THE AGE OF THE GALLAND MANUSCRIPT OF THE NIGHTS: NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE FOR DATING A MANUSCRIPT? [1]

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The importance of the age of the Galland manuscript of the Nights derives from its being the oldest manuscript extant of this text. There is no date of transcription in the manuscript. In an earlier study, the present writer postulated 1426 as a date post quem because of the mention of the coin *ashrafī* (first issued by al-Ashraf Barsbāy in 1426). This date post quem has been rejected by Muhsin Mahdi, the editor of the manuscript, in a recent publication in which he attempted to identify the *ashrafī* mentioned in the text with the gold coin issued by al-Ashraf Khalīl (1290–93). This article shows that his identification is untenable, and that the Galland manuscript, in all likelihood, was not copied earlier than 1450.

In a few years, the West is going to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the discovery of the Thousand and One Nights. In recent years, some such centenaries have given cause for a new evaluation of the celebrated event; sometimes there has been a call for a devaluation of the event—as was the case with the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America.

It cannot be said that the discovery of *Alf layla wa-layla* is to be considered parallel with the discovery of America, neither in its importance for the course of world history, nor in its consequences for the "victims" of the discovery. There is a parallel in so far as the treasures of this New World, the world of the Arabian Nights, since their discovery, have become the property also of the West—where these treasures, by the way, were more highly appreciated than in the East. But the parallel is not complete: the East was never deprived of these treasures. What might be worthy of blame in this discovery is that the Arabian Nights have contributed, especially by their widespread reception, more than any other work to the creation of that somewhat distorted image of the East which partly still persists in the West, and hampers a deeper understanding of the East and its very nature. But I

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[1] Slightly condensed version of a public lecture held September 12, 1995, in the Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Beirut, Lebanon.

would like to emphasize that this image, though distorted, replaced another, unfavorable, image of the East, marked by the fears of an aggressive Muslim Empire.[2]

It is not the aim of this paper to make the discovery of the Nights nor the man who discovered them for Europe, Antoine Galland, the subject of a reevaluation—or devaluation.

From the dedication of Galland's translation of the Nights and from his correspondence, the circumstances of the discovery of the Nights are relatively well known. In the spring of 1701, Galland had completed his translation of the *Adventures of Sindbad the Sailor.* Before the manuscript went to the press, he was informed by Syrian friends living in Paris, that these adventures of Sindbad the Sailor were part of a far larger Arabic collection ("recueil") named "Les mille et une nuits". He tried to get a copy of this collection— "il a fallu le faire venir de Syrie," and in the fall of 1701, he got with the aid of "un ami d'Alep, résident a Paris" three volumes of *Alf layla wa-layla.* The first volume of Galland's French translation came out in 1704, which was the beginning of a new phase in the eventful history of *Alf layla.*

Since their first appearance in Europe, the Nights have met with lively interest from a large public. In the latter part of the 18th century this interest generated something like a run on manuscripts of the Nights. The chief aim of this search for MSS, however, was to find a complete copy of the Nights; and when in the first years of the 19th century complete copies of the Nights had come into the hands of European travellers—most of them were amateurish orient-lovers, but some were qualified scholars—and when finally, in the 1830s the printed editions of the Nights appeared and it became clear that all these texts presented almost the same repertoire of stories, this chief aim seemed to be have been achieved. The Bulaq edition of 1835, which was widely circulated both in the Arab world and in Europe, and the Calcutta II edition of 1839–1842 (which is of the same recension), superseded almost completely all other texts and determined the general perception of the Arabian Nights. For more than half a century it was neither questioned nor contested that the text of the Bulaq and Calcutta II editions represented the true and authentic text. As a quite logical side-effect, incomplete copies, such as the Galland MS, were no longer given any attention. To be precise, it cannot be said that the Arabic text of the Nights,

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[2] As late as 1683, Qara Mustafa had besieged Vienna; the ultimate termination of Ottoman expansion was reflected in the treaties of Karlovac/Karlowitz (1699) and Požarevac/Passarowitz (1718).

of whatever recension or MS, had been the object of any serious philological research until the end of the nineteenth century. It was not before 1887 that Arabists made the Arabic text—or, more precisely, the various Arabic texts (in the plural) of the Nights the object of their studies. In this year, Herrman Zotenberg published an extensive study with the title "Notice sur quelques manuscrits des Mille et Une Nuits et la traduction de Galland," where he showed that the Bulaq and Calcutta II editions represented only one recension of the work and that other recensions of the Nights were attested by manuscript evidence much older than any evidence for what he called "la rédaction moderne d'Égypte," and what we usually call ZER, Zotenberg's Egyptian Recension.

