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## Purchasing a Slave in Fourteenth-Century Cairo: Ibn al-Akfānī's *Book of Observation and Inspection in the Examination of Slaves*

How were slaves bought and sold in Mamluk Cairo? The answer depends to a surprising degree on which genre of Mamluk texts we consult. This article is based on the genre of slave-buying advice, particularly the fourteenth-century treatise of Ibn al-Akfānī which is published here for the first time. However, a contradiction becomes apparent when Ibn al-Akfānī's medical perspective on the slave market is compared with the legal perspective adopted by the genre of *ḥisbah* manuals. The medically-oriented slave-buying advice manuals considered it essential for a prospective slave buyer to inspect the slave's naked body before committing to purchase, while the legally-oriented *ḥisbah* manuals considered such an inspection inappropriate. To understand how such conflicting legal and medical norms were reconciled in practice, a third genre, the travel narrative, will be added to the analysis.

Most studies of slavery during the Mamluk period have focused on master-slave interactions and on the various types of service required of slaves.<sup>1</sup> Less scholarly

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<sup>1</sup>Amir Mazor, *The Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment: The Maṣūriyya in the First Mamluk Sultanate, 678/1279–741/1341* (Bonn, 2015); Hannah Barker, "Egyptian and Italian Merchants in the Black Sea Slave Trade, 1260–1500" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2014); Anne Broadbridge, "Sending Home for Mom and Dad: The Extended Family Impulse in Mamluk Politics," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 15 (2011): 1–18; Julien Loiseau, "Frankish Captives in Mamluk Cairo," *Al-Masaq* 23 (2011): 37–52; Nur Sobers Khan, "Slaves, Wealth and Fear: An Episode from Late Mamluk-Era Egypt," *Oriens* 37 (2009): 155–61; Linda Northrup, "Military Slavery in the Islamic and Mamluk Context," in *Unfreie Arbeit: Ökonomische und kulturgeschichtliche Perspektiven*, ed. M. Erdem Kabadayi and Tobias Reichardt (Hildesheim, 2007), 115–131; Shaun Marmon, "Black Slaves in Mamlūk Narratives: Representations of Transgression," *Al-Qantara* 28 (2007): 435–64; idem, "Domestic Slavery in the Mamluk Empire: A Preliminary Sketch," in *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East* (Princeton, 1999), 1–23; idem, *Eunuchs and Sacred Boundaries in Islamic Society* (Oxford, 1995); 'Alī al-Sayyid Maḥmūd, *Al-ḥawārī fī mujtama' al-Qāhirah al-mamlūkīyah* (Cairo, 1988); Hassanein Rabie, "The Training of the Mamluk Faris," in *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East*, ed. V. J. Parry and M. E. Yapp (London, 1975), 153–63; Ahmad 'Abd al-Rāziq, *La femme au temps des Mamlouks en Égypte* (Cairo, 1973); idem, "Un document concernant le mariage des esclaves au temps des Mamlūks," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 13 (1970): 309–14; Sayyid al-Bāz al-'Arīnī, *Al-Mamālīk* (Beirut, 1967); David Ayalon, "L'esclavage du mamelouk," *Oriental Notes and Studies* 1 (1951): 1–66, and a number of other articles.



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attention has been devoted to the purchase of slaves, the economic transaction and legal act that initiated a new master-slave relationship.<sup>2</sup> Of course, in many ways the market for slaves was similar to markets for other goods: supply and demand, contracts and payments, all operated much the same whether the commodity being exchanged was human or non-human. The most notable difference between the sale of human and non-human goods lay in the inspection process conducted by the buyer.

Legally, every act of sale required the informed consent of all parties. For the buyer, informed consent meant an opportunity to inspect the goods before purchase in order to confirm that their content and quality were as advertised by the seller. Fulfillment of the requirement for informed consent was signaled in the sale contract by a clause stating that “viewing, cognizance, and agreement in a legal manner” had occurred.<sup>3</sup> In the case of a slave sale, the prospective buyer would conduct a physical examination and interview in order to determine whether the slave’s physical and mental qualities matched the seller’s description. A thorough inspection demanded expert knowledge of the various qualities commonly found in human bodies and minds, with special emphasis on the qualities considered most and least desirable in slaves.

In addition to fulfilling the legal requirement of informed consent, inspection served a second function in the sale of slaves, one unique to slaves as human commodities. The physical inspection of slaves’ bodies was deeply humiliating. This humiliation was not incidental. It served to reinforce the powerlessness and

<sup>2</sup>Yusuf Ragib, *Actes de vente d’esclaves et d’animaux d’Égypte médiévale* (Cairo, 2002); idem, “Les marchés aux esclaves en terre d’Islam,” in *Mercati et mercanti nell’alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1993), 721–66; Donald Little, “Two Fourteenth-Century Court Records from Jerusalem concerning the Disposition of Slaves by Minors,” *Arabica* 29 (1982): 16–49; idem, “Six Fourteenth Century Purchase Deeds for Slaves from al-Ḥaram aš-Šarīf,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 131 (1981): 297–337. Scholarship on the Mamluk slave trade has developed independently of scholarship on the sale of individual slaves. See Reuven Amitai, “Diplomacy and the Slave Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Re-examination of the Mamluk-Byzantine-Genoese Triangle in the Late Thirteenth Century in Light of the Existing Early Correspondence,” *Oriente moderno* 88 (2008): 349–68; Andrew Ehrenkreutz, “Strategic Implications of the Slave Trade between Genoa and Mamluk Egypt in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century,” in *The Islamic Middle East, 700–1900*, ed. Abraham Udovitch (Princeton, 1981), 335–45; Benjamin Kedar, “Segurano-Sakran Salvaygo: un mercante genovese al servizio dei sultani mamalucchi, c. 1303–1322,” in *Fatti e idee di storia economica nei secoli XII–XX: Studi dedicati a Franco Borlandi* (Bologna, 1977), 75–91; Charles Verlinden, “Mamelouks et traitants,” in *Économies et sociétés au Moyen Age: Mélanges offerts à Edouard Perroy* (Paris, 1973), 737–47.

<sup>3</sup>“النظر والمعرفة والمعاقدة الشرعية” or an equivalent phrase. Little, “Six Fourteenth Century Purchase Deeds,” 299, 301. In addition to the *shurūf* manuals cited by Little, see Gabriela Linda Guellil, ed., *Damaszener Akten des 8./14. Jahrhunderts nach at-Tarsusis Kitab al-ʿIḥām: Eine Studie zum arabischen Justizwesen* (Bamberg, 1985), 115.



dishonor of slaves through the profanation (*ibtidāl*) of their bodies in contrast to the inviolability (*ḥurmah*) of the free body.<sup>4</sup> The humiliation was made especially acute by examining the naked bodies of slaves in public places. Thus by the time a slave changed hands from the old master to the new, a relationship of power and subjection, honor and dishonor, had already been established through the process of inspection.

Humiliating displays of power during the inspection also inhibited the slave's unique ability as a human commodity to interfere with his or her own sale. Individual slaves could choose to cooperate with, acquiesce to, or resist the entire inspection process; confirm or deny the claims of sellers about their health and character; encourage or discourage particular buyers; and in some cases give or withhold consent in contracts for their own sale.<sup>5</sup> Such maneuvering occurred within very narrow constraints and could be dangerous for the slave. Yet buyers and sellers could not afford to ignore the ability of slaves to exercise their own will in the midst of sale. Humiliating them helped to forestall and overcome their resistance.

For these reasons, inspecting a slave was a complex undertaking and difficult to carry out effectively. It is not surprising that some prospective slave owners sought advice before attempting to buy a new slave. Much of this advice was probably shared in person, but there was also a written genre of slave-buying advice. This genre, the evolution of which has been traced by Hans Müller, was derived from Greek models but took on its own distinctive form in the Islamic intellectual context.<sup>6</sup> Texts in the slave-buying advice genre might appear as stand-alone manuals or as chapters within encyclopedic works. They were addressed to the prospective slave buyer, who was assumed to be a man buying slaves of either

<sup>4</sup>Baber Johansen, "The Valorization of the Human Body in Muslim Sunni Law," *Princeton Papers in Near East Studies* 4 (1996): 74; Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, 1982), 10–12.

<sup>5</sup>Little, "Six Fourteenth Century Purchase Deeds," 317; Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Jarawānī, *Al-Kawkab al-mushriq fīmā yaḥtāj ilayhi al-muwaṭṭiq li-ālim al-shurūṭ*, ed. Souad Saghbini (Berlin, 2010), 54–55.

