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Composition and Worldview of some *Bourgeois* and *Petit-Bourgeois* Mamluk *Adab*-Encyclopedias

The economic and cultural rise of parts of the *‘āmmah*¹ due to the particular economic and infrastructural conditions of the Mamluk era brought with it the emergence of new intermediate levels of literature that were situated between the literature of the elite and that of the ignorant and unlettered populace; between the Arabic *koiné* (*al-‘arabīyah al-fuṣḥā*) and the local dialects (*‘āmmīyahs*); and between written and oral composition, performance, and transmission. The following article proposes to analyze the composition of three Mamluk *adab*-encyclopedias and compendia and their treatment of poverty and wealth in light of the social milieus of their authors and audiences.

The Rise of a New Class

When the Mamluks took power between 1250 and 1260 in the former Ayyubid lands of Egypt and Syria, the Mongol invasions and the assassination of the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad as well as the ongoing Crusader presence in Palestine all brought about a shift in the eastern Islamic world's center to Mamluk Egypt, which became a highly effective bulwark of Arab-Islamic rule and culture. The

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¹ The terms *‘āmmah* and *khāṣṣah* are used in Mamluk sources written mostly by eminent *‘ulamā*, who thereby expressed their normative perception of social order. In this perception *‘āmmah* refers to the immense majority of the population that was not part of the military and civil elite. On the other hand, Jonathan Berkey, referring to the question as to whether a distinct Mamluk popular culture existed, argues that “in the Islamic Middle East [the] distinction [between “high” and “popular” culture] is even harder to draw, since the lines separating one social group from another were, in general, more porous than they were in medieval Europe” (Jonathan Berkey, “Popular Culture under the Mamluks: A Historiographical Survey,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 9, no. 2 [2005], 135. See also: Thomas Herzog, “Mamluk [Popular] Culture,” in *Ubi Sumus? Quo Vademus? Mamluk Studies, State of the Art*, ed. Stephan Conermann [Göttingen, 2012], 131–58). Many of the individuals I will refer to in this contribution were craftsmen; the “parts of the *‘āmmah*” intended here comprise what one might somehow anachronistically term “middle-class,” “bourgeoisie,” and “petite bourgeoisie,” and do not include the, in economic and cultural terms, “lowest” classes of the *‘āmmah*.



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Mamluk Empire and especially Cairo had a flourishing urban culture with a developed economy and educational system which benefited during large spans of Mamluk rule from the special socio-economic conditions appertaining to the ancient military slaves' reign. Protected from the "barbarism of the invaders,"² i.e., Mongols and Crusaders, Mamluk Egypt and Syria would indeed be the site of an extraordinary cultural flowering from the late thirteenth to the late fifteenth century—a flowering which produced a last great synthesis of Arab and Islamic culture before the onset of the modern era.

The Mamluk Empire's economic strength, at least over large spans of its existence, along with the intense building activity of Mamluk sultans and amirs, not only enriched traditionally wealthy and influential families but allowed other groups to rise in Mamluk society. Indeed, one of the more important social phenomena occurring under Mamluk rule was the accession of craftsmen to a degree of wealth, power, and education. As Doris Behrens-Abouseif has shown for the Circassian period of Mamluk rule,³ such people as carpenters, stone-cutters, masons, and coppersmiths were not only highly respected and well-paid⁴ but rose to very high positions. The first Circassian Sultan al-Ẓāhir Barqūq deigned not once but twice to marry into the family of his chief architect, "*al-mu'allim*" Aḥmad al-Ṭulūnī. In his turn, al-Ṭulūnī, who already occupied the post of *shādd al-ʿamāʾir*, or supervisor of the royal constructions, was appointed an amir of ten and began to dress as a Mamluk; and his descendants would later shun their ancestor's "blue-collar" profession and become scholars and bureaucrats. "*Al-mu'allim*" Aḥmad al-Ṭulūnī would seem to have been no exceptional case. Ibn Taghribirdī (812–74/1409 or 10–70) and Ibn Iyās (852–ca. 930/1448–1524) reported a number of similar upstart craftsmen, and Ibn Taghribirdī in particular deplored the fact that posts originally reserved for Mamluks were increasingly occupied by non-Mamluks—by bureaucrats or even craftsmen. Ibn Taghribirdī and Ibn Iyās did nothing to conceal their disdain toward the "riffraff" (*awbāsh wa-aḥdāth*)⁵ in their reports that a butcher became vizier⁶ or that a market-merchant,⁷ the owner of a

² Jean-Claude Garcin, "Le Proche-Orient à l'époque mamelouke," in *Etats, sociétés et cultures du monde musulman médiéval*, vol. 1, *L'évolution politique et sociale*, ed. idem (Paris, 1995), 343.

³ Doris Abouseif, "Craftsmen and Upstarts," in *Towards a Cultural History of the Mamluk Era*, ed. Mahmoud Haddad et al. (Beirut, 2010), 67–75. See also: Irmeli Perho, "Climbing the Ladder: Social Mobility in the Mamluk Period," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 15 (2011): 19–35.

⁴ Ibid., 73–74.

⁵ Ibid., 69.

⁶ Abū al-Maḥāsin Yūsuf Ibn Taghribirdī, *Extracts from Abū 'l-Maḥāsin ibn Taghrī Birdī's Chronicle Entitled Hawādhith ad-duḥūr fī madā 'l-ayyām wash-shuhūr*, ed. W. Popper (Berkeley, 1930–42), 3:512–13, 4:771, 780ff. See Abouseif, "Craftsmen and Upstarts," 69.

⁷ Abū al-Maḥāsin Yūsuf Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Cairo, 1963–71), 15:388, 397. See Abouseif, "Craftsmen and Upstarts," 69.



sweetmeat shop and son of a carpenter,⁸ as well as a fur tailor⁹ all rose to the post of supervisor of pious endowments (*nāzir al-awqāf*), or that a coppersmith became secretary of the public treasury (*wakīl bayt al-māl*).¹⁰ All this proves that these craftsmen and merchants of the fifteenth century had at least become wealthy enough to be able to buy their positions, which was a widespread practice under the Circassian Mamluks. But it seems to me that these historians were not only disconcerted by the fact that corruption permitted the ascent of formerly ostracized commoners (*ʿawāmm*) to high-ranking positions but that these parvenus blurred formerly clear-cut cultural divisions. Maybe it was for this reason that Ibn Taghribirdī devoted several pages in his chronicle to, and reserved all his contempt for, one of his contemporaries, the coppersmith and *wakīl bayt al-māl* Abū al-Khayr al-Naḥḥās (d. 863/1459). What seems to have most annoyed him was the fact that even though Abū al-Khayr occupied one of the highest posts in the state hierarchy, he still looked and behaved (in his eyes) like a commoner, lacked the knowledge of a respectable *ʿālim*, and displayed his ignorance through his recitation of the Quran like a popular performer rather than as a professional reader.¹¹ Following Ibn Iyās' assessment of him, Abu al-Khayr adopted the conduct deemed appropriate for a scholar (*takhallaqa bi-akhlāq al-fuqahā*)¹² and inscribed his name in the mausoleum he built for himself as Abū al-Khayr Muḥammad al-Ṣūfī al-Shāfiʿī, obviously trying to create the image of a Shāfiʿī scholar and Sufi. As complete fakery on Abu al-Khayr's part seems unlikely, Behrens-Abouseif concludes that Abū al-Khayr did in all likelihood acquire some basic madrasah knowledge at some point in his career.

Ibn Taghribirdī's critique of social upstarts blurring formerly clear-cut cultural divisions finds a remarkable parallel in the complaint over half-educated, so-called scholars populating the madrasahs, a lament echoed by a number of important authors since the end of the Ayyubid period. The famous Maliki jurist Ibn al-Ḥājj (d. in Cairo 737/1336) fretted that "the Muslims have confused the scholars with the vulgar (*al-ʿāmmī*) without being able to distinguish between them" and that for some of the so-called scholars of his day, "quality, length, and lavish cut

⁸ Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr fī Waqāʾiʿ al-Duhūr*, ed. M. Muṣṭafā (Wiesbaden-Cairo, 1961–75), 4:44ff. See Abouseif, "Craftsmen and Upstarts," 72.

⁹ Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, 3:192, 209, 212, 382, 446. See Abouseif, "Craftsmen and Upstarts," 72.

¹⁰ See below the case of Abū al-Khayr al-Naḥḥās.

¹¹ Ibn Taghribirdī, *Ḥawādith*, 1:35, 49, 54, 68, 76–77, 80–81, 84; 2:329, 392; 3:408, 410–23, 658. *Nujūm*, 15:375–76, 382, 395–401, 418–22, 429, 441; 16:131, 132, 133, 210–11. See Abouseif, "Craftsmen and Upstarts," 69–71.

¹² Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, 3:192, 209, 212, 382, 446. See Abouseif, "Craftsmen and Upstarts," 69–71.



of their clothes [were] the equivalent of science.”¹³ He further complained that most of those scholars were hypocrites whose way of life hardly corresponded to their teachings in the madrasah¹⁴ and that most of them were more interested in business than in science: “Today the scholars swarm out when the sun rises so as to follow worldly purposes (*fī asbāb al-dunyā*) and to be mostly entirely lost in them. Only rarely do they leave such to come to the mosques and teach.”¹⁵ Some thirty years later Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī used roughly the same language to bemoan the worldly motives of many scholars¹⁶ and to criticize the fact that some teachers in the madrasahs either only knew how to recite two or three lines of a book without being able to interpret them, or that they did in fact know more but lazily refrained from teaching what they knew: “But the worst ill is the teacher who only knows two or three lines of a book by heart, who sits down, recites them, and then rises to go away. If he is incapable of doing more than this then he is not suited for teaching and it is not right that he take wages for this. For in reality he has failed his teaching post and his salary has not been honestly earned.”¹⁷ What is interesting is the reason al-Subkī gives for criticizing these teachers: “This only opens the way for the commoners (*al-ʿawāmm*) to desire these posts; for few are the commoners who do not know two or three lines by heart. If ever the scholars would shield science and if the teaching scholar would give teaching what it deserves...[then] commoners, beginners, and those in the middle stages of science who are present [at their teaching] would understand for themselves that they are incapable of producing something similar and would know that according to custom and law teachers do not have to be other than this. They would also likely not covet these posts themselves and the commoners (*al-ʿawāmm*) would not desire to occupy the posts of the scholars.”¹⁸ Just as Ibn Taghrībirdī and Ibn Iyās complained of commoners achieving high rank in the Mamluk state administration, Ibn al-Ḥājj and Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī deplore the fact that commoners have risen to

¹³ Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Al-Madkhal (ilā Tanmiyat al-Aʿmāl bi-Taḥsīn al-Niyāt wa-al-Tanbīh ʿalā baʿd al-Bidaʿ wa-al-ʿAwāʿid allatī Intaḥalat wa-Bayān Shanāʿatihā)* (Cairo, 1348/1929), 1:155. See for the quotations from Ibn al-Ḥājj and al-Subkī (below): Stefan Leder, “Postklassisch und vormodern: Beobachtungen zum Kulturwandel in der Mamlukenzeit,” in *Die Mamluken: Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur: Zum Gedenken an Ulrich Haarmann (1942–1999)*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Anja Pistor-Hatam (Schenefeld, 2003), 301–2.

