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## Al-Maqrīzī as a Historian of the Reign of Barqūq

When reading the *Kitāb al-Sulūk* of al-Maqrīzī one cannot help but notice the consistently negative assessment the historian made of Barqūq and his rule in the reports on his rise from simple mamluk to *amīr kabīr* (roughly from 768–79/1366–78), and then from *amīr kabīr* (779–84/1378–82) to sultan (784–91, 792–801/1382–89, 1390–9). The criticisms he voiced are simply too pervasive and too peculiar to his work—they are absent from most of his contemporaries' chronicles—for them to be ignored or to be explained away as mere coincidence. The aim of this article is twofold: first, it will present the arguments marshalled by al-Maqrīzī<sup>1</sup> in his attacks on Barqūq,<sup>2</sup> and then verify whether or not they are present in the works of contemporary and later historians, namely Ibn al-Furāt's (735–807/1335–1405) *Tārīkh al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk*, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's (773–852/1372–1449) *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr bi-Abnāʾ al-ʿUmr*, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's (779–851/1377–1448) *Al-Dhayl fī Tārīkh al-Islām*, Ibn Taghrībirdī's (812–74/1409–70) *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*, al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafī's (819–900/1416–94) *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-al-Abdān fī Tawārīkh al-Zamān*, and Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Iyās's (852–930/1448–1524) *Badāʾiʾ al-Zuhūr fī Waqāʾiʾ al-Duhūr*,<sup>3</sup> second, it will examine the historiographical

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<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this paper, three of al-Maqrīzī's works have been examined: *Al-Khiṭaṭ*, vols. 1–2 (Beirut, n.d.); idem, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Maʿrifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, vol. 3 (parts 1–2), edited by Saʿīd ʿĀshūr (Cairo, 1970); and idem, *Mamluk Economics: A Study and Translation of al-Maqrīzī's Ighāthah*, translated by Adel Allouche (Salt Lake City, 1994).

<sup>2</sup>So far, the only attempt to analyze the aversion of al-Maqrīzī towards Barqūq was made by Amalia Levanoni in her "Al-Maqrīzī's Account of the Transition from Turkish to Circassian Mamluk Sultanate: History in the Service of Faith," in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt (c. 950–1800)*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden, 2001), 93–105, where she noted what she perceived as inconsistencies and prejudices on the part of al-Maqrīzī: among other things his over-emphasis, unsupported by evidence, on the decline of the Turks and the rise of the Circassians (91–101) and his own personal dislike of Barqūq and his kin, the Circassians (100–2). For Levanoni, his severe attitude vis-à-vis holders of power "might be found in his deep commitment to the role Islam allotted to religious scholars, the ulama, in the guidance of their community [103]." In other words, it is because he perceived that the new Mamluk regime "fell short of the traditional Muslim political theory" (103) that he took it upon himself to criticize it. Even though the explanations presented by Levanoni are undoubtedly central and essential to our understanding of al-Maqrīzī's denigration of Barqūq, there are other factors that need to be examined.

<sup>3</sup>Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk*, vol. 9, pts. 1 and 2, ed. Costi K. Zurayk and Najla



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significance of al-Maqrīzī's comments.

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The criticisms voiced by al-Maqrīzī towards Barqūq are part of a complex of negative opinions that indicate not only that he, alone among the historians of this period, seriously disliked the sultan, but also felt that he was witnessing the end of an era and the dawn of another fraught with a breakdown in the traditional order, social turmoil, danger at the borders, an increasingly predatory regime, etc. The criticisms levied by al-Maqrīzī do not pervade every page of his works. They do however appear consistently in those parts of the *Kitāb al-Sulūk* that cover the rise of Barqūq until the end of his first reign, whenever he described or recounted events that were symptomatic, in his eyes, of the ills of Egypt and Syria and more specifically of the *fin d'époque* he felt he was witnessing.

The most eloquent criticism of Barqūq and his regime is to be found in an often-quoted passage of the *Kitāb al-Sulūk* that is intended as an assessment of Barqūq's first reign, which ended in 791/1389. After noting the taxes that he abolished, the structures he ordered built, his deference, unique amongst the "Turkish kings," towards men of religion, al-Maqrīzī said the following:<sup>4</sup>

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Izzeddin (Beirut, 1936–38); Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr bi-Abnāʾ al-ʿUmr*, vols. 1–4 (Beirut, 1986); Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Al-Dhayl fī Tārīkh al-Islām*, vols. 1, 3, 4, ed. ʿAdnān Darwīsh (Damascus, 1977–97); Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*, vols. 11–13, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shams al-Dīn (Beirut, 1992); and idem, *History of Egypt 1382–1467*, trans. William Popper, University of California Publications in Semitic Philology, vols. 13, 17, 18 (Berkeley, 1954– ); al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-al-Abdān fī Tawārīkh al-Zamān*, vol. 1, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1970); Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʾ al-Zuhūr fī Waqāʾiʾ al-Duhūr*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden, 1974–75). Al-ʿAynī's *Iqd al-Jumān* is the only one of the major chronicles of the period I was unable to consult. As will become apparent below, of all the above-mentioned historians, Ibn Iyās (852–930/1427–97) is the only one to systematically denigrate Barqūq. Interestingly, the overwhelming majority of his criticisms are either taken directly from al-Maqrīzī or are paraphrases of his accounts.

<sup>4</sup>*Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:2:618–19. The translation is William Popper's in Ibn Taghrībirdī, *History of Egypt*, 13:42–43. Ibn Taghrībirdī made up for the dearth of non-political facts in his chronicle by adding to his work the type of information which makes his chronicle extremely useful: the accounts he reports from people who lived through this period, namely his father's associates and acquaintances, and the first-hand knowledge he had of the sultan and his family, to whom he was related. In the case of the quotation at hand, Ibn Taghrībirdī clearly identifies the passage as al-Maqrīzī's (something he rarely does in his narrative unless, for example, he wants to challenge his teacher) in order to criticize him. I have added in italics a few sentences that are present in al-Maqrīzī's *Kitāb al-Sulūk* but were written differently or simply omitted in the *Nujūm al-Zāhirah*. On the other hand, I have removed passages that are not to be found in the *Kitāb al-Sulūk* but are present in the *Nujūm al-Zāhirah*.