Zotenberg's pioneering study not only introduced a pattern for understanding the differences and variations found in the MSS and printed editions of the Nights—variations in the repertoire of the stories, their order and in the wording of the texts—it also gave prominence to the very MS which Galland had purchased in 1701 from Syria.

After Galland's death (1715), the three volumes of this MS were given to the Bibliothèque du Roi, later to be called the Bibliothèque Nationale (de France), where the MS, now nos. 3609, 3610, 3611, as it seems, never was paid special attention until Zotenberg not only observed that the wording and narrative of this MS were far better than in most other versions, especially better than in the parallel stories in ZER, but also realized that it was the oldest MS of the Nights in the Bibliothèque Nationale and the oldest one at all known to him. In his judgment, which was based on paleographic arguments, the MS was transcribed in the second half of the fourteenth century. He published a page of the Galland MS in facsimile, and on the basis of the facsimile of this one page, Nöldeke wrote in his review of Zotenberg's book (*WZKM* 2 (1888): 170) that this date was by no means too early.

The Galland MS and other old MSS of the Nights, the importance of which had been established by Zotenberg, were then the object of the research of Duncan Macdonald. In the beginning of this century, Macdonald announced his project for publishing a critical edition of the Galland MS as the basis for all further research about the text of the Nights and its history. He never achieved his project. It was Muhsin Mahdi who finally in 1984 presented this critical edition of *The Thousand and One Nights: from the Earliest Known Sources,* but we are indebted to Macdonald for some substantial preparatory studies in this field, which were published between 1909 and 1924. His preparatory studies are highly valuable contributions to the "demystification" of the matter: he could demonstrate that the "Breslau

edition" was not based on a true oriental recension of the Nights—as its editor says on the title page—but was a compilation made by its editor Maximilian Habicht himself, a compilation which included, however, fragments of "authentic" recensions of the Nights; he could further demonstrate that the text of the Calcutta II print—which is said, on the title page, to be based on a MS brought from Egypt—is partly expanded by passages taken from the Calcutta I print, which is of the same recension as the Galland MS; and he was able to classify most of the MSS of the Nights.

A minor result of Macdonald's studies is of high relevance for this paper. He called into question the date of the Galland MS: "Local Cairene references in it indicate a date considerably younger than that assigned by Zotenberg" (1922, p. 307). In his article "The Earlier History of the Arabian Nights" (*JRAS* 1924, pp. 353–397), he repeated this statement: "We shall see, I think, that both of these estimates [of Zotenberg—second half of the fourteenth century—and of Nöldeke—still older] make the MS too old" (p. 382). But he did not assign any date to the MS; the most precise words are those found in his article "Alf Laila wa-Laila" in the supplement to *EI*[1] (1934) referring to William Popper's article "Data for Dating a Tale in the Nights" in *JRAS* 1926, pp. 1–14: "Professor Popper considers that the reference to the Naḳīb Barakūt puts the story [of the Christian broker in the Hunchback cycle] after 819 (1416). In addition to all this, time must be allowed for the stories to have become so popular that they were taken into a recension of the Nights" (21a). This statement, however, is made in a context where Macdonald is arguing against the supposition that the stories which constitute the corpus of the Galland MS formed the Nights recension already in Fatimid times. This is, maybe, the reason why later publications on the Nights completely disregarded Macdonald's doubts as to the age of this MS. Elisséeff (p. 56) and Tauer (p. 128) followed Zotenberg as to the date, without any argument in favor of this assignment or against Macdonald's choice of a later date.

Muhsin Mahdi's edition appeared in 1984. The Galland MS which is at the basis of this edition—since it is the oldest extant text—has been assigned a date of transcription in the fourteenth century.[3] The authority of Theodor Nöldeke which Muhsin Mahdi refers to, is of little weight in this connection.

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[3] "Hiya ghayru muʾarrakha, . . . wa-lākinna waraqahā wa-khaṭṭahā yadullu ʿalā annahā nusikhat fī ʾl-qarni ʾl-thāmini mina ʾl-hijrati (al-qarni ʾl-rābiʿi ʿashara mina ʾl-mīlādi)." I, p. 29. More detailed vol. II, pp. 239–240.

