MAMLŪK STUDIES REVIEW

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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Rudolf Veselý, 1931-2020 (Photo Courtesy of Jana Součková)

Josef Ženka
Charles University

Rudolf Veselý, 1931–2020

Sadly, Rudolf Veselý, a long-time member of the Department of Middle Eastern Studies of the Faculty of Arts at Charles University, passed away on February 8, 2020, at the age of 88 in Prague, Czech Republic. The scholarly community has lost the founder and pioneer of critical studies of Mamluk chancery manuals and formularies, an expert on Egyptian diplomatics, and an outstanding master of classical Arabic. His students have lost a devoted teacher and fierce champion.

Veselý was born on April 28, 1931, in the East Bohemian city of Hradec Králové but soon afterwards moved to Prague with his parents, Rudolf and Marta. While still in high school, his early interest in entomology stimulated his study of the Arabic language. Indeed, his committment to learning Arabic was primarily motivated by his ardent desire to visit the Middle East to collect beetles, a trip that required a good knowledge of the language.[1]

After World War II, the Oriental Institute in Prague renewed their Arabic language courses and Veselý enrolled in one in 1947. In 1950, after his admission to the Faculty of Science had been denied, he instead joined the Faculty of Arts at Charles University to study Arabic and Persian. His lecturers included, among others, Felix Tauer, Jan Rypka, Rudolf Růžička, and Karel Petráček. He completed his studies in 1955 and successfully defended his diploma thesis on the Ansar Rebellion in Medina in 683 and the Battle of al-Harra. He went straight on to become a lecturer in the Department of Near Eastern and Indian Studies, teaching the reading of Arabic and translation, as well as lecturing in the language school. Later, he succeeded his previous teacher, Felix Tauer, taking over his lecture duties on Middle Eastern History. He intended to continue to focus on early Islamic history and sources in his dissertation, but it was not meant to be. The dramatic changes in Egypt after the accession of President Gamal Abdel Nasser proved to

I am indebted to Jana Součková, Professor Veselý's daughter, for her invaluable help, support of my work, and access to her father's photo archive. My thanks also go to my colleagues Jakub Rumpl, for allowing me to handle and use Veselý's papers, and Eduard Gombár and Jitka Malečková, for details of his life. On Veselý's career, see Ladislav Bareš, "Prof. PhDr. Rudolf Veselý, CSc.," *Pražské egyptologické studie* 24 (2020): 115–17; Luboš Kropáček, "Anniversary: Rudolf Veselý Septuagenarian," *Archiv Orientální* 69 (2001): 511–14; Viktor Bielický, "Prof. Rudolf Veselý—Bibliography (1953–2001)," *Archiv Orientální* 69 (2001): 515–23.

[1]This passion for entomology proved to be lifelong, and he even donated his collection to the National Museum in Prague before he died.

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be the indirect cause of Veselý becoming a specialist on Arab and Egyptian diplomatics.

In the 1950s, the Egyptian Minister of Education, Muṣṭafá Kāmil Murād, decided to drop English as the primary foreign language being taught and instead supported the teaching of other languages. Czech became one of them as it was the dominant mother tongue of fraternal socialist Czechoslovakia. Subsequently, a post teaching the Czech language was established at the Higher School of Languages in Cairo and Veselý was awarded the position in 1958. The totalitarian communist regime, which had ruled in Czechoslovakia since 1948, did not generally allow freedom of travel, so the opportunity to teach in Cairo was the first possibility Veselý had to realize his boyhood dream and visit the Middle East. It also provided him the opportunity to enhance his knowledge of classical Arabic, learn the colloquial language, and obtain practical experience of living in Egyptian society.

He travelled to Cairo in December 1958 following the birth of his only daughter, Jana, in November. He spent his first year in Egypt on his own, and it was only after the summer break of 1959 that he was able to bring his wife, Zdenka, and their daughter back with him to Egypt for the 1959–60 academic year. He briefly returned to Prague to work in 1960 but went back to Cairo in 1962, again with his wife, where they both became lecturers of Czech, tasked specifically with helping Egyptian students to conclude their last year of Czech studies. In April 1963, a decision was made that resulted in some students having to repeat parts of their studies. This translated into an extension of Veselý's stay for one further year. His two stays in Egypt proved to be an invaluable source for his teaching and provided personal experiences that he fondly recalled for the rest of his life. He loved teaching Arabic and was always keen to help his students in Prague as well as in Cairo. Indeed, his passion for teaching stayed with him throughout his entire career.

In Cairo, he lived in Heliopolis and remembered his walks in the area, and the locals who took him in, with great affection. His family employed an Egyptian nanny and he liked to tell stories about his daughter learning colloquial Arabic from her so well that she was able to speak it in the 1990s when his son-in-law, Jan Souček, was working as a lecturer of Czech at Ain Shams University. On another occasion, he told us how he overheard a piece of classical poetry being recited in Heliopolis and realized that his knowledge of poetry and his vocabulary were so advanced that he was able to comprehend it without any help. We were able to observe this for ourselves many years later in his courses on Arabic and Mamluk poetry and poetics, courses that he continued to teach year after year, and which he clearly loved. His knowledge of classical Arabic vocabulary was absolutely phenomenal. He knew many obscure words and their multiple meanings. This

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was a great help in his work with manuscript materials, and it helped many of us in translation situations that would, without his assistance, have proved impenetrable for us.

While in Egypt, Veselý began collecting material for his dissertation thesis. Initially he wanted to focus on the period of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt and the first decades of Ottoman rule that could be found in narrative sources. An encounter with Professor ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Ibrāhīm of Cairo University in Giza, himself a pioneer in studies of Mamluk documents from the Cairo archives, turned his interest to diplomatics. They met during Veselý's first stay in Egypt and Ibrāhīm pointed out to him all the documents available at the *sharʿīyah* court (Maḥkamat al-aḥwāl al-shakhsīyah, now held in Dār al-wathāʾiq). Many of us know only too well how difficult it is to access source materials in the archives and libraries of Cairo, and how time-consuming it often is to obtain permission to view them. Veselý had no such difficulties. He reminisced, in a humorous way, about how his employer confirmed that he was an employee of the university and a long-term resident in the country: "So they wouldn't be concerned that I was there to steal something. That's how I got to see the documents, quite easy." He understood that this was a unique achievement:

> Another colleague from America notes in one of his books that it took him over a year to receive permission to visit that [court] archive. However, he did not get to see the documents at all; he was only given a catalogue that he subsequently transcribed and published. I had access not just to the catalogue but also to the documents, which I photographed during my first stay, down in the basement where they were stored. During my second stay, I got all the documents spanning the entire century which I wanted to process directly from them at the court.[2]

On that occasion he was able to get photographs of all the available documents covering the period from ca. 1517 to ca. 1600, and to examine them on the spot. However, despite this early successful access, and even though he revisited Egypt in 1967, in 1970, and several times in the 1990s, he never again viewed the original documents or worked with them directly. He continued to work with photographs and microfilms, and his extensive collection of those is now kept in the Library of the Department of Middle Eastern Studies. It should be noted that Veselý's wife, Zdenka, also focused on documentary studies in her dissertation, and subsequently on Ottoman documents from Sinai.

In 1964, Veselý returned to the Faculty of Arts, Charles University. He was allowed to travel overland from Egypt and he visited one of the most renowned

[2] "Osudy Rudolfa Veselého," Český rozhlas Vltava, Prague, February 25, 2014.

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papyrologists of his time, Adolf Grohmann, in Innsbruck. Previously, Felix Tauer had shared his contacts with Veselý, including Hans Robert Roemer, then Director of the German Institute of Archeology in Cairo, and other German experts. Veselý was thus able to build a network of contacts that helped him acquire literature and, to an extent, aided him in publishing abroad. Within the department, he also became head of the library.

In the summer of 1964, while still in Egypt, Veselý was able to conclude his dissertation on the *waqfīyah* of Maḥmūd Pasha from 974/1567. He successfully defended it in 1966. An extensive edition in three volumes that included diplomatics, architectural, and thematic studies with commentary, it unfortunately remains in manuscript form only.[3] It is an exemplary thesis and, for its time, an innovative piece of scientific research. It is no exaggeration to say that it made Veselý a leading expert on sixteenth century *waqf*s. It was published in 1971, but only as a facsimile followed by a brief commentary. Veselý published several other studies of early Ottoman *waqf*s in the 1960s and 1970s that were originally intended to form part of his habilitation thesis, "Four Studies from Cairo Archives." He was, however, not allowed to submit them.

Veselý used the body of documents that he had brought from Egypt to demonstrate the continuity between Mamluk and Ottoman diplomatics and legal practices. He prepared a systematic introduction for studies of diplomatics of court documents from the Cairo archives, as well as two complex studies of legal authentication methods in court documents *(ʿalāmah, ʿunwān)*. He was only able to publish the third volume dedicated to *imḍāʾ* four decades later, in 2011. Apart from one seminal review, he was able to process further documents only after the fall of the Communist regime. His studies of Egyptian documents are renowned for their highly precise historical and philological character, and in many cases provide pioneering introductions to issues hitherto left untouched by academics. From today's perspective, their key drawback is that they were largely published in German, and many of them in less accessible journals. This resulted from the limited publishing possibilities at the time of their development, with these difficulties in publishing also impacting on Veselý's career at Charles University.

In 1968, the Soviet-led armies of the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia. Subsequently, all Party members employed at the department were expelled from the Communist Party. Veselý's presence in the faculty, as he had no interest in politics and had never been a member of the Communist Party, was greatly diminished from the beginning of the "normalization" era of the early 1970s. He

[3] *Nadační listina Maḥmūda paši z roku 974 h./1567 n. l.: Příspěvek ke studiu sociálně ekonomických poměrů Egypta v pozdním středověku a k arabské diplomatice* [The endowment deed of Maḥmūd Pasha (dated 974/1567): A contribution to the study of social-economic issues of Egypt in the late Middle Ages and Arabic Diplomatics]. 3 vols. Prague, 1965.

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and his colleague and friend Karel Petráček discussed how to maintain the continuity of scientific endeavors, and how to maintain the legacy of Felix Tauer and Jan Rypka. They felt deeply frustrated by the entire situation, in which they had few students and the admission of new ones was severely limited. At one point, it seemed that the entire department would be abolished. This depressing situation was resolved in 1974, when a new, deeply committed member of the Communist Party was appointed department head. On the one hand, she preserved the existence of the department. On the other, however, she also had a crucial but negative impact on Veselý's professional and scientific career.

By 1967, Veselý had already started working on his second research interest, chancery manuals, and was preparing to publish *Tathqīf al-taʿrīf bi-al-muṣṭalaḥ al-sharīf* by Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh. This was to be the very first critical edition of a Mamluk chancery manual. In 1969, he published his first study of the topic and completed the entire work in 1974, shortly after the appointment of the new department head. She, however, did not give approval for the publication, commenting that there were thousands of documents all over the world, so she did not see why that particular one should be singled out for publication (Veselý recounted this absurd conclusion consistently from that point on). Despite this disappointment, he remained at the department until 1980, when he joined a Czech engineering company, Strojexport, in Libya as an interpreter. A year later he left the university permanently. His new employer finally permitted him to print his edition of Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh and the book was published in 1987 in Cairo.

In 1982, Veselý travelled from Libya to Czechoslovakia to attend the wedding of his daughter. For reasons unknown, the Communist authorities confiscated his passport during this trip, preventing his return to Libya, and thus forcing him to leave his position with Strojexport. The Communist head of the department blocked his re-employment at the university so, in September 1982, he began working as an ordinary lecturer at the State Language School—the only non-university institution that taught Middle Eastern languages—where, along with Arabic, he also taught Persian. Many of his colleagues there were his former students and, compared to the highly politicized environment of the Faculty of Arts, the school provided a quiet, amiable environment in which to teach. In the spring of 1983 he was appointed head of the Oriental Department. His departure from the university, his work at Strojexport, and, subsequently, at the language school slowed Veselý's scientific career for a time. He was only able to publish the seminal textbook on the *Auxiliary Sciences of History in Middle Eastern Studies* in 1988. In that same year, one of his former colleagues intervened on his behalf; his passport was returned and he was permitted to visit Iraq.

In 1989, during the Velvet Revolution and following the fall of Communism, an agreement was reached that all former department members who had been forced

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to leave the faculty for political or other untenable reasons would be permitted to return. In February 1990, at the age of 59, Veselý was finally able to rejoin the academic world. In the same year, he was appointed associate professor of Middle Eastern History and Culture, and in 1992, he became a full professor. Between 1991 and September, 2000, he held the position of Director of the Department of Middle Eastern and African Studies, a unique department in the country. He built up the department with vigor and enthusiasm. He reveled in teaching the new generations of students, and he shared his unique skills and knowledge with optimism and kindly humor. He worked at the department until 2005, when he was awarded the title of Professor Emeritus. He continued to lead courses until 2014.

In the 1990s, he was finally able to freely pursue his projects and research, take part in and organize conferences, and meet his colleagues in the West in person. It may seem surprising that someone who had been so curtailed in terms of opportunities for independent research could summon up the enthusiasm to, in effect, restart a new scientific career at the age of 60. Nonetheless, that is precisely what Veselý did in the field of Mamluk diplomatics. His first task was to start work on the edition of one of the collections of Ibn Nubātah. While studying Brockelmann, he encountered the name of Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī and the work *Qahwat al-inshāʾ*. He did not realize while hunting down microfilms and copies of manuscripts that it would be this book that would bring him the highest renown, as well as identify research paths that would occupy him for more than two decades.

Ibn Ḥijjah's work became his passion. Thanks to his sources, he was able to study Mamluk *taqārīẓ* and aesthetics and he embarked on tracking down two as yet unknown biographies of Sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh. He published two minor chancery handbooks of al-ʿUmarī. In 2005, his definitive edition of Ibn Ḥijjah was published, the culmination of Veselý's precise historical and philological work and erudition. Due to its unique character, it became one of the most frequently used sources not just for studies of Mamluk diplomatics, but also Mamluk diplomacy in general. In 2000, Veselý also pointed out Mamluk documents in the Leiden manuscript of *Zuhrat al-nāẓirīn wa-nuzhat al-nādirīn* but was, unfortunately, not able to complete the publication.

His most significant incomplete and unpublished work is an extensive (148 pages) analytical catalogue of documents that he obtained during his stays in Egypt. Before his death, he was able to complete almost the entire part focused on the Maḥkamah collection from Dār al-wathāʾiq.[4] For each document, he prepared

[4] Veselý's collection of photographs consists of the following documents: Dār al-wathāʾiq, Maḥkamah 277/43–312/46, 314/47–317/47, 319/47–340/50, and 342/50–343/50; Wizārat al-awqāf, ḥujaj al-waqf 82, 139, 432, 465, 503, 507, 520/1–2, 521/1–3, 522/1–3, 538, 539, 767, 768, 796, 820, 906, 908, 911, 918, 919, 1022, 1074, 1079, 1142, 1176, 1242, 1360, 1459, 2419, 2831, 2836, 2869, 3176; Dār al-

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a thorough summary of its content, its diplomatics, and its external characteristics. He also identified several Mamluk documents or their early Ottoman copies omitted by Amīn. He did not live to see the publication of the second edition of the *History of Egypt*, in which he presented his synthesis of the Mamluk and Ottoman periods.

For his own personal interest, rather than as a specific part of his academic work, he translated two collections of historical stories into Czech, following on from his translation of Usāmah ibn Munqidh. He read to me from those in his Prague apartment at Vinohrady during my last visit. He spent many years of his happy and rewarding marriage to Zdenka Veselá-Přenosilová (1930–1998), a renowned Turkologist, in that apartment.[5] They met during their studies and their entire life together was filled with mutual collaboration and inspiration. They found much joy in their daughter and their grandchildren, though only Veselý lived to see his great-grandchildren. Their apartment was a true oasis for several generations of students and colleagues and they welcomed visits from enthusiasts interested in Arabic and the Middle East. He never refused to help us and he expressed genuine interest in all of our topics. He retained his lifelong optimism and refused to be worn down by mishaps or obstacles. He lived and breathed the department and his family. He passed away in his sleep after a long and fulfilling life, secure in his reputation as the most prominent Czech Arabist of the past half-century, leaving behind many admirers who will continue to benefit from his research and talents for many years to come.

Kutub 1948/1, 1948/4, 1948/8, 6524Í . Maḥkamah 292/44, 293/44, 297/45, 300/45, and 302/45 contain Mamluk documents and are not listed by Amīn in his catalogue.

[5] For the overview of her remarkable career see Christoph K. Neumann and Petr Štěpánek, "In Memoriam Zdenka Veselá," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 88 (1998): 9–13.

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[1] Readers interested in Rudolf Veselý's hard-to-find publications are encouraged to contact the compiler of this list. Contact details: josef.zenka@ff.cuni.cz.

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Michael Winter, 1934-2020

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Michael Winter, 1934–2020

Professor Michael Winter, a widely known scholar in the field of the intellectual, social, and political history of the Middle East, passed away on September 1, 2020, at the age of 86. He was a devoted family man and gave generously of himself to his students, colleagues, and friends. He leaves a rich research oeuvre that dates back to his student days in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when he was enrolled in the Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies Department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. There he encountered such luminaries as Uriel Heyd, David Ayalon, and Gabriel Baer, who sparked his interest in the Mamluk and Ottoman Empires and the social history of the Middle East. His doctoral dissertation, awarded in 1969 by the University of California, Los Angeles, was written under the supervision of the renowned Islamic scholar Gustave von Grunebaum. In his dissertation (which was published in book form in 1982[1]), Winter analyzed the writings of the celebrated Egyptian Sufi ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565), thus shedding light on aspects of Egypt's social and religious life in the sixteenth century after the Ottoman conquest in 1517.

In 1972, he joined the Department of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel Aviv University and became one of its pillars until his retirement in 2004. Winter was highly prolific in a variety of fields but concentrated in particular on Egypt and Syria under the Mamluks and the Ottomans. His publications deal with Sufism and Islamic thought, ulama, qadis, *ashrāf* (descendants of the Prophet), Arab and Ottoman historiography, the Jewish community in Ottoman Egypt, and education in the pre-modern and modern Middle East.

The wide scope of Winter's research, backed by his outstanding command of Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, enabled him to explore a broad swath of geographic spaces and social groups including clerics, administrators and military officers, dervishes and beggars, Jews and Christians. Winter's diverse scholarship is manifested in his impressive list of publications (see below). Winter was not only a prolific writer but also a great teacher and educator who trained numerous generations of students, Jews and Arabs alike.

Winter's publications intertwine religion, society, and state. His works reveal him to be a meticulous and sensitive social historian who carefully examined the

[1] Michael Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī* (New Brunswick, 1982).

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social manifestations of religion, both judicial and mystical. In this sense, Winter made an important contribution to the sociology and phenomenology of Islam that went beyond a philological analysis of texts or an analysis of institutional structures by codifying and situating Islam in the human and social landscape. In so doing he injected richness, dynamism, power, and vitality into his depictions of Islamic institutions and how their representatives coped with serious challenges and bitter rivalries, especially in modern times, as embodied mainly by Islamic fundamentalism.

Winter also made major contributions to the study of the Mamluk (1250–1517) and the Ottoman (1517–1798) periods, which enabled him to map lines of continuity and change in the transition between the two eras in the key areas of religion, society, and politics.[2] Winter's unique combined study of the Mamluk and Ottoman empires was acknowledged in a volume published in his honor by A. Ayalon and D. J. Wasserstein (eds.), *Mamluks and Ottomans: Studies in Honor of Michael Winter* (New York, 2006). Winter's scholarly achievements also included his familiarity with both Arab and Ottoman sources, archival and narrative, which enabled him to examine the interrelationships between the imperial center and the provinces, especially with regard to networks of learning and culture, as well as the images and representations of the Other, the Arabs, and the Turkish-Ottomans.

Yet another sterling quality of Winter's scholarship was his ability to sketch a panoramic picture of historical processes that captured social groups (urban, rural, and tribal) and interfaith relations (Muslims, Christians, and Jews). This was brilliantly illustrated in his book *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule, 1517–1798*. At the same time, he also displayed an impressive talent for drawing micro-biographical portraits of ulama, Sufi shaykhs, and administrators, and placing them in their broader religious and social contexts, as he did for the Egyptians Zakarīyā al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520) and ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565), and the Syrian ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731), three key figures from the Mamluk and Ottoman periods. The same goes for Winter's writings on the Egyptian historian ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī (d. 1822), who, for him as well as for other scholars, reflected the transition of Egyptian society from a traditional to a more modern one against the background of the French occupation of Egypt (1798–1801) and the rise of Muḥammad ʿAlī to power in 1805. The study of modernity and its key issues were not foreign to Winter either. He enlisted his vast expertise in the fields of classical and medieval Islam to explore contemporary phenomena such as Islamic political thought and the charged relationship between ulama, Sufis, and lay Islamists.

[2] *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule, 1517–1798* (London, 1992). This book was translated into Arabic by Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 2001).

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Winter was a perceptive social historian who showed enormous respect for the texts he explored but also sought to extract the human stories and contextualize them. He exhibited great intellectual curiosity, sensitivity, and empathy toward his research subjects, with no hint of criticism or condescension. His descriptions of Sufism and its followers and rituals, for instance, always presented a complex picture of this popular culture that noted the marginal effects of begging and idleness or strange rituals, but which primarily reflected the Sufis' productivity, close affinity to society, protection of the weak, and their mediational role in conflicts between social groups and authorities. Winter identified Sufism as a quiet retreat and an intimate connection to faith, both of which were assets he thought had not been lost even in an era of rising Islamic fundamentalism, with its puritan mindset.

Winter conducted his research with a confident and eloquent hand, making extensive use of a variety of sources including archival documents, chronicles, fatwa compilations, biographical dictionaries, newspapers, and others. He rarely drew on theories and research methodologies from the social sciences, sociology, anthropology, or the psychology of religion. This does not, however, detract from the wealth of data he let unfold before the reader's eyes and the quality of his insights and observations, which were often the impetus for interdisciplinary studies and works in comparative religion.

Some of Winter's works, including those from the early 1970s and 1980s, were watersheds for the growing field of social history of the Middle East, and shed light on the lively Muslim public sphere,[3] a theme later developed in research. In other publications, Winter pointed to the existence of ethnic identities in the Middle East, mainly in Egypt even earlier than the nineteenth-century rise of nationalism. He also highlighted the emergence of a unique form of Islam in the Nile Valley, whose main conduits were al-Azhar and the Sufi orders. Winter contributed immensely to the deconstruction of the stereotyped image of a centralized and tyrannical Ottoman Empire ("Oriental despotism"). He did so by characterizing the local power centers that played active and constructive roles in regulating the life of the Arab provinces of the empire, in a give-and-take relationship with Istanbul, a phenomenon Albert Hourani called the "politics of notables." Finally, in some ways, Winter was ahead of his time and paved the way for new approaches to topics such as Islamic conceptions of time or the human body, which later became important research genres.[4]

Michael Winter remained involved in research years after his retirement in 2004, and right up to his death in 2020, as text and pen were among his best

[3] See also M. Hoexter et al., eds., *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies* (New York, 2002).

[4] See for example Michael Winter, "Islamic Attitudes toward the Human Body," in *Religious Reflections on the Human Body,* ed. Jane M. Law (Bloomington, 1995), 36–45.

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friends. His frequent participation in international conferences instilled in him an enduring passion for writing. He was a sharp, prolific, and visionary scholar, but also a "mensch," who was pleasant, gracious, and loved by all who knew him. We mourn the passing of a dear teacher and mentor. May his monumental scholarship guide us for years to come.

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Jo Van Steenbergen, Mustafa Banister, Rihab Ben Othmen, Kenneth A. Goudie, Mohamed Maslouh, Zacharie Mochtari de Pierrepont

Fifteenth-Century Arabic Historiography: Introducing a New Research Agenda for Authors, Texts and Contexts

Introduction

The Arabo-Islamic world of the later medieval period (thirteenth–sixteenth centuries) witnessed substantial transformations in the writing and reading of Arabic literary texts. For a long time, the study of these texts and of their diversity and changes was determined by the model of a "post-classical" literary field in fossilizing decline.[1] In the twenty-first century, however, new trends in literary and historical scholarship have been disengaging from these old, but still widespread, negative paradigms. They have managed to replace a condescending insistence on what Arabic literary texts no longer represented, or could no longer do, for more critical appreciations of what they really were, did, and meant for contemporaries. Modern scholars such as Thomas Bauer and Konrad Hirschler have shown how in late medieval Egypt and Syria these texts actually came to represent a crucial channel of elite communication and identity-formation. They have also stressed how this went hand-in-hand with a marked expansion in the sheer number of texts that were produced and ever more widely consumed. Hirschler in particular has demonstrated how from at latest the fourteenth century onwards increasingly more diverse social groups joined Syro-Egyptian educated elites in these processes not just by reading but also by producing texts.[2]

This introductory article has been written within the context of the project "The Mamlukisation of the Mamluk Sultanate II: Historiography, Political Order and State Formation in Fifteenth-Century Egypt and Syria" (UGent, 2017–21); this project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (Consolidator Grant agreement No 681510). We are grateful to all team members for their comments and feedback on earlier versions, especially to Daniel Mahoney and Maya Termonia.

[1] See, e.g., the seminal presentation of Arabic literary texts from this period by Carl Brockelmann (1868–1956) in the third book of his *History of the Arabic Written Tradition* entitled "The Decline of Islamic Literature", with the following additional qualification: "So, while much paper was covered with ink in Syria and Egypt during this period, precious little was written that was anything more than a substitute for something older that had been lost." (Carl Brockelmann, trans. Joep Lameer, *History of the Arabic Written Tradition,* vol. 2, Handbook of Oriental Studies, section 1, The Near and Middle East, vol. 117/2 (Leiden, 2016), 6–7; originally published in idem, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden, 1949 [1st ed. Weimar, 1898–1902]), 2:7–8.

