MAMLŪK STUDIES
REVIEW

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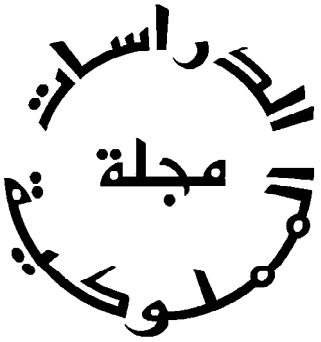

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MAMLŪK STUDIES REVIEW

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Mamlūk Studies Review is an annual, Open Access, refereed journal devoted to the study of the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt and Syria (648–922/1250–1517). The goals of *Mamlūk Studies Review* are to take stock of scholarship devoted to the Mamluk era, nurture communication within the field, and promote further research by encouraging the critical discussion of all aspects of this important medieval Islamic polity. The journal includes both articles and reviews of recent books.

Submissions of original work on any aspect of the field are welcome, although the editorial board will periodically issue volumes devoted to specific topics and themes. *Mamlūk Studies Review* also solicits edited texts and translations of shorter Arabic source materials (*waqf* deeds, letters, *fatawa* and the like), and encourages discussions of Mamluk era artifacts (pottery, coins, etc.) that place these resources in wider contexts. An article or book review in *Mamlūk Studies Review* makes its author a contributor to the scholarly literature and should add to a constructive dialogue.

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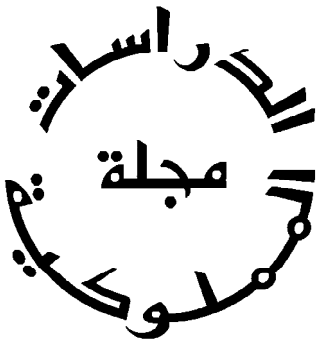

Editor´s Note

In the front matter of every volume of *Mamluk Studies Review* you will find a statement that ″. . .the editorial board will periodically issue volumes devoted to specific topics and themes.″ With the partial exception of the first volume, with its heavy emphasis on ″state of the art″ essays, this is the first such volume. The topic addressed is the ″literary culture″ of the Mamluk era, and the hope of the editors is that these essays may serve to inspire a fresh and unbiased look at a topic that has too frequently been relegated to a sort of scholarly oblivion.

It has been my good fortune to have had the assistance of Professor Th. Emil Homerin, of the University of Rochester, as my collaborator in the planning and execution of this volume. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge his contribution as guest editor, and to thank him for his patience, energy, and insight. It should also be noted that Professor Donald P. Little lent a hand with the editing of several articles, and that his efforts have improved the volume substantially. Marlis Saleh has, as always, contributed significantly to the final product. Finally, thanks are due the individual contributors, who responded with enthusiasm to the opportunity to produce a volume on Mamluk literature.

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Robert Irwin
London, England

Mamluk Literature

When the Mamluks took power first in Egypt and then in Syria, there must have been many who viewed their ascendancy with dread. During the 650s/1250s the Ṣāliḥī Bahri mamluks had acquired a reputation as rapacious thugs. The Mamluk Sultan Baybars (r. 658–76/1260–77), who was feared by his subjects rather than loved, had no literary culture and was, indeed, illiterate. Nevertheless, he did listen to readings of history. Specifically, he listened to the chronicle of his own exploits, the *Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir,* read to him by its author, the historian and senior chancery official Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir. The sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn showed little or no interest in literature and his Arabic was notably poor. However, as we shall see, even in that first generation of the Mamluk regime there were some amirs who took a serious interest in literature. More literate and literary mamluks emerged from the second and third generation of the military elite, for the Mamluk regime in Egypt and Syria relied on an unusually literate military elite. This was because the training of a young mamluk in the Cairo Citadel did not just include exercises with sword, lance, and bow. Twice every week, Arab scholars from the city came in to instruct the young mamluks how to speak and read Arabic, as well as the tenets of Islam. There was a *faqīh* assigned to each barrack *(ṭabaqah)* whose job it was to teach the young mamluks the Quran, the Arabic script, and elements of the shariʻah.[1] Evidence survives from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that the sultans′ young mamluks in the Citadel were put to work copying manuscripts in the royal library.[2]

The Ayyubid library in the Citadel, the *khizānat al-kutub,* had been destroyed by a fire in 1292, and it is not clear what steps were taken to replace the lost volumes. Subsequently, the wealthy amir and friend of Ibn Khaldūn, Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn ʻAlī al-Ustādār, provided his Jamālī madrasah with a large collection of books purchased from the royal citadel. The sultans al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh and al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq were fanatical book collectors, but it is not clear whether the books they collected ended up in the royal library of the Citadel. The chief concentration of institutional libraries was in the mosques and madrasahs of the

[1]Aḥmad ibn ʻAlī al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawāʻiẓ wa-al-lʻtibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār* (Bulaq, 1853–54), 2:213–14.
[2]Barbara Flemming, ″Literary Activities in Mamluk Halls and Barracks,″ in *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, ed. Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (Jerusalem, 1977), 249–60.

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Bayn al-Qaṣrayn.[3] To mark the restoration of the mosque of al-Ḥākim after the earthquake of 702/1302–3, Baybars II presented the mosque with a library of 500 volumes on the religious sciences, literature, and history.[4] There were also private libraries amassed by some of the great amirs. The Cairo palace of Badr al-Dīn Baysarī al-Shamsī (d. 1298) had a grand collection of Arab books, as well as a certain ″Turkish book″ that so fascinated the historian Ibn al-Dawādārī.[5] The wealthy vizier Amir Badr al-Dīn Baydarā similarly amassed a great library. According to Ibn al-Ṣuqā'ī, Baydarā liked *adab* and singing.[6]

Al-Maqrīzī once composed some verses in which he claimed that people who loitered about in markets were up to no good. The only exceptions he allowed were loitering in the weapons market or the book market. The main book market used to be in Fustat, east of the Mosque of 'Amr. This market declined steeply in the fourteenth century, but al-Maqrīzī could still remember buying books there as a boy. In 700/1301, however, a new book market, the Sūq al-Kutubīyīn, had been founded, close to the goldsmiths′ market. This market was part of the *waqf* of the Manṣūrī Bīmāristān. Another, smaller cluster of bookstalls was to be found close to the Azhar Mosque (and close also to the candle market, where the prostitutes used to hang out). In the fifteenth century, the Sūq al-Warrāqīn, or market of copyists, was close to Barsbāy′s madrasah. Bookshops were, of course, also copying shops and some of them also doubled as circulating libraries.

Barracks, libraries, and bookshops apart, prisons also sometimes served as a somewhat unexpected learning environment for members of the Mamluk elite. Baybars al-Jashinkīr studied Arabic in prison before becoming sultan. The sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad already had Arabic when he was imprisoned, and he used it to study al-Bayhaqī′s eleventh-century writings on hadith. The theologian and jurist Ibn Taymīyah wrote copiously in prison. Shihāb al-Dīn al-'Umarī got much of his (rather inaccurate) information about Europe from a fellow-prisoner who was Genoese. Ibn 'Arabshāh was presumably in prison when he wrote his unfinished eulogistic chronicle of the achievements of Jaqmaq.

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[3]On libraries of the Mamluk period, see Carl Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1981), index, s.v. ″libraries.″ On medieval Muslim libraries more generally, see Youssef Eche, *Les Bibliothèqes arabes publiques en Mésopotamie, en Syrie et en Egypte au moyen age* (Damascus, 1967); Mohammed Makki Sibai, *Mosque Libraries: an Historical Study* (London, 1987).

[4]Donald Little, ″Religion under the Mamluks,″ *Muslim World* 73 (1983): 170.

[5]Ulrich Haarmann, ″Turkish Legends in the Popular Historiography of Medieval Egypt,″ in *Proceedings of the VIth Congress of Arabic and Islamic Studies,* ed. Frithiof Rundgren (Leiden, 1975), 99, 102.

[6]Faḍl Allāh ibn Abī al-Fakhr al-Suqā'ī, *Tālī Kitāb Wafayāt al-A'yān,* ed. Jacqueline Sublet (Damascus, 1974), 75.

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Some amirs seem to have identified strongly with Arabic culture. Sanjar al-Dawādār wrote poetry. Baybars al-Manṣūrī wrote history. Ṭaybughā al-Ashrafī wrote a treatise on archery. The brutal amir Uzdamur al-Kāshif had memorized al-Ḥarīrī′s *Maqamāt,* as well as much Arabic poetry. Quite a few amirs and mamluks interested themselves in Hanafi or Shafi'i jurisprudence or in collecting and transmitting hadiths. However, although it is not uncommon to come across references to sultans, amirs, and mamluks who spoke and wrote in Arabic, there seems to be more evidence of this level of culture in the fifteenth century than in earlier periods.[7]

The literary culture of the Mamluk period was Turkish as well as Arabic, though the production of literary works in Turkish mostly seems to have been a late development that reached its peak in the Circassian period. Turkish works composed within the frontiers of the Mamluk Sultanate were written in Kipchak, Oghuz, or a mixture of the two. It is one of the curious features of the Circassian period that, on the evidence of what has survived, more works were then translated from Arabic or Persian into Kipchak or one of the other Turkish dialects than in the preceding Kipchak Turkish Mamluk period. It seems probable that, despite the increased numbers of Circassians imported into Egypt and Syria in the later Mamluk period, some form of Turkish remained the military lingua franca. It is difficult to consider the Turkish literature of Mamluk Egypt in isolation from that of the Golden Horde, Khwarizm, Anatolia, and Azerbaijan. The legacy of Khwarizmian Kipchak literary culture and its continuation in the lands of the Golden Horde was at first particularly important. Later on, translations into Oghuz Turkish, the dialect of the Anatolian and, more specifically, of the Ottoman Turks became more common. However, even towards the end of the Mamluk period, in the reign of Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī, a mamluk called Asanbāy min Sūdūn copied a Hanbali religious treatise by Abū al-Layth in the Kipchak dialect for the royal library. Much of what was translated into Turkish was instructional in nature, dealing with jurisprudence, hippology, or *furūsīyah* and hence of no interest to the student of literature in the narrow sense.

It seems that the earliest text on Turkish grammar to circulate in the Arab lands was produced by an Andalusian immigrant. Athīr al-Dīn Muḥammad Abū

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[7]On the Arabic culture of the mamluks, see Ulrich Haarmann, ″Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamluks and Their Sons in the Intellectual Life of Fourteenth-Century Egypt and Syria,″ *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33 (1988): 81–114; Jonathan Berkey, ″′Silver Threads Among the Coal′: A Well-Educated Mamluk of the Ninth/Fifteenth Century,″ *Studia Islamica* 73 (1991): 109–25; idem, ″Mamluks as Muslims: The Military Elite and the Construction of Islam in Medieval Egypt,″ in *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society,* ed. Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann (Cambridge, 1998), 163–75; Robert Irwin, ″The Privatization of ′Justice′ Under the Circassian Mamluks,″ *Mamlūk Studies Review* 6 (2002): 69–70.

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Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī (654–745/1256–1344) was born in Granada, but like so many of his literary contemporaries, he ended up in Cairo, where he enjoyed the patronage of Sayf al-Dīn Arghūn, the *nā'ib al-salṭanah* in Egypt. Although Abū Ḥayyān was primarily a grammarian and linguist, he also enjoyed a considerable reputation as an elegant, stylish poet, who produced verses on a wide range of themes. In particular he made use of poetry to expound grammar. An expert linguist, he wrote in Turkish and Persian. His *Al-Idrāk li-Lisān al-Atrāk* is an exposition of the Turkish language as it was spoken in Cairo. Bärkä Faqīh´s translation of part of *Khusraw and Shirin* from Persian into Kipchak Turkish in 1386 was the first work of high literature to be produced in Turkish in the Mamluk lands. A few years later Sayf-ı Sarāyī arrived in Egypt. Sayf-ı Sarāyī, as his name suggests, came to Egypt from the capital of the Golden Horde and was the most prominent writer of Turkish verse to reside in the Mamluk lands. He translated Sa'dī´s *Gulistan* into Kipchak Turkish, and added an appendix of poems, most of which were his own.[8] More generally, Turkish scholars and littérateurs were likely to receive a favorable reception from the Mamluk elite. Sayf al-Dīn Sarghitmish al-Nāṣirī, one of the most powerful amirs in the decades that followed the death of the sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and a fanatical partisan for the Hanafi *madhhab,* founded a Hanafi madrasah that became a magnet for *fuqahā'* from all over the Turkish-speaking world.[9] Ibn 'Arabshāh´s and al-'Aynī´s knowledge of Turkish almost certainly helped bring them to the favor of the Mamluks.[10]

The sultan al-Ẓāhir Tātār (r. 824/1421), besides studying Hanafi jurisprudence and the shari'ah in Turkish, was fond of listening to poetry, especially Turkish poetry, which he memorized, and he was said to understand the principles of its composition. He also collected books in Turkish. According to Ibn Taghrībirdī, he was the second Mamluk sultan, after al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh, to have had a taste for the sciences *('ulūm),*

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[8]On Turkish literature in the Mamluk lands, see András Bodrogligeti, ″A Collection of Poems from the 14th Century,″ *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 16 (1963): 245–311; idem, *A Fourteenth Century Turkic Translation of Sa'dī´s Gulistān* (Bloomington, Ind., 1970); idem, ″A Grammar of Mamluke-Kipchak,″ in *Studia Turcica*, ed. L. Ligeti (Budapest, 1971), 89–102; idem ″Notes on the Turkish Literature at the Mamluke Court,″ *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 14 (1962): 273–82; János Eckmann, ″The Mamluk-Kipchak Literature,″ *Central Asiatic Journal* 7 (1962): 304–19; Barbara Flemming, ″Zum Stand der Mamluk-Türkischen Forschung,″ in *XIX. Deutscher Orientalistentag 1975 in Freiburg im Breisgau: Vorträge,* Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Supplement 3, 2 (Wiesbaden, 1977), 1156–64. On Athīr al-Dīn Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī, see Th. Emil Homerin, ″Reflections on Poetry in the Mamluk Age,″ *MSR* 1 (1997): 80–85.

[9]Leonora Fernandes, ″Mamluk Politics and Education: The Evidence from Two Fourteenth Century Waqfiyya,″ *Annales Islamologiques* 23 (1987): 87–98; Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 338–39.

[10]Annemarie Schimmel, ″Some Glimpses of the Religious Life During the Later Mamluk Period,″ *Islamic Studies* 7 (1965): 356–57.

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arts, and literature.[11] Ibn Taghrībirdī´s obituary of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh states that that sultan was fond of poetry, though what kind is not stated.[12] Those military men who did interest themselves in literary culture were likely to write in both Arabic and Turkish—and, in a few cases, in Persian as well. Sayf al-Dīn Taghrībirmish al-Jalālī (d. 1448), an expert in *fiqh,* composed in both Arabic and Turkish.[13]

The brutal Amir Yashbak min Mahdī (d. 1480), the terror of the Arabs of Upper Egypt and a notorious sadist, was also a key figure in the literary culture of the late fifteenth century. Besides bringing peace of a desolate sort to Upper Egypt, he presided over the defeat of Shāh Sūwār in Anatolia and opened hostilities against Uzun Ḥasan in Iran. One can describe him as the power behind Qāytbāy´s throne, though in fact he was such a prominent statesman and soldier that he could better be described as the power in front of the throne. Judged as a whole, Yashbak´s personality and career are strongly reminiscent of his near-contemporary, John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester (ca. 1427–70), for Tiptoft was notorious as England´s chief torturer and impaler and famed, also, as a pious and cultured humanist.[14] Yashbak wrote a genealogy of the Prophet, as well as soulful religious poems in Turkish. He was also a passionate collector of books and an important cultural patron. He was especially fond of Persian scholars. He was the patron of the Persians Ya'qūb Shāh and Pīr Ḥajjī. Yashbak commissioned the production of beautiful books, for example the copy of al-Būṣīrī´s poem of praise of the Prophet, *Al-Kawākib al-Durrīyah,* which is preserved in the Chester Beatty Library.[15] This and other acts of religious patronage may raise doubts about Ibn Taghrībirdī´s claim that Yashbak hated religion. Much of what we know about Yashbak comes from his client, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd ibn Khalīl Ibn Ajā al-Ḥalabī (d. 881/1476). Ibn Ajā, a former student of Ibn Ḥajar´s, also wrote poetry in Turkish. Ibn Ajā served Yashbak as military qadi and envoy and he produced a fascinating chronicle of Yashbak´s campaigning against the Dhu al-Qadrid prince Shāh Sūwār. He also translated al-Wāqidī´s *Futūḥ al-Shām* into Turkish for Yashbak.[16] Al-Sakhāwī, who praised Yashbak´s generosity to *fuqarā',* hajjis, and

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[11]Abū al-Maḥāsin Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Berkeley, 1909–36), 6:517; Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi' li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi'* (Cairo, 1934), 4:8.

[12]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 6:428.

[13]Berkey, ″Silver Threads.″

[14]Rosamond J. Mitchell, *John Tiptoft, 1427–70* (London, 1938).

[15]Chester Beatty MS 4169; c.f. Esin Atıl, *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks* (Washington, 1981), 47 and note.

[16]On Yashbak´s political and literary career, see Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd ibn Khalīl Ibn Ajā, *Tārīkh al-Amīr Yashbak al-Ẓāhirī,* ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad al-Ṭulaymāt (Cairo, 1974); Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Weimar and Leiden, 1898–1902, 1943–49), S2:78; Haarmann, ″Turkish Legends,″ 98; Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, ″Les dernières batailles

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plague victims, wrote the chronicle *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Dhayl al-Sulūk* at his request, and al-Sakhāwī added that Yashbak later carried the book about with him and showed it to other people. However, having celebrated Yashbak´s discrimination and enthusiasm, al-Sakhāwī gloomily and typically added that all that ″is a thing of the past. Nothing now remains but stupidity, boorishness, and an interest in worldly trifles.″[17] Yashbak´s master, the sultan al-Ashraf Qāytbāy (r. 872–901/1468–96), shared his henchman´s literary interests. He composed Turkish *ghazal*s, as well as Arabic religious poetry and *muwashshaḥ*s, and he composed Sufi *awrād* and *adhkār* in Arabic. Muḥammad ibn Qāytbāy followed in his father´s literary footsteps. As we shall see, the penultimate Mamluk sultan, al-Ashraf Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī, was at least as cultured as his former owner, Qāytbāy.[18]

The literacy in Arabic of many amirs and mamluks may explain the number of manuscripts produced in this period devoted to *furūsīyah,* hunting, hippology, and perhaps also chess (a game that was considered as a training in strategic thinking). Treatises on *furūsīyah* that aimed at the mamluk market were mostly of a practical nature and thus quite unlike the devotional treatises in what was nominally the same genre produced by such pious Arabs as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah. Even so, literary and antiquarian elements might creep in and, for example, al-Aqsarā'ī´s *Nihāyat al-Su'āl wa-al-Umniyah fī Ta'līm A'māl al-Furūsīyah* recycled parts of Aelian´s *Tactica*, a second-century A.D. Greek treatise on strategy that must have been of negligible use for fourteenth-century Mamluk cavalry.[19]

Evidently, the bookish tastes of the Mamluk elite had some part in shaping the literature of medieval Egypt and Syria. However, the role of the *awlād al-nās* was

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du grand emir Yasbak min Mahdi,″ in *War and Society in the Eastern Mediterranean, 7th–15th Centuries,* ed. Yaacov Lev (Leiden, 1997), 301–42, esp. 314–15; Flemming, ″Literary Activities,″ 252, 255; idem, ″Šerīf, Sultan Ġavrī und die ´Perser,´″ *Der Islam* 45 (1969): 87–89; Toufic Fahd, *La Divination arabe* (Paris, 1987) 202 n.

[17]Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-I'lān bi-al-Tawbīkh li-Man Dhamma al-Tārīkh,* translated in Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1968), 329.

[18]On al-Ghūrī´s literary culture, see Mohammad Awad, ″Sultan al-Ghawri: His Place in Literature and Learning (Three Books Written under His Patronage),″ in *Actes du XXe Congrès international des orientalistes* (Louvain, 1940), 321–22; Flemming, ″Šerīf,″ 81–93; idem, ″Aus den Nachtgesprächen Sultan Gauris,″ in *Folia Rara: Wolfgang Voigt LXV. Diem Natalem Celebranti ab Amicis et Catalogorum Codicum Orientalium Conscribendorum Collegis Dedicata* (Wiesbaden, 1976), 22–28. On Turkish literature of the Mamluk period more generally, see János Eckmann, ″Die Mamluk-kiptchakische Literatur,″ in *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, ed. Jean Deny et. al. (Wiesbaden, 1959–), 2:296–304; Omeljan Pritsak, ″Das Kiptschakische,″ in ibid., 1:74–87; Ananiasz Zajaczkowski, *Vocabulaire Arabe-Kiptchak de l´époque de l´État Mamelouk: Bulġat al-Muštaq fī Luġat at-Turk wa-l-Qifžaq* (Warsaw, 1958); Bodrogligeti, ″Collection of Turkish Poems″; Flemming, ″Zum Stand der Mamluk-Türkischen Forschung.″

[19]Geoffrey Tantum, ″Muslim Warfare: A Study of a Medieval Muslim Treatise on the Art of War,″ in *Islamic Arms and Armour,* ed. Robert Elgood (London, 1979), 194–96.

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perhaps even more crucial. The *awlād al-nās,* sons of mamluks, many of whom had married into Arab elite households, acted as cultural intermediaries between the Mamluk elite and their Turkish subjects, and many of them also wrote books. The subject has been the subject of an excellent study by Ulrich Haarmann.[20] The ranks of the *awlād al-nās* included such writers as Ibn al-Dawādārī, Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Jankalī al-Bābā, al-Ṣafadī, Ibn al-Turkumānī, Ibn Manglī, Ibn Sūdūn, Ibn Taghrībirdī, and Ibn Iyās. In most cases, the identification of the *awlād al-nās* with Arabic culture was total. However, the historian Ibn al-Dawādārī took an interest in Turkish legends and folklore and Ibn Taghrībirdī was famous for his expertise in Turkish matters, though some of his critics doubted that expertise.

A remarkably large part of the literature of the Mamluk age was produced by Arab officials working in the employment of the state, either in the *inshā'* (chancery) or in one of the *dīwān*s. The income from state employment may have cushioned their writing activities. On the other hand, in many cases the bureaucrats seem to have been producing literature in the expectation of advancing their careers. Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir, ʻIzz al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād, Shāfīʻ ibn ʻAlī, Ibn al-Mukarram, and Ibn Abī Ḥajalah were among the chancery men who wrote chronicles celebrating the achievements of ruling sultans.[21] In the case of Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir, his chronicles, especially the one devoted to the deeds of Qalāwūn, seem to have largely served as a framing device for Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir′s own drafts of diplomatic pieces and occasional displays of fine prose.[22] (The elaborate official drafts produced earlier in the Ayyubid period by such figures as al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil and ʻImād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī furnished the model for this sort of thing, and Ibn Nubātah, who worked in the Syrian and Egyptian chanceries, was to produce a collection of al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil′s letters, as an act of literary piety.) That chancery prose was esteemed and enjoyed as a form of belles-lettres is indicated by the inclusion of a chapter on the subject in al-Ghuzūlī′s *Maṭālīʻ al-Budūr* (on which see below).

Besides histories, officials in the *inshā'* also produced extensive manuals on the running of the chancery and the *adab,* or culture, that the scribes who worked in it might be expected to have. Saladin′s officials ʻImād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī and al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil served as prose models for writers in the service of the Mamluk *inshā'*.

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[20]Haarmann, ″Arabic in Speech.″

[21]P. M. Holt, ″Literary Offerings: A Genre of Courtly Literature,″ in *Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society,* 3–16; Otfried Weintritt, *Formen spätmittelalterlicher islamischer Geschichtsdarstellung: Untersuchungen zu an-Nuwairī al-Iskandarānīs* Kitāb al-Ilmām *und verwandten zeitgenössischen Texten* (Beirut, 1992), 185–200. See also Robert Irwin, ″Mamluk History and Historians,″ in the forthcoming volume of the *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature* edited by Roger Allan and Donald Richards and devoted to late medieval literature.

[22]P. M. Holt, ″Three Biographies of al-Ẓāhir Baybars,″ in *Medieval Historical Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds*, ed. D. O. Morgan (London, 1982), 19–29.

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The chancery official Muḥammad ibn Manẓūr′s chancery treatise, *Tadhkirat al-Labīb wa-Nuzhat al-Adīb,* has not survived (though it was one of Ibn al-Furāt′s and al-Qalqashandī′s sources). However, Muḥammad ibn Manẓūr, also known as Ibn Mukarram (630–711/1233–1311), was also well known as a philologist and lexicographer, whose chief claim to fame was his compilation of one of the great dictionaries of the medieval period, the *Lisān al-ʻArab.* The *Lisān* was no mere glossary of words and their meanings. Because of its numerous citations of illustrative fragments of poetry and other material, it was in effect a literary chrestomathy.[23]

Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nuwayrī (667–732/1279–1332) worked in government service as a scribe and financial official. However, he only wrote his encyclopedia, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab,* after leaving government service. Successive volumes dealt with the universe, poetry, female singers and administration, fauna, flora, and history. (The historical section provided disproportionately a large tail to this learned dog.) The *Nihāyah,* like some of its successors, was more of a copious display of knowledge than a seriously useful office manual. Similarly, the *Masālik al-Abṣar fī Mamālik al-Amṣār,* by Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʻUmarī (700–49/1301–47), was pre-eminently a work of *adab,* rather than a serious work of reference for the scribe in office. (The same author′s *Al-Taʻrīf bi-al-Muṣṭalaḥ al-Sharīf* would have been more useful in the latter respect.) Like so many authors in this period, al-ʻUmarī was a polygraph, and he wrote a history of his family of distinguished jurists, as well as various other shorter works, including poems.[24] Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʻAlī al-Qalqashandī (756–821/1335–1418) compiled the *Ṣubḥ al-Aʻshá fī Sināʻat al-Inshāʼ,* which contains an unusually large number of official documents in it, so that the work comes close to constituting an archive of templates for drafts of official documents. Al-Qalqashandī also wrote a *maqāmah* on secretaryship, as well as a treatise on Arab tribes.[25] Almost all the officials briefly discussed wrote on a disconcertingly wide range of matters. It was a feature of the age. Poets doubled as biographers and authors of religious treatises. Pornographers wrote poems in praise of the Prophet and treatises on dream interpretation. The disinclination of writers to tie

[23]Walther Björkman, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Staatskanzlei im islamischen Ägypten* (Hamburg, 1928), 67; John A. Haywood, *Arabic Lexicography: Its History and Its Place in the General History of Lexicography*, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1965), 77–82; Claude Cahen, *La Syrie du nord à l′époque des croisades et la principauté franque d′Antioche* (Paris, 1940), 76–77; Ulrich Haarmann, *Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1970), 77.

[24]Etienne Quatremère, ″Notices de l′ouvrage entitulé Masâlek-el-absâr,″ *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du roi* 13 (1838): 151–384.

[25]Björkmann, *Beiträge;* Clifford Edmund Bosworth, ″Al-Ḳalḳashandī,″ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 4:509–11.

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themselves down to any particular genre makes it more or less impossible to present an orderly picture of Mamluk literature.

After the golden age of the Hamdanids in Northern Syria in the tenth century, there was little in the way of a sustained culture of poetry and belles-lettres in Syria or Egypt until the late twelfth century. There was, however, a literary renaissance in the Ayyubid and early Mamluk period. Like all true renaissances, it had a backward-looking flavor and it harked back to the manners and literary productions of eighth– and ninth-century Abbasid Iraq, so that al-Mas'ūdī and al-Jāḥiẓ served as models for Mamluk prose stylists. The poets of Cairo and Damascus studied the old Baghdadi prescriptions on how to court beautiful slave girls, cultivate male friendships, dress elegantly, and perfume themselves. There was then an antiquarian feel to much of Mamluk belles-lettres and poetry, as its authors looked back on the cult of the *nadīm* (cup-companion) and the *ẓarīf* (dandy). Around the mid-thirteenth century, the poets Bahā' al-Dīn Zuhayr and Taqī al-Dīn ibn Daqīq al-'Īd (who wrote poetry but was better known as a qadi and an alchemist) embraced fairly self-conscious roles as *ẓurafā'*. In the following generation, Ibn 'Afīf al-Tilimsānī, the composer of elegant poetry about wine and love, was also known as al-Shābb al-Ẓarīf (the Young Dandy). Al-Ghuzūlī's fifteenth-century belles-lettres compilation included a chapter on the *nadīm,* and another on the repertoire of stories of the *nadīm*, both of which drew largely on Abbasid material. Al-Suyūṭī's later treatise on women, *Al-Mustaẓraf,* dealt mostly with slave girls of the Abbasid period and the passions they aroused, and this too was essentially part of the old culture of the *ẓarīf*. The code of the *ẓarīf* was not confined to the written page and, for example, the fifteenth-century Amir Jānibak al-Ashrafī dressed and behaved like a *ẓarīf*.[26] The personnel and manners of the *ẓurafā'* overlapped somewhat with those of the gay community. Al-Tīfāshī remarked how it had become fashionable in literary circles to affect homosexual mannerisms. Besides the cages of singing birds, the chessboard, and bottles of wine, the typical gay man's apartment contained books of poetry, love romances, and magical treatises.[27]

Apart from the example of old Baghdad, the court culture of al-Andalus and the Maghrib also provided models for the would-be courtier and writer. Sharaf al-Dīn Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Tīfāshī (580–651/1184–1253) was an immigrant from Tunisia whose *Mut'at al-Asmā'* was a treatise dedicated to the pleasures of music, dance, shadow theatre, and wine drinking. His account of the etiquette of court concerts, in which music, song, and wine came together, drew

[26]On the persistence (or was it a revival?) of the culture of the *ẓarīf,* see Mhammaed Ferid Ghazi, "Un group sociale: 'Les Raffinés' (*ẓurafā'*)," *Studia Islamica* 1 (1959): 59.

[27]Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Tīfāshī, *Nuzhat al-Albāb fīmā la Yūjadu fī Kitāb,* ch. 5. René Khawam's translation of this work, as *Les Délices des coeurs* (Paris, 1981), should be treated with caution.

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sharp contrasts between eastern and western ways of holding these entertainments. Al-Tīfāshī was also author of a literary encyclopedia, *Faṣl al-Khitāb fī Madārik al-Ḥawāss al-Khams,* and a well-known treatise on precious stones, *Azhār al-Afkār fī Jawāhir al-Aḥjār,* as well as various works of erotica.[28] He was one of several well-known North African immigrants who found a patron in the amir Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Yaghmūr (d. 663/1265). Abū al-Ḥasan ʻAlī Ibn Saʻīd al-Maghribī (d. 673/1274), the poet, anthologist, and geographer, was another. Indeed Ibn Yaghmūr′s salon, where poets used to compete with one another at capping lines, was known as *kāhf al-maghāribah* (or Cave of the Maghribis).[29] Ibn Yaghmūr was a friend of the father of the historian al-Yūnīnī. (Other writers and scholars from North Africa who found patronage in Egypt or Syria later on in the Mamluk period included such distinguished figures as Ibn Manẓūr, Ibn Abī Ḥajalah, and Ibn Khaldūn.) The strong interest of Egyptian and Syrian poets in the *muwashshaḥ* form is yet another indication of the literary influence of Andalusia.

Since the poetry of the Mamluk period is still only partially explored, it is difficult to offer generalizations about its development or confidently to single out the important poets of the period.[30] At first at least, little panegyric poetry was written in praise of Mamluk sultans (presumably because those sultans were not really interested in poetry). Instead poetic praise *(madīḥ)* tended to be addressed to the Prophet and to ulama and holy men. Bahā' al-Dīn Zuhayr (581–656/1186–1258) wrote panegyrics in the hope of securing patronage, but with only modest and intermittent success, and in the end he died in poverty. His less grandiose lighter pieces, hedonistic, satirical, and urbane, are more pleasing to a modern sensibility. Above all his verses commemorated fleeting passions and regrets for wasted youth.[31]

The hedonistic celebration of love and wine gardens was continued by Bahā' al-Dīn′s successors. Only a few representative figures will be singled out here. Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (657–ca. 750/1278–ca. 1349) was born and died in Iraq. He also spent time in Egypt and Syria. He frequented the court of the Ayyubids of

[28]For al-Tīfāshī on concerts and related matters, see M. B. al-Ṭanjī, ″Al-Ṭarā'iq wa-al-Alḥān al-Mūsīqīyah fī Ifrīqīyā wa-al-Andalus,″ *Al-Abḥāth* 21 (1968): 93–116. On al-Tīfāshī′s oeuvre more generally see Iḥsān ʻAbbās′s preface to al-Tīfāshī (as abridged by Ibn Manẓūr), *Surūr al-Nafs bi-Madārik al-Ḥawās al-Khams* (Beirut, 1980).

[29]Jean-Claude Garcin, *Un Centre musulman de la Haute-Égypte médiévale, Qūṣ* (Cairo, 1976), 242 n.

[30]On that poetry, see in particular Muḥammad Zaghlūl Sallām, *Al-Adab fī al-ʻAṣr al-Mamlūkī*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1971); Homerin, ″Reflections on Poetry,″ 63–85.

[31]Edward Henry Palmer, *Poetical Works of Behá-ed-Dīn Zoheir, of Egypt* (Cambridge, 1877); D. M. Dunlop, *Arab Civlization to A. D. 1500* (London, 1971), 68–69; R. Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193–1260* (Albany, 1977), 250–51.

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Ḥamāh, and al-Ṣafadī introduced him to the sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in Egypt. Ṣafī al-Dīn wrote playful and licentious verse (addressed to both sexes). Unlike Bahā' al-Dīn, he was a master of word play and of the elaborate *badī'* style, and more generally he seems to have delighted in displaying his versatility in all the forms of poetry in favor at the time. He wrote *qaṣīdah*s and *muwashshaḥ*s. He also produced a treatise on popular Arabic poetry of his time, entitled *Al-'Āṭil al-Ḥālī*. However, by far and away his most interesting work is his *Qaṣīdah al-Sāsānīyah,* in which he made use of a wide range of rather esoteric underworld jargon in order to describe the modus operandi of the Banū Sāsān (that is to say the beggars, charlatans, and low life entertainers).[32] (On the Mamluk preservation of the old literary cult of rogues, beggars, and freeloaders see below).

Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī also produced a panegyric *qaṣīdah* in honor of the Prophet, *Al-Badī'īyah al-Nabawīyah.* This was modeled on an earlier *qaṣīdah,* the *Burdah* of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Būṣīrī (608–ca. 694/1212–ca. 1294). Al-Būṣīrī was a minor figure in the Mamluk administration, who wrote *khamrīyah,* as well as poetry on a variety of other themes, including attacks on Copts and corrupt officials. The *Burdah,* though famous and still widely esteemed today for its wonder-working therapeutic properties, is of little literary interest.[33] Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī′s version, however, was a much more elaborate and artful affair, which made use of a different rhetorical figure in each of its lines. The latter′s way of emulating and outstripping the *Burdah* was to be widely imitated by poets who came after him, including Ibn Ḥijjah (whose version was so obscure that its author felt impelled to produce a commentary on it) and 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah (a learned Sufi who died in 922/1516).[34]

Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Nubātah (686–768/1287–1366) was, like Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, a poet who found patronage at the puppet court of the Ayyubids of Ḥamāh. His edition of al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil′s letters has already been mentioned. The historian prince al-Mu'ayyad Abū al-Fidā' was one of his patrons and the panegyrics Ibn Nubātah wrote for him were collected and entitled *Al-Mu'ayyadāt*. After the deposition and death of Abū al-Fidā'′s son and successor al-Afḍal, Ibn Nubātah wrote a lament for the end of the Ayyubid dynasty. Though he later briefly found employment in the service of the Mamluk sultan al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, it is hard not to feel that Ibn Nubātah′s growing interest in Sufism and his production of *zuhdīyāt*

[32]See, above all, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature* (Leiden, 1976), 1:132–49; also R.A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, Cambridge, 1966) 449–50.
[33]Nicholson, *Literary History*, 326–7; Clifford Edmund Bosworth, ″Al-Būṣīrī,″ *EI² Supplement*, 158–59.
[34]See in this issue Th. Emil Homerin, ″Living Love: The Mystical Writings of 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah (d. 922/1516).″

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(poetry of asceticism) indirectly at least reflected his straitened circumstances. He died in poverty.[35]

The impulse to demonstrate literary diversity is exemplified by the oeuvre of Shihāb al-Dīn Ibn Abī Ḥajalah (725–76/1325–1375). Born in Tlemcen, Ibn Abī Ḥajalah was a poet, anthologist, and jack-of-all-literary-trades. He produced a much-admired anthology on profane love, the *Dīwān al-Ṣabābah* (Divan of ardent love), which covered roughly the same ground as the eleventh-century Andalusian Ibn Ḥazm´s famous work on the *adab* of love, *Ṭawq al-Ḥamāmah,* and which mostly drew on older materials. However, his literary production was quite diverse and also included *qaṣīdah*s in praise of the Prophet, a *qaṣīdah* on Peter of Cyprus´s attack on Alexandria, a compilation designed to console those who mourn over the death of a child entitled *Sulwat al-Ḥazīn fī Mawt al-Banīn,* a chess *maqāmah* entitled *Unmudhaj al-Qitāl fī Li'b al-Shatranj,* several treatises on the plague, and a chronicle of the reign of the sultan al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, as well as an account of the revolt of the *julbān* (newly imported mamluks) against that sultan. The *Sukkardān al-Sulṭān* (Sugar-bowl of the sultan), dedicated to al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, is one of his most curious works, as it harps on the importance of the number seven to the history of Egypt.[36]

Abū Bakr Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī (767–837/1366–1434) was another who spread himself widely in his literary productions. He started out as a button-maker, but later became a minor chancery official in Syria and, like so many of his colleagues, he produced his chancery treatise (entitled *Qahwat al-inshā',* or Intoxication of the chancery). His major work, however, was his anthology of poetry and prose, the *Thamarāt al-Awrāq* (Fruits of the leaves). This wonderfully miscellaneous compilation included an account of a journey that the author made from Cairo to Damascus and another trip through Anatolia, the history of Hūlāgū in Baghdad, as well as all sorts of curious anecdotes about Umayyad, Abbasid, and Mamluk personalities. Another of his anthologies, the *Khizānat al-Adab* (The Ornate treasury), assembled the best-known poetry of his time. He wrote a treatise on *badī'*, which besides setting out the principles of this elaborately rhetorical form of poetry was also an anthology of contemporary *badī'* poetry. He wrote

[35]Umar Mūsá Bāshā, *Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī: Amīr Shu'arā' al-Mashriq* (Cairo, 1963). See in this issue Thomas Bauer, ″Communication and Emotion: The Case of Ibn Nubātah´s *Kindertotenlieder,*″ and Everett Rowson, ″An Alexandrian Age in Fourteenth-Century Damascus: Twin Commentaries on Two Celebrated Arabic Epistles.″

[36]Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyá Ibn Abī Ḥajalah, *Kitāb Sukkardān al-Sulṭān* (Beirut, n.d.); Lois Anita Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love Among the Arabs* (New York, 1971), 38–41; Umberto Rizzitano, ″Il diwan as-sababa dello scrittore magrebino Ibn Abī Ḥajalah,″ *Rivista degli studi orientali* 28 (1953): 35–70; Michael Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton, 1977), 326–27; Weintritt, *Formen*, 192–200.

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badī‘ poetry himself. He also collected jokes, and his decidedly miscellaneous writings include a *risālah* on the burning of Cairo by Barqūq in 791/1389, as well as poetry in praise of chess and horses.[37] Ibn Ḥijjah′s friend, al-Nawājī, was unkind enough to write a study of his plagiarisms.

Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Shams al-Dīn al-Nawājī (788–859/1386–1455) studied under al-Damīrī (on whom see below), taught hadith at a couple of madrasahs and had Sufi links, but he is best known for his anthology devoted to wine, *Ḥalbat al-Kumayt* (The Racecourse of the bay). *Kumayt* refers both to a dark bay horse and to a reddish brown wine, cups of which, in al-Nawājī′s metaphor, circulated round the convivial table like race horses. Besides celebrating the joys of wine, al-Nawājī′s anthology also devoted a lot of space to the ambient pleasures, such as gardens, furniture, flowers, candles, and lamps that went best with an amiable drinking session. Al-Nawājī′s *Kitāb al-Ṣabūḥ* was devoted to the more specialized pleasure of drinking in the morning. Both works followed the conventions of an extensive earlier literature of *khamrīyah* (works devoted to wine), and it is unclear whether al-Nawājī′s work reflected a genuine enthusiasm for alcohol or whether it was just another example of the literary antiquarianism that was so pervasive in the Mamluk period. The same question applies to his anthology devoted to beautiful boys, *Marāti‘ al-Ghazlān* (The Prairie of gazelles), which also included some of his own poems on the subject. Al-Nawājī also compiled the *‘Uqūd al-La’āl,* strings of pearls, a *muwashshaḥ* anthology, that drew heavily on Ibn Sanā’ al-Mulk and al-Ṣafadī.[38]

Much of Mamluk poetry consists either of light-hearted verses d′occasion or of experiments with riddles, chronograms, and similarly artful and taxing devices. These sorts of productions have not survived well compared to the work of older poets—to, say, the more directly hedonistic poetry of an Abū Nuwās or to the warrior′s rhetoric of an Abū Firās. It is hard to point to much that was distinctively original. Nevertheless, despite the general conservatism of Mamluk poetry (and the *badi‘,* or ″original″ poetry, was at least as conservative as anything else) there were some developments, including a growing readiness to experiment with folk genres, including the *muwashshaḥ,* the *zajal,* and the *mawwāl*. Andalusian influence was a factor here. Panegyrics were generally to the Prophet and to the ulama rather than to the Mamluk elite. Panegyrics to members of the Mamluk elite, while not unknown, were not so very common. However, Mamluk taste may lie

[37]Clément Huart, *A History of Arabic Literature* (London, 1903), 324–25. See also Geert Jan van Gelder, ″Poetry for Easy Listening: *Insijām* and Related Concepts in Ibn Ḥijjah′s *Khizānat al-Adab*″ in this issue.

[38]Geert Jan van Gelder, ″A Muslim Encomium on Wine: *The Racecourse of the Bay (Ḥalbat al-Kumayt)* by al-Nawāǧī (d. 859/1455) as a Post-Classical Arabic Work,″ *Arabica* 42 (1995): 222–34.

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behind the common choice of a Turkish boy rather than an Arab girl as the object of affection in the *ghazal,* or love poem.

Though the Mamluk era was an age of compilations and anthologies, it was hardly more so than the centuries that preceded it. It seems to have been a point of pride to write upon any and every topic. Short treatises were written on all manner of subjects; al-Ṣafadī wrote on tears, al-Maqrīzī wrote about bees, and al-Suyūṭī wrote on the legality of wearing the furs of squirrels that had been strangled, on jokes about Saladin´s governor Qarāqūsh, and much else besides. However, the most popular topics for longer compilations of prose and poetry continued to be love and wine-drinking, and the most pious figures had no hesitation in writing about profane love and partying. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, the Islamic rigorist and Sufi (on whom see below) compiled a treatise on love. So did ʻAlāʼ al-Dīn Abū ʻAbd Allāh Mughulṭāy ibn Qilīj al-Ḥanafī (ca. 690–762/ca. 1291–1361), who was a Hanafi professor and specialist in hadith, *nasab* (genealogy), and biography. His *Al-Wāḍiḥ al-Mubīn fī Dhikr Man Ustushhida min Muḥibbīn* (The Clear and eloquent in speaking of those lovers who became martyrs), as its title suggests, argued for the reliability of a hadith to the effect that those who die of love are martyrs on the path of God.[39] Al-Tīfāshī´s and al-Nawājī´s compilations which dealt with wine-drinking and its attendant pleasures have already been mentioned.

Much of that kind of material was also brought together by ʻAlāʼ al-Dīn ibn ʻAlī al-Ghuzūlī (d. 815/1412), a citizen of Damascus, in his *Maṭāliʻ al-Budūr fī Manāzil al-Surūr* (Risings of full moons regarding the pleasures of households). The *Maṭāliʻ* is a literary anthology on the pleasures of life. These pleasures including sex, candles, speaking birds, slave girls, chess, animals, cooling breezes, wine, and visits to Birkat al-Raṭlī (one of Cairo´s pleasure lakes). One chapter, ″Fī al-Ṣāḥib wa-al-Nadīm,″ dealt with what was expected of a friend in the way of elegant behavior and conversation. Such a friend was a latter-day *ẓarīf,* whose uniform included the *qalansuwah* (a pointed hat), *mandīl* (handkerchief), expensive green silken belt, and so on. The next chapter consists of a collection of tales suitable to be told by *nudamāʼ* in the evenings. The stories date from Abbasid times or even earlier.[40]

A number of important story-collections were put together in this period, of which the best known (after *Alf Laylah wa-Laylah,* that is) was *Al-Mustaṭraf fī Kull Fann Mustaẓraf,* compiled by the Egyptian Bahāʼ al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ibshīhī (790–ca. 850/1388–ca. 1446). This was a vast anthology of prose and classical and folk poetry. The prose material included stories of the

[39]*GAL,* 2:48; ibid., S2:47–48; Sallām, *Al-Adab,* 1:127; Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love,* 33–34, 80.
[40]ʻAlāʼ al-Dīn ibn ʻAlī al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʻ al-Budūr fī Manāzil al-Surūr,* 2 vols. (Cairo, 1882–83); *GAL,* 2:55; *GAL,* S2:55; Sallām, *Al-Adab,* 2:32–34.

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Prophet and of Sufi saints, proverbs, animal fables, and entertaining stories. Many of the stories were of an improving nature and most of it fairly unsophisticated. Stories about simple saints and poor artisans carried a message that the reader should be patient with his lot and content with what God had decreed. However, some tales seem to have been included simply for the comic or erotic pleasure they afforded.[41]

By contrast with al-Ibshīhī′s well-known collection, the *Fakihāt al-Khulafā' wa-Mafakihāt al-Ẓurafā'* of Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Arabshāh (791–854/1392–1450) has had little attention paid to it in recent centuries. The *Fakihāt,* in which animals tell entertaining and improving tales, was modeled on the Persian *Marzubān-nāmah* of al-Warāwīnī, and, like its prototype, it aimed at an exalted audience, for it was a work in the mirror-for-princes genre. It considerably expanded on its Persian original and included quite a lot of material concerning recent Mongol and Timurid history. Ibn ‘Arabshāh modeled his style as well his content upon Persian exemplars and wrote in a torturous and metaphor-laden rhymed prose. Having spent his youth in Samarkand, he had travelled widely since then, and he wrote copiously in both Arabic and Turkish (but it is dispiriting to find how little attention has been paid to his literary oeuvre). Ibn ‘Arabshāh′s *Al-Ta' līf al-Ṭāhir* was both a royal biography and a mirror-for-princes, with the Sultan Jaqmaq as the model ruler that other princes should follow. Though it seems to have been written in the hope that the exemplary prince would release Ibn ‘Arabshāh from prison in Cairo, in fact its author was released only a few days before his death. His better-known *'Ajā'ib al-Maqdūr fī Nawā'ib Tīmūr,* a history of the career of the villainous Tīmūr, or Tamerlane, was written in Arabic, but again in the Persianate manner. Although it was a popular subject of study for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Orientalists, it seems to have had little or no influence on chroniclers of the Mamluk period, perhaps because of its rebarbative, ornate style, so different from the workaday prose of al-Maqrīzī or Ibn Taghrībirdī. Even so, it should be noted that Ibn Taghrībirdī was a fan of Ibn ‘Arabshāh and got an *ijāzah* to teach his writings.[42]

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[41]Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ibshīhī, *Al-Mustaṭraf fī Kull Fann Mustaẓraf*, trans. Gustave Rat, 2 vols. (Paris and Toulon, 1899–1902); idem, *Les Poètes amoureux*, trans. René Khawam (Paris, 1999); Octave Houdas, ″Al-Mostatraf,″ *Journal asiatique*, 9th ser., 15 (1900): 388–90; Timo Paajanen, *Scribal Treatment of the Literary and Vernacular Proverbs of al-Mustaṭraf in 15th–17th Century Manuscripts* (Helsinki, 1995).

[42]Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn ‘Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib al-Maqdūr fī Nawā'ib Tīmūr,* ed. Aḥmad Fā'iz al-Ḥimṣī (Beirut, 1986); idem, *Fructus Imperatorum et Iocatio Ingeniosorum (Fākihat al-Khulafā' wa-Mufākihat al-Ẓurafā'),* ed. G. W. Freytag (Bonn, 1832); idem, *Tamerlane; or Timur the Great Amir,* trans. J. H. Sanders (London, 1936); Antoine Isaac Sylvestre de Sacy, ″Liber Arabicus,″ *Journal des Savants* (1835): 602–12, 652–67; J. Pedersen, ″Ibn ‘Arabshah,″ *EI*^{2}, 3:711–12; Robert Irwin, ″What the Partridge Told the Eagle: A Neglected Source on Chinggis Khan and the Early

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Ibn ʻArabshāh has suffered from being treated by modern scholars as merely a historian. But the same is true of Badr al-Dīn al-ʻAynī (762–855/1361–1451) and his collection of entertaining stories about various classes of people, the *Majmūʻ Mushtamil ʻalá Ḥikāyāt wa-Ghayrihā,* has received even less attention than the *Fakihāt.*[43] His current reputation is based primarily on his authorship of the chronicle *ʻIqd al-Jumān* (Necklace of pearls), which he used to read in Arabic to the sultan Barsbāy, and then explain in Turkish. Of more purely literary interest are his presentation chronicles, *Al-Sayf al-Muhannad fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad* and *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir,* addressed to the sultans al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh and al-Ẓāhir Tātār respectively, which have a belles-lettres quality, as they are not so much chronicles of the sultans′ achievements as panegyrics to the qualities of an ideal ruler. The two texts include disquisitions on cosmology, numerology, genealogy, and pre-Mamluk history, as well as advice of the mirror-for-princes type.[44] Much of al-ʻAynī′s prestige among his contemporaries rested neither upon his historical nor on his more literary productions, but on his commentary on al-Bukhārī′s hadith collection, *ʻUmdat al-Qārī.* The work of Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim al-Nuwayrī al-Iskandarānī (fl. 670s/1370s) has similarly hitherto only attracted the attention of historians. His *Kitāb al-Ilmām fīmā Jarat bihi al-Aḥkām al-Maqḍīyah fī Waqiʻat al-Iskandarīyah,* which has as its pretext an account of Peter of Cyprus′s attack on Alexandria in 767/1365, is nevertheless better considered as *adab,* since documentary reporting is crowded out by information about early Arab shipping, stories about Alexander and Aristotle, and other dubiously relevant material.[45]

Although al-Nuwayrī al-Iskandarānī′s work may be cited as an instance of what may be called the ″literarization of history,″ it is questionable whether there was a single trend. Sayf al-Dīn Abū Bakr Ibn al-Dawādārī (d. 713/1313) inserted snippets of Turkish and Mongol folklore into his chronicles.[46] Ibn Iyās similarly

History of the Mongols,″ in *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy,* ed. Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David O. Morgan (Leiden, 1999), 5–11.

[43]Hellmut Ritter, ″Arabische Handschriften,″ *Oriens* 2 (1949): 285–87. On al-ʻAynī in general, see William Marcais, ″Al-ʻAynī,″ *EI*^{2}, 1: 790–91; Petry, *Civilian Elite,* 69–71; Anne F. Broadbridge, ″Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt: al-ʻAynī, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī,″ *MSR* 3 (1999): 85–107.

[44]Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad Al-ʻAynī, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Tātār*, ed. Hans Ernst (Cairo, 1962); idem, *Al-Sayf al-Muhannad fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad*, ed. Muḥammad Shaltūt (Cairo, 1967); Holt, ″Literary Offerings,″ 8–12; Weintritt, *Formen,* 185–92.

[45]Aziz Suriyal Atiya, *The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1938), 349–75; Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography,* 155, 458–59; Weintritt, *Formen*.

[46]Haarmann, *Quellenstudien,* esp. 159–98; idem, ″Auflösung und Bewahrung der klassischen Formen arabischer Geschichtsschreibung in der Zeit der Mamluken,″ *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 121 (1971): 46–60; Barbara Langner, *Untersuchungen zur*

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enlivened his chronicle of sixteenth-century Egyptian affairs with stories of a folkloric nature. As has already been noted, some chroniclers used their histories as display books for examples of fine chancery prose. The Ba'alabakkī chronicler Qutb al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī (640–726/1242–1326) included a striking amount of poetry in what was formally an annals of Syrian history. In doing so, he was perhaps following the earlier example of Abū Shāmah, the Syrian chronicler of Ayyubid times. (But al-Yūnīnī's readiness to include satirical poetry and poetry which celebrated love and wine-drinking is curious given the chronicler's ascetic tendencies, his devotion to hadith studies and his admiration for the austere Ibn Taymīyah.[47]) Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ṣaṣrā's late fourteenth-century chronicle of Damascus was peppered with fables, proverbs, and moralizing advice.[48] Nevertheless, there were limits to the literarization of history writing, and most chronicles of the Mamluk period were rather uninterpretative, pedestrian chronicles of public affairs whose authors do not seem to have dreamt of emulating such earlier stylish writers of history as al-Mas'ūdī or Miskawayh.

Like the chronicle, the bestiary could also serve as a pretext for the kind of erudition befitting an *adīb*. For example the *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān* (Lives of beasts) by Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Mūsá al-Damīrī (745–808/1344–1405) more closely resembles al-Jāḥiẓ's classic *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* than it does a work of scientific zoology, as al-Damīrī repeatedly digressed into literature and folklore and, for some reason, he chose to add the caliphs to his collection of beasts. However, he was more systematic than al-Jāḥiẓ in that he dealt with his creatures in alphabetical order. Al-Damīrī, who ended up as a *faqīh* in Cairo, had started off as a tailor and his career, like that of al-Nawājī, who also started as a tailor, indicates that the life of an alim was a career open to all the talents.[49] The earlier bestiary *Kitāb Manāfi' al-Ḥayawān* (Usefulness of beasts) of Tāj al-Dīn 'Alī Ibn Durrayhim (712–62/1312–66) is not so very scientific either, but in Ibn Durrayhim's

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historischen Volkskunde Ägyptens nach mamlukischen Quellen (Berlin, 1983), esp. 9–12, 127–30; Weintritt, *Formen;* Bernd Radtke, *Weltgeschichte und Weltbeschreibung im mittelalterlichen Islam* (Stuttgart, 1992); idem "Zur 'Literarisierten Volkschronik' der Mamlukenzeit," *Saeculum: Jahrbuch für Universalgeschichte* 41 (1990): 44–52; Li Guo, "Mamluk Historiographic Studies: The State of the Art," *MSR* 1 (1997): 33–37.

[47]Li Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography: Al-Yūnīnī's Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān,* 2 vols. (Leiden, 1998), 1, esp. 87–94.

[48]Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ṣaṣrā, *A Chronicle of Damascus, 1389–1397,* ed. William M. Brinner, 2 vols. (Berkeley, 1963).

[49]József Somogyi, "Ad-Damīrī Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawānja," in *Semitic Studies in Memory of Immanuel Löw*, ed. Alexander Scheiber (Budapest, 1947), 123–30; Manfred Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam* (Leiden/Cologne, 1972), 39–40.

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case, discussion of the flora and fauna was skewed by the author's interest in the occult and healing properties of things. Ibn Durrayhim, an immigrant from Mosul who became a professor at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, wrote on a range of occult and related subjects, including code-breaking, dream interpretation, magic mirrors, and physiognomy.[50]

Al-Ṣafadī took an interest in various occult subjects. The Egyptian chroniclers al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Iyās had a strong interest in the legendary history of ancient Egypt with its tales of talismans, treasures, and lost esoteric knowledge. But, in general, this was not a great age for occultism. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah and Ibn al-Ḥājj (on both of whom, see below) denounced the pursuit of such studies. Al-Suyūṭī declared that all of the *'ulūm al-awā'il*, or ancient sciences, were forbidden by God. (These included not just the occult arts, but also logic.) From the thirteenth century onwards, learned magic, which drew on Greek and other non-Arab traditions, was giving way to a pietist Sufi magic that depended on invocations of the names of God, magic squares, manipulations of the mysterious letters at the heads of certain surahs of the Quran and similar procedures. In the early thirteenth century Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Būnī had been the leading proponent of this kind of magic. Thereafter, Shādhilī Sufis disseminated it.[51] It is true that there were still some interesting representatives of the older tradition of Islamic occultism, including Abū al-Qāsim al-'Irāqī, the author of the thirteenth-century magical compendium *'Uyūn al-Ḥaqā'iq* (Wellsprings of truth), and 'Izz al-Dīn Aydamur ibn 'Alī al-Jildakī (d. ca.743/1342), the author of several alchemical treatises. However, though they were impressively learned, this knowledge was marginal to the concerns of the scholarly and literary elite, and such figures were rarely, if ever, accorded the dignity of an entry in a biographical dictionary.[52]

The boundaries between high and low culture were fluid—so much so that it hardly makes sense to speak of boundaries at all. Many writers took pride in demonstrating their command of both *fuṣḥá* and colloquial Arabic. Piety and pornography were not mutually exclusive, and members of the elite in the Mamluk period imitated their Abbasid and Buyid predecessors in taking a curious interest

[50]Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "The Section on Codes and Their Decipherment in Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 8 (1963): 17–33; Ullmann, *Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften,* 38–39.

[51]Armand Abel, "La Place des sciences occultes dans la decadence," in *Classicisme et déclin culturel dans l'histoire de l'Islam,* ed. Gustav von Grunebaum and Robert Brunschvig (Paris, 1957), 291–311.

[52]On Abū al-Qāsim al-'Irāqī, see Eric Holmyard, "Abū'l-Qāsim al-'Irāqī," *Isis* 8 (1926): 403–26; Ullmann, *Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften,* 125, 237, 391, 412. On Jildakī, see Eric Holmyard, "Aidamur al-Jildakī," *Iran* 4 (1937): 47–53; Ullmann, *Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften,* 237–42, 413–14; Henri Corbin, *L'Alchimie comme art hiératique* (Paris, 1986).

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in the manners, customs, and argot of the Banū Sāsān and other disreputable types. In these respects, the career and writings of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Dāniyāl (ca. 646–709/1248–1310) are instructive. Ibn Dāniyāl, who came from Mosul and who made a living as an oculist, with a shop just inside Cairo's Bāb al-Futūḥ, had distinguished friends. They included the historian Ibn al-Dawādārī, Muḥammad ibn Jankalī al-Bābā (the cultured son of a *wafidī* amir, who was an expert on medicine, hadith, music, and grammar), and, above all, Qalāwūn's son, Khalīl (later to rule as al-Ashrāf Khalīl). Ibn Dāniyāl wrote a long medical poem, several verse panegyrics on Mamluk amirs, *qaṣīdah*s and *muwashshaḥ*s, and a perfectly respectable and respected verse history of the judges of Egypt. But he also produced scripts for three shadow plays that deal with characters who live in or on the edges of the social underworld. *Ṭayf al-Khayāl* (Shadow of the imagination) is about the quest for marriage of a disreputable old soldier. *'Ajīb wa-Gharīb* presents a parade of members of the Banū Sāsān and similar folk, each of whom in turn describes their precarious and disreputable modes of making a living. *Al-Mutayyam wa-al-Ḍā'ī' al-Yutayyim* (The Love-stricken one and the lost orphan) is about a homosexual passion, pursued while watching a series of fights between beasts. The plays celebrate most of the vices of the age, and their concluding scenes of repentance are perfunctory. The plays all have a strong pornographic content and make extensive use of low-life slang. (Ibn Dāniyāl also wrote several poems with a similar content, dealing with wine, hashish, and acting.) Even so, Ibn Dāniyāl's audience did not necessarily consist entirely or even primarily of the low-lifers who frequented taverns in the more disreputable parts of Cairo. The plays, though perfunctorily plotted, show considerable sophistication in the use of language and literary allusion and it is clear that Ibn Dāniyāl considered himself to be writing in the tradition of the *maqāmah*s. There are several explicit references in the plays to al-Ḥarīrī's work. Certainly Ibn Dāniyāl was read and cited by al-Ṣafadī, Ibn Ḥajar, al-Suyūṭī, and Ibn Iyās, among others. Al-Ṣafadī was probably his greatest fan.[53]

Ibn Dāniyāl's plays were composed at the request of 'Alī ibn Mawlāhum al-Khayālī, a presenter of shadow plays in Cairo who was possibly the brother of

[53]Muḥammad Ibn Dāniyāl, *Three Shadow Plays*, ed. Paul Kahle, Derek Hopwood, and Muṣṭafá Badawī (Cambridge, 1992); Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech," 109–110; Shmuel Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World* (Edinburgh, 1992); Everett Rowson, "Two Homoerotic Narratives from Mamluk Literature: al-Safadi's *Law'at al-shaki* and Ibn Daniyal's *al-Mutayyam*," in *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature*, ed. J. W. Wright, Jr., and Everett K. Rowson (New York, 1997), 172–84; Li Guo, "Paradise Lost: Ibn Dāniyāl's Response to Baybars's Campaign against Vice in Cairo," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121 (2001): 219–35. See also the articles by Li Guo and Amila Buturović in this issue of *MSR*.

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Muḥammad ibn Mawlāhum al-Khayālī, the author of two *maqāmah*s on tradesmen.[54] An Ibn Mawlāhum, as well as Ibn Dāniyāl and the disreputable twelfth-century Spanish poet Ibn Quzmān, is saluted as an esteemed predecessor by ʻAlī al-Baghdādī in the preface to his *Kitāb al-Zahr al-Anīq fī Lubūs wa-al-Taʻnīq* (The Book of delicate flowers regarding the kiss and the embrace). ʻAlī al-Baghdādī´s collection of bawdy tales about wily women was written perhaps in the 1350s. Although the tales are mostly of considerable antiquity (and some have their analogues in *The Thousand and One Nights*), they are presented as having happened to real, named and often identifiable figures in the early Mamluk period.[55]

Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363), a member of the *awlād al-nās* who worked as a government official, wrote in broadly the same tradition as Ibn Dāniyāl. Among much else, al-Ṣafadī wrote *Lawʻat al-Shākī* (Plaint of the lovelorn), a languorous and elaborate commemoration in rhymed prose and poetry of the narrator´s love for a Turkish horse-archer. Al-Ṣafadī also compiled a homoerotic anthology on beautiful boys, a treatise on the *khāl,* or beauty spot, and a *maqāmah* on wine. However, he spread himself even more widely than his admired predecessor, Ibn Dāniyāl. He also produced a series of eminently respectable biographical dictionaries. *Al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafayāt* (The Abundant book on dates of death) is a comprehensive biographical dictionary of Muslim personalities, whereas *Aʻyān al-ʻAṣr* (Leading figures of the age) was restricted to contemporaries. Al-Ṣafadī´s fame and usefulness as a biographer has tended to eclipse awareness of his writings in other areas. Apart from composing and compiling works of belles-lettres and erotica, he also wrote about alchemy and *malāḥim* (apocalyptic prophecies).[56]

Although it is not possible to cover in this short survey all those writers who devoted themselves to writing bawdy and entertaining pieces, nevertheless no survey of Mamluk literature would be complete without reference to ʻAlī ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbughāwī (ca. 810–68/ca. 1407–64). The son of a Circassian mamluk, Ibn Sūdūn was educated at the Shaykhūnīyah madrasah, but failed to establish himself as a successful alim and after serving as a poorly-paid imam at several mosques, he set about pursuing an alternative career as a satirical poet and buffoon. He acquired notoriety as a hashish addict and after he was expelled from Cairo, he moved to Damascus where he worked as a copyist, but supplemented that income by occasional poems and other literary exercises, including poetry readings and quasi-dramatic performances beneath the Damascus citadel. His collected work

[54]Moreh, *Live Theatre,* 109.
[55]Robert Irwin, ″ʻAlī al-Baghdādī and the Joy of Mamluk Sex,″ in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt (c. 950–1800),* ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden, 2001), 45–57.
[56]Franz Rosenthal, ″Al-Ṣafadī,″ *EI*^{2}*,* 8:759–60; Donald P. Little, ″Al-Ṣafadī as Biographer of his Contemporaries,″ in *Essays on Islamic Civilization: Presented to Niyazi Berkes,* ed. Donald P. Little (Leiden, 1976), 190–211; Rowson, ″Two Homoerotic Narratives,″ 161–72.

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the *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-Muḍḥik al-'Abūs* (The Diversion of souls and the gloomy person's jester) is in two parts. The first part contains serious panegyrics and love poetry, followed by some humorous material. The second part includes comic *qaṣīdah*s, trumped-up stories, some (silly) *muwashshaḥ*s, other popular verse forms, and brief accounts of wondrous curiosities and strange novelties. According to al-Sakhāwī, Ibn Sūdūn's poetry was popular with the *ẓurafā'*, who fought to get hold of copies of it.[57]

A great deal of literature of a broadly popular nature was produced in the Mamluk period that was devoted to such matters as heterosexual and homosexual love, jokes, the wiles of women, hashish-taking, and the jargon of (legal and illegal) crafts and trades. So far this vast body of literature by Muḥammad al-Bilbaysī, 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Ḥawrānī, Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr al-Badrī, and others has hardly been explored.[58] Whatever the literary merits of such materials, they are certainly of historical interest. Besides literary entertainments by named authors, the Mamluk age was pre-eminently a period in which anonymous epics and story collections were compiled, elaborated, and expanded. The oldest substantially surviving manuscript of *Alf Laylah wa-Laylah* (The Thousand and one nights) dates from the fourteenth or fifteenth century, and some of the stories contained in it reflect, in however fanciful a manner, the social and economic realities of life under the Mamluk sultans. The lengthy pseudo-historical epics, however, seem to have been more popular. Of these the most famous was the *Sīrat 'Antar,* which was put together sometime between 1080 and 1400. It was the favorite stock-in-trade of street-corner story-tellers. Despite this epic's notional setting in pre-Islamic Arabia, some of its episodes are based on the Muslims' encounters with the Byzantines and Crusaders. Similarly the *Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan,* though set in the Yemen in a fanciful version of the sixth century A.D., shows clear signs of having been composed in Egypt much later. This saga, like so many of its rivals, has an episodic plot, or rather a straggling series of plots. Its chief merit lies in its wild and colorfully inventive deployment of vivid imagery of a magical realist sort—including Snatcher the Jinn who has smoke instead of blood in his veins, the glass bed, and the woman who has been jointly impregnated by a wolf, smoke, and her husband.[59] The *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir,* devoted to the legendary exploits of the

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[57]Moreh, *Live Theatre,* index, s.v. "Ibn Sudun"; Arnoud Vrolijk, *Bringing a Laugh to a Scowling Face: A Study and Critical Edition of "Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-Muḍḥik al-'Abūs" by 'Alī ibn Sūdūn al-Bašbuġāwī* (Leiden, 1998).

[58]See, however, Bosworth, *Mediaeval Islamic Underworld;* Franz Rosenthal, *The Herb: Hashish versus Medieval Muslim Society* (Leiden, 1971); idem, *Gambling in Islam* (Leiden, 1975); Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (Harmondsworth, 1994).

[59]*The Adventures of 'Antar*, trans. H. T. Norris (Warminster, 1980); *The Adventures of Sayf Ben Dhi Yazan: An Arab Folk Epic*, trans. Lena Jayussi (Bloomington, Ind., 1995); Rudi Paret, *Sīrat*

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Mamluk sultan al-Ẓāhir Baybars, has a similar lack of narrative sophistication that is only partially compensated for by its madly inventive energy. It is not clear how much of this epic was in existence in the Mamluk period.[60] (The oldest surviving manuscript is sixteenth century and the existing versions are full of Ottoman terminology, as well as mockery of the stupidity and thuggishness of Ottoman Turks.) One of the curious features of the story is the hostility shown to the amir (later sultan) Qalāwūn. Equally curious is the co-option of the Ismaili Assassins to be Baybars´ allies in his struggle against Franks, Mongols, sorcerers, and corrupt amirs. The relationship of the story of this epic to real historical events was very slight.[61] Nevertheless, as Franz Rosenthal has observed, it ″was through these novels that history filtered deep down into the hearts of the people.″[62]

The fantasies purveyed in these popular anonymous *sīrah*s was not so very different from the romances dealing with the origins of Islam, the exploits of ʻAlī, and the early Islamic conquests that were attributed to a certain Abū Ḥasan Aḥmad al-Bakrī al-Wāʻiẓ. It seems likely, however, that attribution to ″al-Bakrī″ denoted a literary genre, rather than the real authorship of an actual individual.[63] Whatever the truth of the matter, al-Dhahabī and al-Qalqashandī denounced the lies found in this sort of material. The popular romances suffered the opprobrium of the intelligentsia. Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, writing on the various offices and trades in the Mamluk lands, advised the *nāsikh* (copyist) not to copy ″those deceptive books . . . by which God does not offer any useful thing, such as *Sīrat ʻAntar* and the books by the *ahl al-mujūn* (the pornographers).″[64] Similarly Ibn al-Ḥājj, in his treatise against unacceptable innovations, inveighed against booksellers who traded in the stories of romantic heroes and most notably in the story of ʻAntar.[65] To those who thought like Ibn al-Ḥājj, it was reprehensible to trade in any books that sought merely to amuse. In this period, the literature of vulgar entertainment and

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Saif Ibn Dhī Jazan (Hannover, 1924); Peter Heath, ″A Critical Review of Modern Scholarship on *Sīrat ʻAntar ibn Shaddād* and the popular *sīra*,″ *Journal of Arabic Literature* 15 (1984): 19–44; M. C. Lyons, *The Arabian Epic,* 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1995).

[60]See in this issue Thomas Herzog, ″The First Layer of the Sīrat Baybars: Popular Romance and Political Propaganda.″

[61]M. C. Lyons, ″The Sirat of Baybars″, in *Orientalia Hispanica: Sive Studia F. M. Pareja Octogenario dictata* (Leiden, 1974), 1: 490–503; idem, *Arabian Epic.*

[62]Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography,* 186.

[63]Rudi Paret, *Die Legendäre Maghāzi-Literatur* (Tübingen, 1930), 155–58; Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography,* 169–70.

[64]Tāj al-Dīn ʻAbd al-Wahhāb ibn ʻAlī al-Subkī, *Kitāb Muʻīd al-Niʻam wa-Mubīd al-Niqam,* ed. David Myhrman (London, 1908), 51/186.

[65]Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥājj al-ʻAbdarī, *Kitāb al-Madkhal ilá Tanmiyat al-Aʻmāl bi-Taḥsīn al-Niyāt* (Cairo, 1320/ 1902–3), 3:131.

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delight competed with its opposite, a literature of piety and rigorism (and there were even a few authors who tried their hands at writing both types of literature).

Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymīyah (661–728/1263–1328) was the leading figure in the religious campaign against unacceptable innovations in religious and social practices. He issued fatwas and wrote to denounce a wide range of deviations from pure Islam, many of them of folkloric or Sufi origin. His attacks on Sufi deviations into heterodoxy (for example his assault on what he perceived to be the thirteenth-century Andalusian Sufi Ibn ʻArabī′s monism) were particularly controversial, and many of the Mamluk elite supported Ibn Taymīyah′s pro-Sufi opponents. However, Ibn Taymīyah was not a root-and-branch enemy of Sufism. Like his chief disciple, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, he was a Qādirī Sufi himself. Moreover, in engaging in polemical controversy with the other members of the religious elite and their Mamluk patrons, he offered at least one hostage to fortune, as his extreme version of Hanbalism allowed his enemies to accuse him of the heresy of anthropomorphism regarding the attributes of God. Despite occasional clashes with the Mamluk regime, he was in general a political quietist. ″To demand ideal qualifications in a ruler is a sin against God″ was one of his observations. He enjoyed a great following not just among the masses (who were ready to riot on his behalf), but also among prominent members of the Mamluk elite, including Kitbughā al-Manṣūrī and Arghūn al-Nāṣirī. Even al-Ṣafadī seems to have been an admirer of Ibn Taymīyah.[66]

Ibn Taymīyah′s disciple Shams al-Dīn Abū ʻAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah (691–751/1292–1350) was a prolific writer on the Quran, the shariʻah, and other spiritual matters. In particular, he wrote verse and prose to popularize Hanbali mysticism, and he denounced the occult sciences at length. His *Rawḍat al-Muḥibbīn* (Garden of the lovers) is a fairly conventional treatise on profane love, only with a more spiritual slant than is common in the genre. His treatise on *furūsīyah,* though it assembles a number of religious precepts on the subject, would have been of no practical use whatsoever to a mamluk horseman.[67] Ibn

[66]The literature on Ibn Taymīyah is vast. See especially Henri Laoust, *Essai sur les doctrines socials et politiques de Takī-d-Din Ahmad b. Taimīya* (Cairo, 1930); Muhammad Umar Memon, *Ibn Taimīya′s Struggle Against Popular Religion: with an Annotated Translation of His Kitāb Iqtiḍā' aṣ-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqūm* (The Hague, 1976); Donald P. Little, ″Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?″ *Studia Islamica* 41 (1975): 93–111; idem, ″The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya,″ *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4 (1973): 311–27; Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn ʻArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany, 1999), 87–111.

[67]Henri Laoust, ″Ibn Ḳayyim al-Djawziyya,″ *EI*^{2}, 3:821–22; Joseph N. Bell, *Love Theory in Later Hanbalite Islam* (Albany, 1979); Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love,* 34–38; John W. Livingston, ″Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: A Fourteenth Century Defence against Astrological Divination and Alchemical Transmutation,″ *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 91 (1971): 96–103; Hilary

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Qayyim al-Jawzīyah was based in Egypt, but Ibn Taymīyah was also quite widely admired and supported by what has been called the ″codex-swapping crowd″ in Syria. Most fourteenth-century historians and compilers of biographical dictionaries in Syria, including al-Jazarī, al-Birzālī, al-Yūnīnī, and al-Dhahabī seem to have supported Ibn Taymīyah in his struggles with the authorities, even though by no means all of them were Hanbalis. Ibn Kathīr, who died in 774/1373, was the last important representative of this tradition. Generalizing rather broadly, this group of scholars conceived of history as the handmaiden of hadith studies.[68]

Egyptian chronicles tended to be somewhat more secular and court-centered in their orientation. However, plenty of treatises calling for a stricter observance of Islam were produced in Mamluk Cairo. The best known of such works was the *Madkhal,* a treatise on *bida'* by the Maliki jurist Abū 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Ḥājj al-'Abdarī (d. 737/1336). The *Madkhal'*s detailed evocation of hedonistic pursuits, albeit couched in the negative (silk carpets not to be displayed, pleasure gardens not to be visited, picnics not go to on and so forth), makes it an invaluable source on social history. Ibn al-Ḥājj denounced the corrupt practices of the Cairenes with all the vigor of an immigrant from the freshly purified Maghrib. However, his main target seems to have been the pleasures of the lower classes; the mamluks on the whole escaped criticism.[69] Idrīs ibn Baydakīn al-Turkumānī also produced a treatise, the *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-Ḥawādith wa-al-Bida',* sometime in the fourteenth century, which took a similarly dour view of popular pleasures and local superstitions. Some of al-Turkumānī′s targets were conventional, but others were unusual, even eccentric, such as his diatribes against crossbowmen.[70] In the *Madkhal*, Ibn al-Ḥājj had stressed on the importance of *nīyah,* or good intention, and this theme was taken up by Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (728–77/1327–69 or 70) in his *Kitāb Mu'īd al-Ni'am wa-Mubīd al-Niqam* (The Restorer of favors and the restrainer of chastisements), which is devoted to good intention in the various

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Kilpatrick, ″Some Late Abbasid and Mamluk Books about Women: A Literary Historical Approach,″ *Arabica* 42 (1995): 56–78.

[68]On Syrian historiography, see Little ″The Historical and Historiographical Significance″; Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography,* esp. 1:60–96; idem, ″Mamluk Historiographic Studies,″ 37–39.

[69]Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal;* Langner, *Untersuchungen,* Verfasserindex, s.v. ″Ibn al-Haǧǧ″; Huda Lutfi, ″Manners and Customs of Fourteenth-Century Cairene Women: Female Anarchy versus Male Shar'i Order in Muslim Prescriptive Treatises,″ in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven and London, 1991), 99–121. Since, in the *Madkhal*, Ibn al-Ḥājj denounced alchemy as a Sufi *bid'ah,* the attribution of such occult works as the *Shumūs al-Anwār* to him must surely be incorrect.

[70]Idrīs ibn Baydakīn al-Turkumānī, *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-Ḥawādīth wa-al-Bida',* ed. Ṣubḥī Labīb (Cairo, 1986); Ṣubḥī Labīb, ″The Problem of *Bida'* in the Light of an Arabic Manuscript of the 14th Century,″ *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 7 (1964): 191–96. (But Labīb misidentifies crossbowmen as musketeers.)

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ranks, offices, and crafts in Mamluk Egypt. ″Be as the corpse in the hands of the washer″ was the book′s quietist, Sufi burden.

A considerable quantity of edifying uncontroversial Sufi literature was produced in this period, mostly in the form of poems, sermons, or short biographies of Sufi holy men. Ibn Abī Ḥajalah wrote Sufi poetry. ʻAbd Allāh ibn Asad al-Yāfiʻī (ca. 700–ca. 768/1299–1367) compiled *Rawḍ al-Riyāḥīn fī Ḥikāyāt al-Ṣāliḥīn,* which contained the biographies of over five hundred Sufis. His collection was later drawn upon by al-Ibshīhī and by the anonymous continuators of the *Arabian Nights.* The Shādhilī Sufi Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn ʻAṭā Allāh (d. 709/1309) produced collections of spiritual aphorisms and sermons. Both al-Yāfiʻī and Ibn ʻAṭā Allāh were implacable opponents of Ibn Taymīyah.[71] However, the most heated debates throughout the whole Mamluk period concerned the disputed orthodoxy of two Sufis of the pre-Mamluk period, Sharaf a-Dīn ʻUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ (576–632/1181–1235) and Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʻArabī (560–638/1165–1240). Fierce debates raged about the meaning of their poetic output and about whether it was legitimate to use apparently blasphemous metaphors in order to express holy things. Ibn al-ʻArabī and Ibn al-Fāriḍ avoided official condemnation, and Ibn al-Fāriḍ′s verses in the *badīʻ* manner were widely imitated by poets of the Mamluk age.[72] Even so, al-Dhahabī declared that Ibn al-Fāriḍ′s writings were ″pastry laced with venom.″ Other distinguished hostile critics included Ibn Abī Ḥajalah, Ibn Khaldūn, and Ibn Ḥajar.

A student of Ibn Ḥajar′s, Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Biqāʻī ibn ʻUmar (ca. 809–85/ca. 1407–80) was perhaps the most interesting and certainly the most venomous of the critics of the two famous Sufi poets. Al-Biqāʻī can be considered as a writer as man of action, since he participated in Mamluk raids against Cyprus and Rhodes. He was a stylish and embittered author who wrote on a great range of subjects, including hadith, history, biography, famous lovers, and mathematics. Given the Mamluk court′s tendency to look kindly on Sufism, his onslaught on monism and other alleged Sufi excesses was doomed, and he died in disgrace in Damascus. Since no one else was likely to, he had written his own eulogy.[73]

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[71]On Sufism in the Mamluk period, see Annemarie Schimmel, ″Sufismus and Heiligeverehrung im spätmittelalterlichen Ägypten,″ in *Festschrift Werner Caskel zum siebzigsten Geburtstag 5. März 1966 gewidmet von Freunden und Schülern,* ed. Erwin Graf (Leiden, 1968), 274–89; Donald P. Little, ″Religion under the Mamluks,″ *The Muslim World* 73 (1983): 165–81; Leonor E. Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution in Mamluk Egypt: The Khanqah* (Berlin, 1988).

[72]Th. Emil Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn al-Fāriḍ, His Verse, and His Shrine* (Columbia, S.C., 1994), 55–75; Knysh, *Ibn ʻArabī,* 49–140, 201–23; Michael Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1982), 160–65.

[73]Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love,* 41–42; Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint,* 62–75; Knysh, *Ibn ʻArabī,* 209–23; Li Guo, ″Al-Biqāʻī′s Chronicle: A Fifteenth Century Learned Man′s Reflection on His Time and World,″ in Kennedy, *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt,* 121–48.

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Although al-Biqā‘ī was unusual in the range and quality of the enemies he accumulated, the ninth/fifteenth century was a great age for *odium theologicum* and scholarly rancor. Ibn Ḥajar and al-Maqrīzī hated al-‘Aynī, a sentiment that was reciprocated. Al-Maqrīzī and al-Sakhāwī attacked Ibn Taghrībirdī. Al-Suyūṭī and al-Sakhāwī feuded.[74] The intensity of these and other feuds reflected the intensity of the competition for patronage. Writers of ability, or, if not actual ability, at least ambition, flooded into Cairo from Syria, Upper Egypt, Iraq, Anatolia, and North Africa. Many of the leading (and feuding) intellectuals of the fifteenth and early sixteenth century are esteemed today as compilers of useful chronicles and biographical dictionaries. It is certainly true that history writing had a more central role in the literary culture of this period than it had, say, under the Abbasids or the Ayyubids. Even so, few of those who compiled the useful chronologies and obituaries were merely chroniclers of their times and, in some cases, their main interest lay elsewhere. Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (773–852/1372–1449) was the leading intellectual figure of the fifteenth century. He had started out on his literary career as an *adīb* and poet. His *Dīwān* starts with panegyrics of the Prophet, then of rulers and other members of the elite, followed by love poems, followed by verses on miscellaneous themes, and finally *muwashshaḥ*s. Horribly industrious, he wrote some 250 books. He is known today chiefly for his biographical dictionary of fifteenth-century people, the *Durar al-Kāminah,* and his much-read chronicle *Inbā' al-Ghumr* (Informing the uninstructed). But in his own time, the reputation of Ibn Ḥajar rested on his expertise in hadith studies and on the many distinguished students he had taught in this field, including al-Sakhāwī, al-Biqā‘ī, Ibn Taghrībirdī, al-Qalqashandī, and al-Nawājī.[75]

Ibn Ḥajar, while a political quietist, was anti-Turkish and hostile to those who, like al-‘Aynī, identified themselves too closely with the interests of the Mamluk regime. The same was true of Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī (766–845/1364–1442). It is clear that al-Maqrīzī′s main interest was history, though he wrote more widely than that, including works on various occult and cosmological matters, Arab tribes, the Sudan, lives of the artists, and, of course, like almost every writer of the Mamluk period, he fancied himself as a poet. His masterpiece, the *Kitāb al-Mawā‘iẓ wa-al-I‘tibār fī Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār* (The Book of warning and taking example from places and ruins) is a survey of Cairo and Egypt more generally, in which topography serves as the pretext for literary nostalgia and lamentations about the corruption of the age the author lived in.[76] Al-Maqrīzī′s

[74]On some of these feuds, see Broadbridge, ″Academic Rivalry.″

[75]Franz Rosenthal, ″Ibn Ḥadjar,″ *EI*^{2}, 3:776–78; Aḥmad Āftāb Raḥmānī, ″The Life and Works of Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī,″ *Islamic Culture* 45 (1971): 203–12.

[76]The literature on al-Maqrīzī is vast, but see, for a general orientation, Franz Rosenthal, ″Al-Maḳrīzī,″ *EI*^{2}, 6:193–94 and, on one aspect of al-Maqrīzī′s literary output, Aḥmad al-Ghawaby,

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rival Abū al-Maḥāsin Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdī (ca. 812–74/ca. 1409 or 1410–69) was similarly primarily a historian, but he also wrote a treatise on the errors that Arabs and Persians make with Turkish names, a collection of proverbs, a treatise on music, and, of course, poetry.[77] Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Iyās (852–ca. 930/1448–ca. 1524), besides writing a well-known chronicle, the *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'i' al-Duhūr,* was a prolific poet.

Ibn Iyās had studied with al-Suyūṭī, but, true to the rancorous age he lived in, he did not think much of him. The latter has already been referred to several times above. This is hardly surprising, for Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (849–911/1445–1505) was one of the last Muslim scholars who aimed to cover everything. His autobiography *Al-Taḥadduth bi-Ni'mat Allāh* (Speaking of God's bounty), despite its moralistic exordium, which offered the work as thanks to God and the life as an example for others to emulate, was a sustained piece of boasting riding on an academic's *curriculum vitae*. In the *Taḥadduth*, al-Suyūṭī listed 283 of his works. Al-Sakhāwī accused him of being too bookish. Certainly al-Suyūṭī's scholarship was of a backward-looking nature, and most of the books he boasted of having read were written at the beginning of the Mamluk period or even earlier. If modern scholars have regarded the Mamluk age as one of intellectual and literary decline, it is worth bearing in mind that this view was widely shared in the Mamluk age itself. Al-Suyūṭī deplored what he perceived to be an unprecedented dearth of scholarship and concomitant spread of ignorance throughout the Mamluk lands. Despite his faith in himself as a *mujaddid,* or renewer of the religious sciences, al-Suyūṭī shared al-Maqrīzī's gloom about the future. Fires and earthquakes were omens of further troubles to come and, although he loved Egypt, he predicted the land's ruin.[78]

In the Indian summer of the Mamluk sultanate, a number of literary salons flourished under the presidency of members of the Mamluk court. One such was established by Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Jaqmaq (847/1444), the son of the Sultan al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq and the heir apparent to the Mamluk sultanate. According to Ibn Taghrībirdī, the main source here, the prince was learned in history, rare anecdotes, and Turkish and Arab poetry. He was also fond of the Sufi practice of *samā'* (and this passion for music and song may have been part of a youthful revolt against his learned but austere father, who certainly disapproved of that sort

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"Al-Maqrīzī as a Poet," *Minbar al-Islām* 2 (1962): 28–30.

[77]Gaston Wiet, "L'Historien Abul Maḥāsin," *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 12 (1930): 89–105; Aḥmad Darrāj, "La vie d'Abū'l-Maḥāsin et son oeuvre," *Annales Islamologiques* 11 (1972): 163–81; William Popper, "Abū al-Maḥāsin Jamāl al-Dīn ibn Yūsuf ibn Taghrībirdī," *EI*^{2}, 1:138.

[78]There is an extensive literature on al-Suyūṭī. See in particular Elizabeth Sartain, *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī,* 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1975); Jean-Claude Garcin, "Histoire, opposition politique et piétisme traditionaliste dans le Ḥusn al Muḥādarat de Suyûti," *Annales Islamologiques* 7 (1967): 33–91.

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of thing). The prince seems to have held soirees almost every evening, for Ibn Ḥajar attended regularly two evenings a week, while one of his enemies also attended two nights a week, but on different nights. The prince was the patron of both Ibn Ḥajar's *Inbā' al-Ghumr* and Ibn Taghrībirdī's *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah.* According to Ibn Taghrībirdī, Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad "almost flew for joy" when he heard that Ibn Taghrībirdī had commenced work on his chronicle.[79] Alas for Ibn Taghrībirdī's hopes, the prince died of a diet that involved drinking vinegar on an empty stomach.

