

Circassian Mamluk Historians and their Quantitative Economic Data

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Quantitative data has become an increasingly important tool for students of economic and monetary history as scholars seek to determine, whenever possible, rates of exchange. Numerical data for the pre-Ottoman Arabic speaking areas of the Near East can be found in papyri, Geniza fragments, *waqf* documents, administrative handbooks, travel literature, European merchant accounts, and chronicles. For the years A.H. 784–878/A.D. 1382–1479 the Arab chronicles are the most important source for price and monetary data for Egypt and Syria, especially the Mamluk capital of Cairo. The data include references to wheat, barley, beans, flour, bread, meat, rice, straw as well as coins of gold, silver and copper for periods when prices are high and low.

The quantity and quality of the Cairene data were noted in 1949 by Professor Eliyahu Ashtor in his pioneering article on Mamluk prices and salaries.¹ Since then numerous scholars² have consulted these chronicles for their data but almost none has made more than the most general remarks about the relative value of the chronicles.³ The more complex problem of the interdependency of the Circassian sources is also unexplored.⁴ What follows is not an analysis of the data but a series of comments on the historians and the quality and quantity of their numerical data for economic and monetary history. The essay seeks to show the critical role played by an author's attitude toward collecting economic data while his occupation is not important. The permanent absence of data for some years and the major lines of transmission of data among these historians will be demonstrated in the study.

The following table lists a number of the historians whose works are invaluable for any study of Circassian Egypt.⁵ Each historian's major works are then analyzed in terms of the value of their economic and monetary data. This approach permits the answering of the question was there a high degree of correlation between the chronicler who was a *muhtasib* (market inspector) and the quantity and quality of the economic information he included in his works. The number of references from each source is then listed, Table II, to illustrate the quantitative distribution of data. In this case, the totals, impressive as they are, are misleading since they do not indicate the extent to which one chronicler derived his data from another or a common source. While the elimination of such duplication reduces the total of unique elements by circa 50%, the process by which such elimination was obtained also permits the establishment of chains of transmission or stemma among various historians. The overlapping of years covered by various chronicles also makes it possible to isolate those years for which statistical data is lacking. It will then be argued that for many of these years the discovery of new manuscripts or sources may not enable us to fill these gaps.

TABLE I

Major Historians of Circassian Egypt

<i>Name</i>	<i>Birth</i>	<i>Death</i>
1. Ibn al-Furāt	735/1334	807/1405
2. Ibn Duqmāq	750/1349	809/1407
3. Ibn Khaldūn	732/1322	808/1406
4. al-Qalqashandī	—	821/1418
5. al-Maqrīzī	766/1364	845/1442
6. al-‘Aynī	762/1360	855/1451
7. Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī	773/1388	852/1449
8. Ibn Taghrī Birdī	813/1411	874/1570
9. al-Jawharī	819/1416	900/1495
10. al-Sakhāwī	830/1427	902/1497
11. Ibn Iyās	852/1448	930/1524

1. Ibn al-Furāt (d. 807/1405)

Ibn al-Furāt was considered by his contemporaries as a major historian whose basic work was a general history of Islam, *Ta’rīkh al-Duwal wa-l Mulūk*.⁶ The only part which has been edited and published for Circassian history covered the years 789/1387 to the end of the work, 799/1396. Although Ibn al-Furāt relied on Ibn Duqmāq for earlier portions, there is no indication that he used him for his information on prices for the last decade of the eighth/fourteenth century.⁷ On the other hand almost all the prices (and few references to monetary developments) recorded by Ibn al-Furāt can be found in al-Maqrīzī’s *al-Sulūk*.

2. Ibn Duqmāq (d. 809/1407)

Along with Ibn al-Furāt he was regarded by later Circassian writers as a major historian of the Bahri—early Circassian years. His history of Egypt, *Nuzhat al-Anām fī Ta’rīkh al-Islām*, ended with the year 779/1377, but, encouraged by Barqūq, he continued it into 808/1405, calling the work *al-Jawhar al-Thamīn fī Sirat al-Khulafā’ (al-Mulūk) wa-l Salaṭīn*.⁸ The latter is particularly valuable for price data from 805/1402 on. While later historians copied from Ibn Duqmāq, they did not extract a number of his monetary and price references which are only found in his *al-Jawhar*.

3. Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406)

The Islamic historical work most famous in the Western world is Ibn Khaldūn’s *Muqaddimah* which has been translated into French and English and carefully analyzed by numerous modern scholars. The monetary information in it relates to the traditional account of the origins of the Muslim coinage system.⁹ After completing the *Ibar*,¹⁰ which is an important source for North African history, Ibn Khaldūn went to Egypt in 784/1382 where he spent most of the rest of his life. While in Cairo he served as Chief Malikite Qādī on six different occasions between 786/1384 and 808/1406.¹¹ He developed close ties with such leaders as the *amīr* Maḥmūd al-Ustādār and Sultan Faraj and even met Timur during the siege of Damascus.¹² In order to record his own activities, Ibn Khaldūn wrote an autobiographical appendix to his *Ibar* which he called *al-Ta’rīf*,¹³ covering his life to mid-807/1405. Although Ibn Khaldūn witnessed major monetary and economic changes and was associated with leaders who were involved in these changes, his autobiography throws almost no light on these developments.