<sup>6</sup>Hans Müller, *Die Kunst des Sklavenkaufs nach arabischen, persischen und türkischen Ratgebern vom 10. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg, 1980). The most widely known example of this genre is Ibn Buṭlān's treatise, "Risālat jāmi'ah li-funūn nafi'ah fī shirā' al-raḥiq wa-taqlīb al-'abid," in *Nawādir al-makḥūṭāt*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo, 1954), 383–420. A complete Italian translation has been published by Antonella Ghersetti, *Trattato generale sull'acquisto e l'esame degli schiavi* (Catanzaro, 2001). A partial English translation by Bernard Lewis is available in Jarbel Rodriguez, *Muslim and Christian Contact in the Middle Ages: A Reader* (Toronto, 2015), 422–29. Little else has been written about this genre, but see Antonella Ghersetti, "De l'achat des esclaves: entre examen médical et physiognomie: Le chapitre 46 du Kitāb al-dalā'il d'Ibn Bahlūl (Xe s.)," in *Essays in Honour of Alexander Fodor on his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. K. Dévényi and T. Iványi (Budapest, 2001), 83–94.



gender. Their advice centered on the medical knowledge necessary to inspect a slave's body for signs of poor health. Most were written by practicing doctors or scholars with medical expertise. The authors often supplemented their medical advice with ethnographic information (qualities associated with slaves from various places), ethical and political commentary (how to control the behavior of slaves and integrate them into the household), and general recommendations presented as common sense (shop around rather than buying the first available slave). The kinds of service required of these slaves were spelled out most clearly in the ethnographic chapters, which used stereotypes to classify slaves for domestic work, military service, sexual exploitation, hard labor, household or business management, and creative endeavors such as music.

Within these genre conventions, no two slave-buying advice texts are exactly alike. This article focuses on the distinctive features of one Mamluk-era slave-buying advice manual, *The Book of Observation and Inspection in the Examination of Slaves* by Ibn al-Akfānī. *The Book of Observation* survives today in a single manuscript fragment apparently copied in the fifteenth century.<sup>7</sup> It was acquired by the Bibliothèque Nationale Française in 1833 as part of the collection of Jean-Louis Asselin de Cherville, a French consular agent in Cairo from 1806 to 1822.<sup>8</sup> At that time it had already been bound into a volume with several other texts relating to Mamluk Syria and Egypt.

<sup>7</sup>“Kitāb al-nazar wa-al-tahqīq fī taqlīb al-raqīq,” Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale Française MS arabe 2234, fols. 148r–151r. The entire volume and its contents are described in W. M. G. de Slane, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1883), 392, accessed online March 17, 2015 at <http://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ead.html?id=FRBNFEAD000030154>. Although the catalog lists *The Book of Observation* as folios 148r–157v of the volume, in fact it takes up only folios 148r–151r. Fols. 148–155 form a gathering with two loose sheets, fols. 156 and 157, attached at the end. Ibn al-Akfānī's treatise begins with a title page on fol. 148r. The text of his treatise runs from fol. 148v to fol. 151r but stops abruptly a few lines into fol. 151r. The next line is the beginning of a second, unrelated text which fills the rest of fol. 151r and its margins. The remainder of the gathering consists of an assortment of unrelated texts. The first loose sheet, fol. 156r, is a second title page for Ibn al-Akfānī's treatise using the same layout as the title page on fol. 148r. Perhaps the scribe was practicing. However, the margins of fol. 156r are filled with a continuation of the unrelated text from fol. 155v. The textual continuity from fol. 155v to fol. 156r, from the end of the gathering onto the loose leaf, is signaled with a guide word. The second loose leaf, fol. 157, is blank. Red ink is used to highlight certain letters in Ibn al-Akfānī's treatise, but does not appear elsewhere except for a *bismillah* on fol. 156v. A German translation of Ibn al-Akfānī's treatise is available in Müller, *Die Kunst des Sklavenkaufs*, 177–180, but the original Arabic text has not been published until now.

<sup>8</sup>Marie-Geneviève Guesdon, e-mail message to author, March 31, 2015. The volume containing Ibn al-Akfānī's treatise was number 497 in de Cherville's collection.



The author of *The Book of Observation*, Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Sā'id ibn al-Akfānī al-Anṣārī, was born in Sinjār in northern Iraq in the 1280s.<sup>9</sup> He moved to Syria and then to Cairo in the course of his studies, settling down as a physician at the Maṣṣūrī hospital in Cairo by the 1320s. He was also a prolific writer and composed dozens of treatises on a wide variety of topics from ophthalmology to astronomy. His most famous work was an encyclopedia that covered sixty branches of knowledge gathered under the headings of literature, logic, theology, physics, geometry, astronomy, mathematics, and the practical sciences (such as politics). He died in 1348 at the age of sixty, a casualty of the first outbreak of the Black Death in Cairo. Therefore, although the text of *The Book of Observation* is not dated, it was probably composed in Cairo in the second quarter of the fourteenth century.

Ibn al-Akfānī applied his medical knowledge to the purchase of slaves in practice as well as in theory. Slave traders and brokers frequently consulted him about the health of their slaves. According to his friend and biographer al-Ṣafadī, “as for knowledge about slaves, both male and female [*al-raḥīq min al-mamālīk wa-al-jawārī*], he had a wealth of it. I saw those enthusiastic about the trade come to him and talk about what problems had befallen them in the course of their work. He guided them to that which was right and led them to repair their faults.”<sup>10</sup> Given Ibn al-Akfānī's wide-ranging medical knowledge, his great activity as a writer, and his involvement with the local slave market, it is not surprising that he decided to write a treatise in the genre of slave-buying advice.

*The Book of Observation* is not, however, an entirely original work. Ibn al-Akfānī seems to have based it on an anonymous treatise entitled *Inspection in Slave-Buying* composed in early thirteenth-century Egypt or Syria.<sup>11</sup> It is difficult to compare *The Book of Observation* and *Inspection in Slave-Buying* because both surviving texts are incomplete, but Ibn al-Akfānī's version is far shorter and less detailed. It includes no ethnography and less common-sense advice, and it may have been intended to circulate as an introduction to *Inspection in Slave-Buying* rather than an independent treatise. Nevertheless, it was *The Book of Observation* that was named as a model for the third and final known slave-buying advice

<sup>9</sup>Jan Just Witkam, “Ibn al-Akfānī,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., supplement no. 5–6, 381; idem, “Ibn al-Akfānī (d.749/1348) and his Bibliography of the Sciences,” *Manuscripts of the Middle East 2* (1987): 37–41.

<sup>10</sup>Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān al-ʿaṣr wa-a'wān al-naṣr*, ed. Fuat Sezgin (Frankfurt, 1990), 2:225–31, no. 1440.

وأما معرفة الرقيق من المماليك والجواري فأليه المال في ذلك، ورأيت المولعين بالصنعة يحضرون إليه ويذكرون ما وقع لهم من الخلل في أثناء ذلك العمل، فيرشدهم إلى الصواب، ويدلهم على إصلاح ذلك الفساد

<sup>11</sup>“Al-Taḥqīq fī shirā' al-raḥīq,” Cairo, Dār al-Kutub MS 48 Taymūriyah, Faḍā'il wa-radhā'il. This is the sole surviving version of the text and it lacks the final chapter.



manual of the Mamluk era, *The Apt Statement on Choosing Female and Male Slaves*, composed by al-ʿAyntābī in the late fifteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Like Ibn al-Akfānī, al-ʿAyntābī was a physician at the Mansūri hospital in Cairo. Unlike Ibn al-Akfānī, al-ʿAyntābī wrote a full slave-buying treatise with substantial sections on common-sense advice, ethnography, and physiognomy. The apparent mismatch between the content of al-ʿAyntābī’s treatise (which appears to follow *Inspection in Slave-Buying*) and its stated model (the abbreviated *Book of Observation*) supports the theory that the combined texts of both the anonymous *Inspection in Slave-Buying* and Ibn al-Akfānī’s *Book of Observation* were circulating together under the title *The Book of Observation*.<sup>13</sup>

It is no coincidence that the two known authors of Mamluk-era slave-buying manuals, Ibn al-Akfānī and al-ʿAyntābī, were both physicians at the Mansūri hospital. The district where the hospital is located, Khān al-Khalīlī, was also home to some of the larger and more famous slave markets in Cairo, enabling slave sellers, buyers, and brokers to consult the Mansūri physicians with ease.<sup>14</sup> Mamluk slave markets appeared in three different physical forms: an open market located in a vacant lot or square; a street market in which the slaves stood or sat along the walls; or an enclosed market located within a building (a *khān* or *funduq*) consisting of a central courtyard surrounded by shops on the first floor and rooms for the slaves on the second floor.<sup>15</sup>

In the early thirteenth century, two locations within Khān al-Khalīlī were designated as slave markets. One market was closed in 1225 so that al-Kāmil could use the site to build his madrasah.<sup>16</sup> It was replaced for a brief time by an open market located along the same street, Bayn al-Qasrayn, in a space (*sāḥah*) opposite

<sup>12</sup>Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-ʿAyntābī al-Amshāṭī, *Al-Qawl al-sadīd fī ikhtiyār al-imāʾ wa-al-ʿabīd*, ed. Muḥammad ʿĪsā Ṣāliḥīyah (Beirut, 1996); Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ*, ed. Husām al-Dīn al-Qudsi (Cairo, 1934), 10:128, no.541 is a biography of al-ʿAyntābī.