But he was avaricious, and in his days has introduced the practice of the open offering of bribes; indeed he hardly ever appointed anyone to an office or administrative position except for money, *so the lowlifes acceded to prestigious positions and to high stations*, and on this account political corruption was common; he also had an inordinate predilection for advancing men of the lowest classes and debasing those of noble family so that *he changed the social order amongst people*,<sup>5</sup> *and he antagonized the grandees amongst the Turcomans and Arabs in Syria, Egypt, and the Hijaz*. In his days three disgraceful practices became notorious: pederasty, *to such an extent that prostitutes, for their lack of business, had to imitate the ghulmān in order to boost the demand for their debauchery*, because of the favor which he openly showed to handsome mamluks *and the accusation levied against him and his amirs that he had intercourse with them*; the frank acceptance of bribes, *in which he was imitated by district governors, until such behavior ceased to be reprehensible*; and the decline in the business of the market and the *paucity of gain*, because of his niggardliness and the rarity with which he made gifts to anyone. So his faults were many times more numerous than his virtues.<sup>6</sup>

The charges levelled here by al-Maqrīzī against Barqūq, namely the accusations of pederasty, the taking of bribes and niggardliness, his overturning of the social order, his antagonizing of internal and outside forces, etc., even though forcefully put,<sup>7</sup> do not cover the whole range of criticisms that are to be found in other parts of the *Kitāb al-Sulūk*.

For one thing, the criticisms elaborated by al-Maqrīzī concerning the character of Barqūq touch upon much more than the shortcomings noted in the quotation above. In those instances where al-Maqrīzī commented on the very persona of

<sup>5</sup>This is my understanding of "wa-ghayyara mā kāna lil-nās min-al-tartīb," whereas Popper reads it as "he brought about a change in the orderly conduct of people," Ibn Taghrībirdī, *History of Egypt*, trans. Popper, 13:43.

<sup>6</sup>Following this passage, Ibn Taghrībirdī systematically rebuked his former teacher by noting in the case of pederasty and the taking of bribes that they were old practices, the former going as far back as the Khurasānīs' entry into Iraq during the Abbasid revolution (ibid.). Ibn Taghrībirdī stated that the accusation of niggardliness might hold if he is compared to his predecessors, "but he was generous in comparison to those who came after him" (ibid., 44). The refutation of al-Maqrīzī's discourse is accompanied by harsh criticisms as for example, "Shaikh Taqī al-Dīn (God have mercy on him) was guilty of well-known inconsistencies. . . ." (ibid.).

<sup>7</sup>One of them, that of pederasty, was found nowhere else in the chronicle.



Barqūq, the latter is depicted as a conniving individual who maneuvered through the meanders of politics to secure his power. For example, as early as 23 Rabī‘ al-Thānī 779/ 28 August 1377, following the removal of Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī by Barqūq and Barakah, al-Maqrīzī noted that the civil wars, the mamluk revolts, and the changes in government that had previously taken place were all but a springboard for Barqūq’s taking over of the country. Barqūq, continued al-Maqrīzī, quickly settled into office and governed on his own until he was taken to the grave, “[an] honored, invincible, revered, and lofty [man].”<sup>8</sup> The Machiavellian nature of Barqūq was again emphasized by al-Maqrīzī on a number of other instances. For example, when Barqūq used the services of the qadis and the ulama on 19 Ṣafar 782/ 25 May 1380 to ease the tension between himself and his former ally Barakah, al-Maqrīzī saw nothing in the motivation of the *amīr kabīr* but “ruse and cunning.”<sup>9</sup> In 793/1391, one year after his return to the throne, the arrest of an amir by Barqūq is yet another opportunity for al-Maqrīzī to dwell upon the sultan’s calculating ways; commenting on the arrest of Āqbughā al-Mārdīnī, he said: “This is the habit of the sultan: he is patient with his enemies in that he does not take revenge on them until he has the opportunity to discipline them for a punishable crime so that he does not appear to be seeking revenge, thanks to his self-command and *retenue*. Follow this and you will realize that it is as I said to you.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>*Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:316. Ibn Taghrībirdī noted, for the same event, that the removal of Yalbughā took place a few days after Barqūq and Barakah had dismissed a number of amirs from office, *Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 11:130. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah made no negative comments and simply mentioned Yalbughā’s removal, *Al-Dhayl*, 3:548. Ibn Ḥajar simply commented that Barqūq “held absolute power,” *Inbā’ al-Ghumr*, 1:234. Ibn Iyās was the only one of the chroniclers to echo al-Maqrīzī: he repeated his account almost word for word and then added “and he established the Circassian regime,” *Badā’ i’ al-Zuhūr*, 1:2:212.

<sup>9</sup>*Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:379. Al-Maqrīzī was more discerning in the analysis he later made of the causes behind the conflict between the two former “brothers.” He mentioned the negative effects of the 781 rebellion led by Īnāl al-Yūsufī, the then *silāḥdār*, with the alleged collusion of Aytamish al-Bijāsī, Barqūq’s close ally, whose purpose was to get rid of Barakah, and then he noted the following: because of the jealousy that appears frequently between associates, it was in the nature of things for the two amirs to try to monopolize power and to seek glory for their own person (ibid., 3:1:380–81). See Levanoni, “Al-Maqrīzī’s Account of the Transition,” 96–100, for an analysis of the Īnāl rebellion and al-Maqrīzī’s alleged *parti pris* in its reporting. All four chroniclers who reported this event—Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’ al-Ghumr*, 2:2; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 11:141ff; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Al-Dhayl*, 1:22; and Ibn Iyās, *Badā’ i’ al-Zuhūr*, 1:2:254–55—refrained from making any negative comment about Barqūq.

<sup>10</sup>*Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:3:734. None of the chroniclers who also reported this event, namely Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’ al-Ghumr*, 3:73, Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 12:8, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Al-Dhayl*, 1:368–69, al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs*, 1:323, and Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:247, made any comment that could be construed as being negative.



Thinly veiled references to Barqūq's alleged cowardice and calculating personality can also be construed from the remark al-Maqrīzī made in his report on the aftermath of the conflict between Barakah and Barqūq in 782: "It is incredible that during this serious incident, Amir Barqūq did not ride into battle for even an hour of the day, but remained put while the battle between his supporters—chief among them Amir Aytamish—and those of Barakah [was taking place], until God gave him victory effortlessly (*min ghayr ta'ab*)."<sup>11</sup> On top of Barqūq's cunning, al-Maqrīzī associated with him character flaws that are of a non-political nature such as indulgence in drinking<sup>12</sup> and pederasty.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond the alleged immorality of Barqūq the man, al-Maqrīzī also often sought to indict the regime that gave rise to him and that he later headed, its genesis and political personnel. And he does this from a particular angle, that of a member of the *khāṣṣah* who was witnessing the rise of "men of the lowest classes" and the debasing of those of "noble family." The sentiment of dismay al-Maqrīzī felt towards this situation can be seen expressed in various parts of the *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, whether about the upstart and greedy *julbān* or members of the *āmmah*. On 8 Dhū al-Qa'dah 779/8 March 1378, upon the nomination of a new roster of amirs, many of whom had been simple soldiers (*mafāridah*) prior to their rebellion, al-Maqrīzī exclaimed: "The elevation of the lowlives became the matter of proverbs as the mamluk recruits who yesterday had been unknown quantities, by means of murder, banishment, and various forms of torture, had become kings to whom the bounties of all things are brought and who ruled the kingdoms of the world according to their wants. From then on, the situation of the land changed with the

<sup>11</sup>*Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:385. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Al-Dhayl*, 1:26, was the only chronicler to actually narrate this story that is almost identical to al-Maqrīzī's.