4. al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418)

One of the most valuable types of these records is the cadastral and financial registers kept by scribes for the Mamluks. It had been assumed, based on a comment by Ibn Iyās, that these Mamluk documents were destroyed at the time of the Ottoman conquest.¹⁴ Professor S. J. Shaw has established, however, that these records were not destroyed but were hidden and many of them were found later by the Ottomans.¹⁵ The eventual publication of those copies which still exist would be a major contribution to our knowledge of the fiscal structure of the Mamluk state. However, reference to material in the various cadastral surveys has appeared in Mamluk administrative handbooks. An excellent example is the *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā* by al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418).¹⁶ Completed by Shawwāl, 814/February, 1412, the work includes extremely important sections on exchange rates for gold, silver and copper, and the difference in the coin weights for Egypt and Syria. The inclusion of the economic data is one of the few instances in which an Arab source lists a normal or "middle" price; unfortunately, al-Qalqashandī does not give a specific date with it.¹⁷

5. al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442)

Al-Maqrīzī was the most famous historian of the century. Whether he was criticized, hated, or admired, all the other major historians read his works. Born in Cairo, he was first raised a Ḥanafite and then a Shāfi'ite, but it is doubtful that he was significantly concerned with any one legal school. His only close contact with the sultan's government was when he served as *muḥtasib* of Cairo from 11 Rajab, 801/19 March 1399 to 29 Dhū-l-Qa'da 801/2 August 1399 and again briefly 18 Jumādā 1-10 Sha'bān 802/16 January-5 April 1400.¹⁸ The fact that al-'Aynī had replaced him as *muḥtasib* in 801/1399 and then he replaced al-'Aynī created a permanent animosity between the two historians. After 802/1400, as Ibn Taghrī Birdī pointed out, al-Maqrīzī was never close to government circles again.¹⁹ This relative isolation plus his jealousy of al-'Aynī, who was friendly with a number of sultans, suggests why al-Maqrīzī disliked many of the rulers,²⁰ although he tried to win their favor.

His first important essay was a treatise on the great economic crisis of 806/1403-807/1404, completed by the beginning of 808/July, 1405. This "Book of Famines" or *al-Ighāthah*²¹ was an attempt to show that this crisis was no worse than earlier crises. In order to demonstrate this, al-Maqrīzī produced price data from an earlier period which has been accepted by modern scholars as accurate data for those years. However, a more systematic and critical analysis of this data is still needed. For instance, the prices for 801/1398 in *al-Ighāthah* are reasonable compared to the chronicles, but there are significant differences between *al-Ighāthah* and other sources for 775/1373.²² The monetary information in *al-Ighāthah* is valuable but of a relatively general nature.

Al-Maqrīzī then wrote, sometime between 818/1415 and 824/1420, a short treatise on money, *Shu-dhūr al-'Uqūd fi Dhikr al-Nuqūd*. It was apparently composed to gain favour with al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh.²³ The great interest in the text is reflected by the number of scholars who edited or translated it.²⁴ The importance of the work is in the general survey it gives of Muslim monetary developments rather than in the specifics of the Circassian period which are confusing, partially contradictory and, fortunately, found in greater and clearer detail in his general history.

Until recently, his greatest reference work for scholars was a topographical study of Egypt, entitled *al-Khiṭat*.²⁵ It was written between 818/1415 and 827/1424 with notes added in 828, 832, 840, 841 and 843.²⁶ It has been used by almost every modern historian who has studied Mamluk society although it was largely copied without acknowledgement from earlier sources.²⁷ For specific monetary information it is of limited value as exchange rates are only available for

Ramaḍān 790/September, 1388, 808/1405, and Shaʿbān, 821/September, 1418. The undated reference for 808/1405 is unreliable as it is almost 100 units above all the other rates for the same period including those found in *al-Sulūk*. However, the sections on coinage and the mint are more valuable as summaries.

The most important work for the economic and monetary history of Circassian Egypt to the end of 844/May 1441 is al-Maqrīzī's *al-Sulūk*.²⁸ The text for the Circassian period includes over 850 monetary and price references for those years. While there is an uneven distribution of the data in terms of quantity and quality, there is at least one reference per year for food from 795/1392 to 844/1441, except for 800–801/1398–1399, 841/1439, 842/1440, and 844/1441. For the last two years al-Maqrīzī wrote of scarcities and price increases but gave no specific numbers.²⁹

The absence of any price data for 801/1399 raises some interesting problems. First, it was at this time, and only this time, that al-Maqrīzī served as a *muhtasib*. Second, there are price data for 801/1399 in *al-Ighāthah* but not in *al-Sulūk*. In fact, the lack of correlation between data in *al-Sulūk* and *al-Ighāthah* raises doubts that al-Maqrīzī used the former as a reference when writing the latter.

The monetary data in *al-Sulūk* is proportionally as extensive as the price information. However, a number of these references, for the Muslim years 802–821, can also be found in the chronicle of al-ʿAynī, and about a dozen of the same exchange rates for the years 821–839 appeared in both *al-Sulūk* and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's chronicle. Even with these duplications the quantity and quality of al-Maqrīzī's data in *al-Sulūk* made it an invaluable source to his immediate successors and modern historians alike.

6. al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451)

While al-Maqrīzī is noted for his lack of contact with the government, al-ʿAynī is known for his intimate relationships to governmental circles. His close ties did not mean he participated in governmental decisions, but rather that he had personal knowledge of many events. As mentioned, in 801/1399 he replaced al-Maqrīzī as *muhtasib* of Cairo, creating a permanent split between the two historians.³⁰ The fact that al-ʿAynī himself was shortly removed and replaced by al-Maqrīzī did not improve their relationship. Ultimately, the position of *muhtasib* of Cairo was held numerous times by al-ʿAynī although the exact dates when he served as *muhtasib* have not been established. Characteristic of the confusion in the sources is the following information in Ibn Taghrī Birdī's *al-Nujūm*. In the yearly accounts, al-ʿAynī is mentioned as being replaced as *muhtasib* on Ṣafar 12, 847/June 11, 1442, while under the necrologies for 855/1451 it is stated that he last served as *muhtasib* in 846/1442.³¹ Another position al-ʿAynī held was that of overseer of pious foundations (*nāzir al-ahbās*) which he held in 804/1401, 819/1416, and for long periods during the reigns of Barsbāy (825–841/1422–1438) and Jaqmaq (842–857/1438–1453). He also held the post of Chief Ḥanafite Qāḍī from Rabiʿ I, 829/January, 1426 to 833/1429 and again from 835/1432 to Muḥarram, 842/July, 1438.³² During his long career, he occasionally held three government posts at once, a relatively unique phenomenon even in an age when men attempted to accumulate as many posts as possible. He finally retired from his last job (overseer) in Rajab, 853/September, 1449, almost ninety years old.

