

## Ibn al-Jazarî's *Al-hisn al-hasîn* (Damascus 791/1389): a case of non-violent resistance (?)

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### Introduction

The manuscript presented and described in this article, acquired in 2004 at an auction in the Netherlands, is a nicely written and richly decorated eighteenth century copy of *Al-hisn al-hasîn min kalâm sayyid al-mursalîn* by Shams al-dîn Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Muhammad Ibn al-Jazarî al-Shâfi'î.<sup>ii</sup> The text, although a well-known and well-beloved one in the Muslim world, has thusfar not been studied. It was the colophon that roused my interest in the first place:

'I completed the masonry of this "Bastion of the words of the Lord of the messengers" in the afternoon of Sunday the 21st of the blessed Dhû l-Hijja of the year 791 (10th of December 1389) in a college that I founded at the top of the Kattân-steep (Ra's 'aqaba al-Kattân) within well-guarded Damascus (may God protect her and other land of the Muslims against evil). At a time when all the gates of Damascus were closed and even barricaded with stones, all creatures relied on the walls for protection, the population fortified itself with great effort, the watersupplies were cut, the hands were raised towards God, after fire had been set to the outskirts of the city, its wealth had been sacked and everybody was afraid for himself, his money and his family and filled with fear because of his sins and bad manners, at that time I fortified myself as far as possible, for I made this into my fortress, and trusted in God, for He is sufficient for me.'

The circumstances this colophon refers to turned out to be a very thrilling episode in the history of Damascus. In those years, the final decades of the 8th/14th century, the Bahrî Mamluks who ruled Egypt and Syria had lost their power to the Burjî Mamluks, but not without opposition from the deposed party. In 1389-1390 the Burjî sultan al-Zâhir Barqûq had to give up his throne, but regained it after a few months.<sup>iii</sup> Of course this did not happen without much fighting and bloodshed, not only in Cairo, but throughout the whole realm. And the siege of Damascus was part of this struggle for power.

### The sources

The earliest reports about this period, and maybe in fact the best available, were written by Ibn Khaldûn (d. 808/1406), the great North African historian, in his large *Kitâb al-'Ibar*<sup>iv</sup>, and in a long section in his *Autobiography*.<sup>v</sup> Ibn Khaldûn spent the last 25 years of his life in Cairo, serving in important educational and judicial positions. He lost his job by his support for a rival to Barqûq. This emotional involvement makes it understandable that he tried to justify his choice. It might have induced him to open this section in his *Autobiography* with a short exposé of his dialectic theory of the rise and fall of dynasties and the principle of 'asabiyya, the subjects of the *Muqaddima*. After this exposé he described what had happened since the beginning of the rule of the Mamluks, including the events in his own time, in terms of these theories. The initial rulers, the Bahrî Mamluks<sup>vi</sup>, were a group that had seized power by their vitality and ruthlessness, they had lost it by becoming effeminate and addicted to luxury. The Burjî's were the new vital group, but from the moment they had the power their degeneration started. This theory implicates that he considered the actors as exponents of a group, not as individuals. And that has consequences for

the way he tells the story. Barqûq belonged to the so-called Yalbughâwiyya-mamluks<sup>vii</sup>, slaves that had been owned by Yalbughâ, chambellain of the last important Bahrî sultan Sha'bân al-Ashraf. After Sha'bân al-Ashraf had ordered the execution of Yalbughâ, Yalbughâ's slaves had murdered the sultan in revenge. When these slaves, henceforward known as Yalbughâwiyya, had gained influence, they got internally divided and rivaled for power, but kept alive some measure of their team-spirit ('asabiyya). The losers of the contest were not executed or murdered, but either imprisoned or exiled and given governorships in Syria.

