtue of his dismissal. The reason for that was the effort of some enemies with (*‘inda*) al-Malik al-Ashraf, [saying] that these two *qādīs* would not cease fighting, nor agree, such that the interests of the Muslims were lost between them. They [these ill-wishers] found no way [to achieve] the dismissal of the author [except by] this calumny; thus the dismissal happened because of this.<sup>52</sup> The Sultan spoke to me about

<sup>51</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 13:225; also see Ibn Sabāṭ, *Ṣidq al-Akhhbār* (Tripoli, Lebanon, 1993), 2:775-76.

<sup>52</sup>The text seems to be corrupt: *lam yajidū ṭarīqan fī ‘azli musatṭirihī ilá hādhā al-iftirā’*.



that and said: "I did not dismiss you for a matter that required dismissal, nor because of a legitimate accusation, but the situation is thus."<sup>53</sup>

So, too, both men were not loath to point out weaknesses or physical infirmities in one another. When in that same year al-‘Aynī fell off his donkey and broke his leg, Ibn Ḥajar took care to mention it in his chronicle.<sup>54</sup> Later al-‘Aynī replied in kind by referring to the fatigue Ibn Ḥajar felt when visiting the prince Muḥammad ibn Jaqmaq. Such visits forced the elderly scholar to climb up not only the steps to the citadel but also additional steps within it to Muḥammad’s elevated apartments.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless relations between the two scholars at other times seem to have been good, so much so that, when both men accompanied Barsbāy during his campaign to Āmid in 836/1433, al-‘Aynī invited Ibn Ḥajar to be his houseguest in ‘Ayntāb for the ‘Īd al-Fiṭr.<sup>56</sup>

Nor was sporadic petty griping merely a private matter between these two men. The outsider, al-Maqrīzī, was similarly prone to such tendencies—with one exception. Al-Maqrīzī’s opinion of Ibn Ḥajar seems to have been very high; in no place does he utter a word against him, and when possible al-Maqrīzī takes the time to praise Ibn Ḥajar’s remarkable learning.<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately for al-Maqrīzī, this high regard may not have been fully returned; rather, al-Sakhāwī reports that Ibn Ḥajar considered al-Maqrīzī to be a plagiarist, and condemned him for stealing the bulk of his *Khiṭaṭ* work from a neighbor, al-Awḥādī.<sup>58</sup> But it is unclear how much of this accusation was al-Sakhāwī’s opinion and how much Ibn Ḥajar’s own view.

At any rate, although he remained deferential to Ibn Ḥajar, al-Maqrīzī’s opinion of al-‘Aynī seems to have been poor. This can be glimpsed in al-Maqrīzī’s treatment of al-‘Aynī in *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, as well as in his lack of treatment of the ‘Ayntābī in the *Khiṭaṭ*. Nowhere in the *Khiṭaṭ* is al-‘Aynī’s *madrasah* mentioned, although its location near al-Azhar, the addition to it of its dome by al-Mu’ayyad, and its unusual Anatolian-influenced *mihrab* seem to make it worthy at least of mention. In his introduction to the work al-Maqrīzī states his intention of depicting the glories of past ages, that of the Fatimids in particular. Ayman Fu’ād Sayyid points

<sup>53</sup> Al-‘Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān*, 372.

<sup>54</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’ al-Ghumr bi-Abnā’ al-‘Umr*, ed. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bukhārī (Beirut, 1986), 8:204.

<sup>55</sup> Al-‘Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān*, 617.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 431.

<sup>57</sup> See al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:2:992.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Sakhāwī, “al-I’lān,” ed. and trans. Rosenthal, *Historiography*, 402.



out, however, that al-Maqrīzī departed noticeably from his own plan in later sections of the work—the text includes dates as late as 843/1439–40. Sayyid also reminds us that the *Khīṭaṭ* was compiled gradually throughout al-Maqrīzī’s lifetime, with a definitive edition composed near the end of his life after the completion of most of his other works.<sup>59</sup> It seems impossible that al-Maqrīzī would have been ignorant of the existence of al-‘Aynī’s *madrasah*.

