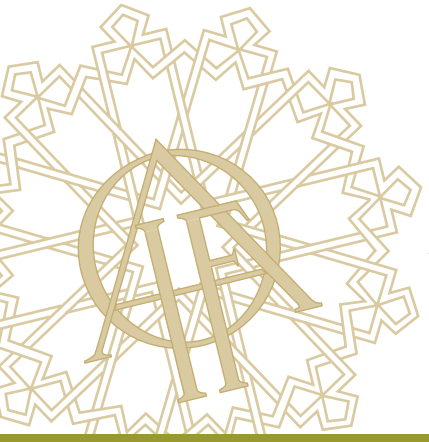
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Anne F. Broadbridge

# Diplomatic Conventions in the Mamluk Sultanate

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ANNE F. BROADBRIDGE

# Diplomatic Conventions in the Mamluk Sultanate

Diplomatic conventions are generally understood to mean the protocol and etiquette that govern encounters between the representatives of different states, such as when ambassadors go to a foreign court to meet with its ruler on behalf of their own. But similar rituals can also govern internal relations, namely those between a ruler and his officials, and those among officials. An understanding of the diplomatic conventions of the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt and Syria (648-922/1250-1517) can therefore illuminate both the character of Mamluk relations with outsiders, and the internal workings of the Mamluk state. The world of Mamluk diplomacy was filled with rigorous protocol and elaborate ceremonies, in which great attention was paid to details. These included the paper, ink colors and pen sizes used in documents, the etiquette of official ceremonies—from the order of participants' entrances and departures to the ranks of those who stood or sat—and the styles, fabrics and decoration of clothing worn for formal occasions. Such details allowed individuals to understand their own position in hierarchies of rank and status, and through their behavior, indicate either their acceptance of these hierarchies or their rejection of them. Individuals could also read these details to understand how others fit into the hierarchies of rank, and thus discern when an irregularity in protocol signaled a shift in the relationships of power that the protocol overlay. In this paper I will first analyze and compare several chancellery manuals, which are major sources for the study of diplomatic conventions. Then I will use evidence both from these manuals and from the Mamluk chronicles to demonstrate the way Mamluk ceremonial etiquette revealed important information about politics and power to astute observers.



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## Sources for the Study of Diplomatic Conventions

The main sources for the study of Mamluk diplomacy are chancellery manuals and histories (chronicles and biographical works). Although coins, inscriptions and advice literature can also be brought to bear on diplomatic topics, they lag far behind in their contributions. Here I will focus on the chancellery works, since they illuminate the protocol surrounding the production of diplomatic letters, and at times even record the letters themselves. I will not discuss the histories in detail, however, since these recount events of all kinds, not just diplomatic ones, and it would be impossible in a single article to describe their full contribution to the topic. Fortunately many have received thorough treatment elsewhere, to which I refer the reader.[1]

In his overview of Islamic chancellery works, Samir al-Droubi notes that four chancellery manuals from the Mamluk Sultanate have been edited: *Ḥusn al-tawassul ilā ṣināʿat al-tarassul* by Šihāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Ḥalabī (d. 725/1324), *al-Taʿrīf b-il-muṣṭalaḥ al-šarīf* by Šihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Faḍlallah al-ʿUmarī (d. 749/1349), *Kitāb taṭqīf al-taʿrīf b'il-muṣṭalaḥ al-šarīf* by Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Nāẓir al-Ğayš (d. 786/1384), and the massive *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿšā fī ṣināʿat al-inšā'* by Šihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Qalqašandī (d. 821/1418).[2] Three other works from the Mamluk period survive but have not yet been published: the Rasulid manual *al-Burd al-muwaššā fī ṣināʿat al-inšā'* of Mūsā b. al-Ḥasan al-Mawṣilī (fl. 7th/later 13th century), and the Mamluk manuals *al-Tibyān fī iṣṭilāḥ ahl al-zamān* of Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī (fl. 778/1376), and the *Qalā'id al-ğumān fī muṣṭalaḥ mukātabāt ahl al-zamān* of Naǧm al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Qalqašandī (d. 876/1471), son of the author of the *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿšā*.[3] Here I will focus on the edited works, since I was unable to gain timely access to the manuscripts.

In general the manuals are remarkably useful for historians, whether those interested in chancellery practices, or in larger questions about the Sultanate and the states around it. Although all the chancellery manuals belong to the same genre, however, they vary in content, organization and focus. They can range from discussions of rhetoric and style, to technical details like titles and formulas, to presentations of model letters. Some are augmented by information on geography, politics or administration. Although many of the manuals rely openly on one another, each makes a distinctive contribution to our knowledge. The references between manuals can thus help historians better understand how the chancellery changed over time, while the different strengths of each author contribute to a larger, more complete picture both of the chancellery profession, and of the world with which it interacted.

1. See for example Little, *Mamlūk Historiography*; Haarmann, *Mamlukenzeit*; Guo, *al-Yūnīnī*. For more than a thousand additional references see the online Mamluk Secondary Bibliography at the University of Chicago under "Historiography" at http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/mideast/mamluk/.

2. See al-Droubi, *Critical Edition*, p. 60-79.

3. The *Burd* is in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, MS 3242 (1). The *Tibyān* is in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, MS no. 8641. The *Qalā'id* is in the British Library in London, MS. Or. 3625.

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### *Al-Ḥalabī*

The first Mamluk-era chancellery author was Šihāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Ḥalabī (d. 725/1325), an Aleppan whose professional career led him to Damascus and Cairo, where he worked in a variety of scribal positions. Al-Ḥalabī reached the pinnacle of his success in 717/1317-1318 when he became Chief Secretary (*kātib al-sirr*) and head of the Damascus chancellery, where he remained until his death.[4] Al-Ḥalabī's work was the *Ḥusn al-tawassul ilā ṣināʿat al-tarassul* (The Excellence of Achievement in the Art of Letter Writing), which he wrote for his offspring and other interested chancellery professionals. The manual was printed twice, without editing, in late nineteenth-century Egypt.[5] Thereafter Akram ʿUṯmān Yūsuf produced an edition based on six manuscripts and the printed versions in 1980 in Iraq.[6]

The *Ḥusn* is arranged in three unequal parts. First and shortest is a discussion of the knowledge a scribe must acquire to achieve proficiency in his work. The second and longest section focuses on rhetoric, and concerns topics like the proper use of metaphors and similes, ellipses, transitions and digressions, paronomasia, poetry, citation, ornamentation, and so on. Only the third section contains material of direct interest to historians, since in it al-Ḥalabī records model and actual letters. These cover topics of martial interest, like how best to describe forts and armies, horses and falcons, shooting and hunting; how to address someone who is defeated in war (sympathetically or mockingly); and how to encourage subordinates to perform lesser *jihad*. This final section also includes a few actual historical documents or drafts thereof: appointment decrees for an Armenian king and for the renegade Ilkhanid governor of Anatolia, Sülemiš; a document on Islamic chivalry (*futūwa*); a response letter to the ruler of Granada, and a draft of an unsent missive to an unidentified non-Muslim king.[7]

Overall al-Ḥalabī's work can be described as backward looking, since it makes many stylistic and historical references to early Islamic history and to the Ayyubid period, but few to the Mamluk Sultanate. Al-Ḥalabī does not discuss the titles and formulas used in letters from his own time, which contrasts with the practices of subsequent chancellery manuals. Nor does the *Ḥusn* incorporate geography, although this topic figures prominently in later works. Although authors like al-Qalqašandī do refer to al-Ḥalabī for stylistic suggestions, few modern historians—other than historians of medieval Islamic rhetoric—are likely to find his work of great value, except for the third section and the few pieces it contains. Modern historiographical discussion of the *Ḥusn* is correspondingly limited.[8] The manual can thus be summed up as a handbook of style written by a man for his progeny, which serves merely to show modern historians how much bolder later works proved to be.