Ibn Khaldûn might have appreciated this mildness, having been a lifelong adversary of torture and violent death.<sup>viii</sup> He had, however, other reasons to create a positive portrait of Barqûq, since he had to thank him for his position in Cairo and hoped to regain his favor. He closed the section in the Autobiography with a poem in praise of his former benefactor, and he offered him one of the two complete copies of the Kitâb al-'Ibar that were published during his lifetime<sup>ix</sup>, all in the hope that he would accept his excuses and restore him to his former position. That failed, but about ten years later, under Barqûq's son, he got due recognition of his talents as a diplomat, as he was sent to negotiate with Timurlenk in Damascus. <sup>x</sup>

Most surprisingly, there exists a biography of Barqûq by a European merchant, one who knew Arabic and was an excellent and well-informed observer.<sup>xi</sup> Bertrando de Mignanelli, a native of Siena, spent most of his adult life in the Near East, living in Damascus and traveling through the whole area for his affairs. In 1416, back in Italy, he wrote a detailed Latin report, the *Ascensus Barcoch*. De Mignanelli's background and cultural heritage made his perception of the acting persons different from Ibn Khaldûn's vision. Whether as an echo of the classical way of writing biographies or as a demonstration of the renaissance personality (if Burckhard's conception is accepted), De Mignanelli's Barqûq is an individual with private motifs. He was a man literally possessed by a dream, his whole life was a struggle to realize that dream. He is shown as carefully planning his actions, a shrewd politician, ruthless if necessary, mild if possible. When reading this portrait, one gets the impression that De Mignanelli, who had known Barqûq personally and had witnessed many of his actions, vacillated between admiration and dislike. In the events on which I focused to explain the circumstances to which Ibn al-Jazarî's work refers, he depicts him sympathetically, as does Ibn Khaldûn. The close resemblance of their stories just in these events may be due to access to a common (unknown) informant. It is even possible that De Mignanelli has known Ibn Khaldûn and/or his work, they visited the same places and might easily have met. But there is thusfar no proof of a meeting or contact. In the description of other events the resemblance is not so strong or even absent.

The vicissitudes of history spared a single copy, now in the Bodleian Library, of a chronicle of Damascus in those crucial years, before the devastation caused by the troops of Timurlenk. It is called: *The Enlightening Pearl*, concerning the rule of al-Zâhir (that is, Barqûq), written by Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Najm al-dîn Ahmad ibn Sasrâ. About this author nothing more is known than that he was an eyewitness to the events he lively described, embellishing the story with moralising lessons from the hadîth and other sources.<sup>xii</sup>

Of course, there are many more sources in Arabic, more or less contemporaneous and very detailed, but less analytic. They haven't been consulted for writing this article.

## The facts

With the murder of sultan Sha'bân al-Ashraf, a long period of rivalry between pretenders to the throne started. Sha'bân's young son 'Alî al-Mansûr, and when this one died his other minor son Amîr Hâjj al-Sâlih were set on the throne as puppet-sultans. Three members of the Yalbughâwiyya played prominent parts: Barqûq, al-Nâsirî, and Mintâsh; al-Tunbughâ al-Jûbânî, whose rôle might have been exaggerated by his friend Ibn Khaldûn, acted more in the background. Barqûq got rid of his rivals and monopolized the throne in 784/1382. But after a couple of years al-Nâsirî, who was governor (or vice-roy, but I prefer governor) of Aleppo, revolted and succeeded to bring Mintâsh who was governor of Malatya in Anatolia and all the other governors of Syria (many of them banished like he himself) on his side.<sup>xiii</sup> Barqûq lost much of his supporters, abdicated and surrendered and was imprisoned in Kerak. According to Ibn Khaldûn, the others wanted his execution, but al-Jûbânî saved his life by insisting on respect for the oath he had sworn to protect him personally. The conspirators restored al-Sâlih to the throne Barqûq had taken from him. Soon thereafter Mintâsh eliminated his fellows al-Nâsirî and al-Jûbânî by imprisoning them, but at the same time Barqûq escaped from his prison in Kerak<sup>xiv</sup> and headed for Damascus with an army recruited from among the Bedouins and local peasants. The city closed the gates, the inhabitants, or rather the ruling part of them, preferred Mintâsh, and even hated Barqûq. In the sources no reason is given for this hatred. Barqûq had lived in Damascus in his younger years and had earned much respect, if De Mignanelli tells the truth. The cause might have been that a group of 500 mamluks of Barqûq's household had been billeted on inhabitants of Damascus and had severely misbehaved.<sup>xv</sup> Finally after almost two months of suffering in the beleaguered city Mintâsh arrived with the Egyptian army in Syria, so Barqûq had to give up the siege to fight him. He won the decisive battle, got his throne back<sup>xvi</sup> and reigned some more years until he died from a fit of epilepsy.