The key to al-ʿAynī's favored position was his knowledge of Turkish. His language ability allowed him to be on intimate terms with the Sultans al-Muʿayyad Shaykh (815–824/1412–1421), Ṭaṭar (824/1421), but most of all, Barsbāy, in a way no Arabic speaking scholar could have been. Ibn Taghrī Birdī praised al-ʿAynī for being a boon companion of Barsbāy and relating to the sultan in Turkish the events of history as recorded in his chronicle which was written in Arabic.³³

The great historical work of al-ʿAynī was his *ʿIqd al-Jumān fī Taʾrīkh Ahl al-Zamān*.³⁴ Begun before 825/1422, al-ʿAynī continued his yearly accounts and accompanying necrologies through 850/February, 1447. While al-ʿAynī in typical medieval Arabic fashion plagiarized without citation for his pre-Circassian years, there is no evidence that he did so for the economic data for the post-784/1382 period. There is a certain amount of duplication of information found in *al-Sulūk*, but al-Maqrīzī began writing *al-Sulūk* later and any duplications on either part would reflect a common source rather than plagiarism. The data in the *ʿIqd al-Jumān* is best for the first reign of Faraj (801–808/1399–1405), and the reigns of al-Muʿayyad Shaykh and Barsbāy. But, there seems to be no direct correlation between governmental service and economic information included in al-ʿAynī’s chronicle, because from 839/1435 to 850/1446, with the exception of 847/1443 and 849/1445, there is no specific monetary data available in the *ʿIqd al-Jumān*.

7. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449)

Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī was considered the greatest religious scholar of his age, and he was praised by the historians al-Suyūṭī and al-Sakhāwī, the latter being his most famous pupil. The admiration for his works carried over into the field of history where there are three times as many copies of his chronicle as that of al-Maqrīzī’s *al-Sulūk*.³⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, known for his honesty, was appointed as Chief Shāfiʿite Qādī six times between Muḥarram, 828/1423 and Jumādā II, 852/July, 1448.³⁶

While most of Ibn Ḥajar’s literary output dealt with traditions, law and religious topics, one of his works (the *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr bi-Anbāʾ al-ʿUmr*) is valuable for its quantitative data.³⁷ This work differs in a number of ways from the traditional Muslim chronicle. In his preface Ibn Ḥajar, unlike many other historians, acknowledged a number of authors he used, including Ibn al-Furāt, Ibn Duqmāq and al-Maqrīzī. Even with these sources he still has unique monetary data for Barqūq’s reign. The second peculiar feature of the work is that the chronological limits are set by the author’s own life and not by some major political change such as the establishment of the Mamluks in Egypt. Finally, the entries are grouped by year, but not arranged chronologically by date. This jumbled order leads to serious dating problems for isolated references on exchange rates and prices, and their exact date can only be estimated. The original data were probably collected on cards and never organized in a chronological manner.³⁸ The chronicle ends the same year as al-ʿAynī’s, 850/1447.

The impact Ibn Ḥajar had on later historians for the transmission of economic information is questionable. His pupil, al-Sakhāwī, relied on al-ʿAynī for the post-843/1440 years, since he could not rely on Ibn Ḥajar as he had no price information for these years. Ibn Taghrī Birdī failed to mention the *Inbāʾ* in his biographical dictionary when discussing Ibn Ḥajar, possibly implying he was not aware of the work at that time. However, Ibn Taghrī Birdī referred to it in his *al-Nujūm* when he pointed out an error in the *Inbāʾ* claiming Ibn Ḥajar lacked intimate contact with the rulers.³⁹

Ibn Ḥajar competed with al-ʿAynī and possibly wrote the *Inbāʾ* to gain favor at the court,⁴⁰ but he was also willing to use the *ʿIqd al-Jumān* for his own history. For example, in the case of al-Muʿayyad Shaykh’s reign, he not only used *al-Sulūk* for the price of gold as Professor Ḥabashī noted,⁴¹ but also copied some of his exchange data from al-ʿAynī. Most of the monetary information unique to Ibn Ḥajar was recorded during Barsbāy’s reign. Finally, the absence of data for the reign of Jaqmaq when he served as Chief Shāfiʿite Qādī and was writing his history demonstrates again that a chronicler’s governmental employment with the implication of its access to price data does not guarantee inclusion of that data in the historian’s works.

8. Ibn Taghrī Birdī (d. 874/1470)

In many ways Abū-l-Maḥāsīn ibn Taghrī Birdī has become the most important Mamluk source for modern historians. His intimacy with the leading Mamluks through his father who was a Mamluk, the marriages of his sisters to Mamluks, and his knowledge of Turkish gave him an almost unique position as an historian. Relying upon his personal understanding of the Mamluk state, he corrected errors in the works of al-Maqrīzī, al-ʿAynī and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī. His close association with the government caused him to be skeptical of the totals given by earlier chroniclers for the number of people who died in a plague or were killed in a battle. His own figures reflect this cautiousness. Finally, the value of Ibn Taghrī Birdī's historical works is greatly enhanced by the edition of his chronicles by William Popper. The care and scholarship put into Popper's research make these editions definitive works. The English translation of *al-Nujūm* and Popper's *Systematic Notes to Circassian Egypt and Syria*⁴² based on Ibn Taghrī Birdī have made available fundamental information on the Mamluk state. The esteem in which Ibn Taghrī Birdī was held by those who followed him is reflected in the way they copied from him, at least for economic data. Al-Sakhāwī (d. 900/1445) and ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalīl (d. 920/1514) relied on the data found in the *Ḥawādīth* for the exchange rates and prices found in their respective chronicles for the years 850/1447 – 872/1468. The criticism of Ibn Taghrī Birdī raised by al-Sakhāwī was concerned with minor details and his opinion was strongly influenced by his prejudice as an Arab against this "Turkish" historian.⁴³ Although Ibn Iyās rarely used Ibn Taghrī Birdī or economic information, he did have a high opinion of his works.⁴⁴