<sup>12</sup>Of the two instances recorded in the *Kitāb al-Sulūk* concerning the drinking habits of Barqūq, the first is reported as a matter of fact without any criticisms (3:2:590). As for the other, in which al-Maqrīzī described a big party held by the sultan at the hippodrome, it is replete with negative comments (3:2:902): he stated that the sultan drank with the mamluks and was warned about doing so, and that later, at the end of the party, the populace was allowed to loot both food and beverages; this, al-Maqrīzī added, was an ugly day during which sacrilegious things occurred, so that it dawned upon *ahl-al-ma'rifah* that this was the end of it all. For the first event, the accounts of both Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 11:210, and al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs*, 1:51, were either modeled upon that of al-Maqrīzī or simply directly quoted from the *Kitāb al-Sulūk*. The second incident elicited more negative reactions. For example, Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 12:66–67, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Al-Dhayl*, 1:662, and Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 1:2:500–1, actually quoted al-Maqrīzī's account, whereas Ibn Ḥajar stated the facts and then added that a *faqīr* who decried what was going on was beaten and humiliated, *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, 3:383–85.

<sup>13</sup>See note 7, above.





change of its rulers.”<sup>14</sup>

The imbalance in the traditional social order was not only the work of the *julbān* but also that of the *‘āmmah*. Al-Maqrīzī might have been more prone than, say, an Ibn Taghrībirdī to report the way events such as famine impinged on the lives of the populace,<sup>15</sup> but his comments on the *‘āmmah*, particularly when it was involved in “political action” on the side of Barqūq, reveal a high degree of antagonism. Al-Maqrīzī noted on a number of occasions that the common people liked Barqūq and that he did his utmost to protect them so that they sympathized with and felt strongly for him.<sup>16</sup> Of note are his thoroughly negative characterization of the *‘āmmah*, which he alone did among contemporary historians: during his description of the events surrounding Īnāl al-Yūsufī’s rebellion in Rajab 781/November 1379, al-Maqrīzī noted Barqūq’s appeal to the *‘awāmm* and then immediately observed that he was “very cunning and deceitful. They [the plebeians] rose at once and shouted together: ‘Walk ahead of us!’ So he went, surrounded by them as if they were a swarm of locusts.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup>*Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:289. Only Ibn Iyās narrated this story by copying al-Maqrīzī almost word for word, *Badā’i’ al-Zuhūr*, 1:2:191–92. Even though Barqūq had not yet emerged from obscurity and is not mentioned by al-Maqrīzī in reference to this event, namely the aftermath of the murder of al-Ashraf Sha’bān, as a Yalbughāwī mamluk, he was very much involved in the coup; see *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:155 for a brief summary of Barqūq’s travels and activities following the murder of Yalbughā al-‘Umārī in 768/1366. See also *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:277, 287–88, in which much is made about the lowly status and *arriviste* nature of the new military elite. On the political activities of the *julbān* and those Levantines rank-and-file mamluks during the period at hand, see her “Rank-and-file Mamluks versus Amirs: New Norms in the Mamluk Military Institution,” in *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann (Cambridge, 1998), 25–28.

<sup>15</sup>For a discussion of the way the *‘āmmah* were treated by historians during the Circassian period, see Irmeli Perho, “Al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taghrībirdī as Historians of Contemporary Events,” in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt*, 93–105.

<sup>16</sup>*Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:352–53. Here again, Ibn Iyās was the only one amongst the chroniclers to echo the relationship between Barqūq and the *‘āmmah*, *Badā’i’ al-Zuhūr*, 1:2:240.

<sup>17</sup>*Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:365–66. See also 3:1:382, 386. Only Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-Zuhūr*, 1:2:257, used the term *jarād al-muntashir* (swarm of locusts). Interestingly, even the description of a rather mundane event such as a new fashion trend amongst women in Cairo provided al-Maqrīzī with the opportunity to criticize the uppitiness of the lower classes: “In this [the wearing of large dresses] the females of the populace overindulged until they imitated in their dress the women of the rulers and the elite [*al-mulūk wa-al-a’yān*],” *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:2:750. The *a’yān/‘awāmm* dichotomy can also be seen in al-Maqrīzī’s account about a *maẓālim* court held by Barqūq on 28 Ramadān 789/ Saturday 12 October 1387: great fear, said al-Maqrīzī, overtook members of the elite “as the lowlives became daring in dealing with the grandees,” *ibid.*, 3:2:566. Concerning this last event, Ibn Ḥajar said “and whoever amongst the villains wished to disrespect the grandees, did so,” *Inbā’ al-Ghumr*, 2:249, while al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafī simply paraphrased al-Maqrīzī, *Nuzhat*



But nothing appears to hurt the class sensibility of al-Maqrīzī more than the perceived decline in standing and power of the civilian elite in general and the ulama class in particular, and the concomitant social ascension of *arbāb al-sayf* and their taking over of domains previously the exclusive preserve of the *arbāb al-qalam*. The importance al-Maqrīzī attached to the social class he belonged to is clearly discernible in his writings.<sup>18</sup> In *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, al-Maqrīzī reported on an event dated 9 Jumādā al-Thānī 781/ 21 September 1379 which witnessed the removal of a Hanafī judge who had harbored a man who, because he was sought by the *hājib*, had placed himself under the protection of the *shar'*. After stating that the *hājib* had complained to Barqūq who had then acquiesced to his wishes, namely the removal of the qadi, al-Maqrīzī then declared that "this was also one of the events which were unheard of before whereby the station of the *quḍāh* was diminished and the reach of the *hujjāb's* rulings extended according to their fancy; and their evil flourished without it being checked by either knowledge or faith."<sup>19</sup>

Also of great concern to al-Maqrīzī, and a symptom in his eyes of the overall worsening of the state of the kingdom, was the very denigration and lowering of the standing of the ulama in the eyes of the holders of temporal power. Nowhere is this more obvious, and again peculiar to our historian, than in an incident that took place in 783/1381 during which Barqūq spoke ill of the ulama by declaring that they were not Muslims. "It was one of those ugly novelties," noted al-Maqrīzī,

that the *amīr kabīr* and his entourage started to show ill respect to the *quḍāh* and the *fuqahā'*, and that the amirs and mamluks started

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*al-Nufūs*, 1:157.

<sup>18</sup>Levanoni, "Al-Maqrīzī's Account of the Transition," 102–5.