**4.** Al-Ṣuqāʿī, *Tālī*, p. 195 (Arabic text).

**5.** Despite the two printing dates for this work, the "copies" are extremely similar. The first, from al-Maṭbaʿa al-Wahbīya, is 1298/1881; the second, from Amīn Afandīya, is 1315/1897-1898.

**6.** For the critical edition see al-Ḥalabī, *Ḥusn*, (ed.) Yūsuf.

**7.** Al-Ḥalabī, *Ḥusn*, p. 369-373 for the appointment of the Armenian king and 373-378 for Sülemiš; p. 379-382 for the chivalry document; p. 335-338 for the response to Granada, and p. 338-343 for the unsent letter to the non-Muslim king.

**8.** See al-Droubi, *Critical Edition*, p. 71, refuting claims about al-Ḥalabī's importance made by Hartmann, "Politische Geographie," p. 7. For a general discussion of the work and its author see Yūsuf, "Introduction," [to the *Ḥusn*], entire.


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### *Al-ʿUmarī*

Far more ambitious, and far more rewarding for the historian, is the *al-Taʿrīf b-il-muṣṭalaḥ al-šarīf* (Instruction in the Illustrious Technical Term) by Šihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Faḍlallah al-ʿUmarī (d. 749/1349). Al-ʿUmarī came from the Banū Faḍlallah, an educated Syrian family whose members worked in chancelleries in Homs, Damascus and Cairo, beginning in the 660s/1260s. Al-ʿUmarī himself was a second-in-command for his father, Muḥyī al-Dīn Yaḥyā Ibn Faḍlallah (d. 738/1337), who headed first the Damascus then Cairo chancelleries in the 720s/1320s and 730s/1330s. But after al-ʿUmarī protested the elevation of a rival official in 738/1337, and despite Muḥyī al-Dīn Yaḥyā's intercession for his son, al-ʿUmarī was disgraced, punished, and replaced by his brother ʿAlā' al-Dīn ʿAlī. Al-ʿUmarī was later partially restored to favor through a transfer to Damascus in 741/1340, then was replaced there in 743/1342 by his other brother, Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad. Al-ʿUmarī lived the rest of his life in forced retirement in Damascus, where he wrote the *Taʿrīf* and other works.[9] Although al-ʿUmarī's best known composition is not the *Taʿrīf* but his massive geography, the *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*,[10] the *Taʿrīf* is worthy of attention in its own right. It is based on several chancellery manuals, among them al-Ḥalabī's *Ḥusn*, as well as collections of letters, oral sources, and al-ʿUmarī's own knowledge of the subject.[11] The *Taʿrīf* was first printed without editing in Cairo in 1894, then Samir al-Droubi published a 2-volume critical edition and study from 10 manuscripts and the printed version in 1992 in Jordan.[12]

The *Taʿrīf* contains seven sections of unequal length. Chapter One discusses the technical terminology used in Mamluk letters, which includes titles, address formulas, invocations and signatures. This section focuses on Mamluk letters to outside rulers, but ends with letters to military officials within the Sultanate as well. Chapter Two covers appointment diplomas, while Chapter Three discusses oaths of allegiance to the sultan from his subjects. Chapter Four presents administrative documents like safe-conducts, reconciliations and armistices. Chapter Five describes the geography of the Mamluk Sultanate and provides a smattering of administrative information, which makes it a significant departure in topic from the previous chapters. Chapter Six explains those institutions seen as auxiliaries to the chancellery, such as the systems for horse messengers (*barīd*), the pigeon post, beacon fires and ice transportation, as well as methods for scorching earth in Syria. The work ends with Chapter Seven, which discusses an eclectic mixture of phenomena that a scribe might need to describe: tools of all kinds, water in various forms, time and times of day, and types of weather. The *Taʿrīf* covers the 700s/1300s to the 740s/1340s.

**9.** For a detailed biography see al-Droubi, *Critical Edition*, p. 20-35.

**10.** Sections of the *Masālik* have been edited at different times by different people. For al-ʿUmarī's discussion of Egypt and Yemen see the 1985 edition by Ayman Fu'ad Sayyid; for Egypt without Yemen see the 1986 edition by Dorothea Krawulsky; for the Mongols see the 1968 edition and German translation by Klaus Lech.

**11.** For details and titles of the works al-ʿUmarī used see al-Droubi, *Critical Edition*, p. 48-53.

**12.** Al-Droubi looked at 13 manuscripts, but 3 were too corrupt to be useful. See al-Droubi, *Critical Edition*, p. 82-94.


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The *Taʿrīf* is far more ambitious than the *Ḥusn*, and is valuable to the reader both because of the topics covered, and because of the organization used to present them. An important key for understanding the *Taʿrīf* is the arrangement of material. Throughout the work items discussed first take precedence over, and are thus considered more important than, those discussed later. In general, precedence (*sābiqā*) enjoyed a long history in Islamic writing as a concept, a genre of literature (*awā'il*) and a method of understanding the world.[13] More narrowly, as a literary technique it emphasized the importance of material in a text. Like authors before him, therefore, al-ʿUmarī uses precedence to highlight the significance of certain points. Thus the first chapter (on letters) opens with the Abbasid caliphs and the Zaydi Imams, which reflects their positions as symbolic heads of the Islamic community, even though at the time that symbolism had no relationship to political reality. Thereafter al-ʿUmarī moves to territorial rulers, and places Muslims before non-Muslims to demonstrate the greater importance of the former. Then, however, the precedence appears to break down, for although al-ʿUmarī arranges Muslim rulers loosely by geographical group, he jumps from region to region without any apparent rationale for his choices.[14] At the end of the chapter, however, al-ʿUmarī resumes his use of precedence to underscore importance when he discusses letters sent from the sultan to military officials within the Sultanate. Here he arranges individuals by rank, highest to lowest, thus the vicegerent of the Sultanate in Egypt comes first, then the Syrian governors, beginning with the governor of all Syria, then those in Aleppo, Tripoli and Safad, followed by other officials in the Sultanate arranged by rank: military men, civilian officials, religious figures, Beduins.[15]

A similar hierarchy of importance appears in the geography of the Sultanate. Here Cairo takes pride of place because it houses the Abbasid caliphs, the sultan and religious scholars.[16] From this starting point al-ʿUmarī discusses the rest of Egypt as it relates to Cairo, then addresses Syria, beginning with Damascus (the most important administrative division) and ending with Karak (the least important), followed by outlying areas. Al-ʿUmarī's novel use of precedence allowed scribes to see the rank and relative importance of all interlocutors, and address them with the proper honorifics and courtesies (which al-ʿUmarī provided). In addition, the combination of precedence with geography meant that scribes could understand how the recipients of royal letters fit into a hierarchy of importance designated by location and relationship to Cairo. This suggestion of a geographical hierarchy was further developed by later authors.

