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An Unpublished Anthology of the Mamluk Period on Generosity and Generous Men

Scholars are aware that the amount of unpublished—and sometimes unknown—works of Arabic literature is sizeable indeed. As Thomas Bauer recently emphasized, the Mamluk period in particular, with its flourishing cultural life, is still awaiting a complete evaluation of its literary production.¹ With this article I hope to make a small contribution to the catalogue of this literature.

Among the manuscripts preserved in the library of the University of Liège, which houses still more undiscovered treasures for Arabists, a work entitled “Ḥilyat al-Kuramā’ wa-Bahjat al-Nudamā’” (The ornament of generous people and the joy of the boon-companions)² attracted my attention. The title announced that kind of monothematic *adab* anthology dedicated to a specific theme or to a specific category of persons: in this particular case, the theme of generosity, certainly one of the most valued in the ethics of classical Arabic culture, and the category of generous people.

The sabbatical year I spent at the University of Liège allowed me to see the manuscript and to make a quick study of the text. It turned out that not only is the work still unpublished,³ but more interestingly, that the identity of its author seemed dubious and the text itself was problematic as far as the contents of the chapters and order of the narratives contained therein are concerned. If this title is to be added to the list of the Mamluk anthologies recently compiled by Thomas Bauer,⁴ the issues raised by its authorship and the form of the text preserved in

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A first draft of this article was read at the Sixteenth Colloquium on the History of Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras (10th–15th centuries), University of Ghent (Belgium), 10–12 May 2007.

¹Thomas Bauer, “Mamluk Literature: Misunderstandings and New Approaches,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 9, no. 2 (2005): 105–32.

²The catalogue of the Arabic and Oriental manuscripts of this library is still in progress. I thank Frédéric Bauden, who is preparing it, for having pointed out this title to me.

³It does not appear among the titles mentioned by Reinhard Weipert, *Classical Arabic Philology and Poetry: A Bibliographical Handbook of Important Editions from 1960 to 2000*, Handbook of Oriental Studies 63 (Leiden, 2002), nor in the catalogues of the most important libraries of Middle East studies.

⁴Thomas Bauer, “Literarische Anthologien des Mamlūkenzeit,” in *Die Mamlūken: Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur: Zum Gedenken an Ulrich Haarmann (1942–1999)*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Anja Pistor-Hatam (Hamburg, 2003), 71–122. In this connection Bauer states: “This list can



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DOI: [10.6082/M1T72FMW](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1T72FMW). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1T72FMW>)

DOI of Vol. XIII, no. 1: [10.6082/M1WQ01W6](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1WQ01W6). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/DRTM-CA24> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.

the manuscript tradition call for a further inquiry.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE AUTHOR

The Liège manuscript of “Ḥilyat al-Kuramā’ wa-Bahjat al-Nudamā’,” which I took as my point of departure, made no mention of the author’s name. To learn more, I looked at *Kashf al-Zunūn* of Ḥajjī Khalīfah: the title “Ḥilyat al-Kuramā’” was in fact mentioned. The work was attributed to Ibn Abī al-‘Īd al-Mālīkī.⁵ He is certainly not a well-known author in the history of Arabic literature. I checked in Brockelmann’s *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, and the book was mentioned twice, but—to my surprise—with two different attributions. In fact, Brockelmann mentions ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ ibn Muḥammad al-Shubrāwī al-Mālīkī ibn Abī Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd as the writer who composed this anthology, and he refers to two manuscripts, one preserved in the library of Gotha and the second one in the Princeton University library.⁶ Nevertheless, shortly thereafter, the same title is assigned to a certain al-Shaykh Ishāq,⁷ a person about whom no biographical details are known. Only a manuscript of the work, preserved in Algiers, is mentioned in relation to this quite unknown author. Up to this point I had entertained the following hypothesis: (a) two different works having the same title, but not the same author; or (b) one single work with a double attribution. But the question turned out to be still more confusing when I discovered a third possible attribution for this same title. George Vajda, in a note dated 1952 correcting some errors in the magnum opus of Brockelmann, points to the existence of another manuscript of the “Ḥilyat al-Kuramā’” unaccounted for in *GAL*. This “new” manuscript was preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, but the name of the author given by Vajda was not ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ ibn Muḥammad al-Shubrāwī al-Mālīkī ibn Abī Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd or al-Shaykh Ishāq but instead Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Khālīdī. In any case, George Vajda noticed that “quoi qu’il en soit de la question de l’auteur, les deux notices de Brockelmann doivent être fondues en une seule.”⁸ The matter then seemed a little less nebulous, even if the issue of the authorship remained to be cleared up: apparently there was only one work entitled “Ḥilyat

easily be augmented, but it may provide a first orientation for future efforts. What we need most urgently given the present state of our knowledge are preliminary studies of as many of these anthologies as possible.” (“Mamluk Literature,” 124). This article is then intended as a small contribution to answer the call.

