

On Networking and Book Production in Fourteenth-Century Damascus

Tāğ al-Dīn al-Subkī's and Ḥalīl b. Aybak al-Şafadī's Working Methodology

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Abstract A unique manuscript, written in Damascus (in 1359), sheds light on author-copyist relation. Tağ al-Subkī and al-Şafadī, two well-known scholars and authors, met at a private house and produced a legal compendium, which became popular among Muslim jurists. The inspection of this *unicum* and its comparison with printed editions of *Ġam' al-ğawāmi'* enriches our data on book production in the Mamlūk Sultanate.

Keywords Tağ al-Dīn al-Subkī. al-Şafadī. Ġam' al-ğawāmi'. Book production.

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1 Introduction

The diffusion of both the written word and reading skills generated literate enclaves in the urban centres of the Fertile Crescent long before the emergence of the Mamlūk Sultanate (1259-1517).¹ Through meticulous examination of several manuscripts of Tağ al-Dīn al-Subkī's *Ġam' al-ğawāmi' fī 'ilm uşūl al-fiqh* (The Assemblage of

¹ Ibn Ġubayr, *al-Riḥla*, 271-2.

Numerous [books] on the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence), this chapter investigates fourteenth-century Mamlūk authors' working methods. Its *point de départ* is that contemporaneous recipients (the audience) did not consider a book's manuscript as a completed recension. It was for them instead an open text, with changes inserted during its transmission. In support of my *thèse de travail* I will provide a condensed account of two prolific scholars who stand out in the fourteenth-century Damascene records. *Inter alia*, I will analyse accounts that cast light on authors' working methods and book production.

The reading and writing of books within the Mamlūk Sultanate was the art of transmitting facts and ideas, as well as amusing the audience. This creative activity was not always a silent practice. On the contrary, reading was often a collective aural routine. Voices flanked the word. Writing went hand in hand with listening/reciting. The aural transmission was an integral stage in the writings' transmission. The production of a book was often seen as a speech act and, hence, preliminary steps in the writing of a book could imply listening instead of silent reading.

There were several ways in which authors who worked in this era could obtain texts and read works that were written by past masters or by colleagues. To peruse works that interested them they could visit libraries,² participate in learning circles,³ consult manuscripts,⁴ borrow (*ista'āra*),⁵ buy manuscripts from booksellers (*warrāqūn*; *kutubiyyūn*)⁶ or obtain autographs and/or holographs (*malaktu-hu bi-ḥaṭṭi-hi*)⁷ and gain transmission licenses (*iğāza*).⁸ The act of private acquisition did not result in the vanishing of a text, which continued to surface in the communal space. This is visible in many manuscripts that bear the mark *waqf* (endowment).

² al-'Udfuwī, *al-Ṭāli'*, 46 (*wa-wağadtu anā bi-Asnā kitāban sammā-hu ṣāhibu-hu*); Hirschler 2012; 2020.

³ Leder et al. 1996.

⁴ Ibn Ḥağar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Durar*, 1: 9 (*qara'tu tarğamata-hu bi-ḥaṭṭi al-quṭubi al-Ḥalabī fī ta'rīḥi Mişra*), 10 (*ra'ytu bi-ḥaṭṭi-hi ġuz'an aḥrağa-hu li-nasfi-hi*), 13 (*qara'tu ḡalika bi-ḥaṭṭi Ibn Sukr*).

⁵ Ibn 'Asākīr, *Ta'rīḥ madīnat dimaşq*, 52: 196 (*fa-sta'āra-hu minī Abū Bakr fa-radda-hu ba'da sinīn*).

⁶ Behrens-Abouseif 2018, 71-6.

⁷ al-Şafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 18: 528; al-Biqā'ī, *'Unwān*, 4: 122 (*wa-ra'ytu ḥaṭṭa Ibn al-Ġazarī bi-ḡalika*), 150 (*kataba lī bi-ḥaṭṭi-hi*); al-'Udfuwī, *al-Ṭāli'*, 654.

⁸ al-Biqā'ī, *'Unwān*, 4: 177; Chamberlain 1994, 15, 49; Ducène 2006; Arjmand 2018; Vajda 2012; Witkam 2012.

Students sought out revered men of letters.⁹ They studied with them, reciting aloud before them (*qara'tu 'alay-hi*), or listened to an author reading from his compilations (*sami'tu*)¹⁰ or otherwise presenting a text (*'araḍa*).¹¹ The aural communication was an integral stage in written transmission. Reciting aloud textual productions,¹² such as exegeses, religious sciences, literary works and poetry, was a common group practice, as we learn from many jottings at the end of works that refer to public performances of reciting and listening (*qara'a/sami'a*).¹³ Hearing the text went hand in hand with seeing it written.

Audiences who listened to the dictation of a book often used written notes while copying (*qultu wa-aḥḍara lī waraqa*)¹⁴ their masters' manuscripts (*naqaltu min ḥaṭṭi-hi*),¹⁵ summarising their books (*talḥiṣ*)¹⁶ and toiling to produce high quality works (*al-ṣayḥ al-muṭābir*).¹⁷ The opening remarks by Abū Sa'īd Ḥalīl b. al-'Ālā'ī, who studied in Damascus with al-Ḍahabī (*ba'da an qara'tu 'alay-hi*),¹⁸ provides one example among many records of this undertaking. In one of his impressive onomastic productions, al-Ḍahabī¹⁹ furnishes a short entry on Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Kāfī al-Subkī (683-756/1284-1355), the father of Tāḡ al-Dīn (727-771/1327-1370), whose *Ġam' al-ḡawāmi' fī 'ilm uṣūl al-fiqh* serves as the hub of the present study. The great Damascene scholar declares: "I listened to his reading and he listened to mine" (*sami'tu 'alay-hi wa-sami'a minnī*).²⁰

This technique of transmission was not restricted to *ḥadīṭ*, Qur'ān exegeses or jurisdiction, but was common also in poetry and literary

9 al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, 5: 327, 353 (no. 1831; *ustāḍu-nā* [Ibn Ḥayyān] *sultān 'ilm al-naḥw*).