<sup>13</sup>Müller, *Die Kunst des Sklavenkaufs*, 109–11, 177.

<sup>14</sup>Consulting with a physician was also common practice for slave buyers in contemporary Genoa and Valencia. Carmel Ferragud, “The Role of Doctors in the Slave Trade during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries within the Kingdom of Valencia (Crown of Aragon),” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 87 (2013): 143–69; for Genoa, see Bartolomeo de Bosco, *Consilia* (Lodano, 1620), 493–95, consilium 301.

<sup>15</sup>Ragib, “Les marchés aux esclaves,” 722–23. On this architectural form, see Olivia Remie Constantine, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World* (Cambridge, 2003).

<sup>16</sup>Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-khiṭaṭ wa-al-athār fī Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*, ed. Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid (London, 2002–4), 3:304–5; Sylvie Denoix, Jean-Charles Depaule, and Michel Tuchscherer, *Le Khan al-Khalili et ses environs: Un centre commercial et artisanal au Caire du XIIIe au XXe siècle* (Cairo, 1999), 2:25; Nicholas Warner, *The Monuments of Historic Cairo: A Map and Descriptive Catalogue* (Cairo, 2005), no. 428.



Bāb al-Zuhūmah, previously the gate of the old Fatimid palace and later the gate of the Hanbali hall of the madrasah of al-Ṣāliḥ.<sup>17</sup> The market was moved again almost immediately when a retired palace eunuch named Masrūr purchased the site for a small *khān*, Khān Masrūr al-Ṣaghīr, sometime during the reign of al-Kāmil (1218–38).<sup>18</sup>

The slave market did not move far, however, reappearing next door as part of Masrūr's large *khān*, Khān Masrūr al-Kabīr. Masrūr's large *khān* was built next to his small *khān*, still in the vicinity of Bāb al-Zuhūmah.<sup>19</sup> In the thirteenth century, the large *khān* boasted ninety-nine rooms and a mosque.<sup>20</sup> By the late fourteenth century it was one of the most important *khāns* in Cairo, notable for its many traders from Syria as well as a government office for the deposit of funds for orphans and travelers.<sup>21</sup> It was also famous as a slave market. Either beside the *khān* or among its exterior shops were two rooms with a bench between them. Turkic and Anatolian *mamlūks* (*al-mamālīk al-turuk wa-al-rūm*) sat on the bench to be displayed for potential buyers.<sup>22</sup>

The sultan al-Zāhir Barqūq closed this slave market in the 1380s, and Khān Masrūr went into decline shortly afterwards.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile the slave market shift-

<sup>17</sup>The term used is *ساحة*. Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍah al-bahīyah al-zāhirah fī khitāṭ al-mu'izzīyah al-Qāhirah*, ed. Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid (Beirut, 1996), 25; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-khitāṭ*, 2:431. The Ṣāliḥīyah madrasah is Warner, *Monuments of Historic Cairo*, no. 38.

<sup>18</sup>Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍah al-bahīyah*, 25. Some of the land in question belonged to the author's father. The revenues of the *khān* were used to endow the school established in Masrūr's house after his death. It was renewed in the fourteenth century, incorporated into a *waqf* by al-Ādil Ṭūmānḅāy in the early sixteenth century, then rebuilt as Khān al-Laban in the Ottoman era and as Wakālat Badawīyah bint Shahīn today. Denoix, Depaule, and Tuchscherer, *Le Khan al-Khalili*, 2:30; André Raymond and Gaston Wiet, *Les Marchés du Caire: Traduction annotée du texte de Maqrīzī* (Cairo, 1979), 133–35.

<sup>19</sup>Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-khitāṭ*, 3:304–5; Raymond and Wiet, *Les Marchés du Caire*, 133–35; Denoix, Depaule, and Tuchscherer, *Le Khan al-Khalili*, vol. 2 plate 7. The large *khān* was built on the site of the former Khazānat al-Daraq.

<sup>20</sup>Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍah al-bahīyah*, 25.

<sup>21</sup>Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-khitāṭ*, 3:304–5.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 2:246. This method of displaying slaves was also used in fifteenth-century Bursa. Bertrandon de la Broquière, *The Voyage d'Outremer*, trans. Galen Kline (New York, 1988), 84. There is no evidence that the slaves displayed on the bench were auctioned, despite Ragib, "Les marchés aux esclaves," 756. There is also no evidence that the two benches were used to display male and female slaves separately, despite Raymond and Wiet, *Les Marchés du Caire*, 94–95, and Muḥammad Mukhtar, *Bughīyat al-murīd fī shirā' al-jawārī wa-taqlīb al-'abīd* (Cairo, 1996), 86. In fact, I have found no sign that female slaves were ever sold at Khān Masrūr.

<sup>23</sup>Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-khitāṭ*, 3:304–5, blamed Timur for this, since his devastation of Syria disrupted the activities of the Syrian merchants who normally used Khān Masrūr as their base in Cairo. The large *khān* was demolished in 1428 by al-Ashraf Barsbāy and rebuilt as a *waqf* for



ed to a new district, Khuṭṭ al-Miṣṭāḥ. This market, located near the Madrasah Ḥusāmīyah, was referred to interchangeably as the slave market (*sūq al-raqīq*) and the female slave market (*sūq al-jawārī*).<sup>24</sup> It was a street market on the Darb al-Mushtarak and remained at this location for almost a hundred years.<sup>25</sup> The only hiatus occurred in 1418, when it was moved to an unnamed *funduq* opposite the shrine of al-Ḥusayn.<sup>26</sup> This may have been Funduq Bahādur, founded in 1258 and located across the street (Darb Jirjī) on the western side of the mosque of al-Ḥusayn.<sup>27</sup> A second fifteenth-century street market was found in Khūkhah Sūq al-Jawār, near the madrasah of Sayf al-Islām and the Ḥammām al-Sulṭān.<sup>28</sup> It was referred to interchangeably as a market for slaves and female slaves (*sūq al-raqīq* and *sūq al-jawārī*) and was operational until at least 1471.<sup>29</sup> There may also have been a third fifteenth-century slave market near Madrasah al-Fakhrīyah during the reign of al-Zāhir Jaqmaq.<sup>30</sup>

Towards the end of the Mamluk period, the slave market moved yet again. In November 1514, al-Ashraf Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī closed the old slave market and founded a new one (*sūq lil-raqīq*) on the same street as the temporary slave market of 1418.<sup>31</sup> This may have evolved into Wakālat al-Jallābah, an Ottoman-era street market specializing in black slaves which itself changed location several times

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the benefit of the son of Amir Janibak. Denoix, Depaule, and Tuchscherer, *Le Khan al-Khalili*, 2:8–9; Terence Walz, “Wakalat al-Gallaba: The Market for Sudan Goods in Cairo,” *Annales islamologiques* 13 (1977): 217–45.

<sup>24</sup>Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-khiṭaṭ*, 3:94. The Miṣṭāḥ quarter was located outside the Qanṭarah gate, near the Shaʿrīyah gate, between the Milḥīyin quarter and the Sūwayqah al-Ṣāḥib quarter. Al-Maqrīzī’s description of this market was adopted almost word for word by Āqbughā al-Khāṣikī in his own description of Cairo during the reign of Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī in the early 1500s. Al-Khāṣikī, “Al-Tuḥfah al-fākīrah,” Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale Française MS arabe 2265, fol. 40v.

