

Al-Qalqašandī's maqāma *al-Kawākib ad-durrīya*

A Re-Consideration Within the Framework of Ego-Documents

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Abstract Al-Qalqašandī's maqāma *al-Kawākib ad-Durrīya* reports an encounter between a narrator in professional crisis and an anonymous interlocutor. In addition to being an 'ego-document' written by the individual al-Qalqašandī, the maqāma also strongly advocates a scribal 'esprit de corps'.

Keywords Al-Qalqašandī, Mamluks, Literature, Maqāma

Introduction

The maqāma has been one of the most popular genres of Arabic literature for centuries, with its beginnings in the tenth century when it was inaugurated by al-Hamađānī, and later examples composed during the nineteenth century, with the prolific intellectual Fāris aš-Šidyāq and his parody version. The inventor of the genre is not though the most prominent author of maqāmāt, but al-Ḥarīrī, who lived in the twelfth century. The term can be translated as "assemblies"; in French it is often translated as "Séances". In its 'original' form, it is a rather short piece (up to ten pages), composed in rhymed prose (*sağ'*), containing rhetorical figures and quotations in poetry. More often than not, a maqāma does not come alone, but is embedded in a whole collection.¹ The topic of the maqāma is usually an anecdote in which a witty and eloquent protagonist in disguise

1 Most likely, the concept of deliberately authoring a whole collection of maqāmāt is a later development that only occurred after al-Ḥarīrī's precedent, as Maurice Pomerantz and Bilal Orfali have suggested: Pomerantz and Orfali 2015a, 124.

repeatedly tries to cheat the (first-person-) narrator. Later, (in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries), the genre began to broaden considerably. In addition to the picaresque narrative, there were examples of maqāmāt expressing philological, scientific, or scholarly expertise, or containing exhortatory and moral features. Thus, by the time of the author al-Qalqaṣandī (d. 821 / 1418), the genre had developed in a number of different directions.²

Al-Qalqaṣandī's maqāma *al-Kawākib ad-durrīya fī manāqib al-badrīya* ("The brilliant stars of Badr ad-Dīn's virtues") was originally composed in 791 / 1389, when he became part of the chancery during the term of the 'privy secretary' (*kātib as-sirr*) Badr ad-Dīn b. Faḍlallāh al-ʿUmārī (d. 796 / 1394), to whom it is dedicated. Later, when composing his opus magnum *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā fī ṣināʿat al-inšāʿ* ("The dawn of the Nightblind, concerning the art of text composition") on the profession of the chancery clerk, al-Qalqaṣandī included it in this voluminous work.³ Apparently, it is not preserved in manuscript form outside the larger work.

The maqāma *al-Kawākib ad-durrīya* has been subject to several studies. In the 1960s, C.E. Bosworth published a short article on this piece, in Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila's monograph on the genre, it is listed among the later examples, and in his 2003 study, Muhsin al-Musawi resumed the topic, setting it in a broader context.⁴ One might ask now why studying the maqāma again will benefit understanding of its author. First of all, there is comparably little information on al-Qalqaṣandī in sources that should range among the obvious contemporary, or near-contemporary sources on his life. Biographical compendia only provide sparse information on the author of the *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā*. Accordingly, for want of a better source, it seems only natural to turn to a piece of literature that contains some autobiographical cues. Second: most of the studies that have already dealt with the maqāma do refer to the *Ṣubḥ* in a rather perfunctory manner. They usually refer only to al-Qalqaṣandī's introduction to the *Ṣubḥ*, seldom to other parts of the work. However, as the maqāma has been described as *Ṣubḥ* in a nutshell, we can derive some interesting insights from actually looking at the superstructure the maqāma has inspired in more detail than has been done previously.⁵

2 Stewart 2006; Hämeen-Anttila 2002.

3 Al-Qalqaṣandī 1913–1919, 14:112–128.

4 Bosworth 1964; Hämeen-Anttila 2002, 341–342 and 360–364; Musawi 2003.

5 Cf. Musawi 2003. Similarly, the maqāma of Aḥmad Fāris aṣ-Ṣidyāq that was described as "the Sāq in a Nutshell": Guth 2010, 147.

Several scholars have either analyzed maqāmāt in search for autobiographical information, or they have interpreted individual works of the genre as consisting of ‘autobiographical contents’.⁶ However, the genre itself has been described as predominantly ‘fictional’ in character—and thereby as differing from other works of belles lettres (*adab*).⁷ This ‘fictionality’ does not necessarily mean that there is no autobiographical material to be considered within individual maqāmāt. Nevertheless, this assemblage of ‘fictional/fictitious’ and ‘real’ or ‘perceived-as-real’ contents may not be absolutely random. To deal with autobiographical and personal information in a predominantly fictional framework provides certain options to an author, while at the same time narrowing other perspectives he might have in mind. For one thing, an author will be able to admit thoughts he would have to conceal in a text of rather non-fictional character. Then again, these same thoughts could be misunderstood by the audience of the text as simply not being connected to its author.