10 al-'Udfuwī, *al-Ṭāli'*, 58 fn. 13.

11 al-Biqā'ī, *'Unwān*, 4: 14 (no. 359), 98 (no. 389), 105 (*wa-kataba wa-sami'a al-kutuba*), 125 (*amlā 'alayya*).

12 Snow in Damascus (744/1344) stimulated al-Subkī and al-Ṣafadī to compose stanzas describing this climate event. They exchanged letters about it and we may assume that they were read collectively. See al-Ṣafadī, *Alḥān*, 2: 15.

13 Little 1976, 199; Frenkel 2006a; 2006b.

14 al-Biqā'ī, *'Unwān*, 4: 176.

15 al-Biqā'ī, *'Unwān*, 4: 5, 6; al-'Udfuwī, *al-Ṭāli'*, 46 (*ḍakara-hu al-ṣayḥ al-manbiḡī fī ta'rīḥi-hi allaḡī ṣannafa-hu wa-huwa musawwadāt bi-ḥaṭṭi-hi lam yubayyiq min-hu illā al-qalīl wa-naqaltu min al-musawwadati fī ḥaḍā al-kitābi mawāḍi'a naqaltu-hā min ḥaṭṭi-hi*), 51, 649.

16 al-Suyūṭī, *Ta'rīḥ al-ḥulafā'*, 65.

17 al-Biqā'ī, *'Unwān*, 4: 58.

18 al-Ḍahabī, *Bayān*, 71; on al-'Ālā'ī, see Kızılkaya 2021, 114-18.

19 De Somogyi 1932; Bori 2016.

20 al-Ḍahabī, *al-Mu'ḡam al-muḥtaṣṣ*, 166 (no. 204). All translations were made by the Author.

works.²¹ Evidence of it can be traced in sources that report on the production of books. This working method provides a basis for assuming that the copyists or the transmitters regarded the text as open to interpretations (*šarḥ*), abridgments (*talḥiṣ*; *muḥtaṣar*) and continuations (*ḡayl*), similar to their activity when discussing each other's texts together. They did not erase the authors' names; on the contrary, they used the authors' works and names as bases on which rested a complex structure of other texts.

Based upon his in-depth investigation of al-Nuwayrī, Elias Muhanna concludes that "copying [*nash*] involved more than mere replication of exemplary manuscripts. Some level of editing and markup was not only considered acceptable, but was expected from a good scribe".²² Contemporaneous recipients did not consider these agents' interventions as a corruption of the author's recension. The evolution of abridged compendia (*muḥtaṣars*) supports this deduction.²³ Yet, this very common technique of book circulation does not rule out self-production, namely the compilation of books by an author who inscribed a draft (*musawwada*) and later produced a fair copy (*mubayyada*).²⁴

The above-mentioned sources (i.e. authorisation certificates (*iḡāzāt*), transmission records (*samā'āt*), colophons, and title pages), and also chronicles and biographical dictionaries, provide an emic view of the textual production in Mamlūk Damascus and highlight circles of scholars,²⁵ their learning and compilation. Nevertheless, this rich documentation does not fully illuminate the working techniques of such authors and the way they read texts/listened to the voice of masters and selected, reused or discarded information gathered in this way. In order to gather information that reveals their practices and methods we should look at another sort of contemporary source: references within the works that record transmission of textual production and name works consulted by authors.²⁶ Some information on working methods and personal meetings can also be traced in manuscript marginalia.

21 al-Biqā'ī, *ʿUnwān*, 4: 13; al-Šafadī, *Aʿyān*, 5: 334 ("listening to lyric love poems [*ḡazal*] he [Ibn Ḥayyān] took the liberty of shedding tears"), 341 ("he authorised [*iḡāza*] me, the writer of these lines [al-Šafadī], to transmit literary compilations [*al-taṣānīf al-adabīyya*]").

22 Muhanna 2020, 238.

23 Ibn Ḥaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, 5: 280 [Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, 3: 290-1]; Arazī 1993; al-Šaykh 1994, 343-4.

24 Ibn Ḥaġar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Durar*, 1: 26 (*wa-nasaḥa ġālība taṣānīfi-hi bi-ḥaṭṭi-hi*).

25 al-Šafadī, *al-Wāfi*, 2: 164 (*aḥbaranī min lafzi-hi bi-mawliḍi-hi*), 165 (*aḥbaranī Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī*).

26 Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāya*, 9: 338, 339 (*wa-qad ḥarraranā ḡalika fī al-tafsīr*; *wa-qad ḡakarnā*), 340 (*wa-ḡakara fī kitābi-hi*), 355, 411 (*qāla fī dīwāni-hi al-maktūb*).

As already indicated, three protagonists, Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, Tāġ al-Dīn al-Subkī, and Ḥalīl b. Aybak al-Şafadī (696-764/1297-1363) serve as the focus of the present article. Looking at them through the prism of a unique Mamlūk document that fortunately reached us, we are able to investigate techniques of textual production and transmission of books in fourteenth-century Damascus. The document in question is an understudied manuscript of Tāġ al-Dīn al-Subkī's *Ġam' al-ġawāmi'* in the handwriting of Ḥalīl b. Aybak al-Şafadī. This latter prolific author recorded, rather than copied, a legal work that had been compiled by Tāġ al-Dīn al-Subkī, his companion and the son of his celebrated teacher.²⁷

As such, this manuscript illuminates the circumstances surrounding communication between an author and a scribe. From that data we can, therefore, deduce more general conclusions on the relations between a man of letters and his devoted audience who, by recording his work, contributed to its dissemination. Producing a recension of his master's book, al-Şafadī intervened as an agent, other than the author, in the transmission of that work.²⁸

2 al-Şafadī and Historians' Methodology

Al-Şafadī is known as the author of several biographical dictionaries and other works, and historians of Mamlūk textual production agree on his importance. Analysis of Middle Islamic Arabic textual production reveals that, in some of his compilations, al-Şafadī referred to earlier writings that were either composed by him or were comments on his social companions and intellectual circles.²⁹ Indeed, many of his writings inform his audience about his working techniques and practices in collecting data and, more generally, his method of textual production.³⁰ He often quotes paragraphs and verses, both short and long, from early and late Arab authors.