⁵Ḥajjī Khalīfah, *Kashf al-Zunūn fī Asāmī al-Kutub wa-al-Funūn*, ed. Sharaf al-Dīn Yāltaqāyā and Rif‘at Bīlkah al-Kalīsī (Beirut, 1982, reprint of Istanbul, 1941), vol. 1, col. 690.

⁶Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden, 1943–49), S2:905, ch. 2, n. 3.

⁷*GAL*, S2:909, n. 44.

⁸George Vajda, “Notes sur la Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur,” *Journal Asiatique* 240 (1952): 19.



al-Kuramā³,” but once the additional information given by Vajda was taken into account, the possibilities for the name of the author rose to three.

The only way to clarify the issue was to consult all the manuscripts mentioned in the bibliographies and the catalogues of manuscripts in connection with this title. The number of known manuscripts that I could trace amounted to seven, three dated and four undated. Apart from the Liège manuscript, I found two preserved in Princeton, one in Paris, one in Algiers, one in Gotha, and one at al-Azhar library in Cairo.⁹ The perusal of six of these seven (the Algiers copy being inaccessible to me) confirmed that the matter of authorship was rather muddled. Some manuscripts mentioned the name of the writer, but in inconsistent forms, while others left it out.

Four manuscripts mention the author’s name. The first one is Princeton, Yahuda Collection 847, undated (but probably copied in the eleventh/seventeenth century): at fol. 1 a certain al-Sakhāwī is mentioned, but as this was a widespread *nisbah* in Egypt in the Mamluk period, no further light is shed on the matter. The manuscript of Gotha, undated but in any case earlier than 1807 (which is the date of acquisition), at fol. 1a cites ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ ibn Muḥammad al-Shubrāwī al-Mālikī as the author. A further reference in the form “Ibn Abī al-‘Īd al-Mālikī” has been added in a different handwriting, no doubt on the basis of the attribution given by Ḥajjī Khalīfah, who is also mentioned on the same page. An analogous case is that of the manuscript of al-Azhar, recent and defective: at fol. 1b this one also mentions the attribution to Ibn Abī al-‘Īd al-Mālikī, but in this case too we are dealing with a later addition made in a different handwriting, on the basis of the information given by Ḥajjī Khalīfah. Therefore, the al-Azhar manuscript is of no use in solving the problem of authorship.

The last manuscript which mentions the author’s name is the Algiers one. Unfortunately, since it remained inaccessible to me, I had to content myself with the accurate description made by E. Fagnan in his catalogue. Following the details given by the French scholar, the name that is cited in this manuscript (undated, but copied probably in the tenth/sixteenth century) is that of al-Shaykh Ishāq, the one related by Carl Brockelmann.

The second manuscript of Princeton (Garrett 157H) and the one preserved in Liège do not mention the name of the writer and therefore they are of no help in shedding light on the authorship of the book.

A case apart is that of the Paris manuscript, copied in Cairo in 1169/1755. In his note Vajda suggested the authorship of an unknown writer, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Khālidi, which was rather puzzling. A closer examination of the manuscript revealed that this hypothesis was based both on a mistaken reading

⁹Princeton MS Garrett 157H 1112/1700; Paris MS ar 3476(2); Liège MS 5300/1; Algiers MS 1880 (fols. 157–338r); Princeton MS Yahuda 847; Gotha MS Pertsch 1232; Azhar MS Abāza 7034.



and a misinterpretation. In fact the name on the colophon is that of Muḥammad Zayn al-Dīn, but this name identifies the copyist, not the author of the book as Vajda surmised.¹⁰ So, the Paris copy must also be discarded in connection with the issue of authorship.

Obviously, in order to clear up the matter, the manuscripts bearing the author's name as a later addition based on the reference of Ḥajjī Khalīfah were to be disregarded; I could then only base my investigation on three manuscripts, namely those bearing the name of the author in the very same handwriting as the copyist. I obtained the following forms for the identity of the writer: 'Abd al-Fattāḥ ibn Muḥammad al-Shubrāwī al-Mālikī (Gotha), al-Sakhāwī (Princeton Yahuda 847) and al-Shaykh Ishāq (Algiers). Excepting the last eccentric form, inconsistent with the others and with the data of Ḥajjī Khalīfah, I had then to deal with the following: 'Abd al-Fattāḥ ibn Muḥammad al-Shubrāwī al-Mālikī and al-Sakhāwī, for both of whom the *nisbahs* clearly reveal an Egyptian origin.