### The siege

After this very short description of the events in 791/1389 that led to the siege of Damascus, now the siege itself in Ibn Sasrâ's words:

"The mangonels were set up in the citadel, as were [the citadel's] fortifications; and the people moved in from outside the city and returned to the most miserable condition they had known." (42-3)

After the battle at Shaqhab on 10 Shawwâl 791/October 31, 1389, won by Barqûq, Damascus continued preparations for a siege.

"The viceroy of Damascus meanwhile locked the gates of the city, plastering them up with lime and stones. He set an emir at each gate, the remaining emirs and soldiers on the wall, pressed men into service; and the people began the siege." (44)

After a couple of days Barqûq moved closer to the city and camped in the Maydân.

"(..) When the populace saw him - for he had cut off from them the waters of the river al-Qanawât and of Bâniyâs, and they hated him for that reason - when the populace saw him below the citadel, while he thought that they were for him, they arose against him, stoning him and those with him with rocks. The people shouted against him, the shouting increased. (..) the garrison of the citadel fired arrows at him, setting fire to all those shops from the bridge of al-Zalâbiya until the Bâb al-Hadîd." (45)

Finally, Barqûq retreated after this first failed attack, but did not yet give up.

"The sultan, meanwhile, was angry at the populace and regretted his coming, having been dishonored, and his belongings having been looted; and he therefore planned every evil and misfortune for them. (..) Every evil and covetous person in Damascus went out to him. Meanwhile (..) the viceroy of Damascus on [Monday] al-Qa'da 18<sup>xvii</sup> [November 8], began to order the

destruction of the bastion of Bâb al-Jâbiya, and likewise of all the gates, so that there would be a space before them. They placed shields of wood at the gates, fortified the citadel strongly, setting up in it four mangonels, slings, cannons [as well as] men. They blocked all the gates (..). Every day many people perished from the crowding together, for the people were moving into the interior of the city." (47-8)

The viceroy asked Mintâsh for help and

"administered affairs well, (..) not taking money from anyone without right, [even] in a situation as severe as this. Buying and selling diminished among the people, the unfortunate perished, and brother did not pity brother. The people were divided into two factions; the Mintâshî and the Barqûqî." (49)

On 28 Dhû l-Qa'da (November 18) Barqûq again attacked.

"The viceroy immediately summoned the people (..) and distributed arrows among them, while the populace went out to battle at the risk of their lives. The drums were sounded before the citadel, and the men went out to the bridge of al-Fujl. The two factions came forth to battle; the two rows of troops fought while the populace shouted and threw stones at them. (..) That day ended with the people of the city gaining mastery over the sultan." (51-2)

But Barqûq gathered more support and skirmishes around the city caused many casualties.

Barqûq ordered the hands of seven men that had been captured to be cut off.

"News reached the city of all that had happened to them, and it was a dreadful day. The people wept bitterly. Everyone was weeping for his family, for his children, or for his friends, especially when those whose hands had been cut off came. Fortune turned against the people of Damascus that day." (53)

On the 1st of Dhû l-Hijja, the viceroy of Aleppo arrived before the city, and the siege became even more grim, with every day new fires:

"Many babies and old people were burned on that day, goods were plundered, and women were violated. (..) The fire continued raging, people wept, and women were ravaged. A day like this has never been seen, for it was a day of disorder. (..) The people viewed destruction on that day until evening." (55)

"The followers of the sultan continued setting fires and looting, while the garrison of the citadel burned what was around it, fearing for it. Fire surrounded the city on all sides (..)" (56-7)

On 21 Dhû l-Hijja Ibn al-Jazarî completed his Bastion, on the 26th Barqûq launched another attack that failed. The new year, the 1st of Muharram (December 20), began

"with the people in terrible distress. At times news of the Egyptian troops arrived and at times was concealed (..). During those two or three months the inhabitants of Damascus had faced destruction, siege, and terror, high prices, lack of water, and cold. " (67)

On 8 Muharram (December 27) a tower had collapsed.