In several of his works, al-Şafadī refers to this composition technique. The texts that he consulted, or copied,³¹ were employed by him in two opposing ways: on the one hand, as a source of inspiration, as

²⁷ On the close working relations between these two scholars, see Little 1976, 205.

²⁸ See chap. 3 of this book, by Élise Franssen, for more details about al-Şafadī as a scribe.

²⁹ Little 1976, 197.

³⁰ Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Fuṣūl*, 29 (*wa-qaḍ aḥbabbtu an u'aliqqu taḍkiratan fī ḡalika li-takūn maḥalan ilay-hi, anmūḡaḡan wa-'awnan la-hu wa-'alay-hi*).

³¹ al-Şafadī, *A'yān al-'aṣr*, 5: 331 (no. 1831): "He [Ibn Ḥayyān] composed a great number of works [*taṣānīf*] that were distributed all over [*sāra wa-tāra*]. They spread all over but did not vanish. The gleaming books were read and copied [*nusiḥat*]. Preserving the books of past generations' fallacies did not alter them".

a model; and on the other hand, as examples of mistakes that should be avoided, references that should be corrected.³² A case in point is al-Şafadī's detailed biography of 'Uṭmān b. Ḥāğib al-Mālikī (570-646/1177-1249), within which the biographer narrates:

[the] ṣayḥ Şams al-Dīn [al-Dahabī] says:³³ I copied [*wa-naqaltu*] from a manuscript in the hand of [*min ḥaṭṭi*] the jurist al-Tuḥī al-Şāfi'ī whom I already mentioned earlier in my book. He wrote a dissertation [*ta'līq*] on Ibn Ḥāğib but did not complete it; Ibn Ḥallikān has also mentioned him; I learned that Ibn al-Wakīl has provided a similar account.³⁴

Several paragraphs of *al-Wāfi bi al-wafayāt* (The Continuum List of Deceased Men), one of al-Şafadī's major compilations, illustrate al-Şafadī's close relations with the al-Subkī family. In the introduction to this multi-volume work, he presents the history of Arab historiography and adds guidelines for those who are engaged in producing historical works. These lines support and further illuminate my argument regarding inter-author relations. This paragraph is based on a long quotation (*naqaltu min ḥaṭṭi al-imāmi*) from Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī's handwriting:

I copied the following lines from a text that the grand savant, *ṣayḥ al-Islām*, the chief judge Taqī al-Dīn Abī al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Kāfi al-Subkī al-Şāfi'ī had written himself [*min ḥaṭṭi*]. [It says]: "While compiling [*naqala*] from a written record, the faithful historian should concern himself with a literal transmission rather than an interpretative one. The data that he transmits should be in the words that have been recorded [*muḍākara*] by him, and which subsequently should be written down accurately. He should name the author of the text that he transmits. He should differentiate between the text transmitted by him and paragraphs added by him. In biographies [*tarğama*] written by him he should meet four essential conditions. This is required even in cases that he either extends the biography or shortens it. He should know the circumstances of the person he portrays, his learning, religiosity and other qualities. Although it is very difficult to meet it, this obligation should not be missed [*wa-ḥaḍā 'azīz ġiddan*]. He should have a comprehensive knowledge of the vocabulary and obtain a very eloquent style when depicting the subject of the biography. He should portray all the circumstances of this person and his features. Describ-

32 al-Şafadī, *Taşḥīh*.

33 al-Dahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-islām*, 48: 320.

34 al-Şafadī, *al-Wafī*, 19: 490-5.

ing him, he should be very precise, not adding unnecessary data and not omitting necessary information. Emotions should not govern his depiction, which in the case of a person whom he loves will lead his flattering efforts astray and will cause him to accumulate needless words. And in the opposite case it will result in neglecting essential words. Hence, he should avoid emotions and should not give into sentiments; indeed, this is very difficult. Sound evaluation should lead the biographer while depicting someone he does not like, and he must advance along the path of even and balanced composition. These are four primary stipulations and to them can be added an additional fifth one. Only the combined stipulations enable the biographer to produce a sound portrayal and balanced picture. The most difficult among these primary stipulations is the evaluation of a person's scholarship. To evaluate correctly the person who concerns him, the biographer must know profoundly all the branches of science and must be familiar with the scholarly production of the subject of the biography".³⁵

In al-Şafadī's biography of al-Ḍahabī we read:

Kamāl al-Dīn b. al-Zamlakānī (d. 727/1327) read al-Ḍahabī's history [*ta'rīḥihi al-kabīr al-musammā bi-ta'rīḥ al-islām*] carefully, inspecting section after section till he completed surveying [*muṭāla'a*] it. He concluded his reading with the remark: "This is a fine scholarly work, I studied it and gained from it. I read with him a considerable number of his compilations [*taṣānīf*]. Reading them I did not stumble upon the dullness [*ġumūd*] of *ḥadīth* scholars nor upon the ponderousness [*kūdana*] of transmitters. On the contrary, he [al-Ḍahabī] is a scholar with deep insight. He makes sharp analysis of opinions [*darba*] and piercing evaluation of past scholars' methodology and of sages' writings. I was deeply impressed by his working practice. If, in his writings, he criticized a *ḥadīth*, he would first clarify its meaning and indicate its weak points or faults in the chain of transmission, pointing out deficiency of transmitters. Only with him and in his writings did I find this high quality of working habits".³⁶

In both quotations al-Şafadī provides guidelines for the historian who is engaged in compiling a book. He advises him about collecting data and evaluating it, yet he does not mention originality. Moreover, the subtext of al-Şafadī's advice amplifies the conformism of writers. Although an author should not avoid a critical approach to texts

³⁵ al-Şafadī in Amar 1911, 44-7; Ritter 1962, 1: 46.