What he says about Macdonald[4] applies even more to Nöldeke, who is likely to have seen of the Galland MS no more than that facsimile page published by Zotenberg.

There is, however, a hidden clue in the MS itself. When working in the early 1980s on microfilms of the Galland MS and the Sabbagh MS for the study published by me and my wife in 1984, we discovered in the story told by the Jewish physician in the Hunchback-cycle a key for dating the MS—at least for defining the date post quem. We discovered a *coin.* The hero of this story, a young man from Mosul who travelled together with his paternal uncles to Damascus, relates (3610, fol. 43r–43v = p. 319, 17–21 of Muhsin Mahdi's edition):

Fa-nazalnā fī baᶜḍi ᵓl-khānāti wa-waqafū aᶜmāmī wa-abāᶜū biḍāᶜatī wa-matjarī, fa-kasaba ᵓl-dīnāru khamsatan, fa-fariḥtu bi-ᵓl-ribḥi. Wa-tarakūnī ᶜumūmī w-tawajjahū ilā Miṣra wa-qaᶜadtu baᶜdahum. Fa-lammā sāfarū, aqamtu anā wa-sakantu fī qāᶜatin kabīratin bi-rukhāmin wa-fisqīyatin wa-ṭabaqatin wa-khizānatin wa-māᵓin yajrī ᵓl-layla wa-l-nahāra, wa-tuᶜrafu bi-Qāᶜat Sūdūn ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān, fī kulli shahrin bi-ashrafīyayni.[5]

"We stayed in one of the caravansaries, and my uncles sold my goods at a profit of five dinars for each dinar, and I was delighted by this profit. Then they left me and went on to Egypt, while I stayed (in Damascus). After their departure, I moved to a large house, paved with marble and equipped with a fountain, a *ṭabaqa,* a *khizāna* and with water running night and day, known as Qāᶜat Sūdūn ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān, which I rented for two *ashrafīs* a month."

The word *ashrafī* in this text put us into the situation of an archeologist who has discovered a coin in an archeological layer. Coins found in an untouched layer of an archeological site or in a hoard are indisputable indicators of the date post quem for the origination of the layer or site or the hiding of the hoard in the ground, provided, of course, that the coins are not obliterated to such a degree that it is impossible to identify them. Coins mentioned in a text can serve the same purpose, provided that, on the basis of the name used for the coin, it is possible to identify an individual coinage. In Arabic texts, however, this is very rarely the case: coins are mentioned

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[4] "Ammā Macdonald, fa-lam yaqṭaᶜ fīhā raᵓyan wa-lam yakun qad faḥaṣa waraqa ᵓl-nuskhati faḥṣa khabīrin. . . . Wa-lā yaẓharu annahu raᵓāhā bi-ᶜaynihi aw faḥaṣahā bi-diqqatin." II, p. 239.

[5] Mahdi notes the presence of an anomalous second *alif* after the *bi-* in *bi-ashrafīyayni,* but retains it in his text. It could be even *bi-ashrafayni*, with the extra *alif* and only one *yāᵓ*.

mostly by their generic name, e.g., *dirham* or *dīnār.* But the half dirham (*niṣf dirham* or simply *niṣf*) minted by the Mamluk sultan al-Muʾayyad Sayf al-Dīn Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī (815–824/1412–1421) and the *dīnār* minted by al-Ashraf Sayf al-Dīn Barsbāy (825–841/1422–1437) met with such a success as to make the name of these coinages *muʾayyadī* and *ashrafī* synonymous for nearly a century with their respective generic names *niṣf* and *dīnār.* As for the *muʾayyadī,* to be precise, it seems that this was the case mainly[6]—or only—among European merchants and pilgrims, who throughout the fifteenth century and still in the sixteenth century used to call the half dirham *maydin* or *meidin.* The word *ashrafī,* on the other hand, was actually used, in the later fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, by the Arabs themselves, Egyptians as well as Syrians, as a synonym for dinar, especially when what was meant was the *dīnār* as a gold coin, not as a monetary unit. The word was also used for the *dīnārs* minted by the successors of al-Ashraf Barsbāy. European merchants and travellers, unless they called these *dīnārs* simply *ducat,* that is, by the name of its European counterpart, used to call this coin *serif, cerif* or *serifi,* in the plural *serifin, cerifin,* or the like.