"The account of this tower is remarkable and was as follows: It cracked when the shops around it burned, so that at the onset of night it fell, its fall making a tremendous rumbling which frightened the people. The inhabitants of the city hurried to the viceroy to inform him, and he was distressed by it. (..) He immediately called the craftsmen and builders and rebuilt it by the light of candles and lanterns. They worked at it busily while he urged them on, all night long. No one slept that night, and the sun did not rise before the tower arose, standing as though it never had fallen. " (72-3)

The next day, Barqûq was informed about the fall of the tower, and thinking that this was his chance, he mounted another attack. But:

"The people of Damascus fought a violent battle from the top of the walls on that day, so that not one of the sultan's followers could reach the wall on that day."

It was a terrible fight, with many being killed or wounded, but in the end the sultan had to give up:

"He felt deceived by the people of Damascus when he saw their fighting and courage, their endurance and audacity; for it had not occurred to anyone that they would be like this." (73) News now reached the city that Mintâsh had arrived with the Egyptian army. Their ordeal was over: "The people of Damascus rejoiced, bands conveyed the tidings, and the people were [caught] between belief and disbelief until Saturday, Muharram 13 [January 1, 1390] (..)", when Barqûq and his troops retired to meet Mintâsh, "collecting what they did not need and burning it. They burned the mangonel with which they had fired on Damascus." (74) <sup>xviii</sup>

### **The author of Al-Hisn al-hasîn**

This report confirms all what Ibn al-Jazarî told his readers in the colophon of his book Al-Hisn al-hasîn. This author was born in Damascus in 751/1350, he studied there and in Cairo and Alexandria, he worked as a teacher in Damascus (about the college he said he founded I was not yet able to find any data) and was appointed Shâfi'itic qâdî some years after the siege.<sup>xix</sup> He joined later the court of the Ottoman sultan Bayazid I in Bursa, but Timurlenk changed the course of his life. He was taken prisoner after the battle of Ankara (805/1402), sent off to Samarkand as prisoner of war and spent the rest of his days on several locations in the East. He died in Shirâz in 833 /1429.<sup>xx</sup> Of the many books he wrote some are printed, others survived only in manuscript.<sup>xxi</sup> Of the al-Hisn al-hasîn many copies are known, it has been translated into Urdu and it has several times been printed, even in a condensed edition.<sup>xxii</sup>

### **Al-Hisn al-hasîn**

The book has been characterized as a prayerbook. That is no satisfactory description of a book that has many aspects. In fact it contains rules for the proper execution of rituals, etiquette, exemplary tales of the conduct of the Prophet in various situations, invocations and prayers, in short: a guide of conduct for every conceivable occasion of life. In the preface Ibn al-Jazarî explains the way he compiled his book; it is based on a collection of 27 works of hadîth, prayer and the like, given in a list. He also explains his system of reference: every book is characterised by a letter, or a combination of two letters (written in red ink in the present copy), and every item was followed by at least one marker, but usually more than one. He had even a marker for dubious traditions. For the ordinary reader these markers were not necessary, he says, they were only meant for very learned users. To give an idea of the work, I present the division in chapters based on the condensed printed edition (in the manuscript they are not always indicated) and a selection of items.

### **Content**

Ch. I: On the benefit of the invocation of God (dhikr), prayer (du'â'), ritual prayer (salât), the salutation of the Prophet (sallâ Allâh 'alayhi wa-sallam), and the rules to be followed.

Ch. II: On the hours, circumstances and places of fulfillment, and whose requests are fulfilled and what will be fulfilled, and the supreme name of God and his 99 attributes, and the token of the fulfillment and its praise.