The *Taʿrīf* should be considered the first major Mamluk chancellery manual, and can be very useful to modern historians.[17] It goes far beyond al-Ḥalabī's rhetorical suggestions by illustrating specific practices used by actual officials working during the reigns of the sultan

**13.** See Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, entire.

**14.** The order is this: the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa and Andalusia, Saharan and sub-Saharan Africa, Iraq, Herat, Gilan, Diyarbakr and Diyar Rabia, Anatolia, Central Asia and the Qipchaq Steppe, Iran, India. He finishes with Christian rulers in eastern and then western Europe.

**15.** Al-ʿUmarī, *Taʿrīf*, p. 85-106.

**16.** Al-ʿUmarī, *Taʿrīf*, p. 247.

**17.** Al-Droubi, *Critical Edition*, p. 72.

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al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 693-694/1293-1294, 698-708/1299-1309, 709-741/1310-1341) and his first successors. It details the titles and honorifics appropriate for members of the Mamluk elite, and in so doing clarifies the elaborate protocol required to produce letters for elite interactions. In addition, al-ʿUmarī's innovative use of precedence in a chancellery work allows modern historians to understand the hierarchies of rank and place that the Mamluk chancellery employed. Within the Sultanate the *Taʿrīf* was so useful that later authors cited it extensively; nevertheless it is still worth reading in its own right, since these quotations do not always capture the full picture. Despite the work's importance, however, much of the modern historiography devoted to al-ʿUmarī has focused on his geographical compendium, the *Masālik*, and not on the *Taʿrīf*, even after the appearance of al-Droubi's edition and commentary.[18]

### *Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš*

The third published Mamluk chancellery author was best known as Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš, although his name was actually Taqī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. Muḥammad al-Taymī al-Ḥalabī al-Miṣrī. His father, one Muḥibb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yūsuf, spent years as the Inspector of Army Finances (*nāẓir al-ǧayš*), whence the son's nickname. Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš himself worked in the chancellery in Cairo from 748/1347-1348 until his father's death in 778/1377-1378, after which he left the chancellery and assumed his father's position. Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš remained Inspector of Army Finances until 786/1384, when the sultan Barquq (first r. 784-791/1382-1389) had him beaten for overstepping his authority; Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš died shortly thereafter as a result.[19]

Like al-Ḥalabī, Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš composed his chancellery manual, the *Taṯqīf al-taʿrīf bil-muṣṭalaḥ al-šarīf* (Training on the "Instruction in the Illustrious Technical Term"), for a son, Aḥmad, who worked in the chancellery.[20] Unlike al-Ḥalabī, however, Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš was not overly interested in rhetoric or the art of the scribe. Instead, and as is evident from the title, Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš used al-ʿUmarī's *Taʿrīf* as a model; he also referred occasionally to other authors, and drew extensively on the details of chancellery practice itself, which he knew well. Rudolf Veselý edited the *Taṯqīf* from five manuscripts and published it in Cairo in 1987.

The *Taṯqīf* contains seven chapters, many of which are extensively subdivided.[21] These may have inspired the even more elaborate subdivisions later used by al-Qalqašandī. Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš's longest cohesive section is Chapters One through Four, which draw heavily on, then expand, al-ʿUmarī's first chapter (on letters). In Chapter One, which is itself very long and intricately subdivided, Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš discusses the protocol for Mamluk letters sent to Muslim and Christian rulers in various locations. Chapter Two covers letters from the sultan to members of the Mamluk military administration in Egypt and Syria. Chapter Three addresses

**18.** For historiographical discussions of the *Masālik* see the online Mamluk bibliography under "Umari."

**19.** For Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš's life and career see Veselý, "Introduction," [to the *Taṯqīf*], p. VIII-X.

**20.** Veselý, "Introduction," [to the *Taṯqīf*], p. IX (and text, p. 3).

**21.** For comparisons of the formats used by Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš and al-ʿUmarī see Veselý, "Introduction," p. XII; al-Droubi, *Critical Edition*, p. 72-74.


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letters to Arabs, Turkmen and Kurds living in Mamluk territory, and Chapter Four discusses the protocol for letters to civilian officials. After these four closely related sections, Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš moves on to administrative documents other than letters—appointment diplomas, documents granting financial rights, etc (Chapter Five). Chapter Six addresses peace treaties, and Chapter Seven describes miscellaneous titles that might come in handy to a scribe.

Despite Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš's reliance on al-ʿUmarī, the *Taṭqīf* is significantly different from the *Taʿrīf*.[22] Although Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš discusses many of the same technical details as al-ʿUmarī, like titles, formulas, paper sizes and pens, Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš omits administration, geography or auxiliary institutions like the pigeon post, which makes the *Taṭqīf* far more narrow in focus.[23] Instead, Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš's contribution to our knowledge of the period is found in the techniques he uses to expand al-ʿUmarī's model, especially in the section on letters. Although Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš imitates al-ʿUmarī by employing precedence to indicate significance, Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš is far more rigorous in his organization, and thus creates a clearer hierarchy of importance.

This development appears in his discussion of Mamluk correspondence with outsiders (Chapter One). Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš here ensures that Muslim rulers precede non-Muslim rulers; he also opens with the Abbasid caliphs and the Zaydi Imams, as al-ʿUmarī does. Then, however, Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš diverges from al-ʿUmarī's organization by further subdividing rulers in a hierarchy based on location.[24] Muslim rulers found to the east of the Mamluk Sultanate therefore precede those to the west, followed by Muslim rulers who are either insignificant, or whose lands are far from Mamluk territory.

Within this hierarchy of space Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš distinguishes between major rulers (who begin the chapter) and minor ones (who end it); he also includes additional hierarchies based on ethnic origin, rank or power. In the section on major rulers, therefore, he not only discusses the most important eastern sovereigns, but also classifies them by their relationship to the Chingizid Mongol imperial house. Here he begins with the Chingizids themselves, then moves to major Mongol rulers who are not Chingizids, and ends with the non-Chingizid, non-Mongol Kurdish Ayyubid dynasty.[25] By contrast, Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš ranks Muslim rulers in the west in terms of power, not ethnic group; thus the Marinids of the far west (668-870/1269-1465) precede the Hafsids of Tunis and central North Africa (627-982/1229-1574), who in turn precede less powerful figures in Andalusia. Thereafter come weak or distant Muslim rulers (India, Yemen, Mali, etc.), followed last and least by Christian rulers, whose order appears to be random.[26]

**22.** Veselý, "Introduction," p. xii.

**23.** Veselý, "Introduction," p. xiii.

**24.** This is admittedly ironic for a man who was otherwise uninterested in geography.

**25.** It is possible that Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš borrowed these categories from al-ʿUmarī's *Masālik*, which discusses the Mongols and their subdivisions at length, but as yet we have no direct evidence that Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš read the *Masālik*.

**26.** His order here is: the Pope, the Byzantine Emperor, the rulers of Georgia, Barcelona, Serbia and the Bulghars, Ethiopia, Genoa, Venice, Armenia, Cyprus, and so on.


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At the end of this section on letters to other courts (still Chapter One), Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš discusses lesser rulers with the same organization he used for the great sovereigns: Muslims before non-Muslims, easterners before westerners, and so on. This means that he again begins with eastern Muslim rulers, further divided as petty non-Chingizid Mongols; Turks, Turkmen and Kurds; important women, and male religious figures. Thereafter come western Muslims below the rank of ruler (viziers, etc.), from most to least powerful, followed by lesser figures at unimportant or distant Muslim courts (but without any low-ranking Christians). Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš's penchant for hierarchies also appears in his section on letters to Mamluk officials (Chapter Two), where the hierarchy shows military rank, and thus expands the treatment al-ʿUmarī gave this topic in his chapters on letters (One) and geography and administration (Five).

Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš's work is extremely important to historians for several reasons. First, by beginning in the early 7th/14th century and continuing to 780/1378-1379, he covers much of the era of the Qalawunid dynasty.[27] Although his work does overlap with that of al-ʿUmarī, the *Taṯqīf* is unique among published chancellery manuals for its coverage of the decades between the 740s/1340s and 780/1378-1379. This period is sparsely treated in the histories as well, which makes Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš's contribution particularly useful.[28] Second, Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš's hierarchies of importance, combined with his information on technical details like titles and paper sizes, clearly present the official Mamluk view of everyone to whom they wrote, as categorized by combinations of location, ethnic origin, rank or power. This allows modern historians to see the status of everyone who ever received a Mamluk letter. Third, Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš is unique in his full (and sometimes opinionated) explanations of variations or changes in protocol, and often includes both the precise year of their occurrence, and the political events that inspired them (see examples below). This means that the *Taṯqīf* illuminates not only the logic behind chancellery developments, but occasionally Mamluk politics as well. Despite the *Taṯqīf*'s importance, however, the historiographical treatment of it has been relatively limited.[29]

### *Al-Qalqašandī*

The best known and most comprehensive Mamluk-era chancellery manual is the *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿšā fī ṣināʿat al- inšā'* (The Daybreak for the Sufferer of Night-Blindness in Composing Official Documents[30]), written by the Egyptian chancellery official Šihāb al-Dīn Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Qalqašandī (d. 821/1418), who hailed from the village of Qalqašandā in the Nile Delta

**27.** This covers the period from the second reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 698-708/1299-1309) to slightly after the reign of al-Ašraf Šaʿbān (r. 764-778/1363-1377).

**28.** The unpublished *Tibyān* of Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī does describe the same time period, and may flesh out Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš's information admirably; let us hope that an edition is undertaken soon.

**29.** See Veselý, "Introduction," entire; also the review of the edition by Holt, p. 623; Richards, "Chancery Manual," p. 97-101; al-Droubi, *Critical Edition*, p. 72-74.

**30.** The translation comes from Van Berkel, "Attitude," p. 159.


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near Qalyūb. Al-Qalqašandī came from a family of scholars and trained in law. He started working in the Cairo chancellery in 791/1388-1389 under the sultan Barquq, and remained there for his entire career.[31] Al-Qalqašandī wrote the *Ṣubḥ* over a period of about ten years, from 805/1402-1403 to 814/1411-1412; it has been suggested that he did so in response to an official request.[32] The *Ṣubḥ* first appeared in 14 volumes in Cairo in the early twentieth century (two editions), then in the 1960s in Cairo and in Lebanon in 1987.[33]

The *Ṣubḥ* is both massive and complex: its contents and arrangement alone have provided material for more than one article.[34] The work is carefully organized into ten large "Chapters" or sections, which contain an almost bewildering array of precisely delineated subsections and further divisions. Although the *Ṣubḥ* uses precedence as did the *Taʿrīf* and the *Taṭqīf*, it is too large, and contains too many internal cross-references, for this technique to be as striking as in the earlier works. Chapters One and Three discuss the tools of the chancellery trade used both in al-Qalqašandī's own time and in the past: these include pens, papers, inks and types of documents. Chapter Two addresses the geography and history of the Islamic world, while Chapter Four explains the titles, formulas and technical terminology used in correspondence with military and civilian figures, both contemporary to al-Qalqašandī and historical. Chapter Five covers appointment documents, while Chapter Six discusses documents relating to religious establishments, and permissions for various activities. Chapter Seven concerns land grants, Chapters Eight and Nine address peace treaties and agreements, and the final chapter, Ten, first summarizes kingly writing on miscellaneous topics, then follows al-ʿUmarī's example by describing the pigeon post, signal fires and horse messengers. As if the contents of the work were not useful enough, al-Qalqašandī heightened the value of his masterpiece by including texts of historical documents throughout these chapters.

As in the *Taʿrīf* and the *Taṭqīf*, ideas of geography appear in the *Ṣubḥ*, which al-Qalqašandī probably acquired from al-ʿUmarī (the *Taʿrīf* and the *Masālik*, both cited repeatedly), as well as from Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš's geographical echoes of al-ʿUmarī. Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Ṣayyād notes that al-Qalqašandī arranges his geographical section in four parts: the earth, the caliphs, Egypt, and other lands. Among these sections, al-Qalqashandi's discussion of the caliphs in particular explains the political geography of the Islamic world, and allows him to map the development of Islamic society over time.[35] As in al-ʿUmarī's *Ta'rīf*, therefore, al-Qalqašandī's geographical discussion helps scribes understand how the sultan's interlocutors fit into the world beyond Cairo, although unlike al-ʿUmarī, al-Qalqašandī emphasizes the importance of this knowledge by making geography the second of ten chapters, rather than the fifth of seven.

31. ʿAbd al-Karīm, "Introduction," in *al-Qalqašandī*, p. 8.

32. It is unknown who gave the order. ʿInān, "al-Qalqašandī wa kitābuhu" in *al-Qalqašandī*, p. 15-16; also see al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, (ed.) Shams al-Dīn, vol. 1, p. 34-35.

33. See the bibliography for full references. All subsequent footnote references to the *Ṣubḥ* will indicate the Beirut edition.

34. See ʿInān, p. 11-21, Van Berkel, "Attitude," p. 159-168.

35. Al-Ṣayyād, "Naẓrah Ǧiyugrāfī [sic]," in *al-Qalqašandī*, p. 203-204.


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Al-Qalqašandī's section on Egypt is particularly reminiscent of al-ʿUmarī's work, since al-Qalqašandī also puts Egypt in pride of place based on the presence in it of caliphs, sultans and holy men, its control of the Holy Cities of the Hijaz, and its own religious history, religious virtues and other qualities.[36] Thereafter he describes other regions in the Mamluk Sultanate according to their virtues and qualities as well. When he turns to lands outside the Sultanate, however, he modifies not al-ʿUmarī's work but that of Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš: he starts with the East and the Mongols, then inserts an unexpected section on Iraq, Yemen, the Persian Gulf and India, then finally turns to the West, followed by lands south and north of Egypt, and ending with Christian Europe.[37]

Al-Qalqašandī's stated goal was to expand on all previous chancellery works and provide clear, comprehensive information to readers.[38] He also may have envisioned this as a reference work for scribes—certainly the *Ṣubḥ*'s size places it in the encyclopedic tradition of the Mamluk period.[39] Despite its quality, however, the *Ṣubḥ* is still best read in conjunction with the *Taʿrīf* and the *Tathīf*, since although al-Qalqašandī cites these earlier authors carefully, he does not always do so completely. For modern historians al-Qalqašandī provides wonderful information on the Mamluk administrative hierarchy and the diplomatic conventions that governed all relationships of the Mamluk Sultanate. This makes the *Ṣubḥ* an essential tool to reconstruct Mamluk diplomacy, both internal and external, and to understand the deeper political meanings that diplomatic protocol conveyed.