Nor, since composition of the *Khīṭaṭ* spanned decades, does it seem plausible that he left these structures out because he had already completed the work. This cannot but prompt the question: What other buildings have been left out of the book? Did al-Maqrīzī’s personal opinion of their founders play any role in his selection of material? Or, if their omission were indeed a function of al-Maqrīzī’s preoccupation with the Fatimids, we must wonder what prompted that preoccupation. Was it al-Maqrīzī’s alleged descent from the Fatimids? Did he himself accept this lineage? Or did his status as a reclusive outsider in his own time have any influence on his preoccupation with a vanished historical age?

It is not my purpose to address these issues here, however, as they do not pertain directly to the subject at hand, namely al-Maqrīzī’s literary treatment of al-‘Aynī. Certainly the case seems clearer in *Kitāb al-Sulūk*. There, although most of al-Maqrīzī’s references to al-‘Aynī are circumspect notices of promotions or dismissals, hints of al-Maqrīzī’s dislike of al-‘Aynī emerge where issues of *ḥisbah* are concerned. In one reference to al-‘Aynī as *muḥtasib*, al-Maqrīzī states:

On Friday, Dhu’l-Hijja 7, there was a disgraceful occurrence. Bread was scarce in the markets; and when Badr ad-Dīn Maḥmūd al-‘Ainī, market inspector of Cairo, left his house to go to the citadel, the populace shouted at him, implored the amirs to come to their relief, and complained to them against the market inspector. In fear lest the people would stone him, he turned from the Boulevard and went up to the Citadel; he complained about them to the Sultan [Barsbāy], of whom he was a favorite, and to whom he used at night to read the histories of kings and translate them into Turkish for him. The Sultan was enraged and sent a party of amirs to Zuwaila Gate; they took possession of the entrances into the streets in order to seize the people. One of the slaves threw at an amir a stone which struck him; he was captured and beaten. Then a large number of people were seized and brought before the Sultan, who

<sup>59</sup>Ayman Fu’ād Sayyid, “Remarques sur la compositions des *Ḥīṭat* de Maqrīzī d’après un manuscrit autographe,” *Hommages à la mémoire de Serge Sauneron, 1927-1976, II: Égypte post-pharaonique*, 231-58, Bibliothèque d’étude, 81:2 (Cairo, 1979), 240.



ordered them to be cut in two at the waist; but then he handed them over to the governor of the city who beat them, cut off their noses and ears, and imprisoned them on the eve of Saturday. In the morning they were reviewed before the Sultan, who set them free; they numbered twenty-two respected men, *sharifs* and merchants. Men's hearts were alienated by this, and tongues were loosed with imprecations and the like.<sup>60</sup>

This passage is not directly critical of al-'Aynī, or at least, not at first glance. Indeed, Ibn Ḥajar seems much more critical in his description of the same incident when he writes:

On Dhū al-Ḥijjah 7, 828 [10 October ], a group rose up against the *muhtasib*, who was the *qādī* Badr al-Dīn al-'Aynī, because of [his] negligence of the matter of the vendors, and the excessiveness of bread [prices] despite the cheapness of wheat.<sup>61</sup>

Al-'Aynī may indeed have been an inept *muhtasib*; his skill or lack thereof, however, is not the point here. Rather it is the opinions of his peers that are interesting, especially that of al-Maqrīzī, and especially when we note that in *al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah* Ibn Taghrībirdī provides a different perspective on the incident. After quoting al-Maqrīzī's entry, Ibn Taghrībirdī confirms that the information supplied is true, but then adds that al-Maqrīzī neglected to report that the mob did in fact stone al-'Aynī, thus justifying his complaint to the Sultan. Ibn Taghrībirdī goes on to explain that al-Maqrīzī omitted this detail because "He wished thereby to increase the vilification of him [al-'Aynī], for there was long-standing hostility between the two."<sup>62</sup>