<sup>25</sup>Al-Khāṣikī, “Al-Tuḥfah al-fākīrah,” fol. 54r; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-khiṭaṭ*, 3:127; al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʿ al-lāmiʿ*, 10:159, no. 643. The street was named after the *ṣilāḥdār* of al-Zāhir Barqūq who died in 821/1418.

<sup>26</sup>Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk*, ed. M. M. Ziyadah and Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿAshūr (Cairo, 1934–73), 4:1:442. The shrine was in the same location as the present mosque of al-Ḥusayn. Warner, *Monuments of Historic Cairo*, no. 28.

<sup>27</sup>Denoix, Depaule, and Tuchscherer, *Le Khan al-Khalili*, 2:52–53.

<sup>28</sup>Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-khiṭaṭ*, 3:268.

<sup>29</sup>Alī ibn Dawūd ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *Inbāʾ al-ḥaṣr bi-ibnāʾ al-ʿaṣr*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1970), 379, 383, and 396. He refers the reader to al-Maqrīzī’s description cited in the previous footnote.

<sup>30</sup>Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʿ al-lāmiʿ*, 3:72. The madrasah might have been located in the mosque of ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Fakhrī built in 1418. Warner, *Monuments of Historic Cairo*, no.184. Today it is located on Shārīʿ Port Saʿīd, just south of its intersection with Shārīʿ al-Azhar and north of the Islamic Museum, on the east side of the street.

<sup>31</sup>Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr* (Cairo, 1984), 4:404–5 and 5:94; Denoix, Depaule, and Tuchscherer, *Le Khan al-Khalili*, 52.



while keeping the same name.<sup>32</sup> White slaves were sold in the Wakālat al-Kushuk and Khān Jaʿfar during the Ottoman era.<sup>33</sup> Markets with these names have been attributed to the Mamluk era as well, but there is no mention of them in contemporary sources.<sup>34</sup> The Ottoman pattern of separate markets for black and white slaves, or for male and female slaves, was not characteristic of the Mamluk era either.

However, not all slaves were sold in the context of an organized market. Some were displayed for sale in public places, such as the entrances of mosques and churches, or were led through the streets by criers.<sup>35</sup> Others were sold in private spaces such as homes and shops. For example, when the young Ayyubid ruler of Aleppo, al-Manṣūr Muḥammad, wanted to buy a slave in the early thirteenth century, a merchant visited his house with a selection of slaves so that he and his mother could inspect them from behind a veil or screen.<sup>36</sup> In the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, al-Muʿayyad Shaykh was playing cards with a group of friends when a slave merchant appeared with a particularly fine *mamlūk* for sale.<sup>37</sup> A private sale environment seems to have been the prerogative of wealthy buyers and a privilege granted to elite slaves, who thus avoided the humiliation of public display.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, the majority of slaves were sold in noisy, bustling public markets. In an environment full of distractions, how was an ordinary, non-expert slave buyer to take full advantage of his or her right to inspect the goods and avoid fraud? How was he or she to decide whether a slave was truly in good health and

<sup>32</sup>Ola Rashad Seif, “The Khan al-Khalili District: Development, Topography and Context from the 12th to the 21st Century” (M.A. thesis, American University in Cairo, 2005), 54; Walz, “Wakalat al-Gallaba”; ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī, *‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī’s History of Egypt*, trans. Thomas Philipp and Moshe Perlmann (Stuttgart, 1994), 2:314; Raymond and Wiet, *Les Marchés du Caire*, Appendix II.

<sup>33</sup>Marcel Clerget, *Le Caire, étude de géographie urbaine et d’histoire économique* (Cairo, 1934), 2:343, citing eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources. On Clerget’s map (2:145), the various locations of Wakālat al-Jallābah are numbers 36, 124, and 291; Khān Jaʿfar is number 52; and Wakālat al-Kushuk does not appear.

<sup>34</sup>Mukhtar, *Bughīyat al-murīd*, 85; Naʿīm Zakkī Fahmī, *Ṭuruq al-tijārah al-dawliyah wa-muḥaṭātuhā bayna al-sharq wa-al-gharb* (Cairo, 1973), 224.

<sup>35</sup>Ragib, “Les marchés aux esclaves,” 723–24.

<sup>36</sup>Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfi wa-al-mustawfā baʿd al-wāfi*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn and Saʿīd ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ ‘Āshūr (Cairo, 1986), 3:447–67, no. 717. Also *ibid.*, 4:68, no. 769.

<sup>37</sup>Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*, ed. William Popper (Berkeley, 1909), 6:374.

<sup>38</sup>Clerget, *Le Caire*, 344; Adam Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, trans. Salahuddin Khuda Bakhsh and D. S. Margoliouth (Patna, 1937), 160.



able to provide whatever services the buyer had in mind? Ibn al-Akfānī's response to this dilemma is given in Arabic in Appendix A and in English translation in Appendix B.

His advice can be summed up in six points. First, avoid inspecting slaves when in a state of need or desire, since buyers experiencing urgent need tend not to be concerned about quality.<sup>39</sup> Second, avoid choosing a slave on the basis of first impressions, since they may be misleading. Third, disregard statements from the previous owner about the quality of the slave, but do ask about the reason for the sale. Fourth, avoid slaves who resist punishment and who may have been corrupted by a poor environment. Fifth, purchase slave women only during their menstrual period in order to ensure that they are not concealing a pregnancy, and do not forget after purchase that they might wish to become pregnant. This is a reference to *umm walad* status.<sup>40</sup> A pregnant slave woman would become an *umm walad* if her master acknowledged paternity of her child. The child of an *umm walad* would enjoy free status from the moment of its birth and would be considered a legitimate heir of its father. The *umm walad* herself could not be sold and would be manumitted upon the death of her master.

Ibn al-Akfānī's final piece of advice was a checklist for a thorough head-to-toe inspection of the slave's body in order to detect any hint of injury or disease. Since the surviving manuscript copy is incomplete, the checklist covers only the area from the head to the arms. Nevertheless, a buyer who worked through Ibn al-Akfānī's checklist would be well-informed about the slave's physical state of health and thus well-equipped to avoid fraud, negotiate a fair price, and conclude a valid sale with respect to the requirement for viewing and cognizance of the goods.

Yet Ibn al-Akfānī's manual cannot be taken at face value as a description of how prospective slave buyers acted in the marketplace. Slave-buying advice is a normative genre, telling slave buyers what they ought to do rather than describing what they actually did. To check the accuracy of Ibn al-Akfānī's portrayal of the slave marketplace, his treatise should be compared with sources from two other genres, one normative and one descriptive. The normative genre of *ḥisbah* manuals, manuals for market inspectors, set forth guidelines for the sale of slaves based on legal rather than medical principles. *Ḥisbah* manuals were written by jurists to help the market inspector (*muḥtasib*), a state official, carry out his legal and moral duty "to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong" in the marketplace and other public spaces.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, the descriptive genre of the travel

<sup>39</sup>Al-ʿAyntābī, *Al-Qawl al-sadīd*, 38 specifies this desire as sexual, but Ibn al-Akfānī does not.

<sup>40</sup>Marmon, "Domestic Slavery in the Mamluk Empire," 4.

<sup>41</sup>"تأمرون بالمعروف وتنهون عن المنكر." Quran 3:110, quoted in Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab* (Cairo, 1964–92), 6:296. The duties of a *muḥtasib* are explained in Jonathan



narrative recorded the observations of Mamluk society made by visitors from other parts of the world for the entertainment and edification of their readers.

The comparison between slave-buying advice manuals and *ḥisbah* manuals quickly reveals that although both were normative genres, they were not always in agreement about what the norms for slave-buying were. The two most important surviving Mamluk *ḥisbah* manuals, *The Utmost Authority in the Pursuit of Ḥisbah* by Ibn Bassām and *The Guideposts of Piety in the Principles of Ḥisbah* by Ibn al-Ukhūwah, date from the first half of the fourteenth century.<sup>42</sup> Both were based on *The Utmost Authority in the Pursuit of Ḥisbah* by al-Shayzarī, a Syrian market inspector with medical expertise who wrote during the twelfth century and whose treatise was still being copied in the fourteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

*Ḥisbah* manuals tended to focus on different aspects of slave market procedure than slave-buying advice manuals. In keeping with their legal and moral aims, *ḥisbah* manuals emphasized the enforcement of the law governing slave sales.<sup>44</sup> Muslims were not to be sold as slaves. Children and slave converts to Islam were not to be sold to non-Muslims. Young children were not to be separated from their mothers. Slave brokers were to check the terms of previous sale contracts for each slave in case any conditions had been placed on his or her resale. They were also to keep a register of their transactions in case of dispute.<sup>45</sup> All of these areas were outside the purview of the slave-buying advice manuals, which tended to assume that the slaves available in the market were legal to buy. Likewise, *ḥisbah* manuals did not concern themselves with common sense advice, ethnography, or ethical and political commentary because choosing and training the right slave for the right purpose had no bearing on the legality of the sale.