[2] Thomas Bauer, "Mamluk Literature: Misunderstandings and New Approaches," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 9, no. 2 (2005): 105–32; idem, "In Search of 'Post-Classical Literature': A Review Article," *MSR* 11, no. 2 (2007): 137–67; idem, *Die Kultur der Ambiguität: Eine andere Geschichte des Islams*

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Arabic texts of history were part and parcel of this remarkable late medieval cultural and social transformation. The historiographical field indeed experienced an unprecedented explosion in the sheer volume and variety of texts that were produced.[3] At the same time, this booming business of historiographical production underwent substantial qualitative changes, affecting the nature of the texts as well as the identities of their producers in highly interconnected ways. In the early 1990s, Tarif Khalidi identified these changes by introducing the term *siyāsah* historiography. This refers especially to most of late medieval Arabic historiography's production in close proximity to the region's many different and often competing courts, and to its shared presentist concerns for recording above all configurations, transformations, and actions of various power elites. Over time rather straightforward chronographical or biographical listings of these power dynamics and elitist concerns gave way to more entertaining narratives, and even these lists may have been constructed in more complex literary ways than often has tended to be appreciated. Nevertheless, *siyāsah* priorities continued to inform the majority of Arabic historiographical texts into the early modern period.[4] One leading specialist of Arabic historiography, the late Donald P. Little (1932–2017), even suggested an intensification and culmination of this trend in what he defined as the "imperial bureaucratic chronicle" of the fifteenth centu-

(Berlin, 2011); idem, "Mamluk Literature as a Means of Communication," in *Ubi Sumus? Quo Vademus? Mamluk Studies—State of the Art,* ed. Stephan Conermann, Mamluk Studies, vol. 1 (Bonn, 2013), 23–56; idem, "'Ayna hādhā min al-Mutanabbī!' Toward an Aesthetics of Mamluk Literature," *MSR* 17 (2013): 5–22; Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands. A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh, 2012). See also Li Guo, *The Performing Arts in Medieval Islam: Shadow Play and Popular Poetry in Ibn Daniyal's Mamluk Cairo,* Islamic History and Civilization, vol. 93 (Leiden, 2012); Muhsin J. al-Musawi, *The Medieval Islamic Republic of Letters: Arabic Knowledge Construction* (Notre Dame, Ind., 2015); Adam Talib, *How Do You Say "Epigram" in Arabic?: Literary History at the Limits of Comparison,* Brill Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures, vol. 40 (Leiden, 2018).

[3]Ulrich Haarmann, *Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit,* Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, vol. 1 (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1970), 129–31; Konrad Hirschler, "Studying Mamluk Historiography: From Source-Criticism to the Cultural Turn," in *Ubi Sumus? Quo Vademus?,* 159–86; idem, "Chapter 13: Islam: The Arabic and Persian Traditions, Eleventh–Fifteenth Centuries," in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing,* vol. 2, *400–1400,* eds. Sarah Foot and Chase F. Robinson, gen. ed. Daniel Woolf (Oxford, 2012), 279–81.

[4]Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period,* Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge, 1994), 182–231 (Chapter 5: History and *Siyasa*), esp. 183–84). See also Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography,* Themes in Islamic History (Cambridge, 2003), 103–23 (Ch. 6: Historiography and Society); Hirschler, "The Arabic and Persian Traditions," 275–78 ("Historians and the Ruling Elites"); Nelly Hanna, "The Chronicles of Ottoman Egypt: History or Entertainment?" in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt (c. 950–1800),* ed. Hugh Kennedy, The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400–1453, vol. 31 (Leiden, 2001), 237–50.

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ry.[5] Furthermore, these qualitative changes involved not just the texts of Arabic history writing, but also their authors' relationships with historiography as a practice. In fact, it has been convincingly argued for many decades that especially from the turn of the fourteenth to the fifteenth century, as Konrad Hirschler summarily phrased it, "the writing of history became a more self-conscious, and to some degree self-confident, cultural practice."[6]

As a result of these late medieval texts' richness and detail, their highly accessible *siyāsah* priorities, and the—in comparison—relative scarcity and complexity of other types of sources, today's research on late medieval Syro-Egyptian lands, peoples, objects, texts, and ideas (i.e., on so-called Mamluk history) continues to rely heavily on this extensive historiographical production. For a long time, therefore, this research has primarily been concerned with the individual or collective histories of local and regional power elites. Recent decades have witnessed the gradual overcoming of such a particular bias, which tends to reduce the history of the Syro-Egyptian region to that of its power elites as represented in these highly self-conscious texts. This revisionism has been happening both through the adoption of new methodologies and approaches and through the expansion of the range of sources being examined.[7] In these ways this critical turn has mainly tried to find ways to circumvent or neutralize the frames, narrative engagements, and overall authorial and ideological subjectivities of this historiographical material. Valuable as that is, this also means that genuine appreciations of these frames and narrative engagements remain wanting, and that these texts continue to be approached first and foremost as containers of facts, defined by all kinds of subjectivities that can simply be discarded. As will be further explained in this introductory article, discarding these has resulted in the actual nature, impact, and value of the substantial Arabic historiographical corpus, as a remnant of a particular and highly integrated fifteenth-century social and cultural practice, remaining hugely underexplored and significantly underestimated. Consequently, as a particular type of active participant in cultural production, social communication, and strategies of elite formation in the social worlds of late medieval Egypt and Syria, historiography continues to be poorly understood.

This special journal issue brings together five articles that were written in the context of a collaborative research project that aims to remedy this challenging situation in current understandings of late medieval Arabic history writing. This project, funded by the European Research Council and entitled "The Mam-

[5] Donald P. Little, "Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Epochs," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt,* vol. 1, *Islamic Egypt, 640–1517,* ed. Carl F. Petry, gen. ed. M. W. Daly (Cambridge, 1998), 413.

[6] Hirschler, "The Arabic and Persian Traditions," 267.

[7] See the survey in Hirschler, "Studying Mamluk Historiography."

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lukisation of the Mamluk Sultanate-II (MMS-II): Historiography, Political Order, and State Formation in Fifteenth-Century Egypt and Syria," runs for five years (2017–21) at Ghent University (Belgium). MMS-II is aiming to tackle this challenge by arguing with and beyond, instead of against or irrespective of, this historiographical production's vexed interests and related subjectivities. The MMS-II project studies more specifically how not just fifteenth-century historians' truth but also the political order of their courtly surroundings were constructed in textual practice. This introduction to this issue of *MSR* seeks to explain in more theoretical, programmatic, and empirical detail why and how MMS-II considers this textual relationship between history writing and dynamics of power to be a valid and valuable—yes, even a necessary—research perspective in the study of fifteenth-century Arabic historiography. It furthermore aims to explain how MMS-II research is unfolding in practice, and how this journal issue's five articles tie in with this approach as well as with their wider context of fifteenth-century history writing. This introduction pursues these goals by first explaining how MMS-II considers the construction of political order, within the wider framework of a revaluation of the concept and reality of state formation in fifteenth-century Syro-Egypt. It then presents the texts of history with which MMS-II engages, focusing especially on sketching the current state of scholarship on these texts. Third, this introduction explains in more detail how MMS-II research takes up a particular position within that scholarship and aims to connect the study of history writing with that of state formation. Finally, the fourth part summarizes not just how the five articles in this issue of *MSR* fit into this research program, but also what they contribute to it, both individually and collectively.

Rethinking State Formation and Political Order in Fifteenth-Century Syro-Egypt

Most understandings of late medieval Syro-Egyptian state formation tend to adopt an institutionalist, structuralist, and dichotomous approach to power relations. They arguably all tend to think of a Mamluk state and a Mamluk society that would have produced each other as "Mamluk" analytical and descriptive categories through bipolar state-society interactions. These interactions are always represented as having an autocratic, an oligarchic, or a symbiotic nature, and they are always assumed to have been rooted in an unchanging normative practice of the priority of the institution of military slavery.[8] MMS-II consciously

[8]For useful syntheses of these understandings, see R. Stephen Humphreys, "The Politics of the Mamluk Sultanate: A Review Essay," *MSR* 9, no. 1 (2005): 221–31; Albrecht Fuess, "Mamluk Politics," in *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus?,* 95–118; Julien Loiseau, *Les Mamelouks (XIIIe–XVIe siècle): une expérience du pouvoir dans l'islam médieval* (Paris, 2014). See critical reflections in Jo Van Steen-

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breaks with this tradition and chooses to build on an alternative interpretive model of "the state" that was first proposed by the historian of modern Egypt Timothy Mitchell. This model perceives power as a ubiquitous and circulating relational phenomenon rather than as any absolute quality that would have distinguished the "haves" from the "have-nots." It also sees the explanations for particular configurations of power relations as always participating in the collective imaginations of those configurations as correct or natural, that is, as a "state" that is preserving order and sovereignty by structuring "society." Mitchell, expanding on the thinking of Michel Foucault, explains that from an analytical perspective it is more fruitful to step outside of this imagination, to reverse this imagined causality, and to think of "society," or at least of particular configurations of social relations, as constructing the powerful notion of a socially transcendent "state" in ways that conform with, perform, and legitimate these configurations' changing needs. In other words, this model understands social practices of power as constantly regenerating not just particular configurations of power, but also the creative imagination of these configurations as pertaining to the coherent and sovereign order of "the state" and its agents, mechanisms, sites, value systems, and resources.[9]

In line with the adoption of this model as analytically preferable, MMS-II situates the subjects of late medieval Arabic historiography and power dynamics within this interpretive framework of "the state" as an effect of social practices and their structuring imagination. MMS-II therefore understands the Cairo Sultanate's process of state formation in the fifteenth century beyond the traditional narrow framework of the ongoing expansion and institutionalization of a bureaucratic apparatus. It rather sees this formation as driven by a process of endless socio-political transformations affecting, and affected by, statist effects that were produced, and reproduced, by a range of configurations of power relations that were particular to the fifteenth century. Otherwise formulated, it considers "the state"—and especially its contemporary representation with the equally

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bergen, "'Mamlukisation' between Social Theory and Social Practice: An Essay on Reflexivity, State Formation, and the Late Medieval Sultanate of Cairo," *ASK Working Paper* 22 (2015): 1–48; Jan Dumolyn and Jo Van Steenbergen, "Studying Rulers and States Across Fifteenth Century Western Eurasia," in *Trajectories of Late Medieval State Formation across Fifteenth-Century Muslim West-Asia—Eurasian Parallels, Connections, Divergences,* ed. J. Van Steenbergen, Rulers and Elites: Comparative Studies in Governance (Leiden, 2020), 88–155.

[9]Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics," *The American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1 (1991): 77–96, building upon Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York, 1977); also Timothy Mitchell, "Society, Economy, and the State Effect," in *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn,* ed. G. Steinmetz (Ithaca, NY, 1999), 76–97; republished in *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader,* Blackwell Readers in Anthropology, vol. 9 (Malden, 2006).

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highly complex notion of *dawlah*—as an empowering but elusive collective idea of sovereignty, a powerful discursive strategy to integrate disparate sets of statist agents, mechanisms, sites, value systems, and resources, and a continuously re-imagined construction of order and sovereignty in the chaos of the endless formation and fragmentation of central power networks within the orbit of the royal court in Cairo.[10]

This different perspective enables another, non-traditionally "Mamluk" reading of the well-known fact that the sultanate's relatively long history between the thirteenth and early sixteenth centuries was all but a continuous and linear one. There definitely was an appearance of three centuries of structural, institutional continuities, often identified with the notion of a long-standing sultanic state. This went hand in hand, however, with the repeated disintegration and violent fragmentation of successful configurations of power relations around particular constellations of military leaderships and elite households. In fact, particular historical conditions made the sultanate's fifteenth-century configurations of powerholders entirely different from those of their predecessors. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the process of convergence of power relations and the related construction of social order actually witnessed a continued preponderance of moments of dynastic rule, topped for most of the fourteenth century by that of the Qalāwūnids. Throughout this period dynastically explained contingencies repeatedly managed to bind the process of regular elite fragmentation and re-orientation into imaginations of one dynastic order of legitimate empowerment and valid social and cultural organization.[11] The fifteenth century, however, was very different, and this was not in the least due to the recurrent failure of highly tenacious dynastic tendencies. Different configurations of old, new, and

[10]See also Jo Van Steenbergen, Patrick Wing, and Kristof D'hulster, "The Mamlukization of the Mamluk Sultanate? State Formation and the History of Fifteenth Century Egypt and Syria: Part II: Comparative Solutions and a New Research Agenda," *History Compass* 14, no. 11 (2016): 560–69, esp. 564–65; and especially, also for the complex notion of *dawlah,* Jo Van Steenbergen, "Appearances of Dawla and Political Order in Late Medieval Syro-Egypt: The State, Social Theory, and the Political History of the Cairo Sultanate (Thirteenth–Sixteenth Centuries)," in *History and Society during the Mamluk Period (1250–1517): Studies of the Annemarie Schimmel Research College II,* ed. Stephan Conermann, Mamluk Studies, vol. 12 (Bonn, 2016), 53–88.

[11]See, e.g., Jo Van Steenbergen, "Chapter Nine: Ritual, Politics and the City in Mamluk Cairo: The *Bayna l-Qaṣrayn* as a Dynamic 'Lieu de Mémoire' (1250–1382)," in *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean: Comparative Perspectives,* eds. A. Beihammer, S. Constantinou, and M. Parani, The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400–1453, vol. 98 (Leiden, 2013), 227–76, esp. 258–66; Loiseau, *Les Mamelouks,* esp. 112–32; Anne F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds,* Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge, 2008), esp. 145–48; Clément Onimus, *Les Maîtres du Jeu: Pouvoir et Violence Politique à l'Aube du Sultanat Mamlouk Circassien (784–815/1382–1412),* Bibliothèque Historique des Pays d'islam (Paris, 2019), esp. 125–57.

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predominantly mamluk power elites succeeded each other as agents and clients of, especially, a series of seven sultans and their distinct leadership formations. This series began with the enthronement of al-Muʾayyad Shaykh in 1412, and continued with that of al-Ashraf Barsbāy in 1422, of al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq in 1438, of al-Ashraf Īnāl in 1453, of al-Ẓāhir Khushqadam in 1461, and of al-Ashraf Qāytbāy in 1468. The latter accession began a much longer period of relative stability that continued until the turn of the sixteenth century and included not just the long reign of Qāytbāy (r. 1468–96) but also the much briefer one of his son al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 1496–98). This series of seven successful sultans then came to a conclusion with the accession of Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī in 1501, after the break-up of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's dynastic project and the prolonged search for a new stable configuration of leadership.[12] Just as in the latter case of al-Ghawrī, each of these seven sultans and their supporters lacked effective dynastic links to connect, let alone explain, their violent successions and distinct claims to sovereignty: nevertheless, they all successfully made and sustained those claims.[13]

Modern scholarship has so far mainly dealt negatively with the question of what was actually happening here. It has preferred readings of crisis, breakdown, decline, corruption, subversion, decentralization, and privatization to understand the expanding gap between fifteenth-century statist perspectives and social realities.[14] As explained above, MMS-II questions the particular state-society cau-

[12]Robert Irwin, "Factions in Medieval Egypt," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1986): 228–46; Amalia Levanoni, "The Sultan's Laqab—A Sign of a New Order in Mamluk Factionalism?" in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society,* eds. Amalia Levanoni and Michael Winter, The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400–1453, vol. 51 (Leiden, 2004), 79–115; Henning Sievert, *Der Herrscherwechsel im Mamlukensultanat: Historische und Historiographische Untersuchungen zu Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī und Ibn Taġrībirdī,* Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, vol. 254 (Berlin, 2003); Julien Loiseau, *Reconstruire la Maison du Sultan, 1350–1450: Ruine et Recomposition de l'Ordre Urbain au Caire,* 2 vols., Etudes Urbaines, vol. 8 (Cairo, 2010); Carl F. Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power* (Albany, 1994); Van Steenbergen, "'Mamlukisation' between Social Theory and Social Practice"; Albrecht Fuess, "The Syro-Egyptian Sultanate in Transformation, 1496–1498: Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad b. Qaytbay and the Reformation of *Mamlūk* Institutions and Symbols of State Power," in *Trajectories of Late Medieval State Formation across Fifteenth-Century Muslim West-Asia,* 201–23; Christian Mauder, *In the Sultan's Salon: Learning, Religion and Rulership at the Mamluk Court of Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī (r. 1501–1516),* Islamic History and Civilization, vol. 169 (Leiden, 2020).

[13]See Jo Van Steenbergen and Stijn Van Nieuwenhuyse, "Truth and Politics in Late Medieval Arabic Historiography: the Formation of Sultan Barsbāy's State (1422–1438) and the Narratives of the Amir Qurqumās al-Shaʿbānī (d. 1438)," *Der Islam* 95, no. 1 (2018): 147–88; Kristof D'hulster and Jo Van Steenbergen, "Family Matters: The 'Family-In-Law' Impulse in Mamluk Marriage Policy," *Annales Islamologiques* 47 (2013) (dossier: "Famille," ed. Julien Loiseau): 61–82.

[14]See Jo Van Steenbergen, Patrick Wing, and Kristof D'hulster, "The Mamlukization of the Mamluk Sultanate? State Formation and the History of Fifteenth Century Egypt and Syria: Part I: Old Problems and New Trends," *History Compass* 14, no. 11 (2016): 549–59.

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sality that is implied in these readings. Rather than asking what went wrong in the social world of fifteenth-century Syro-Egyptian leaderships despite the available statist solutions, MMS-II asks how the "state" *(dawlah)* was made to look like a continuous and unwavering sovereign order and a coherent bureaucratic infrastructure when social realities were rather different. MMS-II suggests that Syro-Egyptian leaderships, their supporters and retainers, and their rivals and opponents must have participated in the imagination of particular narratives, and counter-narratives, of belonging, social distinction and structural continuity that explained away in non-dynastic ways the oft-violent accession and configuration of fifteenth-century sultanic leaderships. This making of the "state" as an ideational construct of a particular time and space and as a discursive effect of particular practices and realities of power is being explored in MMS-II.[15]

Rethinking Fifteenth-Century Arabic Historiographical Texts and Their Study

Among the practices involved in the process of explaining and signifying the power relations and leadership formations of the fifteenth-century sultanate, MMS-II's research focuses on a specific set that materialized in the booming and changing business of contemporary history writing. The fifteenth century actually witnessed the active participation of different highly interconnected and deeply politically engaged generations of Egyptian, Syrian, and Meccan scholars, administrators, and courtiers in late medieval literary communication and *siyāsah* historiography. Their ranks included towering personalities such as al-Maqrīzī (1365–1442), al-ʿAynī (1361–1451), Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (1372–1449), Ibn Taghrībirdī (1411–70), and al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497) in Cairo, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah (1377–1448) in Damascus, and al-Fāsī (1373–1429) and Ibn Fahd (1409–80) in Mecca. These different generations' collective historiographical engagements created a remarkable number of historiographical works, often stretching across multiple volumes, mostly integrating detailed local or regional historical accounts into wider temporal or spatial frameworks. They all employed long-standing annalistic, dynastic, and biographical models to structure their texts. In the majority of cases, substantial inter-textualities connected these texts and moreover tied them strongly to

[15]For a highly relevant and inspiring parallel, see Heather L. Ferguson, *The Proper Order of Things: Language, Power and Law in Ottoman Administrative Discourses* (Stanford, 2018) (e.g., p. 3: "In administrative documents or in the various forms of history writing, commentaries, and reform manuals that proliferated along with the tempestuous movements of the day, neither cavalryman nor janissary adhered to the bounded social, political, and economic role assigned to them by statesmen, bureaucrats, and intellectuals. But both administrative document and intellectual treatise constructed an idealized system of governance that assigned clear divisions between social groups and sought to remedy present concerns by reasserting foundational principles.")

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the writings of predecessors, from those of the fourteenth-century authors Ibn Duqmāq (d. 1407) and Ibn al-Furāt (d. 1405) in Cairo and Ibn Kathīr (d. 1370) in Damascus, to the canonical texts of the patrons of the "medieval" Arabic chronicle and biography traditions Ibn Khallikān (d. 1282), Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233), Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200), and al-Ṭabarī (d. 923). All of this had remarkable and long-lasting effects on the establishment by the majority of these historians of their historical texts as authorities of historical truth for their own and earlier times. Many of these multi-volume texts therefore had, and continue to have, an unparalleled impact on the historical knowledge of their authors' own time and space (as well as preceding times or other regions and localities), and they have been defining the historical writings of later generations of historians, such as Ibn Iyās (d. 1524) and Ibn al-Ḥimṣī (d. 1527–28), as much as those of modern specialists of late medieval Syro-Egyptian history. Modern research's reliance on the rich detail of many of these texts for the study of thirteenth- to fifteenth-century Syro-Egyptian (and many other) historical realities continues to be substantial. This means that their fifteenth-century discursive perspectives are until today imposing their paradigmatic meanings on the historical understanding of much of the Islamic Middle Period (tenth–fifteenth centuries).

This important body of fifteenth-century Arabic historiographical texts has so far been only partially and haphazardly identified and studied.[16] In fact, Donald Little's observation, made more than twenty years ago, that "critical analysis of the originality, sources, and possible interdependence of these and other [fifteenth-century] historians has not yet approached the level of scholarship on the [thirteenth- and fourteenth-century] historians,"[17] remains remarkably valid for the majority of these texts. Since Little penned his assessment more studies about a handful of relevant texts and authors have been published. However, these studies all remain rather circumscribed and dispersed, and they are at best only partly concerned with the full scope of an author's textual corpus, and not at all with the whole body of historiography produced in this period.[18] In the major-

[16]For one of the very few and yet incomprehensive surveys, see Little, "Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Epochs," 436–40.

[17]Ibid., 433.

[18]See, e.g., Kamāl al-Dīn ʿIzz al-Dīn, *Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī muʾarrikhan* (Cairo, 1987); Li Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography: al-Yunīnī's Dhayl Mirʾāt al-Zamān,* Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts, vol. 21 (Leiden, 1998); idem, "Al-Biqāʿī's Chronicle: A Fifteenth-Century Learned Man's Reflection on His Time and World," in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt,* 121–48; idem, "Tales of a Medieval Cairene Harem: Domestic Life in al-Biqāʿī's Autobiographical Chronicle," *MSR* 9, no. 1 (2005): 101–21; Anne F. Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt: al-ʿAynī, al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī," *MSR* 3 (1999): 85–107; idem, "Royal Authority, Justice, and Order in Society: the Influence of Ibn Khaldūn on the Writings of al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taghrībirdī," *MSR* 7, no. 2 (2003): 231–45; Irmeli Perho,

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ity of cases in which such texts are studied and used, longstanding heuristic traditions rooted in the philological origins of modern studies of medieval Islam are upheld. Mostly, this means that the detailed narratives of these texts are taken for granted as mere descriptive and at best selective or biased containers (as opposed to re/producers) of forms of (as opposed to claims to) historical truth. The focus of the majority of historiographical research has therefore mainly stuck to the study of technical and factual issues of originality, veracity, and inter-textuality.[19]

This remains far removed from the wider approach that Stephen Humphreys already called for in the early 1990s—an analysis of "the interplay between the life and career of a historian, the cultural currents in which he was immersed, and the development of his thought and writing."[20] It remains even further removed from MMS-II's concern for understanding historiographical texts as actively participating in discursive practices that connected power relations and claims to order and truth.[21] For the much earlier thirteenth century Konrad Hirschler and

Ibn Taghribirdi's Portrayal of the First Mamluk Rulers, Ulrich Haarmann Memorial Lecture, vol. 6 (Berlin, 2013); Sami G. Massoud, "Notes on the Contemporary Sources of the Year 793," *MSR* 9, no. 1 (2005): 163–206; idem, *The Chronicles and Annalistic Sources for the Early Mamluk Circassian Period,* Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts, vol. 67 (Leiden, 2007); idem, " Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba's *al-Dhayl al-Muṭawwal*: The Making of an All Mamluk Chronicle," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 4 (2009): 61–79; Fozia Bora, "A Mamluk Historian's Holograph: Messages from a *Musawwada* of *Taʾrīkh,*" *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 3, no. 2 (2012): 119–53; idem, *Writing History in the Medieval Islamic World: The Value of Chronicles as Archives,* The Early and Medieval Islamic World (London, 2019).

[19]See, e.g., Haarmann, *Quellenstudien;* idem, "Auflösung und Bewahrung der Klassischen Formen Arabischer Geschichtsschreibung in der Zeit der Mamluken," *Zeitschrift Der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 121 (1971): 46–60; idem, "Al-Maqrīzī, the Master, and Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī, the Disciple—Whose Historical Writing can Claim More Topicality and Modernity?" in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt,* 149–65; Donald P. Little, *An Introduction to Mamlūk Historiography: An Analysis of Arabic Annalistic and Biographical Sources for the Reign of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāʾūn,* Freiburger Islamstudien, vol. 2 (Wiesbaden,1970); idem, "A Comparison of al-Maqrīzī and al-ʿAynī as Historians of Contemporary Events," *MSR* 7, no. 2 (2003): 205–15; Amalia Levanoni, "Al-Maqrīzī's Account of the Transition from Turkish to Circassian Mamluk Sultanate: History in the Service of Faith," in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt,* 93–105; Kamāl al-Dīn ʿIzz al-Dīn, *Arbaʿat muʾarrikhīn wa-arbaʿat muʾallafāt min Dawlat al-Mamālīk al-Jarākisah* (Cairo, 1992).

[20]R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: a Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton, NJ, 1991), 135; also quoted in Li Guo, "Mamluk Historiographic Studies: The State of the Art," *MSR* 1 (1997): 27.

[21]For related understandings of history writing in adjacent fields of historical research, see Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 65, no. 1 (1990): 59–86; idem, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore, 1997); idem, , "Foucault and the Problem of Genealogy," *The Medieval History Journal* 4, no. 1 (2001): 1–14; Robert Doran, ed., *Philosophy of History after Hayden White* (London, 2013). Konrad Hirschler, who already moved in this analytical direction in his 2006 monograph

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Li Guo have shown important ways forward toward understanding both the reproductive agencies of Arabic historiographical texts in social practice and the related politics of historical truth and order.[22] For historiography's wider context of late medieval cultural production, reproduction, and consumption in Syria and Egypt, key social practices such as patronage, competition, and knowledge transmission have furthermore been qualified in a number of highly inspiring and innovative ways in the works of, especially, Michael Chamberlain and Jonathan Berkey.[23] For the substantial number of Arabic texts of history that were written in the fifteenth century, the wide-ranging and impressive historiographical production of Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī has especially received substantial attention over the years. This great variety of studies and research were mainly published

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Authors as Actors, refers in this context of an interpretive turn to meaning making not only to the writings of Spiegel, but also to the seminal impact of Clifford Geertz's *Thick Description* (1973); he aptly explained that "in recent decades 'meaning' has become an increasingly important concern in historical studies. Geertz is one of the influential writers who consider culture to be a system of symbols and meanings. Texts (in a very comprehensive sense) are mainly interesting as a part of this system: they have not so much to be explained as interpreted in order to grasp both their symbolic content and meaning, and are not seen as merely the direct outcome of material reality or of social processes. ... Thus, in discussing the texts under consideration in this study I will ask how they produced meaning ... [using as the criterion] for inclusion of information ... not necessarily their truth-value but possibly their significance within a specific context" (Konrad Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors,* SOAS/Routledge Studies on the Middle East [London, 2006], 4).