¹⁴ Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Al-Madkhal*, 1:155.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁶ Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Muʿīd al-Niʿam wa-Mubīd al-Niqam: The Restorer of Favours and the Restrainer of Chastisements*, ed. D. W. Myhrman (London, 1908), 96; German translation by O. Rescher, *Über die moralischen Pflichten der verschiedenen islamischen Bevölkerungsklassen* (Constantinople, 1925), 59–60.

¹⁷ Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Muʿīd*, 153. See also Leder, “Postklassisch,” 303.

¹⁸ Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Muʿīd*, 153.



teaching positions in the madrasahs; and like their historian colleagues, it might well have been the blurring of formerly clear-cut cultural boundaries that most annoyed them. In Mamluk times the madrasahs were indeed much more than specialized teaching institutions for an elite body of students—they had become places of teaching and piety for the neighborhood at large.¹⁹ Commoners increasingly audited the edifying preachments and lectures on the Quran and, most of all, those sessions entailing transmission of hadith.²⁰ Although there were sporadic attempts to prevent common people (*al-‘āmmah*) from attending lessons in the madrasahs,²¹ this never became a widespread practice. On the contrary, the influx of commoners apparently led to the creation of intermediate teaching positions in the madrasahs. In Mamluk madrasahs religious instruction was provided not only by (more or less) sophisticated scholars but there were also present simple *ḥāfiẓes*—those who had memorized the Quran and taught it to the people;²² those occupying the position of *wazīfat al-taktīb*, who taught writing to those with a desire to learn it; and also a special group of teachers, the *qāri’ al-kursīs*, which Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī describes in the chapter immediately following that on the *qāṣṣ*, the popular storyteller, in his *Mu‘īd al-Niqam* (The Restorer of favors).²³ In this chapter the *qāri’ al-kursīs* are described as sitting on a chair in a madrasah, a mosque, or a Sufi convent and teaching not by heart as did the storytellers in the streets but from books, and their public was mostly commoners and not the officially enrolled students of the madrasahs. Al-Subkī states that the *qāri’ al-kursī* should refrain from teaching those books too difficult to understand for the commoners; instead, they should limit themselves to books such as al-Ghazzālī’s *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* or al-Nawawī’s *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn*, which would indicate that at least some of them regularly attempted to teach more difficult subject matter. It is not quite clear to what degree all these basic teachers might have been able to rise to higher positions where they might have become part of that notorious coterie

¹⁹ See Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, 1992), 182ff.

²⁰ Stefan Leder, Muḥammad Yāsīn al-Sawwās, and Ma’mūn al-Ṣāgharjī, *Mu‘jam al-Samā’āt al-Dimashqīyah al-Muntakhabah min al-Sanat 550 ilā 750 H: Les certificats d’audition à Damas 550–750 h./1155 à 1349* (Damascus, 1996), attests to broad popular participation in the transmission of hadith outside the madrasahs in Damascus during the period 550–750/1155–1349.

²¹ Berkey, *Transmission*, 202, cites a passage from Ibn al-Ḥājj’s *Madkhal* in which he states that, “It is desirable [that the scholar] in a *madrasa*, as has been described in a mosque, be humble and approachable to any student or any other who attends him, and that he forbid no one from among the common people [*‘āmmat al-nās*] to approach him, because if religious knowledge is forbidden to the common people [*al-‘amma*], the elite [*al-khāṣṣa*, i.e. the ‘*ulamā*’] will not benefit from it either.”

²² Berkey, *Transmission*, 203.

²³ Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Mu‘īd*, chs. 62 and 63, 162–63. See also Berkey, *Transmission*, 205ff



which “knew to recite two or three lines of a book without being able to interpret them.” At any rate, these minor teaching positions afforded basic instruction to large parts of the Muslim population but offered those “half-instructed”—which many high scholars continuously criticized—the possibility of earning their living at least partly within the educational system.

It would therefore seem obvious that the clear-cut dichotomy of an instructed and wealthy *khāṣṣah* and an ignorant and poor *‘āmmah* (which might have been more of a discourse in the sources than a social reality) in the Mamluk era must be replaced by a much more nuanced picture of society—a society in which a percentage of the commoners could indeed climb the social ladder and become more or less wealthy and educated persons.

Given the rise of the formerly excluded popular classes to a degree of wealth, it is hardly astonishing that in the historiography of the Mamluk era we notice an increased interest in daily events, in the life and culture of common people, and even in those marginal individuals among them, namely the weak and the poor.²⁴ We might see this as a sign that the increased exchange with the commoners in educational institutions and endowments and in Sufi orders caused the elite to gradually become aware of the importance of the commoners.

The economic rise of parts of the *‘āmmah* not only implied their entry into the realms of institutional learning and teaching but the emergence of new intermediate levels of literature that were situated between the literature of the elite and that of the utterly ignorant and unlettered populace, between the Arabic *koiné* (*al-‘arabīyah al-fuṣṣḥā*) and the local dialects (*‘āmmīyahs*), between written and oral composition, performance and transmission. As early as the twelfth century we find testimony to the existence of lengthy heroic narratives that were destined for a broad public and which were probably recited by the popular *quṣṣāṣ* in the streets.²⁵ In the fourteenth century these narratives were already known as *ṣīrah*, pl. *siyar*, and covered a large thematic range. The *siyar* narratives were composed in a synthesis of *fuṣṣḥā* and *‘āmmīyah* and were cyclically structured in episodes that were intended to be recited periodically, for instance every Friday or every evening at a certain time. They made use of material that was to be found in the canon of traditional elite scholarship and combined it with more popular and entertaining forms of expression. It was through this fusion that the *siyar* can be seen as a partial appropriation of “high” culture by those intermediate levels of

²⁴ See Axel Havemann, “The Chronicle of Ibn Iyās as a Source for Social and Cultural History from Below,” in *Towards a Cultural History of the Mamluk Era*, ed. Haddad et al., 87–98.

²⁵ Narratives of ‘Antar and of Dhāt al-Himmah had already been recited during the twelfth century, although it is not clear whether these narratives already showed the full-fledged form of the popular *siyar* in which we know them from manuscripts dating from the fifteenth century on.



Mamluk society of which the authors, reciters, and auditors of these narratives most certainly were a part. For these intermediate “classes” of Mamluk society the heroic *siyar* narratives served not only as night-time entertainment. By virtue of their thematic range they also represented a synthesis of content with regard to Islamic and Islamized cultures; they provided a kind of survey of almost all of Islamic and pre-Islamic culture.²⁶ Interestingly enough, this appropriation of certain parts of the “high” culture was not a one-way street. As seen in the example of the *Sīrat al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars*, a narrative which had its formative period in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries in Mamluk Egypt and Syria,²⁷ not only did the authors of the popular *sīrah* borrow from learned biographical and historiographical literature but Mamluk historiographers most certainly borrowed from that popular heroic narrative.²⁸ Despite condemnations of the content of popular storytelling by prominent ‘*ulamā*’, in the Ayyubid and especially the Mamluk period there was increased interest on the part of people of high social standing as well as learned ‘*ulamā*’ in the narratives that the popular storytellers (*quṣṣās*) recited.²⁹

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, al-Maqrīzī (766–845/1364–1442) reported that evenings on Cairo’s most-frequented thoroughfare, the Khuṭṭ Bayna al-Qaṣrāyn, found groups reciting the *siyar* and *akhbār* and providing other kinds of entertainment: “When the days of the Fatimids were coming to an end...this place turned into a bazaar...a promenade where in the evening the nobles and their like walked to see the enormous multitude of candles and lanterns and everything that men long for and that delights their eye and gladdens their senses. There used to sit a number of groups, where *siyar*, *akhbār*, and poems were recited and where people indulged in all kinds of games and pastimes. There was such a crowd in this place that its number cannot be calculated, nor can it be related or described.”³⁰

All this shows that in late Ayyubid and Mamluk times common public spaces of literary entertainment and exchange did indeed exist. This fact should not astonish us, as these places of common perception were in the end nothing less than the spatial translation of the social transformation that society had undergone.

²⁶ See: Thomas Herzog, “Orality and the Tradition of Arabic Epic Storytelling,” in *Medieval Oral Literature*, ed. Karl Reichl (Berlin/Boston, 2012), 637.

²⁷ See: Thomas Herzog, *Geschichte und Imaginaire: Entstehung, Überlieferung und Bedeutung der Sīrat Baibars in ihrem sozio-politischen Kontext*, Diskurse der Arabistik 8 (Wiesbaden, 2006), 393–419.

²⁸ Ibid., 358–92.

²⁹ See Leder’s citation of an interesting passage in Ibn al-Athīr’s (d. 637/1239) *Al-Mathal al-Sā’ir fī Adab al-Kātib wa-al-Shā’ir*, “Postklassisch,” 291–92.

³⁰ Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Mawā’iz wa-al-I’tibār fī Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār* (Bulāq, 1270/1853–54), 2:28, lines 18 ff.



Three Mamluk *Adab*-Encyclopedias and Compendia

In terms of worldviews and mentalities, one of the more interesting genres in Mamluk literature is the *adab*-encyclopedia. By comparing different works of this “genre” we will come across certain features particular to the literature of the new rising class of semi-instructed bourgeoisie.

Hillary Kilpatrick defined an *adab*-encyclopedia (which is of course an ascription to these texts, since their historical authors did not use the term *mawsūʿāt adabīyah*) as a work “designed to provide the basic knowledge in those domains with which the average cultured man may be expected to be acquainted. It is characterized by organization into chapters or books on the different subjects treated so that, although there may be some overlapping of material and repetition, the various topics may be found without difficulty.”³¹

The best-known *adab*-encyclopedias are pre-Mamluk: Ibn Qutaybah’s *ʿUyūn al-Akḥbār* (ninth century), Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi’s *Al-Iqd al-Farīd* (tenth century), al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī’s *Muḥāḍarāt al-Udabāʾ wa-Muḥāwarāt al-Shuʿarāʾ wa-al-Bulaghāʾ* (early eleventh century), and al-Zamakhsharī’s *Rabīʿ al-Abrār wa-Nuṣūṣ al-Akḥbār* (eleventh/twelfth century). For the Mamluk era the best known works that can be termed *adab*-encyclopedias are al-Nuwayrī’s (1279–1332) *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* (first third of the fourteenth century) and Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmārī’s (1301–49) *Masālik al-Aḥsār fī Mamālik al-Amṣār* (first half of the fourteenth century). Al-Qalqashandī’s (1355–1418) *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā* is in some ways a borderline case, as it is more a specialized administration manual than an *adab*-encyclopedia.

Mamluk *adab*-encyclopedists such as al-Nuwayrī and Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmārī rely heavily on the tradition of their forerunners. The cultural synthesis of orally transmitted Arab *akḥbār* with material that was “*min kutub al-Hind wa-al-ʿajam*”—still distinctly marked in Ibn Qutaybah, for instance—is now taken for granted; *isnāds* mostly disappeared from the Mamluk works. Like many of their forerunners, the works of al-Nuwayrī, Ibn Faḍl Allāh, and al-Qalqashandī were those of civil servants working in the Mamluk *dawāwīn* and were written for men of their own class. Like Ibn Qutaybah’s *ʿUyūn* and Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi’s *Iqd*, they discuss at length the qualities of the ruler, the arts of war and peace, and administrative matters of all kind, while at the same time providing all sorts of historical and geographical information as well as that pertaining to history, natural history, and geography.