³⁶ al-Şafadī, *al-Wāfi*, 2: 163.

consulted by him, he is advised to follow his predecessors and to refrain from breaking the literary lines.

Concentrating on a *unicum* text, namely the copy of *Ġam' al-ġawāmi'* in al-Şafadī's handwriting, I will look into al-Şafadī's role in writing down his master's recitations and in the transmission of the book's draft.

3 Tāġ al-Dīn al-Subkī's *Ġam' al-ġawāmi'*

Taqī al-Dīn 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Kāfī al-Subkī³⁷ was an eminent Mamlūk scholar and jurist whose intellectual productions were favourably received during his lifetime and among Şafī'ite, and it continues to the present day.³⁸ The list of his works is impressive, containing approximately 30 books and numerous epistles that cover a vast range of subjects, from grammar to jurisdiction. This productivity boosted his social position and intellectual fame; in Damascus, and villages in the city's green belt, students gathered around him. They studied *ḥadīth* and jurisdiction with the master, who held several high ranking scholarly and juridical positions.³⁹ As we shall see, some among them transcribed his lectures, and these manuscripts circulated among book-reading communities. Among his students were his son Tāġ al-Dīn and al-Şafadī.

Tāġ al-Dīn al-Subkī is considered the most illustrious member of the well-known family of Shāfi'ī '*ulamā'*' from the Mamlūk period.⁴⁰ He composed a considerable number of books, including, among other subjects, biographies and texts on juridical administration and jurisdiction.⁴¹ Tāġ al-Dīn al-Subkī's *Ġam' al-ġawāmi'*, the book under consideration here, was well-received in Mamlūk society, as demonstrated by the amount of exegeses composed in the decades that followed.⁴² Its popularity among Arabic-speaking Muslim audiences en-

³⁷ The earliest account of his life was written by his son Tāġ al-Dīn al-Subkī in his great biographical dictionary of eminent Şafī'ites (*al-Ṭabaqāt al-Şāfi'iya al-kubrā*). Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Şāfi'ī copied this long entry as an independent booklet, titled *Kitāb I'lām al-a'lām bi-manāqib šayḥ al-Islām qāḍī al-quḍāh 'Alī al-Subkī raḥimahu Allāhu* informing the learned public about the virtues of the late Muslim leader and chief judge 'Alī al-Subkī (in 17 Sa'bān 766/9 May 1365). A joint examination of the various manuscripts of al-Subkī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Şāfi'iya* and a comparison with his *Kitāb I'lām* resulted in the conclusion that the booklet version of the biography contains a limited number of changes. See *Kitāb I'lām* (Princeton University Library, Islamic Manuscripts, MS Ar. Garrett no. 2258Y).

³⁸ Thomas, Mallett 2013, 5: 88-91; Schacht 1997.

³⁹ al-Ḍahabī, *Mu'ġam a*, 2: 34 (no. 355); Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāya*, 18: 566.

⁴⁰ Berkey 2010.

⁴¹ For his teachers see Ibn Sa'd al-Şāliḥī, *Mu'ġam šuyūḥ al-Subkī*. For his works Brockelmann 2016, 2: 92-3.

⁴² The first one was actually written by al-Subkī himself. al-Subkī, *Man' al-mawānī'*, 1: 369.

couraged them to facilitate access to it and they worked diligently to achieve this goal.⁴³ According to my estimation, at least four authors wrote exegeses on this work of al-Subkī during the first century after the book's composition.

The circulation of such pre-modern exegeses of the *Ġam' al-ġawāmi'*, as well as the publication of several modern editions of the book, illuminate al-Subkī's prominent position in Islamic juridical studies and the reception of his scholarship, at least among the Šāfi'ites. However, it seems that the recensions currently circulating fail to collate all of the interesting manuscripts of the book.⁴⁴ Editors of these editions of the *Ġam'* do not refer, to the best of my knowledge, to the manuscript stored at the library of Princeton University (copied in 921/1515). Its colophon reads:

The complier [*mušannif*] completed the fair copy of [this work] [*kāna tamām bayādi-hi*] in his dwelling at al-Dahīša, in the village of al-Nayrab in the suburb of Damascus on the last watch of the night of 1 Dū al-Ḥiġġa 760/3 November 1359.⁴⁵

A second manuscript that did not catch the attention of modern editors is kept in Jerusalem, at the National Library of Israel (henceforth NLI); this manuscript of al-Subkī's compilation was handwritten by al-Šafadī. This recension ends with a colophon written and signed by al-Šafadī, which means that we are facing with a holograph:⁴⁶ this manuscript was written entirely in al-Šafadī's hand. It opens with a blurb (*taqrīz*), a short poem put down in al-Šafadī's handwriting.⁴⁷

This is a compilation by our master and leader Abū al-Naṣr 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Subkī. I, Ḥalīl b. Aybak al-Šafadī, wrote this blurb [*taqrīz*] of that composition:

⁴³ al-Zarkašī 2000; Ibn al-'Irāqī al-Kurdī al-Qāhirī 'al-Šāfi'ī 2004; al-Maḥallī al-Šāfi'ī, 2005; al-Waqqād al-Azharī 2006.

⁴⁴ Ed. by 'Abd al-Mun'im Ḥalīl Ibrāhīm (1424/2003) and 'Aqīlah Ḥusayn (1432/2011). The Nation al Library of Israel, in Jerusalem, stacks a second manuscript of the *Ġam' al-ġawāmi'* (Yahuda, *maġmū'a* 274: it is an Ottoman collection of 10 titles).

⁴⁵ al-Subkī, *Ġam' al-ġawāmi' fī 'ilm uṣūl al-fiqh* (Princeton Islamic Manuscripts, MS Ar. Garrett 4168Y), see appendix 3.

