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**A GLOBE-TROTTER FROM MAGHRIB
IN AL-MAQRĪZĪ'S BOOKLET ON ETHIOPIA :
A FOOTNOTE FROM SOME ARABIC SOURCES.**

FRANZ-CHRISTOPH MUTH

This article deals with al-Maqrīzī book (1438) on the Ethiopian muslim Kingdoms. It examines the various editions and translations of this text as well as its sources, notably written (which raises the issue of "plagiarism") but also oral.

This paper is concerned with an informant of the famous Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī (died 845 AH/1442 AD), who quotes a short report by him in his well-known booklet on Ethiopia. This person is a Sheikh from North Africa called Shihābaddīn Aḥmad b. 'Abdalkhāliq al-Majāṣī. The following lines bring together the material from some Arabic sources dealing with this globe-trotter from Maghrib, who remains unknown until now.

al-Maqrīzī¹ "was one of the great polymaths of the Mamlūk period²." Born in Cairo in the sixties of the fourteenth century, he was active like his father in various scholarly and administrative functions. He began his public career as a scribe in the chancellery. Subsequently designated a deputy judge and market inspector (*muḥtasib*) in Cairo, he became also Imām, chief administrator and preacher at two Mosques in Cairo³, as well as professor of tradition (*ḥadīth*). He spent ten years in Damascus and held various teaching positions there too. Here he seems to have given up his official career to devote himself full-time to the study of history. Consequently, he had some professional and personal quarrels with some of his fellow historians and rivals, such as Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (died 852 AH/1449 AD) and al-'Ainī (died 855 AH/1451 AD)⁴. Having first returned to

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1. The gentilic (*nisba*) al-Maqrīzī refers to a quarter in Ba'labakk ; see Rosenthal : Al-Maqrīzī in : EI² vol. 6 (1987), p. 193.
2. Richard : al-Maqrīzī, in : EAL vol. 2, p. 509.
3. According to Rosenthal : Al-Maqrīzī ; in EI² vol. 6 (1987), p. 193, the Mosques of al-Ḥākīm and 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ.
4. See Rosenthal : Al-Maqrīzī, in : EI² vol. 6 (1987), p. 194, and in detail Broadbridge, Rivalry pp. 85-107.

Egypt, then he spent the following five years, from 1430 to 1435 AD (834-839 AH), in Mecca. Here he composed some of his short and remarkable treaties, such as the geography of Ḥaḍramaut from the year 1435 AD⁵, or his booklet on Ethiopia and its Muslim rulers. Upon returning to Egypt and isolated from the spheres of power and wealth, al-Maqrīzī died after a long illness at the age of seventy-nine in Cairo, end of January 1442 AD⁶.

al-Maqrīzī's many historical and geographical works include a chronicle of the Fātimids (*Kitāb Itti'āz al-ḥunafā' bi-akhbār al-a'imma al-khulafā'*), a history of the Aiyūbids and the Mamlūks down to the end of his life (*Kitāb as-Sulūk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk*), a monograph on the economy, finances and periodic famines in Egypt (*Ighāthat al-umma bi-kashf al-ghumma*), an extensive biographical dictionary on famous Egyptians (*Kitāb al-Muqaffā'*), and an extensive topographical work, widely known as *al-Khiṭaṭ* (*al-Mawā'izwa-l-i'tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār*), on the history, topography and architecture of Islamic Cairo, Fuṣṭāṭ and Alexandria as well as the Egyptian history in general⁷.

al-Maqrīzī's booklet on the Muslim rulers of Ethiopia, the *Kitāb al-Ilmām bi-akhbār man bi-arḍ al-Ḥabasha min mulūk al-Islām*, the "Book of the true knowledge of the History of the Muslim Kings in Ethiopia", was finished in early summer of 1438 AD. As one of al-Maqrīzī's first books to be edited and translated into an European language, the short text was edited by Friedrich Theodor Rinck⁸ and published with a Latin version in 1790⁹. Based on his Latin translation, a German version was made by the German scholar and husband of Marianne von Brentano, Theophil Friedrich Ehrmann only four years later¹⁰. Furthermore, the typescript of an unpublished English translation, made by George Wynn Brereton Huntingford¹¹ in the fifties of the late century, is available in the SOAS Library in London. The translation,

5. Maqrīzī, *Tuhfa*, quoted by Sakhāwī, *Ḍau'* vol. 2, p. 22, line 23, and elsewhere.

6. According to the sources quoted by Broadbridge, *Rivalry* p. 105, al-Maqrīzī died on the 16th or 17th of Ramaḍān 845 AH/28th or 29th of January 1442 AD.

