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Lahcen Daaïf and Yossef Rapoport: *The Book of Clear Arabic Expression Regarding the Arab Tribes of Egypt: An Edition, Translation and Study of al-Maqrīzī's al-Bayān wa-l-i' rāb 'an mā fī arḍ Miṣr min al-a' rāb*

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The books the Egyptian historian Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī wrote in the first half of the fifteenth century CE rank among the most popular sources for modern studies of Egypt's medieval history. His historical topography of Egypt, the *Khīṭaṭ*, is perhaps best known; but his works on Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk history too are key sources for enquiries into the political, economic, and social history of the country. Al-Maqrīzī, who took a deep interest in his native country, wrote many other works about the history of Egypt. The book reviewed here is concerned with one of his minor works: *al-Bayān wa-l-i' rāb 'an mā fī arḍ Miṣr min al-a' rāb*, “The Book of Clear Arabic Expression Regarding the Arab Tribes of Egypt”. In this treatise, al-Maqrīzī gives an overview of social groups in Egypt who identify themselves as Arabs or Berbers. He presents and comments upon their lineages and interrelationships, lists their various subgroups and locates them throughout the country (most of them are sedentary), names some of these groups' famous members or ancestors, and recounts important moments in their history, especially their migration history. The treatise offers a fascinating glimpse into the tribal landscape of medieval Egypt.

In *The Book of Clear Arabic Expression Regarding the Arab Tribes of Egypt*, Lahcen Daaïf and Yossef Rapoport present an academic edition, annotated translation, and a much-needed study of the *Bayān* – much needed because the treatise is not a straightforward text about Arab and Berber tribes in Mamluk Egypt. Among the many important points Daaïf and Rapoport raise in the eight chapters that explore the *Bayān* several points stand out. First, al-Maqrīzī did not write the treatise, the reader learns in chapter 1, in a selfless attempt to document tribes in Egypt. Despite al-Maqrīzī's claim that he wrote the treatise “for myself and for my fellow people”, Daaïf and Rapoport argue that he probably intended it as a gift to Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf, the son and heir of Sultan Barsbāy, who, aged 14, ruled as sultan for three months in 1438. Building on recent research, Daaïf and Rapoport group the *Bayān* together with two other treatises which al-Maqrīzī composed for the child sultan in order to solicit or confirm the latter's patronage.

Second, the *Bayān* does not provide historical information about Egypt's tribal landscape of al-Maqrīzī's time. Much of the *Bayān* is based on a now-lost tribal register composed roughly 150 years earlier by a state official named Badr al-Dīn al-Ḥamdānī. Al-Maqrīzī does not indicate his sources, but Daaïf and Rapoport reconstruct his reliance on this register by comparing the *Bayān* with other overviews of Egypt's tribes that do acknowledge their use of al-Ḥamdānī's register. Al-Maqrīzī does not update the information he took from the register. In fact, the information he occasionally adds mostly comes from genealogical works written centuries earlier. The author, Daaïf and Rapoport argue, comments on Egypt's fifteenth-century tribal landscape through the lens of history. The work is not entirely detached from Egypt's fifteenth-century tribal map, though. The treatise (on “the Arab tribes of Egypt”) includes a long section on Egypt's Berber tribes and their genealogies and subdivisions. Al-Maqrīzī's main source for Berber genealogies is Ibn Ḥazm's eleventh-century *Jamharat ansāb*

al-‘arab, but the inclusion of this material and especially the unique reference to the settlement of the Hawwāra in Upper Egypt under Sultan Barqūq – during al-Maqrīzī’s lifetime – indicates that the author wanted the treatise to be relevant for his peers. The reader learns in chapter 5 that al-Maqrīzī had no knowledge of Berber languages despite his acquaintance with Maghribi scholars, the best known among them being Ibn Khaldūn, and that his spelling of Berber names contains many mistakes.

Daaïf and Rapoport’s discussion of topics such as these allows the reader to appreciate the treatise in its historical context. Among the other topics they study are the genealogical genre to which the *Bayān* belongs, the work’s information about tribal migration and provincial elites, the possible influence of Ibn Khaldūn’s historical vision on al-Maqrīzī’s presentation of Egypt’s tribal history, and the treatise’s reception (from manuscript copies to modern academic and non-academic engagement with the *Bayān*). *The Book of Clear Arabic Expression Regarding the Arab Tribes of Egypt* offers a serious contribution to a better understanding of this text.