⁴⁶ On this term see Gacek 2020. Editor's note: technically speaking, the Author is mentioning a manuscript handwritten by another famous author, that is, a manuscript for which the scribe is also an author. 'Holograph' can be said when a manuscript is entirely in its author's hand. Since al-Šafadī is not the author of the *Ġam' al-ġawāmi'*, the manuscript cannot be called a holograph. See Bauden, Franssen 2020 and Gacek 2020. On the contrary, the blurb mentioned below is holograph: it is the oeuvre of al-Šafadī and it is in his hand.

⁴⁷ al-Biqā'ī, 'Unwān, 4: 191; Rosenthal 1981; Levani 2013. See appendix 1 for the edition of this *taqrīz*.

“This is a book in Islamic law that incredibly transformed the perception of juridical principals [*uṣūl*] [in the Qur’ān and *ḥadīṭ* as they are applied by the judge].⁴⁸ If you were to ponder on the book’s content you would find it a striking artefact.

This compilation [*ġam’*] is an abridgment of an unmatched legal anthology. Disregarding it would damage you, so don’t neglect it.⁴⁹ It exposed gleaming moons, its shining beams explore hidden topics. Uniquely the book’s author beamed, radiating steadily his merits. Unafraid, he concluded his verdict decisively, neither a close opponent nor a remote adversary could disagree with him.

He directed and taught those who gathered around him, and every letter will profit us, even when we become old.

His eloquent speech refines and astonishes, and you will solemnly use it even if you do not understand a word in the text.

He accomplished marvellous achievements while epitomizing, adding highly sophisticated expressions to it.

He did not leave a single word without clearly explaining it, these exegeses by him are astonishing.

In an extremely pleasing and beautiful approach he combined the understanding of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīṭ*, the two sources of legal theory, with legal dialectic disputation [*ġadal*],⁵⁰ providing an account of loose wording in an eloquent form.

As if tomorrow the *agama* lizard due to his eloquent talk will be saved and beloved.

Similarly, opposing him the sword’s blade will decay.

The poor Ibn al-Ḥāḡib⁵¹ is merely the chief guardian who stands at the gates of our eminent magistrate”.

According to the colophon, al-Ṣafadī visited Tāġ al-Dīn al-Subkī’s home, where he listened to his master’s lectures and dictations and wrote them down, resulting in a book. It reads:

Ḥalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī, the scribe who inscribed this compilation [*kātibu-hu*], completed writing it down for his own usage [*ta’līqih li-nafsi-hi*] on the fifth of the month Rabī’ II in the year 761 [24 February 1360] in the protected city of Damascus.⁵²

⁴⁸ Calder 2010, 140; Musa 2014, 327.

⁴⁹ For a reference to Tāġ al-Dīn al-Subkī’s, *Ġam’ al-ġawāmi’*, see Zakariyah 2015, 24.

⁵⁰ Siddiqui 2019.

⁵¹ A reference to Ibn al-Ḥāḡib al-Mālikī’s *Ġāmi’ al-ummahāt*.

⁵² al-Subkī, *Ġam’ al-ġawāmi’* (Jerusalem, NLI, MS Yah. Ar. 198). In addition to the above-mentioned manuscript of the *Ġam’ al-ġawāmi’*, the NLI also owns some folios of al-Ṣafadī’s *al-Wāfi*, which were not used by the editors of the two editions of this impor-

This manuscript demonstrates that, although writing was the prevalent method of preservation and transmission of a book, dictating could sometimes be the preliminary stage of textual production. This explains minor distinctions between the manuscripts at our disposal. There was no final recension.

It should be added that this unique manuscript is not the only reference to the close relations between Tāġ al-Dīn al-Subkī and al-Şafadī. Such closeness obliterates the borderlines that separate the two men, the master-writer and his student-scribe, particularly given that the age gap between them was not very wide. Occasionally they become a united entity that jointly produced a text, as will be demonstrated below. Moreover, in the earlier stage of their career, the two were joined by a third scholar, al-Subkī's father, Tāqī al-Dīn, creating a multi-generational set of writers and readers. This collaboration resembles the study and transmission of *ḥadīṭ* and is an additional verification of the holistic approach that characterises the Arab-Islamic Republic of Letters.⁵³

Indeed, master-student relations are depicted in several other contemporaneous works. A case in point is the opening paragraph of al-'Udfuwī's treatise on *şūfī* doctrine. Şāliḥ b. 'Abd Allāh al-Dimaşqī al-Qaymarī notes that he wrote (*wa-dā ḥaṭṭī-hi wa-şahḥa ḡalika*) it at the house of Abū Ḥayyān in the Şāliḥiyya *madrassa* in Cairo, where the author (*mu'allif*) dictated his work (*sami'a ḡami'a ḥadā al-kitābi min lafzi mu'allifi-hi al-şayḥ al-imām al-'Udfuwī bi-ḥuḍūri sayyidi-nā wa-şayḥi-nā Ibn Ḥayyān yawma al-'ṭnayn tāmin 'aşr Şafar sanat 741 bi-manzili sayyḥi-nā Abī Ḥayyān*).⁵⁴

al-Subkī's intellectual *vita* (*mu'ġam*) should also be mentioned here.⁵⁵ Thanks to this, we possess rich data on the Damascene scholarly circles, and on the productivity of the three savants mentioned above. Nevertheless, I will refrain here from analysing the detailed information that the *vita* furnishes, and will limit my contribution to a single node in al-Şafadī's circle of intellectual acquaintance,⁵⁶ namely al-Şafadī's activity within the coterie of Tāqī al-Dīn al-Subkī and his relations with Tāġ al-Dīn al-Subkī, his master's son. In fact, they operated as a collective, a community that shared recreational delight in book production.

tant biographical dictionary: NLI, MS Yahuda Ar. 307. Moreover, the text of these folios is not included in the holograph fragments preserved in Gotha Library (ms Ar. 1733).

53 Cf. al-Musawi 2015, 33.

54 al-'Udfuwī, *al-Mūfī*, 33 (13 August 1340).

55 al-Suyūṭī, *Buġyat al-wu'āh*, 2: 176.