The name of this coin gave us an indisputable terminus post quem for the transcription of the MS, since this new type of gold coin of the same weight as the Venetian ducat had been introduced by an edict of 15 Ṣafar 829 = 27 December 1425 as a measure to replace the ducat in commercial transactions in Egypt and between Europe and Egypt. The measure itself came into effect only in 831/1427–8, when the first installment of the ransom (the total amount of which was 200,000 ducats) for the Cypriot king James was paid. This provided the Mamluk sultan with bullion for issuing a sufficient number of coins. One has to add some years before it could again become common practice to specify prices, rental rates, and the like by a number of coins—no longer by a number of theoretical or fictive currency units. We thought that we had to add at least some ten or fifteen years before this practice and the name of the new coin would be mirrored in everyday language as exemplified by the usage of Arabic authors of the latter part of

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[6] Lane, *Manners and Customs,* Appendix B (p. 579 of the Everyman's Library edition) says that the smallest silver coin "faḍḍah" was called "nuṣṣ," and adds that it was also called "meyyedee." Johannes Wild, in whose few quotations of Arabic words the colloquial usage of the beginning of the seventeenth century is mirrored, speaks only about "nuss" (*Neue Reysbeschreibung eines Gefangenen Christen etc.,* Nürnberg, 1623, passim).

the century.[7] So we concluded that the Galland MS could not have been copied before 1426 and that it was copied, in all likelihood, in the second half of the fifteenth century. This conclusion was put forward in our booklet "Die Erzählungen aus 1001 Nacht" (Darmstadt, 1984, pp. 26–27) and repeated in a very condensed form in my article "Neglected Conclusions" (*JAL* 16 (1985): 85, n. 30). (This article is a slightly expanded English version of a paper I presented to the 23rd Deutscher Orientalistentag in Tübingen in the spring of 1983).

We overlooked at that time that the same line contains a further key for defining a date post quem: Qāᶜat Sūdūn ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān, the name of the mansion which the young man hired. There can be no doubt that what the author or redactor of the story has in view is the Dār Sūdūn Ibn ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān (variant: Bayt Sūdūn min ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān). This building is mentioned by Ibn Ṭūlūn in a note of 900 H. = 1494 A.D. as the residence of the Ḥanbalite *qāḍī* (I, p. 161, l. 12) and in notes of 922 and 923 H. = 1516 and 1517 A.D. as the quarters of the Ottoman sultan Selim (II, p. 35, l. 21 and II, p. 70, l. 20). In the last mentioned place, the building is said to be *al-maᶜrūfa qadīman bi-Dār Sūdūn* (without *Ibn* or *min*) *ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān wa-yawmaᵓidhin bi-Tanim mamlūk Sibāy,* "which formerly was known as the mansion of Sūdūn ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān and now as that of Tanim, the mamluk of Sibāy." Sūdūn min ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān had been *nāᵓib al-Sham* in the years 827–835/1424–1432; he fell into disgrace with the sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy, was removed and died in 841/1438 in Damietta. He was jailed according to Maqrīzī (*Sulūk,* IV, p. 1066f.) or simply exiled (Sakhāwī, *Ḍawᵓ,* II, p. 275f.). Sakhāwī points to his building activity during the years of his *niyāba* in Damascus.

I cannot see exactly what consequences dating the Galland MS in the second half of the fifteenth century would imply for the stemma of Muhsin Mahdi. As I understand his explanations, all development and ramification, all copying and loss of copies could have happened in the same way, even if the Galland MS was transcribed 100 years later than he supposed. Muhsin Mahdi, in any case, rejected our arguments for a date of transcription in the late fifteenth century—not openly, but in a more tacit, though unmistakable

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[7] Maqrīzī has devoted in his treaty *Shudhūr al-ᶜuqūd fī dhikr al-nuqūd,* completed in Ramaḍān 841 = March 1438, a long passage to the *dirham muᵓayyadī* (ed. al-Sayyid Muḥammad Baḥr al-ᶜUlūm, pp. 32–36) in which he appreciates the reform aspect of this minting. On the other hand, he does not mention at all the *ashrafī,* which fact makes it evident that, as late as February 1438, the importance of Sultan al-Ashraf's monetary reform was not obvious for him.

way. In the third part of his edition, *Introduction and Indexes,* which appeared in 1994, he published, as a kind of frontispiece, the photo of a dinar issued in the year 690/1291 by the Mamluk sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl.