The edition and translation also contribute to this project. Fifteen manuscript copies of the *Bayān* are known to exist today. Daaïf and Rapoport base their edition on four of these. A fascinating manuscript forms the basis of their edition: Leiden University Library’s Or. 560. It contains a copy of the main part of the text made by a professional scribe (probably at al-Maqrīzī’s request). Al-Maqrīzī himself added a title, an introduction and a colophon, and corrected the text and added new information to this version of the treatise by collating it with his personal notes. This he did in Dhū al-Qa‘da 841 AH (April–May 1438 CE). In accordance with the special attention given to autograph and authorial copies of al-Maqrīzī’s works in Brill’s *Bibliotheca Maqriziana* series, a facsimile edition of all the relevant folios in Or. 560 can be found at the end of the book, allowing today’s reader to gain a visual impression of al-Maqrīzī’s working method.

This precious manuscript, once owned by the author himself, contains the version of the text al-Maqrīzī wanted to publish: his revisions of and additions to the main text and often also his introduction and colophon are seamlessly integrated in later copies of the *Bayān*. This does not become entirely clear from Daaïf and Rapoport’s discussion of the treatise, however. The part of the text written by the professional copyist represents “the original treatise” which al-Maqrīzī revised, they write (e.g. pp. 5, 7, 32, 42, 50). Elsewhere, however, they indicate that the manuscript presents the text “as al-Maqrīzī wanted it to circulate” (pp. 1 and 66).

Other manuscript copies of the work leave no doubt about the nature of Or. 560. As the authors note, all known copies of the treatise integrate al-Maqrīzī’s corrections and insertions, even those written on separate pieces of paper found at the end of Or. 560. Interestingly, two manuscript copies explicitly indicate this. Yale manuscript Landberg 492, which colophon states that it contains “a copy of a copy of the author’s copy” (folio 15 verso), reads at the end of the section on the Hawwāra: “here ends a marginal comment (*hāshiya*) in the author’s hand” (folio 13 recto). Manuscript AF 342a of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna is a derivative of Or. 560 as well. In the margin of folio 151 recto, the scribe who produced this manuscript wrote that “the marginal note (*turra*) in the handwriting of the author – may God have mercy on him – reaches from (the words) *awlād al-kanz* until here”. The two passages in question are indeed insertions which al-Maqrīzī wrote on separate slips of paper, which he added to Or. 560. These observations indicate that al-Maqrīzī only brought the text into circulation after he revised Or. 560 – that is to say, the manuscript presents the only version of the work al-Maqrīzī considered publishable, not a revised version or an expanded edition. A further indication of this may be the fact that al-Maqrīzī himself wrote the words *wa-ba‘d* in the introduction with red ink, in careful consideration of the professional scribe’s presentation of the treatise. Modern historians interested in al-Maqrīzī’s working method will wonder about

the nature of that part of Or. 560 which the scribe produced. One is tempted to consider it a transcript of a draft, but Daaïf and Rapoport do not discuss this.

The edition's critical apparatus shows textual variants in the three other manuscripts the editors consulted. The choice for these manuscripts remains unclear. The editors indicate that they represent different manuscript traditions (p. 66), but they do not describe the characteristics of these traditions. In fact, one of the copies they used, AF 342a of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, appears to be so closely related to Or. 560 as to give the impression that it belongs to the same tradition. By using only three other manuscripts, the editors did not take the opportunity to document the valuable information variant readings may contain about the textual forms in which the *Bayān* has been known. Recording textual history seems not their primary concern. Above all, and fully in line with their study of the text that precedes the edition, the edition's aim is to reconstruct and present al-Maqrīzī's original composition as faithfully as possible – an aim they fully achieve.

Although various editions of the *Bayān* have been published since its first modern publication in the mid-nineteenth century, Daaïf and Rapoport's edition is the only one that fully meets modern academic standards. In addition, it is the first edition that does not maintain the manuscripts' erroneous spelling of Berber names, but it offers their correct spelling, indicating what is found in the manuscripts in the critical apparatus. This renders the edition much more informative. Daaïf and Rapoport further enhance the accessibility of the text with their annotated English translation, the three maps that allow readers to locate al-Maqrīzī's tribes in Egypt, and the detailed indices. In short, Daaïf and Rapoport's *The Book of Clear Arabic Expression Regarding the Arab Tribes of Egypt* is now the preferred edition for academic research and the most accessible book on the *Bayān* for (non-)academic readers.