56 The list of al-Şafadī's acquaintances includes some of the leading jurists and literati of mid-seventh/fourteenth-century Damascus: Ibn Nubāta, Ibn Faḡl Allāh al-'Umārī, Ibn Taymiyya and others. He served as a secretary in the chancery of the famous viceroy Tankiz, whose biography he wrote. See Conermann 2008.

4 Authors' Methodology

In the previous sections I have mentioned, *inter alia*, scholars' circles, networks and inter-generation communication. This section of the paper looks at the techniques of composition and book transmission. It will cast light on several authors who functioned, often simultaneously, as recipients as well as disseminators.

Among al-Şafadī's contemporaries in fourteenth-century Damascus, transmission of condensed paragraphs from earlier volumes, as well as offering pastiches, were common practices, as we learn from his and other scholars' texts. To write the biography of al-Şafadī, Ibn Ḥaġar al-'Asqalānī collected data from various sources, which he names:

al-Dahabī cherished him [*qāla fī ḥaqqi-hi*] arguing: "I learned with him and he studied from me"; Ibn Kaṭīr says: a note written by him informs the reader: "I wrote *circa* five hundred tomes"; His student Ibn Ḥamza al-Ḥusaynī (1315-1364) said [similar words] and also Ibn Rafī' al-Sallāmī (1305-1372).⁵⁷

Many times, the sentence "the writing is completed" did not indicate that the composition of a book had indeed ended. It is not rare to stumble upon a sentence that discloses continuations (*ḡayl*) of books compiled by past authors, nor the completion of a compilation previously started by another author. It seems that the community of writers/readers imagined transmitted/copied texts as 'a work in progress' engaged by creative *littérateurs*. Al-'Alā'ī, a Jerusalemite contemporary of Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, opens his book with the statement:

What drove me to compile [*ġama'a*] this book is *al-Aşbāh wa al-naẓā'ir*, a composition [*ta'liq*] about this topic that was written by Şadr al-Dīn Ibn al-Wakīl, one of the great scholars with whom I met. His nephew, Zayn al-Dīn, added to it [*tamma 'alay-hi*] several legal enquiries. I extracted from several compendia similar issues and added them to this book of mine.⁵⁸

In his *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Şāfi'iyya*, his paramount work, Tāġ al-Dīn al-Subkī provides a detailed biography of al-Şafadī, who was his colleague and one of his father's students. The entry contains information on al-Şafadī's working method, as we can summarise from the following ego-documents:

⁵⁷ Ibn Ḥaġar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmina*, 2: 87-8 (no. 1654).

⁵⁸ al-'Alā'ī, *al-Maġmū'*, 208.

He did not endeavour to compose a book without consulting me. He would ask me and enquire about topics in law, tradition, sources of jurisdiction and philology. This is certainly the case with his book on the leading figures of our days [*A'yan al-ʿaṣr*]. I was the one who suggested its compilation to him and encouraged him to compose it. Frequently he asked for my advice while he was busy with its composition. When I prepared my short synopsis in jurisdiction and theology, the book that is named *Ġamʿ al-ġawāmiʿ*, he copied my text [*kataba-hu bi-ḥaṭṭi-hi*]. He participated regularly in my learning circle and read the entire book aloud, while I chaired the session. His reciting was very agreeable. He profited from re-reading the book. Moreover, he participated in clarifying some points in the book. He named me as the compiler of the book, although he contributed in clarifying certain points in the text. I accompanied him from childhood. I used to write to him and he wrote to me. He encouraged me to immerse in *adab* [...] One time he granted me the privilege of reading a volume of his *Taḍkira*. At that point he was occupied in writing a book about description and imitation. He used to search in the *Taḍkira* and to take notes, whenever he found an appropriate line.⁵⁹

From the reference to the *taḍkira* we can confirm that the usual mnemonic for composing a compilation was the use of notes (*hypomnēma*: private notes to commit to memory for a lecture).⁶⁰ It supported the predominant aural ‘reception’ of a book, which should not surprise students of Arabo-Islamic civilisation. Although Islamic jurisdiction procedures emphasise the importance of oral evidence, the use of documents in court halls is nevertheless widely recorded.⁶¹

The common method of literary production mentioned above is illustrated by another paragraph taken from Tāġ al-Dīn al-Subkī’s works; it casts light on his close working relations with al-Ḍahabī, “one of the four [Damascene] scholars (*ḥuffāz*) of our days, there is no fifth”, who served both as his companion and as his teacher (*ustāḍu-na; wa-huwa allaḍī ḥarraġa-na fī ḥādīhi al-ṣināʿa*).⁶² Al-Subkī then dwells upon al-Ḍahabī’s compilation technique and quotes an ego-document:

I was struck [*yuʿġibu-nī*] by the words of our ṣayḥ Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥāfiẓ in a chapter composed by him after he had completed the

⁵⁹ al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Šāfiʿiyya*, 10: 6-7. About al-Šafadī’s *Taḍkira*, see chap. 3 by Élise Franssen.

⁶⁰ Schoeler 1997, 423; Schoeler 2009, 20-1; Kohlberg, Amir-Moezzi 2009, 4.

⁶¹ Wakin 1972; Messick 1993, 211-16; Hallaq 1999; Ergene 2004; Marglin 2017.