The legend

Ashrafi Dinar (see Night 133)
Damascus 690 A.H./[A.D. 1291]
Put in circulation during the reign of al-Ashraf Khalil
B. N. Lavoix 793, Phot. Bibl. Nat. de Fr., Paris

suggests that this coin is the *ashrafī* mentioned in the text, and that we were wrong in identifying the *ashrafī* of the text with the type of coin inaugurated by al-Ashraf Barsbāy and issued until the end of the Mamluk state in 922/1517, when the Ottomans conquered Syria and Egypt. This calls for a response.

My response consists of two parts. In the first part, I am going to sum up the arguments for our identification of the "two *ashrafīs"* of the text with the gold coin of al-Ashraf Barsbāy and his successors. It can be demonstrated that the text passage quoted above (p. 54) fits very well into the usage of the later fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. In the second part, I will demonstrate why the "two *ashrafīs"* of the text cannot be identified with the "dinar" of al-Ashraf Khalīl.

First of all, we have to take a short digression into the monetary history of the Mamluk period. I quote Jere L. Bacharach:[8] "The traditional Muslim coin was the dinar with a canonical weight standard, the *mithqâl,* of 4.25 grams. With the advent of Saladin's rule in Egypt (566/1171) this traditional weight standard for individual dinars was dropped and stamped pieces of coined gold of varying weight were issued. This policy was continued under Saladin's descendants, the Ayyubids, then during the first period of Mamluk rule, the Baḥrî, and finally into the Circassian period. While the weight of individual pieces varied from under 5 to over 15 grams, almost all the issues had a very high degree of fineness." In the beginning of the fifteenth century, there were several attempts to introduce again a Muslim gold coin with a weight standard, but they failed, as is reported unanimously by the Arab historians, and the Venetian ducat remained the most common currency even in the Mamluk State. "The reassertion of a Muslim coin over its European counterpart on the Cairo, and by extension Mamluk, market took place during the sultanate of al-Ashraf Barsbây. His coin, the *ashrafî,*

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[8] "The Dinar versus the Ducat," *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 4 (1973): 84; cf. also the remainder of the article (pp. 77–96).

gave its name to almost all the gold coins issued by the succeeding Mamluk sultans. Even the Ottoman sultans used the name for their Egyptian gold coins."[9]

There may have been several motives for replacing the ducat by an Islamic gold coin; in any case, making transactions possible by count was a chief aim. In this, the Mamluk sultans were successful. A second aim was the creation of a reliable reference unit for values and prices. In this, they were only partly successful. Especially in Egypt, people continued for a long time to specify values in *riṭl* of *fulūs,* as Maqrīzī remarks. Prices specified in numbers of *ashrafīs* do not occur in texts relating *ḥawādith* before the middle of the fifteenth century. In texts relating *ḥawādith* from the second half of the century and the first quarter of the sixteenth century, prices or fares in *ashrafīs* are not unusual, but they occur less frequently than prices specified in *niṣf/anṣāf* or in *dirhams.* Partly, this can be explained by the nature of the merchandise or the service: if prices in general do not exceed fractions of the *ashrafī,* then it is more reasonable—for better comparison with the higher or lower prices mentioned elsewhere in the chronicle—to specify the prices in *anṣāf* or *darāhim.*

Examples of the common usage may be found in two Arabic works from the beginning of the sixteenth century: the *Badāyiᶜ al-zuhūr fī waqāyiᶜ al-duhūr* of the Cairene Ibn Iyās (1448–1524) and the *Mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān* of the Damascene chronicle-writer Ibn Ṭūlūn (1475–1546). Each author made the final redaction of his chronicle or diary after the Ottoman conquest of his own city, but in general I think that they reproduced their information about prices and the like from their sources or *muswaddāt* without any changes. The usage is also mirrored in the "Pilgrimage" of Arnold van Harff, a German nobleman from Cologne who travelled disguised as a merchant through Egypt and Syria in 1497 and visited St. Catherine monastery and the Holy Places in and around Jerusalem. He was in close connection with two Mamluk officers of German origin, and in particular the account of his stay in Cairo seems to be reliable, whereas the account of his voyage around the Red Sea and his visit to Mekka is no doubt a literary fiction.

