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## 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-Zāhir*, read to him by its author, the historian and senior chancery official Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir. 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 shari‘ah.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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 ‘Alī al-Uṣṭādār, provided his Jamālī madrasah with a large collection of books purchased from the royal citadel. The sultans al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh and al-Zāhir 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

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<sup>1</sup>Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawā‘iz wa-al-l‘tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār* (Bulaq, 1853–54), 2:213–14.

<sup>2</sup>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.<sup>3</sup> To mark the restoration of the mosque of al-Ḥākīm 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> The wealthy vizier Amir Badr al-Dīn Baydarā similarly amassed a great library. According to Ibn al-Ṣuqā‘ī, Baydarā liked *adab* and singing.<sup>6</sup>

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 Maṣūri 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.

<sup>3</sup>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 Bibliothèques arabes publiques en Mésopotamie, en Syrie et en Egypte au moyen âge* (Damascus, 1967); Mohammed Makki Sibai, *Mosque Libraries: an Historical Study* (London, 1987).

<sup>4</sup>Donald Little, “Religion under the Mamluks,” *Muslim World* 73 (1983): 170.

<sup>5</sup>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.

<sup>6</sup>Faḍl Allāh ibn Abī al-Fakhr al-Suqā‘ī, *Tālī Kitāb Wafayāt al-A‘yān*, ed. Jacqueline Sublet (Damascus, 1974), 75.



Some amirs seem to have identified strongly with Arabic culture. Sanjar al-Dawādār wrote poetry. Baybars al-Manṣūrī wrote history. Ṭaybughā al-Ashrafi wrote a treatise on archery. The brutal amir Uzdampur al-Kāshif had memorized al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqamāt*, as well as much Arabic poetry. Quite a few amirs and mamluks interested themselves in Hanafī or Shafī'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.<sup>7</sup>

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 Khwarizmiyan 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

<sup>7</sup>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.



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-salṭānah* 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. Bärkâ 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.<sup>8</sup> 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 Hanafī *madhhab*, founded a Hanafī madrasah that became a magnet for *fuqahā'* from all over the Turkish-speaking world.<sup>9</sup> Ibn 'Arabshāh's and al-'Aynī's knowledge of Turkish almost certainly helped bring them to the favor of the Mamluks.<sup>10</sup>

The sultan al-Zāhir Tātār (r. 824/1421), besides studying Hanafī 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*),

<sup>8</sup>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.

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

<sup>10</sup>Annemarie Schimmel, "Some Glimpses of the Religious Life During the Later Mamluk Period," *Islamic Studies* 7 (1965): 356–57.



arts, and literature.<sup>11</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī's obituary of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh states that that sultan was fond of poetry, though what kind is not stated.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup>

The brutal Amir Yashbak min Maḥdī (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 Qāyṭbāy'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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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-Wāqīdī's *Futūḥ al-Shām* into Turkish for Yashbak.<sup>16</sup> Al-Sakhāwī, who praised Yashbak's generosity to *fuqarā'*, hajjis, and

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 6:428.

<sup>13</sup> Berkey, "Silver Threads."

<sup>14</sup> Rosamond J. Mitchell, *John Tiptoft, 1427–70* (London, 1938).

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

<sup>16</sup> On Yashbak's political and literary career, see Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd ibn Khalīl Ibn Ajā, *Tārīkh al-Amīr Yashbak al-Zāhirī*, 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



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 "is a thing of the past. Nothing now remains but stupidity, boorishness, and an interest in worldly trifles."<sup>17</sup> Yashbak's master, the sultan al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy (r. 872–901/1468–96), shared his henchman's literary interests. He composed Turkish *ghazals*, as well as Arabic religious poetry and *muwashshaḥs*, and he composed Sufi *awrād* and *adhkār* in Arabic. Muḥammad ibn Qāyṭbāy 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, Qāyṭbāy.<sup>18</sup>

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-Ummiyah 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.<sup>19</sup>

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.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> 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: Bulḡat al-Muštaq fī Luḡat at-Turk wa-l-Qiḡzaq* (Warsaw, 1958); Bodrogligeti, "Collection of Turkish Poems"; Flemming, "Zum Stand der Mamluk-Türkischen Forschung."