All the aforementioned *adab*-encyclopedias shared roughly the same method of compilation. Rosenthal listed the basic ingredients as “accumulations of apho-

³¹ Hillary Kilpatrick, “A Genre in Classical Arab Literature: The *Adab* Encyclopedia,” in *Proceedings of the 10th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, Edinburgh, 9–16 September 1980*, ed. Robert Hillenbrand (Edinburgh [?], 1982), 34.



risms, prose mini-essays and snatches of verse rather than full-blown poems”³²—to which we might add Quranic citations and prophetic traditions, anecdotes and quotations from collections of proverbs, and histories. Because the material of older encyclopedias was recycled into the later ones, the reader has a constant feeling of déjà-vu in the sense that he recognizes a particular aphorism or poem but cannot quite say where he first ran across it.

Al-Nuwayrī’s (1279–1332) *Nihāyat al-Arab*³³ is perhaps the most systematically constructed *adab*-encyclopedia we know. His aim is to provide his reader with a comprehensive guide to the universe. Al-Nuwayrī rigorously divides his work into five books (*funūn*), each of them divided into five parts (*aqṣām*) that are again divided into chapters (*abwāb*). His conception of affording the reader a universal overview is reflected in the choice of subjects for the five books: cosmography and geography (*al-samāʾ*), mankind and related matters (*al-insān wa-mā yataʿallaqu bi-hi*), animals (*al-ḥayawān al-ṣāmit*), and plants (*al-nabāt*). The fifth and longest book is entirely dedicated to history (*al-tārīkh*) conceived as a complete universal history.

Structure of al-Nuwayrī’s *Nihāyat al-Arab* (ed. Cairo, 1923–97):

<i>Fann</i>	No. of sections (<i>qism</i>)	No. of chapters (<i>bāb</i>)	No. of pages	% of the total book	% of <i>fann</i> 1–4	Title	Topic
1	5	25	416	3	10	السماء	Cosmography and geography
2	5	34	2601	20	63	الانسان وما يتعلق به	Men
3	5	19	468	3	11	الحيوان الصامت	Animals
4	5	17	661	5	16	النبات	Plants
5	5	42	9013	69	-	التاريخ	History
Total	25	137	13159	100	-		
Total, <i>fann</i> 1–4	20	95	4146	-	100		

³² Franz Rosenthal, “Sources for the Role of Sex in Medieval Muslim Society,” in *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam*, ed. A. Lutfi I-Sayyed-Marsot (Malibu, 1979), 15.

³³ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab*. (Cairo, 1923–97), 33 vols. See: Elias Muhanna, “Encyclopaedism of the Mamluk Period: The Composition of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nuwayrī’s (d. 1333) *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab*” (Ph.D. diss, Harvard University, 2012).



The second Mamluk *adab*-encyclopedia that I treat in this article is of a quite different genre. *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf fī Kullī Fannin Mustazraf*³⁴ is a work that Thomas Bauer termed an anthology with an encyclopedic claim, whereas others do consider it an encyclopedia.³⁵ In any case, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf fī Kullī Fannin Mustazraf* (The utmost in all elegant arts) is the work of a certain Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ibshihī al-Maḥallī al-Shāfi'ī, an Egyptian of some learning who is briefly cited in al-Sakhāwī's *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi'*. He was born in 790/1388 in the village of Abshuwayh (or Ibshāwāy or Ibshih) in the central delta province of al-Gharbiyah, but in the first years of his life he moved to al-Maḥallah, also in the Nile delta, where his father was appointed the preacher, *khaṭīb*, of a local mosque. It seems that al-Ibshihī spent most of his life in al-Maḥallah, where he succeeded his father as *khaṭīb* after his pilgrimage to Mecca in his mid-twenties, about 815/1413. He studied the Quran and *fiqh* in al-Maḥallah and made several trips to Cairo to take instruction there. Al-Sakhāwī cites two of his masters: a certain Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭalyāwī al-Azhari al-Shāfi'ī al-Muqri', *shaykhuhu*, and al-Imām 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Umar ibn Raslān, known as Jalāl al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī.³⁷ According to al-Sakhāwī, al-Ibshihī died sometime after 850/1446 and had contact with the literati of his time (*wa-taṭāraḥa ma'a al-udabā'*), but his Arabic was not proficient enough for him to be accepted as a real *ʿālim*; as al-Sakhāwī writes, "*wa-kāna fī kalāmihi al-laḥn kathīran*."³⁸ Al-Ibshihī was probably one of those "small" *ʿulamā'*, men possessing a certain level of erudition but who were not part of the Mamluk Empire's intellectual elite. As will shortly be seen, the choice of topics and the worldview of al-Ibshihī's *adab*-

³⁴ Bahā' al-Dīn Abū al-Faṭḥ Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Ibshihī, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf fī Kullī Fannin Mustazraf* (Beirut, 1999).

³⁵ Anthology: Thomas Bauer, "Literarische Anthologien der Mamlukenzeit," in *Die Mamluken: Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur: Zum Gedenken an Ulrich Haarmann (1942–1999)*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Anja Pistor-Hatam (Schenefeld, 2003), 101, and Robert Irwin, "Al-Ibshihī," *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ed. Julia Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London, 1998), 1: 337b–338a. Encyclopedia: Kilpatrick, "A Genre," 35, and G. Rat, French translation of al-Ibshihī's *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf* entitled *Al-Mustaṭraf: recueil de morceaux choisis ça et là dans toutes les branches de connaissances réputées attrayantes par Shihāb-ad-Dīn Aḥmad al-Abshihī: ouvrage philologique, anecdotique, littéraire et philosophique, traduit pour la première fois par G. Rat* (Paris, 1899–1902), 1:VII (preface of the translator).

³⁶ Muḥammad Ramzī, *Al-Qāmūs al-Jughrafī lil-Bilād al-Miṣrīyah: Min 'Ahd Qudamā' al-Miṣrīyīn ilā Sanat 1945* (Cairo, 1953–54, repr. 1994), 2:2:95.

³⁷ Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Umar al-Bulqīnī (763–824/1362–1421) succeeded his brother Muḥammad as *qāḍī al-ʿaskar* in 791/1389. He lived in luxurious style, "had a retinue of 300 *mamlūks*, and in 804/1401 obtained the office of Shafi'ī grand qadi, which he held for intervals until his death (H. A. R. Gibb, "al-Bulqīnī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 1:1308–9).

³⁸ Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi' li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi'* (Cairo, 1353–55/1934–36), 7:109:

وتعاني النظم والتصنيف في الأدب وغيره، ولكنه لعدم إلمامه بشيء من النحو يقع فيه وفي كلامه اللحن كثيراً.



encyclopedia confirms this supposition and enables us to make further suppositions regarding his social milieu.

According to Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ, the editor of the 1999 Beirut edition, al-Ibshīhī's main sources were al-Zamakhsharī's (467–538/1075–1144) *Rabīʿ al-Abrār*; Ibn Ḥamdūn's (d. 1166–67) *Tadhkirah*, an *adab*-encyclopedia that was extremely popular in Mamluk times; al-Ṭurtūshī's (1059–1126) *Sirāj al-Mulūk*; al-Qazwīnī's (d. 682/1283) *ʿAjāʾib al-Makhlūqāt*; and al-Damīrī's (d. 808/1405) *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān*. Except for al-Zamakhsharī's *Rabīʿ al-Abrār* and Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi's (246–328/860–940) *Al-Iqd al-Farīd*—from whom he compiles only a few items—al-Ibshīhī fails to indicate his source-material, though he sometimes copies these sources at chapter length, as Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ complained.³⁹

If we compare al-Ibshīhī's encyclopedia/anthology with those of leading ʿulamāʾ, such as al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-Arab*, we recognize at once that it is much less strictly arranged and considerably shorter.⁴⁰ The chapters simply follow one another without being united by the author into larger thematic units. There is nevertheless a certain logic in al-Ibshīhī's arrangement of his 84 chapters (*abwāb*) according to subject matter.

The book starts with a chapter treating the five pillars of Islam—*al-ikhhlāṣ lillāh*, *al-ṣalāh*, *al-zakāh*, *al-ṣawm*, *al-ḥajj*—and in the ensuing three chapters al-Ibshīhī addresses what for him would seem to be the most important and desirable qualities of men: ʿaql, *dhakāʾ*, ʿilm, and *adab*. Al-Ibshīhī continues in this vein in the next nine chapters (5–13), with two chapters on aphorisms and proverbs (5–6); three chapters on eloquence (*balāghah*), the mastering of a clear Arabic (*faṣāḥah*), on orators and poets, and on quick-wittedness in discussions (7–9); and another four chapters on trust in God's rule, on being aware of the consequences of one's actions, that silence is often better than mindless chit-chat, etc. (10–13). This first section in which al-Ibshīhī treats intelligence, eloquence, and wit covers 250 pages—about 16 percent of the book.

In the eight ensuing chapters (14–21, covering a total of 72 pages, or 5 percent of the book) al-Ibshīhī treats subjects related to government: royalty and the sultan, the sultan's entourage, viziers, chamberlains, judges, justice and injustice, and tyranny and tax collection. The most interesting aspect of this group of chapters treating the question of correct government is that he inserts in the chapter on judges and justice not only a section on corruption (*rashwah*) but also a small

³⁹ Al-Ibshīhī, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*, 1:9 (editor's preface).

⁴⁰ The book is nevertheless a very big work (in the 1999 Beirut edition it consists of three volumes of some 1500 pages total) and is by virtue of the wide range of its topics clearly of an encyclopedic character.



section⁴¹ in which he condemns popular storytellers (*quṣṣāṣ*) and the Sufis whom he views as mere charlatans who rob the naïve populace.

The third section that I have identified is a large group of chapters which could be subsumed under the heading “*akhlāq*,” or “morality.” In twenty-three chapters (22–44) al-Ibshihī examines actions, attitudes, and character traits that he considers laudable as well as those he condemns; and as always in this *adab*-encyclopedia, he does this through a large number of citations from the Quran, hadith, and poetry and prose, both Islamic and pre-Islamic.⁴² The section on “*akhlāq*” covers a total of 493 pages, which is more than a quarter (27 percent) of the book.

Following this important group of chapters on “*akhlāq*,” the thematic scope of al-Ibshihī’s *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf* widens to more worldly subjects with a number of chapters on the joys of life, on wealth and poverty, and on life in society. This part of *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf* encompasses a large number of chapters and spans a total of 693 pages, which is some 45 percent of the 1999 edition, and includes chapters on geography and flora and fauna.⁴³

Al-Ibshihī concludes his *adab*-encyclopedia with a series of chapters that I would summarize with the phrase “the misfortunes of life” and related matters.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Al-Ibshihī, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*, 1:321–24 (section 18, 3).

⁴² The laudable or condemnable actions and attitudes cover a large array: *al-ma’rūf*, *al-mawaddah*, *al-shafā’ah*, *al-ḥayā’*, *al-kibr*, *al-fakhr*, *al-sharaf*, *al-jūd*, *al-bukhl*, *al-‘afw wa-al-ḥilm*, *al-wafā’*, *kitmān*, *al-sirr*, *al-ghadr wa-al-khiyānah*, *al-sariqah*, *al-ḥasad*, *al-shajā’ah wa-al-jihād*, *al-madh*, *al-hijā’*, *al-ṣidq wa-al-kasb*.