The area where the two genres overlapped and contradicted one another was the physical inspection process. *Ḥisbah* manuals expected that brokers would assist the slave buyer in carrying out the physical inspection. Either the broker

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Berkey, “The Muhtasibs of Cairo under the Mamluks: Towards an Understanding of an Islamic Institution,” in *Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, ed. Michael Winter and Amalia Levanoni (Leiden, 2004), 245–76.

<sup>42</sup>Ibn Bassām, *Nihāyat al-rutbah fī ṭalab al-ḥisbah*, ed. Husām al-Dīn al-Sāmarrāʿī (Baghdad, 1968), 149–52; Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Ukhūwah, *Maʿālim al-qurbah fī aḥkām al-ḥisbah*, ed. Reuben Levy (London, 1938), 50. Aḥmad ibn Taymiyah, *Al-Ḥisbah fī al-Islām*, ed. Muḥammad Mubārak (Cairo, 1967), from the same era does not include a chapter on slaves.

<sup>43</sup>Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Naṣr al-Shayzarī, *The Book of the Islamic Market Inspector: Nihāyat al-Rutbah fī Ṭalab al-Ḥisba: (the Utmost Authority in the Pursuit of Ḥisba)*, ed. R. P. Buckley (Oxford, 1999), v. This edition is based on a manuscript produced in Egypt in 711/1310–11.

<sup>44</sup>Ibn Bassām, *Nihāyat al-rutbah*, 149–50; Ibn al-Ukhūwah, *Maʿālim al-qurbah*, 20, 50, 57.

<sup>45</sup>No Mamluk registers have survived, but from the Fatimid era we have D. S. Richards, “Fragments of a Slave Dealer’s Day-Book from Fustat,” in *Documents de l’Islam médiéval*, ed. Yusuf Ragib (Cairo, 1991), 89–96.



himself “must be well acquainted with faults and experienced in incipient illnesses and diseases,” or else “let him turn concerning that to those who know about temperaments and constitutions.”<sup>46</sup> According to the *shurūṭ* manuals which provided scribes with model documents and legal formulas, if a slave was sold with known faults, “it is important that he [the scribe drawing up the contract] enumerate [each] fault, and that the doctors testify concerning it that is a fault.”<sup>47</sup> Inspection of the shame zones of male slaves—the area between the navel and the knees—was entirely forbidden.<sup>48</sup> The shame zones of female slaves—the entire body except for the face, hands, and sometimes the feet and forearms—could not be inspected in public. However, because male ownership of a female slave included the right to have sex with her, the condition of her shame zones was considered relevant to the sale. Therefore a male buyer was permitted to inspect a female slave’s entire body in a private space and in the presence of other women.<sup>49</sup> Doctors were allowed to examine the shame zones of men and women in private as part of their medical practice, and they may have done so on behalf of the slave buyer as well, although there is no definite evidence for this.<sup>50</sup>

Slave-buying manuals contradicted *ḥisbah* manuals by advising slave buyers to inspect the shame zones of both male and female slaves publicly. *The Book of Observation* specifically recommended examining male slaves for hardness or roughness in the area between the navel and the penis, a direct violation of the *ḥisbah* guidelines.<sup>51</sup> It also advised against buying a slave woman except during her menstrual period. Unfortunately, the surviving text ends before the section where one would expect details on inspecting the female body, including how to determine whether a woman was menstruating or pregnant. *Inspection in Slave-buying* and *The Apt Statement* both give instructions for inspecting the entire female body with respect to general health, menstruation, pregnancy, and wet nursing. This suggests that the missing portion of *The Book of Observation* would also have advocated for inspection of the entire female body, but it is impossible to be sure. In any case, the *ḥisbah* manuals indicate that doctors should not publicly examine the naked bodies of slaves or advise non-doctors on how to do so, while the slave-buying advice manuals recommend the opposite.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Shayzarī, *The Book of the Islamic Market Inspector*, 103; “يستعان عليها بالذين يعرفون الامزجة وطبائها” Ibn Bassām, *Nihāyat al-rutbah*, 152.

<sup>47</sup> “مهما كان يعد عيبا، وتشهد به الأطباء أنه عيبا.” al-Jarawānī, *Al-Kawkab al-mushriq*, 73.

<sup>48</sup> Johansen, “Valorization of the Human Body,” 75 and 78–80, explains the concept of shame zones. Ibn Bassām, *Nihāyat al-rutbah*, 149, forbids their inspection.

<sup>49</sup> Ottoman markets made use of nearby houses for private inspection. Ragib, “Les marchés aux esclaves,” 738.

<sup>50</sup> Ragib, “Les marchés aux esclaves,” 747.

<sup>51</sup> See fol. 149v in the appendix to this article.



In practice, did Mamluk slave buyers publicly inspect the shame zones of slaves (in accordance with slave-buying advice) or not (in accordance with the *ḥisbah* manuals)? Travel narratives indicate that the slave-buying advice prevailed. Detailed descriptions of slave inspections are rare in Arabic travel narratives, perhaps because they were too ordinary to be noted. The best description was composed by Ibn al-Mujāwir, who visited the slave market of Aden in the early thirteenth century, around the same time as the anonymous slave-buying advice manual *Inspection in Slave-Buying* was written. According to Ibn al-Mujāwir:

The slave girl is fumigated with an aromatic smoke, perfumed, adorned and a waist-wrapper fastened round her middle. The seller takes her by the hand and walks around the souk with her; he calls out that she is for sale. The wicked merchants appear, examining her hands, feet, calves, thighs, navel, chest and breasts. He examines her back and measures her buttocks in spans. He examines her tongue, teeth, hair and spares no effort. If she is wearing clothes, he takes them off; he examines and looks. Finally he casts a direct eye over her vagina and anus, without her having on any covering or veil.<sup>52</sup>

Ibn al-Mujāwir's description suggests that the slave-buying manuals which advised public examination of the shame zones were closer to the reality of inspection than the *ḥisbah* manuals.

A second description of a slave inspection comes from a visitor to Alexandria in the late Mamluk period. Felix Fabri, born Felix Schmidt in Zurich in the 1430s, served for much of his life as prior of the Dominican convent of Ulm in Schwabia.<sup>53</sup> His duties required frequent travel in Germany and Italy, but he also made time for two pilgrimages to Jerusalem, the first in 1480 and the second from April

<sup>52</sup>English translation from Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mujāwir, *A Traveler in Thirteenth-Century Arabia: Ibn al-Mujāwir's Tārīkh al-mustabṣir*, ed. G. Rex Smith (Aldershot, 2008), 162. Arabic text from Oscar Löfgren, *Arabische Texte zur Kenntnis der Stadt Aden im Mittelalter* (Uppsala, 1936), 1:66.

تَبَخَّرَ الجارية وتطَيَّبَ وتعَدَلَّ ويشدُّ وسطها بمغزٍ ويأخذ المنادى بيدها ويدور بها في السوق وينادى عليها ويحضر التجار الفجار يقبلون يدها ورجلها وساقها وأفخاذها و سرحها و صدرها ونحدها ويقلب ظهرها ويشير عجزها ويقلب لسانها وأسنانها وشعرها ويبدل المجهود وإن كان عليها ثياب خلعها وقلب وأبصر وفي آخر الأمر يقلب فرجها وجحرها معاينة من غير ستر ولا حجاب

<sup>53</sup>Kathryne Beebe, *Pilgrim & Preacher: The Audiences and Observant Spirituality of Friar Felix Fabri (1437/8–1502)* (Oxford, 2014); Nicole Chareyron and Jean Meyers, eds., *Les errances de Frère Félix, pèlerin en Terre sainte, en Arabie et en Egypte (1480–1483)* (Montpellier, 2000), ix–xxxii; Wieland Carls, *Felix Fabri, Die Sionpilger* (Berlin, 1999), 53–62. Bernhard von Breydenbach, who also wrote a lengthy travel narrative, was one of Fabri's companions on his second pilgrimage. Bernhard von Breydenbach, *Sanctarum peregrinationum in montem Syon ad Christi sepulcrum in Hierusalem* (Speyer, 1502).