<sup>19</sup>*Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:361. Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, 1:303–4, devotes two short paragraphs to this story but makes no comment à la al-Maqrīzī. In his *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr*, 1:244–45, Ibn Iyās presented an account similar to but shorter than al-Maqrīzī's. Al-Maqrīzī made similar comments concerning the office of the *ustādār* whose holders acted as if they were *quḍāh*, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 1:222. For another incident of this type, see *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:2:636–37, Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, 2:329, and Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:1:110–12, who give similar accounts of the same event. In the same vein, see *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:330, on the indignation expressed by al-Maqrīzī when reporting that people of high rank destined for mulcting were delivered to the *wālī* of Cairo instead of to the *shādd al-dawāwīn* or the *muqaddam al-dawlah*, both of whom usually acted upon edicts issued by the vizier: "... the rulings of the *wālī* never extended beyond the populace and the criminals [*ahl al-jarā'im*] amongst them. As for the soldiery, the secretaries, and the elite of the merchants, they were beyond the reach of his ruling, as they were the responsibility of *nā'ib al-sultān*, and if not his then that of the *hājib al-hujjāb*, because each individual has a station peculiar to him he does not exceed. Now barriers collapsed and each person started to exceed his station and to ignore his lot." Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, 1:264, and Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr*, 1:224, both mentioned this event without making any value judgment.



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to debase their immunity. All that after they (the *quḍāh* and the *fuqahā'*) had witnessed the lengths the sultan and the grandees from amongst the amirs used to go to dignify them, and after the realization that it was through them that they had known the religion of Islam, and that it was in the shadow of their sanctity that they lived. The grandest of them considered it a blessing to kiss the hand of the learned. Things changed dramatically [*inqalaba al-amr*] and the opposite situation started to prevail, so the instances of amirs and mamluks demeaning them increased because of what they had learned from the *amīr kabīr*. Things then came to a head, and from the end of the Zāhirī Barqūq regime, through that of al-Nāṣir Faraj and beyond, the rulers continued to demean the station of the *quḍāh* and the *fuqahā'*: the lowest of the slave boys and the vilest of peddlers spoke ill of them. . . .<sup>20</sup>

Curiously, the outrage felt by al-Maqrīzī with regard to the fate of the class he belonged to did not prevent him from reporting stories about its corrupt practices, notably employment through money payments or the intercession of a powerful patron. Whether he decried his peers in order to uphold his attachment to "the long-held Islamic societal ideal of intellectual success—[that of a] scholar untainted by the corrupting hand of government,"<sup>21</sup> or to settle scores with them,<sup>22</sup> al-Maqrīzī was critical of those among his peers who bought their charges,<sup>23</sup> and of the state for encouraging such a practice.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:2:448. Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, 2:47–48, and Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Al-Dhayl*, 1:61, reported this incident without any comment while Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr*, 1: 291, quoted al-Maqrīzī by name but made changes to his report.

<sup>21</sup> Anne F. Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt: al-'Aynī, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 85.

<sup>22</sup> One of the most devastating attacks on his peers is to be found in the annal of the year 820 in which he blasted the military personnel of the state as well as its civilian functionaries, especially the *muḥtasibs* and the *quḍāh*, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:1:388, 389.

<sup>23</sup> Government service need not taint an office-holder. For example, at the very beginning of his 785 annal, we see al-Maqrīzī give a glowing and very long description of the character and person of Shams al-Dīn Kātib Arlān, the newly appointed vizier who, in his eyes, constituted the quintessential example of the perfect civil servant, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:2:486–87.

<sup>24</sup> See for example *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:293, 333–34, 3:2:454, 746, 810, 872. As usual, he is alone most of the time among Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, Ibn Taghrībirdī, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, and al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafī in making value judgments about, and mentioning the influence of money on, nominations. Only Ibn Iyās usually copied or paraphrased him directly and thus mentioned the negatives without fail.





The role of the state in fostering bribery<sup>25</sup> has already been pointed out in the lengthy citation from the *Kitāb al-Sulūk* quoted above, but bribery is only one of what appears to be a panoply of means, other than the accepted ones, used by the regime to sustain and enrich itself. Certainly, most of the methods used by Barqūq and his collaborators were not new.<sup>26</sup> The sources dealing with the period preceding that of Barqūq all the way to the early Mamluk Sultanate and beyond abound with stories that illustrate various types of money extraction, whether “shake-downs” and the arbitrary seizing of property of both civilian and military personnel, looting, or the occasional forced sale or purchase of goods, etc. However, a cursory and admittedly unscientific survey of mostly secondary sources seems to show that the incidence of such stories as well as of reports about new means of money extraction, such as the confiscation of *awqāf*, is more pervasive in Barqūq’s period and later than in the preceding Bahri era.

Even though stories about mulcting are as prevalent in other chronicles as they are in his, in this respect al-Maqrīzī again differed from his contemporaries in going it alone with regard to emphasizing the evil inherent in the corruption of the state, and describing its mechanisms.<sup>27</sup> In his report about 13 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 779/12 April 1378, less than seven months after Barqūq and Barakah had monopolized power following the removal of Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī, al-Maqrīzī depicted the way this duumvirate functioned and presented the earliest evidence of systemic corruption in the state: the two then friends divided all matters between them and while decisions pertaining to nominations to and removals from office were taken in the house of Barakah, the countersigning of all was in the hands of Barqūq in the royal stables.<sup>28</sup> No position, continued al-Maqrīzī, could be obtained by anyone

<sup>25</sup>In his *Ighāthah* (trans. Allouche, 52–53), al-Maqrīzī indicted bribery as one of the three causes behind the crises of the years 807/1404–5 and 796/1393–94. See also the *Khiṭaṭ*, 1:111, where al-Maqrīzī dated back the practice of bribery to the Ayyubids while noting that Barqūq over-indulged in it.

<sup>26</sup>For a general work on this issue, see Ḥasanayn Muḥammad Rabī‘, *The Financial System of Egypt, A.H. 564–741/A.D. 1169–1341* (London, 1972).

<sup>27</sup>Examples of different types of malversation and administrative expedients on the part of the Ṣāḥiri regime, such as mulcting, confiscations of properties, *awqāf*, and orphans’ money, forced sales and purchases, etc., are legion in the *Kitāb al-Sulūk*: 3:1:137, 140, 172, 215, 234, 235, 241, 253, 268, 282, 289, 290, 291, 292, 319, 321, 330, 336, 337, 341, 343, 346, 347, 352, 354, 355, 360, 364, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 377, 386, 389, 390, 391, 409, 410, 411, 412; 3:2:440, 450, 455, 456, 467, 468, 471, 482, 490, 500, 501, 520, 531, 553, 561, 566, 583, 624, 627, 628, 636, 637, 648, 649, 650, 659, 660, 661, 663, 668, 669, 672, 673, 675, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 690, 703, 709, 712, 721, 723, 724, 725, 727, 732, 734, 736, 746, 747, 761, 763, 765, 770, 773, 781, 784, 796, 799, 802, 810, 812, 816, 829, 833, 850, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 861, 862, 871, 872, 880, 895, 896, 922, 924, 925, 928, 933.