⁴³ The chapters on the joys of life cover subjects related to the physical aspects of human existence. These include beauty and ugliness (46); youth and old age, health and strength (48); beautiful voices (68); male and female singers and musicians (69 and 70); love and passion (71); a long chapter on various literary and mostly poetic genres such as *muwashshah* or *zajal* (72, consisting of 123 pages); women, social intercourse with them, laudable and condemnable women, treacherous women, marriage and divorce (73); a chapter on the prohibition of alcohol (74); and two chapters on jokes and anecdotes (75 and 76). The chapters dealing with social life cover subjects like “what to say about gold ornaments, rings, and perfumes” (47); presents and gifts (54); slaves and servants (58); travels and expatriations (50); wealth and the love of money (51); poverty (52); gentleness toward beggars (53); working and professions (55); good and bad fortune and how to endure each (56 and 57); and tricks and stratagems in obtaining one’s objectives (61). In that part of his book which I would entitle the joys of *dunyā*, al-Ibshihī integrated two chapters on “the strange customs of pre-Islamic Arabs” (59) and on divination practices (60) as well as five chapters on domesticated and wild animals (62), on the earth, and on rivers, sources, wells, mountains, oceans, jinns, huge buildings, mines and stones, and on the ‘*ajā’ib* and ‘*gharā’ib* of all these phenomena of creation.

⁴⁴ He introduces this last part of his book with chapters on prayer to God (*du‘ā’*; 77), destiny (*al-qadā’ wa-al-qadar*; 78), and repentance (*tawbah*; 79), and then goes on to illness and death (80 and 81)—here he addresses the medical treatment of certain diseases (80)—and rounds things off with a discussion of patience and funeral elegies (*al-marāthi*). Al-Ibshihī then finishes his book with a chapter on *faḍl al-ṣalāh ‘alā al-nabī*.



Remarkably enough, it is only in the context of illness and death—in the penultimate chapter of some 84 chapters and over roughly a dozen of the more than 1,500 pages—that al-Ibshīhī treats the subject of *zuhd*, asceticism, which was a favorite topic in countless writings of the Mamluk era.⁴⁵

Al-Ibshīhī's *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf* (ed. Beirut, 1999) thus has the following structure:

Part	Chapters	No. of pages	% of the book	Topic	Overall topic
1	1–5	62	4	The five pillars, intelligence and wit, the Quran and the benefits of reading it	Intelligence, eloquence, and wit
2	5–13	188	12	Eloquence and wit	
3	14–21	72	5	Government	Government
4	22–44	418	27	<i>Akhlāq</i>	<i>Akhlāq</i>
5	45–76	693	45	Joys of life	<i>Dunyā</i>
6	77–84	114	7	Misfortunes of life	
Total		1547	100		

As this brief overview shows, the work of al-Ibshīhī—a provincial imam of some learning, son of a provincial imam, who succeeded his father in his post—differs considerably in scope and choice of subjects from the *adab*-encyclopedias composed by eminent ‘*ulamā*’ in service of the state, like al-Nuwayrī and Ibn Faḍl Allāh al’Umarī, themselves sons of ‘*ulamā*/’*kuttāb*. The book is much less universal, contains no section on history, and keeps very brief the section on government. It focuses on the joys of life, on social intercourse, and on morally correct and intelligent behavior in society at large. Al-Ibshīhī’s *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf* is the perfect guide for a man of his milieu, who required knowledge pertaining to the functioning of government, to the sultan, his viziers, the judges and tax collectors, and who needed to be conversant in a variety of topics so as to enable him to engage with local notables.

The third Mamluk *adab*-encyclopedia that I should like to discuss here, namely *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn wa-al-Fulk al-Mashhūn*,⁴⁶ is a work that Thomas Bauer termed

⁴⁵ Here is a chapter with a more directly religious theme (on *tawakkul* and *qanā’ah* and the condemnation of avidity), which is integrated into that group of chapters illustrating the good and correct behavior of an Arab and Muslim man.

⁴⁶ Yūnus al-Mālikī, *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn wa-al-Fulk al-Mashhūn* (Cairo, 1956, attributed in this publication to Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī).



an “anthology,” moreover a “popular anthology,”⁴⁷ whereas I would like to stick with the term encyclopedia. However, as the text is quite unorganized and differs in this way from the mainstream of Arab encyclopedias, I propose to term it an encyclopedic *adab*-compendium.⁴⁸ The (main) author of “The buried treasure and the laden ark” is a certain Yūnus al-Mālikī, who in contrast to al-Ibshīhī did not find his way into any of the known biographical dictionaries. There is a short entry in Ḥājji Khalifah’s *Kashf al-Zunūn*,⁴⁹ which mentions the title and name of the author—Yūnus al-Mālikī⁵⁰—but with no allusions to the latter’s life or date of death. The book is frequently attributed to the Mamluk polygraph Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (849–911/1445–1505)—for example in the 1956 edition of Maktabat Muṣṭafā Bābī al-Ḥalabī that I am using⁵¹—but this attribution seems improbable owing to the character of the book. The book’s author must have lived at the end of the eighth/fourteenth century, as he himself tells us in citing a poem praising the Prophet that a certain Abū al-‘Abbās ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Mu‘ṭī had recited to him at *al-ḥaram al-sharīf* in Mecca in Dhū al-Qa‘dah of the year 764/August 1363.⁵² He also cites a conversation on religion that he had in Sha‘bān 767/May 1366 in Jerusalem with his “brother in religion” the qadī Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Dā‘im, known as Ibn Maylaq.⁵³ Given these dates, the attribution to al-Suyūṭī is impossible, at least for these passages. Many linguistic clues (e.g., the terms he employs, certain dialectal passages), as well as his clear focus on Egypt, would indicate that Yūnus al-Mālikī, or at any rate the author, must have been Egyptian. Although al-Mālikī seems to have been the main author of *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn*, the reference to the Nile flood in the year 854/1450⁵⁴ and to the elegy of Sultan Qāyṭbāy⁵⁵ are clearly the work of another author, probably also Egyptian.⁵⁶ The book might thus be a collective work with one particular writer’s name serving as a sort of catchall author.

⁴⁷ Bauer, “Literarische Anthologien,” 101. See also Giovanni Canova, “Una pagina di *al-Kanz al-Madfūn* sugli uomini più illustri,” in *Ultra Mare: Mélanges d’arabe et d’islamologie offerts à Aubert Martin*, ed. Frédéric Bauden (Louvain, 2004), 93–94.

⁴⁸ See my argument below, pp. 115–120.

⁴⁹ Ḥājji Khalifah, *Kashf al-Zunūn ‘an Asāmī al-Kutub wa-al-Funūn/Lexicon Bibliographicum et Encyclopaedicum*, ed. G. Flügel (Leipzig, 1853–58), 5:257, no. 10925.

⁵⁰ See Canova, “Una pagina,” 93–94. Al-Mālikī, *Kanz*, 167, gives Yūnus al-Mālikī as author.

⁵¹ Zirīklī, *Al-A‘lām*, also gives al-Mālikī as author.

⁵² Al-Mālikī, *Kanz*, 249.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 161–62.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 52–53.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁵⁶ For the question of authorship see also: Canova, “Una pagina,” 94–95.



As judged by its content, *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* may well be considered an *adab*-encyclopedia, but the organization of its content differs widely from the learned *adab*-encyclopedias I presented at the beginning of this article, as well as from al-Ibshihī's *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*. We find many small, medium, or long narratives, of one or two lines up to several pages, and mainly in the genres of *ḥikmah*, *fā'idah*, *mathal*, *nādirah*, *ḥikāyat lughz/enigmas*; the majority of the text will be in prose, but we also frequently find *saj'*/rhymed prose and *shi'r*/poetry. Among other subjects, *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* covers the Quran, hadith, *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-dīn*, etymology, *du'ā'* and other prayers for a multitude of occasions; history, mostly in the form of anecdotes or short reports; geography, zoology, and botany, mostly in the form of lists of names and terms; grammar;⁵⁷ and medicine, meaning prescriptions for various diseases,⁵⁸ aphrodisiacs, and amulets, talismans, and magic spells for a variety of occasions.⁵⁹ Al-Mālikī sometimes cites at length parts of works of known authors such as al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-Jawzī,⁶⁰ Ibn Taymīyah, al-Ṣafadī,⁶¹ Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī, and other authors.⁶² Much of the book's information is conveyed in the form of questions and answers—e.g., “Why did such and such happen as it did?” or “Why did such and such bear such and such a name?”⁶³ or “The difference between *a* and *b* is *c*,”⁶⁴ etc., at times in the form of a dialogue between a fictive reader and author. A strong recurring feature in *Al-Kanz* is the lists of names⁶⁵ and terms often presenting synonyms or antonyms,⁶⁶ these usually presented in the form of questions and responses.

In contrast to those *adab*-encyclopedias that I have hitherto discussed, *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* has no discernible organizing principle. Judging from the variety of subjects and the book's organization—or rather *non*-organization—it is clear that one of the author's main aims is to entertain. And this it does—particularly in consideration of the fact that the alternation from serious to light subject matter is essential to creating an entertaining encyclopedia. The book is never boring. Serious religious or juridical questions—e.g., “Why was the Quran not revealed

⁵⁷ Al-Mālikī, *Kanz*, 49.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 182, 191, 238.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 63, 65.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 240: “بديع من كلام ابن الجوزي”.

⁶¹ Ibid., 220–24: “كتات من صنعة صلاح الدين الصفدي بشارة بوفاء النيل”.

⁶² Ibid., 224–25: “منقول بمجموع من تصانيف لابن حزم”.

⁶³ Ibid., 98: “لم سمي سيدنا عيسى عليه السلام بعيسى؟”.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 77: “الفرق بين السخي والكريم والبخيل واللئيم”; ibid., 140: “الفرق بين الباسور والناصور”; ibid., 231: “الفرق بين اليتيم والترجي”.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 114: “أسماء أهل الكهف”; ibid., 137: “في اسم الخوت الذي ابتلع نبي الله يونس”.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 125: “من أسماء الذئب”; ibid., 154: “أسماء أولاد البهائم”; ibid., 67: “أسماء الشمس”; ibid., 69: “من أسماء ساعات النهار”; ibid., 246: “من أسماء المطر”.



in a single moment?”⁶⁷ or, “How are the male and female heirs of a widow who has remarried to be treated?”—are juxtaposed with a *ḥikāyah muḍḥikah*, a funny story, or with entertaining enigmas.

There is one central idea behind every subject that the book touches on, whether it be religion, science, geography, or etymology—namely, the information should be *useful* in a practical sense, and many of the subjects are in fact introduced by the word “*fā'idah*,” a useful thing. The bulk of information in the book is useful for daily life—useful in order to duly fulfill one’s religious duties, useful so as to assure oneself of a place in paradise, and useful for purposes of conversation.

Owing to its completely unorganized structure, *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn*, even more than al-Iḥshānī’s *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*, could be subsumed (as Thomas Bauer does) under the category of “anthology.” But subsuming *Al-Kanz* under the category of “anthology” would mean to overlook the dominant encyclopedic tendency in this work and the educational and instructive tone that marks many parts of it.⁶⁸

An Excursion through Contemporary European Literature to Better Understand al-Mālikī’s Work

In order to come to terms with al-Mālikī’s intriguingly unordered yet encyclopedic compendium, I looked at similar phenomena in late medieval and Renaissance Europe, and this comparison proved to be fruitful more than just once.⁶⁹ *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* indeed shares certain features with a couple of works that appeared

⁶⁷ Ibid., 122: “ما الحكمة في إنزال القرآن متفرقا؟”.