1483 to January 1484. In the course of his second pilgrimage, Fabri visited Sinai, Cairo, and Alexandria as well as Jerusalem. He then wrote three narratives of his pilgrimage experiences (*Das gereimte Pilgerbüchlein* in rhyming German verse, *Evagatorium* in Latin, and an abridged version of *Evagatorium* in German) as well as a contemplative guidebook for nuns in his spiritual care who could not make the physical journey to Jerusalem, a treatise on the history of Ulm, and an assortment of sermons and theological treatises. Although he hoped to return to the Holy Land a third time, Fabri died and was buried in Ulm in 1502.

*Evagatorium* was the longest of Fabri's travel narratives. He began writing immediately upon his return from Egypt in 1484 using notes which he had taken during his pilgrimage, and he was still revising it in 1488.<sup>54</sup> This makes it roughly contemporary with *The Apt Statement*, al-'Ayntābi's fifteenth-century slave-buying advice manual. Fabri's narrative was intended for a learned audience of fellow Dominicans who could appreciate its philosophical references as well as its dramatic anecdotes. He described the Tatar *funduq* in Alexandria as follows:

We stood for some time in this sorrowful market and saw the mournful, or rather terrifying, handling of people. For when a person wants to buy a person, male or female, he enters the building and considers those for sale, which [of them] pleases him. In that consideration are those with the best eyes and most expertise, for there is no doctor or physician who can be compared to them in recognizing the complexions and conditions of people; for immediately, as they look into the face of someone, they recognize of what value, skill, or fortune he may be. If it is a boy, he knows, as he looks at him, for what he may be suitable. Thus they also have such diligence in recognizing the natures and conditions of horses, so that they may seem to have attained all the skill of the medical art to the full, for they immediately discern in one single look all his flaws and achievements, and of what use, age, and value he may be. For they are entirely free from other speculative medical arts, nor is it a question with them of the soul or its capacities, passions, and habits, nor do they ask about its infusion or its union with the body. But, however, in the aforementioned [matter] they are skilled beyond all natural philosophers and physicians, as much in the inspection of animals as of humans. Therefore when anyone wanting to buy a person considers one pleasing to him, he extends a hand into the heap, and leads out a pleasing female or male and appraises [her or him] for buying in various ways, speak-

<sup>54</sup>Chareyron and Meyers, eds., *Les errances de Frère Félix*, xxx.



ing to him and hearing whether the answer is rational. He looks in his eyes, whether they are good and right; whether he hears well; he touches; and then he also strips [him] of his clothes, noting all the members. He considers how modest [he is], how timid, how happy, how sad, how healthy and whole. There, which is shameful to say, the genitals of males and females are handled and openly shown in the presence of all. Also, nude and cut by whips, they are compelled to march, run, walk, and jump in the presence of all, so that it becomes manifestly clear which are sick or healthy, male or female, virgin or corrupt. If they see them blush, they take up position around them striking more, cutting with sticks, buffeting with fists, so that he would do thus in a forced manner what he blushed to do voluntarily in the presence of all.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>“Aliquamdiu stetimus in hoc funesto foro et lamentabiles, imo horribiles hominum contrectationes vidimus. Nam dum homo vult emere hominem, masculum aut foemellam, intrat domum et considerat venales, quis sibi placeat, et in illa consideratione sunt oculatissimi et expertissimi, non enim est medicus aut physicus, qui valeat eis comparari in cognoscendis complexionibus et conditionibus hominum; immediate enim, ut in faciem alicujus inspexerint, cujus sit valoris, artis vel fortunae cognoscunt, et si puer est, scit, ut eum inspicit, ad quod habilis sit. Sic etiam in cognoscendis equorum naturis et conditionibus tantam habent industriam, ut videantur omnem physicae artis peritiam ad plenum consecuti, ad unum enim unicum respectum omnes ejus defectus et profectus, et cujus sit utilitatis, aetatis et valoris immediate discernunt. Aliis enim artibus speculativis physicalibus omnino carent, nec est apud eos quaestio de anima aut ejus potentiis, passionibus et habitibus, nec quaerunt de ejus infusione aut unione ejus cum corpore. Sed tamen in praedicto sunt super omnes naturales et physicos periti, tam in inspectione bestiarum quam hominum. Dum ergo aliquis hominem emere volens considerat sibi placentem, extendit manum in cumulum, et placentem foemellam vel masculum educit et variis modis probat emendum, loquitur ei et audit responsum, si rationabile. Respicit ei in oculos, an bonos et rectos habet, an bene audiat, tentat, et demum etiam vestimentis denudat notans omnia membra, quam verecundas, quam timidus, quam laetus, quam tristis considerat, quam sanus et integer. Ibi, quod pudor dictu, masculorum et foeminarum pudenda coram omnibus contrectantur et manifesto ostenduntur, nudi etiam compelluntur caesi flagellis coram omnibus incedere, currere, ambulare et saltare, ut manifeste appareat, utrum infirmus vel sanus, masculus vel foemella, virgo aut corrupta. Et si quos viderint erubescere, circa illos magis instant impellendo, virgis caedendo, colaphisando, ut sic coacte faciat, quod sponte erubuit coram omnibus facere.” Felix Fabri, *Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti peregrinationem*, ed. Conrad Hassler (Stuttgart, 1843–49), 18:165. The same slave market was described in less detail by other late fifteenth-century pilgrims: von Breydenbach, *Sanctarum peregrinationum*, fol. 88r; Arnold von Harff, *The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff*, trans. Malcolm Letts (London, 1946), 95; Joos van Ghistele, *Voyage en Egypte de Joos Van Ghistele, 1482–1483*, ed. Renée Bauwens-Préaux (Cairo, 1976), 21. A fifteenth-century traveler in Damascus described a slave woman being cried for sale in the street wearing nothing above her waist. De la Broquière, *The Voyage d’Outremer*, 84.



The stages of inspection observed by Fabri at the slave market in Alexandria correspond roughly to those recommended by Ibn al-Akfānī. The overall process, which Fabri referred to as handling (*contrectatio*), began with a general survey of the slaves offered for sale. This survey, which Fabri called consideration (*consideratio*), was conducted at a distance and based on knowledge of physiognomy. Once the buyer had settled on a slave, he reached into the crowd and extracted the one he had selected for a second and more comprehensive appraisal (*probat emendum*, literally testing the thing to be bought). This stage included public viewing and touching of the slave's naked body. If, having completed the second inspection, the buyer found the slave to be satisfactory, he met with the seller to discuss the price. This description makes clear that the slave-buying manuals' advice to inspect the shame zones prevailed over the *muḥtasib*'s responsibility to prevent it. It also illustrates the dangers that threatened slaves who attempted to resist the slave-buying process: those who balked at the humiliating public inspection of their naked bodies were beaten until they complied.

A second anecdote from Felix Fabri's narrative drives home the role of humiliation in the inspection process. Fabri's guide in Cairo, a *mamlūk* of Hungarian origin, pretended to offer the travelers for sale in the slave market as a joke. Fabri describes the experience as follows:

We came into a market in which many people were held for sale, youths and children of both sexes, black and white, female and male. However, with us standing in that market with our *mamlūk*, many thought that our *mamlūk* had us for sale and that he was a merchant, whence many hurried to see us. Finally one came on a horse, a big man, and asked our *mamlūk* what price we four were. "I," he said, "will buy those four, and I will give a sufficient price. Say how much seems just to you." The *mamlūk* responded to him, "In this market no one will give me a sufficient price for these four slaves; for they are without flaw, whole and healthy. Therefore I will send them to Alexandria, and there they will be led to overseas parts, where the prices are higher." The Saracen was not content with this response and produced ten ducats from his bag, obviously wanting to give ten for each without an appraisal so that he would sell them to him. During this a great rush was made towards us because, when anyone buys a person, many hurry in order to see the price and the appraisal. Thus with great delight we stood for sale;



and when the Saracen perceived us happy and laughing with the *mamlūk*, he understood that we were not for sale and went away.<sup>56</sup>

The fact that Fabri and his traveling companions were identified as free because of their cheerful demeanor implies that the misery of genuine slaves in the market was evident to their buyers and sellers. It is also revealing that the *mamlūk* guide was willing to haggle with a prospective buyer as part of the joke, but that the mock sale stopped as soon as bystanders gathered to watch the appraisal. Apparently public physical inspection and not haggling was the aspect of sale that would have offended the honor of the travelers as free men. The Hungarian *mamlūk* guide, himself a slave or former slave from a Latin Christian background similar to that of the travelers, would have undergone the full sale process at least once and would have known where to draw the line.