[22] Hirschler, *Authors as Actors;* Guo, *Performing Arts.* Also important in this respect is Thomas Herzog, *Geschichte und Imaginaire: Entstehung, Überlieferung und Bedeutung der Sīrat Baibars in ihrem Sozio-Politischen Kontext,* Diskursse der Arabistik, vol. 8 (Wiesbaden, 2006); idem, "Mamluk (Popular) Culture: The State of Research," in *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus?,* 131–58; Hirschler, "Studying Mamluk Historiography."

[23] Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350,* Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge, 1994); idem, "The Production of Knowledge and the Reproduction of the Aʿyān in Medieval Damascus," in *Madrasa: la Transmission du Savoir dans le Monde Musulman,* eds. Nicole Grandin and Marc Bagorieau (Paris, 1997), 28–62; Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, 1992); idem, "Tradition, Innovation and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Near East," *Past and Present* 146 (1995): 38–65; idem, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East,* Publications on the Near East (Seattle, 2001); these types of social practices were also taken into account for the examination of fifteenth-century historians such as al-ʿAynī, al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Ḥajar, and Ibn Taghrībirdī in Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt"; idem, "Royal Authority, Justice, and Order in Society"; Loiseau, *Reconstruire la maison du sultan;* Jo Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate and Kingship in a Fifteenth-Century Literary History of Muslim Leadership and Pilgrimage*: *Critical Edition, Annotated Translation, and Study of* Al-Dhahab al-Masbūk fī Dhikr man Ḥajja min al-Khulafāʾ wa-l-Mulūk, Bibliotheca Maqriziana, vol. 4 (Leiden, 2016).

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in an Arabic collected volume edited by Ziyādah,[24] in detailed studies by ʿĀshūr and by Kamāl al-Dīn ʿIzz al-Dīn,[25] in various contributions to a 1997 conference volume *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt,*[26] in a separate issue of *Mamlūk Studies Review,*[27] and in many articles, chapters, monographs, and even a dedicated series—the *Bibliotheca Maqriziana*—authored, commissioned, or edited by Frédéric Bauden.[28] Al-Maqrīzī truly stands out, however, as an exception to the general rule of a remarkable dearth of relevant scholarship on fifteenth-century historiography.[29]

This imbalance in present day historiographical scholarship arguably goes back to the priority awarded to al-Maqrīzī's writings in the wake of the pioneering French translations of parts of his contemporary chronicle in the mid-nineteenth century by Etienne Quatremère (1782–1857).[30] This imbalance was only very partly redressed by work on Ibn Taghrībirdī in the mid-twentieth century

[24]Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah, ed., *Dirāsāt ʿan al-Maqrīzī: Majmūʿat abḥāth* (Cairo, 1971).

[25]Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿĀshūr, "Aḍwāʾ jadīdah ʿalá al-muʾarrikh Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī wa-kitābātihi," *ʿĀlam al-Fikr* 14, no. 2 (1983): 453–98; ʿIzz al-Dīn, *Arbaʿat muʾarrikhīn wa-arbaʿat muʾallafāt.*

[26]Kennedy, ed., *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt.*

[27]*MSR* 7, no. 2 (2003).

[28]See, among others, Frédéric Bauden, "Maqriziana I: Discovery of an Autograph Manuscript of al-Maqrīzī: Towards a Better Understanding of his Working Method, Description: Section 1," *MSR* 7, no. 2 (2003): 21–68; idem, "Maqriziana IV: Le Carnet de Notes d'al-Maqrīzī: l'Apport de la Codicologie à une Meilleure Compréhension de sa Constitution," *Manuscripta Orientalia* 9, no. 4 (2003): 24–36; idem, "Maqriziana I: Discovery of an Autograph Manuscript of al-Maqrīzī: Towards a Better Understanding of his Working Method: Analysis," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 12, no. 1 (2008): 51–118; idem, "Maqriziana VIII: Quelques Remarques sur l'Orthographies d'al-Maqrîzî (m. 845/1442) à Partir de son Carnet de Notes: Peut-on Parler de Moyen Arabe?" in *Moyen Arabe et Variétés Mixtes de l'Arabe à Travers l'Histoire,* eds. Jérôme Lentin and Jacques Grand'Henry (Louvain-la-Neuve, 2008), 21–38; idem, "Maqriziana XI: Al-Maqrīzī et al-Ṣafadī: Analyse de la (Re)Construction d'un Récit Biographique," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi, Nuova Serie* 5 (2009): 99–136; idem, "Maqriziana IX: Should al-Maqrīzī Be Thrown Out with the Bath Water? The Question of his Plagiarism of al-Awḥadī's *Khiṭaṭ* and the Documentary Evidence," *MSR* 14 (2010): 159–232; idem, *Al-Maqrīzī's Collection of Opuscules: An Introduction,* Bibliotheca Maqriziana, vol. 1 (Leiden, forthcoming).

[29]For the fourteenth century, two more exceptions to this rule are now Elias Muhanna's work on al-Nuwayrī's encyclopedism, especially his *The World in a Book: al-Nuwayrī and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition* (Princeton, 2018), and Fozia Bora's study of the historiography of Ibn al-Furāt, especially her *Writing History in the Medieval Islamic World.*

[30]Etienne Marc Quatremère, *Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks de l'Égypte, écrite en Arabe par Taki-eddin-Ahmed-Makrizi; Traduite en Français... et Accompagnée de Notes Philologiques, Historiques, Géographiques, par Quatremère,* Oriental Translation Fund, 2 vols. (Paris, 1837–45).

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by Gaston Wiet (1887–1971) and William Popper (1874–1963).[31] Other fifteenth-century historians and their texts of history have never received any similar kind of sustained scholarly attention, and neither their writings, nor most of al-Maqrīzī's writings, have ever been approached from the critical social and literary perspectives that Hirschler and Guo successfully deployed for the thirteenth century.[32] More generally, this historiography's active participation in processes of meaning making and knowledge construction, as well as in the wider discursive dimensions of those social practices, have remained almost entirely unexplored.[33] As a result, many questions remain to be asked, a truism that even applies to al-Maqrīzī's atypical case. These questions include the issue of the effects on current historical understandings of this unbalanced quantitative relationship between scholarship on al-Maqrīzī and that on his peers and successors. They also concern the critical nature, academic status, and textual relationships of many editions of al-Maqrīzī's and many others' texts that have appeared in recent decades, and that continue to be published and republished, especially by various publishing houses in the Middle East. Finally, these many unresolved questions certainly also concern the impact on historical knowledge of the positioning of this body of texts at the interface between, on the one hand, the above detailed issues of the high social importance and functionality of late medieval Arabic texts in general and, on the other hand, the imagination of political order, sovereignty, and the "state" *(dawlah)* in a repeatedly fragmenting fifteenth-century socio-political context.

Studying Claims of Historical Truth and Political Order between 1410 and 1470

MMS-II engages with these many unresolved questions on the nature and impact of late medieval Arabic history writing. It asks above all the question of how historical texts participated in complex processes of explaining and making sense of power relations and leadership formations. It therefore puts the extant narrative sources at the center of the historical action that is being studied.

[31]Gaston Wiet, *Les Biographies du Manhal Safi* (Cairo, 1932); William Popper, *History of Egypt, 1382–1469 A.D., Translated from the Arabic Annals of Abu l-Maḥasin ibn Taghrî Birdî,* University of California Publications in Semitic Philology, vols. 13–14, 17–19, 22–24 (Berkeley, 1954–63); idem, *Egypt and Syria under the Circassian Sultans, 1382–1468 A.D.: Systematic Notes to Ibn Taghrî Birdî's Chronicles of Egypt,* University of California Publications in Semitic Philology, vols. 15, 16, 24 (Berkeley, 1955–63).

[32]An exception for the study of the writings of al-Maqrīzī is Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate and Kingship,* 9–133 (Part 1: Study—The Cultural Biography of a Fifteenth-century Literary Text).

[33]For the fourteenth century, some steps in this direction have recently been taken in Muhanna, *The World in a Book,* and in Bora, *Writing History in the Medieval Islamic World.*

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MMS-II's chronological focus in this respect is on the period between the 1410s and the 1460s. Not only was this a period during which a succession of rather volatile configurations of Syro-Egyptian power elites appeared as a continuous series of six sultans and their courts;[34] this was also the time during which some of the most impactful Arabic historiographical texts of the medieval period were written, by al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taghrībirdī and by many of their aforementioned fifteenth-century peers.[35] At the very heart of MMS-II is the rethinking of this substantial but underexplored historiographical material that was produced between the 1410s and 1460s, from the perspective of how it may have participated in making contested claims to historical truth in general and to political order and sovereignty in particular.[36]

As explained above, MMS-II suggests that between the 1410s and 1460s members and agents of different sultanic formations, their supporters and retainers, and their rivals and opponents must have participated in the imagination of particular narratives—and counter-narratives—of belonging, social distinction, and structural continuity, which explained away in non-dynastic ways the oft-violent accession of fifteenth-century sultans. MMS-II especially suggests that one of these narratives involved the discursive claiming of a particular historical truth, including via historiographical action, which MMS-II terms "Mamlukization."

[34]For similar considerations of this mid-fifteenth century period as a coherent unit for historical research, see Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 32–38 ("The Fifteenth Century Restoration: 1422–1470"), 32 ("Yet beginning with the reign of Sultan al-Muʾayyad Sheikh (1412–1421) and his successor Sultan Barsbāy (1422–1438) a partial restoration of the fortunes of the empire was achieved."), 38 ("But from about 1470 fresh and cumulative strains pushed Mamluk Syria and Egypt into the vortex of complete economic, political, and social collapse from which they would ultimately be rescued only by incorporation into the Ottoman Empire."); Robert Irwin, "Factions in Medieval Islam," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 118, no. 2 (1986): 228–46, on the so-called "Muʾayyadī faction, fl. 1400–1467. [The] Muʾayyadī mamluks of Sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh .... Above all the life cycle of the Muʾayyadī faction falls mainly within the lifetime of Ibn Taghrībirdī (1411–70)" (229); this life cycle ended with "Khushqadam's reign (865/1461–872/1467) [which] was the Indian summer of the Muʾayyadī faction" (235).

[35]See J. Van Steenbergen, "Introduction: History Writing, *Adab,* and Intertextuality in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria: Old and New Readings," in *New Readings in Arabic Historiography from Late Medieval Egypt and Syria,* eds. M. Termonia and J. Van Steenbergen, Islamic History and Civilization (Leiden, 2021): "the biggest moment—in quantitative if not in qualitative terms—in the history of late medieval Arabic history writing was the subsequent period, between the 1410s and the 1460s ...."

[36]See the parallel with Ferguson, *The Proper Order of Things* (e.g., p. 4: "The arguments contained here thus build on studies concerned with the relationship between empire and textuality and the mechanisms by which the circulation of documents characterized and, in the act of characterizing, produced a particular conception of sovereignty. This conceptual framework defined and supplemented imperial authority and was deployed in the midst of the varied crises [bureaucratic leaders] sought to address.")

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This refers to the construction of the collective imagination of one long-standing and continuous political order of the *dawlah* that made sense of the fifteenth-century realities of discontinuous and contested leaderships through a combination of dynastic amnesia and the social memory of a shared past of mamluk sultans and the regular succession, since the mid-thirteenth century, of their glorious periods of rule. Put another way, MMS-II's main research hypothesis is the invention between 1410 and 1470 of a tradition of one symbolic order of sultanic leadership, captured by the aforementioned neologism "Mamlukization." Discursively mediated by various practices that include the formulation of literary claims to historical truth, this invented tradition of "Mamlukization," MMS-II argues, stands for the construction of a particular genealogical social memory of one, longstanding, and continuous leadership of military slaves (mamluks, also more generally identified as *atrāk*) that makes sense of a socio-culturally fragmented fifteenth-century present through both the marginalization of dynastic realities and ideas and the cultivation of a shared and glorious past.

Driven by the need to test and refine this hypothesis and the revisionist historical and historiographical agendas that inform it, MMS-II's collaborative research project pursues three major objectives. These represent the macro-, meso-, and micro-perspectives of the study of, respectively, the entire historiographical corpus for the period 1410–70, specific textual traditions within this corpus, and the vocabularies and discursive registers that informed this corpus. Together they act as the interlocking interpretive and organizational layers at which MMS-II believes any response to questions concerning the agency and politics of history writing in the period 1410–70 should be situated.

Survey: Unlocking Fifteenth-Century Arabic Historiography (ca. 1410–ca. 1470)

MMS-II works with an inclusive definition of the textual specimens that are considered relevant. It includes in its analyses any Arabic literary text produced between ca. 1410 and 1470 (roughly from the execution of Sultan al-Nāṣir Faraj in 1412 to the accession of Sultan Qāytbāy and the organization of his court in the period 1468–70) in the localities most strongly touched by the political gravity of the Sultanate's court in Cairo (i.e., the Egyptian, Syrian, Anatolian, and Hijazi domains) which makes any kind of explicit or implicit claims to engaging with contemporary historical truths. This includes all the grand narrative annalistic chronographies and biographical dictionaries that have traditionally informed—and continue to do so—most research on Syro-Egyptian society and culture between the thirteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries. This also includes several other types of texts, such as panegyrics, individual biographies, treatises, and other specimens of Arabic prose and poetry, as well as some more "marginal" historiographical texts, produced in the many peripheries of the Sultanate's authority.

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To date, 31 authors from Egypt, Syria, and the Hijaz have been identified as having produced one or more relevant historiographical texts in the 1410–70 timeframe (see appendix). Among these 31, there is a clear majority of authors (19) sharing the characteristic of having lived a predominantly Cairo-centered life. At the same time, these authors are almost equally divided between two generations (15 *vs.* 16). The first of these two generations consisted of men who were born before the 1390s. They closely experienced the different crises that affected life in Egypt, Syria, and wider Western Asia in highly transformative ways in the course of the first decade of the fifteenth century, and were all obliged to reposition themselves and often also their writings vis-à-vis that matrix moment and the subsequent post-1412 rebuilding of the Sultanate and its elites.[37] Their ranks were dominated by the authoritative personalities of al-Maqrīzī (1365–1442), al-ʿAynī (1361–1451), and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (1372–1449) in Cairo, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah (1377–1448) in Damascus, and al-Fāsī (1373–1429) in Mecca. The second generation included equally well-known historians, such as Ibn Taghrībirdī (1411–70), al-Biqāʿī (1406–80), and Ibn Fahd (1409–80). Born in the 1390s and 1400s, their socio-cultural horizons were less defined by the troubled turn of the fourteenth to the fifteenth century. They were rather more affected by both the violent successions of fifteenth-century sultans and courts—in the early 1420s and the late 1430s, and then again in the mid-1450s and in the early and later 1460s—and the repeated searches for a new stabilization of power relations that followed each of these moments of substantial transformation.

The full corpus of these authors' relevant texts currently amounts to no less than 81, with a major preponderance of texts by Cairo-centered authors (58) and a slight imbalance between each generation's historiographical production (46 *vs.* 35) (see appendix). Quite a few of these texts consist of multiple volumes. Most of them have been preserved in part or in full in manuscript copies kept in major library collections around the world (especially in Egypt, Turkey, Europe, and the US) and have been published at least once in more or less critical editions. As one would expect, the well-known big names of fifteenth-century Arabic historiography feature most prominently on this list as its eight most productive contributors, jointly responsible for the production of almost two thirds of these texts (50, or 62%). Topped by al-Maqrīzī (11 texts) and then Ibn Taghrībirdī (8), the latter ranks also include the Cairo-centered authors Ibn Ḥajar (7), al-ʿAynī (5), al-Qalqashandī (4), and al-Biqāʿī (4), as well as their Meccan peers al-Fāsī (6) and Ibn Fahd (5).

The objective of MMS-II's survey component is not just to identify the full and remarkably extended corpus of Arabic historical texts that were produced in

[37] On this "matrix moment," see Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate and Kingship,* 34–40; Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt."

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the period 1410–70. MMS-II also aims to create a "cultural biography" for each of these texts, that records—or at least allows for the (often patchy) reconstruction of—its "social life" from its fifteenth-century conception until today.[38] This takes the form of a comprehensive bibliographic survey of these texts, with particular attention to questions of authorship, textual production, consumption and reproduction, materiality, and modern research. Basic research tools are still lacking for the comprehensive study of these texts and all other late medieval Arabic historiography. This includes not least the continued absence of dedicated reference works taking stock of relevant texts, the status of their textual preservation, the contexts of their production and consumption, and completed and ongoing relevant research. In the twentieth century, Carl Brockelmann's *GAL* meant a huge breakthrough in this respect for the full scope of Arabic literature, but it is now outdated.[39] *Christian-Muslim Relations, A Bibliographical History, vol. 5 (1350–1500)* offers a much needed, extremely rich, and very useful upgrade, but takes a very specific approach to the subject.[40] Online resources such as the *Mamluk Bibliography Project* (University of Chicago Library, http://mamluk.lib.uchicago.edu) offer access to a comprehensive and continuously updated set of bibliographical metadata on Mamluk research published in any language of scholarship, but its ambitions, scope, and organization are very different from being a research tool for late medieval Arabic historiography. MMS-II therefore aims to combine all of these and related bibliographical data sets (e.g., http://ottomanhistorians.uchicago.edu/en, http://www.fihrist.org.uk, https://gallica.bnf.fr/, https://www.islamic-manuscripts.net, http://orient-digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/) and to enrich them with other relevant metadata. These also importantly include codicological and related data that give insight into the materiality of the corpus, gathered from on-site investigations in the major manuscript collections. All these data are published in an open, searchable bibliographic repository: Bibliography of 15th Century Arabic Historiography (BAH) (http://ihodp.ugent.be/bah).

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[38] See Igor Kopytoff, "Chapter 2: The Cultural Biography of Things: Commodization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective,* ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge, 1986), 64–91; Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate and Kingship,* 2–3.

[39] Brockelmann, *GAL;* but see the recently begun project in Leipzig (timing: 2018–35) to update and expand upon Brockelmann's work for Arabic literary texts from the period 1150–1850 (Bibliotheca Arabica—Towards a New History of Arabic Literature, https://www.saw-leipzig.de/de/projekte/bibliotheca-arabica/intro).

[40] David Thomas and Alex Mallet, eds., *Christian-Muslim Relations, A Bibliographical History, vol. 5 (1350–1500),* History of Christian-Muslim Relations, vol. 20 (Leiden, 2013). See also G. Dunphy, ed., *Encyclopaedia of the Medieval Chronicle* (Leiden, 2010).

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Texts: Historicizing Fifteenth-Century Contexts, Structures, and Meanings of Arabic Historiography (ca. 1410–ca. 1470)

As detailed above, with the exception of al-Maqrīzī and his many texts, the substantial body of Arabic historiographical texts that was produced in the period 1410–70 has so far been only partially and haphazardly studied, if at all. MMS-II therefore pursues in-depth case studies of discrete sets of Arabic historical works from this period, with the precise aim of understanding and situating these texts at the performative interface between, on the one hand, power relations involving authors, audiences, and many others and, on the other hand, discursive meaning making endeavors, including making claims to historical truth and political order. The aim is not to publish new critical editions or annotated translations of these texts, but rather to push their understanding beyond mere positivist assumptions of originality and veracity, and thus to enable an entirely new and genuine assessment of the historical value of their inter-subjectivities.

This obviously cannot be undertaken as a comprehensive exercise for all the texts in the corpus. As the different papers in this special journal issue make clear, a selection of cases has been made, defined by pragmatic considerations of available material and expertise as well as by certain quantitative and qualitative criteria. The latter are informed by concerns both for the cases' centrality in as well as their representativity for the full corpus, and for their complementarity within the selection of MMS-II case studies as well as with ongoing and extant research. As a result, the textual traditions that are currently being studied in the context of MMS-II are those of al-ʿAynī, Ibn Ḥajar, Ibn ʿArabshāh, Ibn Taghrībirdī and al-Biqāʿī, representing five distinct textual traditions that gave shape to one third of the entire corpus (27 texts).

Methodologically, these case studies of discrete sets of texts are informed by research approaches, insights, and tools developed within the overlapping contexts of New Historicism,[41] narratology,[42] and social semiotics.[43] Informed by

[41] Very broadly considered here as a combined interest in the textuality of history and the historicity of texts, thus necessitating the thorough contextualization of historiographical practice (see, e.g., Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, eds., *Practicing New Historicism* [Chicago, 2000]); for the value of contextualization in understandings of texts from late medieval Egypt and Syria, see also Hirschler*, Authors as Actors*.

[42] The study of narrative structures which inform the compilation and organization of texts (see, e.g., Sandra Heinen and Roy Sommer, *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research,* Narratologia: Contributions to Narrative Theory, vol. 20 [Berlin, 2009]; Stephan Conermann, ed., *Mamluk Historiography Revisited: Narratological Perspectives,* Mamluk Studies, vol. 15 [Bonn, 2018]).

[43] The study of signification, or the awarding of meaning to "signs" (in this case historiographical writings), as a highly dynamic communicative process that is never fixed in form and content, because it is "multimodal" and continuously redefined by specific discursive and social realities,

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these approaches and carefully deploying the research tools that they offer, each of these case studies focuses on three main issues:

A. Establishing and revealing contexts. As the papers in this volume suggest, each case study reconstructs relevant aspects of the socio-economic, cultural, and political dynamics of continuity and change, as well as the author's positioning within them, his engagement with them through social practices such as competition, patronage, kinship or learning, and his texts' relations with these practices.
B. Analyzing the text. Each case study pursues analyses of textual narratives from the perspective of structures such as story and plot, of textual strategies such as narrative modes, time, narrator, and focalization, and of inter- and para-textual relations.
C. Unravelling meanings. Each case study defines textual themes, didactic purposes, and layers of meaning, and reconstructs texts of history as communicative acts and social performances in complex discursive contexts of power relations.

Vocabularies: Textualizing Historical Truth and Political Order (ca. 1410–ca. 1470)

There exists, at present, no systematic study of the vocabulary that these texts, their authors, and their audiences employed to construct their historical narratives. The field continues to have to rely on the standard lexicographical tools produced in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[44] After William Popper's technical lists for Ibn Taghrībirdī's chronicles,[45] nothing comparable has ever been attempted.[46] The third objective of MMS-II, therefore, consists of engaging in a study of the political vocabularies of Arabic historical works from the period 1410–70. It aims to identify and explain

in particular by the complex power relationships of those involved in the communicative act (see, e.g., Theo Van Leeuwen, *Introducing Social Semiotics* [London, 2005]; Fedwa Malti-Douglas, "Dreams, the Blind, and the Semiotics of the Biographical Notice," *Studia Islamica* 51 [1980]: 137–62).

[44]Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon,* 8 vols. (London, 1863–74).

[45]Popper, *Egypt and Syria under the Circassian Sultans.*

[46]With noted exceptions, such as Nasser Rabbat, "Representing the Mamluks in Mamluk Historical Writing," in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt,* 59–75; Mathieu Eychenne, *Liens personnels, cliéntelisme et réseaux de pouvoir dans le sultanat mamelouk (milieu xiiie–fin xive siècle)* (Beirut, 2013), 31–55 ("Préambule: Le lien sociale dans les textes: Etude terminologique des sources de l'époque mamelouke"); Jo Van Steenbergen, *Order Out of Chaos: Patronage, Conflict and Mamluk Socio-Political Culture: 1341–1382,* The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400–1453, vol. 65 (Leiden, 2006), 53–100, 127; idem, "'Mamlukisation' between Social Theory and Social Practice," 10–23.

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the semantics of signifiers of particular discourses of political order that informed these texts and that, at the same time, materialized through them. This not only makes it possible to take stock of and to better understand these vocabularies. It also informs the preceding second textual objective, allowing us both to fully engage with MMS-II's main research question (the relation between constructions of historical truth and of order in 1410–70) and hypothesis (the Mamluk sultanate as a particular product of that relation).

These vocabularies of order, power, status, distinction, entitlement, and legitimacy (and of "Mamluk-" and "Turkish-"ness), and of their opposites, in the corpus are approached through the prism of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is an interdisciplinary approach that consists of a number of methods and techniques that have been developed in pragmatics, sociolinguistics, intellectual and conceptual history, and political sociology.[47] The implementation of a CDA-informed approach will be aimed first and foremost at identifying and explaining paradigmatic "chains of signifiers" of political order and at linking these textual political discourses to wider discourses that emerged from contemporary social practice. To pursue this, MMS-II is building a full digital corpus of its 81 texts, in a collaboration with the Open Islamicate Text Initiative (see appendix), and in an open format that allows for annotation and computational analysis on the text platform "Corpus: Texts from Late Medieval Egypt and Syria" (http://ihodp.ugent.be/corpus).

Overall, the dialectical interaction between these macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of socio-culturally informed historiographical analyses is expected to enable a much better understanding of the cultural history of political order in fifteenth-century Egypt and Syria. Furthermore, it will enable deeper comprehension of how some of the most informative extant cultural actors (historiographical texts)—rather than any dogmatic structural framework of state and society—participated in the shaping of that order in the social practice of their discursive engagements, narrative constructions, and wider inter-subjectivities.

The Historicization of Fifteenth-Century Authors, Texts, and Contexts

In December 2018 the MMS-II team organized a one-day workshop to present the first set of results from its research. Entitled "Fifteenth-Century Arabic Historiography: Historicizing Authors, Texts, and Contexts," it was designed to discuss in substantial detail, with the much-appreciated input of five external respondents, the first drafts of the articles that are now being published in this special journal

[47] See Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (3rd edition) (London, 2014); Jan Blommaert, *Discourse: A Critical Introduction* (New York, 2005).

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issue.[48] These articles are part of the aforementioned meso-historical case studies of distinct textual sets that are currently being researched in the context of MMS-II, and that are organized, as mentioned above, around the historiographical repertoires of Ibn Ḥajar, Ibn ʿArabshāh, al-ʿAynī, Ibn Taghrībirdī, and al-Biqāʿī. In these capacities, each of these articles represent an important first step in these different case studies. They each reconstruct different aspects of the fifteenth-century's socio-economic, cultural, or political dynamics, and the respective authors' positioning within these dynamics, their engagement with them through social practices such as competition and patronage, or the studied texts' relations with these practices.