Although we have no detailed account of the way in which Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad's salon conducted its affairs, at the very end of the Mamluk period the sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī presided over one of the grandest and best-recorded salons. The sultan has already been mentioned as a poet in Turkish and Arabic. He also boasted of fluency in several other languages, and he commissioned the translation by Sharīf Ḥusayn ibn Ḥasan of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmah* into Ottoman Turkish.[80] According to Sharīf's preface to the *Shāhnāmah,* al-Ghūrī knew Persian well, but he wanted to make the great work accessible to his amirs. He also presided over regular soirees, of which records were kept and placed in the royal library. The subjects that came up in the sultan's soirees ranged over history, geography, mythology, current affairs, and jest, but most commonly the topics bore upon religion. How can Ramadan be observed in the Arctic Circle? When and in what circumstances has the hajj ever been suspended? Is there anything in the hadith to license the playing of chess? The soirees were recorded in two sources: the *Nafā'is al-Majālis al-Sulṭānīyah* by Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad called Sharīf, covering a few months in 910/1505, and the *Kawkab al-Durrī fī Masā'il al-Ghūrī*, set in 915/1513–14, of which the first half is missing. Despite the participation of leading Egyptian Arab ulama in these sessions, one thing that emerges is the Turco-Persianate formation of court culture, and there are many references to Maḥmūd of Ghaznah, the *Shāhnāmah,* and the ideal ruler, Alexander (as featured in the *Shāhnāmah*). Al-Ghūrī's salon does not seem to have been particularly interested in the famous poets and prose writers of traditional Arab literary culture.[81] Like al-Ghūrī's enthusiasm for gardening on a grand scale in the Ottoman Turkish manner, the soirees provide evidence of the openness of the sixteenth-century Mamluk court to foreign exemplars and, more broadly, of the spread of an international court culture throughout the eastern Islamic lands.

The debt in all the above to the still scanty and patchy secondary literature

[79]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 8:211.
[80]Flemming, "Šerīf"; Atıl, *Renaissance of Islam,* 264–65; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Sultan al-Ghawrī and the Arts," *MSR* 6 (2002): 77.
[81]Awad, "Sultan al-Ghawrī," 321–22; Flemming, "Aus den Nachtgesprächen Sultan Gauris," 22–28; Berkey, "Mamluks as Muslims," 170–73; Behrens-Abouseif, "Al-Ghawrī and the Arts," 76–78.

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must be evident and it is certain that many important and exciting discoveries remain to be made in the *terra incognita* of Mamluk literature. Although the backward-looking nature of so much Mamluk poetry and prose has been stressed here, this feature should not necessarily be identified with decadence.[82] For if Mamluk authors imitated and sought to surpass their Abbasid predecessors, it was also true that Abbasid authors had looked back on and imitated their pre-Islamic and Umayyad precursors. In both periods originality was only valued within quite close constraints. In his *Literary History of the Arabs*, R. A. Nicholson, while confessing to ″a desultory and imperfect acquaintance with their work,″ ventured that even the best of the poets of the Mamluk period were ″merely elegant and brilliantly accomplished artists, playing brilliantly with words and phrases, but doing little else.″[83] In *Arabic Literature,* Sir Hamilton Gibb characterised the literary production of the Mamluk age as follows: ″the output was enormous throughout, but the qualities of originality, virility, and imagination, weak from the first, die away completely by the sixteenth century.″[84] While it is hard to dissent from these timeworn verdicts, it is nevertheless the case that modern western literary theory accords originality and ″virility″ a status that writers and critics of the Mamluk period would have found excessive. On the other hand the versatility, erudition, and literary stamina of most of the writers mentioned above is quite astonishing.

[82]See in this issue Bauer, ″Communication and Emotion.″
[83]Nicholson, *A Literary History,* 448.
[84]Hamilton Gibb, *Arabic Literature: An Introduction,* 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1962), 142.

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Poetry for Easy Listening: *Insijām* and Related Concepts in Ibn Ḥijjah´s *Khizānat al-Adab*

If one considers the history of the indigenous Arabic tradition of poetics and rhetoric one cannot help being impressed by the ever-growing terminological sophistication in the study of figures of speech, the schemes and tropes of '*ilm al-badī*'. In the late third/ninth century the poet and prince Ibn al-Mu'tazz set the trend in his modest but seminal treatise with a mere handful of terms: five principal ″novel″ kinds called *badī*' and some thirteen further ″embellishments″ *(maḥāsin)*. Ibn Abī al-Iṣba', who died early in the Mamluk period, in 654/1256, discusses 125 kinds,[1] claiming to have discovered thirty of them himself. From then on, the rate of growth decreases. Nearly two centuries later, Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī (d. 837/1434) lists 142 kinds,[2] and another three hundred years on 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī distinguishes 150 kinds.[3]

A study of these works, which also serve as anthologies of prose and above all poetry, might give an impression of the increasing sophistication and artfulness of the poetry itself, or even its growing artificiality and obscurity. To some extent there is truth in this, although the poetry in these works is carefully selected in order to illustrate the schemes and tropes, the puns and ornaments, and is therefore not truly representative of poetic practice as a whole. It is well known that general works on Arabic literary history often speak of ″decadence″ after the Abbasid period. This decadence is seen, on the one hand, in the alleged ornateness and flowery rhetoric of elite style, and on the other hand in the alleged influence of so-called Middle Arabic and the colloquial language, resulting in simplification and the infringement of ″pure″ syntax and style by ″vulgarisms.″ In short, according to this view one either finds what is obscure and difficult but vapid and trivial, or what is simple but stylistically marred and, as often as not, equally empty, trivial,

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[1]He himself says 121; see *Taḥrīr al-Taḥbīr* (Cairo, 1383), 621.

[2]I have used the edition Būlāq 1291 [1874] of the *Khizānat al-Adab* along with a modern (but uncritical) one by 'Iṣām Sha'aytū, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1987). The references are given to both, separated by a slash.

[3]'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, *Nafaḥāt al-Azhār* (Būlāq, 1299); Pierre Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician or The Schemer´s Skimmer. A Handbook of Late Arabic badī' drawn from 'Abd al-Ghānī an-Nābulusī´s* Nafaḥāt al-Azhār 'alā Nasamāt al-Asḥār (Wiesbaden, 1998).

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and banal. ″The best of them,″ said Nicholson in his *Literary History of the Arabs,* speaking of poets in the Mamluk era, ″are merely elegant and accomplished artists, playing brilliantly with words and phrases, but doing little else.″[4] These words are quoted by Homerin, reviewing the neglect of poetry from the Mamluk period;[5] in fairness to Nicholson, one should add that he admits that ″until they have been studied with due attention, it would be premature to assert that none of them rises above mediocrity.″

It is extremely unlikely that the reigning view on the superiority of the older poets will ever change, but the generally negative and disparaging remarks on post-Abbasid poetry may well be replaced by more balanced judgements as post-Abbasid poetry is slowly beginning to be investigated in more detail. Here I shall concentrate on the concept of stylistic and poetic ″easiness″ as we find it in Ibn Ḥijjah′s work on *badī‘*. Ibn Ḥijjah, poet and *kātib,* wrote his *Khizānat al-Adab* on the model of *Sharḥ al-Kāfiyah al-Badī‘īyah* by the well-known poet Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 749/1349): both works are commentaries on *badī‘īyah* poems composed by the authors themselves, in *basīṭ* meter and rhyming in *-mī,* in praise of the Prophet (like, before them, al-Būṣīrī′s celebrated ode), each verse of which exemplifies a particular figure of speech or stylistic embellishment. *Khizānat al-Adab* contains a large quantity of poetry from all ages, much of it from post-Abbasid or Mamluk times. Since normally a figure of speech or trope does not exceed the compass of one or two lines, most of the quotations are short, but one also finds longer fragments and poems, including *muzdawijah*s of 133 and 158 couplets.

Most of the ″embellishments″ are thought of as features that are somehow changed from or added to an underlying basic utterance: a metaphor instead of the literal word, a pun, antithesis, syntactical or semantic parallelism that can be superimposed on plain expressions. Instead of adding, one could presuppose other mutations: suppression in the case of ellipsis and conciseness, permutation in the case of some syntactic rearrangements. There are also ″figures″ that cannot so easily be described, for instance the more impressionistic concepts of *nazāhah,* ″chaste diction,″ particularly when in biting lampoons one manages to avoid obscenities,[6] or *salāmat al-ikhtirā‘,* ″originality.″[7] The same is valid for a few chapters that deal with easy diction and smooth style, which form the subject of this article.

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[4]R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, Cambridge, 1966), 448.

[5]Th. Emil Homerin, ″Reflections on Arabic Poetry in the Mamluk Age,″ *Mamlūk Studies Review* 1 (1997): 63–85.

[6]*Khizānah,* 95–96/1:172–74.

[7]Ibid., 493–98/2:362–69.

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The most important of these is the section on *insijām,* ″fluency.″[8] It is obviously a concept that is dear to Ibn Ḥijjah, for the section is the longest of all by a wide margin, apart from the only section that surpasses it, the very extensive chapter on *tawriyah.*[9] A later author, Ibn Ma‘ṣūm, who completed his large-scale *badī‘īyah* commentary *Anwār al-Rabī‘* in 1093/1682, goes even further, making *insijām* by far his longest chapter.[10] The term *insijām* is derived from a root denoting flowing, streaming, and pouring forth of water. In the metalanguage of *badī‘,* the dominant semantic fields are those of jewelry, embroidery, and other sartorial imagery;[11] it is appropriate that the limpidity of streaming water is used for what comes down to the *absence* of ornament. For, paradoxically, *insijām* is a kind of *badī‘* that is defined by being devoid of *badī‘*.[12] ″Water″ implies not only smoothness and fluency, but sparkle and lustre: in Arabic, as in English, one speaks of the ″water″ of a sword. It is unique among drinks and food in that its tastelessness is praised and called sweetness. Ibn Ḥijjah´s description of *insijām,* given at the beginning of the chapter, is as follows:

> By *insijām* is meant that [the text] flows like water when it runs down *(inḥidār),* because it is free from complexity *(‘aqādah),* so that it would almost stream forth *(yasīl)* in its elegance *(riqqah),* because of the smoothness of its construction *(suhūlat tarkībih)* and the sweetness of its diction *(‘udhūbat alfāẓih)*. . . . The scholars of *badī‘* are unanimous in defining this kind of *badī‘* as being remote from artificiality and free from kinds of *badī‘ (an yakūna*

[8]Ibid., 236–74/1:417–76. See also Usāmah ibn Munqidh, *Al-Badī‘ fī Naqd al-Shi‘r* (Cairo, 1960), 131–32; Ibn Abī al-Iṣba‘, *Taḥrīr*, 429–32; idem, *Badī‘ al-Qur’ān* (Cairo, 1957), 166–67; Najm al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Ismā‘īl Ibn al-Athīr, *Jawhar al-Kanz* (Alexandria, 1983), 297–77; Ṣāfī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiyah al-Badī‘īyah* (Damascus, 1982), 264–65; al-Suyūṭī, *Sharḥ ‘Uqūd al-Jumān* (Cairo, n.d.), 153 (wrongly claiming the introduction of *insijām* into *ʿilm al-badī‘* for himself); ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, *Nafaḥāt al-Azhār*, 295–303 (cf. Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician*, 118–19, no. 162).

[9]*Khizānah,* 295–435/2:39–251.

[10]‘Alī ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ma‘ṣūm, *Anwār al-Rabī‘ fī Anwā‘ al-Badī‘,* ed. Shākir Hādī Shukr (Karbalā’, 1968–69), 4:5–194.

[11]Among the few who have dealt with this topic is Abdelfattah Kilito, ″Sur le métalangage métaphorique des poéticiens arabes,″ *Poétique* 38 (1979): 162–74.

[12]*Khizānah,* 236/1:417; cf. Ibn Abī al-Iṣba‘, *Taḥrīr*, 429; idem, *Badī‘ al-Qur’ān,* 166; al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ,* 264; al-Nābulusī, *Nafaḥāt,* 295.

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> *ba'īd min al-taṣannu' khālī min al-anwā' al-badī'īyah),* except when this happens easily and unintentionally.

He adds that *insijām* in rhymed prose means that the rhymes appear to be unintentional and spontaneous. In the Quran it is seen in the occasional short passages that scan as poetic meters; Ibn Ḥijjah gives examples at some length.[13] Another paradox seems to be lurking here: *insijām* in metrical speech implies that it sounds almost like prose, and conversely, when prose chances to come out according to one of the recognized poetic meters, it is *insijām* too. As far as we can judge, *insijām*, as a separate section in lists of *badī'*, started its life precisely as the last-mentioned kind: prose that fortuitously turns out to be metrical, for this is how Usāmah Ibn Munqidh, the first to do so, defines and illustrates the term in his work on *badī'*.[14] *Insijām* in its broader sense is first found in Ibn Abī al-Iṣba'.

Immediately after defining *insijām* Ibn Ḥijjah says that ″most of the poetry of al-Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Anṣārī, *shaykh al-shuyūkh* of Ḥamāh… corresponds to this definition.″ This poet, also known as Ibn al-Raffā', died early in the Mamluk period, in 662/1264;[15] later in the chapter, Ibn Ḥijjah quotes six fragments or short poems by him, with a total of 57 lines, which illustrate his ″amatory fluency″ *(insijāmātuh al-gharāmīyah).*[16] It appears that *insijām* and love poetry are closely connected, for Ibn Ḥijjah says at the outset that the masters of this style are *ahl al-ṭarīq al-gharāmīyah,* ″the people of the amatory path,″[17] or *aṣḥāb al-madhhab al-gharāmī.*[18] This love may be profane or mystical, or even both at the same time; it is not always possible to distinguish between the two categories. Before we look at the poetry in more detail, consider the following short text, a lover's complaint:

> Khabbirūhū tafṣīla ḥālī jumlatan; fa-'asāhū yariqqu lī wa-la'allah!
> Kam tanaḥnaḥtu idh tabaddá, ḥidhāran min raqībī, wa-kam takallaftu

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[13] *Khizānah,* 236–38/1:417–21.

[14] Usāmah, *Badī'*, 131–32; he discusses prose that is unintentionally metrical but does not mention the Quran. Ibn Abī al-Iṣba', *Taḥrīr*, 429 discusses the Quranic phenomenon and refers to a book of his, *Al-Mīzān,* on this topic. See also Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *Al-Fawā'id* (Cairo, 1327), 219–20; al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1975), 3:296–97 (ch. 58).

[15] Ibn al-Raffā', 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin, was born 586/1190; see Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafayāt,* 18:546–56, where he is highly praised for his beautiful and artful poetry, full of wit *(nukat),* punning (*tawriyāt),* easy rhymes, ″sweet syntax″ *(al-tarkīb al-'adhb),* correct diction, and eloquent ideas.

[16] *Khizānah,* 249–51/1:436–39.

[17] Ibid., 236/1:417.

[18] Ibid., 238/1:421.

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su‘lah! Laysa lī ‘an hudá hawāhu ḍalālun, akthara al-lawma ‘ādhilī aw aqallah. Rukkibat fī jibillatī nashwatu al-‘ishqi; wa-ṣa‘bun taghyīru mā fī al-jibillah.

Sādatī, ‘āwidū riḍākum wa-‘ūdū ‘an jafākum, fa-mā baqiya fīya faḍlah! Dhubtu shawqan, fa-‘ālijūnī bi-qurbin; muttu ‘ishqan, fa-ḥanniṭūnī bi-qublah! Wa-ishghulūnī ‘an lā’imin mā atānī bi-rashādin atat′hu āfatu ghaflah: Qultu, ″Billāhi, khallinī!″, fa-tamādá. Wa-qalīlun man yatruku al-sharra lillah.

[Tell him the details of my state, and all of it; perhaps he will have pity on me, maybe . . . ! How often did I say ″Ahem″ when he appeared, being wary of my watchful guard; how often did I feign a cough! I do not stray from the right path of loving him, however much or little critics may reproach me. Intoxication by love′s passion is a part of me by nature: and it is hard to change what′s in one′s nature.

My masters, let me have your favor once again, after your harshness, for I cannot bear it any longer! I′ve pined away with passion; cure me now with nearness! I′ve died of love; embalm me with a kiss! Distract me from a censurer—as soon as he tells me how to behave, he′s plagued by inattentiveness: I say, ″For God′s sake, leave me!″ But he perseveres. Few people will abandon evil ″for God′s sake.″]

A pleasant piece of literary prose? Perhaps the recurrent rhyme in *-lah* has given the game away: it is in fact poetry, by the above-mentioned Ibn al-Raffā‘, as the following layout makes clear.[19]

Khabbirūhū tafṣīla ḥāliya jumlah
fa-‘asāhū yariqqu lī wa-la‘allah
Kam tanaḥnaḥtu idh tabaddá ḥidhāran
min raqībī wa-kam takallaftu su‘lah
Laysa lī ‘an hudá hawāhu ḍalālun
akthara al-lawma ‘ādhilī aw aqallah
Rukkibat fī jibillatī nashwatu al-‘ish-
qi wa-ṣa‘bun taghyīru mā fī al-jibillah
Sādatī ‘āwidū riḍākum wa-‘ūdū

[19]Ibid., 249–50/1:438. In the ″prose″ version I have cheated a bit in giving prose forms instead of ″poetic″ deviations and rhymes (thus *ḥālī*, *jumlatan, ‘ishq, baqiya*, whereas the poem has *ḥāliya, jumlah, ‘ishqi, baqī*).

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‘an jafākum fa-mā baqī fīya faḍlah
Dhubtu shawqan fa-‘ālijūnī bi-qurbin
muttu ‘ishqan fa-ḥanniṭūnī bi-qublah
Wa-ishghulūnī ‘an lā’imin mā atānī
bi-rashādin atat´hu āfatu ghaflah
Qultu billāhi khallinī fa-tamādá
Wa-qalīlun man yatruku al-sharra lillah

[Tell him the details of my state, and all of it;
perhaps he will have pity on me, maybe . . . !
How often did I say ″Ahem″ when he appeared, being wary of
my watchful guard; how often did I feign a cough!
I do not stray from the right path of loving him,
however much or little critics may reproach me.
Intoxication by love´s passion is a part of me by nature:
and it is hard to change what´s in one´s nature.
My masters, let me have your favor once again,
after your harshness, for I cannot bear it any longer!
I´ve pined away with passion; cure me now with nearness!
I´ve died of love; embalm me with a kiss!
Distract me from a censurer—as soon as he
tells me how to behave, he´s plagued by inattentiveness:
I say, ″For God´s sake, leave me!″ But he perseveres.
Few people will abandon evil ″for God´s sake.″]

This gives an idea of what Ibn Ḥijjah calls ″fluency″: no intricate word-play, the few antitheses are simple (line 3: *hudá*/*ḍalāl, akthara*/*aqalla;* line 5: *riḍākum*/*jafākum*), as is the syntactic, semantic, and phonetic parallelism in line 6. Both halves of the poem (lines 4b and 8b) end with a maxim-like sentence, the latter being a little joke in that it gives a twist to the imprecation *billāh* in 8a, and using the colloquial *lillah* with short *a* in the last rhyme. If, as the earliest known treatment of *insijām,* by Usāmah Ibn Munqidh, suggests, the ″figure″ was originally conceived as prose unintentionally coming out metrically, as poetry, then an important criterion is apparent artlessness. A test for poetry would consist in writing it out as prose, as I have done above, and see how long it takes for a new reader to discover that it is in fact poetry.

Ibn Ḥijjah quotes some 112 different poets in the chapter (including himself, with a piece of 19 lines).[20] Many are well-known, others are obscure or wholly

[20]Ibid., 274/1:475.

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unknown. The majority are late, but there are some lines by early poets: Imru' al-Qays, with a line from his *Mu'allaqah* (″A-gharraki minnī anna ḥubbaki qātilī . . .″) and the line that ends with the well-known words ″. . . wa-kullu gharībin lil-gharībi nasībū″ [a stranger is related to every other stranger].[21] Many other early poets are also represented by a few lines. Poets from the Abbasid era are better represented, some by longer quotations, such as al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (30 lines) and Mihyār al-Daylamī (26 lines). High scores among pre-Mamluk poets are for Bahā' al-Dīn Zuhayr (d. 656/1258), with 48 lines, and especially Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), with 130 lines (half of them from what looks like a conflation of his two *Tā'īyah*s), which is remarkable in view of the profusion of figures of speech in his verse. Among the Mamluk poets are al-Shābb al-Ẓarīf and his father 'Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī, Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Nubātah, Ibn al-Wardī, and Burhān al-Dīn al-Qīrāṭī. I shall quote and translate short poems or fragments by all five of these.

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-'Afīf al-Tilimsānī, nicknamed al-Shābb al-Ẓarīf, ″the Decent Young Man″ (*ẓarīf* also means ″elegant, witty, charming″) was born in Cairo in 661/1263 and died at Damascus at the very young age of 26, in 688/1289, two years before his father.[22] Ibn Ḥijjah quotes seven pieces or fragments by him, with a total of 51 lines, all of them love lyrics. His verse is indeed smooth and fluent, though not without obvious rhetorical craftsmanship. An example:

Lā takhfi mā fa'alat bi-ka al-ashwāqū
wa-ishraḥ hawāka fa-kullunā 'ushshāqū
Fa-'asá yu'īnuka man shakawta la-hu al-hawá
fī ḥamlihī fa-al-'āshiqūna rifāqū
Lā tajza'anna fa-lasta awwala mughramin
fatakat bi-hi al-wajanātu wa-l-aḥdāqū
Wa-iṣbir 'alá hajri al-ḥabībi fa-rubbamā
'āda al-wisālu wa-lil-hawá akhlāqū
Kam laylatin as'hartu aḥdāqī bi-hā
wajdan wa-lil-afkāri bī iḥdāqū
Yā rabbu qad ba'uda al-ladhīna uḥibbuhum

[21] *Dīwān,* ed. Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1969), 357; it does not sound very authentic.

[22] Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden, 1949), 1:258, S1:458; J. Rikabi, ″Ibn al-'Afīf al-Tilimsānī,″ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., 3:697; F. Krenkow-[M. Yalaoui], ″Tilimsānī,″ *EI*^{2}, 10:499-500; D. J. Wasserstein, ″Ibn al-'Afīf al-Tilimsānī,″ *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature,* ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London and New York, 1998), 1:308; Shawqī Ḍayf, *'Aṣr al-Duwal wa-al-Imārāt: Miṣr wa-al-Shām,* Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī, no. 6 (Cairo, 1984), 695–97; Ibn Shākir al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-Wafayāt* (Beirut, 1973–74), 3: 372–82; al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī,* 3:129–36. *Dīwān al-Shābb al-Ẓarīf,* ed. Shākir Hādī Shukr [thus in preface; on title page and cover: Shakr] (Beirut, 1405/1985), with some 2500 lines.

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‘annī wa-qad alifa al-rifāqa firāqū
Wa-iswadda ḥaẓẓī ‘indahum lammā sará
fīhī bi-nāri ṣabābatī iḥrāqū
‘Urbun ra’aytu aṣaḥḥa mīthāqin lahum
an lā yaṣiḥḥa ladayhimū mīthāqū[23]

[Don´t hide what love has done to you:
display your passion; we are lovers all.
If you complain of love to someone, he
may help you bear it: lovers are all friends.
You must not grieve, you´re not the first who loves
and has been killed by murderous cheeks and eyes.
Be steadfast when your love deserts you, for
you may be reunited. Passion has its ways.
So many nights I kept my eyes awake,
love-sick, besieged by thoughts all round.
Lord! Those I love are far from me;
parting from friends is part of normal life.
My luck with them has blackened, with
the scorching fire of passion burnt.
They´re Bedouin nomads, most reliable, I find,
in that one never can rely on them.]

The ″fluency″ consists in the absence of difficult words and intricate syntax. The few instances of word-play are simple: *aḥdāq* and *iḥdāq* (line 5), *rifāq* and *firāq* (line 6). A sprinkling of antitheses adds clarity to the ideas expressed (hiding/displaying, grief/steadfastness, parting/union). As in the poem quoted above, several lines end with a general statement resembling a maxim (lines 1, 2, 4) and the poem is rounded off (at least in the curtailed version given in the *Khizānah*) with a neat paradox, a line that stands out in being the only one that does not contain a reference to love or lovers.[24] There is a contrast or even a conflict, not resolved, between on the one hand the optimistic and consoling first four lines, addressed to the lover (or perhaps spoken by the lover to himself), and on the

[23]*Khizānah,* 252/1:441; cf. *Dīwān*, 161, which adds one line after vs. 1 and three more at the end. In line 6, *Khizānah* has *al-firāqa firāqū*, which does not make sense; the version of the *Dīwān* has been followed instead. In the last line one might read *yaṣiḥḥu,* instead of the subjunctive, since no wish or effect is involved.

[24]Vs. 1 has *ashwāq, hawá* and *‘ushshāq*, vs. 2 *hawá* and *‘āshiqūn,* vs. 3 *mughram,* vs. 4 *ḥabīb* and *hawá,* vs. 5 *wajd,* vs. 6 *uḥibbuhum,* vs. 7 *ṣabābatī.*

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other hand the unredeemed misery described in the second half of the poem, where the second person singular (comfortingly included in ″all of us″) is replaced by the first person singular throughout, apparently isolated from ″them.″ It could be argued, of course, that such sudden changes of mood are normal in the love-stricken.

Ibn Ḥijjah also quotes the following four lines by him:

Bi-tathannī qawāmika al-mamshūqī
wa-bi-anwāri wajhika al-ma'shūqī
Wa-bi-ma'nan lil-ḥusni mubtakarun fī-
ka wa-qalbin ka-qalbiya al-maḥrūqī
Jud bi-waṣlin aw zawratin aw bi-wa'din
aw kalāmin aw waqfatin fī al-ṭarīqī
Aw bi-irsālika al-salāma ma'a al-rī-
ḥi wa-illā fa-bi-al-khayāli al-ṭarūqī[25]

[By the swaying of your slender body,
and the lights of your beloved face,
By a rare and novel beauty in you,
and a heart burnt black like my own heart:
Come live with me, or visit me, or promise me,
or say something, stop briefly on the street,
Or send a greeting with the wind; if not,
then visit me at least at night in dreams!]

This little poem is more unified than the previous one; it consists of only one sentence that is long but transparent, neatly divided into two equal halves. The lines are devoid of any puns, and employ none but the simplest metaphors; the only art lies in the artless diction and the pleasing anticlimactic series in the last two lines, in which the requests become, on the whole, progressively longer and emptier.

More intricate word-play and greater frequency of it are not incompatible with *insijām*. Here is a piece by the father of al-Shābb al-Ẓarīf, 'Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (610–690/1213–1291).[26] By calling him one of the *'ārifūn,* Ibn Ḥijjah indicates that the verses should be given a mystical interpretation:

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[25]*Khizānah,* 252/1:441. In the *Dīwān* (167–68) the poem has 13 lines, of which Ibn Ḥijjah offers 1, 2, 4, and 5. Instead of *wa-qalbin ka-qalbiya al-maḥrūqī* the *Dīwān* has *wa-khaṣrin ka-qalbiya al-masrūqī*.

[26]Krenkow-[Yalaoui], ″Tilimsānī″; Brockelmann, *GAL,* 1:258, S1:458.

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Ludh bi-al-gharāmi wa-ladhdhati al-ashwāqī
wa-ikhtar fanā'aka fī al-jamāli al-bāqī
Wa-ikhla‘ sulūwaka fa-huwa thawbun mukhlaqun
wa-ilbas jadīda makārimi al-akhlāqī
Wa-tawaqqa min nāri al-ṣudūdi bi-shurbatin
min mā'i dam‘ika fa-huwa ni‘ma al-wāqī
Wa-idhā da‘āka ilá al-ṣibā nafasu al-ṣabā
fa-ajib rasūla nasīmihi al-khaffāqī
Wa-idhā sharibta al-ṣirfa min khamri al-hawá
iyyāka taghfalu ‘an jamāli al-sāqī
Wa-ilqa al-aḥibbata in aradta wisālahum
mutaladhdhidhan bi-al-dhulli wa-al-imlāqī
A-wa-laysa min aḥlá al-maṭāmi‘i fī al-hawá
‘izzu al-ḥabībi wa-dhillatu al-‘ushshāqī[27]

[Take refuge in love and the pleasure of passion
and seek your extinction in beauty that lasts.
Take off the old cloak, now worn out, of your solace;
and get yourself dressed in a new set of virtues.
Seek protection ´gainst fire of rejection by drinking
the water of tears: they´re the safest protection.
When the zephyr invites you to amorous folly,
obey then the messenger sent in its fluttering breeze.
And when you have drunk the unmixed wine of passion,
be careful to notice the cupbearer´s beauty.
And meet those you love, if you wish to be one with them,
while you relish in being submissive and poor.
For isn´t this one of the sweetest ambitions in love:
the beloved exalted, and humbled the lovers?]

The poem is based on an often-expressed paradox: a lover´s true happiness exists in being miserable, and it ought to be his highest ambition to be lowly and submissive. This is expressed through various instances of paronomasia: *ludh*/*ladhdha*, *mukhlaq*/*akhlāq*, *tawaqqa*/*wāqī*, *ṣabā*/*ṣibā, mutaladhdhidh*/*dhull,* and of antithesis: *fanā'*/*bāqī, ikhla‘*/*ilbas*, *mukhlaq*/*jadīd*, *nār*/*mā', ‘izz*/*dhillah*. Combined, these two figures suggest a punning antithesis of *ladhdhah* ″pleasure″ and *dhillah*/*dhull* ″submission″ that here, exceptionally, goes beyond the confines

[27] *Khizānah,* 260/1:453.

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of a single line (see lines 1, 6 and 7) and is reinforced by the fact that the very first word, *ludh* (from a different root), is a palindrome of *dhull*. Yet, in spite of all this apparent artifice, one can understand that Ibn Ḥijjah cites it as an example of *insijām* ″that stirs the passions and ardent emotions.″

Not all poems quoted are on love secular or mystical. The longest poem, by Ibn Nubātah (686–768/1287–1366), is a *muzdawijah* of 158 *rajaz* couplets in praise of the ruler of Ḥamāh, al-Malik al-Afḍal. After a brief description of nature, it turns into a hunting poem, with a brief panegyric at the end.[28] The poem reads smoothly indeed, and approaches prose not only in being relatively free of obscure diction and far-fetched imagery, but also because it is basically a narrative, from the beginning of the hunt (line 23: ″When the time for the shoot[29] approached, we set out . . .″) until the returning, with a heavy bag (lines 137–39: ″God, what a fine and blessed sight, the manner we returned from the mountain´s summit, our hands filled with the spoils, thankful for the bounty bestowed upon us, thronging round the Victorious King, al-Malik al-Manṣūr[30] like comets round the luminous moon″). Within a framework of verbs in perfect tense at intervals (*sirnā . . . ḥattá nazalnā . . . wa-ibtadara al-qawm . . . wa-aqbalat mawākibu al-ṭuyūr . . . sirnā . . .*, etc.), the action and scenes are depicted in the intervals by means of circumstantial clauses, extended attributive clauses, similes (*ka-annahā . . .*), exclamative sentences (*fa-yā la-hā . . ., fa-ḥabbadhā . . ., kam . . ., wāhan la-hā . . .*) and other constructions. Shooting turns to hawking and to hunting with hounds and cheetahs, and all of it underlines both the bounty and the bloodshed that is customarily ascribed to rulers in panegyric poetry. Ibn Ḥijjah, praising the poem, says that ″If the Sharīf could have seen it, he would have sponged off of *(taṭaffala)* the breeze of its verses [i.e., plagiarized them], and he would have acknowledged that *The Chanter and the Groaner* does not chant and warble as sweetly.″ He refers to Ibn al-Habbārīyah (d. ca. 509/1115) and his collection of poems in *rajaz* meter with mostly animal fables, even though Ibn Nubātah´s poem is more akin to the model set by Ibn al-Mu'tazz and Abū Firās.[31]

Ibn Ḥijjah is enthusiastic, too, about a poem by Ibn al-Wardī (691–749/1292–1349) which is a versified deed of purchase, improvised when challenged on 14 Ramaḍān of the year 715/1316.[32] It begins as follows:

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[28]Ibid., 267–72/1:466–72. The edition of the poem by Muḥammad As'ad Ṭalas in *Majallat al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī* 2 (1952): 302–10 has 177 couplets.

[29]With pellets, *ramy al-bunduq,* for shooting birds.

[30]Ibn Ḥijjah explains that al-Malik al-Afḍal´s earlier name was al-Malik al-Manṣūr.

[31]See, e.g., James E. Montgomery, ″Abū Firās´s Veneric *Urjūzah Muzdawijah*,″ *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures* 2 (1999): 61–74, esp. 69.

[32]*Khizānah,* 272–73/1:473–74. The date, as can be expected here, is given in the poem itself.

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Bi-ismi ilāhi al-khalqi hādhā mā ishtará
Muḥammadu ibnu Yūnusa ibni Sunqurā
Min Māliki ibni Aḥmada ibni al-Azraqī
Kilāhumā qad ʻurifā min Jilliqī

[In the name of the God of all creatures: this is what has been
bought
By Muḥammad Ibn Yūnus Ibn Sunqur
From Mālik Ibn Aḥmad Ibn al-Azraq,
Both known persons from Damascus.]

Truly fluent like prose, it is versification, *naẓm,* but not everyone would call it poetry, *shiʻr*. It is perhaps not strange that the poem is not found in Ibn al-Wardī's *Dīwān*.[33] Ibn Ḥijjah could have used the second and third hemistichs of this fragment as illustrations of another "figure" of *badīʻ*, called *iṭṭirād* (lit. "uninterrupted sequence"), which consists in using personal names in poetry in a seemingly artless manner.[34]

The Egyptian poet Burhān al-Dīn al-Qīrāṭī (726–81/1326–79),[35] a friend of Ibn Nubātah, is represented with three fragments taken from one poem, the first two being the following:

Akhadhat Bābilu ʻanhū / baʻda tilka al-nafathātī
Fa-huwa ghuṣnun fī inʻitāfin / wa-ghazālun fī iltifātī
Ḥasanātu al-khaddi minhū / qad aṭālat ḥasarātī
Kullamā sā'a faʻālan / qultu «Inna al-ḥasanāti . . .»
Wa-li-sū'i al-ḥaẓẓi ṣārat / ḥasanāti sayyi'ātī
Aʻshaqu al-shāmāti minhū / wa-hiya asbābu mamātī
. . . . . .
Bi-abī laḥẓu ghazālin / qā'ilin fī al-khalawāti:
"Inna lil-mawti bi-aqdā- / ḥi jufūnī sakarātī"
Qultu "Qad mittu gharāman" / Qāla lī "Mut bi-ḥayātī"[36]

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[33] *Dīwān Ibn al-Wardī*, ed. Aḥmad Fawzī al-Hayb (Kuwait, 1986).

[34] *Khizānah,* 199–201/1:351–53; cf. Ḥasan Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī, *al-ʻUmdah fī Maḥāsin al-Shiʻr wa-Ādābihi wa-Naqdih*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut, repr. 1972), 2:82–84; Ibn Abī al-Iṣbaʻ, *Taḥrīr,* 352–54, Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician,* 43 (no. 64), where it is rendered "flowing identification."

[35] Ḍayf, *ʻAṣr al-Duwal,* 292–95; Brockelmann, *GAL,* 2:14, S2:7.

[36] *Khizānah,* 273/1:474.

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[Babylon took from him
some of these magic spells:[37]
He is a twig the way he bends,
a gazelle the way he turns.
The beauties of his cheek
have prolonged my miseries.
Whenever he behaves badly
I say, «Surely the good deeds . . .»[38]
But to my misfortune my good deeds
have turned into evil deeds.
I am in love with his moles
though they be the causes of my death.
. . . . . .
O, how dear to me is the glance of a gazelle
saying in the desert,[39]
″Death´s throes[40] are in
the cups of my eyelids″
I said, ″I am dying of passion!″
He replied to me, ″Die, by my life!″]

The usual motifs—the twig, the gazelle, magic charms, cheeks, moles or beauty spots, and finally death by love—make for easy listening, together with the smooth syntax, short lines, and easy diction. There is hardly anything deep in such a poem, although one notices little touches that lift it above the wholly trite. By saying that the ″prehistoric″ Babylonians derived their magic from the beloved, it is suggested that he[41] is a timeless, primeval being, perhaps an angel fallen from heaven like Hārūt and Mārūt. The lover, in turn, pretends to have fallen: in love and into sin. His beloved´s bad deeds have literally been ″taken away″ by the incompleteness of the Quranic quotation as well as by his beauty; conversely, the lover´s goodness has turned into badness as stated in the next line and implied by

[37]Babylon is associated with the fallen angels Hārūt and Mārūt and with magic.

[38]« . . will take away the evil deeds» (Quran 11:114).

[39]Ḍayf, who quotes these lines (*ʿAṣr al-Duwal,* 293, omitting vss. 4–5), places this line at the beginning. He interprets *qāʾil* as from the root *qyl* (″taking a midday nap″), which is possible. In the version quoted by Ibn Ḥijjah ″saying″ is more appropriate, since the following line must be spoken by the ″gazelle.″

[40]Literally, ″intoxications,″ hence the ″cups.″

[41]Ḍayf, child of his time, assumes that the beloved is female.

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the mention of drunkenness further on. There is an obvious play on the two meanings of *ḥasanāt,* aesthetic and moral ″beauties.″ The last word is a linguistic joke, playing on two meanings of the preposition *bi-* in ″by my life″: either an implied oath: ″(I swear) upon my life,″ or literally ″by means of my being alive.″

There are two other sections in *badī‘* lists, including Ibn Ḥijjah′s *Khizānah,* that are not wholly unlike *insijām.* Ibn Ḥijjah deals with them in two much shorter consecutive sections. The first is *suhūlah*,[42] which means, of course, ″easiness, smoothness, facility″; as we have seen, Ibn Ḥijjah uses the word when describing *insijām.* He is aware that the concepts are related, as appears from the following:

> *Suhūlah* is mentioned by al-Tīfāshī in connection with the figure of *ẓarāfah* (″elegance″);[43] some people associate it with *insijām.* It is mentioned by Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī in his book *Sirr al-Faṣāḥah (The Secret of Eloquence),* where he says that it consists of the words being free from artificiality, complexity, and tortuousness in the expression *(khulūṣ al-lafẓ min al-takalluf wa-al-ta‘qīd wa-al-ta‘assuf fī al-sabk).*[44] Al-Tīfāshī defines *suhūlah* as ″easy expressions, that are distinguished from others even to those literate people who have the least taste, and which bespeak of a sensitive feeling, a fine nature, and a sound reflective mind.″[45]

Almost all the illustrations are from Bahā’ al-Dīn Zuhayr, ″who holds the reins of this kind.″ No attempt is made to distinguish between *insijām* and *suhūlah* and it is doubtful that Ibn Ḥijjah would insist on a distinction; he is bound to follow his

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[42]*Khizānah,* 554–7/1:478–81; cf. al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ*, 311–13; Ibn Ma‘ṣūm, *Anwār,* 6:270–78 (calling it *tas′hīl*); al-Nābulusī, *Nafaḥāt,* 311–16; Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician,* 119 (no. 163), where it is translated as ″smoothness.″

[43]Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Tīfāshī (d. 651/1253), author of works on precious stones and sex, also wrote a work on *badī‘* which has not been preserved. See al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ*, 72; Ibn Abī al-Iṣba‘, *Taḥrīr*, 91; Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafá Tāshkubrī′zādah, *Miftāḥ al-Sa‘ādah wa-Miṣbāh al-Siyādah* (Hyderabad, 1977–1980), 1:182 (spelled as al-T.ghāshī); Bahā’ al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Subkī, *‘Arūs al-Afrāḥ fī Sharḥ Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ,* in Mas‘ūd ibn ‘Umar al-Taftāzānī et al., *Shurūḥ al-Talkhīṣ* (Cairo, 1937) 4:467 (here spelled as al-Shāshī). Before al-Tīfāshī, Usāmah Ibn Munqidh *(Badī‘*, 134–39) offered a chapter on *al-ẓarāfah wa-al-suhūlah.*

[44]Not found in the consulted editions of Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī (d. 477/1074), *Sirr al-Faṣāḥah* (Cairo, 1932 and Beirut, 1982). Until this point, Ibn Ḥijjah is quoting, or near-quoting, al-Ḥillī′s commentary (*Sharḥ al-Kāfiyah*, 311), which has *ṭarāfah* instead of *ẓarāfah*).

[45]*Khizānah,* 554/1:478.

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model, al-Ḥillī, who, in turn, merely collected those terms of *badī‘* that were current. Judging by the examples, *suhūlah* seems to be applied even more than *insijām* to poetry that is ″easy,″ in that it avoids difficult words, difficult syntax, and difficult thoughts. One example, by al-Bahā’ Zuhayr, is on the old conceit of offering to return a kiss as if it were a present that could be given back:[46]

> Man lī bi-qalbin ashtarī- / hi min al-qulūbi al-qāsiyah
> Wa-ilayka yā malika al-milā- / ḥi waqaftu ashkū ḥāliyah
> Innī la-aṭlubu ḥājatan / laysat ‘alayka bi-khāfiyah
> An‘im ‘alayya bi-qublatin / hibatan wa-illā ‘āriyah
> Wa-u‘īduhā la-ka lā ‘adim- /ta bi-‘aynihā wa-kamā hiyah
> Wa-idhā aradta ziyādatan / khudhhā wa-nafsī rāḍiyah[47]
>
> [Who has a heart for me that I could buy, a hard one!
> To you, O king of pretty ones, I′ve come with my complaint.
> I want one thing; it will not be unknown to you:
> Please make me happy with a kiss: a gift, or else a loan;
> You′ll have it back precisely as it was, my dear!
> But if you′d like some more, please take them, it′s my pleasure.]

The other, following section is entitled *ḥusn al-bayān,*[48] a term that should be taken in a vague and general sense, such as ″beautiful exposition, or clarity of expression.″ Ibn Ḥijjah describes it as follows:

> They say that it means the clear expression *(ibānah)* of what is in the soul in eloquent words that are remote from intricacy *(lubs)*, since the intention of it is to utter the sense by means of a lucid picture *(ikhrāj al-ma‘ná ilá al-ṣūrah al-wāḍiḥah)* and to convey it to the understanding of the recipient in the easiest manner.

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[46]Cf. the joke told in Ibn Qutaybah, *‘Uyūn al-Akhbār* (Cairo, 1925–30), 2:55 and other sources; see Ulrich Marzolph, *Arabia Ridens* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992), 2:47 (no. 175).

[47]*Khizānah,* 556/2:480–81; Bahā’ al-Dīn Zuhayr ibn Muḥammad, *Dīwān,* ed. and transl. Edward Henry Palmer (Cambridge, 1876–77), 1:297–98 (text), 2:331 (rhymed translation, changing the gender of the addressee). The *Dīwān*′s version has ten lines (Ibn Ḥijjah quotes 2–3, 5–8). Some lines are quoted in *The Thousand and One Nights* (*Alf Laylah wa-Laylah* [Cairo, n.d.], 2:42–43).

[48]*Khizānah,* 557–58/2:482–83; see al-Ḥillī, *Sharḥ*, 309–10; Ibn Ma‘ṣūm, *Anwār,* 6:290–95; al-Nābulusī, *Nafaḥāt,* 321–22; Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician*, 112–13 (no. 153, translated as ″articulateness″); Ibn Abī al-Iṣba‘, *Taḥrīr*, 489–93; idem, *Badī‘ al-Qur’ān*, 203–6; Badr al-Dīn Ibn Mālik, *Al-Miṣbāḥ* (Cairo, 1341), 92–93, al-Suyūṭī, *‘Uqūd,* 140.

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In view of the more precise sense of ″imagery″ that the term *bayān* carried in Ibn Ḥijjah´s time, according to the more formal and scholastic study of eloquence and style, one might believe that here, too, he refers above all to imagery, seeing moreover that he speaks of a ″picture/image.″ Yet in the rest of the chapter and its illustrations this is not borne out.

Although *insijām* and related terms were introduced in studies on *badī‘* at a relatively late stage, this does not mean that the concepts of fluency and seeming ease were absent from earlier phases. Both terms for eloquence, *bayān* and *balāghah,* near-synonyms before they acquired more specialized technical meanings, stress the clarity and communicativeness of eloquence that seem to favor easiness over obscurity. Ja‘far Ibn Yaḥyá al-Barmakī is reported to have described true *bayān* as ″what is far from artifice *(ṣan‘ah),* free of complexity *(ta‘aqqud),* and not in need of interpretation *(ta’wīl)*″; this view was endorsed by al-Jāḥiẓ and many others.[49] *Suhūlah* is mentioned often, usually favorably. It is the first of forty-six stylistic traits of the poetry of ‘Umar Ibn Abī Rabī‘ah listed in *Al-Aghānī* and attributed to Muṣ‘ab Ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Zubayrī (uncle of al-Zubayr Ibn Bakkār, d. 256/870).[50] Particularly common is the concept of the ″seemingly easy,″ often expressed as *al-sahl al-mumtani‘,* or *al-muṭmi‘ al-mumtani‘* but found in other expressions. Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ is reported to have defined eloquence as ″what an ignorant person hears and thinks (mistakenly) he can do equally well.″[51] Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī (d. 235/850) called the poetry of Manṣūr al-Namarī ″easy of diction, difficult to aspire to″ *(sahl kalāmuh, ṣa‘b marāmuh).*[52] Ismā’īl, son of ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ibn Yaḥyá *al-kātib* (d. 132/749), defined a good prose writer as ″he who writes a letter so that people reading it imagine they can do as well, but when they try they cannot.″[53] Al-Aṣmā‘ī is credited with a definition of poetry as ″what is concise, easy, delicate, and subtle of meaning; if you hear it you think you can reach that level, but if you try it, you find it far from your grasp. All the rest is mere versification.″[54] Ibrāhīm, son of al-‘Abbās Ibn al-Aḥnaf, describing his father´s

[49]Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-Bayān wa-al-Tabyīn* (Cairo, 1968), 1:106; Ibn Qutaybah, *‘Uyūn al-Akhbār,* 2:173.

[50]Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Cairo, 1927–74), 1:120–21.

[51]‘Alam al-Hudá ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍá, *Amālī al-Murtaḍá: Ghurar al-Fawā’id wa-Durar al-Qalā’id* (Cairo, 1954), 1:137.

[52]Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Ewald Wagner (Wiesbaden, 1958–), 1:17.

[53]From ‘Abd Allāh al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Kuttāb,* ed. by Dominique Sourdel as ″Le «Livre des secrétaires» de ‘Abdallāh al-Baġdādī,″ *Bulletin d´Etudes Orientales* 14 (1952–54): 149.

[54]Al-Muẓaffar ibn al-Faḍl al-Ḥusaynī, *Naḍrat al-Ighrīḍ fī Nuṣrat al-Qarīḍ* (Damascus, 1976), 10.

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poetry, said he had never found anything by a modern poet that was ″more difficult while being easy″ *(aṣ'ab fī suhūlah)*.[55] Similar sayings abound.

This preference for easy comprehension in poetry seems to contrast with the opinion that the basic difference between poetry and prose is that the former tends to obscurity and the latter to limpidity. In his epistle on the difference between prose and poetry, Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm Ibn Hilāl al-Ṣābī (d. 384/994) wrote that as a consequence of its prosodic restrictions ″the most splendid *(afkhar)* poetry is what is obscure *(mā ghamuḍa)* and only gives up its purport after some delay,″ whereas ″the most splendid epistolary prose *(tarassul)* is what has a clear meaning and gives up its purport as soon as one hears it.″[56] Al-Ṣābī, himself a prose writer, exaggerates: certainly in his day, the prestigious epistolary style tended to rival or surpass poetry in obscurity and ornateness. The issue of obscurity in Arabic literary criticism, from the scattered remarks by al-Jāḥiẓ to the important contribution on the topic by the sixth/thirteenth-century theorist Ḥāzim al-Qarṭājannī, has been studied by Albert Arazi in his article on this epistle.

Although critics and theorists, ancient and modern, often pay lip-service to the ideals of clarity and easiness in general terms, these are not very rewarding concepts to them since, like happy families to novelists, they offer few opportunities to show one's critical and analytical skills. Easy poetry offers not enough of a challenge, nor does the concept of easiness itself. We must be grateful to Ibn Ḥijjah and other writers of *badī'īyah* commentaries that they did not disdain to deal at length with easy poetry, stooping from being critics to being ″merely″ consumers of pleasant verse. To them, *insijām* and related ″figures″ are an excuse for quoting good or occasionally excellent poetry which does not depend primarily on artifice. The chapters serve to redress the balance to some extent between the artful and the seemingly artless. It is not strange that the *insijām* chapter is so extremely lengthy in Ibn Ḥijjah's *Khizānah* and Ibn Ma'ṣūm's *Anwār al-Rabī'*: it helped them to give their works more of the character of a representative anthology. ″Fluency″ is neither absent from the poetry of the Mamluk period, nor particularly common in it: it is found in all periods. The phrase ″easy listening″ in the title of

[55]Abū al-Faraj, *Aghānī,* 8:365; cf. Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, *Kitāb al-Ṣinā'atayn* (Cairo, 1971), 67; Ibrāhīm ibn 'Alī al-Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr al-Ādāb* (Beirut, 1972), 685.

[56]Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn Ḥamdūn, *Al-Tadhkirah al-Ḥamdūnīyah,* ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās and Bakr 'Abbās (Beirut, 1996), 6:357; Albert Arazi, ″Une épître d'Ibrāhīm b. Hilāl al-Ṣābī sur les genres littéraires,″ in M. Sharon, ed., *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization in Honor of Professor David Ayalon* (Jerusalem, 1986), 473–505 (see 498); Ziyād al-Zu'bī, ″Risālat Abī Isḥāq al-Ṣābī fī al-Farq bayna al-Mutarassil wa-al-Shā'ir: Dirāsah Tawthīqīyah Naqdīyah,″ *Abḥāth al-Yarmūk* 11 (1993): 129–65 (see 156).

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this paper suggests pleasant rather than great poetry, and it is true that many of the poems that show *insijām* do not seem to tax the listener, just as some muzak, meant to be relaxing and reassuring, has been purged of dissonants or ″difficult″ features. Nevertheless, there are many other poems that, though easy to listen to, hide deeper layers of meaning and thought for those listeners who make an effort.

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Communication and Emotion: The Case of Ibn Nubātah´s *Kindertotenlieder*

The Speechlessness of Death

> Ibn Nubātah said, bewailing the death of his son:
> Qālū ″fulānun qad jafat afkāruhū / naẓma al-qarīḍi fa-lā yakādu yujībuhū″
> Hayhāta naẓma al-shi‘ri minhū ba‘damā / sakana al-turāba walīduhu wa-ḥabībuhū
> [″This man,″ they say, ″has turned away his thoughts from verse, he´ll barely give an answer.″
> Composing poetry? Impossible for him whose child / *Walīd*, whose dear beloved / *Ḥabīb* has settled in the earth![1]]

Speechlessness is a natural reaction to the death of one´s own child, and it seems as if it was the normal reaction for most Arabic poets, too. Only a small number of elegies on the death of a poet´s child has come down to us. Most, however, are remarkable indeed. The Hudhaylian poet Abū Dhu'ayb (d. ca. 28/649) composed an elegy on the death of his sons (*A-min al-manūni wa-raybihā tatawajja‘ū,* meter *kāmil),* which is not only Abū Dhu'ayb´s unquestioned masterpiece, but also one of the finest and most famous poems of the early Islamic period in general.[2] In the Abbasid period, Ibn al-Rūmī´s (d. 283/896) elegies on his relatives stand out, especially his exceedingly long dirge commemorating the death of his mother. But he also composed several shorter poems on the death of two of his sons.[3] Even more famous, however, are two of several cases in which poets were induced by the loss of their children to compose a whole series of dirges. The first case is

[1] Ibn Nubātah, *Dīwān* (Cairo, 1333/1905), 51 (meter *kāmil*). *Tawriyah*s are noted in my translations in the following way: The primarily intended meaning is underlined, the secondarily suggested meaning written in italics. In reading aloud, the words in italics should be omitted.

[2] Another early poem ascribed to a certain Bint al-Ḥārith is discussed in Gert Borg, *Mit Poesie vertreibe ich den Kummer meines Herzens: Eine Studie zur altarabischen Trauerklage der Frau* (Istanbul-Leiden, 1997), 199–204. Borg considers this poem as ″one of the peaks of Arabic literature″ (203).

[3] Pieter Smoor, ″Elegies and Other Poems on Death by Ibn al-Rūmī,″ *Journal of Arabic Literature* 27 (1996): 49–85.

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Abū al-Ḥasan al-Tihāmī (d. 416/1025), whose three poems on the death of his son Abū al-Faḍl became the pillar of his fame, especially the ode rhyming in *–ārī* (meter *kāmil*) to which we will return later. The second case is Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī (d. 768/1366), who doubtlessly was, after Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, the greatest Arabic poet of the eighth/fourteenth century. His *dīwān,* which was compiled by his pupil al-Bashtakī from several smaller collections published previously by Ibn Nubātah himself, contains seven poems on the death of a child. At least three of these poems commemorate the death of a son named ʻAbd al-Raḥīm, but the others are so similar in tone and content that one may well assume that most of them were composed on the same occasion. Three of them are epigrams comprising two lines (one of them was quoted above), one is a seven liner, probably from Ibn Nubātah´s collection *al-Sabʻah al-Sayyārah*,[4] and the remaining three poems are long, sophisticated odes comprising 34 *(askanta qalbiya laḥdak*, meter *mujtathth),* 38 *(abkīka li-al-ḥasanayni al-khalqi wa-al-khuluqī*, meter *basīṭ),* and 57 *(Allāhu jāruka inna damiʻya jārī*, meter *kāmil)* lines respectively. Here I will focus on the last one.

Al-Tihāmī and Ibn Nubātah are not the only cases in which a poet composed a series of poems on the death of a child. One can name at least three other Arabic poets,[5] but there are also two such collections in German literature. Nearly simultaneously (without knowing of each other´s enterprises) Joseph von Eichendorff wrote a cycle of ten poems *(Auf meines Kindes Tod)* after the death of his daughter in 1832,[6] and Friedrich Rückert reacted to the death of two of his children in 1833–34 with the composition of an ensemble of more than five hundred (!) so-called *"Kindertotenlieder,"*[7] a term that seems suitable to me also for the (albeit much smaller) collections of al-Tihāmī and Ibn Nubātah. Obviously, the death of one or more children may have caused a similar reaction in completely different epochs and cultures. Instead of losing their speech, poets may seek recourse to speech itself, or rather, an artistic transformation of speech. Composing poetry could have complied with the emotional needs after the tremendous experience of losing a child; in other words, it could have had a cathartic effect on the poet.

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[4]ʻUmar Mūsá Bāshā assumes that all seven lines in al-Bashtakī´s recension stem from Ibn Nubātah´s collection *Al-Sabʻah al-Sayyārah;* see ʻUmar Mūsá Bāshā, *Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī: Amīr Shuʻarāʾ al-Mashriq* (3rd ed., Cairo, 1992), 250–51.

[5]Other poets who composed similar sets were Ibn ʻAbd Rabbih (d. 328/940), ʻUmārah al-Yamanī (d. 569/1174), and Usāmah ibn Munqidh (d. 584/1188), but since there is nothing to suggest that Ibn Nubātah´s poems presuppose knowledge of these poems, we will not dwell upon them.

[6]Joseph von Eichendorff, *Werke*, ed. Jost Perfahl (3rd ed., Düsseldorf-Zürich, 1996), 1:243–48.

[7]Friedrich Rückert, *Kindertodtenlieder,* ed. Hans Wollschläger (Nördlingen, 1988); cf. also Eda Sagarra, "Friedrich Rückert´s *Kindertotenlieder*," in *Representations of Childhood Death,* ed. Gilian Avery and Kimberley Reynolds (New York, 2000), 154–68.

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At first sight, this process seems easy to understand. A poet is shaken by overwhelming emotions, whereupon he sets about to express them in a poem. The resulting poem would thus reflect the poet´s emotions. But things are not so simple. Yet it is this simplification that made Ibn Nubātah´s *Kindertotenlieder* attractive to some literary historians who are accustomed to criticizing Mamluk poetry for its allegedly mannered and unnatural style and are glad to find in Ibn Nubātah´s elegies on the death of his son(s) poetry that conveys the immediate, unaffected expression of ″genuine feelings.″[8] Close inspection will reveal, however, that neither assumption is tenable: Mamluk poetry is not extraordinarily mannered, and Ibn Nubātah´s dirges are highly rhetorical. Of course, nobody can seriously doubt the sincerity of Ibn Nubātah´s feelings. But to transform emotions into literature means not only to transform them into speech, but also to transform them into an act of communication that conforms both to the rules of everyday communication and, furthermore, to the rules of a far more complex communication system of literature.

This can be shown clearly by the epigram initially quoted. Its two lines follow exactly the pattern of an ideal apologetic epigram. In line one, the problem is identified: in this case, the poet is reproached for his speechlessness. In line two, a justification for the criticized behavior must be given, usually in the form of a point which is often based on linguistic or literary ambiguity. In our sample, the poet justifies his silence by the death of his child. This justification is given a pointed form by the use of a *tawriyah* (double entendre). The words which designate the child, *walīd* ″child″ and *ḥabīb* ″beloved,″ have a double meaning. They are also the names of the two classical poets al-Walīd al-Buḥturī and Abū Tammām (whose name was Ḥabīb ibn Aws). Together with the child, so we can understand the line, the poet lost his Buḥturī and his Abū Tammām. One can hardly imagine a better expression of the fact that a very individual, personal grief is not easy to communicate by means of a culturally prefigured and historically shaped set of rules. Ibn Nubātah´s epigram is an accurate and intelligent (as well as intelligently ambiguous) formulation of this experience. The epigram is remarkable in another respect. Its point is achieved by a *tawriyah*, a form of witty wordplay, which in modern eyes would hardly be considered appropriate to the somber occasion. But, as this poem shows, one has to be very careful about generalizing our own prejudices and applying them to other times and cultures. As is shown by the *Kindertotenlieder* of the Arab poets as well as by those of Rückert and Eichendorff, poetry—including its artistic and playful element—can be helpful in coping with the grief of the loss of one´s own beloved, for poets as well as for their public. It

[8]See my review of *Al-Ghazal fī al-ʻAṣr al-Mamlūkī al-Awwal*, by Majd al-Afandī, *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 214–19.

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may help the poet to prove his own abilities to create a work of art, and by way of the act of active creativity he may cope with the experience of loss. He may find relief from the experience of helplessness and passive suffering and prove to himself that he still has a share in life. Even more important may be the fact that a poem (or any other work of art) is a means to break the speechlessness of death, to resume communication and thereby to reassume a social role without having to interrupt the process of mourning.[9] Several such attempts to communicate about the death of one´s own child proved to be successful, as the collections of dirges on childhood death in Arabic and German literature show. Obviously, the public was willing to lend these poets an attentive ear.

Communication with the Past: Ibn Nubātah and al-Tihāmī

Arabic poetry is not only a communication with contemporary (and future) audiences, it is always also a communication with the past. From pre-Islamic times onwards, Arabic poetry displays an extraordinary intertextual density. Every line and every concept refers back to many other lines and concepts in a more complex but often direct way than is the case in most Western literatures. Scholars at first had difficulty understanding that a seeming similarity between individual poems and lines was not due to impotence or a lack of originality or the inflexibility of an all-pervading convention, but was rather the result of a closely woven net of intertextual strands that was deliberately cultivated and consciously achieved by the poets. Arabic poems were expected, at all periods, to be original. But the notion of originality was different from that of early modern and modern Europe. After all, there was no hereditary nobility in the Islamic world against which a bourgeoisie had to revolt by setting its own norms of individualism in opposition to the class consciousness of nobility, as was the case in Europe. And since this factor did not exist, there was no need to abolish a poetic tradition that was considered satisfactory and perfectly fulfilled the needs of its participants.

Instead, in premodern Islamic societies an extraordinary importance was given to poetry that can only occasionally be found in European societies. Since the degree of institutionalization was rather low in Islamic societies and social groups were only loosely organized, the most important strategy for the formation of social groups, the integration of their members, and their separation from other groups or social layers, was communication, that is, qualified participation in the group´s dominant discourses. The rank of the individual member was established by his excellence in mastering the respective discourses rather than by the posts

[9]Since the psychological aspects of poetry as a reaction to one´s relative´s death have been dealt with extensively by Th. Emil Homerin, I will touch on this subject only peripherally, see Th. Emil Homerin, ″A Bird Ascends the Night: Elegy and Immortality in Islam,″ revised ed., *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59 (1991): 247–79.

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and positions he (often all too shortly) held. Now even a brief glance into any collection of biographies of the *a'yān* in the Arab world from the later Abbasid period onwards shows that obviously poetry was one of these discourses, and this is small wonder, since communication was the basic mechanism of the constitution of social groups, and poetry was the most privileged and prestigious form of communication. Therefore, the group of the ulama was equally characterized by their mastering the principles of Islamic law as well as by their participation in permanent poetic communication between its members, as the countless *ikhwānīyāt*, *muṭāraḥāt*, *tahāni'*, and *ta'āzī* [10] show with sufficient clarity—genres that have been deliberately avoided by the scholars of our days (since for experts in the field of literary studies these genres are not ″poetic″ enough, whereas experts in the field of social studies customarily skip poetry anyway). And since this mechanism persisted well into the nineteenth—if not even right into the twentieth—century, there was no reason to abolish the communicative potential that arose from the intertextual nature of Arabic poetry for about one and a half millennia. On the contrary, any fundamental break in tradition would have meant the loss of one of the most important social communication systems and therefore would have led to a social disintegration to nobody's benefit—a consequence hardly believable in a society for which literature is at best a useless pastime, as it has become in our own times.

Therefore, it is no wonder that the Arabic-speaking—and rhyming—world tried at one and the same time to maintain a common poetic system as a communicative basis for a broad layer of society, as well as to demand originality as one of the most important qualities of a poem. To be original meant to be able to display a creative handling of tradition that surprised the educated public by its novelty and at the same time confirmed the value of tradition. This system functioned perfectly well until the forced introduction of Western literary norms in the second half of the nineteenth century. The fact that in the Mamluk and even in the Ottoman period many of the norms of early Arabic poetry were still considered valid, so that we find lots of poems that are not terribly different from those written by al-Mutanabbī, was ammunition for the European colonial enterprise in the nineteenth century to disparage contemporary Arabic literature and to construct the idea of a period of cultural stagnation and decadence lasting for many centuries in order to justify colonialist intervention (which could not have been sufficiently justified by economic and technological superiority alone). Western nineteenth-

[10]Because of the neglect of the Mamluk period and prejudices towards occasional poetry, these genres are so little studied that they even lack entries in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* and the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature.*

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century standards of originality are still prevalent among contemporary Arabic scholars and lead to many misinterpretations.[11]

A characteristic misunderstanding is M. Muḥammad´s treatment of Ibn Nubātah´s *rā'īyah*, the intertextual component of which he simply overlooked, though he did note some pre-Islamic lines, the alleged transformation of which by Ibn Nubātah he considered unsuccessful.[12] In general, however, he regarded the poem as sufficiently original, but criticized its seemingly rather unorganized structure (a point which will be discussed extensively later). He could discern neither a well-formed introduction nor several clearly separated text paragraphs. But in this case he was prepared to excuse the poet for these shortcomings (which they doubtlessly are in his eyes), since they gave testimony to the spontaneity, immediacy, and veracity of the poem: ″He did not allow himself to contemplate the structure of his poem. . . .″[13] ″When Ibn Nubātah started to elegize his son, he did not reflect upon the way in which he would carry out his elegy and relied on his natural disposition that would bring about the elegy in a form inscribed in his imagination. . . .″[14] All these speculations turn out to be futile when we discover that Ibn Nubātah´s poem was not a spontaneous, unpremeditated reaction, but a consciously and very carefully elaborated work of art that was the artistic transformation of another poem.

Ibn Nubātah´s choice was not spontaneous at all. He took as his model the only poem on the death of a child that had really gained fame, and, at the same time, dealt more extensively with the subject of childhood death itself.[15] It is a poem by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Tihāmī, a poet who was born in the Yemen, but spent most of his life in Iraq, Syria, and Palestine, before he died as a prisoner in Fatimid Egypt.[16] During his stay at Ramlah, where he held the office of a preacher, his son Abū al-Faḍl died as a child. Al-Tihāmī reacted by composing three elegies on Abū al-Faḍl´s death, a short one of 13 lines *(kāmil,* rhyme *–3qī*[17]*)* that need not

[11]In the case of elegies, the focus on immediacy and originality ″ignores the importance of standardized themes and their repetition, which are crucial to successful elegies as poets attempt to place their personal sorrow within more universal contexts.″ (Th. Emil Homerin, review of *Āfāq al-Shi'r al-'Arabī fī al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī,* by Yāsīn al-Ayyūbī, *MSR* 3 [1999]: 238).

[12]Maḥmūd Sālim Muḥammad, *Ibn Nubātah, Shā'ir al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī* (Beirut, 1420/1999), 225.

[13]Ibid., 221.

[14]Ibid., 222.

[15]In contrast to Abū Dhu'ayb´s *'aynīyah,* which had gained fame enough, but only very superficially deals with the fact that the deceased were children.

[16]On al-Tihāmī see Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden, 1967–), 2:478–79; Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, ″Al-Tihāmī,″ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., 10:482; G. J. H. van Gelder, ″Al-Tihāmī, 'Alī ibn Muḥammad,″ *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature,* ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London and New York, 1998), 2:772–73.

[17]*-3qī* means that the poem rhymes in *-qī* where *-qī* is preceded by one of the three short vowels,

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concern us here, and two lengthy sister poems,[18] one of 81 lines *(ṭawīl,* rhyme *–xrī)* that was obviously an intertextual reaction to a poem by Abū ʻAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʻUtbī (d. 228/842–3) with the same rhyme and meter,[19] and a poem of 90 lines (*kāmil*, rhyme *-ārī*), which was to become al-Tihāmī´s most famous poem, in fact, the pillar of his fame.[20]

The lifetime of al-Tihāmī, the later Buyid period, featuring such poets as al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1015), his brother al-Murtaḍá (d. 436/1044), and Mihyār al-Daylamī (d. 428/1036–37), is the first period that was considered by Western scholars as a period of decadence and stagnation, and were it not for al-Maʻarrī (d. 449/1058), its literature would have remained more or less unstudied. For Ibn Nubātah, however, who lived almost three and a half centuries later, al-Tihāmī was a classical author. In Ibn Nubātah´s programmatic anthology *Maṭlaʻ al-Fawāʼid*, this period is represented by three authors (of fifteen altogether): al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, al-Tihāmī, and al-Maʻarrī (who, contrary to a common prejudice, was never neglected or even suppressed).[21] Al-Tihāmī´s fame rested, as already mentioned, on his elegies for his son, especially on his *kāmil rāʼīyah*. His poems in this field were well known to Ibn Nubātah, who quotes four lines from al-Tihāmī´s *kāmil rāʼīyah* and six lines from al-Tihāmī´s *ṭawīl rāʼīyah* in the chapter on *rithāʼ* in his *Maṭlaʻ al-Fawāʼid*.[22] He may have quoted these lines without envisaging that one day he would come back to them after having experienced the same loss as their author.

Al-Tihāmī´s elegy in *–ārī* is quoted in a great number of sources, to mention only al-Ṣafadī´s *Wāfī* and al-Bākharzī´s *Dumyah*.[23] One can assume, therefore,

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a, u, or *i*, while *-xrī,* the next rhyme scheme mentioned, means that *-rī* is preceded by any consonant.

[18]So called in Yāqūt al-Rūmī, *Muʻjam al-Buldān*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1866–70), 2:819 (article ″Al-Ramlah″).

[19]The poem is quoted (probably fragmentarily) in al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Madīnat al-Salām,* ed. Bashshār ʻAwwād Maʻrūf (Beirut, 1422/2001), 3:564, and in other sources.

[20]Its text is quoted according to the following edition: *Dīwān Abī al-Ḥasan ʻAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Tihāmī*, ed. Muḥammad ibn ʻAbd al-Raḥmān al-Rabīʻ (Riyadh, 1982). The *ṭawīl* poem is found on pp. 338–43, the *kāmil* poem on pp. 308–22. In this poem, line 86 is a combination of two originally separate lines. The text has to be corrected according to al-Bākharzī, *Dumyat al-Qaṣr wa-ʻUṣrat Ahl al-ʻAṣr*, ed. Muḥammad al-Tūnijī (Beirut, 1414/1993), 1:140–49. Note that in my quotations of this poem, from line 86 onwards the number of the line in al-Rabīʻ´s edition has to be augmented by one.

[21]Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Nubātah, *Maṭlaʻ al-Fawāʼid wa-Majmaʻ al-Farāʼid,* ed. ʻUmar Mūsá Bāshā (Damascus, 1392/1972). My study on the Mamluk literary anthology with special reference to Ibn Nubātah´s *Maṭlaʻ al-Fawāʼid* is in press: ″Literarische Anthologien der Mamlukenzeit,″ in *Die Mamluken: Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur im Gedenken an Ulrich Haarmann (1942–1999),* ed. S. Conermann and A. Pistor-Hatam (Hamburg, 2002).

[22]Ibn Nubātah, *Maṭlaʻ al-Fawāʼid,* 342–43.

[23]Further quotations are listed in al-Tihāmī, *Dīwān,* 320–22.

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that the contemporary audience of Ibn Nubātah´s poem realized that this poem is a *mu'āraḍah* to al-Tihāmī´s famous ode, even upon hearing only its first line. Al-Tihāmī´s dirge starts with the following words:

> Ḥukmu al-manīyati fī al-barīyati jārī / mā hādhihī al-dunyā bi-dāri qarārī
> [Death´s judgment makes its rounds among the creatures. This world is not a permanent home.]

Ibn Nubātah´s introductory line refers to his model with the word *jār(ī)*, the most prominent word in al-Tihāmī´s text, because it is its first rhyme word. He does not simply quote it, however, but makes it the object of the hearer´s reflection, since Ibn Nubātah´s *jārī* is a *tawriyah* (the first *tawriyah* in the poem). It can mean ″my helper″ or ″running,″ and at the same time the less probable meaning ″helper″ is suggested by the preceding word *jārukā*, which yields a *jināS tāmm* with the rhyme word. One may perhaps also mention the *jināS muḍāri'* between *manīyah* and *barīyah* in al-Tihāmī´s verse, which is echoed by another *jināS muḍāri'* in Ibn Nubātah´s poem (*awṭān*/*awṭār*), to which again more prominence is given in this poem, since it includes the second rhyme word:

> Allāhu jārukā inna dam'iya jārī / yā mūḥisha al-awṭāni wa-al-awṭārī
> [God be your helper as my tears are flowing / *my helpers*, oh you who have forsaken both my home and hope!]

As we can see, Ibn Nubātah uses rhetorical devices here to direct the hearer´s attention to the transformation of his model. But this is not their only function. Al-Tihāmī´s line is a very clear, straightforward, even proverbial statement that brings about sadness and comfort at the same time, for it reaffirms that whatever happens is part of an eternal and stable world order.[24] With Ibn Nubātah´s line, we enter into a troubled world. The first pronoun (in *jāruka*) does not refer to the hearer, as one might first think, but to the deceased child, but this only becomes clear at the end of the line. As unclear as the pronominal reference is the meaning of the first rhyme word, and the prominent similarity between *awṭān* and *awṭār* adds to the impression of uncertainty and ambiguity that is evoked in the hearer´s mind. But this is exactly the main difference between the two dirges. A grave and stately, well-constructed ode by al-Tihāmī is contrasted with a poem that presents a mind that cannot find a way out of a world of despair, uncertainty, and ambiguity. Ibn Nubātah manages to convey this message with his very first line, in which rhetorical devices are obviously far more than embellishments, for they serve not

[24]The most common motif of comfort in Arabic elegies is the statement that everybody must die; cf. Thomas Bauer, ″Todesdiskurse im Islam,″ *Asiatische Studien* 53 (1999): 5–16.

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only to refer to the poet´s model, but also to transform it into the poet´s own perspective.

References to al-Tihāmī´s poem permeate the whole of Ibn Nubātah´s *rā'īyah*, but it may suffice here to mention only two. The word *miḍmār* ″race course,″ the rhyme word of line 5, sticks out. The comparison of life to a race course may be more familiar to the reader of German baroque poetry[25] than to the reader of Arabic poetry, where it is—if my memory does not fail—not very common. It occurs, however, in al-Tihāmī´s poem, again with *miḍmār* as rhyme word (al-Tihāmī, line 27):

> La-qad jarayta kamā jaraytu li-ghāyatin / fa-balaghtahā wa-abūka fī al-miḍmārī
> [Towards a goal you ran like me and reached it, while your father is still on the race course.]

Al-Tihāmī´s striking and concise image of the experience of premature death of a beloved person is too good a line to be neglected by Ibn Nubātah. And at first sight his line (line 5) even seems strikingly similar to that of al-Tihāmī:

> Layta al-radá idh lam yada'ka ahāba bī / ḥattá nadūma ma'an 'alá miḍmārī
> [Would that destruction had summoned me as well, when it did not refrain from you, so that we could have pursued the same race course!]

Again al-Tihāmī supplies an interpretation of what happened. Life is a race course that inevitably leads to the same goal. The fact that some runners arrive first even if they had started later is nothing extraordinary; the child´s death is therefore again embedded in the cosmic order. In Ibn Nubātah´s line, the poet and the child are no more on the same race course. Instead, *radan* ″destruction″ (a word common in pre-Islamic poetry but not occurring in the Quran), which is personified here, has summoned only the child and left the father on a road of his own. Only destruction, appearing here as a vague promise, could have united them, but even this hope proved to be futile. Hopeless despair has taken the place of al-Tihāmī´s trust in the cosmic order.

The experience that the body of the deceased is still present in the grave but cannot communicate anymore is cast into the following words by al-Tihāmī (line 24):

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[25]″Abend″ in Andreas Gryphius, *Gedichte*, ed. Adalbert Elschenbroich (Stuttgart, 1968), 11: ″Diß Leben koemmt mir vor als eine Renne-Bahn.″

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> Ashkū bi‘ādaka lī wa-anta bi-mawḍi‘in / law-lā al-radá la-sami‘ta fīhi sirārī
> [How much I complain that you are so far, though you lie in a place in which you could hear my most secret talks were it not for destruction´s work!]

The situation of the father at the grave is transformed into a paradox: although the child is near, it cannot hear nor answer. Ibn Nubātah liked the line and quoted it in his *Maṭla‘ al-Fawā’id.*[26] But when he reverted to the *ma‘ná* in his own poem, it sounds rather different (line 12):

> Nā’ī al-liqā wa-ḥimāhu aqrabu maṭraḥan / yā bu‘da mujtami‘in wa-qurba mazārī

Though the rhyme word is different in this case, al-Tihāmī´s model is clearly visible. But whereas al-Tihāmī explains the paradox (˝if there were not destruction . . .˝), it remains unresolved in Ibn Nubātah´s line. Further, it is condensed to the first *miṣrā‘* of the verse: ˝A long way ´tis to meet him, though his shelter is the nearest spot.˝ There remains a second *miṣrā‘*, but again Ibn Nubātah gives no explanations. Instead, he simply repeats the *ma‘ná* in different words in the intensified form of an exclamation: ˝How far is union, yet how close the place to visit him!˝ This repetitiveness, this persistence in one and the same thought without suggesting to the hearer that there is a way out which is exemplified in this single line, is one of the main characteristics of the poem as a whole, as we shall see. The two *ṭibāq*s in this line *(nā’in/qarīb; bu‘d/qurb)* are again not embellishments, but appear as a logical consequence of the sense the poet wants to convey, just as is the case with his *tawriyāt* and *jināsāt,* as we have already seen.

Several other lines in Ibn Nubātah´s poem turn out to be transformations of a line by al-Tihāmī,[27] but these three examples may suffice for the moment to show that Ibn Nubātah´s *rā’īyah* was in no way a spontaneous creation, but a well-planned and deliberately-composed intertextual response to another poem. And since the author spared no effort in directing attention to exactly this fact, the poem presupposes a reader/hearer who is equally prepared and willing to invest considerable effort to decipher not only the complex poetic language of the poem itself, but also its many intertextual relations. For many readers, however, these efforts must have been rather satisfying, as the fame of this poem proves.

[26] P. 342.
[27] Cf. the chart below, p. 78.

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THE TOPICS OF COMMUNICATION: PRIVATE SPHERE AND HEROIC AFFAIRS

As the single lines of the poem are most carefully elaborated, it is hard to believe that the structure of the poem—or rather, the obvious lack of an easily discernible structure—came about by accident. Again a glance at al-Tihāmī′s poem may be helpful.

If Ibn Nubātah′s *rā'īyah* leaves the impression of being more or less unstructured, one can hardly imagine a more clearly structured poem than al-Tihāmī′s *rā'īyah*. The poem starts with an introduction contemplating the transitoriness of human life in general, culminating in a line that is the versification of a famous hadith (line 6):

> Fa-al-'ayshu nawmun wa-al-manīyatu yaqẓatun / wa-al-mar'u baynahumā khayālun sārī
> [Life is sleep, death is awakening, and man between them is a fleeting vision.]

Following this introduction (lines 1–11), al-Tihāmī turns to the *rithā'* proper (lines 12–39), in which he laments the death of Abū al-Faḍl, of which part we have already quoted lines 24 and 27. The third part, however, which stretches from line 40 to 63 and is the central part of the poem, comes somewhat as a surprise, for it is a formidable example of the *fakhr* genre, 33 lines in praise of the poet′s ″tribe″ (whatever this may have been), introduced by the following lines (40–41):

> Law kunta tumna'u khāḍa dūnaka fityatun / minnā biḥāra 'awāmilin wa-shifārī
> Wa-daḥaw fuwayqa al-arḍi arḍan min damin / thumma inthanaw fa-banaw samā'a ghubārī
> [If a chance were given to defend you, young heroes from us had waded into a sea of spear-heads and sword-blades,
> unfolding above the earth a second earth of blood, erecting then, when they return, a sky of dust.]

This collective *fakhr* is followed by a fourth part, a sort of personal *fakhr,* that starts with a complaint about old age (64–75), leading into a passage (76–90) devoted to general wisdom *(ḥikmah),* self-glorification, and a complaint about the vileness of the poet′s time and his contemporaries *(dhamm al-zamān)*.

Whereas proverbial expressions of the transitoriness of human glory or the complaint about old age seem to be absolutely appropriate themes for elegies, self-glorification and a praise of military prowess can hardly be reconciled with

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our image of mourning. We must, however, take into account two basic premises of premodern Arabic poetry, first, its basically and consciously communicative nature, and second, the conception of the *rithā'* genre.

For Arabic literary theory, *rithā'* was considered a subcategory of *madīḥ,* since the essence of an elegy was praise. The only difference from panegyric poetry was that the object of praise is a dead person.[28] If, however, elegies are nothing but eulogies, it is inevitably difficult to compose elegies for people who could not have been the subject of an eulogy. Still in al-Tihāmī´s time, a poet who wanted to write panegyric poems on persons other than princes, rulers, governors, or generals had a difficult task. Basically, the *mamdūḥ* should be praised for two qualities: generosity and military prowess. Still al-Mutanabbī, forced in his youth to compose poetry on several *aṣḥāb al-qalam,* rarely and briefly mentions their professional proficiency, but instead tries to find some link to the theme of bravery, even if he has to go back to some real or imagined ancestors of the *mamdūḥ,* who may never have had a sword in their hands. If *quḍāh* and *kuttāb* are difficult to praise, it is easy to understand Ibn Rashīq when he stresses that ″one of the most difficult tasks for a poet is to elegize children and women, for he cannot say much about them, since their distinguishing qualities are but few″ *(li-ḍīq al-kalām 'alayhi fīhimā wa-qillat al-ṣifāt),*[29] which is not so much a misogynistic statement as a sober observation that the common poetic themes of *madḥ* are hardly reconcilable with the reality of the life of women and children. Therefore, it is no wonder that earlier poems on childhood death confine themselves mainly to the subjects of death, transitoriness, and mourning, and do not talk much about childhood. Often such poems are more similar to *zuhd* poetry than to *rithā'*. There are basically two ways to bring in the subject of childhood. First, the poet may say that the feelings of a father towards his child are especially intense. This is done by Ibn 'Abd Rabbih and al-Tihāmī several times, but it is a topic that can hardly be extended over more than one or two lines. The second, more important, strategy is the following: since the poetic tradition did not provide a stock of subjects and concepts to talk about what children were, poets instead talked about what the child did not become. If children did not achieve anything worth mentioning in poetry, the poet could nevertheless imagine what the child (in this case, of course, only sons come into question) would have achieved were he not deprived of his opportunities by premature death. By proceeding in this manner the poet was able to bring in all the conventional and indispensable themes of a eulogy and elegy proper and to compose a poem on a subject that was not given a recognized place in literary tradition.

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[28]Gregor Schoeler: ″Die Einteilung der Dichtung bei den Arabern,″ *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 123 (1973): 9–55.

[29]Ibn Rashīq, *Al-'Umdah fī Ṣinā'at al-Shi'r wa-Naqdihī,* ed. al-Nabawī 'Abd al-Wāḥid Sha'lān (Cairo, 1420/2000), 2:843.

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Al-Tihāmī makes use of this device in the most extensive way. In his *ṭawīl rā'īyah* the central part, beginning with line 39, starts with a complaint that the father's grief is doubled by the realization that his son could not take part in heroic military actions. To quote but one example (line 43), he could not prove his prowess:

> Bi-ḍarbin yuṭīru al-bīḍu min ḥarri waq'ihī / shu'ā'an ka-mā ṭāra al-sharāru min al-jamrī
> [With sword strokes so hot that beams are made to radiate like sparks that fly from live coal]

After mentioning other heroic actions that the child could not carry out because of his premature death, al-Tihāmī leads predictably from the subject of military prowess to that of generosity, until he concludes this section in line 54. The only other subject besides military virtues is, in line 51, al-Tihāmī's regret that his son never had the opportunity to bring forth the beauties of prose and poetry, a motif that was taken up by Ibn Nubātah in his lines 17–18. This long, central passage from lines 39–54 in al-Tihāmī's *ṭawīl* poem is the counterpart to the *fakhr* section in the sister poem in *kāmil.* Obviously we will only be able to understand the innovative quality of Ibn Nubātah's poem if we understand the function of these *fakhr* sections in al-Tihāmī's poems and the complete absence of the subject of heroism in Ibn Nubātah's poems.

First of all, we must not fall into the trap of reading these poems as primarily autobiographical. Al-Tihāmī is said to have originated from a family of low birth,[30] for which reason alone one should be admonished not to take the praise of the heroic deeds of his "tribe" too literally. And one would certainly miss the point if the heroic passage in his *ṭawīl* poem were interpreted as reflecting al-Tihāmī's dream that his son would have pursued a military career. In all probability al-Tihāmī did not dream of a son as soldier. Instead, one can conceive of two reasons for the inclusion of the heroic passages.

First, heroism is a good counterweight to the paralysis following the experience of a tremendous loss. Already in pre-Islamic poetry, heroic themes serve to counterbalance the loss of self confidence depicted in the *nasīb*, and the reassurance of one's own value in a social undertaking such as war is again a reasonable way to overcome the isolation, which is a consequence of the bereaved's retreat into his pain and his memories of past bliss.

The second and, I think, more important reason is the fact that a premodern Arabic poem, even if it deals with such an intimate subject as the death of one's own child, still remains primarily an act of communication directed by its author

[30]Heinrichs, "Al-Tihāmī," 482a.

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to a specific public. From a communicative point of view, however, poems on childhood death are an extremely problematic genre. First, they have no immediate addressee. The child is already dead, the bereaved person is the poet himself (who is most affected, but cannot address a poem to himself), and since the child did not yet play a public social role, there is nobody other than the father/poet himself who can be consoled for having undergone a loss. In this respect, an elegy on children is different from genres like panegyric poetry or love poetry, in which there is an addressee (ruler, beloved) to whom the poem is (at least nominally) directed. In other genres in which there is no direct addressee, like wine, garden, or hunting poetry, still the recitation of the poems formed a part of special social occasions, whereas there was no special social situation for the performance of a poem on childhood death. Islamic funeral rites leave no room for the recitation of elegies. As a small poem, focussing on the subject of transitoriness, it may be used in the same way as any other *zuhd* poem and recited on occasions in which people used to exchange *zuhdīyāt*. But to make a great affair out of the death of a small child was more difficult. Al-Tihāmī wanted to make a monumental poem to match his monumental grief. Therefore he had to have recourse to the accepted ″monumental″ subjects like heroism and magnanimity, and he succeeded in composing a really impressive poem that gained wide circulation and indeed impressed its readers for centuries.

Three and a half centuries later many things had changed. Gradually the *kuttāb* had ceased to form a distinct social group with specific skills and knowledge and its own canon of literature. By the Mamluk period, their functions had been taken over completely by the ulama, a group of scholars who had undergone a more or less identical basic training and socialization. Ibn Nubātah and, a century later, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī, to mention only two examples, had more or less the same sort of academic training. Both felt especially attracted to the fields of hadith and poetry, and it was by no means inevitable that the first should become a great poet and the other a great *muḥaddith*. And still Ibn Nubātah was the primary transmitter of Ibn Isḥāq´s *Sīrah* in Egypt, and Ibn Ḥajar left a small but fine *dīwān* of excellent poetry. As poets, both of them seized the opportunity to get in contact with the last remaining Arabic-speaking dynasties. Ibn Nubātah found a patron in al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad, the Ayyubid ruler of Ḥamāh, whereas Ibn Ḥajar entered the court of the Rasulids in the Yemen. These patrons gave them plenty of occasions to compose panegyric poems with traditional structure and thematic content, but in the end even for them the poetic relations to their fellow ulama proved to be more important than the favor of princes. Though Ibn Nubātah may have considered his *Mu'ayyadīyāt* as his primary achievement, his *dīwān* contains more poems addressed to the Subkīyūn, the Abnā' Faḍl Allāh and other ulama, and the same is, *mutatis mutandis,* also true for Ibn Ḥajar. Therefore,

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in the literary system, the ulama had not only taken over the functions of the *kuttāb,* but also the functions of the princes as patrons, addressees of panegyric poetry, and as models of an ideal personality. Of course, Mamluk poets had no difficulty in praising a qadi, a *muḥaddith,* or a *naḥwī* for his scholarly abilities, and had no need to resort to the subject of military prowess, which had largely lost its former importance in Mamluk literature anyway, since the Mamluks themselves were only peripherally part of the literary system, whereas the civilian elite had (and was supposed to have) little to do with warfare.