This analysis of the slave-buying process as depicted in Mamluk-era slave-buying advice manuals, *hisbah* manuals, and travel narratives has shown that the advice of physicians carried more weight in Mamluk slave markets than the advice of jurists. The more intrusive inspection recommended by physicians such as Ibn al-Akfānī not only enabled buyers to carry out the legal requirement of viewing and cognizance with great thoroughness, but also humiliated slaves and made them more tractable by publicly displaying their powerlessness and dishonor. The less intrusive inspection advocated by jurists permitted the slave to retain some vestiges of honor, but it did not reinforce the extreme power differential on which the institution of slavery was based, nor did it fulfill the buyer's desire to gather as much information about the goods as possible before committing to a purchase. The significance of the slave's nakedness in the marketplace is not apparent, however, without this comparative perspective.

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<sup>56</sup>“In forum venimus, in quo venales habebantur multi homines, juvenes et pueri utriusque sexus, nigri et albi, foemellae et masculi. Stantibus autem nobis in illo foro cum nostro Mamalucis aestimabant multi, quod Mamalucus noster venales nos haberet et quod mercator esset, unde multi accurrebant ad videndum nos, tandem venit unus in equo, homo magnus, et interrogavit Mamalucum nostrum, quanti pretii essemus nos quatuor? Ego, inquit, hos quatuor emam, et sufficiens pretium dabo, exprime, quantum tibi justum videtur. Cui respondit Mamalucus: in hoc foro nemo dabit mihi sufficiens pretium pro illis quatuor sclavis; sunt enim sine defectu, integri et sani, mittam ergo eos Alexandriam, et ibi ducentur ad transmarinas partes, ubi magni pretii erunt. Hac responsione non fuit contentus Sarracenus, et produxit de pera sua X ducatos, volens in promptu sine proba emendorum dare pro quolibet decem, ut sibi eos dimitteret. Inter haec magnus fuit concursus factus ad nos, quia, quando aliquis emit hominem, accurrunt multi, ut pretium et appetitatum videant. Cum magna jucunditate sic stetimus venales: et dum Sarracenus cerneret nos laetos et corridentes Mamalucis, consideravit nos non esse venales et abiit.” Fabri, *Evagatorium*, 18:36–37. Fabri also saw Tatar slaves sold at auction in Cairo. *Ibid.*, 18:40.



## Appendix A: Ibn al-Akfānī, *Kitāb al-naẓar wa-al-tahqīq fī taqlīb al-raqīq*

[fol. 148r]

كتاب النظر والتحقيق في تغليب الرقيق لابن الأكفاني تغمده برحمته الله.

[fol. 148v]

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم. يقول العبد الفقير إلى الله تعالى الواحد البارئ، محمد ابن إبراهيم ابن ساعد الأنصاري رحمه الله: الحمد لله الذي حق حمده وصلواته على سيدنا محمد خير خلقه وعلى آله وصحبه. هذه رسالة مختصرة في تغليب الرقيق وتأمل أحواله. وصنعتها امتثال الامر من وجبت طاعته علي لسالف إحسانه إلي. قال يجب أن يكون المستعرض لصنف من الرقيق غير مضطر إليه، فإن الجائع يستطيب كل طعام والعريان يستجيد كل ثوب. ولا تقطع بأول نظرة فإن لها روعة. ولا تشغل بتأمل ملبوس أو زينة، فإنه ربما يدهش. ولا تعتبر بأول حديث تسمعه بسيده الأول أو ذمه إياه. وتساءل عن سبب بيعه. وتحذر شري من تمرد على الضرب والخصومة. واعلم أن الرقيق بأول وهلة إن أطمع طمع وإن كف انقمع، ومتى خالط فاسدا فسد. والحدرد  
[احذر]

[fol. 149r]

من حمل الجوارى، فرما أخفينه وجئن بدم كذب. كما تحذر من مكرهن بعد الملك في الحمل، فإنه ربما ألجهن بعضهن كراهة الحمل مع الرغبة فيه. ولا تخون لبائع جارته أن تخرجها إلا في دم لأحمال ما يطراً عليها بعد. فأول ما يسعى النظر إليه من الرقيق القدر والقوام وتناسب الاعضاء. ثم تنظر إلى اللون فإن الحائل المائل إلى الصفرة دال على ضعف الكبد، إن قارنه غلظ أو حشاة أو صلابة في الجانب الأيسر مما تحت الاضلاع أو على غلبة الصفراء. إن قارنه شقرة والحائل إلى الكمودة، دال على آفة في الطحال، إن قارنه غلظ أو حشاة أو صلابة في الجانب الأيسر مما تحت الاضلاع أو على غلبة السوداء، إن قارنه قُطرب في الوجه. والعاجي دال على قلة الدم والروح وغلبة البلغم أو ضعف المعدة

[fol. 149v]

إن قارنه هزال البدن. وصلابة ما بين السرة والقضيب أو غلظ سوداء. وأفضل الألوان وأعد لها الصافي في البياض المشرب بجمرة. وهذا في البيض. وأما السمرة، فالصافي منها والسوداء الحالك البراق. ثم تنظر إلى خلو البشرة عن البهق والبرص والنمش والوسم والقوباء والتآليل وكبي النار وأثار القروح في الوجه وسائر الجسد. واعلم أنه ربما ضيع البهق والبرص بالشيطرج والخلل وغسله بالخل والأشنان المكوي يكشفه. ثم تنظر إلى الرأس ومنايته الصدر والعنق فإن عظمه مع دقة العنق وضيق الصدر رديء. وتنظر إلى شكله لئلا يكون مشوهاً، وأن يكون الشعر رجلاً غير مصبوغ ولا متقصف ولا متمرط ولا به داء الثعلب

و[داء] الحية أو سعة أو بعضه أبيض أو بين منابته خلل كثير أو آثار قروح أو قشور كالنخالة. ثم تنظر إلى ما عين رميه من الفضول أو جاحظتين أو غائرتين أو حركتهما مضطربة



[fol. 150r]

وبسواد أحدهما زرقة أو بياضهما كدر أو جامد أو تميل إلى الصفرة أو ظاهر العروق أو لحفهما ظفرة. بل تكونان معتدلتين السواد صافية البياض ملوَّزتين عدلتين. وتتفقد أحفانها لثلا تكونا غليظة أو خشنة أو مسترخية أو بأحدهما تناثر أو انقلاب إلى داخل أو بأحدهما بياض أو بحما جنون ويعم على المآق الأكبر. فإن ظهر [ت] منه رطوبة، فيه ناصور. وتعتبر نظرها إلى الأشياء الدقيقة والبعيدة وحالهما في الشمس. ثم تنظر إلى الأذن في الضوء الشديد لثلا يكون بحما سدة أو ثؤلول أو لحم زائد أو سدة. وتعتبر بسمعهما في الصوت الحفي وسرعة الجواب. ثم تنظر إلى الأنف كذلك لثلا يكون به قروح أو بواسير أو لحم زائد أو سدة. وتعتبر حاله بإدراك المشمومات الضعيفة وخلو الصوت عن الغنة. ثم تنظر إلى اللسان لثلا يكون عظيماً أو صغيراً جداً أو قد ذهب منه جزؤ بالعض في صدع. بل تختار المعتدل المقدار الرقيق الأحمر الصافي

[fol. 150v]

السريع الحركة. ويكره الأبرص والأصفر [ر] والأسود والخشني لدالتهما على أخلاط رديئة في المعدة. ثم تنظر إلى الأسنان في كمالها وصحتها وبياض لونها وخلوها عن الحفر والمآكل والقيح. وتعتبر اللون والعفن وما فقد منها قبل ألا يغير فإنه يعود دون ما بعده. ثم تتفقد اللثة لثلا تكون حامية أو عفنة أو متقلصة. وتنظر إلى اللهاة لثلا تكون واردة أو مسترخية. ثم تسمع صوتها لثلا يكون أبح أو أغن. ثم تستنكه لثلا يكون انخراً أو حاد النفس. وما كان من تغير الرائحة سببه من الفم يرجى برؤه، وما كان من المعدة فلا برؤه. وتستنشق رائحة الأنف. ثم تتأمل اللوزتين والنغانغ لثلا يكون هناك خنازيراً أو أثرها. ثم تنظر إلى الصدر لثلا يكون ضيقاً أو معوجاً أو بارز الجزء الطائر وإلا قليل اللحم. ثم تنظر إلى الأكتاف لثلا تكون مجنحة ولا مختلفة الوضع. ثم تنظر إلى اليدين لثلا تكونا ذوا قصيرتين أو مختلفي المقدار. ولا يكون المرفق منهلاً إنثناء بغير التواء ولا ورم ولا تشنج. وإن يكون لهما

[fol. 151r]

ورم رقيق مستطيل كأنه دودة فأنه يدل على العروق المديني. وتعتبر قوتها بالقبض الشديد. ثم يتفقد تحت الإبطين.