In the first article, Clément Onimus presents a case study of the narrative elaboration of a historical figure. It is argued that the amir Jakam (d. 1407) was awarded a particular status in fifteenth-century historiography. Although political troublemakers were generally denounced by the authors, Jakam, who took part in most of the internal wars of the reign of Sultan Faraj (1399–1412) and proclaimed himself sultan in Aleppo, enjoyed a *salvatio memoriae* under the pen of the Cairene and Syrian historians. The plurality of historiographers and the various and changing positions in the political and academic fields that they held during their lifetimes created a polyphonic and unstable representation of the past. Among those historians was al-ʿAynī, a client of Jakam. It is argued that, because of his intimacy with the amir, the style and contents of his historical writings changed with the evolution of the political situation from the disgrace of this defeated amir until the triumph of his faction, when one of its members, Barsbāy, became sultan. In fact, despite the polyphony of contemporary historiography, it appears that all historians converged on emphasizing Jakam's justice, not only because they were integrated into Barsbāy's network when it reached sovereign authority, but also because of the contrast it offered with representations of Sultan Faraj. This enables engagement with the question of the legitimacy of rebellion against a rightful ruler, and therefore the question of the role of the law in history writing by jurists and judges.

In the second article, Zacharie Mochtari de Pierrepont emphasizes how, through careful and selective historiographical construction, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalanī displayed religious charismatic authority in his main historiographical work, the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr bi-abnāʾ al-ʿumr*. Through the discourse and lexicon related to religious charismatic figures, their followers, places where they gathered, and the institutions and elites to which they were linked, it is argued that Ibn Ḥajar narratively framed a set of behaviors by political, moral, and legal boundar-

[48] These respondents were Frederic Buylaert (UGent), Malika Dekkiche (UAntwerpen), John Meloy (AUBeirut), Arjan Post (KU Leuven), Eric Vallet (UParis 1–Panthéon-Sorbonne).

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ies that were enclosed in the broader narrative representation of a contemporary cultural, social, and political order. As such, religious charisma was one expression of the various types of authorities which could act, compete, and legitimately participate in that order, as part of the changing social and political world of the Cairo Sultanate. The *Inbāʾ* was thus producing a historical meaning of its own, intimately connected to Ibn Ḥajar's own times and persona.

Mustafa Banister's article historicizes and explains the composition of Ibn ʿArabshāh's *Al-Taʾlīf al-ṭāhir* (The Pure composition), a panegyric and brief historiographical work apparently written for the sultan Jaqmaq (r. 1438–53) approximately two years after the start of his reign. It is through the *Pure Composition,* a text closely linked to and written shortly after Ibn ʿArabshāh's more well-known biography of Tamerlane (r. 1370–1405), the *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr* (The Wonders of destiny), that the author sought to define himself, announce his availability to potential patrons, and perform his literary skills and past expertise. Decades after his death, the ominous specter of Tamerlane loomed large in Ibn ʿArabshāh's writings from the 1440s and helped sharpen the author's understandings of just rule, the dichotomy between good and evil, and the ideal relationship between Muslim subjects and their sultan.

In Rihab Ben Othmen's article, the life trajectory and career of Abū al-Maḥāsin Ibn Taghrībirdī is reconsidered beyond the well-known historiographical narratives about his Turkish background and his achievements as a historian. Informed by a literary-oriented approach, including Greenblatt's notion of "self-fashioning," this article examines how Ibn Taghrībirdī shaped his authorial identity throughout his different historiographical compilations. More specifically, it analyzes the way the author negotiated multiple and contrasting identities and how he cast himself in different roles simultaneously, as a Sunni scholar, a notable Turkish courtier par excellence, and a polished litterateur. By identifying and scrutinizing Ibn Taghrībirdī's self-fashioning strategies this study reveals his multi-layered narrative of identity. It suggests that the multiplicity of authorial voices and identities on display in his writings does not simply suggest a "hybrid identity." Rather, it forms part and parcel of the author's patterns of social advancement in the cosmopolitan and constantly changing social world of the late medieval Cairene court.

The final article, by Kenneth Goudie, aims at two complementary purposes. On the one hand, it provides an overview of how al-Biqāʿī sought to increase the social and cultural capital resources that he had at his disposal to build and expand the social network which underpinned his career in Cairo, a network which crumbled in the aftermath of Sultan Īnāl's death in 1461 and under the weight of three successive controversies (on the use of the Bible in *tafsīr,* the poetry of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and the theodicy of al-Ghazālī). In doing so, it outlines in more detail al-

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Biqāʿī's origins, before moving to discuss the key relationships—particularly his patron-client relationships—he established and how these facilitated his making his way in Cairo. Having done so, it turns to its second purpose: namely, it argues that the descriptive reconstruction of al-Biqāʿī's life and career should be read against the interpretative frameworks employed by the authors of our sources. By recognizing how thoroughly entangled our authors and texts are, and by appreciating their discursive strategies and intentions, we can begin to disentangle the emplotments of al-Biqāʿī's life from its social contexts and develop a more nuanced understanding of both al-Biqāʿī and his social contexts.

Several recurring and interconnecting issues emerge from these five papers, which deserve to be spelled out more explicitly, here and in future explorations, as remarkable determinants in the social and cultural worlds of fifteenth-century historiography. The Āmid campaign of 1433 appears as a fortuitous moment of convergence, when the social world of many of our authors was reshaped through the momentary entanglement of the scholarly and courtly networks of both Egypt and Syria. Launched by Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy (r. 1422–38) against ʿUthmān Beg Qarā Yulūk (r. 1403–35), leader of the Aqquyunlu Turkman configuration in East-Anatolia, the campaign to Āmid was part of the ongoing negotiation of the relationship between the sultan in Cairo and Qarā Yulūk in the Upper Euphrates basin. Its purpose, however, seems to have been twofold. On the one hand, it sought to resituate the Aqquyunlu within the political order of the Cairo Sultanate, after a period of conflict, through Qarā Yulūk's recognition of Barsbāy's ultimate authority. On the other hand, the campaign appears to have been equally, if not more so, about demonstrating Barsbāy's authority in the Syrian urban centers and their hinterlands, the loyalty of whose *nāʾib*s was not always assured. Thus, the campaign force comprised not only the army but also much of the court of Cairo, as well as a substantial number of scholars. The deployment of the full retinue of the sultan to Syria may thus have been intended to signal to potentially rebellious amirs the willingness and ability of Barsbāy to ensure obedience by presenting a paradigmatic and idealized image of the court, wherein scholars and military elites worked together in harmony.[49]

Indeed, all of the historians studied in this volume were present for all or part of this campaign, or sought to take advantage of the opportunities it offered.[50]

[49] See, especially, Patrick Wing, "Submission, Defiance, and the Rules of Politics on the Mamluk Sultanate's Anatolian Frontier," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25, no. 3 (2015): 377–88; see also John Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire*, revised and expanded edition (Salt Lake City, 1999), 52–53; Aḥmad Darrāj, *L'Egypte sous le règne de Barsbay, 825–841/1422–1438* (Damascus, 1961), 373–81.

[50] See also Wing, "Submission, Defiance, and the Rules of Politics," 387–88.

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Ibn Ḥajar and al-ʿAynī travelled in their capacities as chief Shafiʿi and Hanafi qadis. They remained behind in Syria when the army advanced northward and travelled together to al-ʿAynī's native ʿAyntāb. There Ibn Ḥajar stayed as al-ʿAynī's houseguest for ʿĪd al-fiṭr before both rejoined the sultan in Aleppo after his return from Āmid. Ibn Taghrībirdī, contrarily, continued with the personal entourage of Barsbāy all the way to Āmid, and his account stresses his involvement in some of the military engagements and diplomatic negotiations between Barsbāy and Qarā Yulūk, and also that it was his father-in-law Sharaf al-Dīn Ashqar who concluded the truce.[51]

Al-Biqāʿī, having attached himself to Ibn Ḥajar some two years earlier, accompanied his shaykh and took advantage of their passing by Damascus to inquire about his family history. Furthermore, it was outside of Damascus, in the small village of al-Qābūn al-Taḥtānī, that Ibn Ḥajar held a literary salon for local scholars; among them was Ibn ʿArabshāh, a client of the shaykh ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Bukhārī (1379–1438), who used the occasion to introduce himself to Ibn Ḥajar, whom he impressed and with whom he had a lengthy literary discussion. On his return to Cairo, Ibn Ḥajar praised Ibn ʿArabshāh and encouraged his own students to seek him out.

The Āmid campaign thus represents a powerful nexus in the formation of scholarly networks and client-patron relationships, which occurred against the backdrop of the political relations between Barsbāy and Qarā Yulūk and within the context of a profound attempt to assert the ideological—as opposed to the functional—authority of the Cairo Sultanate on the frontier.

The Āmid campaign further demonstrates, as has just been mentioned, that Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (1372–1449) played a pivotal role as a central mediator and broker of relationships and resources between many if not most of our authors. Following the spread of his masterwork, the *Fatḥ al-bārī,* a commentary on al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* and a highly influential and well-regarded work of hadith studies, Ibn Ḥajar's reputation spread throughout the Islamic world and allowed him to accumulate positions in various institutions of knowledge or justice. In 1423, Sultan Barsbāy named him as chief Shafiʿi qadi, the highest judiciary position in the Sultanate, which he held (with some interruptions) until his death in 1449.[52]

His personal status and standing in Cairo allowed him to weave an impressive web of acquaintances, friendships, and clients that served his knowledge, reputa-

[51]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah,* ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shams al-Dīn (Beirut, 1992), 14:220–21.

[52]See R. Kevin Jacques, *Ibn Hajar,* Makers of Islamic Civilization (London, 2010); Joel Blecher, "Ḥadīth Commentary in the Presence of Patrons, Students and Rivals: Ibn Ḥajar," *Oriens* 41, nos. 3–4 (2013): 261–87; idem, *Said the Prophet of God: Hadith Commentary across a Millennium* (Oakland, 2018), 49–139.

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tion, and self-promotion. This also helped him acquire the means to appear as one of the main brokers in the scholarly environment of Cairo. Ibn Ḥajar was thus a crucial node in the respective networks of many of the authors examined in the MMS-II project. He was at the same time an acquaintance of al-Maqrīzī and a personal friend of both Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah and Najm al-Dīn Ibn Ḥijjī. He had numerous contacts among the scholars of Syria and trained many who came to Cairo, including al-Biqāʿī, one of his very close students. Ibn Ḥajar played a formative role not only in al-Biqāʿī's education but also in the development of his career. It was through Ibn Ḥajar's support that al-Biqāʿī received his first appointment to teach Sultan Jaqmaq, a position which allowed him to develop relationships with the political elite. Ibn Ḥajar was also a peer and colleague of two important patrons of Ibn ʿArabshāh: ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Bukhārī and Kamāl al-Din Muḥammad ibn al-Bārizī. There is little to suggest, however, that Ibn ʿArabshāh was successful in building a long-lasting relationship with Ibn Ḥajar, though Ibn ʿArabshāh's son did maintain a correspondence with him. One of Ibn Ḥajar's judiciary colleagues, al-ʿAynī, chief Hanafi qadi of Cairo, stood for a period as an academic and social rival, and their scathing competition seemed at some point to impede the functioning of the legal system. Yet, their later reconciliation, if not friendship, when both scholars ranked highly in the social hierarchy of the Cairo sultanate, also underlines the way that relationships evolve over time.[53]

The Āmid Campaign also highlights the close links that many historians fostered with the court. These links with the court are perhaps best exemplified through panegyric. The cultural practice of composing panegyric literature, whether in the form of poetry or royal biography, is one that many of our fifteenth-century historians engaged in and that was linked closely to patronage practices. Peter Holt described such works as "literary offerings" written often on the occasion of a new ruler's accession to power and presented as a gift in the form of a book.[54] Indeed, panegyric as a genre was in the background of many of the historiographical activities of several of our authors: al-ʿAynī wrote at least two works of sultanic biography: *Al-Sayf al-muhannad* for al-Muʾayyad Shaykh (r. 1412–21) and *Al-Rawḍ al-zāhir* for al-Ẓāhir Ṭaṭar (r. 1421); Ibn ʿArabshāh penned his *Taʾlīf al-ṭāhir* for al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq (or a member of his court); Ibn Taghrībirdī began writing his dynastic history of Egypt, *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* for a son and heir of Jaqmaq (r. 1453); while al-Biqāʿī similarly read an unnamed panegyrical work for Aḥmad ibn Īnāl (r. 1461). Though it is less clear if Ibn Ḥajar composed such works

[53]On the latter relationship with al-ʿAynī, and also with al-Maqrīzī, see also Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt."

[54]Peter M. Holt, "Literary Offerings: A Genre of Courtly Literature," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society,* eds. Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge, 1998), 3–16.

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for the sultans of his career—Shaykh, Barsbāy, or Jaqmaq—we do know that he wrote a number of *qaṣīdah*s, at least one praising one of his patrons, the Abbasid caliph al-Muʿtaḍid II (r. 1414–41), on the occasion of the Āmid campaign.[55]

In the case of the first four authors, we have to do with examples of writers involved with (or trying to gain access to) the court of the ruler. Their panegyric literary endeavors, engaging in a communicative act among the courtly elite, represented a strategy to consolidate (or acquire) positions and accrue cultural and symbolic capital through which to fuel the attainment of social and professional mobility. In the cases of al-ʿAynī, Ibn Taghrībirdī, and al-Biqāʿī, these works were also discussed or performed at the court and allegedly even read to their intended recipients. While conventional wisdom dictates that such works were often written or commissioned primarily to furnish a new sovereign with legitimacy for his reign, the MMS-II project is interested in moving beyond this now somewhat antiquated (though still relevant) notion to uncover *other* political, economic, or socio-cultural factors which led to their composition. Remaining attuned to the panegyric dimension of some of our works facilitates an investigation of the authorial voices of our historians as well as the agency of both author and text within the social world for which it was intended—thereby demonstrating the practical, performative functionality of historiography in a late medieval Islamic courtly setting.[56]

Yet panegyric was not the only context within which historians operated, and it would be remiss to overlook the importance of their intellectual environment, and especially how that environment was defined in many ways by traditionalism. Traditionalism as a movement of Islamic theological thought and ethico-legal practice informed the world of norms, knowledge practices, and authorities of many of our authors, mostly as its adherents, sometimes as its opponents. This obviously had some impact on their historical imagination and history writing. By the fifteenth century traditionalism had come to stand for a longstanding and dominant intellectual trend that was most often defined in opposition to speculative theology *(kalām),* particularly in its Ashʿarī rationalist form. In line with the occasional identification of traditionalism's adherents as the *ahl al-ḥadīth,* it maintains above all that greatest formal authority should be awarded to Quranic scripture and, especially, the Prophetic model in practices of Islamic knowledge construction and, more specifically, theological and legal interpretation. As an umbrella term that joined together diverse groups, movements, and schools of thought, traditionalism actually managed to build itself an increasingly popular

[55] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Jawāhir wa-al-durar fī tarjamat Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Ḥajar,* ed. I. ʿAbd al-Majīd (Beirut, 1999), 1:197.

[56] On the constitutive link between performative acts and late medieval courts, see Mauder, *In the Sultan's Salon.*

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identity claim, implying also referential reverence of the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ,* the first generations of Muslims. In the fifteenth century traditionalism had even come to occupy a decisive space in the cultural, religious, social, institutional, and political lives of the Cairo Sultanate, across the four communities of the Sunni schools of jurisprudence.[57]

To date it is still hard to grasp the full contours and consequences of traditionalism in social and cultural reality. Nevertheless, it is important to note that, just like the Shafiʿi and Hanafi chief judges and hadith specialists Ibn Ḥajar and al-ʿAynī, all of the historians examined in this special journal issue were also somehow involved in *fiqh* and hadith studies (with the notable exception, perhaps, of Ibn Taghrībirdī). Such specialization implied a particular cultural background and mind-set and a specific apprehension for and understanding of legal subtleties and methodologies, deeply anchored in forms of education and knowledge transmission that by this late medieval period were strongly marked by traditionalist practices and ideas, or at least by debates on the centrality of such practices and ideas. When considering the narrative construction of the authors' historiographical works, there is little doubt therefore that these productions were in some ways framed by their own background and positionality in religious studies. Traditionalism, its opposite Ashʿarism, and, especially, the continuum of grey zones that connected the extremes of both intellectual visions thus informed the theoretical and epistemological framework in which the authors grew up and of which they were among the heirs, the keepers, and the authorities. This framework was directly linked to the changing social and political order they narrated, participated in, and shaped. As such, references to theological debates, questions of law—including the ambiguous legality of usurpation or rebellion, as demonstrated in the historiographical trajectory of Amir Jakam's case—and the display of the legal system, with its hierarchies and different actors, appear as important topics in all of their works of history.

Between the twin poles of proximity to the court and the intellectual context of traditionalism and its alternatives, our historians furthermore always wrote their texts of history as an articulation of their and their audiences' sense of belonging, that is, of their individual and collective identities. As suggested in different historiographical narratives of authorial selves or others, these identities were composite and fluid entities that were constructed and expressed through a set of shared cultural, social, and political references. Despite the multiplicity and entanglement of these entities, they were well-defined and quite distinct in each of the authors' writings. The Sunni-Islamic identity, as a fundamental and

[57]See, e.g., G. Makdisi, "Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites in Islamic Religious History I," *Studia Islamica* 17 (1962): 37–80; L. Holtzman, *Anthropomorphism in Islam: the Challenge of Traditionalism (700–1350)* (Edinburgh, 2018).

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framing narrative, particularly informed the historical perception and practice of the bulk of our authors, regardless of their social or cultural background. More specifically, this fundamental and encompassing category of belonging, being articulated around a set of legal norms and moral-religious subtleties, steeped many historical narratives with the above-mentioned traditionalist outlook. The Turkish martial identity appears as a less encompassing and engaging category that was more exclusively reserved for authors who were related to the military, like Ibn Taghrībirdī. Referring to a certain notion of elite-ness closely connected to the bounding idea of Turkish-ness, this category was defined through distinctive markers that included specific military apparel and horsemanship as well as warfare practices, and cultural issues of personal names and linguistic skills. Among other textually performed identities is the one invoking the litterateur or the *"adīb."* Literary performances achieved by our authors, through varying uses of ornate prose and poetry quotations in their writings, connect with this more specific category of the "cultural intelligentsia."[58]

Juggling multiple identities and altering engagements with various categories of belonging were distinctive features of all texts examined in this special issue, most notably perhaps those by Ibn ʿArabshāh (d. 1450) and his later student Ibn Taghrībirdī. The latter's shifting and manifold engagements bring to the forefront the subjectivities lying behind our texts. This also evinces how altering life experiences and patterns of social advancements left their impact on processes of textual construction. Ibn ʿArabshāh's experience, being kidnapped by Temür then relocated at the various courts of Transoxiana and Asia Minor, represents one of the more extreme examples, materializing in a diverse corpus of texts that defies simple classification and interpretation. More generally, this construction and articulation of identities in different historiographical compilations was achieved through a narrative process, whose evolving dynamics manifested in the authors' varying self-positioning, both in relation to particular events or characters and to intellectual and normative expectations. Being essentially narrative, these categories of belonging came to be performed and negotiated textually in reference to broader cultural, social, and political stories. The stories that allowed for specific modes of telling and authorial positioning included large ones, such as that of the rebellion of the amir Jakam in 1406–7 or of the accession and empowerment of Sultan Jaqmaq in 1438, more subtle ones, such as those involving the performance of religious charismatic authority, and more personal ones, such as the life experiences of our authors. Indeed, as is demonstrated in all of the articles in this volume, in order to give a particular sense to their life-experiences

[58] See, e.g., G. Van den Bossche, "The Past, Panegyric, and the Performance of Penmanship: Sultanic Biography and Social Practice in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria" (Ph.D. diss., Universiteit Gent, 2019).

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and to their places in the world, authors like Ibn Ḥajar, Ibn ʿArabshāh, al-ʿAynī, Ibn Taghrībirdī, and al-Biqāʿī tended to connect their personal tales with other encompassing and authoritative socio-political stories. Ibn Taghrībirdī's multi-layered narrative was specifically grounded in a high courtly context, whereas that of Ibn Ḥajar also nurtured a particular world of religious authorities. As for al-Biqāʿī, his interpretation of the trials and hardships he underwent was set in an eschatological context invoking divine immanence and the triumph of the Muslim community after tribulations. All stories were therefore not only told in a multiplicity of historiographical voices, but also made meaningful by these authors in ways that connected to their life experiences as well as to the categories of belonging to which they and their audiences felt compelled to appeal.

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Appendix: Survey of Fifteenth-Century Arabic Authors and Their History Writings (ca. 1410–70)

Geo-politically and generationally differentiated. (+ OpenITI unique text identifiers)

Cairo-Centered

Generation 1 (Born ca. Pre-1390)

A: al-Maqrīzī, Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-ʿUbaydī (1365–1442, Cairo)

1. Kitāb al-muqaffá al-kabīr (0845Maqrizi.Muqaffa)
2. Al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-al-iʿtibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-al-āthār (0845Maqrizi.Mawaciz)
3. Al-Sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk (0845Maqrizi.Suluk)
4. Shudhūr al-ʿuqūd fī dhikr al-nuqūd (0845Maqrizi.ShudhurCuqud)
5. Durar al-ʿuqūd al-farīdah fī tarājim al-aʿyān al-mufīdah (0845Maqrizi.DurarCuqud)
6. Al-Dhahab al-masbūk fī dhikr man ḥajja min al-khulafāʾ wa-al-mulūk (0845Maqrizi.DhahabMasbuk)
7. Al-Bayān wa-al-iʿrāb ʿammā bi-arḍ Miṣr min al-aʿrāb (0845Maqrizi.Bayan)
8. Ittiʿāẓ al-ḥunafāʾ bi-akhbār al-aʾimmah al-Fāṭimīyīn al-khulafāʾ (0845Maqrizi.IqazHunafa)
9. Al-Ilmām bi-akhbār man bi-arḍ al-Ḥabashah min mulūk al-Islām (0845Maqrizi.Ilmam)
10. Al-Awzān wa-al-akyāl al-sharʿīyah (0845Maqrizi.AwzanWaAkyal)
11. Al-Ḍawʿ al-sārī fī maʿrifat khabar Tamīm al-Dārī (0845Maqrizi.DuSari)

B: al-ʿAynī, Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad (1361–1451, Cairo)

12. ʿIqd al-jumān fī tārīkh ahl al-zamān (0855BadrDinCayni.CiqdJuman)
13. Tārīkh al-Badr fī awṣāf ahl al-ʿaṣr (0855BadrDinCayni.TarikhAlbadr)
14. Al-Jawharah al-sanīyah fī tārīkh al-dawlah al-Muʾayyadīyah (0855BadrDinCayni.JawharaSaniyya)
15. Al-Sayf al-muhannad fī sīrat al-Malik al-Muʾayyad (0855BadrDinCayni.SayfMuhannad)

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16. Al-Rawḍ al-zāhir fī sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir (0855BadrDinCayni.RawdZahir)

C: Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Kinānī (1372–1449, Cairo)

17. Inbāʾ al-ghumr bi-anbāʾ al-ʿumr (0852IbnHajarCasqalani.InbaGhumr)
18. Rafʿ al-iṣr ʿan quḍāt Miṣr (0852IbnHajarCasqalani.Rafcisr)
19. Al-Durar al-kāminah fī aʿyān al-miʾah al-thāminah (0852IbnHajarCasqalani.DurarKamina)
20. Dhayl al-durar al-kāminah fī aʿyān al-miʾah al-thāminah (0852IbnHajarCasqalani.DhaylDurar)
21. Dīwān Ibn Ḥajar (0852IbnHajarCasqalani.Diwan)
22. Al-Jawāb al-jalīl ʿan ḥukm balad al-Khalīl (0852IbnHajarCasqalani.JawabJalil)
23. Badhl al-māʿūn fī faḍl al-ṭāʿūn (0852IbnHajarCasqalani.Badhl)

D: Ibn ʿArabshāh, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh (1389–1450, Damascus, Cairo)

24. Al-Taʾlīf al-ṭāhir fī shiyam al-Malik al-Ẓāhir al-qāʾim bi-nuṣrat al-ḥaqq Abī Saʿīd Jaqmaq (0854IbnCarabshah.TalifTahir)
25. ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr fī nawāʾib Tīmūr (title variations) (0854IbnCarabshah.CajaibMaqdur)
26. Fākihat al-khulafāʾ wa-mufākahat al-ẓurafāʾ (0854IbnCarabshah.FakihatKhulafa)

E: Ibn Nāhiḍ, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Juhanī al-Kurdī (1356–1438, Aleppo, Damascus, Cairo)

27. Sīrat al-Malik al-Muʾayyad (0841IbnNahid.SiraShaykhiya)

F: al-Qalqashandī, Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Fazārī (1355–1418, Cairo)

28. Qalāʾid al-jumān fī al-taʿrīf bi-qabāʾil ʿArab al-zamān (0821Qalqashandi.QalaidJuman)
29. Nihāyat al-arab fī maʿrifat qabāʾil al-ʿArab (0821Qalqashandi.NihayaArab)
30. Maʾāthir al-ināfah fī maʿālim al-khilāfah (0821Qalqashandi.Maathir)

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31. Ḍawʾ al-ṣubḥ al-musfir wa-janá al-dawḥ al-muthmir (0821Qalqashandi.DawSubhMusfir)

G: Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī, Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn ʿAlī (1366–1434, Hama, Cairo)

32. Qahwat al-inshāʾ (0837CaliIbnHijjaHamawi.QahwatInsha)

H: Anonymous (?, Cairo)

33. Muzīl al-ḥaṣr fī mukātabāt ahl al-ʿaṣr (800Anonymous.MuzilHasr)

Generation 2 (Born ca. Post-1390)

A: Ibn Taghrībirdī, Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Maḥāsin Yūsuf al-Atābakī (1411–70, Cairo)

34. Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah (0874IbnTaghribirdi.NujumZahira)
35. Mawrid al-laṭāfah fī man waliya al-salṭanah wa-al-khilāfah (0874IbnTaghribirdi.MawridLatafa)
36. Ḥawādith al-duhūr fī madá al-ayyām wa-al-shuhūr (0874IbnTaghribirdi.HawadithDahriya)
37. Al-Dalīl al-shāfī ʿalá al-manhal al-ṣāfī (0874IbnTaghribirdi.DalilShafi)
38. Al-Baḥr al-zākhir fī ʿilm al-awwal wa-al-ākhir (0874IbnTaghribirdi.CilmZakhir)
39. Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī wa-al-mustawfá baʿda al-wāfī (0874IbnTaghribirdi.ManhalSafi)
40. Al-Kawākib al-bāhirah min al-nujūm al-zāhirah (0874IbnTaghribirdi.KawakibBahira)
41. Manshaʾ al-laṭāfah fī dhikr man waliya al-khilāfah (0874IbnTaghribirdi.ManshaLatafa)

B: al-Ẓāhirī, Ghars al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Shāhīn (d. 1468, Cairo)

42. Zubdat kashf al-mamālik fī bayān al-ṭuruq wa-al-masālik (0872Zahiri.ZubdatKashf)

C: al-Biqāʿī, Burhān al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar (1406–80, Damascus, Cairo)

43. Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr li-asrār ahl al-ʿaṣr (0885Biqaci.IzharCasr)

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44. ʿUnwān al-ʿunwān bi-tajrīd asmāʾ al-shuyūkh wa-baʿḍ al-talāmidhah wa-al-aqrān (0885Biqaci.Cunwan)
45. Al-Iʿlām bi-sann al-hijrah ilá al-Shām (0885Biqaci.Iclam)
46. ʿUnwān al-zamān fī tarājim al-shuyūkh wa-al-aqrān (0885Biqaci.CunwanZaman)

D: Ibn Quṭlūbughā, Zayn al-Dīn al-Qāsim ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥanafī (1399–1474, Cairo)

47. Tāj al-tarājim fī ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyah (0879IbnQutlubugha.TajTarajim)
48. Talkhīṣ tāj al-tarājim fī ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyah (0879IbnQutlubugha.TalkhisTaj)

E: al-Banbī, Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Muḥyawī (1386–1474, Cairo)

49. Al-ʿUqūd al-durrīyah fī al-umarāʾ al-Miṣrīyah (0865Banbi.CuqudDurriya)

F: Ibn Bahādur, Kamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Muʾminī (d. 1473, Cairo?)