Al-Qalqašandī and his *Ṣubḥ al-ašā*

Al-Qalqašandī was born in 756/1355 in a village north of Cairo and was member of a family of local scholars (*ulamā*). He received his education in Alexandria and Cairo, focusing on literature and Šāfi‘ī law. In 778/1376, he received a license (*iğāza*) to teach law and to issue legal opinions (*fatāwā*). However, after a ten-year-period of working as a professor and commentator of Šāfi‘ī law books, in 791/1389 he exchanged the academic position (*‘ālim*) for a post as a second-class scribe (*kātib ad-darğ*) in the chancery. His opus magnum, the *summa* of chancery literature, is the above mentioned *Ṣubḥ al-ašā fi šinā‘at al-inšā* in fourteen volumes, completed in 816/1412.⁸

The work is divided into ten parts, called “Maqālāt”, preceded by a preface (*ḥuṭba*) and a general introduction (*muqaddima*).

6 Behzadi and Hämeen-Anttila 2015; Bauer 2002, 78–83; Bauer 2003; Bürgel 1991; Guth 2010.

7 Hämeen-Anttila 1997, 582. Not surprisingly, Hämeen-Anttila is very careful to interpret certain motifs in a maqāma as ‘autobiographical’: cf. Hämeen-Anttila 2002, 155, interpreting “the nisba al-Baṣrī” as a possible “hint” to al-Ḥarīrī himself.

For general discussions on ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ in pre-modern Arabic literature, cf. Leder 1998; Kennedy 2005a, especially Kennedy 2005b and Bray 2005; Toral-Niehoff 2015.

8 Cf. Bosworth 1960–2009; van Berkel 2009. The edition consulted for this article was al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919. In manuscript format, there are seven volumes in total.

- In the introduction (I, 1–139), al-Qalqašandī praises the virtue of the scribal profession and assesses the significance of the compositional secretaryship (*kitābat al-inšāʿ*) as opposed to financial secretaryship (*kitābat al-amwāl*). He describes the compositional secretary (*kātib al-inšāʿ*) as a cultural and political broker of his time. Another important point he stresses is the ethics of the profession, thereby providing a how-to manual on ideal behavior at court.
- Maqāla 1 (I, 140–III, 226) encompasses a guide to the essential educational canon for the chancery scribe, divided into two parts; scientific or scholarly information (*umūr ʿilmīya*), and technical or practical information (*umūr ʿamalīya*) such as the handling of the scribal equipment.
- Maqāla 2 (III, 227–V, 422) is about history and geography. This rather large part has attracted the curiosity of many researchers, as it contains information that has been termed as ‘historical’.
- Maqāla 3 (V, 423–VI, 273) prepares the reader for the Maqāla 4, as it introduces two important phenomena; first, honorific names (*alqāb*) to be applied in official correspondence, and second, material aspects of chancery writing, such as formats and questions of layout.
- Maqāla 4 (VI, 274–IX, 251) offers insights into the topic of official letters of the chancery (*mukātabāt*), to a large part presenting model documents.
- Maqāla 5 (IX, 252–XII, 484) is similar to Maqāla 4 in that it provides an introduction to the field of certain chancery genres, in this case certificates of appointments (*wilāyāt*).
- Maqāla 6 (XIII, 1–XIII, 103), deals with documents such as tax levying certificates (*musāmaḥāt*), public exhortatory writings (*waṣāyā dīnīya*), or writings to retired Mamlūk military men.
- The following three Maqālāt are rather short compared to the earlier parts, that is Maqāla 7, on letters of endowment (*iqṭāʿāt*, XIII, 104–199), Maqāla 8, on letters of safe-conduct (*aymān*, XIII, 200–320), and Maqāla 9, on peace and armistice agreements and correspondence with foreign powers (XIII, 321–XIV, 109).
- Finally, Maqāla 10 (XIV, 110–365) deals with writings that are relevant outside the chancery. The last Maqāla is supplemented by an afterword (*ḥātima*, XIV, 366–404).

What is interesting here is that this tenth Maqāla builds the detailed frame of reference for the maqāma *al-Kawākib ad-durriya*. In the 1913 edition, Maqāla 10 contains around 250 pages and is classified as containing details on “branches of writing that the scribes use to exchange, rivalling in

composing them”, though these writings were probably not exchanged in the context of the ‘core’ chancery routine.⁹ This Maqāla is divided into two sub-chapters; first, serious, or earnest genres (*ǧiddīyāt*), and second, comic writings (*hazlīyāt*), the latter being only a handful of pages. Among the first category, we find not only the maqāmāt, but also panegyrics (*madḥ*), encomium (*taqrīz*), boastful encounters (*mufāḥarāt*), dowry testimonies or marriage contracts (*ṣaduqāt*), archery-related writings (*qīdmāt al-bunduq*) and other genres. Although these genres are outside the chancery routine, they are important to indicate a certain lettered culture. Whoever is proficient in these genres goes beyond mere copying and copyediting. The maqāma is the first branch among these serious genres that is thoroughly discussed. One wonders though, why the maqāma, which was composed some twenty years before the actual *Ṣubḥ* (in 791 / 1389, upon his entry into the chancery), has not been placed in a more prominent position, or in relationship to less serious writings.¹⁰