Ibn Taghrī Birdī's first work was a biographical dictionary of the leading *amīrs*, scholars, etc., from 650/1248 to 855/1451 with additions to 862/1458.⁴⁵ During the reign of Jaqmaq he began to write a general history of Egypt, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhirah*. It was written to gain favor with Muḥammad ibn Jaqmaq whom he expected to become sultan, but who prematurely died in 847/1443. Originally intended to end in 857/1454, *al-Nujūm* was continued until 872/1468. The post-845/1442 material is really a summary of information found in his more detailed history, the *Ḥawādīth*, and as such is of limited value for monetary information. There is no question of the author's reliance on *al-Sulūk* for earlier years of *al-Nujūm*. Most of the references to monetary changes, exchange rates and prices for the Circassian period through 844/1441 can be found in al-Maqrīzī's work. The *al-Nujūm* only copies economic information found elsewhere and has almost no unique information.

Abū-l-Maḥāsīn ibn Taghrī Birdī, who began his major history, the *Ḥawādīth al-Duhūr fī Mada' al-Ayyām wa-l-Shuhūr*,⁴⁶ deliberately from the end of *al-Sulūk* with 845/1441, considered himself al-Maqrīzī's successor. The chronicle for the 850's and 860's is rich in monetary and price data but not for the 840's. Part of this lack of data for the pre-850/1446 period was due to the fact that Ibn Taghrī Birdī lost his notes for 845/1441, 846/1442, and 847/1443.⁴⁷ As Ibn Taghrī Birdī did not rely on al-ʿAynī for prices, particularly not for the 840's, their common monetary data for 847/1443 could reflect a common source and not a plagiarism.

9. al-Jawharī (d. 900/1495)

Al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafī was one of the least known historians of the late Mamluk period. He wrote a history of the Mamluks from the advent of the Circassian rulers called the *Inbā' al-Ḥaṣr fī Anbā' al-ʿAṣr*. Only two parts of this work are known. The chronicle for the years 784–850/1382–1447 called the *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-l-ʿAbdān fī Tawārīkh al-Zamān* exists in an autographed copy in Cairo and is being published by Dr. Ḥasan Ḥabashi.⁴⁸ In this work al-Jawharī derived his economic information for the years 806–828/1403–1425 almost entirely from al-ʿAynī. Statistical

data before and after these dates appear to have come from al-Maqrīzī's *al-Sulūk*. However, the chronicle included more than just a copy of data found in the available copies of al-'Aynī, al-Maqrīzī and occasionally Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī. It is probably that these few unique data came from an earlier manuscript of al-'Aynī or al-Maqrīzī than exists today.

The second work by al-Jawharī is of greater value. It is the ninth part of the *Inbā'* and covers the years 873/1468 to 877/1473.⁴⁹ Reference to events in the first person indicates that he was an intimate of the court. The economic information for 873/1478 was copied from Ibn Taghrī Birdī and the long biographical notice of this historian leaves no question as to his reliance upon him.⁵⁰ Fortunately al-Jawharī was interested in money and prices and included in his chronicle unique price data for the next few years, including a long list of prices for the beginning of 875/June, 1470.

10. al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497)

Like Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Sakhāwī wrote a continuation of al-Maqrīzī's *al-Sulūk*, the *al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Dhail al-Sulūk*.⁵¹ The only existing segment includes the years 845–857/1441–1453 and the publication of the work in the nineteenth century made the chronicle an important source for scholars. The monetary price data for *al-Tibr* came from two sources. The pre-850/1447 information can be found in al-'Aynī while most of the other data was copied from Ibn Taghrī Birdī's *Ḥawādith*. In fact the Berlin copy of the *Ḥawādith* is in al-Sakhāwī's hand with his own marginal notes proving he was very familiar with the work.⁵² The only unique economic data in *al-Tibr* is for 851/1447, plus a long list of prices for Ramaḍān, 854/October, 1450.⁵³

11. Ibn Iyās (d. 930/1524)

The early editing of Ibn Iyās's history, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'i' al-Duhūr*, plus an expanded and revised edition by Kahle and Mustafa and a translation by Wiet have made Ibn Iyās more accessible to scholars than almost any other Mamluk historian.⁵⁴ The history has been a principal source for a study of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt although the most detailed parts of the chronicle start with the reign of Qāyitbāy.⁵⁵

Ibn Iyās was a student of al-Suyūṭī and admired Ibn Taghrī Birdī, using these for some of his information. Quantitatively, Ibn Iyās is very disappointing as he is our principal chronicle for the post-877/1473 years and includes only a few references to money and prices. Qualitatively, his works are even more disappointing as he occasionally put prices in confusing monetary terms, demonstrating his lack of understanding of earlier developments.⁵⁶ Even his price data themselves can be difficult to use because they are given by reign, not years.⁵⁷

Other Egyptian Authors

The following historians have traditionally been considered minor sources for the Mamluk period and they are included only in this survey because they contain some monetary-economic data.