⁶⁸ See also Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh, 2012), 189.

⁶⁹ These comparisons with pre-modern European developments make sense as they often attest to quite parallel developments on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. These parallel developments have been explained by historians in the field of “global history” by the existence of a pre-modern Eurasian world system, which they claim to have united large parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Janet Abu-Lughod (*Before European Hegemony: The World System 1250–1350* [New York and Oxford, 1989]) claims that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there existed dense contacts and the mutual exchange of learning inside this world system. (Her theory has been taken up recently by Peter Feldbauer and Gottfried Liedl, *Die islamische Welt 1000 bis 1517: Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft, Staat* [Vienna, 2008].) Reinhard Schulze’s sketch of the history of the Islamic world in modern times (“Die islamische Welt in der Neuzeit [16.–19. Jahrhundert],” in *Der islamische Orient: Grundzüge seiner Geschichte*, ed. Albrecht Noth and Jürgen Paul [Würzburg, 1998], 333–403) shows that even the use of European terms like “Renaissance” and “Baroque” may prove useful for the interpretation of certain developments in Islamic history, or at least that the use of these terms might help to enlarge the “hermeneutic horizon” (Schulze, *ibid.*, 333) for modern Islamic history. It is in this sense that I compare al-Mālikī’s compendium to late medieval and early modern European proto- or semi-encyclopedic literary genres.



before the emergence of the great early modern Western encyclopedias.⁷⁰ In fact, *Al-Kanz*'s aforementioned lists of words and synonyms very much resemble the thematically organized medieval proto-encyclopediaic "vocabularies" which presented the world in the form of bilingual word lists (Latin/vernacular languages).⁷¹ Just as their European counterparts made specialized Latin vocabulary accessible to their readers, *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn*'s wordlists made specialized Arabic vocabularies accessible to the average cultivated Arab reader or listener of the book.⁷² For instance the *Elucidarius carminum et hystoriarum*, a proto-encyclopediaic text published in 1505, contains lists of verbs designating the voices of wild animals,⁷³ lists of numbers (cardinal, ordinal, distributive, etc.), lists of plants, precious stones, etc., all topics we also find in *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn*'s wordlists. Also like *Al-Kanz*, the titles of European proto-encyclopediaic texts often contain metaphors of houses, store-rooms, and containers of all sorts to indicate the volume of the encompassed knowledge—for instance, the *Schatzbehalter* (container of treasures), which the Franciscan monk Stephan Fridolin first published in 1491 in Nuremberg.⁷⁴ Finally, another European late medieval proto-encyclopediaic work, *Ein lieblich Hystorie von dem hochgelehrten Meister Lucidario*, published in Augsburg in 1483,⁷⁵ shows just like *Al-Kanz* the structure of a dialogue between a fictive disciple and his master, the latter giving authoritative answers to the former's questions: "*Lieber meyster*

⁷⁰ Such as those of Pierre Bayle, Johann Heinrich Zeller, Jean-Baptiste Rond d'Alembert; and Denis Diderot; see Schenda, "Hand-Wissen," 15.

⁷¹ Beginning with the tenth-century *Vocabularis Sancti Galli* (see Schenda, "Hand-Wissen," 16–17), many proto-encyclopediaic works were at least partly organized in lists of words. See for instance Francesco Alunno, *La Fabbrica del mondo* (Venice, 1548) (see Schenda, "Hand-Wissen," 19); François Pomey, *Indiculus Universalis.../L'Univers en abrégé...* (Lyon, 1667); and Hermannus Torrentius, *Elucidarius carminum et hystoriarum* (Strassburg, 1505). (The historical editions of Pomey and Torrentius can be downloaded as pdf-files from the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek: <http://www.gateway-bayern.de>).

⁷² See for instance the "translation" list of synonyms in al-Mālikī, *Kanz*, 216:

"الصيديل هو العطار، النحاس دلال الرقيق، الجهد الجاني."

⁷³ See al-Mālikī, *Kanz*, 170: "في أصوات الحيوانات."

⁷⁴ Stephan Fridolin and Michael Wolgemut, *Der Schatzbehalter*, The Printed Sources of Western Art, 28 (facsimile of the 1491 Nuremberg edition) (Portland, Oregon, 1972). See Schenda, "Hand-Wissen," 18.

⁷⁵ *Ein lieblich Hystorie von dem hochgelehrten Meister Lucidario* is not published, but a later printing of the same work entitled *M. Elucidarius: Von allerhande geschöpffen Gottes, den Engeln der Him-meln, Gestirns, Planeten, vnnd wie alle Creaturen geschaffend sein auff erden* (Augsburg, 1548) can be downloaded as a pdf-file from the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek: <http://www.gateway-bayern.de>. See Schenda, "Hand-Wissen," 23–24.



sag wie, wie manigen Namen hat nun die helle?"⁷⁶ or "Wieufl der Hymel?"⁷⁷ or "Wie alt was Adam da er starb?"⁷⁸ or "Wer war dann der erst Mann der das Buchstaben fande?"⁷⁹ These questions resemble again quite neatly what we find in al-Mālikī's *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn*: "عليه السلام فائدة: قبض أبونا آدم ⁸⁰ or لم خلق الله تعالى النار سبع طبقات والجنة ثمان طبقات؟" or "أول من خط بالقلم" ⁸² or الساعة الحادية عشرة من يوم الجمعة أخرج من الجنة ⁸¹ وفي يوم الجمعة قبل الزوال بلحظة، وفي الساعة الثالثة من يوم الجمعة خلق، وفي الساعة السادسة من يوم الجمعة أسكن جنة عدن، وفي

However, what distinguishes all the aforementioned works from *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* is the fact that they organize their subjects and do not present them in an obviously arbitrary way as does al-Mālikī's *Kanz* (the late medieval and early modern pre-encyclopedic compendia usually follow a religiously dominated worldview similar to many Arab-Islamic *adab*-encyclopedias⁸³). Even the anthology genre of the *Florilegium*, in which various aphorisms, maxims, and proverbs were assembled as fruits of browsing the corpus of antique literature and which was in the beginning a rather unorganized corpus of "fruits of readings," soon became a hierarchically organized genre of literature.⁸⁴

⁷⁶ "Dear master, tell me: how many hells exist?" *M. Elucidarius*, pdf-file Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 13: Das iii. Capitel, "Vom Fall Lucifer und der hellen."

⁷⁷ "How many heavens exist?" *ibid.*, 15: Das v. Capitel, "Wieufl der Hymel/und wa Adam geschaffen."

⁷⁸ "What was Adam's age when he died?" *ibid.*, 16–17: Das vi. Capitel, "Vom Paradeiß/taylung der welt/und wassern des Paradeiß."

⁷⁹ "Who was the first man who invented the letters of the alphabet?" *ibid.*, 17: Das vi. Capitel, "Vom Paradeiß/taylung der welt/und wassern des Paradeiß."

⁸⁰ Al-Mālikī, *Kanz*, 134.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 282.

⁸³ For instance, the *Indiculus universalis* (1667) of the Jesuit François Pommey has the following structure: (I) Le Monde (The creation of the world, of heaven, the elements, animals, plants, stones and metals); (II) L'Homme (His body, clothes, soul, intelligence, virtues, vices, and passions); (III) La Ville (The city's inhabitants, social groups and ranks, buildings, arts, crafts, the city and the countryside, gardens and fruits); see Schenda, "Hand-Wissen," 19. Concentrating very much on God and the hereafter is the anonymous Anglo-Norman *Elucidarium* from the early thirteenth century (see *Eine altfranzösische Übersetzung des Elucidarium*, ed. Henning Düwell [Munich, 1974], 6 f.): "Li fundemenz de l'ovre seit jetez sur pierre, çoe est sur Crist; e tuit li engienz seit apuiez de quatre fermes columnes. La premeraine comlumne esdreizt l'autorité des prophetes, la secunde establisset la diginité des apostles, la tierce esfortz li sens des esposturs, la quatre ficht la profitable utilité des maistres." ("The foundations of the work shall be erected on stone, that means on Christ; and the whole framework shall be based on four firm columns: on the authority of the prophets, the dignity of the apostles, the reason of the interpreters, and the profit which the masters may draw from it.")

⁸⁴ While Erasmus initially published his collection of proverbs, *Adagia* (1500), as well as his *Parabolae* (1514) and *Apophtegmata* (1531) in a rather unorganized way, the subsequent editions of



Yet another genre in late medieval European literature, the *housebook*, may help us to understand the genesis of al-Mālikī's work. The *housebook* indeed shows a close thematic proximity to the bulk of practically useful information which *Al-Kanz* provides to its readers, while having the same lack of organization as *Al-Kanz*.

The manuscript text collections of the *housebook* type were an urban phenomenon of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe and shared a number of common characteristics. They were mostly collected, written, and retained by the same person, in general by men belonging to the urban bourgeoisie; they usually began with one longer literary text (for instance, a heroic epic or romance) which was followed by smaller sections whose suite often didn't follow any logical order—a section of prayer could be followed by a section of maxims, followed by a section on kitchen recipes; and finally, the thematic range of these *housebooks* was usually closely linked to the practical necessities and interests of the collector's/writer's/owner's household (which is why they were called *housebooks*) and/or to their professions.⁸⁵

The emergence of this kind of literature in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries seems to have been mainly due to the fact that the European late medieval era was, just like the Ayyubid and Mamluk era in the Arab world, marked by the spread of education to formally excluded classes of the population such as craftsmen and small merchants—a spread that made the distinction between laymen and clerics no longer that between illiterate and literate.⁸⁶ Whereas the most luxuriously executed *housebooks* were works ordered by noblemen or rich bourgeois,⁸⁷ we can see in the sixteenth century the spread of this type of text collection in less beautiful manuscripts to urban clerks (e.g., the *housebook* of Jakob Käbitz, Wemdingen, at the end of the fifteenth century;⁸⁸ or the *housebook* of Valentin Holl the scribe, Augsburg, 1524–26) or to craftsmen (e.g., the *housebook* collection

these works in the course of the sixteenth century were placed in alphabetical order. See Gilbert Heß, "Enzyklopädien und Florilegien im 16. Jahrhundert: *Doctrina*, *Eruditio* und *Sapientia* in verschiedenen Thesaurierungsformen," in *Wissenssicherung, Wissensordnung und Wissensverarbeitung: Das europäische Modell der Enzyklopädien*, ed. Theo Stammen, and Wolfgang E. J. Weber (Berlin, 2004), 41.

⁸⁵ Dieter H. Meyer, "Hausbuch," in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft*, vol. 2, ed. Harald Fricke, 12.

⁸⁶ Nikolaus Henkel, "Ein Augsburger Hausbuch des Spätmittelalters," in *Literarisches Leben in Augsburg während des 15. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Johannes Janota and Werner Williams-Kramp (Tübingen, 1995), 27–28.

⁸⁷ See for instance the *Hausbuch von Schloss Wolfegg*, circa 1480, which was lavishly illustrated. See Christoph Graf zu Waldburg-Wolfegg, *Venus and Mars: The World of the Medieval Housebook* (Munich, 1998).