⁶² Tāġ al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Šāfiʿiyya*, 9: 100 ff. (no. 1306).

compilation [*taṣnīf*] of his book *al-Mizān*. He [Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥāfiẓ] stated: “in this compilation of mine, I mentioned a considerable number of trustworthy transmitters of *ḥadīṭ* [*ṭiqāt*] who have been refuted by al-Buḥārī, al-Muslim and other authoritative *ḥadīṭ* collectors. They did so because these men were refuted by sources that evaluate the credibility of *ḥadīṭ* transmitters. I mentioned their name in my work not because I disqualified them as untrustworthy, but in order to inform my audience about my evaluation of their features”.⁶³

As argued above, contemporary authors regarded the book as an open enterprise, ‘a work in progress’, which we can also conclude from lines that encouraged poets to quote works of earlier writers (*taḍmīn*, i.e. inclusion, quotation),⁶⁴ the compilation of exegeses and continuations (*ḡayl*) is further support for this hypothesis.⁶⁵ In the biography of Taḡī al-Dīn al-Subkī, his son Tāḡ al-Dīn narrates:

I copied these verses from a text [*ḥaṭṭ*] that my brother Abū Hāmid Aḥmad handwrote about verses that our father had recited (in AH 719) [...] Our friend, the paramount scholar Ṣalāh al-Dīn Ḥalīl b. Kaykaladī al-‘Alā‘ī, inserted [*ḡamma*] the first stanza in a poem that he wrote.⁶⁶

Al-Ṣafadī wrote a short treatise that praised the art of inclusion:

How nice is the making of poetry by an elegant scholar who, by writing highly sophisticated texts appropriately, following his father’s benevolence or memories of a beloved friend, will guard their fame forever. I liked the idea of composing a work that uses earlier texts, a compilation that will augment scattered verses and fragments and will assemble new and old stanzas, will organize dispersed ideas and consolidate strewn literary branches. This work will make difficulties easier and will provide literature lovers with all they need. It will illuminate the marginal topics and will be useful for those who debate them, supporting them and saving them from [errors]. It will save the one who does not play according to the canon and eliminate [his mistakes]. He will not be approached and not flattered.⁶⁷

⁶³ Tāḡ al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣāfi‘iyya*, 9: 111.

⁶⁴ van Gelder 1997; Gully 1997, 467.

⁶⁵ On this genre see Farah 1967; Massoud 2007, 25-6.

⁶⁶ Tāḡ al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣāfi‘iyya*, 10: 181.

⁶⁷ al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb iḥtiyār taḍmīḥ al-taḍmīn*, Princeton University Library MS Ar. Garrett 440Y, ff. 32a-34b, see appendix 2.

Yet this stylistic approach does not eliminate the notion of the difference between originality and plagiarism among Mamlūk authors.⁶⁸ The boundary between literary theft and convention or legitimate appropriation of motives (*lafẓ*) and rhetorical devices (*ma'nā*) was clear. Al-Suyūṭī's "On the difference between the author and the thief (plagiarist)" explores the relation between these two categories.⁶⁹

5 In Conclusion

This contribution has concentrated on a single node in mid-fourteenth century Damascene networks. By comparing the two recensions (Berlin, Princeton) of Tāğ al-Dīn al-Subkī's *Gam' al-ḡawāmi'* with the copy made by Ḥalīl al-Ṣafadī (Jerusalem), we can shed new light on author-scribe relations in Mamlūk Damascus, as well as on al-Ṣafadī's and al-Subkī's working method. The texts analysed serve to augment biographical and historical reports, which illuminate the production of knowledge, the role of the author and the role of the copyist.

The written and the aural served together in the transmission of texts: reading was often performed collectively and loudly, and reading aloud and writing down the text that the author/teacher read to an audience was a common practice, and it illuminates social practices. In a number of cases, the production of the written text was done in group, in a circle assembled around an author who performed as a reader of a text compiled by himself. The widespread use of the verbs 'I read aloud/I listened to' (*qara'tu/sami'tu*) indicates that reading was a speech act. Some of those present among the listeners in the learning assemblies recorded the lectures, which ended up in the form of books. The materials reviewed above also cast light on the common contemporary concept of book, on both authorship and reception.

Yet, although data sources regularly report on collective reading aloud, such information does not exclude the possibility of solo silent reading or writing/copying (*naqaltu*). It would be proper to mention here that the verb *katabtu* (I wrote) is not often used by the contemporary authors who reported on their compilation techniques. The close inspection of the documentation discussed in this article adds to the growing knowledge of Mamlūk learning, transmission of knowledge, compilation techniques and book production.

⁶⁸ On questions of originality and plagiarism see von Grunebaum 1944; Heinrichs 1987-88; Bonebakker 1997; Bauden 2010.

⁶⁹ al-Suyūṭī, *al-Fāriq*; al-Biqā'ī, *Unwān*, 4: 45.

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Appendix 1

Edition of al-Ṣafadī's *taqrīz* for Tāğ al-Dīn al-Subkī's
Ġam' al-ğawāmi' (ms NLI Yahuda Ar. 198)

تصنيف مولانا وسيدنا مفتي الفرق حجة المذاهب جامع أشات / العلوم قاضي القضاة أبي نصر عبد الوهاب السبكي الشافعي / امتع الله المسلمين بفضائله وأوزع العافين شكر فواصله / بمنذر كرمه¹
 لكاتبه خليل بن أبيك الصّفدي
 في تقرّيط هذا المصنّف
 كتابٌ في الأصول غداً غريباً تأمله تجد شيئاً عجيباً
 وجميماً في الجموع بلا نظير فلا تصرفه عنك تكن مصيباً
 به كشفت بدور مصنفات بشمس منه يأتي لن تغيباً
 فأبرق مصنفه فريداً مشيراً من قوائده مثيباً
 وأحكّمه فما يخشى رقيباً يُناقضه بعيداً أو قريباً
 وسدد ما حواه وكل حرف إذا شيينا نجيب به نجيباً
 وقد راققت فصاحتُه فما إن تربت بأن تزين به
 واعجز حين أوجز مع بيان بها الأدبياً
 فما من لفظة إلا ويُعطي معاني لم يكن فيها مربياً
 حوى الأضليل مع جدل بديع وحسن تصرف يحكي السبياً
 كأنّ لبّ الحيين غداً يناجي بحسن بلاغة منه حبيباً
 فخلّ السيف يبلى في صداه له ضربياً
 كما ابن الحاجب المسكين² على أبواب قاضينا نقيباً
 <لب> بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم عفوك اللهم ورحمتك
 قال مولانا وسيدنا قاضي القضاة حجة المذهب
 مُفتي الفرق لسان المتكلمين سيف المناظرين
 علامة العلماء واللجّ الذي لا ينتهي لكل بحر ساحل³
 تاج الدين أبو نصر عبد الوهاب السبكي ابن قاضي القضاة شيخ الإسلام
 تقي الدين أبي الحسن علي ابن قاضي القضاة زين الدين أبي محمد عبد الكافي
 الأنصاري الحزرجي السبكي الشافعي أمتع الله المسلمين بأيامه
 وبفوائده