The chronicle of Nāṣir al-dīn Muḥammad al-Ja'farī (d. c. 900/1494) which has been dismissed as being without value does furnish monetary data and prices not found elsewhere, particularly for 865/1460 and the 870's.⁵⁸

Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) was the most prolific writer of the Mamluk period. His major contributions to Arabic literature were in the religious sciences. His reputation as an author is the only reason he merits attention in a survey of this sort, as neither his history of the caliphs nor his handbook of history, buildings, etc., include any significant monetary-economic information which cannot be found elsewhere, particularly in Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī's chronicle.⁵⁹

A late Mamluk traveler and historian, 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalīl (d. 920/1514) was the son of an important administrator.⁶⁰ His major history, *al-Rawḍ al-Bāsim*, is in manuscript form for which only the chronicle covering the years 844-850/1440-1447 and 865-874/1460-1470 are known.⁶¹ For his economic data, 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ relied on Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī and Ibn Taghrī Birdī and almost all of his statistical information can be found in the works of these two authors or in Ibn Iyās's chronicle as Ibn Iyās relied on 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ. This author's second work, *Nayl al-Amal*, is also in manuscript and covers the years 841-896/1437-1491, but the specific economic and monetary data are very limited.⁶²

How much information is there in a particular chronicle? In the preceding survey stress has been on the dependence of one source or another and the area in which a particular chronicle has unique information. The following table represents the quantitative distribution of data. Obviously, there is a great deal of duplication as can be illustrated by the totals for gold exchange rates and wheat prices. Six hundred exchange rates were listed for gold coins from all the sources but when you subtract the second, third, etc., reference to a particular rate for a specific date only 304 unique datum remain. In the case of wheat prices the same procedure for eliminating more than one reference to a particular price reduced the total from 613 citations to 338 unique datum.

TABLE II
Monetary — Price References for Cairo
(784-902/1382-1497)

Source	Muslim Yrs. Covered	General Monetary	Gold	General Products	Wheat
Ibn Duqmāq	784-807	13	8	113	15
Ibn al-Furāt	789-799	1	-	92	25
Ibn Khaldūn	784-807	-	-	-	-
al-Maqrīzī	784-844	287	186	602	156
al-'Aynī	784-844	166	103	439	82
Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī	784-850	83	52	156	64
Ibn Taghrī Birdī	784-872	55	29	18	7
	845-873	60	27	219	50
al-Jawharī	784-850	131	80	465	109
	873-877	7	7	75	12
Al-Sakhāwī	845-857	18	9	119	24
al-Suyūṭī	784-902	3	1	1	-
Ibn Iyās	784-902	17	11	30	12
Others	784-902	140	87	126	57
Totals		981	600	2455	613

It is possible that most of the data could be found in al-Maqrīzī, al-Jawharī and Ibn Taghrī Birdī but a systematic survey of all the chronicles allows us to maximize our data. Our knowledge of the period is neither so great nor are the references so numerous that we can neglect any of them. What is more striking is that there is no correlation between occupation and the quantity of data included. Both al-'Aynī and Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī spent many years in government service but one included a lot of data and the other did not. In theory the post of *muhtasib* was important for collecting raw data but the historians don't prove it. Al-Maqrīzī served so briefly in the office that the only impression left must have been a negative one. More important is that there

is almost a negative correlation between holding the office and including statistical data in chronicle.

In analyzing the distribution of economic data for the years 784–878/1382–1479 there are years for which there is a relatively large number of citations but more interesting are the years for which there is no data. The reign of Barqūq (approximately 784–801/1382–1392) is particularly under-reported since prices are available for only 10 years of his reign. Considering the number of historians who were writing during these years (Ibn al-Furāt through Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī on the first table), it is very surprising and might relate to how these Mamluk historians acquired their data.

The source of most of the information concerning exchange rates was the Mamluk government itself. Official decrees announced that a gold coin was to be worth so many units of some other type of money. The same was true for silver and copper exchange rates. In most cases the government was interested in setting rates for its own advantage and did not allow a completely free exchange on the market. The absence of data for certain periods could reflect either a market situation which continued to be favorable to the sultan and his leading *amīrs* or a lack of interest on their part in the exchange rates since most of the references to exchange rates read, “on such and such a day it was announced that a particular coin was to be traded for so many units of another coin.” There are also a number of references to the sultan calling the money changers (*ṣayārifah*) and traders (*tujjār*) to the Citadel to announce a new rate.