<sup>19</sup> Geoffrey Tatum, "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.



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.<sup>20</sup> 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 *dīwāns*. 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 'Abd al-Zāhir, 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād, Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, Ibn al-Mukarram, and Ibn Abī Ḥajalah were among the chancery men who wrote chronicles celebrating the achievements of ruling sultans.<sup>21</sup> In the case of Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, his chronicles, especially the one devoted to the deeds of Qalāwūn, seem to have largely served as a framing device for Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir's own drafts of diplomatic pieces and occasional displays of fine prose.<sup>22</sup> (The elaborate official drafts produced earlier in the Ayyubid period by such figures as al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil and 'Imād 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 *Maṭāli' 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 'Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī and al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil served as prose models for writers in the service of the Mamluk *inshā'*.

<sup>20</sup>Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech."

<sup>21</sup>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.

<sup>22</sup>P. M. Holt, "Three Biographies of al-Zāhir Baybars," in *Medieval Historical Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds*, ed. D. O. Morgan (London, 1982), 19–29.



The chancery official Muḥammad ibn Manzūr'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 Manzūr, 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-'Arab*. 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.<sup>23</sup>

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-Aḥṣār fī Mamālik al-Amṣār*, by Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī (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-Ta'rīf bi-al-Muṣṭalaḥ al-Sharīf* would have been more useful in the latter respect.) Like so many authors in this period, al-'Umarī was a polygraph, and he wrote a history of his family of distinguished jurists, as well as various other shorter works, including poems.<sup>24</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Qalqashandī (756–821/1335–1418) compiled the *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā fī Sinā'at al-Inshā'*, 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.<sup>25</sup> 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

<sup>23</sup>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.

<sup>24</sup>Etienne Quatremère, "Notices de l'ouvrage intitulé Masālek-el-absār," *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du roi* 13 (1838): 151–384.

<sup>25</sup>Björkman, *Beiträge*; Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "Al-Qalqashandī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 4:509–11.





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-Jāhīz 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 *zarīf* (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 qadī and an alchemist) embraced fairly self-conscious roles as *zurafā'*. In the following generation, Ibn 'Afīf al-Tilimsānī, the composer of elegant poetry about wine and love, was also known as al-Shābb al-Zarīf (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-Suyūfī's later treatise on women, *Al-Mustazraf*, 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 *zarīf*. The code of the *zarīf* was not confined to the written page and, for example, the fifteenth-century Amir Jānibak al-Ashrafī dressed and behaved like a *zarīf*.<sup>26</sup> The personnel and manners of the *zurafā'* overlapped somewhat with those of the gay community. Al-Tifāshī 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.<sup>27</sup>

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-Tifāshī (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

<sup>26</sup>On the persistence (or was it a revival?) of the culture of the *zarīf*, see Mhammaed Ferid Ghazi, "Un group sociale: 'Les Raffinés' (*zurafā'*)," *Studia Islamica* 1 (1959): 59.

<sup>27</sup>Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Tifāshī, *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.



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.<sup>28</sup> He was one of several well-known North African immigrants who found a patron in the amir Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Yaḡhmūr (d. 663/1265). Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī Ibn Sa‘īd al-Maghribī (d. 673/1274), the poet, anthologist, and geographer, was another. Indeed Ibn Yaḡhmūr’s salon, where poets used to compete with one another at capping lines, was known as *kāhf al-maghāribah* (or Cave of the Maghribis).<sup>29</sup> Ibn Yaḡhmūr 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 Manzūr, Ibn Abī Ḥajalah, and Ibn Khaldūn.) The strong interest of Egyptian and Syrian poets in the *muwashshah* 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.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup>

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

<sup>28</sup>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 ‘Abbās’s preface to al-Tīfāshī (as abridged by Ibn Manzūr), *Surūr al-Nafs bi-Madārik al-Ḥawāss al-Khams* (Beirut, 1980).