In another passage al-Maqrīzī's criticism is simultaneously more long-winded and more pronounced:

In the middle of this month (Ṣafar 829/December-January 1425-26), the price of wheat rose and one *irdabb* exceeded 300 *dirhams*; flour became scarce at the mills and [so did] bread in the markets. The matter became atrocious on the twenty-ninth [of the month] and people crowded to the bakeries asking for bread; and they

<sup>60</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *History of Egypt*, trans. Popper, 18:29; idem, *al-Nujūm*, 14:117-18; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:2:698.

<sup>61</sup>Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'*, 8:77-78.

<sup>62</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 14:118; also idem, *History of Egypt*, trans. Popper, 18:29.



clamored to buy bread. Through this the souls of the bakers became miserly, and a *qadah* of *fūl* was offered for sale at four *dirhams*. For this there were many reasons: One of them is that al-Badr Maḥmūd al-‘Ayntābī tended to be lenient on the vendors, to the extent that it was as if there were no limitation on them in what they did, nor on the prices by which they sold their goods. So when al-Shashmānī<sup>63</sup> was appointed [*muḥtasib*], he terrorized the vendors and curbed them with severe blow[s] . . . .<sup>64</sup>

And it happened in those days that there was destruction of a great many water buffalos and cattle, to the extent that [there was] a man who had 150 water buffaloes and all of them died. There remained no more than four water buffaloes, and we don’t know what happened to them. Milk, cheese, and butter [also] became scarce. Then in the middle of this month [?] winds blew,<sup>65</sup> [which] continued (*tawālat*) for more than ten days. The boats could not travel in the Nile, and the coast was laid bare of crops. News arrived of high prices in Gaza, Ramla, Jerusalem, Nablus and the coast, Damascus, Hārrān, and Hamāh, until the price of an Egyptian *ardab* [of grain] among them would exceed 1000 *dirhams*’ worth of copper (*alf dirham fulūsan*) if it were counted. News arrived of high prices in Upper Egypt; in the whole area wheat and wheat bread were scarcely to be found. Despite these disasters, the notables became greedy. Indeed when wheat reached 250 *dirhams* per *irdabb* some of the Amirs of One Thousand said: “I will only sell my wheat at 300 *dirhams* per *ardab*.” The Sultan forbade that any wheat be sold from his granaries because of the scarcity of what he had. People thought bad thoughts, and became agitated and angry. Cautiousness became strong, and greed increased. The wheat vendors kept what wheat they had, hoarding it, and hoped to sell earth (i.e., wheat) for pearls. All this, and the one in charge of the *ḥisbah* was far from [any] knowledge of it. And the long and short of it was what is said: “Tribulation piled up on one person.”<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup>The amir Ināl al-Shashmānī was appointed *muḥtasib* in mid-Šafar 829, at the end of the period of inflation, Dhū al-Qa‘dah 828- Šafar 829; perhaps in an effort to stabilize the situation?

<sup>64</sup>In this sentence the text seems to be corrupt: *fa-kādūhu* (??) *wa-taraka ‘iddatun minhum mā kāna yu‘ānīhi* (??) *min al-bay’*.

<sup>65</sup>I could not make sense of this word: *muraysīyah?* *marīsīyah?* *murīsīyah?*

<sup>66</sup>Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:2:710-11.



That prices rose dramatically during those few months seems to be generally acknowledged, for Ibn Ḥajar, Ibn Taghrībirdī and al-‘Aynī himself also mention it. For each historian, however, the possible causes seem to differ: for al-Maqrīzī, as seen above, it is a combination of al-‘Aynī’s inefficiency and a number of natural disasters; for Ibn Ḥajar it is a similar combination of al-‘Aynī’s negligence and a plague of vermin in Syria.<sup>67</sup> Al-‘Aynī himself mentions both the inflation and the vermin but neglects to expand on his own actions,<sup>68</sup> while Ibn Taghrībirdī’s later contribution is little more than the transmission and critique of al-Maqrīzī’s opinion.<sup>69</sup>