<sup>28</sup>*Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:324.



without payment of money so that "society's lowlifes and wretches acceded to what their minds fancied in terms of prestigious positions and high situations, and a great disaster befell people and led necessarily to the destruction of Egypt and Syria. . . ." <sup>29</sup> Elsewhere, as part of the events of 23 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 781/31 March 1380, al-Maqrīzī described in detail the predatory fiscal policies of governors who enriched themselves at the expense of the local population, only to see themselves replaced while they were still in office by people who had paid a larger amount, and also mulcted and deprived of all that they had accumulated in terms of movable and immovable property; and the province of Egypt, concluded al-Maqrīzī, became corrupt because of this practice. <sup>30</sup>

The leitmotiv, encountered above, peculiar to al-Maqrīzī, that Egypt and Syria had declined and were no longer the same as before was used by him while highlighting the shortcomings of the state at yet another level: its antagonizing of both internal and external forces, namely the Arabs in both Egypt and Syria, and the Turcomans in the Anatolian marches, something which caused both political instability and economic hardship to the kingdom. For example, al-Maqrīzī related news that reached Cairo on 25 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 780/13 April 1379 about a Mamluk defeat in Anatolia: after having attacked and looted the encampments of Turcomans who had come to them bearing gifts and asking for peace, the Mamluk forces of Syria fell into a trap set by remaining Turcomans forces and were wiped out, their military equipment, their money, horses and camels, etc., taken away. "This," commented al-Maqrīzī,

caused a weakness in the state: the Turcomans were the equivalent of fortifications protecting the country, and every year tens of thousands of sheep would be garnered from them along with alms payment in kind called the *'idād*. From them, the people of Aleppo reaped uncountable benefits, and if the sultan delegated them to fight a war they acquiesced to his order and they went ahead in obeisance and prostration. The ill treatment and the oppression they were subjected to transformed them into the enemies of the state who kill its soldiers, loot its moneys, and take over its dependencies. . . . <sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Ibid. Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, 1:326–27, Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 11:133, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Al-Dhayl*, 3:555, noted the changes in the top echelons of the state, but offered no information on the mechanisms of corruption described by al-Maqrīzī. Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 1:220, offered almost the same account as al-Maqrīzī whom he appeared to have paraphrased.

<sup>30</sup>*Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:371–2. Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 1:251, is the only chronicler to give an account of this mechanism of money extraction. His report is almost exactly the same as al-Maqrīzī's.

<sup>31</sup>*Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:347–48. Neither of the other chroniclers who reported this event, Ibn Ḥajar



Al-Maqrīzī used the same alarmist tone in his analysis of the relations between the state and the Arabs. For instance, on two occasions he decried the harshness of Mamluk governors in dealing with the nomads of Egypt and Syria, and on both occasions his reports ended with laments about the fact that such behavior was pivotal in the destruction of both regions.<sup>32</sup>

The last category of criticisms to be dealt with here is al-Maqrīzī's apparent dislike of the very ethnic stock of the new ruling elite, the Circassians. Politically, it has been shown that he displayed a marked bias against the Circassians in the very way he presented the events that accompanied the struggle between Barqūq and Barakah which came to a head in Rabī' al-Awwal 782/June 1380.<sup>33</sup> Thus, among other things, al-Maqrīzī generalized to all Circassians the accusation of inveterate plotting he had leveled earlier against Barqūq.<sup>34</sup> Elsewhere in his *Kitāb*

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al-'Asqalānī and Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, made similar comments: the latter gave an account of the battle, *Al-Dhayl*, 3:579, while the former, in a couple of sentences, noted the defeat of the army and the fact that from then on, the Turkmān refrained from paying the 'idād, *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, 1:273. Ibn Iyās's account, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr*, 1:237–38, reproduced almost word for word al-Maqrīzī's comments.

<sup>32</sup>In the case of Egypt, the occasion is the reporting of the nailing of Awlād al-Kanz Arabs on 17 Muḥarram 781/5 May 1379: the severity of the governor's oppression caused the rebellion of those Arabs and their depredations, to such an extent that "Aswan escaped the control of the state and was then destroyed," *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:352. Of the other chroniclers, only Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, 1:297, reported the fact of the wālī's oppression of the Arabs and their defeat at his hands, but made no value judgment. As for Syria, the event in question, in early Rajab 785/late August 1383, at the very beginning of Barqūq's sultanate, was the attack launched by Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī on Nu'ayr ibn Ḥayyār, who had just been replaced by 'Uthmān ibn Qārah as *amīr al-'arab*. Nu'ayr was defeated, his encampment looted, his womenfolk taken away: "this," said al-Maqrīzī, "was also one of the greatest reasons for the corruption of the state, and one of the most important reasons behind the destruction of Syria," *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:2:496. Ibn Taghrībirdī and Ibn Ḥajar did not report the event, while Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Al-Dhayl*, 1:111, presented the bare facts without comment. As for al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs*, 1:72–73, and Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr*, 1:334, both offered accounts very close to al-Maqrīzī's that incorporated his negative characterization of the event: in al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafī's story, al-Maqrīzī's name actually appeared directly before the quote describing the evils that befell Syria.

<sup>33</sup>See note 9, above.

<sup>34</sup>"And the Turkish government came to an end completely. They [the Turkish amirs] were pursued, executed, banished, and imprisoned. And the Circassians had already . . . spoken among themselves, saying that there would be a great civil war that would be put down, and after it another one would break out between them and the Turks in which they would vanquish the Turks after a fight, and [then] they would be under their command. And when there was the rebellion led by Īnāl, they spoke of it aloud and so unashamedly and made it public to the degree that the most senior and the most junior of them spoke of it. And thus it indeed happened;" Levanoni's translation, quoted in her "Al-Maqrīzī's Account of the Transition," 95; see also *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:385. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Al-Dhayl*, 1:26, and Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr*, 1:262, both quoted al-Maqrīzī



*al-Sulūk*, al-Maqrīzī appeared to be shocked at the fate of the mamluks of Uljāy al-Yūsufī (d. 775/1373), a former grandee of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, who on 23 Rabīʿ al-Thānī 779/ 28 August 1377 were accused of plotting against Barqūq and were imprisoned in the Shamāyil treasury, the prison of the common criminals. "It was unheard of before this incident," noted al-Maqrīzī, "for the Turks, the foundation of the state (*rijāl al-dawlah*), to be humiliated in this fashion."<sup>35</sup>

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The discourse of al-Maqrīzī on Barqūq's reign is remarkable on many accounts. Firstly, even though, as will be shown below, his tone did change in his accounts of the sultan's second reign, the antipathy he felt towards Barqūq is clearly evident. As a matter of fact, no other sultan of the Circassian period attracted the ire of al-Maqrīzī more consistently than Barqūq did. This is not to say that al-Maqrīzī did not have anything negative to say about post-Barqūq Circassian sultans or their regimes. As a matter of fact, in his *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, al-Maqrīzī did savage Faraj,<sup>36</sup> Shaykh,<sup>37</sup> Barsbāy,<sup>38</sup> and their respective regimes, but his criticisms do not

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almost word for word, without identifying him as their source, especially his comments concerning the end of the Turkish state, but refrained from mentioning his litany about a conspiracy. Levanoni, "Al-Maqrīzī's Account of the Transition," 95, said that Ibn Taghrībirdī was influenced by al-Maqrīzī's account and indicated a page number in the Cairo edition of the *Nujūm al-Zāhirah*. In the Beirut edition, however, I was not able to find this reference.