<sup>29</sup>Jean-Claude Garcin, *Un Centre musulman de la Haute-Égypte médiévale, Qūṣ* (Cairo, 1976), 242 n.

<sup>30</sup>On that poetry, see in particular Muḥammad Zaghlūl Sallām, *Al-Adab fī al-‘Aṣr al-Mamlūkī*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1971); Homerin, “Reflections on Poetry,” 63–85.

<sup>31</sup>Edward Henry Palmer, *Poetical Works of Behā-ed-Dīn Zoheir, of Egypt* (Cambridge, 1877); D. M. Dunlop, *Arab Civilization 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.



Ḥamāh, and al-Şafadī introduced him to the sultan al-Nāşir Muḥammad in Egypt. Şafī 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 *qaşīdahs* and *muwashshaḥs*. 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 *Qaşīdah al-Şāsānīyah*, 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).<sup>32</sup> (On the Mamluk preservation of the old literary cult of rogues, beggars, and freeloaders see below).

Şafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī also produced a panegyric *qaşīdah* in honor of the Prophet, *Al-Badī'īyah al-Nabawīyah*. This was modeled on an earlier *qaşīdah*, the *Burdah* of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Būşīrī (608–ca. 694/1212–ca. 1294). Al-Būşīrī 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.<sup>33</sup> Şafī 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).<sup>34</sup>

Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Nubātah (686–768/1287–1366) was, like Şafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, a poet who found patronage at the puppet court of the Ayyubids of Ḥamāh. His edition of al-Qādī 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-Nāşir Ḥasan, it is hard not to feel that Ibn Nubātah's growing interest in Sufism and his production of *zuhdīyāt*

<sup>32</sup>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.

<sup>33</sup>Nicholson, *Literary History*, 326–7; Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "Al-Būşīrī," *El<sup>2</sup> Supplement*, 158–59.

<sup>34</sup>See in this issue Th. Emil Homerin, "Living Love: The Mystical Writings of ‘Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah (d. 922/1516)."



(poetry of asceticism) indirectly at least reflected his straitened circumstances. He died in poverty.<sup>35</sup>

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 *qaṣīdahs* 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 *Sukcardān 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.<sup>36</sup>

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

<sup>35</sup>Umar Mūsā 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."

<sup>36</sup>Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā Ibn Abī Ḥajalah, *Kitāb Sukcardān 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.



*badi'* 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.<sup>37</sup> 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, *Marāṭī' 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 *muwashshah* anthology, that drew heavily on Ibn Sanā' al-Mulk and al-Ṣafadī.<sup>38</sup>

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 *muwashshah*, 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

<sup>37</sup>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.

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



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 'Alā' al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḡhulṭāy ibn Qilīj al-Ḥanafī (ca. 690–762/ca. 1291–1361), who was a Hanafī professor and specialist in hadith, *nasab* (genealogy), and biography. His *Al-Wāḍiḥ al-Mubīn fī Dhikr Man Ustushhida min Muḡhibbīn* (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.<sup>39</sup> 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 'Alā' al-Dīn ibn 'Alī al-Ghuzūlī (d. 815/1412), a citizen of Damascus, in his *Maṭāli' al-Budūr fī Manāzil al-Surūr* (Risings of full moons regarding the pleasures of households). The *Maṭāli'* 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-Ṣāḡib 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 *zarīf*, 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 *nudamā'* in the evenings. The stories date from Abbasid times or even earlier.<sup>40</sup>

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 Mustazraf*, compiled by the Egyptian Bahā' al-Dīn Muḡammad ibn Aḡmad 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

<sup>39</sup>GAL, 2:48; *ibid.*, S2:47–48; Sallām, *Al-Adab*, 1:127; Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love*, 33–34, 80.