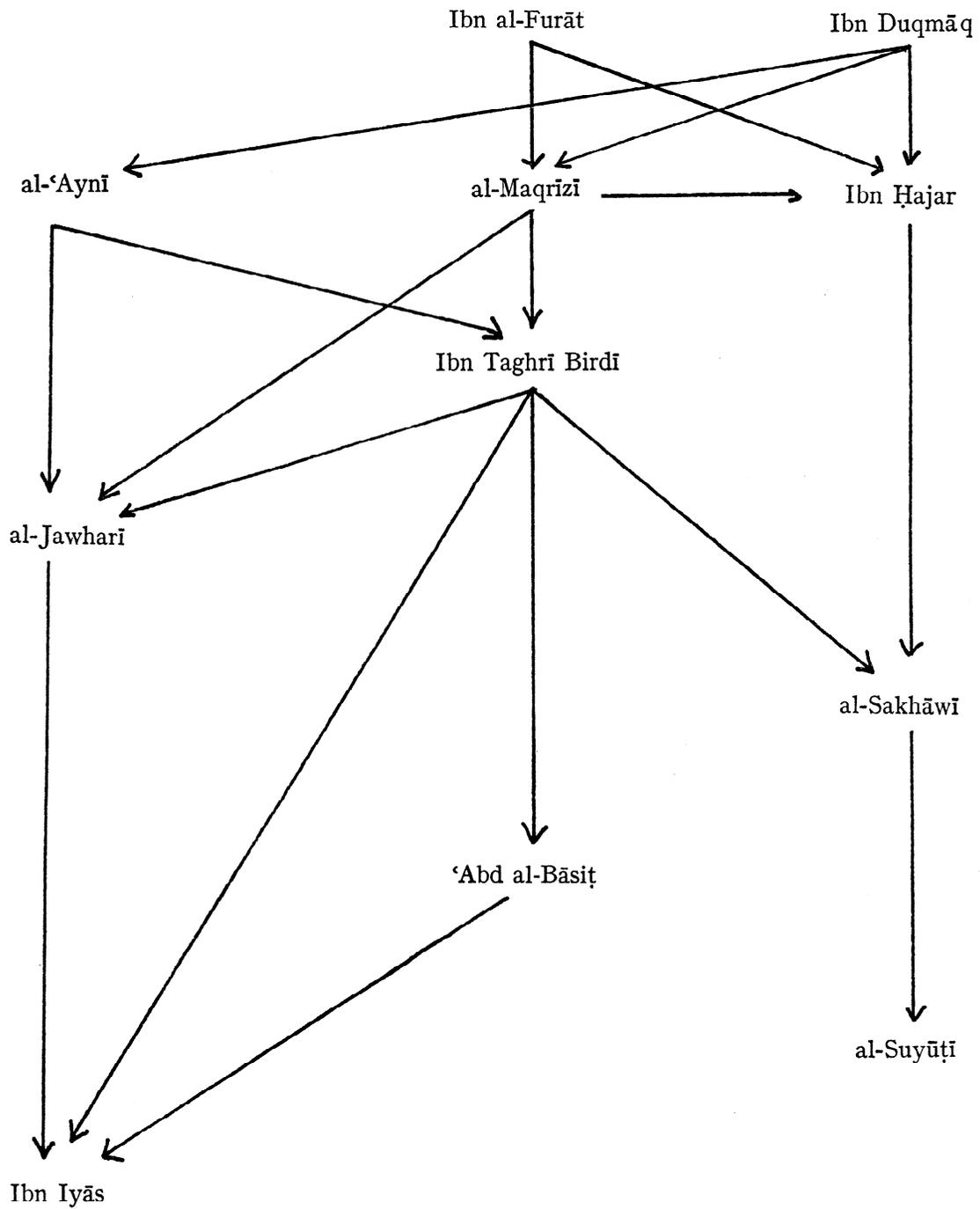
As stated above the fact that a particular historian was a *muḥtasib*, a *qāḍī* or even both and therefore knew the actual market rate does not mean he included it in his chronicle. The announcement of a rate of exchange was a newsworthy event and hence recordable. On the other hand, rates of exchange occasionally can be determined by calculating pay scales or food prices given in two currencies. Information on monetary changes of a more descriptive nature, such as the introduction of a new coin, appears to be based on the historian’s personal observation as well as official decrees.

The origin of the data for the price of goods is less certain. If one was a *muḥtasib* or *qāḍī* and interested in prices, then prices should be available for those periods when the historian was intimately connected with the market. This was not always true. The traditional argument has been that when prices were extreme the Arab historian would record them. While this might be true of the pre-Circassian periods, this hypothesis is not applicable for the post-784/1382 years. An exception is the few products which are desired by the populace during times of plague, the prices of which are only given at that time and thus are abnormally high. There are numerous other prices in the chronicles which vary from a normal or minimal level to an extreme. There are also years when the historian who is interested in prices mentions that prices were rising but gives no data.⁶³ The problem is further complicated by the quantity of the goods involved. Who would buy an *irdabb* (about five bushels) of wheat or how many Muslims could even afford a *riḥl* (about 458 grams) of mutton?

Therefore it is assumed that the price lists found in the chronicles are often evidence of governmental interference in the market. In an attempt to raise prices deliberately or stop an inflation, specific prices were decreed. These prices were then announced and enforced by the *muḥtasib*. This direct interference was not necessary all the time nor was it practiced by all the sultans. Jaqmaq seems to have left the market alone in terms of its prices and exchange rates more than any other Circassian sultan. If a chronicler was to record important events, then the government interference or direct interest in prices would be such an event. This, of course, assumes that the historian was interested in such economic activities in the first place to even record them.

TABLE III

MAJOR LINES OF TRANSMISSION FOR CIRCASSIAN HISTORICAL DATA



A second possibility for the absence of economic data is historical "accident" as illustrated by the case of economic data for the years 840–850/1436–1446. They are only three years in this decade with specific numerical price data. The historical "accidents" would be the following conditions: Ibn Taghrī Birdī appears to have lost his notes for some of these years, al-Maqrīzī died in 845/1442, al-ʿAynī was an extremely old man and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī was not very interested in economic matters. Such circumstances or "historical accidents" may explain the absence of the data but a simpler explanation is that Jaqmaq who ruled as sultan rarely interfered in the market and therefore such "newsworthy" announcements were not made.

After examining the works of the numerous historians who were writing during these years, many of whom were collecting their data independent of other historians, it appears very unlikely that significantly new statistical data will be found for pre-878/1489. As Ibn Iyās's chronicle is the only published work for this last period of Circassian history new data may still be found in new manuscripts.

Finally, the analysis of economic and monetary data in the specific historians permits the establishment of tentative lines of transmission. Obviously this chart will be refined and corrected as scholars turn to the relatively neglected field of Circassian Mamluk historiography.

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¹ E. Strauss [Ashtor], "Prix et salaires à l'époque mamlouk: Une étude sur l'état économique de l'Égypte et de la Syrie à la fin du Moyen Âge," *REI* (1949), 49–94.