Ch. III: On what is said in the morning and the evening, the night and the day in general and in particular, and the circumstances of dreaming and waking.

Ch. IV: On what concerns cleansing (tahûr), the mosque, the prayercall, the regular salât and special salâts. Regular salât: prostration at the recitation, pronouncement of the shahâda (the creed), salât of obedience. Special salâts: of going round the Ka'aba, of the Ka'aba, of the asking of good guidance, of marriage, of repentance, of the memorization of the Qur'ân, of damage and need, of glorification, of arrival after a journey.

Ch. V: On what concerns food, drink, fasting, zakât (religious tax), traveling, pilgrimage, jihâd and marriage.

Ch. VI: On what concerns celestial matters, like clouds, thunder, rain, wind, crescent and moon.

Ch. VII: On what concerns the circumstances of mankind / the person, varying according to different circumstances. His clothing; atonement for a meeting before it starts; on money, infants and slaves; on sight; on hearing; on addressing people.

Ch. VIII: On accidents and evils that are important in life until death.

Ch. IX: On private worship, its benefit when it is not done on the prescribed moment, the asking of forgiveness that wipes out offenses, and the benefits of the glorious Qurân, sûra's and verses thereof.

Ch. X: On stray unregistered prayers coming from Him (i.e. Muhammad) sallâ Allâh 'alayhi wa-sallam.

### **Selection of items**

(45v<sup>o</sup>) A prayer

O Lord, I ask your protection against the pains of hell, against the pains of the grave, against the temptation of the false Messiah, against the temptation of the living and the dead.

(52v<sup>o</sup>) On clothes

When He put on a garment, He said: "O Lord, I ask you for its benefit and the benefit it does, and I ask your protection against its evil and the evil it does." If it was new, he called it by its name, a turban, a jacket or what else it was, then he says: "O Lord, praise be to You, You clothed me. I ask you for its benefit and the benefit it was made for."

(55v<sup>o</sup> - 56r<sup>o</sup>) On marriage

When He (God's blessing and peace be on Him) had married 'Alî to Fâtima, He entered the house and said to Fâtima: "Bring me water", and she got up to fetch a cup in the house and brought Him water. He took it and spat into it. Then he said: "Come closer", and she came closer. He then sprinkled water between her breasts and on her head, and said: "O Lord, I place her and her

offspring under Your protection against the cursed Satan." Then // He said to her: "Turn around", and she turned around, and he poured water between her shoulders. Then He said: "O Lord, I place her and her offspring under Your protection against the cursed Satan." Then he said to them: "Bring me water." 'Alî said: "I understood what he wanted, so I rose, filled a cup with water and brought it to Him. He spat into it, then he said: 'Come closer', and I came closer, and he poured it on my head and in my hands. Then he said: 'O lord, I place him and his offspring under Your protection against the cursed Satan.' Then he said: 'Turn around', and I turned around, and he poured it between my shoulders and said: 'O Lord, I place him and his offspring under Your protection against the cursed Satan.' Then he said: 'Sleep with her and be blessed.'" (Taken from Ibn Hayyân)

(50v<sup>o</sup>) On food

To Satan belongs all food over which God's name has not been said.

(60v<sup>o</sup>) On a journey in a strange country

When it has become evening and night is falling: O earth of my Lord, your Lord is God, I ask His protection against your evil and the evil that has been created in you, and against evil that crawls on you. I ask God's protection against tiger and black (asad and aswad), against serpent and scorpion, and against the evil of an inhabitant of the country and against a father and what he begot.

(67r<sup>o</sup>) On the pilgrimage, the water of Zemzem

When the imâm hoja 'Abd Allâh b. Mubârak came to Zemzem he took a draught from it, turned into the direction of prayer and said: " Ibn Abî l-Mawâlî told me (on the authority of an expert) that the Messenger of God (God's blessing and peace be on Him) said: 'The water of Zemzem is for what it is drunk for; I drink it to quench the thirst of the day of the Resurrection', and then he drank. I said: "This is a sound transmission."