The maqāma and its Arabic literary context

As most texts in Arabic literature, al-Qalqaṣandī's *Kawākib ad-durriya* are embedded in a web of intertextual references. The most obvious here is the reference to the forefathers of the genre, al-Hamaḍānī and al-Ḥarīrī. As Hämeen-Anttila has pointed out in his monograph, al-Hamaḍānī was superseded by al-Ḥarīrī to the point that one could not understand anymore what exactly al-Hamaḍānī's original contribution to the genre had been.¹¹ This point is also supported by al-Qalqaṣandī, who reports that al-Ḥarīrī's maqāmāt had become so famous and achieved such a level of beauty that al-Hamaḍānī's works were forgotten.¹² He quotes Ḍiyā' ad-Dīn Ibn al-Aṭīr's

9 Al-Qalqaṣandī 1913–1919, 14:110.

10 In the prologue (*ḥuṭba*) to the work (al-Qalqaṣandī 1913–1919, 1:8–9), al-Qalqaṣandī refers to the composition of the maqāma on the occasion of his entry to the ranks of the scribes. Thus, an inclusion in the beginning of the book would have been a quite reasonable decision. However, as the genre is regarded as of ‘supplementary’ function to the chancery, al-Qalqaṣandī might have decided against a more prominent framing of the piece.

11 Hämeen-Anttila 2002, 123–4. However, there is still research to be done in order to re-evaluate the maqāmāt of al-Hamaḍānī, their composition, collection, and distribution, as the studies stemming from the joint project of Bilal Orfali and Maurice Pomerantz have demonstrated: Pomerantz and Orfali 2015a and Pomerantz and Orfali 2015b.

12 Al-Qalqaṣandī 1913–1919, 14:110. Intriguingly, Ibn al-Aṭīr's source Ibn al-Ḥaššāb (492/1099–567/1172) was a severe critic of al-Ḥarīrī, and author of a controversial work

(558/1163–637/1239) assessment of al-Ḥarīrī, who, in the words of the *Ṣubḥ*, did not do full justice to this later author, since he purported that al-Ḥarīrī was not able to compose anything but maqāmāt. On the authority of Ibn al-Ḥaššāb, Ibn al-Athīr reported a story that elaborated on al-Ḥarīrī's restricted capabilities: due to his famous work, he was invited to join the ranks of the caliphal bureaucracy (*dīwān*) in Baghdad. When he was commissioned to write a letter though, he was unable to do so and fell silent, and “his tongue neither produced *ṭawīl*, nor *qaṣīr*” meters.¹³

However, according to al-Qalqašandī, there is a reasonable excuse for al-Ḥarīrī's rather focused literary portfolio: in the case of maqāmāt, there is always a fixed frame of reference, the narrative (*hikāya*) one can resort to. The rules of chancery composition are somewhat different, described as “a sea without shores”. The reason for this phenomenon are the *maʿānī*, which in the realm of chancery composition are constantly renewed—and to be aware of changing circumstances is part of the responsibilities of each individual author.¹⁴

What does al-Qalqašandī mean by the term *maʿnā* and its plural form *maʿānī*? From modern standard Arabic, this term is translated into English as ‘meaning’, or ‘sense’. For the fifteenth-century lettered man (*adīb*) with a firm grounding in rhetorical learning (*balāḡa*), the implications of this term are more complicated, encompassing ‘words’, (poetic) ‘motifs’, ‘concepts’, or ‘ideas’.¹⁵ In order to understand what al-Qalqašandī means by the term *maʿnā*—and what exactly distinguishes the professional scribe from a full-time-composer of maqāmāt, a look at some passages in Maqāla 1 will prove insightful. In the following quote, the author explains the hierarchy of the *maʿānī* (concepts/ideas) vis-à-vis the *alfāz* (wordings/terms/expressions), by displaying a wisdom of the profession that draws on corporeal metaphorical language:

It is well-known that the *maʿānī* (concepts/ideas) relate to the *alfāz* (wordings/terms/expressions) as the bodies relate to the garments (*aʿlam an al-maʿānī mina l-alfāz bi-manzilat al-abdān mina t-ṭiyāb*).¹⁶

Concepts and corresponding wordings each have predetermined purposes and functions. For the author of the *Ṣubḥ* (and many others of his

bearing the title *Naqd al-maqāmāt al-ḥarīriya* (“Critique of the Ḥarīrian maqāmāt”), cf. Hämeen-Anttila 2006–.

13 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:111.

14 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:111.

15 Cf. Sauer forthcoming a, ch. 2.

16 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 2:183.

profession), as a general rule, the wording follows the concepts, not vice versa (*al-alfāzu tābi'atan, wa-l-ma'anī matbū'a*). A "beautification through *alfāz*" has to benefit the *ma'anī* (*wa-ṭalaba taḥsīnu l-alfāzi innamā huwa li-taḥsīni l-ma'anī*), otherwise it is useless and even harmful to communication:

[. . .] nay, the *ma'anī* are the souls (*arwāḥ*) of the *alfāz* and their objectives (*ḡāyatuhā*) on account of which they are formed and on which they are built upon! To take care (*iṣāba*) of the *ma'anī* is of utmost importance for the adept of *balāḡa* (*ṣāḥib al-balāḡa*)—more than the beautification of the *alfāz*: for if the *ma'nā* is correct and the *lafz* is incorrect and deviating from the method of linguistic purity (*munḥaṭṭan sāqiṭan 'an uslūbi l-faṣāḥa*), the statement will be comparable to a human being that is deformed in its features though still inhabited by a soul (*al-kalāmu ka-l-insāni muṣawwaha ṣ-ṣūrati ma'a wuḡūdi r-rūḥi fīhi*). But if the *ma'nā* is corrupted, the statement is comparable to a human being that is dead, without any soul in it, albeit being of excellent and most beautiful figure.¹⁷