<sup>40</sup>'Alā' al-Dīn ibn 'Alī al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāli' al-Budūr fī Manāzil al-Surūr*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1882–83); GAL, 2:55; *GAL*, S2:55; Sallām, *Al-Adab*, 2:32–34.



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.<sup>41</sup>

By contrast with al-Ibshīhī's well-known collection, the *Fakihāt al-Khulafā' wa-Mafakihāt al-Zurafā'* 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-nāmāh* 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'rif al-Tāhir* 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.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup>Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ibshīhī, *Al-Mustatraf fī Kull Fann Mustatraf*, 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-Mustatraf in 15th–17th Century Manuscripts* (Helsinki, 1995).

<sup>42</sup>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-Zurafā')*, 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*<sup>2</sup>, 3:711–12; Robert Irwin, "What the Partridge Told the Eagle: A Neglected Source on Chinggis Khan and the Early



Ibn ‘Arabshāh has suffered from being treated by modern scholars as merely a historian. But the same is true of Badr al-Dīn al-‘Aynī (762–855/1361–1451) and his collection of entertaining stories about various classes of people, the *Majmū‘ Mushtamil ‘alā Hikāyāt wa-Ghayrihā*, has received even less attention than the *Fakihāt*.<sup>43</sup> His current reputation is based primarily on his authorship of the chronicle *‘Iqd 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-Zāhir*, addressed to the sultans al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh and al-Zāhir 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.<sup>44</sup> Much of al-‘Aynī’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, *‘Umdat 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 Waqī‘at 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.<sup>45</sup>

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.<sup>46</sup> Ibn Iyās similarly

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

<sup>43</sup>Hellmut Ritter, “Arabische Handschriften,” *Oriens* 2 (1949): 285–87. On al-‘Aynī in general, see William Marcais, “Al-‘Aynī,” *EF*<sup>2</sup>, 1: 790–91; Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 69–71; Anne F. Broadbridge, “Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt: al-‘Aynī, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī,” *MSR* 3 (1999): 85–107.

<sup>44</sup>Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad Al-‘Aynī, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Zāhir 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.

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

<sup>46</sup>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*





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.<sup>47</sup>) Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ṣaṣrā’s late fourteenth-century chronicle of Damascus was peppered with fables, proverbs, and moralizing advice.<sup>48</sup> 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 Mūsā 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.<sup>49</sup> 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.

<sup>47</sup>Li Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography: Al-Yūnīnī’s Dhayl Mir’āt al-Zamān*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1998), 1, esp. 87–94.

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

<sup>49</sup>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.



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.<sup>50</sup>

Al-Şafadī 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-Suyūfī 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.<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup>

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 *fushḥā* 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

<sup>50</sup>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 Geheimpwissenschaften*, 38–39.

<sup>51</sup>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.

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



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, *qaṣīdahs* and *muwashshahs*, 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-Dā’i’ 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 *maqāmahs*. 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.<sup>53</sup>

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

<sup>53</sup>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*.



Muḥammad ibn Mawlāhum al-Khayālī, the author of two *maqāmahs* on tradesmen.<sup>54</sup> An Ibn Mawlāhum, as well as Ibn Dāniyāl and the disreputable twelfth-century Spanish poet Ibn Quzmān, is saluted as an esteemed predecessor by ‘Alī al-Baghdādī in the preface to his *Kitāb al-Zahr al-Anīq fī Lubūs wa-al-Ta‘nīq* (The Book of delicate flowers regarding the kiss and the embrace). ‘Alī 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.<sup>55</sup>

Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Şafadī (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-Şafadī wrote *Law‘at 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-Şafadī 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-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt* (The Abundant book on dates of death) is a comprehensive biographical dictionary of Muslim personalities, whereas *A‘yān al-‘Aşr* (Leading figures of the age) was restricted to contemporaries. Al-Şafadī’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).<sup>56</sup>

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 ‘Alī 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

<sup>54</sup>Moreh, *Live Theatre*, 109.