² A few examples would include E. Ashtor, *Histoire des prix et des salaires dans l'orient médiéval* (Paris, 1969); Jere L. Bacharach, "The Dinar versus the Ducat," *IJMES*; Ahmad Darrag, *L'Égypte sous le Règne de Barsbay* (Damascus, 1961); Subhi Y. Labib, *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens im Spätmittelalter* (Wiesbaden, 1965); and Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967).

³ An exception to this generalization is Eliyahu Ashtor, "Étude sur quelques chroniques Mamloukes," *Israel Oriental Society I* (1971), 272–97.

⁴ For the Bahrī period see Donald P. Little, *An Introduction to Mamlūk Historiography* (Wiesbaden, 1970) and Barbara Schäfer, *Beiträge zur mamlukischen Historiographie* (Freiburg, 1971). For a different method of analyzing these sources see Hartmut E. Fahndrich, "The Wafayāt al-Aʿyān of Ibn Khallikān: A New Approach," *JAOS* 93 (1973), 432–45. The only work which has dealt with the question of the transmission of specific material by Circassian chroniclers is William M. Brinner, "Some Ayyūbid and Mamlūk documents from non-archival sources," *Israel Oriental Society II* (1972), 117–143.

⁵ More details on each of these historians can be found in the *EI*, *GAL*, and M. M. Ziyāda, *Al-Muʿarrikhūn fī Miṣr fī-l-Qarn al-Khāmis ʿAshar* (Cairo, 1954). The historians who wrote from Syria have not been included but one should investigate the works of Ibn Ṣaṣra, Ibn Qādī Shuḥbah, al-ʿAsadī, and Ibn Ṭūlūn.

⁶ Ibn al-Furāt, *Taʾrīkh al-Duwal wa-l-Mulūk*, IX (Beirut, 1939).

⁷ E. Ashtor, "Some Unpublished Sources for the Bahrī Period," *Scripta Hierosolymitana IX* (1961), 22.

⁸ Ibn Duqmāq, *al-Jawhar al-Thamīn fī Sirat al-Khulafāʾ wa-l-Salaṭīn* (MS. Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Taʾrīkh No. 1087). Ibn Duqmāq's topographical survey, *al-Intiṣār li-Wāsiṭat ʿIqd al-Amṣār* (Bulaq, 1909), is useful for information on waqf income.

⁹ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (New York: Bollingen Series XLIII, 1958), II, pp. 54–60.

¹⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿIbar wa-Dīwān al-Mubtadaʾ wa-l-Khabar* (Bulaq, 1284 A. H.).

¹¹ Kamal M. Salibi, "Listes chronologiques des grands cadis de l'Égypte sous les Mamelouks," *REI XXV* (1957), 115.

¹² Walter J. Fischel, *Ibn Khaldūn and Tamerlane* (Berkeley, 1952), pp. 93–96.

¹³ Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Taʾrīf bi-Ibn Khaldūn wa-Riḥlatuhu Gharban wa-Sharqan* (Cairo, 1370 A. H.).

¹⁴ Stanford J. Shaw, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt, 1517–1798* (Princeton, 1962), p. 18.

- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, 14 vols. (Cairo, 1914-28); Index (Cairo, n. d.).
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 448.
- ¹⁸ al-Maqrizī, *al-Sulūk li-Ma'rifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1936-73), III, 930, 960, 999 and 1013. A collection of essays dealing with al-Maqrizī's life and works was recently published Aḥmad 'Abd al-Karīm, ed., *Dārasāt 'an al-Maqrizī* (Cairo, 1971).
- ¹⁹ Ibn Taghrī Birdī, "al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira," trans. William Popper, *University of California Publications in Semitic Philology* VI, 756.
- ²⁰ G. Wiet, "L'Historien Abdul-Mahāsīn," *BIE* XII (1930), 103.
- ²¹ al-Maqrizī, *Ighāthat al-Umma bi-Kashf al-Ghumma* (Cairo, 1940).
- ²² *Ibid.*, 40. *Nujūm*, V, 224.
- ²³ al-Maqrizī, *Traité des Monnoies Musalmanes traduit de l'arabe Makrizi*, trans. Antoine Issac Sylvestre de Sacy (Paris, 1905), p. 9.
- ²⁴ P. Anastoise-Marie de Sainte-Elie edited it and included it in *al-Nuqūd al-'Arabiyya wa-'Ilm al-Nummiyya* (Cairo, 1939), pp. 21-73. The edition by Leo Mayer printed in Alexandria, 1933 is a photocopy of a manuscript. He did not publish an English translation of it. E. Minost, "Au Sujet du traité des Monnaies Musulmanes de Makrizi," *BIE* XIX (1936-37), 45-61, Daniel Eustache, "Études de numismatique et de métrologie musulmanes: II," *Hespéris-Tamuda* X (1969), 95-190.
- ²⁵ al-Maqrizī, *al-Mawā'iz wa-l-'Itibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-l-athār*, 2 vols. (Bulaq, 1854 reprinted Beirut, n. d.).
- ²⁶ G. Wiet, "Review of Ibn Muyassar's Annales d'Égypte." *JA*, Series XI, XVIII (1921), 73, n. 1.
- ²⁷ It was based on a work by one al-Awḥadī, C. Brockelmann, "al-Maqrizī," *EI*, 1st ed., III, p. 175.
- ²⁸ The editing of this work, begun by Dr. M. M. Ziyāda in 1936, has just been completed by Dr. Sa'īd 'Āshūr of Cairo University. See note 18 for the complete reference.
- ²⁹ *Sulūk*, IV, 1078 and 1205.
- ³⁰ The al-'Aynī versus al-Maqrizī split was not the only "academic" rivalry among these Circassian chroniclers. While Ibn Taghrī Birdī was occasionally critical of al-'Aynī, Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī was more severe, feeling that al-'Aynī was under the domination of the sultans. The bitterness between al-'Aynī and Ibn Ḥajar was created by their competing commentaries on al-Bukhārī's works. While Ibn Ḥajar's commentary was considered superior to al-'Aynī's, he also attempted to surpass al-'Aynī as an historian.
- ³¹ *Nujūm*, V, 327 and VII, 175.
- ³² Salibi, *REI*, 105.
- ³³ *Nujūm*, V, 543.
- ³⁴ al-'Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān fī Ta'rīkh Ahl al-Zamān* (MS, Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Ta'rīkh No. 1044).
- ³⁵ Ḥasan Ḥabashī, *Historical Studies on the Manuscript of Ibn Ḥajar* (unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation. University of London, 1955), p. 40. Besides Ḥasan Ḥabashī's dissertation, a second was done on Ibn Ḥajar by Sabri Kawash, *Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī* (1372-1449 A.D.): *A Study of the Background, Education, and Career of a 'Ālim in Egypt* (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation. Princeton University, 1969). Finally articles by Aftab Ahmad Rahmani, "The Life and Works of Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī," *Islamic Culture* XLV (1971), 203-21 and 275-293; XLVI (1972), 75-81 and 171-78 appear to be drawn from his Ph. D. dissertation.
- ³⁶ Salibi, *REI*, 91-92.
- ³⁷ Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-Ghumr bi-Anbā' al-'Umr*, 3 vols. (Cairo, 1969-73). The last volume from 839 A. H. is forthcoming. The publication of this edition by Dr. Ḥasan Ḥabashī will finally eliminate the problem of bringing together all the additional data Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī added to his own work. Ḥabashī, 56.
- ³⁸ Ḥabashī, 59.
- ³⁹ *Nujūm*, VI, 555.
- ⁴⁰ This was possibly for one of the sons of the Sultan Jaqmaq. Ḥabashī, p. 41.
- ⁴¹ Ḥabashī, 84.
- ⁴² In addition to the Popper edition and translation of that part of the *Nujūm* which dealt with the Circassian sultans, there is a complete edition of the whole work, 16 volumes, Cairo, 1963-72. William Popper, "Systematic Notes to Circassian Egypt and Syria," *University of California Publications in Semitic Philology*, XVI (1957).
- ⁴³ William Popper, "Sakhāwī's Criticism of Ibn Taghrī Birdī," *Studi orientalistici in onore die Giorgio Levi della Vida* II (Roma, 1956), 377.
- ⁴⁴ David Ayalon, "Notes on the Furūsiyya Exercises and Games in the Mamluk Sultanate," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* IX (1961), 33, n. 11.
- ⁴⁵ Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Manhal al-Sāfi wa-l-Mustawfā ba'd al-Wāfi* (MS. Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Ta'rīkh No. 113). Gaston Wiet, *Les Biographies du Manhal Safi* (Cairo, 1932).