The name mentioned by Brockelmann, namely 'Abd al-Fattāḥ ibn Muḥammad al-Shubrāwī al-Mālikī ibn Abī Muḥammad ibn 'Abd, rests in fact on the combination of the forms given by the manuscript of Gotha ('Abd al-Fattāḥ ibn Muḥammad al-Shubrāwī) and that given by Ḥajjī Khalīfah (Ibn Abī al-'Abd al-Mālikī),¹¹ but contains a further onomastic element (ibn Abī Muḥammad) of unknown origin. It needs nevertheless a minor correction: Ibn al-'Abd is the form based on a misreading of the Flügel edition of *Kashf al-Zunūn*,¹² which gives 'Abd instead of the correct 'Īd. With such a nebulous description of the identity of the writer, in order to establish the authorship it was necessary to look in the biographies for more information about writers whose name could match, at least in part, the aforementioned one and whose life and intellectual activity could provide useful clues about the authorship of the "Ḥilyat al-Kuramā'." The works of a much better known al-Sakhāwī, the historian Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Shams al-Dīn, are the sources that could shed some light on the matter. Two entries seemed particularly interesting in this connection, the first one contained in his *Al-Daw' al-Lāmi' li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi'*¹³ and the second one, a little more detailed, in his *Al-Tuḥfah al-Laṭifah fī Tārīkh al-Madīnah al-Sharifah*.¹⁴

¹⁰The name of both the owner and the copyist that figures on the title page is instead Muḥammad ibn al-marḥūm al-ḥājj Ḥusayn Zayn al-Dīn.

¹¹Vajda, "Notes," 18.

¹²Repr. New York and London 1964, 3:112, n. 4633.

¹³Cairo, n.d., vol. 7, notice n. 243, 110–11.

¹⁴Cairo n.d., vol. 3, notice n. 3647, 508–11. The author's life and the role he and his family played in Medina are also discussed in 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mudayris, *Al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah fī al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī (648–923 h./1250–1517 m.): Dirāsah Tārīkhīyah* (Riyadh, 2001), 173 and passim, but only on the basis of the information given by al-Sakhāwī.



BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The author of “*Hilyat al-Kuramā*” must be identified as Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Mūsá ibn Abī Bakr ibn Abī al-‘Īd, al-Shams Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Sakhāwī, *thumma* al-Qāhirī al-Mālikī,¹⁵ also known as Ibn al-Qaṣabī, al-Sakhāwī, and earlier as Ibn Abī al-‘Īd, qadi and *nazīl* of Ṭaybah, “the perfumed one,” i.e., Medina. His renown is certainly not universal, and therefore it could be useful to give some details about his life, his intellectual activities, and his (scarce) bibliography.

He was born in Sakhā, in the Nile Delta, in 819/1416–17. After having studied in his native town, in 831/1427 he went to Cairo, where he stayed for more than seven years, attending the lectures of famous teachers. In 840/1436 he went on the pilgrimage and afterwards he came back to his native town, where he stayed until 859/1454. In that year, he returned to Cairo for the second time, where he dedicated himself to the study of law under the guidance of the representatives of the four legal schools, first alone and then with his son. Prior to his appointment in Medina, in order to earn his living he held the offices of witness and deputy judge. The biographies say that he was also a panegyrist and he gained his living from this activity, which also brought him wide renown. Thanks to some influential acquaintances, he was eventually appointed qadi of Medina in 860/1455, a fact to which he owes his *nisbah* of al-Madanī. There he carried out his duties with the utmost dignity and showed every virtue, much to his subjects’ satisfaction. He also attained a remarkable degree of power. After more than three decades he suffered a stroke leading to partial paralysis and, due to the progressive decline in his health, in 892/1486 he was succeeded by one of his two sons, Khayr al-Dīn Muḥammad.¹⁶ This succession was a happy one, since—as the sources tell us—his son Muḥammad was even wiser and more virtuous than his father. Ibn Abī al-‘Īd died 5 Muḥarram 895/29 November 1489.

Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī, the author of *Al-Daw’ al-Lāmi’*, reports that on several occasions he had been in touch with him. He first met him at Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī’s house, referring to al-‘Asqalānī as *shaykhunā* (our master). He then met him again in Miná and went to visit him in Medina, where Ibn Abī al-‘Īd (already afflicted by his infirmity) showed him hospitality. Al-Sakhāwī also informs us that they shared intellectual interests and exchanged poetry: on several occasions al-Sakhāwī transmitted his poems to Ibn Abī al-‘Īd and received his poems in return, which he copied in a quire (*kurrāsah*). Nevertheless, al-Sakhāwī fails to mention the literary skills of our author in the field of prose, and therefore no hint of the

¹⁵Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daw’ al-Lāmi’ li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi’* (Cairo, n.d.), 7:110; idem, *Al-Tuhfah al-Laṭifah fi Tārīkh al-Madīnah al-Sharīfah* (Cairo, n. d.), 508 has also “*thumma* al-Madanī.”

¹⁶Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Mūsá ibn Abī Bakr ibn Abī al-‘Īd: al-Sakhāwī, *Daw’*, 7:47–48, notice n. 124.



writing of literary anthologies or *adab* books is to be found in relation to our qadi. On the contrary, he speaks well of both prose and poetry composed by his son Muḥammad. The little anthology that I present here is unaccounted for in the bibliography of Ibn Abī al-ʿĪd al-Mālikī as it is given in his biography.