<sup>35</sup>*Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:331. Ibn Taghrībirdī presented no report on the incident, while Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah stated the facts and then noted that "a great humiliation befell the Turks the like of which they had never experienced before," *Al-Dhayl*, 3:571. As for Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr*, 1:265, he simply related that "they were greatly humiliated." Finally, Ibn Iyās stated the facts without referring to any humiliation, but concluded his report by saying "this was the first assault by the Atābak Barqūq on the Turkish mamluks and the first public manifestation of the Circassian regime," *Badāʾiʾ al-Zuhūr*, 1:334.

<sup>36</sup>Faraj's obituary is particularly telling since al-Maqrīzī does not seem to see anything redeeming about Barqūq's son, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:1:225–28. Al-Maqrīzī also reported without fail what would later become a distinguishing characteristic of Faraj's reign, the long list of atrocities he committed against his enemies, for example, *ibid.*, 4:1:113, 114, 148, 180, 187, 188, 192, 196.

<sup>37</sup>Shaykh's obituary, even though overwhelmingly negative, is not as devastating as Faraj's, *ibid.*, 4:1:550–1. Also, on one occasion, *ibid.*, 4:1:532, al-Maqrīzī, while talking about the piety displayed by Shaykh, indicted his entourage rather than the sultan himself for the evils of his regime. As for Tatar (d. 824/1421), al-Maqrīzī stated that he did not rule long enough for his actions to be either lauded or denigrated, *ibid.*, 4:2:550–1.

<sup>38</sup>My edition of the *Kitāb al-Sulūk* did not include al-Maqrīzī's negative obituary of Barsbāy which is quoted by Broadbridge in her "Academic Rivalry," 93–94. What appear to me to be the three major negative characteristics of Barsbāy's rule, namely the endemic rioting of the *julbān* (4:2:673, 793, 804, 805, 909, 930, 931, 965, 975, 1006, 1025, 1027, 1047), the systematic recourse



come close to the *systematic* and *direct* attacks he made on Barqūq and his rule.<sup>39</sup> Secondly, al-Maqrīzī's criticisms are all the more surprising since he did benefit from Barqūq's and later from his son Faraj's patronage,<sup>40</sup> and also since Sūl, a favorite slave-girl of his, was given to him by no other than the sultan.<sup>41</sup> Thirdly, al-Maqrīzī was the only one amongst the chroniclers<sup>42</sup> of this period to systematically criticize Barqūq, especially during his description of the sultan's first reign.

In the light of what was said in the above paragraph, what is then, if any, the historiographical significance of al-Maqrīzī's negative attitude towards Barqūq? An analysis of a passage from Ibn Taghrībirdī's *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah* is one way to tackle this issue. After rejecting point by point the very serious accusations levelled by his former teacher against Barqūq in his assessment of his first reign, Ibn Taghrībirdī said:

Shaikh Taqī ad-Dīn was guilty of well-known inconsistency; he said now this and now that. . . . And my statement that the Shaikh Taqī ad-Dīn sometimes praises Barqūq and sometimes blames him rests on the fact that *when the author was friendly with al-Malik az-Zāhir during his second sultanate and az-Zāhir made him the object of his beneficence, he went to extremes in praising him in several passages of his works, and forgot this earlier statement of*

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to mulcting as a means to enrichment (4:2:619, 610, 621, 623, 631, 632, 633, 636, 644, 648, 662, 663, 673, 685, 688, 693, 709, 729, 735, 754, 747, 751, 754, 755, 767, 768, 791–92, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 817, 819, 820, 821, 823, 824, 833, 860, 867, 868, 872, 887, 905, 906, 912, 913, 914, 919, 928, 929, 931, 933, 934, 936, 938, 950, 962, 965, 968, 1005, 1008, 1020), as well as the establishment of monopolies over the spice trade and other sectors of the economy (647, 824, 869, 905, 929, 1001), are very well documented in the *Kitāb al-Sulūk*. But al-Maqrīzī directly attacks Barsbāy only on one occasion: after the death of his arch-foe Jānbak al-Šūfī in 841, al-Maqrīzī stated that because of Barsbāy's injustice, God made sure he did not savor his victory as the sultan ended up dying shortly after, *ibid.*, 4:2:1024.

<sup>39</sup>Maybe it was the novelty of the new regime and the fact that it heralded new practices that later became commonplace that caused al-Maqrīzī to formulate very precise and scathing criticisms of Barqūq. Also, it may be that, in his eyes, Barqūq not only erected the new system but also came to epitomize it, so that he did not see the need to rehash at later stages of his writing things he had already observed.

<sup>40</sup>See Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry," 89–90.

<sup>41</sup>See al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi' li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi'* (Beirut, 1992), 12:66–67. This reference as well as the information concerning Sūl was kindly brought to my attention by Nasser Rabbat.

<sup>42</sup>Of the major historians of this period, Badr al-Dīn al-'Aynī (762–855/1360–1451) is the only author whose work, *Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān*, I have not been able to consult. As was noted throughout this paper, only Ibn Iyās closely followed al-Maqrīzī in his denigration of Barqūq by either copying or paraphrasing his *Kitāb al-Sulūk*.





*his and others similar to it; it escaped his notice that he should have changed this earlier account, for, as the proverb runs, "Who praises and blames is as though he lied twice."*<sup>43</sup>

One can sense that the tone of al-Maqrīzī's writings with regard to Barqūq changed from one period to another: in the *Kitāb al-Sulūk*<sup>44</sup> the criticisms started<sup>45</sup> in full-swing in 778/1376–77 (the year that witnessed the successful coup led by the *julbān* and upstart mamluks against the sultan al-Ashraf Sha'bān), continued during al-Maqrīzī's account of Barqūq's rise to power in 779/1378, and peaked during the early 1380s, only to subside during the second reign of the sultan, from 792/1390 until 801/1399.<sup>46</sup> Strikingly, al-Maqrīzī's obituary of Barqūq in 801/1399 contained only a handful of comments that could be construed as strictly negative (his greed and his advancement of Circassians over Turks, etc.) drowned as they were in more than four pages of praise (his love of men of religion, the illegal taxes he abolished, the structures he ordered built, his largesse, etc.<sup>47</sup>), a far cry

<sup>43</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *The History of Egypt*, trans. Popper, 13:44–45. [Emphasis mine]

<sup>44</sup>Both *Kitāb al-Ighāthah* and the *Khīṭaṭ* contain a fair number of passages in which al-Maqrīzī condemns Barqūq and aspects of his rule, but it is in the *Kitāb al-Sulūk* that they are the most pervasive and systematic.