When al-Qalqašandī goes into detail as to how to produce the best of the *ma'anī*, it becomes quite clear that one has to have a firm knowledge of grammar, syntax and the intricacies of semantics. The goal of the sound *ma'nā* is not to entertain, or to compose superfluously embellished sentences, but to adjust to the specific context in which a message is produced (*muqtadā l-hāl*).¹⁸ For once, al-Qalqašandī and other scribes criticized al-Ḥarīrī's lopsided focus on the embellishment of wordings.¹⁹ Furthermore, the critique on al-Ḥarīrī, who was 'only' a "minor civil servant (*ṣāḥib al-barīd*)"²⁰ during his career, was strongly connected to questions of professional specification. For example, in the chapter on the supremacy of the position of compositional secretary (*tafḍīl kitābat al-inšā' 'alā sār anwā' al-kitāba*), al-Qalqašandī explains that unlike all the other persons of the administrative apparatus, the *kātib al-inšā'* has to be proficient in *all* branches of knowledge, including the financial sector. He maintained that the financial secretaries (*kuttāb al-amwāl*), on the contrary, were only trained in calculating. In addition to being able to calculate, the compositional secretary had to know about how to find the appropriate words and

17 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 2:183.

18 Cf. al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 2:332–338.

19 For example al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 2:271.

20 Hämeen-Anttila 2002, 148. The above-mentioned position is equivalent to a postman.

sentences for every given and novel situation—a capability al-Ḥarīrī purportedly did not have, as he resorted to his everlasting frame of reference—the *maqāma* genre.²¹ Thus, seen in a broader context, text composition is described as too complicated for a less important official who is ‘only’ proficient in one single genre.

Although al-Ḥarīrī is venerated as a great artist in the realm of *maqāmāt*, it becomes clear from many instances in the *Ṣubḥ* that al-Qalqašandī’s opinion of this famous author is rather troublesome. In the chapter on aesthetics, for instance, he criticizes him for not properly understanding the scribes’ reliance on the Arabic literary heritage.²² Taken together, the objections against the author of the most famous *maqāmāt* do not appear as complete rejections—by and large, they are rather reflections of a scribal ‘esprit de corps’.

Al-Qalqašandī’s own contribution, in turn, is not exactly what an author of ‘classical’ *maqāmāt* would recognize as such. Hämeen-Anttila labels the *Kawākib ad-durrīya* as a “professional” *maqāma*, in accordance with later developments.²³ Indeed, there are some similarities to another work of roughly the same time period which has been edited, translated and commented on by Thomas Bauer some fifteen years ago. In this *maqāma* on the profession of the miller, the protagonist begins by lamenting on the difficulties of his branch. He admits that he had to find employment in order to gain a living. However, his choice turned out to be rather unfortunate, as he soon began to suffer from his strenuous occupation and the dirt surrounding the mill, resulting in hygiene problems, in severe headaches and graying hair.²⁴

21 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 1:54–55. In one of his *maqāmāt* (al-Furāṭīya), al-Ḥarīrī also refers to the debate between the financial secretaries and their compositional adversaries, with the hero Abū Zayd providing an “eloquent analysis of their respective merits” (Hämeen-Anttila 2002, 164). This story shows some similarities to a plot known from anecdotal literature, namely the narrative about the ‘weaver of words’ (Hämeen-Anttila 2002, 163–164). For the ‘weaver of words’ as presented by al-Qalqašandī, see Sauer forthcoming a, chapter 2.

22 Sauer forthcoming a, ch. 1.

23 Hämeen-Anttila 1997, 586, where he suggests that “philological” *maqāmāt* “seem to be the earliest examples of what later became [. . .] what might be called ‘professional *maqāmas*’” (explicitly referring to the *Kawākib ad-durrīya*). However, in his 2002 monograph, there is no separate section describing the characteristics of “professional” *maqāmāt*, neither do we find the term in the index. Nevertheless, in some paragraphs, Hämeen-Anttila discusses topics related to professions, such as Hämeen-Anttila 2002, 337, or 341–342, with the former referring to two “vulgar *maqāmas*” discussing occupations, and the latter referring to the “scholarly or professional *maqāma*” of which the *Kawākib* are seen as an example.

24 Cf. Bauer 2003. Bauer mentions the fact that al-Mi‘mār’s *maqāma* was famous among Mamlūk littérateurs, extant in many manuscripts. Ibn Taḡribirdī (d. 874/1407) was even

Structure and content of the *Kawākib ad-durrīya*

After the preliminaries on the history of the genre, al-Qalqašandī introduces his own maqāma: he informs us that it was composed in the year 791 / 1389, upon his inauguration to the chancery and dedicated to his patron Badr ad-Dīn. The text contains around sixteen pages.²⁵ The only other work quoted in the maqāma-chapter was written by al-Qāsim al-Ḥwārizmī, a contemporary of al-Ḥarīrī.²⁶ Contrary to the ornate prose applied by the latter, the language of al-Ḥwārizmī's piece has been described as "fluent and unforced"²⁷—which may explain al-Qalqašandī's choice. The section on the maqāmāt thus represents two examples of relatively 'easy style', as al-Qalqašandī's own composition also has a most unpretentious style, albeit containing rhymed prose (*sağ'*) and numerous quotations in verse.²⁸

The overall structure of the maqāma *al-Kawākib ad-durrīya* reads as follows:²⁹

1. *Isnād*³⁰
2. Introduction: narrator's professional crisis³¹
3. Sudden appearance of the anonymous interlocutor ('link')³²

reluctant to quote him as he assumed his work to be common knowledge to everybody (3–4).