The decreasing importance of the military elite in the system of literature did not lead, however, to a decreasing social importance of poetry in general or of the panegyric poem in particular. Just the opposite was the case. The former asymmetric poetic communication between a prince and patron as addressee on the one side and the poet as supplicant on the other had given way to a symmetric communication between ulama who were not only able to judge the literary merits of a poem addressed to them, but also to answer it with a poem of their own. And since the ulama had more or less monopolized poetic discourse, poetry became a means of integration with and delimitation from other social groups.[31] In addition, poetic skill could also serve as a means to distinguish oneself and to acquire social status. Therefore, in the Mamluk period we witness at one and the same time the disappearance of the professional poet as well as an increase in the social importance of poetry.

This new social role of poetry had, of course, consequences for poetry itself. The most obvious consequence is the increasing importance of genres which immediately serve the poetic communication between the ulama, such as congratulation poems *(tahāni'),* poems of condolence *(ta'āzī),* or poetic exchanges *(muṭāraḥāt),* not to mention the countless exchanges of riddles, epigrams (hence the unprecedented popularity of these forms in the Mamluk period), or rhymed *fatwá*s and other, even more occasional, forms of poetry. Poetry in praise of the Prophet is another genre that was particularly successful in Mamluk times since it could satisfy the emotional and religious requirements of the ulama as well as present their values and concerns.

Another consequence of the fact that poetry became more and more a means of communication among the members of a rather closely defined social group is its increasing intimacy. Obviously, ulama started to become interested in each others´ family life. While we know virtually nothing about the wife/wives and children of the most outstanding poets and scholars from the early and middle Abbasid period, al-Sakhāwī (to mention only one) provides the readers of his

[31]Cf. Thomas Bauer, ″Ibrāhīm al-Mi'mār: Ein dichtender Handwerker aus Ägyptens Mamlukenzeit,″ *ZDMG* 152 (2002): 63–93.

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Ḍaw' al-Lāmi' with plenty of gossip about the family life of his contemporaries, and gives a very detailed account of the marital crisis of his venerated teacher Ibn Ḥajar in his biography.[32] Unfavorable as his description might appear at first, it was certainly not malicious, since al-Sakhāwī honored his teacher almost as a saint. Instead, he might have considered the exposition of private details rather as a ″human touch″ that would add common interest to his biography and understanding for its subject. Ibn Ḥajar, in turn, was not devoid of this new interest in intimate matters. In one of the longest *ghazal* poems ever written, he made love of his wife and yearning for his child during his pilgrimage its main theme.[33] It is inconceivable that al-Buḥturī or even al-Mutanabbī could have composed a love poem about his own wife! A very striking example of this new tendency is also the fact that Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī (d. 745/1344), the greatest grammarian of the Mamluk age, composed a series of nine poems on the death of his daughter Nuḍār, whereas elegies on daughters are hardly found before.[34] One may also mention the poet Ibrāhīm al-Mi'mār (d. 749/1348), a craftsman who was not really accepted as an equal among the ulama, but whose poetry was nonetheless highly esteemed for its striking, witty, and satirical portrayal of the pangs and pleasures of everyday life in Mamluk Cairo.[35] Perhaps the most striking and moving example of this tendency is Ibn Sūdūn´s (d. 868/1464) poem on the death of his mother, ″a very personal and intimate picture of the tender loving mother figure who spoils her little boy and cannot let him go, not even when he is married. . . . There is a certain bitter-sweetness in this poem, a melancholy sense of humor, and certainly a very personal touch.″[36] So unprecedented was this poem that Ibn Sūdūn could not help but include it in the section of *hazalīyāt,* because he could not find a ″serious″ traditional genre that would allow for such intimacy.

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[32]Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Jawāhir wa-al-Durar fī Tarjamat Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Ḥajar,* ed. Ibrāhīm Bājis ʻAbd al-Majīd (Beirut, 1419/1999), 3:1207–27.

[33]Thomas Bauer, ″Ibn Ḥajar and the Arabic Ghazal of the Mamluk Age,″ in *Migration of a Literary Genre: Studies in Ghazal Literature,* ed. Thomas Bauer and Angelika Neuwirth (Beirut, forthcoming).

[34]Th. Emil Homerin, ″A Bird Ascends the Night″; idem, ″I´ve Stayed by the Grave´: An Elegy/*nasīb* for Nuḍār,″ in *Literary Heritage of Classical Islam: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy*, ed. Mustansir Mir (Princeton, 1993): 107–18; idem, ″Reflections on Poetry in the Mamluk Age,″ *MSR* 1 (1997): 63–85, esp. 80–85. These elegies display also a very private and intimate tone. Since Nuḍār, a very educated woman, was already 28 years old when she died, these poems do not fall into the category of childhood death. Nevertheless it is remarkable that Abū Ḥayyān composed a whole series of poems to commemorate her death, just as the poets who had lost their infant sons did.

[35]Bauer, ″Ibrāhīm al-Mi'mār.″

[36]Arnoud Vrolijk, *Bringing a Laugh to a Scowling Face: A Study and Critical Edition of the "Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-Muḍḥik al-'Abūs" by 'Alī Ibn Sūdūn al-Bašbuġāwī* (Leiden, 1998), 45.

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As these examples show, people started not only to become interested in the private life of their fellows, but also came to think that other people´s personal fate was relevant for their own life and could provide a model, an encouragement, or a comfort in individual situations. And, as a last step, they considered these topics worthy of being treated in the prestigious medium of poetry. As a consequence, poems on childhood death also acquired a new importance. For now it was no longer more or less unimportant what a person had to say about the death of his child, and one no longer had to have recourse to a topic such as heroism that was publicly accepted as important in order to draw attention to a poem on the death of one´s own child. It seems as if this development had taken place even before recurrent epidemics of the plague made the death of children an everyday experience.

If we consider the social, literary, and public-health circumstances of his time, it is little wonder that Ibn Nubātah´s poems on the death of his children have a conspicuously different starting point from those of al-Tihāmī. Ibn Nubātah could take public interest in his poems for granted, even if he limited himself to the subject of the death of his own child. Therefore, his poems were never a soliloquy, nor can they be interpreted as the poet´s most intimate expression of his own feelings, especially because such feelings met with general appreciation. Instead, these poems were part of a dialogue between the afflicted poet and the literary public of his time; there is no reason to doubt that Ibn Nubātah was aware of this, and one may well assume that for Ibn Nubātah this form of literary conversation added a lot to the comforting effect of the composition of his poems. Of course, these poems were intended for publication. Unfortunately Ibn Nubātah´s own collections of his poetry are not yet published and we only have an anthology of Ibn Nubātah´s pupil al-Bashtakī at our disposal. Nevertheless, we may assume that more than one of the books Ibn Nubātah published himself contained *Kindertotenlieder*. The response given to his work corroborates our assumption. Already al-Bashtakī had enough material to include seven *Kindertotenlieder* in his recension of Ibn Nubātah´s *dīwān*. Ibn Nubātah´s elegies were copied out and exist in manuscripts independent of Ibn Nubātah´s *dīwān*.[37] Indeed, the most important and exhaustive consolation manual for parents who had lost their children was written by Ibn Abī Ḥajalah (725–76/1325–75), a near contemporary of Ibn Nubātah. In this book, entitled *Salwat al-Ḥazīn fī Mawt al-Banīn,* Ibn Abī Ḥajalah quotes first al-Tihāmī´s *kāmil rā'īyah*, followed by 26 lines from Ibn Nubātah´s *munāẓarah* on this poem.[38] And if Mamluk and Ottoman Arabic literature were better known, one would certainly be able to adduce many more examples of the

[37]To mention only Wilhelm Ahlwardt, *Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin: Verzeichnis der arabischen Handschriften* (Berlin, 1887–99), 7:77, 277.
[38]Ibn Abī Ḥajalah, *Salwat al-Ḥazīn fī Mawt al-Banīn*, ed. Mukhaymar Ṣāliḥ (Amman, 1994):143–49.

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reception of Ibn Nubātah´s poems. But the examples mentioned may suffice to show that Ibn Nubātah´s poems can only be properly understood when their function in the system of communication of the ulama is taken into account.

Talking about Children

Mamluk society lacked the high degree of institutionalization of comparable Western societies. What was achieved here by institutions had to be achieved there by discourse, that is to say, by communication. This was true not only for scholars, but also for military rulers. As Al-Harithy has shown in a recent article, even the Mamluks themselves gave great weight to communication and tried by means of architecture, the most important form of art for them, ″to enforce the dialogue between ruler and ruled″ and developed the façades of their buildings ″into a sophisticated means for addressing the urban environment and its dwellers.″[39] It is amazing to see that this increasing importance of communication instead of representation had an effect on architecture that appears strikingly similar to the effect it had on certain forms of literature. Al-Harithy states that ″the static symmetrical façades of the Fatimid period were replaced by dynamic façades in the Mamluk city . . ., and the emphasis on axial symmetry gave way to an emphasis on continuity.″[40] This comparison with architecture does not, of course, imply that there was a general tendency towards less strictly structured poems in the Mamluk period. Rather, the bipartite *qaṣīdah* was still the prevalent model, which was applied even to the popular genre of praise of the Prophet. But it should demonstrate that it is not only in architecture that the message of works of art ″is not literal or direct, but implied as part of the general Mamluk social discourse and practice.″[41] In literature, this may mean a less ceremonial and representative attitude (one is even tempted to use the word ″bourgeois,″ would it not imply too many false connotations); a great flexibility to meet the immediate communication purposes; an increasingly feeble delimitation between the official and the unofficial, the high and the low, the public and the private, the serious and the humorous; and a very high density of messages and signals the reader has to decode.

In the case of Ibn Nubātah´s *rā'īyah*, the consequences are rather the same as noted by Al-Harithy for architecture. Al-Tihāmī´s representative structure—symmetrical, with heroism at its center—gives way to a supple structure that consists of small paragraphs of mostly three lines with a smooth transition between them. There is no clear thematic or structural break in the whole poem.

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[39]Howayda Al-Harithy, ″The Concept of Space in Mamluk Architecture,″ *Muqarnas* 18 (2001): 87.
[40]Ibid., 90.
[41]Ibid.

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The theme of heroism is no longer present (lines 49–52 will be dealt with later). Instead, I know of no other poem in which the theme of childhood is treated so extensively as here.[42] First, it is present linguistically through the repetition of the address *yā / a-bunayya ″*my little son!*″* (lines 4, 20, 24, 25, 33, cf. also *banīya* line 36, *ṭifl* line 30, *al-aṣāghir* line 53) that is scattered over the greater part of the poem. The prevailing notion in dealing with childhood death is its prematureness. In this respect, Ibn Nubātah does not differ from al-Tihāmī. But of course the Mamluk scholar did not complain about heroism manqué. Instead, he focused on a general treatment of premature death. The first line in this series is line 6, which is the transformation of one of the heroic concepts of al-Tihāmī. In his self-praise we learn (line 81):

> Wa-al-nāsu mushtabihūna fī īrādihim / wa-tafāḍulu al-aqwāmi fī al-iṣdārī
> [When they are driven to the water-place, all people are alike. Their different ranks are only visible when they are driven back.]

In this line, coming into life is compared to the cattle´s coming to a watering place, and death, consequently, is the coming back from it. When Ibn Nubātah transformed this famous line, he compared life to a sojourn at a watering place and left out everything heroic. The son should not have proved his rank; he should have simply been given the opportunity to experience the whole cycle of life. Nevertheless, al-Tihāmī´s model remains visible, and I doubt that Ibn Nubātah´s line can be fully understood if one doesn´t know al-Tihāmī´s. Ibn Nubātah says (line 6):

> Layta al-qaḍá al-jārī tamahhala wirdahū / ḥattá ḥasibta ʻawāqiba al-iṣdārī
> [Would that destiny had delayed in its permanent course till you could have imagined the end of the route!]

The theme of premature death is carried on with similar images in line 7 (lightning that did not bring rain) and line 13 (a twig that did not bring forth fruit).

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[42]I will not discuss here the importance of Ibn Nubātah´s poems for the study of the history of mentalities. There is, of course, no doubt that these poems reflect a far more intimate relation between fathers and their children than is posited by Philippe Ariès for pre-eighteenth-century Europe. But I suppose that this was already the case in the Abbasid period, even if a poet like al-Tihāmī still had difficulties in communicating it without recourse to motifs of heroism. A discernible change in mentalities between the time of al-Tihāmī and the Mamluk period cannot be established on the basis of the present material. On children in Islam see also Avner Giladi, *Children of Islam: Concepts of Childhood in Medieval Muslim Society* (London, 1992).

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Several lines later, Ibn Nubātah for once expresses more concrete ideas. Again he seems to have followed al-Tihāmī´s example. In line 51 of his *ṭawīl* poem, al-Tihāmī mentions a single non-military deed that his son was prevented from performing by his early death. It is the only concession to the fact that he himself is a poet, not a warrior:

> Wa-lam tukhjil al-rawḍa al-anīqa bi-rawḍatin / mufawwafati al-arjā'i bi-al-naẓmi wa-al-nathrī
> [Nor could you shame the graceful garden by a garden, the sides of which are variegated by poetry and prose.]

In al-Tihāmī´s line, prose and poetry fit very well in the enumeration of heroic deeds of which they form a part, for they are seen as achievements the child failed to perform, and the child´s achievements are obviously something of which to be proud.

In Ibn Nubātah´s poem, the father does not complain about his son´s unachieved accomplishments, but about the fact that the father never had the pleasure of hearing his son talk to him (line 17), and when Ibn Nubātah states that his son´s ″feet of intelligence did not wade into the seas/meters of poetry″ (line 18), it is again not the disappointment of a father´s hopes, but rather the son´s missed opportunities that are regretted.[43] There is no connection between the child and the public. The only counterpart to the son is his own father. In this way the more intimate and private nature of Ibn Nubātah´s poem as compared to that of al-Tihāmī becomes visible even in the transformation of a single motif.

The motif of premature death undergoes several developments in the course of the poem. In lines 40 and 41 it is connected with the theme of grey hair that had its exposition in line 26. In lines 20 and 33, it is softened by stating that the son´s fate is everybody´s fate and the disparity between the lifespan of the son and that of the father became but small. In lines 21–22, finally, the motif is inverted altogether. The son´s death was not premature at all, since he did not miss anything in this world, and his death came just in time. Al-Tihāmī´s versification of the hadith saying that man´s life is ″but a fleeting vision″ (Ibn Nubātah clearly alludes to this line by means of the words *al-khayāli al-sārī*) is here pursued to its final consequence and applied to the son´s short life.

Premature death not only means missed opportunities but also avoided guilt. The child´s innocence, which is expressed in line 11, is a theme unknown to me from al-Tihāmī or any other author before Ibn Nubātah. As we see, the consequences

[43] Abū Ḥayyān´s daughter Nuḍār lived long enough to develop a good command of literary language. Her father does not fail to mention this in a line with extraordinary rhetorical sophistication; see Homerin, ″I´ve Stayed by the Grave,″ 112.

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of an early death are illuminated from all angles in this poem, and the respective lines are scattered all over the poem and run through it like a thread. But premature death is not Ibn Nubātah´s only way to mention childhood. He could hardly have done without the old motif saying that the death of a small child must not mean small sorrows. Ibn Nubātah presents this well-known motif, which was common already long before al-Tihāmī, skilfully in the form of a dialogue using very simple expressions (line 10). When the son is mentioned for the first time, it is said that he was a light burden when alive, whereas the grief for his death is heavy to bear (line 4). This is one of the few lines in which bodily features of the child play a role, as well as the father´s way of dealing with his child. Paternal care is also mentioned in line 31.

It is striking that religion hardly plays a role in this poem. There are several unspecific references to ″fate″ that could just as well be pre-Islamic, but only two references to Islamic concepts. The first is the statement of line 3 that the child is in paradise (which is also mentioned in lines 22 and 34). This line is, by the way, another transformation of a line of al-Tihāmī, and I cannot help but imagine that whoever grasped this relation must have found it rather funny, despite the earnest subject of the poem. In the final section of al-Tihāmī´s *kāmil* poem, the poet boasts of his insuperable virtues and tells us that he feels pity for those who envy him ″for the heat of rancor gathered in their breast″ (line 76), and he continues (line 77):

> Naẓarū ṣanī‘a Allāhi bī fa-‘uyūnuhum / fī jannatin wa-qulūbuhum fī nārī
> [When they perceive how God acted towards me, their eyes dwell in heaven, their hearts in hell.]

In Ibn Nubātah´s poem, it is the child who is in heaven, and the poet who is in hell. Children, of course, have no difficulties in entering heaven, since there is no concept of an original sin in Islam. As far as parents are concerned, there are several hadiths according to which those who lost several (or even only one) of their children will enter paradise or will at least be granted considerable advantages on the Day of Judgment.[44] These traditions have to be seen in the light of the tendency to grant martyrdom for causes of death that were considered especially cruel (pestilence, disease of the belly, death in childbed, etc.). Parents who lost their child are still alive. Nevertheless their fate was considered sufficiently cruel

[44]These hadiths are the main content of treatises for the comfort of parents who have lost a child to premature death. A bibliographical list is given in Thomas Bauer, ″Islamische Totenbücher: Entwicklung einer Textgattung im Schatten al-Ġazālīs,″ to appear in *Akten des 19. Kongresses der Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, Halle 1998.*

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to grant them conditions that factually come rather close to martyrdom. This concept is alluded to in line 24, in which the son is asked to serve his father on the Day of Judgment as a recompense for the father´s ″entreasuring″ his son´s body in the earth. Since this prerequisite is purely metaphorical, the line acquires a taste of bitterness and cannot be regarded as a straightforward expression of religious feelings. Obviously still in Mamluk times, in which religious poetry became increasingly popular, religious and poetic discourse remained as clearly distinguishable as they were in previous periods,[45] and not necessarily the same answers to a problem were given in poetry as in hadith or law.

These are the main representations of childhood in Ibn Nubātah´s poem. Unlike al-Tihāmī´s *rā'īyah*s, there is no section devoted to childhood death, but the theme of childhood is present throughout the poem. Due to the ubiquity of the theme in this poem, even motifs that only accidentally have to do with childhood are given a new context in the mind of the audience. So it is conventional to compare the weeping of the bereaved with the cry of the pigeon, but in this poem one is again made aware of the fact that the pigeon weeps over its nestling (line 8). And in countless elegies the clouds are asked to pour rain on the grave of the deceased with a lot of different images. In this poem, however, it cannot be incidental that the image of breastfeeding is chosen in line 56, the penultimate line of the poem.

Taken together, the image of childhood and childhood death is present in this poem in more than forty per cent of its 57 lines, compared to about ten lines out of 90 in al-Tihāmī´s *kāmil rā'īyah*.[46] Since the subject of childhood death permeates the whole poem, the audience/reader will connect all other themes and images to this subject as well, and this is what gives this poem an unprecedented intensity, which is enforced by the constant repetition of a small stock of themes and images and the use of rhetorical devices, as we will see in the following.

Theme and Development

Just as is the case with the theme of childhood, other themes and images recur over and over again. Instead of building separate blocks dedicated to different subjects, the poem is a constant play with a limited stock of themes and images. One is reminded of the musical technique of exposition and development. In fact, most of the concepts are presented in the first six lines of the poem, and developed in the following sections. The main themes besides childhood are: (1) tears, (2)

[45]Bauer, ″Todesdiskurse,″ and idem, ″Raffinement und Frömmigkeit,″ *Asiatische Studien* 50 (1996): 275–95.

[46]His *ṭawīl rā'īyah* contains more lines on childhood death, but since the whole passage on heroism is formally constructed as a complaint on premature death (″he did not march under the banner . . .″), it is hardly comparable.

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journey (and its counterpart: place of sojourn), (3) earth/grave, (4) light/stars (and its opposite: darkness), (5) water/garden. The following examples may show how these themes are developed.

(1) Tears, an indispensable subject of every elegy, are already mentioned in line 1. In line 2 they are equated with theme (5) ″river″ and contrasted with theme (3) ″dust.″ In line 7, ″rain″ (again theme 5) is provided by the eyes in the form of tears, but remains an unfulfilled promise of ″lightning″ (theme 4), to which the short life of the child is compared. Lines 8 and 9 provide explicit elaborations of the theme of ″weeping.″ In line 14, the child is compared to a pearl that is covered (theme 4: light and darkness) by the ″sea″ (theme 5) of tears (but the *biḥār* of poetry in line 18 have nothing to do with weeping), whereas the tears are pearls themselves in line 19. If the dead son in paradise (theme 5) could know about his father′s fate, he would himself weep (line 22). A perfect synthesis is given finally in line 34: the child in paradise will give his father a drink from the stream of paradise (theme 5) as a compensation for the father′s watering the son′s grave (theme 3) with his tears before. This line is not unproblematic from a religious point of view, since excessive weeping is interdicted in Islam and is by no means a reason for heavenly reward as it might seem from this line. But more important is the literary effect of bringing together the theme of weeping with the son′s stay in paradise, thereby concluding a thematic circle that began in lines 2 and 3. Consequently, there is no further mention of weeping in the poem.

(2) The theme of travel is initiated by the unmetaphorical mentioning of night journeys in line 4 and carried on with the image of the race course in line 5 and the comparison of life to a stop at a watering place in line 6. It therefore dominates the whole section from line 4 to 6. Subsequently, it is again modified and confronted with other themes such as ″stars″ (theme 4) in line 15, ″seas″ (theme 5) in line 18, and, as a final climax, with the theme of ″grave″ (theme 3) in line 38. In between, we find it in lines 12 and 21, direct echoes of al-Tihāmī, and in line 33, a direct echo of line 12. Its counterpart, the place of sojourn, is mentioned by words derived from the root *sakan* in lines 2 and 16 (cf. also *awṭān* in the very first line). In line 2, it is the grave where the child sojourns, whereas in the final line of this circle, line 38, the grave is only the mount that shows that the journey has not come to an end. Again we see that a cycle, which had started in line 2, is brought to an end more than thirty lines later. There is no further mention of travelling in the poem after line 38.

(3) In contrast to themes (1) and (2), the theme of earth and grave, which starts in line 2, is carried on right to the end of the poem. In very different contexts it appears in lines 2, 12, 13, 16, 20, 24, 36, 37, 42, 46, 49, 50, 51, and 57. Since elegies conventionally end with the wish for copious rain to moisten the grave, it is not surprising that Ibn Nubātah too ends his poem with this motif.

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(4) Stars have already been a recurrent theme in al-Tihāmī´s poems. In Ibn Nubātah´s poem, the theme of stars/light and darkness starts in line 7 with the image of lightning, is continued in lines 14 and 15, but assumes major importance in the second half (lines 28–30, 36, 41, 44, 45, 51, 52, 56). Since we have already seen how Ibn Nubātah develops his themes by confronting them with different situations and with each other, we need not go into detail here. The same is true with theme (5) ″water, garden, plants,″ which occurs in lines 2, 3, 6, 7, 13, 14, 18, 22, 34, 53, and 57.

Even themes of lesser importance are dealt with in the same way. In line 26, the theme of grey hair is introduced in the form of an antithesis. In this place, it has little more to say than that the pleasures of life are gone. Only in the paragraph comprising lines 41 to 43 do we realize the potential of the theme, since here it is confronted with the theme of premature death, and it turns out that with the help of a *tawriyah* this confrontation results in a quite interesting image. This is Ibn Nubātah´s method for the greater part of his *rā'īyah*. He takes a limited stock of themes and tries out what happens if these themes are confronted with each other or with different situations. So the same themes and motifs appear under constantly changing perspectives. On the other hand, the persistence of the same themes reflects a mind whose thoughts constantly dwell on the same matters, thus reflecting despair and hopelessness.

This method is pursued until the beginning of the last passage in about line 40. Until then we have heard about the death of the boy and the father´s despair. But an elegy has to address the subject of comfort and self-control. After all, *ṣabr* is one of the main virtues and one of the most important subjects of the Arabic elegy in general, and it is also the main subject of the final part of Ibn Nubātah´s *rā'īyah*. It starts with the statement that everybody must die (line 40), which is elaborated in the ″grey hair″ passage already mentioned (lines 41–43). The fact that everybody must die was obviously considered the most convincing argument for consolation, much more so than the prospect of paradise, which is only rarely mentioned in poetry.[47] In a group of again three lines, Ibn Nubātah continues the elaboration of this theme in lines 44 to 46, leading from the celestial sphere to earthly tombstones. Two lines (47–48) admonish the hearer—and probably the father himself—to think about this fact and consequently to show *ṣabr*. The most common motif to express the fact of the inevitability of death is the *ubi sunt qui ante nos* motif, to which the following six lines are devoted. In an amazing climax, the poet adduces three groups of people, each of them presented in two lines. First, the former kings, the most commonly mentioned group in the *ubi sunt* passages, are all dead (lines 49–50). The second group are the war heroes, and

[47]Bauer, ″Todesdiskurse,″ 12.

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these lines are of course Ibn Nubātah′s explicit answer to the heroic passages in al-Tihāmī′s poems. Even the sparks they let fly in the heat of battle are a reflection of a formulation of al-Tihāmī (cf. line 43 of his *ṭawīl rā'īyah,* quoted above). All that is left from al-Tihāmī′s heroism are two lines that state that even heroes are doomed to death. But the most surprising passage is constituted by the following lines, in which a third group joins the princes and heroes: children. ″Where have all the babies gone?″ is a most extraordinary turn of the *ubi sunt* motif, and it is most remarkable that childhood death could be seen in one and the same line with the death of society′s most prominent members.

In the concluding passage of the last three lines, Ibn Nubātah reverts to the notion of *ṣabr* from line 48. But something must have happened in between. Whereas the mood of line 48 is still rather optimistic as far as the achievement of *ṣabr* is concerned, this confidence must have been lost in the course of the following lines. Though it was exactly their aim to strengthen *ṣabr,* something must have gone wrong. Obviously the reference to the children has shattered the hopes of attaining equanimity. If *ṣabr* is shown, it is only pretence or constraint. The poem ends in hopelessness.

Unorganized as the poem might seem at first glance, it turns out to match its emotional development perfectly. Two thirds of the poem are devoted to the father′s grief about the loss of his beloved son. Its enormous density is achieved by a technique that may remind the audience of a composition technique utilized often by such composers as Brahms or Reger, who used to base long movements on short and at first inconspicuous motifs, which only gained their significance by the way they were treated and developed in the further course of the movement. In the same way, Ibn Nubātah introduces five themes, which are neither especially conspicuous nor original, in the first six lines of his poem. But in the following thirty-three lines, this material is varied, modified, adapted, arranged in ever-new combinations, brought to reveal unexpected relations and shown to permeate every conceivable aspect. Presenting always new constellations of these themes, but hardly transgressing them, the poet may at the same time convey the impression of the inexhaustibility of paternal pain as well as that of its inescapability. The final part, the poem′s last third, should display the harmonization of the conflicts, should present equanimity *(ṣabr)* regained, should bring comfort through the realization that everybody and everything is doomed to end. In order to achieve this, the tightly knotted, condensed structure of the first two thirds gives way to a more linear structure. But *ṣabr* cannot be gained. The sonata has no recapitulation but an open end. This is, to stick to the musical image, the melody. The harmony, which, as we will see, corresponds exactly to this structure and reinforces its emotional effectiveness, is provided by the rhetorical devices, which we will examine in the following.

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Rhetoric and Emotion

Poetry is communication, and a poem is only meaningful if its communicative function is taken into regard. This has already been stated, but it must inevitably be repeated in a chapter dealing with emotions. Many contemporary Arabic scholars assume that it is the main function of a poem to ″express feelings,″ and that the quality of a poem can be determined more or less according to the degree of directness by which a poet ″expresses his true feelings.″ If a poet uses more than only a very limited number of rhetorical devices in his poem, it is considered an indication that the poet´s feelings are not sincere and the poem is ″a mere play on words″ and of no further poetic relevance.[48] This attitude is sometimes considered to be a reflection of European romanticism, but I suppose that two other roots are more important. The importance given to the ″sincerity″ of emotions, the fact that emotions themselves are the focus of interest rather than their poetic transformation, and the postulate that these emotions should be spoken out in a direct and immediate way point to a Protestant origin of this attitude.[49] One of the entrance gates of such ideas may have been the Protestant mission of the Americans in Beirut, which during the *nahḍah* period played a major role in forming modern Arab attitudes towards literature.

The other root of the enmity towards rhetorics in the modern Arab world is the European, especially French, enlightenment. One of the ideals of this movement was purity of language and clarity of expression, which resulted in a general devaluation of the literature of previous periods, especially of the era of the baroque, but proved rather disadvantageous for the production of poetry (romanticism was a major attempt to overcome the sterility and dullness of enlightenment poetry). When the French set out to colonialize the Arab world, they were faced with the problem that, contrary to sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab world already possessed what was considered civilization by European standards of that time. In this situation, the French made literature and language one of their main weapons. It was acknowledged that the Arab world had developed a great civilization in the ″Middle Ages,″[50] but afterwards this civilization was subject to a

[48]Bauer, Review of al-Afandī.

[49]On the Protestant origin of this attitude see Hans-Georg Soeffner, ″ Luther: Der Weg von der Kollektivität des Glaubens zu einem lutherisch-protestantischen Individualitätstyp,″ in *Vom Ende des Individuums zur Individualität ohne Ende,* ed. Hanns-Georg Brose and Bruno Hildebrand (Opladen, 1988), 107–49.

[50]The still current application of the term ″Middle Ages″ and ″medieval″ to Islamic history is a remnant of the colonialist degradation of Arabic and Islamic culture in that its whole premodern history is limited to the role of a transition period between the two really ″valuable″ periods, antiquity and modernity. At least, this was the reason for the coinage of this term in Europe. To use this designation for great parts of Arab history means to deprive the Arab world of the right of

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process of steady decline and decadence, and this decadence was considered to be especially visible in the case of literature with its ″baroque″ and over-ornate style.[51] In fact, it was literature which gave the French one of the arguments for the justification of a *mission civilisatrice* in the Arab world. This went hand-in-hand with the propagation of the French language, which was considered an unsurpassable model on account of its *clarté*,[52] and it is small wonder that it set the norm for literary style in Arabic as well. And just as former (and, as we see it now, formidable) periods of European literature had been disparaged for the benefit of the bourgeois taste of enlightenment, now with the same arguments the overwhelming portion of Arabic literature was disparaged for the benefit of colonialism.

Still, more than a century afterwards, a colonialized mind is clearly visible in contemporary Arab attitudes towards premodern Arabic poetry. But it is high time now to stop applying criteria to this literature that it can never match. In fact, no premodern Arab poet ever tried to ″express true feelings″; he would not even have understood the words *'abbara 'an shu'ūr ṣādiqah,* let alone applied them to judge literary texts. Instead, he might have used a formulation like that used by Ibn Rashīq, who, after having stated that it is particularly difficult to compose elegies on women and children, continues: ″One of the best and most saddening *(ashjá)* elegies on women, one of those that have the deepest effect on the heart *(ashaddihī ta'thīran fī al-qalb)* and in arousing grief *(wa-ithāratan li-al-ḥuzni)* is the poem by Ibn 'Abd al-Malik on his *umm walad*. . . .″[53] Here, as in countless other statements, the poet is not judged according to the feelings he *expresses,* but according to the feelings he *arouses* in the audience/reader.

This result should motivate us to ask what is meant by the formulation ″to express one's feelings.″ To ″express a thought″ means to put it into words that match it as exactly as possible and therefore allow it to be communicated to others without causing misunderstanding. To ″express a feeling,″ however, can hardly mean in a poetic context to put a feeling into words in order to inform the hearer as precisely as possible about the physical and psychic effects of it. This would be appropriate in a confession, an examination of one's conscience (I already mentioned the Protestant roots of this concept), or in a psychoanalysis, but not in a poem. Ibn Nubātah very obviously did not want to inform his contemporaries of the fact that

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having a history of its own that is meaningful even if it is not constantly related to European history. Remarkably enough, historians do not speak of medieval Japan or China.

[51]Thomas Bauer, ″Die *badī'iyya* des Nāṣīf al-Yāziği und das Problem der spätosmanischen arabischen Literatur,″ in preparation.

[52]Ulrike Freitag, *Geschichtsschreibung in Syrien 1920–1990: Zwischen Wissenschaft und Ideologie* (Hamburg, 1991), 83–89.

[53]Ibn Rashīq, *'Umdah,* 2:846.

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he suffers insomnia and is forced to weep on account of the death of his son. Had he aspired to do so, he could have set out his emotional state of mind in plain prose and written a letter to the few people who might have been interested in his personal concerns. Instead, he composed a poem that was meant to be published and to be of relevance to many other people who were not the least interested in the ″sincere feelings″ of a certain Ibn Nubātah. They were, however, interested in their own feelings (and the reflection of their own feelings in somebody else), and therefore it again seems that the old critics who regarded the effect of a poem rather than the sincerity of the poet´s feelings were nearer to the reality of the literary communication system than the proponents of the notion of emotional expression.

Nevertheless, the feelings of the poet himself are not completely irrelevant. Even Arabic literary theorists established that to be really in love or really filled with wrath does help a lot in composing good *ghazal* or *hijā'* poetry.[54] But they never use the notion of ″expressing″ these emotions, and therefore we may well ask where exactly the feelings and emotions are in a poem. The only possible answer is to state that, again, the emotions are nowhere else than in the audience/reader of the poem, and that the poem´s function is to evoke these emotions in the recipient. Inevitably, the poet himself is not only the poem´s producer, but also its first audience, and his emotional reaction to the poem is at least similar to that of the intended public. Therefore, the poet will test—consciously or not—whether the poem has more or less the same emotional effect on himself which it is supposed to have on its later hearers and readers. The notion of ″expressing″ a feeling is therefore hardly anything other than a metaphorical expression for arousing a feeling in the hearer that is similar to the feeling in the mind (or wherever feelings may be) of the poet himself. The emotions, therefore, are not somewhere in the poem, which is supposed to express them, but they are induced more or less successfully by the poem in the audience (the poet himself included). This is corroborated by the fact that the means to induce feelings by literary texts can be analyzed fairly well, whereas the question of whether a poem expresses the sincere feelings of its author must always remain pure speculation. In the case of Ibn Nubātah´s *Kindertotenlieder*, we have, of course, no reason to doubt the depth and sincerity of their author´s feelings. It is beyond any doubt that these feelings helped a lot to create the masterly poem that we have before us. However, this does not help much to understand the poem, but rather leads in a wrong direction, as we have already seen. The poem is not a spontaneous outburst of uncontrolled emotion, but a carefully planned and executed text, as is shown by its structure, which may seem chaotic at first glance but turns out on closer

[54]Ibid., 1:194, 198, but compare ibid., 1:329–45.

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analysis to be structured in exactly such a way as to be able to induce an effect of helpless emotional tangle.

If Ibn Nubātah´s elegy were a spontaneous creation, as M. Muḥammad thinks (but which it is not), and if it is a reflection of sincere feelings, as all previous interpreters think (and which it certainly is),[55] and if spontaneity and veracity are opposed to the use of rhetorical devices, as the adherents of the aforementioned school of ″expression-of-sincere-feelings″ believe, this poem should contain few rhetorical devices. However, the contrary is true. For those who think that rhetorical sophistication and deep feelings are irreconcilable and like Ibn Nubātah´s text, the chart on the following page may come as a surprise. It lists the more conspicuous figures of speech and rhetorical devices of the poem for every line:[56]

[55]Therefore, Ibn Nubātah´s *rā'īyah* is said to ″abound with images full of passion and poetic presentations full of heat,″ as is stated by Yāsīn al-Ayyūbī, *Āfāq al-Shi'r al-'Arabī fī al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī* (Tripoli, Lebanon, 1995), 174. An accurate review of this book is given by Th. Emil Homerin in *MSR* 3 (1999): 237–40.

[56]With the exception of anaphora I limited myself to the traditionally established rhetorical figures, which are at the same time clearly recognizable. Stylistic features like *insijām* (cf. the contribution of G. J. van Gelder in this volume), which would not be considered as foregrounding devices, are not represented in the chart. As a convenient reference and for an English translation of the names of rhetorical figures I use Pierre Cachia, *The Arch Rhetorician or The Schemer´s Skimmer: A Handbook of Late Arabic badī' drawn from 'Abd al-Ghanī an-Nābulusī´s* Nafaḥāt al-Azhār 'alā Nasamāt al-Asḥār (Wiesbaden, 1998) and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, ″Rhetorical Figures,″ *EAL* 2:656–62. In the last column of the chart I noted the number of the line of al-Tihāmīs *kāmil* poem (in italics) and of his *ṭawīl* poem (in parentheses) which was the model for the respective line of Ibn Nubātah. I completely disregarded hyperbole, which plays only a minor role in the poem. One may add the rhetorical figure of *qasam* ″oath″ (Cachia, *Rhetorician*, no. 139) for line 39; *iqtibās* (ibid., no. 169) for line 40 (it may be considered a vague allusion to Quran 38:3, but is rather a common formula); and *al-madhhab al-kalāmī* ″logical argumentation″ (Cachia, *Rhetorician*, no. 127; W.P. Heinrichs, *″al-madhhab al-kalāmī,″ EAL* 2:482) for line 47.

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line	anaphora	*isti'ārah, tashbīh*	*murā'āt al-naẓīr*	*ṭibāq*	*jinās*	*tawriyah*	other	cf. al-Tīhāmī
1								*1*
2								
3								*23*
4								
5								*27*
6								*80*
7		*sh*						
8								
9								
10								*20*
11								
12								*24*
13								
14		*sh*						
15								
16		*sh*						*18*
17								
18								(53)
19		*sh*						
20								
21		*sh*						*6*
22								*2*
23								
24								
25								
26								
27								
28		*sh*						
29								

line	anaphora	*isti'ārah, tashbīh*	*murā'āt al-naẓīr*	*ṭibāq*	*jinās*	*tawriyah*	other	cf. al-Tīhāmī
30								*14*
31					?			
32								
33								
34								
35								
36		*sh*						
37								
38								
39					?			
40					?			
41								
42		*sh*						
43								
44								
45								
46								
47								*18*
48								
49					?			
50								
51								(43)
52								
53		*sh*						
54								
55								
56								
57								

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If we include the four lines marked with a question mark in column *"jināS,"* but regardless of whether we regard the column "anaphora" or not (since anaphora was not a well established figure in indigenous Arabic rhetorical theory), we can conclude that every line with the sole exception of the very last contains one or more rhetorical figures. These figures are not distributed evenly in the text; rather their distribution reflects the structure explained above. While the first part is dominated by simile and metaphor, which are often used to form a *murā'āt al-naẓīr,* and the emotional intensity of this part is reinforced by several anaphoras, the final part is dominated by *ṭibāq.* Let us briefly consider the most important figures of speech and rhetorical devices:

(a) Anaphora (like alliteration or the epigram) is one of those devices that were well known and consciously used by Arabic poets, but had no specific technical term and were not considered by literary theory.[57] To start several consecutive lines with the same word(s) is indeed one of the oldest and most characteristic devices of the elegy and can be traced back to the primitive forms of the pre-Islamic *niyāḥah*.[58] This kind of anaphora, reflecting perhaps the repeated desperate cry of the wailer, is the most atavistic device of the *marthiyah* and maybe the most immediate expression of despair. In a highly sophisticated poem like that of Ibn Nubātah it is, of course, no longer immediate to that degree, but in all probability the hearer will still associate it with overwhelming emotionality. This is most probably also its main function in Ibn Nubātah's poem, where it seems to have been used very consciously. Starting with two relatively inconspicuous anaphoras in lines 5–6 and 8–9, which do not have any structuring function, there follows a *lahfī* passage (lines 13–15) featuring three images of premature death, and, interrupted by a line mentioning the grave and the place of the deceased boy in the father's memory, an *a'ziz 'alayya* passage, again mainly about premature death. The more complicated anaphoric words correspond to the more complicated images of premature death in this passage. The other lines marked as anaphoric are those beginning with *a-bunayya*.[59] They are scattered over the first part of the poem to remind the hearer constantly of the fact that the object of the poem is a child. One should mention that Ibn Nubātah makes less use of the anaphora in his other elegies on his son, and in al-Tihāmī's *kāmil rā'īyah* it is completely absent.

[57]One may subsume it under the rubric *takrār* (cf. Cachia, *Rhetorician*, no. 53), but rhetoricians do not specify the unit within which the repetition has to take place. In most examples of *takrār,* a word or phrase is repeated within a single line.

[58]See already Ignaz Goldziher, "Bemerkungen zur arabischen Trauerpoesie," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlands* 16 (1902): 307–39.

[59]I did not mark the isolated lines starting with *a-bunayya* (lines 20 and 33) in the above chart. I am not sure if the anaphora was felt as such in these cases.

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(b) Simile *(tashbīh)* and metaphor *(isti'ārah)* are the all-prevailing means of foregrounding in this poem. The first half especially is dominated by them. Three quarters of lines 1–39 contain one or more of these figures, whereas less than a third of the remaining lines do so. The following chart gives a list of the *prima* and *secunda comparationis,* arranged alphabetically according to the *primum comparationis*:[60]

babies	blossoms	53
babies	pearls	54
boy	flash of lightning	7
boy	eye	9
boy	twig	13
boy	pearl	14
boy	star	15
boy	apparition	21
boy	treasure	24
boy	intestines	35
child	stars	30
child	moon	36
darkness	trail	28
dawn	curtain	29
dust	clouds	36
earth	clothes	20
face	dinar	32
father	pigeon	8
fortune	ruins	25
grave	garden	2
grave	shelter	12
grave	mount	38

grey hair	dust	42
intestines	earth	16
kings	mountains	50
life	race course	5
life	rest at water place	6
moon	bow	45
pain	fire	3
pain	load	4
pleasures	whiteness	26
poetry	sea	18
stars	nails	28
sun	stars	29
tears	helpers	1
tears	rivers	2
tears	rain	7
tears	gold	9
tears	seas	14
tears	pearls	19
tears	drink	34
tongue	host	17
words	guest	17

[60]I omitted the *isti'ārah* "feet of intelligence" of line 18.

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The main function of comparison in this poem is obviously to create and connect the five themes that form the basis of the major part of the poem. The experience of the boy′s death is transformed into a world consisting of the elements tears, journeys, earth, stars, and gardens, which permanently interact. Many items occur more than once in one of the columns or in both of them. This world is based largely on comparison, but to attract the audience′s attention to the act of comparing would have disturbed the impression. Therefore, the similes and metaphors are less interesting in themselves than in what is achieved by them. It is not surprising thus that the most original simile, the comparison of babies in their cradles with blossoms (line 53), is not found in the five-themes part of the poem but in its final section, in which there are only a few similes and metaphors anyway. Finally, one may note that apparently Ibn Nubātah was keen to avoid monotony and to further conceal the extensive use of comparison by varying the formal means of comparison. Several types and constructions of metaphors and similes alternate, and there are never two consecutive lines that contain a particle of comparison (lines that contain such an *ālat al-tashbīh* are marked with *sh* in the chart above).

(c) The same tendency is reflected in the remarkably high number of lines that form what is called *murā'āt al-naẓīr*, that is, consist of images and/or ideas that pertain to the same semantic sphere.[61] In most cases, the figure is brought about by two (or more) comparisons that lead into the same semantic realm. In this way Ibn Nubātah produces lines that are entirely devoted to images like garden, thunderstorm, twigs, doves, pearls, night and stars (this image is even carried on over the three lines 28–30), etc. All these topics are part of the five themes that form the skeleton of the poem′s first part. In these lines, the respective theme appears alone and undisturbed. But it is fascinating to see how Ibn Nubātah repeatedly interrupted the sequences of *murā'āt al-naẓīr* by lines featuring a *ṭibāq* ″antithesis.″ Neither the lines containing *ṭibāq* nor those containing *murā'āt al-naẓīr* exceed thematically the frame of the five themes mentioned previously. The poet thus dwells on the same subjects, but treats them with different stylistic devices. This conveys an image of density and insistence. Consequently, in the latter third of the poem no single instance of *murā'āt al-naẓīr* occurs.

(d) *Ṭibāq (or muṭābaqah)* ″antithesis,″[62] is another extremely important figure in this poem. Of course, the contrast between life and death lends itself easily to

[61]Heinrichs, ″Rhetorical Figures,″ 658–59; Cachia, *Rhetorician*, no. 73 (to include cases of phonetic resemblance seems to be a purely theoretical phenomenon in latter *badī'* treatises and can be ignored here).

[62]Heinrichs, ″Rhetorical Figures,″ 659; Cachia, *Rhetorician*, no. 79. Though Cachia is right to note that *ṭibāq* is wider in reach than antithesis, I cannot persuade myself to translate it as ″parallelism.″ I wonder if ″contrast″ would be an adequate translation.

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the construction of antithetic contrasts, but Ibn Nubātah´s *ṭibāqāt* go far beyond that scope. Ambivalence and contrast dominate the father, the son, their destiny (on earth as well as in heaven), their mutual relation, and finally the whole of life and the whole of mankind, as the following chart (in the compilation of which the term *ṭibāq* was used in its most restricted way) shows:

paradise	hell	3
light	heavy	4
warada	*ṣadara*	6
small	big	10
far	near	12
distant	close	12
clothed	naked	20
sleep	sleeplessness	27
highland	lowland	35
souls	bodies	37

white	black	41
shoot	be hit	45
rejection	confirmation	46
revelation	secret	47
mountain	dust	50
darkness	sparks	51
intactness	destruction	52
bones	flesh	54
pearls	stones	54
patience	grief	55

And again, the rhetorical figure not only corresponds with the structure of the poem but is, in fact, one of the main devices to structure it. While in the first part a few instances of *ṭibāq* are used to contrast a far greater number of *murā'āt al-naẓīr,* the second part of the poem with its more general reflections about life and death is largely dominated by *ṭibāq*. Starting with line 35, we can observe an antithetic *accelerando* culminating in the *ubi sunt* passage (lines 49–54) with its surprising climax kings/heroes/babies. The last *ṭibāq* in the poem is the contrast between *ṣabr* ″patience″ and *jaza'* ″grief,″ a contrast that is shown in the end as insuperable.

(e) The extensive use of *jināS,* the phonetic or graphic resemblance (or even identity) of two semantically different elements (words or word pairs), is not specific to any special period of Arabic literature. Even the pre- and early-Islamic poet al-A'shá was extremely fond of it (not to speak of al-Ṭirimmāḥ and the Umayyad *rajaz* poets), and Abū Tammām was notorious for his *jināS* excesses. Enthusiasm for *jināS* is neither a sign of decadence nor something particularly characteristic of the Mamluk period. In this time, however, it became the subject of a somewhat tragic dispute. I call it tragic because it seems as if this controversy destroyed the friendship of the two most important *hommes de lettres* of the eighth/fourteenth century, Ibn Nubātah and al-Ṣafadī. The latter had composed a collection of poetry of his own, in which he carried the potential of *jināS* to its

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extreme.[63] ʻUmar Mūsá Bāshā may be right to assume that the reason he composed the book was his determination to counter Ibn Nubātah´s sophisticated and innovative treatment of the *tawriyah* with the propagation of another rhetorical figure. Al-Ṣafadī was enormously proud of his achievement, sent his booklet to many fellow ulama, and proudly collected the accolades *(taqrīẓāt)* he received.[64] Ibn Nubātah, however, proved himself not to be amused by al-Ṣafadī´s amassing of *jināsāt,* and ″things too long to explain occurred between both on this account.″[65] In the end, it seems as if al-Ṣafadī fell in with Ibn Nubātah´s stylistic trend in favor of the *tawriyah* and composed a treatise on this subject[66]—only to be accused by Ibn Nubātah of plagiarism (an accusation that was only too justified, if we accept Ibn Ḥijjah´s judgement).[67] What a time, in which friendships broke apart not out of avarice, but out of a quarrel about rhetorical figures!

Ibn Ḥijjah´s position in this respect is quite clear, and it seems by and large to reflect Ibn Nubātah´s attitude.[68] *JināS* is, he concludes, one of the more primitive rhetorical figures, and too much of it can spoil any poem. In right measure, however, it can add to a poem´s value. According to Ibn Ḥijjah, it is especially effective in the first line of a poem, if the poet fails to produce a *tawriyah*, which would be the more elegant (and more modern) way to start.[69] Needless to say, in our poem Ibn Nubātah succeeds in combining a *jināS* with a *tawriyah,* and at the same time alludes to his model, al-Tihāmī, in his first line. Aside from the introductory line, *jināS* in fact plays a minor role. It marks the climax of the *lahfī* series in line 15, where it is again combined with a *tawriyah,* thus again lending enormous prominence to the verse. Then we find it in a very marked way in line 37, the emotional climax before the concluding part, and again combined with a *tawriyah* in the rather complicated line 43. As a result, we may note, in this poem Ibn Nubātah uses *jināS* only very sparingly and consciously to emphasize lines of special importance for the content and/or the structure of the poem.

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[63]Al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb Jinān al-JināS fī ʻIlm al-Badīʻ* (Constantinople, A.H. 1299, reprint Beirut, n.d.). The edition by Sāmir Ḥusayn Ḥalabī (Beirut, 1407/1987) adds a lot of misprints in consequence of which the text acquires a certain dadaistic flavor. See also Bāshā, *Ibn Nubātah,* 445–47.

[64]Al-Ṣafadī, *Aʻyān al-ʻAṣr wa-Aʻwān al-Naṣr,* ed. ʻAlī Abū Zayd et al. (Damascus, 1987–88), 1:397–98, 3:291, 374–76, 501–2, 5:361–63.

[65]Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī, *Khizānat al-Adab wa-Ghāyat al-Arab* (2nd ed., Beirut, 1991), 1: 56.

[66]Al-Ṣafadī, *Faḍḍ al-Khitām ʻan al-Tawriyah wa-al-Istikhdām*, ed. ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz al-Ḥinnāwī (Cairo, 1399/1979). See also Bāshā, *Ibn Nubātah*, 456–59.

[67]Ibn Ḥijjah, *Khizānah*, 2:121–29. This is only one of several possible reconstructions of the story between Ibn Nubātah and al-Ṣafadī. Further research is required. It should include a study of the relation between Ibn Nubātah´s *Al-Sajʻ al-Mutawwaq* and al-Ṣafadī´s *Alḥān al-Sawājiʻ* (both still unedited).

[68]Ibn Ḥijjah, *Khizānah*, 1:54–55.

[69]Ibid., 55.

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This is the case as far as real *jinās* is concerned. It is appropriate, however, to address here the problem of the four lines labelled with a question mark in the column *jinās* in the chart. In fact, when I drew up this chart, in the end five lines remained without entry. Apart from the final line, these were lines 31, 39, 40, and 49. But when I compared these lines, I realized that all of them contained the same sort of paronomasia in a very similar way: *ḥudhirtu . . . ḥidhārī* (line 31), *khaṭarin min al-akhṭāri* (line 39), *ayna al-firāru . . . ḥīna al-firāri* (line 40), and *ʻatharū . . . ayya al-ʻithāri* (line 49). Each of them contains a *jinās al-ishtiqāq* with the second word being the rhyme word. But a *jinās al-ishtiqāq* was not considered a *jinās* proper by the rhetoricians, since there is no semantic difference between its two elements. A poem, however, is not a work of theory, and one can hardly doubt that there is some sort of foregrounding in the four *jināsāt al-ishtiqāq* in Ibn Nubātah´s poem as well. Therefore, it seems appropriate to label these lines as indeed containing a rhetorical figure with, however, a rather low degree of rhetorical markedness. It seems as if the poet shunned the contrast between rhetorically marked and completely unmarked lines, and as if he wanted to reserve the effect of this contrast to the very last line. Therefore he provided the lines mentioned with at least an etymological *jinās* rather than letting them stick out by having no rhetorical prominence at all.

(f) The *tawriyah* ″double entendre″ was the rhetorical figure *par excellence* for the Mamluk period, and Ibn Nubātah was indisputably its greatest master.[70] It is hardly accidental that the career of the *tawriyah* coincided with the increasing participation of ulama in the system of literature, because in the *tawriyah* the ulama could create consciously the ambiguity they were used to detecting in the sacred texts during their exegetical activities. Therefore the *tawriyah* is far more than word play. It is—at its best—the reflection of the ambiguity of man´s perception of the divine world order and a playful plumbing of the borders of human language—epistemology in the form of a poetical device. Unfortunately, the well-known prejudices have prevented scholars so far from studying the usage of *tawriyāt* in the texts of the Mamluk period. Many such studies would be necessary, however, to ascertain the proper place of this rhetorical figure, its achievements, and the specific usage made of it by different poets in different poems. So far, I can only judge impressionistically that in our sample poem Ibn Nubātah uses the *tawriyah* in a comparatively modest way. In lines 1, 15, and 43 it is used together with a *jinās* to highlight three particularly important lines of the poem. Several times a *tawriyah* is used to connect themes. So in line 15, it connects the themes of travel and star, in line 56 clouds and stars. In line 33 it enables an antithesis.

[70]Ibid., 2:39–251; Seeger A. Bonebakker, *Some Early Definitions of the Tawriya and Ṣafadī´s Faḍḍ al-Xitām ʻan at-Tawriya wa-´l-Istixdām* (The Hague-Paris, 1966); Bāshā, *Ibn Nubātah,* 448–64; Thomas Bauer, review of *Ibn Nubātah,* by M. Muḥammad, *MSR* 6 (2002): 219–24.

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The theme of grey hair is treated in lines 41–43, where the term *ashhab* is used in several meanings, connecting this subject with the notion of horses in line 41 (alluding to the notion of life as a ″race course″ of line 5) and connecting it again with the theme of stars in line 43. More independent is the use of the *tawriyah* in lines 32 and 45. A dinar and a moon are ordinary, harmless things, but the *tawriyah*s make the reader suddenly aware that transitoriness lurks behind them. In general, one may say that the great master of the *tawriyah* restrained himself considerably in this poem and assigned a purely subordinate function to this rhetorical figure.[71]

(g) To mention briefly the other more conspicuous rhetorical figures: in line 1 both hemistichs rhyme *(taṣrī')*. This is not surprising, but nevertheless adds to the rhetorical fireworks of this introductory line. The small paragraph stretching from line 10 to 12 shows a beautiful variety of rhetorical figures. It starts with an antithesis that is cast in the form of a question and answer, a figure that is called *murāja'ah.*[72] The next line enumerates in logical order all organs with which men are wont to do evil. This is called *tartīb*.[73] Further, I wonder if *lam yusi'* in this line suggests a non-actualized meaning of ″sword″ for *māḍin,* in which case we would have another *tawriyah* before us. Finally, the passage concludes with a double *ṭibāq* in line 12. With two rather uncommon figures (together with *ṭibāq*), Ibn Nubātah interrupts two blocks of verses featuring anaphora and *murā'āt al-naẓīr* and thus saves the poem from monotony. A similar case is lines 22–23, in which a *radd al-'ajuz 'alá al-ṣadr* (repeating the rhyme word in the first hemistich)[74] and a *mumāthalah* (metrical isocolon without rhyme)[75] conclude a paragraph of four lines in which the father complains to his son about his miserable life. In line 26, a ″fanciful cause″ *(ḥusn al-ta'līl)*[76] is given for the white hair of the father, which is introduced in this line. ″Feigned ignorance″ *(tajāhul al-'ārif)*[77] is the way to present the subject of sleeplessness in lines 29–30. Rather prominent is the figure of *istikhdām*[78] in line 44, in which the terms ″scorpion″ and ″lion″ must be interpreted as signs of the zodiac, if the genitives *al-falak* and *al-burūj* are considered, but as animals, if the adjectives *lasūb* and *ḍārin* are considered. Finally, the subject of

[71]One may perhaps add line 17, where *qārin* ″host″ may also be interpreted as *qāri'* ″reader,″ and line 11, where *māḍin* may be conceived as ″sword.″
[72]Cachia, *Rhetorician,* no. 146.
[73]Ibid., no. 68.
[74]Heinrichs, ″Rhetorical Figures,″ 660–61; Cachia, *Rhetorician,* no. 56.
[75]Heinrichs, ″Rhetorical Figures,″ 660; Cachia, *Rhetorician,* no. 7.
[76]Heinrichs, ″Rhetorical Figures,″ 657; Cachia, *Rhetorician,* no. 132 (his translation).
[77]Heinrichs, ″Rhetorical Figures,″ 659 (his translation); Cachia, *Rhetorician,* no. 135.
[78]Heinrichs, ″Rhetorical Figures,″ 657, Cachia, *Rhetorician*, no. 107, Bonebakker, *Some Early Definitions*, 18–20.

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ṣabr, with which the poem shall conclude, is introduced in line 48 by means of another *radd al-ʿajuz ʿalá al-ṣadr*, in which way it can be expressed very directly and clearly without abstaining entirely from rhetorical figures.

Altogether, a great variety of rhetorical figures is applied in this poem, but none of them gains prominence. Nevertheless, the high number of rhetorical figures, the uninterrupted foregrounding, plays an important role in the communicative potential of the poem. At the end of the first section we asked why and how the composition of elegies could be of use for the poet himself. Part of the answer was that poetry enables communication. But this communication only works if there is a recipient. Therefore we have to ask what the use of hearing or reading an elegy on the death of somebody else´s child may be.

Of course, a natural group of potential readers of such poems are other people who have lost their children. This is corroborated by the fact that part of Ibn Nubātah´s *rāʾīyah* is included in Ibn Abī Ḥajalah´s manual for the consolation of parents bereft of a child. In times of the Black Death, this group must not have been inconsequential. For them, the consoling effect of the poem is quite obvious; a trouble shared is a trouble halved. But this is only part of the story. After all, Ibn Nubātah´s dirges were included in his *dīwān*, and this *dīwān* was also read by people who had not lost a child. Further, the *dīwān* contains other elegies, especially a famous elegy on the death of Ibn Nubātah´s patron al-Malik al-Muʾayyad, and the number of people who grieved the loss of a prince was probably not too great. Nevertheless, they were moved by the poem. This is not difficult to understand if we consider the popularity of modern forms of art with which we are more familiar, for example, the opera. Though most people have never had problems and experiences like those of Rigoletto or Tosca, many are moved to tears by being confronted with them. Film enthusiasts will not have problems adducing similar examples from this medium. In general, it is again one of the prejudices of the school of ″immediate expression of true feelings″ that the experience of the artist is the most central point of a work of art, which requires that the ideal recipient must have undergone a rather similar experience in order to understand him and to judge the veracity of his expression.

But it is not primarily interest in the experiences of the poet that makes the normal recipient turn to his works. A more important reason for confronting oneself with works about death and suffering is the aspiration of a therapeutic effect through catharsis, as Aristotle has noted. Nowadays a neuropsychological approach can help us understand this effect better. It can be shown that the effect of catharsis does not so much aim to make negative emotions disappear, but rather to put them into a new context, allowing one´s emotions to be seen in the context of other emotions and experiences and thereby gaining more consciousness of them. For ″the reader of a literary text is able to engage in abstraction, comparison,

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and analogy: in particular, the reader can be prompted by the internal logic of the text to place the literal meaning of a given negative feeling within a wider context provided both by other feelings encountered in the text as well as by her sense of prior and anticipated meanings. In this way, negative feelings, and the concerns of the self that may be implicated with them, can be relocated in a wider perspective. . . . In the literary response, negative feelings are contextualized or transformed rather than avoided: in comparison with the usual notions of purging or balance, this is perhaps a more appropriate way of understanding how a cathartic process might operate while reading.″[79]

In order to make a text work in this way, i.e., in order to enable communication with an audience interested in the emotional potential of a text and desire a cathartic effect, the text has to arouse emotions. Its capacity to arouse emotions is therefore much more important than the question of whether or not the author himself experienced the emotions he talks about, helpful (and biographically interesting) as his own experience may be. It is consequently irrelevant and useless and even contradicts the nature of the literary communication process to ask if the usage of rhetorical devices in a poem corroborates or contradicts the veracity of the poet´s utterances. Rather, one should ask if the rhetorical devices are effective in intensifying in the audience emotions that enable them to recontextualize their own experiences.

As a matter of fact, foregrounding, i.e., the usage of parameters like meter and rhyme, poetic language, figures of speech, and rhetorical devices, does arouse emotions in itself.[80] The way this is achieved and the exact effect of the different factors is dependent on the past experiences and the expectations of the respective public. Since we can no longer conduct neuropsychological experiments on the literary public of the Mamluk period, we can only try to reconstruct their expectations and anticipations by carefully analyzing as many texts as possible and by scrutinizing the abundant theoretical and critical utterance of this time. Such studies have not yet been done. However, it is certainly no daring speculation to assume that the permanency of foregrounding by means of manifold rhetorical devices in Ibn Nubātah´s poem had the power to intensify energetically its emotional effect in the audience. This effect seems to be strengthened further by the fact that, despite its closely-woven carpet of foregrounding, no single device stands out to attract special attention. This permanent but rather subdued fuelling of emotions, together with the emotive structure discussed above, may have yielded an extremely emotional text. Its production will not have failed to produce a cathartic effect on

[79]David S. Miall, ″Anticipation and Feeling in Literary Response: A Neuropsychological Perspective,″ *Poetics* 23 (1995): 293–94.
[80]David S. Miall and Don Kuiken, ″Foregrounding, Defamiliarization, and Affect: Response to Literary Stories,″ *Poetics* 22 (1994): 389–407.

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the poet himself. To indulge in it may have contributed to emotional relief for many of its audience, whatever their personal sufferings may have been, and the whole group of participants in the Mamluk literary system may have experienced a feeling of solidarity resulting from shared emotions.

Concluding Remarks

Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī´s *rā'īyah* is one of at least seven poems he composed on the death of his son(s). We can discern several functions of the poem on multiple levels: (1) It contributes to the process of mourning of the poet himself. (2) It may serve as consolation for other people who have experienced a similar loss. (3) It allows the poet to overcome his absorption in grief and to resume his public role as *homme de lettres*. (4) As a work of art with its interpretative openness, it is the basis of communication between the poet and his audience in a more general sense. (5) As a highly emotional text it allows its recipients to experience a cathartic process of recontextualization of their own emotions. (6) For the participants in the Mamluk literary system (more or less identical with the ulama) it is considered a text of emotional and artistic relevance to them and in this way helps to stabilize the social group that is defined, in addition to other ways, by participation in the literary discourse. (7) For the members of this social group, who ascribe personal relevance to the text, it helps shape and communicate their attitudes and emotions about childhood death and gives them a language with which to speak about it. (8) All these functions are provided with an additional historical dimension by Ibn Nubātah´s transformation of a famous dirge by al-Tihāmī, who had lived three and a half centuries earlier.

We know that two of Ibn Nubātah´s three long dirges were written on the death of his son ʻAbd al-Raḥīm. His name is mentioned in line 3 of the *qāfīyah* and in the headline of the *dālīyah* (rhyming in *-dak*). I have hardly any doubt that the *rā'īyah* was composed on the same occasion. In all probability, Ibn Nubātah, who greatly admired the poems of al-Tihāmī, wanted to respond to al-Tihāmī´s series of three long poems (two *rā'īyah*s and a *qāfīyah*) with a series of his own, comprising three long poems as well. One may try to order Ibn Nubātah´s three odes chronologically according to their position in the mourning process of the poet (in which case probably the poem rhyming in *–dak* would come first), but must at the same time avoid overlooking the literary enterprise these poems represent. As a matter of fact, Ibn Nubātah presented three long and ambitious poems, each of them of very different character, to give his time a new corpus of poems on childhood death as an answer to the, by then, classical poems of al-Tihāmī. Thereby, Ibn Nubātah gave a new voice to the experience of childhood death for his own contemporaries, thus confirming the value of the old classics and at the same time remodelling and supplementing (if not superseding) them. Of course, a

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further assessment of Ibn Nubātah's *Kindertotenlieder* would have to take into account the whole set of poems.

Literary ambition was probably also a reason why Ibn Nubātah surrounded his three long dirges with several smaller ones. Again, only one of them mentions the name of ʻAbd al-Raḥīm in the text, but others may also have been by-products of his composition of the long odes. By means of these small poems, Ibn Nubātah could further transform the tradition to Mamluk conventions, since the epigram was extremely popular in his time. Again, he proved that he could adapt a multitude of literary forms and techniques to his theme, even the *tawriyah*-pointed epigram.

In the preceding, we could ascertain several characteristics of the poem that can be considered typical for the Mamluk period. The fact that the rather homogenous group of the ulama became the bearer of the literary system contributed to a more private nature of literature; the exegetical preoccupations of the ulama favored the use of rhetorical devices of ambiguity such as the *tawriyah;* and their encyclopedic training might have fostered a tendency to combine many aspects in a small space, as a polydisciplinary, kaleidoscopic text like Ibn Muqri''s *ʻUnwān al-Sharaf al-Wāfī,* the multifold art of the *badīʻīyah,* or the richness of allusions in many Mamluk poems may show. In our example, the extreme density of the poem in several respects may be a reflection of this tendency. However, our knowledge of Mamluk literature is extremely poor, and we are still far from comprehending its peculiarities or even the special characteristics of even its most important poets.[81] Even the way a rhetorical device like the *tawriyah* functions in its poetic context and the kind of intellectual and emotional reactions it provoked are still difficult to state. I may simply conclude therefore by quoting another *tawriyah*-pointed epigram of Ibn Nubātah. What for the modern reader might appear to be humorous, and therefore irreconcilable with mourning, is applied by Ibn Nubātah to speak about his grief. The *tawriyah,* which forms the point of the epigram, is based on the double meaning of the word *kānūn,* which is the name of two months of winter, in one of which ʻAbd al-Raḥīm had died, but also a word designating an oven, a brazier, or a coal pan:[82]

> Yā lahfa qalbī ʻalá ʻAbdi al-Raḥīmī wa-yā / shawqī ilayhi wa-yā shajwī wa-yā dā'ī
> Fī shahri kānūna wāfāhu al-ḥimāmu la-qad / aḥraqta bi-al-nāri yā kānūnu aḥshā'ī
> [Oh sorrow in my heart for ʻAbd al-Raḥīm, oh yearning for him, oh

[81]Homerin, "Reflections on Arabic Poetry."
[82]Ibn Nubātah, *Dīwān*, 18 (meter *basīṭ*); I translate *kānūn* as December, but it could also be January (*kānūn al-thānī*).

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my grief and malady!
Death overtook him in December, but you, December / *oven,* burnt my intestines with fire!]

Text and Translation

١	اللّه جارك إنّ دمعيَ جاري	يا موحشَ الأوطان والأوطار
٢	لما سكنتَ من التراب حديقة	فاضت عليك العينُ بالأنهار
٣	شتّان ما حالي وحالك أنت في	غرفِ الجنان ومهجتي في النار
٤	خفّ النجا بك يا بنيّ الى السُرى	فسبقتني و ثقلتُ بالأوزار
٥	ليت الردى إذ لم يدعْك أهاب بي	حتى ندوم معاً على مضمار
٦	ليت القضا الجاري تمهَّل وِرده	حتى حسبت عواقب الإصدار
٧	ما كنت إلاّ مثل لحمة بارقٍ	ولّى وأغرَى الجفن بالإمطار
٨	أبكيك ما بكت الحمامُ هديلها	وأحنّ ما حنّت إلى الأوكار
٩	أبكي بمحمرّ الدموع وإنما	تبكي العيون نظيرها بنُضار
١٠	قالوا صغيراً قلتُ إنّ وربما	كانت به الحسرات غير صغار
١١	وأحقّ بالأحزان ماضٍ لم يسئْ	بيدٍ ولا لسنٍ ولا إضمار
١٢	نائي اللقا وحِماه أقرب مطرحاً	يا بعد مجتمع وقرب مزار
١٣	لهفي لغصن راقني بنباته	لو أمهلته التربُ للإثمار
١٤	لهفي لجوهرةٍ خفتْ فكأنني	حجّبتها من أدمعي ببحار
١٥	لهفي لسارٍ حارَ فيه تجلّدي	وا حيرتي بالكوكب السيّار
١٦	سَكَنَ الثرى فكأنه سكن الحشا	من فرط ما شغلتْ به أفكاري
١٧	أعززْ عليّ بأنّ ضيف مسامعي	لم يحظَ من ذاك اللسان بقاري
١٨	أعزز عليّ بأنْ رحلتَ ولم تخض	أقدام فكرك أبحر الأشعار
١٩	أعزز عليّ بأن رفقت على الردى	وعليك من دمعي كدرّ نثار
٢٠	أبنيّ إن تكسَ التراب فإنه	غايات أجمعنا وليس بعار
٢١	ما في زمانك ما يسرّ مؤمّلاً	فاذهبْ كما ذهب الخيال الساري
٢٢	لو أن أخباري إليك توصّلت	لبكيتَ في الجنّات من أخباري
٢٣	أحزان مدّكرٍ ووحشةُ مفردٍ	ومقام مَضْيَعة و ذلّ جوار
٢٤	أبنيّ إنّي قد كنَزتُك في الثرى	فانفع أباك بساعة الإقتار
٢٥	أبنيّ قد وقفتْ عليّ حوادثٌ	فوقفنَ من طلل على آثار

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٢٦ و مضى البياض من الحياة و طيبها لكنها أبقته فوق عذاري
٢٧ نمْ وادعاً فلقد تقرَّح ناظري سهراً ونامت أعينُ السُمَّار
٢٨ أرعى الدّجى و كأنّ ذيل ظلامه متشبّثٌ بالنجم في مسمار
٢٩ خلع الصباح على المجرّة سجفه أم قسّمت شمس النهار دراري
٣٠ أم غاب معْ طفل أخيرُ دجنّتي لا كوكبي فيها ولا أسحاري
٣١ تبًّا لعادية الزمان على الفتى فلقد حذرت وما أفاد حذاري
٣٢ وحويت ديناراً لوجهك فانتحى صرف الزمان فراح بالدينار
٣٣ أبنيّ إن تبعدْ فإنّ مدى اللقا بيني وبينك مسرعُ التيّار
٣٤ إن تسقني في الحشر شربة كوثرٍ فلقد سقتك مدامعي بغزار
٣٥ كيف الحياة وقد دفنت جوانحي ما بين أنجادٍ إلى أغوار
٣٦ وحوى بنيّ تراب مصر وجلّق كالغيم مرتكناً على أقمار
٣٧ طرقتْ على تلك النفوس طوارق وطرت على تلك الجسوم طواري
٣٨ وبدت لدى البيدا مطيّ قبورهم علماً بأنَّهمُ على أسفار
٣٩ قسماً بمن جعل الفناء مسافة إنّا على خطرٍ من الأخطار
٤٠ قل للذين تقدّمت أمثالهم أين الفرار ولات حين فرار
٤١ ما بين أشهبَ للظلام معاود ركضاً وأدهم للدُجى كرّار
٤٢ يطأ الصغير ومن يعمر يلتحقْ وعليه من شيبٍ كنقع غبار
٤٣ مالي وعتب الشهب في تقديرها ولقد تصاب الشهب بالاقدار
٤٤ لا عقرب الفلك اللسوب من الردى ينجو ولا أسد البروج الضاري
٤٥ يرمي الهلال بقوسه أرواحنا ولقد يصاب القوس بالاوتار
٤٦ كتب الفَناء على الشواهد حجّة غَنِيَتْ عن الإقرار والإنكار
٤٧ فلتظهر الفطن الثواقب عجزها فظهوره سرّ من الأسرار
٤٨ وليصطبر متفجّع فلربّما فقد المنى ومثوبة الصبّار
٤٩ أين الملوك الرافلون إلى العلى عثروا إلى الأجداث أيّ عثار
٥٠ كانوا جبالاً لا تُرام فأصبحوا بيد الردى حفنات تربٍ هار
٥١ أين الكماة إذ العجاجة أظلمت قدَحوا القسيّ وناضلوا بشرار
٥٢ سلموا على عطب الوغى ودجى بِهم داجي المنون إلى محلّ بَوار
٥٣ أين الأصاغر في المهود كأنما ضمَّت كمائمها على أزهار
٥٤ خلط الحِمام عظامهم ولحومهم حتى تساوى الدرّ بالاحجار

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٥٥ فلئن صبرتُ ففي الأولى متصبّرٌ ولئن بدا جزعي فعن أعذار
٥٦ درّت عليك من الغمام مراضعٌ وتكنّفتك من النجوم جوار
٥٧ تسقي ثراك و ليس ذاك بنافعي لكن أغالط مهجتي وأداري

1. God be your helper as my tears are flowing / *my helpers,*
   oh you who have forsaken both my home and hope!
2. When you settled in a garden of dust,
   my eyes poured forth rivers over thee.
3. Amazingly different is your condition and mine: While you dwell
   in the lofty chambers of paradise, my heart is in the fire of hell.
4. When we set off on a night journey, you were a light burden, my little son,
   but you outstripped me, and I was burdened with a heavy load!
5. Would that destruction had summoned me as well, when it did not refrain from you,
   so that we could have pursued the same race course!
6. Would that destiny had delayed in its permanent course
   till you could have imagined the end of the route!
7. You were only a flash of lightning from a cloud
   that rainless turned away but made the eyelids shed a copious rain.
8. I´ll weep over you as long as the doves weep over their nestling,
   and I´ll yearn for you as long as they yearn for their nests.
9. No wonder that with reddened tears I weep,
   for eyes only weep with gold over their own kind.
10. ´Twas but a child so small, they said. True, I replied,
    but many times my grief for him was anything but small.
11. And is not he who did no wrong with hand or tongue
    nor hid an evil in his heart the worthiest of grief?
12. A long way ´tis to meet him, though his shelter is the nearest spot.
    How far is union, yet how close the place to visit him!
13. O sorrow for a twig the growth of which delighted me—
    if only earth had given it the time to bring forth fruit!

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14. O sorrow for a pearl once shining.
    It seems as if I′d veiled it now with seas of tears.
15. O sorrow for a nightly traveller whose departure had caused my endurance to wane!
    How lost am I with the departed star / *planet!*
16. He settled in the earth but occupies my thoughts so in excess
    as if he′d settled in my heart.
17. How it distresses me that my ears′ guest
    never enjoyed the hospitality of that tongue!
18. How it distresses me that you departed ere the feet of your intelligence
    did wade into the seas / *meters* of poetry!
19. How it distresses me that you behaved so gently with destruction
    while my tears are poured on you like scattered pearls.
20. My little son, that you were clad in earth,
    well, ′tis the end of all of us and tis no shame / *no one will remain naked.*
21. In times like these not much remains to make a man of great expectations happy,
    thence vanish like a fleeting apparition!
22. If news about my state would reach you there, you′d weep in paradise
    over the news you hear:
23. Sadness of memories, gloom of loneliness,
    an abode of perdition, contemptible protection.
24. My little son, I buried you, my treasure, in the soil.
    Help then your father in the hour of indigence!
25. My little son, misfortune after misfortune has afflicted me,
    and donated a fortune of rubble to ruins,
26. And gone is the whiteness of life and its sweetness,
    though life left its whiteness on my beard.
27. Sleep in peace, while my eyes are wounded by sleeplessness
    when the eyes of the night companions have long been closed in sleep,
28. Staring at a night that seems as if the train of its darkness
    was nailed down by the stars.[83]

[83]Probably by *najm* the Pleiades are meant. Cf. a line by Ṣurr Durr quoted in Paul Kunitzsch and Manfred Ullmann, *Die Plejaden in den Vergleichen der arabischen Dichtung* (Munich, 1992), 83, in which the Pleiades are compared to the nails of a coat of mail. These nails are compared in al-Tihāmī′s *kāmil rā'īyah* with water bubbles. This line (49), rhyming in *al-mismārī*, is certainly

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29. Has morning yet veiled the Milky Way,
    or the light of day put the stars to flight?[84]
30. Or has an endless darkness, without stars or dawn for me,
    yet left me along with the child?
31. May then perish the vicissitudes of time that befall noble men!
    Indeed, I made provisions, but all provisions are in vain,
32. And I embraced in your face a dinar,
    but time´s misfortune / *money changing* approached and
    took the dinar away.
33. My dear son, though you are far from me / *may you not perish*,
    the time of our meeting
    draws quickly near.[85]
34. You will give me a draught of Kawthar´s water on the Day of Judgment,
    for my tears will have given you to drink abundantly before.
35. How can life be
    after I have buried my intestines between highland and
    lowland,
36. And the dust of Cairo and Damascus encloses my sons
    like clouds heaped up around moons?
37. Calamities have come upon these souls,
    unexpected misfortunes have befallen these bodies.
38. The mounts of their graves appear in the wilderness
    as a sign that they are on a journey.
39. I swear by him who postponed our end:
    We are always at some brink of destruction!
40. Say to those the like of whom approached us asking ″ Where is escape?″ :
    ″Time is none to escape!″
41. What is the difference between a white horse / *grey-haired*
    galloping with determination
    into darkness, and a black horse / *black-haired* jumping
    into gloom?
42. The small child is trod under foot, whereas he who is granted long life will catch up

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alluded to by Ibn Nubātah. His magnificent image was completely misunderstood by M. Muḥammad, *Ibn Nubātah,* 225, who wrongly assumes a connection with a line by Imru' al-Qays.

[84]Thus, if one reads *qussimat;* otherwise: ″or had the sun of day distributed glistening stars.″

[85]On the original meaning of the formula *lā tab'ad* see Gert Borg, *″Ammā ba'du:* The Meaning of *'lā tab'ad,″ Zeitschrift für Arabische Linguistik* 37 (1999): 13–24.

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with grey hair as if he had whirled up a cloud of dust in his race.

43. Why do I blame the stars / *grey-haired* and their assignments?
The stars / *grey-haired* are struck by fate themselves!
44. Neither the stinging celestial scorpion will escape destruction
nor the rapacious zodiac lion.
45. With his bow the crescent moon shoots at our souls,
but the bow is struck by revenge / *the strings* in turn.
46. Perdition inscribed a document on tombstones that is valid
regardless whether it be rejected or confirmed.
47. Let penetrating minds reveal their ignorance—
its revelation is a secret great indeed!
48. Let the afflicted bear the pain with calm—
how often were a dearly loved and endurance´s reward all lost at once!
49. Where are the kings that strutted towards loftiness?
They stumbled over their trails right into their graves!
50. Mountains they were, unthinkable to ascend.
Destruction´s hand has turned them into a handful of wavering dust.
51. Where are the well-armed heroes who, when the clouds of dusk darkened the battle field,
ignited fire with their bows and shot with flashing sparks?
52. Unharmed they survived disasters of battle
until dark fate led them to a place of destruction to darken their light.
53. Where are the babies who in the cradles lied
like blossoms enclosed by their calyces?
54. Death has permeated their bones and flesh until the pearls they were
became transformed into mere stones.
55. If I be patient, it is because I force myself to patience in all this;
and if I show my grief, how manifold are my excuses!
56. May nursing clouds bestow their copious stream upon you!
May servant / *moving* stars from all sides be around you!
57. They all will moisten the earth of your grave, but be of no avail for me.
Instead, I´ll try to cheat my heart and to deceive it.

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An Alexandrian Age in Fourteenth-Century Damascus: Twin Commentaries on Two Celebrated Arabic Epistles

Superficially, at least, the traditional Western view of Arabic literature in the Mamluk period conforms rather closely to the hoary cliches about the Alexandrian Age of Greek literature, a millennium and a half earlier. Authors worked under the burden of a rich canon of classical texts, which they revered, and which they diligently collected, classified, commented, criticized, and epitomized. By comparison, their own literary efforts, while certainly copious, have been seen as derivative, lifeless, and smelling altogether too much of the lamp.

Evidence for the first half of this picture—if not the second—is easy to come by, as can be seen from even a cursory look at some of the literary production of two of the more celebrated figures of the age, Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī (d. 768/1366) and his younger colleague Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363). Ibn Nubātah, known principally as a poet, published selections of the verse of a number of his predecessors, including Ibn al-Rūmī (d. 283/896) and the notorious Ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 391/1001), as well as a collection of the epistles of the famous Ayyubid minister and stylist al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil (d. 596/1200).[1] Al-Ṣafadī, mainly a prose writer, composed commentaries on the famous poem *Lāmīyat al-'Ajam* by al-Ṭughrā'ī (d. 515/1121) and the work of literary criticism entitled *Al-Mathal al-Sā'ir* by Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr (d. 637/1239), a series of monographs on individual literary tropes, and a number of biographical dictionaries, including one on the blind and one on the one-eyed.[2]

Particularly interesting as a manifestation of these two writers' "Alexandrian" qualities—as well as a curious link between them—is the fact that each wrote an elaborate work of commentary on a prose epistle (a different epistle in each case) by the fifth/eleventh-century Andalusian poet and littérateur Ibn Zaydūn (d. 463/1070). These commentaries are far more than philological glosses; in each

[1]On Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v.; Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden, 1949), 2:10–12, S2:149–50; 'Umar Mūsá Bāshā, *Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī* (Cairo, 1963); Maḥmūd Sālim Muḥammad, *Ibn Nubātah: Shā'ir al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī* (Damascus and Beirut, 1999). The most useful list of Ibn Nubātah's works is in Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm's edition of his *Sarḥ al-'Uyūn fī Sharḥ Risālat Ibn Zaydūn* (Cairo, 1964), 18–24.

[2]On al-Ṣafadī, see *EI*^{2}, s.v.; *GAL*, 2:31–33, S2:27–29; Josef van Ess, "Ṣafadī-Splitter," *Der Islam* 53 (1976): 242–66, and 54 (1977): 77–108.

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case the original epistle takes up less than ten pages, while the commentary extends to more than four hundred. Both works are thus highly digressive, and they manage to incorporate in their compass vast swathes of traditional Arabic literary culture and thereby offer the reader a far richer plate than the occasion of a single epistle would seem to promise.

A first question to pose about these two texts, then, concerns their status as commentaries. If they are not just offering a simple *explication du texte,* what are they doing, and why? Where do they fit in the larger context of commentary writing in the Mamluk age? In particular, what was the impetus for commenting literary works in prose, as opposed to the long-established tradition of commenting poetry? Another obvious question, given the wealth of information these works contain on the Arabic literary heritage as a whole, is what they can tell us about the canon in their own day. What was ″classical,″ and what was not? Are they working to define that canon, to reinforce it, or perhaps to expand it? And who was their intended audience? Were they intended for students, for a general educated (or semi-educated) public, or perhaps for other scholars, who would be dazzled by their erudition? More generally, what do they tell us about the role of intertextuality in Mamluk literature, the supposed attendant ″anxiety of influence,″ and its general ″Alexandrian″ qualities altogether?

The author of the two epistles around whom Ibn Nubātah and al-Ṣafadī chose to build their works is, of course, very well known. Ibn Zaydūn was a Cordoban aristocrat whose life reflects the turbulence of eleventh-century Andalusia under the ″Party Kings.″ In his youth he served as vizier to the governor of Cordoba, Ibn Jahwar, but then fell foul of him and was thrown into prison, where he languished for some time before escaping, returning to the city only after Ibn Jahwar′s death. Later he again fell from favor and left Cordoba for Seville, where he spent many years at the Abbadid court of al-Mu‘taḍid and his son al-Mu‘tamid, returning to Cordoba only with the Abbadid conquest of the city. Probably the most famous poet of his time, he composed verses in many genres; among the most famous are his love poems on Wallādah, daughter of the erstwhile caliph al-Mustakfī, with whom he had a stormy affair in his youth, as well as his poetic pleas *(isti‘ṭāf)* to Ibn Jahwar to release him from prison during his first confinement in Cordoba.[3]

But Ibn Zaydūn was also known as a prose stylist, and his two most famous epistles are concerned with these same wrenching youthful experiences. The first, later christened the ″humorous epistle″ *(al-risālah al-hazlīyah),* was occasioned by an attempt by his enemy and rival Ibn ‘Abdūs to supplant him in the affections of

[3]On Ibn Zaydūn, see *EI*^{2}, s.v.; Devin Stewart, ″Ibn Zaydūn,″ in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: The Literature of Al-Andalus*, ed. María Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin and Michael Sells (Cambridge, 2000), 306–17.

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Wallādah (an attempt which, by the way, later proved successful); speaking in Wallādah′s voice *(‘an lisānihā),* he has her peremptorily reject Ibn ‘Abdūs′s advances and pour scorn on him for his presumption. The second, the ″serious epistle″ *(al-risālah al-jiddīyah),* is a prose companion to his *isti‘ṭāf* poems, attempting to move Ibn Jahwar to pity and persuade him to let him out of jail.

These are the two epistles commented by, respectively, Ibn Nubātah and al-Ṣafadī, and their choice of them is perhaps a bit surprising. Commentary as a general enterprise was, of course, a growth industry in this period, especially in religious scholarship; indeed, in jurisprudence *(fiqh)* it had become perhaps the most dominant form of writing altogether. Commentaries on works of grammar, lexicography, and literary criticism also abounded. Within the realm of pure literature, the commenting of poetry—both *dīwān*s of individual poets and anthologies such as Abū Tammām′s *Ḥamāsah*—was a long-established and still thriving tradition. But for commentators to apply their skills to works of *prose* literature was far less common.

Three prominent examples of such commentaries may, however, be cited from the pens of our authors′ predecessors. The *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah* by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 656/1258), commenting the collection of the purported sermons, speeches, and other dicta of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib put together by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1015), parallels their works not only in being a commentary on prose, but also in its outsize dimensions and highly digressive character; on the other hand, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd′s base text is essentially a religious one, and his objectives correspondingly diverge significantly from those of Ibn Nubātah and al-Ṣafadī.[4] Perhaps more apposite, and certainly more obvious, is the tradition of commenting the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī; at least nine such commentaries were produced in the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries, including those of Ibn Ẓafar (d. 565/1169), Ṣadr al-Afāḍil (d. 617/1220), al-Sharīshī (d. 619/1222), and al-Bayḍāwī (d. 680/1281), and of these the one best known today, that of al-Sharīshī, again displays the qualities of disproportionate length and intentional digressiveness evinced by the two later authors.[5] It is striking to what degree al-Ḥarīrī′s fame eclipsed that of Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 398/1008), the inventor of the *maqāmah* genre, whose own *Maqāmāt* were, so far as is known, never commented at all. On the other hand, al-Hamadhānī′s contemporary, al-‘Utbī (d. ca. 412/1022), who applied the euphuistic prose style developed in the chanceries *(inshā’)* to the writing of history rather than fiction, produced in his laudatory biography of Maḥmūd of Ghaznah, the *Kitāb al-Yamīnī,* a work that seems to have cried out for

[4]Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah,* ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 2nd ed., 21 vols. (Cairo, 1965–67); on Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, see *EI*^{2}, s.v.

[5]For the commentaries on al-Ḥarīrī, see *GAL,* 1:276 f., S1:486–88. On al-Sharīshī, see *EI*^{2}, s.v., and his *Sharḥ Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī,* ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 5 vols. (Cairo, 1970).