As far as the personality of our author is concerned, the portrait sketched by his biographer is overwhelmingly positive. Al-Sakhāwī highly praises his character; in particular he expresses his appreciation for his modesty, his cheerfulness, his integrity and—more pertinent to the argument of this article—his generosity. Concerning this, he specifies that Ibn Abī al-ʿĪd gave a warm welcome to all those who came to see him and that he showed a great liberality towards all the poor people who addressed him: he gave them food and other means of subsistence.¹⁷ These character traits, as well as his manners and behavior, are especially consistent with the choice of the subject treated in “Ḥilyat al-Kuramā” and are well represented in the text of this anthology. In fact, a substantial part of the material presented in the “Ḥilyat al-Kuramā” deals with hospitality and its duties, and the carrying out of charitable deeds is also stressed. As a matter of fact, one passage is especially revealing of the charitable attitude of Ibn Abī al-ʿĪd and speaks of his inclination to Sufism, if not of his open adherence to a Sufi confraternity. At the end of the first chapter, dedicated to the concept of generosity and to the characteristics of generous men, the author mentions two of his masters and recalls their acts of charity, namely the act of offering food to needy people.¹⁸ The two masters are Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Ghamrī (d. 849/1445)¹⁹ and Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Shādhilī al-Taymī (d. 847/1443).²⁰ The close master-disciple relationship revealed by the mention of these two personalities in the “Ḥilyat al-Kuramā” and the pious words which follow their names also receives an external confirmation in the biographical sketches by al-Sakhāwī: according to this source, these two Sufis figure among the saintly men (*sādāt*) that Ibn Abī al-ʿĪd met in his life.²¹ The first one, Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar

¹⁷Al-Sakhāwī, *Tuhfah*, 510: *wa-rassā kathīran min al-qādīmīn bi-simāʾ al-ḍuʿafāʾ bi-al-ṭaʿām wa-naḥwahu*.

¹⁸On charity see Yaacov Lev, *Charity, Endowments, and Charitable Institutions in the Medieval Islam* (Gainesville, Florida, 2005), 18 passim for food distribution to the poor, and 104ff. for the world of mystics.

¹⁹GAL S2:150, notice 15a; Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *Al-Aʿlām* (Beirut, 1989), 6:315; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr bi-Abnāʾ al-ʿUmr*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1994–98), 4:243; al-Sakhāwī, *Dawʿ*, 7:238–40, n. 641; ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Aḥmad al-Shaʿrānī, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, al-Musammā bi-Lawāqih al-Anwār fī Ṭabaqāt al-Akhyār*, wa-bi-hāmishihi *Kitāb al-Anwār al-Qudsiyah fī Bayān Adab al-ʿUbūdiyyah* (Cairo, n.d.), 2:80–81.

²⁰GAL S2:150, notice 17; al-Ziriklī, *Aʿlām*, 6:88; al-Shaʿrānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:81ff.

²¹Al-Sakhāwī, *Tuhfah*, 3:510.



al-Ghamrī, lived a life of poverty among the poor (and was reproached for this lifestyle by Ibn Ḥajar, among others²²) and dedicated himself to the building and restoration of mosques. The second one, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Shādhilī al-Taymī, a Hanafi, was a member of the Shādhilīyah confraternity and was known for some stories concerning him and the sultan Faraj ibn Barqūq. The tone of speech Ibn Abī al-Īd uses when he mentions both of them removes any doubt about the influence they had on him; it also shows how deeply he had been marked by their teachings and the example they set when he met them during his stay in Cairo in his youth.

THE TEXT

As far as I know, the text of “Ḥilyat al-Kuramā’ wa-Bahjat al-Nudamā’” has been preserved in seven manuscripts, which testifies to the wide circulation of this work. Six of them have been copied in *naskhī* writing, and only one of them in *maghribī*, which suggests that its circulation was relatively minor in the western part of the Muslim world. Out of these six, three are closely connected with Egypt, and more specifically Cairo. They are: (a) the Paris manuscript, which was copied in Cairo in 1169/1755; (b) the Gotha manuscript, which was bought in Cairo in 1807 by Setzen; (c) the al-Azhar manuscript, which is still preserved in al-Azhar library. We can thus deduce that the book was mostly circulating in the region of origin of its author. This would entitle us to put forward a hypothesis about the place where this anthology was composed, which could have been Egypt, and most probably Cairo, before its author’s departure to Medina.

As concerns the chronology, the extant manuscripts are dated between the tenth/sixteenth century and the thirteenth/nineteenth century (the al-Azhar manuscript, dated in the fourteenth/twentieth, is defective). This means that the oldest manuscript (Algiers) was probably copied one century after the death of the author.