25 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:112–128.

26 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:128–138. According to Hämeen-Anttila 1997, 589, it is "the most interesting" work "from the point of view of genre". However, this maqāma was originally included in a (now lost) collection termed "Kitāb ar-riḥal" and thus may have escaped the scholars' attention. Fragments of the maqāma collection are extant in several *adab* anthologies. Cf. Hämeen-Anttila 2002, 141–147 and 431–444. In the latter section Hämeen-Anttila provides a translation of the piece based on Ibn Ḥamdūn's (495 / 1102–562 / 1166) *at-Tadkira al-ḥamdūniya*. Interestingly, Ibn Ḥamdūn presented it in a chapter called *al-Mukātabāt wa-r-rasā'il* ("Letters and Epistles"), containing also maqāmāt of al-Hamaḍānī and al-Ḥarīrī (Hämeen-Anttila 2002, 142).

27 Hämeen-Anttila 2002, 147.

28 For al-Qalqašandī's stylistic principles cf. Sauer forthcoming a, ch. 2. Bosworth 1964, 295, mentions that the "sense" of the *Kawākib* "would be generally clear were it not for the formidable list of secretarial skills and techniques which is inserted into the text." However, it is remarkable that Bosworth does not seem to care about the inserted passages of verse, although he indicates there "is a certain amount of poetry in it" (295).

29 Cf. Hämeen-Anttila 2002, 152 for the Ḥarīrian precedent.

30 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:112.

31 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:112–113.

32 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:113.

4. Episode: dialogue between the narrator and his companion (dominated by the latter)³³
5. Envoi³⁴
6. Finale: the narrator enters the ranks of the scribes³⁵

Al-Qalqašandī introduces his narrator, named an-Nāṭir ibn an-Nazzām (*ḥakā an-Nāṭir ibn an-Nazzām*), the “prose-writer son of the versifier”.³⁶ In minute detail, he tells us about his professional crisis: despite noble intentions, his hunt for knowledge (*iqtināš al-‘ilm*) has turned into a trap of studying (*ašrāk at-taḥšīl*). Initially taking advantage of his young age and healthy status, life now has become burdensome (*antahizu furšata š-šabbābi qabla tawallihā wa-aḡtanimu ḥālata š-šihḥati qabla taḡāfihā*). Contrary to the old days, he states, “my eyelids have become the companions of insomnia” (*qad ḥālafa ḡafnī s-suhād*), and his “good sleep has become violated” (*wa-ḥālafa ṭayyiba r-ruqād*).³⁷

He reports on his quest for knowledge, being content with a most simple life and the blandest of foods (*qāni‘an bi-adnā l-‘ayš wa-rādīyan bi-aysari l-aqwāt*), dwelling among strange creatures and living the life of a vagabond. He was delighted though, whenever he was able to explore beauty, taking refuge in things recited from the books that contained the most firm compositions and the most erudite scholarship. Instead of seeking human company, he preferred his books as surrogate friends, staying alone in his house. He would wander about “in the square of thoughts for the hidden things of the *ma‘ānī* to become visible to me” (*wa-aḡūlu fī maydāni l-afkār li-talūḥa li kamā’inu l-ma‘ānī*).³⁸ However, the result of studying would only lead to more questions, so he would harvest the meagre fruits of his daily quest, and spend the evenings in utmost distress (*fī aḡyaqi ḥināq wa-ašaddi wiṭāq*). Furthermore, the need to gain a living was a severe hindrance to his study—which caused a certain melancholy (*al-waḥša*). Thus, at the heart of this crisis lies the antagonism between gaining and learning (*ta‘āraḍa*

33 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:113–127. Unlike the ‘classical’ maqāmāt, the *Kawākib ad-durriya* do not contain a recognition scene. However, as will be demonstrated below (p. 267), there is a section that could be interpreted as some kind of ‘self-recognition’, or ‘awakening’.

34 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:127, including panegyrics favoring al-Qalqašandī’s patron from the Faḍlallāh family.

35 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:127–128.

36 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:112.

37 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:112. Cf. Bauer 2003 and pg. (260) above.