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commentaries, of which at least four are known from the following three centuries, including one by Ṣadr al-Afāḍil, who also commented al-Ḥarīrī´s *Maqāmāt*. All of these are, however, soberly philological, sticking quite close to al-'Utbī´s original text rather than using it as a pretext for striking out in unexpected (and entertaining) directions.[6]

None of these earlier commentaries were directed at epistles *(rasā'il)* in the narrow sense of a relatively brief letter addressed from one individual to another, despite the fact that such letter-writing had been recognized as an art form since the third/ninth century, when the ″collected letters″ of recognized prose stylists began to be published. The earliest such collections are now lost to us, but preserved collections from the second half of the fourth/tenth century enable us to track a real efflorescence in the art of correspondence *(tarassul),* as part of, and a major contributor to, a general enhancement of the status of prose vis-à-vis its rival, poetry, at that time. Writers of both official letters, such as Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣābi' (d. 384/994) and the Ṣāḥib Ibn 'Abbād (d. 385/995), and private individuals, such as Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī (d. 384/994) and al-Hamadhānī himself, cultivated a new, intricate style, characterized by the constant employment of rhetorical tropes, careful attention to phrasal rhythm, and above all patterns of prose rhyme *(saj')*, which was to determine the direction of fine letter-writing for centuries to come, as well as to spawn such new genres as the *maqāmāt.* While this trend was at first particularly associated with the eastern Islamic world, it rapidly spread west, as can be seen in the correspondence of Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (d. 449/1058) in Syria and—albeit to a less extravagant extent—of Ibn Zaydūn in Andalusia.[7]

This now-established euphuistic *tarassul* style enjoyed further development at the hands of two outstanding representatives in the Ayyubid and then Mamluk realms. The first was Saladin´s right-hand man, al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil (d. 596/1200), whose voluminous correspondence is preserved in collections made by a number of later authors. Two of these have been published, one of them compiled by the second major epistolographer of the age, the Mamluk chancery head Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir (d. 692/1292), who is best known today for his biographies of the sultans Baybars, Qalāwūn, and al-Ashraf Khalīl, and whose own correspondence is available only through (extensive) quotations in later authors.[8] Both men were certainly

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[6]On al-'Utbī, see *EI*^{2}, s.v., and *GAL,* 1:314, S1:547 f. The one published commentary on the *Kitāb al-Yamīnī* is the eleventh/seventeeth-century one by al-Manīnī (d. 1172/1759), *Al-Fatḥ al-Wahbī 'alá Tārīkh Abī Naṣr al-'Utbī,* 2 vols. (Cairo, 1869). On the rather neglected Ṣadr al-Afāḍil (al-Qāsim ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Khwārazmī), see Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-Udabā'*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd Rifā'ī (Beirut, 1979), 16:238–53.

[7]For basic orientation on these developments, see Zaki Mubarak, *La prose arabe au IVe siècle de l-Hégire (Xe siècle)* (Paris, 1931).

[8]On al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, see *EI*^{2}, s.v., and *GAL,* 1:316, S1:549. The published collections are Ibn

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models for Ibn Nubātah and al-Ṣafadī; while the latter appended a letter by Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir to his own commentary, Ibn Nubātah manifested his admiration for al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil by preparing his own collection of his letters, entitled *Al-Fāḍil min Inshāʾ al-Fāḍil*.[9]

Ibn Nubātah was born in Cairo in 686/1287, five years before the death of Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir. As a young man he emigrated to Syria, where he spent most of his life, returning to Egypt only when in his seventies and dying in Cairo in 768/1366. In Syria, he was especially patronized by the Ayyubid ruler of Ḥamāh, Abū al-Fidāʾ, and his son; later, resident in Damascus, he was appointed supervisor *(nāẓir)* of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, making an annual trip there at Easter. While he was known primarily as a poet, his prose was also much appreciated, and he served for a time as head of the chancery in Damascus. In a sense, he had a birthright to his eloquence, priding himself on, and taking his name from, his ancestor Ibn Nubātah al-Fāriqī (d. 374/984), a famous preacher at the court of Sayf al-Dawlah in Aleppo, whose sermons—yet another exemplar of the efflorescence of euphuistic prose in the late fourth/tenth century—had been not only collected but also commented on, at least twice, in the seventh/thirteenth century.[10]

Many of Ibn Nubātah´s works survive in manuscript, but only a few of them have been published, including, besides his poetic *Dīwān,*[11] his collection of al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil´s epistles, an *adab* collection entitled *Maṭlaʻ al-Fawāʾid wa-Majmaʻ al-Farāʾid*,[12] and his commentary on Ibn Zaydūn´s ″humorous″ epistle, all three composed at the behest of his patron Abū al-Fidāʾ. Certainly it is the latter, entitled *Sarḥ al-ʻUyūn fī Sharḥ Risālat Ibn Zaydūn* (The Pasture for eyes in explanation of the epistle of Ibn Zaydūn), that has always been his most popular prose work, first printed as early as 1861 in Beirut and many times since.[13]

In his preface to the *Sarḥ al-ʻUyūn* Ibn Nubātah indicates that the work was commissioned by Abū al-Fidāʾ, but supplies no details elucidating the reason for the amir´s choice of the text to be commented. He does recount, somewhat

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ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir, *Al-Durr al-Naẓīm min Tarassul ʻAbd al-Raḥīm,* ed. Aḥmad Aḥmad Badawī (Cairo, 1959); and Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn al-Dībājī, *Rasāʾil al-Ḥarb wa-al-Salām,* ed. Muḥammad Naghash (Cairo, 1978). On Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir, see *EI*^{2}, s.v., and *GAL,* 1:318f., S1:551. The biography of Baybars has been edited by ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz al-Khuwayṭir, *Al-Rawḍ al-Ẓāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir* (Riyadh, 1976); most recently, Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir´s topographic work on Cairo has been edited by Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid, *Al-Rawḍah al-Bahīyah al-Zāhirīyah fī Khiṭaṭ al-Muʻizzīyah al-Qāhirah* (Cairo, 1996).

[9]Extant in manuscript but unpublished.

[10]On the earlier Ibn Nubātah, see *EI*^{2}, s.v.; *GAL,* 1:92f., S1:149f.

[11]Most recently edited by ʻAbd al-Amīr Mahdī Ḥabīb al-Ṭāʾī (Baghdad, 1977).

[12]Ed. ʻUmar Mūsá Bāshā (Damascus, 1972).

[13]I have relied on the 1964 edition by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm; see note 1 above.

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disingenuously, how he protested that he was ″only″ a poet, unqualified to deal with the rich material presented by Ibn Zaydūn′s epistle, but was overruled by the amir, who remarked that ″stories″ *(qiṣaṣ)* are not far removed, in any case, from the poet′s bailiwick. He goes on to say that there were copious resources for this undertaking available in a *waqf* library in Damascus—which, alas, proved inaccessible to him, so he was forced to rely on materials at hand. He also insists on how short he has kept his commentary (although it runs to 476 pages in the most recent printed edition).

After his prefatory remarks, and before launching into his *sharḥ* proper, Ibn Nubātah supplies a brief biography of Ibn Zaydūn and a short selection of his verses. Such capsule biographies-cum-verses were of course standard in his day in a variety of contexts, most notably in biographical dictionaries, and they loom large in the body of this commentary itself. Ibn Nubātah then explains who Wallādah was, adding some of her verses as well, and delineates the precise circumstances that occasioned the letter, namely, Ibn ʻAbdūs′s attempt to horn in on Ibn Zaydūn by sending a slave girl to Wallādah to sing his praises and sound out his chances. Ibn Nubātah is fairly explicit about his sources, saying that he has taken his information from Ibn Bassām, Ibn Ḥayyān, and other standard Andalusian writers.

The commentary itself constitutes the rest of the work. The original epistle is not presented integrally, but taken phrase by phrase. Odd words are glossed, less than obvious syntactical constructions elucidated, and other expected philological work performed. That is, however, only a minor part of the commentary. What Ibn Nubātah is really interested in doing is using the epistle—which happens to be exceptionally replete with historical and literary allusions—to open a window on the entire literary-historical tradition.

The tone is set from the beginning. The *″ammā baʻd″*—the traditional phrase of transition from the invocation to the body of the message—is discussed in terms of who first employed it in Arabic epistolography, and the following phrase, ″O you whose intellect is impaired [because you think you can win me over],″ leads to a full discussion of the intellect *(ʻaql)* in Islamic theology and other contexts, including its etymology, al-Jāḥiẓ′s thoughts on it, verses by ʻAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, two prophetic hadith, considerations of foods that strengthen it, and a conventional sideswipe at schoolmasters, who are thought to lack intellect altogether because they spend all their time with children.

The real backbone of the work, however, is its more extended excursus, most of them biographical and introduced with the rubric *″tarjamah.″* The first of these concerns the famous pre-Islamic sage Aktham ibn Sayfī, whom Ibn Nubātah identifies as the source of a proverb cited in Ibn Zaydūn′s letter; two pages follow, providing general information on Aktham and reviewing the long past controversies

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about his possible adoption of Islam. The second such *tarjamah* is much longer: a verse quoted anonymously by Ibn Zaydūn is identified as being by al-Mutanabbī, and Ibn Nubātah adds, ″Since the discussion has led to our mentioning al-Mutanabbī, it cannot hurt *(lā ba's)* to mention some basic information about him *(nubadh min akhbārihi).*″ Seven pages follow, offering a brief biographical sketch as well as extensive selections, with running commentary, from the *qaṣīdah* from which comes the line quoted by Ibn Zaydūn.

But Ibn Nubātah′s real opportunity for this kind of lore- and verse-mongering in the guise of ″biography″ comes a few lines later in the letter, where Ibn Zaydūn has Wallādah say to Ibn ʻAbdūs that his slave girl messenger had praised him to the skies, ″to the point that she would have me imagine that Joseph (peace be upon him) vied with you in beauty and you put him in his place[14]; that the wife of al-ʻAzīz[15] saw you and forgot about Joseph; that Qārūn[16] amassed only a fraction of the fortune you have stored away, and that al-Naṭif[17] only stumbled on the stray bits of the money you have buried; that Chosroes carried your train, Caesar shepherded your flocks, and Alexander killed Darius only on your orders. . . .″ and so forth, mentioning altogether fifty-two different historical figures, for each of whom Ibn Nubātah supplies a *tarjamah* or sketch.

These biographies fall into distinct groups. Pre-Islamic personages, both Arab and non-Arab, are followed by a group specifically of pre-Islamic and early Islamic poets, with some variation offered by accounts of famous pre-Islamic Arab battles. Then come Umayyad governors and generals (al-Ḥajjāj gets a full eleven pages); then ancient Greek thinkers (including Plato, Aristotle, Ptolemy, Hippocrates, and Galen); a few Islamic scientists, philosophers, and theologians (al-Kindī, al-Naẓẓām); literary figures such as ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd and Jāḥiẓ; and finally the legal scholar Mālik ibn Anas. The choice of names is of course determined by Ibn Zaydūn, not Ibn Nubātah; but Ibn Nubātah exercises considerable ingenuity in keeping up the pace of *tarjamah*s in the second half of the epistle as well, partly by identifying the authors of quoted lines of verse (including, for example, Abū Nuwās and Abū Tammām), partly by paralleling proverbs with other lines of verse by other poets—and partly on the basis of sheer thematics, as when Ibn Zaydūn makes a passing reference to shorthand *(muʻammá),* which Ibn Nubātah tells us was invented by al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, adding, ″It cannot hurt *(lā ba's)* to mention some basic information about him . . . and I will maintain this procedure throughout the rest of this commentary.″ In fact this results in another thirty-six

[14]On Joseph as the paradigm of male beauty in Islam, see *EI*^{2}, s.v. ″Yūsuf.″
[15]That is, the equivalent of the Biblical Potiphar′s wife; see *EI*^{2}, s.v. ″ʻAzīz Miṣr.″
[16]The Biblical Korah (Numbers 16), famed for his wealth; see *EI*^{2}, s.v. ″Ḳārūn.″
[17]A pre-Islamic Arab fabled for his wealth; see the explanation by Ibn Nubātah himself, *Sarḥ al-ʻUyūn,* 54 f.

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*tarjamah*s altogether, somewhat more randomly assorted, including more poets, notorious heretics, and persons famous for their stupidity and inarticulateness, interspersed with discussions of proverbs, technical terms in hadith, grammar, and theology, disquisitions on the world's religions and the seven seas, and various other miscellaneous material.

In many ways—except for its length—this commentary would make an ideal text for a contemporary graduate seminar in Arabic literature, or Islamic studies, since so much basic ground regarding Islamic political, cultural, and literary history gets covered; in short, this text can serve as an introduction to the basic lore, and poetry, with which an *adīb* or littérateur—*not* a disciplinary specialist—was expected to be equipped. Not that it is by any means comprehensive (for one thing, there is little offered later than the third/ninth century), but Ibn Nubātah certainly does cover a lot of basic ground. Such thoughts lead to some obvious questions: what is Ibn Nubātah doing here, and what kind of audience is he positing (beyond the royal addressee who "commissioned" the work)? Clearly, he is not just making the text comprehensible to the average educated reader. Ibn Zaydūn had assumed an audience that would catch his allusions without need for an interpreter; and while Ibn Nubātah may well in some cases be intending to clue in the clueless where Ibn Zaydūn is particularly allusive, he is certainly also using the epistle simply as an occasion for presenting vast quantities of information that can simultaneously teach the neophyte, entertain the more sophisticated reader, and manifest his own wide reading and erudition. In all these ways, presumably, he is offering what he calls *fawā'id,* literally, "benefits," that justify the incorporation of what it "can't hurt" to add to the exposition. But before posing more questions (or answers) of this general nature, it will help to look at this commentary's "twin," al-Ṣafadī's *Tamām al-Mutūn fī Sharḥ Risālat Ibn Zaydūn* (The Complete texts in explanation of the epistle of Ibn Zaydūn), commenting the poet's "serious" epistle, in which he pleads with his erstwhile patron, now jailer, Ibn Jahwar, to set him free.[18]

Al-Ṣafadī was ten years younger than Ibn Nubātah. The son of a Mamluk, he was born in Ṣafad in 696/1296, but spent most of his life shuttling back and forth between Cairo and Damascus. He was a prolific writer on a broad variety of topics, but most fundamentally an *adīb,* although he is undoubtedly best known today for his massive and wide-ranging biographical dictionary, *Al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafayāt.* Rather surprisingly, the latter includes a fairly extensive entry on Ibn Nubātah,[19] despite the fact that the work's very title indicates that it was restricted to personages no longer living and we know in fact that Ibn Nubātah (d. 768/1366)

[18]I rely on the edition by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1969).
[19]Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafayāt,* vol. 1, ed. Helmut Ritter (Wiesbaden, 1962), 311–31.

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outlived al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363) by three years. One can only assume that this biography (which mentions no specific dates later than 743/1343) was inserted at a time when one of the two was in Cairo and the other in Damascus and al-Ṣafadī was assuming that the older man was either dead or soon to be so; but the situation is unclear. In any case, aside from basic biographical facts (about the first half of Ibn Nubātah's life) and general praise (including the statement that in his prose he followed the model of al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil and "snuffed out the light" of Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir), al-Ṣafadī's entry on him is primarily devoted to sketching out the relations between the two men.

From what he has to say, these seem to have been very cordial indeed. Pride of place is given to an epistle al-Ṣafadī, then thirty-two and living in Cairo, addressed to Ibn Nubātah in Damascus, requesting from him permission (in formal terms, an *ijāzah*) to transmit his works—both past and future; this request is preceded by a long passage of fulsome praise, explaining how Ibn Nubātah has outdone, or put to shame, the classical masters in various fields, such as al-'Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf in love poetry, al-Mutanabbī in panegyric, and al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil himself in epistolography, and followed by a further request for a brief curriculum vitae *(dhikr nasabihi wa-mawlidihi wa-makānihi).* Ibn Nubātah begins his equally fulsome, and lengthier, reply with praise for his correspondent, dropping even more famous names along the way than had al-Ṣafadī, rather archly describes what he calls his quandary (he is unworthy of this honor, but does not want to be impolite), but then proceeds to offer his young admirer a general *ijāzah,* to which he appends an autobiographical sketch, naming his early teachers (and models, including both al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil and Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir), citing his precocious exchanges of verse with some of them, and giving us a valuable list of his works to date (including both the *Sarḥ al-'Uyūn* and *al-Fāḍil min Inshā' al-Fāḍil*).

The two men must have met personally very shortly thereafter, since we know that al-Ṣafadī travelled to Damascus later the same year, and he mentions two of Ibn Nubātah's works that he "heard" directly from him. The rest of his biography is then devoted to his later correspondence with Ibn Nubātah, in both prose and verse, the latter including a series of riddle-poems posed by each to the other (with the solutions also offered in verse) as well as Ibn Nubātah's request to borrow a book from al-Ṣafadī with a promise to return it within three days and al-Ṣafadī's (mild) poetic reproach when he failed to do so. Al-Ṣafadī gives no indication of any serious difficulties in this relationship, but one must wonder whether he is being entirely straightforward, since our only information from the other side looks quite different. According to the littérateur Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī (d. 837/1434), Ibn Nubātah complained that every time he came up with an original image or idea *(ma'ná)* in his poetry al-Ṣafadī would "emulate" or "imitate" it *(mu'āraḍah)* in a verse of his own, with the same meter and rhyme, in effect

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stealing it *(sariqah)*. (Both *mu'āraḍah,* generally evaluated positively as an act of hommage, if also rivalry, and *sariqah,* generally evaluated negatively as an act of larceny, were well-established and much-discussed phenomena in the literary tradition by this time.[20]) Finally Ibn Nubātah became so exasperated with this situation that he compiled an anthology specifically of those poems of his which al-Ṣafadī had stolen and entitled it ″Barley-Bread″ (*Khubz al-Sha'īr*), referring to the well-known proverb ″Barley is eaten and despised,″ applied to someone from whom one profits and then does an ill turn. Ibn Ḥijjah was so taken with this little work that he incorporated in its entirety into his *Khizānat al-Adab*.[21]

Although we have no explicit testimony to confirm it, there would seem to be every reason to believe that al-Ṣafadī's commentary on Ibn Zaydūn's ″serious″ epistle, the *Tamām al-Mutūn*, was itself an ″emulation″ of Ibn Nubātah's *Sarḥ al-'Uyūn*, carried out on a rather larger scale. Rather suspiciously, Ibn Nubātah's name does not appear anywhere in al-Ṣafadī's work; on the other hand—and one can only assume a fairly heavy dose of deliberate irony here—″emulation″ in general is virtually a leitmotif throughout its introductory sections. Al-Ṣafadī begins by describing the splendor of Ibn Zaydūn's letter to Ibn Jahwar, noting in one phrase that its beauties are an inexhaustible resource for potential emulators *(wa-al-fadā'il allatī lā tazāl maḥāsinuhā'alá man ḥāwala mu'āraḍatahā mannāna),* and declares his humble intention to ride on its coattails with a modest commentary. This is followed, as in Ibn Nubātah's work, by a brief biography of Ibn Zaydūn and a selection from his verses; the two biographies are very similar, including some verbatim parallels, but that is probably due to the authors' use of the same sources. Al-Ṣafadī mentions the ″humorous″ letter, but only in passing, adding that ″All his epistles are stuffed full of all sorts of *adab,* scintillating historical anecdotes, and striking proverbs, in both prose and poetry.″ He offers rather more information on Wallādah than does Ibn Nubātah, and more of both her verses and Ibn Zaydūn's to and about her.

Regarding the most famous of the latter, Ibn Zaydūn's celebrated *Nūnīyah,* al-Ṣafadī has some supplementary remarks to add, reverting to the topic of emulation: ″People emulated it *('āraḍahā)* both in his lifetime and after his death, but could not come close to it (in quality). I believe that Ibn Zaydūn in this poem was himself emulating verses by al-Buḥturī. . . . The shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī [d. ca. 750/1349] composed a *takhmīs*[22] on this *qaṣīdah* of Ibn Zaydūn's, making it an elegy *(marthiyah)* for al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad 'Imād al-Dīn [Abū al-Fidā'], the

[20]See *EI*^{2}, s.vv. ″mu'āraḍa″ and ″sariḳa.″
[21]Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī, *Khizānat al-Adab wa-Ghāyat al-Arab* (Būlāq, 1291 [1874]), 285–89.
[22]That is, an expansion of the original poem made by adding three half-verses to each original two for each line, thereby totalling five; see *EI*^{2}, s.v. ″takhmīs.″

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ruler of Ḥamāh, and succeeded admirably. . . . And I myself, in my youth, composed an elegy on one of my dear friends in Ṣafad, using the meter and rhyme of this *qaṣīdah* by Ibn Zaydūn. . . .″ Al-Ṣafadī proceeds to quote his own poem in its entirety (twenty-seven lines); clearly the process of shifting in a *mu'āraḍah* from one genre to another (here, in the cases of both al-Ḥillī and al-Ṣafadī, from love to death) was intended as an additional indication of the poet´s dexterity. He then concludes his introduction by offering a rather large selection of Ibn Zaydūn´s other verses, in several different genres—altogether more than twice as many as those provided by Ibn Nubātah. He also, unlike Ibn Nubātah but conveniently, presents the integral text of the epistle to be commented on before launching into his phrase-by-phrase treatment of it.

Whether or not al-Ṣafadī was being deliberately coy by referring so extensively to *mu'āraḍah* in what was in fact an unacknowledged *mu'āraḍah* of Ibn Nubātah´s book (and given Ibn Nubātah´s fame it seems likely the intended audience would have got the point), the idea of commenting Ibn Zaydūn´s *other* famous epistle was certainly a happy one. Despite its very different (serious) tone, this letter offered al-Ṣafadī much the same scope for displaying his wit and erudition as did the ″humorous″ epistle to Ibn Nubātah. More specifically, it even included a *stretto* passage, with a string of famous names and historical incidents, not dissimilar to ″Wallādah´s″ litany in the ″humorous″ epistle referring to Joseph, the wife of al-'Azīz, and so forth. Here, protesting his innocence to Ibn Jahwar, Ibn Zaydūn says, ″Have mercy! The floodwaters have reached their crest, and I have suffered all I can endure! All I can say about my situation is that if I had been commanded to bow down to Adam, but pridefully refused,[23] or if Noah had said to me ´Board (the ark) with us!´ and I had said ´I will take refuge on a mountain that will protect me from the water´[24] . . . there might be justification for calling what has happened to me an exemplary punishment *(nakāl)* and dubbing it, if only figuratively, an (appropriate) requital (*'iqāb)*.″ The hypothetical situations envisaged by Ibn Zaydūn in the prodosis of this sentence (beginning with Adam and Noah) total altogether twenty-three, and march in a fairly organized fashion through episodes in prophetic, then pre-Islamic Arab, then Islamic history, concluding with al-Ḥajjāj´s bombardment of the Ka'bah in 73/692, and thus providing al-Ṣafadī with an ideal opportunity for extensive digression.

And digress he does, not only on this passage but throughout the *risālah*, to an extent that significantly outdoes Ibn Nubātah. As opposed to the latter´s reliance on *″tarjamah*s,″ al-Ṣafadī casts his nets much wider, devoting sections not only to famous people, and events, but also to (for instance) various rhetorical tropes

[23]As did Iblīs (Satan), according to Quran 2:34; cf. 7:12.
[24]Quoting Quran 11:42–43.

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(such as *taḥsīn al-qabīḥ,* ″making the bad seem good″), character and behavioral traits (including loyalty, slander, and Schadenfreude *[shamātah]*), points of theological and legal controversy (for example, Mutazilite views on the superiority of angels to prophets, and an excursus on judicial conservatism *[taqlīd]*), and such unclassifiable topics as the behavior of hungry cats and the perception that ″It′s a wide world!″. He also has a much broader field of vision chronologically than Ibn Nubātah: while the latter included in his book virtually nothing later than the fourth/tenth century, al-Ṣafadī seems to be making an effort to give early and recent writers ″equal time″—he very frequently cites al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, for example, and also a whole range of Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk poets, while by no means neglecting the older heritage, from pre-Islamic through Abbasid times. Also unlike Ibn Nubātah, al-Ṣafadī is generally inclined to name his direct sources, which range very widely over the tradition and testify to his extraordinary learning.

This is not the only time al-Ṣafadī engaged in such an exercise in wholesale ″browsing″ through the entire Arabic literary tradition from the beginning to his own times. Perhaps even more striking an example is his massive commentary on al-Ṭughrā'ī′s *Lāmīyat al-ʻAjam* entitled *Al-Ghayth al-Musajjam*.[25] In that work, which uses each line of the commented poem to launch into a ten- to thirty-page digression on the most varied topics imaginable, al-Ṣafadī actually felt compelled in his introduction to include a long defense of his use of such digression *(istiṭrād),* appealing to al-Jāḥiẓ (one must never bore the reader) and al-Buḥturī (as espousing the generalist ideal of the *adīb,* as opposed to the specialist ideal of the scholar), among others. He does not drift quite as far from his primary topic in his commentary on Ibn Zaydūn′s letter as he does in that work; but it is still abundantly clear that the letter commented is serving primarily as a vehicle, to a degree that one would hesitate to attribute to Ibn Nubātah.

Not that al-Ṣafadī neglects the requisite philological, and to some extent thematic and aesthetic, analysis of Ibn Zaydūn′s words themselves. This task is performed conscientiously throughout the commentary, and at its conclusion al-Ṣafadī actually goes so far as to add an appendix listing fifteen weak points in the *risālah*′s language and style—together with suggestions for improvement. A second appendix, seemingly more gratuitous and introduced by the phrase *″lā ba's″* (″it cannot hurt [to add it]″), which al-Ṣafadī otherwise avoids, reproduces a rather long epistle by Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir to the poet Ibn al-Naqīb (d. 687/1288), defending himself against criticism from an unnamed Shiʻite for having shown himself excessively humble in a scholarly gathering. Playing extensively with Shiʻi themes, Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir includes in this letter a number of *″stretto″* passages that bring it into

[25] Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Ghayth al-Musajjam fī Sharḥ Lāmīyat al-ʻAjam*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Beirut, 1990). On al-Ṭughrā'ī, see *EI*^{2}, s.v.

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parallel with Ibn Zaydūn´s efforts, including a name-dropping section to the effect of ″Do you think I agreed with Ibn Muljam (when he assassinated ‘Alī) . . .?″ and so forth. The more general effect of al-Ṣafadī´s adding this text to the end of his commentary is to stress the continuity of the tradition of rhetorical epistolography, from Ibn Zaydūn and his likes, through al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil and Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir, and perhaps by implication on to (the unmentioned) Ibn Nubātah and al-Ṣafadī himself.

The heightened status of epistolography and of artistic prose generally in the Mamluk era, and its suitability for commentary, is the first of four points on which this quick survey of these two texts may offer food for thought, if not more specific conclusions. The relative merit of prose and poetry had been itself a standard topos in *adab* literature since the fourth/tenth century, when the former first attained a level of rhetorical development that made real competition with the latter plausible. Yet the level of complexity, and ambiguity, involved in artistic prose rarely attained that of poetry, and that most specific form of homage, the commentary, was relatively rarely applied to prose—the primary exception being the *maqāmāt.* On the other hand, commenting prose offered a unique way of presenting miscellaneous information, true to the Jāḥiẓian formula for entertaining digression, that began to be exploited in the seventh/thirteenth centuries, as represented by Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd´s *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah* and al-Sharīsī´s *Sharḥ Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*. Ibn Nubātah saw such an opportunity in Ibn Zaydūn´s *risālah hazlīyah,* and grabbed it; and the young, brash, and competitive al-Ṣafadī proceeded to outdo him with his commentary on the *risālah jiddīyah.* Ultimately, nevertheless, al-Ṣafadī´s own commentary on the *Lāmīyat al-‘Ajam* demonstrated that the same technique could be applied at least as effectively to poetry, and the commenting of artistic prose never developed into a full-fledged major genre of Arabic *adab*.

Second, both Ibn Nubātah and al-Ṣafadī are clearly concerned with the canon of Arabic literature. Ibn Zaydūn, in both his epistles, had relied on, rehearsed, and indeed to some extent pinned down, the canon in his own day (a canon that was for him, significantly, entirely Eastern—there is nothing specifically Andalusian in either *risālah*). Ibn Nubātah emphatically reinforced this canon with his *tarjamah*s, inducting students into, and reminding peers of, a significant cross-section of what every respectable littérateur should know. Al-Ṣafadī went further, giving full credit to ″modern classics″ alongside their hoary predecessors, and demonstrating the continuing vitality of the literary tradition by citing recent and indeed contemporary poets and *udabā*’ in the context of a three hundred year old epistle.

Third, it seems safe to say that both Ibn Nubātah and al-Ṣafadī were addressing several audiences, and accomplishing several intentions, at once. Their commentaries offered students a panorama of the world of literary learning, and a potted lesson in the basics of their heritage. At the same time, peers had this

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lesson reinforced, or, perhaps more plausibly, were expected to congratulate themselves on recognizing, and even anticipating, the information and allusions as they were presented, while being impressed by the elegance with which this was done. A broader audience was offered a smorgasbord of *"fawā'id,"* "useful bits," which they could savor and incorporate into their dinner conversation. And of course—perhaps particularly in al-Ṣafadī's case—the authors were establishing their own impressive credentials as experts for everyone to admire.

Fourth and finally, to come back to the "Alexandrian" character of the literary culture reflected in these works, there can be no question of the centrality of *erudition* to these authors and their audiences. All were conscious of a weighty tradition behind contemporary literary efforts, which acknowledged it at every turn. There is, however, little or no evidence for this fact being perceived as any kind of burden—the "anxiety of influence" becomes acute only when originality is prized in a way that would be completely foreign to our authors. What we seem to find instead is a real *delight* in influence. For Mamluk writers, one is tempted to say, intertextuality was what literature is all about; and the more of a past one has to deal with, the more one can glory in reproducing, ringing changes on, and playing with that past, to the ongoing enrichment of the Arabic literary tradition. That, I think, is how we should understand the achievements of Arabic literature in the Mamluk period, and perhaps if we assess it on that basis it will look less jejune and "derivative" (in an assumed negative sense) than the consensus of past scholarship would insist was the case.

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Vindicating a Profession or a Personal Career? Al-Qalqashandī's *Maqāmah* in Context

Al-Qalqashandī's *maqāmah* in praise of his patron Badr al-Dīn ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī and the epistolary art was written as a manual on secretaryship.[1] The *maqāmah* is a summation of the art that predated the voluminous compendium *Ṣubḥ* and draws attention to its author as an epistolographer of great literary caliber.[2] While introducing his *Ṣubḥ* with a specific mention of this *maqāmah,*[3] al-Qalqashandī is unequivocal in glorifying this piece, terming it an art of ″allusion and suggestion,″ attuned to ″brevity″ that renders it beyond the reach of the common reader and the less erudite in the art of literary composition. He specifically intimates that it was due to the precision and conciseness of this *maqāmah* that many missed its focused argument, and hence a certain person of sound judgment and indisputable advice, perhaps his patron, ″directs me to follow it up with a thorough compilation covering essentials and rules.″[4] The *maqāmah*, therefore, complements the compilation of the *Ṣubḥ* as it drew attention to al-Qalqashandī and his mastery of literary composition. It was the achievement and proof of his proficiency in the art, and the marker of his merits as prose writer.

This introductory note in *Ṣubḥ* is of great significance, not only because it sets the date of composition for the *maqāmah*, in 791/1389, ″when I settled at the chancery . . . ,″[5] but also because it was written with a focused purpose to bring the *maqāmah* genre once and for all within the orbit of literary composition in which the author aimed to demonstrate his mastery. His *maqāmah,* then, may be read as an autobiographical piece as the self-made epistolographer is keen on drawing a

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[1]On this *maqāmah,* see C. E. Bosworth, ″A *Maqāma* on Secretaryship: Al-Qalqashandī's Al-Kawākib al-Durrīyah fi'l-Manāqib Al-Badriyya,″ *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 27 (1964): 291–98, reprinted in the author's *Medieval Arabic Culture and Administration* (London, 1982), 292–98.

[2]See *Ṣubḥ al-A'shá fī Ṣinā'at al-Inshā',* ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shams al-Dīn (Beirut, 1988), 1:34–35.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., 34.

[5]Ibid. Bosworth notes that the author ″entered the *dīwān* in 791/1389, the date when he composed his *maqāma* in praise of *inshā'* and of his master Badr al-Dīn.″ See *Medieval Arabic Culture,* 293.

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sustained parallel between the *'isāmī* (the self-made person or survivalist) and *'izāmī* (″of honorable ancestry″).[6] But the comparison, between nepotism and merited chancery emplacements and appointments, is carried out within a *maqāmah* convention, which is also intentionally underlined to highlight the speaker's position as *al-Nāthir ibn al-Naẓẓām*, ″the prose writer son of the versifier,″[7] according to a systematic prioritization of genres.

In the following pages, I will argue for the significance of al-Qalqashandī's *maqāmah* in relation to both epistolography and *maqāmāt* conventions and professional and cultural engagements.

In his *maqāmah,* al-Qalqashandī's protagonist-narrator establishes his identity as a prose writer with poetic grounding, whose credentials and talent secure him a chancery position despite rampant nepotism and mediocre competitors. While striving for recognition through his panegyrics, his growth as a learned prose writer entitles him to debate forebears in an ″anxiety of influence″ pattern. This recognition is justified by the voluminous *Ṣubḥ,* completed in 814/1412, and his earlier *maqāmah* of 791/1389, which secured him a textual lineage among learned prose writers and epistolographers. Although his *maqāmah,Al-Kawākib al-Durrīyah fī al-Manāqib al-Badrīyah*, was the prototype for the larger compendium, its place in the last volume among other *maqāmāt* may have been assigned by design to hold the *Ṣubḥ* together. The *maqāmah* acts like an autobiographical postscript, which concludes a voluminous work in order to draw attention to the author after a long and laborious journey among impersonal accounts, epistles, biographies, and achievements of others. Although Bosworth thinks that the author sounds boastful[8] in saying that *maqāmah* ″includes an exposition of all the material points which the *kātib al-inshā'* needs to know and all the well-trodden paths which he must follow,″[9] al-Qalqashandī offers more than one reason to justify this position, as will be shown.

Al-Qāḍī Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Qalqashandī (756–821/1355–1420) served as *kātib darj,* ″scribe of the scroll,″[10] in the chancery or *dīwān al-inshā'* during the reign of the first Circassian sultan, al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (784–90/1382–88). At that time, al-Qāḍī Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn Faḍl Allāh and his brother al-Qāḍī 'Alā' al-Dīn, from Banū Faḍl Allāh

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[6]See *Ṣubḥ,* 14:145.

[7]Ibid., 127.

[8]Bosworth, *Medieval Arabic Culture,* 295.

[9]*Ṣubḥ,* 14:147.

[10]The ″scribes of the scroll or the roll″ refers to the pieces of paper or parchment joined together to become a *darj* or scroll for writing. See J. H. Escovitz, ″Vocational Patterns of the Scribes of the Mamluk Chancery,″ *Arabica* 23 (1976): 55. Also, *Ṣubḥ*,1:138.

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al-'Umarī, were in charge of the *dīwān*. Al-Qalqashandī's *maqāmah, Al-Kawākib al-Durrīyah,* dates his formal entry into the chancery in 791/1389. Badr al-Dīn was in charge of the *dīwān al-inshā'* on three occasions: 784/1382, 786–92/1385–90, and 796–801/1394–99.[11] It was during his patron's life that al-Qalqashandī also compiled his voluminous *Ṣubḥ al-A'shá fī Ṣinā'at al-Inshā',* though it was finalized in 814/1412.

Al-Qalqashandī was very proud of the *Kawākib,* as he noted in a number of places.[12] It has an autobiographical aspect, which is quite valuable in view of socio-political mobility. On the other hand, it is structured in a specific way to cater to the *maqāmah* convention while engaging issues of topical interest. It is perhaps worthwhile to discuss its form and textual engagements, so as to assess the author's claims to both thoroughness and precision. It is structured as follows: (1) the concept and meaning of *maqāmah*; (2) history of composition; (3) the prologue; (4) the *hātif,* or voice; (5) the dialogue between the speaker and his companion; (6) the discussion of prioritization between scribes in the finance department and the literary division in the *dīwān*; (7) elaboration on the priority of literary composition and epistolography at large; (8) the qualifications of the epistolographer; (9) the *dīwān* and its present secretary; (10) panegyrics; (11) self-glorification.

It is worth mentioning that the author devotes a paragraph to explain the meaning of the genre. The explanation is significantly drawn in spatial and cultural terms to relate the *maqāmah* as assembly to the *dīwān* as place for literary and educational activity. *Maqāmāt,* he notes, "is the plural for *maqāmah,* which etymologically denotes the name for an assembly or a group of people. A narrative unit is called as such, if it occurs in one assembly where a group gathers to listen to it. This is different from *muqāmah*, which means sojourn or settlement."[13] This explanation leads to the history of the genre with a laudatory mention of al-Hamadhānī, followed by al-Ḥarīrī, whose *maqāmāt* "were so well-received and met with so much luck, that they relegated to oblivion those of al-Badī' [al-Hamadhānī] as if they were obsolete."[14] The subsequent argument on al-Ḥarīrī relates to prioritization of genres and will be discussed in order. But the *Kawākib* is intentionally and vigorously launched as a *maqāmah*, and it deserves to be considered as such, especially for its attention to language and rhetorical embellishments. Other reasons are as follows:

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[11]Bosworth, *Medieval Arabic Culture,* 292.

[12]*Ṣubḥ,* 14:124–27.

[13]Ibid., 124.

[14]Ibid., 125.

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1. The protagonist is a *maqāmah* figure, who is keen on using his skill, talent, and knowledge against uncongenial circumstances of nepotism, political opportunism, and competitiveness. Even after being appointed as *kātib darj,* it took him time to adjust and receive due recognition.[15]
2. There is a narrator and a narratee (a double) or a *hātif* (″voice″) whose role complements the narrator's own. On the other hand, there is an addressee, too, in this case the Qāḍī Badr al-Dīn, who is meant to hear and enjoy the eloquence of his scribe. This narrative grows in a *maqāmah* fashion with great emphasis on dialogue. Speech is the means and the reward here, as in every other *maqāmah.*
3. The narrator, as protagonist, uses the encounter with the narratee mainly to offer justifications for his endeavor to be at the chancery. The narratee, the voice, is a *deus ex machina,*[16] for he shares with the narrator an agenda and a register to describe the Mamluk chancery and its glory and requirements. But the narratee is more than a double, however, as he grows in textual space as a competing protagonist, the one who mediates for the narrator, arranges his entry, and provides him with enough intelligence and information to enable him to secure a position.
4. The narrator-protagonist, *al-Nāthir ibn al-Naẓẓām*, ″the prose writer son of the versifier,″ is designated so by design, not only to echo al-Ḥarīrī's al-Ḥārith ibn al-Hammām, but also to offer another genetic trajectory whereby the article *″al″* adds influence and prestige to the name, the prose writer, in comparison to the versifier who suffers in this prioritization. The act is closely related to the ongoing controversy regarding the significance of each genre, as we shall see.

In another sense, the structure of al-Qalqashandī's *Maqāmah* is also similar to the *Bildungsroman* as a novel of education, especially as its history of composition culminates a life of apprenticeship and challenge, viewed and assessed retrospectively. The aspiring young protagonist, with divided aims and great anxieties, must pass through some test and prove efficiency. In a moment of hesitation and great perplexity, he must choose between the search for knowledge for its own sake and the profession that enables him to make a living, and he

[15]Ibid., 145.

[16]Bosworth, *Medieval Arabic Culture,* 296, n. 16.

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intimates in a manner fashionable in confessional autobiographies: ″I was so distressed and stunned as to act aimlessly. Perplexity kept me suspended between the two courses. If I pursue knowledge for its material benefits, then I commit a reprehensible act, and if I commit myself to study regardless of livelihood, then I should perish in destitution and die of hunger.″[17] Yet, his education in a hierarchical society should be geared towards a post which pays well while preserving his integrity as a writer. Devoid of family connections and in need of money, there must be a patron, or godfather, to offer support and guidance. The hero must search and make connections before coming upon the ideal patron. Also, the internal conflict should conclude in a way that suits the hero´s aspirations in order to offer us a narrative of some edification and educational value.

Yet the *Kawākib* is not wholly fictional, as we gather from the introductory note in the first volume,[18] for it is al-Qalqashandī´s life story, presented to the patron and the reader, to be read and enjoyed. The author is so proud of his career that he wrote it down together with shows of allegiance that act as rites of passage to the chancery proper. Glorifying the vocation and highlighting his own career against mediocrity and conflictual attitudes, he feels empowered enough to submit his *maqāmah* to the public. Although the author´s transition stage of perplexity and hesitation in this *Bildungsroman* has a ″romanticized autobiographical element″ that Bosworth notes,[19] the account in general fits into narratives of education that communicate a moral and educational message to the reader. Such details may prove helpful in reading the *Kawākib* as autobiographical in the first place.

Knowing full well the role of power relations, especially among close-knit relatives with *simāt irthīyah* (″hereditary attributes″),[20] al-Qalqashandī recognizes the need to demonstrate efficiency and competence in performance, along with self-possession and restraint, in order to gain his patron´s support:

> And as I became assured that I am established in his *dīwān,* and listed as one of his pages, I refrained from further search for gain; and neither need nor affluence became of consequence to me, for to catch sight of him suffices to substitute for food and drink, and I am assured that a look from him could promote me to the clouds. . . .[21]

With an eye on his patron, al-Qalqashandī divides his narrative between the narrator and the narratee, engaging the latter in a dialogue concerning the patron. This

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[17] *Ṣubḥ,* 14:128.

[18] Ibid., 1:34–35.

[19] Bosworth, *Medieval Arabic Culture,* 295.

[20] *Ṣubḥ,* 14:141.

[21] Ibid., 145.

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division of labor enables the author to collect and cite information about the ruling caste, while providing him with enough space to justify allegiance and map out a career. The narratee's answers amount to a full account of chancery dealings and responsibilities, as the patron assumes his importance in chancery context. But drawn to the patron's character, the speaker is overwhelmed by the awe-inspiring presence of Qāḍī Badr al-Dīn, which is hereditary, for the patron descends from the caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644), the great "grandfather."[22] These "hereditary attributes," along with his patron's munificence, emphasize nepotism as positively rewarding, as it ensures cultural continuity and professional expertise. Indeed, Badr al-Dīn is of "great lineage, and unsurpassed family," inheriting the position with merit, "though it is his by lineage."[23] The emphasis on nepotism and merit makes up the last part of the *maqāmah*. It corresponds to the panegyric of the ode, to be sure,[24] but it is also a culmination of a long narrative journey of discontent, training, and search. Working out his way in poetry and prose, the author attempts to show his resourcefulness in launching this panegyric while glorifying himself to be worthy of the patron's station. In the panegyric section and its rite of passage, there is more autobiography than a cursory reading may indicate, for every glorification of the patron and patronage is imbued with self-glorification.[25]

The panegyric as a rite of passage comes in response to the narratee's explanations of chancery dealings. In his discourse on Banū Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī, the narrator, as al-Qalqashandī's alter ego, thus avoids clear-cut discussions of nepotism. But there is an underlying belief that familial connections and nepotism kept chancery posts within the family, in a *de facto* manner, which is summed up in the phrase *"bi-al-aṣālah,"* or familial succession.[26] Filiatory ties are a defensive strategy, however, a preemptive procedure to evade penetration, rivalry, and competition. But, on the positive side, this nepotism ensured some continuity in chancellery correspondence, which, paradoxically, led to its subsequent imitativeness, verbosity, and artificiality. The Banū Wahb, Banū 'Abd al-Ẓāhir (especially Muḥyī al-Dīn, 620–92/1223–92) and Banū Faḍl Allāh (especially Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad, d. 749/1349) were among the most prominent dynastic epistolographers. But al-Qalqashandī also refers to chanceries as schools for apprenticeship, for to have epistolographers like Badr al-Dīn manifests "God's favors."[27]

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[22]Ibid., 143.

[23]Ibid., 141.

[24]See Bosworth, *Medieval Arabic Culture,* 297.

[25]On the rite of passage, see Suzanne P. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca, 1993), 5–8.

[26]*Ṣubḥ,* 14:141.

[27]Ibid., 142.

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It is at this point that al-Qalqashandī′s narrator asserts homage and allegiance to his patron and to the family at large. The panegyric ensues as an answer to the narrator′s rhetorical question whether there is ″a necklace″ or a string to hold this prestigious office together.[28] His companion is ready with an elaborate answer to glorify the patron and his family. He goes so far as placing the patron ahead of all chancery writers, including the ones he is known for emulating in his literary composition, such as al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil ʻAbd al-Raḥīm al-Bīsānī (″the honorable magistrate,″ 529–96/1135–1200).[29] In response, the narrator ″recited in public with sincerity″ a verse from the Quran: ″Say it is because of God′s favor *[faḍl Allāh]* and His mercy, let them rejoice for this, for he is better than whomever they choose.″ Set against al-Qalqashandī′s discursive corpus, this piety sounds too contrived to be taken seriously. It is calculated, however, to impress Badr al-Dīn himself, and to draw his attention to al-Qalqashandī′s readiness of mind, his wit, insight, and mastery of Quranic verse. Thus, al-Qalqashandī helps to consolidate the position of the learned who enlisted religious discourse to give legitimacy and authority to their present occupations.[30]

The *maqāmah* sections on the patron are carefully placed within a chancery context to show the merits of both the patron and the scribe. In terms of discussion and analysis of the chancery occupation, al-Qalqashandī subtly penetrates into the fabric of the familiar to represent it anew, drawing attention to his resourcefulness. In a number of places, for example, al-Qalqashandī proves epistolary competence in coming upon the exact Quranic verse, which fits the very name of Badr al-Dīn ibn Faḍl Allāh. Both the recurrence of Faḍl Allāh (God′s favors) in the specific Quranic verse and its prosification in discourse are meant to demonstrate eloquence and mastery of epistolography usually associated with al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil and his Fatimid master Ibn al-Khallāl. While embedded within meticulous prosifications that are bound to impress Badr al-Dīn, the overall design of the panegyric is to establish a career, which may be secured by the less merited by mere allegiance or nepotism. Indeed, al-Qāḍī al-Ṣayrafī, who wrote in praise of Badr al-Dīn ibn Faḍl Allāh, said of him ″he was biased towards some and they gained; and he was against others who made no headway.″[31]

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[28]Ibid., 141.

[29]Ibid.

[30]On the dynasties and their role in the Mamluk period, see Donald P. Little, ″Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Epochs,″ in *Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge, 1998), 1:412–44. On the role of the elite, Jonathan P. Berkey, ″Tradition, Innovation and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Near East,″ *Past and Present* 146 (February 1995); and Carl Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1981), esp. 17–18.

[31]See the editor′s note, *Ṣubḥ*, 14:126, n. 1.

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Especially when considered in this context, al-Qalqashandī's panegyric makes use of a poetic tradition in a changing milieu of great mobility and precariousness. His tools should be as good as a great poet's to complete his rites of passage. The rites of passage to the chancery include many things, to be sure, as the *maqāmah* itself explains, beginning with training in the art and the acquisition of knowledge. But the aspirant must prove that his talent exceeds average requirements. Along with wit and mastery of prosification, he must be a poet too. Thus, upon being appointed, he plays on his patron's name and its meaning again, implying throughout that both name, designation, and meaning fit each other in natural, irrevocable order.[32] After the ceremonial "honor of kissing his [the patron's] hand," the narrator specifies that he "devoted" his utmost praise and benedictions to him.[33] A survivalist, a self-made professional scribe, he must demonstrate talent in the absence of lineage. "I was self-made in this profession *('iṣāmīyan)* not born to it *('iẓāmīyan),"* he says.[34] Thus his first encounter with the *dīwān* professionals was not easy or smooth, for "I took my seat as a stranger, with a desolate demeanor."[35] Yet, he nevertheless strove hard to hold onto the position, for "I clung to it by every means, and I ignited its fire from the least spark," so as to be welcomed accordingly with "charity and fairness."[36]

But patronage is still required in the first place to establish oneself and tackle the work at hand, if the marginalized intellectual is to show competence and talent in a chancery of professionals and functionaries. Hence, the narrator's question to his companion: "Has he [Badr al-Dīn] followers, retinue, from among the scribes whom one should ask for aid and moral support in speech and action, so as to be marked as a scribe and among Badr al-Dīn's pages?"[37] The question is rhetorical, for "Badr al-Dīn's brother is the head of the *dast."* The chancery is a close-knit foundation then, and nepotism runs deeply into its making, performance, and achievement. The chancery is divided between the *"kuttāb al-dast,* [who] are of a higher station, and the *kuttāb al-darj,* [who] are the more suitable for writing and eloquence."[38] The prioritization here is political and bureaucratic, which, in the narrator's oblique reading, carries no intellectual or cultural weight.

We are told the "second division" is the right place for the narrator despite its subordination to the first. The prose writer, *al-Nāthir,* who narrates and interrogates

[32] *Ṣubḥ,* 14:144.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., 145.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 144.
[38] Ibid.

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the whole scene, needs not only to justify a choice, but also to place it in context. Now, he is allied with *kuttāb* of literary writing—as his account of them demonstrates,[39] a post that had a prestigious, though hazardous, history. Moreover, it has contemporary luster whenever related to the learned as different from functionaries, a point which he discusses in detail when analyzing and describing the typology of chancery writers.[40]

To lead the reader into the profession of the *kātib* within the Mamluk chancery of state, al-Qalqashandī surveys writers and scribes[41] who are meant to substantiate the panegyric, but this also highlights the speaker´s affiliation with such prestigious names. Badr al-Dīn is the *kātib sirr,* the confidential secretary in charge of the *dīwān,* including the *kuttāb al-darj.* There is reason to compare him to predecessors dating back to the Umayyads (40–132/661–750), for the latter used to have a *kātib* as secretary of state, instead of the vizier, a designation which the Abbasids (132–333/750–945) favored. In the Fatimid period in Egypt (358–566/969–1171), this was the *kātib al-dast* (secretary of the bench). In the Mamluk period, there was the *dīwān al- inshā' ,* with its two divisions: the *dast* (bench) and *darj* (scroll). It was only in the times of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (678–91/1279–92) that the magistrate Fatḥ al-Dīn ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir was appointed as confidential secretary, *kātib al-sirr,* or ″recorder of the sultan´s secrets,″ a word which people corrupted into *kātim* or ″keeper″ of secrets.[42] The office of vizier was then abolished by al-Nāṣir ibn Qalāwūn (r. 693–741/1294–1340), who divided the office in 710/1310 among four officers, including the ″recorder of the secrets.″

In respect to the specific mention of the post he desires, the narrator says: ″The second division is the more suitable to my status, and the closer to my inclinations.″[43] Reaching the targeted post, he can dispense with his companion. The double is no longer needed, and ″I bade him farewell, thanking him for his help and appreciating his courtesy, and I left him and embarked on my way. That was the last I heard of him.″[44] To dispense with the *deus ex machina* is to assert identity and independence. The speaker or narrator is on his own now, and must proceed in a formal manner to attain this post. Having learned the nature of the chancery and its network, ″I returned to him [Badr al-Dīn], and raised my petition,

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[39]Ibid., 141.

[40]Ibid., 1:31. See Petry, *Civilian Elite,* 204–5, but also *Ṣubḥ*, 1:80–81, on the confusion between the learned and the functionary and the ignorant. In relation to the learned, see Jonathan P. Berkey, ″Culture and Society during the Late Middle Ages,″ in *Cambridge History of Egypt*, 1:375–411.

[41]*Ṣubḥ,* 14:141.

[42]Ibid., 1:138.

[43]Ibid., 14:144.

[44]Ibid.

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and requested his approval of my application, which he accepted. What a munificent master he is, and he assigned me to the honorable *kitābat al-darj*."[45] Although al-Qalqashandī speaks of credentials and suitability, insofar as his choice is concerned, the chancery builds on *hierarchy*. His very language regarding his patron betrays as much, for he "delves into his domains, and swerves to his abode to have a glimpse of him, who appears glowing and glittering as light, and his moons shine with glory, brimming with dignity, submerged in quietude, imbued with authority, and endowed with happiness."[46] Even the design of place and seats was meant to assert this gradation. *Kuttāb al-dast,* or scribes of the bench, sat on a raised platform or bench so as to present or respond to petitions offered to the sovereign in the House of Justice. Sometimes they were called *muwaqqi'*s, for they used to append or inscribe the royal signature on petitions. By contrast, *kuttāb al-darj* were primarily concerned with letters of fief grants, appointments, explanations, salutations, and their likes, which might not demand the immediate involvement of the chief scribe.

Hierarchy, gradation, and hegemony manifest themselves in the nature of discourse, then, whenever the narrator is on his own. He accepts subordination, but, ostensibly, because he thinks of the *kātib al-darj* post as the most fitting for his credentials. But while the *darj* post is not the highest in the *dīwān,* al-Qalqashandī attempts cleverly to add to it its lost prestige.[47] Indeed, the narrator's effort in this direction strives to combine a personal sense of importance and the patron's reputation as *kātib* with the aspiration to regain the glorious past of the profession. It is part of the biographical design, after all, to glorify oneself within loyalty to the profession in its epistolary dimension and historical context.

When 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib (d. 132/750) is mentioned,[48] for instance, there is along with him some allusion to the Umayyads. The same applies to eleven scribes whom al-Qalqashandī mentions in this respect. The office and practice of *al-kātib* gained power and prestige in the Umayyad period not only due to interaction with the culture of other civilizations, but also for the needs of legitimacy in the context of the rivalry with the Prophet's descendents, known as among the most eloquent Arabs. Their discourse posed serious problems to the Umayyads, who spent enormous amounts of money and energy to compete with them. Falsification of records and pretensions to wit were widespread in order to impose legitimacy in a period of great political dissent. In the footsteps of their ostensible precursors, the descendents of the Prophet, the Fatimids elevated their *kātib* to a vizierate, a

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid.

[47]See ibid., 1:63–81.

[48]Ibid., 14:141.

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position belonging ″to the men of sword and sometimes to the men of the pen,″ with ″full delegated powers.″[49] Some of their scribes, like al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil (529–96/1135–1200), were to rise to the highest positions. So was their vizier Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. The Ayyubid period (589–658/1193–1260) brought along with it, through this combination of the sword and the pen, a great deal of the Fatimid preoccupation with culture and faith. Although a Kurdish warrior-chief, with little concern for the Fatimid protocol and hierarchical structures, Ṣalāh al-Dīn inherited their keen interest in culture. But instead of looking for a chief missionary to propagate a faith, he came upon al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil (″The Excellent Magistrate″) ʻAbd al-Raḥīm al-Bīsānī, to join him in his endeavor to regain conquered lands from the Crusaders. The testimony to the power of the word was more eloquent coming from a warrior. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī reports that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn cautioned his ruling elite not to assume that he conquered his enemies by their swords but by the pen of al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil.[50] This reference is not out of place here, especially as al-Qalqashandī specifically chooses al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil to head the list of writers and scribes cited for comparison with his patron: ″Had the Excellent ʻAbd al-Raḥīm seen him, he would never have claimed for himself excellent traits and would never have had recourse to writing.″[51] Every other scribe or writer is of secondary significance in comparison, and every other glory fades in the presence of the overwhelming magnitude of Badr al-Dīn.

Such comparisons and discursive attempts at balanced discussions are part of the autobiographical structure of the *maqāmah,* and should be seen in their subtle ramifications. Every *muwāzanah* (″balanced assessment and debate″) is a strategy of evasion or assertion, for al-Qalqashandī lauds the art of writing in each of these to glorify the patron and himself. The comparison of the patron to his precursors, for example,[52] is functional in more than one sense. It is attuned to the panegyric, and to the personal need to demonstrate allegiance and affiliation to be sure. By implication, it sets the patron and the writer in a genealogy of writers which derives its power from expertise, value, and connection to the sovereign.[53] But it is also an attempt to set the record straight in terms of a response to challenges, professional and political. Aside from the encroaching presence of the *dīwān al-jaysh,* i.e., the military department, there is also the challenge of *kuttāb al-māl,* i.e., of the financial or treasury department.[54] Therefore, enumerating the merits of

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[49]From al-Qalqashandī, tr. Bernard Lewis in *Islam* (Oxford, 1987), 1:203.

[50]Yūsuf ibn Qizughlī Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-Zamān* (Mecca, 1987), 8:472.

[51]*Ṣubḥ,* 14:141.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid., 131–32.

[54]See also his view on the urgent need for such a discussion, ibid., 1:83.

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the art of literary composition, the narrator recapitulates: ″These are the traits of kings, and kingly traits, of the best merits, and the highly merited, for I never thought that writing as art had such a magnificent role and station.″[55]

Al-Qalqashandī's deliberate discourse on the art of prose writing clearly intends to underscore the role of epistolographers among the learned, for there was a tendency to look upon the functionary side of the profession as less qualified for refined knowledge and elitist presence.[56] Thus, he argues that the chancery *kātib* is a learned person, *'ālim.*[57] He cites the philologist al-Mubārak ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Athīr (d. 606/1209) to explain the Prophet's use of the term ″scribe″ as a learned person, a point which al-Qalqashandī has already made in the *maqāmah,* when citing Quranic verses and the Prophet's sayings, in order to place epistolography and literary writing ahead of every other vocation.[58] The amount of emphasis laid on the significance of this writing as profession makes it not only the most prestigious, but also the most needed for statecraft and culture. Indeed, his vindication of *kitābah* as a vocation is so carefully and meticulously argued that it almost convinces the reader that the speaker is not that desperate for the post, and that the post is offered to him because of a dire chancery need for his services.[59] Yet the *maqāmah* is careful in pointing out that this craft is adequate to preserve one's integrity. As Bosworth notices, the thesis lies in the contention that there must be a profession or a vocation for a living.[60] As for ″the student of science,″ i.e., learning, this vocation is ″writing,″ or epistolography, and the scribe should never veer away from it.[61]

As the phrase *kitābah* includes chancellery correspondence in general, al-Qalqashandī unequivocally sides with *"kitābat al-inshā'*," or literary prose.[62] The art itself, *kitābah,* is a ″conceptual″ or ″spiritual″ craft, meaning in al-Qalqashandī's terms ″utterances imagined by the writer whereby he images through combinations an inner picture that exists deep in the recesses of the mind.″[63] This *rūḥānīyah* (″conceptualization″) materializes into *juthmānīyah,* or bodily form, via inscription. He adds, ″the pen turns it from a conceptualized notion into a concrete [i.e.,

[55]Ibid., 14:129.
[56]See Petry, *Civilian Elite,* 204–5.
[57]*Ṣubḥ,* 1:82.
[58]Ibid., 14:129–30.
[59]Ibid., 129.
[60]Bosworth, *Medieval Arabic Culture,* 292–93.
[61]*Ṣubḥ,* 14:126.
[62]Ibid.
[63]Ibid., 1:82, also 64.

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substantial] one.″ To al-Qalqashandī and other authorities, inscription is *inshā'*, inclusive of every artistic composition.[64]

As a result, al-Qalqashandī takes great care to draw a line between *kitābat al-inshā'* and *kitābat al-daywanah,* or the department of finance. In the *Ṣubḥ*, he pointedly argues that ″in Egypt the word scribe came to refer solely to the scribes of the treasury. When it is used, nothing else is meant. As for the craft of composition, it began to have two meanings, a private one used by the people of the *dīwān,* denoting *kitābat al-inshā',* and a public one for the people, which is *tawqī'*. As for naming it *kitābat al-inshā',* it is . . . *inshā,'* or literary composition, [which] is at the root of its subject.″[65]

Aside from the known arguments in support of literary or artistic prose, al-Qalqashandī′s references to the patron and his family, as well as the whole inventory of support for prose as such are deliberately couched in a register of royalty and war to cover and account for nepotism, affiliation, and rivalry among professions in times of mercurial politics. Badr al-Dīn is ″the close advisor of the king and his companion.″ He is ″his keeper of secrets″ and the one in charge. ″He is the closest to him when others are away, and the one endowed with the highest post when others are thrown out.″ He is the king′s secretary who speaks for him. ″He is the one who comes forth with the decisive saying when others are mute, and he is the warrior who fights gallantly with the sword of his tongue and the spear of his pen.″ Hence, he ″is the defender of kingdoms with the battalions and armies of the line of his inscription and the soldiers of his language. He is the one who scatters the enemy with the originality of his utterance and delicacy of maxims. . . . ″[66]

This panegyric derives its effectiveness from *al-ḥamāsah* poetry, with its emphasis on glorious wars, and battles where the human element derives significance and volume from both courage and weapons. It is not surprising that al-Qalqashandī enlists a verse from Abū Tammām (d. 231/846), renowned for his chivalric poetics:

> A stroke from a writer′s hand is deeper and more cutting than a smooth sword. They are a tribe who, when provoked by the hostility of the jealous, shed blood with the blades of pens.

The text as a whole sets this *kitābah* as the ″canon for politics.″ In Bosworth′s version of this passage, this ″encomium of secretaries″ runs as follows: ″they are the far-seeing eyes of kings, their all-hearing ears, their eloquent tongues, and their all-embracing intelligences . . . indeed, kings have more need of secretaries

[64]Ibid., 82.
[65]Ibid., 83.
[66]Ibid., 14:142.

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than secretaries have need of kings."[67] Al-Qalqashandī's *maqāmah*, then, aims at making a case for the learned among writers. Its urgency of tone and immediacy of purpose could have something to do with the Circassian period, and its failure to recognize the critical role of the learned since the times of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (783–801/1382–99).[68] The emphasis on reciprocal benefits is not hard to follow, for, as W. W. Clifford notices, "Through such patronage networks the Mamluk political elite functionally exchanged economic benefits for social validation from the cultural elite."[69]

But emphasis on the use of epistolographers and the learned at large is only one side of the coin. In more than one sense, they were the intermediaries between Mamluk oligarchies and the people. "Seeking legitimacy through the support of intellectuals," argues Donald P. Little, the Mamluk sultans "spent enormous sums on their salaries and patronage, sometimes in return for their specific services to the court but often for their function as devotional and educational intermediaries with the public."[70] Quoting 'Alī ibn Khalaf (d. 455/1063) in *Mawādd al-Bayān,* al-Qalqashandī asserted such a role. Writers are "the medium between kings and subjects," as they are "the only class which shares with kings grandeur and great significance while they are like the rest of the people in modesty and restrained expenditure."[71] For this reason, they are indispensable "to protect the interests of people while securing the rights of sultans and maintaining the adequate connection between the two."[72] Al-Qalqashandī never tires of quoting authorities that endorse the view that epistolographers are "the ornament of the kingdom and its beauty." It is the epistolographer's discourse which "uplifts its [the kingdom's] value and raises its reputation, magnifies its power, and indicates its merits." He contends further that, "On the sultan's behalf, he warns and persuades, praises or chastises. He articulates words to ensure the subordination and obedience of supporters, and drives away the intentions of foes to disobey or to continue hostility."[73] While relying on Ibn Khalaf in theory, al-Qalqashandī also enlists the views of kings and sultans on his side, as these are more acceptable among their equals. Abū al-Fidā', al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad of Ḥamāh (d. 732/1331) describes the role of epistolographers and writers as "the most noble profession after the caliphate, as it is the best of

[67]Bosworth, *Medieval Arabic Culture,* 296.

[68]Petry, *Civilian Elite,* 20.

[69]W. W. Clifford, "*Ubi Sumus?* Social Theory and Mamluk Studies," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 1 (1997): 51.

[70]Little, "Historiography," 413.

[71]*Ṣubḥ,* 1:73.

[72]Ibid., 73–74.

[73]Ibid., 86.

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favors and the most ultimate desire."[74] As for the Abbasid caliph al-Mustarshid Abū Ja'far (caliph in 512/1118), he was reported to have described writing as the "root" and the "pillar" of the kingdom, "separate branches of one tree."[75] These and similar opinions are also found in the *maqāmah*.[76]

But there is a third side in this delicate intersection between epistolographers, prose writers, and intellectuals in general. In gratuitous comments, writers are never short of anecdotes and reports which address sultans and kings as liking to "own something of eloquence and good writing," as the Fatimid 'Alī Ibn Khalaf stipulates. Al-Qalqashandī uses this notion to forward his contention that epistolography is the "best of crafts,"[77] or, as he puts in the *maqāmah,* it is "the canon of politics."[78] Obviously, statesmen and sultans needed a powerful bureaucracy in the early pre-modern periods, and this materialized in the growth of a "class of secretaries," which Bosworth is right in describing as "numerous and powerful."[79] But, as J. H. Escovitz notes, this class was rather professional, with no absolute loyalty to the chancery.[80] Loyalty is ambiguous as a term, however, and we need to set the whole issue in terms of competitiveness, interests, and patterns of independence and subordination. In the *maqāmah,* then, al-Qalqashandī has an eye, too, on his present times, their precariousness and confusion. In assessing the situation, there is a need to maintain a divide between functionaries as part of bureaucratic and financial apparatus, usually inherited and developed by the Ayyubids and Mamluks, and the learned who were simultaneously needed, feared, and challenged by circumstance and division.[81] The period itself had a mixture of authoritarianism, eclecticism, and sentimentalism towards knowledge. Sultans like Baybars could well intervene, for instance, in the judicial system, altering the judiciary by appointing four qadis for every Sunni school. The intervention was not whimsical, for the very structural change in centers of power in the Islamic world impelled him to meet this diversity in predilections, loyalties, and outlooks. The attitude itself should be seen as signifying a centralizing tendency, which involved a drive towards homogeneity and sameness through a wider accommodation of schools and sects in a Cairo which was growing as the center for Dār al-Islām. What Berkey signaled in architectural monuments as "statements

[74]Ibid., 65–66.
[75]Ibid., 66.
[76]Ibid., 14:129–30.
[77]Ibid., 1:67.
[78]Ibid., 14:130.
[79]*Medieval Arabic Culture,* 292.
[80]Escovitz, "Vocational Patterns," 62.
[81]Berkey, "Culture and Society," 398.

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of integration into an urban society which valued knowledge and piety, and which relied upon the private exercise of power and wealth to generate its cultural tradition and to protect its social order"[82] should be seen as a manifestation of a centralizing outlook. Nelly Hanna is surely right in suggesting that "the [Mamluk] sultans and their ruling amirs for over two centuries created the models and set the fashions, in the arts and in architecture.[83]

Similarly, rulers' interest in writing, epistolography, and eloquence should not be seen as the whim of dilettantes, but as a drive for power and control through appropriation. Upon noticing his chancery potential as manifested in the *maqāmah,* al-Qalqashandī's patron, or some other authority, directed him to write a manual, more elaborate and extensive than the existing ones, including those by Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad and Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh, which, for all their merits, "could not compensate for others," nor could they be comprehensive enough to "go beyond the science of rhetoric" which is the staple of other manuals.[84] The increasing production of compendiums, manuals, and teaching material in the art of epistolography was meant to meet a demand, which was also impelled and perpetuated by the sovereign whose power was to be sustained through a sophisticated bureaucracy and financial apparatus.

"Al-kitābah qānūn al-siyāsah" (literary composition is the canon of politics), says the *maqāmah,* and we need to assess the interrelatedness of the two in contextual terms. While alienating other departments of the army and treasury, for instance, al-Qalqashandī valorized the art of chancellery correspondence in its literary dimension. Although we have no information regarding specific royal orders for manuals or compendiums, these could be seen as ultimate markers of professional grounding and knowledge, which could have secured their authors a good, and, perhaps, lasting position in the chancery. In these manuals on procedural matters, formats, varieties of address, samples of polished correspondence, and stylistic needs and applications, the emphasis is laid on conformity, not deviation. Although knowledge admittedly varies between one person and another, the whole idea of a guide and a manual is to ensure symmetry and uniformity. Patronage by Mamluk sultans and ruling groups involved elite culture in some sameness, for, as Bakhtin argues, "The ruling class strives to impart a supraclass, eternal character to the ideological sign," in order to render it "unaccentual".[85]

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[82]Ibid., 397.

[83]Nelly Hanna, "Culture in Ottoman Egypt," *Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. M. W. Daly (Cambridge, 1998), 2:87.

[84]*Ṣubḥ,* 1:31–35.

[85]M. M. Bakhtin, "On Dialogic Discourse," in *The Bakhtin Reader,* ed. Pam Morris (London, 1997), 55.

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Using these manuals and theoretic readings of the profession, al-Qalqashandī certainly catered to this centralizing drive while participating intellectually in defining culture and its magnanimous interest in and use of prose. Linking himself to such illustrious names and authorities as Qudāmah ibn Ja'far (d. 326/938), Ibn Qutaybah (d. 275/889), 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib, Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 775/1374), al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, al-Ṣābī (d. 383/994), Ibn Nubātah, Ibn al-Athīr, along with Ibn Khalaf, Ibn Mamātī, and the dynasties of Banū Faḍl Allāh, Banū 'Abd al-Ẓāhir, and many others,[86] al-Qalqashandī as a self-made scholar established for himself a professional lineage in the absence of reputed familial and blood connections. On the other hand, this subtext of belonging also highlights his patron's achievement, for he surpassed all in competence and grandeur. But by so doing, al-Qalqashandī also glorifies his own role and achievement for he, after all, claims to have improved even on al-Qāḍī Shihāb al-Dīn ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī.[87] Saying as much, al-Qalqashandī proves that, based on his hard work and skill, he deserves great acknowledgment and merit.

Yet to emphasize value and use for the state is not enough, especially among the literati. Poetic leanings and achievements were still in vogue, and the *maqāmah* never loses sight of this. The *kātib* is addressed as a flowering and ultimate maturation from poetry, and al-Qalqashandī could find no better lineage to allegorize his career than *al-Nāthir ibn al-Naẓẓām* (The Prose Writer Son of the Versifier). Sealing a tradition, he pointedly elevated prose to the highest position, and he is at pains to enlist every authoritative view on this subject, particularly 'Alī ibn Khalaf (d. 455/1063) and his *Mawādd al-Bayān*. 'Alī ibn Khalaf is one of the illustrious figures in *Ṣubḥ* for the simple reason that he divides the ″art of composition″ in three: *kitābah,* oratory, and poetry, emphasizing superiority in sequence, a point which al-Qalqashandī endorses, especially in his *maqāmah*.[88] Moreover, in his third chapter, al-Qalqashandī entitles his discussion unwaveringly ″Prioritization of Prose to Poetry.″ This prioritization takes for granted that powerful prose should make intensive use of other styles and genres so as to reach large audiences, while keeping to the Quranic tradition of restrained and balanced use of assonance and figurative language.

It is within this prioritization of genres and the valorization of epistolary art that al-Qalqashandī targeted poetic license as an invitation to laxity, and openness to all including the ″rabble″ and the ″reprobates.″[89] But he is for the positive sides of poetry, too, especially its poetics of style. Indeed, *″ḥall,″* poetic prosification,

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[86]*Ṣubḥ,* 14:141, 1:35, 135–45, etc.

[87]Ibid., 1:35.

[88]Ibid., 14:130.

[89]Ibid., 1:92.

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was repeatedly emphasized as a prerequisite to epistolography. Abū 'Uthmān ibn Ibrāhīm al-Nābulusī (d. 685/1286) was strongly drawn to the practice in his *Luma'*. The scribe or clerk in *dīwān al-inshā'* should be "well acquainted with sciences, especially literature, to reach the highest station in verse and prose, even to reach that stage of rhetoric to be able to put poetry into prose, or vice versa. . . ."[90]

'Abd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad al-Tha'ālibī (d. 429/1038) explains in detail his practice of *nathr al-naẓm,* or the turning of poetry into prose. But Ḍiyā' al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr (d. 636/1239) goes even further, for his book *Al-Washy al-Marqūm fī Ḥall al-Manẓūm* is meant as a manual for prosification. This tendency was never incidental, for even the application of the method itself to the Quranic verse was meant to manipulate classical poetics into epistolography. Further in *Al-Mathal al-Sā'ir fī Adab al-Kātib wa-al-Shā'ir,* Ibn al-Athīr is unequivocal in prioritizing prose in keeping with the spirit of the age. Insofar as Arabic poetics is concerned, the attempt falls within a larger drive to account for change and intercultural inroads which also imply leaving Abbasid poetics behind, alienating classical poetry, its centripetal power and unifying tradition. Al-Qalqashandī's focused appropriation of Ibn al-Athīr, along with other authorities in epistolography, is carefully done in order to underscore the notion of change in state machinery and the corresponding priority of prose.

In his *maqāmah* as well as in his elaborate discussion of the qualifications of the epistolographer,[91] al-Qalqashandī again enlists authoritative writers on the prerequisites and attributes of the *kātib*.[92] He must be a male, a free person, who is just and decent, knowledgeable in the Quran and hadith. He must be a rhetor, for he is the "sultan's tongue and hand, and an effective scribe may well replace battalions, and his pen could substitute for the most sharp and cutting swords."[93] He is to be sensible, mindful, insightful, and reasonable. He should be well acquainted with the Islamic judiciary and law in general. His knowledge of the sciences is to be wide and extensive, including relevant branches and disciplines. He is to be of solid caliber, respectable and daring to be effective in address. Efficiency and resolution are required, too, to ensure high morale among Muslims. But these are among the basic requirements which he terms *'ulūm,* or the requisites that cover the following: the Quran and its sciences; principles of statecraft; the heritage of

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[90] *Luma' al-Qawānīn,* ed. C. Becker and C. Cahen (Port Said, n.d.), 24–25. Also see in this issue Geert Jan van Gelder, "Poetry for Easy Listening."

[91] *Ṣubḥ,* 1:95–98.

[92] Along with Abū al-Faḍl al-Sūrī, al-Madanī (d. 849), al-'Askarī (d. 1009), Ibn Mamātī (d. 1209), Ibn Khalaf and Ibn al-Athīr, documentation is drawn from the Quran and the Prophet's tradition, and the sayings of his companions and other notables.

[93] *Ṣubḥ,* 1:98.

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the Arabs; their orations and epistles; history of their dynasties and chivalry; their rhetoric and grammar and chancery skills.[94] As for the *rusūm*, as delineated in the *Kawākib,*[95] they are no less varied and diversified, covering calligraphy, knowledge of chancellery correspondence, geography and cultures of other nations. The list is ambitious and demanding, and, perhaps, smacks of self-glorification.

Al-Qalqashandī further implies in the listing of the qualifications and their complementary procedures and acquisitions that he is not only endowed with these, but also qualified enough to assess and set guidelines for others in the field. In a word, he shines as one of the most illustrious epistolographers in this *maqāmah*. But this should not be surprising. Since the middle of the twelfth century many epistolographers had been called upon to write down ″the official histories of the dynasties in whose chanceries they held important positions″ as Makdisi argues,[96] and on many occasions they were unable to remain as ghostwriters. In keeping up with their sovereigns and their feats and conquests, they found themselves too closely involved and intimately entangled to sustain a low profile. Those epistolographers who began an early career as *kātib*s in the chancery of state were, as al-Nābulusī argues, asked to be ″of distinctive merits to be ahead of the rest, of wonderful *naẓm* [poetry] and wonderful prose that shines in the vast domain of writing, bringing about a light of unfamiliar literature whose secret is somewhere like the heart of a wise, reasonable and intelligent person.″ As for the rest, they are ″copyists or embellishers, job holders of some talent in literary or colloquial utterance.″[97]

In such a context, the *Kawākib* speaks then for epistolographers of some renown against reputed poets and *maqāmah* writers, and a post at the chancery was the desire of no less talented poets than Ibn Sanā' al-Mulk (d. 607/1211) and Ibn Nubātah (d. 766/1365). Prose writers were to vie with poets. Thus, in the manner of exemplary *maqāmah,* the *Kawākib* engages issues of immediate interest to the literati, and particularly scribes, epistolographers, and poets. The naming of the protagonist "the prose-writer son of versifier" is meant to carry on the argument that prose grows out of poetry and outgrows it. His contention is that prose maturates out of verse in order to cope with expanding undertakings, issues, domains of interest, and extensive knowledge. Indeed, the *'ulūm* and the *rusūm* which al-Qalqashandī enumerates make epistolography comprehend every other genre and field of knowledge and technique. Further, drawing on antecedent authority, including Ibn Qutaybah, Shihāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd, and al-'Askarī, al-

[94]Ibid., 14:133–37. See also Bosworth, *Medieval Arabic Culture,* 296.

[95]*Ṣubḥ,* 14:137–40.

[96]*The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West* (Edinburgh, 1990), 166.

[97]*Luma' al-Qawānīn,* 25.

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Qalqashandī is keen on establishing a genealogy of ancestors, among whom the narrator aspires for a distinguished presence despite his post as *kātib darj*. We should remember that he resolves to put aside personal inhibitions and expectations and settle for a place where Badr al-Dīn and his brother were in charge.[98] But the outcome, in terms of literary writing, demonstrates also that he is so well-qualified that he can uplift the whole *darj* profession to the station of the ulama and the learned.[99]

On the other hand, this *maqāmah*'s literary value also lies in its subtle attempt to undermine ancestry. Indeed, if we accept the earlier contention that the effort to prioritize prose implies a decentralization of a classical tradition of poetic supremacy, it is even more tenable to see al-Qalqashandī fighting back against his literary father, al-Ḥarīrī. Indeed, no matter how eloquent al-Qalqashandī is in relying on antecedent authority, he is no exception in betraying a great anxiety of influence. But he sets a theory for that, for, like poetry, epistolography is a negotiatory textual space. Writing as craft is a ″growth,″ and ″construction should have a base, and branch should have a root,″ he says[100] upon improving on his immediate epistolary precursors, al-Qāḍī Shihāb al-Dīn and Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh. As a growth, the craft of writing is bound to outgrow the precursor, namely the former epistolographers. By the same token, he, in the present *maqāmah,* has to outgrow al-Ḥarīrī. Since the literati had been very receptive to al-Ḥarīrī and his art, al-Qalqashandī should have experienced some anxiety of influence. His argument for prose is applied also against the *maqāmah* of al-Ḥarīrī. Relying on Ibn al-Athīr's derogatory remarks against al-Ḥarīrī,[101] al-Qalqashandī sided with the former's conclusion that al-Ḥarīrī was not an adept in epistolography, a conclusion that is rife with implications, for Ibn al-Athīr was no less anxious to prove his literary prestige at a time when al-Ḥarīrī's reputation was so overwhelmingly present as to allow little space for the rest. Ibn al-Athīr used the disputed anecdote of Ibn al-Khashshāb (d. 567/1172) to imply that al-Ḥarīrī was good only as a *maqāmah* writer, but not as epistolographer.[102]

Al-Qalqashandī argues that Ibn al-Athīr ″had not given him [al-Ḥarīrī] his due and had not treated him fairly.″[103] Yet al-Qalqashandī mentions, nevertheless, the whole story of al-Ḥarīrī's failure to write epistles, along with the vindictive poetry against him. He goes so far as to quote Ibn al-Athīr's suggestion that to write a

[98] *Ṣubḥ,* 14:145.
[99] Ibid., 147.
[100] Ibid., 1:34.
[101] Ibid., 86, 14:125.
[102] Ibid., 14:125.
[103] Ibid.

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maqāmah does not entail good style and acumen, for ″all *maqāmāt* have only one orbit revolving around a tale with a conclusion, unlike epistolography which is a sea with no borders, for its themes are endless and are renewed in pace with time and events.″[104] Still, in his attempt to outgrow his ancestor, al-Qalqashandī comes to internalize him, and on occasion, to recollect his style and highlight al-Ḥarīrī′s stylized diction. In such a game there is, in Bakhtin′s words, ″intensification of others′ intonations in a certain discourse or a certain section,″ delivered in such a manner ″so that his own present writer′s direct or refracted word might ring out all the more energetically.″ The tendency throughout is to keep al-Ḥarīrī in subordination, ″a passive tool in the hands of the author wielding it,″ to use Bakhtin on parody again.[105]

Yet, while al-Ḥarīrī′s own profession and career drew sharp criticism from professional *kuttāb* of literary prose, his elegant prose put many of them to shame. Ibn al-Athīr repeats the story that his own output in writing equals thousands of *maqāmāt.* Yet al-Ḥarīrī (445–515/1054–1122) and his *maqāmah* signify a turning point in the history of *belles lettres.* His contemporaries and immediate followers were so impressed by his stylistic virtuosity and use of narrative that they, like Ibn Ḥamdūn (d. 495/1102), collapsed *maqāmah* and *risālah,* using them interchangeably. More importantly, al-Ḥarīrī leaves al-Hamadhānī′s ingenious and eloquent beggars behind to be replaced by scholars and marginalized intellectuals with extensive knowledge in mystical, geographical, medical, and other professional engagements. Thus, his protagonists speak for epistolographers of the self-made kind. The shrewd forebear anticipates his grandsons who will try to keep his ghost in the background. No wonder he is so much present in al-Qalqashandī′s *maqāmah,* despite the counter presence of Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn al-Khashshāb.

In particular, al-Qalqashandī calls upon al-Ḥarīrī′s *Al-Furātīyah,* which recalls a mission up the Euphrates when scribes were engaged in debates identical with those of al-Qalqashandī. As al-Ḥarīrī′s *maqāmah* goes, Abu Zayd al-Sarūjī is in the boat in the company of secretaries who are busy arguing for or against chancery vocations. His intervention is not welcome at first. But, upon listening to him, they find it worth attention. Insofar as the chancellery correspondence is concerned, he argues: ″The *munshi*′ is the confidant of the mighty and an important figure amongst the boon-companions. His pen is the tongue of sovereignty and the knight of the skirmish, the Luqmān of wisdom and the interpreter of resolution. It bears good tidings and warnings alike, it intercedes and acts as an envoy. By it impregnable fortresses are won and key-points conquered.″ On the other hand, he

[104]Ibid., 126.

[105]″Dialogic Discourse,″ 109.

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defends the treasury scribe with equal force, for the financial secretary has a pen which is "always firm." He adds, "accountants are the guardians of wealth, the bearers of burdens, the reporters of attested statements, the trustworthy envoys, the ones prominent in meting out justice and securing it for others, the legal witnesses whose testimony is adequate in disputes."[106] Although seemingly attracted to this balanced argument, al-Qalqashandī follows a stylization process which is subtly placed in a context of other competing views and reviews. In the process, al-Ḥarīrī's views on the benefit of each profession enjoy some activation in order to prepare for the postmaturation of al-Qalqashandī's ultimate triumphal note in respect to epistolography, which Ibn al-Athīr thought of as too wide-ranging for al-Ḥarīrī. The concluding note of triumph only supports Bakhtin's discussion of parody at large: "Every struggle between two voices within a single discourse for possession or dominance in that discourse is decided in advance."[107]

While there is self-glorification, al-Qalqashandī's *maqāmah* ultimately is a testimonial epistle whose comprehensive overview and literariness stand for an outgrowth, a maturation that surpasses and supersedes earlier practices. Indeed, by citing Badr al-Dīn as unprecedented, whose *merits* supersede al-Qāḍī's *faḍā'il* (merits),[108] al-Qalqashandī the epistolographer glorifies his own achievement, too. Playing on the meaning of *faḍl* (favor and merit) in Badr al-Dīn's *nisbah* or lineage, and the somehow identical connotation in al-Qāḍī al-Faḍil's attribute (the excellent or the erudite magistrate), al-Qalqashandī asserts both his own stylistic skill in coining the right comparison, his mastery of puns and metaphors, and his faith in the growth of chancellery correspondence, whose theory and practice is attested to by the summation and the compendium at hand.

Yet the mere use of the *maqāmah* genre betrays resignation to al-Ḥarīrī's powerful presence. Further, al-Qalqashandī concludes that what his *maqāmah* "includes in respect to the tributes of *kitābah* and the honor of writers [scribes] excludes the need for any other."[109] But the conclusive remark is belied by his text full of citations to *maqāmāt* and epistles, and so alludes to a cultural climate rife with controversy and difference. His *maqāmah* is meant to sum up a profession and map out a career, which it aptly does. However, success on a personal level is set within other accounts and significations of achievement and failure, like the epistles and *maqāmāt,* which he cites and includes before and after his own *maqāmah*.

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[106]Cited in Bosworth, *Medieval Arabic Culture,* 293–94, from T. Chenery's translation of the *Assemblies.*

[107]"Dialogic Discourse," 112.

[108]*Ṣubḥ,* 14:141.

[109]Ibid., 145.

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While al-Qalqashandī´s compendium is the largest and most extensive encyclopedic effort in epistolography, his *maqāmāt* are of great cultural relevance, too. Further, al-Qalqashandī´s highly spirited account of chancery posts and scribal vocations should not blind us to his intentional design to set his own *maqāmah* among others that reveal a great deal about the history of epistolography, its achievements and failures. Against his seemingly balanced argument to promote the profession, there stands Yaḥyá ibn Salāmah al-Ḥaṣkafī´s (d. 551/1156) epistle.[110] This ″supreme orator″ and ″crown of the learned″ wrote an epistle, in a *maqāmah* fashion, entitled *'Itāb al-Kuttāb wa-'Iqāb al-Alqāb,* to chastise those who ″settled for lowliness instead of striving for requisite knowledge.″[111] Al-Ḥaṣkafī holds the chief chancery clerk and his staff responsible for the deterioration of prose, and he castigates the vizier and secretaries of the bench and their deputies, along with secretaries of finance and keepers of secrets, for unwarranted arrogance and failure in performance. By so doing, al-Ḥaṣkafī provides a counter treatise and devastating account that reveals a chancellery of reprobates headed by ″our master the minister who is lapsing into vice.″[112]

Of no less significance is Abū al-Qāsim al-Khawārizmī´s (d. 387/997) *maqāmah,* which al-Qalqashandī contrasts with his own panegyric *maqāmah.*[113] Al-Khawārzmī´s *maqāmah,* which is originally cited in full by Ibn Ḥamdūn, is written in lofty prose with an ornate style and elevated rhetoric to attack the pretensions of a certain pedant named al-Hītī, who undeservedly gained the reputation as one of the learned and the ulama among his community. The argumentation is carried out smoothly, with great serenity and vigor, to explode the myth which al-Hītī had perpetrated about himself. Incorporating it in full, al-Qalqashandī balances his own positive appraisals of the profession.

Moreover, al-Qalqashandī´s citations of such criticism make up a body of texts with a historical and political referentiality that endow his *maqāmah* with some discursive strategies of oblique criticism, indirection, parody, and stylization. Indeed, al-Khawārizmī´s *maqāmah* is not alone in its biting sarcastic tone and pointed exposure, for Ibn Nubātah held similar views of his critics among chancery clerks who, ″except for the turban, had nothing in their heads.″ They ″were ignorant of *tarassul* (epistolography) and unqualified in rhetoric.″[114] These remarks came in a letter of gratitude addressed to Ibn Fahd, Shihāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Ḥalabī, who was in charge of the *dīwān* in Damascus, after he made an eloquent defense of Ibn

[110]Ibid., 230–36.
[111]Ibid., 231.
[112]Ibid., 233.
[113]Ibid., 146–56.
[114]Ibid., 279.