(67v<sup>o</sup> - 68r<sup>o</sup>) On confronting the enemy

When they wanted to confront the enemy, the Imâm waited until the sun went down, then He stood up and said: "O people, don't desire the confrontation with the enemy, and ask God for well-being. If you confront them, then show endurance and know that paradise is under the shadow of the swords." Then he said: " O Lord, Downsenser of the book, Mover of the clouds, and Vanquisher of the troops, defeat them and let us triumph over them."

(79r<sup>o</sup> - 79v<sup>o</sup>) On greeting

When he greets someone, he must say: al-salâma 'alaykum (or: 'alayka), wa-rahmatu-llâhi wa-barakâtû. And when he returns the greeting, he says: wa-'alaykum al-salâm wa-rahmatu-llâhi wa-barakâtû.

(86r<sup>o</sup>) On ailments

Who complains of pain or something in the body, must lay his right hand on the spot where it hurts, and he must say: bismillâhi (three times) and: I seek the protection of God and His Omnipotence against the evil that I feel and am wary of (seven times).

(88r<sup>o</sup> - v<sup>o</sup>) On martyrdom

He who in earnest asks God for martyrdom shall be led by God to the places of martyrdom, even if he dies in bed. He who in earnest asks for martyrdom shall get it, even if it will not have befallen

him. He who fights for God a [single] moment, paradise has been reserved for him. He who asks God in earnest for his death, and dies or gets killed, for him is the recompense of a martyr.

(89v<sup>o</sup> - 90r<sup>o</sup>) Letter of consolation written by the Prophet to Ma'âdh when he had lost a son.

{91v<sup>o</sup>) Prayer for a deceased person

O Lord, forgive him and have mercy on him, protect him and excuse him, offer him plenty of food, give him a generous welcome, wash him with icecold water, purify his faults like you purify a white cloth from stains, exchange his house for a better one, his household for a better one, his wife for a better one, and make him enter paradise, cure him from the pain of the grave and the pain of fire.

(108r<sup>o</sup>) On learning the Qur'ân

Learn the Qur'ân and recite it; he who learned the Qur'ân, and stood up to recite it, is like a bag filled with fragrant musk the smell whereof is all over the place.

(109r<sup>o</sup> - v<sup>o</sup>) On the use of the sûrat al-baqara (the cow, sûra 2)

Satan flees from the house where al-baqara is recited.

(110v<sup>o</sup>) On the use of the sûrat al-kahf (the cave, sûra 18)

He who recites the last ten verses of al-kahf is immune against the temptation of the Antichrist. (Many variations)

(116r<sup>o</sup>) On protection against bad luck

O Lord, I ask your protection against four things: useless knowledge, a heart that is not humble, an unsatisfied soul, a prayer that is not heard.

### **Ibn al-Jazarî's contribution to the defense of the city: purpose of the book**

Why should Ibn al-Jazarî have written such a book under those dramatic circumstances of a devastating siege? I think the answer lies in the phrase in the colophon: "everybody was afraid for himself, his money and his family and filled with fear because of his sins and bad manners". To correct the bad manners, he wrote his book, and the underlying thought must have been : If we behave according to these rules, then such ordeals as we undergo at present will be spared us.

As to the claim that his bastion of words was efficient, in his preface he elaborated on the metaphor of weapons, and he claimed also that his weapon had worked:

(1 r<sup>o</sup>) "In this "Bastion of the words of the Lord of the messengers", the weapon of the believers from the armory of the faithful Prophet, the lofty temple of the sayings of the noble Messenger, the well-kept refuge of the utterings of the Immaculate, the Trustworthy, I gave sincere advice - they are certainly those who are the sincere advice - . I took it from the sound traditions, I presented it as a tool against all hardship, I abstracted it [from them] as a shield that protects against the evil of men and jinns (litt.: possession, madness). I fortified myself in it against the sudden arrival of disaster, I protected myself against every oppressor with the effective arrows that are available to me and I said in poetry:

"Don't speak// (1v<sup>o</sup>) about my weakness to a powerful person while he is not fearing danger. I concealed arrows for him during the nights and I hope that they will hit him."