<sup>55</sup>Robert Irwin, “‘Alī al-Baghdādī and the Joy of Mamluk Sex,” in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt (c. 950–1800)*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden, 2001), 45–57.

<sup>56</sup>Franz Rosenthal, “Al-Şafadī,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 8:759–60; Donald P. Little, “Al-Şafadī 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.



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 *qaṣīdahs*, trumped-up stories, some (silly) *muwashshaḥs*, 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 *zurafā’*, who fought to get hold of copies of it.<sup>57</sup>

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.<sup>58</sup> 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.<sup>59</sup> The *Sīrat al-Zāhir*, devoted to the legendary exploits of the

<sup>57</sup>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-Bašbuḡāwī* (Leiden, 1998).

<sup>58</sup>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).

<sup>59</sup>*The Adventures of ‘Antar*, trans. H. T. Norris (Warminster, 1980); *The Adventures of Sayf Ben Dhī Yazan: An Arab Folk Epic*, trans. Lena Jayussi (Bloomington, Ind., 1995); Rudi Paret, *Sīrat*



Mamluk sultan al-Zāhir 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.<sup>60</sup> (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.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, as Franz Rosenthal has observed, it "was through these novels that history filtered deep down into the hearts of the people."<sup>62</sup>

The fantasies purveyed in these popular anonymous *sīrahs* was not so very different from the romances dealing with the origins of Islam, the exploits of 'Alī, and the early Islamic conquests that were attributed to a certain Abū Ḥasan Aḥmad al-Bakrī al-Wā'iz. It seems likely, however, that attribution to "al-Bakrī" denoted a literary genre, rather than the real authorship of an actual individual.<sup>63</sup> 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 'Antar* and the books by the *ahl al-mujūn* (the pornographers)."<sup>64</sup> 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 'Antar.<sup>65</sup> 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 'Antar ibn Shaddād* and the popular *sīra*," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 15 (1984): 19–44; M. C. Lyons, *The Arabian Epic*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1995).

<sup>60</sup>See in this issue Thomas Herzog, "The First Layer of the *Sīrat Baybars*: Popular Romance and Political Propaganda."

<sup>61</sup>M. C. Lyons, "The *Sīrat* of Baybars", in *Orientalia Hispanica: Sive Studia F. M. Pareja Octogenario dictata* (Leiden, 1974), 1: 490–503; idem, *Arabian Epic*.

<sup>62</sup>Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 186.

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

<sup>64</sup>Tāj al-Dīn 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn 'Alī al-Subkī, *Kitāb Mu'īd al-Ni'am wa-Mubīd al-Niqam*, ed. David Myhrman (London, 1908), 51/186.

<sup>65</sup>Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥājj al-'Abdarī, *Kitāb al-Madkhal ilā Tanmiyat al-A'māl bi-Taḥsīn al-Niyāt* (Cairo, 1320/ 1902–3), 3:131.



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 ‘Arabī’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.<sup>66</sup>

Ibn Taymīyah’s disciple Shams al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah (691–751/1292–1350) was a prolific writer on the Quran, the shari‘ah, 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.<sup>67</sup> Ibn

<sup>66</sup>The literature on Ibn Taymīyah is vast. See especially Henri Laoust, *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Takī-d-Dīn Ahmad b. Taimīya* (Cairo, 1930); Muhammad Umar Memon, *Ibn Taimīya’s Struggle Against Popular Religion: with an Annotated Translation of His Kitāb Iqtīdā’ aṣ-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaquīm* (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 ‘Arabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany, 1999), 87–111.

<sup>67</sup>Henri Laoust, “Ibn Qayyim al-Djawziyya,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 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



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.<sup>68</sup>

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 *bidaʿ* by the Maliki jurist Abū ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Ḥājj al-ʿAbdarī (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.<sup>69</sup> Idrīs ibn Baydakīn al-Turkumānī also produced a treatise, the *Kitāb al-Lumaʿ fī al-Ḥawādith wa-al-Bidaʿ*, 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.<sup>70</sup> 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 Muʿīd al-Niʿam 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.