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Nubātah against his critics. Al-Qalqashandī himself was critical of the style and language of a number of letters[115] which he criticizes for ″coarse utterance″ and structural lapses despite the fact that they were drawn up in the reign of both al-Ẓāhir Baybars and al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn who ″were among the most magnificent of kings.″[116]

These epistles and *maqāmāt* cited by al-Qalqashandī act as paratexts for his *Kawākib al-Durrīyah*. They recapitulate the common view of the degeneration of epistolary practice, for which al-Qalqashandī offers two explanations. First, following Ibn Ḥājib al-Nu'mān (d. 951/1031), al-Qalqashandī argues that ″scribes used to compete in earning the right merit, aloof from any vice of ignorance, striving to gain whatever improves utterance, and beautifies their performance, in order to reach the highest station and to win the best of favors.″[117] Presently, things took the opposite direction, for the ignorant and the greedy received advancement. Thus, ″arts were shunned as taboos and sciences were discarded as if the greatest sins.″[118] Second, while leveling blame on generations of scribes with little grounding in arts and sciences,[119] al-Qalqashandī believes that the domination of non-Arabs *(a'jam)* led to this confusion between the ″dumb″ and ″unversed″ in Arabic and the learned. Nevertheless, the *maqāmah* is keen on forwarding epistolography as the best of arts, that subsumes every genre without loss of its own richness. It befits a growing empire in its official discourse, for Egypt ″still grows in stature and reputation until it has become the abode of the Abbasid caliphate, and the base for the Islamic kingdom. Its kingdom takes pride in serving the two holy shrines, and the rest of kings and nations served it for this reason.″[120]

Finally, then, al-Qalqashandī's defense of the profession and the craft should not be taken at face value. Employment in the chancery had its many ups and downs, and competition among other secretarial occupations was intense at times. If earlier records testified to gain and loss, the later periods were no less rife with competitiveness, malice, and cruelty.[121] A pertinent illustration is the allegorical

[115]Ibid., 83.

[116]Ibid., 70.

[117]Ibid., 1:80.

[118]Ibid.

[119]Ibid., 78.

[120]Ibid., 31.

[121]Zamrak's (d. 1393) hatred led to Ibn al-Khaṭīb's death. Indeed, many writers of prose, like Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 656/1257) and 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī al-Kātib (d. 597/1201) blamed, for instance, Ḍiyā' al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr (d. 637/1239) for his negative influence on Ṣalāh al-Dīn's son, Al-Afḍal. In his book on the latter, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd traced in Ḍiyā' al-Dīn's *Al-Mathal* negative and positive sides. On the negative side, he found Ibn Al-Athīr ″highly proud of himself,″ to the extent of ″raising objections against the honorable.″ See *Al-Falak al-Dā'ir 'alá al-Mathal al-Sā'ir*,

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tale reported by ‘Uthmān ibn Ibrāhīm al-Nābulusī.[122] There was a merchant who was so learned that a certain sultan was advised to choose him as vizier, for the kingdom had lost so many. According to tradition, each minister was deported to an empty and deserted island upon terminating a year in that position. The merchant asked to see the island, and in a very discreet manner moved his family and servants there along with manufacturers and laborers so as to make it habitable in preparation for such an end.[123] The anecdote speaks of the other side in the life of *kātib*s and viziers.

In all, al-Qalqashandī´s vindication of the profession, his autobiographical review of his own career, and his expressions of homage and allegiance set his *maqāmah* in a ramified engagement of great socio-political, cultural, and textual richness. Brief like any other *maqāmah,* its referentiality extends in time and space, while its textual registers go beyond the compendium, at times, to involve the whole controversy on genres and their prioritizations. It offers a literary history in a nutshell and draws attention to chancery rivalry in its professional dimension, too. Its markers of argumentation, debate, and engagement, and its register of figures and issues testify to its complexity and richness beyond the mere shows of homage or expressions of need and choice. On the other hand, this very extensive referentiality grants al-Qalqashandī another cultural lineage, an intertext of wide-ranging contributions, ″embellished″ inscriptions with figures who still argue and debate issues and attitudes. The self-made scribe who ironically bewails his lack of lineage survives the ordeal and emerges with another ancestry which is still alive among readers and scholars of Mamluk history and culture.

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ed. Aḥmad Al-Ḥūfī and Badawī Ṭabānah (Cairo, n.d.), 32.

[122]*Luma‘ al-Qawānīn.*

[123]Ibid., 24–25.

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The First Layer of the *Sīrat Baybars:* Popular Romance and Political Propaganda

We know quite a lot about the setting of the *Sīrat Baybars* and of other popular *siyar,*[1] the Arabic popular romances. European travellers and scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, among others Carsten Niebuhr,[2] Edward William Lane,[3] and the authors of the *Description de l'Egypte,*[4] reported that storytellers recited in the coffeehouses of the big cities. In Damascus and Cairo, for a "trifling sum of money,"[5] they related different sorts of entertaining stories, especially the popular *siyar, Sīrat 'Antarah ibn Shaddād, Sīrat Banī Hilāl, Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan,* and the *Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars*. This last text is the subject of this essay.

We know next to nothing about the genesis and the development of these texts. Most of the complete *sīrah* manuscripts at our disposal are relatively late versions of these texts. Of the older layers of the *siyar sha'bīyah* only fragmentary remnants have survived. The nature of the *siyar* texts poses further problems: the *siyar sha'bīyah* are clearly anonymous stories, created by several authors who regularly revised and recreated their texts, thus adapting them to the expectations and taste of their audience. In this sense, the popular romances are the structural opposites of texts representing classical Arabic literature, which were created by single authors and which show the influence of their socio-political milieu.

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[1]Plural of *sīrah*, meaning in this context account of life history, biography. The most famous example of a learned *sīrah* is the *Sīrat al-Nabī,* the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad. See Marco Schoeller, *Exegetisches Denken und Prophetenbiographie* (Wiesbaden, 1998), 37–49. The term *siyar sha'bīyah* (popular *siyar*) was "coined by Arab folklorists in the 1950s for a genre of lengthy Arabic heroic narratives that in Western languages are called either 'popular epics' or 'popular romances.'" See Peter Heath, "Sīra Sha'biyya," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., 9:664.

[2]Carsten Niebuhr, *Beschreibung von Arabien aus eigenen Beobachtungen und im Lande selbst gesammelten Nachrichten abgefasst* (Copenhagen, 1772), 106–7.

[3]Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1846), 2:103–44. See also Alfred von Kremer, *Ägypten: Forschungen über Land und Volk während eines zehnjährigen Aufenthalts* (Leipzig, 1863), 2:305–6.

[4]Charles Louis Fleury Panckoucke, ed., *Description de l'Egypte ou recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Egypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française,* vol. 18, *Etat Moderne* (Paris, 1821–30), 161–62.

[5]Lane, *Modern Egyptians,* 2:103.

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In order to establish the time, place and social context of the genesis of a text such as the *Sīrat Baybars,* we have to rely on the indirect evidence provided by the text itself, such as specific references to the social or political points of view of its creators. Such an analysis gives us insight into the different functions that the *sīrah* acquired in the course of its development.

Evidence shows that the *Sīrat Baybars* is a composite text in which three layers of text development can be distinguished; those layers originated in three different eras and social environments that merged in a process we can no longer reconstruct. For this article, we will not concentrate on the ″adventure-romance″ from the fifteenth century, which forms most of the *sīrah.* Nor will we talk about Baybars′ youth and ascent in the *sīrah,* a part of the text in which Baybars is built up as a counter-image to the despotic sultans of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and in which the *ummah′*s anger found its expression regarding corruption and abuse of power at the time of the great crisis of the Mamluk Empire (at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century).[6] Instead, we shall concentrate on the oldest layer of the legendary biography of the great Mamluk sultan Baybars I. Although initially assumed to be a product of the second half of the fourteenth and of the fifteenth century, we established in the course of our investigation that—judging by the representation of Sultan Baybars and of several other historical figures—the *sīrah* seems to have been inspired by the spirit of the second half of the thirteenth century, thus the early period of the Mamluk Empire. Our line of argument is based essentially on two elements: first on the representation of Sultan Baybars as the virtuous guardian of Ayyubid legitimacy, and second on the representation of a series of historical rivals to Baybars and the Ẓāhirīyah Mamluks.

One of the greatest problems facing the Mamluks at the beginning of their rule was that of legitimacy. If the Ayyubid house, which had ruled before them, had been legitimized by its descent and by investiture by the caliph of Baghdad, the military slaves that finally came to power with Baybars could not legitimize themselves either by descent—having been born in non-Islamic lands—or, for a transitional period after the Mongol seizure of Baghdad, by the religious authority of the caliph. In this context, if we examine the representation of Baybars in the *sīrah,* his origins, his rise, and how he finally took over power, details that at first seem merely to glorify the hero of an adventure story suddenly form a coherent unity.

Indeed, from his introduction in the romance, the representation of Baybars seems entirely motivated by the idea of the legitimation of Mamluk rule. Although

[6]For this, see my Ph.D. thesis to be published in 2002 (″Genese, Überlieferung und Bedeutung der Sīrat Baibars in ihrem sozio-politischen Kontext″).

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he is shown as a military slave—it would have been unconvincing to try to disguise it—Baybars is in the *sīrah* Muslim by birth, bears the name of Maḥmūd, and is the son of the king of Khurasan, who became a slave after he had been betrayed by his brothers.[7] Baybars does not stay a slave for long: in Damascus, where he is first brought after having been enslaved and where he is serving as a house slave, a rich widow ″adopts″[8] him because he resembles her deceased son. She names him after her son Baybars and makes him the master of her fortune.[9] It is in Damascus that the four *aqṭāb,* in Sufi belief the mystical poles of the universe[10] (in the *sīrah* Aḥmad al-Badawī, al-Dasūqī, al-Jīlānī, and the *ṣāḥib al-waqt*[11]), appear to Baybars and pray for him. It is also in Damascus that during the *Laylat al-Qadr,* the Night of Destiny in which people believe that God determines the fate of men for the following year, the gates of heaven open to Baybars. He is told that he will become sultan of Egypt and Syria.[12] Having come to Cairo, Baybars quickly rises in rank, becomes commander of a Mamluk regiment, *wālī, muḥtasib,* and governor of several provinces. Finally, Baybars is ″adopted″ by the Ayyubid sultan al-Ṣāliḥ and his spouse in the *sīrah,* Shajarat al-Durr,[13] thus recovering a

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[7]*Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars,* ed. Jamāl al-Ghīṭānī (Cairo, 1996), 469. This is a re-edition in five volumes with new pagination of the first edition by al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Amīn Dirbāl (Cairo, 1326–27/1908–9) and the second edition by Muḥammad ʻAbd al-Laṭīf al-Ḥijāzī (Cairo, 1341–44/1923–26). Whereas the betrayal of Baybars′ brothers shows obvious borrowings from the story of Joseph in the Bible and the Quran (Genesis 37:4 and Quran 12:5), Baybars′ fictitious origins go back to the origins of his predecessor Quṭuz al-Muẓaffar as related by some Arab historians. Ibn Iyās reports, citing Ibn al-Jawzī, that Quṭuz had once been beaten by his master Ibn al-Zaʻīm, over which he bitterly wept. Being asked why he wept so bitterly because of a single blow he answered: ″′I only weep because he cursed my father and my grandfather, whilst they are more deserving than he is.′ He was asked: ′But who are your father and grandfather, aren′t they Christians?′ He said: ′No, on the contrary, I am a Muslim son of a Muslim and my name is Maḥmūd, son of Mamdūd, nephew of the Khwarizm Shah, from the progeniture of the kings of the east. The Mongols took me as a boy, after they had defeated them.′ This is why Quṭuz was not a slave.″ (Ibn Iyās, *Badāʼiʻ al-Zuhūr fī Waqāʼiʻ al-Duhūr,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá as *Die Chronik des Ibn Ijās* [Cairo/Wiesbaden, 1960–84], 1:1:303). See also: Donald P. Little, ″Ḳuṭuz,″ *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., 5:571.

[8]We put the word ″adopts″ in quotation marks, because in Islamic law full adoption does not exist.

[9]Fāṭimah al-Aqwasīyah was a widow and without a male descendant following the death of her son. There is a certain resemblance to the *sīrah* of the Prophet, although it differs from it in that Baybars does not marry Fāṭimah, which would not have suited the *sīrah′*s story.

[10]See F. de Jong, ″Al-Ḳuṭb: 2. In Mysticism,″ *EI*^{2} 5:543.

[11]*″Ṣāḥib al-waqt″* or *″Ṣāḥib al-zamān,″* the temporary *qutb* (pole, axis; the head in the hierarchy of the ″saints″). See de Jong, ″Al-Ḳuṭb,″ 543. It is also one of the names of the *mahdī*. See Heinz Halm, *Shiism* (Edinburgh, 1991), 77.

[12]*Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir,* 159 ff.

[13]Ibid., 462.

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double royal descent, that of his father, king of Khurasan, and that of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, the last great Ayyubid on the throne of Egypt.

It is interesting to observe how the *sīrah*′s authors relate the upheaval during the transition from Ayyubid rule to that of the first great Mamluk sultan, al-Ẓāhir Baybars: as al-Ṣāliḥ dies, it is Baybars to whom he limits his succession, asking God to have all those who were due to become sultan before Baybars die by an unnatural death.[14] By this strategy, the *sīrah* takes into account the historical succession of rulers and simultaneously confirms Baybars as the true heir and undoubted guardian of the Ayyubid dynasty′s legitimacy. In fact, Baybars refuses the sultanate each time a successor to al-Ṣāliḥ is nominated—ʻĪsá al-Muʻaẓẓam Tūrānshāh, al-Ashraf, al-Ṣāliḥ al-Ṣaghīr ibn al-Ashraf (a fictive sultan), Aybak al-Turkumānī, and al-Muẓaffar Quṭuz, who are all shown as Ayyubids in the *sīrah*—with the vehement words: ″God forbid that I take the dignity of a sultan under the eyes of the Ayyubid princes! Who am I to divest them of their right to the throne, I who once used to be their slave?″[15]

It is equally interesting to observe how the *sīrah* diverts historical responsibility from Baybars for the murder of two of al-Ṣāliḥ′s successors, ʻĪsá al-Muʻaẓẓam Tūrānshāh and Quṭuz. The case of the first of al-Ṣāliḥ′s successors is that of ʻĪsá al-Muʻaẓẓam Tūrānshāh, al-Ṣāliḥ′s son and immediate successor. He was apparently more interested in the fine arts and wine than in government or the army, and he was murdered by the Baḥrīyah Mamluks under the leadership of Baybars following the battle of al-Manṣūrah against the Crusader army of Louis IX. According to a number of historians it was a group probably headed by Baybars himself which carried out the assassination of the young sultan.[16] The authors of the *sīrah,*

[14]Ibid., 965–66, and the manuscript versions: Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek Gotha MS 2628, fol. 18a (catalogue listing: Wilhelm Pertsch, *Die orientalischen Handschriften der Herzoglichen Bibliothek zu Gotha,* pt. 3, *Die arabischen Handschriften,* vol. 4 [Gotha, 1883], no. 2628); British Library London MS Or 4649, fol. 13a (catalogue listing: Charles Rieu, *Supplement to the Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts of the British Museum* [London, 1894], no. 1191); Staatsbibliothek Berlin MS We 572, fol. 76b (catalogue listing: Wilhelm Ahlwardt, *Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin,* vol. 20, *Verzeichniss der arabischen Handschriften,* vol. 8 [Berlin, 1896], no. 9155 [We 561–586]); Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek Gotha MS 2600, fol. 79a (catalogue listing: Pertsch, *Die orientalischen Handschriften,* no. 2600); *Le roman de Baïbars*, translated by Georges Bohas and Jean-Patrick Guillaume from a nineteenth-century Aleppo manuscript (Paris, 1985–), 6:76 f.

[15]Bohas/Guillaume, *Roman,* 6:83 f.

[16]The following historians state that Baybars was the leader of the group that murdered Tūrānshāh or, alternatively, that he assassinated him personally: Muḥammad ibn Sālim Ibn Wāṣil, ″Mufarrij al-Kurūb fī Akhbār Banī Ayyūb,″ Paris Bibliothèque Nationale MS Ar 1702, fol. 371a–b; Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir, *Al-Rawḍ al-Ẓāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir,* ed. ʻAbd al-Azīz Khuwayṭir (Riyadh, 1396/1976), 50; Ismāʻīl ibn ʻAlī Abū al-Fidā', *Al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar*

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however, do not make ʻĪsá al-Muʻaẓẓam Tūrānshāh die directly by Baybars′ hand but rather show his death as God′s punishment for a sinful way of life. In the *sīrah,* ʻĪsá becomes completely drunk while sitting on an elevated seat he had built in order to be able to watch the battle of al-Manṣūrah against the Frankish troops and falls, breaking his neck.[17]

The case of the second successor of al-Ṣāliḥ for whose death Baybars is responsible is that of al-Muẓaffar Quṭuz, the hero of the battle of ʻAyn Jālūt against the Mongols, a Mamluk just like Baybars. While the historical Quṭuz was trapped by Baybars in an ambush and killed in cold blood,[18] the *sīrah′*s Quṭuz is murdered by Frankish spies.

Obviously the *sīrah* had to convince its audience of Baybars′ innocence; it could not entirely suppress his historical role in these events, but it skilfully integrated the allegations against Baybars and invalidated them. So ʻĪsá does not die at the hands of the future sultan, but gets caught in the ladder of his elevated seat, stumbles and falls while fearing the anger of Baybars, who furiously approaches him in the middle of the battle, having seen him drinking while watching the battle. In the case of Quṭuz, Baybars′ historical responsibility for the murder finds expression in the account that the Frankish spies who murder Quṭuz leave by the side of the corpse a slip of paper on which Baybars declares his responsibility for the crime.[19]

Further, the account of al-Ṣāliḥ′s different Ayyubid successors in the *sīrah* not only depicts Baybars as the altruistic guardian of Ayyubid legitimacy, it also shows that after al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb the Ayyubids could no longer provide a sovereign able to rule the empire and thus rightly lost their power to the Mamluks. All the

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(Constantinople, 1286/1870; repr., Cairo 1325/1907–8), 190–91; Abū Bakr ibn ʻAbd Allāh Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar fī Jāmiʻ al-Ghurar* (Cairo and Freiburg, 1972), 7:382–83; Ismāʻīl ibn ʻUmar Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah fī al-Tārīkh* (Cairo, 1993–94), 13:202; Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʻIbar wa-Dīwān al-Mubtada' wa-al-Khabar fī Ayyām al-ʻArab wa-al-ʻAjam wa-al-Barbar* (Būlāq, 1284/1867), 360–61; Aḥmad ibn ʻAlī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Maʻrifat Duwal al-Mulūk,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah (Cairo, 1934–), 1:2:359–61.

[17]See: *Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir,* 984; British Library MS, fol. 28a–b; Staatsbibliothek Berlin MS We 562, fol. 78a (catalogue listing: Ahlwardt, *Handschriften-Verzeichnisse,* no. 9155 [We 561–586]); Gotha MS 2628, fol. 19a–b.

[18]Ibn Wāṣil, ″Mufarrij al-Kurūb fī Akhbār Banī Ayyūb,″ Paris Bibliothèque Nationale MS Ar 1703, fol. 163b; Mūsá ibn Muḥammad al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān fī Tārīkh al-Aʻyān* (Hyderabad, 1374–80/1954–61), 1:370–371; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,*1:2:435. Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir stresses the point that Baybars murdered Quṭuz himself without any help: *Rawḍ*, 68: ″The sultan al-Malik al-Ẓāhir did what he did on his own and reached his aim alone, in the midst of a powerful army and massive protection. And nobody was able to speak and nobody could resist him.″

[19]*Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir,* 1079: ″It was no one else but the amir Baybars who accomplished these deeds and attained this destiny, [my] writing and seal testify to this.″ Nota bene the proximity to the account of Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir, *Rawḍ*, 68, cited above.

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successors of al-Ṣāliḥ that the *sīrah* calls Ayyubids are shown to be either unworthy of the sultanate (ʻĪsá Tūrānshāh, Aybak), or unsuitable for it due to their youth (al-Ṣāliḥ al-Ṣaghīr), gender (Shajarat al-Durr[20]), or finally to be entranced saints *(awliyā')* (al-Ashraf Khalīl, Quṭuz) who were equally unsuited for the office of sultan of the Ayyubid Empire. So the *sīrah* depicts the transition from the Ayyubids to the Mamluks not only as legitimate, but also as consistent.

In my opinion, the important place that Ayyubid legitimacy occupies in those parts of the *sīrah* dealing with the transition to the Mamluks points to the beginning of the Mamluk period. Whereas the *vita* of Baybars composed by the court biographer Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir shows him as the spiritual heir of al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb,[21] the picture of the great sultan that Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir′s nephew Shāfiʻ ibn ʻAlī draws some thirty years after his uncle[22] already shows the consolidation of Mamluk power. As P. M. Holt put it, ″The Baybars of *Ḥusn al-manāqib* is still an impressive, even an heroic figure, whose military achievements secured the future of Islam in Syria against the threats from the Mongols and the Franks. He appears, further, as an autocratic but just ruler, who was (to use a cliché) the true founder of the Mamluk sultanate. What he has lost is the aura of legitimacy as the true heir of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, by which Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir sought to disguise his twofold usurpation. But when Shāfiʻ wrote, Ayyubid legitimacy had long ceased to be a political issue, and Baybars could stand justified by his deeds.″[23]

It is not only the picture of Baybars drawn by the *sīrah* that makes us presume that a first layer of the *Sīrat Baybars* dates from early Mamluk times. If we look at the representation of several historical characters of the *sīrah,* we note that they are shown in a certain number of purely fictitious episodes of the romance in an extremely negative light. This evidence gains further importance since these characters were all historical rivals or opponents of Baybars and his Ẓāhirīyah Mamluks. Their negative representation thus faithfully reflects the conflicts of interest and power of the time of Baybars′ rule or of those of his immediate successors and that from a ″Baybarsian″ point of view.

The most prominent examples of this representation are those of al-Muʻizz Aybak and of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn. Al-Muʻizz Aybak, who was, like Baybars, a Mamluk and before him—from 648/1250 to 655/1257—sultan, is shown in the

[20]Although she is not of Ayyubid descent, the *sīrah* represents her nearly as such.
[21]Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir, *Rawḍ*, 46.
[22]Shāfiʻ ibn ʻAlī finished his *Kitāb Ḥusn al-Manāqib al-Sirrīyah al-Muntazaʻah min al-Sīrah al-Ẓāhirīyah* (ed. ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz Khuwayṭir [Riyadh, 1396/1976]) in 1316.
[23]P. M. Holt, ″The Sultan as Ideal Ruler: Ayyubid and Mamluk Prototypes,″ in *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age: the Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World,* ed. Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead (London and New York, 1995), 136–37.

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sīrah as a crypto-Christian and ally of the Franks, who nourishes in his heart hatred towards Muslims. He is introduced into the romance as king of Mosul, who wants to attack al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb′s empire, but finally enters into the sultan′s service and conspires against the Muslims from the heart of their state.[24] After the death of al-Ṣāliḥ he wants to seize power and pretends that Baybars had murdered his master, but his words turn out to be lies.[25] Nevertheless, Aybak threatens to ″make the blood cool in floods″ if Baybars should become sultan.[26] After the death of ʻĪsá Tūrānshāh, Khalīl ibn ʻĪsá as al-Ashraf and al-Ṣāliḥ al-Ṣaghīr ibn al-Ashraf successively become sultan, and Aybak poisons both of them and seizes power.[27] He finally tries to assassinate Baybars as well.[28] Baybars leaves for Syria where he installs a counter rule.[29] It quickly comes to a conflict between Baybars and Aybak as the coins minted by Baybars in Damascus have a higher value and render those minted by Aybak worthless in the market.[30] People mock Aybak, who falls in love with a Bedouin girl and no longer shows any interest either in state affairs or in his spouse Shajarat al-Durr, who finally murders him out of jealousy.[31]

This extremely negative and, except for his death, totally unhistorical representation[32] of Aybak in the *Sīrat Baybars* goes back, in my mind, to the historical struggle for power, to the time between the death of the last great Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ and the first great Mamluk sultan Baybars. Al-Malik al-Muʻizz Aybak, the first Mamluk on the throne of Egypt, recognized the Baḥrīyah Mamluks, one of whose leaders was Baybars, correctly as a permanent threat. It is true that the Baḥrīyah did not dare to seize power immediately after the assassination of ʻĪsá Tūrānshāh and preferred to accept temporary and unstable

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[24]*Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir,* 71–75, 87–92. During Baybars′ rise to power in Cairo, Aybak acts regularly on the side of the qadi Jawān, a crypto-Christian and the main evil character of the romance, trying to get Baybars executed (e.g., ibid., 270ff., 744 ff.). The corrupt *wālī* Ḥasan Āghā and his nephew the *muḥtasib* (market-superintendent) Qarājūdah are also crypto-Christians from Aybak′s entourage (ibid., 506 ff., 586 ff.) who try to harm Baybars. According to his status as crypto-Christian, Aybak deserts the Muslims during the battle against the Mongols and tries to collaborate with the latter (ibid., 773 ff.).

[25]As Aybak pretends after al-Ṣāliḥ′s death to become the future sultan, the vizier Shāhīn reprimands him, saying that someone like him could never merit the sultanate: ″And the vizier said: ′Please preserve a sense of decency in this matter. Somebody like you will never deserve the sultanate.′″ (ibid., 966ff.).

[26]British Library MS, fol. 14a.

[27]*Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir,* 985ff., 992ff.

[28]Ibid., 1007 ff.

[29]Ibid., 1034 ff.

[30]Ibid., 1061 ff.

[31]Ibid., 1069–74.

[32]Aybak′s rule over Egypt, his marriage with Shajarat al-Durr, and his neglect of her for another woman are the only historical elements in the *sīrah*′s account of Aybak.

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solutions such as the rule of the female Shajarat al-Durr with Aybak as *atabeg*.[33] But this circumstance did not hinder them enough to cause them to deny soon afterwards the legitimacy of Aybak´s sultanate and to act more and more in a self-assured and arrogant way.[34] Fāris Aqṭay, the leader of the Baḥrīyah-Jamdārīyah Mamluks, began to act as the true ruler of Egypt and finally asked Aybak and his spouse to leave the citadel, in order to permit him to accommodate his own spouse, the daughter of the ruler of Ḥamāh, in keeping with her station.[35] Aybak then decided to eliminate Fāris and his Mamluks. On 1 January 1254 (10 Dhū al-Qa'dah 651), he ordered Fāris Aqṭay to visit him at the citadel. As soon as Fāris entered, he was captured and murdered by a troop of Aybak´s personal Mamluks. In spite of Aybak´s immediate attempt to capture the remaining Baḥrīyah-Jamdārīyah Mamluks, the majority managed to flee.[36]

Al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn is the second historical figure whose extremely negative representation in the *sīrah* makes me believe that parts of the *Sīrat Baybars* go back to the struggle for power in the early Mamluk period. Qalāwūn, who historically was one of Baybars´ comrades, is depicted in a number of manuscript and printed versions of the *sīrah* as a Mamluk who hates Baybars from their first encounter.[37] On their way with a slave caravan from Bursa to Damascus, Baybars and Qalāwūn share the same mount. Baybars, who is severely ill, suffers from diarrhea[38] and asks Qalāwūn to help him to dismount. Qalāwūn is disgusted by Baybars and pushes him at dawn from the animal and so Baybars nearly dies in the desert.[39] Later, when Baybars has already become sultan, Qalāwūn becomes one of his

[33]A Turkish term used from Saljuq to Mamluk times designating a military leader mostly of slave origin who was acting as a tutor for a young prince. He typically married the mother of the minor prince and thereby acquired great power. The tutorate of Aybak for Shajarat al-Durr as regent-spouse of the heir and widow of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb is a special case. See Cahen, ″Atabak,″ *EI*^{2} 1:731.

[34]Peter Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt,* trans. P. M. Holt (London, 1992), 47.

[35]Amalia Levanoni (″The Mamluks´ Ascent to Power in Egypt,″ *Studia Islamica* 72 (1990): 143–44) writes: ″Being the accepted candidate of the Baḥriyya-Jamdāriyya Emirs, Aqṭay began behaving like a pretender to the throne. Riding through Cairo, he acted like a sovereign. His Mamluk comrades already called him al-Malik al-Jawād among themselves and addressed their requests of Iqtā' to him. The climax of this process came when Aqṭay asked Aybak al-Turkmānī, Atābak al-'Asākir, and his wife Shajar al-Durr to leave the palace of Qal'at al-Jabal in order to house his bride, daughter of the ruler of Hamah, in a residence befitting a princess.″

[36]See Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt*, 47.

[37]See, for instance, Staatsbibliothek Berlin MS We 561, fol. 39b (catalogue listing: Ahlwardt, *Handschriften-Verzeichnisse,* no. 9155 [We 561–586]).

[38]*″Baṭnatuhu māshiyah,″* ibid.

[39]See also Vatican Library MS Barberiniani Orientali 15, fol. 4a (catalogue listing: Giorgio Levi Della Vida, *Elenco dei manoscritti arabi islamici della biblioteca vaticana: Vaticani, Barberiniani, Borgiani, Rossiani* [Vatican City, 1935]); Gotha MS 2628, fol. 5b; and Bohas/Guillaume, *Roman,* 1:80–81.

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permanent opponents. He tries to seize power by any means, even murder. So he poisons Baybars[40] and then his two sons al-Sa'īd[41] and Aḥmad Salāmish.[42] When, after the murder of al-Salāmish, the people of Cairo hear that Qalāwūn has become the new sultan, they decide to kill him on his triumphant entry into the city.[43] They throw stones at Qalāwūn even before he enters Cairo, so the vizier Shāhīn advises him to enter the city by night from behind the citadel. After having entered the city secretly, Qalāwūn sends the army, which slaughters one third of Cairo's population. The vizier advises Qalāwūn to declare peace, but the latter does not listen to him. The vizier responds: "This man is a traitor. He cannot hope for anything else than the sword from us. [Indeed] he must be put to death!"[44] Following the printed version of the *sīrah,* the people of Cairo make fun of Qalāwūn at his entry into the city: "Who for heaven's sake has put this one on the throne?" Furious, Qalāwūn orders the ulama to draw up a *fatwá* declaring that such behavior is to be punished by the sword, and he lets his soldiers loose on the people of Cairo for three days. Qalāwūn himself tries to rape Tāj Bakht, Baybars' spouse, but she flees to a poor woman who gives shelter to her and her children.[45] The famous hospital Qalāwūn constructed in Cairo is also shown as a diabolic invention: having realized his sinful way of living,[46] Qalāwūn builds a hospital. In spite of healing sick people, Qalāwūn forces the doctors to concoct a poison, which he gives to a man who tries to approach one of his concubines. The man dies in a spectacular way and the sultan's concubine is driven crazy. There is little doubt that this story excited the erotic imagination of the storytellers' audiences. Qalāwūn then builds a hospital for lunatics where the patients are healed by music.[47]

According to the *sīrah*, the son of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn, al-Ashraf Khalīl, who reigned after his father's death from 689/1290 to 693/1293, did not inherit his

[40]*Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir,* 3078–80.
[41]Paris Bibliothèque Nationale MS no. 4997, pt. 24 (catalogue listing: Edgar Blochet, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes des nouvelles acquisitions* [Paris 1925], nos. 4981–97); Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek Gotha MS 2609, fol. 67b (catalogue listing: Pertsch, *Die orientalischen Handschriften,* no. 2609); *Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir,* 3071.
[42]*Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir,* 3109–10.
[43]Gotha MS 2609, fol. 70a–b: "We'll kill him, if he enters [the city]."
[44]Ibid., fol. 70b: "This man is a traitor. The only thing he can await from us is the sword. He must be killed."
[45]*Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir,* 3111–14.
[46]Ibid., 3112: One of the ulama who interpreted his dream for him said: "You did wrong and you used unlawful violence against your Muslim subjects."
[47]Ibid.

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father′s wickedness, but was inclined to the *dawlat al-Ẓāhir*[48] and is therefore placed by his father in the relatively remote post of governor of Damascus.

In searching for the reasons for this extremely negative representation of Qalāwūn in the *sīrah,* we can first ascertain that it neither corresponds to the historical record nor does it go back to an actual enmity between Baybars and Qalāwūn. On the contrary, Qalāwūn enjoyed Baybars′ full confidence.[49] According to Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, Baybars made a great effort to consolidate Qalāwūn′s position. Therefore, he had raised the number of soldiers under his command, given a better *iqṭā‘* to him, and increased his salary. Baybars had made Qalāwūn his chief counsellor *(ra’s al-mashūrah)* and had ″depended on him as no king had ever depended on an amir and as no sultan had ever depended on a counselor.″[50]

Matters become clearer only if one establishes a link between Qalāwūn′s relations to al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars′ Mamluks. Qalāwūn had indeed deposed the young sultan al-Sa‘īd with the backing of the Ṣāliḥīyah Mamluks and had therefore kept the younger Ẓāhirīyah Mamluks away from state power.[51] During the next sultanate of Baybars′ underaged son al-Salāmish, Qalāwūn *de facto* already ruled the empire[52] and made use of the time to place his men from among the Ṣāliḥīyah Mamluks—his comrades in having served al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb—in a series of key positions.[53] Having thus consolidated his power, Qalāwūn finally put himself on the throne through the Ṣāliḥīyah amirs, who definitely invited the enmity of the Ẓāhirīyah Mamluks. Indeed, he suffered during most of

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[48]Ibid., 3115: Khalīl asks the Ismailian Ibrāhīm al-Ḥawrānī what he should do against his father′s behavior: ″O my commander, my father used violence and did wrong against the dynasty of al-Ẓāhir; he is anxious to turn me away from the dynasty of al-Ẓāhir. [So] he banished me to Damascus and made me [his] governor there. Indeed I hate injustice and immoderateness! Al-Malik al-Ẓāhir did not harm us in any way; he even let my father kill his sons.″ See also *Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir,* 3118: ″The deeds of King Khalīl after his father [′s death] and how he was inclined to the dynasty of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir.″

[49]Several anecdotes from the year 661/1262–63 prove this. Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir, *Rawḍ*, 148, 166–69, 181; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* 1:2:480–81, 501. (Cited from Linda S. Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan* [Stuttgart, 1998], 72).

[50]Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, ″Al-Faḍl al-Ma’thūr min Sīrat al-Sulṭān al-Malik al-Manṣūr,″ Oxford Bodleian MS Marsh HS 424, fol. 4a; Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir, *Rawḍ*, 166–69, 181; David Ayalon, ″Studies on the Structure of the Mamlūk Army, part III,″ *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 16 (1954), 69. (Cited from Northrup, *From Slave*, 73).

[51]See Northrup, *From Slave,* 78–80.

[52]Ibid, 78–83.

[53]As *atabeg*, Qalāwūn had many of the rights of a sultan. His name was included along with Salāmish in the *khuṭbah* and was minted on one side of the coins. See: al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl,* 4:5; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah,* 13:322; Muḥammad ibn Shākir al-Kutubī, ″‘Uyūn al-Tawārīkh,″ Dār al-Kutub MS 949 *tārīkh,* vol. 21, pt. 1, fol. 191; Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt,* ed. Qusṭanṭīn Zurayq (Beirut, 1936–42), 8:148. (Cited from Northrup, *From Slave*, 81).

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his regency from their opposition.[54] It is for this reason that Ibn Taghrī Birdī reports that the Mamluks despised Qalāwūn, for they believed that Qalāwūn had poisoned al-Sa'īd.[55] In fact, Qalāwūn did not assassinate al-Sa'īd after his deposition, but banished him to al-Karak, where the latter died in March of the following year (1280) under unclear circumstances. The following year Qalāwūn authorized al-Sa'īd's mother to bury her son in Baybars' mausoleum in Damascus, a ceremony that took place during Qalāwūn's stay in the city. It is highly probable that this public *mise en scène* of his attachment to the deceased and his family was supposed to stop rumors of Qalāwūn's responsibility for al-Sa'īd's death.[56]

Not only the Ẓāhirīyah Mamluks, but also a certain number of elderly Ṣāliḥīyah amirs had reason to feel themselves ignored. It is true that they had been rewarded by Qalāwūn for their backing, but in principal they had the same rights to the throne as he had. It is not astonishing then that al-Maqrīzī reports that Qalāwūn, having become sultan, did not dare to ride out in public because of his fear of the Ṣāliḥīyah and the Ẓāhirīyah Mamluks' jealousy. According to al-Maqrīzī, the people heard about it and began insulting him at night, shouting in the dark under the citadel. They defiled his coat-of-arms and insulted his amirs, so that he finally avoided contact with the people.[57]

As we can see, the authors of the episodes focussing on al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn have adopted quite faithfully the critique of the Ẓāhirīyah Mamluks, who felt betrayed by Baybars' successors. It seems as if these authors belonged to the milieu of the Ẓāhirīyah or the Ṣāliḥīyah Mamluks who were mourning their old sultan.

It is of course possible that the negative image of Qalāwūn did not focus on Qalāwūn as the rival of the Ẓāhirīyah Mamluks but was rather created only at the end of the thirteenth century and aimed at Qalāwūn as the ancestor of the Qalawunid "dynasty." This view is expressed by Ibn Iyās at the beginning of the sixteenth century in his commentary on the seizure of power by the first Circassian sultan, al-Ẓāhir Barqūq, in 1382. He notes that the last sultan of the Qalawunids, al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥajjī, took the regnal name of al-Manṣūr as did his ancestor Qalāwūn and that Barqūq had snatched power from the descendents of Qalāwūn just as Qalāwūn had snatched it from Baybars' sons with the words: "Just as one takes, it is taken from him."[58]

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[54]Northrup, *From Slave*, 87.
[55]Abū al-Maḥāsin Yūsuf Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Cairo, 1929–72), 7:272. (Cited from Northrup, *From Slave*, 88).
[56]Northrup, *From Slave*, 89.
[57]Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* I:3:672; see also the French translation by Etienne Quatremère, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks de l'Egypte* (Paris, 1837–45), 2:14–15. (Cited from Northrup, *From Slave*, 88).
[58]See Ibn Iyās, *Kitāb Tārīkh Miṣr al-Mashhūr bi-Badā'i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'i' al-Duhūr* (Būlāq,

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The thesis that parts of the *Sīrat Baybars* initially go back to a propaganda text of early Mamluk times, and the view that they aimed at legitimizing Barqūq′s seizure of power by shedding a negative light on Qalāwūn, are not mutually exclusive. Texts like the *Sīrat Baybars* are complex structures in constant development. They integrate new elements, conserve or eliminate old evidence, and interpret such elements in new contexts and in a new manner.

In my view, the evidence indicates that the first layer of the *Sīrat Baybars* was created in the last decades of the thirteenth century by persons or their descendants whose accounts obviously still testify to the conflicts of the time of Baybars and his immediate successors, and who therefore clearly take a political stand in them.

1311/1893/94), 1:290, lines 5–8. I thank Jean-Claude Garcin for identifying this passage.

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The Shadow Play in Mamluk Egypt: The Genre and Its Cultural Implications

The growing, albeit still meager, scholarship on Ibn Dāniyāl brings him into focus as one of the wittiest men of letters in medieval Arabo-Islamic culture, and hails his work as a pioneering expression of Arabic drama. Such complimentary proclamations of Ibn Dāniyāl's artistic stature counteract a long-standing textual and contextual marginalization of Ibn Dāniyāl: "textual," due to a habitual scholarly neglect of non-canonical genres, including the shadow play; and "contextual," thanks to an enduring notion that the Mamluks had a rather unimpressive cultural and literary record that does not merit comprehensive analysis.[1] As both areas are now being reassessed and Ibn Dāniyāl has started to attract interest, he emerges as one of the most challenging and exotic authors of medieval times. Even so, the conceptual ambiguity related to the development of dramatic art in medieval Arabo-Islamic culture, the semantic difficulties of his idiom, and a critical apparatus inadequate to tackle the peculiarities of the genre have resulted in the ongoing neglect of Ibn Dāniyāl as a playwright. Instead, when studied, his work is usually compared or related to the mainstream literary heritage of the medieval Arabs at the expense of a more complex assessment of his dramaturgy. Although the merits of such an approach need not be belittled, the main feature of Ibn Dāniyāl's work—namely, its dramaturgy—has been seriously overshadowed by concerns about its textuality.

To be fair, such scholarly tendencies are not surprising. Ibn Dāniyāl's plays come to us as texts, not as performances, and as such, they raise a series of textual questions. For example, the syntactical and lexical intricacies resulting from Ibn Dāniyāl's hopscotch between colloquial and standard Arabic, numerous orthographic and phonetic alterations for the sake of rhythm and rhyme, his parodic references to great men of letters, and his masterful leaps between prose and

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[1] For example, Ibn Dāniyāl is only briefly referred to in studies such as Aḥmad 'Abd al-Rāziq, *La femme au temps des Mamlouks en Égypte* (Cairo, 1973); Boaz Shoshan, "High Culture and Popular Culture in Medieval Islam," *Studia Islamica* 73 (1991): 67–107; Ulrich Haarmann, "Regional Sentiment in Medieval Islamic Egypt," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43 (1980): 55–66; idem, "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamluks and Their Sons in the Intellectual Life of Fourteenth Century Egypt and Syria," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33 (1988): 81–114; Barbara Flemming, "Literary Activities in Mamlūk Halls and Barracks," in *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet,* ed. M. R. Ayalon (Jerusalem, 1977), 16; whereas in Reynold A. Nicholson's *Literary History of the Arabs* (London, 1907) there is no mention of Ibn Dāniyāl at all.

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poetry, all make textual analysis a quite formidable task. Moreover, the manuscripts themselves—the Istanbul, the Madrid, and the two Cairo ones—reveal an array of incongruities arising from the copyists′ errors in transcribing Ibn Dāniyāl′s colloquialisms, puns, and occasional gibberish. In this sense, the literary challenge is profound and the overall findings still incomplete. In short, nobody has managed so far either to edit or translate the texts of Ibn Dāniyāl′s plays with full confidence and total satisfaction.

This article, however, aims to transcend strict textual concerns in order to highlight the performative quality of Ibn Dāniyāl′s *khayāl al-ẓill,* the shadow play. The article proposes a joint assessment of content and form while both acknowledging the difficulty, and highlighting the necessity, of understanding the shadow play′s triangular mode of dramaturgic communication that involves the puppets, the puppeteer, and the audience. Moreover, since Ibn Dāniyāl′s trilogy *Ṭayf al-Khayāl* is discussed first and foremost as performance art, its relational qualities are enhanced. This enables us to look at the shadow play as an interactive genre and to shift its analysis from textual to a performative production of meaning. It is my contention, therefore, that a more appropriate understanding of Ibn Dāniyāl′s shadow plays must lie in the discussion of the *khayāl al-ẓill* as performance art situated in the larger context of Mamluk society and culture. This, in fact, is the will of the author Ibn Dāniyāl himself. In the prologue to his trilogy, he makes a plea to the commissioner of the plays to suspend any critical judgment of his work until the performance is carried out in full:

> You wrote to me, ingenious master, wanton buffoon, may your position still be lofty and your veil inaccessible, mentioning that *khayāl al-ẓill* lost its popularity as its quality slackened due to repetitiveness. You therefore asked me to produce something in this genre with fine and original characters. Modesty overcame me because of the subject of your request—which you would later introduce as mine—but then I realized that my refusal would lead you to assume that either I was not interested or that I lacked ideas and talent, regardless of my ample inspiration and natural gift. So I indulged in the domain of their unruly dominion and decided to comply with your request. I thus composed witty *bābāt* of high, not low, literary quality. *When you sketch the characters, cut out their parts, put them together, and then project them before the audience through a candle-lit screen, you will see that they are an innovative example, surpassing other such plays in truth.*[2]

[2]Ibn Dāniyāl al-Mawṣilī, ″Kitāb Ṭayf al-Khayāl,″ Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi MS 648

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KHAYĀL AL-ẒILL AS PERFORMANCE ART: THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Standing above the analysis of Ibn Dāniyāl's *khayāl al-ẓill* is the question of whether the Arabs ever knew drama. Traditionally answered in the negative, this question is probably as old as the criticism of the Arab intellectual heritage itself.[3] Based on Aristotelian models, scholarly negations are quick in pointing out the medieval Arab lack of both cultural and analytical frameworks to understand Aristotle's terminology associated with this mimetic genre. But sticking to the Aristotelian definition of drama as a representation of life excludes rather sweepingly a whole range of performative genres of the non-Hellenic kind in which form and content are more fluidly, or just differently, engaged than they are in the Greek drama. In fact, a variety of such fluid possibilities exists in the Arab heritage, from the *maqāmah* to the *ḥikāyah,* and even, as Michael Sells suggests, to the *qaṣīdah* improvisations that can be likened to jazz performances where individual renderings dictate the tenor of any given tune.[4] More than these, however, the *khayāl* and its derivatives are the most widespread performative phenomena that speak to the presence and relative ubiquity of dramatic art. To that end, in his study on medieval Arab live theater, Moreh argues that

> The term *khayāl*/*khiyāl* is well established in the sense of "live play" from at least the ninth century; in the tenth century it is employed as a synonym for *ḥikāya*, which it eventually supersedes. The shadow play, on the other hand, receives its first mention only in the eleventh century, in Ibn al-Haytham, and then, specifically as *khayāl al-ẓill,* in Ibn Ḥazm. The qualification of *khayāl* by *al-ẓill, al-izār, al-sitāra,* etc., is reasonably clear evidence for the reference of the simple term to a type of performance from which it was necessary to differentiate this new import from the Far East.[5]

Moreh draws attention to several issues of immediate relevance: first, there is a historical continuity within the dramatic heritage in medieval Islam, in which the shadow theater plays a prominent role; second, Ibn Dāniyāl greatly benefited from

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Ali Paşa Hekimoğlu Collection (henceforth MS[1]); Madrid, El Escorial MS 469 Derenburg Collection (henceforth MS[2]); Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah MS 16 Aḥmad Taymūr (henceforth MS[3]).

[3]Shmuel Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World* (New York, 1992), Preface.

[4]Michael Sells, *Desert Tracings: Six Classic Arabian Odes* (Middletown, CT, 1989); also, for example, Régis Blachère and Pierre Masnou, *Maqāmāt (séances)/al-Hamadāni (Hamadhâni): choisies et traduites de l'arabe avec une étude sur le genre* (Paris, 1957).

[5]Shmuel Moreh, "Live Theatre in Medieval Islam," in *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization: in Honour of Professor David Ayalon,* ed. M. Sharon (Jerusalem, 1986), 60–61.

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the continuity of performative genres by deploying the term *khayāl* ″in all its shades of meaning for puns and paronomasia″[6]; third, medieval Muslim writers distinguished well among different types of performance arts, which exposes the misconception that their usage of the terms was random because of a general lack of popularity of these genres; and fourth, that there exists a whole series of literary sources indicating the diversity of themes employed by performative artists.

Arguing that *khayāl al-ẓill* is best understood as a performative genre, this article takes the approach that shadow theater can be assessed from the perspective of theatrical semiotics, which defines dramatic art through the specification of four indispensable elements: (1) the presentation of human relationships (2) organized into a story (3) to an audience (4) by conscious and present agents.[7] The presence of all these necessary elements in the shadow play, though not always in an obvious and linear way, points to its integrity as dramatic art and highlights relational modes in the enactment of text and the assignment of meaning.

This proposition lends itself to the question about the ways in which theatrical interaction takes place, especially in the shadow play. Here, the theory of Possible Worlds may give a useful insight. As Darko Suvin explains, ″in theatre, dramaturgic story and spacetime induce, by the interaction between the existents, events, and relationships being ostended and the audience for which they are ostended, a specific Possible World.″[8] In other words, the audience, positioning itself within the existing system of values, interacts with the dramatized state of affairs by inducing a world in which such relations are possible, not actual. The emphasis on the interaction between the stage and the audience is therefore significant not only to make sense of the text but of its visual representations through the prism of a shared cultural repertoire. While differences among individual spectators will generate a certain level of divergence in this interpretive process, the attempt is to highlight the aspects of the performance that could possibly relate to the actual world. To that end, common cultural denominators are required for the recognition, de-semantization, and re-semantization of all theatrical signs. Here a cue can be taken from Umberto Eco′s argument that ″in the *mise-en-scène* an object, first recognized as a real object, is then assumed as a sign in order to refer back to another object (or to a class of objects) whose constitutive stuff is the same as that of the representing object.″[9]

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[6]Ibid., 46.

[7]Darko Suvin, ″Approaches to Topoanalysis and to the Paradigmatics of Dramaturgic Space,″ *Poetics Today* 8 (1987): 312.

[8]Darko Suvin, ″The Performance Text as Audience-Stage Dialog Inducing a Possible World,″ *Versus* 42 (1987): 15.

[9]Umberto Eco, ″Semiotics of Theatrical Performance,″ *The Drama Review* 21 (1977): 111.

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By analogy, the shadow plays of Ibn Dāniyāl also offer an alternative vision of the actual world through the creation of an imaginary state of affairs represented by shadow figures. Of course, the specificity of the shadow theater calls for further elucidation of the nature of theatrical signification. The most recognizable feature of this genre, from which the name itself derives, is the casting of shadows of flat, leather figures (usually *ashkhāṣ* in Arabic) onto a white screen (usually *sitārah, sitr,* or *izārah* in Arabic) by means of a lamp *(fānūs),* candle *(sham‘)* or other source of light. The settings used for this purpose are usually of two kinds: portable and permanent. The portable consists of a box into which the puppeteer (usually *khayālī, muqaddim,* or *muḥarrik* in Arabic) enters and maneuvers the source of light and the figures so as to create a shadow-play effect without being seen himself. In contrast, the permanent (and the more complex) setting involves a large screen as the stage that divides the audience and the puppeteer. A curious deviation from these common methods of casting shadows is a technique described by Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), involving a rapidly revolving wheel onto which the figures are fastened in the order of appearance in the play.[10] As the wheel, interposed between the source of light and the screen, spins, the figures consecutively cast their shadows and thus carry out the performance. Although the human factor cannot be excluded in the realization of the action, it is plausible that such a show was silent and the role of the puppeteer confined to a mere *taḥrīk* function. This mode of performance, however, seems to have been rather uncommon.

The absence of human beings as visible dramaturgic agents and their replacement with one-dimensional shadows certainly carries some drawbacks that have to be compensated for at another level of theatrical communication. Here, action happens as the puppeteer animates the figures through a range of audio-visual effects. Because the function of the stage is assumed by a white screen onto which the shadows are projected, the screen determines the boundaries of ″a spatio-temporal *elsewhere* represented as though actually present for the audience.″[11] The set of relations on that stage is threefold: the puppeteer, the figures, and the shadows. Their synchronization is not only semiotic but mimetic, since it is the puppeteer′s conscious ″acting,″ along with the figures′ signification, that ultimately achieves an ″elsewhere″ which resembles as well as points to the actual world. The usage of props is considerably reduced, and their presence only vaguely marks the space of action (e.g., indoors/outdoors; sea/land; city/countryside, etc.). A more complex communication, because of such limited usage of props, is therefore achieved through the deployment of additional narrative markers.

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[10]‘Alī ibn Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm, *Kitāb al-Akhlāq wa-al-Siyar* (Beirut, 1985), 30.

[11]Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London, 1980), 99.

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Furthermore, as I have argued elsewhere,[12] the verisimilitude of stage signs, or what semioticians refer to as ″iconic identity,″[13] can hardly be achieved in the shadow play, whereas theater proper allows it often in a rather convincing fashion. Similarly, the subtlety of human relations or psychological processes that can evolve on the stage in theater proper are hardly possible in the shadow play where only clumsy and rudimentary representations of human interaction can take place. Furthermore, the figures representing human beings in the shadow theater often assume grotesque representations or stereotypes based on culturally assumed attributes. The Turkish *Karagöz* is an excellent example of ethnic, gender, or social typifications of various Ottoman subjects. The shortcomings of the shadow play are thus manipulated as modes of strengthening, if problematically, the embedded societal relations. It is therefore very difficult, even impossible, to be experimental or innovative in the shadow theater. The innovation cannot come through spontaneity but through careful rearrangement of the long-term and familiar modes of representation. Thus, the deployment of leather figures as dramaturgic agents evokes playful yet often immediate associations between the shadows and the objects they iconically designate. In the majority of shadow plays, then, it is collectivities or types of people that are represented, not individual characters. The collectivity is given a primordial quality singled out and objectified in the shadow figure´s physical trait, the accent, or the costume. The audience is thus placed in servitude to its own beliefs and experiences. This degree of condensation of collective traits into shadow representations takes to an exceptional degree one of the basic principles of theatrical interaction, which Umberto Eco defines as the transposition of stage signs from the rhetorical to the ideological level.[14]

As the one-dimensionality of its bearers of action limits the figures´ mobility, gestural communication is often successfully compensated by the puppeteer´s persuasive rhetorical and acting skills. In his study of the medieval Arabic shadow play, Ibrāhīm Ḥamādah observed that ″the puppeteer has to have good narrative skills; must know the basic principles of verse composition and be able to sing; must feel a special affection towards popular story-telling, riddles, and *zajal*s. All in all, he must know what the audience enjoys and loves.″[15] With the puppeteer´s help, the spectators are reminded that they are already familiar with the possible world of the play, be it through its system of values (as in the *wayang kulit,* or

[12]Amila Buturović, ″″Truly, This Land is Triumphant and Its Accomplishments Apparent!′: Baybars´s Cairo in Ibn Dāniyāl´s *′Ṭayf al-Khayāl,′*″ in *Writers and Rulers: Perspectives from Abbasid to Safavid Times,* ed. Beatrice Gruendler and Louise Marlow (Wiesbaden, forthcoming).

[13]Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 23.

[14]Eco, ″Semiotics of Theatrical Performance,″ 116.

[15]Ibrāhīm Ḥamādah, *Khayāl al-Ẓill wa-Tamthīlīyāt Ibn Dāniyāl* (Cairo, 1963), 18.

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Indonesian shadow play, for example) or through recognizable contours of animate and inanimate objects. Thus, it is mainly the puppeteer who activates the modes of recognition as he animates the figures, allowing the audience to look at the stage not as an unknown reality but something possibly familiar. For all its limitations and one-dimensionality, then, the shadow theater possesses the capacity of intimating, if not recreating, any number of possible relations. In that process, the puppeteer's role is pivotal.

While at one level, the theatrical frame is meant to be easily recognized, the two worlds—the actual and the possible—are sharply delineated. The audience is thus pulled into the production of meaning first by virtue of visual recognition of the contents in the theatrical frame and, secondarily, by drawing analogies and commentaries between the theatrical frame and the outside world. A full awareness of the theatrical frame and the action that happens within it ascertains the flow of the stage-audience dialogue, even in the case of the portable type where the stage would come to the audience rather than in the fixed theater setting. In fact, other props and markers that inaugurate and assist the production of the play—the lantern, the rhetorical interventions, or the music—help to confirm that "the frame of an activity" is established and the audience's engagement is initiated. As Erving Goffman argues in his study on framing devices in social life, "Given their understanding of what it is that is going on, individuals fit their actions to this understanding and ordinarily find that the ongoing world supports this fitting."[16]

Therefore, despite the seeming drawbacks and a limited scope of performance of action, "we are," as Suvin puts it in reference to theater at large, "in final analysis always dealing with human relationships."[17] In fact, the condensation of human qualities in shadow representations often accelerates rather than hampers this process. Eco's argument that every sign, "after being a mere presence, a figure of speech, becomes an ideological abstraction,"[18] can be demonstrated quite well in the shadow play where only the contours of the figures are visually functional whereby their completeness calls for instantaneous group identifications, or evocation of "types." In the case of Ibn Dāniyāl's types, the process of association is most readily conducted on ethnic, professional, and gender lines. The assumed power relations in Mamluk society—about which a word will be said shortly—when transferred onto the white screen demand the bracketing off of those group traits that the

[16]Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York, 1974), 247. However, in certain extraordinary mental experiences even this conspicuous framing may not be sufficient. Goffman thus mentions an instance of a drunken spectator who shot a puppet portraying the devil, 363.

[17]Suvin, "The Performance Text," 4.

[18]Eco, "Semiotics of Theatrical Performance," 16.

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society treats as stereotypical and therefore constant. This gives a more sociological orientation to an argument made already by the Prague School of semiotics, which says that stage semiotization occurs the moment any object is put on the stage, and from then on the audience's assumption is a signifying function of all that they see therein.[19] The significance of such "bracketing" of human form and action within the dramaturgic space, when perceived through the context of the Mamluk audience for which Ibn Dāniyāl wrote, raises an important concern: since we cannot determine the character of the audience for lack of historiographical sources, the best we can do is project the target audience on the basis of the plays and the milieu.

In that sense, while the semiotic definition discloses an internal integrity of the shadow theater, a broader-based, sociocultural perspective demands that the shadow play be treated as a dynamic and rich social phenomenon that creates a sense of collectivity by engaging the audience in decoding the dramaturgic message. As the formal structure of the art demands, any successful shadow performance must evoke a set of associations that are both accessible and shared by the target audience. Unlike our current efforts to address the textual challenges of Ibn Dāniyāl's plays, the actual audience was faced with a task of quite different proportions, namely, of engaging actively and collectively in the production of the three plays. A cue here can be taken from Ward Keeler who in his study on the *wayang kulit*—the Indonesian shadow play—argues the following:

> To understand a performance as a relationship does not simply permit investigation to challenge commentary with observed reactions, however. It permits them, much more significantly, to integrate the art form with other kinds of relationships that obtain among the members of that culture. It is here that aesthetics, sociology, and ideology meet: in recurrent patterns in the mediation of self and other.[20]

Keeler's integrative approach suggests that we should not look for a cause-and-effect paradigm in the development of the shadow play as art performance in any given culture; rather, our task is primarily to discern the mechanisms that sustain the relationship between this art form and social life. In a similar vein, the aim here is not to create a causal link between Mamluk culture and the shadow-play tradition but to probe the relations through which Ibn Dāniyāl's text comes to life. To be sure, the challenge of this task is rather daunting: after all, unlike the Indonesian

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[19]For elaborate discussion on the theatrical principles set up by this school see Ladislav Matejka and Irwin R. Titunik, *Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions* (Cambridge, MA, 1976).

[20]Ward Keeler, *Javanese Shadow Plays, Javanese Selves* (Princeton, 1987), 17.

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shadow play, which continues to thrive as performance art—thus remaining accessible to researchers—the Mamluk shadow play is a dead form, surviving only descriptively, through scant historical and literary references, and prescriptively, through the text by Ibn Dāniyāl. Although in the absence of sufficient data about the staging and attending of such performances we can never imagine these events with full confidence, we can nevertheless take up the challenge of ″dramatizing″ the possible modes of interaction and interpretations of the text. Ultimately, then, the intention is to analytically envision the larger picture of societal relations that are animated as the leather figures communicate, through the agency of the puppeteer, the text of Ibn Dāniyāl′s plays to the Arabic-speaking audience of Mamluk Egypt.

KHAYĀL AL-ẒILL IN HISTORY: THE MAMLUKS AND BEYOND

A historical question comes to mind: is the medieval Arabic shadow play necessarily tied to any particular aesthetic, ideological, or cultural framework? What is its historical function? What are its themes? Unlike the Chinese shadow play, which has a liturgical place in popular Chinese religion,[21] the Indonesian *wayang kulit,* which enacts the stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabarata,* or the Ottoman *Karagöz,* which focuses on themes from everyday life through slapstick humor, the medieval Arabic shadow play had a more diverse, yet probably less ubiquitous presence in cultural history. On the one hand, it appears quite difficult to trace chronological and textual connections among different styles of shadow-play performances—and we know that there were several—in the medieval Islamic world. On the other hand, the extant historical evidence demonstrates the flexibility of this genre and its ability to adjust to the specificity of its different sociohistorical contexts.

While not indigenous to Islamic cultures, the shadow play found in *Dār al-Islām* a rather receptive ground. That the Fatimids already knew this theater is inadvertently documented by the ophthalmologist Ibn al-Haytham.[22] It was also known in another corner of the Arab world, as is attested by the Andalusian Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), who also alludes to a type of shadow play that appears to be unknown in the Mashriq. Commonly, the argument is made that the shadow play was a low and popular form of entertainment. For example, Jacob Landau states:

> For generations the ″Shadow-Play″ was nearly the only amusement which even the humblest could enjoy. The Shadow-Theatre, the artistic level of which is not high, could flourish even in a country

[21]Fan Pen Chen, ″The Chinese Shadow Theatre: Popular Religion, and Women Warriors,″ an unpublished monograph, 10–15.

[22]Ibn al-Haytham, *Kitāb al-Manāẓir,* ed. A. I. Sabra (Kuwait, 1983), 3:6, 408.

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> torn by internecine wars and strifes, which delayed its cultural development and impoverished its inhabitants. Hence the popular character of the Shadow Theatre in the Arab countries, especially in Egypt and Syria. [23]

However, the themes of the shadow play, as well as extant historical evidence, point to a different situation. The historian Ibrāhīm Ḥamādah is inclined to believe that, at least in Fatimid times, this theater penetrated into both popular and courtly milieux because it explored themes that appealed to both types of audience.[24] This view can certainly find theoretical justification: as Stuart Hall remarks, ″popular forms become enhanced in cultural value, go up the cultural escalator—and find themselves on the opposite side. Other things cease to have high cultural value, and are appropriated into the popular, becoming transformed in the process.″[25] Indeed, labeling the medieval shadow play as either popular or courtly, rather than both, obscures a whole range of historical evidence that points to the criss-crossings of its social and cultural frameworks. Thus, we know that in Ayyubid Egypt court functionaries had access to the shadow play just as common people did, as is attested by the ambivalence shown towards the shadow play by Saladin and al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil in 567/1171.[26]

In Egypt under the Mamluks, local historiographers treat the shadow play as one of the common forms of entertainment. Ibn al-Dawādārī speaks of Ibn Dāniyāl as one of his friends from literary circles,[27] while Ibn Taghrībirdī speaks offhandedly of the staging of various shadow plays before and in his lifetime.[28] In his chronicle

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[23]Jacob Landau, ″Shadow Plays in the Near East,″ *Edoth ("Communities")* 3 (1947–48): 23. This view is also shared by ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd Yūnus, *Muʻjam al-Fulklūr* (Beirut, 1983), 11–12, 24–25.

[24]Ḥamādah, *Khayāl al-ẓill*, 34.

[25]Stuart Hall, ″Notes on Deconstructing ´the Popular,´″ in *People´s History and Socialist Theory,* ed. Raphael Samuel (London, 1981), 234.

[26]Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī, *Thamarāt al-Awrāq* (Beirut,1983), 1:47, writes: ″This resembles what al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil said when the sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn brought to his castle a performer of *khayāl,* I mean, *khayāl al-ẓill,* for the qadi to be entertained. But al-Fāḍil stood up to leave when the performer began. Al-Nāṣir said to him: ´If it was forbidden, we would not attend it.´ Since he had been in al-Nāṣir´s service even before the latter took over the sultanate, the qadi did not want to create trouble so he sat until the end. Al-Malik al-Nāṣir asked him what he thought of the performance and the qadi answered: ´I thought it was a great lesson. I saw dynasties come and go. And when the curtain went up there was but one mover.´ And so, with the help of his eloquence, he produced something serious out of something so trivial.″

[27]Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān wa-Ghurar Tawārīkh al-Zamān,* ed. and trans. Gunhild Graf (Berlin, 1990), 57–58.

[28]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith al-Zamān,* as quoted by Moreh, *Live Theatre,* 139.

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Badā'i' al-Zuhūr, Ibn Iyās writes that in the year 779/1375 Sultan Sha'bān took a shadow-play performer as an entertainer during his pilgrimage to Mecca.[29] As we learn from the composition of the pilgrimage caravans, various functionaries used to accompany the Mamluk sultans on their way to Mecca. Among them were judges, but also entertainers *(ṭubūlkhānah)* and professional poets.[30] Manifestly, nothing in the themes of these shadow performances was offensive to the sultan and the religious elite as they made their way to Mecca.

We also learn that the shadow play at least once fell out of grace with the authorities. In the year 855/1451, Sultan Jaqmaq had all figures collected in a pile and incinerated. Per his decree, no performer was to stage either live or shadow-play performances any longer.[31] Although the extent of the damage to the props and possibly written texts is impossible to estimate, it is evident from later accounts that the shadow play outlived Jaqmaq's assault. As we are informed by Ibn Iyās, its popularity continued even on the courtly level: in the year 904/1489, Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir "sent someone to fetch Abū al-Khayr with his props for a shadow play, the group of Arab singers, and the chief buffoon, Burraywah."[32] Even as the Mamluks were about to fall, the shadow play emerges as a form of cultural activism. In 923/1517, as Sultan Selim was taking over Egypt, his victory was marked by a shadow-play performance. According to Ibn Iyās:

> On several evenings [the sultan Selim] attended the shadow performances. When he sat for the entertainment he was told that the performer was going to produce for him the figure of Bāb Zuwaylah and the figure of Ṭūmān Bāy as he was hanged and as the rope was cut twice in this process. This delighted Ibn 'Uthmān. That evening he rewarded the performer with 200 dinars, presented him with a velvet robe embroidered in gold, and said to him: "Travel with us to Istanbul and stay with us to entertain my son with this."[33]

Reflecting on this account, is it possible to argue that the Mamluk shadow play ceased in Egypt in its existing form and became reincarnated as, or at least absorbed into, the Ottoman *Karagöz?* While it is hard to speculate on the historical

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[29]Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'i' al-Duhūr,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá (Cairo, 1982), 1:174.

[30]'Abd Allāh 'Ankawī, "The Pilgrimage to Mecca in Mamlūk Times," *Arabian Studies* 1 (1974): 163–66.

[31]Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 2:33.

[32]Ibid., 3:401.

[33]Ibid., 5:192.

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journey of the performance art, the above references make it important to acknowledge the shadow play's integration into the cultural fabric of Mamluk Egypt at both popular and courtly levels. Ibn Dāniyāl's plays may be the only surviving testimony to the relative popularity of this genre, but its historical association with different spheres of Mamluk public life requires us to acknowledge its accessibility to both illiterate masses and educated elite both before and during Mamluk times. While the contents of Ibn Dāniyāl's play certainly reveal a rich referential value for reconstructing popular life in Cairo, the awareness of the shadow play by dignitaries and intellectuals—including, somewhat earlier, the great Sufi poet Ibn al-Fāriḍ who mentions in some detail different shadow plays[34]—testifies to its thematic and social diversity.

Many Stories, One Space-Time: Ibn Dāniyāl's Trilogy *Ṭayf al-Khayāl*

Kitāb Ṭayf al-Khayāl is composed of three plays reconstructing the exuberant popular culture of Mamluk Cairo. In all available manuscripts, the plays appear in the following order: (1) *Ṭayf al-Khayāl;* (2) *'Ajīb wa-Gharīb;* and (3) *Al-Mutayyam wa-al-Dā'ī al-Yutayyim.* The three plays share several common features; one is the spatial and temporal coordinates of the plays' possible world: Cairo under the rule of Baybars (1260–77). As this space-time coincides with Ibn Dāniyāl's empirical world, it is the plays' theatrical frame that transforms the historical here-and-now into a fictional one. Another common feature relates to the plays' themes: all three revolve around the everyday life of Baybars' Cairo, depicting people and relations that constitute the social and cultural reality of the Mamluk polity. Finally, the three plays are textually linked through the same prologue and executed by the same presenter *(rayyis),* the puppeteer 'Alī, which suggests that they must have been jointly staged. In that respect, it is important to establish a sense of continuity not just in the inner composition of the plays but in their production as well, since they prove to complement each other in matters of agential relations, dramaturgic style, and the target audience.

At the same time, however, the plays are configured independently in that they are marked by their own beginning and end and focused on unrelated stories and situations. The first play, *Ṭayf al-Khayāl,* bears the name of the entire trilogy. It is the most complex and mature piece with a well-conceived plot, action, and dialogue. It takes its name from a character, a narrator of sorts, Ṭayf al-Khayāl. The character blurs the otherwise clear line between the plays. In fact, he introduces them all by virtue of epitomizing, or embodying, in his shadowy presence, the potency of the genre in framing the reality that surrounds the audience. The

[34]See Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Nazm al-Sulūk,* vv. 679–714, translated by Th. Emil Homerin in *'Umar ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sufi Verse, Saintly Life* (New York, 2001), 269–79.

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paronomastic associations are unmistakable: on the one hand, the world of *khayāl al-ẓill* is animated as the character of Ṭayf al-Khayāl appears on the scene, showing and telling the framework of the play. On the other, different associations of *"khayāl"* as an immaterial and deceptive motif in Arab poetic and philosophical tradition are evoked, teasing the imagination of the audience. Yet, although presented as an elusive shadow image—like all other characters in the play—Ṭayf al-Khayāl tells a story of a very visible world: Baybars´ Cairo. All around the audience, the reality of Baybars´ Cairo is made daunting. The ambiguity and tangibility of everyday life are thus both foregrounded as Ṭayf al-Khayāl, the shadow figure, exclaims: ″Inna hādhihi dawlah qāhirah wa āthāruhā ẓāhirah.″ Make no mistake, in other words: what you see may or may not be what it is, for it is both concrete and elusive, both visible and invisible. The contrasts established by the framing of the palpable and immediate reality of Mamluk Cairo through the white cloth of the shadow theater are not just an optical challenge but a test in epistemology. As it turns out, the actual and the possible are not oppositional in any ideological or political sense. Rather, they are complementary, coexisting through clear visual boundaries yet blurred through the mimetic depictions of potentially real people as shadow figures. This allows the audience to participate in the critique and commentary about the actual through the mediation of the plays´ possible worlds. In that sense, the appearance of Ṭayf al-Khayāl at the beginning of the first play inaugurates the tone of the relationships that Ibn Dāniyāl wishes to establish with his audience: in all three plays, the audience is asked to draw analogies, make comparisons, and create contrasts. In fact, in all three plays this is achieved by positing main characters as pairs that can either evolve into irreconcilable polarities or supplements. I will return to this pairing after a brief story line of each play has been laid out.

In the first play, as the setting is established and connections to the outside world drawn, a humorous story evolves around a friend of Ṭayf al-Khayāl, a *jundī* by the name of Amīr Wiṣāl. It is through his story that the first play develops as an independent and well-rounded unit. Threatened by Baybars´ moral standards that clash deeply with his own, Wiṣāl informs the dismayed Ṭayf al-Khayāl that he has decided to abandon his wanton lifestyle—something the two friends have always shared—and settle down. Umm Rashīd, a go-between, is summoned to find Wiṣāl a bride. After much slapstick humor and comic speeches by the clerk in charge of Wiṣāl´s finances,[35] Tāj Bābūj, and a court poet Ṣurrah Ba'r, a bride is brought in with her entourage, including a boy—her grandson. Wiṣāl lifts the veil and discovers the ugliest woman staring at him, a nemesis contrived by Umm

[35]The mention of poor finances, according to Muṣṭafá Badawī, must have been the moment in the performance that signaled to the audience to reward the performers with money. See his ″Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Dāniyāl,″ *Journal of Arabic Literature* 13 (1982): 97.

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Rashīd for her long grudge against male behavior of which Wiṣāl is the worst example. Wiṣāl is furious and, appealing to his military power and authority, demands the punishment of Umm Rashīd and her husband ʻAflaq. Only the aging and pitiful ʻAflaq appears, oblivious to the reality around him and suffused in the memories of his youth and sexual vitality. He remarks, rather casually, that Umm Rashīd had just passed away at the inept hands of the local doctor Yaqṭīnūs. Yaqṭīnūs is summoned to confirm the news, which he does by adding a sexually suggestive remark that Umm Rashīd has just been buried with full honors, ″in the drain of the bath, behind the exit and near the entrance.″ Umm Rashīd′s demise inspires Wiṣāl and Ṭayf al-Khayāl to repent and to make the pilgrimage to Mecca.

In contrast, the second play, *ʻAjīb wa-Gharīb,* has no discernible story line. Rather, it is structured as a funfair comprising an episodic succession of different *personae* representing various trades and professions in Mamluk Egypt. Within such a scheme of representation, the audience acts as a crowd gathered to observe the skillful demonstrations of the fair exhibitors.

The title of the play derives from the names of two dramaturgic personalities—one Gharīb and the other one ʻAjīb—who stand for two disparate societal groups and thus define the play′s social boundaries. A brief authorial note introduces the play as ″giving an account of the ways of quaint and fraudulent people . . . who use the language of Banū Sāsān.″[36] A character appears on the stage, identifying himself as Gharīb. His name is a pun, foregrounding thus not only his belonging to the underground classes, but also the stereotypical visions of his kinfolk.[37] In many respects, Gharīb is the mainstay of the actual structure of the play, central to any analysis.

After a brief self-introduction, Gharīb withdraws and his partner, the preacher ʻAjīb al-Dīn, appears. Opening his sermon with the *basmalah,* he compliments the show by praising God for creating humor, and choosing the Prophet ″who knew how to joke yet spoke only the truth.″[38] Though ʻAjīb stands as the ideological antipode of Gharīb, the two are not in an antagonistic but complementary relationship. In fact, their juxtaposition reconciles social polarities in a way that makes it possible for the audience to see the necessity for social and cultural diversity that is so vibrantly captured in the play.

Following the introduction, the parade of figures starts as a parade of different professions. The name of each *persona* is a salient pun on her/his trade, referring thus to a whole system of values culturally associated with any given profession.

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[36]MS^1, fol. 86a; MS^2, fol. 30; MS^3, fol. 67.

[37]For a thorough discussion on the Banū Sāsān, see Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The Medieval Islamic Underworld* (Leiden, 1976).

[38]MS^1, fol. 95; MS^2, fol. 32a; MS^3, fol. 74.

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From the dramaturgic perspective, we are here clearly dealing not with characters, but types. We are thus introduced to a snake charmer, a quack doctor, an herbalist, a surgeon, an artist, a magician, an astrologer, a fortuneteller, an animal tamer, and many other entertainers and professionals who disclose secrets of their skill and trade and tell us about their successes and failures. The atmosphere is fully carnivalesque, bringing to the fore what Mikhail Bakhtin describes as ″an ancient connection between the forms of medicine and folk art which explains the combination in one person of actor and druggist, [whereby] medicine and theater are displayed side by side in the marketplace.″[39] Given the lack of narrative progression, the ending of the play is neither a resolution nor otherwise. The play simply ceases as the last exhibitor withdraws and Gharīb reappears, announcing in verses composed in *mutaqārib* that ″Gharīb is strange and ʻAjīb is odd.″[40]

Finally, the third play of the trilogy, *"Al-Mutayyam wa-al-Dāʻī al-Yutayyim,"* like the first one, has an organized story-line. The third play, in fact, is a burlesque portrayal of amorous conventions in Arabic literary discourse, yet with overwhelming sociological value related to popular practices in Mamluk Egypt. In the words of Ibn Dāniyāl himself: ″This is a play entitled ′The Enthralled One and the Enthralling Wretch.′ It speaks partly of the condition of lovers, partly of dalliance that is a certain kind of bewitchment, partly of playing games, and partly of wondrous and odd buffoonery that is not disgraceful.″[41]

The play begins with the appearance of ″a *shakhṣ* visibly distressed by ardent love,″ whose name—Mutayyam—betrays his pathos. Similar to the names of many other characters in Ibn Dāniyāl′s plays, the name Mutayyam is associated with a whole set of values that both belong to and transcend the immediate context. As in earlier plays where binaries are created as a framing device, Mutayyam′s role is related to Yutayyim, who, as his name implies, is the reason of Mutayyam′s distress.

Mutayyam opens his speech with a poem lamenting the condition of *ahl al-gharām*—love-stricken people—which mocks the amatory themes in classical Arabic poetry. He then turns to the audience and, having introduced himself, reveals the sorrowful story of his unrequited love towards a beautiful young man—Yutayyim—whom he had seen in a public bath in all his seductive nakedness.

Mutayyam then composes a *muwashshaḥah* exalting the young man′s beautiful features that supersede any woman′s and cause all men to fall in love with him.

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[39]Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World,* trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, IN, 1984), 159.

[40]MS[1], fol. 138; MS[3], fol. 109. Here, the word *gharīb* is repeated 4 times, while in MS[2], fol. 47a, the first two are *gharīb* and the last two, *ʻajīb*.

[41]MS[1], fol. 138a; MS[2], fol. 48; MS[3], fol. 110.

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As he completes his eulogy, a deformed person comes in, introducing himself as Mutayyam´s former lover. He is devastated that Mutayyam has dumped him for a younger and taller man, having thus ″replaced with jasmine the thorns of tragacanth.″ From their conversation, we learn that Mutayyam had spotted Yutayyim in a public bath, where he managed to steal a kiss. He also confesses that he is now busy trying to seduce Yutayyim through the latter´s servant Bayram, who seems to exercise a great control over his master. Indeed, Bayram appears, explaining that he has taken matters into his own hands. A typical story of unrequited love and quest for the beloved unfolds, with Bayram assuming the role of the go-between, in a way similar to Umm Rashīd in the first play. Here too, ″little people″ are given prominence as agents of action and change.

Bayram organizes a fight between Yutayyim and Mutayyam´s pet animals. Three matches follow, arbitrated by one and the same judge, Zayhūn, and attended by many. The build-up of tension carries strong comic and erotic effects: as the tension increases, so does the size of the animals in the fight: first roosters, then rams, and, finally, bulls. Mutayyam´s ascension to victory is toned down by a desire to appease his lover whose animals do not perform well. The game is about class as much as it is about erotic gain.

Each match is preceded by a formulaic speech by the judge Zayhūn, starting with a pious eulogy and ending with an explanation of the importance of such noble sports.[42] Finally, Yutayyim´s bull wins, which temporarily throws Mutayyam into despair but gives him a chance to sacrifice the bull and throw a feast. As the feast goes on, unknown people pour in, introducing themselves to the host Mutayyam through peculiar stories of their lives, satisfying their hunger—both physiological and erotic—and eventually falling asleep. As in the second play, the succession of people is the succession of particular trends, and in this case, these trends relate to clandestine erotic interests and sexual practices. At the end of the play, amidst the pile of drunken and unconscious bodies, Mutayyam is visited by another, the Angel of Death. In a tragicomic confrontation with his departure from this world, Mutayyam rushes to repent, uttering all necessary formulaic expressions of piety and submission to God and the Prophet.

Inducing a Possible World: Recognition and Critique

As indicated by the contents of the plays, it is the heterogeneity of the Mamluk milieu that comes to life in Ibn Dāniyāl´s work. Individual plays, then, are not cast as singular events that stand apart from the real world. Rather, teasing out the audience´s common perception and attitudes, Ibn Dāniyāl expropriates common

[42]Curious is his remark before their beginnings that the fights are carried out ″as the custom of the play requires″ (*'alá 'ādat al-khayāl)*.

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knowledge to explore some of the possible relations in the surrounding world. In that sense, Ibn Dāniyāl appeals to issues and relations that already belong to the audience but assigns to them unconventional values and humorous overtones.

Among the most prominent and recurrent issues in all three plays of *Ṭayf al-Khayāl,* for example, are the ambiguous relationship between the military and religious elite, the ethnic composition of Mamluk Cairo, and the criss-crossings between high and low cultures. As suggested earlier, these issues are problematized rather humorously through repetitive pairings of characters that belong to different walks of life. Political rivalries are presented as correlative rivalries. In real life, the Arabs and the Turkic-speaking Mamluks kept a distance and each nurtured a sense of superiority over the other. The local ulama looked down on Mamluks as soldiers with no skill in matters of culture and often blamed them for the decline of Arabic literature and arts.[43] In turn, Mamluks resented the ulama´*s* sense of superiority for it seemed unrealistic in the face of their lack of political power. The Mamluks thus nurtured their own sense of cultural authenticity by insisting on using Turkish in oral communication and often requiring it from all state employees.[44] In the early period of their rule in particular, the local religious elite was biased against the pagan origins of the Mamluks, which almost automatically dismissed them as unsuitable for the traditional Arabo-Islamic cultural circles: ″'*Ulamā*' continued to write about '*ulamā*' and for '*ulamā*' paying little or no attention in their works to all those who stood outside their own circles.″[45] Despite this attitude of entrenched cultural stereotyping, the ties of the religious elite with the Mamluk aristocracy increased. Gradually, a partial integration of the ulama into the political apparatus occurred through the appointments of the chief qadi, army judges, market inspectors, official preachers, administrators of schools and hospitals, and so on.[46] In the domain of culture, however, the Mamluks´ interest and contributions were perceived as motivated purely by political gain.[47]

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[43]Haarmann, ″Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage,″ 82.

[44]Flemming, ″Literary Activities,″ 250, 259.

[45]Haarmann, ″Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage,″ 84. This attitude was not shared by the masses, who saw the Mamluks as their protectors. Ulrich Haarmann, ″Ideology and History, Identity and Alterity: The Arab Image of the Turk from the 'Abbasids to Modern Egypt,″ *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20 (1988): 183–84.

[46]Ira Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1984), 130–41.

[47]Ibid., 191; Haarmann, ″Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage,″ 83. This prejudice, however, seems to have been a two-way street. Ibn al-Dawādārī, for example, who cultivated both Turkish and Islamic sentiments, contemptuously speaks about how superstitious the Arabs were. See Ulrich Haarmann, ″Turkish Legends in the Popular Historiography of Medieval Egypt,″ in *Proceedings of the VIth Congress of Arabic and Islamic Studies,* ed. Frithiof Rundgren (Leiden, 1975), 105. Also, the Mamluks were often criticized for not caring about the names of the Prophet

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The ongoing tension between the Mamluk military aristocracy and the Arab religious notables was complicated by the presence of other minorities that were disadvantaged by such precarious internal relations, so it is generally argued that this period witnessed a significant decrease in the Coptic population.[48] While on the one hand the Mamluks established important political and economic relations with a number of non-Muslim countries extending from the Kingdoms of Aragon and Castile in the west to South India in the east, they carefully monitored potential ties between their own non-Muslim communities and external ones.[49] However, both Jews and Christians frequently occupied important positions in the Mamluk bureaucratic apparatus, mainly as scribes and tax collectors. In spite of that practice, the *dhimmī*s were obliged to observe certain rules of conduct that clearly defined them as second-class citizens. Thus, they had to bow their heads when passing Muslims, were not allowed to crowd Muslims in public places, were allowed to use their temples for quiet religious services only, had to display emblems on their turbans in a clear manner, and had to preserve the color of their garments by regular dyeing.[50] We also know of occasional public outbursts: during the reign of al-Ashraf al-Khalīl, for example, Muslim dissatisfaction with Coptic influence on public affairs resulted in a series of assaults on Coptic houses and churches. When the sultan eventually yielded to public demand and ordered the hanging of a number of Christian scribes, he was cautioned by an amir that these scribes were indispensable, as they ran all financial affairs.[51]

This strained yet functional state of affairs was contingent on the sense of political stability, though many rules and habits were often bent in the name of that stability. Principles often gave in under the pressures of practical concerns. For example, common folk negotiated such tensions with much more fluidity and openness to compromise. As Haarmann points out: ″The people in the street did not share this feeling of suffocation and threat of selfishness and dishonesty. They declared, ′Rather the injustice (or tyranny) of the Turks than the righteousness (or

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and his Companions, and maintaining their Turkish names as first names. See David Ayalon, ″The Muslim City and the Mamluk Military Aristocracy,″ *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 2 (1968): 322.

[48]Clifford Bosworth, ″Christian and Jewish Religious Dignitaries in Mamlūk Egypt and Syria,″ *IJMES* 3 (1972): 59–74 and 199–216; Donald P. Little, ″Coptic Conversion to Islam under the Baḥrī Mamlūks, 629–755/1293–1354,″ *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39 (1976): 552–54.

[49]Bosworth, ″Christian and Jewish Religious Dignitaries,″ 64.

[50]Ibid., 215.

[51]Little, ″Conversion to Islam,″ 554.

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self-righteousness) of the Arabs *(ẓulm al-turk wa-lā 'adl al-'arab).*"[52] For Ibn Dāniyāl, Arab but not Egyptian born, black-and-white choices and unbending allegiances were never a serious option, and his biographical data reveal an unfettered freedom of action and movement through different circles.[53] Accordingly, in the possible worlds of his plays, the social and cultural boundaries are not fixed but porous, despite the squad of distinct and seemingly incompatible shadow figures that perpetually mock and trick each other, undermine each other's authority, and explicitly care only for their own self-interest. The representation of their mutual dissociation is tackled in a dramaturgic process which in carnivalesque festivities correspond to travesty, defined by Michael Bristol, in a different context, as "code switching" and "grotesque exaggerations" whereby "identity is made questionable by mixing attributes."[54] For Ibn Dāniyāl, visual stereotypes remain as the figures cast their shadows with recognizable traits—attire, physical features, demeanor, and so on. The world of seemingly polar oppositions is turned into a world of complementary attributes—the mutable is at once immutable, the sacred is profane, the moral is immoral. Code switching happens in the matters of language as well, as the characters move randomly and with ease from prose to poetry, from eschatology to scatology, from grammatical sophistication to colloquial simplification, even gibberish. The overall effect becomes intentionally humorous, and it is through laughter that the audience participates in a critique of its own perceptions and representations of group identities.

To enhance this process, dramaturgic agents are constructed around paronomasia. It has been pointed out that in the second play almost all agential names appear as metaphoric constructs built directly around the types of represented trades: Ḥunaysh al-Ḥuwāh (Little Snake Charmer), Maymūn al-Qarrād (Monkey the Ape Trainer), Hilāl al-Munajjim (Astrologer's Crescent), and so on. Similarly, when removed from the dramatic frame and placed back into the frame of actual historic circumstances, most of the names of other of Ibn Dāniyāl's *personae* reveal a number of cultural allusions: in the first play, these are, for example, the names of Amīr Wiṣāl (The Prince of Sexual Union), Ṭayf al-Khayāl (the Spirit of Imagination—the leitmotif of early Arabic poetry), Ḍabbah bint Miftāḥ (Latch Daughter of Key), Tāj Bābūj (Crown of Slippers), Ṣurrah Ba'r (Pile of Dung, also an allusion to the poet Sarrah Ḍurrah). In the third play, the names of the

[52]Ulrich Haarmann, "Ideology and History," 183.

[53]See, for example, Khalīl Ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafayāt,* ed. Sven Dedering (Wiesbaden, 1981), 3:51–52; Muḥammad ibn Shākir al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-Wafayāt*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo, 1951), 2:384–85; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, 57–58.

[54]Michael Bristol, *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (New York, 1985), 65.

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protagonists—Mutayyam and al-Dā'ī Yutayyim—stand in opposition vis-à-vis each other. The other appearing *personae,* such as Abū Sahl (Father of the Easy One), Baddāl (Substitute), Dā'ūd al-Qabbāḍ (Dā'ūd the Gripper), and Jallād 'Umayrah (lit., the one who skins his member, i.e., Masturbator), are all associated with specific sexual practices and lifestyles.