I ask God the Almighty that it will be of profit for the Muslims, and that through it every Muslim will be relieved, provided that, taken into consideration its limitations and brevity, I left no sound tradition without using and presenting it in its proper place. When I had completed its arrangement and correction, I was called by an enemy that nobody but God the Elevated could repel, so I fled in secret from him and fortified myself in this bastion. I saw Him (God's blessing and peace be on Him) with me sitting at his left side, and it was as if he said: "What do you want?" I said: "O Messenger of God, pray God for me and the Muslims." He (God's blessing and peace be on Him) then raised // (2 r<sup>o</sup>) His noble hands, while I was looking to him, and he prayed. Thereupon he stroked His noble face with them. That was on Thursdaynight, and on Sundaynight the enemy fled, and God relieved me and the Muslims, thanks to what is in this book about Him (God's blessing and peace be on Him)."

So I think I was justified in calling this article: a case of non-violent resistance.

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<sup>i</sup> This is a revised version of the lecture given by Th. Marita Koornwinder-Wijntjes in the colloquium of 19-20 May, 2005.

<sup>ii</sup> I want to express my gratitude to the Stichting Behoud Cultuurbezit in Bussum, The Netherlands, the owner of the manuscript, for the opportunity to study it. The manuscript is in good condition, with some wormholes in the margins without loss of text. Brown leather cover (loose) with gilt stamped decoration. Paper, measuring 200 x 115 mm; 131 numbered double pages and some blanks before and after them (the number following 129 is 12, the next one is 130). Page 0 verso decorated, on each page a gilt frame, on 0 v<sup>o</sup> and 1 r<sup>o</sup> 133 x 68 mm, on the other pages 130 x 65 mm, 13 lines to the page of clear naskhî script with gilt markings and small decorations, red captions and red letters referring to the quoted books. Catchwords on the verso sides referring to the next recto, marginal annotations. On the last page an authorization (wakîl) has been added: I have authorized my children Abû I-Fath Muhammad, Abû Bakr Ahmad, Abû I-Qâsim 'Alî, Abû I-Khayr Muhammad, Fâtima, A'isha, Salmâ and Khadîja to transmit my work, with all what is authorized to me to transmit (in the margin: so I authorized the people of my time). Praise be to God, first and last, private and public. His blessing be on the on the Lord of the creation, on his family and companions and His peace be on him and on them. At the end of the manuscript: The calligraphy of this "Bastion of the words of the Lord of the messengers" has been completed by the feeble servant Sayyid Husayn in the year 1167 (1753-54).

<sup>iii</sup> El 2nd ed., 1:1050a.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibn Khaldûn, Kitâb al-'Ibar, 7 vols., Bûlâq 1867 ff, reprint Bayrût, no date, vol.V 461-505 for the reign and vicissitudes of Barqûq.

<sup>v</sup> Ibn Khaldûn, Al-ta'rîf bi-Ibn Khaldûn wa-rihlatuhû gharban wa-sharqan, ed. by Muhammad b. Tâwîl al-Tanjî, Cairo 1951, the section about the revolt of al-Nâsirî, 314-335. See also Ibn Khaldûn, Le Voyage d'Occident et d'Orient. Traduit de l'arabe et présenté par Abdesselam Cheddadi, Paris,

Sindbad, 1980, 189-204. The Turkish names are given in forms that differ from what is usual in the English-language literature, and the conversion of the Hijra-dates into Christian dates should always be checked as they are very often wrong. For a discussion about the problems posed by this autobiography: Walter J. Fischel, "Ibn Khaldûn's *Autobiography* in the light of external Arabic sources", in: *Studi Orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida*, Rome 1956, vol. I 287-308 and also Ali Merad, "L'Autobiographie d'Ibn Khaldûn", in: *IBLA* 19 (1956) 53-64.

<sup>vi</sup> Ibn Khaldûn did not use those names for the successive Mamluk rulers, but for convenience's sake I borrowed them from the literature. The difference was not only in the name and the place of their barracks, it implied also an ethnic change, the Bahrî's being Turks, the Burjî's Circassians.