⁸⁸ Meyer, "Hausbuch," 13.



in several volumes of the weaver Simprecht Kröll, Augsburg, 1516–56;⁸⁹ or the *housebook* of the craftsman and later mayor of Augsburg Ulrich Schwarz, d. 1478).⁹⁰ The life of Mayor Schwarz resembles in many aspects the lives of the aforementioned mamluk upstarts Aḥmad al-Ṭulūnī and Abū al-Khayr al-Naḥḥās (the latter was a contemporary of Schwarz). Just like his mamluk counterparts, Schwarz rose from a very modest milieu of urban craftsmen, entered local politics (at the latest around 1459), married a rich widow in 1469, occupied a number of public positions (among others that of the city's chief architect), was the administrator of the Hospital of the Holy Spirit over a number of years, and was repeatedly elected mayor from 1469 on (as a candidate of the guilds). In 1478 the city's patricians backed by the Holy Roman Emperor instigated a trial for misappropriation of public funds, at the end of which Schwarz was found guilty and executed.

Although the thematic scope of Schwarz's *housebook* (which in its present state has 163 folios) is much smaller than that of al-Mālikī's *Kanz* (Schwarz's *housebook* very much concentrates on pragmatic prose and in this way greatly resembles the many useful [*fā'idah*] text sections of *Al-Kanz*⁹¹), it shows the same lack of order in the arrangement of its texts.⁹² Most interestingly, while up to folio 142

⁸⁹ For Holl and Kröll, see Dieter H. Meyer, *Literarische Hausbücher des 16. Jahrhunderts: Die Sammlungen des Ulrich Mostl, des Valentin Holl und des Simprecht Kröll* (Würzburg, 1989), 2 vols.

⁹⁰ For Schwarz, see Henkel, "Augsburger Hausbuch."

⁹¹ The other *housebooks* cited above (Jakob Käbitz, Valentin Holl, Simprecht Kröll; see Meyer, *Literarische Hausbücher*) are less focused on pragmatic prose, containing—like *Al-Kanz*—numerous segments of literary prose and poetry.

⁹² For instance, in Schwarz's *housebook* we find: (1) a collection of prayers; (2) an extract from the *Practica*, a medical treatise by Bartholomäus Salernitanus; (3) a section on fireworks; (4) various medical and other recipes—how to avoid bad mouth odor, how to make mice flee from one's house, etc.; (5) a section on the making of wine;...(7) an incantation for a sword; (8) recipes and magical techniques; (9) a prayer for recovery from disease;...(12) an extract from the "German Cato" (maxims); (13) a section on recipes for cuisine;...(17) Johannisminne, on courtly love; (18) a treatise on the Black Death;...(21) "Christ's knighthood in the holy week"—each of the seven days of the holy week consecrated to the struggle against one particular cardinal sin; (22) the Ten Commandments and the seven cardinal sins; (23) a recipe to counteract women's discharge; (24) a list of dishes; (25) prayers; (26) maxims for marital life and other realms, and prayers;...(28) notes relating to Vehmische courts; (29) country lore; (30) remedies for horses;...(32) rhymed moral lessons; (33) blessing of arms;...(35) a comparative table of measures of the capacities of various cities; (36) what to do against stains, against burnings, viper bites, what to fish, etc.;...(38) a prayer for the Virgin Mary; and (39) some historical events of the year 1471. See Henkel, "Augsburger Hausbuch," 34–41. The *housebooks* of Jakob Käbitz, Valentin Holl, and Simprecht Kröll are more structured than Schwarz's *housebook*, but they do also contain texts that have simply been added in random order. Meyer (*Literarische Hausbücher*, 2:766) describes the way in which the different texts were assembled in the *housebooks* as follows: "Die Art und Weise, wie die Sammler an das Sammelgut gerieten, bestimmte die Anlagegestalt ihrer Kollektionen. Überwiegend wurde ein größerer Textbestand zu Beginn der Sammlungen registriert, während



of Schwarz's *housebook* the manuscript is nearly entirely in his own hand, from that point on the manuscript is continued by several other hands, which seem to have been those of his son⁹³ and his descendants. The folios 153–63, which seem to have been added after the death of Ulrich Schwarz's son Matthäus in 1519 when the manuscript was bound, are entirely blank, a fact that Nikolaus Henkel interprets as proof of the fact that the manuscript was meant to be continued. For him the apparent disorder in the subject material, the fact that spaces were left free, apparently for subsequent additions, as well as the frequent change of pen and ink, all prove a discontinued process of redaction. In order to make the chaotic arrangement of the material available for practical use, a table of contents has been added at the end of the manuscript—either by Schwarz or his son.⁹⁴

Having seen the example of Ulrich Schwarz's *housebook*, we might now regard the genesis of *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* as being an open and ongoing collection of various materials. Unfortunately, an original manuscript of *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* from al-Mālikī's or his successors' hands has not been and perhaps never will be found. But were we to have it, I daresay that it would most probably resemble the *housebook* of Ulrich Schwarz and his sons—discontinued, from different hands, open to subsequent additions, and with an added table of contents to make it easier to handle.

Al-Kanz al-Madfūn thus displays the characteristics of a hybrid genre. It is clearly a work with encyclopedic ambitions, meant to provide the readers or listeners with a wealth of knowledge from a variety of fields, and it is not surprising that it resembles a number of European proto-encyclopedic works in its narrative strategies and subject matter. *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* is also an entertaining book that may well have been read among relatives, neighbors, and friends. *Al-Kanz*'s genesis may well have been similar to that of the *housebooks* of Ulrich Schwarz and other European upstarts of the “*āmmah*.” In fact, I daresay that *Al-Kanz* might be seen as a sort of mamluk *housebook* that has expanded over time to such an extent that it eventually became a petit-bourgeois encyclopedic *adab*-compendium.

innerhalb der Anlagen sich unterschiedliche Formen kleinerer Texteinheiten in Abhängigkeit von Erwerbsart und Ordnungsstreben der Sammler einstellten. So können poetische Texte [und] pragmatische Prosatexte zu inhaltlich homogenen Corpora zusammengefasst sein...[Es] ergeben sich Abschnitte ohne innere Einheitlichkeit, sobald vom ordnenden auf das rein addierende Sammeln übergegangen wird bzw. werden muss.”

⁹³ See Henkel, “Augsburger Hausbuch,” 41.

⁹⁴ See *ibid.*, 44.



Poverty and Wealth

After having presented the three *adab*-encyclopedias, in terms of their structure and content, respectively as what one might term an elite work (al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-Arab*), as a work emerging from the milieu of "small 'ulamā'" (al-Ibshīhī's *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*), and as a work arising from a less instructed but literate milieu (al-Mālikī's *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn*), I will now try to highlight the worldview of these three texts by examining one particular subject—namely, the statements these texts make on poverty and the poor, on wealth and the rich, and on working and earning one's living.

In al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-Arab* this subject is treated in the second *fann*: *al-insān wa-mā yat'allaqu bi-hi*, in the third *qism*, which begins with the laudable and reproachable attitudes of men, under the heading *al-jūd wa-al-karam*. This third *qism* follows the first, which treats the physical condition of men, love, and genealogy, and the second *qism*, whose subject matter is the proverbs and customs of the pre-Islamic Arabs and those of the Prophet Muḥammad.

What is interesting in al-Nuwayrī's presentation of poverty and the poor is firstly that he treats them in thematic proximity to that larger part of his second *fann* devoted to the ancient Arabs and their customs, and secondly that he treats poverty in the context of *al-jūd wa-al-karam*. Poverty and the poor are not subjects to which he devotes an independent chapter in his encyclopedia; instead al-Nuwayrī treats the subject as part of the question of generosity and its opposite, *bukhl*, generosity being one of the more prominent and positive ways in which a pre-Islamic freeman Arab could prove his *murū'ah*, or manliness.

Al-Nuwayrī begins this chapter with two Qurānic verses on generosity,⁹⁵ these being followed by a couple of *aḥādīth* from the Prophet Muḥammad: "Generosity (*al-jūd*) stems from the generosity of God, so be generous and God will be generous toward you."⁹⁶ And in the same vein: "Generosity is one of paradise's trees; its branches hang down to the earth. Whoever seizes one of these, I will have him enter into paradise."⁹⁷ Consequently, the believer should not fear poverty, because God will rescue him: "Forgive the sin of the generous man because God...takes him by his hand whenever he stumbles, and opens [the way for] him whenever

⁹⁵ "You will not attain piety until you expend of what you love" (Sūrat Āl 'Imrān 3:92) and: "And preferring others above themselves, even though poverty be their portion. And whoso is guarded against the avarice of his own soul, those—they are the prosperers" (Sūrat al-Ḥaṣhr 59:9). Translation Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London, 1955).

⁹⁶ "قال صلى الله عليه وسلم: "الجود من جود الله تعالى فجدوا بوجود الله عليكم."

Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 3:204.

⁹⁷ Ibid. "ألا أن السخاء شجرة في الجنة أغصانها متدلّية في الأرض فمن تعلّق بغصن منها أدخله الجنة."



he is impoverished.”⁹⁸ Conversely, avarice precipitates men into poverty, and al-Nuwayrī cites Aktham ibn al-Ṣayfī, “*ḥakīm al-ʿarab*”: “Do not believe in avarice; it [only] hastens poverty.”⁹⁹ After quite a long chapter on generosity in pre-Islamic times, where al-Nuwayrī cites a number of stories on famous pre-Islamic warriors and generous men such as Ḥātim al-Ṭāʾī,¹⁰⁰ al-Nuwayrī touches again on the subject of poverty and wealth when he treats avarice. Al-Nuwayrī not only cites a hadith of the Prophet Muḥammad stating that avarice is incompatible with belief¹⁰¹ and that the avaricious will not enter paradise¹⁰² but he cites the Greek philosopher Socrates in his statement that “rich and avaricious men are at the same level as mules and donkeys—they are burdened with gold and silver and they eat straw and barley.”¹⁰³ Al-Nuwayrī explicitly makes the point about avarice in citing two anonymous voices that represent the mainstream of classical Arab thinking¹⁰⁴ when they respectively state that “an avaricious individual does not merit being called a free man because he is owned by his wealth (*māl*)”¹⁰⁵ and that no wealth belongs to the avaricious man “because he belongs to his wealth.”¹⁰⁶ By insisting on the fact that avarice makes men prisoners to their wealth, al-Nuwayrī’s statements on avarice dovetail with the main “non-religious” argument that we find in the classical, pre-Mamluk elite literature against poverty: poverty is negative mainly because it strips a free man of his liberty.¹⁰⁷ Al-Nuwayrī ends his treatment of *bukhl* by citing quite a large number of stories about avaricious individuals, compiled from al-Jāḥiẓ’s *Kitāb al-Bukhalāʾ* and other sources. In the section “How the Avaricious Justify Their Avarice,”¹⁰⁸ this vision of poverty is clearly expressed in a phrase attributed to Abū Ḥanīfah: “There is no good in the one who does not protect his wealth in order to protect his honor, to care for those

⁹⁸ Ibid. “تجاوزوا عن ذنب السخي فإن الله عز وجل أخذ بيده كلما عثر وفاتح له كلما افتقر.”