Out of the six manuscripts I have been able to consult, two contain an incomplete text. In particular, the Liège manuscript seems to be a summarized version with some interpolations: some passages are missing, and the fifth and final chapter does not correspond at all to its counterpart in the other manuscripts. Furthermore, after this last chapter, the copyist who drew up the Liège manuscript added a completely new section with a pious tone which does not figure in any of the other manuscripts. This copy is therefore of little use for the reconstitution of the text of “Ḥilyat al-Kuramā’.” The same goes for the al-Azhar manuscript, which stops abruptly in the middle of the fourth chapter despite the declaration made by the copyist on the title page (probably for commercial reasons) that the

²²See Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’*, 4:243.



manuscript contains the text “in its totality” (*‘alá al-tamām wa-al-kamāl*).

Apart from these two cases, as far as it can be assessed on the basis of the four manuscripts which are seemingly complete, the text is far from being unequivocal. Two areas are rather problematic: the end of the second chapter and the entire fifth chapter. The end of the second chapter poses some difficulty: the three manuscripts that usually agree on the rest (Princeton Garrett, Gotha, Paris) and which constitute the most plausible basis for the edition of the text that I am preparing, present some important fluctuations in the type and order of the materials between chapter two and chapter three, while in the fourth manuscript (Princeton Yahuda) many anecdotes are simply missing. Chapter five in principle should contain some pieces of advice (*waṣāyā*), as it is announced in its title: “On the recommendations which are useful to the intelligent man and are a warning to the careless man.” As a matter of fact, the chapter’s content is consistent with its title only in one manuscript out of four, the Princeton Yahuda, where chapter five consists of a series of aphorisms arranged in alphabetical order. On the contrary, in the others (Princeton Garrett, Gotha, Paris) the number of aphorisms is much smaller and a short section of a zoological character is appended to the paremiological section.

Obviously the copyists tinkered with the text in more than one way and at more than one point. This is a rather common phenomenon considering the composite character of these anthologies; as they are made up of independent textual units (anecdotes, aphorisms, short narratives, poems) arranged in intermediate units (the chapters), it is easy to shift, remove, add, or replace each textual unit, and so change the text. This is also more likely when the copyist has before him a corrupted or defective copy, as could have been the case with our text: the temptation to complete the corrupted passages, to offer a better version of an anecdote, or to adapt the contents of a chapter to its title must have been very difficult, if not impossible, to overcome.

DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK

Following the established conventions of the anthologies of the period, “*Ḥilyat al-Kuramā*” is composed of miscellaneous materials, both in prose and poetry: Quranic verses, hadith, poetry, aphorisms, and a good number of anecdotes and stories, organized in five chapters preceded by an introduction. All these materials are arranged in the hierarchical order which is usual in *adab* works: both in the introduction and in the following sections Quranic verses, if present, come first, followed by traditions, pious anecdotes, and worldly anecdotes or aphorisms.

The theme of generosity has a long tradition going back to the beginnings of Arabo-Islamic literature: it was among the preferred subjects that scholars treated in both monothematic works and in specific sections of works of a more



encyclopedic nature. Among the most popular books of Arabic literature dedicated to this subject, I shall limit myself to the mention of *Al-Mustajād min Fa‘ālāt al-Ajwād*, which has long been attributed to al-Muḥassin al-Tanūkhī (d. 384/994). *Adab* encyclopedias also often include generosity in the range of the themes they deal with, as is the case with *Al-‘Iqd al-Farīd* by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih (d. 328/940). Generosity (and the generous: *karam*, *karīm*, and the synonymous *jūd/jawād*, etc.) as well as its antonym, meanness, were then part and parcel of the range of topics treated in canonical *adab* works, which is also demonstrated by the substantial list of titles which mention a word for generosity.²³ Our anthology, “Ḥilyat al-Kuramā’ wa-Bahjat al-Udabā’,” is thus the heir of a long tradition, from the point of view both of theme and organizational scheme.

The following is the list of contents found in the introductory section.

Introduction: on the intellect and the legal rules that originate in it and are established on its basis

Chapter one: on generosity and its features, and on those who bear its signs

Chapter two: on doing good deeds and the assistance of those who have suffered injustice

Chapter three: on the lives of the sovereigns, the ancients, and the histories of outstanding civil servants

Chapter four: on the state of women and men, and on their habits in all conditions

Chapter five: on the recommendations which are useful to the intelligent man and are a warning to the careless man

The introduction is mostly made up of Quranic verses and hadith, but also of short poems and anecdotal material concerning the creation of the intellect (*‘aql*) and its substance. The division of the faculty of the intellect into that which originates from experience (*al-‘aql al-tajribī*) and that which is an innate faculty is also briefly sketched, along with a list of signs typical of the intelligent man. It is a subject which is often treated in anthologies and in *adab* encyclopedias²⁴ of the Arabic literary tradition, especially in their introductions, and virtually forms a kind of standard opening for this type of text. What is noticeable, on the contrary, is the absence of the lexicographical section which is so common in the literary anthologies and in the monothematic *adab* works of the Abbasid period. In fact, these normally begin with a presentation of the keyword identifying the theme of the literary composition (e.g., *karam*, as in this case) and related terms: the

²³A catalogue for the Abbasid period, with a brief introduction to the topic and a presentation of the lexical issues, in Mohsen Zakeri, ed. and trans., *Persian Wisdom in Arabic Garb: ‘Alī b. ‘Ubayda al-Rayḥānī (d. 219/834) and his “Jawāhir al-kilam wa-farā’id al-ḥikam”* (Leiden, 2006), 1:285–91.

