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MANUSCRIPTS ATTRIBUTED TO YĀQŪT AL-MUSTA'ŠİMĪ  
(D. 698/1298) IN OTTOMAN COLLECTIONS.  
THOUGHTS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF YĀQŪT'S LEGACY  
IN THE OTTOMAN CALLIGRAPHIC TRADITION

Nourane BEN AZZOUNA

The history of Islamic calligraphy is marked by a number of founder figures who are credited with key innovations and inventions. One of the most important among them, as far as the question of legacy is concerned, is Yāqūt b. 'Abd Allah al-Musta'šimī, a slave of the last Abbasid caliph al-Musta'šim Billah (640–56/1247–58) who was raised in the caliphal palace in Baghdad and trained in the art of calligraphy by the most skilled masters of the mid-13th century. Although largely ignored by the sources of his lifetime, Yāqūt al-Musta'šimī is credited by most later accounts of the history of calligraphy with the canonisation of the so-called '*aklām-i sitte*', *naskh*, *thulth*, *muḥaqqaq*, *rayḥān*, *riqā* and *tawqīf*, the six classical styles of calligraphy in Arabic script which mostly flourished at the Ottoman court from the period of Şeyh Hamdullah (d. 926/1520) onwards.<sup>1</sup> Yāqūt al-Musta'šimī is thus particularly important for the Ottoman calligraphic tradition as expressed through the classical sources, i.e. the historical texts<sup>2</sup> and the *icazetnames*,<sup>3</sup> but also through the manuscript collections that reflect and certainly also influence the history of calligraphy: no fewer than sixty manuscripts and numerous calligraphic pieces bearing Yāqūt's signature are preserved in Istanbul libraries, a figure unrivalled by any other medieval calligrapher and still a very large

- 1 The information about Yāqūt and his role in the history of calligraphy is scattered in a variety of sources and studies from the beginning of the 14th century onwards; it will be discussed in my Ph.D. dissertation 'La production de manuscrits en Iraq et en Iran occidental à l'époque des dynasties mongoles (ilkhanide et djalayiride, 656–814 / 1258–141)', (forthcoming). The most recent studies about Yāqūt are S.S. BLAIR, *Islamic Calligraphy*, Edinburgh, 2006, pp. 242 ff. and 'Yāqūt and his followers', *Manuscripta Orientalia*, IX–iii, 2003, pp. 39–47.
- 2 A review of the main Ottoman and modern Turkish literature on the history of calligraphy is available in M. SERİN, *Hat sanatı ve meşhur hattatlar*, İstanbul, 1999.
- 3 N.M. MANŞÜR, *Al-Ijāza fī fann al-khatt al-'arabī*, Amman, 1421/2000.