⁹⁹ “ولا تعتقدوا البخل، لتعجلوا الفقر، أخذه الشاعر فقال: أمن خوف فقر تعجلته \ وأعرت إنفاق ما تجمع \ فصررت الفقير وأنت الغني \” Ibid., 205.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 208 ff.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 295. “قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: ‘خلتان لا تجتمعان في مؤمن: البخل وسوء الخلق’.”

¹⁰² Ibid. “فقال الله عز وجل (للجنة): ‘أنت حرام على كل بخيل.’”

¹⁰³ Ibid. “وقال سقراط: ‘الأغنياء البخلاء، بمنزلة البغال والحمير، تحمل الذهب والفضة، وتغلف التبن والشعير.’”

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Herzog, “Figuren der Bettler,” *Asiatische Studien* 65, no. 1 (2011): 72–73.

¹⁰⁵ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 3:296. “وقالوا: البخيل لا يستحق اسم الحرية، فإن ماله يملكه.”

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. “ويقال: لا مال للبخيل، وإنما هو ماله.”

¹⁰⁷ We find this argument, albeit not very explicitly, at the beginning of al-Nuwayrī’s chapter on generosity (al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 3:205): “The generous one is he who gives of his wealth but protects himself from [depending on] the wealth of others.”

¹⁰⁸ “وقال بعض الحكماء: الجواد من جاد بماله وصان نفسه عن مال غيره. وقيل لعمرو بن عبيد: ما الكرم؟ فقال: أن تكون بمالك متبرعا، وعن مال غيرك متورعا.”

Ibid., 314. احتجاج البخلاء وتحسينهم للبخل



for whom he is responsible, and to avoid the worst type of people.”¹⁰⁹ This mainstream view of poverty, mendicancy, and avarice is conclusively brought home in a poem by Ibn al-Mu‘tazz:

“O blamer: avarice is not my nature / but I saw poverty being a worse path / Indeed, death is better for a man than avarice / but avarice is better than begging from the avaricious.”¹¹⁰

To sum up, one can say that al-Nuwayrī treats poverty very much from the perspective of a wealthy Arab Muslim gentleman. Poverty and wealth are seen from the perspective of the charitable (*al-jūd wa-al-karam*) or uncharitable (*bukhl*) person who possesses a certain wealth. In the end, poverty and charity are for him mainly questions of status in society. Poverty is humiliating because of the dependence it entails, wherefore it must be avoided, whereas charity merits honor.

The second author, al-Ibshīhī, takes a more straightforward attitude toward wealth and poverty. He treats these subjects in that part of his book which I have termed “The Joys of Life.” Here he dedicates three chapters (51–53) to subjects closely related to our question: *Bāb dhikr al-ghinā’ wa-ḥubb al-māl wa-al-iftikhār bi-jam‘ihā*, “Wealth and money, the love of money, and boasting of its accumulation”; *Bāb dhikr al-faqr wa-madhihi*, “Poverty and praise of poverty”; and *Bāb fī al-talattuf fī al-su‘āl wa-dhikr man su‘ila fa-jād*, “Begging in a gentle way.”

Very interesting here is the space that al-Ibshīhī allots the various chapters in his book. Whereas the chapter on “Wealth and money, the love of money, and boasting of its accumulation” covers 17 pages in the Beirut, 1999, edition, the chapter on “Poverty and praise of poverty” is only 6 pages long, and the chapter on “Begging in a gentle way” takes up 14 pages.

Al-Ibshīhī begins his chapter on wealth and the rich with the well-known Quranic verse—“*al-māl wa-al-banūn zīnatu al-ḥayātu al-dunyā*/Wealth and sons are the ornaments of the worldly life”¹¹¹—and then adduces an anonymous (*qilā*) citation: “*al-faqr ra’s kulli balā’ wa-dā‘iyah li-maqtī al-nās*/Poverty is the fount of all vices and pushes mankind to hatred.”¹¹² Then al-Ibshīhī cites another reason why wealth is positive and poverty is not: “Poverty also robs of manliness and shame. When a man is stricken by poverty, he must give up his shame; and he who loses his shame, loses his manliness (*murū‘ah*); and he who loses his manliness is hated; and he who is hated is despised. A man who ends up in this situation can say

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 315. “وقال أبو حنيفة: لا خير فيمن لا يصبون ماله ليصون به عرضه، ويصل به رحمه ويستغني به عن لئام الناس.”

¹¹⁰ “قال عبد الله بن المعتز: أعاذل ليس البخيل مني سحبة \ ولكن وجدت الفقر شر سبيل \ لموت الفتى خير من البخل للفتى \ وللبخل خير من سؤال لبخل.” Ibid. See also Herzog, “Figuren der Bettler,” 73.

¹¹¹ Sūrat al-Kahf 46.

¹¹² Al-Ibshīhī, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*, 2:268.



whatever he likes, but it will always be used against him.”¹¹³ So the first thing al-Ibshīhī does when he addresses wealth and poverty is to underscore the fact that *māl* means *murūʾah* and that poverty means the loss of honor. We can find similar statements in many *adab*-encyclopedias, such as al-Nuwayrī’s *Nihāyat al-Arab* or Ibn Qutaybah’s *ʿUyūn al-Akhbār* and other classical works—but these authors do not place it right at the beginning of their argument.

After these introductory words, al-Ibshīhī continues in the same vein, citing what he says to be a hadith of the Prophet Muḥammad:¹¹⁴

“There is no good in a man who does not love wealth (or money: *māl*) to provide for his relatives,¹¹⁵ to deliver what was committed to his trust, to assure his independence, and to be free from others (literally: from God’s creation).”¹¹⁶

Al-Ibshīhī then spends another six pages citing poetry, mostly from al-Zamakhsharī’s *Rabīʿ al-Abrār* and from the *Tadhkirah* of Ibn Ḥamdūn. If ever one had expected from the title of al-Ibshīhī’s fifty-first chapter, “*Bāb dhikr al-ghināʾ wa-ḥubb al-māl wa-al-iftikhār bi-jamʿihā*,” that there would be long passages condemning “*ḥubb al-māl wa-al-iftikhār bi-jamʿihā*/the love of wealth and boasting of its accumulation,” one is definitely disappointed. Except for some brief verse at the end of the chapter, none of the numerous poems that al-Ibshīhī compiles in his chapter condemn in the slightest the love of wealth and its accumulation.¹¹⁷ To the contrary, in his compilation there are two lengthy prose sections that interrupt what might have been some very conventional “*al-madhḥ wa-al-dhamm*/praise and condemnation.” The first section—“*fīmā jāʾa fī al-iḥtirāz ʿalā al-māl*/What has been said on the protection of wealth”—discusses the tricks and stratagems that people employ so as to snatch one’s money and how to unmask these con artists and thieves; and the second section—“*nubdhah min al-dhakhāʾir wa-al-tuḥaf*/The most excellent treasures and bijoux”—describes the fabulous treasures and jewelry that kings and sultans have possessed throughout history. While the second prose section covers three pages and is mainly compiled from the

¹¹³ Ibid. "وهو مع ذلك مسلية للمروءة، مذهبة للحياء، ومن فقد حياءه فقد مروءته، ومن فقد مروءته مُقَتَّ، ومن مُقَتَّ أَزْدَرِي به، ومن صار كذلك صار كلامه عليه ولا له."

¹¹⁴ I could not identify this phrase as being a hadith of the Prophet Muḥammad. Ibrāhīm Sālīh, the editor of the 1999 Beirut edition, says in a footnote that *Al-Tadhkirah al-Muḥammadiyah*, which is one al-Ibshīhī’s possible sources here, attributes the saying to Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab, and that al-ʿIqd al-Farīd attributes it to a “*ḥakīm*,” a sage. It seems to be a variation of the statement cited by al-Nuwayrī, who attributes it to Abū Ḥanīfah (see n. 109, above).

¹¹⁵ رَجْمَه: the relatives from the side of the mother, so those one has to protect.

¹¹⁶ "لا خير لمن لا يحب المال ليصل به رَجْمَه وَيُؤَدِّي به أمانته وَيَسْتغني به عن حلب ربه." Al-Ibshīhī, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*, 2:268.

¹¹⁷ See the poem of a Bedouin below, p. 127.



Kitāb al-Dhakhā'ir wa-al-Tuḥaf by Ibn al-Zubayr (d. 563/1168),¹¹⁸ the first section on hustlers and thieves covers three and a half pages and seems not to be citations from other authors or a summary compilation of other works (the editor of the 1999 edition found no trace of citation or compilation). It would indeed seem that al-Ibshīhī wrote these pages without any external assistance. Al-Ibshīhī presents a kind of taxonomy of different groups of money-grabbers: “It has been said that the owner of wealth must keep and protect it from the rapacious (*al-muṭmaʿūn*), the betrayers (*al-mubartihūn*),¹¹⁹ the liars and those who embellish their talk (*al-mumakhriqūn wa-al-mumawwiḥūn*),¹²⁰ and those who hide their real intentions (*al-mutanammisūn*).”¹²¹ As for the rapacious, they flatter the rich and wealthy and offer them perfect “investment opportunities” or try to engage them in treasure-finding projects, which of course all end up with the rich investor losing his money. As for the betrayers, they gain the rich man’s confidence through the steady and loyal service of selling and buying for him—and then when he has delegated all his transactions to them, they secretly strip the wealthy man of his money. As for *al-mumakhriqūn* (or *al-muḥtarifūn wa-al-muwaḥḥimūn* in the 1999 Ṣaydā edition), the liars, they present themselves as having acquired great wealth through certain investment strategies and bamboozle their victims into thinking that they can make similar profits by entrusting the swindler with their own monies. Finally, al-Ibshīhī presents *al-mutanammisūn*, hypocrites, those who hide their real intentions, who cloak themselves in piety and pretend to renounce the world in order to become guardians of individual testaments and of other money that must needs be safeguarded. They are, al-Ibshīhī concludes, worse than the brigands and bandits; the naïve individual is on guard against the latter, but the former they foolishly trust.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Al-Rashīd Abū al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad ibn al-Qāḍī al-Rashīd Ibn al-Zubayr, *Kitāb al-Dhakhā'ir wa-al-Tuḥaf*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamid Allāh and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Kuwait, 1959).

¹¹⁹ I could not find the word “*mubartih*” in any of the Arabic dictionaries I consulted; my translation “betrayer” comes from the description that al-Ibshīhī gives of “*al-mubartihūn*.”

¹²⁰ The 1999 Ṣaydā edition (al-Ibshīhī, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf fī Kullī Fannin Mustazraf*, ed. Darwish al-Juwaydī) has here: “*al-muḥtarifīn wa-al-muwaḥḥimīn*.”

¹²¹ “فقد قالوا: ينبغي لصاحب المال أن يحترز ويحفظه من المطمعين والمبرطحين والمخترقين والمؤحّضين والمتنمسين.” Al-Ibshīhī, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*, 2:274.

¹²² Al-Ibshīhī seems to have composed these pages himself and they were apparently intended to warn wealthy people against those who sought to steal their money. In a way they resemble ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jawbarī’s *Kashf al-Asrār*. But just as al-Jawbarī—who was apparently less educated than al-Ibshīhī—cannot be called a “small ‘ālim” (he is not to be found in any biographical dictionary; see Manuela Höglmeier, *Al-Ġawbarī und sein Kaṣf al-asrār: ein Sittenbild des Gauners im arabisch-islamischen Mittelalter [7./13. Jahrhundert]: Einführung, Edition und Kommentar* [Berlin, 2006], 31 ff.), his reading public may have been less wealthy than those wealthy men (*ṣāhib al-māl*) al-Ibshīhī warns against those who want to trap them in fraudulent investments.