<sup>vii</sup> They are called the Baybaqâwiyya-mamluks in the *Kitâb al-'Ibar*, but it is obvious that this refers to the same group.

<sup>viii</sup> M.Redjala, "Ibn Khaldûn devant la torture et la mort violente", in: *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 40 (1985) 2, 155-171.

<sup>ix</sup> See Redjala, *op. cit.*, note 1.

<sup>x</sup> The poem is in Cheddadi's translation only indicated by a note, but has not been translated. That is a regrettable omission, because the poem offers insight into Ibn Khaldûn's character and into the events that preceded its presentation. Fischel, *Autobiography*, quoted a few lines, but the number of verses he gave there (53) and in the *Ascensus Barcoch* (52; see note 10) is not correct. The poem has 60 verses, and 67 if the seven verses at the occasion of al-Jûbânî's expedition to Syria are included.

<sup>xi</sup> Walter J. Fischel, "Ascensus Barcoch. A Latin biography of the Mamlûk sultan Barqûq of Egypt (d.1399) written by B. de Mignanelli in 1416", in: *Arabica* 6 (1959), 57-74, 152-172. Fischel estimated Ibn Khaldûn's work as the best portrait of Barqûq, and he considered the possibility that De Mignanelli could have known this work, in fact the only available written source at the time he wrote his report.

<sup>xii</sup> *A Chronicle of Damascus 1389-1397* by Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Sasrâ (..) Translated, edited and annotated by William M. Brinner, Vol. I, The English Translation; Vol. II, The Arabic Text. Univ. of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963. See also Gérard Degeorge, *Damas. Des origines aux Mamluks*. L'Harmattan, Paris - Montréal, 1997, 273-276.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ibn Khaldûn had put his signature under a fatwa asked by Mintâsh of the leading judges and other persons of religious authority to get rid of Barqûq. Under pressure, threatened with violence, he assured in the poem. But there is some reason to doubt his sincerity. Seen against the background of his biography, there are more moments in his life where he made the wrong choice, and anyhow for some reason or other, all his jobs ended in conflict.

<sup>xiv</sup> De Mignanelli has a romantic story about Barqûq's release from prison: The commander of the fortress in Kerak was a follower of al-Nâsirî, and just before he was arrested in Cairo al-Nâsirî managed to send a message to him with the order to free his prisoner. Mintâsh also sent a message, ordering his execution, but this messenger arrived a few hours too late, after Barqûq's release, and was immediately killed. (Fischel, *Ascensus Barcoch* 155).

<sup>xv</sup> See *Chronicle* Vol. I, 17-18.

<sup>xvi</sup> Barqûq returned on the throne in Safar 792 / Februari 1390. Ibn Khaldûn was wrong when he wrote in his autobiography (*Ta'rîf* 330; Cheddadi, *Voyage* 203) that it was in the year 791, but in the *Kitâb al-'Ibar* V, 493 he gave the correct year.

<sup>xvii</sup> The Arabic text has Friday; al-Qa'da should be read: Dhû l-Qa'da.

<sup>xviii</sup> All the references are to Brinner's translation of the *Chronicle* (Vol. I).

<sup>xix</sup> Barqûq was also Shâfi'ite, and had been Shâfi'itic qâdî, according to rumors Ibn Khaldûn had heard (Cheddadi, *Voyage* 153).

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<sup>xx</sup> El 2nd ed., III:753a.

<sup>xxi</sup> Brockelmann, GAL, Suppl. II, 274-278. Al-Hisn al-Hasîn is nr. 19 of the list, the year 791 has wrongly been converted into 1386. Under nr. 24 is found: "eine während der Belagerung von Damaskus durch Barqûq (..) verf Traditionssammlung"; from the colophon of the copy I studied it has become clear that this is identical with nr. 19.

<sup>xxii</sup> Ibn al-Jazarî, 'Uddatu -l-hisn al-hasîn min kalâm sayyid al-mursalîn, Cairo 1303/1886. The compiler has remained anonymous.