⁴⁶ Ibn Taghrī Birdī, “Ḥawādith al-Duhūr fī Mada al-Ayyām wa-l-Shuhūr,” ed. William Popper, *University of California Publications in Semitic Philology*, VII (1930–31).

⁴⁷ *Nujūm*, XIII, xxiii.

⁴⁸ al-Jawharī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-l-Abdān fī Tawārīkh al-Zamān*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1970–74). Volume 4 forthcoming.

⁴⁹ al-Jawharī, *Inbā’ al-Ḥaṣr bi-Abnā’ al-‘Aṣr*, ed. Dr. Ḥasan Ḥabashi (Cairo, 1970).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁵¹ al-Sakhāwī, *al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Dhail al-Sulūk* (Bulāq, 1896. Reprinted.).

⁵² *Nujūm*, XXIII, ix.

⁵³ Al-Sakhāwī was Ibn Ḥajar’s pupil and wrote a biography of him. He also followed Ibn Ḥajar’s model and wrote a biographical dictionary of leading figures for the ninth/fifteenth century—the *al-Daw’ al-Lāmi’*. Both include very little monetary and economic information.

⁵⁴ Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-Zuhūr fī Waqā’i’ al-Duhūr*, 2 vols. (Bulaq, 1311 A. H.); Vols. IB-V (Wiesbaden, 1960–75); *Histoire des Mamlouks Circassiens*. Trans. Gaston Wiet (Paris, 1945); *Journal d’un Bourgeois du Caire*, Trans. Gaston Wiet (Paris, 1955).

⁵⁵ The dependence of Ibn Iyās on ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ for his details of the reign of Qayitbay are spelled out by E. Ashtor, *Israel Oriental Society*, 294.

⁵⁶ Examples of this type of error are the listing of prices for 791/1388 and 803/1400 in gold *ashrafī* while the coin wasn’t issued for another quarter century. Ibn Iyās, I, 269 and 340.

⁵⁷ There are some prices for Jaqmaq’s reign but without any indication of which year. Ibn Iyās, III, 47.

⁵⁸ Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ja’farī, *Bahjat al-Sālik wa-l-Maslūk fī Ta’rīkh al-Khulafā’ wa-l-Salāṭīn wa-l-Mulūk* (MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, No. 1607).

⁵⁹ al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-Muḥādara fī Akhbār Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira* (Cairo, 1904) and *Ta’rīkh al-Khulafā’* (Cairo, 1964).

⁶⁰ His father was Khalīl ibn Shāhīn al-Zāhirī, author of the *La Zubda Kashf al-Mamālik de Khalīl al-Zāhirī*, Arabic edition (Paris, 1894); Trans. Jean Gaulmier (Beirut, 1950).

⁶¹ ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ, *al-Rawḍ al-Bāsim* (MS: Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Ta’rīkh No. 2403).

⁶² ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ, *Nayl al-Amal* (MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, No. 812). For an excellent survey of the contents of this chronicle see E. Ashtor, *Israel Oriental Society*, 287–297.

⁶³ This is true for al-Maqrīzī for the Muslim years 842 and 844.