50. Kitāb futūḥ al-naṣr fī tārīkh mulūk Maṣr (0878IbnBahadur.FutuhNasr)

G: al-Maqdisī/al-Qudsī, Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Khalīl al-Qāhirī al-Shāfiʿī (1416–83, Cairo)

51. Badhl al-naṣāʾiḥ al-sharʿīyah fīmā ʿalá al-sulṭān wa-wulāt al-umūr wa-sāʾir al-raʿīyah (0888Qudsi.Badhl)

H: al-Saḥmāwī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 1463, Cairo)

52. Al-Thaghr al-bāsim fī ṣināʿat al-kātib wa-al-kātim (0868Sahmawi.ThaghrBasim)
53. Al-ʿUrf al-nāsim min al-thaghr al-bāsim (0868Sahmawi.UrfNasim)

I: al-Qalqashandī, Najm al-Dīn Ibn Abī Ghuddah Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Fazārī (1395–1471, Cairo)

54. Qalāʾid al-jumān fī muṣṭalaḥ mukātabāt ahl al-zamān (0876Qalqashandi.QalaidJuman)
55. Nihāyat al-arab fī maʿrifat ansāb al-ʿArab (0876Qalqashandi.Nihayah)

J: al-Ghazzī, Raḍī al-Dīn Abū al-Barakāt Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad (1408–60, Damascus, Cairo)

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56. Bahajat al-nāẓirīn fī tarājim mutaʾakhkhirī al-Shāfiʿīyah (0864RadiGhazzi.BahjatNazirin)
57. Sīrat Jaqmaq (0864RadiGhazzi.SiratJaqmaq)

K: Ibn Ḥatlab al-Ghazzī, ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh (al-Ḥanafī Ibn al-Hanbalī?) (d. 1455, Cairo?)

58. Al-Murūj al-zakīyah fī tawshiyat al-durūj al-khiṭābīyah (0859IbnHatlabGhazzi.MurujZakiyya)

Syria-Centered:

Generation 1 (Born ca. Pre-1390)

A: Ibn Buḥtur, Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá al-Tanūkhī (d. 1436, al-Gharb/Beirut)

59. Tārīkh Bayrūt: wa-huwa akhbār al-salaf min dhurrīyat Buḥtur ibn ʿAlī amīr al-gharb bi-Bayrūt (0840IbnBuhtur.TarikhBayrut)

B: Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad (1377–1448, Damascus)

60. Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah (dhayl muṭawwal) (0851IbnQadiShuhba.TarikhIbnQadiShuhba)
61. Al-Iʿlām bi-tārīkh ahl al-Islām (al-tārīkh al-kabīr) (0851IbnQadiShuhba.TarikhKabir)

C: Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Jibrīnī al-Shāfiʿī (1372–1439, Aleppo, Tripoli)

62. Al-Durr al-muntakhab fī takmilat tārīkh Ḥalab (0843IbnKhatibNasiriya.DurrMuntakhab)

D: al-Bāʿūnī, Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad, al-Shāfiʿī al-Dimashqī (1374–1466, Damascus)

63. Tuḥfat al-shurafāʾ fī tārīkh al-khulafāʾ (Farāʾid al-sulūk fī tārīkh al-khulafāʾ wa-al-mulūk) (0871Bacuni.Tuhfah)

Generation 2 (Born ca. Post-1390)

A: Ibn al-Shiḥnah, Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad (1402–85, Aleppo, Cairo)

64. Nuzhat al-nawāẓir fī rawḍ al-manāẓir (0890IbnShihna.NuzhatNawazir)

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B: Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad (d. 1456, Aleppo?)

65. Mukhtaṣar al-durr al-muntakhab fī takmilat tārīkh Ḥalab (0860IbnKhatibNasiriya.MukhtasarDurrMuntakhab)

C: Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr (1400–70, Damascus)

66. Al-Durr al-thamīn fī manāqib Nūr al-Dīn (0874QadiShuhbah.ManaqibNur)

D: Anonymous

67. Ḥawlīyāt Dimashqīyah 834–39 (0800Anonymous.Hawliyat)

Mecca-Centered

Generation 1 (Born ca. Pre-1390)

A: al-Fāsī, Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-Ṭayyib Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Makkī (1373–1429, Mecca)

68. Shifāʾ al-gharām bi-akhbār al-balad al-ḥarām (0832AbuTayyibFasi.ShifaGharam)
69. Al-ʿIqd al-thamīn fī tārīkh al-balad al-amīn (0832AbuTayyibFasi.CiqdThamin)
70. Al-Zuhūr al-muqtaṭafah min tārīkh Makkah al-musharrafah (0832AbuTayyibFasi.ZuhurMuqtatafa)
71. Al-Muqniʿ min akhbār al-mulūk wa-al-khulafāʾ wa-wulāt Makkah al-shurafāʾ (0832AbuTayyibFasi.Muqnic)
72. Muntakhab taḥṣīl al-marām min akhbār al-balad al-ḥarām (0832AbuTayyibFasi.MuntakhabTahsilMaram)
73. Tuḥfat al-kirām bi-akhbār al-balad al-ḥarām (0832AbuTayyibFasi.TuhfatKiram)

B: al-Shaybī, Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Qurashī al-ʿAbdarī (d. 1433, Mecca)

74. Al-Sharaf al-aʿlá fī dhikr qubūr al-Muʿallā (0833Shaybi.Sharaf)

C: al-Ṣāghānī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ḍiyāʾ al-ʿUmarī al-Qurashī (d. 1450)

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75. Al-Baḥr al-ʿamīq fī manāsik al-muʿtamir wa-al-ḥājj ilá al-bayt al-ʿatīq (Tārīkh Makkah wa-al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah wa-al-qabr al-sharīf) (0854Saghani.BahrCamiq)

Generation 2 (Born ca. Post-1390)

A: Ibn Fahd, Najm al-Dīn ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Makkī (1409–80, Mecca)

76. Itḥāf al-wará bi-akhbār Umm al-Qurá (0885IbnFahd.IthafWara)
77. Al-Durr al-kamīn bi-dhayl al-ʿiqd al-thamīn fī tārīkh al-balad al-amīn (0885IbnFahd.DurrKamin)
78. Muʿjam al-shuyūkh (0885IbnFahd.MucjamShuyukh)
79. Al-Tabyīn fī tarājim al-Ṭabariyīn (0885IbnFahd.Tabyin)
80. Al-Lubāb fī al-alqāb (0885IbnFahd.Lubab)

B: Al-Ḥusaynī, Tāj al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Muḥammad (d. 1470, Mecca)

81. Al-Rawḍ al-mugharras fī faḍāʾil al-Bayt al-Muqaddas (0875Husayni.RawdMugharras)

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The Historiographical Trajectory and Legal Status of a Rebellion: Anti-Sultan Jakam (d. 809/1407) and his Literary Representation

Introduction

Context: Amir Jakam and early fifteenth-century internal warfare

The ninth/fifteenth century in Egypt and Syria began with a period of internal warfare *(fitnah)* that substantially disturbed the sultanate of Cairo. The death of Sultan al-Ẓāhir Barqūq in 801/1399 brought to the throne an eleven-year-old child, his son al-Nāṣir Faraj (r. 801–15/1399–1412), who proved incapable of ensuring the domination of the sultanic household. His enthronement provoked a long series of political struggles in Egypt and then Syria between the main warlords of the realm, among whom were the amirs Jakam min ʿIwaḍ, Sūdūn Ṭāz, Yashbak al-Shaʿbānī, Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī, and Nawrūz al-Ḥāfiẓī. These conflicts (which even Tamerlane's invasion in 803/1401 did not suspend) ended a few years after Faraj's tragic death, during the reign of Sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh (r. 815–24/1412–21).[1]

The main texts that narrate these events were written between the 810s/1410s and the 840s/1440s. All of them condemned the military elite's proclivity to conflict and its responsibility in these long, fratricidal wars. The biographical dictionaries, especially, show their disapproval of these wars, or *fitnah,* and define the instigators in terms that suggest to what extent internal warfare was in opposition to the values considered important by these historians (and by the ulama in general). The biographers, who point out how an amir "liked quarrels" or used to spark them off,[2] systematically relate these instances using negative expressions such as "he was a man of evil and discord."[3] The hostility of the opinions against

[1]On these events, see Clément Onimus, *Les Maîtres du jeu: Pouvoir et violence politique à l'aube du sultanat mamlouk circassien (784–815/1382–1412)* (Paris, 2019).

[2]We can find the following expressions: "*kāna yuḥibbu al-fitan wa-al-ḥurūb*" or "*kāna min muthīri al-fitan*" or "*kāna min ruʾūs al-fitan.*" See for example the biography of Sūdūn al-Jalab (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr bi-abnāʾ al-ʿumr,* ed. Aḥmad Allāh Khān [Hyderabad, 1969–76], 7:99–100), the biography of Shāhīn Qiṣqā (Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah,* ed. William Popper [Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1933–54], 6:286), or the biographies of Yashbak al-Mūsāwī (Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī wa-al-mustawfá baʿd al-wāfī,* ed. Muḥammad Amīn [Cairo, 1984–2005], 12:130; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk,* ed. Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿĀshūr [Cairo, 1936–1973], 4:201).

[3]We find the expression *kāna min ahli al-sharr wa-al-fitan* in the biography of Amir Alṭunbughā Shaqal, from al-Maqrīzī's pen, which was copied by al-Sakhāwī. In the *Sulūk,* al-Maqrīzī, calls

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the conspiracies that led to *fitnah* is sometime explicit, as when Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah explains how much Amir Ṭurunṭāy al-Kāmilī was hated for having provoked Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī's war with his intrigues.[4]

Nevertheless, one of those warmongers, Amir Jakam min ʿIwaḍ, enjoyed special treatment in the sources. Although he was one the most active faction chiefs in the discords that determined the evolution of the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century, the judgements on him were surprisingly qualified. Jakam appears in the sources in Rabīʿ II 801/December 1398, when Sultan Barqūq appointed him as an amir.[5] After the sovereign's death, he took part in the internal war of 802/1400, where he joined Barqūq's younger amirs against the leading amirs. After their victory, Jakam and his allies, led by Amir Yashbak al-Shaʿbānī, distributed amirates and offices among themselves. Thus, Jakam's was a fast ascent that allowed him to reach the highest amiral rank, amir of 100, in one and a half years. Thanks to his newly-gained power, he managed to become autonomous: it seems, indeed, that he did not benefit from the patronage of any other amir.[6] He then engaged in the incessant conflicts between the amirs until he became the chief of a powerful faction that allowed him to take power in Cairo in 803–4/1401. After another *fitnah* where he lost all his supporters, among whom was Amir Nawrūz al-Ḥāfiẓī, he was arrested by one of his rivals, Amir Sūdūn Ṭāz, and imprisoned in Syria (804–6/1402–4). The governor of Aleppo, Amir Damurdāsh al-Muḥammadī, hoping to benefit from such a precious ally, freed him from jail, but Jakam fled and took part to the interminable Syrian wars that involved numerous factions for years.[7] As a talented warlord, he succeeded in gathering several rebels around

him "corrupted scum" and "demon of the sultan" just before he adds that he was one of the warlords of these internal wars: *"kāna min ruʾūs al-fitan."* Al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd al-farīdah fī tarājim al-aʿyān al-mufīdah,* ed. Maḥmūd al-Jalīlī (Beirut, 2002), 1:430; idem, *Sulūk,* 4:206–7; al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ,* ed. Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Qudsī (Cairo, 1934–37), 2:320. Evil *(sharr)* is also related to *fitnah* in the biographies of ʿAllān Julaq (Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 8:21–22), Uzbak Khāṣṣ Kharjī (Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 2:341–42; al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 2:273), Bardbughā al-Dawādār (Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 3:283–84), and Jānim min Ḥasan Shāh (Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 4:216–17), among others.

[4] Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah,* ed. ʿAdnān Darwīsh (Damascus, 1977–97), 1:356–57.

[5] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* 3:924; idem, *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* 1:574–80; al-ʿAynī, *Al-Sulṭān Barqūq muʾassis dawlat al-mamālīk al-jarākisah min khilāl makhṭūṭ ʿIqd al-jumān fī tārīkh ahl al-zamān li-Badr al-ʿAynī,* ed. Īmān ʿUmar Shukrī (Cairo, 2002), 487; al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-jumān fī tārīkh ahl al-zamān,* ed. Islām Yushāʿ Bīnū (Amman, 2011), 82; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh,* 4:11; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ,* 6:24–27; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 5:591; idem, *Manhal,* 4:313–24.

[6] Although Jakam was a mamluk of Barqūq at the very beginning of his career, it seems that he was never the client of another amir afterwards. He never appears in the sources except as a leading chief of a faction, and never as the follower of another amir.

[7] Damurdāsh al-Muḥammadī (d. 818/1415) was a friend of Taghrībirdī, father of the famous historian. He took part in the conflicts of Sultan Faraj's reign and was one of the causes of the second

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him, thanks to betrayals and changing alliances. He managed to obtain the temporary support of some of his former enemies, such as Yashbak al-Shaʿbānī and his ally Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī, with whom he led the war against Sultan Faraj in 807/1404–5. His skill in manipulating various political networks, as well as his perseverance, allowed him to surmount the military interventions of the young sultan who, in 809/1406, led an expedition in Syria intended to annihilate the faction of Jakam and Nawrūz. After the sultan's return to Cairo, Jakam seized most of Syria and proclaimed himself sultan in Aleppo in 809/1406–7. He was the first of Sultan Barqūq's former mamluks who dared to break with his late master's testament and the dynastic succession he had prepared. Jakam's reign did not last more than two months, however, as he was killed in battle in Dhū al-Qaʿdah 809/April–May 1407, while besieging the city of Āmid[8]—which used to belong to the chief of the White Sheep Turcoman Horde, Amir Qarā Yulūk (d. 839/1435).[9]

Paradox: The Issue of Jakam's Salvatio Memoriae

Jakam was thus one of the vanquished in history. His career and his final failure might have—perhaps *should* have—made him a damned person in historiography. Yet his memory was neither passed over in silence nor tarnished. Why this paradox? What process of history writing had led the ninth/fifteenth-century historians to this *salvatio memoriae*?

Sources that come directly from Jakam himself are rare. We possess only an inscription from the citadel of Aleppo, which he had restored after its destruction by Tamerlane. This inscription confirms the construction projects that are mentioned in the narrative sources, which show not only his concern for fortifying the city (especially the construction of the south bastion on which the inscription can be found) but also that his monumental projects should have been worthy of a ruler (especially the ceremonial hall that connected the two towers flanking the gate).[10] The extreme rarity of such direct pieces of evidence would make them

internal war of the reign. See Onimus, *Les Maîtres du jeu,* 115, 120, 199, 250, 245, and 366.

[8]Now Diyarbakir, Turkey.

[9]The sources give different dates of death: 11, 17, 25, or 27 Dhū al-Qaʿdah 809/19 or 25 April or 3 or 5 May 1407. For the details of Jakam's biography, refer to the table at the end of this article and to his biography in Clément Onimus, "Écrire la vie de Jakam," in Mathilde Boudier, Audrey Caire, Eva Collet, and Noëmie Lucas, eds., *Autour de la Syrie médiévale: Études offertes à Anne-Marie Eddé* (Paris, 2020), forthcoming.

[10]This inscription has been published twice with a few corrections, first by Sauvaget, then by Herzfeld. Jean Sauvaget, "Enceinte primitive d'Alep," *Mélanges de l'Institut Français de Damas* 1 (1929):142, n. 2; Ernst Herzfeld, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum;* part 2: *Syrie du Nord; Inscriptions et Monuments d'Alep,* t. I, vol. 1; *Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire* 76 (1955): 93, n. 43. See *Thesaurus d'Epigraphie Islamique* (TEI), XIIIe livraison, 2015, nos. 8810 and 32331.

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incomprehensible to the modern historian without the narrative work of contemporary historians. Faced with such a problematic character who instigated *fitnah* and sought to break the dynastic order, they tried to give meaning to Jakam's failed rebellions in the biographies they wrote about him. What significance did they give to his life? What memory did they elaborate for this amir? My approach will combine both a narratological and a micro-historical perspective[11] and ask in particular what discursive treatment of the individual the authors chose.

In this article, I intend to develop the argument that, on the one hand, history writing is not independent from jurisprudence, and, on the other hand, that the evolution of the political regime had an impact on historiography. Most of the historians of the Cairo sultanate were indeed jurists. The converging image of Amir Jakam they elaborate, despite their different positions in the academic field, is linked to the way they handle justifying his rebellion against Sultan Faraj. This justification was being written during a period when a monarchic regime was being built, under Sultan Barsbāy (824–41/1421–38). In a second historiographical stratum, the nature of narration changed: from justification, it became memory. The juridical stake disappeared and its historiographical expression became sedimented, like a fossil inside the rock of memory writing. In each one of these historiographical strata, one historian played a particular role in the elaboration of the literary representation of Amir Jakam: al-ʿAynī at the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century and Ibn Taghrībirdī during the second half of the century. This article will give a special emphasis to both of these historians, whose works will be compared to those of their contemporaries.

I shall first describe the narrative existence of Jakam. In other words: to what extent is his life narrated by the historians? Then I shall describe the position of each one of those historians *vis-à-vis* Jakam. At last, we shall see that, despite the various contexts, a thematic convergence develops in these texts around the issue of the justice of the rebel.

Amir Jakam's narrative existence

Jakam's narrative existence—the one that is meaningful to the authors—does not start with his birth (about which we know nothing—neither the place nor the year—just as we do not know anything about his ethnic, religious, or geographic origins). It begins with his first appointment as an amir, a social ritual of institution that is the condition *sine qua non* for the discursive ritual of institution

[11]For a seminal study that links microhistory to narratology, see Jo Van Steenbergen and Stijn Van Nieuwenhuyse, "Truth and Politics in Late Medieval Arabic Historiography: the Formation of Sultan Barsbāy's State (1422–1438) and the Narratives of the Amir Qurqumās al-Shaʿbānī (d. 1438)," *Der Islam* 95, no. 1 (2018): 147–87.

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consisting of integrating him into the biographical dictionaries. Before this event, he does not exist. That means that the narrative existence defines the social existence, and this is mutual: to become an amir is the only way for a military man to be considered a member of the *aʿyān*, that is, a notable. The consistency of this social milieu is given by the biographers: they define it through the mention of the proper names in their narration and through the biographies. These dictionaries, thus, create the elite as a group of individuals.[12]

These individualities are only defined inside a particular field, which depends on the profile of the person who is the subject of the biography.[13] To be more precise, the political field is almost the sole relevant facet of Jakam's life, just as it is in the biographies of other amirs. This explains the lacunae related to his family,[14] his economic activity, and a lot of other acts and facts that might have been presented if the biography were a narrative of his life. As in most of the amiral biographies, Jakam's life is restricted to listing his offices, his fiscal concessions *(iqiāʿ),* his rebellions, and other political acts. In short, Jakam's biographies map a course, a succession of positions in the political arena of the sultanate,[15] in an institutional and symbolic frame into which rebellion is integrated as one of the forms of political action. It is thus unnecessary to explain its immediate causes:[16] often, the struggles are mentioned only in order to describe a change in the government, not to analyze the ins and outs of the event.

There are eight biographies of Jakam. Almost all of the contemporary authors wrote one or two of them, as did some authors of the second half of the ninth/fifteenth century.[17] Four of them are in biographical dictionaries[18] and four are

[12] See Onimus, *Les Maîtres du jeu,* 33–34.

[13] It is possible to distinguish different types of biographies, such as the biographies of scholars, the biographies of amirs, or the biographies of secretaries.

[14] No source mentions either a wife or a child.

[15] On the *cursus honorum* in Cairo sultanate, see Clément Onimus, "La question du *cursus honorum* dans le sultanat mamelouk au tournant des xive–xve siècles," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 64 (2015): 365–90.

[16] The tensions that broke out between Jakam and Sūdūn al-Ḥamzāwī in Ṣafar 804/September 1401 are mentioned by different chroniclers without any kind of explanation. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:1078; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 6:93.

[17] I have not found any other biography of this character. The authors who wrote before Jakam's rise do not speak about him: neither Ibn Khaldūn nor Ibn al-Furāt nor Ibn Duqmāq. There is no obituary in Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's chronicle either, because the edited book does not go further than 808/1405. The mentions of Jakam within his chronicle look like what can be found in al-Maqrīzī.

[18] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 4:313–24; al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* 1:574–80; Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah, "Al-Durr al-muntakhab fī tārīkh Ḥalab," Bibliothèque nationale MS Arabe 5853, fols. 133–35; al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 3:76.

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obituaries included in annals.[19] It is noteworthy that some authors did not include Jakam in their dictionaries: he does not appear in Ibn in their*Al-Durar al-kāminah* or in the *Dhayl al-durar al-kāminah* by the same author; he is absent from al-Maqrīzī's *Muqaffá* and from al-Suyūṭī's *Nal-Suyoʿiqyān.* Some choices have been made, but they may be neither an apotheosis nor a *damnatio memoriae,* as some authors do not cover Jakam in one of their dictionaries, but do in another, as in al-Maqrīzī's *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, or in the obituaries of a chronicle, as in Ibn the obi*Inbāʾnb**Ibn the* Symmetrically, no necrology of Jakam is found in some chronicles whose authors wrote a biography of him in their dictionaries, such as al-Maqrīzī's *Sulūk* or Ibn Taghrībirdī's *Nujūm.* This depends on the historiographical program of each author. Ibn n apotheosis nor a nd outs of the event. hrough the mention of the proper names in their narration and through s the lives of scholars) and his chronicle (which is the discursive place of politics). Al-Suyūṭī's work is the acme of this literary distinction, where the military are only tolerated in a biographical dictionary if they held a license *(ijāzah).*[20] On the contrary, in the eyes of al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taghrībirdī, biographical dictionaries elaborate the sociopolitical identity of the regime and are thus oriented toward the amirs,[21] although the obituaries in the chronicles are shorter and rarer. Al-Maqrīzī wrote two dictionaries with two distinct plans: one is meant as a register of contemporary notables since 760/1358, and it allowed some space for the military,[22] whereas the other is dedicated to prominent characters in the history of Islam and gives only limited coverage of the military in comparison with the attention to scholars.[23]

In short, the narrative existence of the sultanate's amirs used to depend, on the one hand, on the social representations of the ulama of that century, who defined notability according to institutional and political criteria; and on the other hand on the historiographical program of each one of the authors in each one of their books. In this frame, Jakam's narrative existence appears short—it is restricted

[19] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 6:24–27; al-ʿAynī, "ʿIqd al-jumān," Topkapı MS Ahmet III A2911/1, fol. 88v; idem, "Tārīkh al-Badr," Bibliothèque Nationale MS Arabe 1544, fol. 80v; Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa-al-abdān fī tawārīkh al-zamān,* ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1970–71), 2:232.

[20] For example, Sultan Jaqmaq is mentioned but his biography is restricted to the evocation of his teaching license. Al-Suyūṭī, *As-Suyūtī's Who's Who in the Fifteenth Century: Nazm ul-Iqyân fi Ayân il-Ayân: Being a Biographical Dictionary of Notable Men and Women in Egypt, Syria and the Muslim World, Based on Two Manuscripts, One in Cairo and the Other in Leiden,* ed. Philip K. Hitti (New York, 1927), 103.

[21] Julien Loiseau, *Reconstruire la maison du sultan: Ruine et recomposition de l'ordre urbain au Caire (1350–1450)* (Cairo, 2010), 211–12.

[22] See the author's introduction: al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* 1:62.

[23] Only three amirs of the reigns of Barqūq and Faraj are mentioned in al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-muqaffá al-kabīr,* ed. Muḥammad al-Yaʿlāwī (Beirut, 1991).

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to the first nine years of the ninth/fifteenth century—even though it is evoked in several works: seven authors of that century chose to write of his life in eight texts.

Historiographical Trajectories: The Historians and Their Relationships with Jakam

Four of these authors were contemporaries and witnesses of the events. They composed their biographies of Jakam over the course of several decades in the first half of the ninth/fifteenth century. It is possible to propose a chronological order of these biographies: the first was written by al-ʿAynī in his *Tārīkh al-Badr,* whose composition had begun in the last months of the preceding century. Though I do not know the exact date, the second must be that of Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah, as it preceded Ibn Ḥajar's biography.[24] The third is in Ibn Ḥajar's *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* written about 840/1438, and the fourth is the one in al-Maqrīzī's *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* which he wrote before 845/1442. The fifth is in the *ʿIqd al-jumān,* which al-ʿAynī started to write in order to replace his preceding chronicle from 824/1421 or 832/1428, with the fragment in question probably being written in 851/1449.[25] Except for the *Tārīkh al-Badr,* all of these biographies date from at least twenty years after Jakam's death, and they were probably all redacted in about the same decade (840s/1438–47).