²⁴See, e.g., Antonella Ghersetti, “La conception d’intellect dans le *Kitāb al-adkiyā’* par Ibn al-Ġawzi,” *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 10 (1992): 63–73, and bibliography.



etymology, meaning, and use of each term is explained and discussed. In the case under consideration, there is no lexicographical treatment of the terms *karam*, *karīm*, or related ones. The substantial presence of hadith and the conceptual treatment of the subject in philosophical terms indicate a normative and dogmatic tone, which points to the ethical concerns and hortatory purposes which must have inspired the author. This can no doubt be taken as a sign of the shift of interest from the aesthetic aspect of the anthologies to their practical function and content, and to the role played by the ulama in the intellectual life of this time.²⁵ This one could be a typical case: the *forma mentis* of the qadi Ibn Abī al-ʿId was that of a man of law and a pious Muslim, and his concern was more for legal and ethical issues than for philological ones.

Chapter one, the longest of all, treats generosity and its signs. It opens with some traditions in which the Prophet praises hospitality, urges the believers to share their food, and prescribes the rules concerning meals (*ādāb al-akl*). These, hospitality and food, are two themes so often associated with generosity and so profoundly intermingled that they constitute a kind of canonical thematic network.²⁶ What is clearly hinted at by the choice of the traditions related in the very beginning of the first chapter is thus the concept of generosity: to be generous means first of all to share food. This, by the way, also seems to be the essence of hospitality: hospitality substantially consists of offering food and drink.²⁷ This triplet (generosity, food, and hospitality) can be tracked down elsewhere in the “Ḥilyat al-Kuramā’”; to be more precise, almost all the contents of this anthology pivot around it. After the normative section composed by hadith, the chapter continues with many anecdotes that feature high-ranking figures such as Hārūn al-Rashīd or the Barmakids, scholars such as al-Shāfiʿī or Anas ibn Mālik, venerated personalities such as Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, and ʿAlī, but also some unknown people. The common trait is of course their exceeding generosity and their liberal behavior.

Chapter two, dedicated to the support due to needy people, clearly continues the theme of food. Strangely enough, here we find a refined man (*ẓarīf*) presenting a list of the shortcomings of the bad table companion. This would sound rather eccentric in connection with the main subject of the chapter, but can easily be

²⁵The authors of Mamluk anthologies were first of all historians or jurists, and only secondly men of letters; in this sense the ulama replaced the *kuttāb* of the Abbasid period. See Bauer, “Literarische Anthologien,” esp. 79ff.

²⁶The fourth pillar of this thematic network being the antonym of generosity, meanness (*bukhl*), a theme which is in fact treated further in this anthology.

²⁷On this concept and on the thematic network mentioned above see my “À la recherche de nourriture: étude des thèmes liés aux pique-assiettes (*tufayliyyūn*) dans la littérature d’adab,” *Al-Qantara* 25 (2004): 433–62.



explained if we keep in mind the close association linking food and table manners. In a sense, table manners had already been hinted at in the prophetic traditions of the preceding chapter pertaining to *ādāb al-akl*. The list of epithets is followed by a section on meanness (*bukhl*), a feature that is criticized as the worst vice, in accordance once more with the encyclopedia of the ethical values of Arab civilization. This part also contains, obviously in hierarchical order, Quranic verses, traditions, and anecdotes on mean people, all aiming at criticizing this kind of behavior. The purpose of the section devoted to avarice is to emphasize the following exhortation to feed poor people, and in order to support this call, a series of exemplary stories is presented. Here, too, historical and high-ranking figures such as Mu‘āwiyah, ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, and al-Mahdī feature in the anecdotes, as well as unknown and common people.

Chapter three, on the sovereigns, the ancients, and high-ranking officers, is fairly interesting. Moving from the assumption that men are remembered for their good deeds, the author states that if common people must practice virtue and avoid vice, sovereigns must do this all the more. Thus, intelligent people must take the stories of just and generous kings as paragons of virtue and be guided by their good example. That is why the author gives a series of anecdotes on exemplary kings. In the introductory part of the chapter, he also states that people owe obedience to the sovereign (*al-sulṭān*) because power has been given to him by God, and he reports some prophetic traditions about the proper conduct of the powerful. In this connection, the distinction between the just sovereign (*al-sulṭān al-‘ādil*) and the unjust one (*al-sulṭān al-ẓālim*) is also outlined, and it is specified that the kingdom of the latter is destined to perish. The rest of this chapter is rich in anecdotes, sometimes separated by a gnomic break, on historical personalities: Persian and Indian kings, caliphs of both the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, as well as the orthodox caliphs. ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Mu‘āwiyah, Hārūn al-Rashīd, al-Manṣūr, and al-Mahdī are among the most important characters. The series is closed by a story about Alexander the Great. Apart from anecdotes with a strong historical flavor coming from “high literature,” some stories of clearly folkloric origin are found, such as the story of the fisher set among the Banū Isrā’īl.