38 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:112.

fīya ḥukmu l-ʿaqli bayna al-kasbi wa-ṭalabi l-ʿilm), which he was not able to solve:³⁹

If I sought knowledge only for the sake of gaining (*li-l-kasbi*), I would return to obscene language (*afḥaštu ruḡūʿan*); and if I stopped earning money for the quest for knowledge, I would perish from loss and die starving (*halaktu ḍayʿatan wa-muttu ḡūʿan*)⁴⁰

Although the narrator of the maqāma subsumes his burdensome life in the framework of a popular antagonism between earning and studying, a close reading of the section also reveals a second problem that is set within the educational project at large. The situation the narrator finds himself in is not equivalent to the ‘classical’ method of learning and studying. Rather, he describes a personal quest for knowledge, dominated by individual reading experiences, i.e., silent reading (*muṭālaʿa*) and information processing. Our protagonist does not have regular contact to a teacher—most of the time, he is studying alone, trying to find answers all by himself. Obviously, this enterprise has been unsuccessful, because the greater objective of real comprehension is superimposed with even more questions—instead of the desired answers. This individual crisis reflects changed patterns of knowledge transmission during the course of the Middle Period. At the end of this process there is a phenomenon that has been termed ‘deep reading’. In a seminal article, Khaled El-Rouayheb analyzed a treatise from the later seventeenth century that was probably the first to deal with “the proper manner (*ādāb*) of perusing books (*muṭālaʿah*)”.⁴¹ Other treatises from the pre-modern Arabic scholarly community that contained information on how to behave as a student or teacher had simply not dealt with the topic—instead focusing on the aural-oral method of knowledge transmission. However, silent reading was a practice that seemed to be expected of more experienced scholars, though only as one component of a broader approach towards learning.⁴² The growing literarization during the Ayyubid and Mamlūk periods fifth/twelfth to

39 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:113.

40 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:113.

41 El-Rouayheb 2015, 202.

42 El-Rouayheb 2015, 203–207. According to Ibn ʿĀmāʿa (639–733/1241–1333), “[. . .] a teacher-scholar should not rest content with his level of knowledge but seek to develop it by means of thinking, discussion, memorization, writing, and muṭālaʿah.” (206).

ninth/sixteenth centuries) entailed a diffusion of divergent ‘reading practices’⁴³—among them individual reading. Al-Qalqaṣandī’s near contemporary, Ibn Ḥaldūn (732/1332–784/1382), was apparently aware of this trend and raised objections. In his *Muqaddima*, he criticized the effect of studying without a teacher, given the sheer amount of books available to the interested reader.⁴⁴ Thus, when al-Qalqaṣandī’s narrator describes his own individual quest for knowledge as futile, we are able to grasp a certain amount of cultural critique that is witness to a growing awareness of heterogeneous text reception modes.

While travelling around and lamenting his fate, an-Nāṭir ibn an-Nazzām encounters an anonymous man, described as of noblest figure and highest intellect. This man is chanting, praising the scribes (*kuttāb*) in verse (there are ten situations in total in which poetry is included in this maqāma):⁴⁵

In kunta taqṣidunī bi-zūlmika ‘āmidan
 Fa-ḥurimta naf’a ṣadāqati l-kuttāb
 As-sā’iqīna ilā ṣ-ṣiddīqi tarā l-ḡinā
 Wa-n-nā’išina li-‘aṭrati l-aṣḥābi
 Wa-n-nāhiḍīna bi-kulli ‘ib’in muṭqilin
 Wa-n-nāṭiqīna bi-faṣli kulli ḥiṭābi
 Wa-l-‘āṭifīna ‘alā ṣ-ṣadiqi bi-faḍlihim
 Wa-ṭ-ṭayyibīna rawā’iḥa l-aṭwābi
 Wa-la’in ḡaḥadtahumu aṭ-ṭanā’a fa-ṭālamā
 Ḡaḥada l-‘abīdu tafaddūla l-arbābi!

As you have called for me to support you in times of (your) distress:
 It is by the benefits of friendship of the *kuttāb* you will be relieved
 Of those who send valuable riches to the righteous
 Of those who invigorate the peers who have stumbled
 Of those who carry every heavy burden
 Of those who utter every opening [of a letter]
 Of those who compassionately favor the friend
 Of those friendly ones who are of perfumed garments
 (And) indeed, if you refuse to praise them—how often
 Does the servant renounce the courtesy of the Masters!

43 Hirschler 2012 has focused on oral-aural ‘reading practices’, though he also took into account an accompanying trend towards ‘deep reading’ (15–16).

44 Ibn Ḥaldūn and Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Bārī aṭ-Ṭāhir 2012, 536–538.

45 Al-Qalqaṣandī 1913–1919, 14:113–114.

An-Nāṭir ibn an-Nazzām wonders whether these features ascribed to the *kuttāb* are those of kings, or vice versa, and he admits that he didn't believe the scribes to have such a high status in society, and the craft of writing to be of this significance. The interlocutor, frowning upon the narrator's skepticism, starts to convince the 'unbeliever', initially by invoking four common Quranic verses in favor of writing (Q 96:3–5; Q 68:1–2; Q 82:10–11; Q 25:5).⁴⁶ Then, the anonymous acquaintance highlights the noble character of Muḥammad's alleged pool of scribes, which is described as the "elite of his companions (*nuḥbat aṣḥābihi*)", entrusted with writing down "the secrets of the revelation (*asrār al-waḥy wa-t-tanzīl*)" as well as corresponding with the Kings.⁴⁷ Following the prophetic precedence, the rightly-guided Caliphs (*ar-rāšidūn*) had relied on scribes, and all powerful persons afterwards did so as well. The narrator's interlocutor then resorts to overt boasting, describing writing as "the rule of statecraft" (*qānūn as-siyāsa*), and scribes as the ears, eyes, tongues and intellects of the Kings (*wa-l-kuttābu 'uyūnu l-mulūki l-mubšira wa-ādānuhum al-wā'īya wa-alsinatuhum an-nātiqa wa-'uqūluhum al-ḥawīya*). Overall, the Kings were more dependent on their secretaries than vice versa.⁴⁸ Additionally, there is an interesting sentence as to the perceived hierarchy of occupations:

The man of the sword and of knowledge each begrudge the scribe because of his pen—but the scribe is neither envious of the soldier's sword, nor of the scholar's knowledge⁴⁹

The scholarly activities of gathering and transmitting knowledge are then reinterpreted in the framework of belles lettres (*adab*): the scribes become "collectors" (*al-ḥawūn*) of every beautiful description (*li-kulli waṣḥfīn*

46 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:114. The translations are presented according to Arberry 2008. Q 96:3–4: "Recite: and thy Lord is the most generous, who taught by the Pen, taught Man that he knew not."; Q 68:1–2: "Nūn. By the Pen and what they inscribe, thou art not, by the blessing of thy Lord, a man possessed"; Q 82:10–11: "Yet, there are over you watchers, noble, writers"; Q 25:5 "They say 'Fairy-tales of the Ancients that he has had written down [. . .]". Actually, of these four passages, only the first three are clearly favoring writing, whereas the fourth verse combines writing with the accusation of forgery. Intriguingly, this is contrary to the oath of Q 68:1–2, which functions as an authentication of the prophet's mission—through the very act of writing! Cf. Sauer forthcoming a, ch. 3, and Sauer forthcoming b.

47 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:115.

48 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:115.

49 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:115: "anna ṣāḥiba ṣ-ṣayfi wa-l-'ilmi yuzāḥimu l-kātiba fi qalamīhi, wa-lā yuzāḥimu l-kātibu ṣāḥiba s-sayf wa-l-'ilmi fi sayfihi wa-'ilmihi."

ğamīlin) and “noble thing” (*wa-šaʿnin nabīlin*). The scribes’ “kindness are their verses” (*al-karam šiʿāruhum*), “their fundament is intelligence/reason (*wa-l-ḥilmu diṭāruhum*)”, *adab* is their “method/vessel (*wa-l-adabu markabuhum*)”, and “civility/courteousness their school (*wa-l-luṭfu maḍhabuhum*)”.⁵⁰ The passage culminates in a two-verse-quotation dealing with the motif of “gathering/collecting”.⁵¹

Wa-šumūlin ka-annamā ʿtašarūhā
Min maʿānī šamāʿili l-kuttāb

Gathering is as if they extracted from them,
Of the *maʿānī* the good qualities of the scribes

The narrator seems to be convinced by this explanation, ready to accept the scribes’ high status and importance to society. However, as a recent proselyte to the branch, he seeks advice as to which specialization within secretaryship he should pursue.⁵² His companion then proposes to enter the ranks of the compositional secretaries, as he declares *inšāʿ* to be the more meritorious of the different branches of *kitāba*—an insight an-Nāṭir ibn an-Nazzām critically questions: “But, isn’t financial secretaryship the more noble position [. . .] as the Imam [sic!] Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim al-Ḥarīrī has said in his maqāmāt? [. . .]”⁵³ According to these maqāmāt, the tasks of the compositional secretaries mainly consisted of “copy and paste” (*talfīq*).⁵⁴ The anonymous interlocutor of an-Nāṭir ibn an-Nazzām however provides a different perspective on the matter—and uses al-Ḥarīrī’s own inconsistencies to convince the protagonist. As al-Ḥarīrī himself had (purportedly) written, he says, *inšāʿ* was the highest (*arfaʿ*) form of writing, whereas financial secretaryship was the most useful (*anfaʿ*).⁵⁵ The narrator now admits to having proof enough of the primacy of *inšāʿ*. However, he wonders what the scribe needs in order to pursue his career (*fa-mā lladī yaḥtāḡu kātibu l-inšāʿ ilā mumārasatihā*). His companion assures him that he is already devoted to the principles that are central to the profession

50 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:115.

51 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:115.

52 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:115–118.

53 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:118–125.

54 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:116–117. For a critique of al-Ḥarīrī’s incapacity to understand the importance of literary heritage to *inšāʿ*, see ch. 1 of Sauer forthcoming a.

55 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:117.

(*iḍan qad ta'allaqta mina ṣ-ṣan'ati bi-asbābihā*).⁵⁶ As has been suggested above (footnote 33), this scene could be interpreted as a 'surrogate recognition scene' in which the anonymous man declares the narrator to be proficient enough to work as a scribe. Moreover, he assures him that he has been ready for this field all along. A third party thus represents the solution to a professional crisis and enables the narrator to finally recognize his 'scribal self'.

