

Varia bibliographica

DISCOVERY OF A HITHERTO UNKNOWN SECTION OF THE *KITĀB AL-MUQAFFĀ* BY AL-MAQRĪZĪ

In his *Notices sur quelques manuscrits arabes* (Leiden 1847–51), pp. 8–28, R. P. A. Dozy announced a bibliographical discovery of the highest importance. It appeared that in 1806 the Library of the University of Leiden had bought from the library of the late E. Scheidius (1742–94) three volumes of the *Kitāb al-Muqaffā*, a biographical dictionary by the famous Egyptian polygraph al-Maqrīzī (d. 845 AH/A.D. 1441–2), without knowing it, since Scheidius had written an incorrect title on the flyleaf (cf. *Bibliotheca Scheidiana* . . . (Leiden 1806), p. 89, No. 13). By comparison with facsimiles of the Paris MS. (B.N., Arab. 2144, another volume of *Kitāb al-Muqaffā*), which contains a correct title-page in an Oriental hand, and with the marginal notes in the Leiden MS. Or. 560, which contains a great number of shorter treatises by al-Maqrīzī, with autograph remarks, Dozy was able to prove that the three volumes bought from the Scheidius library in fact constituted the working copy of al-Maqrīzī himself. He had thereby discovered three autograph volumes of an important text by an important author, which appeared, moreover, to be a unique copy. Dozy also proved that part of the text of these three volumes (registered in the Library as Or. 1366) did not belong to the *Kitāb al-Muqaffā*, but to a text missing in Or. 560, which in turn proved to contain a portion of *Kitāb al-Muqaffā* missing in Or. 1366. Or. 560 is part of the legacy of L. Warner (d. 1665), which entered Leiden University Library between 1668 and 1674, so that, with the acquisition of the three volumes of *Kitāb al-Muqaffā*, manuscripts which had been separated for over a century were, by a stroke of good fortune, reunited. As early as 1807, however, one volume of this set, among other MSS. belonging to the Leiden Library, was in the house of Prof. S. F. J. Ravius (1765–1807), when the so-called powder-boat accident took place in Leiden, as a result of which a whole section of the town, in which, unfortunately, Ravius's house was situated, was blown up by a frightful explosion. Traces of this accident are to be seen on this volume, which was recovered from the ruins, to this day. Some leaves must have been lost then, including the page bearing the MS. number. In 1888 this somewhat damaged volume was registered once more in the library, now as Or. 3075, although it had already borne the No. Or. 1366, and was available to Dozy in 1847.

These three volumes of al-Maqrīzī's *Kitāb al-Muqaffā*, plus the Paris volume, do not contain the complete text of the work. One reason for this is that al-Maqrīzī did not live to complete his book. This probably made the book not attractive for copying by later generations, so that only the autograph volumes are known to exist. After having his book alphabetically arranged al-Maqrīzī left pages blank whenever he thought he might need space for biographies to come which were not yet available to him. Sometimes, however, he did not foresee this possibility and he was eventually obliged to glue inserts between the pages. For these inserts he used scrap paper which had already been used for calligraphic specimens by some copyist. The three Leiden volumes (plus the short fragment in Or. 560) and the Paris volume which is all that

appeared to be left of the *Kitāb al-Muqaffā*, contain the letters *kāf*, *lām*, *mīm* and part of the *alif* (Leiden) and part of the *ṭā*, *ẓā* and *ʿayn* (Paris). All in all they contain c. 1030 folios, which contain less than half of the alphabet, and, consequently, of the original work.

It is therefore a piece of almost incredible good luck that on 12 October 1978 the Library of the University of Leiden was able to purchase at an auction at Christie's in London, from an anonymous (Egyptian or Iraqi?) vendor, a section of this very same author's set of *Kitāb al-Muqaffā*, containing the letters *alif* (in part) to *khā*. All features of the volumes already in the Leiden University Library are present in this section too. This new part, registered in the library as Or. 14.533, consists of 514 folios (inserts included) of continuous text, with some seven lacunae of c. 17 folios in all. The leaves are not bound and the folios are joined or stitched in small sections of between about five and ten folios. Traces of binding are still visible on the backs of these sections. The relation of this newly acquired MS. to the Istanbul MS., Pertev Library No. 496, which allegedly contains the same part of the *Kitāb al-Muqaffā*, remains to be investigated.

This newly arrived set will be rebound, probably in several volumes, in order to make the text of this hitherto unknown part of *Kitāb al-Muqaffā* easily available for interested scholars. Many difficulties with respect to the restoration technique of the paper and the removal of the glue of the previous binding from the leaves still need to be solved, and the restoration work itself will take several years at least. Detailed indexes on all known volumes of the *Kitāb al-Muqaffā* are now being prepared by the present author, since the *editio princeps* of this important text is not to be expected in the foreseeable future.

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