<sup>45</sup>The kind of dismay frequently expressed by al-Maqrīzī throughout the rise to power of Barqūq in the late 1370s and beyond can actually be encountered as far back as 768/1366–67 during the events surrounding the *coup* launched by his *ajlāb* against Yalbughā al-'Umarī and his assassination on 10 Rabī' al-Thānī 768/13 December 1366. Clearly discernible in al-Maqrīzī's description of events are themes that will be recurrent in his criticisms against Barqūq, namely the ascension of lowly mamluks to positions of authority, the shaking up of the social order at the hands of an increasingly riotous populace, etc. See *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:137–38, 143.

<sup>46</sup>The instances where al-Maqrīzī made negative comments about Barqūq or presented accounts that directly reflected badly upon him number 43 for the period between 778 to 791 and 8 for that stretching between 792 and 801: **778**: 3:1:277, 287–89, 293, 295; **779**: 3:1:315–16, 324; **780**: 3:1:327, 330, 331, 333–34, 337, 347–48; **781**: 3:1:352, 352–53, 360–61, 365–66, 371–72, 374; **782**: 3:1:379, 381, 382, 382, 385, 385, 386, 390; **783**: 3:2:447–48, 454, 457; **784**: 3:2:466; **785**: 3:2:490, 496, 499, 503; **784**: 3:2:466; **785**: 3:2:490, 496, 499, 503; **787**: 3:2:538; **789**: 3:2:563–64, 566; **791**: 3:2:618–19; **793**: 3:2:734, 750; **796**: 3:2:810; **797**: 3:2:826; **799**: 3:2:872; **800**: 3:2:902; **801**: 3:2:935, 943.

<sup>47</sup>*Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:2:937–47. Ibn Taghrībirdī made sure to note in his critique of al-Maqrīzī that the second reign of Barqūq was more deserving of criticism than the first one because the sultan "was guilty of several abominable acts, such as putting some scholars to death and banishing and degrading others because after he had left al-Karak they had issued a decision legitimizing the war against him," *The History of Egypt*, trans. Popper, 13:42–45. Now compare this with what al-Maqrīzī had to say about this issue: "he felt a great deal of dislike for the *fuqahā'* during his second reign because they had issued a *fatwā* allowing his killing, but he did not cease honoring them despite his anger towards them," *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:2:944.



from the savaging he inflicted on the sultan in the report dealing with the end of his first reign.

Was it then, as Ibn Taghrībirdī maintained, the fact that Barqūq had made al-Maqrīzī “the object of his beneficence” which led the latter to tone down his criticisms in his reports on al-Zāhir’s second reign, and in the process, to suppress those sensibilities which had earlier made him prone to condemn the sultan? Ibn Taghrībirdī’s quotation actually raises more questions, historiographical and biographical in nature, than it provides answers. If it is indeed true that his *Kitāb al-Sulūk* reflected al-Maqrīzī’s changing relationship with Barqūq, and if, as Ibn Taghrībirdī argued, this transformation took place during the sultan’s second reign, this means that a substantial portion of the *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, that which contains the most virulent criticisms against Barqūq, must have been written before the rapprochement between the two, sometime during the second reign, which started in 792/1390. The dating of parts of the *Kitāb al-Sulūk* to this particular period raises a number of problems. First, if we take at face value the contentions that: one, the *Kitāb al-Sulūk* was the last of a series of historical works, starting with the *Khiṭaṭ*, depicting various periods of the history of Egypt;<sup>48</sup> two, that the *Khiṭaṭ* was written between 819/1417 and 839/1436;<sup>49</sup> and three, that evidence suggests that the first draft of the *Kitāb al-Sulūk* was written sometime around or after 1421–23 but no earlier than al-Maqrīzī’s return from Damascus following the death of Faraj in 815/1412<sup>50</sup>—then al-Maqrīzī’s chronicle could not have been written during Barqūq’s reign, and certainly not at the earliest stage of al-Zāhir’s rule because he was simply too young. For Ibn Taghrībirdī’s assertion to be correct, one needs to postulate that al-Maqrīzī had already written down extensive notes, tainted by his prejudices, on the first part of Barqūq’s reign *during* this reign, long before he started using these notes to write a full-fledged book. It can then be argued that al-Maqrīzī had no qualms about using the old “anti-Barqūq” notes since he was no longer in danger of incurring the wrath of the sultan, who was then long dead.

This perspective makes good of the claim that the *Kitāb al-Sulūk* was written after al-Maqrīzī’s return to Cairo from Damascus in 820/1417,<sup>51</sup> since it is probable that he would have made use of material composed or gathered in the past along

<sup>48</sup>Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah, “Tārīkh Ḥayāt al-Maqrīzī,” in *Dirāsāt ‘an al-Maqrīzī* (Cairo, 1971), 18–19.

<sup>49</sup>Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah, *Al-Mu’arrikhūn fī Miṣr fī al-Qarn al-Khāmis ‘Ashar al-Milādī, al-Qarn al-Tāsī’ al-Hijrī* (Cairo, 1954), 10.

<sup>50</sup>This information was kindly made available to me by Nasser Rabbat. See his article in this volume on the life of al-Maqrīzī.

<sup>51</sup>Levanoni, “Al-Maqrīzī’s Account of the Transition,” 96. On the uncertainty concerning the date of al-Maqrīzī’s return to Cairo, see below, note 62.



with more recent data. But if, while writing the *Kitāb al-Sulūk* after 820/1417, al-Maqrīzī did more than simply record events but also “took a moral stance against Barqūq both on personal and factional grounds,” and thus embarked upon a retrospective revisiting of past events<sup>52</sup> tainted by the prejudices of a bitter man, then we have a problem to solve: we would still have to account for the generally neutral tone of the annals covering the second half of Barqūq’s reign and the dramatic decrease therein of criticisms directed at him by al-Maqrīzī. One way out of this problem would be to advance another albeit potentially weaker postulate: that al-Maqrīzī *did* write all of the *Kitāb al-Sulūk* starting after 820/1417 and that his retrospective assessment of events was influenced by his reliving, through a wide spectrum of moods, of the events he described in his chronicle.