Chapter four, which treats men and women with no additional qualification, contains a fair number of anecdotes and many aphorisms, but no discursive material. The pre-eminent place, in terms of quantity, is given to stories about poetry and music, wherein the main characters are caliphs or noblemen, together with singers or poets. Thus, they feature, e.g., ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ja‘far, Hārūn al-Rashīd, or al-Ma’mūn, and talented singing-girls who often constitute the object of royal generosity. In accordance with this setting, the quantity of poetic verses mentioned in this chapter is far more substantial than that mentioned in the rest of the anthology. What is remarkable, or eccentric to



be more precise, in this section is a curious catalogue of the defects commonly attributed to women. However, the author must not be accused of misogyny: the sexes are treated equally, since immediately after this list he gives a woman leave to speak. Of course, this wise woman (*imra'ah* 'āqilah) does not hesitate to address a list of the defects of men. Furthermore, to dispel any doubt about the gifts that distinguish cultivated ladies, a series of anecdotes on witty and eloquent women “whose mention cannot be omitted” is included. Curiously enough, in this chapter the stress seems to be laid more on eloquence and musical ability than on generosity, a theme that often remains in the background.

Chapter five is very short (between 1 and 3 folios) in all the manuscripts taken into consideration that contain it (namely Princeton Garrett, Gotha, Paris, and Liège), except in the Princeton Yahuda, where it is longer (7 folios), but where its contents are also completely different. In the three manuscripts which agree on the contents (Princeton Garrett, Gotha, and Paris, as Liège has a completely different text), it opens with some aphorisms on the most varied subjects, including women, but it suddenly continues with a list of the characteristics of certain animals.

At this point, though I am waiting to prepare a more thorough study to be published with the edition of the text, I am nevertheless in a position to make some general remarks on the “Ḥilyat al-Kuramā’.” First of all, it is arranged in narrative units which, as is usual in *adab* anthologies, are grouped together on the basis of affinity of both contents and structure. What is more noteworthy in this case is the frequency of authorial interventions, i.e., notes revealing the author’s voice that serve to clarify the affinity or relevance of the textual units or, in some cases, the differences in style and narrative effect. For instance, there are definitions such as *mā huwa fī al-ma’ná qarīban wa-aqwá himmatan wa-uslūban* or *ḥikāyah tantazim fī silkihā wa-tandamij fī sabkihā*, obviously aiming at evaluating the significance and construction of the anecdotes. Another typical use of the author’s voice is his habit of stressing the demarcation of the units composing the text: every anecdote is in fact preceded by a heading which identifies the narrative typology or the tone of the story. We thus find phrases such as: *ḥikāyah jāmi’ah wa-ḥaqīqah māni’ah*, *ḥikāyah gharībah ‘ajībah*, *ḥikāyah laṭīfat al-ma’ānī wa-‘adhbat al-majānī*, *ḥikāyah laṭīfah wa-innahā khafīfah*, *ḥikāyah wajīzah wa-nuktah ‘azīzah*. The terms used to define the narrative units are *ḥikāyah*, *jawharah*, and *nādirah*, apparently without indicating any difference in the structure of the narrative; the word *fā’idah* is preferred for aphorisms or sections devoid of any narrative character.

The stories and anecdotes never contain any indication of their origin, not to speak of *isnāds*, which are almost completely absent even in their most embryonic form. One exception I came across is a story in the fourth chapter, reported on the authority of Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī; it is in fact preceded by an *isnād* composed



in a proper way, which qualifies it as a “scholarly *isnād*.”²⁸

As to the sources of the materials assembled in this anthology, the author only very vaguely indicates the provenance of the information used in his compilation: in the introduction he confines himself to hinting at the type of sources, rather than identifying them precisely. He claims to draw his materials from the “helpful books of the scholars” (*kutub al-‘ulamā’ al-mu‘tabarah*) as well as from “their clear and well-known speeches that were preserved” (*aqwāluhum al-muḥrazah al-wāḍihah al-mashhūrah*). In any case, some anecdotes can be easily traced back to well-known *adab* works of the Abbasid period such as *Murūj al-Dhahab* and *Al-‘Iqd al-Farīd*²⁹ or of the Mamluk period such as *Al-Mustaṭraf fī Kull Fann Mustazraf* of al-Ibshihī.³⁰

The author’s vague statements qualifying his sources as exemplary confirm the edifying purpose of the book, which obviously had not been conceived only as a literary exercise, but also and first of all as an act of “militant charity”³¹ with the aim of urging the readers to generosity, charity, and assistance of poor people, just as the author was taught by his two masters, Muḥammad al-Ghamrī and Muḥammad al-Shādhilī al-Taymī, and just as he did throughout his long life.