Ibn Iyās, *Badāyiᶜ al-zuhūr,* p. 18; 858 H. = 1454 A.D.:

"In the month of Ṣafar (February 1454), the sultan issued a decree that Zayn al-Dīn al-Ustadār be exiled permanently to Jerusalem. When after his departure he had come to Sabīl Ibn Qāymāz, the sultan sent to him a person

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[9] Ibid., pp. 87–88.

in order to control him, but only 300 *dīnārs* and a little bit of silver was found with him. He had been denounced to the sultan for carrying (a considerable sum of) money with him. . . ."

The word *dīnār* in this text means gold coins. The common gold coin in 858 was already the *ashrafī,* but *dīnār*, as this passage demonstrates, was still the common word in combination with higher figures.

Ibn Iyās, *Badāyiᶜ al-zuhūr,* p. 244; 859 H. = 1455 A.D.:

"In this month (Muḥarram 859 = 22.12.1454–20.01.1455), the price of gold rose so that the *ashrafī* dinar reached an exchange rate of 370 *dirhams* (= trade *dirhams*)."

Ibn Iyās, *Badāyiᶜ al-zuhūr,* p. 52; 862 H. = 1458 A.D.:

"In the month of Rabīᶜ I (17.01.–15.02.1458), the exchange rates for gold and silver were made known by official announcement. The sultan had issued new silver coins. The rate for the gold dinar was set to 300 (trade dirhams) and the rate for the new silver (as follows): 25 good *niṣf ᶜadadī* ("intended to circulate by number") of fine silver for each *ashrafī.*"

This is nearly the same exchange rate mentioned by Harff 40 years later (p. 94; trans. p. 112): "by law a man must give each housewife daily three madines, which equal twenty-six to a ducat (*drij madijn, der doynt sees-indtwentzich eynen ducaeten*)."

Ibn Iyās, IV, p. 323; 919 H. = 1513 A.D.:

The sultan was afflicted by a serious eye decease, and as a sign of his repentance, he distributed alms to his soldiers:

"Monday the 15th of Jumādā I, the sultan distributed the pay and together with it a supplemental gift. He gave every mamluk 30 dinars, the disabled 20, the veterans 10. And he gave 5 dinars to the *mamālīk kitābīya* (i.e., those who already had a contract—*kitāba*—to be set free, but were at the service of their master until the complete amount stipulated for their liberation was paid), and to those of the orphans who were entitled to a pay of 1 *ashrafī*, he gave 2 *ashrafīs*, and to others whose pay was 1000 (dirhams?), he gave 10 dinars. . . ."

This text demonstrates the use of the word *ashrafī* side by side with the word *dīnār*. The higher amounts are specified in dinars, the book-keeping term, the smaller ones in *ashrafīs,* the name of which evokes the image of the coin itself in the mind of the reader. The reader, so to speak, is to visualize the sultan handing over the two gold coins to the orphans.

The same contrast between these two words is to be observed in the work of Ibn Ṭūlūn (I, p. 142, ll. 8–13):

"A person had bought a house, the *thāniyāt* of which required an embellishment.[10] So, he called for construction workers, made a contract with them, gave them the key and went to his work. When they were working and digging in the place, a coconut shell fell upon them from the place where they were digging. In this coconut there were 410 *dīnārs*, and they started quarreling over them. The *nāʾib* heard about this, and he took the gold and gave them ten *ashrafīs*."

The confiscated amount is specified by the more abstract book-keeping term *dīnār,* the reward for the finders by the tangible name of the coin.

On the other hand, there are numerous cases where *ashrafī* is used simply for specifying prices, fares or taxes.

Some evidence for prices

- 3 *irdabb* wheat for 1 *ashrafī* in Ramaḍān 896 = July 1491 (Ibn Iyās, III, p. 284)
- 1 *riṭl kumathrā* ("pears" ?) for 2 *ashrafīs* during a pestilence in Cairo in Jumādā II 897 = April 1492 (Ibn Iyās, III, p. 287)
- 1 *irdabb* wheat for 3 *ashrafīs* in Rabīᶜ I 903 = November 1497 (Ibn Iyās, III, p. 382)
- one *ashrafī* for 30 pieces of coconut reported as a very cheap price in Mekka from Dhū ʾl-Ḥijja 895 = October 1490 by Ibn Ṭūlūn (I, p. 135)

Evidence for fares

A very interesting passage is Ibn Ṭūlūn, I, p. 129, ll. 14–22 (895 H. = 1490 A.D.):