Groupings of characters are also done on ethno-professional lines: Amīr Wiṣāl is a Mamluk prince; Nātū is a Sudanese slave boy; al-Tāj Bābūj is a Coptic secretary; Ṣurrah Ba'r is an Arab court poet; Yaqṭīnūs is a Greek doctor; Ṣāni'ah is a Gypsy tattooing woman; Bayram is a Turkish servant. There are also vocational groupings, such as the trade exhibitors in the second play, 'Ajīb the preacher, or Umm Rashīd as a go-between; the lines of social lifestyle, such as Gharīb, 'Ajīb, 'Aflaq, and different *personae* appearing as sybaritic guests at Mutayyam's party; or gender lines, such as Umm Rashīd as a cunning marriage broker, Ḍabbah bint Miftāḥ as a victim of imbalance in sexual politics, 'Aflaq as a bamboozled husband, Yutayyim as an accessible aesthetic ideal. These groupings are not rigidly separated and their complicated interaction reinforces the overall effect of such puns. Given that all three plays explicitly share the historical frame with Ibn Dāniyāl's own life, it appears worthwhile to reflect on Ibn Dāniyāl's articulation of that frame through such paronomastic appellation.

As proposed above, the main carriers of action in all three plays come in pairs, complementing each other in a dialectic interplay.[55] Although the function of other agents should by no means be underestimated, it seems that the skeletal function of the leading pair supports Ibn Dāniyāl's interpretive axis. These pairs do not necessarily function in the protagonist/antagonist constructs, but they do tend to articulate their concerns through conceptually different frames, allowing the viewers to observe polarities through the grey area of mutual dependence rather than as fixed and isolated entities. In the first play, the pair is Amīr Wiṣāl and Umm Rashīd; in the second, as the title itself indicates, Gharīb and 'Ajīb; and in the third, again as the title suggests, Mutayyam and Yutayyim. Let us consider them all on their own terms.

Amīr Wiṣāl and Umm Rashīd reflect the most visible polarities: Wiṣāl is a Mamluk soldier, that is, a man of the sword. He wears a *sharbūsh,* the headgear reflecting his status with Mamluk chivalry;here he displays an impressive knowledge of different breeds of horses.[56] He carries a mace *(dabbūs)* and wears a bristling mustache. The physical features of a Mamluk soldier are condensed on a leather

[55]This is also the case with the Ottoman *gölge oyunu,* which is built around the characters of Karagöz and Hacivat.

[56]MS[1], fols. 48a–51; MS[2], fols. 18–21; MS[3], fols. 38–41.

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figure, bringing Wiṣāl to the forefront of social stereotyping. As a personality, he embodies power and has no pardon for anything or anyone:

> I am a boxer and a slanderer, a thug and a caviler, a rebuker and a sneaker, a quarreler and a menacer, a believer and a murderer. I′ve been rubbed and stroked. I am a pimp and a shoveler.[57] I dress well and socialize, I turn into a gentleman, I juggle, I dye my hair, I limp, I dance, I report, and I tell stories. So don′t disregard my value, now that I′ve disclosed my secrets to you.[58]

His mainstream Mamluk upbringing is reflected in the social circles of his childhood: he has grown up ″among Dākūsh and Diqlāsh, and Qāmūz and Zamlaksh.″[59] The juxtaposition of the opposites—power on the one hand and its total mismanagement on the other—creates a fierce yet comic character in Wiṣāl. His secretary ridicules his courtly and financial affairs.[60] The courtly poet praises Wiṣāl for turning ″waste land into an earthly paradise governed by justice.″[61] Wiṣāl takes his power for granted, expecting it to help him reach a quick marriage settlement in order to avoid political repercussions and demonstrate his common sense. Taking a shortcut to morality is his privilege as a fearsome *jundī.* Although mocked by his servants and inferiors, Wiṣāl is never challenged by them: after all, they are part of the same system, and they do not step out of their designated roles. The challenge can only come from outside that sociological space, and who better to offer it than Umm Rashīd?

Umm Rashīd belongs to a world that Wiṣāl tries to infiltrate without any respect for its internal workings. The trade that Umm Rashīd personifies —that of go-betweens—is an anathema to Wiṣāl′s lifestyle. Her description in the play is in fact a subtle description of that underground world that functions through strict codes of behavior that are inaccessible to and spurned by Wiṣāl:

> Summon Umm Rashīd, the marriage agent, even though she is one who goes out by night into the bush. But she knows every honorable woman and every adulteress and every beauty in Miṣr and al-Qāhirah. For she lets them go out from the baths, disguised in servant′s clothes, and guarantees the prostitutes for whom the police are looking in secret places, providing them with clothes and jewelry

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[57] *Karuk,* probably from Turkish *körek,* shovel.

[58] MS[1], fols. 12a–14; MS[2], fols. 5–5a; MS[3], fols. 10–11.

[59] MS[1], fol. 13; MS[2], fol. 5a; MS[3], fol. 11.

[60] MS[1], fols. 22–26; MS[2], fols. 8–10; MS[3], fols. 18–21.

[61] MS[1], fol. 26; MS[2], fol. 10a; MS[3], fol. 24.

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> without fee. . . . She also knows how to deal in a friendly way with the hearts of lovers, and she sells the enjoyment of love only on the condition of trial. She does not break her promise, she does not haggle over a price. She does not visit a drinking bout in order to appropriate what drips down from the candles, nor does she ransack the clothes of the guests for money. And she does not take the fragrant flowers around the bottles, pretending it is to decorate the clothes of the sinning women. And she does not filch the pieces of meat from the plates, nor does she pour together what has cleared from the dregs of the wine. She does not exchange old slippers for new ones, and she does not criticize the clothes of customers, as a housewife would do. Mostly she goes round to the houses of the women of rank and sells balls of material, raw and unbleached, and all kinds of spices and incense. She sells on credit and makes appointments for Thursdays and Mondays. And she does not haggle over price. And she keeps her appointments even if it is the Night of Fate *(laylat al-qadr)*. So it is, and her pocket is never empty of chewing-gum and mirrors and rouge and powder and Maghribine nutmeg and powder for coloring the eyebrows and a lime preparation for the armpits and perfumed wool, and skin cream and ″Beauty of Joseph″ and pomade and Barmakide scent and hair-dyes and violet scent. The devil kisses the ground before her daily, and he alone wakes from her slumbers.[62]

Gradually, we learn that the two have a long history: Umm Rashīd remembers little Wiṣāl as a stubborn and dirty boy, and bitterly adds that he managed to get seduced even by her own husband. In fact, Wiṣāl seems to be a true menace, intruding into her affairs for a long time. She takes revenge by offering him in marriage a very ugly and aged bride. Outraged, he tries to gain the upper hand by responding with force—the only weapon he truly knows. However, she dies before he sets his *dabbūs* on her and her husband. Her death, ironically, is not her punishment but his. Her trade is reborn—and so is she—as her mantle is passed on to her disciple just before Umm Rashīd passes away. Finally, her death is a cause for repentance—Amīr Wiṣāl submits his powers to God by virtue of having lost his military vanity to Umm Rashīd. But neither Umm Rashīd′s triumph and

[62]Based on the translation by Paul Kahle in ″The Arabic Shadow Play in Egypt,″ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,* n.s., 4 (1940): 32–33. For an interesting study on the character of Umm Rashīd, see Maria Kotzamanidou, ″The Spanish and Arabic Characterization of the Go-Between in the Light of Popular Performance,″ *Hispanic Review* 48 (1980): 91–109.

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death nor Wiṣāl′s repentance belong to them as individuals. On the contrary, both roles are developed as part of the same death and rebirth cycle through which two collective bodies are reconciled after mutual endangerment: the underworld that Umm Rashīd jealously guards, and the political authority of Amīr Wiṣāl.

A similar binary structure exists in the second play as well, here even more explicitly: Gharīb, who personifies the underworld, and ʻAjīb al-Dīn, who represents the religious discourse. The common people′s allegiances stay in between, revolving around both layers, much in the same way as the common people congregate around the stalls of exhibitors throughout the play. Though linear, the arrangement of the play is such that its beginning and end eventually join, enclosing the folk spirit in a jovial, if tension-filled, way.

Gharīb′s name reveals his social alienation. Literally meaning ″strange, quaint, foreign, etc.,″ this name draws attention to the undefined social status of its bearer and his kinfolk. Gharīb is one of the Banū Sāsān, which is a collective reference to the various groups of people who made up the medieval Islamic underworld:

> The underworld classes of which we have information include the fully criminal ones, like skilful thieves and burglars, footpads and brigands, and also those in the no-man′s land between criminality and conventional behaviour, like entertainers and mountebanks of diverse types, beggars of differing degrees of ingenuity, quack doctors, dentists and herbalists, and so forth.[63]

Gharīb′s alienation is rooted in a somewhat accommodating yet hostile political milieu which created out of the Banū Sāsān perpetual wanderers who claim all lands, disregarding the political and social boundaries: ″The whole world is ours, and whatever is in it, the lands of Islam and unbelief alike.″[64] Gharīb reveals the secrets of a conniving and trouble-making lifestyle on his numerous journeys through Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. We learn what it means to be one of the Banū Sāsān: sleeping outdoors by the fire with one′s head laid on the *kashkūl* instead of a pillow; visiting prostitutes; indulging in various sexual practices; making a living by faking knowledge of religion, philosophy, chemistry, medicine, and herbalism; training animals for fights; and undertaking many other cryptic practices ″during numerous travels around the revolving heavens so as to find a homeland and fulfill wishes.″[65] Ideologically, as Gharīb himself confesses, his attitude has been prompted by loss of faith in people:

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[63]Bosworth, *The Medieval Islamic Underworld,* ix.

[64]Abū Dulāf, as quoted in ibid.

[65]MS[1], fol. 90; MS[2], fol. 31; MS[3], fols. 69–70.

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> When there was nobody left whose generosity could be desired and no one whose gain would be hoped for, we started to trick you having no need for you, we surrendered ourselves to leisure and idleness, became unique in manipulation and dispersed in many bands. No danger and no institution could divert us. . . .[66]

Gharīb thus openly declares war on political and religious institutions and seeks refuge in trickery, admitting that his success in effect depends on these institutions. The Banū Sāsān are thus part of the cycle in which political power and moral values meet in the institutions that both impose rules and accentuate social problems. The articulation of this standpoint comes not from Gharīb but as a roundabout communique in the speech of his partner, ʻAjīb al-Dīn the preacher, and is then exemplified through episodic models. Gharīb thus posits himself as both the vehicle and the tenor of the narrative.

In contrast to Gharīb, the preacher ʻAjīb al-Dīn—the wonder of religion—represents the very same institutions Gharīb rejects. Though a popular preacher, ʻAjīb is a sociopolitical antipode to Gharīb. Yet, like Gharīb who admits the necessity for religious institutions for the Banū Sāsān to exist, ʻAjīb too reveals tolerance for the values he tries to uproot through his preaching. As a bearer of official religious values, he explores venues for the accommodation of the Banū Sāsān´s underworld without endangering the dignity of the authorities in whose service he is employed. A theological justification of the Banū Sāsān´s practices follows, and so does the need to bring closer together the official and unofficial systems of values:

> May God have mercy on the one who seeks to heal his sorrows with the beauty of the character that embellishes him, and transforms his grief with something that amuses him. Wherever there is amusement, melancholy is driven away. . . . Gaiety is beautiful if it is not excessive, so give yourselves to hope and be engaged in this matter. You are the troops of strangers and others among the Banū Sāsān. Be kind in asking and beg for generosity. Take advantage of union because separation will happen, and get united with humankind before what must happen happens. . . . Travel through the countryside and con people, for strangers evoke pity, and man moves about while his livelihood is determined for him. You should know, may God be with you, that small coins attract gold coins. . . . Pretend to

[66] MS^1, fols. 90a–91; MS^2, fols. 31–31a; MS^3, fol. 71.

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> be blind while seeing, and deaf while hearing. Pretend to be lame because a lame person wins favors. Wear your worn-out leather gowns and drink some fig juice so that your faces may turn yellow and your stomachs inflate. Find your rows in the mosques and harass the dumb by begging in the streets. Let rags be your most precious garment and the collection of goods your greatest worry. Go around with both of them and feel safe from bankruptcy and debt. The health of the eye is in the human being, and the health of the human being is in the eye.[67]

A full awareness of their trickery yet a surprising justification, even outright encouragement, of it makes ʻAjīb al-Dīn an odd preacher—yet nevertheless a preacher. In many respects, the complementary functions of the two members of society are projected in their being *ʻajīb* and *gharīb*. In blending the metaphoric themes of societal outcasts and religious guardians, the happy ending is imminent, allowing all exhibitors to rally around the mutual approval of the two seeming antagonists.

In the third set of binary relations, the thematic focus revolves around the concept of profane love. Al-Mutayyam, the enthralled one, and his counterpart Yutayyim, the enthralling one, personify the common poetic amatory trends and translate them into sociological concerns of Baybars´ Egypt. The play evolves against two discourses: one poetic and the other religious. Each of Ibn Dāniyāl´s heroes carefully reflects both of these trends. Mutayyam, the enthralled party, introduces himself through typical *ʻudhrī* imagery, occasionally infusing it with pre-Islamic *ghazal* style:

> O people of passion, gather, beseech, and implore.
> Knock at the door for response with prayers, and listen,
> Die and live in longing, burst open, get torn apart,
> Consider Mutayyam´s story about his captor, or discard it.
> Lover is the one whose sky of tears never dries up.
> Nothing is left of him but bones clattering from affliction.
> From a gorge under his eyelids tears gush forth.
> O you who blame me, there is no place in my heart for blame.
> I have no consolation, and no expectation to unite with my love.
> Mutayyam is the one who, even if he appeases his thirst, will not sleep peacefully.[68]

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[67] MS^1, fols. 95a–97; MS^2, fols. 32a–33a; MS^3, fols. 74–76.

[68] MS^1, fols. 110–111; MS^2, fol. 48; MS^3, fols. 139–139a.

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The progression of the play, however, brings about change. As Mutayyam grows impatient with his ″poetic″ self, he plots a breakaway from it. The emotional surrender to unrequited passion that makes him feel as if he were ″slain with no knife″ gradually gravitates towards a carefully choreographed sensual fulfillment. The movement from *agape* to *eros* is comically developed through an erotic dance with Yutayyim.

Yutayyim, the object of Mutayyam´s passion, stands at the opposite pole. His formidable physical beauty, exposed in all its distinctiveness during ″the bathroom scene,″ evokes an emotional reaction, bringing Mutayyam into existence. In other words, Mutayyam is a consequence. If there were no Yutayyim, Mutayyam would not be. This causal relationship becomes significantly polarized as their meanings begin to expand. Mutayyam appears as a metaphor for excessive sentimentality. He is governed by desire. Yutayyim, on the other hand, signifies cool reason. His presence in the first part of the play is more distant than palpable. We know of him indirectly, after Mutayyam´s appearance on the stage. Gradually, the knowledge of him, though still second-hand (mainly via Mutayyam but also via Bayram), becomes vaguely personalized, as his looks, his style, his tastes and his strengths and weaknesses are told. As the knowledge of Yutayyim becomes more particular, Mutayyam´s passion grows more carnal. It solicits recognition and reciprocation, breaking away from the debilitating causal dependence on Yutayyim. Mutayyam takes his life into his own hands, develops independence, rejects submission that keeps him apart and unable to act. This shift in the relation between the two men is masterfully achieved in a poetic dialogue which, on the one hand, questions the polarity between love and passion, ideals and reality, sacred and profane, and reason and emotion.

With each party articulating quite opposite views of love, we are left to think that they are not engaged in dialogue but unrelated sermons that reflect abstract concepts rather than thoughts, principles rather than feelings. The burlesque reflection on poetic amatory trends is replied to in a detailed yet dispassionate pontification on sexual mores. The final stanza, however, brings comic relief. The whole imagery is uncrowned through a literal and metaphoric demystification when Mutayyam, in a suggestive description, gives an account of the pathetic condition of his pet cock. In a grotesque inversion, formulaic speech and concepts give in to the object of shared passion: cock fights. On the one hand, this inversion spirals the abstraction of love into its carnal fulfillment; on the other, it returns emotions to human kind in all its manifestations and practices. When, upon the celebration of the union between the two protagonists a feast is thrown and many lecherous guests welcomed, a new space is opened to integrate many different understandings and practices of love. As in the previous plays, the meaningfulness

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of the play lies primarily in allowing the different relations to be established, rather than in the verity of the relations themselves.

CONCLUSION

Because of a lack of relevant historical evidence, questions have been raised as to whether the trilogy was in fact ever staged, or whether indeed it was intended for performance.[69] It seems, however, that nothing in the dramaturgic organization of the trilogy Ṭayf al-Khayāl suggests the contrary, namely, that the plays were only intended to be read as texts. Besides, as Ibn Dāniyāl′s own statement makes clear, the plays′ value was to be assessed first and foremost in relation to their performance. Their eclectic style and linguistic vitality, as well as some pointers to the interaction between the stage and audience, all suggest that the plays′ meaning was to evolve *in the course* of their performance. Part of that process, as this article has tried to argue, has to do with the fact that Ibn Dāniyāl′s protagonists embody some of the common stereotypes about different collectives—ethnic, religious, professional—that are readily recognized by the audience. As such, they are often paronomastically defined, emphasizing collective social expectations rather than individualistic traits. While their representation as leather figures betrays both the shortcomings and advantages of the genre, Ibn Dāniyāl skillfully singles out the physical traits associated with certain types of people, then shuffles them through grotesque representations of cultural and social interactions at large. The goal of such dramaturgic strategy is a narrative and visual immediacy that allows different relations and situations to be realized through the audience′s interactive response: laughter, tipping, and/or cheering in approval or disapproval. This leads to the collectivization of the aesthetic experience of the plays. The assignment of meaning is unmediated in that it is constructed as a stage-audience dialogue, rather than as an individual endeavor.[70] Individual reflection is relevant insofar as the shadow performances strike a chord regarding one′s own attitudes toward the relations in the actual world.

To that end, it is important to acknowledge that the depth of any representation resides not in its inner but its outer value. Psychological dramas are not Ibn Dāniyāl′s cup of tea: on the contrary, all experiences are exteriorized and all situations presented as belonging to a collective domain. This is a typical carnivalesque mode, which, as Bakhtin suggests, centers around the body and its

[69]See Everett K. Rowson, ″Two Homoerotic Narratives from Mamlūk Literature: al-Ṣafadī′s Lawāt al-Shākī and Ibn Dāniyāl′s al-Mutayyam,″ in *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature,* ed. J. W. Wright and Everett K. Rowson (New York, 1997), 173–74.

[70]In a similar vein, Keeler argues that meaning in the *wayang kulit* performances need not develop out of or after the event, because a performance of *wayang* need not be mulled over in exegetical rumination to yield up its significance, *Javanese Shadow Plays, Javanese Selves,* 266.

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liberation ″from the oppression of such gloomy categories as ′eternal,′ ′immovable,′ ′absolute,′ ′unchangeable,′″ emphasizing instead ″the gay and free laughing aspect of the world, with its unfinished and open character, with the joy of change and renewal.″[71] Laughter, as Bakhtin further explains, creates an atmosphere in which nothing is taboo or static but everything is fluid and changeable. Laughter ″purifies from dogmatism, from the intolerant and the petrified; it liberates from fanaticism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation, from didacticism, naivete and illusion, from the single meaning, the single level, from sentimentality. . . . It restores this ambivalent wholeness.″[72]

The body in the shadow plays, of course, is reduced to shadow silhouettes that reflect a whole array of common attitudes, and laughter is embedded in the very process of audio-visual associations. As people and places are represented by one-dimensional leather figures, the puppeteer translates the written text into a live performance with incomplete clues, forcing the audience to make its own associations between the projected shadows and real life. Since all three plays by Ibn Dāniyāl are set in Baybars′ Cairo, the challenge of relating the shadow images to actual people and events has satirical implications. Within such a scheme of relations, the aesthetic and interpretive contribution of the plays′ possible worlds is an attempt to ″play with″ the contradictions and polarities generated by political culture yet without attempting to offer either explanations or resolutions. The line between individual authority and collective participation is again erased, both in form and in content. Ibn Dāniyāl thus subversively displaces the authorial ″I″ in the production of meaning in favor of a more interactive and clamorous link between the stage and the audience.

[71]Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World,* 123.

[72]Ibid.

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The Devil's Advocate: Ibn Dāniyāl's Art of Parody in His *Qaṣīdah* No. 71

Mujūn, or "licentious verse," as a genre of Arabic poetry has always gotten a bad rap and thus tended to be overlooked. Not only have the *mujūn* verses been "cleaned up" from major anthologies, but scholars seem to have shied away as well. This self-imposed ban on the part of the literati elite poses serious obstacles when it comes to dealing with poets like Ibn Dāniyāl (1248–1311), for whom "getting dirty" is an integral, and inseparable, part of their artistry as a whole. As a matter of fact, Ibn Dāniyāl, the flamboyant Cairene eye doctor-turned-entertainer, made a name for himself as a larger-than-life "libertine poet," famous, or infamous, for his profuse output of *mujūn* verses. Paradoxically, it is perhaps for the same reason that he should remain an enigma of sorts; while anecdotal tales about this Marquis de Sade of Mamluk Cairo abound, his works have remained virtually unknown outside a small circle of admirers. Recent research, however, has taken a significant and encouraging turn in examining and reassessing his legacy: not only have his shadow plays been given extensive treatments,[1] but his poetry has begun to receive attention as well.[2] But when it comes to his *mujūn* verse, the

Special thanks go to Th. Emil Homerin and to Everett Rowson for their insightful comments on an earlier version of this article. I also wish to acknowledge the financial support of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Research Center in Egypt.

[1] *Three Shadow Plays by Muḥammad Ibn Dāniyāl,* ed. by Paul Kahle with a critical apparatus by Derek Hopwood (Cambridge, 1992); it contains a bibliography of earlier scholarship on Ibn Dāniyāl as well. For recent studies, see Rosella Dorigo Ceccato, "Un diverso approccio al *Ḫayâl al-ẓill* nella letteratura Araba tra ottocento e novecento," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5–6 (1987–88): 208–25; Peter D. Molan, "*Charivari* in a Medieval Egyptian Shadow Play," *Al-Masāq* 1 (1988): 5–24; Amila Buturovic, "Sociology of Popular Drama in Medieval Egypt: Ibn Dāniyāl and his Shadow Plays," Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 1994; Francesca M. Corrao, "La fantasmagoria delle ombre di Ibn Dāniyāl," Ph.D. diss., Università degli studi di Roma, 1990; idem, "Laughter Festival and Rebirth: Ibn Dāniyāl's Shadow Plays, an Example of Cultural Tolerance in the Early Mamluk Ages," *The Arabist* (Budapest) 18 (1996): 13–28; Everett K. Rowson, "Two Homoerotic Narratives from Mamlūk Literature: al-Ṣafadī's *Law'at al-shākī* and Ibn Dāniyāl's *al-Mutayyam,*" in *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature*, eds. J. W. Wright and Everett K. Rowson (New York, 1997); Jacqueline Sublet, "Nom écrit, nom dit: Les Personnages du théâtre d'ombres d'Ibn Dāniyāl," *Arabica* 44 (1997): 545–52.

[2] Ibn Dāniyāl's *dīwān* is apparently lost. Nearly three hundred poems, or parts of them, have

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taboo is still very much intact. Many questions remain: Just how ″dirty″ can the poet get? What is the relation of the *mujūnīyāt* to his overall lyricism, and on a larger scale, what can one say about *mujūn* as a literary genre and its place in the medieval Arabic poetic tradition? It goes without saying that an examination of his *mujūn* verses will help to pave the way for a better understanding, and appreciation, of the legacy of Ibn Dāniyāl, arguably one of the finest, and most exciting, poets in the history of medieval Arabic literature.

In this article I take one step in this direction, in an attempt to sample and examine Ibn Dāniyāl´s *mujūn* verse. The poem to be analyzed was composed by the poet in response to the Mamluk sultan Lājīn´s (r. 1296–99) campaign against vice in Cairo.[3] Several factors underscore the choice of this particular poem. First, among a number of poems by the poet on the Mamluk prohibition in Cairo,[4] the poem in question, listed as *Qaṣīdah* No. 71 in the *Mukhtār* anthology,[5] is perhaps the ″dirtiest″ and thus provides an ideal case study for the present purpose. Secondly, in an earlier study I have studied his mock *madīḥ*-panegyric,[6] while the poem in question, with its unique structure, offers a different angle from which to view the poet´s mock *nasīb*, or the elegiac section in a *qaṣīdah*. Finally, the choice is also highlighted by the fate of this poem that illustrates the kind of dilemma that any serious attempt at studying Ibn Dāniyāl´s work is to face: replete with bawdy language and overt sexual references, scatological to the point of pornography, the poem is so troublesome that it is doomed to be left outside the bounds of serious scholarship. Preserved in a single manuscript,[7] the full text was published

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survived in his shadow plays and in al-Ṣafadī´*s Al-Tadhkirah al-Ṣafadīyah,* vol. 14, Cairo, Dār al-Kutub microfilm 1762. *Al-Mukhtār min Shi'r Ibn Dāniyāl,* ed. Muḥammad Nā'if al-Dulaymī (Mosul, 1979), contains two hundred eighteen poems from *Al-Tadhkirah al-Ṣafadīyah,* and sixty-four more supplemented from other sources. His *Qaṣīdah* No. 69 is the subject of Li Guo, ″Paradise Lost: Ibn Dāniyāl´s Response to Baybars´ Campaign against Vice in Cairo,″ *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121 (2001): 219–35.

[3]Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, in his *Al-Durar al-Kāminah fī A'yān al-Mi'ah al-Thāminah* (Cairo, 1966), 4:55, cites the opening line of the poem. This is the only mention of the poem, to my knowledge, in a major Mamluk chronicle/anthology. For modern studies of the poem, see Shmuel Moreh, ″The Shadow Play *(Khayāl al-ẓill)* in the Light of Arabic Literature,″ *Journal of Arabic Literature* 18 (1987): 56; al-Dulaymī, Introduction to the *Mukhtār,* 13–14.

[4]Muḥammad Zaghlūl Sallām, for example, discusses ″the two lengthy *qaṣīdah*-odes on two important events,″ namely *Qaṣīdah* No. 69, on Baybars´ prohibition, and *Qaṣīdah* No. 72, on that of Lājīn. Sallām also mentions in passing *Qaṣīdah* No. 71, with a citation from Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī; see Sallām, *Al-Adab fī al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī* (Cairo, 1971), 2:168–70.

[5]*Mukhtār,* 119–21.

[6]Guo, ″Paradise Lost.″

[7]See Appendix below.

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once, but only after one fifth, that is, thirteen lines out of a total of fifty, was omitted on the grounds that the verses were too ″obscene and lecherous″ *(alfāẓuhā badhī'ah)*.[8]

Despite such controversy, the poem nevertheless merits serious treatment. Social and historical significance aside, it represents, in my opinion, a high point in the art of satire and parody in the post-classical, or post-Abū Nuwāsian, era. Based on a preliminary reading of the text, which is translated here in its entirety, I will discuss two related issues. First is the overall theme, or ″purpose″ *(gharaḍ),* of the poem, which I consider to be more parody than social satire. I argue that the outburst of ″trash talk″ as witnessed in the poem has less to do with the poet′s conscientious effort to criticize the Mamluk regime than with his compulsive desire to relive suppressed memories. In literary terms, it represents a mock version of the elegiac *nasīb,* with the eternal theme of the departed beloved and happiness lost. But this time the ″beloved″ is none other than Iblīs, the Devil, while the yearning is for the forbidden fruits left in the lost garden. The second issue has to do with artistic features, or textual aspects, of the *mujūn* elements in the poem. Through an analysis of selected samples and a comparison with parallels from the poet′s predecessors, especially Abū Nuwās (d. ca. 814), the dean of the genre, I propose that Ibn Dāniyāl′s, and for that matter Abū Nuwās′, *mujūn* verses are perhaps better understood, and appreciated, as parodies of the antecedent idioms and topoi of the *ghazal* genre in the *nasīb* convention. I further suggest that these parodies are operating around a jesting interplay between the language of purification and its antithesis, that of deliberate pollution.

THE POEM

1. Suddenly, in a dream, I saw Iblīs
   sad and broken hearted,
2. Blind in one eye, the other red and sore,
   tears falling, drop by drop,
3. Screaming, ″Woe is me, what a pity,
   such pain, like no other!″
4. Around him is a gang of his cronies;
   though few, they are plenty.
5. Among them is every queer lad, priceless,
   like the full moon in darkest night.
6. He makes his glance victorious over those who love him,
   but behind his eyes is sorrow.

[8] *Mukhtār,* 119, note *.

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7. The noon-day sun, a pliant branch, his stature;
its shadow, the pubic hair at its base.
8. Caressing him is sweet fruit to those who embrace him
and screw the fig with the date.
9. What's money to union with him
whose lucky horoscopes are Libra and Venus?
10. Among them is every seductress, with enchanting eyes,
a soft girl, prettier than the sun.
11. She tells her lovers, "Stroll
amidst streams and green meadows!"
12. If a lover saw her cunt,
he would love to suck her pussy.
13. Every pimp is farting at the mouth,
and following up with a snort.
14. He [i.e., the pimp] would break into the lover's house by force
in his search for the snatch,
15. Saying—farting from his rear,
his breath filled with fennel—:
16. "Weigh out a thousand dinars, if you want her,
though you won't want her shit!
17. "Praise be to the One who created in her pure cheeks,
white with red on top.
18. "Come on, enjoy, take your fill,
let no reveler stay hard!"
19. Every bugger craves
the beefcake in the tablecloth/anus.
20. When a fart is wafted his way,
he would say, "O, fragrant incense!"
21. Every adulterer sees in whore's piss
a charm guaranteeing his health.
22.Every virgin has no excuse for (keeping) her virginity,
though her passion might be of the 'Udhrī type.
23. She is a dyke with a calloused clit
and little pubic hair, thanks to rubbing,
24. While every tavern-keeper holds a cup in hand,
and a jar on his shoulder,
25. Every stoned hashish eater is high,
green sprouts had grown on his mustache.
26. Some Sudanese is having a barley beer,
poured with care by his friend.

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27. Every ″bottom boy″ has a stud,
who could also screw like a needle,
28. Everyone who jerks off alone
was aroused by a headscarf.
29. And many shadow play performers, singers,
and flutists have come in droves.
30. So I said, ″O Iblīs,
what has caused your tears?
31. ″What has upset your dim disciples,
those wicked ones full of mischief?″
32. And Iblīs replied, ″Idiot! You are trapped
in your sister′s cunt – how awful!
33. ″My troops have diminished, my position sapped.
I am no longer in command!
34. ″The tavern-keeper no longer finds
cups and jars in his place.
35. ″The beer maker′s house is leveled,
upon its roof the yellow sign of disgrace.
36. ″The boot-legger is depressed,
his heart a blazing coal.
37. ″The hashish addict is near crazy,
ready to assault with dagger and knife.
38. ″And all the girls working for us
would rather stay home today.
39. ″They would rather have husbands,
not a whore among them, as if they were free!
40. ″And every gambler, who had her often,
now pays the dowry!
41. ″How hard I′ve worked to seduce and mislead.
How many times I′ve combed somebody′s hair.
42. ″How many times I′ve seen eyes colored with kohl,
for those who cast bewitching glances.
43. ″How many, O how many times have I stayed up at night,
to serve lovers from dusk to dawn.
44. ″But the market of rebellion is stagnant:
no wine, no revelry, no sex.
45. ″Yet I′m inclined to keep pimping,
and free of charge, no less!″
46. Then I said, ″O Iblīs, take us away
on a long journey, far, far from here.

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47. ″But do take care, don´t live in Egypt!
Don´t even come near, though you know it well,
48. ″For there in that country is a just grand vizier,
blessed with good looks and a blaze on his forehead.
49. ″His advice helped the sultan
in his ruling, now famous far and wide,
50. ″And he who breaks this decree
is disgraced in public and beaten with a whip!″

Remembrance of Things Prohibited: Poetry as Memory

The poem is built around a narrative of the poet´s dream encounter with Iblīs, the Devil. At first glimpse, the overall structure is a little odd, in that the typical tripartite *qaṣīdah* is proportionally out of balance: the *nasīb,* wherein Iblīs and his ″gang″ *(ʻiṣbah)* are described as a departing ″beloved,″ occupies most of the space (lines 1–45), while the *raḥīl* (line 46) and *madīḥ* (lines 47–50) make up a few meager verses. On the other hand, one may break the poem down to three thematic units: first is a description, through the poet´s and Iblīs´ voices, of the state of affairs before the prohibition (lines 1–29). Then it is Iblīs doing more talking, in a conversation with the poet, about the situation after the prohibition (lines 30–45). After a hurried *raḥīl* transition, the narrative voice switches back to the poet, who, in a quasi-*madīḥ,* lashes out at the ill-advised sultan and his unnamed prime minister (lines 46–50).

The *nasīb* begins with an unconventional tone. Instead of the usual recitative prelude, it cuts to the narrative from line 1. The dramatic tension is immediately felt as the phrase *fī marrah,* ″all of a sudden,″ serves not only as the rhetorical device of partial *jināS* between *marrah* and *murrah,* in *abū murrah,* ″Father of Bitterness,″ the epithet of Iblīs,[9] but also underscores the unexpected cruelty of the event. This sense of sudden catastrophe is also found in Ibn Dāniyāl´s *Qaṣīdah* No. 69, on Sultan Baybars´ campaign, which opens with a famous line, ″O people! suddenly *(fuj'atan)* Iblīs is dead, / his familiar abode now empty.″[10]

The dramatic moment is further captured by the repetitions, with a typical *nasīb* flavor, in line 2, of tears dropping from the eyes of the departing ″beloved″ *(qaṭratan qaṭrah),* and, in line 3, of Iblīs´ self-inflicted pain and despair (a *jināS* between *ḥasratī* and *ḥasrah*). The odd image of Iblīs being ″blind in one eye″ is not only a vivid depiction of his pitiful appearance, but also, and more important,

[9]It may have its origin in a hadith wherein the Prophet proclaims that *Murrah* is among ″the most hateful″ names to God *(abghaḍuhā ilayhi);* see Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad* (Cairo, n.d.), 4:178, 345; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* ed. and trans. Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān (Beirut, n.d.), 8:134, 144.

[10]Guo, ″Paradise Lost,″ 220.

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a warning for his followers of the grim future that lies ahead. Bodily mutilation as a result of catastrophe and divine punishment is a recurrent motif in medieval Arabic literature. One famous example is the three ″one-eyed″ dervishes and the forty ″one-eyed″ ghostly wandering figures who paid an uninvited night visit in the tale of ″The Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad″ in the *Arabian Nights,* a corpus of tales that took its final shape during Ibn Dāniyāl′s own time.[11] The eerie appearances not only underline the unpredictable vicissitudes in the fate of those who lost their sight but also evoke fear and uneasiness on the part of those who observe them.[12] As for Ibn Dāniyāl′s night visitor, Iblīs, and his followers, the punishment cannot be crueler and the horror cannot be more grave: the ability to see is essential to Iblīs′ enterprise; it is his ″enchanting gaze″ that provides the ultimate protection for his followers.[13] The fact that Iblīs is ″blind in one eye,″ while the other eye is covered with tears and unable to see well, suggests that all the good things under his ″gaze/protection″ must pass away.

In the medieval Arabo-Islamic tradition, dreams are ″signs″ to the dreamer, and dreams depicted in literary texts can be, therefore, the focal point for the interaction of various codes and different meanings, in our case of punishment and redemption. The poet′s dream rendezvous with Iblīs also works on yet another level of the *adab* tradition, and that is the night visit by the phantom of the beloved *(ṭayf al-khayāl)* to the poet. In the classical *nasīb*, the phantom usually appears in the guise of a she-demon *(ghūl),* and the poet is often wide awake, suffering acute anxiety.[14] His evoked memory is more of a conscious effort under

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[11]*The Arabian Nights,* trans. Husain Haddawy (New York, 1990), 66–150. The motif of body mutilation, especially the loss of one eye, and metamorphoses as punishment in the *Arabian Nights* is discussed in Andras Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature* (Princeton, 1974), 164–80, esp. 174–79.

[12]On the motif of losing sight, in dreams, as punishment in Arabo-Islamic literature, see Fadwa Malti-Douglas, ″Dreams, the Blind, and the Semiotics of the Biographical Notice,″ *Studia Islamica* 51 (1980): 137–62, esp. 154–61. Malti-Douglas has also noted the interaction between losing sight, as punishment, and its recovery, as a mercy, ″surrounding an apparent purification with water,″ in what she calls ″the ″blindness dreams.″ For the theme of ″water of purification,″ see below.

[13]For ″the gaze of Iblīs,″ see Guo, ″Paradise Lost,″ 220f, 230–31.

[14]Michael Sells, ″Guises of the *Ghūl:* Dissembling Simile and Semantic Overflow in the Classical Arabic *Nasīb,*″ in *Reorientations/Arabic and Persian Poetry,* ed. Suzanne P. Stetkevych (Bloomington, 1994), 130–64; John Seybold, ″The Earliest Demon Lover: The *Ṭayf al-Khayāl* in *al-Mufaḍḍalīyāt,*″ in ibid., 180–89, esp. 184. Seybold′s claim that ″the *ṭayf al-khayāl* is no dream-image or dream-vision″ and that ″the poet is not sleeping″ is perhaps too broad a generalization, for there is an abundance of textual evidence indicating that the *ṭayf al-khayāl* indeed appears in the poet′s sleep, or dream; see, for example, Renate Jacobi, ″*Al-Khayālānī:* A Variation of the *Khayāl* Motif,″ *Journal of Arabic Literature* 27 (1996): 2–12, esp. 5–7, 10–11.

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control. In our poem, however, the poet is not only in a real dream, as is clearly indicated by the stock phrase *ra'aytu fī al-nawm* (line 1),[15] but also in a "wet" dream, one that is erotically charged. The dream provides a venue for the poet's self-indulgence: it is the dream that triggers his elegy of Iblīs and the latter's outburst of grievance in blatant trash talk. Only in a dream is the poet able to meet the "dead," and more importantly, able to relive the experience passé, and retrieve the memory suppressed. It is this memory, or perhaps fantasies of memory, that stands out as the poem's real theme, or "purpose" *(gharaḍ)*.

From a narrative viewpoint, it is also a double dream, and thus double memory: one for the poet, and one for Iblīs, whose dream is within the poet's dream, and whose memory is intertwined with the poet's own. Iblīs' raucous dream-vision memory constitutes the building blocks of the entire poem whereas the role of the poet, the "lyric I," is reduced to that of a side-kick, whose main job is to give some feedback, stimulating more from his "lord." From line 5 to line 29, the poet, through Iblīs' "memories," sets out a wild roller-coaster ride, with an outburst of descriptions of the hedonistic underworld in Cairo prior to and during the campaign against vice. Compared with *Qaṣīdah* No. 69, where the lamentations of the victims of the prohibition are limited to a select few,[16] the juxtaposition of the various groups in *Qaṣīdah* No. 71 does not seem to follow any particular order. Here Iblīs' first "list of vices" is on display at random: delectable young buyable boy (lines 5–9); female seductress (lines 10–12); pimp (lines 13–15); female prostitutes (lines 16–18); gay men (lines 19–20); adulterer (line 21); lesbian (lines 22–23); tavern-keeper (line 24); hashish eater (line 25); Sudanese wine-bibber (line 26); male "active" and "passive" prostitutes (line 27); masturbation addict (line 28). Topping the list are, curiously, entertainers (line 29), among them shadow play performers, singers, and flutists (the "flute" seems to have some sexual connotation as well).[17] The mosaic-like collage is effective in depicting the chaotic atmosphere, and conveying a sense of lax morality, which were perhaps the order of the day.

To incorporate bawdy material in a "high" *adab* context is one of Ibn Dāniyāl's trademarks. This is seen in the use of the *muqābalah,* or opposition, between the contrasting images of Iblīs' followers who are "few" in number but "plenty" in spirit and enthusiasm (*qillah*/*kathrah*, line 4); between "white" (makeup powder?

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[15]The use of these phrases is discussed in Malti-Douglas, "Dreams," 144; also Jacobi, *"Al-Khayālānī,"* 5–7, 11.

[16]In *Qaṣīdah* No. 69, the lamentations are confined to four subjects: wine, beer, hashish, and prostitution; see Guo, "Paradise Lost," 220–24.

[17]Cf. Abū Nuwās, "Wanna have some fun? / I'll bring you my 'flute'" [Fa-in aḥbabtum lahwan / ataynākum bi-mizmār], *Al-Fukāhah wa-al-I'tināṣ fī Mujūn Abī Nuwās* (Cairo, 1316/1898), 8. The poet is boasting that he has the "tool" to entertain, be it musical instrument or penis.

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sperm? pure cheeks?) and ″red″ (lipstick? makeup? blood? tongue?) on the lover′s cheeks (*bayāḍ/ḥumrah*, line 17). It can also be seen in the intricacy of the *jināS,* or paronomasia, such as the sexually-accessible boy being portrayed as a ″full moon″ and a ″priceless treasure″ (*badr/badrah*, line 5); in his company, money has lost ″weight″ (i.e., value), while his zodiac sign Libra is rising (*wazn/al-mīzān*, line 9). At times, the *jināS* is no more than a recycled cliché, such as the contrast of the *ʻudhrī* and *ʻudhrah,* in line 22. But more often one is struck by Ibn Dāniyāl′s brilliant imaginative innovation and rhetorical prowess. This is best illustrated in verses 26–29, which mark the end of the poet′s nostalgic laments. Herein every line is endowed with one pair of the *jināS*. The mouthful, tongue-twister kind of juxtaposition of the cognate words with different, sometimes contrasting, meanings helps bring about an intensity that pushes the tempo to a climax. To be sure, there is a lot of word play here, where deliberate ambiguity and intentional sabotage of balance seem to be the rule. In line 26, the joy of beer *(mizrah)* is now reduced to very undesirable soaked millet *(mizrah)*. In line 27, the contrast is between *baghghāʾ,* a male prostitute who plays the ″passive″ role in sex, and the cognate superlative/comparative *abghá,* whose exact meaning, derived either from *baghī* (″whore″) or from *bāghin* (″desiring, striving, oppressive, tyrant″), remains ambiguous until it is compared with ″needle″ *(al-ibrah),* perhaps a reference to the penis and its size, a universal butt for locker room jokes, or perhaps alluding to the penetrating power of a needle. This interplay is a recycled idiom that was used by al-Jurjānī (d. 1089) in his famous ″vice list.″[18] An even more outlandish word play is seen in the ensuing line 28, where the contrast is between one′s daily habit of masturbation *(ʻumayrah)* and the annual ″lesser pilgrimage″ *(ʻumrah),* during which any sexual act is strictly forbidden. The word *ʻumrah* also means, according to Edward Lane, ″a visit in which is the cultivation *(ʻimārah)* of love or affection.″ Moreover, this may well be a triple pun in that the reading of the word can also be *ʻamrah,* ″turban.″ So in the final analysis, the fellow would be aroused and seek to relieve himself, be it during the pilgrimage, or at the thought of a rendezvous with a lover, or simply seeing somebody′s headwear.

The poet then proceeds to a conversation with Iblīs. His presumptuous ″moral″ point of view would surely further infuriate the bitter Old Man: ″What has upset your dim disciples, / those wicked ones full of mischief?″ To this Iblīs angrily replies: ″Idiot! You are trapped / in your sister′s cunt—how awful!″ The rhetorical

[18] Al-Qāḍī Abū al-ʻAbbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Al-Muntakhab min Kināyāt al-Udabāʾ wa-Ishārāt al-Bulaghāʾ* (Hyderabad, 1983). A detailed discussion of the vice list in al-Jurjānī′s book is found in Everett Rowson, ″The Categorization of Gender and Sexual Irregularity in Medieval Arabic Vice Lists,″ in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity,* eds. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York, 1991), 64. Rowson rendered the phrase *abghá min al-ibrah* as ″He is more devoted to *bighāʾ* than a needle,″ i.e., which is threaded (64, 78, n. 41).

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question raised by the fictionalized "lyric I," the poet, is designed for multiple purposes. With regard to the poem's overall structure, it serves as a transit point to sum up the first round of lamentation and move on to the next, which is more or less a revisiting of the same theme, with more twists, thus giving the supposedly polythematic *qaṣīdah* a tangible rhythm. This transition is also aimed at the changing of mood and tone, from one of lamenting to one of provoking, from one of pity to one of confrontation, from one of narrative to one of recitation. Further, from a narrative viewpoint, by posing seemingly "stupid" questions, the poet is providing ammunition for Iblīs.

And shoot he does. The reference to "Manichaean," as Iblīs so labels the poet in line 32, denotes a ridiculed sense of "heresy," "pagan," or "Satanic cult," and it was used by earlier poets such as Abū Nuwās.[19] In both Ibn Dāniyāl's and Abū Nuwās' uses, the expression occurs in the *qultu-wa-qāla,* or question-and-response, discourse as a rebuttal to someone who is obviously pathetic or simply stupid as is often seen in the *hijā'*-invective verses. Obviously, it is Abū Nuwās' and Ibn Dāniyāl's way of saying "O you moron!" or "O you idiot!"

For Iblīs, it is not an option to admit to self-loathing or express a desire for purification and deliverance, a topic to be discussed below. The poet's question simply gives him another opportunity to cry and whine. The strategy here is the old tried-and-true one: a random display of the suffering endured by Iblīs' "troops" (line 33), the victims of the prohibition. The reader and audience watch spectral figures jerk into place, expose themselves one more time, and disappear. The cumulative picture of idleness, frustration, and nostalgia is etched in acid. Thus the reader is invited, again, to peruse the painful experiences of Iblīs' "vice list": tavern-keeper (line 34), beer maker (line 35), bootlegger (line 36), hashish addict (line 37), call girls (lines 38–39), and gambler (line 40). The reader is well aware that the list here is more than a mechanical juxtaposition: the "categories" actually interact, and, occasionally, overlap with each other. The gambler, for example, was also a John, and his effort to "free" one call girl, by paying her "dowry," is itself a re-working of the existing topos,[20] which adds more cynicism: that a gambler should be relied upon for, of all things, money!

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[19]See, for example: "I said: 'Praise be to my Lord!' / And he replied: 'Praise be to my Manes!' I said: 'Jesus is a prophet!' / And he replied: '[But] sent by Satan!'" [Fa-qultu subḥāna rabbī / fa-qāla subḥāna mānī; fa-qultu 'īsá rasūlun / fa-qāla min shayṭāni], *Dīwān des Abū Nuwās,* ed. Ewald Wagner (Stuttgart, 1958–), 2:79; "If the joke is to be reversed, then you would be [considered] the moral one, / a secret believer in the religion of Manes, the last drop of cream" [Idhā quliba al-hijā'u fa-anta khulqī / wa-muḍmiru dīna mānī zubdu baqqi], ibid., 2:145.

[20]Al-Bādhānī al-Iṣbahānī: "My bride is a slave girl set free; / I got her without paying a penny for dowry" [Lī 'irsun ḥurrah mamlūkah / ḥuztuhā min ghayri mahrin wa-thaman], *Al-Fukāhah,* 17.

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In addition, the two ″vice lists″ provide vivid descriptions of various people and their outrageous acts and scurrilous behavior, and so amount to mimics of the conventional practice in medieval Arabic literature of composing verses for the purpose of conveying specific information or knowledge. In a wicked sense, these ″lists″ could thus be read as a how-to manual of sorts, another attempt on the poet′s part to poke fun at traditions.

The second round of lamentation, and the second ″vice list,″ end with a string of *ubi sunt,* from line 41 to line 43, each led by a rhetorical question (How hard I′ve worked . . . ! How many times I′ve . . . !), through which Iblīs cries out forcefully, reflecting on his ″hard work″ at the service of the revelers. Iblīs′ praise to himself ends on a high note, more self-congratulatory than self-pitying. The reality is painful, and the Old Man is cranky, but he is not ready to give up and he never will. Indeed, his sense of dark humor is intact and his defiance more evident than ever: ″But the market of rebellion is stagnant; / no wine, no revelry, no sex. / Yet I′m inclined to keep pimping, / and free of charge, no less!″ (lines 44–45). The blunt declaration of being ″rebellious and reckless″ *(al-ma'āṣī)* may be a commonplace Abū Nuwāsian cliché,[21] but the brilliant imagery of ″the market of rebellion is stagnant″ is definitely Ibn Dāniyāl′s own.

Iblīs′ bitter and wry outcry prompts a visceral response from the poet: ″Then I said, ′O Iblīs, take us away / on a long journey, far, far from here′″ (line 46). Here one may note the attempt at a *raḥīl* transition toward the *madīḥ* panegyric proper in the classic *qaṣīdah* tradition,[22] but it is too little, too late. The sense of exhaustion and frustration is clearly felt here as far as the overall structure of the poem is concerned: the poet seems to have lost interest and energy to go on. Instead of a full-blown *madīḥ,* a mere four lines (lines 47–50) were rushed into place, bringing the poem to an end. The panegyric itself employs the same strategy utilized repeatedly by the poet, namely, the rhetorical game of *ta'kīd al-dhamm bi-mā yushbihu al-madḥ* (blame through what looks like praise).[23] Nevertheless, it is not without its own values and novelty. From a historical perspective, the quasi-panegyric contains references, some vague and some explicit, that may shed light on the historicity of the poem and other related issues.[24] One also learns some

[21]For example, ibid., 106; *Dīwān Abī Nuwās* (Cairo, 1322/1904–5), 324.

[22]Compare *Qaṣīdah* No. 69, where the ″going-away″ call is raised much earlier, in line 22, and then reiterated in line 30; see Guo, ″Paradise Lost,″ 223.

[23]Ibid., 230.

[24]A curious discrepancy is observed in that the poem, which is on Lājīn′s (r. 1296–98) prohibition, also appears in a slightly different version in the shadow play *Ṭayf al-Khayāl,* which is believed to describe street life under Baybars′ reign (1260–77), thus raising the issue of who was the exact target of the *madīḥ*. I plan to address this issue in a separate study, with special references to historical reality vs. poetic truth in Ibn Dāniyāl′s writings, his relationship with the Mamluk

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details concerning the events that led to the prohibition, as well as what may have actually happened during the prohibition. The sultan, we are told, listened to the vizier´s ″advice″ and issued a ″decree″ *(marsūm)* to launch the prohibition. Any offender caught would be paraded on the back of a horse, wine jars hanging from his neck, and would be beaten by ″huge sticks.″ A sad finale to a dark, chaotic, and scabrous episode in Cairo´s never-ending saga. But the poet would not let the audience leave without a last laugh. For the general audience, the fact that the revered vizier in fact resembled a horse, ″that is blessed with good looks and a blaze on his forehead″ (line 48), is funny enough, but for Ibn Dāniyāl´s pals, there is more: riding on horseback has long been, in Arabic poetry, associated with sexual, especially homosexual, intercourse. The punch line is, therefore, in the final analysis, a ″fuck you″ note to the authoritarian establishment, Ibn Dāniyāl-style. And the vizier is the sultan´s queer!

Satire or Parody? The Art of *Mujūn*

Although some problems still remain regarding the interpretation of certain rare words and vague expressions, the above reading still allows a general appreciation of the poem. It is obvious that the quasi-*madīḥ* panegyric targeting the sultan, or the vizier, or whoever was responsible for the prohibition, is reduced to a minimum of four lines and is never fully developed; the focus is exclusively on the quasi-*nasīb*, that is, on Iblīs´, and the poet´s, memory. In other words, it is less a political allegory, or social satire, than a parody where the game is wordplay and rhetoric.

Some recent studies of pre-modern Arabic literature and popular culture have challenged, and moved away from, the traditional approach of treating certain texts of the so-called ″*adab* of transgression″[25] as mainly social satire. These texts range from al-Ḥarīrī´s (d. 1122) and al-Ḥamadhānī´s (d. 1008) *Maqāmāt,* Ibn Dāniyāl´s shadow plays and poetry, and al-Nafzāwī´s (d. 1422) erotica, to Ibn Sūdūn´s (d. 1464) and al-Shirbīnī´s (fl. seventeenth century) colloquial poetry and prose. Armed with the Freudian notion of ″repetition compulsion″ and Mikhail Bakhtin´s conception of parody, these studies propose new readings of the aforementioned texts as psychic drama in the form of parody, ″whose purpose,″ in Daniel Beaumont´s definition, ″is the consumption and reshaping of antecedent texts,″ and whose ″key concepts will be repetition and rhetoric.″[26] In providing a theoretical conceptual focal point for this new approach, Mohamed-Salah Omri

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patrons, and his working method in recycling existing texts.

[25]The term was coined by Mohamed-Salah Omri, defined as ″literature that goes beyond the normal conventions and codes by representing them in a parodic manner″; see ″*Adab* in the Seventeenth Century: Narrative and Parody in al-Shirbīnī´s *Hazz al-Quḥūf*,″ *Edebiyāt* 11 (2000): 182, 193 (note 27).

[26]Daniel Beaumont, ″The Trickster and Rhetoric in the *Maqāmāt*,″ *Edebiyāt* 5 (1994): 1–14.

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begins by making the distinction between satire and parody, in that, according to *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetic*s, ″[W]hile satire has as a purpose to make the object of the attack abhorrent or ridiculous,″ parody ″usually makes its point by employing a serious style to express an incongruous subject thus disturbing the balance between form and matter.″[27]

Inspired by this theoretical framework and dealing with one of the banner-carriers of this ″*adab* of aggression,″ I intend to look at Ibn Dāniyāl′s socially-conscious poetry from *both* sides, that is, from historical *and* literary readings of the text. My premise is that these poems, unlike the more fictional shadow plays, undeniably bear specific historical elements, as they were prompted by certain actual events and were therefore meant to comment on certain issues, or send certain messages in the first place. At that level, to treat them as expressions of public sentiment in the form of social satire is indeed a helpful concept to work with. However, close reading of these poems has revealed that besides the poet′s social consciousness, there is something more pressing and more urgent for him to react to and speak out against. Instead of being obsessed with a sultan, or a vizier, or the Mamluk regime, the poet is more concerned about *himself,* about his memories of the now-prohibited sensual pleasures in his lost paradise, his lost garden. If the universal theme of ″sensual pleasure vs. repression″—and in the Islamic context, the mantra of ″commanding right and forbidding wrong *(al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar)*—is at play here, then the poem in question is more about celebrating the forbidden pleasures, the *munkar*s, than condemning the ″righteous″ repression, the *ma'rūf*s. True to Ibn Dāniyāl′s poetic persona, it is more about joy than about anger, about having a good time than about staging a protest. In literary terms, this hardly fits in a conventional *hijā',* where the target is always the enemy. Here in the *mujūn*, the joke is on everybody.

The fact that the poet was, as the above reading of the poem has amply demonstrated, indeed working within the high *adab* domain further allows us to compare him with his predecessors in the same domain. An attempt will be made to show how by means of reprocessing and reshaping the antecedent themes, idioms, and topoi in the Abū Nuwāsian *mujūn* tradition,[28] Ibn Dāniyāl was able to

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[27]Omri, ″*Adab*,″ 193, n. 28.

[28]Editions of Abū Nuwās′ *dīwān* usually omit the *mujūnīyāt* altogether. The few exceptions I have come across are (1) *Dīwān Abī Nuwās bi-Riwāyat al-Ṣūlī,* ed. Bahjat 'Abd al-Ghafūr al-Ḥudaythī (Baghdad, 1980). It contains a sanitized *mujūnīyāt* section (899–937) wherein all the ″dirty″ words were omitted; (2) *Al-Fukāhah,* a slim volume printed privately by one Manṣūr 'Abd al-Muta'āl and one Ḥusayn Afendi Sharaf; (3) *Dīwān Abī Nuwās* (Cairo, 1322/1904–5), published by Muṣṭafá al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī; less than ten pages (339–47) contain a section entitled ″verses blending *[jā'a bayna] khamrīyāt* and *mujūn,*″ which turns out to be largely of the *khamrīyāt* genre. As for the editorial efforts in the West, the long-awaited fifth volume, the *mujūnīyāt,* of *Der Diwān des Abū*

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stay ahead in this rhetorical game. It is further argued that many of the *mujūn* elements had their roots in *ghazal* conventions.

Abū Nuwās'[29] influence, and, more accurately, the tradition he represents, is unmistakably traceable in Ibn Dāniyāl's poetry. In addition to the examples cited above, such as the curse of "Manichaean" (line 32), the analogy of "dowry/fee" paid to "bride/whore" (line 40), and the simile of "flute/penis" (line 29), there are many more. Some items on his "vice lists," for example, such as tribadism (lesbian sex act), were attributed to Abū Nuwās as well.[30] Ibn Dāniyāl's parodies of the Quranic verses were directly inspired by, or simply borrowed from, Abū Nuwās. One example is his *Qaṣīdah* No. 69, line 7: "Many a rake declares: 'This is a day that is, / as they say, 'Dismal and calamitous!'" *(yawm qamṭarīr 'abūs).*[31] A paraphrase of Quran, 76:10, it is found, verbatim, in Abū Nuwās' *dīwān.*[32] In the present poem, a mimicking of the Quranic phraseology is seen in line 17, "Praise be to the One who created . . . " *(subḥāna man wallada . . .),* the like of which occurs frequently in Abū Nuwās' vocabulary.[33] The parody of the Quranic verses is particularly significant for the present discussion in that the intrinsic link between it and the *mujūn* is underlined by the fact that such attempts by Abū Nuwās are considered as of the *mujūn* type and are therefore classified, by medieval Arab anthologists, in the category of the *mujūnīyāt*.[34]

In what follows, samples of Ibn Dāniyāl's *mujūn* verses will be compared with the parallels from Abū Nuwās. After the thematic and linguistic linkage between the two is established, the discussion will proceed on two levels: first, the *ghazal* conventions, such as "the enchanting/enchanted gaze" and "the amorous union," used by Abū Nuwās and Ibn Dāniyāl as they are *supposed to be,* that is, as descriptions of the beloved,[35] although, as we are already aware, in this anything-goes

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Nuwās, edited by Ewald Wagner, is to this day still in manuscript form. For further information, see Amidu Sanni, *The Arabic Theory of Prosification and Versification: On* Ḥall *and* Naẓm *in Arabic Theoretical Discourse* (Beirut, 1998), 167; Gregor Schoeler, "Iblīs in the Poems of Abū Nuwās," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 151 (2001): 43–44, n. 1.

[29]Here Abū Nuwās is treated as a name under which a reservoir of texts was formed; thus the issue of the authenticity of some poems attributed to him is not important. For more on this issue, see Schoeler, "Iblīs," 43, n. 1.

[30]Some medieval critics believed that Abū Nuwās was the first Arab poet to deal with the topic; see *Al-Fukāhah,* 17.

[31]Guo, "Paradise Lost," 221.

[32]"Wa-law fī yawmi hurmuza zurta mūsá / la-ṣayyarahū 'abūsan qamṭarīran," *Diwān des Abū Nuwās,* 2:89.

[33]See, for example, text cited in note 22 above.

[34]Amidu Sanni, *Arabic Theory,* 163–67.

[35]Some scholars, especially those of the "Chicago school of Arabic literature," have long challenged

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territory, the ″beloved″ may be a girl or a boy for Abū Nuwās, a phantom or a devil in Ibn Dāniyāl′s case. But overall the parody remains metaphorical, that is, it does not go beyond the language boundary, in that a kiss really is a kiss, and a gaze a gaze. Second, Abū Nuwās′ and Ibn Dāniyāl′s re-working of the *ghazal* elements, in that farting, urinating, and excrement replace the typical *ghazal* topoi such as the lover′s ″fragrant smell″ and ″sweet saliva,″ and so forth. Here everything is turned upside down, and the parody is operating on both metaphoric and linguistic levels.

MOCKING THE *GHAZAL* CONVENTION: THE ″ENCHANTING/ENCHANTED GAZE″

In a quasi-*nasīb* style, with the conventions of the *ghazal*, the ″departing beloved″ is first introduced to the audience as, among other things, a ″full moon,″ a ″noon-day sun,″ and a ″pliant branch,″ whose ″enchanting gaze″ is all over the place, to be witnessed through the lovers′ ″enchanted gaze.″ Not only do the motifs remain the same, but the wordings are in accordance with the stock repertoire as well: the *badr al-dujá* (line 5), the *shams ḍuḥá* (line 7), the *ghuṣn naqan* (line 7), the *laḥẓ* (line 6), the *suḥūr al-'ayn fattānah* (line 10), the *'ayn wa-al-naẓr* (line 42), and the list goes on and on.

Abū Nuwās uses the same stock similes of ″full moon,″ ″shining sun,″ ″enchanting gaze,″ and so forth, in describing his beloved:

> His figure is like the full moon, his joyful face a shining sun;
> he has a gazelle′s eyes and chest.
> Charm is his gaze, fine wine his saliva;
> his forelock is dark night and his skin is gold.
> [Al-badru ṣūratuhū wa-al-shamsu bahjatuhū
> wa-lil-ghazālati minhu al-'aynu wa-al-lubab
> Wa-al-siḥru laḥẓatuhū wa-al-khamru rīqatuhū
> wa-al-laylu ṭurratuhū wa-lawnuhū dhahab[36]]
>
> How come? O you with enchanting
> gaze and charming bright eyes!

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the traditional interpretation of the descriptive function of the *nasīb;* see, for example, Jaroslav Stetkevych, ″Toward an Arabic Elegiac Lexicon: The seven words of the *nasīb,*″ in *Reorientations,* 58–129; Sells, ″Guises of the *Ghūl.*″ But this is beyond the scope of this study, for Ibn Dāniyāl′s *nasīb* here is already in the form of parody; it nevertheless does reaffirm the point in that what is presented in these *ghazal* similes ″is not in fact the beloved as an object of description,″ but rather ″the mythopoetic world of the lost garden or meadow,″ to quote from Sells (″Guises of the *Ghūl,*″ 130).

[36] *Al-Fukāhah,* 85.

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[Wa-kayfa yā fātira al-laḥẓi sāḥira al-‘ayni aḥwar[37]]

O [you] the heart-throb whose charm
radiates from his enchanting gaze!
. . . . . .
Don´t let me suffer
from your enchanting gaze!
[Yā sāliba al-adhhāni
bi-ṭarfihi al-fattān
. . . . . .
lā tatruknī mu‘nan
bi-ṭarfiki al-fattān[38]]

Mocking the *Ghazal* Convention: The ″Amorous Union″

The influence of Abū Nuwās on Ibn Dāniyāl´s poetic imagination and lyric expression can also be observed in descriptions of the acts of love-making. In the classical *ghazal* tradition, the notion of *al-waṣl* (or *al-wiṣāl*), ″amorous union,″ is usually associated with the lover´s tender touch, in the formulaic contrast with the painful experience of *al-hijrān,* ″departure.″ Although the term does imply sexual intercourse, this function is not overtly emphasized (we will come back to this point later). However, in Abū Nuwās´ vocabulary, not only is the term *al-waṣl* used explicitly for sexual intercourse, but it is also frequently paired with *al-tajmīsh,* a vague term that denotes a wide range of sex acts, from flirtation to rough foreplay and violent fondling. The juxtaposition of *al-tajmīsh* with *al-waṣl* and, occasionally, *naql* (″sweet″ [kiss, hug, etc.]), became a fixation in Abū Nuwās´ love-theme verses; and this is seen in Ibn Dāniyāl´s poem as well.

8. Caressing him *(tajmīshuhu)* is sweet fruit *(naql)* to those who embrace him
and screw the fig with the date.
9. What´s money to union with him *(fī waṣlihi)*
whose lucky horoscopes are Libra and Venus?

Abū Nuwās:

For ordinary folks ever since the Creation, it´s foreplay before fuck.
But in Moses´ household, they fuck first, then fondle!

[37]Ibid., 51.
[38]Ibid., 55.

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[Al-jamshu fī al-nāsi qabla al-nayki mudh khuliqū
wa-al-nayku fī bayti mūsá qabla tajmīsh[39]]

Whenever you were aroused by an urge,
or desired an intimate union . . .
[Kullamā jammashaka al-ilḥāḥ
aw an rumta waṣlaka[40]]

And he said, ″Fuck me! Blow me down!
Keep quiet to your servant, and don´t reveal the secret!″
So I began to mess around with him,
joking and flirting.
[Fa-qāla ṣilnī wa-aqilla ‘athratī
wa-iktum ‘alá ‘abdika lā tufshī
Fa-qumtu bi-al-li‘bi fa-māzaḥtuhū
‘alá ṭarīqi al-mazḥ wa-al-jamsh[41]]

Sweet as fruit is his kiss:
ripe, to be harvested from his cheek;
Waiting for watering,
inviting a fuck!
[Wa-al-naqlu min taqbīli mā
yaqṭifu min wajnatihī
Saqyan lahā min da‘wati
tud‘á ilá naykihī[42]]

From the seemingly compulsory way of paring and juxtaposing a fixed set of terms, it is evident that the classical notion of *al-waṣl,* the Platonic ″amorous union,″ is transformed, in Abū Nuwās´ use, to a synonymy for *al-nayk* (fuck). It is about sex, plain and simple. The same usage is also seen in Ibn Dāniyāl´s work; in the shadow play version of the present poem, the two words *waṣl* and *nayk* are used in a virtually interchangeable manner (see Appendix below, line 18).

To make erotic suggestions within the classical *nasīb*/*ghazal* tradition, the poet often appeals to the senses, and this becomes paramount in the overall texture of the poem.[43] For Abū Nuwās, for example, the joy of love, or love-making,

[39]*Diwān des Abū Nuwās,* 2:90.
[40]*Al-Fukāhah,* 57.
[41]Ibid., 58.
[42]Ibid., 28.
[43]For recent studies of the depictions of the five senses in the *qaṣīdah* tradition, see Michael Sells,

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is summed up in a formula that one may call the "smell, taste, and gaze" combination:

> In love one enjoys the lover's affection and tenderness,
> As well as that [pleasant] smell, [sweet] taste, and [enchanting] gaze.
> [Fa-fīhi mu'ātātu al-ḥabībi wa-'aṭfuhū
> 'alayka wa-fīhi al-shammu wa-al-dhawqu wa-al-naẓar[44]]

Abū Nuwās makes it clear that these are the fundamental elements for a love affair, and a love poem. Among these, "sight" (seeing the lover's beautiful physique, "enchanting gaze") and "touch" (tender or otherwise) are discussed above. As for "smell," the lover's pleasant smell is usually associated with various fragrant perfumes he/she is wearing, but also the intoxicating smell of alcohol on his/her breath. "Taste" alludes to the sweet taste of the lover's rosy cheek, lips, and saliva, which the poet enjoys through deep kisses. Add "sound," that is, listening to love songs as well as the lover's sweet talk, and the poetic atmosphere is saturated with all five senses, and all aspects of human sensuality. A love affair, in the *ghazal* tradition, even within the Abū Nuwāsian deviation, is such a whole package through which one is sure to get an eyeful, earful, noseful, mouthful, and handful. And in the *mujūn*, this is even more the case, as the glorification of flesh and sensual pleasure in a coarse manner is the *raison d'être* of the genre. Bearing this context in mind, we now turn to the poem in question, which showcases the way Ibn Dāniyāl mimicked and subverted the *ghazal* topoi, turning them into *mujūn* scatological farces.

Parody of the *Ghazal* Topos: Farting vs. Fragrant Smell

This seems to be a favorite trick of Ibn Dāniyāl. Two verses in the poem depict breaking wind while having sex, a far cry from the lover's "pleasant smell" in the *ghazal*.

> 13. Every pimp is farting at the mouth *(lahū ḍarṭatun / min shidqihī),*
> and following up with a snort.
> . . . . . .
> 20. When a fart *(faswah)* is wafted his way,
> he would say, "O, fragrant incense!"

Equally coarse and amusing is Abū Nuwās:

"Guises of the *Ghūl*," 139–44, 156–57; Akiko Motoyoshi, "Sensibility and Synaesthesia: Ibn al-Rūmī's Singing Slave-Girl," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 32 (2001): 1–29, esp. 15.

[44] *Dīwān des Abū Nuwās,* ed. Gregor Schoeler (Stuttgart, 1958–), 4:390.

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Her breath stinks like farting,
or rather as a bundle of garlic.
. . . . . .
Out of my love for her, I broke wind,
scaring away even the Byzantine king!
[Ka-annamā nak´hatuhā faswatun
aw ḥuzmatun min ḥuzami al-thūmi
. . . . . .
Ḍaraṭtu min ḥubbī lahā ḍarṭatan
afza'tu minhā malika al-rūmi[45]]

I surely am getting the smell of that fuck.
Screw that thing before you! It´s the aroma of stew.
[Innī ashummu li-hādhā al-nayki rā'iḥatan
fa-irhiz qudāmaka hādhā rīḥa sakbāji[46]]

It [i.e., his penis] cuts through the wind of asshole like the edge of a razor,
screwing the balls, like the head of a spear.
[Ashaqqa li-rīḥi al-ust min ḥaddi shafratin
wa-anfadha fī al-khaṣyayni min ra'si mizrāqi[47]]

The imageries are quite similar: to liken breaking wind to having bad breath, farting while having sex, etc. Also similar is the use of words such as *faswah, ḍarṭah, rīḥ,* etc. Ibn Dāniyāl, however, adds some new, perhaps more outrageous, twists: the farting described in line 20, for example, involves oral and anal sex performed on men, which is not seen in Abū Nuwās´ quotes. Further, in this regard, one may admit that while Ibn Dāniyāl´s ″farting″ scenes are plainly coarse and scabrous, Abū Nuwās´ descriptions are more subtle, with a nice touch of dry humor and literary elaboration; the smell of ″garlic,″ the ″Byzantine king,″ and ″stew,″ are just a few examples.

PARODY OF THE *GHAZAL* TOPOS: EXCREMENT VS. SWEET SALIVA

The combination of excremental and the sexual themes has a long, if not quite respectable, tradition in medieval Arabic literature. Examples of the use of the oral-anal-phallus analogy abound in both the *hijā'* and *mujūn* genres. In the mock

[45]Ibid., 2:87.
[46]*Al-Fukāhah,* 23.
[47]Ibid., 39.

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ghazal context, it ought to be viewed as an antithesis of the lover's "sweet taste." Furthermore, the excremental elements, urine and dung, were also closely associated with food consumption in literature.[48] More often, they, and urine in particular (for its "water" imagery), have to do with sexual intercourse as well. When Ibn Dāniyāl veers into this verbal orgy, he surely would not miss the chance to give it a shot:

15. Saying—farting *(al-kīfākh)* from his rear,
    his breath filled with fennel—:
16. "Weigh out a thousand dinars, if you want her,
    though you won't want her shit *(ba'rah)*!"

. . . . . .

21. Every adulterer sees in whore's piss *(bawlat / al-quḥbah)*
    a charm guaranteeing his health.

Abū Nuwās:

If [your] pussy stretches wider, so will the territory of [my] sovereignty.
    In it, my piss should certainly go a long way!
[Fa-in yaku ṭūlu al-baẓr su'dud
    fa-bawlī 'alayhī annahū sa-yaṭūlu[49]]

They end up witnessing wind coming out their assholes,
    whose hair is braided with dried dung beetles.
[Natajū yarawna al-rīḥah min astāhihim
    wa-bi-hā min al-ji'ri al-yabīsi 'iqāṣ[50]]

The originality lies in the two poets' respective attempts to link excremental movements with many other things. In Abū Nuwās' case, the oral-anal-phallus analogy is translated into one of piss-sperm-shit. The last couplet cited above also sets out a combination of the two topoi, that is, farting and excrement, that involves both "smell" and "taste." Ibn Dāniyāl, on the other hand, has his own idea for pushing the envelope: in line 15, the description of excrement goes beyond the usual sex association, in that he reverses the function of oral and anal in his portrait of a pimp: this time the "shit" is coming from the man's mouth, as he talks

[48]The most recent discussion of the topic of food and sex in Arabic literature is found in Geert Jan van Gelder, *God's Banquet*: *Food in Classical Arabic Literature* (New York, 2000), 3–4, 78–79, 110–11.

[49]*Al-Fukāhah,* 22.

[50]Ibid., 21.

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trash, while ″bubbles *(? al-kīfākh),*″ supposedly foaming saliva, come from his ass. In a reversed kind of excremental movement, things come from wrong places. The idea of the wrong kind of stuff coming from the wrong place is also entertained in line 21, where a mother′s milk is replaced by a prostitute′s urine.

On account of their direct link to physical acts and bodily discharges, these two topoi have a broader implication for the general cultural concern with ritual purity and purification. In his elegant study of the art of simile in the classical *nasīb,* Michael Sells has noted what he calls ″a dynamic polarity of sexual union and ablution or purification,″[51] and ″the interplay between nature and culture, sense fulfillment and purification,″[52] in the poet′s memory of the beloved gone and happiness lost:

> Not only do the description-of-the-beloved passages present elements that depict, through metonymic association, the lost garden, but they present a series of sense experiences as well. Not all *five senses* are actualized within each depiction of the beloved, but several of them usually are. Mention of the beloved generates a movement from sense to sense of excited rapidity. When this sense of excitement is taken into account, many of the same elements that make up the lost garden can be viewed as part of a performative reenactment of sexual union. Sexual union with the beloved is seldom mentioned and *never described directly;* rather it is intimated by the rapid movement through the sensorium that occurs with mention of her. Key to this series of associations and sensual evocations is the depiction of water that appears at the center of so many of the more erotically charged passages, especially the *dynamic polarity of water as sexual and ablutionary* [italics mine].[53]

What occurs in the description passages of the *nasīb,* as Sells sees it, is a ″four-part movement, from the sense image, through images of purification, of atmospheric ablutions, to a garden scene, to the *ṣaḥw* or awakening from the *dhikr.*″[54] The ″water″ metaphor is thus central in this interaction: it is water that runs from the mouth of the beloved (saliva), and the eyes of the lover (tears), to the lost garden (dew, rains), to purification (water for ablution). The sexual suggestions in the *ghazal*/*nasīb* are, according to Sells, therefore always balanced by the ″language of purification.″ Coming back to the present poem, the imagery

[51]″Guises of the *Ghūl,*″ 131.

[52]Ibid., 144.

[53]Ibid., 156–57.

[54]Ibid., 140.

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of water, too, is central in that *mā'* "water," and lush greenery, in the lost garden, first occur in line 11 (and twice in the shadow play version, lines 10, 11; see Appendix), together with Iblīs' tears (line 2). The "water," nevertheless, turns bad rapidly as the poem progresses.

The interplay between purity and pollution is also working at another, and more serious, level, for the idea of purity and purification has its deeply-rooted ramifications in the Islamic context: the notion of *ṭahārah,* or ritual purity, is of paramount significance for one's physical and spiritual well being. "Purity is half the faith," as the Prophet Muḥammad declared. *Ḥadath,* that is, ritual impurity caused by, among other things, sexual intercourse, breaking wind, evacuating urine or feces, or intoxication, is thus to be avoided and cursed.[55] As far as the notion of *ṭahārah* vs. *ḥadath* is concerned, it can be argued that the *ghazal* as a system of lyric expression manages to stay "clean." Activities that frequent the *ghazal* poetry, such as kissing, tender touch, and embracing are not considered of the *ḥadath* type, and bodily discharges, some of which are part of the stock vocabulary, such as the lover's tears, sweat, saliva, mother's milk, etc. should be seen as clean as well.

Needless to say, the boundary is violently, and deliberately, crossed in Ibn Dāniyāl's and Abū Nuwās' verses cited above. Whereas sexual union (*waṣl, wiṣāl)* is merely alluded to, but never described directly, in the classical *ghazal*, as Sells has convincingly pointed out, an abundance of violations is to be found in its antithesis, the *mujūn*. Here the *ḥadath* acts, such as fornication, intoxication, farting, urinating, etc., are being accompanied by the *najāsāt,* the unclean wet discharges such as urine, sperm, pus, feces, and blood. Iblīs, and the poet, never met a dirty thing they did not like. With these bad behaviors, bad smells, and bad leaks, all hell breaks loose. It is the domain of Iblīs, the lost garden of the Devil. Here sexual suggestions are not balanced by the language of purification, as in the *ghazal* convention, but are further materialized and enhanced by the language of abuse and pollution. Furthermore, "the water of purification" is a leitmotif in Arabo-Islamic culture; it also carries an apocalyptic message of redemption, with the miraculous power of curing wounded sinners, including those who lost their sight as punishment.[56] However, this last chance of redemption, by means of "water of purification," is flatly rejected by the wounded sinner, Iblīs, whose escalated swing towards the opposite constitutes a declaration of independence in the face of the religious establishment and authoritarian power. This point was

[55]There is a substantial literature on the subject. For more details and bibliography, see "Ḥadath," "Nadjāsa," and "Ṭahārah," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. My summary here is based on Frederick M. Denny's synthesis in *An Introduction to Islam* (New York, 1994), 113–18.

[56]See the discussion above, esp. note 12.

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surely not lost on Ibn Dāniyāl. This religious context is significant because the motivation of Baybars and Lājīn, and for that matter all other Mamluk sultans, to prohibit vice was largely a political one, in the guise of religion. Their efforts, at least the appearance of them, in enforcing the sharī'ah law would help to establish their puritanical image as warriors for the holy cause and thus the legitimate leaders of the Muslim community.

In general literary terms, if scatology is, by nature, meant to break the rules and codes of ritual purity and purification, then Abū Nuwās′ and Ibn Dāniyāl′s *mujūn*-topoi of farting and excrement have their share in this universal human farce. All together, here the reader runs into a fantasy land ruled by Iblīs, the Devil, where all the sensual extremes are being tested, moving from one sense to another, but in parodic twist: sight (blindness vs. enchanting gaze), smell (farting vs. fragrance), taste (excrement vs. sweetness), touch (rough sex vs. tenderness), and sound (″shriek″ and crying vs. love song and sweet talk). By relentlessly challenging the sense and sensibility of the audiences as they navigate the treacherous path of interplay between *ghazal* and *mujūn,* beauty and ugliness, purity and pollution, the poets′ comic assault on tradition and existing norms is completed.

The assault is also seen on a socio-linguistic level, in that the frequent occurrence of dung, urine, and excrement in poetry is arguably an indication of the poets′ testing of a new poetic vocabulary that would blend the ″high″ and ″low.″ ″These gross vulgarities,″ Jacques Berque writes, ″constitute a poor excuse for an approach to what a ′people′s′ language might be. That they are resorted to indicates *much less a lusty realism than a systematic search for incongruity,* and still more a reaction against the *language′s increasing banality* [italics mine].″[57] Although Berque′s main concern here is the trend of ″new language″ in modern Arabic poetry, it does resonate to echoes in the past, in Abū Nuwās′ and Ibn Dāniyāl′s search for the ″new″ poetic language. But that, of course, is the subject of another study.

CONCLUSION

Ibn Dāniyāl′s *Qaṣīdah* No. 71 combines the force of a manifesto, that deals with the universal theme of sensual freedom versus repression, with the comic relief of a farce, that glorifies all things prohibited through memory. By creating a series of excessively repellent poetic images that amount to parodies of classical and post-classical codes and idioms, the poet triumphed in elevating the art of *mujūn* to a new level. Following his predecessors, especially Abū Nuwās, his central strategy is a constant interplay between the language of purification after erotic suggestions,

[57] *Cultural Expression in Arab Society Today (Langages arabes du présent),* trans. Robert W. Stookey (Austin, 1978), 299.

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in the Platonic *ghazal* tradition, and between that of deliberate impurity and pollution, in scatological *mujūn* parodies. The result is a tour de force that is alternately disturbing and entertaining. The present study is by no means a comprehensive treatment of the development of the *mujūn* genre as a whole, but rather sets out to provide some textual evidence, and observations, for further investigation. In this regard, the poem in question shows not only a continuous development of the *mujūn* genre in the post-classical era, but also the new ways to do it. In that sense, to say that Ibn Dāniyāl was working within the Abū Nuwāsian tradition is perhaps an understatement. He is the one to relentlessly extend the limits, and take the genre to extremes. In many ways, Ibn Dāniyāl might lack Abū Nuwās' elegance and subtlety, and many of his ideas—such as the "wet dream," the night visit by the phantom (a. k. a. Iblīs), the "vice lists," and parodies of the Quranic idioms and the *ghazal* topoi—were obviously inherited from the earlier tradition, including that of Abū Nuwās. Yet his unique style, characterized not only by its excessive aggression and intensity but also its adding new elements—such as Iblīs as "the one-eyed beloved"—to the formula, sets him apart from many others writing in the genre. In this regard, and as is true in the general history of literature, the ideas might not always be original, but it is the presentation that matters.

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APPENDIX: EDITION AND TEXTUAL NOTES

The edition is based on the sole manuscript of al-Ṣafadī's (d. 1362) *Al-Tadhkirah al-Ṣafadīyah,* vol. 14 (Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, microfilm 1762, ff. 64 recto–65 verso). A slightly different version is to be found in the shadow play *Ṭayf al-Khayāl*.[58] The Arabic letter *dāl,* in the lower apparatus, stands for the *Mukhtār* edited by al-Dulaymī; and *mīm* for the manuscript.

The abbreviations used in the textual notes are:

Dozy = Reinhart Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* (Leiden, 1927).

Hans Wehr = Hans Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary* (Ithaca, 1976).

Hava = J. G. Hava, *Al-Farā'id al-Durrīyah fī al-Lughtayn al-'Arabīyah wa-al-Injlīzīyah* (Beirut, 1915).

K = *Three Shadow Plays by Muḥammad Ibn Dāniyāl,* ed. Paul Kahle (Cambridge, 1992).

Kazimirski = Biberstein Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire arabe-français* (Beirut, 197-).

Lane = Edward W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Cambridge, England, c1984).

Lisān al-'Arab = Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 15 vols. (Beirut, 1955).

[58] *Three Shadow Plays* (Arabic text), 9–13.

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Edition

وقال وقد أبطلوا المسكرات في أيام حسام الدين لاجين

(من السريع)

(٦٤ أ)

١. رأيتُ في النومِ أبا مُرَّه — وهو حزينُ القلبِ في مَرَّه
٢. وعيْنُه العوراءُ مقروحة — تقطُرُ دمعاً قطرةً قطره
٣. يصيح واويلاهُ من حسرتي — تلك التي ما مثلُها حسره

(٦٤ ب)

٤. وحَولَه من رهْطه عُصبة — فيهمْ على قِلّتهم كثْرَه
٥. من كل علْقٍ مثل بدر الدجى[٥٩] — قيمتُهُ في واحد بَدْرَه
٦. مُظَفّرُ اللحظ بعشّاقه — وإنما في جفنه كَسْرَه
٧. شمسُ ضحىً غصنَ نقاً قدّهُ — وظلُّه من خلفه الشّعره
٨. تجميشُهُ نَقْلٌ لمن ضمّهُ — وجَوّنَ التينه بالتّمْرَه
٩. يهونُ وزنُ المالِ في وصله — طالعُهُ الميزانُ والزُّهرَه
١٠. ومن سحور العين فتّانه — خود لها شمس الضحى ضَرَّه
١١. تقول للعُشاقِ من معصمي — تنزّهُوا في الماء والخضَره[٦٠]
١٢. اذا رأى عاشقها كسّها — يودُّ لو تُرضعُه بظره
١٣. وكلّ قوادٍ له ضرطهُ — من شدقه يُتبعُها شَخرَه
١٤. يسطو على العاشق في سَومه — مغالباً لما اقتضَى جذره
١٥. يقول والكيفاخ من خلفه — وعندَهُ في قوله شمرَه
١٦. زن ألف دينار اذا رمتُها — إن كنتَ ما ترضىَ بها بعْرَه
١٧. سبحان من وَلّدَ في خدّها — النقي بياضاً فوقه حُمره
١٨. هَيّا تمتعَ ذي سحق الوفا — لا تترك القصفَ على نَشرَه
١٩. وكل لوطيّ له نهمةٌ — على سميط اللحم في السُفره
٢٠. إن وشوَشت في وجههِ فسوَةٌ — يقُل لها يا طيبَها بَخرَه

(٦٥ أ)

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[٥٩] م الدجا

[٦٠] ثلاثة عشر بيتا (١١–٢٣) ساقطة في د.

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٢١. وكل زناءٍ يرى بَولَة القحبة في صحبته ‹ع›شره[٦١]
٢٢. وكل بنت ما لها عُذرةٌ لكن هواها من بني عُذره
٢٣. سحاقةٌ قد كلكلت بظرها وما لها من دلكها شعره
٢٤. وكل خمّارٍ وفي كفه كأسٌ على عاتقه جرَّه
٢٥. ومن حشيشيٍ سطيلٍ على شاربه قد بَقَلَتْ خُضره
٢٦. ومن بني حامٍ له مزرةٌ صفّى له صاحبُه المزرَه
٢٧. وكلٍّ بغّاء به ابنةٌ مُبادلٍ أبغى من الابرَه
٢٨. وكلّ جَلادٍ على خلوةٍ عميرةً هاجتْ به عُمره
٢٩. ومن خيالي ومن مطرب وزامرٍ قد جاء في الزُّمره
٣٠. فقلتُ يا إبليسُ ماذا الذي أسالَ من مُقلتكَ العبرَه
٣١. وما الذي أزعج أشياعك النو كى وإن كانوا ذوي شرّه
٣٢. فقال يا بأبي[٦٢] أنت قد[٦٣] وقعت في كس[٦٤] أخت ما أكره
٣٣. قلّتْ جيوشي وَوَهى منصبي وعدتُ لا أمرَ ولا إمرَه
٣٤. وأصبح الخمارُ لا يلتقي[٦٥] في بيته كوزاً ولا جرَّه
٣٥. ومنزلُ المزّارِ صفرٌ وقد علَتْهُ من ذُلّته صُفرَه
٣٦. وبات قَلي الفارِ في حسرة وقلبهُ يُقلى على جَمْرَه
٣٧. وكاد أن يسطو الحشيشي وأن يجرح[٦٦] بالخنجر والشفْره
(٦٥ ب)
٣٨. وسائرُ الستات من قحبنا[٦٧] أكثرهنّ اليوم في الحُجْرَه
٣٩. يطلبنَ أزواجاً فلا قحبةٌ[٦٨] منهنّ إلا أصبحتْ حُرّه
٤٠. وكل ساكوس قمارٍ وقد أجادَ بالعفقِ بها مهره

[٦١] ‹ع›شره الحرف غير واضحة في م.
[٦٢] د ماني
[٦٣] د الذي
[٦٤] ساقطة في د
[٦٥] د يكتفي
[٦٦] د يخرج
[٦٧] ساقطة في د
[٦٨] ساقطة في د

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٤١. كم جهد ما أغوي[٦٩] وأعوي وكم أصـفّـفُ المـقصوصَ والطُّرَه
٤٢. وكم أرى العينيـن مكحولة لمـن رَمَـى بالعـين والنـظره
٤٣. وكم وكم أسـهـر فـي خدمة الـ ـعشّاقِ في الليلِ الى بُكره
٤٤. قد كسدتْ سـوقُ المعاصي فلا شـربَ ولا قصْفَ ولا عـشره
٤٥. هـذا علـى أنـي مـن غيـّتـي أقـودُ لا أجـرَ ولا أُجـرْه
٤٦. فقلتُ يا إبليـس سـافرْ بنا وطـوّل الغيـبـةَ والسـفـرَه
٤٧. إيـاك أن تـسـكـنَ مصراً وأن تقـربَـها إنْ كـنـتَ ذا خـبـرَه
٤٨. فـإنّ فيـهـا صاحـباً عادلاً مـبـاركَ الـطـلـعة والـغـرّه
٤٩. قد علـمَ السـلطانُ من نُصحه لـلـكه ما شاع بالشهـرَه
٥٠. جـزاءُ مَـن خالـفَ مرسـومَهُ تـجريسُه والـضربُ بالدره

[٦٩] د اعوي

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TEXTUAL NOTES

2. *Maqrūḥah,* lit., ″covered with ulcers″; one MS in K has *maftūḥah,* ″open.″
3. *Yaṣīḥu*, one MS in K has *yaqūlu*, ″he said.″
4. This line perhaps implies that although Iblīs′ followers are few, they represent a large section of the Cairene underworld. Or perhaps it implies that they are so bad that a few are enough.
5. *′Ilq:* a slang word for ″a sexually accessible boy″; the term is still used in Egypt. See Clifford Bosworth, *The Medieval Islamic Underworld: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature* (Leiden, 1976), 138, 361. I thank Everett Rowson for the reference.