After this 'recognition scene', the narrator's companion sets out to elaborate on the specifics of knowledge necessary for the profession—a passage that has been described as the *Ṣubḥ* in a nutshell.⁵⁷ However, as to the details of this scholarly catalogue, there is considerable variation from the hierarchy of the branches of knowledge as found in the *Ṣubḥ* at large.⁵⁸ Briefly, the capacities of the scribe-to-be should be comprised of the following points: (by-heart-) knowledge of *Qurān* and *Sunna*, knowledge of the most important works (speeches and letters) of the paragons among the eloquent (*bulaḡā'*), principles of statecraft (*aḥkām as-sultānīya*), Arabic poetry (ancient and new), history, genealogy, language (the "currency", *ra's māl*, of the scribes), grammar, *ma'ānī*, *bayān* and *badi'*, Islamic law and many others. Furthermore, there is a good deal of practical information to be found in this list: the names of different genres of letters and documents, information on material aspects of epistolography (such as a beautiful handwriting, which is described as "its center", *wāsiṭa 'iqdihi*, of the profession), as well as thematic focuses of the writings to be composed by the chancery clerk.

However, contrary to the presentation in the *Ṣubḥ*, the maqāma does not distinguish between scholarly, or abstract knowledge (*umūr 'ilmīya*), and practical skills (*umūr 'amaliya*). This results in the peculiarity that the *aḥkām as-sultānīya* are depicted as a third branch of knowledge in the maqāma (after *Qurān*, *Sunna* and *balāḡa*), whereas in the *Ṣubḥ* itself, they fall under a category that could be described as miscellaneous, and therefore not deemed as very important. Furthermore, everything that might just be a matter of learning-by-doing becomes over-intellectualized, as it is labelled as *'ilm*. The maqāma, when compared to the opus magnum, is therefore possibly a first idea of what was later to become the *Ṣubḥ*, but it is certainly not the "*Ṣubḥ* in a nutshell". First and foremost, the maqāma stands for itself in that it has a mission to provide shorthand knowledge

56 Al-Qalqaṣandī 1913–1919, 14:118.

57 Al-Qalqaṣandī 1913–1919, 14:118–124.

58 Cf. Sauer forthcoming a, ch. 1, 2, 4.

on the art of *kitāba*, to explain al-Qalqašandī's professional rift and to positively interpret his entry to the chancery.

The catalogue of the required branches of knowledge is followed by a passage in praise of the most important scribal personalities—among them al-Qalqašandī's patron from the 'dynasty' of Faḍlallāh (*Āl Faḍlallāh*).⁵⁹ In the last thematic unit of the maqāma, an-Nāṭir ibn an-Nazzām becomes courageous enough to ask about those who would like to emulate the great names of the profession, and which of the positions would be suitable to him.⁶⁰ His interlocutor advises him to become part of the *kuttāb ad-darġ* (scribes of the scroll), which are lower in the hierarchy in comparison to the *kuttāb ad-dast*. The 'ordinary' hierarchisation of *kuttāb* becomes invalid: the *kuttāb ad-darġ* are ascribed higher status in terms of language production (*šan'at al-kalām*), as they are the ones who actually compose writing.⁶¹ In the end, the interlocutor vanishes, and the narrator enters the *dīwān al-inšā'*.⁶²

Conclusion

Al-Qalqašandī's maqāma *al-Kawākib ad-durrīya* reports an encounter between a narrator in professional crisis and an anonymous interlocutor. The narrator, who can be connected to the author of the *Šubḥ*, provides insights into the details of his depression: he is stuck between his quest for knowledge, and the necessity of earning a living. Additionally, the idealized quest for knowledge carries certain risks: instead of exploring the desired answers, the narrator has to deal with even more questions. Thus, upon close reading of some of the passages of the piece, the maqāma becomes a powerful 'ego-document' reflecting on changed modes of knowledge transmission—thereby representing a 'proto-version' of what was later to become more popular.⁶³ Within the genre-specific frame of reference, there are some similarities to other "professional" maqāmāt.⁶⁴ However, as only a few of these works have been thoroughly analyzed, there is still research to be done here.

59 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:124.

60 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:126–127.

61 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:127.

62 Al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 14:127.

63 Meier 2008; Wollina 2013; Wollina 2014; Sajdi 2015. See also the introduction to this volume which provides some theoretical background on the topic at hand.

64 Bauer 2003.

It is highly likely that there are autobiographical elements in the *Kawākib ad-durrīya*. The situation described on the first pages of the piece are similar to what al-Qalqašandī might have experienced: discontent with his current professional situation, and an ensuing change of career. But al-Qalqašandī is not the only one who had to cope with such a situation. The dissolution of formerly obvious career paths and professional milieus was a trend during his lifetime. In positive or more neutral words, this trend is often linked with “social mobility”. But this mobility does not always entail an upwards trend, all the more since the later fourteenth century is known for its faltering economy. This implies that one possible direction of social mobility is also a downward spiral. Therefore, it might have been simply necessary to accept unusual posts at times.

In addition to being an ‘ego-document’ written by the individual al-Qalqašandī, the maqāma also strongly advocates a scribal ‘esprit de corps’. This becomes especially clear when the author deals with the ‘forefather’ of the genre, al-Ḥarīrī. When explicitly criticizing al-Ḥarīrī for his incapacity to be a proper scribe, he implicitly demonstrates that he himself and less prominent authors like al-Ḥwārizmī are also the better maqāma-writers. Thus, as in many other texts analyzed in this volume, the *Kawākib ad-durrīya* represent ‘individual’ and ‘collective’ *Selbstbilder*. In hindsight, we will not be able to reconstruct which one of the two poles actually prevailed. However, it is plausible to assume they were strongly linked, forming what in our time would be termed ‘identity’.

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