"Saturday the 18th of Shawwāl = 04.09.1490, the pilgrims set out for Mekka. (Silver) dirhams had become very scarce, unlike the *ashrafīs* and copper coins, which were mostly (of the type called) *qarābīṣ,*[11] but prices were low. A very strange thing happened. ᶜAyyāsha, the sister in law of Jaᶜfar al-Miṣrī, of the relationship of the *ḥājib al-kabīr,* had made a contract with a *mukārī* for travelling in a *shiqqa* (one half, or side, of a camel-litter) at a fare of fifty *ashrafīs,* with her daughter on the other side. She got in, but when she arrived at Qubbat Yilbugha, she came down with a fever and said, "I'll return." A woman said to her, "I'll get in instead of you; I am going to

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[10] I do not know the meaning of the architectural term *thāniyāt.* Belot has *thāniya* "poutrelle."

[11] Ibn Ṭūlūn (I, p. 286) relates the *ibṭāl al-qarābīṣ al-nuḥās min al-fulūs,* the proclamation of discontinuing these copper coins in Shaᶜbān 910 = January 1505. But I do not know exactly what kind of *fils* this is.

write an obligation to pay the fifty *ashrafīs* on my return from the Hijaz." She did so, and ᶜAyyāsha returned to her room (*ṭabaqa,* "a small room on the top floor"), looked out of her window, fell down (to the ground) and broke her neck."

I would like to call attention to the word *ṭabaqa.* It occurs in the characterization of the Qāᶜat Sūdūn which the young man in our tale had rented. It is obvious that a *ṭabaqa* is an element in the architecture of a wealthy house.

The fifty *ashrafīs* are to be seen, I think, as the fare for first-class travelling. Arnold von Harff, the young German traveller, paid in 1497 a fare of two *ashrafīs* for a journey in a camel-litter from Cairo to the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai. In his "Pilgrimage," he reproduces the form of a contract with a *mukārī* (I give it in the English translation of Malcolm Letts, p. 134):

"I N. Mokari will carry N., this Frank (so they call us who come from our countries) from here in Cairo to the monastery lying below Mt. Sinai on a good camel, on which he shall sit on one side in a wooden box covered with a thick pelt and carrying on the other side his provisions and the camel's food. I shall carry also for him two udders, namely goat-skins, full of water for him, myself and the camel. In addition I will assist him to get on and off the camel, and will stay by him by day and night and attend his welfare. This Frank N. is to give me two seraphin, namely two ducats, one at Cairo and the other when we reach the monastery below Mt. Sinai."

The fare for the journey from Cairo to Jerusalem was according to Harff six ducats (*vj ducaeten*).

Taxes specified in *ashrafīs* are mentioned specially in the last years of Mamluk rule and at the beginning of Ottoman rule. Ibn Iyās (V, pp. 54–55; Jumādā II 922 = July 1516) may suffice as an illustration of the attempts of Qānsūh al-Ghawrī to mobilize the last economic resources of Egypt in order to cover the pay of his soldiers and the costs of his military operations.

I would also like to call attention to a passage from the obituary note of Qānsūh al-Ghawrī, who died in Ramaḍān 922 = October 1516 (Ibn Iyās, V, p. 89).

Ibn Iyās enumerates the *masāwī,* the bad sides of the late sultan: his monetary policy was the most disastrous ever; his gold and silver coins were falsified, alloyed with copper, and debased. He imposed on the market an extra tax of 2.700 *dīnārs* per month—which led to higher prices. "And he imposed further a considerable sum per month on the mint, as a result of which they openly (*jahāran*) added copper and lead to the gold and silver. When a gold *ashrafī* was refined, then the resulting fine gold was worth only

12 *niṣf* [instead of 25 silver *niṣf* or 50–55 contemporary debased *niṣf?*]. The sultan had handed over (*sallama*) the mint to a person named Jamāl al-Dīn, and this man acted fraudulently with the property of the people. He ruined the currency, he withdrew the gold coins of the preceding sultans and issued new coins, so that no longer a dinar or a dirham of anyone of them was to be seen . . . (l. 16 ff.)."