7. See in particular : Al-Maqrīzī, in *EF* vol. 6 (1987), p. 194, and Richards : al-Maqrīzī, in : *EAL* vol. 2, p. 509.

8. On the editor Rinck (died 1821 AD) see e.g. *ADB* vol. 28 (1889), pp. 625 f., and *DBE* vol. 8 (1998), p. 313.

9. See Maqrīzī, *Ilmām*, and the reviews of Rinck's edition in : *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen* vol. 37 (1790), pp. 1241-1244, and in : *Eichhorn's Allgemeine Bibliothek der biblischen Litteratur* (Leipzig) vol. 6 (1794-1795), pp.769-772.-Sakhāwī, *Ḍau'* vol. 2, p. 22, lines 22-23, indicates a slightly different title: *al-Ilmām fīman ta'akhhara bi-arḍ al-Ḥabasha min mulūk al-Islām*.

10. See Ehrmann, *Al Makrizi's Nachrichten*. His German translation is quoted by Haberland « Tausend Rinder », pp.93, note 2, and 103.- On Ehrmann (died 1811 AD), see *ADB* vol. 5 (1877), p. 721, and *DBE* vol. 3 (1996), p. 45.

11. See Huntingford, *Maqrizi* ; the reference is given by Richard Pankhurst in : *Huntingford, Geography*, p. 14.

accompanied by a small index of proper names and a list of the kings of Zaila' and Ethiopia, was based on Rinck's Latin version as was the Cairo text of 1895¹² on Rinck's editio princeps.

Given the unsatisfactory situation of the text, a new edition, based on a half-dozen of manuscripts from Istanbul, Cairo, Leiden and Paris¹³, seems pertinent¹⁴. Such an edition should also consider the various scattered quotations in the biographical and historical sources, such as as-Sakhāwīs *Daw' al-lāmi'*, Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī's *Durar* and *Inbā' al-ghumr*, Ibn Taghribirdī's *an-Nujūm az-zāhira*, al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* as well as al-Maqrīzī's *Durar al-'uqūd* and *Sulūk*.

al-Maqrīzī's *Ilmām* is divided into three parts. The first two, covering about two fifth of the text, deal with Ethiopia's geography and the surrounding Muslim principalities. A read-through the text leaves no doubt that these two parts are in many ways typical compilations, but whereas other authors usually indicate their sources, al-Maqrīzī makes no effort to do so. In opposition to his statement at the beginning that he had collected his notes from "men who knew the history of the Muslim peoples who inhabit Ethiopia" while staying in Mecca in 1435¹⁵, this material is largely the product of copying from Ibn Faḍlallāh al-'Umarī's (died 749 AH/1349 AD) encyclopedic *Masālik al-abṣār*¹⁶. al-Maqrīzī's monograph on the Arab tribes that came to Egypt, *al-Bayān wal-i'rāb 'ammā bi-arḍ Miṣr min al-a'rāb*, is based on another chapter of Ibn Faḍlallāh's mentioned work too¹⁷. David Neustadt, better known as David Ayalon, stated that "al-Maqrīzī's impudence reached such a degree that he ascribed what he copied from the *masālik* to trustworthy informants he met in Mecca!"¹⁸ One could object to this distinguished scholar, that "plagiarism" is part of the Arabic literature, and in addition, that the third extensive part of al-Maqrīzī's *Ilmām* is an independent and alone source for the history of Ethiopia during the 14th and 15th centuries¹⁹. His account

12. The edition Cairo 1895, dated on 13. Ša'bān 1313 AH/29. January 1896 AD, includes three textes, al-Maqrīzī's *Ilmām* (pp. 2-20), excerpts from Ibn Sa'īd and Abū l-Fidā's *Taqwīm* (pp. 21-27). The « edition » is based on Rinck's edition (« Druckkladde »); see Guidi, Testo p. 388.

13. The following manuscripts are pertinent: Istanbul, ms. Atif Efendi no. 2814, II, foll. 176a-184b (undated); Istanbul, ms. Nuru Osmaniye no. 4937, II, foll. 301a-316b (dated 1085 AH/1674-75 AD); Kairo, ms. Ta'riḥ no. 500, foll. 2a-11a; Paris, Ms. arab. 4657, II, foll. 200b-230b (compilation of the 18th century with 15 titles of al-Maqrīzī); Yemen (Ḥaḍramaut) private collection of al-'Aḥḥās, Ta'riḥ no. 431, 12 foll.; Leyde, ms. Or. 560, II, foll. 96a-102b (partly autograph), and Leyde, ms. Or. 1152, foll. 10a-17b (incomplete).