So far the *Ṣubḥ* has been remarkably useful to scholars, and it is no surprise that unlike in the case of the other manuals, a distinct historiography on al-Qalqašandī's masterpiece already exists. Interest in the *Ṣubḥ* emerged in the pioneering work of individual Orientalists,[40] but the first collected study only appeared in 1973 as the publication of a series of lectures given in Cairo in 1971 under the auspices of the Egyptian Society for the Study of History.[41] Since then, articles and books on the *Ṣubḥ* have been published in many languages. Topics discussed so far have included geography,[42] archeology,[43] the *Ṣubḥ* as a historical source,[44] the *Ṣubḥ* as a

**36.** Al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, vol. 1, p. 30-31.

**37.** Al-Ṣayyād, "Naẓrah Ǧiyugrāfī [sic]," p. 205-207.

**38.** Al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, vol. 1, p, 35.

**39.** Examples include al-ʿUmarī's *Masālik* and the historian Aḥmad al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*. For al-Nuwayrī see the bibliography; also see al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿšā*, vol. 1, p. 31-36; also see Van Berkel, "Attitude," p. 160, 163-168; ʿĀšūr, "Maṣdar li-dirāsat taʾrīḫ Miṣr," in *al-Qalqašandī*, p. 25-26.

**40.** Early Orientalists writing on al-Qalqašandī include Björkman, *Geschichte der Staatskanzlei*; Canard, "Les relations diplomatiques;" Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *La Syrie*; Michel, "L'organisation financière;" Wiet and Tisserant, "Patriarches d'Alexandrie;" and Wüstenfeld, *Geographie und Verwaltung*.

**41.** For the collected study see the bibliography under *al-Qalqašandī*; for later books and articles on al-Qalqašandī see the online Mamluk Bibliography.

**42.** See Wüstenfeld; al-Ṣayyād, "Naẓrah Ǧiyugrāfī [sic]," p. 201-213.

**43.** Darrag, "al-Ǧānib al-Aṭarī," in *al-Qalqašandī*, p. 97-115.

**44.** See ʿĀshūr; also ʿIzz al-Dīn, *al-Qalqašandī Muʾarriḫan*; al-Sāmarrāʾī, *al-Manhaǧ al-Taʾrīḫī*; Ṭulaymāt, "Waṭāʾiq al-Qalqašandī," in *al-Qalqašandī*, p. 117-143.


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source for the study of the chancellery,[45] of al-Qalqašandī himself,[46] or of Islamic culture;[47] the literary side of the *Ṣubḥ* and the terminology used in it;[48] foreign relations as reconstructed from the documents in the *Ṣubḥ*,[49] the *Ṣubḥ* as it illuminates the Egyptian agricultural calendar,[50] Mamluk finances,[51] cryptography,[52] Christians and Jews in general,[53] or the Patriarchs of Alexandria in particular;[54] or, ranging farther afield, the *Ṣubḥ* and its relationship to Palestine,[55] to Syria[56] and even to the Byzantine Emperors.[57] Given the scope of the *Ṣubḥ*, we can expect additional studies to appear for years (and years) to come.

These, then, are the published chancellery manuals from the Mamluk Sultanate. Although different in content, focus and style, all contribute to our knowledge of the Mamluk chancellery profession. At the same time the manuals can illuminate larger questions of politics, administration and especially diplomacy, both internal and external. In the next section I will use examples from these manuals and from the Mamluk histories to demonstrate the way ceremonial etiquette divulged important information about politics and power to participants and observers.

## The Political Meanings of Diplomatic Conventions

All militaries have hierarchies of rank, in which distinctions among levels are marked by ceremonies, protocol and privileges. The government of the Mamluk Sultanate employed both military and civilian officials, but did so in a system based on a military model. Correspondingly the Mamluk political world was one filled with militaristic ceremony, wherein highly visible (and audible[58]) rituals and conventions indicated the status of every individual in government. In this world of ceremony rituals did not represent empty formality, as some in modern times might imagine; rather, the details of official protocol were highly significant to military and civilian observers, who were able to read them as reflections of deeper meanings about politics. Within the Sultanate, conforming to protocol indicated at least temporary acceptance of the

**45.** Ḥabašī, "Dīwān al-Inšā'," in *al-Qalqašandī*, p. 81-95.
**46.** See ʿInān, "Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Qalqašandi," in *al-Qalqašandī*, entire.
**47.** Saʿd, *al-Ṭaqāfa al-Islāmīya*.
**48.** Muḥriz, "Fann al-kitāba," in *al-Qalqašandī*, p. 71-79; al-Shaʿkah, "Al-Ğānib al-adabī," in *al-Qalqašandī*, p. 215-70; al-Shaʿkah, *al-Uṣūl al-adabīyah*; al-Baqlī, *Muṣṭalaḥāt "Ṣubḥ al-Aʿšā."*
**49.** Yūsuf, "ʿAlaqāt," in *al-Qalqašandī*, p. 145-199; more generally see Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, entire.
**50.** Pellat, "Calendrier agricole."
**51.** See Michel, "L'organisation financière."
**52.** Wieber, "Kryptographie;" Bosworth, "Codes."
**53.** Bosworth, "Religious Dignitaries."
**54.** See Wiet and Tisserant, "Patriarches d'Alexandrie."
**55.** Nielsen, "Political Geography."
**56.** See Gaudefroy-Demombynes. *La Syrie*; also Vermeulen, "Remise de taxes."
**57.** See Canard, "Les relations diplomatiques;" also see Crabbé, "Byzantine Emperors."
**58.** I am thinking of the military bands (*ṭablaḫānah*-s), which were exclusive to commanders of the middle and upper ranks in the Mamluk military. Low ranking commanders did not have the right to a band.


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political hierarchy, but deviations from protocol could suggest the opposite. As a result, breaches in ceremony naturally drew the attention of contemporaries and chroniclers, and caused them to wonder: What did a specific abandonment of ritual mean? A problem? An opportunity? A challenge to the current political arrangement?

In addition to reflecting the hierarchies of the Sultanate, Mamluk diplomatic and ceremonial conventions allowed officials to express the position of the sultan to the larger Islamic community outside Egypt and Syria, and in so doing reveal the hierarchies in Mamluk relations with other rulers. Beginning in the mid-730s/1330s, for example, Ilkhanid rulers in Iran suddenly became supplicants to the Mamluk sultan, rather than his near-equals; this new political imbalance was clearly expressed through significant changes in diplomatic protocol.[59] Since the civilian officials in the Mamluk chancellery worked directly with the military elite to regulate Mamluk society, it is no surprise that the technical manuals written for and by chancellery officials reflect both the political and administrative hierarchies of Egypt and Syria, and the hierarchies of Mamluk relations with outsiders. The chancellery protocol spelled out in manuals helped scribes understand the world with which they were interacting, discern the place of individuals within that world, and treat them appropriately through the application of proper ceremonial etiquette. Any mistake in protocol was a grave professional error for a chancellery official, since it might lead him to express an individual's status inaccurately, and thus misrepresent the very real relations of power that lay behind the ceremonial particulars.