Following these pages, which in no way question the legitimacy of “the love of wealth and boasting of its accumulation,” al-Ibshīhī still does not conclude his chapter by addressing the subject of money and those who love it but presents a long passage on treasures, precious stones, gold, silver, etc., that is taken from Ibn al-Zubayr’s *Kitāb al-Dhakhā’ir wa-al-Tuḥaf*. Interestingly enough, he begins his passage by noting—this also to be found in *Akḥbār Makkah* by al-Azraqī (d. 222/837)¹²³—that the treasure that the Prophet Muḥammad was said to have found in the cave of the Ka’bah when he conquered Mecca was said to have been 70,000 ounces or the equivalent of 1,990,000 dinars; and then he continues by elaborating the various treasures obtained during the wars with the Persians and the Byzantines. The whole chapter maintains a serious and even admiring tone, and there is no critique whatsoever of money and wealth. Only at the very end of the chapter on wealth and money does al-Ibshīhī cite a (single) poem stating that all the goods of this world (*dunyā*) are doomed to perish (*a-laysa masīru dhālika lil-zawāl?*).¹²⁴ So, in seventeen pages of praising wealth and money, al-Ibshīhī cites only this one short poem representing a different voice, and in all likelihood simply to serve as segue to the next and much shorter chapter praising poverty.

Al-Ibshīhī begins his chapter on the praise of poverty with the Quranic verse “No indeed; surely Man waxes insolent, for he thinks himself self-sufficient,”¹²⁵ which is for him an indication that wealth (*ghinā*) is condemnable if it leads to tyranny and disobedience of God. Al-Ibshīhī then goes on to cite some of the numerous *aḥādīth* in which the Prophet is said to have valued poverty and the poor—as in the well-known but disputed hadith: “O my God, let me die as a poor man and not as a rich one, and gather me in the group of the poor/*fī jamrati al-masākīn*.”¹²⁶ But unlike his section on wealth and money (except for the last poem), al-Ibshīhī vitiates his praise of poverty by compiling statements like: “One of the prayers of the first Muslims (*salaf*) was: ‘O God, I take refuge with you from the humiliation of poverty and the vanity of wealth.’”¹²⁷ In other citations in his chapter “In praise of poverty,” al-Ibshīhī indirectly reassures his readers that it is not possessions and money that are evil but only money gained through illegitimate means¹²⁸ and that poverty is grace from God which he only bestows on those nearest him, on his *awliyā*: “The Prophet has said: ‘Poverty is one of the

¹²³ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd ibn ‘Uqbah al-Azraqī. Al-Ibshīhī, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*, 2:280.

¹²⁴ “هب الدنيا تقاد إليك عفواً \ أليس مصير ذلك للزوال” Ibid., 2:284.

¹²⁵ “كلا إن الإنسان ليطغى إن رآه استغنى” Sūrat al-‘Alaq 6–7. English translation: Arberry, *Koran Interpreted*.

¹²⁶ Al-Ibshīhī, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*, 2:286. See also Ibn Taymiyah, *Aḥādīth al-Quṣṣāṣ*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ṣabbāgh (Riyadh [?], 1972), hadith no. 50, p. 101.

¹²⁷ “أللهم إني أعوذ بك من ذل الفقر وبطر الغنى” Al-Ibshīhī, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*, 2:289.

¹²⁸ “وقيل مكتوت على باب مدينة الرقة: ويل لمن جمع المال من غير حقة” Ibid., 2:289.



graces of God, for he only bestows it on those closest to him.”¹²⁹ In Mamluk times the term *walī* was used for “saintly” people who were said to have special powers by virtue of their special relationship to God, so a Mamluk reader of al-Ibshīhī’s book might very well understand this hadith the other way around, meaning that if God hadn’t chosen him for poverty then it was because he was not a *walī* of God but just an ordinary believer. Not everybody, al-Ibshīhī seems to be saying here, can be a “saintly” person and have to lead an impoverished existence. Significantly enough, al-Ibshīhī concludes his chapter on poverty by citing a Bedouin (*aʿrābī*): “He who has been born in poverty will have wealth render him arrogant; he who has been born in wealth will only be humble with more wealth.”¹³⁰

The last of these three chapters is one discussing begging and the correct treatment of beggars. In this last chapter, which is quite long (14 pages), we find statements like the famous hadith “*Ttū al-sā’il wa-law kāna ‘alā farasin*/Give to the beggar, even if he is on horseback,” but al-Ibshīhī gives over much space to condemnations of begging.

If we recall the small amount of space that he gives to asceticism/*zuhd* in the penultimate chapter of his book and how in the middle of a reflection on corruption in the chapter on the qadis he severely condemns Sufis as charlatans who rob the naïve populace,¹³¹ we can see that al-Ibshīhī was certainly no advocate of voluntary poverty as the way of God. In my view, his book quite clearly represents the mentality of “middle-class” men of some wealth: merchants, craftsmen, shopkeepers. I think it safe to assume that he wrote his book with a public in mind that was very much like the notables of al-Maḥallah, where he and his father had been imams.

Coming now to the third and final *adab*-encyclopedia that I want to highlight in this article, the mentality or ideology of Yūnus al-Mālikī’s *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* with respect to money and poverty differs again from that of al-Nuwayrī’s work and from that which we can find in al-Ibshīhī’s *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*, and I am very much tempted to attribute this variation to the differing social background of al-Mālikī.¹³² In fact, al-Mālikī’s attitude toward wealth and money, as well as poverty

¹²⁹ Ibid., 2:286. “الفقر موهبة من مواهب الله، فلا يختاره إلا لأوليائه.”

¹³⁰ Ibid., 2:290. Bedouins, who at all times knew poverty very well, have generally not valued this state. Pre-Islamic Bedouin poetry, which forms a considerable part of many classical *adab*-encyclopedias, generally praises wealth.

¹³¹ Ibid., 1:321–24.

¹³² Given the fact that al-Mālikī is cited in none of the biographical dictionaries and that this is probably why Ḥājji Khalīfah cites only the title of the book and the author’s name without indicating his date of death; and given the numerous passages which differ both grammatically and lexically from the norm of the Arabic *koīné*; and given the naïve character of the work—we



and asceticism, is very much a petit bourgeois one. The attitude that al-Mālikī (or whoever might have written the book or parts of it)¹³³ adopts toward wealth and poverty is unlike al-Nuwayrī's Arab Muslim "gentleman"'s attitude or al-Ibshihī's "middle-class" one in which contentment is privileged. In al-Mālikī's book, terms such as *riḍā* and *qanā'ah* (contentment) form the basis of a wise and virtuous man's behavior. Typical aphorisms or proverbs are: "He who is content with what is bestowed [by God] is also patient in the moment of distress,"¹³⁴ or, "The best wealth (*māl*) is that which makes you richer, and better than that is the one that suffices you,"¹³⁵ or, "O how ugly is servility if one is in need and how ugly is arrogance if one needs no help. It is said: The fruit of contentment is peace [of the soul]: ثمرة القناعة الراحة."¹³⁶

Th *Kanz al-Madfūn* clearly does not advocate a mendicant life without work; it cites the following proverb, "Better than begging is facing the difficulties of life,"¹³⁷ and it states that one has to earn one's money in an honest way without begging: "The best subsistence is the one which is not stained when gained and which is not sullied by the ignominy and servility of begging."¹³⁸ Although *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* at times shows understanding for the distress of the poor—"It is most astonishing that the one who is poor and has a family to provide for does not throw himself on the notables (*al-nās*) with a knife [in his hand]"¹³⁹—its essential attitude is expressed in the aphorism: "Continence is the ornament of the poor and thankfulness is the ornament of the rich."¹⁴⁰

Al-Kanz al-Madfūn also assures the impoverished that a poor but righteous man is often better than a vile rich one: "Chosroes has said: 'Stinginess is worse than poverty, for the poor man, if he becomes rich, he is content, whereas the rich man, if he gets something, is never content.'"¹⁴¹ At any rate, *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* comforts its readers when placing money and wealth in the context of *al-dunyā*, that world which is doomed to perish and therefore of no real importance other

have to presume that al-Mālikī came from a less educated and wealthy milieu than the likes of al-Ibshihī.

¹³³ See above, p. 13.

¹³⁴ Al-Mālikī, *Kanz*, 97, l. 22: "من رضي بالقضاء صبر على البلاء".

¹³⁵ "تخير المال ما أغناك وخير منه ما أكفأك." Ibid., 16, l. 1.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 9, l. 1, 1. "ما أقبح الخضوع عند الحاجة، والتكبر عند الاستغناء. يقال: ثمرة القناعة الراحة." A similar idea is expressed by the following: "He who is content with little subsistence [that God has bestowed on him] has no need of most people." Ibid., 97, l. 14: "من قنع باليسير من الرزق استغنى عن كثير من الخلق".

¹³⁷ Ibid., 45, l. 7: "أحسن من السؤال ركوب الأحوال".

¹³⁸ Ibid., 56, l. 16: "تخير الرزق ما سلم من الآثام في الاكتساب، والذل والخضوع عند السؤال".

¹³⁹ Ibid., 95, l. 7: "قال بعض الحكماء: إني لأعجب ممن له عيال كثيرة وهو فقير كيف لا يخرج على النسب بالسيف".

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 9, l. 12: "العفاف زينة الفقير، الشكر زينة الغني".

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 69, l. 20: "قال كسرى: الشح أضر من الفقر. لأن الفقير إذا وجد شبع، والشحيح لا يشبع أبداً".



than being the antechamber of *al-ākhirah*, which is the real world after this one: "The ignorant man wants to acquire wealth, whereas the intelligent man wants to acquire perfection. Be abstinent from that which does not subsist and cling yourself to that which persists."¹⁴² Worldly power, like wealth, is not to be desired—it mostly brings trouble and strife: "Being a prince means first to be blamed, then to regret, and finally torture on the Day of Resurrection."¹⁴³ Pious people should therefore stay far away from the centers of power, as does the ascetic in the following citation: "An ascetic once looked at the door of the king and said: an iron door, death already prepared, hard agony, and travel far away."¹⁴⁴ So *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* provides its reader with a quietist moral, and the author's petit-bourgeois ideology is perhaps best characterized by the following two statements:

"Be occupied with what you're responsible for/مشتغولاً بما أنت عنه مسئول" ¹⁴⁵ and: "He who wishes to remain at peace, does not expose himself and leaves courage alone/من أراد البقاء والسلامة فليدع الاقدام والشجاعة" ¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Ibid., 18, l. 17: "الجاهل يطلب المال، والعاقل يطلب الكمال. ازهد فيما يزول، واعتقل لنفسك ما يدوم."

¹⁴³ Ibid., 110, l. 15: "الامارة أولها ملامة. وثانيها ندامة. وثالثها عذاب يوم القيامة."

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 54, l. 12: "نظر زاهد إلى باب الملك، فقال: باب حديد، وموت عتيد، ونزع شديد، وسفر بعيد."

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 185.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 94.