<sup>68</sup>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.

<sup>69</sup>Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*; Langner, *Untersuchungen*, Verfasserindex, s.v. “Ibn al-Ḥağğ”; Huda Lutfi, “Manners and Customs of Fourteenth-Century Cairene Women: Female Anarchy versus Male Sharʿi 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 *bidʿah*, the attribution of such occult works as the *Shumūs al-Anwār* to him must surely be incorrect.

<sup>70</sup>Idrīs ibn Baydakīn al-Turkumānī, *Kitāb al-Lumaʿ fī al-Ḥawādith wa-al-Bidaʿ*, ed. Ṣubḥī Labīb (Cairo, 1986); Ṣubḥī Labīb, “The Problem of *Bidaʿ* 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.)





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. 'Abd Allāh ibn Asad al-Yāfi'ī (ca. 700–ca. 768/1299–1367) compiled *Rawḍ al-Riyāḥīn fī Hikāyāt 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 'Aṭā Allāh (d. 709/1309) produced collections of spiritual aphorisms and sermons. Both al-Yāfi'ī and Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh were implacable opponents of Ibn Taymīyah.<sup>71</sup> 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 'Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ (576–632/1181–1235) and Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī (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-'Arabī and Ibn al-Fāriḍ avoided official condemnation, and Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verses in the *badī'* manner were widely imitated by poets of the Mamluk age.<sup>72</sup> 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-Biqā'ī ibn 'Umar (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-Biqā'ī 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.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup>On Sufism in the Mamluk period, see Annemarie Schimmel, "Sufismus und Heiligverehrung 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).

<sup>72</sup>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 'Arabī*, 49–140, 201–23; Michael Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1982), 160–65.

<sup>73</sup>Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love*, 41–42; Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint*, 62–75; Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabī*, 209–23; Li Guo, "Al-Biqā'ī's Chronicle: A Fifteenth Century Learned Man's Reflection on His Time and World," in Kennedy, *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt*, 121–48.



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-Suyūfī and al-Sakhāwī feuded.<sup>74</sup> 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 *muwashshahs*. 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.<sup>75</sup>

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'iz 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.<sup>76</sup> Al-Maqrīzī's

<sup>74</sup>On some of these feuds, see Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry."

<sup>75</sup>Franz Rosenthal, "Ibn Ḥajar," *EF*<sup>2</sup>, 3:776–78; Aḥmad Āftāb Raḥmānī, "The Life and Works of Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī," *Islamic Culture* 45 (1971): 203–12.

<sup>76</sup>The literature on al-Maqrīzī is vast, but see, for a general orientation, Franz Rosenthal, "Al-Maqrīzī," *EF*<sup>2</sup>, 6:193–94 and, on one aspect of al-Maqrīzī's literary output, Aḥmad al-Ghawaby,



rival Abū al-Maḥāsīn 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.<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup>

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-Zāhir 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

<sup>76</sup> "Al-Maqrīzī as a Poet," *Minbar al-Islām* 2 (1962): 28–30.

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

<sup>78</sup> 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 Suyūṭi," *Annales Islamologiques* 7 (1967): 33–91.



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.<sup>79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup> 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

<sup>79</sup>Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 8:211.

<sup>80</sup>Flemming, "Šerīf"; Atıl, *Renaissance of Islam*, 264–65; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Sultan al-Ghawrī and the Arts," *MSR* 6 (2002): 77.

<sup>81</sup>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.



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.<sup>82</sup> 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."<sup>83</sup> 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."<sup>84</sup> 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.

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<sup>82</sup>See in this issue Bauer, "Communication and Emotion."

<sup>83</sup>Nicholson, *A Literary History*, 448.

<sup>84</sup>Hamilton Gibb, *Arabic Literature: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1962), 142.