Al-ʿAynī and Jakam: Successive Strata in Historiographical Discourse

Al-ʿAynī (762–855/1361–1451) was a client of Jakam, and one of his friends.[26] All his fellow historians note that he owed his ascension to Jakam's patronage, as, during the very first years of the century (801–4/1399–1402), when Jakam was one of the most powerful amirs in Egypt, he granted al-ʿAynī the positions of *muḥtasib* of Cairo and then *nāẓir al-aḥbās.*[27] After Jakam's imprisonment in Syria in 804/1402, al-ʿAynī's career suddenly took a downward turn. Having lost his patron, he was appointed only to low offices until he again found favor under Sultan al-Muʾayyad

[24] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 3:76.

[25] Nobutaka Nakamachi, "Al-ʿAynī's Chronicles as a Source for the Baḥrī Mamluk Period," *Orient* 40 (2005): 157.

[26] For example, Jakam appointed him *muḥtasib* in Cairo in 803/1401. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh,* 4:161. See Clément Onimus, "Al-ʿAynī and His Fellow Historians: Questioning the Discursive Position of a Historian in the Mamluk Academic Field," in Jo Van Steenbergen and Maya Termonia, eds., *New Readings in Arabic Historiography from Late Medieval Egypt and Syria* (submitted for publication); Onimus, "Écrire la vie de Jakam."

[27] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 11:193–97; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* 3:1038, 1080; idem, *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* 3:467–68; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ,* 4:33–34.

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Shaykh. It was al-ʿAynī's intimacy with Jakam that first incited me to study his creation of this historical character, which later led to the decision to compare it with the character that appears in the works of other historians. This interesting narrative situation deserves some development.

Despite their friendship, al-ʿAynī's obituaries of Jakam (in two different chronicles) are the shortest. The first is the *Tārīkh al-Badr,*[28] composed from 799 to 805/1396 to 1403 and then continued before it was copied by the author's brother until 827/1424.[29] According to Nobutaka Nakamachi, this is the oldest text at our disposal.[30] I suggest that the fragment in question was written between 813/1411 and 815/1412. Indeed, following Nakamachi's statement, it seems that this book was the continuation of an earlier manuscript that was ended in 813/1411.[31] The copy that was made by Aḥmad (al-ʿAynī's brother) was not continued after 815/1412, when the author personally resumed the composition until 819/1416.[32] It is thus very likely that Aḥmad stopped writing in 815/1412. The text is short, consisting of only a few lines.[33] He notes his death, the shortness of his sultanate, and his various qualities. He continues with the restoration of the citadel of Aleppo, which would have been, according to the author, proof that Jakam dealt with important matters.[34] He concedes a mistake: that Jakam had executed his enemies at the end of his life—an accusation that can be backed up through al-Maqrīzī's chronicle.[35] There is a surprising correction in the text. Among Jakam's qualities, a negative one has been written and then crossed out: miserliness. Because of the correction, the reading is complicated; but it seems that it was meant to delete the word *misāk*. Does this mean that the copyist did not benefit from the same favors as his brother Maḥmūd? Indeed, it is written in another manuscript that

[28]Nobutaka Nakamachi, "Al-ʿAynī and His Chronicle: Historical Narrative Practice of Mamluk ʿUlamāʾ," *Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies* 23, no. 1 (2007): 266–67.

[29]Bibliothèque Nationale MS Arabe 1544. I am currently preparing an edition of this text.

[30]Nakamachi, "Al-ʿAynī and His Chronicle," 266; idem, "Life in the Margins: Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-ʿAynī, a Non-Elite Intellectual in the Mamlūk Period," *Orient* 48 (2013): 98.

[31]The manuscript in question is the manuscript of Süleymaniye Library no. 830. Cf. Nakamachi, "Life in the Margins," 99.

[32]Nakamachi, "Life in the Margins," 98.

[33]Al-ʿAynī, "ʿIqd al-jumān," fol. 88v, and idem, "Tārīkh al-Badr," Bibliothèque Nationale MS Arabe 1544, fol. 83v.

[34]The same expression can be found in the obituary of the *ʿIqd al-jumān,* that I will discuss later, as well as in the one written by Ibn al-Ṣayrafī (who copies al-ʿAynī). Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs,* 2:232.

[35]He executes Duqmāq al-Muḥammadī in Jumādá II 808/December 1405, Ibn Ṣāḥib Albāz and his sons in Shawwāl 808/April 1406, Nuʿayr the same month, ʿAllān al-Yaḥyāwī Julaq and Ṭūlū min ʿAlī Bāshā in Dhū al-Ḥijjah 808/June 1406, and Kizil in Dhū al-Qaʿdah 809/April 1407. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* 4:12, 17, 18, 20, 46.

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Aḥmad al-ʿAynī mourned Amir Jakam when he died because Jakam had promised to give him an important position but had not done so.[36] This first obituary belongs to a specific political and personal context. It was written a few years after the events (813–15/1410–12), while one of Jakam's rivals—either Sultan Faraj or Sultan Shaykh—occupied the throne. At that time al-ʿAynī was in disgrace because of his past friendship with the defeated amir. Thus, the text is short, prudent, and includes a negative concession against Jakam, and does not show how much al-ʿAynī was tied to his patron.

The second historiographical text in which al-ʿAynī mentions Jakam's story is the panegyric dedicated to Sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh. Amir Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī had been a prominent member of Yashbak al-Shaʿbānī's faction before he "inherited" this faction after the latter's death on 13 Rabīʿ II 810/17 September 1407. At first he followed the political course of Yashbak (of whom Jakam was a supporter in 802/1400 and an enemy in 803/1401) and he only briefly allied with Jakam in 807/1405 before becoming his enemy in 808/1406. In general (except the 807/1405 episode), Yashbak's and Shaykh's faction remained hostile to Jakam's faction (which Nawrūz al-Ḥāfiẓī inherited after his death in 809/1407).[37] In 815/1412, when Shaykh triumphed over Sultan al-Nāṣir Faraj and proclaimed himself sultan, al-ʿAynī fell into disgrace because he was his rival's follower. In order to be forgiven, he wrote a panegyric titled *Al-Sayf al-muhannad fī sīrat al-Malik al-Muʾayyad*. In all likelihood, this is the second (partially) historiographical text in which Jakam appears. He is not mentioned, however, before his alliance with Shaykh and Yashbak in 807/1405. The causes of the reversal that followed (where Shaykh was forgiven by Sultan Faraj and then opposed to Jakam) are concealed in all the sources, maybe because they were related just to the opportunism and material interest of the actors and were not worth noting. The battle that ensued and opposed Shaykh to Jakam in al-Rastān is briefly narrated (the responsibility for Shaykh's defeat is attributed to his friend Damurdāsh al-Muḥammadī). Regarding the later events, Jakam is negatively evoked: he is said to have gathered corrupt people to create an army that incited him to be proclaimed sultan. The author insists that the only Syrian city that did not submit to Jakam's authority was Ṣafad, where Shaykh was governor, as its conquest was forbidden by God's will *(qadr)*, which warned Jakam that the "Sultan in the sight of God" was the "king" *(malik)* of Ṣafad. In other words, al-ʿAynī interprets the fact that Jakam did not attack Shaykh in Ṣafad as a divine order, when in fact it was due to a call for help from the amir of Mardin. The way al-ʿAynī takes responsibility away from Jakam reminds the reader of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah (779–851/1377–1448), another contemporary of the events, according to whom the sultan's hostility was due only

[36] Nakamachi, "Life in the Margins," 105.

[37] On these two factions, see Onimus, *Les Maîtres du jeu*, 236–38.

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to Jakam's outspokenness and rudeness (as if he was not responsible for having rebelled).[38] The amir's mistakes are thus presented as signs of obedience to God and of the sovereign's intransigence.[39]

From Sultan Barsbāy's enthronement (824/1421) forward, al-ʿAynī wrote a second chronicle, entitled *ʿIqd al-jumān*—of which an autograph copy has been preserved—that was completed in 851/1447. The second obituary of Jakam that can be found in it is more or less a copy of the first. The corrected criticism is absent and it displays a few other differences. It adds two qualities, courage and heroism *(kāna shujāʿan baṭalan),* to the ones mentioned in the first obituary: fortitude, bravery, and devotion. He then supplements these martial qualities with two others: justice and equity *(al-ʿadl wa-al-inṣāf).* Moreover, al-ʿAynī devotes a sentence to defending the amir's sexual probity (a remark that is absent in the *Tārīkh al-Badr* and is so unexpected that it must have been answering an accusation against Jakam decades after his death).[40] While evoking the restoration of the citadel of Aleppo in this obituary, al-ʿAynī adds that God Himself entrusted Jakam with this work after Tamerlane had destroyed it. In short, after thirty years, al-ʿAynī has modified a sober and prudent text to make an apology for Jakam.

While concentrating on the narration of the events in the *ʿIqd al-jumān* and not just in the obituary, the positive evocations of Jakam do not leave any doubt about the author's bias. The frame of the events of 803–4/1401–2 is the same as in al-Maqrīzī's chronicle, but al-ʿAynī presents his protector (with whom he used to dwell, he says)[41] as the protagonist of the realm's history by naming him in every rubrical title.[42] He is presented as a popular man[43] and his faction is glorified for its courage and compared both to a hawk that swoops down on its prey and to a prisoner who takes off his chains.[44] During the *fitnah* of Shawwāl 804/May 1402 (after which Jakam was arrested), al-ʿAynī insists (by quoting "an amir whom [he] trust[s]") that Jakam and Nawrūz would have won the battle if Sūdūn Ṭāz had not used a disloyal ruse.[45] Ibn Ḥajar gives another example: the Shafiʿi qadi criticizes al-ʿAynī for having exhibited his support of Jakam. In order to substantiate the ac-

[38]His edited chronicle ends before Jakam's death, hence the absence of an obituary. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 4:410.

[39]Al-ʿAynī, *Al-Sayf al-muhannad fī sīrat al-malik al-Muʾayyad,* ed. Fahīm Muḥammad, ʿUlwī Shaltūt, and Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah (Cairo, 1998), 247–49.

[40]I have not found any trace of this accusation in the other historiographical writings.

[41]Al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd,* ed. Bīnū, 203.

[42]Ibid., 270–76.

[43]He is supported by the people during the *fitnah*s. Ibid., 274.

[44]Al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd,* ed. Bīnū, 275.

[45]He manipulated the child-sultan who organized negotiations that involved the caliph and the four qadis. Ibid., 308.

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cusations, he quotes *in extenso* al-ʿAynī's paragraph related to the al-Rastān battle that was won by Jakam against Shaykh in Dhū al-Ḥijjah 808/June 1406,[46] and ends with "during this battle, Jakam had less than 2000 [soldiers] but God gives the victory to whom he wants."[47] In its detail, this passage is particularly hostile to Amir Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī (who appears as fearing Jakam's good fortune).

Comparison of the texts shows that the position the author takes on the subject is determined by his position in the political realities at the time he is writing. The first obituary was written when Jakam's enemies dominated the realm and the author was in disgrace. The second text was written less than ten years after the events (818/1415), when some of the protagonists were still alive and one of them (to whom it is dedicated) was the sultan. More than in the former text, the author tries successfully to obtain forgiveness. As for his major chronicle, *ʿIqd al-jumān,* most of the text dates from the second quarter of the ninth/fifteenth century, and particularly from the reign of Sultan Barsbāy, during whose rule it was published.[48] Amir Barsbāy al-Duqmāqī had not been neutral in the conflicts that defined the rhythm of the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century. He was close to Jakam's partisans during his youth,[49] so al-ʿAynī could be more explicit about his bias. A consistent feature of these various texts is that Jakam is always obedient to God's will until his final failure. Al-ʿAynī cultivates then uncertainty when he writes about Jakam, and thus creates a plurality of possible receptions of his text. He makes it acceptable to the victor without betraying himself, by preserving the diachronic unity of his own individuality as a writing subject and a political actor.

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[46] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* 4:20–21; idem, *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* 1:574–80; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ,* 4:24–27; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 6:177.

[47] "Aẓhara al-taʿaṣṣub fīhā li-Jakam" he says. Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ,* 5:302.

[48] A part of it may have been written during the 810s, while al-ʿAynī had fallen into disgrace. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 11:193–97.

[49] Since the beginning of his career, Barsbāy had been an intimate friend to Ṭaṭar and remained so until Ṭaṭar's death. Ṭaṭar was directly tied to the faction of Shaykh Lājīn and Jakam. Barsbāy joined the rebel coalition between Jakam, Yashbak, and Shaykh before he obtained the amnesty of the sultan in Dhū al-Qaʿdah 808/May1406, but it is not said which one of them he was supporting. Among the four other amirs who got amnesty, there were three members of the Jakam-Nawrūz faction (Jumaq, Arghiz, and Sūdūn al-Yūsufī) and a partisan of Yashbak-Shaykh (Asanbāy al-Turkumānī). When Ṭaṭar joined Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī's faction after Jakam's death, Barsbāy followed him and was granted the office of great chamberlain of Damascus by this amir in Ramaḍān 811/February 1409. It is noteworthy that we should not follow Aḥmad Darrāj's opinion related to Barsbāy as an unconditional partisan of Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī: this would obliterate a great part of his factional course. Al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* 1:456–82; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 6:397–405 (biography of Sultan al-Ẓāhir Ṭaṭar); Aḥmad Darrāj, *L'Égypte sous le règne de Barsbāy, 824–841/1422–1438* (Damascus, 1961), 13.

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Other Biographers, Other Narrative Contexts

Other contemporary authors, who also knew Jakam, present his personality from various angles according to the context in which each of them was writing. Nevertheless, a generally positive perspective emerges from their pens. It will be useful to explain their various political and academic positions.

Al-Maqrīzī (766–845/1364–1442) was al-ʿAynī's rival.[50] By appointing al-ʿAynī *muḥtasib* of Cairo, Jakam caused al-Maqrīzī's destitution. During the time when Jakam was politically active (801–9/1399–1407), it seems that al-Maqrīzī belonged to the rival faction led by Yashbak al-Shaʿbānī.[51] He left the political scene as early as the 810s/1410s and began writing his chronicle the *Kitāb al-sulūk*. However, as Jo Van Steenbergen shows in his edition of al-Maqrīzī's *Al-Dhahab al-masbūk,* this author remained involved in clientage relationships with the successive sovereigns. Indeed, he would have dedicated this book concerning the rulers of old who performed the pilgrimage to Sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh in 821/1418, then he offered it to Yūsuf, son of Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy, in 834/1431.[52] In all likelihood, al-Maqrīzī's retirement should be questioned.[53] To be specific, while writing the *Kitāb al-sulūk*, he was presumably seeking the patronage of both sultans. He was writing at the same time as al-ʿAynī was composing his *Tārīkh al-Badr;* both texts are, consequently, independent of each other.

The biography al-Maqrīzī wrote decades later in the *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* during Barsbāy's reign, is relatively long in comparison to the rest of the biographies in that work,[54] a form of implicit emphasis of this individual's importance. He is, thus, the most accurate of the witnesses. The comparison of this text with the narrative of the events in the *Kitāb al-sulūk* shows that the entire text is composed as a compilation of the excerpts from the chronicle that mention Jakam. In his various books, al-Maqrīzī is consistent: unlike al-ʿAynī, his public position *vis-à-vis* Jakam did not change between the composition of the *Kitāb al-sulūk* (the second decade of the ninth/fifteenth century) and the composition of the *Durar al-ʿuqūd*

[50] On al-Maqrīzī, I refer to Frédéric Bauden, "Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī," in Alex Mallett, ed., *Medieval Muslim Historians and the Franks in the Levant* (Leiden and New York, 2014), 161–200. On the rivalries between al-Maqrīzī, al-ʿAynī, and Ibn Ḥajar, see Anne F. Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt: al-ʿAynī, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 85–107, and Clément Onimus, "Al-ʿAynī and his Fellow Historians: Questioning the Discursive Position of a Historian in the Mamluk Academic Field," in Van Steenbergen and Termonia, eds., *New Readings in Arabic Historiography.*

[51] Jo Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate and Kingship in a Fifteenth-Century Literary History of Muslim Leadership and Pilgrimage* (Leiden, 2016), 38.

[52] Ibid., 47, 50. This is a critical edition and translation of al-Maqrīzī's *Al-Dhahab al-masbūk fī dhikr man ḥajja min al-khulafāʾ wa-al-mulūk*.

[53] On this debate, see ibid., 34–35.

[54] Six pages in the published version. Al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* 1:574–80.

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(the fifth decade of the century). While Sami G. Massoud has demonstrated that al-Maqrīzī's position toward a historical character could evolve significantly,[55] the diachronic treatment of the figure of Jakam shows a remarkable historiographical stability.

The biography that Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah (774–843/1372–1439)[56] wrote is as long as al-Maqrīzī's.[57] He is chronologically the third author who wrote on Jakam, and he had a particular point of view: he came from an Aleppine family of scholars and lawyers and became a historian of Aleppo, the city that Jakam made his capital. He probably lived there during Jakam's reign. According to al-Sakhāwī, he left Cairo in Rabīʿ I 809/August 1406, when Sultan Faraj undertook his expedition against Jakam in Syria, and he probably stayed in Syria during the following months (i.e., during Jakam's reign).[58] He wrote years—or perhaps decades—later, while he was chief qadi of Aleppo (an office he held several times from 816/1412–13 onwards) or chief qadi of Tripoli, or while he occupied other positions in Aleppo.[59] Indeed, in his biography of Jakam he elaborated on Syrian events, which indicates his access to Levantine sources and witnesses.[60] It is noteworthy that there are no indications that he had relationships with al-ʿAynī or al-Maqrīzī, but he was close to Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, of whom he may have been a student in Cairo (unless they were of the same age) and whom he invited to stay in his house in Aleppo during Sultan Barsbāy's expedition to Āmid. Ibn Ḥajar also corrected the manuscript of Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah's chronicle.[61]

Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (773–852/1372–1449) is the last contemporary author who wrote on Jakam. He had long been a rival of al-ʿAynī before the latter became close to Jakam. This rivalry can be easily read in the first mentions of Jakam in the *Inbāʾ,* which insist that al-ʿAynī owed his ascension to the amir.[62] While

[55] Sami G. Massoud, "Al-Maqrīzī as a Historian of the Reign of Barqūq," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 7, no. 2 (2003): 119–36.

[56] Born in Jibrīn, near Aleppo, he became qadi of Aleppo and Tripoli. Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte des arabischen Literatur* (Leiden, 1949), S2:42.

[57] Six pages. Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah, "Al-Durr al-muntakhab fī tārīkh Ḥalab," Bibliothèque nationale MS Arabe 5853, fols. 133–35.

[58] See al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 5:303–7.

[59] Among others, he was the preacher and imam of the great mosque of Aleppo, as well as a teacher.

[60] Besides the narrative of the *fitnahs*, he is also the most accurate about the restoration of the citadel of Aleppo and the war that opposed him to the governor of al-Bīrah and then to Qarā Yulūk.

[61] After al-Sakhāwī who was, later, another pupil of Ibn Ḥajar. The biography al-Sakhāwī wrote cannot allow us to establish an accurate chronology of the life of Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah. He mainly gives the list of his teachers. See al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 5:303–7.

[62] Jakam appears in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* in the obituary of al-ʿAynī's father, in which the author denounces the intercession that he granted to the son, Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd. Jakam's patronage

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writing the *Inbāʾ,* Ibn Ḥajar became the chief Shafiʿi qadi in Egypt during Sultan Barsbāy's reign and was dominating the academic scene, concurrently with al-ʿAynī. The context in which Ibn Ḥajar wrote was, therefore, ambiguous. On the one hand, he was writing about an individual whose client was his rival. Moreover, this individual had been the enemy of his benefactor, Sultan Faraj.[63] On the other hand, he was writing during the reign of another sultan, Barsbāy, from whom he received exceptional favors and who had been a member of, or close to, Jakam's faction. Thus, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī could have been equally biased in favor of or hostile toward Jakam.

The different biographies of Jakam that were written by contemporary witnesses are independent of each other. No clue indicates any dependence of one text on another, except the two obituaries that al-ʿAynī wrote. Al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī wrote texts that were far longer than al-ʿAynī's biographies, as well as more accurate and factual. These authors' positions create a historiographical polyphony as a result of their various political and academic contexts. The notion of "historiographical trajectory" allows us to apprehend not only the different positions of each actor but also the evolution of their writing contexts, depending on evolving political realities. A remarkable stability can be found under al-Maqrīzī's pen. Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah's point of view is clearly correlated to his Aleppine origins. Political evolutions caused in al-ʿAynī's and Ibn Ḥajar's works a sort of distortion of a past that they evoke in equivocal ways, because their positions at the time of the events and their positions at the times of the composition of their works were different. We shall see, finally, that all of these works converge toward a positive historiographical representation of this amir.

Ibn Taghrībirdī and the Later Biographers

Among the later authors, three historians of the second half of the century wrote biographies of Jakam: Ibn Taghrībirdī (813–74/1411–70),[64] al-Sakhāwī (830–902/1427–97),[65] and Ibn al-Ṣayrafī (819–900/1416–95).[66]

Unlike the later texts of al-Sakhāwī and Ibn al-Ṣayrafī (which consist of summarized compilations of former biographies, and specifically the ones that were

toward his clients is mentioned several times, particularly about al-ʿAynī.

[63] There is no doubt that Ibn Ḥajar was then closer to Sultan Faraj, who appointed him *muftī* of the Dār al-ʿAdl in 811/1408–9, than to the partisans of Jakam. Franz Rosenthal, "Ibn Ḥadjar al-ʿAsḳalānī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., 3:800.

[64] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 4:313–24.

[65] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 3:76.

[66] Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs,* 2:232.

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the most in favor of Jakam),[67] Ibn Taghrībirdī's text looks like a long panegyric of the amir.[68] As Julien Loiseau explains that the objective of the compilation of the *Manhal* was the elaboration of the memory of the mamluks of Sultan al-Ẓāhir Barqūq, we may infer that Jakam's importance in this book shows that Ibn Taghrībirdī believed that Jakam had played an important role in the formation of the Ẓāhirīs' power. [69] Because of the exceptional length of this biography, as well as the memorial intent that rules the book, this is a key text in the elaboration of the historiographical figure of Jakam, and it is worthy of particular exposition.

In general, this is a compilation of excerpts from al-Maqrīzī's chronicle regarding Jakam's rebellions, but Ibn Taghrībirdī adds some original accounts thanks to his integration inside the amiral milieu (he was the son of a colleague of Jakam). For example, he is the only one who gives a physical description of Jakam, although he never met him:[70] "he was tall, had bright red skin, a black beard and black brow, and he was hairy." This description may reflect the true appearance of the amir during the years 801–9/1399–1407, but its mention in the biography is not innocuous, as it shows a mature man, that is, a man that can reign, unlike Sultan Faraj, whom the same author describes as a blond-haired child of medium height.[71] Ibn Taghrībirdī's biography is obviously in favor of Jakam and echoes some passages of the chronicle of al-ʿAynī, whose disciple he had been.[72] In a passage that he copied from al-Maqrīzī, we find the same reservation that al-ʿAynī expresses in regard to the other amirs Jakam killed.[73] The recurrence of this reservation shows that it was common decades later among the survivors of these wars. Despite the seriousness of the criticism, Ibn Taghrībirdī sings Jakam's praises. Unexpectedly, the hostility between Amir Taghrībirdī (father of the historian) and Amir Jakam during at least two *fitnah*s is never mentioned and does

[67] They reproduce or compile data available in the witnesses' works: al-Sakhāwī summarizes Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah's text, although he quotes Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī and al-Maqrīzī among his sources. Ibn al-Ṣayrafī writes just a few lines that are based on al-ʿAynī's text, and lingers on Jakam's qualities and kind deeds before he ends with a eulogy (which is exceptional in this chronicle's obituaries).

[68] It is the longest biography: twelve pages in the edited version.

[69] Julien Loiseau, "L'émir en sa maison: Parcours politiques et patrimoine urbain au Caire, d'après les biographies du *Manhal al-Ṣāfī*," *Annales Islamologiques* 36 (2002): 120–23; ibid., *Reconstruire la maison du sultan: Ruine et recomposition de l'ordre urbain au Caire (1350–1450)* (Cairo, 2010), 209–14.

[70] Ibn Taghrībirdī was born in 813/1411 and Jakam died in 809/1407.

[71] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 6:271. The contradiction might be with Sultan Īnāl as well, as he was more than 60 years old when he was enthroned, while the author was writing his chronicle.

[72] In the biography of Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī, Ibn Taghrībirdī says that he held from him a teaching license for his whole work. This biography is almost a panegyric. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 11:193–97.

[73] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 6:177.

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not lessen the praise.[74] Here again, the representation of the amir he had to elaborate was more important than any reservation that could be expressed.

The variety of writing contexts is thus clear: differences in geographical context between the Cairenes and the Aleppine, differences in political context between Jakam's client and his rival's clients, differences in academic context between friends and rivals, and so on. And yet, from the comparison, a permanent feature appears: the crucial role that was played by Sultan Barsbāy's reign. Jakam's figure not only evolved under al-ʿAynī's pen and was then rehabilitated in the *ʿIqd al-jumān*, but he also acquired a central position for all the historiographers. The enthronement of one of his former partisans was the occasion that led to a new period of historiographical writing, which the historians of the second half of the ninth/fifteenth century inherited. The unanimously laudatory presentation of Jakam's life by Ibn Taghrībirdī, and then by al-Sakhāwī and Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, shows how much this character had become a major figure in the history of the regime.

Convergence: The Impossible Elaboration of a Sultanic Figure

Despite the different contexts, the historiographical polyphony converged toward a unanimous treatment in favor of the figure of Jakam.

Titles and the Question of the Sultanate

An onomastic study confirms such a polyphony, which is particularly significant to the extent that the name is the cornerstone of the individual identity. As we can see in the following table, Jakam's name changes according to the author and must be compared with the official title he gave to himself and that appears in the foundation inscription of the south bastion of the citadel of Aleppo.[75]

[74] Jakam was a supporter of the younger *khāṣṣakīyah* amirs during the internal war of 802/1401, while Taghrībirdī supported their rivals Aytamish and Tanam. Compare the biographies of both amirs and their mentions in the chronicles: al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* 1:574–80; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 6:24–27, 7:83–84; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 4:31–43; idem, *Nujūm*, 6:16; al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd*, ed. Bīnū, 171; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* 3:986 ff. In 807/1405, during an offensive led by Amirs Jakam, Yashbak al-Shaʿbānī, and Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī against Egypt (which was ruled by Īnāl Bāy), Taghrībirdī followed the sultan's party against Jakam and his allies. Compare al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* 1:574–80; idem, *Sulūk,* 3:1144; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 6:24–27; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 4:313–42; idem, *Nujūm,* 6:124.