14. See recently Braukämper, Southern Ethiopia p. 20, note 37.

15. Maqrīzī, *Ilmām* pp. 1, line 10-2, line 1/(Cairo) p. 2, lines 4-5.

16. See b. Faḍlallāh, *Masālik* vol. 4, pp. 16, line 15-30, line 7 (chapter 8 : *Fi mamālik al-muslimīna bi-l-Habasha*).

17. According to Ayalon, *Yāsa* p. 113, note 1, it is the 15th chapter of Ibn Faḍlallāh's *Masālik al-abṣār*. *Fī dhīkr al-'arab al-maujūdin fi zamāninā wa-amākinihim*. For the text and the translation see also Wüstenfeld, *Stämme* p. 5.

18. Ayalon, *Yāsa* p. 113.

19. After a raser cursory summary of the first rulers of Īfāt al-Maqrīzī gives an account of the rise of Ḥaqqaddīn II. (ruled 1376 to 1386 AD), the campaigns of his successor Sa'daddīn II. (ruled 1386 to

about the troubled years following the death of king Yeshāq (1413-1430 AD) and the continued success of the Ethiopian army in the wars against 'Adal is remarkably accurate, the chronological imperfections being largely due to the uncertainties of the political situation in Ethiopia itself.

al-Maqrīzī's comments on Ethiopia's districts, Shoa, Damot, 'Adal al-Umarā', Hamasen in the north of Tigrē, the seven Muslim trading states in southern Ethiopia, fittingly called the "Muslim fringe" (*aṭ-ṭirāz al-islāmī*), Ifāt, Dawārū, Arābabnī, Hadiya, Sharḥā, Bālī and Dāra, then Naryā in the north, Samhar in the north-east, Ganz in the center and Lamanān²⁰, most all this information is taken from Ibn Faḍlallāh, the prominent author and administrator of the Mamlūk era²¹. Having served in the chanceries of Damascus and Cairo, hence an apt expert on a wide variety of special fields related to administration and politics, Ibn Faḍlallāh had dealt with these subjects in his principal work, the *Masālik al-abṣār wa-l-mamālik al-amṣār*, "The routes toward insight into the capital empires", an encyclopaedic survey of the world and its peoples.

Ibn Faḍlallāh had gathered his informations on Ethiopia first hand. During the years 1332 to 1338 AD he interviewed an Ethiopian jurist from az-Zaila', 'Abdallāh ibn Yūsuf az-Zaila'ī²². A resident in Cairo for a long time, he died in the sixties of the fourteenth century²³. Another informant was the Coptic Patriarch Benjamin who transmitted a report of a merchant named 'Izzaddīn on climate conditions and mineral resources in Ethiopia, mainly on mines of iron and gold, or silver²⁴. He also utilized the reports of a Nubian slave-trader on the very unpleasant practices on the castration of eunuch slaves, called *Ṭawāshiya*, in Hadiya and the town of Washalū or Washelo²⁵. The result is a detailed and vivid account of Ethiopia, its nature, vegetation, climate conditions and way of living of the inhabitants. The data so provided were extensively quarried by the great compilers of the next generation, the Egyptian encyclopedist al-Qalqashandī²⁶ (died 821 AH/1418 AD) and al-Maqrīzī.

1415 AD) and his four sons from the end of the 14th century up to the middle of the 15th century. See in particular: Maqrīzī, *Ilmām* pp. 15, line 1-36, line 8/(Cairo) pp. 9, line 1-20, line 9, and Tadesse Tamrat, Church pp. 280-281.

20. Maqrīzī, *Ilmām* pp. 2, line 3-3, line 3, and 9, line 4-14, line 11/(Cairo) pp. 2, lines 6-15, and 6, line 3-8, line 18.

21. See Salibi : Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī, in : EI² vol. 3 (1971), p. 758-759.

22. See e.g. b. Faḍlallāh, *Masālik* vol. 4, p. 18, line 2, and Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *L'Afrique* p. 5.