### *Mamluks and the Sultanate*

A few examples of chancellery protocol should illuminate the political meanings it could express. These come from the *Taṯqīf* of Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš, since he was the most explicit of the chancellery authors about the way protocol reflected status. When discussing the way to write to the caliph's heir, for example, Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš explained that scribes could address the heir with "His Nobility (approx; *ǧānib*, lit. "side")," which he claimed that al-ʿUmarī had recommended (without explaining why); or they could use the similar "His Honor (*ǧanāb*)."[60] Like al-ʿUmarī, Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš preferred "His Nobility;" unlike al-ʿUmarī, he gave a reason for the preference: since "His Honor" could also indicate high-ranking military commanders, it was a title shared by many, and was therefore far less desirable for the caliph-to-be. By contrast, "His Nobility" was unique [and presumably conferred distinction on the addressee].[61] Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš's opinion thus indicated not only that the heir's rank was singular, but that the use of a special marker to designate this was desirable.

Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš displayed a similar concern with the reflection of rank when he discussed the protocol used in letters to the governor of Syria (*nā'ib al-Šām*). At first the titles of

**59.** See Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, Chapter Five.

**60.** Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš, citing al-ʿUmarī, *Taṯqīf*, p. 8; I found no such distinctions made in the section on this topic in al-Droubi's edition of al-ʿUmarī, *Taʿrīf*, p. 15-17 (although *ǧanāb* is given as an alternate reading in one of the mss; see p. 15 note 2).

**61.** Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš, *Taṯqīf*, p. 8; also see al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, vol. 4, p. 144-145 for the uses of "His Honor."


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the vicegerent in Egypt (*nā'ib al-salṭana*) were far loftier than those for the governor of Syria, as Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš explained by comparing the two side by side: "If you contemplate these two written examples, the elevation of the one for the vicegerent in Egypt over the governor of Syria will become clear to you."[62] Then in 775/1373-1374 the Mamluk commander Baydamur al-Khwarazmī was appointed as governor of Syria for the third time, and gained a set of new and improved titles to reflect an elevation in his status. But since Baydamur's titles were now more impressive, the higher-ranking vicegerent in Egypt also needed similar titles to maintain his position, "...*since the level of writing could not be less for him than it was for the governor of Syria* (emphasis added)... Thus the [style of] writing to the two of them was the same, and the vicegerent in Egypt was not lower than the governor of Syria, except that the vicegerent received one additional title... which the governor of Syria did not."[63]

This change in Baydamur's status also led to adjustments in the protocol used for group letters to the seven major Syrian governors. The openings of such letters had followed a specific pattern, controlled by rank, thus the governors of Syria and Aleppo came first, together; then those of Tripoli, Hama, and Safad in a group; followed last by the governors of Giza and Karak. But when Baydamur was elevated as governor of Syria, his change in rank forced stylistic innovations in group letters to reflect the new political reality: "Now, however, this format cannot be used because the governor of Syria requires new titles. He cannot therefore be included [in group letters], since he has titles now that cannot be used for anyone else. *And if those titles were left out, it would be a blow against his rank* (emphasis added). Therefore he must now be written to individually, and the group letter is written to everyone else [without him]."[64]

But it was not only chancellery professionals who paid attention to protocol, for other members of the civilian and military elites also scrutinized diplomatic conventions to discern deeper political meanings in them. Whereas chancellery officials focused on the narrower meanings expressed through the stylistic particulars of letters and documents, others recognized political significance in the etiquette of Mamluk formal ceremonies. The Mamluk-era historians in particular were very interested in ceremonies, described them regularly in the chronicles, and took care to note any breaches in their protocol.[65] Examples here should explain how the meaning inherent in ceremonies complemented those found in and expressed through chancellery documents.

In the 690s/1290s the Syrian civilian Ibn al-Salʿūš twice committed faults in his ceremonial behavior, which indicated a serious imbalance in his relationship to other civilian and military officials, and allowed astute political players to recognize an irregularity in the channels of political authority. The first breach took place in 688/1289 when sultan Qalawun's son and heir,

**62.** Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš, *Taṭqīf*, p. 89.
**63.** Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš, *Taṭqīf*, p. 93; also al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, vol. 7, p. 184, but omitting Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš's explanation of the ramifications; see also Van Steenbergen, *Order out of Chaos*, p. 43.
**64.** Ibn Nāẓir al-Ǧayš, *Taṭqīf*, p. 115.
**65.** Among the best authors for these details were al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, volumes 27, 29-33; also see al-Yūsufī, *Nuzha*. Ibn Ḥaǧar, *Inbā'*, is also good for descriptions of ceremonies and protocol, although in his case the historian has to read between the lines to understand the significance of events.


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al-Ašraf Ḫalīl, made Ibn al-Salʿūš his personal vizier and gave him a splendid robe to indicate his new authority. This robe was similar to that worn by the vizier of the Sultanate.[66] When Qalawun saw Ibn al-Salʿūš wearing the look-alike robe he disapproved, and asked his own men about him. From them Qalawun learned not only that Ḫalīl had made Ibn al-Salʿūš his vizier, but also that Ḫalīl envisioned himself as equal to his father (perhaps because he was the heir?). One sign of that equality was Ḫalīl's possession of an administration like the royal administration, which he indicated publicly by giving Ibn al-Salʿūš a robe of office that copied the one his father's man wore.[67] But to Qalawun the robe must have been visible proof of a covert political challenge from his son, although Qalawun astutely punished Ibn al-Salʿūš instead of Ḫalīl. Qalawun summoned Ibn al-Salʿūš to a formal meeting, to which he came wearing the troublesome robe. At the meeting Qalawun asserted the superiority of his administration by rebuking Ibn al-Salʿūš for becoming Ḫalīl's vizier without authorization from the real powers in the Sultanate, whether Qalawun himself, Qalawun's vicegerent or the actual vizier. The sultan then confiscated the offending robe and sent Ibn al-Salʿūš off for imprisonment, extortion and torture. Ḫalīl had to expend considerable effort to save his man, and only succeeded in freeing him first to house arrest in Cairo, and then to exile in the Hijaz.

As a result of Qalawun's wrath, Ibn al-Salʿūš remained in exile until after the sultan's death on 6 Ḏū al-Qaʿda 689/10 November 1290, when Ḫalīl summoned him back to Egypt. But soon after Ibn al-Salʿūš's return to Cairo, evidence of Ḫalīl's favor began to appear once again in telling breaches in ceremony.[68] First Ḫalīl gave Ibn al-Salʿūš an honor guard of Royal Mamluks, which was unprecedented for a vizier. This appears to have turned Ibn al-Salʿūš's head: "He became arrogant, and began to take the military elite (*al-nās*) lightly, and he exceeded the boundaries for viziers."[69] Soon during routine ceremonies when the military commanders went to greet Ibn al-Salʿūš, who was always seated, he would snub them by rising only halfway to his feet, not fully. Next he began to summon (not invite) commanders to his presence, which was itself an arrogant move; he then made the matter worse by doing so without addressing the summons with the conventional honorifics. The breaches were most egregious against the vicegerent, Badr al-Dīn Baydara. Despite Baydara's status Ibn al-Salʿūš slighted him in several matters of protocol: at least once when the two met, walking, Ibn al-Salʿūš let Baydara bow more deeply than he bowed in return, which was an affront; then the two strolled together briefly, but Ibn al-Salʿūš kept slightly ahead of Baydara, which was disrespectful. Compounding the problem, Ibn al-Salʿūš took leave of Baydara by addressing him merely as "Commander Badr al-Dīn," which was a terrible gaffe: "He said no more than that. No one had ever heard of such a thing before."[70] The vizier also failed to cooperate with the vicegerent in

**66.** For this episode see al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, vol. 31, p. 187-191; Ibn al-Furāt, *Taʾrīḫ*, vol. 8, p. 107; on the vizier under Qalawun see Northrup, *Slave to sultan*, p. 217-221.