6–7. The order of the two lines is reversed in K.

6. *Kasrah,* lit., ″his eyelid is contracted,″ i.e., ″languid.″ See Lane, *kasara*.
7. For *al-shi′rah* as ″the hair of the pubes,″ or ″the pubes″ itself, see Lane.
8. *Al-tajmīsh: jammasha* is given in the *Lisān al-′Arab* as a synonym of *ghāzala,* ″flirt, dally with some one″ (A. F. L. Beeston, *The Epistle on Singing-Girls by Jāḥiẓ,* [Warminster, England, 1980], 59, 65), whereas Hans Wehr has ″to make love, caress, pet.″ From Abū Nuwās′ use it is obvious that *al-tajmīsh* denotes some sex acts but not necessarily intercourse. Beeston thus translates Jāḥiẓ′s phrase *wa-jammashat′hu bi-′uḍūḍ tuffāḥihā* as ″[she] teases him with bites of her apples″; see *Epistle*, 33 (translation), 19 (Arabic text). *Naql:* ″sweet fruit,″ specifically the ″munchies″ that were a standard part of a drinking party. I thank Everett Rowson for the reference. *Ḍammahu*: K has *dhāqahu,* ″tasted it,″ with variant of *ḥāzahu,* ″got hold of him.″ *Jawwana,* a standardized version of the Egyptian *gawwin,* ″to cause to go deep or far″ (El-Said Badawi and M. Hinds, *Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic* [Beirut, 1986]), derived from the basic meaning of the word *gaww,* ″inside.″ K has *jawwaza,* that is, sodomy. The metaphor of ″fig″ for ″anus″ is quite common in medieval Arabic literature; see Rowson: ″Two Homoerotic Narratives,″ 176, 189 (note 60).
9. In K, one MS has *ḥubbihi,* ″his love,″ ″his compassion,″ while all the three other have the same *waṣlihi*. This line is perhaps saying that one′s association with Iblīs is priceless for the fun and pleasures that money cannot buy. The significance of the two zodiac signs, Libra *(al-mīzān)* and Venus *(al-zuhrah),* is not clear; for *al-mīzān*, see Paul Kunitzsch, *Untersuchungen zur Sternnomenklatur der araber* (Wiesbaden, 1961), 81; for *al-zuhrah*, see Paul Kunitzsch and Manfred Ullmann, *Die Plejaden in den Vergleichen der arabischen Dichtung* (München, 1992), 109–10. The verse perhaps

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means it is appropriate to have Venus (love) and the Balance (weighing out money) in the ascendant with this delectable buyable boy.

10. *Khawd la-hā;* K has *li-ḥusnihā,* "for its beauty," that is, the beauty of the seductress, who, lit., is "a soft girl who has the noonday sun as a co-wife *(ḍarrah),*" that is, she is the principal wife, while the sun has a lower rank in beauty, as merely a co-wife.

10–11. One line is inserted between the two lines in K; it reads: Yaḥmilu (variant: taḥmilu) dhāka al-naqsha min jismihā / mā'u na'īmin qāma bi-al-qudrah. [Cleaning up that tattoo (?) off her body is water of pleasure, overflowing with vigor.]

11. *Mi'ṣamī,* lit., "my wrist," that is, the lovers were released from the seductress, wandering in the fantasy garden of "water and green"; for the implications of "water" and "green" see the discussion in the article. "Green" also hints at hashish; see Guo, "Paradise Lost," 221 (note 9).

12. *Turḍi'uhu baẓrah,* lit., "so [her] clitoris would give him suck."

13. *Shidqihi,* lit., "[through] the corner of his mouth"; K has *famihi,* "his mouth."

14. I read the phrase *mughāliban* as a *ḥāl* clause, modifying the main verb *yasṭū*. The phrase *li-mā* is to be understood here as related to the verbal noun *sawm,* "the going away for or after a thing" (Lane; compare the usage cited by Lane: *khallāhu wa-sawmahu li-mā yurīdu*, "he left him to do as he pleased"). *Jadhr,* the "snatch"; the word also can be understood as "what is to be uprooted," that is, hashish. This line is not in K. This is a difficult line, the reading of which is undertain.

15–16. The two lines are condensed into one in K: Yaqūlu lil-kīfākhi min khalfihi / an (in?) kāna mā yarḍá bi-hā ba'rah [He speaks to the tall woman (?), dragging behind him, although he doesn't care about her dung].

15. All the manuscripts used in *Mukhtār* and K have *al-kīfākh,* except one, which has *al-afqāḥ,* an alternate for the uncertain *kīfākh*. *Afqāḥ* appears to be a plural form for perhaps *fuqqāḥ,* "blossom of plants, tall, handsome woman" (Hava), or *fiqāḥ,* "a wide anus" (Lane, Kazimirski). As for *kīfākh,* according to the *Lisān al-'Arab* the root *k-f-kh* has the basic meaning of *ḍaraba,* "to strike, to squeeze (?)"; thus *kafkhah* means *al-zubdah al-mujatama'ah al-bayḍā',* "the foam, or cream, on top of the butter," which is considered its best part *(Lisān al-'Arab),* or "Écume abondante" (Kazimirski). There is also the possibility of a corrupt spelling of *q-f-ḥ,* thus *qafīḥah,* "cream upon which milk is added" (Hava), or *q-f-kh,* thus *qufākh,* which is similar to *k-f-kh*. I read the rest of the line, after *wa-al-kīfākh* . . . , as a *ḥāl* clause, describing the circumstances under which the pimp was speaking. *Shamrah,* "fennel," perhaps alludes to hashish.

16. *Zin*, lit., "weigh out!"

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17. *Fawqahu*: one MS in K has *dabba fī,* ″(worms) crawl in,″ perhaps as in ″*white* sperms, like worms, crawling around the *red* makeup (or blood?) on her cheeks,″ or the other way around, as in ″red tongue, like a worm, crawling around white cheeks.″
18. K has a totally different line: Yā ayyuhā al-nāsu (variant: yā ma'shara al-nās) ighnamū waṣlahā / lā tatrukū al-nayka 'alá fashrah [O men, seize the opportunity to screw her! Don't trade a real fuck for cheap talk!] *Dhī saḥq al-wafā',* lit., ″those who wear the old garments of chivalrous loyalty (?)″; for *saḥq,* ″an old and worn-out garment,″ see Lane. Note the similar imagery of worn-out cloth *(nashrah)* in the next hemistich. *Al-qaṣf:* the fuller version of the expression is *dhū al-qaṣf,* ″folks of carousal, revelry,″ which also appears in Ibn Dāniyāl's *Qaṣīdah* No. 69 (line 6); see Guo, ″Paradise Lost,″ 221, 232. The rendering of this verse is uncertain.
19. *Samīṭ al-laḥm,* lit., ″a meat dish.″ *Sufrah,* ″tablecloth,″ also means ″anus″ in modern Egyptian (Badawi and Hinds). I thank Everett Rowson for the reference.
20. *In washwashat fī wajhihi faswatun*; K has *in nasamat fī wajhihi ḍarṭatun*.
21. The first letter of the last word is erased in the manuscript, I read the word as '*ishrah;* K has *nushrah,* which does not make sense to me.
22. '*Udhrah*; an ancient Arabian tribe famous for its folks' platonic love.
23. *Saḥḥāqah*: K has *saḥḥātah,* the meaning of which is unclear.
24. K has slightly different wording: Wa-kullu khammārin 'alá 'unqihi / ziqqun wa-fī 'ātiqihi zukrah.
26. K has slightly different wording*:* Wa-min banī ḥāmin akhū mizrah / qad 'akkarahu al-waqtu lahū mizrah (variant: ṣafā lahū *s-n-d [sh-d-d]* wa-lahū mizrah). *Al-mizrah,* according to al-Dulaymī, means *manqū' al-dhurah* (*Mukhtār,* 120 [note 356]); since *naqī'* is a kind of ″juice obtained from dried fruits soaked in water″ (Hans Wehr), *manqū' al-dhurah* could probably be some kind of juice obtained from millet soaked in water.
27. *Baghghā'*, an energetic form of *bighā',* ″passive prostitution,″ that is, a male prostitute who is penetrated; see Rowson, ″Medieval Arabic Vice Lists,″ 54, 64–65. Both *bighā'* and *ubnah* are listed by al-Jurjānī in the category of ″passive male homosexuality.″ *Mubādil*, derived from *bidāl,* namely, ″taking turns at the active role in homosexual intercourse″; see Rowson, ″Medieval Arabic Vice Lists,″ 66–67. *Abghá* is a superlative perhaps punning on *bāghin,* ″striving, oppressive,″ and *baghī*, ″whore.″
28. *Mukhtār* has '*umrah*, but the word may be read '*amrah*, ″turban,″ as well.
28–29. In K, two more lines are inserted between these two:

Wa-kullu shālūṣi qimārin wa-qad / ajāda bi-al-'ufqi la-hū qamrah
Wa-kullu liṣṣin wa-'ayyārin / wa-baṭṭāṭin wa-fī tubbānihi ṣurrah

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[Every gambler who is good at breaking wind (while having sex) has his target to shoot at (?).
Every thief, bum, and (wine?) bottle maker, a money bag hangs in his pants.]
The first line is somewhat similar to line 40 in the *Mukhtār* version. The meaning of *qamrah,* so vocalized in K, is unclear; Dozy has ″coup de flèche qui atteint presque le but.″ *Al-'ufq*, vocalized so in K, is also unclear; for *al-'afq*, see note to line 40 below.

31. *Mā*, K has *man,* ″who caused . . . ″; and *man turá*, ″who do you think . . .″ *Dhawī shirrah,* K has *dhawī khibrah,* ″savvy, seasoned.″
32. *Mānī,* ″a Manichaean″ (the common spelling is *mānawī*); this reading is given in *Mukhtār;* the word appears in the manuscript, without dots, as either *bānī* (?), or *bābī* (?), likely *bi-abī,* that is, ″O you for whom I would ransom my father . . .″; one MS in K has *ṣāḥibī,* ″my friend,″ while the other three have *bābī*. *Kuss* (*u*)*kht*, lit., ″sister's cunt,″ as in, ″fuck your sister!″
33. *Qallat*: K has *fullat* (variant: *qallat*). The second hemistich, lit., ″I no longer have commanding power *(amr)* nor authority *(imrah).*″
34. *Yaltaqī* in the manuscript; but the *Mukhtār* gives *yaktafī,* ″is satisfied with . . .″; K has *yaltaqī* as well.
35. *Ṣufr,* ″yellow″: under Mamluk ruling, Jews were forced to wear yellow turbans in public, and their shops were supposed to hang a yellow sign to distinguish themselves from the businesses run by Muslims. It could also be a pun on *ṣifr* (empty, has been stripped bare) and *ṣufr* (he is so humiliated that his face has turned yellow).
36. *Qalī* (K has *qallā,* a verb) *al-fār*, lit., ″ he who fries rat,″ or ″fried rat″; for the possible meaning of *al-fār* as the name of some hard liquor, see Guo, ″Paradise Lost,″ 234 (line 14, *ṭājinat al-fār,* ″Hot Pot of Rat″). *Fī ḥasrah*: K has *fī fāqatin,* ″in poverty.″
37. *Yujriḥa* in the manuscript; *Mukhtār* and K have *yakhruja,* ″is about to go out . . .″
38. K has a different first hemistich: Fa-lā tasalnī 'an banāti al-khaṭā [Don't even bother to ask me about the misguided girls . . .].
40. This line is likely misplaced. The K version is closer to the right context; it has a different line: Wa-kullu qiṣṣīfin yará sakrata / al-mawti wa-lā talqāhu fī sakrah [Every reveler would see the agony of death, which you may not find in drunkenness]. *Sākūs qimār*: al-Dulaymī suggests the meaning of the word *sākūs* to be *al-mudmin,* ″addict″ (*Mukhtār,* 120 [note 359]). I suspect it was perhaps a misspelling of *sālūs;* for *sālūs,* see Bosworth, *The Medieval Islamic Underworld,* 311 *(sālūs, shālūsah).* K has *shālūṣ*. *Al-'afq*

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bi-hā: the reading is uncertain; the basic meaning of the verb root *ʻ-f-q* is ″to come and go often,″ hence the current translation; however, according to the *Lisān al-ʻArab*, the verb *ʻafaqa* means *ḍaraṭa*, ″fart,″ or *al-ḍarṭah al-khafīyah*, ″breaking soundless wind″; cf. the use cited in the *Lisān: ʻafaqa bi-hā wa-khabaja bi-hā idhā ḍaraṭa*, ″sodomize her while breaking wind.″ If that is the case, then we have one more example of the ″farting vs. fragrant smell″ topos.

41. Both *Mukhtār* and K have *aghwī wa-aʻwī* (″howl,″ but it can also mean something like ″lead into *fitnah*.″) ″To comb love-lock and forelock″ perhaps strikes an image of Iblīs constantly grabbing his hair, or his followers theirs, in desperation and despair, somehow an equivalent of ″lending a shoulder for someone to cry on.″ It may also simply mean that Iblīs helps his ″clients″ to get well-groomed and ready to go.

45. *Lā ajrah,* lit., ″without fee, or charge.″

47. *Taskuna:* K has *tadhkura,* ″[don′t] even mention . . . .″ ″*Miṣr,* ″a country,″ a pun on ″Egypt″ or ″Cairo″ *(miṣr)* and a ″country″ *(miṣr)*.

48–50. K has a different ending:

Iyyāka an tadhkura miṣra wa-an / taqrubahā in kunta dhā khibrah
Fa-inna fīhā malika qāsiṭin / lā bariḥat ayyāmuhū naṣrah
Bāta al-qarīru al-ṭarfi fī baladatin / amnuhū aʻlá min al-nashrah
[Don′t you dare mention a place called Egypt, let alone come close to it, even if you know it well.
In that country, there is a just ruler, whose reign continues to gain support.
A gratified man will rest assured that in such a place, his safety is loftier (in status) than a royal decree!]

48. *Mubārak al-ṭalʻah*, that is, a handsome horse.

50. For the torture of *al-tajrīs,* see Guo, ″Paradise Lost,″ 221. *Al-durrah*, ″big-headed whip,″ *Mukhtār*, 121 (note 360).

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Living Love: The Mystical Writings of ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah (d. 922/1516)

The summer of 922/1516 was a difficult time for Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī. The Mamluk sultan was in tense negotiations with Sultan Selim, his Ottoman rival, and fearing war, al-Ghawrī mustered an army at Aleppo. There, in the months of Jumādá II and Rajab/July and August, al-Ghawrī prepared his troops and ordered prayers recited on their behalf day and night. The sultan was reclusive and rarely appeared in public save for urgent military matters.[1] Yet, Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī took time to meet with an elderly woman. Accompanied by al-Badr al-Suyūfī (ca. 850–925/1446–1519), an accomplished religious scholar, his student al-Shams al-Safīrī (877–956/1472–1549), and several others, ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah was granted an audience with the sultan. Shortly thereafter, ʻĀ'ishah returned home to Damascus, while al-Ghawrī left Aleppo for his fateful day at Marj Dābiq.[2]

I

ʻĀ'ishah's meeting with the Mamluk sultan was an extraordinary event befitting her exceptional life. She was born in Damascus near the middle of the ninth/fifteenth century into a family of respected religious scholars and litterateurs. Originating in the village of al-Bāʻūn in southern Syria, the Bāʻūnī family served the Mamluks for several generations, holding a number of important religious and legal positions throughout the empire.[3] ʻĀ'ishah's grandfather, Aḥmad ibn Nāṣir (751–816/1350–1413), was at various times the Friday preacher at the al-Aqṣá Mosque in Jerusalem, the Friday preacher at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, the Shafiʻi judge of Damascus and, for two months, of Egypt, as well. During the reign of Sultan Barqūq (r. 784–801/1382–99), Aḥmad was granted the eminent rank of *shaykh al-shuyūkh,* but he fell from royal grace for refusing to lend the sultan funds from religious endowments. Aḥmad wrote a commentary on the Quran and a poem on proper religious belief, and was considered an excellent preacher. Likewise, his son Ibrāhīm (ca. 777–870/1375–1464) served as the Friday

[1]Carl F. Petry, *Twilight of Majesty* (Seattle, 1993), 221–28.
[2]Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab fī Tārīkh Aʻyān Ḥalab,* ed. Maḥmūd al-Fākhūrī and Yaḥyá ʻAbbārah (Damascus, 1973), 1:2:1061; 1:2:506–22, and 2:2:258–62.
[3]Concerning al-Bāʻūn, see Ḥasan Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah* (Irbid, 1997), 13–31.

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preacher at the Umayyad Mosque, the Friday preacher of the al-Aqṣá Mosque, and supervisor of the Muslim holy places of Jerusalem and Hebron *(nāẓir al-ḥaramayn).* His fine literary abilities won him the title ″Master of Literature in the Land of Syria.″ Aḥmad′s second son, Muḥammad (780–871/1378–1466), was also the Friday preacher at the Umayyad Mosque, as well as a minor poet and historian.[4]

Aḥmad′s third son Yūsuf (805–80/1402–75) was ʻĀʼishah′s father. He received a religious and legal education similar to that of his brothers, and was appointed Shafiʻi judge in Ṣafad, Tripoli, Aleppo, and, finally, in Damascus, where he also oversaw the reorganization and expansion of the hospital of Nūr al-Dīn. Yūsuf wrote both prose and poetry, and was regarded as an honest and pious man, and among the best judges to have served in Damascus. Shortly before his death in 880/1475, he completed the pilgrimage to Mecca with his children and other family members, ʻĀʼishah presumably among them.[5] In addition to his daughter ʻĀʼishah, Yūsuf had at least five sons, the most prominent of whom was probably Muḥammad (857–916/1453–1510), a poet, historian, and legal scholar who served for a time as the Shafiʻi judge of Aleppo.[6]

Nevertheless, surpassing them all in talent, erudition, and fame was their sister ʻĀʼishah. Several contemporaries left accounts of her, including the Damascene historian Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn (884–935/1479–1529), and the necrologist of Aleppo, Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī (908–71/1502–63). Drawing extensively from both sources are later notices by Muḥammad al-Ghazzī (977–1061/1570–1651), and ʻAbd al-Ḥayy Ibn al-ʻImād (1032–89/1623–79).[7]

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[4]For information and sources on members of the Bāʻūnī family, see W. A. S. Khalidi, ″Al-Bāʻūnī,″ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., 1:1109–10; Fāris Aḥmad al-ʻAlāwī, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah al-Dimashqīyah* (Damascus, 1994), 20–31, and Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 33–42. ʻAlāwī should be used with caution; see my review of al-ʻAlāwī in *Mamlūk Studies Review* 6 (2002): 191-193.

[5]See the sources listed in the preceding note, as well as Muḥammad ibn ʻAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʼ al-Lāmiʻ li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsiʻ* (Cairo, 1934), 10:298–99; Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Al-Qalāʼid al-Jawharīyah fī Tārīkh al-Ṣāliḥīyah,* ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Duhmān (Damascus, 1980), 1:488–89; Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mutʻat al-Adhhān min al-Tamattuʻ bi-al-Iqrān,* ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣilī (Beirut, 1999), 2:832–33, and Mūsá ibn Yūsuf al-Anṣārī, *Nuzhat al-Khāṭir wa-Bahjat al-Nāẓir,* ed. ʻAdnān Muḥammad Ibrāhīm and ʻAdnān Darwīsh (Damascus, 1991), 2:13–40.

[6]Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mutʻat al-Adhhān,* 1:416, 464–65, 472, 2:792; Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib al-Sāʼirah bi-Aʻyān al-Miʼah al-ʻĀshirah,* ed. Jibrāʼīl Sulaymān Jabbūr (Beirut, 1945), 1:72–73, 147; and Khalidi, ″Al-Bāʻūnī,″ *EI*^{2}, 1:1110.

[7]Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mutʻat al-Adhhān,* 2:878–79; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab,* 1:2:1060–69; al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib,* 1:287–92; and ʻAbd al-Ḥayy Ibn al-ʻImād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār Man Dhahab* (Cairo, 1931), 8:111–13.

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Unfortunately, none of them mentions when ʻĀʼishah was born, though Ibn Ṭūlūn, who knew her, quoted verses that ʻĀʼishah recited to her uncle Ibrāhīm, who died in 870/1464. Perhaps ʻĀʼishah was ten at that time, and so born around 860/1455.[8] For she was a precocious child, and in one of her writings, ʻĀʼishah stated that she had memorized the entire Quran by the age of eight.[9] ʻĀʼishah went on to study poetry, hadith, and jurisprudence, probably with her father and her uncle Ibrāhīm, among others.[10]

ʻĀʼishah also specialized in the study and practice of Islamic mysticism, which was important to the entire family. Her great uncle Ismāʻīl had been a Sufi ascetic; her uncle Muḥammad composed a devotional poem of over a thousand verses on the prophet Muḥammad, while her uncle Ibrāhīm had been the first director of the al-Bāsiṭīyah *khānqāh* in Damascus. Moreover, many members of the Bāʻūnī family, including ʻĀʼishah´s father, were buried in a family plot adjacent to the *zāwiyah* of the Sufi master Abū Bakr ibn Dāwūd (d. 806/1403). This strongly suggests their attachment to this Sufi and his descendents, who were affiliated with the Urmawī branch of the Qādirīyah order.[11]

ʻĀʼishah´s own affection for the Qādirīyah is evident in many of her writings, which include praise for the order´s progenitor ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (470–561/1078–1166).[12] She was also influenced by ʻAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī (396–481/1005–89), composing a verse rendition of his popular Sufi guide, the *Manāzil al-Sāʼirīn.*[13] In addition, ʻĀʼishah read and made copies of Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Nawawī´s (631–76/1233–77) book on prayer, the *Kitāb al-Adhkār,*[14] and ʻAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī´s (740–816/1339–1413) Sufi lexicon, the *Kitāb al-Taʻrīfāt.*[15] Further, she frequently praised her two spiritual masters, Jamāl al-Dīn Ismāʻīl al-Ḥawwārī (fl. late ninth/fifteenth century), and his *khalīfah,* or successor,

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[8]Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mutʻat al-Adhhān,* 2:878, and al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib,* 1:292.

[9]Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab,* 1:2:1060–61, and al-ʻAlāwī, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,* 18–20.

[10]See the sources listed in the preceding note, as well as al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib,* 1:287–98, and Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 44.

[11]Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʼ,* 2:232, 308, 7:114; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Al-Qalāʼid,* 1: 274–78, 299–301, 489, 2:593; ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Nuʻaymī, *Al-Dāris fī Tārīkh al-Madāris,* ed. Jaʻfar al-Ḥasanī (reprint, Cairo, 1988), 2:196, 202–3; and Eric Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Egypte et en Syrie* (Damascus, 1995), 225–28.

[12]See W. Braune, ″ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Djīlānī,″ *EI*^{2}, 1:69–70, and D. S. Margoliouth, ″Ḳādiriyya,″ *EI*^{2}, 4:380–83.

[13]See S. De Beaurecueil, ″Al-Anṣārī al-Ḥarawī,″ *EI*^{2}, 1:515–16.

[14]C. Brockelmann, ″ʻĀʼishah Bint Yūsuf,″ *Encyclopaedia of Islām,* 1st ed., 1:217, and W. Heffening, ″Al-Nawawī,″ *EI*^{2}, 7:1041.

[15]Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab,* 1:2:1062, and al-ʻAlāwī, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,* 35. Also see A. S. Tritton, ″Al-Djurdjānī,″ *EI*^{2}, 2:602–3, and Geoffroy, *Soufisme,* 90–91.

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Muḥyī al-Dīn Yaḥyá al-Urmawī (fl. ninth-tenth/fifteenth-sixteenth centuries). ʻĀʼishah states:

> My education and development, my spiritual effacement and purification, occurred by the helping hand of the sultan of the saints of his time, the crown of the pure friends of his age, the beauty of truth and religion, the venerable master, father of the spiritual axes, the axis of existence, Ismāʻīl al-Ḥawwārī—may God sanctify his heart′s secret and be satisfied with him—and, then, by the helping hand of his successor in spiritual states and stations, and in spiritual proximity and union, Muḥyī al-Dīn Yaḥyá al-Urmawī—may God continue to spread his ever-growing spiritual blessings throughout his lifetime, and join us every moment to his blessings and succor.[16]

The relationship between ʻĀʼishah and Ismāʻīl al-Ḥawwārī appears to have been particularly close, for in several of her works ʻĀʼishah described herself as ″related to Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Bāʻūnī on earth, and in truth to the axis, the unique and universal helper, Jamāl al-Dīn Ismāʻīl al-Ḥawwārī.″[17]

As a Qādirī Sufi and a woman, ʻĀʼishah was expected to marry and have children. The Bāʻūnīs were a prominent family of the al-Ṣāliḥīyah district of Damascus, and several Bāʻūnī daughters, including ʻĀʼishah, married members of another distinguished family from the area. Known as Ibn Naqīb al-Ashrāf, they were descendents of the prophet Muḥammad through his grandson al-Ḥusayn. ʻĀʼishah married Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Naqīb al-Ashrāf (d. 909/1503), about whom we know little, while his more famous brother, the religious scholar and teacher ʻAlāʼ al-Dīn ʻAlī (852–910/1448–1504), married one of ʻĀʼishah′s

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[16]Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab,* 1:2:1063–64; also see Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mutʻat al-Adhhān,* 2:878; al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib,* 1:287–92; al-ʻAlāwī, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,* 18–19, 124–25; and Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 162–67.

[17]ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Dīwān ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah (=Fayḍ al-Faḍl),″ Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, Cairo, microfilm 29322 of MS 431 (Shiʻr Taymūr), 4; her ″Durar al-Ghāʼiṣ fī Baḥr al-Muʻjizāt wa-al-Khaṣāʼiṣ,″ Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, Cairo, microfilm 34329 of MS 558 (ḥadīth), fol. 2a; and her ″Al-Mawrid al-Ahná,″ ed. al-ʻAlāwī, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,* 124–25. Sources differ over Jamāl al-Dīn Ismāʻīl′s place of origin. Ibn Ṭūlūn called him ″al-Ḥawrānī″ from a village in the districts of Damascus, while Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, al-Ghazzī, and Ibn al-ʻImād called him ″al-Khwārazmī;″ Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mutʻat al-Adhhān,* 2:878; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab,* 1:2:1063; al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib,* 1:288, and Ibn al-ʻImād, *Shadharāt,* 8:111. However, surviving manuscripts of ʻĀʼishah′s works clearly state that Jamāl al-Dīn Ismāʻīl was ″from Ḥawwār,″ a village near Aleppo. Also see Mājid al-Dhahabī and Ṣalāḥ al-Khiyamī, ″Dīwān ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,″ *Turāth al-ʻArabī* (Damascus) 4 (1981): 110–21, esp. 112, and Yāqūt ibn ʻAbd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Muʻjam al-Buldān* (Beirut, 1979), 2:315, 317.

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older nieces.[18] ʻĀʼishah had at least two children, including a daughter, Barakah (b. 899/1491), and a son, ʻAbd al-Wahhāb (b. 897/1489).[19]

Together with ʻAbd al-Wahhāb, ʻĀʼishah set out for Cairo in 919/1513. By this time ʻĀʼishah′s husband and brothers were dead, and so she apparently took it upon herself to travel to Cairo in order to secure a job for her son in the Mamluk administration.[20] Unfortunately, during their journey they were robbed near the Egyptian city of Bilbīs, and ʻĀʼishah lost all of her writings. When they finally arrived in Cairo, ʻĀʼishah requested the assistance of Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad ibn Ajā (854–925/1450–1519), the confidential secretary and foreign minister of the sultan al-Ghawrī. Ibn Ajā treated ʻĀʼishah like an old friend to the extent of lodging her in his own harem and eventually employing her son in the chancery.[21] Why Ibn Ajā was so generous to ʻĀʼishah and her son is open to speculation, though Ibn Ajā had previous close relations with at least one member of the Ibn Naqīb al-Ashrāf family. In addition, Ibn Ajā, who was originally from Aleppo, may have known ʻĀʼishah′s brother Muḥammad, who had been a Shafiʻi judge there, or her Sufi shaykh, Jamāl al-Dīn Ismāʻīl, who was also from the region. It may be, too, that ʻĀʼishah′s poetic reputation had preceded her to Cairo, attracting the attention of Ibn Ajā, to whom she would dedicate several glowing panegyrics.[22]

Whatever the case, Ibn Ajā gave ʻĀʼishah an apartment next to his wife, Sitt al-Ḥalab (d. 933/1526). Sitt al-Ḥalab was the daughter of an important Mamluk amir and official of Aleppo, and after her father′s death, she became the overseer of the substantial religious endowments that he had created during his lifetime.[23] Sitt al-Ḥalab then appears to have conspired with Ibn Ajā to divorce her first

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[18]Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mutʻat al-Adhhān,* 1:157, 483–84, 518; 2:716–17, 878.

[19]In comments at the end of one of her works, ʻĀʼishah names her husband, her two children, the dates of her children′s births, and makes a few comments on the difficulty of receiving the stipend owed to her son as a descendent of the Prophet Muḥammad; see her ″Al-Mawrid al-Ahná fī al-Mawlid al-Asná,″ Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, Cairo, MS 639 (Shiʻr Taymūr), 355–56, quoted in Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 46–47; and also see ʻAbd Allāh Mukhliṣ, ″ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,″ *Majallat al-Majmaʻ al-ʻIlmī* (Damascus) 16 no. 2 (1941): 66–72, esp. 69. Ibn al-ʻImād (*Shadharāt,* 8:132) following al-Ghazzī (*Al-Kawākib,* 1:257) referred to ʻAbd al-Wahhāb′s mother as ″Zaynab bint al-Bāʻūnī.″ But I believe, as does Rabābiʻah, that ʻĀʼishah is meant, due to the time and circumstances of ʻAbd al-Wahhāb′s stay in Cairo as discussed below.

[20]ʻĀʼishah may also have been attempting to secure her son′s stipend; see n. 19; Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 47–52, and ʻUmar Farrūkh, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-ʻArabī* , 5th ed. (Beirut, 1984), 3:926–27.

[21]Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mutʻat al-Adhhān,* 1:483; 2:878; al-Dhahabī and al-Khiyamī, ″Dīwān ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,″ 112; and Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab,* 1:2:1064.

[22]Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab,* 1:1:1064; 2:2:456–60; also see Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān fī Ḥawādith al-Zamān,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá (Cairo, 1962), 1:315; al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib,* 1:101; and Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 50–52, 250–51.

[23]Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab,* 1:2:575–78, 884–85, and al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʼ,* 5:125.

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husband, after which she married Ibn Ajā. No doubt aided by Sitt al-Ḥalab′s vast wealth, Ibn Ajā became the Hanafi judge of Aleppo in 890/1485 and continued his rise to power until Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī appointed him confidential secretary and foreign minister in 906/1500.[24] Though frequently in poor health, Ibn Ajā held these important positions until the end of the Mamluk dynasty, as he enjoyed the high esteem and friendship of al-Ghawrī. Ibn Ajā threw lavish banquets for his sultan, who reciprocated with expensive gifts, and Sitt al-Ḥalab, too, had elaborate meals prepared for al-Ghawrī and his entourage when the sultan came to Ibn Ajā′s residence to visit his ailing minister. Not surprisingly, Sitt al-Ḥalab was on friendly terms with al-Ghawrī′s wife, the Circassian princess Jān-i Sukkar, whom she met at monthly soirees.[25]

Perhaps ʻĀʼishah attended some of these sessions and met the princess, for she certainly circulated among Cairo′s elite. ʻĀʼishah studied and shared views with a number of the finest scholars of the time, who authorized her to teach, and give legal opinions of her own. Ibn Ajā also introduced her to the noted litterateur and religious scholar ʻAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʻAbbāsī (867–963/1463–1557), with whom she exchanged a number of friendly and witty poems.[26] ʻĀʼishah stayed in Cairo for several years enjoying Ibn Ajā′s patronage, and she may not have left Cairo until 922/1516, when her son ʻAbd al-Wahhāb, then an assistant secretary, accompanied Ibn Ajā to Aleppo, where ʻĀʼishah met the sultan.[27] Perhaps Ibn Ajā suggested the royal audience to al-Ghawrī, whose love of poetry is well known.[28] But the sultan may have met with ʻĀʼishah to seek her blessings, as well. For in this time of crisis, al-Ghawrī was also gathering his spiritual forces for the days and battle ahead, and it is quite apparent from biographies of ʻĀʼishah and from her own comments in her writings that she was highly regarded as a pious woman and Sufi master.[29]

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[24]Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab,* 2:2:452–54, and Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Iyās, *Badāʼīʻ al-Zuhūr fī Waqāʼīʻ al-Duhūr,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá, 3rd ed. (Cairo, 1984), 3:219, 258, 318, 426, 474.

[25]Ibn Iyās, *Badāʼīʻ,* 4:276, 394, 473–74, Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab*, 1:2:575–78.

[26]Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab,* 1:2:1064–65; Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mutʻat al-Adhhān,* 2:878; al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib,* 1:288–90; al-ʻAlāwī, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,* 37–42; and Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 167–72.

[27]Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mutʻat al-Adhhān,* 1:483.

[28]Ibn Iyās, *Badāʼīʻ,* 5:89, and see Petry, *Twilight,* 119–22.

[29]ʻĀʼishah′s biographers refer to her variously as ″the intelligent, knowledgeable, and pious shaykhah, poet, litterateur and Sufi, one of the unique people of all time, and a rarity of the ages.″ Also see Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 220–22; Th. Emil Homerin, ″Saving Muslim Souls: The *Khānqāh* and the Sufi Duty in Mamluk Lands,″ *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 59–83, esp. 62–63; and Petry, *Twilight,* 224–25, who describes al-Ghawrī′s invocations for divine aid on the battlefield of Marj Dābiq.

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II

Indeed, by any standard, ʻĀ'ishah′s religious writings were extensive, but for a premodern woman, they were simply extraordinary. While a number of women were respected scholars and teachers in Mamluk domains, they rarely composed works of their own.[30] ʻĀ'ishah, however, was a prolific author of both religious prose and poetry, and she probably wrote more Arabic works than any other woman prior to the twentieth century. In addition to copying earlier religious works, including al-Nawawī′s *Kitāb al-Adhkār,* and al-Jurjānī′s *Kitāb al-Taʻrīfāt,* ʻĀ'ishah composed verse abridgements of Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī′s (d. 902/1497) *Al-Qawl al-Badīʻ fī Ṣalāt ʻalá al-Ḥabīb al-Shafīʻ*,[31] and *Al-Muʻjizāt wa-al-Khaṣā'iṣ al-Nabawīyah* by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505).[32] Both were devotional works in praise of the prophet Muḥammad, and she also composed a panegyric on Muḥammad entitled *Fayḍ al-Wafā' fī Asmā' al-Muṣṭafá,* and several similar works combining prose and poetry, including the *Madad al-Wudūd fī Mawlid al-Maḥmūd, Al-Fatḥ al-Qarīb fī Miʻrāj al-Ḥabīb,* and *Al-Mawrid al-Ahná fī al-Mawlid al-Asná*.[33] ʻĀ'ishah also wrote a number of works on Sufism, including her verse abridgement of al-Anṣārī′s *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn,*[34] a spiritual guide entitled *Al-Muntakhab fī Uṣūl al-Rutab,*[35] a work entitled *Malāmiḥ al-Sharīfah min Āthār al-Laṭīfah,* an ode on mystical recitation and prayer called *Tashrīf al-Fikr fī Naẓm Fawā'id al-Dhikr,* and two volumes of mystical and devotional poetry, *Al-Fatḥ al-Ḥaqqī min Fayḥ al-Talaqqī,* and her *Fayḍ al-Faḍl wa-Jamʻ al-Shaml*.[36]

Among ʻĀ'ishah′s favorite poets was Muḥammad al-Buṣīrī (d. 694/1295), and she incorporated his famous panegyric to Muḥammad, *Al-Burdah,* into a *takhmīs,* which was among the dozen works stolen from her in 919/1513 on the road to

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[30]See al-ʻAlāwī, *ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,* 36–37; Huda Lutfī, ″Al-Sakhāwī′s *Kitāb al-Nisā'* as a Source For the Social and Economic History of Muslim Women During the Fifteenth Century A.D.,″ *Muslim World* 71 (1981): 104–24, esp. 121; and Jonathan P. Berkey, ″Women and Islamic Education in the Mamluk Period,″ *Women in Middle Eastern History,* ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven, 1991), 143–57.

[31]Kātib Çelebi, *Kashf al-Ẓunūn* (Istanbul, 1941–43), 2:1081, 1362.

[32]ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Durar al-Ghā'iṣ fī Baḥr al-Muʻjizāt wa-al-Khaṣā'iṣ″; she completed this work in 902/1497 (fol. 1b.).

[33]For a list of ʻĀ'ishah′s writings prior to 919/1513, see her ″Fayḍ al-Faḍl,″ 218–20; also see Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 59–65 and the partial list in al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib,* 1:288. For her *Al-Mawrid al-Ahná,* completed in 901/1495, see the recent edition in al-ʻAlāwī, *ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,* 44–47, 103–79.

[34]ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Fayḍ al-Faḍl,″ 219, and Kātib Çelebi, *Kashf al-Ẓunūn,* 1:96.

[35]Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, Cairo, microfilm 13123 of MS 318 (Taṣawwuf Taymūr), 1074/1663.

[36]ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Fayḍ al-Faḍl,″ 219, 297, and Kātib Çelebi, *Kashf al-Ẓunūn,* 2:1232, 1813.

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Cairo. Though devastated by this loss, ʻĀʼishah set to work composing a second *takhmīs* on *Al-Burdah,* and she collected it in a volume together with five additional odes in praise of the Prophet which she completed during her stay in Cairo.[37] This collection includes her most famous poem, the *Fatḥ al-Mubīn fī Madḥ al-Amīn* (The clear inspiration in praise of the trusted prophet), which consists of 130 verses, each containing an elegant example of a rhetorical device (*badīʻ;* e.g., paronomasia, antithesis, etc.), while lauding an attribute or action of Muḥammad. This work and ʻĀʼishah′s commentary on it reveal her refined poetic skills and extensive knowledge of Arabic language and literature, and she referred to many of her literary predecessors including al-Buḥtarī (d. 284/897), al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965), al-Maʻarrī (d. 449/1057), and Ibn Abī Iṣbaʻ (d. 654/1256). Further, ʻĀʼishah consciously patterned her *Fatḥ al-Mubīn* on earlier *badīʻīyah* poems praising the Prophet by Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 749/1349) and Abū Bakr Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī (d. 838/1434); the poetic influences of al-Buṣīrī and his literary forefather, ʻUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), are evident as well.[38]

But ʻĀʼishah′s praise of the prophet Muḥammad was more than a rhetorical undertaking, as she noted in her introduction to her second *takhmīs* on *Al-Burdah,* entitled *Al-Qawl al-Ṣaḥīḥ fī Takhmīs Burdat al-Madīḥ:*

> Praising the noble Prophet is a distinguishing feature of the pious and a sign of those who are successful. Those who desire the best, desire to praise him, while the pure of heart praise him without end, for this is among the best ways to achieve success and a means for doubling rewards![39]

Further, in many poems, ʻĀʼishah extolled the spiritual and physical benefits of such pious praise:

> Praise of God′s Prophet moves the soul;
> it drives away doubt, worries, and grief.

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[37]ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Fayḍ al-Faḍl,″ 219, and al-Dhahabī and al-Khiyamī, ″Dīwān ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,″ 112–13, which also contains a description of this collection. A *takhmīs* is the expansion of an earlier poem by adding three stanzas in elaboration and/or commentary to each verse (two stanzas) of the original poem (= 5 stanzas = *takhmīs*); see W. P. Heinrichs, ″Allusion and Intertextuality,″ in Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* (London, 1998), 1:82–83, and Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 123–38.

[38]Al-Dhahabī and al-Khiyamī, ″Dīwān ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,″ 113–15; al-ʻAlāwī, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,* 44–47, 185–91; and Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 56, who notes that ʻĀʼishah cites at least fifty authors and poets in her commentary. Also see in this issue, G. van Gelder, ″Poetry for Easy Listening: *Insijām* and Related Concepts in Ibn Ḥijjah′s *Khizānat al-Adab*.

[39]Al-Dhahabī and al-Khiyamī, ″Dīwān ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,″ 112, and al-ʻAlāwī, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,* 44–47.

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Spirits find rest, eyes cry in delight,
and bodies dance—you can´t hold them back![40]

In fact, ʻĀ'ishah´s own devotion to the Prophet was probably strengthened by her vision of him during her stay in Mecca. Though she does not relate the date of the event, it probably occurred around 880/1475 when ʻĀ'ishah went on pilgrimage with her father.

> God, may He be praised, granted me a vision of the Messenger when I was residing in holy Mecca. An anxiety had overcome me by the will of God most high, and so I wanted to go to the holy sanctuary. It was Friday night, and I reclined on a couch on an enclosed veranda overlooking the holy Kaʻbah and the sacred precinct. It so happened that one of the men there was reading a *mawlid* of God´s Messenger, and voices arose with blessings upon the Prophet. Then, I could not believe my eyes, for it was as if I was standing among a group of women. Someone said: ″Kiss the Prophet!″ and a dread came over me that made me swoon until the Prophet passed before me. Then I sought his intercession and, with a stammering tongue, I said to God´s Messenger, ″O my master, I ask you for intercession!″ Then I heard him say calmly and deliberately, ″I am the intercessor on the Judgment Day!″[41]

For ʻĀ'ishah, then, praising the Prophet was akin to a religious vocation, and her devotion to this task is seen clearly in her popular prose work *Al-Mawrid al-Ahná fī al-Mawlid al-Asná* (The most wholesome source on the birth of the most brilliant prophet). In this reverential account of Muḥammad´s birth and call to prophecy, ʻĀ'ishah´s mystical tendencies are clear from the outset as she begins with a discussion of *al-Nūr al-Muḥammadī,* or Muhammadan Light, a type of Muslim logos principle. God was a hidden treasure who loved to be known, and so the Light came forth from His knowledge as the first emanation. With the Light, God produced the Pen and Tablet as instruments to bring about creation, and He then made the Light shine in Adam and the other prophets, culminating in Muḥammad, the most beloved of God and humanity´s intercessor on the Judgment Day.[42] After

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[40] ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Fayḍ al-Faḍl,″ 26.
[41] ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Mawrid al-Ahná,″ 104–5, and quoted in Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 53.
[42] ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Mawrid al-Ahná,″ ed. al-ʻAlāwī, *ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,* 117–37; also see Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 141–57. Concerning *al-Nūr al-Muḥammadī,* or the Muḥammadan Light, see Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1985), 123–43.

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this introduction, ʻĀʼishah recounts the noble lineage of the earthly Muḥammad from his ancestor Muḍar, the miracles surrounding his birth and early childhood, his travels and extraordinary encounters in Syria, and his marriage to the faithful Khadījah. ʻĀʼishah then celebrates more of the Prophet´s miracles, praises his fine moral and physical attributes, and concludes with a brief account of his death.[43] *Al-Mawrid al-Ahná* closely follows the Arabic *mawlid* genre in that ʻĀʼishah selected and summarized events detailed in the *sīrah,* or hagiographical literature on Muḥammad. Further, her condensed references to many events, hadith, and Quranic verses suggest that her audience was quite familiar with the material. Obviously, ʻĀʼishah did not intend her *al-Mawrid al-Ahná* to be a study of Muḥammad´s life. Rather, it is a joyous hymn of praise for God´s greatest Prophet to be recited publicly on the anniversary of his birth, and this performative aspect is underscored by ʻĀʼishah´s many poems placed within the rhymed prose of the text:[44]

Pray for him,
    blessed and saved by God,
        his creator in pre-eternity!
Bless this cosmic splendor,
    more praised than heaven,
        named before Tablet and Pen.
Pray for him,
    and God will bless you ten times more
        and hold you in favor and grace!
Pray, for God´s blessings
    are His mercy from which
        all benefits flow.
Bless him, for one who prays for him
    wins a share of favor
        and safety from misfortune.
Pray for my master, bless my support,
    pray for my intercessor
        who grants my desire!
Pray for the lord from Muḍar´s line,
    bless the chosen one,

[43] ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Mawrid al-Ahná,″ 137–79; also see al-ʻAlāwī, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,* 103–11.

[44] In terms of Christian literature, this and similar works are comparable to Christmas hymns, more akin to Handel´s *Messiah* than to the Gospels. For more of ʻĀʼishah´s poetry on Muḥammad see Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 141–62; for the Prophet´s *mawlid* in general see Schimmel, *Muhammad,* 144–58.

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messenger to nations!
Pray for him
praising and praised from eternity;
bless the best to walk the earth!
God bless him always and forever,
and his family and companions,
knowing and wise,
As long as the hawk′s call at noon
moves the riders with joy
toward the House and Sacred Precinct,
As long as the breeze blows at night
from Kāẓimah, lightning flashing
on the slopes of Dhū Salam.[45]

In the final verse, ʻĀ'ishah recalls Kāẓimah and Dhū Salam, two sites on the pilgrim routes to Mecca. Here, she pays homage to *Al-Burdah,* which begins by invoking both places, and, perhaps, to a poem by Ibn al-Fāriḍ that served as the model for al-Buṣīrī′s famous ode.[46] The strong influence of both poets is evident throughout ʻĀ'ishah′s verse, whether in poems praising the prophet Muḥammad, or in her many poems on mystical themes. Though much of ʻĀ'ishah′s Sufi verse is lost, several manuscripts of her *Fayḍ al-Faḍl wa-Jamʻ al-Shaml* (The emanation of grace and the gathering of union) have survived.[47] This collection contains over three hundred ″inspired poems on divine, intimate conversations, mystical meanings and states of grace, spiritual efforts, matters of desire, and passionate ways.″[48] The poems in the volume appear to span much of ʻĀ'ishah′s life, from her ″days as a novice and student to her mastery of the branches of mystical annihilation and the arts of effacement.″[49]

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[45]ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Mawrid al-Ahná,″ 176.
[46]See Stefan Sperl′s recent translation and insightful comments on *Al-Burdah,* ″Qasida 50,″ in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa,* 2 vols., ed. S. Sperl and C. Shackle (Leiden, 1996), 2:388–411, 470–76. For Ibn al-Fāriḍ′s poem see my translation and analysis in Th. Emil Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn al-Fāriḍ, His Verse and His Shrine,* 2nd rev. ed. (Cairo, 2001), 4–9. Also see Farrūkh, *Tārīkh,* 3:927.
[47]Three manuscripts of her ″Fayḍ al-Faḍl″ may be found in Cairo′s Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, and are listed as ″Dīwān ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,″ MS 431 (Shiʻr Taymūr), dated 1031/1622; MS 581 (Shiʻr Taymūr), dated 1031/1622; and MS 4384 (Adab), dated 1341/1922. All references in this article are to MS 431, unless otherwise noted. Rabābiʻah (*ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 60) found a fourth manuscript in Cairo′s Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, presumably under its correct title. This is MS 112 (Shiʻr Taymūr), also dated 1031/1622 and by the same scribe as MS 431.
[48]ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Fayḍ al-Faḍl,″ 4.
[49]Ibid., 218–19.

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An odd feature of the *Fayḍ al-Faḍl* is that the collection seems to end at several places:

> ʻĀʼishah—related to Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Bāʻūnī on earth, and in truth to the axis, the unique and universal helper, Jamāl al-Dīn Ismāʻīl al-Ḥawwārī, known as the axis of existence, may God bless his heart secret—when she finished with this conclusion—and she never concludes without a new beginning—the Real inspired her with an awesome book which she received from Him, may He be praised, the Real. He entitled it *Al-Fatḥ al-Ḥaqqī min Fayḥ al-Talaqqī,* and it has sublime, inspired verse not contained in this present volume, so be aware of that. God is the protector and my success, and He is the most wonderful companion![50]

Yet, after this apparent ending, the *Fayḍ al-Faḍl* begins anew with a number of additional poems. One of them names, for the first time, ʻĀʼishah′s second spiritual master and Ismāʻīl al-Ḥawwārī′s successor, Muḥyī al-Dīn Yaḥyá al-Urmawī, further suggesting that the *Fayḍ al-Faḍl* was an on-going compilation.[51] This may also explain why none of the manuscripts cite a completion date for the original work. Nevertheless, ʻĀʼishah may not have added poems to this collection after her arrival in Egypt in 919/1513, since the poems that she composed in Cairo are not cited in the *Fayḍ al-Faḍl,* as are her other works.[52]

Whatever the case, the *Fayḍ al-Faḍl* begins with a series of *munājāt* or intimate monologues with God. This particular literary form had been popularized by the Persian Sufi ʻAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī, whose work ʻĀʼishah knew well. Each of ʻĀʼishah′s *munājāt* usually consists of two or three verses, in which she assumes the position of the submissive believer before God. In one such poem from ″her days as a novitiate,″ ʻĀʼishah says:[53]

> Whenever the fates make your servant recall
> someone besides you, by God, it does no good.
> For memory of you is hidden deep in the heart,
> and you know what I reveal and conceal.

[50]Ibid., 296–97, and 218–20.
[51]Ibid., 314.
[52]Ibid., 218–20, 296–97.
[53]Ibid., 5. For the *munājāt* of ʻAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī see *Khwaja Abdullah Ansari: Intimate Conversations,* translated by Wheeler M. Thackston (New York, 1978), 163–233.

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In a similar spirit of pious resignation, ʻĀʼishah wrote:[54]

I am content with what God wants for me;
I commit my whole affair to Him.
I turn to Him, seek refuge in Him, cling to Him
for I can trust no one save Him!

Preceding these verses and most of the other poems in the *Fayḍ al-Faḍl* is the phrase *wa min fatḥi Allāh ʻalayhā* or, more often, *wa min fatḥihi ʻalayhā*: ″From God′s/His inspiration upon her,″ declaring the deeply spiritual source and character of ʻĀʼishah′s poetry. Further, in a number of instances, poems are introduced by a few additional words citing their occasion, theme, or ʻĀʼishah′s mystical state when composing them, as in the following poem inspired when ″rapture was intense:″[55]

With noble invocation of the One, Creator,
refresh a heart melted by longing.
Singer, lift up His praise and repeat it;
Saqi, pass round His love′s ancient wine.
For life has passed in desire to drink it,
though I never won a taste, no, not a taste.
See how it revived impassioned souls
brought to ruin and destruction.
See how it made them disappear
from all the world since they fell for it.
See how it drove them love-mad and crazy,
shattered by rapture and craving.
See how it melted hearts now flowing down
from tear ducts of large round eyes.
See how it brought a dead lover back to life;
O, how many strong lovers have died!
It is a wine ever appearing
to man as the rising sun,
And when its bouquet spreads forth,
it covers all the world and existence.
When will I win its quenching draught
passing me away in that abiding beauty?

[54] ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Fayḍ al-Faḍl,″ 5.
[55] Ibid., 5–6

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Similar to Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his famous wine ode, *Al-Khamrīyah,* ʻĀʼishah here links the memory and recollection *(dhikr)* of God to His love, which is likened to an ancient, intoxicating wine (vv. 1–3). The quest for it has destroyed many true lovers, yet a taste of this wine could resurrect the dead. Again like Ibn al-Fāriḍ, ʻĀʼishah draws attention syntactically to the wine′s miraculous effects, in this case by beginning five consecutive verses with the phrase *wa-lakum bi-hā* (″Consider how it . . .″ vv. 4–8). She further suggests the spiritual properties of this splendid, fragrant vintage in her final verses (vv. 9–11). There, in verse 11, ʻĀʼishah plays on the well-known Sufi terms for mystical union, *fanā*ʼ (″annihilation,″ ″passing away″) and *baqā*ʼ (″abiding″), while, at the same time, alluding to the Quranic declaration (55:26–27): ″All things on the earth are passing away, while the majestic and beneficent countenance of your Lord abides.″[56]

This poem is representative of many others in the *Fayḍ al-Faḍl* with their devotional tone and uncomplicated diction and style. In these poems, ʻĀʼishah explored a full range of Arabic rhymes, meters, and poetic forms, whether to praise the Prophet and seek God′s forgiveness, to instruct the Sufi novice, or to speak of longing and mystical union.[57] Further, inspired by earlier Sufi poets, ʻĀʼishah composed a *takhmīs* on an ode ascribed to ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī proclaiming his high saintly status,[58] and, in one of her longest poems, she dedicated over 250 verses to a variety of mystical themes, using as her model Ibn al-Fāriḍ′s Sufi classic the *Naẓm al-Sulūk* (The poem of the Sufi way), also known as *Al-Tāʼīyah al-Kubrá* (Ode in T - major).[59] Toward the end of her own *tāʼīyah,* ᶜʻĀʼishah begins forty-three verses with the phrase *a-lā yā rasūla Allāh* (″O messenger of God″), establishing a reverent rhythm and mood as she prays to and praises the Prophet. Such syntactical and phonemic patterning is common in many of her poems, suggesting that she may have intended them to be recited or chanted in Sufi gatherings and *samāʻ* sessions. This is particularly the case with ʻĀʼishah′s many *muwashshaḥah,* or strophic poems, which often feature refrains:[60]

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[56]For Ibn al-Fāriḍ′s wine ode, see my translation and analysis in Th. Emil Homerin, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sufi Verse, Saintly Life* (New York, 2001), 41–51. For other examples of wine and its motifs in ʻĀʼishah′s poetry see Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 207–20, 287, 306–14; unfortunately Rabābiʻah nearly always misses her many references to Ibn al-Fāriḍ′s verse here and elsewhere.

[57]E.g. ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Fayḍ al-Faḍl,″ 29–30, 34–35, 84–85, 126–27, 205–8. For a good introduction to ʻĀʼishah′s poetry, with examples drawn largely from the ″Fayḍ al-Faḍl,″ see Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah.*

[58]ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Fayḍ al-Faḍl,″ 290–92, and see Braune, ″ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Djīlānī,″ 70.

[59]ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Fayḍ al-Faḍl,″ 139–51; also see Homerin, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sufi Verse, Saintly Life,* 67–291, and Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 287–88.

[60]ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Fayḍ al-Faḍl,″ 253–54; also see 172–78, 208–10, 294–96, 306–8, 327–28. For a survey and stylistic analysis of ʻĀʼishah′s *muwashshaḥah* and musical elements in her verse,

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I see no one but my love
when I´m here or when I´m gone.
I see him always with me,
for he´s my destiny.
O my joy and happiness
faithful love has graced me
With passing away in abiding
and abiding in passing away,
For I have met my fate,
and fate is my reunion.
So my heart savor
union with my love.
I see him always with me,
for he´s my destiny.
He´s my attributes, my essence;
I see him and nothing else;
He´s my effacement, my endurance
when I pass and then return.
He´s my union and dissolution
in my aim and way of life;
He´s my substance and my meaning
far away or near.
I see him always with me,
for he´s my destiny.
Here, by God, and in my heart
God made my bliss complete.
I loved my lover and my lord,
spring of my soul and being.
So life was good, I was always near,
and God made my vision last.
So his brilliant flash, no other,
appeared to me unbroken.
I see him always with me,
for he´s my destiny.
My life was all delight, my separation sweet
in love with beauty´s lord.
My union came, division left,
my wide expansion stayed.

see Rabābi'ah, *'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: Shā'irah,* 71–104, 335–400.

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My illusions gone, my truth proved true
and unadorned appeared.
A handsome moon beguiled me;
he held all wondrous things.
I see him always with me,
for he´s my destiny.
By my life,
he is my highest goal!
My art is passing away in him,
passion, my food and drink.
He´s my reason, my religion,
my doctrine and devotion.
Wherever I turn my face,
I see him alone with no one watching.
I see him always with me,
for he´s my destiny!

Ostensibly, this poem tells of a lover´s consuming passion for her beloved. Destiny has fated that she love him, and so, faithfully, she gives up all thought or care for herself. Yet this does not cause her ruin but, rather, her happiness and joy, as she finds blissful union with her handsome love. Enhancing this love theme are the underlying devotional and mystical elements of the poem, which contains several possible allusions to the prophet Muḥammad. ʻĀʼishah refers to her beloved as *ḥabīb* (v. 1), a lover who is like the full moon (*badr*, v. 41), and both terms are standard poetic references to Muḥammad, the ″beloved of God.″ Strengthening this reading is the first portion of ʻĀʼishah´s refrain: *kayfa lā ashhaduhu* (″How can I not see him,″ v. 3ff.), which may also be translated as ″How can I not bear witness to him,″ echoing the Muslim profession of faith: *ashhadu an lā ilāha illā Allāha wa ashhadu anna Muḥammada rasūlu Allāh,* ″I bear witness that there is no deity but God and that Muḥammad is the messenger of God.″[61] However, this could equally imply that God is ʻĀʼishah´s love, a reading supported by her use of the term *rabb* for her beloved, and her direct references to God (vv. 25–30).

In addition, the poem contains over a dozen well-known Sufi technical terms regarding mystical states and stations. Central to this poem is union, and ʻĀʼishah frequently underscores the dialectic relation between passing away and abiding in union (*fanāʼ-baqāʼ,* vv. 7–8, 18, 47; *maḥw-thibāt,* v. 17; *jamʻ-shitāt,* v. 19; *jamʻ-farq,*

[61]Concerning the *shahādah,* or Muslim profession of faith, see Cyril Glasse, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1989), 359–60; also see Homerin, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sufi Verse, Saintly Life,* 57–58, and Schimmel, *Muhammad,* 124, 176–215.

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vv. 35, 37). Likewise, she makes distinctions between substance and meaning, and illusion and truth (*ma'ná-'ayn,* v. 21; *wahm-ḥaqq,* vv. 39–40) as spiritual contemplation and vision (*shuhūd,* v. 30) produce an expansive state of exhilaration (*basṭ,* v. 38).[62] Graced with illumination, the lover rests at ease with her beloved, whom she encounters within herself and everywhere she turns:

> Wherever I turn my face,
> I see him alone with no one watching.
> I see him always with me,
> for he's my destiny!

'Ā'ishah drew from both Arabic love poetry and the Quran for this final, climactic verse. In the classical poetic tradition, the *raqīb,* or "spy," stands guard to protect the beloved against the lover's advances. However, the spy may be avoided in a secret rendezvous or, of course, in the bridal chamber, where lovers meet alone. The sacred all-embracing nature of this union, as well as the divine identity of the beloved, is further suggested by 'Ā'ishah's phrase *kayfa mā wajahtu wajhī arāhu* ("Wherever I turn my face, I see him"), a clear reference to the Quranic declaration, often quoted by Sufis (2:115): "Wherever you turn, there is the face *(wajh)* of God."[63] Here again, 'Ā'ishah, unlike Ibn al-Fāriḍ, is explicit regarding the divine status of the beloved. This may be the result of her overtly devotional aims. Yet, as one of a very few medieval women publicly composing Arabic love poetry, 'Ā'ishah may have wanted to avoid any ambiguity regarding the spiritual character of her love, so as to avoid controversy or scandal.

III

This poem and many others by 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah show clearly that her mystical quest revolved around love for God and his prophet Muḥammad. Her verses are replete with Sufi technical terms, and she often expresses her veneration for 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and her Sufi masters.[64] Following their Qādirīyah way, 'Ā'ishah strove to keep God's commandments and accept His decrees, while seeking God's forgiveness and the Prophet's intercession on the Day of Judgment. Moreover, her spiritual discipline and mystical practice appear to have illumined her faith with moments of mystical union, ecstasy, and joy. Significantly, she alludes to these

[62]Regarding many of these Sufi terms see 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt* (Beirut, 1983), 77, 89, 129, 169, 171, 255. For further examples of their frequent use in other poems by 'Ā'ishah, see Rabābi'ah, *'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: Shā'irah,* 284–86.
[63]See Homerin, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sufi Verse, Saintly Life,* 19; for Ibn al-Fāriḍ's use of the "spy," 74–75, v. 6.
[64]For further examples, see Rabābi'ah, *'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: Shā'irah,* 187–202.

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powerful experiences in her comments preceding individual poems, and these autobiographical remarks, together with those found elsewhere in her writings, suggest ʻĀʼishah′s sense of confidence and accomplishment in both her life and work.

ʻĀʼishah is also exceptional in that she attempted to articulate and clarify some of her mystical beliefs and practices in a separate Sufi compendium, *Al-Muntakhab fī Uṣūl al-Rutab* (Selections on the fundamentals of stations). ʻĀʼishah notes at the outset that the stages of the mystical folk are innumerable, yet all of them are based on four fundamental principles: *tawbah* (repentance), *ikhlāṣ* (sincerity), *dhikr* (recollection), and *muḥabbah* (love). She then addresses these principles in four separate sections.[65] ʻĀʼishah begins each section with relevant quotations from the Quran, and she usually cites Arabic synonyms for each term, along with their extrinsic *(ẓāhir)* and intrinsic *(bāṭin)* meanings. ʻĀʼishah quotes relevant traditions of Muḥammad and sayings from the early Muslim forefathers *(ṣalaf),* followed by extensive quotations from Sufi masters. To conclude, she sometimes adds an illustrative story or two, together with a few of her own observations and inspired verses on the subject.

Thus, *tawbah,* or ″repentance,″ explicitly means turning away from sinful acts toward praiseworthy ones, and away from evil speech toward good words. Inwardly for the Sufis, repentance also signifies turning away from all things save God.[66] Repentance is effective on three conditions: (1) remorse for past misdeeds, (2) desisting immediately from current offenses, and (3) never returning to sin. ʻĀʼishah further notes that each member of the body has a share in repentance. The heart must resolve to leave sin and be remorseful, while the eyes should be down cast; the hands should cease to grasp; the feet should stop hurrying, and the ears should stop trying to listen in. This is repentance for the common people. The repentance of the elect goes further by opposing the lust of concupiscence *(nafs),* and by averting the gaze of the heart away from pleasure and prosperity, while abstaining from all transient things. Such repentance is required for the love for God, who said (2:222): ″Verily, God loves those who turn in repentance. . . .″ Higher still is

[65] ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Muntakhab fī Uṣūl al-Rutab,″ Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, Cairo, microfilm 13123 of MS 318 (Taṣawwuf Taymūr), 1074/1663, 1–5. Rabābiʻah did not consult this work, believing it to be lost, though he had access to a short work entitled ″Majmūʻ fī Kalām ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah fī Taṣawwuf,″ Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, Cairo, microfilm 4059 of MS 319 (Taṣawwuf Taymūr); *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah*, 62, 64. Based on Rabābiʻah′s citations of this work, I believe this ″Majmūʻ″ consists of selections from ʻĀʼishah′s ″Al-Muntakhab.″ Unfortunately, because he did not know this, Rabābiʻah ascribes to ʻĀʼishah statements made by earlier Sufis; see Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah*, 211, 257; ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Muntakhab,″ 151–57; and Ibn ʻAṭā Allāh al-Iskandarī, *Laṭāʼif al-Minan* (Cairo, 1979), 52–55.

[66] ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Muntakhab,″ 5–7.

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the repentance of the elect of the elect. They turn away from considering anything but God, including spiritual states and blessings, until God reveals His beauty to them, eradicating everything but Himself.[67]

In her discussion of repentance, ʻĀ'ishah relies heavily on the opinions of the respected Sufi master and scholar Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (465/1072), and this is also the case regarding her second fundamental principle, *ikhlāṣ,* or ″sincerity″ in word and deed. ʻĀ'ishah quotes al-Qushayrī to the effect that sincere obedience to God should be motivated only by the desire to draw closer to Him. The believer should have no thought of attaining praise or glory among people, for sincerity requires the utmost humility. Therefore, concupiscence *(nafs)* is to be disciplined, while the heart must be blind to the opinions of others, as the spirit guards against pride.[68] To underscore the importance of sincerity, ʻĀ'ishah cites numerous prophetic traditions, and stories regarding proper intentions and the grievous sin of hypocrisy. Sincerity, she says, is like water helping the tiny seeds of good works to grow, while hypocrisy is a cyclone that will sweep away the fields of one´s labor.[69]

Essential to both repentance and sincerity is the third principle, *dhikr,* or ″recollection″ of God. ʻĀ'ishah begins her section on this pivotal topic with God´s promise in the Quran (2:152): ″Remember Me, and I will remember you,″ and al-Qushayrī´s commentary on it. He notes that, for those who understand the Quran literally, this verse means: ″Remember Me at the appropriate times, and I will remember you with acts of grace.″ However, those with insight also grasp the mystical import of this divine message: ″Remember Me by leaving behind all thought of reward or punishment, and I will remember you by establishing you in My truth after your passing away from yourselves.″[70] Following al-Qushayrī, ʻĀ'ishah elaborates on this reciprocal relationship of recollection between God and His faithful worshippers in a series of mystical interpretations: ″Remember Me with sincerity, and I will remember you among the spiritual elect; remember Me in your striving, and I will remember You with witnessing; . . . remember Me in your passing away, and I will remember you in your abiding; . . . remember Me in your hearts, and I will remember you in nearness to Me; remember Me in your spirits, and I will remember you in moments of enlightenment; remember Me in your heart secrets, and I will remember you in illuminations!″[71]

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[67]Ibid., 22–25; 45–46.
[68]Ibid., 82–83. Also see Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah,* ed. ʻAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd Ibn al-Sharīf (Cairo, 1972–74), 1:443–47, and 1:275–88; and H. Halm, ″Al-Ḳushayrī,″ *EI*^{2}, 5:526.
[69]ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Muntakhab,″ 89–90.
[70]Ibid., 96–97. Also see Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān,* ed. Ibrāhīm Basyūnī (Cairo, 1981), 1:137–38.
[71]ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Muntakhab,″ 98–99.

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In context of the classical Sufi tradition, ʻĀʼishah regards *dhikr* as both a process and a mystical state. As a process, recollection of God is the means to purify oneself of selfishness and hypocrisy, and to ward off Satan. Though one will never be able to remember God constantly with one′s lips, the sincere believer should strive always to recall God within the heart. As with repentance, recollection may differ in its effects depending on the believer′s spiritual level; common people are soothed and receive blessings by praising God; religious scholars gain insight into God′s names and attributes, while the spiritual elect who recollect God are purified and rest in Him. The ultimate goal of recollection, then, is a paradoxical state of forgetting everything while remembering God.[72] This results in absorption in Him, and ʻĀʼishah states that the most effective means to achieve this mystical state is to recollect the phrase: ″There is no deity but God.″ Finally, Muḥammad is reported to have said: ″One who loves something, remembers it often,″ and, so, ʻĀʼishah includes recollection among the signs of love.[73]

This leads naturally to *maḥabbah,* or ″love,″ the subject of the final and longest section of *Al-Muntakhab*. As in the preceding section on *dhikr,* ʻĀʼishah opens with verses from the Quran followed by al-Qushayrī′s commentary. God commands Muḥammad (3:31): ″Say: ′If you love God, then follow me and God will love you.′″ True love of God, al-Qushayrī observes, requires lovers to efface themselves completely as their beloved wears them out. This love relationship is possible because God created human beings in the best of forms and, so, He has a special affection for them. Further, God has said (5:54): ″O you who believe, any of you who turns away from his religion, God will replace with a people whom He will love as they love Him.″ For al-Qushayrī and ʻĀʼishah, this verse declares to believers the wonderful news that if they keep the faith and love God, He most certainly will love them.[74] ʻĀʼishah then reinforces this point with several divine sayings *(al-ḥadīth al-qudsī)* on love, particularly the famous ″Tradition of Willing Devotions,″ a standard Sufi text in support of mystical union: ″God said: ′Whoever treats a friend of mine as an enemy, on him I declare war! My servant draws near to Me by nothing more loved by Me than the religious obligations that I have imposed upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me by acts of willing devotion such that I love him. Then, when I love him, I become his ear, his eye, and his tongue, his heart and reason, his hand and support.′″[75]

ʻĀʼishah next cites a number of statements on love by Sufi masters, including: ″love is the hearts′ delight in the beloved′s being,″ and ″love is intoxication without

[72]Ibid., 102–29.
[73]Ibid., 130–40.
[74]Ibid., 141–44. Also see al-Qushayrī, *Laṭāʼif,* 1:235–36, and his *Al-Risālah,* 2:610–25.
[75]ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah,, ″Al-Muntakhab,″ 148.

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sobriety, an indescribable astonishment in meeting the beloved.″ Like a spell, God′s love overwhelms the hearts of His loving worshippers, and reveals to them the light of His beauty and the sacred power of His majesty. Love′s effects, however, will vary depending on the believers′ spiritual capacities, and ʻĀ'ishah quotes the North African Sufi Ibn al-ʻArīf (d. 536/1141) on the levels of love. For the common believer, the seeds of love are planted by reading the Quran and following the custom of Muḥammad, and then nourished by complying with divine law. This love will thwart the temptations of Satan, provide solace in times of adversity, and make service to God delightful. By contrast, love among the spiritual elite strikes like a bolt of lightning, leaving the lovers dumbfounded and confused. This overwhelming love causes the spiritual elite to pass away in God′s love for them, which is beyond any description or allusion.[76]

ʻĀ'ishah then turns to the signs of love, which include intimacy with God and estrangement from the world, awe before God and contentment with His will, performing pious deeds, loving others who love God, and passing away in the beloved from all things.[77] ʻĀ'ishah adds that these are only a few of the many signs, as she moves on to traditions and stories about love. She observes that many people and religious communities have been touched by the irresistible love of God in the past, but that Muslims can bear more of it thanks to the enduring legacy of the most perfect and noble prophet Muḥammad. Still, God′s love is all-consuming, as even Hell discovered. The great Sufi al-Junayd (d. 298/911) once said: ″Hell fire asked, ′O Lord, if I don′t obey You, will You punish me with something stronger than me?′ God said, ′Yes, I will inflict on you My greater fire.′ Hell asked, ′What fire is more intense and awesome than me?′ God answered, ′The fire of My love that I have placed in the hearts of My friends *(awliyā')*!′″[78]

Perhaps on a more personal note, ʻĀ'ishah ends her section on love with two stories of pious women whose unwavering devotion and love for God are rewarded by His blessings.[79] She then concludes *Al-Muntakhab* with her own mystical truths *(ḥaqā'iq ladunīyah)* on love inspired by God. Love is the greatest secret of God; it is an endless sea. Those blessed with God′s love are His saintly friends *(awliyā')* whose existence is eradicated in a state beyond description. They pass away and abide in Him, so that their hearts become a place of vision where the truth of the divine essence *(dhāt)* is revealed. God then assumes His worshippers′ senses as attested in the ″Tradition of Willing Devotions.″ Though the worshippers′ love draws them ever closer to the divine beloved, God bestows His love as an act of unearned grace. Ultimately, the lovers lose all sense of self *(anānīyah)* when the

[76]Ibid., 148–58. Also see A. Faure, ″Ibn al-ʻArīf,″ *EI*^{2}, 3:712–13.
[77]ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Muntakhab,″ 158–64.
[78]Ibid., 180.
[79]Ibid., 185–90.

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truth of oneness *(al-ḥaqīqah al-aḥadīyah)* appears, but their mystical death leads them to eternal life, as ʻĀʼishah declares in verses from her closing poem:[80]

God looked with favor on a folk,
and they stayed away
from worldly fortunes.
In love and devotion, they worshipped Him;
they surrendered themselves,
their aim was true.
In love with Him, they gave themselves up
and passed away from existence,
nothing left behind.
So He took pity
and revealed to them
His He-ness,
And they lived again
gazing at that living face
when His eternal life appeared.
They saw Him alone
in the garden of union
and drank from contemplation´s cups,
Filled lovingly with pure wine
from the vision
of true oneness.

Throughout *Al-Muntakhab,* ʻĀʼishah consistently cites the Quran and carefully notes the sources of her hadith. Further, she relies on several major Sufi works, which she cites and accurately quotes. These works include Muḥammad al-Kalābādhī´s (d. 385/995) *Al-Taʻarruf li-Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf,*[81] al-Qushayrī´s *Al-Risālah* and his Quranic commentary *Laṭāʼif al-Ishārāt fī Tafsīr al-Qurʼān,* and writings by Muḥammad al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), author of the *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfīyah.*[82] In addition to these classical sources, ʻĀʼishah occasionally draws selections from a few later works, in particular the *ʻAwārif al-Maʻārif* by ʻUmar

[80]Ibid., 190–211.
[81]E.g. ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Muntakhab,″ 16–18, 124–25, and Muḥammad al-Kalābādhī, *Al-Taʻarruf li-Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf* (Beirut, 1980), 92–93, 103–104. Also see P. Nwiya, ″Al-Kalābādhī,″ *EI*^{2}, 4:467.
[82]E.g., ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Muntakhab,″ 89, 100, 145, and G. Bowering, ″Al-Sulamī,″ *EI*^{2}, 9:811.

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al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234),[83] and the *Laṭā'if al-Minan* by Ibn ʻAṭā Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309),[84] and she quotes a poem by Ibn al-ʻArīf, and one by Muḥammad Ibn Abī al-Wafā' (d. 891/1486).[85] Among these Sufi authorities, however, al-Qushayrī is clearly the most cited and easily the most influential.

As indicated in its title, *Al-Muntakhab fī Uṣūl al-Rutab* is a ″selection″ ʻĀ'ishah made from earlier works on Sufism. As such, it testifies to ʻĀ'ishah′s extensive reading on the subject, and records some of the mystical writings circulating in Sufi circles of her day. Notable by its absence is any reference to the popular works of Ibn al-ʻArabī (d. 637/1240) or those of his students.[86] Perhaps ʻĀ'ishah consciously avoided these controversial authors, as well as difficult matters of mystical theology, which are rarely discussed in *Al-Muntakhab*. Further, ʻĀ'ishah does not refer explicitly to her own teachers, nor does she mention the Light of Muḥammad, which figures prominently in her other works. These omissions, however, may reflect her particular focus in *Al-Muntakhab* on classical sources that are not primarily concerned with mystical prophetology. While ʻĀ'ishah intended her *Al-Muntakhab* to be useful for fellow travelers on the mystic path,[87] this work appears to be less of a formal guide-book than a collection of insightful and inspirational passages organized around the four basic principles of repentance, sincerity, recollection, and love.[88] As in her poetry, ʻĀ'ishah′s tone throughout the work is consistently positive and often up-lifting. She stresses repeatedly that divine mercy and grace are limited only by human heedlessness and recalcitrance, but that God will love and help all believers who sincerely try to reach Him:

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[83]ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Muntakhab,″ 164–67, and ʻUmar al-Suhrawardī, *ʻAwārif al-Maʻārif* (Cairo, 1973), 461.

[84]ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Muntakhab,″ 151–57, and Ibn ʻAṭā Allāh al-Iskandarī, *Laṭā'if al-Minan,* 52–55. Also see G. Makdisi, ″Ibn ʻAṭā Allāh,″ *EI*^{2}, 3:722–23.

[85]ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Muntakhab,″ 181–82, 206. For Muḥammad Ibn Abī al-Wafā' see al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmiʻ,* 7:197, and ʻUmar Kaḥḥālah, *Muʻjam al-Mu'allifīn* (Damascus, 1957), 9:117. In her section on ″sincerity,″ ʻĀ'ishah also cites (pg. 96) an animal fable from Muḥammad al-Damīrī′s (d. 808/1405) famous animal encyclopedia *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān* (Cairo, 1978), 2:10; see L. Kopf, ″Al-Damīrī,″ *EI*^{2}, 2:107–8.

[86]Concerning Ibn al-ʻArabī and his influence in the Mamluk period, see Homerin, *From Arab Poet,* 26–32, 55–75; Geoffroy, *Soufisme,* 437–503; and especially Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn al-ʻArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition* (New York, 1998).

[87]ʻĀ'ishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Muntakhab,″ 3–4.

[88]Cf. Abū Najīb al-Suhrawardī, *Kitāb Ādāb al-Murīdīn* (*A Sufi Rule for Novices*), edited with an abridged translation by Menahem Milson (Cambridge, MA, 1975).

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I see love,
an ocean without a shore.
If you are loveʹs chosen ones,
plunge in![89]

IV

During the difficult summer of 922/1516, Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī met with ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah. Later, the Mamluk sultan rode out with his army to meet the Ottoman sultan Selim at Marj Dābiq. There, surrounded by his religious officials and spiritual advisors, al-Ghawrī suffered a stroke and died in the heat of battle.[90] His decimated forces fled the field, and some survivors eventually returned to Cairo, Ibn Ajā among them. Ibn Ajā was then retained as confidential secretary and foreign minister by the new Mamluk sultan Tūmānbāy, who was defeated and killed a few months later when Selim took Cairo. Selim, however, treated the elderly Ibn Ajā with respect and permitted him and his family to return to their native Aleppo, where Ibn Ajā died in 925/1519.[91] Ibn Ajāʹs widow, Sitt al-Ḥalab (d. 933/1525), mourned her husband for a year and then remarried, taking delight in a considerably younger man.[92]

After Marj Dābiq, ʻĀʼishahʹs son, ʻAbd al-Wahhāb, did not follow his employer Ibn Ajā to Cairo. Instead, ʻAbd al-Wahhāb returned to the al-Ṣālihīyah district of Damascus, where he studied jurisprudence and Sufism until his death, around the age of thirty, in 925/1519.[93] As for ʻĀʼishah, she too died in Damascus, on the sixteenth of Dhū al-Qaʻdah, 923/December, 1517, the same year that the Mamluk dynasty passed away.[94] However, her prose and poetry lived on to be admired and copied for centuries, thereby preserving her extraordinary legacy. ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah remains of one of the greatest woman poets and writers in Islamic history, and she serves as a fitting testimony to the vibrant literary and religious culture of the Mamluk period.

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[89]ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, ″Al-Muntakhab,″ 198.
[90]Petry, *Twilight of Majesty,* 224–31.
[91]Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mutʻat al-Adhhān,* 2:799; al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib,* 1:303; and Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab,* 2:2:455–56.
[92]Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab,* 1:2:577–78.
[93]Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mutʻat al-Adhhān,* 1:484, and al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib,* 1:257.
[94]Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān,* 2:74. Most other sources list her year of death as 922/1516, however, Ibn Ṭūlūn personally knew ʻĀʼishah and her son; see Rabābiʻah, *ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah,* 57–59.

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Laila ʻAli Ibrahim, 1917–2002

Laila ʻAli Ibrahim passed away July 14. She was 85. Many students of Mamluk art and architecture have come to identify Laila with Cairo: she was the ″Godmother″ of the city and the guardian of its monuments.

Laila learned her metier informally through exposure to the best minds concerned with the fate of historic Cairo in the 1940s and 1950s. These included her father, Dr. ʻAli Ibrahim, a major Islamic art collector whom she adored, and K. A. C. Creswell, the eccentric Briton who spent most of his working life studying the Islamic architecture of Cairo. But she had one thing that most scholars of Cairo of her time did not have: total devotion to her subject. This showed not only in her publications, public lectures, and participation in countless organizations promoting the safeguarding of the monuments of Cairo, but also in her tireless efforts to gain new converts to the study and appreciation of Cairo. To that end, she taught the history of Cairo at the American University of Cairo (AUC) and made herself available to any researcher, Egyptian or foreign, interested in studying Mamluk Cairo.

Laila´s articles and one published book are solid, carefully researched, and clearly written pieces. She seemed to have focused mostly on little-studied aspects of Cairene architecture that lesser scholars avoided. She took special interest, for instance, in Mamluk residential architecture, about which she published a number of erudite articles. She also delved into writing on little-known or ruined monuments, such as the *khānqāh*s of Amir Qawsūn and of Zayn al-Dīn Yūsuf or the madrasah of Badr al-Dīn al-ʻAynī. Her book on Mamluk building terminology, published in 1990 and coauthored with the late Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, is an indispensable source for all students of Cairo. It is the distillation of the expertise of these two irreplaceable scholars: Laila with her intimate and extensive knowledge of the historic buildings and Amīn with his profound familiarity with the legal documents related to them.

Laila spent more than half a century studying, teaching, and speaking for and on behalf of the architecture of Cairo. But she shunned all ceremonial social events and was interested only in constructive ones. Her admirers, however, managed to put together a collection of essays in her honor, *The Cairo Heritage,* which was edited by Dr. Doris Behrens-Abouseif and published by AUC Press in

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2001, although Laila unfortunately was unable to read it. Laila left a small but extremely valuable library that I hope will find an institutional home where it could be open to all researchers from all over the world. This is how Laila herself would have liked it to be.

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Ḥasan Rabābi‘ah, *‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūnīyah: Shā‘irah* (Irbid: Dār al-Hilāl lil-Tarjamah, 1997). Pp. 441.

Reviewed by Th. Emil Homerin, University of Rochester.

‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūnīyah (d. 922/1517) left behind a rich legacy as one of the greatest woman authors in Islamic history. ‘Ā’ishah′s writings were extensive even by men′s standards, and they are unparalleled for a pre-modern Muslim woman. Though women were respected scholars and teachers in medieval Islam, they generally did not compile their own independent works. However, ‘Ā’ishah was very prolific. She dedicated a number of panegyrics to the prophet Muḥammad and composed several *mawlid*s combining prose and poetry. ‘Ā’ishah also wrote works on Islamic mysticism, including a spiritual guide and several volumes of mystical and devotional poetry.

Despite ‘Ā’ishah′s extensive body of work and celebrated career among her peers and later generations, she has attracted only sporadic attention over the last century. More recently, Fāris Aḥmad al-‘Alāwī issued a new edition of her *Al-Mawrid al-Ahná* (1994; see my review in *MSR* 6), while I have published a study of her life and work (*MSR* 7). It was while completing this latter article that I came across Ḥasan Rabābi‘ah′s very useful book, *‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūnīyah: Shā‘irah,* published in Jordan in 1997. As an introduction, he begins with a chapter on ‘Ā’ishah′s family origins in the town of al-Bā‘ūn in the Mamluk province of ‘Ajlūn in what is now southern Syria and the Jordanian province of Irbid (pp. 13–31). Then, in chapter two, Rabābi‘ah gives a brief biography of ‘Ā’ishah, who was born in Damascus, around 864/1459. Using ‘Ā’ishah′s own comments on her life found in several manuscripts, Rabābi‘ah notes her pilgrimage to Mecca, where she had a vision of the Prophet, her study of Sufism, her marriage to Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Naqīb al-Ashrāf (d. 909/1503) and the names of their children. He also touches on her trip to Cairo in 919/1513, her meeting with the Mamluk sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī in 922/1516, and her death the next year (pp. 33–59). Unfortunately, this biographical section is, at times, disorganized and incomplete, and Rabābi‘ah could have added significant information had he utilized his sources more thoroughly. Rabābi‘ah does a much better job when compiling a list of ‘Ā’ishah′s writings and the location of her surviving works (pp. 59–65), with the exception of her *Al-Muntakhab fī Uṣūl al-Rutab,* which he believes to be lost, though a copy may be found in Cairo′s Dār al-Kutub.

Rabābi‘ah′s main concern, however, is not ‘Ā’ishah′s life or religious beliefs, but her refined poetic skills and extensive knowledge of Arabic language and literature. This is evident in his third chapter, on ‘Ā’ishah′s versification in the popular forms of *muwashshahah, zajal, dū bayt,* and *mawālīyā* (pp. 67–121). Here

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as elsewhere, Rabābi'ah quotes from a number of 'Ā'ishah's works, though he usually draws his examples from her *Fayḍ al-Faḍl wa-Jam' al-Shaml* (The Emanation of grace and the gathering of union), which contains over three hundred poems in various styles and forms. Rabābi'ah pays particular attention to formal matters of rhyme and meter, compiling a series of tables summarizing these and other stylistic and structural elements as found in 'Ā'ishah's poems. In passing, he notes that the content of these poems revolves around the prophet Muḥammad, and the mystical themes of love and wine. Rabābi'ah makes several brief but useful comparisons between 'Ā'ishah's *muwashshahah* and those of her Sufi predecessors Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 637/1240) and al-Shustarī (d. 668/1268)(pp. 99–103). Rabābi'ah follows this same pattern in chapter four on 'Ā'ishah's poems involving *tasmīṭ* and *takhmīs* (pp. 125–37).

In chapter five, Rabābi'ah provides an overview of 'Ā'ishah's main poetic themes, including: praise of the prophet Muḥammad and accounts of his life and miracles, praise of his companions and Sufi masters, verse exchanged with some of her learned contemporaries *(ikhwanīyāt),* Sufi themes and states, love, longing, and beauty (pp. 139–224). Rabābi'ah cites a few verses to illustrate each theme, which help to convey the range and depth of 'Ā'ishah's religious and poetic concerns, though Rabābi'ah's commentary is very general. Further, he repeatedly fails to note the obvious influence on 'Ā'ishah of the great Sufi poet Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), while mistakenly ascribing to her statements by the Sufi master Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309) (p. 212, again on 252).

In chapters six, seven, and eight, Rabābi'ah turns to 'Ā'ishah's *qaṣīdah*s, again, following a structuralist approach. Central to chapter six is Rabābi'ah's analysis of an ode by 'Ā'ishah (pp. 262–68). Rabābi'ah notes that the encampments of this poem and others by 'Ā'ishah are not ruined or abandoned, as is the case in earlier classical odes, since she longs for the holy cities of Mecca and Medina and her beloved prophet. Strangely, Rabābi'ah cites only 37 of the poem's 50 verses. Chapters seven and eight touch on 'Ā'ishah's use of Sufi technical terminology (pp. 269–300), the mystical themes of love and wine, and her devotion to the prophet Muḥammad (pp. 301–34). Rabābi'ah underscores the thematic unity and harmony of 'Ā'ishah's poems and some of her sophisticated rhetorical strategies. Here, too, at last, he finally mentions her debt to Ibn al-Fāriḍ though, unfortunately, Rabābi'ah does not pursue this important aspect of 'Ā'ishah's thought and work. In his final chapter, Rabābi'ah speculates on the musical qualities of 'Ā'ishah's verse. Taking several poems as examples, he examines in some detail their poetic structures and various formal elements including rhyme and meter, sound and rhythm, and 'Ā'ishah's creative use of antithesis, repetition, and phonemic patterning (pp. 335–400).