23. On him, whom al-Qalqashandī in some passages of his *Ṣubḥ al-aṣḥā*, e.g. vol. 5, p. 324, line 7, calls 'Abdalmu'min az-Zaila', instead of 'Abdallāh, see in particular : b. Ḥajar, *Durar* vol. 2, p. 417, line 11-20 (no. 2250); b. Taghribirdī, *Nujūm* vol. 5, p. 180, lines 3-7 (s.a. 762 AH)/(Cairo) vol. 11, p. 10, lines 1-6; as-Suyūṭī, *Ḥuṣn* vol. 1, p. 165, lines 5-8; ash-Shaukānī, *Badr* vol. 1, p. 402, lines 10-17 (no. 185); Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *L'Afrique* p. 2, note 1; GAL² vol. 1, p. 346; GAL S vol. 1, p. 509; and Zirikli, *A'lām* vol. 4, p. 147.

24. See e.g. b. Faḍlallāh, *Masālik* vol. 4, p. 28, lines 14 f., and Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *L'Afrique* p. 28.

25. See b. Faḍlallāh, *Masālik* vol. 4, pp. 22, line 16-23, line 6, and Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *L'Afrique* pp. 16 f.; see also Maqrīzī, *Ilmām* pp. 12, line 10-13, line 5/(Cairo) pp. 7, line 17-8, line 3.

26. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vol. 5, pp. 302, line 1-307, line 18, and 322, line 1-335, line 16.

I would like now to examine one of the quoted sources in al-Maqrīzī's *Ilmām*. It is in the chapter on the kingdom of Īfāt or Aufāt, that al-Maqrīzī mentions one of his informants, the educated man of letters and poet Sheikh Šihābaddīn Aḥmad b. 'Abdalkhāliq b. Muḥammad b. Khalafallāh b. Muḥammad al-Majāšī²⁷.

This North African globe-trotter had reported him that agricultural and other produce in Īfāt was cheap. A bunch of some 100 bananas was sold for a quarter of a dirham, while thirty pounds (*tābiq*)²⁸ of meat was sold for a dirham and a half²⁹. Compared with the previous translations of Ehrmann³⁰ and Huntingford³¹ including Pankhurst's short notice³², they differ in that bananas and Damascus grapes are not the same, and the quotations of prices are mis-translated. Therefore, this is a good example to remind that a misinterpretation of a passage still lives on.

Who was this North African globe-trotter, al-Majāšī? Fortunately, al-Maqrīzī has supplied his annalistic and topographical studies with a variety of biographical lexica. In his *Kitāb al-Muqaffā al-kabīr* or *at-Ta'rikh al-kabīr al-Muqaffā* he has dealt with more or less detailed accounts of prominent men of Egypt since the Arabic conquest. The dimensions of this biographical dictionary are given different. According to al-Maqrīzī's pupil Ibn Taghribirdī (died 874 AH/1469 AD) and as-Sakhāwī (died 902 AH/1497 AD) a completed form would have filled more than eighty volumes, and according to as-Sakhāwī the existing parts had covered

27. Maqrīzī, *Ilmām* pp. 10, line 9-11/(Cairo) p. 6, lines 16-20, and the correct translation by Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *L'Afrique* p. 38.
28. On *tābiq*, corresponding to thirty liters, see Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *L'Afrique* p. 38. This unit weight is not mentioned in Pankhurst's relevant article on measures, weights and values.
29. The starting point for the following mistranslation is Rinck's attached Latin version on pp. 11 f.: « Qua de re certior me fecit Sheih Moammer Adib Eshaar Shehaboddin Ahmed Ben Abdolchalek Ben Mohammed Ben Halef Ben Mohammed Mogatensis occidentalis cui faveat Deus, qui terram istam peragraverat: 'Vidi, inquit, dum Aufatae commorabar [sic!], ista urbe **uvas Damascenas**, quarum racemi centum fere uvarum **quatuor dirhemis** venibant. Vidi etiam qui frusta carnis triginta librarum **sesqui dirhemo** venderent.' »
30. See Ehrmann, *Al Makrizi's Nachrichten* p. 274: « Wie mir Scheik Moammer Adib Ashaar Shehaboddin Ahmed Ben Abdolchalek Ben Mohammed Ben Halef Ben Mohammed, ein Abendländer aus Mogat, dem Gott gnädig seyn wolle, von seiner Reise durch dies Land [sc. das Königreich Aufat] berichtet hat. 'Als ich in Aufat war, sagte er, sah ich in dieser Stadt **Damaszener Trauden**, die in ganzen Bünscheln, woran ungefähr hundert Trauben hiengen, für vier **Dirhem** zu haben waren. Auch sah ich Leute, welche Stücke Fleisch zu dressig Pfund um **anderthalb Dirhem** verkauften.' »
31. See Huntingford, *Maqrizi* p. 9: « This was told me by Scheik Shihab ad din Ahmad ibn Abdal Ḥalīq ibn Muhammad Ḥalaf ibn Muhammad al Mujasi of Moghreḥ, may God be good to him, who travelled throughout the world. 'When I was in Awfat', he said, 'I saw in that town **Damascus grapes** of wich bunches bearing about 100 grapes were sold for **4 dirhams**. I saw also those who sold pieces of meat of 30 pounds for **half a dirham**'. »
32. See Pankhurst, *Borderlands* pp. 48 f., refering in note 10 on Rinck's Latin version: « His [sc. al-Maqrīzī's,] account contains a few additional passages gleaned from a North African traveller, Sheikh Shihab ad-Din Aḥmad al-Mujasi [sic!].... Thirty pounds of meat sold for only **half a dirhem**, while **four dirhems** would purchase a bunch of about 100 **Damascus grapes**. »