[75] See n. 10 above.

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Jakam's Titulatures	
Source	**Titulature**
Inscription on the south bastion of the citadel of Aleppo	Al-Malik al-ʿĀdil Abī ʿAbd Allāh Jakam Niẓām al-Mulk
Al-Maqrīzī (766–845/1364–1442), *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 4:574.	Jakam al-Malik al-ʿĀdil Abū al-Futūḥ ibn ʿAbd Allāh
Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (773–852/1372–1449), *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 6:24	Jakam ibn ʿAbd Allāh Abū al-Faraj al-Ẓāhirī
Al-ʿAynī, "Tārīkh al-Badr," Bibliothèque Nationale MS Arabe 1544, fol. 80v	Al-Malik Sayf al-Dīn Jakam
Al-ʿAynī (762–855/1361–1451), "ʿIqd al-jumān," MS Ahmet III A2911/19, fol. 88v	Al-Malik Sayf al-Dīn Jakam
Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah (d. 843/1451), "Al-Durr al-muntakhab," Bibliothèque Nationale MS Arabe 5853, fol. 133.	Jakam ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ẓāḥirī al-Amīr Sayf al-Dīn
Ibn Taghrībirdī (813–74/1411–70), *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī*, 4:313.	Jakam ibn ʿAbd Allāh min ʿIwaḍ al-Ẓāhirī al-Amīr Sayf al-Dīn al-mutaghallab ʿalá Ḥalab al-mulaqqab bi-al-Malik al-ʿĀdil
Ibn al-Ṣayrafī (819–900/1416–95), *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 2:232.	Al-Malik Sayf al-Dīn Jakam
Al-Sakhāwī (830–902/1427–97), *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ*, 3:76.	Jakam Abū al-Faraj al-Ẓāhirī Barqūq

The singularity of Jakam's biography consists in the fact that it had to take a position *vis-à-vis* the sultanic figure since the biographized subject had claimed the sovereign title. But the main aspect of Jakam's naming is its heterogeneity. The onomastic instability illustrates the difficulty of elaborating a unified biographized subject due to divergences between the biographizing subjects. This difficulty correlates with the position of each author in the political field. First, we notice that no author plainly states the sultanic title. The term "sultan," although it can be found elsewhere in the text, cannot be found in any title attached to Jakam. Its omission on the Aleppo inscription is related to Jakam's progressive claim of the sultanate: Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah explains that he initially ordered the Friday sermon to be said in his name using the royal title *(laqab)* al-Malik

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al-ʿĀdil, but without the term "sultan" until 10 Shawwāl 809/20 March 1407.[76] We learn from the epigraphy that he bore at that time the title of Niẓām al-Mulk, which could be translated as "regent of the realm." Only al-Maqrīzī uses the royal title (the *ism* is in the first position because of the alphabetical classification), whereas al-ʿAynī uses the royal title of *malik* but without the royal name al-ʿĀdil. On the contrary, he chooses a typically amiral *laqab* (Sayf al-Dīn), hence an onomastic inconsistency. Thanks to various evidence, we know of his intimacy with Jakam, so his hesitation to use a higher title cannot be anything other than a sign of prudence while facing those of his enemies who became sovereigns after Jakam's death. Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī choose an entirely amiral title, except for the *kunyah* (in Ibn Ḥajar's text), which is rare among amiral titles but systematic in the sultanic ones. This *kunyah* is very interesting because it diverges from al-Maqrīzī, who names him Abū al-Futūḥ (the father of victories), and from Ibn Ḥajar, who calls him Abū al-Faraj (the father of relief). The epigraphy shows that Jakam had in fact chosen another *kunyah* for himself, Abū ʿAbd Allāh, which may have been a paternal name (the father of ʿAbd Allāh). Thus, the *kunyah*s that we find in al-Maqrīzī's and Ibn Ḥajar's texts may be either deliberate or unconscious choices made by these authors that associate the amir with positive values. Moreover, the second one symbolically retakes the notion of relief from the name of Sultan al-Nāṣir Faraj, Jakam's rival; such a correspondence cannot be pure coincidence. The title is one of the most revealing clues to an author's position: al-Maqrīzī recognizes kingship, Ibn Ḥajar and Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah do not, and al-ʿAynī grants it with some caution, probably because he was known to be the amir's loyal partisan.

The later authors use the titles their teachers used: Ibn Ḥajar and Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah are al-Sakhāwī's sources, and al-ʿAynī is Ibn al-Ṣayrafī's source. Only Ibn Taghrībirdī proposes a medium solution. Whereas al-Sakhāwī's and Ibn al-Ṣayrafī's choices come from a classical phenomenon of compilation that transforms the narrated fact from testimony to memory, Ibn Taghrībirdī prefers a new solution that shows a sort of neutrality as he gives an amiral title (the only one that uses Jakam's *nisbah:* "min ʿIwaḍ" or "al-ʿIwaḍī") but adds the claimed royal title. These onomastic divergences indicate the substantial complexity of the position of these epigones who depended on their sources and masters but were also responsible for the elaboration of the political memory of the regime.

From Polyphony to Convergence

The titles and the onomastic express the polyphony of the historiographical writing. However, it is noteworthy that, despite this polyphony, every biography of

[76] Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah, "Al-Durr al-muntakhab," fol. 135r.

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Jakam converges on a positive treatment. Unlike both biographies written by al-ʿAynī, the three other contemporary authors—al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī—insist on a factual description of Amir Jakam's career: offices, rebellions, battles, and so on. Yet, no one limits his discourse to the facts: all of them make positive remarks which do not leave any doubt about their bias in favor of the amir. In Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah's text, the Aleppine point of view is obviously in favor of Jakam. For al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Ḥajar, the writing of their works during the reign of Barsbāy (1422–38) influenced their perspectives: denigration of the amir would have displeased their audience, i.e., the court. An ambiguity can be noticed in the obituary in Ibn Ḥajar's *Inbāʾ*. [77] Although the biography is, on the whole, positive, Ibn Ḥajar expresses (explicitly or implicitly) some criticisms of the amir: he doubts the date of his appointment as an amir[78] and accuses him of megalomania *(taʿāẓum).*[79]

In contrast, in al-Maqrīzī's text the position *vis-à-vis* Jakam is stable and unnuanced. The very same representation of Jakam appears in the body of the *Kitāb al-sulūk* and in the biography in the *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* despite Jakam's hostility to al-Maqrīzī's patron, Amir Yashbak,[80] and despite the fact that part of the *Sulūk* was written during the reign of an enemy of Jakam, Shaykh. In a first writing stratum, higher stakes prevailed in the factional games, which led him to show Jakam in a favorable light. In a second stratum, this positive representation integrated the process of the pursuit of sultanic patronage: while writing the *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, during Barsbāy's reign, to evoke Jakam positively became a clientage action.

In sum, every contemporary author shows himself to be in favor of Jakam. Their various historiographical trajectories allow us to understand why each one adopted this perspective, but this does not explain everything. As it appears in the onomastic and in the *Kitāb al-sulūk,* for example, other issues also seem to have influenced the historiographical representation of Amir Jakam.

[77] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 6:24–27.

[78] He postdates Jakam's appointment as an amir after Barqūq's death and not during his reign. This statement looks like an anecdote but it suggests that his appointment was not due to the sultan who recognized his skills but to his ambition and the conflicts in the beginning of Faraj's reign.

[79] Jakam's claim to the sultanate would be hubris, which may be an implicit way to explain his death two months after his enthronement as a divine punishment.

[80] There is only one clear difference between the biography and the chronicle: the reaction of Jakam's allies when in 807/1404–5, while he was rebelling against al-Nāṣir Faraj, he adopted the sultanic rituals. In the *Kitāb al-sulūk,* he would have caused the wrath and anxiety of his allies, Shaykh and Yashbak, while in the *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* this decision would have provoked their mockery. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* 3:1150; Onimus, "Écrire la vie de Jakam."

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A Thematic Convergence: The Justice of the Rebel

The onomastic instability shows how complicated an author's position related to the sultanic claim was. This complexity is due to the fact that the notion of rebellion was anything but trivial. It asks the question of the rebel's legitimacy, a major issue that is not explicitly evoked by any author, but which no one could have simply omitted, even if it is only present in the titles.

The core of the question is the theme of justice. After the narrative, the amiral biographies all end with a list of qualities and faults. This list is standardized: the terms that are meant to describe an individual personality belong to a repertory that is common to all the authors and is an expression of the set of values considered important in the milieu of the ulama.[81] This enumeration of terms does not inform about the events, but it should not be considered as an annex either. On the contrary: it is the core, the essence of the biography. Indeed, the authors wrote the lists of obituaries and collections of biographies with the intention of expressing a hierarchy of values that was meant to define an ideal of notability. The compilation of biographies, associated to a proper name, elaborates the social group of the *aʿyān* and each biography locates a member of this group as an *exemplum* in relation to the moral ideal of the ulama. Thus, the dictionaries are written from the perspective of *Historia magistra vitae,* aimed at the ethical edification of the readers and listeners who are incited to conform themselves to this ideal. From the point of view of the biographized individuals, the enumeration of qualities contrasts with the linearity of the biography or of the annalistic narrative: the individual is not depicted as an actor in political events but as a personality which is evaluated according to a moral position *vis-à-vis* the other members of the elite and specifically *vis-à-vis* the ulama.

The analysis of the qualities that are attributed to Jakam is enlightening. Al-Maqrīzī and al-ʿAynī associate this list with the sultanate. We read in the *Durar al-ʿuqūd:* "*as a sultan*, he was clement, fair and feared."[82] "His sultanate did not last more than two months. He was nothing but courageous, heroic, firm, brave, and devoted," al-ʿAynī says in the *ʿIqd al-jumān,* adding that "he loved justice and equity" *(al-ʿadl wa-al-inṣāf).* Unexpectedly, the longer enumeration of qualities comes from Ibn Ḥajar: "he was courageous, valiant, feared *(muhāb),* prone to seek justice *(yataḥarrá al-ʿadl)* and to like equity. He was well-disposed towards the composition of poems and loved to listen to them."[83] More interesting is the text of Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah, who places the list of qualities not at the end of the biography but just before the evocation of his claim for the sultanate. There is no doubt that he was preparing the reader, who thus understands that this claim was not

[81] Onimus, *Les Maîtres du jeu,* 40–48.

[82] Al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* 1:574–80.

[83] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 6:24–27.

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unjustified. Jakam was, he says, "a grand amir, respected, courageous, valiant, and a skilled administrator. He was a man of great honor and was feared with such a reverence that it forced the magnates to be humble." In order to insist on Jakam's legitimacy, Ibn Khaṭīb adds that no one opposed the proclamation of the deposition of Sultan Faraj. In other words, the divergences between the authors become less marked when writing of the personal qualities of Jakam; hence the exemplification of his figure. He is thus unanimously recognized as fitting the moral ideal that amirs are meant to conform to.

Jakam was not the only amir whose lists of qualities emphasize justice, but this is not common. Among hundreds of amirs who took part in the wars during the reign of Sultan Faraj, only three enjoyed such a treatment:[84] Tanam (d. 802/1400),[85] Taghrībirdī (d. 815/1412),[86] and Duqmāq al-Muḥammadī (d. 808/1406).[87] Justice is also mentioned, but ambiguously, in two other biographies: Sūdūn al-Jalab (d. 815/1412)[88] and Yashbak al-Aʿraj (d. 831/1428).[89] Among Jakam's peers, i.e., the protagonists of these wars, Amir Taghrībirdī is without any doubt the one who was granted the most positive remarks, but most of them come from his own son, who made his chronicle a sort of panegyric for his father. Among the leaders of factions, Amir Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī is depicted with laudatory commentaries but justice is not mentioned in any biography of him[90] except al-ʿAynī's panegyric.[91] Shaykh had by then become sultan, and he favored most of our historians. It is noteworthy, however, that for unknown reasons, al-Maqrīzī ended Shaykh's biography before his appointment as sultan and does not mention any qualities.

[84] Based on an exhaustive prosopography of the 1102 amirs under the reigns of Barqūq and Faraj.

[85] Only Ibn Ḥajar mentions his justice explicitly (*Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 4:143–89), but all the other biographers insist on similar qualities. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 4:168–74; Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs,* 2:66.

[86] Only Ibn al-Ṣayrafī mentions his justice and equity explicitly (*Nuzhat al-nufūs,* 2:320–21), but all the other authors agree on his numerous qualities and his good behavior, particularly his son. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 4:31–43; al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* 1:491–92; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 7:83–84.

[87] Ibn Taghrībirdī is the only one who notes his justice (*Manhal,* 5:310–14), but Ibn Hajar insists on other qualities (*Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 5:319–21).

[88] Ibn Ḥajar says he was fair toward the inhabitants of al-Karak, of which he had been governor, but he does not forget to mention that he instigated *fitnah*s. (*Inbāʾ,* 7:99–100; idem, *Dhayl al-durar al-kāminah fī aʿyān al-miʾah al-tāsiʿah,* ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Muzaydī [Beirut, 1998], 163). Al-Maqrīzī says that he oppressed the population of al-Bilqāʿ (*Sulūk,* 4:62).

[89] Ibn Ḥajar speaks well of him (*Dhayl al-durar al-kāminah,* 243), whereas Ibn Taghrībirdī is less indulgent (*Manhal,* 12:122–26).

[90] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 6:263–312; al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* 2:125–88; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Dhayl al-durar,* 214–15.

[91] Al-ʿAynī, *Al-Sayf al-muhannad*, 2, 3, 40, 261–64.

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It seems, therefore, more relevant to compare Jakam's qualities to the qualities that the authors grant to other defeated amirs, the other losers in history, namely Nawrūz al-Ḥāfiẓī and Yashbak al-Shaʿbānī. The different authors contradict each other in the ways they depict Amir Nawrūz: Ibn Taghrībirdī considers him to be a great king, whereas al-Maqrīzī condemns his tyranny.[92] Just one historian, Ibn Taghrībirdī, wrote a biography of Yashbak al-Shaʿbānī, and he lists no quality except his splendor.[93] Such a lacuna in the written works of every contemporary historians toward one of the most powerful amirs of the reign of Faraj[94] cannot be a coincidence. Obviously, they all considered him unworthy to be ranked among *aʿyān,* and therefore converged on this sort of *damnatio memoriæ.*

The biographical treatment of Jakam is, therefore, unique, and without any doubt it reveals the ideas that all the authors had about his rule and the legitimacy of his rebellion. Obviously, they associate Jakam more than any other amir, more than any other warlord, and more than any other who was vanquished, with the notion of justice *(ʿadl)* and with the qualities of sovereignty.

The amir's qualities appear even clearer while analyzing the rhetorical figures through which the authors elaborate a sort a *literalization* of the historical character. They do not hesitate to create discursive devices that are meant to show his justice. Sometimes, the narrative becomes fiction, or at least we can doubt the veracity of parts of the anecdotes and see them as *topoi* or stylistic devices. For example, the direct speeches could not be exact, as they would have been spoken in Circassian or Turkish, while they are written in Arabic. Yet, several authors reproduce the very same dialogues, like a sentence of Jakam that is quoted by al-ʿAynī, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Taghrībirdī:[95] during a *fitnah* in Shawwāl 803/May–June 1401, he is supposed to have promised to the sultan that he was loyal and that his enmity fell on his rival, Amir Yashbak al-Shaʿbānī. This anecdote may be real, but why did it become a recurrent element in the chronicles and biographies? What significance did it add to the event itself? In general, direct speech (which is necessarily a literalized reconstruction of history) informs more about the narrative representation of the character than about his real acts. Here, Jakam appears as an honest and loyal man, faithful to his oath to the sovereign, a man whose goal is not to depose the sultan but to defend his life and honor against his enemy. Another recurring event relates to Jakam's fair behavior toward the

[92]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 12:34–38; al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* 3:513–18.

[93]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 12:119–22.

[94]He ruled the realm several times: from 10 Rabīʿ I 802/10 November 1399 to 19 Shawwāl 803/2 June 1401, then from 7 Muḥarram 805/7 August 1402 to 4 Rajab 807/6 January 1405, and finally from Jumādá II 808/December 1405 to 25 Ṣafar 810/1 August 1407. See Onimus, *Les Maîtres du jeu,* 244.

[95]Compare al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd,* ed. Bīnū, 274; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* 3:1063; and Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 6:88.

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people of Damascus and his strictness toward his soldiers when he entered the city. This anecdote is mentioned twice in his biographies, at two different times: in 802/1400[96] and in 808/1406,[97] so it is possible to question the reality of the fact, but above all an interrogation of the spreading of that narrative and the causes of its repetition is important. The event may or may not be real, but its reality does not contradict its literalized aspect, as this act was selected by the authors in order to become significant. Here, the meaning the authors give to Jakam's career invariably orbits around the notion of justice.

Ibn Taghrībirdī, particularly, emphasizes this theme. In his work, Jakam is shown as a man who is fair toward his subjects, not only when he ran the realm in Cairo but also when he ruled Aleppo "unlike the rulers who conquered their realm,"[98] the author adds, a remark that obviously incites the reader to compare Jakam to Sultan Faraj's injustice.[99] Another passage of Ibn Taghrībirdī's work again shows the subjects' positive opinion of the amir, as well as the author's narrative choice, by quoting this popular slogan: *Jakam ḥakama wa-mā ẓalama,* which we may translate as "Jakam ruled with justice and without injustice." Such a slogan contributes to expressing Jakam's popularity. "Most of his comrades and mamluks have told me that in this manner," Ibn Taghrībirdī specifies in order to support his statement. He adds that, according to these same mamluks, "his expedition to Āmid saved Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Faraj: had he come to Cairo, no one would have opposed him because people liked him."[100] Ibn Taghrībirdī presents a flattering portrait with a long list of qualities, where justice and equity join splendor, courage, valiance, reverence, honor, cunning, smartness, force, power, aggressiveness, abstinence, decency, and popularity.[101]

The insistence on ritual acts plays the same role. That is what Philippe Buc suggests when he comes to the conclusion that the relevance of the very notion of ritual should be questioned by medievalist scholars. Ritual is always a reconstruction, because its interpretation is never immediate and its symbolic

[96] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* 3:1011; al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd,* 1:574–75; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ,* 6:25. For the year 802/1400, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah seems to be more neutral: he evokes Jakam's arrival in Damascus with a deed of *amān* from the sultan, which provoked the joy of the people, but he does not give a personal statement related to Jakam. However, he notes his popularity among the people of Damascus when he returned there in 807/1405 because of his past and present fair rule. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh,* 4:91, 410.

[97] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 6:178.

[98] "*Bi-khilāfi al-mutaghallibīn ʿalá al-bilādi min al-mulūk.*"

[99] Jakam's fair rule is also mentioned in the chronicle of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, who insists on the difference between Jakam's and his predecessor's (Damurdāsh) behavior. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh,* 4:408.

[100] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 4:323–24.

[101] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal,* 4:313–24.

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significance is accentuated by contemporary authors (who can invent ceremonial fictions): it is thus the text that mentions the ritual that is effective and not the performance of the ritual itself.[102] A lot of ritual acts are mentioned by the authors and represented as meaningful in the political arena in interactional situations between the competitors. In the case of Jakam, all of them are related to the adoption of royal etiquette: for example, to sit in the center of the hall or to salute according to the sultanic rite.[103] These acts are mentioned by al-Maqrīzī in order to prepare the audience for an evolution in the narrative (without impact on the events' sequence) and to express a relation between the appearance and reality of power. The uncertainty of the facts should not prevent us from drawing any conclusions, but it informs less about Jakam's acts than about the political culture and the ninth/fifteenth century historians' symbolic representations. Here, al-Maqrīzī unquestionably mentions the rituals in order to progressively give to Jakam a sultanic appearance in the course of the narrative.

Symmetrically, the authors' silences are as eloquent as their inventions. In the first years of Jakam's career, he was close to the faction of a soldier named Shaykh Lājīn. This soldier rebelled against Sultan Faraj and claimed the sultanate while Tamerlane was besieging Damascus. The revolt provoked the return of the young sultan to Cairo at night, and consequently the rout of the army as soon as dawn broke. No author speaks about any link between Shaykh Lājīn and Jakam, but their closeness is obvious after prosopographic analysis.[104] This may be because this revolt was not ordinary. It caused the capitulation of the sultan in the face of a Mongol conqueror, and the leader—who was not an amir—claimed sovereignty and called for the destruction of the books of *fiqh* and the abolition of *iqṭāʿ*s and *waqf*s.[105] In sum, such a program would have endangered the very essence of the regime. When he ruled Cairo and Aleppo, Jakam never implemented any part of this program and there is no evidence that he adopted it, although Shaykh Lājīn was still alive when Jakam ruled the realm at the end of 803/mid-1401.[106] His closeness to Shaykh Lājīn was probably nothing more than part of his strategy to seize power himself. It seems that he hoped to take advantage of the exceptional respect that this soldier enjoyed among the Circassians, but he never adhered to his program. So, the authors might have discreetly concealed the truth in order

[102] Philippe Buc, *Dangereux rituel: De l'histoire médiévale aux sciences sociales* (Paris, 2003).

[103] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* 3:1150–51, 1159; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 6:119.

[104] Onimus, *Les Maîtres du jeu,* 237.

[105] Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh,* 4:285–86; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* 3:1090; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 6:155; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ,* 5:51–53.

[106] On the other hand, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī notes that this program remained in the mind of some of his partisans. Shaykh Lājīn died in Rabīʿ I 804/October 1401. Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ,* 5:51–53.

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to dissimulate a less acceptable aspect of Jakam's career, although they firmly condemned Shaykh Lājīn and his partisans.[107]

Despite the heterogeneity of their political positions, the authors converge, then, on a thematic unity in the treatment of the historical figure of Jakam: he is represented as just and as fitting a sort of sultanic ideal.

History Writing: A Resort for Law?

Justice is at the core of this idealized representation of sovereignty. Following the transition from the caliphal to the sultanic regimes during the fifth–sixth/eleventh–twelfth centuries, sovereign legitimacy abandoned theocratic functions and concentrated around some basic aspects of Islamic kingship, such as leading the holy war *(jihād)* and justice *(ʿadl)*. The definition of the sovereign's justice is based on several elements: application of the sacred law *(sharīʿah)* as defined in the scriptures and in jurisprudence *(fiqh);* practice of royal justice through the reception of subjects' petitions and the *maẓālim* courts that Sultan Barqūq, the father of Sultan Faraj, had recently restored and that Jakam himself organized in his own palace when he ruled Egypt;[108] and above all a ruling practice that respects the welfare of the subjects, according to the criteria of the ancestral political culture of the "circle of justice," according to which sovereign power should complement the common good by means of fiscal justice.[109]

For the previously mentioned historians of the ninth/fifteenth century, who were all jurists or judges, it was obvious that injustice and not the struggle for power delegitimized a ruler's authority.[110] The evaluation of a prince's legitimacy did not focus on how he reached the throne but how he ruled, hence his justice or injustice. The moral evaluation of a ruler concentrated on that aspect of his reign, while the usurpation question could be ignored.

The mention of this topic with respect to Jakam raises the question of the justice of the rebel, which used to be a major question in Islamic jurisprudence. One of the main debates among the premodern jurists was related to the juridical

[107] Shaykh Lājīn's name is never mentioned by al-ʿAynī, although he evokes his *fitnah:* this is a suspicious oversight from one of Jakam's clients. Al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-jumān,* ed. Bīnū, 246.

[108] Ibn Ḥajar says that he had proclaimed throughout Cairo: "Whoever has been subjected to an injustice must come to Jakam's gate." Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ,* 6:24–27. It is noteworthy that this justice of the military elite was in competition with the qadi's justice.

[109] The notion of the Circle of Justice comes from early Middle Eastern antiquity, according to Linda Darling. It creates an indissoluble link between the monarch's power, his army, taxes, and justice toward the subjects. See Linda Darling, *A History of Social and Political Power in the Middle East: The Circle of Justice from Mesopotamia to Globalization* (London and New York, 2013).

[110] This was an important idea in the eyes of Ibn Khaldūn, whom all our authors knew (al-Maqrīzī was one of his students). See Linda Darling, *Circle of Justice,* 123.

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status of *fitnah* and the rules of rebellion *(aḥkām al-bughāt).* How jurists dealt with rebels and *fitnah*s is thus an important question and there is no doubt that while writing their chronicles and biographies these ninth/fifteenth century authors had in their minds related juridical categories. Classical Islamic law condemns revolt because it breaks the unity of the *ummah*, the community of believers; the only legal war is holy war against infidels, or *jihād*. The violence of the very first *fitnah* that opposed ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib to ʿĀʾishah, Ṭalḥah, and Zubayr, and then to Muʿāwiyah, was seen as an extreme situation that was meant to remain an exception. From this point of view, which was justified by a Quranic verse,[111] an unfair ruler was better than internal warfare.[112] During the time of the Cairo Sultanate, Ibn Jamāʿah (d. 733/1333) forcefully represented this "legalist" trend: in his eyes, *fitnah* was cursed. But Khaled Abou El Fadl has shown that the idea that a quietist consensus gradually emerged is wrong. The existence of violent conflicts among the closest companions of the Prophet during the first/seventh century forced Muslim jurists to consider that rebellion might not deserve an extreme punishment, and even that the rebel could be within his rights.[113] In the juridical writings of our historians, al-ʿAynī, a Hanafi, considers the rebel not to be a criminal and Ibn Ḥajar, a Shafiʿi, considers only those who rebel without a cause or grievance to be condemnable.[114] This juridical situation, due to constant reference to the beginnings of Islam, led jurists to elaborate theology according to juridical categories, the law being an instrument of negotiation between history, theology, and politics.[115]

History writing in the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century does not come within the province of first/seventh-century sacralized history: it does not specify a doctrine. The narrative about the beginnings had authority to present claims about the Prophet's and the first caliphs' behavior and guidance. Thus, historiography had a normative value. There is not such a value in the narrative of Sultan Faraj's reign. History as it is narrated by our jurists is not considered sacred, so it is not written in order to defend a juridical doctrine. Nevertheless, another dialogue is created between law and history by the ninth/fifteenth-century authors: all of them mention the *fitnah*s in their historiographic texts and wonder about the legality of rebellion in their juridical texts. When some conflicts between Muslim belligerents are firmly condemned, it is due to a reaction to the conver-

[111] Quran 4:59: "Obey God, Obey the Prophet and those in authority among you."

[112] Symmetrically, other Quranic verses firmly condemn *fitnah,* which here means "temptation to apostasy"; for example, in Quran 2:191: "*fitnah* is more serious than murder."