1 وفي مخطوطة 4168Y Princeton Garrett no. - قاضي القضاة وشيخ الإسلام / ملك ملوك الفقهاء سلطان والأديب مظهر / الفوائد والفتون أهبت والعيون حجة / الإسلام شرف الأنام بقية السلف الكرام ناصر / السنة والدين قابع المبتدعين لسان المتكلمين / سيف المناظرين رُخلة الطالبين قدوة / المحققين آخِر المجتهدين سيّد العلماء العاملين تاج الدين / أبي نصر عبد الوهاب / السبكي الشافعي تَقَمَّدهُ اللهُ تعالى / بِرَحْمَتِهِ الوَاسِعَةِ / وَرَوَى ثَرَاه بِشَاتٍ / سَحِيحًا اله / بِحُجَّتِهِ وَآلِهِ / وَصَحِيحِهِ.

2 تاج الدين أبو نصر عبد الوهاب بن علي بن عبد الكافي السبكي الأنصاري الشافعي (727-1327/771-1370)، رفع الحاجب عن مختصر ابن الحاجب حقاؤه علي محمد عوض وعادل أحمد عبد الموجود (بيروت: عالم الكتب، 1419/1999).

3 تاج الدين أبو نصر عبد الوهاب بن علي بن عبد الكافي السبكي الأنصاري الشافعي (727-1327/771-1370)، طبقات الشافعية الكبرى حقاؤه حقيق محمود محمد الطناحي، عبد الفتاح محمد الخلو (القاهرة: عيسى البابي الحلبي (1383-1395/1963-1976)، 01: 161، وقد خصص تاج الدين كتاباً لترجمة والده تاج الدين كتاب إعلام الأعلام بتناقب شيخ الإسلام قاضي القضاة علي السبكي رحمه الله (مخطوطة Princeton Garrett no. 2258Y)، 24؛ وهذا هو بيت الشعر للمنتهي (303-915/965-354). وينظر عند أبي الحسن علي الواحدي النيسابوري الشافعي (468/1076)، شرح ديوان المنتهي حقاؤه ياسين الأيوبي وقصي الحسين (بيروت: دار التراث العربي 1419/1999)، 397 (72)؛ وعند أبي العلاء المعري (363-449/973-1058)، معجز أحمد [شرح ديوان أبي الطيب المنتهي] حقاؤه عبد المجيد دياب (القاهرة: دار المعارف، 1413/1992) 2: 281.

Appendix 2

al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb Iḥtiyār taḍmīḥ al-taḍmīn* (ms PUL Garrett 440Y)

﴿32ب﴾ ما حُسن موقع التضمين من الأديب ولاق في صناعة الإنشاء غيث الوليد أو ذكر من حبيب وسلامه إلى يوم الدين وقد أحببت أن أضع في التضمين تصنيفًا يجمع شتاته ويضم فتاته ويلم فتاه ويحقق ظنونه ويدقق فنونه وهذا التصنيف تخف المؤاينة ويكف المحب شأنه وتضى ديباجه ويجد من يناقشه ويُناجيه ويهد من يناقحه ويُنافيه ويُداينه ولا يُداجيه و يا الله اعتضد واعتصم واستند إليه ما يصمي أو يصم⁴ أنه خير معين وأكرم مبين.

Appendix 3

Colophons of *al-Subkī, Ġam' al-ġawāmi'*

Staatsbibliothek Berlin, MS Sprenger 603

تم تعليقه على يد أفقر الخلق إلى عفو الحق وتوفيقه أحمد بن محمد بن عمر الشافعي غفر الله له ولوالديه ولن نظره فيه ولجميع المسلمين في آخر شهر المحرم سنة ثمان وخمسين وثمانمائة (1\January\1454). قال مصنفه رحمه الله تعالى كان تمامُ بياضه في أخريات ليلة حادي عشر ذي الحجة سنة ستين وسبعمئة (3\Nov\1359) بمنزلي بالدهشة من أرض النيرب ظاهر دمشق المحروسة حرسها الله تعالى والحمد لله رب العالمين. بلغ مقابله على أصله فصح وبالله التوفيق سنة تسع وستين وستمئة في جمادى الأولى سنة تاريخه (1).

Princeton University Library, MS Ar. Garrett 2258Y

قال مصنفه رحمة الله عليه كان تمام بياضه في أخريات ليلة حادي عشر ذي الحجة سنة ستين وسبعمئة (3\Nov\1359) بمنزلي بالدهشة من أرض النيرب ظاهر دمشق المحروسة. ووفق الفراغ من كتابته وتحريره نهاري الخميس منسوخ شهر شوال من شهر عام أحد وعشرين وتسعمئة (9\Dec\1515) علقه لنفسه ولمن شاء الله من خلقه الفقير إلى عفو الله تعالى الودود المتعرف بالعجز والتقصير محمود ابن محمد ابن مكية الشافعي حامداً لله تعالى ومُصلِّياً على رسوله محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم ورضي عن آله وأصحابه وتابعيهم بإحسان إلى يوم الدين.

NLI, MS Yahuda Ar. 198

فرغ من تعليقه لنفسه كاتبه خليل بن ايبك الصَّفدي عفا الله عنه في خامس شهر ربيع الآخر سنة إحدى وستين وسبعمئة بدمشق المحروسة . الحمد لله حقَّ حمده وصلاته على سيِّدنا محمد نبي الرَّحمة وَهادي الأُمَّة وآله وَصحبه (2\March\1360) وسلامه إلى يوم الدين . حسَّنا الله ونعم الوكيل .

4 محمد بن سعيد بن حماد الصنهاجي البوصيري (1295-1213/696-608) ، البردة طبع ضمن. Stetkevych 2010, 245 (l. 19).