Nor did al-‘Aynī refrain from returning such favors to his peers. Although al-‘Aynī managed to achieve a high level of financial and material success through competition for *manṣibs*, access to powerful people and generally an adroit manipulation of patronage opportunities during his lifetime, this did not automatically result in success on the more idealized level of scholarship. In the field of history Ibn Ḥajar and al-Maqrīzī could be counted among al-‘Aynī’s competitors. In addition, al-‘Aynī was involved in the above-mentioned heated debate with Ibn Ḥajar about the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī.

Matters came to a head in 833/1428, when an ambassador arrived in Cairo from the court of Shāh Rukh, the son of Tīmūr and ruler of Herat, requesting copies of two books: al-Maqrīzī’s *Kitāb al-Sulūk* and Ibn Ḥajar’s *Fath al-Bārī bi-Sharḥ al-Bukhārī*. The royal commission of works from authors who had achieved a level of renown was one specific patronage practice at that time. Al-Maqrīzī records the titles of both books in *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, mentioning Ibn Ḥajar’s first.<sup>70</sup> Ibn Ḥajar neglects to mention al-Maqrīzī’s book, although he informs us that he immediately set about having a copy of his own work prepared; nor does he mention, as does Ibn Taghrībirdī, that Barsbāy in fact turned down Shāh Rukh’s request.<sup>71</sup> If we take al-Sakhāwī’s portrayal of al-Maqrīzī’s desire for detachment from court life at face value, we might infer here that Shāh Rukh’s request did not impress the historian. However, Ibn Taghrībirdī’s image of him as a man disappointed by his own failure within the competitive arena might instead lead us to conclude that he viewed this specific request of his scholarly work by a foreign ruler—and the son of Tīmūr at that—as an honor.

We may also infer that Shāh Rukh’s desire for works by two of al-‘Aynī’s major rivals was quite a professional blow to the ‘Ayntābī historian. In his own

<sup>67</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’*, 8:77-79, 94.

<sup>68</sup> Al-‘Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān*, 2:252-53.

<sup>69</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 14:117-18.

<sup>70</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:2:818.

<sup>71</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’*, 8:194; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 14:170.



entry for the event, al-‘Aynī curiously fails to refer in any way to the two works requested, although he goes into some detail about the foreign gifts presented to Sultan Barsbāy:

On Tuesday 21 Muḥarram [833], a messenger came from Shāh Rukh ibn Tīmūrlank, sultan of the lands of the Iranians and the Turks; he had a letter to al-Malik al-Ashraf containing much information, and he had some gifts from their country. Likewise he had the letter of the son of Shāh Rukh, who is Ibrāhīm Shāh, ruler of the lands of Fārs, whose capital is the city of Shīrāz. He also sent gifts, among them: a bezoar stone,<sup>72</sup> eleven *mithqāls*, and a letter from him written in gold in Arabic letters, and a letter from the Shāfi‘ī *qāḍī* Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Jazarī, chief *qāḍī* in Shīrāz. The date of their letters was from the beginning of [8]32.<sup>73</sup>

In his biography of al-‘Aynī and despite his high opinion of him as an historian, al-Sakhāwī critiques the ‘Ayntābī scholar because his books were not the stuff of requests made by foreign kings:

. . . al-‘Aynī’s *Sharḥ* [of al-Bukhārī] is also copious but it did not become as widespread as that of our shaykh [Ibn Ḥajar], nor did rulers of the outlying areas [*mulūk al-aṭrāf*] request it from the ruler of Egypt.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup>Bezoar stone, from Arabic *bazhar*, from Persian *pādzahr* (*pād*, protecting against, and *zahr*, poison); refers to stone-like concentrations of resinous organic matter considered to have medicinal qualities.

<sup>73</sup>Al-‘Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān*, 2:370-71.