The lamentations of Ibn Iyās over the debasement of the *ashrafīs* struck under this Jamāl al-Dīn seem to be exaggerated: the exchange rates for the *ashrafī* proclaimed in Damascus Tuesday 23 Rajab 923 = 11 August 1517, after the Ottoman conquest when there was no longer any need to apply the official rates of the Mamluk sultans, were sixty (*niṣf*) for *ḍarb Qānsūh al-Ghawrī* and fifty-six for *ḍarb Jamāl al-Dīn* (Ibn Ṭūlūn, II, p. 65). The rates proclaimed in Cairo in Dhū ʾl-Qaʿda 926 = October 1520 were 50 *niṣf* for *al-ashrafī al-dhahab al-ʿuthmānī wa-l-ghawrī* and 42 *niṣf* for *al-ashrafī alladhī huwa ḍarb Jamāl al-Dīn* (Ibn Iyās, V, p. 356).

In the historical texts, the pay and the gratification of the mamluks are often specified in *ashrafīs.* From some passages in Ibn Iyās, it becomes evident that at least during the rule of Qānsūh al-Ghawrī, the official exchange rates were applied even to the pay of the soldiers: they got instead of gold the official equivalent in silver or copper and lost in this way 20 to 25 percent. Harff, however, reports from 1497 that the mamluks who participated in the campaign against Āqbardī al-Dawādār had received "ander halff hundert ceraphin, das sijnt ducaeten, zu rustgelde ind darzoe eyme yecklichen des maentz twelff seraphen ind dat allet wael betzaelt" (p. 156, l. 26), "a hundred and fifty seraphin for equipment, and in addition each month twelve seraphin well and truly paid" (trans., p. 182).

These figures fit well with the information of Ibn Ṭūlūn (II, p. 20; Jumādā I 922 = June 1516) that the *nāʾib* of Damascus intended to pay his mamluks a *jāmakīya* of 50 *ashrafīs,* that is, 80 *ashrafīs* less than the mamluks of the sultan had received for their participation in the campaign against the Ottomans, which fact led to a revolt.

In the passage of the Nights quoted above (p. 54), the words *bi-ashrafīyayn* presuppose that *ashrafī* is a kind of currency unit. That it is a coin cannot be demonstrated from the text.

The dinar of Barsbāy, as was shown above, had been introduced with the intention of creating an Islamic gold coin which could, like the ducat, circulate by number, and no longer, as had been necessary in the case of the earlier coin-shaped ingots, by weight. And that is just what makes the coin a currency unit. This coin was called *ashrafī.*

From the historical texts, we know that the *ashrafī* was a gold coin with which a new weight standard was introduced (3.41 gr.). That led finally to a new definition of the unit dinar. Formerly, 1 dinar had been equal to 1 *mithqāl* (4.25 gr.) of gold. Now, 1 dinar was equal to 1 *ashrafī.* The words *ashrafī* and *dīnār* occur side by side in the texts, as in the passage quoted above, and they seem to have been largely interchangeable. So it could happen that people, by inadvertence, replaced the word *dīnār* by the word *ashrafī,* even when speaking of times before the introduction of the coin *ashrafī*. This happens with Ibn Iyās, who "speaking of the price of wheat in 803 A.H. anachronistically says it reached 4 Ashrafis!"[12]

Thus, I think we have all reason to accept the identification of *ashrafīyayn* in the text of the Nights with the coin/currency unit *ashrafī* of the later fifteenth century.

As regards the dinar of al-Ashraf Khalīl, there are no reports that this sultan who ruled for only 3 years and 57 days (689–693/1290–1293) made any attempt at a monetary reform, so that a new coin would have been nicknamed after him. On the contrary, his dinars display the same absence of a weight standard which was usual in his century and the following. The weight of the coin shown in the frontispiece of Muhsin Mahdi's third volume is 7.51 gr. (Balog, p. 122, no. 148). The weight of al-Ashraf Khalīl's other gold dinars listed by Balog are 4.60, 6.42, 6.80, 7.10, and 8.41. The weight of one specimen is not specified. Thus, the dinars of al-Ashraf Khalīl, as those of all Mamluk sultans until al-Ashraf Barsbāy, are not coins (I quote Balog, p. 40) "in the strict sense of the word, but only ingots (in the shape of coins), which could not have circulated by count, but had to be weighed." Thus the dual in the Nights passage (which implies that these *ashrafīyayn* circulated by count) would make no sense with reference to "coins" of al-Ashraf Khalīl.

There is no argument at all to identify the *ashrafī* of the Nights text with any other *ashrafī* than the gold coin issued by al-Ashraf Barsbāy and his successors. Consequently, there is no argument at all to date the Galland MS of the Nights earlier than ca. 1450 A.D.

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[12] Popper, *Egypt and Syria under the Circassian Sultans,* p. 50.

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