**67.** See also Northrup, *Slave to Sultan*, p. 207, 248.

**68.** For these episodes see al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, vol. 31, p. 191-193.

**69.** Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, vol. 31, p. 191.

**70.** Unfortunately we do not know what Ibn al-Salʿūš *should* have said. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, vol. 31, p. 193.


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various matters. When combined with the lapses in ceremony, this behavior made it clear to the military commanders in general and to Baydara in particular that Ibn al-Salʿūš did not respect them as he should, and thus represented a challenge to their political authority. It also broadcast Ḫalīl's favor towards Ibn al-Salʿūš through his public willingness to give the vizier a free hand; worst of all, it suggested Ḫalīl's own relative disdain for some of the commanders, Baydara among them. If Ḫalīl had been more careful or politically astute, he might have kept his vizier in check, and these breaches in protocol might not have signaled the underlying political imbalance so quickly and so clearly. But since Ḫalīl chose to let Ibn al-Salʿūš behave as he wished, it is no surprise that soon after the sultan's own assassination in Muḥarram 693/December 1293 by a cartel led by Baydara, Ibn al-Salʿūš, bereft of his royal protector, was tortured to death by the Mamluk commanders.[71]

A similar political imbalance was revealed through breaches of ceremonial protocol during the 720s/1320s in the case of another civilian official, Karīm al-Dīn the Elder, who exercised tremendous power as the chief financial officer of the sultanate. Just as Ḫalīl had strongly favored Ibn al-Salʿūš, so too the sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (third r. 709-741/1310-1341) showered Karīm al-Dīn with attention, and showed this favoritism through unique details of ritual. One such was the sultan's use of formal robes of honor. Such robes were a standard part of the Mamluk ceremonial world, and were typically granted to officials on a host of occasions: upon appointment to a new position, throughout their tenure in that position, at designated ceremonies, or on special occasions to indicate the sultan's particular favor. Robes were also used extensively in foreign diplomacy.[72] Robes varied in color, material and decoration, all of which could express both an individual's status and the sultan's opinion of him. Muḥammad's growing favor for Karīm al-Dīn thus first appeared in the physical qualities of the many robes he gave him, which increased in loveliness until they culminated in a white satin outer robe, accompanied by a green satin under robe decorated with gold embroidered bands. Contemporary observers noted that this combination represented a type and quality of garment that had previously been granted only to military men, not to civilian officials.[73] Nor were the unusually lavish robes the only signs of Karim al-Din's special position and power: once when the governor of Aleppo was in Cairo, he not only rode through the streets with Karīm al-Dīn, but even dismounted and walked for a ways while Karīm al-Dīn remained riding, which was a great honor.[74] On another occasion when Karīm al-Dīn recovered from an illness, the sultan had the city decorated in thanksgiving for him, which was not unusual, but did so with the ornaments normally reserved for celebrating victory on the battlefield, which was unprecedented.[75]

**71.** Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, vol. 31, p. 273; al-Ǧazarī, *Ta'rīḫ*, vol. 1, p. 193-194; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, vol. 8, p. 350. Also see Holt, *Age of the Crusades*, p. 105-106; Irwin, *Mamluk Sultanate*, p. 76-82.

**72.** For robes of honor see Mayer, *Mamluk Costume*, p. 21-25, 56-64; Petry, "Robing Ceremonials," p. 353-377; Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, Chapter 1.

**73.** Nuwayri, *Nihāya*, vol. 33, p. 50; also see Mayer, *Mamluk Costume*, p. 24 for types of cloth.

**74.** Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, vol. 33, p. 51.

**75.** Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, vol. 33, p. 52.


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And yet Karīm al-Dīn's favor did not last. Although originally Muḥammad had lavished splendid robes on Karīm al-Dīn, other robes later became a sign of his displeasure, for eventually the sultan began to complain that Karīm al-Dīn was giving people nicer robes than he was. This was a serious mistake for Karīm al-Dīn, since the differences between his robes and the sultan's robes were immediately visible, and thus the infraction in protocol, and the underlying arrogance that it signaled, were clear to all viewers:

> "If [the sultan] gave someone an ordinary colored robe (*mulawwan*), then [Karīm al-Dīn] would give a [higher-ranking] colored robe (*muṣmat*). If the sultan gave a higher-ranking colored robe, then Karīm al-Dīn would give a striped robe (*ṭardawaḥš*). If the sultan gave a striped robe, then Karīm al-Dīn would give a robe of striped brocade (*ṭardawaḥš muqaṣṣab*). And if the sultan gave a brocade robe (*muqaṣṣab*), then Karīm al-Dīn would give a satin robe with gold embroidered bands (*al-aṭlas al-maʿadanī b'il-ṭarz al-zarkašī*)... If the sultan gave someone a satin robe with gold embroidered bands, then Karīm al-Dīn would give an embroidered robe adorned with pearls and studded with jewels, as well as caparisoned horses and mules, and so on. If the sultan gave someone money, Karīm al-Dīn would give exponentially larger amounts of money. This was one of the reasons that the sultan harbored feelings of resentment against him. He would mention this as one of Karīm al-Dīn's faults, that is, his practice of an activity that was not appropriate."[76]

As in the case of Ibn al-Salʿūš, therefore, signs of an impending fall for Karīm al-Dīn, like his fabulous rise, appeared in the breaches of ceremonial protocol that surrounded him and provided a road map of his position to those who read them. It should come as no surprise that some time after complaining about Karīm al-Din's ceremonial excesses, the sultan removed Karīm al-Dīn from office and had him tortured and sent into exile, where the disgraced financier ultimately committed suicide.

### *Mamluks and Outsiders*

Diplomatic protocol also reflected the status of individuals outside the Mamluk Sultanate and their place in an international hierarchy of rank relative to the Mamluk sultans. Within his territory the sultan was responsible for the reception of all foreign dignitaries, and could indicate his opinion of them, or, in the case of ambassadors, of the ruler they represented, through the details of their welcome. These included the location and quality of the guests' accommodations, the amount and kinds of food and drink they were given, the etiquette of their ceremonial meeting with the sultan, and even the status of the Mamluk officials who met them outside each major Mamluk city—the higher the officials' rank, the greater the honor to the guests. Three examples of the relationships among diplomatic protocol, status and the political situations they reflected appear in the cases of the rebel Ilkhanid governor Temürtaš, the refugee Jalayirid ruler Sulṭān-Aḥmad, and a set of ambassadors from the Crimea. Although all

**76.** Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, vol. 33, p. 54.


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of these men went to Cairo and were honored there, the details of those honors are extremely telling of different political meanings in each situation.