<sup>74</sup>Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw’*, 10:134. It may be, however, that al-‘Aynī took his revenge on Shāh Rukh in the only way possible, that is, by using his own education against the Timurid. Throughout Barsbāy’s reign one controversial strategic, ideological and legal issue was Shāh Rukh’s attempt to provide the *kiswah* or covering for the *ka’bah*, traditionally maintained by the Mamluks. Barsbāy’s repeated refusal of Shāh Rukh’s requests to provide the *kiswah* was generally unpopular among the amirs. In 838/1434, therefore, when Shāh Rukh once again wrote demanding this privilege, explaining that he was bound by an oath he had made after a dream, Barsbāy met with the four chief *qāḍīs* to discuss the legal ramifications of denying the request of such an individual. It comes as little surprise to discover that it was al-‘Aynī, spurned academically six years earlier, who stated that Shāh Rukh’s vow was null and void, thereby giving Barsbāy the legal grounds on which to refuse the request; see al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:2:928.



Al-‘Aynī’s contempt for al-Maqrīzī even survived the latter’s death in 845/1442. The first to go, the seventy-nine year-old al-Maqrīzī died on 16 Ramaḍān/28 January after a long illness.<sup>75</sup> By nature isolated, by professional circumstance removed from the circles of power and wealth, al-Maqrīzī did not even have the comfort of his children in his final days, for the last of his offspring, his daughter Fāṭimah, had predeceased him in 826/1423.<sup>76</sup> In terms of the competitive arena and Mamluk patronage practices, al-Maqrīzī seems to have died a failure; in terms of academic endeavor, a resounding although not unqualified success with at least his followers, although not his detractors.<sup>77</sup> Nor could mortality soften al-‘Aynī’s antagonism for al-Maqrīzī; Ibn Taghrībirdī points out that al-‘Aynī incorrectly noted al-Maqrīzī’s death date as 29 Sha‘bān/12 January.<sup>78</sup> Al-‘Aynī’s death notice for al-Maqrīzī is a mere five lines long. In it al-‘Aynī makes no mention of al-Maqrīzī’s works, nor of the achievements of his earlier career, but rather accuses him of geomancy, then attempts to “clarify” the *ḥisbah* incident of 801-3/1398-1401:

[In this year died] the shaykh Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn al-Maqrīzī; he died Friday, 29 Sha‘bān; he was occupied with writing history and with geomancy (*ḍarb al-raml*); he was appointed to the *ḥisbah* of Cairo at the end of the days of al-Malik al-Zāhir [Barqūq], then was dismissed for the author (*musattirih*; i.e., al-‘Aynī) [of this book]; then was appointed another time in the days of the amir Sūdūn, al-Zāhir’s nephew the great *dawādār*, replacing the author because the author had [already] dismissed himself because of the oppression of the above-mentioned Sūdūn.<sup>79</sup>

Ibn Ḥajar’s death notice for al-Maqrīzī, by contrast, is twenty-five lines long, and the date is 17 Ramaḍān/29 January. In it he refers to al-Maqrīzī’s love of history, then goes on to praise him:

He was a skillful, outstanding, versatile, precise, pious, superior imām; [he was] fond of the people of the *sunnah*; he inclined

<sup>75</sup> Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Daw’*, 2:25.

<sup>76</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:2:651.

<sup>77</sup> These include al-Sakhāwī, who accused al-Maqrīzī of plagiarizing the manuscript for his *Khiṭaṭ*, and possibly Ibn Ḥajar as well. See above; also al-Sakhāwī, *al-Daw’*, 1:358-59; 2:22; and “al-I‘lān,” ed. and trans. Rosenthal, *Historiography*, 285, 402.

<sup>78</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 15:226.

<sup>79</sup> Al-‘Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān*, 2:574.



towards *ḥadīth* . . . [he was] pleasant company [and] entertaining; he went on the pilgrimage often and lived [and studied in Mecca] many times.