CONCLUSIONS

It is now time to draw some conclusions. First of all, concerning the authorship: all the identities proposed in the secondary literature must be discarded, except that of Ibn Abī al-‘Īd. The author of “*Hilyat al-Kuramā’*” is definitely Muḥammad ibn [Abī] Aḥmad ibn Mūsā ibn Abī Bakr ibn Abī al-‘Īd, al-Shams Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Sakhāwī, *thumma* al-Qāhirī *thumma* al-Madanī al-Mālikī,³² also known as Ibn al-Qaṣabī, al-Sakhāwī, and previously as Ibn Abī al-‘Īd. This is demonstrated both by external elements, namely the quotation of Ḥājji Khalīfah, and by internal

²⁸As Julia Ashtiany Bray would call it (for types of *isnāds*, see her “Isnāds and Model of Heroes: Abū Zubayd al-Tā’ī, Tanūkhī’s sundered lovers and Abū ‘l-‘Anbas al-Ṣaymarī,” *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures* 1 [1998]: 7–30).

²⁹Among others, the anthology contains (in chapter four) a story on Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī which had a wide circulation in Arabic literature and the most ancient versions of which are found in *Murūj* and *‘Iqd* (see my “L’anecdote-accordéon ou comment adapter le sens du récit au contexte narratif,” in *Le répertoire narratif arabe médiéval: transmission et ouverture: Actes du colloque international qui s’est tenu à l’Université de Liège 15–17 septembre 2005*, ed. Frédéric Bauden, Aboubakr Chraïbi, and Antonella Gherseti (Liège, 2008), 15–17).

³⁰Al-Ibshihī, *Al-Mustaṭraf fī Kull Fann Mustazraf* (Beirut, 1986), 1:397.

³¹This was a common phenomenon in the Mamluk period since, as Bauer says (“Literarische Anthologien,” 109), the structure and contents of literary anthologies so often go arm in arm with paraenesis.

³²The form given is derived from the combination of information from al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daw’ al-Lāmī’*, and idem, *Al-Tuḥfah al-Latīfah*.



elements, namely the mention in the “Ḥilyat al-Kuramā” of the two personalities (Muḥammad al-Ghamrī and Muḥammad al-Shādhilī al-Taymī) who were actually the masters of Ibn Abī al-ʿĪd. Among the internal elements, it is also worth noting a more general feature, i.e., the relevance of tone and contents of the anthology to the attitude, beliefs, and lifestyle of the author.

I can also suggest a hypothesis for the place and date of composition of this work, on the basis of the internal elements as well as of codicological ones. As for the place of composition, the area of diffusion of the manuscripts hints at Cairo, or in any case Egypt, most probably the village of Sakhā, the native town of our author where he lived for nearly twenty years after his first stay in Cairo. This assumption is corroborated by other internal elements more relevant to the date of composition, namely the mention of Ibn Abī al-ʿĪd’s masters and the eulogies following their names. The terms *naffaʿanī* (or, according to a different reading, *mattaʿanā*) *Allāhu bi-ḥayātīhi* (or, according to a different reading, *nafaḥātīhi*) *wa-ʿāda ʿalaynā min barakātīhi* and *adāma Allāhu qaṣḍahu* are in fact used to refer to persons still alive and not to somebody who is deceased. The writing of the “Ḥilyat al-Kuramā” would then have taken place before the death of the two saintly men, who died shortly thereafter (Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Shādhilī al-Taymī died in 847/1443 and Muḥammad al-Ghamrī in 848/1444). As to the date of composition, I would then propose as a *terminus ante quem* the date of 847/1443, well before Ibn Abī al-ʿĪd’s departure to Medina.

This anthology is an interesting example of the thematic anthologies that were such a flourishing genre in the Mamluk period. It also represents a sample, if one is needed, of the intense cultural and literary activity practiced by the scholars (ulama) of that period, even outside the circles of literati and philologists *stricto sensu*, which is a feature very typical of Mamluk cultural life. In this sense, it could even be considered an emblematic case of the shift of the primacy in the cultural debate from the *kātib* to the *ʿālim*.³³ This work also testifies to the continuity of the themes and of the organization schemes of composition of *adab* anthologies since the golden age of this genre, i.e., the Abbasid period. Notwithstanding this formal continuity, the Mamluk authors were able to express in a very effective way their own purposes. In this particular case, the main purpose of Ibn Abī al-ʿĪd no doubt corresponds to what has been defined as ethical *adab*, i.e., instructing the readers and urging them to virtuous behavior by showing them apt examples in the form of narratives. Charity was exactly that virtuous behavior which our author was taught by his masters, which he practiced all his life, and which he persistently urged upon the readers of his anthology.

³³See Bauer, “Literarische Anthologien,” esp. 72, 110.