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ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah: Shāʻirah is a good general introduction to the verse of a fine poet. A major strength of the book is Rabābiʻah's knowledge and extensive use of relevant manuscript resources, despite a few lapses, as noted above. Further, unlike many scholars of Arabic literature, Rabābiʻah does not stereotype or denigrate Arabic poetry of the Mamluk period as pallid or unoriginal. On the contrary, Ḥasan Rabābiʻah is to be commended for his enthusiasm for and appreciation of the poetry of ʻĀʼishah al-Bāʻūnīyah, and I hope he continues to pursue this line of research in the future.

MOSHE HARTAL, *The al-Ṣubayba (Nimrod) Fortress: Towers 11 and 9: With Contributions by Reuven Amitai and Adrian Boas* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2001). Pp. 130.

REVIEWED BY LORENZ KORN, University of Tübingen

Mamluk fortifications have attracted the interest of Near Eastern architectural historians only after a certain delay. Crusader castles and city walls had become objects of scholarly research and detailed documentation already before World War I. Exploration of their Saljuq/Zengid and Ayyubid counterparts started a few decades ago, and thanks to studies like the one by Paul Chevedden on the citadel of Damascus, we are able to assess the implications of the revolution in siege technique and military architecture which took place in the late sixth/twelfth century. Against this background, Mamluk military architecture received only perfunctory attention. The important fortresses of Gaziantep and Birecik, to cite only two major examples, are practically unexplored, and the same is true for most fortifications built between 1250 and 1517 in the Near East. Again, it has been the citadel of Damascus that exemplifies the possibilities of a detailed architectural study in the minute analysis of its Mamluk constructions by Hanspeter Hanisch.

The fortress of Qalʻat al-Ṣubaybah (today often called Nimrod Castle), on the western margin of the Golan Heights, is one of those Mamluk military constructions that were built as a reinforcement to older Crusader or Ayyubid structures, and is similar in size and importance to the castles of al-Karak and al-Shawbak (of which the post-Crusader parts remain to be studied as well, despite valuable archeological soundings undertaken by Robin M. Brown). After the Mamluk takeover, al-Ṣubaybah was substantially rebuilt under Baybars, as earlier studies of the building inscriptions and architectural remains have already shown.

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The present study is the result of work carried out on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Israel National Parks Authority. It covers two large towers and some other sections of the western front of the fortress. Since the spur on which the castle is built continues westward, this side was heavily fortified. The two towers are built on rectangular plans. Each of them consists of an Ayyubid core, which was encased by the Mamluk constructions. Heavy destruction, probably by an earthquake in the eighteenth century, left only the lower parts of the towers standing while the top storeys have almost totally disappeared.

The remaining substance of the towers, the adjacent galleries, and the water reservoir in the southwest corner of the lower bailey of the fortress, is presented in great detail. Every room is described, detailing the masonry of its floors, walls, and ceilings, and including all openings, stairs, and installations, and is richly documented in photographs as well as architectural drawings. Highly interesting are the water installations, such as the latrines and the water lifting shaft in tower 11, or the fountain in the outer wall of the reservoir. The presentation allows a comprehensive insight into the evidence, enabling the reader to test the conclusions of the author. These are mostly reasonable, but in a few points debatable.

In general, Mamluk fortification technique appears as a direct continuation of Ayyubid military architecture. The layout of rectangular towers with vaulted halls and passages, firing chambers, and arrow-slits follows the same principles as in the fortresses of Tabor, ʻAjlūn, Bosra, and Baalbek, to quote the nearest important examples; these elements were changed and improved in details.

Tower 11 used an Ayyubid gate tower as a core around which a vaulted passage with firing chambers was laid. The gate function was given up. In the basement, a postern gate with a narrow passage was built into the new walls. The upper parts of the tower are difficult to reconstruct, but it is clear that a large building inscription was part of its eastern façade. For all these constructions, huge ashlars were used for which parallels in Mamluk fortifications are rare. This is all the more remarkable since the contemporary enlargement of tower 9 shows much smaller blocks. Hartal explains this feature partly with technical reasons, partly with a special function of tower 11. Considering the size of the tower and its position on the slope, he terms the Mamluk constructions ″retaining walls″ and suggests that they were necessary to ″hold back quantities of earth″ (p. 63). This might have been true, had there not been the earlier, Ayyubid tower. Its outer walls must actually have prevented any substantial horizontal pressure on the adjacent Mamluk constructions, and made a particular reinforcement less urgent. Similarly, it seems far-fetched to assume that the Mamluk builders of al-Ṣubaybah turned to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem as an example for the handling of huge blocks. The Ayyubid fortresses mentioned above, or perhaps the Herodian remnants in the citadel of Jerusalem, were probably more important in this respect.

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Hartal′s assumption that the top floor of tower 11 served as a residence for the lord of the castle is convincing and gives a better explanation for the use of the large-scale masonry as a means to enhance the imposing appearance of the building. For the uppermost parts of the tower, one might discuss whether there might have been two-storeyed fighting galleries, with a row of vaulted fighting chambers surrounding the open platform, and a walk behind the crenellated parapet on top. Also, the question of machicouli galleries arises, since these appear prominently in Baybars′ rebuilding of the Krak des Chevaliers. Under these circumstances, the reconstruction drawing Fig. 35 seems a little too assertive.

The article by Reuven Amitai deals with the large building inscription from tower 11 and (fragments of) some other inscriptions which were found in the course of the work. Amitai not only gives a detailed examination of the protocol of the inscriptions, with appropriate comparisons, but also a historical commentary which is important for the understanding of the structural history of al-Ṣubaybah, with Bīlīk al-Khāzindār as the actual owner of Bāniyās and the northern Golan. The enlargement of the two towers was certainly due to his patronage.

The reading of the one-line inscription band found near tower 16 (pp. 118 ff.) has to be corrected in one place (Fig. 194): Amitai′s reading ″nāṣir (?) amīr al-mu'[minīn]″ must be rejected. The letter in the center of the block cannot be a *ṣād,* and the adjacent letters do not match either. Instead, I would suggest ″al-muthāghir,″ which is sometimes found in combination with the more common epithets ″al-mujāhid al-murābiṭ,″ missing in the present fragment. In this case, the following ″al-mu'-″ would then belong to the likewise more frequent ″al-mu'ayyad.″ This sequence of titles is well attested for Ayyubid building inscriptions (cf. *Répertoire chronologique d′épigraphie arabe,* Publications de l′Institut français d′archéologie orientale du Caire [Cairo, 1931–], vol. 10, no. 3664, vol. 11, nos. 4057, 4246, 4417); an example in one of Baybars′ inscriptions comes from Ramlah (cf. Max van Berchem, *Inscriptions arabes de Syrie,* Mémoires présentés à l′Institut égyptien 3 [Cairo, 1897], 473f.).

A contribution by Adrian Boas deals with the ceramics found during the removal of the fallen debris. Brief descriptions of the wares are supplemented by comparative material and thus add to a more complete picture of Mamluk ceramics in southern Bilād al-Shām. At the same time, it becomes clear that the rough excavation technique used has limited the evidence in this case, since no stringent stratigraphy could be achieved.

On the whole, this book is a highly valuable contribution to the recording and discussion of Mamluk military architecture. Difficulties in readability which might arise from the lengthy descriptions will not deter the reader to whom the book is addressed. They are far outweighed by the merits of the accurate documentation. This implies the wish that work on al-Ṣubaybah (also and especially the inner

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castle) be continued in the same manner. In this context, it should be remarked that the excavations of the western front were undertaken in the course of preparing a new visitor´s exit out of the castle. In this way, the work presented here might constitute a precedence for future investigations into Mamluk fortifications, or the combination of site management with archaeological research. At least, the touristic appeal of Mamluk fortresses should not be underrated.

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān fī Ḥawādith al-Zamān,* edited by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣilī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1998). Pp. 421.

Aḥmad ibn Munlā/Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Muṭ'at al-Adhhān min al-Tamattu' bi-al-Iqrān bayna Tarājim al-Shuyūkh wa-al-Aqrān,* 2 vols., edited by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣilī (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1999). Pp. 1116.

Reviewed by Stephan Conermann, University of Kiel

I was pleased to learn that two new works by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 955/1548), the scholar and prolific writer from Damascus, are now available in print for the first time. But appearances are deceptive, because in the case of *Mufākahat al-Khillān fī Ḥawādith al-Zamān* this surely is a bogus claim, at least from my point of view. All that the editor, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣilī, did was simply to reproduce the exemplary two-volume edition of the unique Tübingen copy (MS MA VI,7) published by Muḥammed Muṣṭafá (Cairo, 1962–64). The less than meager annotations are the only items actually penned by the editor himself.

The other publication that I will review here deserves more attention. Even though it does not represent an original piece of writing by Ibn Ṭūlūn, the edition does contain extracts from *Al-Tamattu' bi-al-Iqrān bayna Tarājim al-Shuyūkh wa-al-Aqrān,* a collection of biographies that has not been preserved in its entirety. This part of the work survived because Ibn Ṭūlūn´s student Aḥmad ibn Munlā al-Ḥaskafī al-Ḥalabī (937–1003/1530–94) intended to write such a collection of short biographies himself and therefore made ample use of his teacher´s works.

Compiling these unique Who´s Who handbooks was very much *en vogue* in the Mamluk period.[1] Scholars wished to portray the merits of famous men in order

[1]Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd revised ed. (Leiden, 1968), 100–6. See also H. A. R. Gibb, ″Islamic Biographical Literature,″ in *Historians of the Middle East,* ed.

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to present them as shining examples to their contemporaries. Moreover, general consensus among Muslims had always been that history and thus the renewal of religion was primarily shaped by individuals. The power elite—both rulers and religious scholars—for their part used these biographical accounts to assure themselves that their actions were legitimate. The genre thus satisfied the needs of the authors and the readership for which it was intended at one and the same time. It is therefore hardly surprising that biographical collections became one of the main forms of contemporary historical writing.

Even though all of the biographical abstracts usually contain information about the date of the person´s death, his ancestry, his teachers, his writings, and other important events in his life, the works differ regarding the particular common denominator shared by the people included in the anthology. Law schools were one such common denominator, as were the vizierate**,** blindness, poetry, Sufi congregations, cities, or cemeteries. During the last third of the eighth/fourteenth century, for example, a certain al-Faqīh ʻUthmān wrote a biographical guide entitled *Murshid al-Zūwār ilá Qubūr al-Abrār* in which he described all the people interred at Mount al-Muqaṭṭam in Cairo,[2] while al-Dāwūdī (d. 945/1538) focused on every known exegete of the Quran.[3] But the century in which the famous people had died constituted the most popular selection criterion for these biographical collections.

When compiling a dictionary, the biographical writer made full use of the work done by his predecessors. Of course, one needs to be aware of the fact that plagiarism[4] in those days did not have the negative implications it does today, but rather was regarded as a completely legitimate narrative method at which nobody took umbrage. Previous historians were considered incontestable authorities,

Bernard Lewis and Peter M. Holt (London, 1962), 54–58; Fedwa Malti-Douglas, ″Controversy and Its Effects in the Biographical Tradition of al-Khatib al-Baghdadi,″ *Studia Islamica* 46 (1977): 115–31; Tarif Khalidi, ″Islamic Biographical Dictionaries: A Preliminary Assessment,″ *The Muslim World* 63 (1973): 53–65; Malak Abiad, ″Origine et développement des dictionnaires biographique arabes,″ *Bulletin d´études orientales* 31 (1979): 7–15; and Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, ″Le dictionnaire biographique: un outil historique: Etude réalisée à partir de l´ouvrage de Sakhāwī: *aḍ-Ḍaw' al-lāmiʻ fī aʻyān al-qarn at-tāsiʻ*,″ *Cahiers d´onomastique arabe* (1988–1992): 9–38.

[2]Cf. Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden, 1949), 2:42 and S2:30.

[3]Cf. ibid., 2:373 and S2:401.

[4]The early attempts of Muslim writers at describing the concept of plagiarism were summed up by the Egyptian chief judge al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338) in his work *Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ* (ed. ʻAbd al-Raḥmān al-Barqūqī as *Al-Talkhīs fī ʻUlūm al-Balāghah* [Beirut, 1982]). Cf. Gustav von Grunebaum, ″Der Begriff des Plagiats in der arabischen Kritik,″ in *Kritik und Dichtkunst: Studien zur arabischen Literaturgeschichte* (Wiesbaden, 1955), 101–29; A. F. Mehren, *Die Rhetorik der Araber* (Copenhagen and Vienna, 1853); and Aḥmad Maṭlūb, *Al-Qazwīnī wa-Shurūḥ al-Talkhīṣ* (Baghdad, 1967).

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especially regarding historical events that one had not witnessed personally. This was particularly so since one did not want to correct one´s predecessors by presenting new insights or new interpretations of past events. It was not customary to mention the names of the true authors of the reports and hence this practice was not considered negligent. Some authors occasionally did cite the sources they had used in the preface to their work, but it was not considered absolutely necessary.

The source material for Aḥmad ibn Munlā´s life provides some indication of the extent to which different biographical accounts depended on each other. Most of the information about our author can be found in the works of his teacher Ibn al-Ḥanbalī (d. 971/1563),[5] yet al-Būrīnī (d. 1024/1615)[6] is the first one to present a complete biographical sketch in his *Tarājim al-A'yān min Abnā' al-Zamān.*[7] These two short biographies then served as the prototypes for all the following accounts, with the portrayals by Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī (d. 1061/1651),[8] Ibn al-'Imād (d. 1089/1679),[9] and Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Muḥibbī (d. 1111/1699)[10] differing only in style.

All in all, the biographical descriptions give the following picture: Aḥmad ibn Munlā, whose ancestors came from Diyār Bakr, was born in Aleppo. Some of his family were notable members of the community: his grandfathers, Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf ibn Mūsá al-Sindī (d. 894/1488–89), who was known by the name of Munlā Ḥājj,[11] and Yaḥyá ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 935/1528–29),[12] both belonged

[5]Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-Ḥabab fī Tārīkh A'yān Ḥalab,* ed. Maḥmūd Aḥmad al-Fākhūrī (Damascus, 1972–74), 1:239–68. Ibn al-Ḥanbalī wrote his *Durr* on famous individuals who had some kind of relationship with Aleppo, as a continuation of Muwaffaq al-Dīn Abū Dārī Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī´s (d. 844/1479) *Kunūz al-Dhahab fī Tārīkh al-Ḥalab.* Incidentally, it was Ibn al-Ḥanbalī´s pupil Aḥmad ibn al-Munlā who collected his *dīwān* after his death. On Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, see *GAL,* 2:368 and S2:495, and 'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Aḥmad Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār Man Dhahab* (Cairo, 1930–31), 8:364–65.

[6]See *GAL,* 2:290 and S2:401 on al-Būrīnī.

[7]Al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Būrīnī, *Tarājim al-A'yān min Abnā' al-Zamān,* ed. Saḷāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Damascus, 1959–63) 1:180–85.

[8]Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib al-Sā'irah fī A'yān al-Mi'ah al-'Āshirah,* ed. Jibrā'īl Sulaymān Jabbūr (Beirut, 1945), 3:109–11 and idem, *Lutf al-Samar wa-Qatf al-Thamar min Tarājim A'yān al-Ṭabaqah al-Ūlá min al-Qarn al-Ḥādī 'Ashar,* ed. Maḥmūd al-Khayr (Damascus, 1981), 1:289–92. On al-Ghazzī, see *GAL,* 2:292 and S2:402.

[9]Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab,* 8:440–42. On him, see *GAL,* S2:403.

[10]Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat al-Athar fī A'yān al-Qarn al-Ḥādī 'Ashar* (Cairo, 1284), 1:277–80 and idem, *Nafaḥat al-Rayḥānah wa-Rashḥat Ṭilā' al-Ḥānah,* ed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥulw (Cairo, 1967–71), 2:255–61. On this historian, see Carl Brockelmann, ″Al-Muḥibbī″, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 7:469–70; *GAL,* 2:293 and S2:403.

[11]Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-Ḥabab,* no. 61.

[12]Ibid., no. 611.

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to the intellectual circles of Aleppo, as did his father, Muḥammad ibn ʻAlī al-Munlā al-Ḥaṣkafī (d. 935/1528–29).[13]

His father evidently took care of Aḥmad ibn Munlā´s education in its early stages. Later on he was sent to study with the local ulama. They instructed him in the subjects that were customary in those days—hadith, grammar, exegesis of the Quran, theology, jurisprudence.[14] Aḥmad ibn Munlā took two extensive study trips to Damascus during his youth; he was accompanied by his father on one of them. In 958/1551, he went to the Ottoman court in Istanbul to take lessons with a number of well-known scholars. Aḥmad ibn Munlā described his experiences in a book *(Al-Rawḍah al-Wardīyah fī al-Riḥlah al-Rūmīyah)* that unfortunately has not survived. The scholar from Aleppo returned to his hometown later on and held various teaching positions. Aḥmad ibn Munlā was particularly interested in linguistics. He wrote a number of treatises over the years. In addition to a number of studies on Arabic syntax and a historical narrative *(Tārīkh al-Islām wa-Ṭabaqāt al-Mashāhīr min al-Aʻlām),* one should also mention his commentary on Ibn Hishām´s (d. 761/1360) famous *Mughnī al-Labīb ʻan Kutub al-Aʻārīb* and a comprehensive commentary on al-Bayḍāwī´s (d. after 685/1216) *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-Asrār al-Ta'wīl* in this context. Neither of the books has apparently been preserved.

In his day, Aḥmad ibn Munlā was evidently recognized not only as a scholar but also as a poet. Ibn al-Ḥanbalī offers us a selection of his poetry. His life ended in a manner hardly befitting his social standing: farmers beat him to death near Aleppo. Aḥmad ibn Munlā was buried in his grandfather´s *turbah* at al-Jubayl Cemetery in Aleppo. He was survived by two sons, Ibrāhīm (d. 1032/1622–23) and Muḥammad (d. 1010/1601–2).[15]

At the beginning of his *Mutʻat al-Adhhān,* Aḥmad ibn Munlā tells us that he took extensive excerpts from Ibn Ṭūlūn´s *Al-Tamattu' bi-al-Iqrān bayna Tarājim al-Shuyūkh wa-al-Aqrān* when preparing his manuscript. In doing so, he had selected every item that helped him compose his own handbook.[16] The book prepared by the alim from Aleppo contains 1,030 biographical sketches, with the month of Dhū al-Qaʻdah 993/1585 being the last date mentioned. It is very difficult to tell from the content which parts were actually written by Ibn Ṭūlūn and which

[13]Ibid., no. 529.

[14]Ibn al-Ḥanbalī provides a long list of his teachers.

[15]On Aḥmad ibn Munlā´s sons, see al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣah,* 1:11–12 (Ibrāhīm) and 3:348–50 (Muḥammad); and Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Khafājī (d. 1068/1659), *Rayḥānat al-Alibbā wa-Zahrat al-Ḥayāh al-Dunyā,* ed. ʻAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥulw (Cairo, 1967), 1:97–98. Al-Khafājī´s *Rayḥānat al-Alibbā* is an expansion of his own work *Khabāyā al-Zawāyā fīmā fī al-Rijāl min al-Baqāyā;* see *GAL,* 2:286 and S2:396.

[16]Aḥmad ibn Munlā, *Mutʻat al-Adhhān,* 39.

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parts were added by Aḥmad ibn Munlā. To answer this question it would be helpful to do a detailed study comparing the styles of his *Mut'at al-Adhhān* with Ibn Ṭūlūn's "Dhakhā'ir al-Qaṣr fī Tarājim Nubalā' al-'Aṣr" (Gotha MS 1779), which is an appendix to his *Al-Tamattu'* written in his own hand and containing 136 biographies of well-known Damascene citizens in alphabetical order. The original models upon which the two authors based their work also merit close analysis. Ibn Ṭūlūn primarily used Yūsuf ibn 'Abd al-Hādī's (d. 909/1503)[17] *Al-Riyāḍ al-Yāni'ah fī A'yān al-Mi'ah al-Tāsi'ah*[18] and al-Buṣrawī's (d. 905/1500)[19] *Tārīkh*[20] as his models, while Aḥmad ibn Munlā apparently referred not only to Ibn Ṭūlūn's writings but also to the biographies compiled by al-Sakhāwī and al-Būrīnī.

The Berlin manuscript (Berlin MS 9888) is the only available copy of Aḥmad ibn Munlā's *Mut'at al-Adhhān min al-Tamattu' bi-al-Iqrān bayna Tarājim al-Shuyūkh wa-al-Aqrān.* The manuscript is quite difficult to read, yet my cursory comparison of the original text and the present edition revealed hardly any mistakes. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣilī has evidently done a very good job. The detailed annotations and the comprehensive indexes are extremely useful, while the introduction could be a bit more detailed.

Jonathan P. Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001). Pp. 143.

Reviewed by Th. Emil Homerin, University of Rochester.

In his *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo* (Princeton, 1994), Jonathan Berkey offered a detailed study of religious education in Mamluk Cairo. His main concerns were higher education, primarily Islamic jurisprudence, the scholarly elite (ulama) and their students, though he also discussed the place of women and the ruling Mamluk military elite in this educational system. Among his insightful conclusions, Berkey found that the transmission of religious knowledge in Mamluk Egypt was vital to easing certain social boundaries as it brought together individuals from groups that otherwise might not have mingled so easily. Now in his most

[17]On this scholar see *GAL,* 2:107–8 and S2:130–31; Stefan Leder, "Yūsuf b. 'Abd al-Hādī," *EI*^{2}, 9:354; and Aḥmad ibn Munlā, *Mut'at al-Adhhān,* 838–40 (no. 968).

[18]Yūsuf ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, *Al-Riyāḍ al-Yāni'ah fī A'yān al-Mi'ah al-Tāsi'ah,* ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣilī (Damascus, 1986).

[19]On him, see Aḥmad ibn Munlā, *Mut'at al-Adhhān,* 540–41 (no. 591).

[20]'Alī ibn Yūsuf al-Buṣrawī, *Tārīkh,* ed. Akram Ḥasan al-'Ulabī (Damascus, 1987).

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recent book, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East,* Berkey again addresses the transmission of religious knowledge, but by those who were generally outside the small circle of religious professionals. In particular, he studies the many popular preachers and storytellers, and how their activities raised issues of the interrelationship between high and popular cultures, on one hand, and questions of religious authority, on the other.

To start, Berkey discusses some of the key players involved. The *khaṭīb* was generally a state-appointed religious scholar who delivered the official Friday sermon, while the *wā'iẓ* (″preacher,″ ″admonisher″) and the *qāṣṣ* (″storyteller″) were often independent and less educated though they, too, called the common people to lead a pious life. As such, this latter group, like the ulama, actively transmitted religious knowledge, but this became a major source of tension. For as Berkey notes, ″the controversy that their activities engendered was in the final analysis about how the common people were to understand Islam.″ (p. 21) That much was at stake is clear from the many critiques of the popular preachers written throughout the medieval period by members of the religious establishment, including those by Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), Ibn al-Ḥājj (d. 737/1336), Zayn al-Dīn al-'Irāqī (d. 806/1404), al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), and 'Alī ibn Maymūn al-Idrīsī (d. 917/1511). Though these and other members of the ulama held a variety of theological and legal views, they were united in their stand against unlawful innovation in religion, which they sought to define and articulate in a system of proper Sunni belief and ritual.

Yet this was a daunting task, for the popular preachers and religious storytellers were pervasive in medieval Muslim society, and they were often adored by the common people as sources of religious edification as well as entertainment. Their critics, however, warned of charlatans and fools, who might cheat the people out of their money, while leading them astray. Such imposters and ignoramuses lacked proper education and certification, and so they spread lies, weak hadith, and heresies, while their preaching sessions were thought to encourage the mixing of the sexes and other illicit activities. This was a crucial issue, for popular preaching and storytelling were acceptable, even honorable, activities provided that their practitioners were trained and regulated by the ulama. Indeed, many critics of the popular preachers and storytellers were, themselves, preachers as well as religious scholars. Their sermons were punctuated by quotations and allusions, traditions of the prophet Muḥammad, and stories of the earlier prophets *(Isrā'īlīyāt)*.

Further, two themes central to all preaching were the renunciation of worldly goods and preparation for the Day of Judgment. Berkey reviews these and other themes found in the sermons of popular preachers, and their emotional impact on their audiences. He further observes that underlying much of this preaching was Sufism, which was a prominent feature of Islam in the Mamluk period. Poverty

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and death were major topics of medieval mysticism, which sought to foster the love between God and His servants. But some critics feared that public expressions of pious love would be misconstrued by common folk as blatant eroticism, while the public presentation of mystical teachings, such as those by Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 637/1240) could be even more dangerous.

In response to such criticism, others defended popular preachers and storytellers as serving an essential religious service to the Muslim community. Here, Berkey focuses on an anonymous manuscript entitled *Al-Bā'ith 'alá al-Khalāṣ fī Aḥwāl al-Khawāṣṣ* (″The Enticer to Liberation from the Concerns of the Elites″). Through a good piece of scholarly detective work, Berkey discovered that the author of this work is almost certainly 'Alī Ibn Wafā' (d. 807/1404), an important member of the Wafā'īyah Shādhalīyah Sufi order, and a popular preacher. He wrote this treatise in response to Zayn al-Dīn al-'Irāqī′s polemic against popular preachers and their Sufi values. The two men squared off over ″the fundamental issue surrounding the preachers and storytellers . . . control: who was to control their activities, their words, and their messages, and how was such control to be exercised″ (p. 55). Al-'Irāqī, fearing sedition and heresy, wanted to control and regulate what he believed to be illegal activity on the part of ignorant and unrestrained preachers. Ibn Wafā' agreed that preachers who preached against the law would surely face divine retribution. But he noted that many preachers and storytellers had, in fact, been authorized to transmit legitimate religious knowledge. Further, for Ibn Wafā', what truly mattered was the quality and sincerity of a sermon′s '*ibrah*, or spiritual message. As Berkey points out on this and similar matters, Ibn Wafā' and al-'Irāqī held differing views regarding what constituted proper religious knowledge. While the conservative al-'Irāqī attempted to circumscribe this knowledge and its transmission, Ibn Wafā' pressed for openness, ″for the possibility that humanity′s understanding of the will of God was incomplete and susceptible to further refinement, even in the hands of individuals such as those preaching and telling stories to the Muslim masses″ (p. 85). Berkey concludes that this debate over popular preachers and storytellers underscores the fact that while the ulama had emerged as the religious authorities of medieval Islam, precisely who qualified for membership in this elite group and on what basis remained somewhat ambiguous.

Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East is a concise, well-argued, and well-written book. My only real criticism is that in a book about preaching, we never read an actual sermon. Either as part of his second chapter ″Storytelling and Preaching in the Late Middle Period,″ or as a separate succeeding chapter, Berkey might have translated and analyzed several representative sermons. For example, reading a sermon by the conservative *khaṭīb* Ibn al-Jawzī, together with one by the respected Sufi preacher Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309), and another by one of the popular preachers, such as

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Shaykh Shu'ayb al-Ḥurayfīsh (d. 801/1389–99), would have made for an interesting contrast, and provided a fuller picture of the types of material involved. Finally, to Berkey's extensive bibliography should be added Īliyā Ḥāwī's anthology *Fann al-Khaṭābah* (Beirut, n.d.). These minor points aside, with *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East*, Jonathan Berkey has presented a detailed and insightful discussion of the vibrant and dynamic activity of Muslim preaching and storytelling and so has made another important contribution to the study of medieval Islam.

Grandes villes méditerranéennes du monde musulman médieval. Edited by Jean-Claude Garcin (Rome: Collection de l'École française de Rome, 2000). Pp. 323.

REVIEWED BY PAULINA B. LEWICKA, University of Warsaw

This ambitious volume brings together a number of papers prepared by fourteen distinguished scholars who acted upon the request of Claude Nicolet, then the director of the École française de Rome and the organizer of a conference on the "megapoles" of the Mediterranean (Rome, May 1996). The contributors decided to examine nine cities—not all of them of the Mediterranean basin, despite the book's title. The list, which includes Damascus, Qayrawan, Cordoba, al-Fusṭāṭ, Aleppo, Cairo, Fez, and Tunis, is complemented by Baghdad, a center separated from the Mediterranean's eastern shore by over 800 km of desert routes. Baghdad, however, a great early medieval megapolis of the Arab-Muslim world, "could not be ignored," to use the editor's own words. Therefore it was included—on an equal basis—"for scholarly comparison." The magnitude of tenth-century Baghdad cannot be denied. To include it, however, among Mediterranean urban centers is somewhat confusing. Similarly, the need to compare the characteristics of Oriental cities with those of Mediterranean urban centers is indisputable. However, to claim regularity based on the comparison of those centers with the single model of Baghdad is somewhat misleading.

The book presents nine Islamic cities. Thierry Bianquis examines post-Umayyad Damascus, while Mondher Sakly looks at Qayrawan, the capital of the province of Ifrīqīyā until the mid-eleventh century. The flourishing Abbasid Baghdad is discussed by Françoise Micheau; this presentation, the only one in this volume that contains comprehensive footnotes, is followed by a plan of the city, prepared by Abdallah Cheikh-Moussa. The plan includes the toponyms recorded in the

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period between the foundation of Baghdad and the beginning of the tenth century. M. Acién Almansa and A. Vallejo Triano deal with tenth-century caliphal Cordoba. Ayman Fu'ad Sayyid and Roland-Pierre Gayraud, director of the archeological mission in al-Fusṭāṭ, examine the characteristics of this city in the Fatimid period. Anne-Marie Eddé's study presents Aleppo of the twelfth–thirteenth centuries. Two of the contributions deal specifically with the capital of the Mamluk state: the presentation by Doris Behrens-Abouseif, Sylvie Denoix, and Jean-Claude Garcin is followed by Garcin's evaluation of possible Cairo population figures in 1517. Halima Ferhat looks at fourteenth-century Merinid Fez. Finally, Mounira Chapoutot-Remadi examines fifteenth-century Tunis of the Hafsides.

To make sure that the results of their work remain (to quote the editors' expression) at least in "minimum harmony," the contributors agreed that a set of twelve topics be addressed for each of the cities under study. The topics, inspired by those drawn up by scholars working in Claude Nicolet's project on the metropolitan areas of the northern Mediterranean, are: documentation and studies; quantitative evaluations; the forming of the population; distribution of the population; urban morphology; infrastructure and services; city authorities and administration; the city in its territory; the city and its long-distance links; religious and cultural topography; identity of the city.

The presentations are preceded by Thierry Bianquis' and Jean-Claude Garcin's thoughts on the notion of "megapolis" and its meaning. In fact this interesting chapter, while shedding much light on the question of the proper understanding of the ancient Greek term, is also somewhat confusing to the reader, who expects that being a "megapolis" is an element connecting the cities under study and probably constituting one of the main threads of the whole volume. In reality the essay offers an otherwise absorbing presentation in which Jean-Claude Garcin argues that Cairo of the thirteenth–fifteenth centuries can be considered a "megapolis" (which in his view is also the case for Baghdad of the ninth–tenth centuries), but that cities like al-Fusṭāṭ, Aleppo, Qayrawan, and Cordoba should not be included in this category. Garcin's reasoning, apparently inspired by Claude Nicolet's project, is very convincing, if not too closely in line with the chapters that follow.

Twelve topics, nine cities, an enormous abundance of secondary literature to study and sources to rediscover—and just one volume to contain it all. The title, the impressive format, and the preface appear promising, as do the table of contents and the names of the contributors, many of whom are internationally recognized experts on medieval Muslim cities. However, as soon as one reaches the bibliography (which precedes the presentations), confusion returns. In her bibliography for the essay on Baghdad, Françoise Micheau states that the list contains the most important works only and as for the sources, one should refer to the article itself (its footnotes

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are indeed detailed and exhaustive) or to the appropriate entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam [sic!]*. To compensate for this deficiency, the author includes in the list of secondary literature that follows one- or two-sentence descriptions of each work. A number of works also seem to be missing from the list of sources for the chapter on al-Fusṭāṭ (compare it with the bibliographies included by Ayman Fu'ad Sayyid in any of his numerous editions of Arabic sources for the history of Cairo).

For anybody acquainted with the enormous richness of sources for the history and topography of Mamluk Cairo (including the European travellers′ accounts that are frequently quoted in Jean-Claude Garcin′s presentation), the five items that constitute the list of sources seem at least odd; defining them as ″sources essentielles″ to some degree explains the brevity, but does not quite help to understand the number of works selected. The list of modern literature that follows omits a number of important works, a deficiency that becomes particularly manifest in the presentation itself, as the reader is rarely given a chance to see more details on literature or additional explanations that are usually placed in footnotes. The case of Mamluk Cairo, however, is not an extraordinary example: chapters on Cordoba, al-Fusṭāṭ, Qayrawan, Damascus, and Fez are hardly annotated at all.

As for the articles themselves, their content is formed according to the pattern mentioned above and presented in an almost encyclopedically concise manner. For example, the chapter on Mamluk Cairo contains a very brief description of basic sources for topography of the city and mention of a few names of scholars who have studied its urban history (section ″documentation and studies″), followed by ″quantitative evaluations″ by Jean-Claude Garcin in which the author discusses all known estimations concerning the population of Cairo and suggests 270,000 as the most probable number (this fails to correspond with what André Raymond and others have calculated, which Garcin explains in a separate chapter). In the same section the author, using the works by al-Maqrīzī, Leo Africanus, and the map of Cairo by Matheo Pagano, provides some more figures concerning the city′s area and the density of population in certain parts of it.

Doris Behrens-Abouseif presents the composition of the population and, pointing out the cosmopolitan character of Mamluk Cairo, explains that the emergence of the multinational mosaics that the city dwellers formed was a result of many factors, such as the original multi-religious character of the city, frequent immigration of conquering troops, and waves of refugees that followed various conquests and wars. The Mamluk system of recruitment, the widespread use of slaves, and the international character of shrines and religious academies of Cairo added new nationalities and new groups to the already differentiated society.

In the following section the same author examines the distribution of the city population and notes that in Mamluk Cairo the separation of the Muslim and non-Muslim quarters was not very strict; a certain flexibility was permitted here.

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She also points out that despite the professional specialization of Copts and Jews, there did not exist a strict religious segregation as far as the workplaces or crafts were concerned. She also stresses that because of the lack of sources similar to the Geniza archives for the time of the Fatimids or to court registers for the Ottoman epoch, we know relatively little on the distribution by profession of the population of Mamluk Cairo.

In the section dealing with infrastructures and services, Doris Behrens-Abouseif and Jean-Claude Garcin very briefly present the system of water provision and transportation of merchandise; they devote more space to Cairo bazaars. They examine the nature of commercial installations in the center of al-Qāhirah, explain the changing topography of the Cairene commerce that evolved according to the sultans′ and amirs′ orders, to economic crises, or to changing fashion. They also discuss the history of the founding of the bazaars along al-Qaṣabah, or the main axis of the Fatimid city, and explain the reasons for this development.

In her presentation on the authorities and administration of the city, Sylvie Denoix first points to the fact that, contrary to its European counterpart, the medieval Islamic city did not have municipal institutions of any kind and that the absence of urban administration is one of the characteristic features of the ″Islamic city.″ The author does not examine this interesting phenomenon further (which, considering the form of the volume, is quite understandable), but she also fails to mention fundamental studies on the subject, such as S. M. Stern′s ″The Constitution of the Islamic City″ (in A. H. Hourani and S. M. Stern, eds., *The Islamic City: A Colloquium* [Oxford, 1970]) or I. M. Lapidus′s ″Muslim Cities and Islamic Societes″ (in I. M. Lapidus, ed., *Middle Eastern Cities* [Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969]).

Sylvie Denoix goes on to say that the Islamic cities were governed by other institutions instead: by *ḥisbah,* by judicature of the qadis, by various types of police and by *waqf*—the system of ″social solidarity,″ and she briefly presents each of them. Again, the omission of basic sources (the works of al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Duqmāq do not constitute the fullest compendium on the Cairene *ḥisbah* system) and of at least a few important items from the long list of secondary literature on the subject (the literature on the institution of *waqf* in Egypt is fairly rich) is an element that can hardly be applauded.

The author concludes the essay by stating that what in fact made Mamluk Cairo different from other Islamic cities was the duality of forces in power: there were local civilian elites responsible for religious and certain administrative issues on the one hand, and the army with the military and political power on the other; but as this duality was apparently the case with all Egyptian and Syrian cities where Mamluk troops were posted, this is not a distinguishing feature of the Cairo urban administration. This city was unique in being the seat of the Mamluk sultan, an officer who was not only the ruler of the kingdom, but also the one who often

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took a personal interest in, and gave dispositions as to, the order in the city, the safety of its gates and streets, control over its various legal and illegal businesses, as well as its urban development. It was he, finally, who presided over the *maẓālim* court sessions, so that the four Sunni judges were not the only institution that dispensed justice in the city.

Perhaps the most thought-provoking part of the chapter on Mamluk Cairo, if not of the entire book, is Jean-Claude Garcin´s ″Note sur la population du Caire en 1517.″ In his article the author, referring to various sources that indicate the number of dwellers in late medieval Cairo, comments on the results of contemporary studies on the subject (particularly those by André Raymond), draws his own conclusions, and attempts to establish his own figures. Garcin apparently does not agree with the methods of calculation applied by Raymond nor with his application of these methods to the pre-Ottoman epoch.

Thus, trying to avoid the methodological confusion that an ″Ottomanist″ approach to medieval Cairo may cause, the author decides in the first place to redefine the term ″Cairo″ by incorporating al-Fusṭāṭ within Cairo´s medieval limits at the end of the fifteenth century—contrary to the ″Ottomanists,″ for whom al-Fusṭāṭ is just a ruined suburb. However logical this move may appear, the soundness of it is open to discussion, and not just on whether al-Fusṭāṭ was already ruined or not. In the late fifteenth century, as before, the chief of police of al-Qāhirah was not responsible for order in al-Fusṭāṭ, and *vice versa;* the two officers did not have any common beat or share a common commander, which suggests that from the administrative point of view (whatever this may mean in the case of a city with no municipal authorities) the two urban entities were separate. Al-Qalqashandī, who in his encyclopedia devotes a section to describe *madīnat* al-Fusṭāṭ, and another to describe *madīnat* al-Qāhirah, apparently confirms the late medieval situation.

At the same time, another proposition by the author, to include Būlāq and other *extra-muros* quarters within the city limits, seems to be rational. This said, one remark should be added, viz., that the poor of Cairo (if we consider them its inhabitants) seem not to fit the methods of counting valid for other inhabitants. Some of them lived in exceedingly overcrowded houses, where a ″feu fiscal″ could by no means be limited to five persons; some of them—usually homeless immigrant scholars and personnel of various and numerous religious institutions of Cairo—dwelled in the institutions´ buildings or slept in front of them. Still others lived outside the walled city, on the ground or in some kind of temporary housing. How large a part of Cairo´s population did they form? An absorbing study by Adam Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge, 2000), does not provide the answer either, but leaves this question tantalizingly open.

The glossary of Arabic urban terms and a set of carefully prepared colored maps of the nine cities complete the book. There is no index.

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The approach the contributors have adopted in their study resulted in creating a reference volume, a kind of encyclopedia-style handbook consisting of nine large entries on nine medieval Mediterranean cities, including Baghdad. Indeed, much of this material covers—to use Carl F. Petry′s words—ground thoroughly trodden by specialists in the field, especially in the case of Cairo, Damascus, and Aleppo, which over the preceding thirty years have been ″worked over to a degree verging on excess.″ This, however, does not negate the value of the volume. As the editor states, the aim was to contribute to the work on the general history of Islamic urbanism. And the book, no doubt, satisfies all conditions to serve this purpose. It indeed paves the way for further work in this direction; what we need now is to rediscover, reread, reanalyze the sources, and interpret the data on Islamic urban and social history that the medieval works and documents contain. One can only praise the efforts of this group of distinguished scholars for placing their research on medieval Muslim cities in a framework that enables further comparative studies on a scale even larger than Mediterranean Muslim urbanism.

‘Imād Badr al-Dīn Abū Ghāzī, *Taṭawwur al-Ḥiyāzah al-Zirā‘īyah fī Miṣr Zaman al-Mamālīk al-Jarākisah* (Cairo: ‘Ayn lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Buḥūth al-Insānīyah wa-al-Ijtimā’īyah, 2000). Pp. 155.

Reviewed by Igarashi Daisuke, Chuo University

It is generally agreed that the *iqṭā‘* system was a fundamental military and economic system of the Mamluk state providing the basic framework for the Mamluk regime and its society. However, even though this is a most important matter directly linked to the social and political power structures, only a few attempts have so far been made to understand the actual transformation process of the *iqṭā‘* system—that is, the land tenure system under the Circassian Mamluks that has been regarded as being in ″a period of decline″—with the exception of C. F. Petry′s recent studies using Mamluk *waqf* documents concerning the expansion of the sultans′ *waqf* lands.

The present book is a remarkable study that considers the land tenure system in Circassian Mamluk Egypt based on Mamluk documents in the Ministry of *Waqf*s and National Archives in Cairo, which have heretofore been used almost exclusively for *waqf* studies, and Ottoman land registers of *rizaq (dafātir al-rizaq al-jayshīyah, dafātir al-rizaq al-aḥbāsīyah)* that have never been used as historical sources for Mamluk studies. The author notices that there were many cases of

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state land sales from the state treasury *(bayt al-māl)* to individuals during the Circassian Mamluk period. The data he examines is based on 570 cases of state land sales appearing in the documentation. The aim of the book, as the author describes it in the Introduction, is to consider the process of development, causes, and effects of the sale of state lands, which he regards as an important phenomenon influencing the traditional land tenure system in medieval Egypt. It argues against the common opinion that most agricultural land belonged to the state, and that private ownership had not developed in medieval Egypt, as attested by al-Qalqashandī and al-Maqrīzī, historians of the Circassian Mamluk period. They state in their works that there was neither much privately owned nor *waqf* land in Egypt in the early fifteenth century, the beginning of the Circassian period.

Chapter 1 deals with the development of state land sales during the Circassian Mamluk period, in which most of the cases were found, although the practice had existed since the Fatimid period. Some 570 cases are arranged chronologically and according to sultanic reigns. In a table, the author shows that most state land sales were carried out during specific reigns, like those of Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī and al-Ashraf Īnāl, but, in contrast, only few cases can be found under others, like al-Ẓāhir Barqūq and al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh, despite their long terms. Similarly, land sales are concentrated in particular periods, that is, the mid-fifteenth century and the last twenty years of Mamluk rule. Judging from this data, it is obvious that the state land sales did not occur equally throughout the Circassian Mamluk period.

Chapter 2 focuses on the reasons for state land sales. In Mamluk documents, they were ordinarily legitimated ″for expenditures on military expeditions and payments to soldiers,″ attempting to overcome the fact that the *fuqahā'* had not agreed on the legality of selling land originally belonging to the state treasury. Therefore, the following three questions are considered by the author: did state land sales coincide with military expeditions or with other military activities? Were there fiscal circumstances that actually required selling land? Did land payments actually enter the state treasury´s coffers? As a result of this investigation, no apparent relationships can be found between fiscal or military circumstances and the frequency of state land sales. Moreover, the documents frequently tell us that land payments from the state treasury were ″awarded″ to buyers. Consequently, the author concludes that the reasons for selling state land described in the documentation were not legitimate.

In Chapter 3, entitled ″Effects of state land sales under the Circassian Mamluks,″ the author assumes that state land sales influenced various aspects of society in medieval Egypt for the reason that agricultural land was the basis of state revenues as well as the *iqṭā'* system, and therefore he examines the buyers of state lands and the subsequent transfer of that land after purchase. From this analysis, he

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reveals that a vast amount of agricultural land was turned into *waqf* through the sale of state lands, thus in effect transferring land ownership from the state to private hands. He points out that three important changes in the land tenure system and Egyptian society resulted from this. First, it may have caused a decline in the *iqṭā'* system owing to a reduction of state land that could be awarded to mamluks and amirs as *iqṭā'*. He expects that the traditional loyalty between sultans and mamluks and amirs depended on the *iqṭā'* system and may have collapsed as a result of the change in their land tenure status from *muqṭa'*s to private land owners, making them independent of the state to some extent. Secondly, a new landlord group consisting of *awlād al-nās* and Egyptians who had been excluded from the ruling class appeared, now that the state was no longer the exclusive source of land due to the free transfer of land as a result of the spread of sales from the state treasury. However, their social influence on their own land was reduced because it was necessary to turn it into *waqf* to avoid confiscation, in addition to the fact that they had been absentee landlords. Thirdly, nevertheless, the documentation makes clear that most of the land sold from the state treasury eventually fell into the hands of the sultans. That is, they became the greatest beneficiaries of state land sales. Consequently, the author concludes that the real reason for the state land sales was to benefit the sultans themselves, who used it to reward their followers and to conciliate their enemies, all of this due to the political corruption of the period.

The most valuable features of this book are its numerous tables and graphs, which organize the data in archival sources statistically and quantitatively. In addition, the author compares these tools with narrative sources, examining the phenomenon of state-land sale from various aspects. His opinion that this unfortunately overlooked phenomenon was significant in causing great social transformation at the time is very interesting. However, his hypothesis in Chapter 3 about the transformation of the land tenure system remains uncertain because it mostly depends on statistical analysis of the documents, and cannot be proven by the narrative sources. Furthermore, the sultans´ intentions regarding state land sales and the contemporary political situation caused by it, or requiring it, are not examined satisfactorily, but only summed up as political corruption, despite possible effects on the political and power structure of the traditional Mamluk regime. We may recall that many state land sales occurred under particular sultanic reigns, despite the absence of pressing military and economic circumstances, as seen in Chapter 2. Therefore, we must look more carefully into the political circumstances of those reigns, including reconsideration of whether state land sales were transacted under similar situations and for the same purposes throughout the Circassian period, or were merely a part of some intentional policy by particular sultans for some special purpose.

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Even though the author's opinion leaves room for further investigation, especially from the aspect of political history, the importance of this book cannot be overemphasized. Most of all, it shows that Ottoman documents are applicable to Mamluk studies, which have usually been based on narrative sources due to an assumed lack of administrative documents, thus enabling scholars to explore further the land tenure system during the Mamluk period. Land systems are crucial elements of society, having close relationships to political, economic, and social conditions. The conclusions reached in this book will have an impact on other fields of Mamluk history, and will change the previously held historical image of the Circassian Mamluks.

IBN ḤAJAR AL-'ASQALĀNĪ, *Dhayl al-Durar al-Kāminah fī A'yān al-Mi'ah al-Thāminah,* edited by Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1419/1998). Pp. 376.

IBN ḤAJAR AL-'ASQALĀNĪ, *Dhayl al-Durar al-Kāminah fī A'yān al-Mi'ah al-Thāminah,* edited by 'Adnān Darwīsh (Cairo: Ma'had al-Makhṭūṭāt al-'Arabīyah, 1412/1992). Pp. 452.

IBN DUQMĀQ, *Nuzhat al-Anām fī Tārīkh al-Islām, 628/1230–659/1261,* edited by Samīr Ṭabbārah (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-'Aṣrīyah, 1420/1999). Pp. 320.

REVIEWED BY THOMAS BAUER, Universität Münster

Historiographical works are not only important for the facts they contain. Each of these works is also a document for the world view of the time of its composition and can tell a lot about the interests and predilections of its readers, about the scholarly life of that time, and the perception of history in it. Therefore, one should not be disappointed if the recently published works under review do not add many historical facts previously unknown. They are interesting nevertheless, each one in its own way.

Ibn Ḥajar (773–852/1372–1449) hardly needs to be introduced in these pages. His *Durar al-Kāminah,* a collection of biographies of the important persons who died during the eighth century (701–800), is a basic tool for everyone interested in the Mamluk period. It is the first of a long series of works containing the biographies of important people who died within a certain century. But if we consider the date of Ibn Ḥajar's birth and death, he seems not to have been particularly predisposed

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to writing the biographies of the prominent people of the eighth century, because a book like this did not allow him to treat the biographies of all those who died after the author was only twenty-seven years old. It is therefore only too understandable that he planned a continuation to this book, a *Dhayl al-Durar al-Kāminah*. In the year 832 he noticed, as he writes himself, that already a third of the ninth century had elapsed. This inspired him to put together a volume containing short presentations of those who had died during the years 801 to 832 in chronological order (different from the *Durar*). The volume contains the obituaries of 639 persons, ranging between a single line and two pages. Ibn Ḥajar finished a draft *(musawwadah)* only, which circulated among several ulama, among them Ibn al-Labūdī, in whose possession al-Sakhāwī had seen the book,[1] and Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, who left notes in the manuscript. This *musawwadah* in Ibn Ḥajar′s own hand has survived and is probably the only manuscript of the text that ever existed. Ibn Ḥajar himself obviously never cared for the preparation of a fair copy *(mubayyaḍah)*. Probably he felt that his *Inbā' al-Ghumr,* a history of the *ḥawādith*/*wafayāt* type, which he carried on until his death, made a further continuation of the *Dhayl* superfluous.[2] In any case, the whole material of the *Dhayl* can also be found in the *Inbā'* (and, additionally, in al-Sakhāwī′s *Ḍaw'*), so that the edition of the *Dhayl* yields only a very small number of hitherto unknown facts. However, the texts are not identical, and it is never devoid of interest to have the *ipsissima verba* of as great a scholar as Ibn Ḥajar in front of oneself. The edition is, therefore, to be welcomed.

But which edition? The edition by Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī is meant to complete the two-volume set (four volumes in two) of Ibn Ḥajar′s *Al-Durar al-Kāminah* issued by the Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah (henceforth: DKI). The DKI does not mention an editor of the *Durar,* but presents the book as being ″corrected″ by a certain 'Abd al-Wārith Muḥammad 'Alī (Beirut, 1418/1997). It has become common practice with the DKI to publish ″remakes″ of books published previously by other publishing houses. In these cases, the original edition (which is hardly ever specified) is simply retyped without consulting any manuscript. The new text (which is usually presented in a clumsy layout with small margins standing in marked contrast to a pompous cover) can, of course, never be better than the text from which it is copied, because it copies its mistakes and inevitably adds new ones. To give but one example, in the biography of al-Ṣafadī in the new DKI edition of the *Durar* the reader comes across al-Ṣafadī′s statement that he wrote ″two hundred *(mi'atayn)* volumes″ and may find it inconsistent with a later notice

[1]Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Jawāhir wa-al-Durar fī Tarjamat Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Ḥajar,* ed. Ibrāhīm Bājis 'Abd al-Majīd (Beirut, 1419/1999), 3:688.

[2]Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-Ghumr bi-Abnā' al-'Umr,* ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Khān et al., 9 vols. (Hyderabad, 1387–96/1967–76).

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that he wrote more than five hundred. Even more surprising is the enigmatic information that al-Ṣafadī suffered from ″a hardness of hearing in the hereafter *(fī al-ākhirah)*″. If this text is compared with the much superior Hyderabad edition, the reader will find out that al-Ṣafadī claimed to have written ″hundreds *(mi'īn)* of volumes,″ and that the problems with his hearing occurred ″towards the end of his life *(fī al-ākhar)*.″ This example proves the practice of the DKI not only to be ethically dubious but also detrimental to scholarly standards. It is only to be hoped that the easily available print of the DKI will not supersede the excellent Hyderabad edition.

This practice arouses suspicion also for the edition of the *Dhayl,* a suspicion that turns out to be only too justified. Though al-Mazīdī certainly had a copy of Ibn Ḥajar′s autograph in hand (as the plates on pp. 23–24 prove), everything points to the conclusion that this was not the main source for his edition. Six years before, another edition of the *Dhayl* had appeared in Cairo. Its editor, ʻAdnān Darwīsh, had done an impressive job. By comparing Ibn Ḥajar′s *musawwadah,* which is written almost without diacritical dots, with the text of the *Inbā'* , the *Ḍaw'* , and other sources, he manages to decipher Ibn Ḥajar′s text nearly completely. He even succeeds in reading most of the marginal notes by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah. Further, he gives a comprehensive commentary in the footnotes identifying nearly every person and book title mentioned in the text. It may well be the case that Darwīsh′s commentary proves to be more helpful than Ibn Ḥajar′s own words. All these notes are lacking in al-Mazīdī′s edition, a fact that alone lends superiority to Darwīsh′s edition. But really striking is the fact that al-Mazīdī′s version of Ibn Ḥajar′s text is completely identical with Darwīsh′s. By not mentioning Darwīsh′s edition, al-Mazīdī implies that he did not know it. But it is hard to imagine that his reading of Ibn Ḥajar′s sketchy text, which is extremely difficult to decipher (as the sample plates show), is always the same as that of Darwīsh and that he always had the same idea as to how to divide the text into paragraphs. Whenever Darwīsh could not read a word and therefore omits it, al-Mazīdī also could not read it. In many cases Darwīsh notes that a passage was extremely difficult to read, that he could only guess the right word, or that he had to put forward a conjecture. In all these cases, al-Mazīdī′s text is absolutely identical, but without admitting any textual problems. Even where there is a lacuna in the text of the *Dhayl* that Darwīsh tried to fill by adding the corresponding passage of the *Inbā'* in square brackets, al-Mazīdī′s text is identical —with the exception of the brackets. He thus presents passages which are definitely missing in Ibn Ḥajar′s autograph as part of the original text. Therefore we can conclude with almost complete certainty that al-Mazīdī did plagiarize the edition of Darwīsh. It is a matter of course that only Darwīsh′s erudite edition should be bought, used, and quoted.

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The author of the next book under review is Ṣārim al-Dīn Ibrāhīm, known as Ibn Duqmāq, an elder contemporary of Ibn Ḥajar. He was born between 740 and 750, and died in 809/1496. He was an important source for the historical works of Ibn Ḥajar and is the subject of an entry in Ibn Ḥajar´s *Dhayl* (no. 274) and in his *Inbā'* (6:16–17). As his name shows, he belonged to the *awlād al-nās,* and as such had the usual problems of being accepted by the great ulama, because he could not comply with their linguistic standards, which required a flawless mastery of Classical Arabic. Though Ibn Ḥajar had a liking for him and drew heavily on his writings, he cannot help stating that Ibn Duqmāq, ″despite his passion for literature *(adabīyāt)* and history, was bare of the clothes of the Arabic language, and his speech was vulgar *('āmmī al-'ibārah)″* (*Dhayl,* p. 182). Several works of Ibn Duqmāq have been preserved at least partially, among them a collection of the biographies of Hanafi scholars, which caused him a lot of trouble, since he was accused of slandering al-Shāfi'ī in it, and a description of Cairo and Alexandria edited by Vollers in 1893 *(Kitāb al-Intiṣār li-Wāsiṭat 'Iqd al-Amṣār).* A fine edition of a précis of Mamluk history up to the year 805 has appeared recently.[3] In this work, he refers to his *Al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr* (p. 26), by which he certainly meant his history entitled *Nuzhat al-Anām fī Tārīkh al-Islām,* a history in annalistic form following the *ḥawādith*/*wafayāt* pattern. It seems as if at least more than half of it has been preserved.[4] Ibn Ḥajar states that this work was the most important source for Badr al-Dīn al-'Aynī for the period not covered by Ibn Kathīr. Al-'Aynī, he says, copied Ibn Duqmāq, including his linguistic mistakes and without mentioning his source in passages in which Ibn Duqmāq presents himself as an eyewitness, thus pretending falsely to have been an eyewitness himself (*Inbā,'* 1:2–3).

Samīr Ṭabbārah now has undertaken the task of editing the portion covering the years 628–59/1230–61, the end of the Ayyubid and the beginning of the Mamluk period. Obviously Ibn Duqmāq used a great variety of sources, and though many of them are well known, his text provides different formulations, unknown details, and even some biographical entries which the erudite editor could not trace in any other source. But of course only a careful source-critical study will determine the *Nuzhah´*s importance as a historical source for this period. Whatever the results will be, the part edited by Ṭabbārah is interesting in any case, because it is based on Ibn Duqmāq´s autograph. Fortunately the editor did not obliterate the grammatical peculiarities of the manuscript, but only corrected

[3]Ibn Duqmāq, *Al-Nafḥah al-Miskīyah fī al-Dawlah al-Turkīyah,* ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmurī (Beirut, 1420/1999).

[4]The most comprehensive survey of the surviving manuscripts is given in ibid., p. 26, where Tadmurī however fails to mention the Gotha manuscripts. Taken together and provided that all given dates are correct, we posses the parts dealing with the years 176–422, 436–552, 628–59, 701–42, and 768–804.

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obvious errors, in which case he gives the original wording in the notes. In cases of grammatical and syntactic influences of the spoken language, he preserves Ibn Duqmāq´s text and gives the form complying with the rules of Standard Arabic in the notes. In some cases, for no obvious reason, he proceeds the other way around. However, the reader is always able to reconstruct the features of the autograph and is at the same time provided with a readable text. If only the editor had been more attentive and the considerable number of misprints been smaller, this edition could serve as a model for similar cases.

Ṭabbārah´s edition allows us to assess Ibn Ḥajar´s criticism, and we must admit that he was not entirely wrong when he questioned Ibn Duqmāq´s grammatical competence. Ibn Duqmāq´s mistakes, however, were by and large predictable. He starts sentences having a plural subject with a verb in the plural form, disregards accusative endings and mixes up the endings *–ūn* and *–īn*. These completely unspectacular peculiarities are the main features of dialectal influence in Ibn Duqmāq´s text. Instead of mentioning these features, the editor in his introduction discusses the problem of *hamzah* orthography at some length (pp. 17–18). I would prefer that the subject of *hamzah* orthography disappear entirely from discussions of dialect influence in classical manuscripts or of the features of so-called Middle Arabic. Of course these people did not pronounce the *hamz,* but this fact cannot be derived from the manuscripts, because *hamzah* was also unnoted in manuscripts of purely classical texts written by educated writers. The standard orthography was always to write *mas'ūl* with one *wāw* and no *hamzah* sign, and to write *sā'ir* with dotted *yā'* and no *hamzah* sign either. This being so, nothing speaks against replacing this tradition with the modern standard orthography for *hamzah* in editions. This was also Ṭabbārah´s idea. Therefore his haphazard (and often simply wrong) way of writing *hamzah* comes as somewhat of a surprise.

It is remarkable further, as Ibn Ḥajar had already noted, that Ibn Duqmāq´s unaccomplished grammatical training was no obstacle to his predilection for literature. It becomes very clear that Ibn Duqmāq is occupied mainly with two fields, history and *adab,* to which one may add a certain interest in Sufism. For this reason, Ibn Duqmāq treats the eventful year 648 in eleven pages and a half, but devotes nineteen pages to the year 632, in which nothing especially interesting seems to have happened, since the *ḥawādith* of it are treated in only three lines. But 632 was the year in which the poets al-Ḥājirī and—above all—Ibn al-Fāriḍ died. Ibn Duqmāq gives a long biography of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and quotes extensively from his and al-Ḥājirī´s poetic productions. Ibn Duqmāq´s history clearly is no instance of *siyāsah*-oriented historiography, but rather a combination of political and cultural history with a conspicuous focus on *adab*. Ibn Duqmāq obviously liked poetry. Repeatedly he gives his own judgments about the lines he quotes, thereby presenting himself as an *adab* expert. The poetry quoted pertains exclusively

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to high literature. There are no vernacular verses, and *mirabilia* play hardly any role. Therefore I think that the extraordinary role of poetry cannot be explained sufficiently by considering it part of a process of popularization, as Ulrich Haarmann suggested.[5] Taking into account the high prestige of *adab* in the Mamluk period and the overall process, which I call the "'*ulamā*'ization of *adab*" and the "*adab*ization of the '*ulamā*'," [6] one of the motives for adducing such a great amount of poetry may also be the desire of the author to prove his professionality and, in the special case of Ibn Duqmāq, to make up for his incomplete linguistic training. In any case, Ibn Duqmāq's book provides rich material for a new assessment of this and many other questions about the nature of Mamluk historiography. Therefore, though the edition is far from being faultless, one can only give the advice to buy it as long as the DKI has not plagiarized it and added even more mistakes.

ʻAzīz al-ʻAẓmah, *Ibn Taymīyah* (Beirut: Riyād al-Rayyis lil-Kutub wa-al-Nashr, 2000). Pp.499.

Reviewed by Jon Hoover, Dar Comboni Arabic Study Centre, Cairo

ʻAzīz al-Aẓmah has published extensively in both English and Arabic, including the recent *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian, and Pagan Politics* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997). In the Arabic book under review al-Aẓmah offers an anthology of texts drawn from Ibn Taymīyah's (d. 728/1328) vast corpus of writings. Many domains of the Hanbali jurist's thought are represented, although there is little from his spiritual writings. The first and shortest of three major parts is allotted to passages on "the true religion." The second part presents *fatwá*s and other texts dealing broadly with legal matters, including the caliphate and popular religious innovations. Among these are excerpts from the jurist's rulings on the obligation to fight the Islam-confessing Mongols. These have been picked up by modern day radicals to justify violent opposition to governments in the Islamic world. The third part of the anthology includes discussions of religious epistemology and doctrine, as well as Ibn Taymīyah's *Wāsiṭīyah* creed, which

[5]Ulrich Haarmann, "Auflösung und Bewahrung der klassischen Formen arabischer Geschichtsschreibung in der Zeit der Mamluken," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 121 (1971): 46–60.

[6]Thomas Bauer, "Literarische Anthologien der Mamlukenzeit," in *Die Mamluken: Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur im Gedenken an Ulrich Haarmann (1942–1999)*, ed. S. Conermann and A. Pistor-Hatam (Hamburg, 2002), in press.

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remains in use to the present. While the texts chosen are interesting, they are not always taken from the best available printed editions, and they do not necessarily grant perspicuous access to the jurist's ideas. Moreover, al-Aẓmah provides no explanatory notation because, as he informs us in the introduction, this would have made the volume too unwieldy. Al-Aẓmah closes the book with an appendix containing six historical extracts dealing with Ibn Taymīyah's life and works and an index of names.

In the appendix al-Aẓmah performs a sleight of hand that is inexcusable for a modern scholar of any repute. The first and only full account of Ibn Taymīyah's life presented is the late biography of Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 852/1449), in which, contrary to several earlier sources, Ibn Taymīyah confesses Ash'arism under duress and thereby admits that his view of God's attributes is heterodox. After this comes an abridgement of Ibn Rajab's (d. 795/1392) biography that has been divested of nearly everything that counters Ibn Ḥajar's account and a great deal more of substantial historical interest. The third selection, the biography of Kutubī (d. 764/1362), provides an extensive list of Ibn Taymīyah's works but little else, and the fourth is the late biography of Ibn 'Imād (d. 1089/1678), which also does not deal with Ibn Taymīyah's trials concerning God's attributes. The fifth excerpt in the appendix is a condemnation of Ibn Taymīyah's views on God's attributes by the Ash'ari apologist Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), and the final piece is Ibn Kathīr's account of the jurist's funeral. In short, al-Aẓmah has selected and edited texts so as to portray Ibn Taymīyah as heterodox on God's attributes while ostensibly providing important and informative historical sources.

Despite its sophistication and occasional insight, the introduction confirms that one of al-Aẓmah's purposes in presenting this volume is polemical distortion. He does make the valid point that it is important to read what Ibn Taymīyah says in historical context instead of selectively quoting him for tendentious purposes, and he accuses radical Islamists who use the jurist's anti-Mongol *fatwá*s to justify armed resistance of historical anachronism. However, al-Aẓmah demonstrates to excess that Ibn Taymīyah was out of step with the Sunni legal and doctrinal consensus of the day. He also makes no attempt to help the reader understand that Ibn Taymīyah's view of God's attributes is more sophisticated than Ash'ari polemists have wished to acknowledge, a point that has been made by Henri Laoust and that an extended reading of Ibn Taymīyah's texts bears out.

Al-Aẓmah closes his introduction by explaining that research on Ibn Taymīyah is still in its infancy. True as that may be, al-Aẓmah has taken little effort to avail himself of what research there is, and this and the book's polemical agenda render it misleading and nearly useless for those interested in Mamluk studies or the

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history of medieval Islamic thought. This anthology is regrettably little more than testimony to modern intra-confessional controversy, and the excerpted passages are better read in context in the original printed editions.

Sulaymān al-Madanī, *Tīmūrlank fī Dimashq* (Damascus and Beirut: Al-Manārah, 2000). Pp. 192.

Reviewed by Zayde G. Antrim, Harvard University

It is surprising that Tamerlane's invasion of Syria at the turn of the ninth/fifteenth century and its devastating social, cultural, economic, and political repercussions have received so little attention from historians of the Mamluk period or of Bilād al-Shām more generally. Indeed, I have not found a single monograph-length study in a European language dealing with the topic of Tamerlane's campaign in Mamluk Syria. Although in the broad context of Timurid history the Syrian invasion may be interpreted as a strategic side-note, an unresolved interlude, or a denouement, it undoubtedly plays a key role in the context of the history of Syria under Mamluk rule. A lone published monograph in Arabic, Akram Ḥasan al-'Ulabī's *Taymūrlank wa-Ḥikāyatuhu ma'a Dimashq* (Damascus and Beirut, 1987), has filled this historiographical gap in the Arabic-speaking world until quite recently. A thorough survey of the contemporary Arabic source material, including a helpful annotated bibliography, al-'Ulabī's book offers, if not original analytical insight, then at least a solidly documented narrative account of the protagonists and major events that dominate this historical episode. The publication of Sulaymān al-Madanī's *Tīmūrlank fī Dimashq* raises hopes that a new contribution to this neglected area of study might update, complement, or expand upon al-'Ulabī's synthetic work. Unfortunately, it falls short of these expectations.

The greatest weakness of al-Madanī's work is its sloppy scholarly apparatus. Initially, a glance at the bibliography left me concerned. A brief list of ten works consisting of no more than author and title, this "bibliography" does not even cover all the major Arabic chronicles describing the historical events, much less include Persian chronicles or significant secondary works on the Mongols, Tamerlane, or Mamluk Syria published in the last few decades. The only secondary work listed is al-Sayyid al-Bāz al-'Arīnī's 1967 monograph on the Mongols, and the only work originally published in a language other than Arabic that appears in the bibliography is Walter Fischel's *Ibn Khaldūn and Tamerlane* (1952). Although al-Madanī includes accurate, albeit abbreviated, entries for the important chronicles

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by al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Taghrībirdī, and Ibn Iyās, he erroneously records the title of Ibn al-Athīr′s earlier chronicle as *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah* and identifies the author of *'Ajā'ib al-Maqdūr fī Nawā'ib Ibn Tīmūr* by the obscure sobriquet Ibn Dimashqī, rather than by the well-known appellation Ibn 'Arabshāh (and his inconsistent use of both names throughout the rest of the text contributes to this point of confusion). The other three works al-Madanī chooses to list are Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī′s *Khiṭaṭ al-Shām,* to which I found only one reference in the book as a whole, Ibn Ṭūlūn′s *Mufākahat al-Khillān,* to which I found no reference at all, and the mysterious *Al-Mawsū'ah al-'Askarīyah,* which I could neither identify nor find mentioned elsewhere in the book.

As I began to read the text of *Tīmūrlank fī Dimashq*, however, it quickly became clear that al-Madanī employs many sources not listed in the bibliography, including those by some of the more conspicuously absent chroniclers, such as Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah and others. Although this is good news on one level, al-Madanī′s idiosyncratic annotation style makes it frustratingly difficult to establish which source corresponds to which passage, where a quotation begins and ends, whether a marked passage represents a direct quotation or a paraphrase, to which edition the volume and page numbers in the notes refer, and, in the case of obscure secondary sources, what work is being referenced in the first place. For instance, he relies heavily on a source listed in the footnotes simply as ″Shihāb,″ sometimes followed by a number. Only by referring back to al-'Ulabī′s annotated bibliography did I discover that al-Madanī is most likely citing an (apparently) unpublished thesis entitled *Tīmūrlank* submitted by Maẓhar Shihāb for a doctorate from the Université Libanaise in 1981. Finally, *Tīmūrlank fī Dimashq* is peppered with passages clearly quoted or paraphrased without citation as well as passages introduced by a phrase within the body of the text, such as ″according to al-Maqrīzī,″ without further annotation.

The content of the book does not manage to redeem the weaknesses in its form. The first half of the work is characterized by a disjointed sequence of synthetic overviews of the life of Ghengis Khān, the Mongol expansion, the Crusades, and the rise of Tamerlane. After a completely unannotated ten-page chapter on Tamerlane′s early career and before a long discursion on Ayyubid history, al-Madanī inserts a brief chapter entitled ″Tamerlane′s Warning to the Sultan of the Mamluks″ (pp. 37–40). This chapter consists almost entirely of a reproduction of the text of a communication between Tamerlane and ″the Sultan of the Mamluks″ without further identification, interpretation, or analysis. Although the full text of this missive may be found in al-Maqrīzī′s *Kitāb al-Sulūk* and Ibn Taghrībirdī′s *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah,* as well as in several of the other major chronicles, the only annotation al-Madanī provides for the extended quotation is the location of verses from the Quran appearing therein. Furthermore, he indicates

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that the ″Sultan of the Mamluks″ received this correspondence after Tamerlane′s ravaging of Aleppo, which occurred during the reign of Sultan Faraj in 803/1400, despite the fact that it was Sultan Barqūq who received the message in 796/1394, years before Tamerlane invaded northern Syria. Al-Madanī returns to this letter in the proper historical context in a short statement fifty pages later (p. 89), without reference to or explanation of its earlier misleading, if not completely mistaken, presentation.

The rest of the book proceeds more or less chronologically after this interruption, starting with an indictment of Ayyubid disunity, dissolution, and disregard for the Arab subject population. Next to be condemned are the barbarous and foreign military slaves whose coup in Cairo in 648/1250 led to the formation of the Mamluk Sultanate. Mongol and Crusader villains also play parts in this sweeping historical narrative of the victimization of the Arab inhabitants of Bilād al-Shām at the hands of tyrants and armies leading up to their climactic manipulation, betrayal, and near annihilation at the hands of Tamerlane and his minions. The final half of the book, dedicated to a detailed account of Tamerlane′s campaign in Syria, unfolds as a string of excerpts from the major contemporary chronicles without rigorous documentation or original analysis. The extent to which al-Madanī engages in source criticism may be illustrated by the handful of statements contrasting subject matter covered by Tamerlane′s Persian court biographer, Sharaf al-Dīn ʻAlī al-Yazdī, with that covered in the Arabic histories of Ibn ʻArabshāh, al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Taghrībirdī, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, Ibn Iyās, and others. The book ends abruptly with Tamerlane′s departure from Bilād al-Shām, Syrian captives in tow, leaving behind a devastated human and infrastructural landscape. Al-Madanī does not provide his readers with a glimpse of the efforts at social, political, and economic reconstruction over the next decade or any insight into the repercussions of Tamerlane′s invasion for the last century of Mamluk rule.

One of the more provocative aspects of *Tīmūrlank fī Dimashq* is the short preface in which al-Madanī sets out his ideological agenda (pp. 5–9). He blames Tamerlane′s successful victimization of Syria on Arab disunity and Islamic sectarianism within the Arab population. He portrays the Ayyubids, Mamluks, Crusaders, and Mongols as ethnic strangers whose natural inclination was to prioritize their own aggrandizement at the cost of the well-being of the indigenous Arab inhabitants of Bilād al-Shām. If the Arabs could only have united against these foreign rulers and armies, he implies, they would not have suffered as much during this period. Al-Madanī argues that this is a lesson that modern Arabs need to learn as they are still successfully manipulated, betrayed, divided, and conquered by outsiders, most notably Israel, today. Although al-Madanī does not apply this parallelism explicitly in the rest of the book, overtones of the ethnic determinism suggested by this preface resonate throughout. Politics aside, such a presentist

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attitude towards historiography combined with an uncritical approach to the sources and a sloppy scholarly apparatus make Sulaymān al-Madanī´s *Tīmūrlank fī Dimashq* a disappointing contribution to the field of Mamluk studies.

ARNOUD VROLIJK, *Bringing a Laugh to a Scowling Face. A Study and Critical Edition of the "Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-Muḍḥik al-'Abūs" by 'Alī Ibn Sūdūn al-Bašbuġāwī (Cairo 801/1407–Damascus 868/1464)* (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1998). Pp. xiv, 203 (Engl.) + iv, 178 (Arab.).

'ALĪ IBN SŪDŪN AL-YASHBAGHĀWĪ, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-Muḍḥik al-'Abūs,* edited by Maḥmūd Sālim (Damascus: Dār Sa'd al-Dīn, 1421/2001). Pp. 352.

REVIEWED BY THOMAS BAUER, Universität Münster

The edition of Ibn Sūdūn´s *Nuzhah* will change our understanding of Mamluk literature more deeply than would the edition of many other literary texts of this period. This work provides insight into a type of literature that was until now only peripherally known, but must have been rather omnipresent in the salons, gatherings, and streets of Mamluk and Ottoman Egypt and Syria. Besides representing a poorly-known current of Arabic literature, Ibn Sūdūn´s poetry and prose display a very distinct personal character and prove again that in the Mamluk empire men of letters produced a lot of original and innovative works.

Due to its relevance to many fields, Ibn Sūdūn´s work has already attracted the interest of Arabists more than once,[1] though they had to rely on manuscripts or a Cairo lithograph from 1280/1863. Now within just three years, two editions of Ibn Sūdūn´s *Nuzhah* have appeared. The Beirut edition is a serious attempt by an obviously able and diligent editor. But, unfortunately, he neither knew of Vrolijk´s enterprise, nor did he use any manuscript that was not available in Syrian libraries, limiting himself to three manuscripts in Damascus and the lithograph. Whereas three manuscripts may be a reasonable basis for some other texts, this is not the case with Ibn Sūdūn´s *Nuzhah,* which was obviously an extremely popular text right up to the eighteenth century. Vrolijk has traced 38 manuscripts, 33 of which he was able to study either on the spot or in a microfilm copy. The most important

[1]Vrolijk´s edition provides a good bibliography. Not included is van Gelder´s chapter on Ibn Sūdūn and food, cf. Geert Jan van Gelder, *Of Dishes and Discourse: Classical Arabic Literary Representations of Food* (Richmond, 2000), 90–96. A detailed review of Vrolijk´s edition by Everett K. Rowson was published in *Edebiyât* 12 (2001): 128–38.

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result was that he detected two autograph copies written by Ibn Sūdūn himself, which he made, of course, the basis of his edition. In addition he used two other manuscripts close to the autograph tradition to help in cases in which the autographs proved defective. Since many of Ibn Sūdūn´s texts are in colloquial Arabic for which no standard orthography existed, the author´s own orthography (including his usage of vowel signs) is of primary importance, especially since the text provides interesting material for dialectologists. Therefore, the autograph tradition is even more important in the case of Ibn Sūdūn than in the case of texts in pure classical Arabic. Due to this textual basis of Vrolijk´s edition, Maḥmūd Sālim´s edition is deprived of much practical significance. At least, it presents a textual tradition slightly different from the autograph tradition which is not completely devoid of interest, and Sālim also adds several notes which may help in understanding Ibn Sūdūn´s often rather difficult text. Its main value, however, lies in the fact that a text like the *Nuzhah* has been published in the Arab world at all. For too long modern Arab intellectuals have been rather embarrassed by the existence of a humorous literary tradition instead of appreciating it. Now Maḥmūd Sālim´s edition will certainly help make Ibn Sūdūn´s texts more widely known in the Arab world. It is predictable that Vrolijk´s edition will not fulfill this task, because it will probably not appear in bookshops in Arab countries, and because Vrolijk uses Latin abbreviations in his apparatus which might deter Arabic readers. I can see no reason for sticking to this antiquated tradition and would favor a purely Arabic apparatus. In any case, Vrolijk´s diligent and impeccable edition remains the authoritative one. His edition is also accompanied by a thorough, profound, and well-written study of Ibn Sūdūn, which provides a solid starting point for further studies.

As far as the content of the *Nuzhah* is concerned, I will limit myself here to a few words and refer to Vrolijk´s introduction, Rowson´s review, and van Gelder´s study mentioned in note 1. Ibn Sūdūn´s book is divided into two sections, a smaller one on ″serious topics″ *(jidd),* comprising mainly poems in praise of the prophet and *ghazal,* and a second one, more than three times as long, on ″humorous topics″ *(hazl).* This second section is subdivided into five subsections, mainly on formal criteria. It contains texts both in the classical language as well as in colloquial. Both speech forms are utilized in *qaṣīd* poetry, in strophic poetry *(muwashshaḥ* and *zajal),* and in rhymed and unrhymed prose (*maqāmāt* and other prose texts). Vrolijk is certainly right to consider some of the prose texts as dramatic sketches (pp. 36–38). Food and hashish are recurrent themes, but a wide range of other topics is also covered and makes Ibn Sūdūn´s text an extraordinarily important source for the study of material culture in late Mamluk Egypt. Ibn Sūdūn´s usage of the Egyptian dialect (studied by Vrolijk, pp. 137–59) and his interest in foreign languages (some poems contain Turkish and Persian elements)

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and strange dialects (a man from Baghdad makes his appearance, who speaks a dialect that can be clearly identified as *qeltu* Arabic of an Anatolian type) are also not devoid of interest. For comparative literature it will be especially interesting to analyze the specific kind of humor displayed by Ibn Sūdūn. Maḥmūd Sālim feels himself reminded of surrealism (p. 5), while I, myself, rather think of the absurd theatre of Ionesco, and Vrolijk draws a parallel to Monty Python (p. 37).

The author of this fascinating text is ʻAlī ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbughāwī (this, not al-Yashbaghāwī as is stated in al-Sakhāwī´s *Ḍaw',* seems to be the right *nisbah;* it is discussed in Vrolijk, p. 3). He was born in Cairo (810/1407) and died in Damascus (868/1464). It is probable that his father, Sūdūn, was a mamluk of Circassian origin. ʻAlī therefore belonged to the group of the *awlād al-nās* which played an important role in the intellectual life of the Mamluk empire, though few of them completed the requisite scholarly training that would have allowed them to become fully accepted members of the established ulama. The same seems to hold true for Ibn Sūdūn. Vrolijk, who painstakingly traces Ibn Sūdūn´s biography, overestimates Ibn Sūdūn´s scholarly training. The memorizing of a Hanafi textbook and of a bit of hadith,[2] mathematics, and metrics is not really a ″first class education,″ and if Vrolijk´s assumption is right that Ibn Sūdūn took part in military campaigns as a member of the *halqah,* one may doubt even more that a ″promising career″ (p. 9) as a scholar lay ahead of him, which was only thwarted by the economic conditions of the time. Instead, I would suggest that Ibn Sūdūn was one of the hundreds or even thousands of urban people who had acquired some sort of academic training without ever achieving a scholarly proficiency sufficient to enter the ranks of the great ulama.[3] If these people did not earn their livings as craftsmen or traders, they could only hope for unprestigious and poorly paid *mansib*s such as the post of muezzin or of imam in one of the smaller madrasahs. And this is exactly the position to which Ibn Sūdūn did rise. That he could ever have aspired to a more brilliant scholarly career remains very doubtful.

Altogether, it seems that Ibn Sūdūn belonged to a layer of Mamluk society which was of enormous importance for its culture. It is the partially educated, urban middle class, consisting of people such as craftsmen, traders, and minor

[2]The phrase ″sami‘a ‘alá al-Wāsiṭī al-musalsal wa-baqīyat masmū‘ih″ (al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi‘* [Cairo, n.d.], 5:229) does not refer to a philological textbook, as Vrolijk assumes (p. 8), but means that al-Wāsiṭī passed on to Ibn Sūdūn the traditions that were transmitted to him in the *musalsal* way as well as his other orally transmitted traditions. Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Wāsiṭī (745–836) was ″discovered″ in the year 826 as a mine for hadith traditions from people long dead, thus providing hadiths with comparatively short *isnād*s (al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw',* 2:106–7).

[3]Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, 1992), 193–216. Berkey mentions ″minor scholars″ explicitly on pp. 198 and 204.

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ulama. The last group especially seems to have had a considerable proportion of *awlād al-nās* among its ranks. This group left behind more documents than is generally recognized, and these documents are of particular interest, since they allow us to see more deeply into the experiences, values, and attitudes of the people underneath the ″turbaned elite,″ though we must always be aware of the fact that even through them we have not arrived at the ″ordinary people,″ the urban lower classes and the peasants. Quite a lot of poetry from members of this social group has come down to us. Among scattered poems by craftsmen like ʻAyn Baṣal al-Ḥā'ik and al-Ḥammāmī (who was the manager of a bath), the entire *dīwān* of the architect Ibrāhīm al-Miʻmār is preserved in several manuscripts.[4] As far as I can see, al-Miʻmār is the figure most closely resembling Ibn Sūdūn, though he lacks the ″dramatic″ side of Ibn Sūdūn, his love of the absurd, and his keenness for honey, sugar, and *kunāfah*. Instead, he is more satirical, more critical of social conditions, less pious, and more interested in erotica than in bananas. Al-Miʻmār is far more traditional in form, but less proficient in *fuṣḥá*. With Ibn Sūdūn he shares a skill in dialect poetry, an addiction to the topic of hashish (not necessarily to hashish itself, since al-Miʻmār seems to have preferred wine), and the fact that both look at the world from a middle- or lower-class perspective. A comparison of these authors would be of great interest.

Anthologies are another important source for the middle class, its interests and intellectual horizons. The Mamluk period was, in fact, the golden age of the anthology. More than a hundred of them are preserved in the libraries, but this source for Mamluk culture and society still remains untapped. An anthology such as the *Kanz al-Madfūn,* by a certain Yūnus al-Mālikī, collects material destined for the education, edification, and entertainment of this group of people.[5] As Vrolijk shows (pp. 49–57), Ibn Sūdūn was also the author of such an anthology (besides the fact that the *Nuzhah* is an anthology itself, comprising a selection of Ibn Sūdūn′s own works), in which—small wonder—Ibrāhīm al-Miʻmār figures prominently (p. 52). Further studies are needed to determine to which type of anthology this book belongs. I would like, however, to note that it is absolutely

[4]Thomas Bauer, ″Ibrāhīm al-Miʻmār: Ein dichtender Handwerker aus Ägyptens Mamlukenzeit,″ *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 152 (2002): 63–93 (cf. p. 67, note 14, on ʻAyn Baṣal al-Ḥā'ik); idem, ″Die Leiden eines ägyptischen Müllers: Die Mühlen-Maqāme des Ibrāhīm al-Miʻmār (st. 749/1348),″ in A. Blöbaum et al., eds., *Ägypten Münster: Kulturwissenschaftliche Studien zu Ägypten, den Vorderen Orient und verwandten Gebieten (Festschrift Erhart Graefe)* (Wiesbaden, 2003), 1–16. A poem on his bath by al-Ḥammāmī and a *zajal* on the Nile festival by al-Miʻmār will be presented by Otfried Weintritt and myself in the Festschrift Heinz Grotzfeld (to appear 2003).

[5]Thomas Bauer, ″Literarische Anthologien der Mamlukenzeit,″ in S. Conermann and A. Pistor-Hatam, eds., *Die Mamluken: Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur im Gedenken an Ulrich Haarmann (1942–1999)* (Hamburg, 2002). The *Kanz* was composed probably around 770–90.

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unremarkable that, as Vrolijk states (p. 52), ″classical″ authors are not represented in it. In fact, the vast majority of Mamluk anthologies focus on material from Ayyubid and Mamluk times. The reason for this is not that they reflect a ″secondary tradition″ (p. 54). Ibn Nubātah, the author most often quoted in Ibn Sūdūn′s anthology, must have been a ″classical″ author already for Ibn Sūdūn, and he remained a ″classical″ author until the end of pre-modern Arabic literature in the middle of the nineteenth century. Instead, literary anthologies in the Mamluk period are less monuments that preserve the heritage of the past than the reflection of an intense and vivid literary culture. In the Mamluk period, literature was not the domain of a small section of society, but an omnipresent means of communication. Poetry was an everyday commodity for the ulama as well as for the common people (perhaps with the sole exception of the Mamluks themselves). This fostered a great need for poetry that was up to date and *en vogue* and could be imitated or at least quoted whenever necessary. This need was met by the many anthologies of this period. Even the great ulama-poets like Ibn Nubātah and al-Ṣafadī published their work rather in the form of anthologies than in the form of a *dīwān*. Therefore it is not surprising that so many anthologies of this period focus on material that was new and directed at contemporary taste rather than regurgitating a sanctified tradition.[6]

A second characteristic of Mamluk literature is of importance in this context. In the Mamluk era there existed a broad layer of people who were neither fully-fledged ulama nor illiterate yokels but something in between. In other words, social layers were not neatly separated, but there was a continuum ranging between the totally uneducated (who nevertheless may have been acquainted with rather sophisticated oral folk poetry) on the one end and the Ṣafadīs and Ibn Ḥajars on the other end. This in turn led to the fact that what we call ″popular literature″ and ″high literature″ ceased to be two completely different phenomena separated by a broad gap. Instead, there was again a continuum stretching between the *zajal*s sung by the peasants, which never transcended their purely oral existence, and the sophisticated odes by poets like Ibn Nubātah with their many intertextual references to the poetic tradition of past centuries. Ibn Nubātah was popular, as Ibn Sūdūn′s anthology and the *Kanz al-Madfūn* show, also among the urban middle classes, and vernacular poetry by al-Mi‘mār (and certainly also that by Ibn Sūdūn) was highly esteemed among the great ulama. They only seemingly were embarrassed by its ungrammatical features and considered its contents in conflict with their scholarly dignity—but they liked it and read it.[7] Ibn Sūdūn′s work must be seen in this context. It is not popular literature in the sense that it is the pure voice of the

[6]Anthologies of this kind existed nevertheless. I mention only Ibn Nubātah′s *Maṭlā‘ al-Fawā’id* and Ibn Ḥijjah′s *Thamarāt al-Awrāq,* cf. ibid.

[7]Bauer, ″Ibrāhīm al-Mi‘mār,″ 69–72.

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common people, nor is it ″high″ literature. Instead, it reflects the literary taste of the urban (especially Cairene), semi-educated middle classes among which Ibn Sūdūn might have found his main public. There is little doubt, however, that his poems and *maqāmāh*s were esteemed by the high-brow ulama as well as by members of the lower classes. This explains the fact that at least 38 manuscripts of the *Nuzhah* have survived until the present day.

Regardless of the work that has been done in the fields of history and economics, I suggest that the study of literature, especially of texts produced by and/or addressed to members of its middle classes, will help considerably in enhancing our knowledge of the Mamluk period. The edition of Ibn Sūdūn′s *Nuzhah* is a great step in this direction. And, by the way, did I already mention that Ibn Sūdūn′s book provides for extremely entertaining and amusing reading?

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