## Appendix B: Ibn al-Akfānī, *The Book of Observation and Inspection in the Examination of Slaves*

[fol. 148r]

The book of observation and inspection in the examination of slaves by Ibn al-Akfānī, may God cover him with His grace.

[fol. 148v]

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. The humble servant, Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Sā'id al-Anṣārī, may God have mercy upon him, says to God Almighty, the One, the Creator: praise be to God whose praise is true, and His blessings upon our lord Muḥammad, whose character is excellent, and upon his family and his companions. This is a brief treatise about the examination of the slave and the consideration of his conditions. I produced it, obeying the order from its compliance enjoined on me because of the past of his beneficence towards me.

[Ibn al-Akfānī] said that it is necessary for the [slave] inspected to be of a kind of slave which [the buyer] does not need, since the hungry person finds all food delicious and the naked person finds all clothing excellent. Do not decide at first glance, since there is confusion [in that]. Do not be preoccupied by consideration of clothing or adornment, since it may perplex [you]. Do not consider the first report that you hear from his first master, or any criticism of his. Ask about the reason for his sale. Beware of buying one who rebels against beating and argument. Know that if the slave is tempted, he becomes covetous at once, and if he is restrained, he becomes subdued, and when he associates with a corrupt [person], he becomes corrupt.

Beware

[fol. 149r]

of the pregnancy of slave women, since they may hide it and bring forth blood which deceives.<sup>57</sup> Also beware of their cunning concerning pregnancy after taking possession [of them], since some of them may make themselves stubborn with hatred of pregnancy despite the desire for it. Do not be misled by the seller of his slave woman to take her away except during blood because of whatever pregnancies might befall her later on.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup>A pregnant slave woman might present the menstrual blood of another woman as her own in order to conceal her pregnancy.

<sup>58</sup>The buyer should not take possession of a slave woman except during her menstrual period. This strategy ensured that she was not pregnant at the time of transfer and that any subsequent



Build, stature, and proportionality of the limbs are what the gaze proceeds to first in the slave. Then look at the color, since wanness inclining towards yellow shows weakness of the liver, if roughness or fullness or hardness on the left side under the ribs or a prevalence of yellow bile accompanies it. If paleness and the inclination towards dullness accompany [the wanness], it shows damage in the spleen, if roughness or fullness or hardness on the left side under the ribs or a prevalence of black bile accompany it, if lupus on the face accompanies it.<sup>59</sup> [The color] ivory shows lack of blood and of spirit, and the prevalence of phlegm, or weakness of the stomach,

[fol. 149v]

if leanness of the body accompanies it. Hardness or roughness of what is between the navel and the penis is black.<sup>60</sup> The best and most balanced of the colors is pure white tinged with red. That is concerning white. As for brown, [the best] is pure [brown] and lustrous pitch black. Then look at the freedom of the skin from vitiligo, leprosy, freckles,<sup>61</sup> brands, scabies, warts, burns from fire, and traces of sores on the face and the body in general. Know that vitiligo and leprosy are made to vanish with *shītaraj* and vinegar;<sup>62</sup> washing it with vinegar and Meccan potash reveals it.

Then look at the head and its roots, the chest and neck, since its size in relation to the thinness of the neck and the narrowness of the chest may be distorted. Look at its form, lest it be deformed, and [that] the hair be straight, not dyed, not broken, and not falling out; without alopecia and ophiasis, or scalp ringworm, or some of it white, or many gaps among its roots, or traces of sores or scabs like bran.

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pregnancies would be the responsibility of the buyer and not the seller. Accurately determining the paternity of a slave woman's child was important because if the father was her master, the slave mother gained *umm walad* status and could not be sold. Thus if it were discovered that a slave woman had been sold while pregnant with the seller's child, the sale would become invalid. Another strategy recommended by jurists was for the buyer to observe a period of *istibrā'*, refraining from sexual intercourse with his newly purchased slave woman for one to three months in order to confirm that she was menstruating and not pregnant. Robert Brunschvig, "Abd," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 1:24–40.

<sup>59</sup> *Quṭrub* can be translated in a number of ways, but a facial rash is one of the distinctive symptoms of lupus.

<sup>60</sup> Black, i.e., bad.

<sup>61</sup> Lentil-shaped spots of various colors on the skin.

<sup>62</sup> *Shītaraj* is an herb.



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Then look at what waste an eye expels,<sup>63</sup> or [whether they are] protruding, or sunken, or their movement is agitated;

[fol. 150r]

and [whether] there is blueness in the pupil of one of them; or their white is cloudy, dry, inclined towards yellowness, or showing veins; or [whether] their eyelids are covering [them]. Rather they should be even of pupil, pure of white, almond-shaped, equal. Check their eyelids, lest they be rough, coarse, or drooping; or with dispersion in one of them; or turned inward; or with whiteness in one of them; or with a covering on them which extends over the larger corners of the eyes.<sup>64</sup> If moisture arises from it, there is a fistula. Examine their vision on small and distant things, and [examine] their condition in the sun.

Then look at the ear in strong light, lest they have an obstruction, a wart, excessive flesh, or an obstruction [sic]. Examine their hearing in a lowered voice and [in] the quickness of the answer.

Then look at the nose, thus, lest it have sores, polyps, excessive flesh, or an obstruction.<sup>65</sup> Examine its condition in perceiving weak scents, and [examine] the freedom of the voice from a nasal buzz.

Then look at the tongue, lest it be big or very small; or [lest there be] a piece which had gone from it with a bite in cracking.<sup>66</sup> Choose rather the proportionate measure, slim, pure red,

[fol. 150v]

quick in movement. Leprousness, yellowness, blackness, and coarseness are repugnant because their indications are of a distorted mixture in the stomach.

Then look at the teeth, concerning their completeness and their health; the whiteness of their color; and their freedom from cavities, wear, and pus.<sup>67</sup> Examine the color and the decay and what [teeth] were lost before, lest it change, since it reverts without what is after it.<sup>68</sup> Then check the gums, lest they be hot or decayed or wrinkled.

<sup>63</sup>The paragraphs about the eyes and ears begin with singular forms (the eye, the ear) but quickly switch to dual forms (the two eyes, the two ears) in Arabic.

<sup>64</sup>The inner corner of the eye next to the nose.

<sup>65</sup>*Bawāsīr*, translated here as polyps, is more usually translated as hemorrhoids.

<sup>66</sup>If slaves habitually used their teeth to crack nuts, for example, they might accidentally bite and injure their tongues in the process.

<sup>67</sup>*Al-ḥafr* can be translated as cavities or as scurvy.

<sup>68</sup>The buyer should check for color, decay, and missing teeth. If any of these qualities changed after sale, the seller might have used fraudulent means to conceal faults in the teeth. Once the fraud began to wear off, the teeth would revert to their actual state.



Look at the uvula, lest it be swollen or drooping. Then listen to its sound, lest it be hoarse or nasal. Then order him to exhale through his mouth in order to smell it, lest he be rotten or sharp of breath. [If] the reason for whatever change of odor there was is from the mouth, his recovery is expected. [If] whatever [change] there was is from the stomach, there is no recovery for him. Sniff the odor of the nose. Then consider the tonsils and the throat, lest there be scrofula or traces of it there. Then look at the chest, lest it be narrow or curved; or protruding from a heavy part; and nothing but meager of flesh. Then look at the shoulders, lest they be sloped or different in position.

Then look at the two hands, lest they have shortness or be different in measure. The elbows should not be curved, [they should] bend without twisting, and [with-out] swelling or spasms. If they have

[fol. 151r]

a thin, elongated swelling as if it were a worm, then it shows Median veins. Examine their strength with a firm grasp. Then check under the armpits.