Still, one might reject Ibn Taghrībirdī’s contention about a two-phased elaboration of al-Maqrīzī’s *oeuvre*. Despite the deference Ibn Taghrībirdī showed his former teacher qua historian,<sup>53</sup> his *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah* is replete with criticisms directed at al-Maqrīzī. On top of indicating historical inconsistencies,<sup>54</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī, on a number of occasions, belittled al-Maqrīzī’s knowledge.<sup>55</sup> It might be that pointing out alleged inconsistencies on the part of al-Maqrīzī was just another means used by Ibn Taghrībirdī to damage the reputation of his teacher and, in the process, to elevate himself. Within the framework of the intensive competition for patronage and for sheer intellectual glory amongst academics and thinkers during this period,<sup>56</sup> this would come as no surprise. The possibility that it was his intention to discredit al-Maqrīzī is further supported by another statement made by Ibn Taghrībirdī. In the account of the year 841/1437–38 of his *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, Ibn Taghrībirdī again attacked his former mentor’s alleged historical inconsistencies, namely his criticisms against Barsbāy, and then said, as an explanation for al-Maqrīzī’s stand, that after the death of Barqūq “he had no success with the rulers who came after him; they kept him away without showing him any favour, so he on his part took to registering their inequities and infamies.”<sup>57</sup> The fact that al-Maqrīzī was no kinder to later sultans than he was towards

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 95–96.

<sup>53</sup>See for example *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 14: 270, 15: 225–26.

<sup>54</sup>See Ibn Taghrībirdī, *The History of Egypt*, trans. Popper, 13:44 and idem, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 11:240, on the way he discredits al-Maqrīzī on historical grounds.

<sup>55</sup>Especially his and other chroniclers’ paucity of knowledge concerning things Turkish, Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 11:184–85.

<sup>56</sup>On this issue, see Broadbridge, “Academic Rivalry.” Ziyādah makes of the antagonisms, jealousies, and enmities amongst ninth/fifteenth century historians a fundamental characteristic of the historiography of this period, *Al-Mu’arrikhūn*, 84–88.

<sup>57</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *The History of Egypt*, trans. Popper, 18:143 (emphasis mine); idem, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 14:270.



Barqūq during his first reign is supported by evidence.<sup>58</sup> What is interesting about the quotation above is the later statement, casually mentioned by Ibn Taghrībirdī, that al-Maqrīzī was a boon companion of Barqūq.<sup>59</sup> That no other chronicler or biographer, not even the generally caustic al-Sakhāwī, had related such a juicy accusation with high damage potential could indicate that Ibn Taghrībirdī might have been engaged in a low-level work of demolition of al-Maqrīzī's reputation.

Ibn Taghrībirdī could also have simply misunderstood the method used by his teacher in his writing of *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, so that he assumed that it was written during two distinct periods. But even if we reject Ibn Taghrībirdī's original assertion about al-Maqrīzī's writing, we are still not out of the woods: again, what caused al-Maqrīzī to change, in a significant manner, the tone of his comments on Barqūq?

In the light of all that has been said, the easiest way out of the enigma is to posit two scenarios. First, al-Maqrīzī probably started taking notes, from a variety of sources, very early on and this note taking reflected the mood he was in and his relationship with holders of political authority; upon his return to Cairo in 819/1417,<sup>60</sup> he started turning the notes he had assembled into a full-fledged book. This, as has been argued above, weakens the "retrospective presentation of events" postulate. The second scenario, even though not yet supported by research, is that al-Maqrīzī simply relied on another chronicle to write those sections of the *Kitāb al-Sulūk* that dealt with the sultan's first reign.

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Of course, this is all conjecture. As a matter of fact, many matters have to be resolved before the historiographical problem posed above can be dealt with effectively. For one thing, the very biography of al-Maqrīzī and the concomitant issue of the history of his literary production need to be addressed. Even though the general outline of his life is well known, some aspects of it are shrouded in uncertainty and are reported differently by scholars past and present. For example, when did he start working?<sup>61</sup> How long did he stay in Damascus after he went

<sup>58</sup>See Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry."

<sup>59</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 14:270.

<sup>60</sup>Or no earlier than his return from Damascus following the death of Faraj in 815/1412.

<sup>61</sup>Broadbridge says it was in the year 788/1386, "Academic Rivalry," 87, and Ziyādah in 1388, "Tārīkh Ḥayāt al-Maqrīzī," 15. Al-Maqrīzī, in his *Khiṭaṭ*, said he started working in the *dīwān al-inshā'* around "al-sab'īn wa-al-sab' mi'ah," 2:225. If he were born in 766, as is generally accepted, then al-Maqrīzī was around 4 years of age when he started his career (!): it is therefore more than probable that a scribe made a mistake while copying the original or that the editor of the text himself erred in this respect. Surprisingly, the same inconsistency can be found in Ziyādah's *Al-Mu'arrikhūn*, 8, in which the date of birth is reported as 1364 and the year he started his career



there with Faraj in 810/1408 and, consequently, when did he return to Cairo?<sup>62</sup> As we have seen above, much of the interpretations of al-Maqrīzī's historiographical output was made on the assumption that he wrote this or that work on given dates, so what would become of these interpretations if the dates are themselves not to be trusted?

The present state of knowledge concerning the issue at hand calls for two comments: first, to the extent allowed by the primary sources themselves, that a definitive biography of al-Maqrīzī be produced, and second, that the "critical analysis of the originality, sources, and possible interdependence"<sup>63</sup> of "Burji" historians be undertaken at the same level of scholarship as that of the "Bahri" historiographical output.<sup>64</sup> Until then, the questions raised above will only be partially addressed.

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as 1368, without any comment! A footnote actually refers the reader to page 225 of the *Khīṭaṭ*.

<sup>62</sup>Broadbridge, who probably based herself on al-Sakhāwī, states that he went back and forth the same year, "Academic Rivalry," 91. Franz Rosenthal in his *Encyclopaedia of Islam* article reported the figure of around ten years: "In Damascus where he spent about 10 years beginning in 810/1408 . . .," 6:194, and so do Levanoni, "Al-Maqrīzī's Account of the Transition," 96, and Ziyādah, *Al-Mu'arrikhūn*, 9.

<sup>63</sup>Donald P. Little, "Historiography of the Ayyubid and Mamluk Epochs," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt 640–1517*, ed. Carl Petry (Cambridge, 1998), 433. To my knowledge, the only studies that do just that are David C. Reisman, "A Holograph MS of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's 'Dhayl,'" in *Mamlūk Studies Review* 2 (1998): 19–49 and Donald P. Little's article in this volume.

<sup>64</sup>See Donald P. Little, *An Introduction to Mamlūk Historiography: An Analysis of Arabic Annalistic and Biographical Sources for the Reign of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalā'ūn*. (Wiesbaden, 1970).