The first case was that of the rebel Temürtaš, who fled Ilkhanid territory for Egypt in 728/1328, and who immediately noticed that the welcome extended by the sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad involved a confusing combination of privileges. When arriving at Damascus in Ṣafar/January, Temürtaš enjoyed treatment as lofty as what the sultan himself received—Temürtaš stayed in the palace. Outside Cairo, however, the welcoming party contained officials whose rank was only high enough to honor any important Mamluk commander. Thereafter Temürtaš was permitted to join Muḥammad and his commanders for a ceremonial reception and meal, which was an honor, but Temürtaš was seated only with older men of middling status, which was not. This raised questions for Temürtaš: What exactly was his status in the Mamluk Sultanate? What did Muḥammad mean to say through the conflicting ceremonial details of this welcome in general? What was the significance of Temürtaš's place at the reception in particular? Muḥammad was aware of his guest's unhappiness with the unclear protocol, since at the banquet he sent word to Temürtaš to explain that the seating arrangement was meant to honor some of Qalawun's former commanders (now aged), not insult Temürtaš. Although on the surface Temürtaš accepted the explanation, he ultimately proved to have accurately understood the trouble that these discrepancies of protocol signaled, since Muḥammad in fact had not wanted him to come to Cairo at all. Thereafter Muḥammad hesitated over whether to give Temürtaš a standard military grant (*iqṭāʿ*), and only did so at the urging of his own men. He then grew even colder to Temürtaš over time, and finally had him killed disgracefully some months later.[77]

By contrast, when Sulṭān-Aḥmad took refuge from the warlord Temür with the Mamluk sultan al-Ẓāhir Barquq (r. 784-791/1382-1389, 792-801/1390-1399) in Rabīʿ I 796/January 1394, the details of the Jalayirid's reception made Barquq's warm opinion of him very clear: Barquq himself welcomed Sulṭān-Aḥmad outside Cairo, where he went so far as to take him by the hand in greeting. It was a stunning and unprecedented change in protocol that Barquq was willing to meet Sulṭān-Aḥmad personally outside the city walls and touch him, rather than sending a welcoming delegation to bring him to a formal reception in which the sultan was physically isolated on a special seat. Thereafter Barquq rode with Sulṭān-Aḥmad into the city, arranged a banquet in Sulṭān-Aḥmad's honor and gave him elaborate presents. The two later chatted in the palace and went hunting together in Giza, after which Barquq married Sulṭān-Aḥmad's niece.[78] Unlike in the case of Muḥammad and Temürtaš, therefore, Barquq's welcome of Sulṭān-Aḥmad was consistent in its extravagant display of honors, and publicly signaled his total support for the Jalayirid. This support remained unfailing, for ultimately

**77.** For the details see Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, Chapter Four.

**78.** This was Tundī, daughter of Sulṭān-Aḥmad's brother Sulṭān-Ḥusayn; the marriage later ended in an apparently amicable divorce and Tundī's remarriage to one of her cousins, Šāh Walad b. Šāh Zādah b. Šayḫ Uvays. See Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, Chapter Six.

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Barquq reestablished Sulṭān-Aḥmad in Baghdad as a dependent of the Mamluk Sultanate, and continued thereafter to encourage and assist him at long-distance until his own death in 801/1399.

The third and clearest example of the way points of ceremonial etiquette signaled both status and the underlying relationships took place in early Ḏū al-Ḥijja 786/late January 1385, when a Mongol embassy arrived in Cairo.[79] At first Mamluk officials believed that the ambassadors were representatives of Toqtamiš (r. 780-797/1378-1395), Khan of the Golden Horde.[80] By this point, a relationship of great mutual respect and cordiality between the Mamluks and the Khans had lasted for well over a hundred years.[81] As a result, the sultan Barquq carefully conveyed his high regards for Toqtamiš by honoring his men with a kingly welcome. When Barquq's delegation went to meet the embassy outside Cairo, it was led by the vicegerent, Sudun, whose military rank was second only to the sultan. This was a great honor for the guests. The delegation then conducted the ambassadors to their lodgings in a "great square (*maydān*) overlooking the Nile," probably in a ceremonial procession.[82] Accommodations in the city, not in the citadel, were standard treatment for Golden Horde embassies, and indicated the confidence the Mamluk sultans felt towards their allies, since they allowed the ambassadors considerable freedom of movement. By contrast, messengers from enemies or from less important friends were usually housed inside the citadel, from which they could not emerge without passing through numerous, heavily-guarded gates. The stipends and food allotments for the Golden Horde ambassadors were also considerable, and indicated the honor with which they, and their sender, were viewed: a cow, a horse and 500 measures (*raṭl*-s) of [slaughtered] meat every day, in addition to a daily cash allowance of 1,000 silver coins (*dirham*-s).[83]

After settling in, the ambassadors went to a formal reception with the Mamluk sultan on 18 Ḏū al-Ḥijja/31 January, which took place in front of all major military and civilian officials. At this reception the ambassadors presented their gifts of falcons, cloth and military slaves, and their letter for the sultan was read aloud. During the reading, however, the Mamluks discovered that they had made a mistake, since the embassy was not from Toqtamiš, but rather from the ruler of the Crimea.[84] This caused some consternation, since not only was the Crimean Khan far less important than the sovereign of the Golden Horde, but this was the first contact between him and any of the sultans in Cairo, and thus reflected no tradition of relations at all. The immediate Mamluk ceremonial response clearly demonstrated that Toqtamiš greatly outranked the Crimean Khan, and that no prior relationship existed between the Crimea and Cairo: the ambassadors were immediately moved from their place in the square to lesser

**79.** For this episode see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, vol. 3, p. 524; Ibn Qāḍī Šuhba, *Ta'rīḫ*, vol. 3, p. 139; Ibn Ḥağar, *Inbā'*, vol. 1, p. 291.

**80.** For Toqtamiš see Spuler, *Goldene Horde*, p. 121-136.

**81.** See Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, chapters 2, 4, 5, 6.

**82.** Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, vol. 3, p. 524.

**83.** A [modern] *raṭl* is equal to 5 lbs. in Syria and 15.75 oz. in Egypt; see Levanoni, *Turning Point*, p. 202.

**84.** For the Crimea see Spuler, "Ḳirim," p. 136-143.


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and more secure housing in the citadel, and their food stipend was significantly trimmed. But Barquq refrained from insulting them entirely, for he kept the gifts they had brought, and gave them robes of honor before sending them home. Nevertheless, the quality of these robes almost certainly changed: if garments worthy of the Golden Horde had originally been selected for them, lesser robes must have been substituted after the discovery of their actual rank. It is also possible that Barquq then gave the nicer robes to Toqtamiš's actual envoys, who arrived shortly thereafter in early 787/late winter 1385, and who were honored with the fanfare appropriate to their station.[85]

Thus diplomatic conventions governed all official relationships within the Mamluk Sultanate, both those involving internal members of the administration, and those involving outsiders. The world of diplomacy was a complicated one, filled with a wide array of complex ceremonial details. Although to modern readers such details may suggest merely the emptiness of formalities, this is a reflection of our world, not theirs, for ceremonies were far from empty to the Mamluks. Rather, the protocol of diplomacy allowed every player in the Mamluk system, and every outsider interacting with the Mamluk world, to receive crucial messages about status and the relations of power that underlay these ceremonies. Chancellery officials were particularly important to this picture, since it was they who codified, reinforced and perpetuated many of these ceremonial details. Evidence of the important connections between protocol and politics, and of the integral role played by chancellery officials, appears clearly in the chancellery manuals themselves, which, when combined with the histories, form a vital source for information about the Sultanate and the larger Islamic world.

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85. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, vol. 3, p. 531; Ibn Qāḍī Šuhba, *Ta'rīḫ*, vol. 3, p. 155; Ibn Ḥağar, *Inbā'*, vol. 1, p. 301; Ibn Duqmāq, *Ğawhar*, p. 263.


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