Ibn Ḥajar spends the rest of the notice musing about al-Maqrīzī's alleged link to the Fatimids.<sup>80</sup> This notice tempers al-Sakhāwī's version of Ibn Ḥajar's dislike of al-Maqrīzī because of the alleged plagiarism of the *Khiṭaṭ*. Al-Maqrīzī was buried at Maqābir al-Ṣūfīyah.<sup>81</sup>

A few years later, in Dhū al-Qa'dah 852/January 1449, Ibn Ḥajar sickened. This prompted streams of visitors to pay their respects, as could be expected for one of his intellectual stature and reputation, before he passed away at the end of the month. His funeral was extremely well-attended; the Sultan Jaqmaq was there, as was the Abbasid caliph, who led the prayers. (Ibn Taghrībirdī reports 50,000 mourners in the cortège.)<sup>82</sup> Ibn Ḥajar was buried near the tomb of the Imām al-Shāfi'ī, and, appropriately enough for such a well-known and revered figure, prayers were said for him in Damascus, Jerusalem, Mecca, Hebron and Aleppo.<sup>83</sup>

One year after Ibn Ḥajar, it was al-'Aynī's turn as the last of the trio. He suffered from failing memory at the end of his life, which may have been part of the reason for his dismissal from the post of *nāẓir al-aḥbās* in 853/1449 by Jaqmaq "because of his advanced age."<sup>84</sup> Another reason may have been the machinations of a younger scholar, 'Ala' al-Dīn ibn Aqbars. But the waning of al-'Aynī's career had begun earlier. The scholar who had managed to befriend three sultans in a row did not seem to make as successful a transition to the new era of al-'Azīz Jaqmaq. Ibn Taghrībirdī tells us that after Barsbāy's death in 841/1438 al-'Aynī was replaced as chief Ḥanafī *qādī* and kept to his house. Al-Sakhāwī adds that he focused on his writing during this period, and managed financially on his income as *nāẓir al-aḥbās* until he lost that position, after which he sold his property and his books, with the exception of those items he had left as *waqf* in his *madrāsah*, a testament to the uncertain nature of even his substantial material success.<sup>85</sup> Like al-Maqrīzī, al-'Aynī had outlived all his children. In 855/1451 at the age of ninety-three al-'Aynī died, and was buried in his own *madrāsah*.

<sup>80</sup>Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'*, 9:172.

<sup>81</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Manhal al-Ṣāfi*, 1:420; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw'*, 2:25.

<sup>82</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 15:259.

<sup>83</sup>Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn 'Izz al-Dīn, *Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, Mu'arrīkhan* (Beirut, 1407/1987), 106-10.

<sup>84</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *History of Egypt*, trans. Popper, 19:118.

<sup>85</sup>Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw'*, 10:133.



## CONCLUSION

In conclusion we see that the lives of Ibn Ḥajar, al-‘Aynī, and al-Maqrīzī, as well as the numerous rivalries among and between the men, provide a case study of some types of interaction both among the ‘*ulamā*’ and between the ‘*ulamā*’ and members of the military elite. The lives of many scholars during the Mamluk period were caught up with those of the sultan and the amirs in a kind of interdependence, which expressed itself through elite financial and material patronage of the ‘*ulamā*’ in exchange for legitimation and involvement in the dominant Islamic cultural environment. As Chamberlain has pointed out, for the ‘*ulamā*’ the road to material and financial success could lie within the realm of social and academic competition, itself delineated by the parameters of Mamluk patronage practices. Thus hostility, partisanship, and rivalry inevitably arose as scholars maneuvered for proximity to patrons and favorable material and financial rewards within the competitive arena. In the case of al-‘Aynī and al-Maqrīzī, rivalry sprang up between them after the *muḥtasib* incident of 801-3/1399-1401. For al-‘Aynī and Ibn Ḥajar, their rivalries were multi-faceted and ongoing. So, too, the lives of the three scholars provide a case study not only of the types and manifestations of rivalries common among scholars at that time, but also the multiple and often conflicting definitions of success.



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