sixteen volumes³³. Some years ago, the edition of the surviving parts by Muḥammad al-Yaʿlawī was published in eight volumes in Beirut.

al-Maqrīzī's second and more specialized text, *Kitāb Durar al-ʿuqūd*, is concerned with biographies of his prominent contemporaries. The published fragment, based on a rough draft (*musauwada*) in the author's hand from the Gotha collection, contains 382 biographies of names beginning with Alif or 'Ain³⁴. Let us focus on the information that can be gleaned from the latter source of al-Maqrīzī³⁵. Here one reads that Aḥmad b. 'Abdalkhāliq b. Muḥammad b. Khalafallāh al-Majāṣī al-Maghribī had travelled the lands in the east, west, south and north, and had earned his living by poetry. Aged long, he died on the 20th of Rabī' II 802 AH, corresponding to the 20th of December 1399 A.D., in Cairo. He had recited his extensive poetry to al-Maqrīzī and had complained as having never passed a year in forty years since his birth in which not a new damage on his body, his food, and his energy was to be found.

This statement was repeated by al-Maqrīzī's fellow historian Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī³⁶ and his pupil as-Sakhāwī³⁷ (died 902 AH/1497 AD), both of them adding that al-Majāṣī, his *nisba* or gentilic, refers to a village in North Africa, where he apparently came from. In the vast geographical Arabic literature a Berber tribe called the *Majāṣa* in the neighbourhood of Fès can be identified³⁸. Next, they indicate the correct pronunciation, not al-Mujāṣī, as stated by Pankhurst³⁹. Finally, both of them emphasize that al-Majāṣī, a capable and skilful poet who composed panegyric poems and numerous lampoons, passed the eve of his life with almost eighty years as a Sufi in the Sa'īd as-Sa'dā' Khānqāh⁴⁰, a well-known establishment for Sufis at Cairo.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article est une notice historique sur l'ouvrage d'al-Maqrīzī concernant les royaumes musulmans d'Éthiopie (1438). Il en examine les éditions et traductions, de même que les sources écrites (où se pose la question du plagiat à l'égard d'auteurs, notamment al-'Umari) mais aussi orales.

33. See in particular: b. Taghribirdī, *Manhal*, vol. 1, p. 419, line (no. 221), and Sakhāwī, *Ḍau'* vol. 2, p. 22, lines 26 f. (no. 66), quoted by Sayyid, *Le manuscrit* p. 50, lines 3-5, and Little in: *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999), p. 231.

34. See Little's review of Maqrīzī's *Durar*, in *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999), pp. 231-232, with a translation of al-Maqrīzī's preface (vol. 1, pp. 50 f.).

35. Maqrīzī, *Durar* ('Izzaddīn 'Alī), vol. 1, p. 210, lines 1-8 (no. 79).

36. b. Ḥajar, *Inbā'*, vol. 4, p. 52; lines 2-5/(Ḥabashi) vol. 2, p. 114, lines 13-16 (no. 14, s.a. 802 AH).

37. Sakhāwī, *Ḍau'* vol. 1, p. 324, lines 8-12.

38. E. g. Idrīsī, *Nuzha*, fasc. 3, p. 246, line 3/(Dozy) p. 79, line 4 (Arabic text) and p. 90 (French translation).

39. Pankhurst, *Borderlands* p. 48: « Mujasi ».

40. On this famous Khānqāh for Sufis, founded during the Aiyūbid period, see in particular: Sylvie Denoix: *Sa'īd al-Su'adā'*, in: *EI* 8 (1995), p. 861.

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