[113] Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law* (Cambridge, 2001), 13–20.

[114] Ibid., 243; al-ʿAynī, *ʿUmdat al-qārī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut, n.d.), 24:90; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī bi-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut, 1993), 14:312, 350.

[115] Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion,* 33.

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sion to Islam of the Mongols: they are then considered either as infidels or as bandits and therefore criminals (which allows them to be subject to criminal law and not the rules of rebellion). Against Tamerlane, the *takfīr*[116] and *jihād* option was chosen.[117] By contrast, *jihād* was never proclaimed in an internal war between amirs, and almost none of them was condemned according to criminal law.

On the contrary, the jurists of that epoch were inclined to adhere to the school that Abou El Fadl calls "revisionist," that is the law school that considers that a government may not be the resort of Muslims against the enemies of Islam. The revisionists thus make a distinction between rebels who reacted against injustice and rebels who were just after power. Unsurprisingly, al-ʿAynī chose this revisionist juridical position, which allowed him to condemn Sultan Faraj and to legalize a rebellion like Jakam's.[118]

Indeed, a few years after Jakam's death and a few days after Sultan Faraj's defeat and surrender, the rebels Amir Shaykh and Amir Nawrūz summoned and assembled the jurists of Egypt and Syria in order to proclaim a *fatwá* that condemned the sultan and authorized his execution.[119] History has not recorded whether al-ʿAynī and Ibn Ḥajar were among those jurists, but their juridical position in favor of a possible redemption of the rebel echoes the conflictual context in which they spent a long part of their lives, and perhaps specifically the reign of Sultan Faraj.

The treatment they grant Amir Jakam is not unrelated to the juridical question of rebellion. The most striking aspect of this amir's narratives is the unanimity of the authors (historians and jurists) who witnessed these events to save his memory, despite the polyphony of history writing, despite their various political positions, and despite their personal and academic rivalries; in other words, despite their various historiographic trajectories. Amir Jakam is unanimously depicted as a just amir. He shows *ʿadl,* a meaningful term the recurrence of which in the sources is significant: it is a key notion of Islamic political and juridical culture that refers to the justice supported by the coercive power and just violence of the state.[120] In a context of *fitnah*s, such as in the early ninth/fifteenth-century Cairo Sultanate, the juridical expression *ahl al-ʿadl* was opposed to *bughāt* (sing. *bāghī*): it may refer to loyalists at war against unjust rebels but also to rebels at war

[116] That is, to pretend that a Muslim is an infidel in order to wage holy war against him.

[117] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* 3:1035–36.

[118] Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion,* 294.

[119] This event took place on 11 Ṣafar 815/23 May 1412. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm,* 6:311.

[120] Denise Aigle, "La conception du pouvoir dans l'islam: Miroirs des princes persans et théorie sunnite (xie–xive siècles)," *Perspectives médiévales* 31 (2007): 17–44; in contrast with *jihād,* which means just violence against the infidel. See Gabriel Martinez-Gros, "Introduction à la *fitna*: une approche de la définition d'Ibn Khaldun," *Médiévales* 60 (2011): 7–15.

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against an unjust sovereign.[121] The fact that Jakam himself used that term and chose as his royal name "the just king" (al-Malik al-ʿĀdil) shows that he claimed the notion of legitimate rebellion meant to replace the reign of injustice.[122] In other words, the authors adhered implicitly to Jakam's rebellion by using his political phraseology. They made history writing a discursive weapon that was intended to legalize retrospectively a rebellion against a sultan.

Some decades later, to defend Jakam's honor was no longer a juridical question, as the legality of the reign was no longer an issue. The goal was then to elaborate the memory of an elite that had ruled the realm for half a century and that had been unified and established its power after a war against Sultan Faraj in which Jakam played a founding role. The moral idealization of "Jakam's reign" that can be found under the pen of the later authors[123] echoes the juridical aspects of their predecessors' writings. The historical "legalization" of Jakam's revolt was thus a step in the process of mythification of Faraj's reign as a cursed sultan, a scapegoat against whom the new regime became established.[124]

Conclusions

Historical writings change an individual into a narrative character, which raises questions about the intentionality of the authors and their changing positions on the political and academic scenes or, in short, their historiographical trajectories.

The rebel holds a problematic status in historiography and Islamic law, between the curse of *fitnah* and quietism on the one hand (the "traditional position"), and on the other hand the justification of legitimate revolt against an unjust sovereign (the "revisionist position").[125] The issue of the justice of the rebel was indeed addressed while Jakam lived: he demanded from the Aleppine jurists a juridical notice *(fatwá)* that was meant to depose al-Nāṣir Faraj *in absentia* and to legalize Jakam's own reign. He obtained satisfaction, but the content of the

[121] Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion,* 30, 64 (where he evokes Ibn Taymīyah's criticisms against such a commitment by the ulama).

[122] The same title had been chosen in the mid-eighth/fourteenth century by another rebel who proclaimed himself sultan in Aleppo, Amir Baybughā Rus, probably for the same reason.

[123] Al-Sakhāwī emphasizes Jakam's justice three times in his obituary: during his rule as an amir in Cairo, during his rule as sultan in Aleppo, and finally he evokes it once again in the enumeration of his qualities. He adds: "with him, no one could be corrupted." This sentence is meaningful, and it is significant that the author made it his conclusion: Jakam was not only fair; he made every subject fair as well, which is proof of his good rule.

[124] On the mythification and malediction of Sultan Faraj, see Onimus, *Les Maîtres du jeu,* 396.

[125] These expressions are used by Khaled Abou El Fadl. See Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion,* 294.

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text is unknown to us.[126] This legal text being lost, the only traces of this situation can be found in the historiographical texts: chronicles and biographies. The historians could have neglected Jakam's rebellion, as it was aborted and its leader was defeated. However, they wondered about its status, about the justice of the rebel and consequently about the legality of the rebellion—a question that was at the junction between their historical knowledge and their juridical skills. The importance they gave to Amir Jakam shows the role they granted to him in the elaboration of the regime that was established on the cursed corpse of Sultan Faraj. There is no doubt that Jakam's rebellion marked a step in the evolution of the Cairo Sultanate, not only because it was one of the only *fitnah*s for a century where the sultanic title was claimed by a former mamluk,[127] but also because the members of his faction were present at the court, not to say on the throne, some decades later when history was written.[128]

The writing of Jakam's life must thus be apprehended in its diachrony, not only between the successive generations of authors, but also within the works of each author, in particular his client al-ʿAynī. Despite the fact that neither global consistency nor a predefined program appear through this diachronic history writing, with the figure of Jakam a convergence becomes apparent: under each author's pen, this amir represents an ideal of sultanic justice.

For the first of our historians, the narrative of recent events supposes a cultural elaboration that integrates the past into the political order under construction. The absolution they give to Jakam becomes, under their pens, an element of the political culture of the mid-ninth/fifteenth century. During this first step, the salvation of the amir is mainly due to the fact that the writing was being done during the reign of Sultan Barsbāy, who was a member of (or close to) Jakam's faction. It is then determined by and linked to the evolution of the political conjuncture and powerful networks. While the monarchic power of Barsbāy was being established,[129] the evocation of Jakam was a concern for the contemporary historians. As Jo Van Steenbergen and Stijn Van Nieuwenhuyse said about Amir

[126] When Jakam proclaimed himself sultan, he gathered the jurists and notables of Aleppo. He asked them to depose Faraj and no one opposed him. A few years later, in Rabīʿ II 812/August 1409, Sultan Faraj summoned in Damascus the jurists who had signed this opinion *(fatwá)* in favor of Jakam, among whom was Ibn al-Shiḥnah. Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah, "Al-Durr al-muntakhab," fol. 135; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* 4:107.

[127] After the third reign of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (710–40/1310–40), the sultanic title is scarcely claimed by rebels, like Baybughā Rus or Barqūq (who actually seized the sovereign office without rebelling).

[128] On the question of the efficiency of political action, see Onimus, "Écrire la vie de Jakam."

[129] We might qualify the opinion of Aḥmad Darrāj, who writes that Sultan Barsbāy's reign is a period of decadence and tyranny. He follows al-Maqrīzī's opinion and clearly discredits the position of the other authors. Darrāj, *L'Égypte sous le règne de Barsbay.*

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Qurqumās al-Shaʿbānī, "these historians and their colleagues also participated through their many and voluminous writings in the ongoing construction and 'structuration' of a cultural order that aligned itself with ... the new social and political orders of the time."[130] With Barsbāy's enthronement, a new political network came to power and opened a new step in the history of the Cairo Sultanate, as well as in history writing, as every one of these historians took part in this network or at least would have to position himself with regard to it.

This construction of the monarchy of Barsbāy as a "relational product"[131] was one that integrated the historians, perhaps, in the structure of a deliberate cultural policy that intended to create a memory of the sultanate, and so resonated with the story of a life that the authors had to preserve and the narrative of a rebellion that had to be legalized because the new sultan had participated in it. The figure of Jakam asks the question of the relationship between power and justice: that is, the issue of the legality of the rebellion and the re-formation of a just sultanate.[132] In short, the historians changed themselves into judges of the past in order to legitimate the present.

After the death of all contemporary witnesses to the events, the texts of the historians of the first half of the ninth/fifteenth century became the sources for later writings. While historiographic polyphony remained due to the use of different sources according to the personal relationships between masters and disciples, the convergence toward Jakam's absolution signified an ideological confluence. The texts of the second half of the ninth/fifteenth century idealized the past, and distilled the earlier biographies in order to extract the quintessence: Jakam's justice. More than their predecessors, the later historians, particularly Ibn Taghrībirdī, created a myth of Jakam in opposition to the myth of Faraj.

This research on the writing of Jakam's life is, therefore, a case study on the way history is a functional construction intended to answer a precise question: how to justify rebellion in the process of state formation? Historiographical writing, with its polyphony, its diachrony, and its inconsistency, serves not only as a juridical instrument to legalize the revolt of a defeated rebel whose partisans managed to triumph later, but also as an ideological instrument: the memorial expression of the legitimization of the regime of *fitnah* that was the Cairo Sultanate

[130]Jo Van Steenbergen and Stijn Van Nieuwenhuyse, "Truth and Politics in Late Medieval Arabic Historiography: the Formation of Sultan Barsbāy's State (1422–1438) and the Narratives of the Amir Qurqumās al-Shaʿbānī (d. 1438)," *Der Islam* 95, no. 1 (2018): 153.

[131]"Barsbāy's state in formation appears here as a relational product, even a particular type of social network." Van Steenbergen and Van Nieuwenhuysen, "Truth and Politics," 173.

[132]In contrast to the figure of Qurqumās, who asked a question other than the relationship between power and justice: the question of the reinforcement of the military judiciary authority. Ibid., 163, 175.

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in the ninth/fifteenth century, in which no sovereign ascended the throne except following an armed conflict.[133]

[133] On the perpetuation of the sacrificial *fitnah* during the successions in the ninth/fifteenth century, see Onimus, *Les Maîtres du jeu,* 396–99.

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Appendix

Chronology of Amir Jakam's Career		
Dates	**Appointments and imprisonments**	**Participation in a *fitnah***
From 801 to 804/ 1399 to 1402	**In Cairo**	
Rabīʿ II or Dhū al-Qaʿdah 801/December 1398 or July 1399	Amir of 10 and minor captain of the guard	
Rabīʿ I 802/December 1399		*Fitnah* of the younger amirs against Aytamish
Rabīʿ II 802/December 1399	Amir of 40	
Rabīʿ II–Rajab 802/ December 1399–March 1400		*Fitnah* of the younger amirs against Aytamish and Tanam, governor of Damascus
Ramaḍān or Shawwāl 802/ June 1400	Amir of 100	
Jumādá II 803/January 1401		Ambiguous role during Shaykh Lājīn's *fitnah*
Shawwāl 803/May 1401		*Fitnah* of Jakam against Yashbak al-Shaʿbānī
Shawwāl 803/May 1401	Grand writing-case-bearer: Jakam rules the realm until Dhū al-Ḥijjah 803/July 1401.	
Dhū al-Ḥijjah 803/July 1401		*Fitnah* of Ibn Ghurāb against Jakam
Ṣafar–Rabīʿ I 804/ September–October 1401		Most of the amirs, including Jakam, start a conflict against Sūdūn al-Ḥamzāwī.

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Jumādá I–Ramaḍān 804/ February–April 1402		Dissensions between Jakam (and his ally Nawrūz) and Sūdūn Ṭāz
Shawwāl 804/May 1402		First *fitnah* of Jakam and Nawrūz against Sūdūn Ṭāz
Shawwāl 804/May 1402		Second *fitnah* of Jakam and Nawrūz against Sūdūn Ṭāz
From 804 to 809/ 1402 to 1407	**In Syria**	
Shawwāl 804–Ramaḍān 806/ May 1402–March-April 1404	Imprisoned in Syria in Ḥisn al-Akrād then in Marqab	
Ramaḍān 806/March-April 1404		Jakam is first allied with Damurdāsh al-Muḥammadī against Sultan Faraj, then he and his faction became autonomous.
Ṣafar 807/August 1404		Peace: Sultan Faraj grants an amnesty to all the rebels, including Jakam.
Rajab 807/January 1405	*De facto* governor of Tripoli	Jakam seizes Tripoli from Shaykh al-Sulaymānī
Shaʿbān–Ramaḍān 807/February–March 1405	*De facto* governor of Aleppo	*Fitnah* between Jakam and Damurdāsh al-Muḥammadī, who is chased away from Aleppo.
Ramaḍān–Dhū al-Ḥijjah 807/March–June 1405		*Fitnah* of Jakam, Shaykh, and Yashbak against Sultan Faraj. The rebels attack Cairo.

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Rabīʿ II–Jumādá I 808/November 1405		*Fitnah* of Nawrūz against Shaykh. Jakam is quickly allied to Shaykh.
Jumādá II 808/December 1405	*De jure* governor of Aleppo	Peace: Jakam is officially appointed as governor of Aleppo.
Rajab 808/January 1406	*De jure* governor of Tripoli	
Dhū al-Qaʿdah 808/April-May 1406		*Fitnah* of Nuʿayr against Jakam min ʿIwaḍ.
Dhū al-Ḥijjah808/May 1406	*De facto* governor of Damascus	*Fitnah* of Jakam and Nawrūz against Shaykh and Sultan Faraj. Battle of al-Rastān and Jakam's victory against Shaykh. Jakam seizes Damascus.
Rabīʿ I–Rajab 809/August – December 1406		Sultan Faraj's expedition in Syria. Faraj is supported by Shaykh against Jakam and Nawrūz. Jakam flees beyond the Euphrates then comes back to Syria when the sultan rides back to Cairo.
Shawwāl 809/March 1407	Sultan in Aleppo and master of Syria	
Dhū al-Qaʿdah 809/April 1407	Death in Āmid	

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Tales of Reverence and Powers: Ibn Ḥajar's Narratives of Religious Charismatic Authority

This article examines the ways in which Shihāb al-Dīn Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, the well-known ninth/fifteenth-century *muḥaddith* and chief Shafiʿi qadi of Cairo, organized the writing of his main historiographical work, the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr bi-abnāʾ al-ʿumr,* an annalistic chronicle covering a period between the years 773/1372 and 850/1446. It considers the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* as a deliberately constructed set of narratives displaying various layers of meaning, going well beyond the mere description and documentation of Ibn Ḥajar's own times. I will particularly focus here on the crafting of what will be called the *religious and charismatic layer of the socio-political order* that is presented in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* anchored in the display of religious charismatic authority and leadership,[1] namely—following Katherine Jansen and Miri Rubin—a layer which demonstrates authority by "preaching, creating and demanding new obligations, while at the same time evoking and associating with the sacred symbols of the shared religious culture."[2] In that context, "miracles, signs, and proofs" are usually considered "effective testimonials of charismatic authority,"[3] a notion that often intersects with, but is not subsumed in, *taṣawwuf,* and should thus be distinguished from it. The religious charismatic narrative layer set in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* illustrates that religious charismatic authority had a role to play in the society Ibn Ḥajar was crafting, but had to be integrated in a process of social normativity in order to both give an account

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[1] Douglas F. Barnes, "Charisma and Religious Leadership: An Historical Analysis," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 17, no. 1 (1978): 1–18.

[2] Katherine L. Jansen and Miri Rubin, "Introduction," in *Charisma and Religious Authority: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Preaching 1200–1500: Europa Sacra* (Turnhout, 2010), 6–7.

[3] Ibid., 7.

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and produce moral, social, and political order and boundaries through an ever-changing social and political environment.

This article will emphasize how, through careful, selective historiographical construction, Ibn Ḥajar displayed religious charismatic authorities as a legitimate part of a greater social and political world. In such a world, religious charisma, enclosed in a set of institutions, groups, and cultural referents, was presented as playing a discreet, limited, and yet persistent role in the shaping of society and the gradual changes affecting the dynamics of power and the representations and *mises en scène* the ruling elites presented of themselves during the course of the first half of the ninth/fifteenth century.

Ibn Ḥajar thus laid out the specific influence that particular figures held over some of the faithful, including the ruling elites.[4] He also underscored the nature of this influence through a lexicon describing a power, both social and spiritual, that was not taken lightly nor to be left unchecked, as it exercised a deep influence in the social fabric of the Cairo Sultanate. These religious charismatic authorities were part and parcel of the ever-changing dynamics of power. Despite the "routinized" nature of most—yet, not all—of these charismatic figures, they were embodying an aspect of power and social anchorage, albeit not the most obvious one, that had to be included and bounded in Ibn Ḥajar's shaping of the society he was living in and accounting for. In that regard, Ibn Ḥajar's authorial personality appears as establishing a framework of social and political order that delimited situations and cases in which various types of authority could act, compete, and legitimately participate in that order. He underlined this feature without engaging explicitly with the question of the *walāyah* of charismatic religious figures, nor in discussing their spiritual authority. Taking note of the reverence people demonstrated for these characters, their recognition, he reinserted them in the social normative order so as to assert their function, role, and deeds in the historical framework of the chronicle.

The author hence appears as a social, cultural, and political actor engaged in both questioning and reflecting on the nature of the changing society he is part of. His relational networks, his personal involvement in the judiciary and scholarly environment and affairs, as much as his towering social position in Cairo at the end of his life, served as the main ground upon which to outline a history built as his final historiographical legacy, in which the display of religious charismatic authority played its part. Thereupon, the relationship between what Ibn Ḥajar seems to be doing in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* and the social realities of his life and context allows us to speculate in more informed ways about both the ninth/

[4]See for examples Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr bi-abnāʾ al-ʿumr fī al-tārīkh,* ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1968–72), 1:240, 295.

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fifteenth-century context and historical reality and Ibn Ḥajar's historiographical project.

To illustrate this argument, I will draw attention to key features of religious charismatic authorities depicted in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*. After briefly engaging with the notion of charisma used by Max Weber, I will sum up how religious charismatic authority was displayed in Ibn Ḥajar's chronicle, making it possible to use this notion and understand it in the web of intertextuality, vocabulary, and historical context of the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* rather than conflate it with Max Weber's analysis of charisma. I will then underline such display through the example of the obituary notice *(wafāyah)* of a character in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* arguing that Ibn Ḥajar approached a set of primarily Sufis and spiritual religious characters through the prism of religious charismatic authority that was especially anchored in specific spaces in the form of *zāwiyah*s.

In that regard, it is particularly interesting that Leonor Fernandes identified two major trends regarding *zāwiyah*s in the ninth/fifteenth-century Cairo Sultanate that may be seen as part of the process of institutionalization of *zāwiyah*s and routinization of their masters' religious charisma. Fernandes identified that the rise in importance of *zāwiyah*s was accompanied by two "different directions": first, the spread of *zāwiyah*s built by a shaykh with its own money or through donation by a member of the ruling houses;[5] second, the spread of *zāwiyah*s conceived as "*zāwiya-masjid* or *zāwiya-ribāṭ*"[6] independent of the ruling houses, which "adopted a type of orthodox Sufism which transcended the pettiness of the *ṭarīqa*-centered foundations. Most of them embraced Shādhilism or one of its branches."[7] Whatever orthodox Sufism precisely meant for Fernandes,[8] she saw in the spread

[5]Leonor Fernandes, "Some Aspects of the zawiya in Egypt at the Eve of the Ottoman Conquest," *Annales islamologiques* 19 (1983): 11–12.

[6]Ibid., 12.

[7]Ibid.

[8]The notion of orthodoxy used by Fernandes has for some time now been a subject of discussion, due to the problematic issues it raises when used indiscriminately, failing to render the "intrinsic pluralism and complexity characteristic of the religious life of the Muslim community" and its "theological polyphony" (Alexander Knysh, "Orthodoxy and Heresy in Medieval Islam," *The Muslim World* 83, no. 1 [1993]: 62, 50). In that regard one may argue with Alexander Knysh that religious normativity correlated a more contextualized and moving set of ideas in each region and for each period in the history of the Islamic world (ibid., 66). As Richard McGregor reminds us, at times some Sufis or some of their ideas could be subject to censure by other scholars, including other Sufis (Richard McGregor, "The Problem of Sufism," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 13, no. 2 [2009]: 10) This underlines the fact that ideas brought forth by Sufi doctrines were not defined to fit into a specific orthodoxy, but were also prescriptive and explorative (Ahmad Shahab, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* [Princeton, 2016], 282–84). Since this article does not aim to discuss or explore the notion of orthodoxy, I will heed McGregor's warning and will not use that notion in the following pages, focusing instead on the display of accepted religious practices in

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of *zāwiyah*s a reflection of the dwindling of "institutionalized Sufism" in the face of the rise of "popular Sufism," an oversimplified representation about which it is necessary to be very careful. But this phenomenon—beyond the economic and social elements at stake in such a troubled period[9]—may be part of a social and political reaction to integrate, contain, and institutionalize the progressive rise of religious charismatic authorities—fitting the idea that such figures appear in times of crisis—in the normative framework considered as acceptable by scholars like Ibn Ḥajar. Namely, this rise in the number of *zāwiyah*s may also be seen as part of the process of routinization of charisma, integrating a religious charismatic leader or his successors and their followers through an institutionalization process, in which fiscal, administrative, and educational organizations played an important role.[10] As Fernandes emphasizes it, from the seventh/thirteenth century onward, *zāwiyah*s were always built for a particular shaykh.[11] With time, the progressive dissolution of the religious charismatic authority of the shaykh's followers, and the gradual integration of the *zāwiyah* in the normative framework of institutions of knowledge, played their part in creating a feeling of identification between various Sufi institutions.

The fact that many new *zāwiyah*s were linked to the Shādhilī network,[12] as observed by Fernandes, points in the same direction: despite its plural forms,[13] the *ṭarīqah* al-Shādhilīyah and its affiliates took great care to educate the faithful in a way accepted by most of the religious elites.[14] From the start, the Shādhilīyah excluded "both antinomian behaviour and excessive devotional practices."[15] It in-

the framing of the social order shaped in Ibn Ḥajar's chronicle (Richard McGregor, "The Problem of Sufism," 15).

[9]Daisuke Igarashi, *Land Tenure, Fiscal Policy, and Imperial Power in Medieval Syro-Egypt* (Chicago, 2017), 97, 119, 124, 183, 190.

[10]Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, ed. Talcott Parsons (New York, 1964), 21, 369.

[11]Leonor Fernandes, "The *zāwiya* in Cairo," *Annales islamologiques* 18 (1982): 118. Also quoted in Donald P. Little, "The Nature of Khānqāhs, Ribāts, and Zāwiyas under the Mamluks," *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams,* ed. Wael B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little (Leiden, 1992), 95.

[12]Following Shazhad Basir's argument on the term Sufi "orders." See Shazhad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* (New York, 2011), 11–12.

[13]Éric Geoffroy, *Le soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie sous les derniers mamelouks et les premiers ottomans: Orientations spirituelles et enjeux culturels* (Damascus, 1995), 226.

[14]Ibid., 30; É. Geoffroy, "Entre ésotérisme et exotérisme, les Shâdhilis, passeurs de sens (Égypte—XIIIe–XVe siècles)," in *Une voie soufie dans le monde: la Shâdhiliyya,* ed. É. Geoffroy (Paris, 2005), 121, 128.

[15]Richard J. A. McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt*: *The Wafāʾ Sufi Order and the Legacy of Ibn ʿArabī* (New York, 2004), 31.

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sisted on the importance of *waʿẓ;*[16] was more suspicious of *karāmāt* than other Sufi networks;[17] payed particular attention to the necessity of work;[18] and was a quite discreet order.[19] The masters of the Shādhilīyah were also recognized as reconciling sharīʿah and *ḥaqīqah,*[20] as embodied both by the figure of Ḥasan al-Shādhilī[21] and, in the late ninth/fifteenth century, that of the great theologian, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī, a member of the *ṭarīqah al-Shādhilīyah.* Thus, it is not a surprise that affiliates of the Shādhilīyah represent the largest number of Sufis mentioned in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,*[22] for the Shādhilīyah was "the most important Egyptian Sufi order"[23] of the Cairo Sultanate and quite collaborative among the religious elites and legal authorities, as it explicitly sought the instruction of its disciples in religious and legal sciences and an association "with those in power."[24]

The *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*'s concern with documenting *zāwiyah*s, as a distinct and carefully selected number of *loci* of religious charismatic authority set as narrative markers considered in the more general chronicle's intertextuality, illustrates their role as important indicators of a particular narrative pattern in the chronicle, and of the process of institutionalization of religious charismatic authority, grounded in specific characters and institutions. This role and the limits and boundaries assigned to these characters and institutions allow us to better consider the links made by Ibn Ḥajar between two dimensions of his narrative. On the one side, a historiographical production of a political and social order was

[16] Geoffroy, *Le soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie sous les derniers mamelouks et les premiers ottomans,* 30, 129.

[17] Ibid., 30.

[18] Ibid., 99.

[19] Ibid., 172.

[20] Ibid., 403.

[21] Giuseppe Cecere, "Le charme discret de la Shādhiliya: Ou l'insertion sociale d'Ibn Ata Allah al-Iskandari," in *Les mystiques juives, chrétiennes et musulmanes dans l'Egypte médiévale (VII–XVI s.): Intertextualités et contextes historiques* (Cairo, 2013), 73–74.

[22] Zacharie Mochtari de Pierrepont, "Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's Texts and Contexts: Producing a Sufi Environment in the Cairo Sultanate," in *New Readings in Arabic Historiography from Late Medieval Egypt and Syria,* ed. M. Termonia and J. Van Steenbergen, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts (Brill, 2021, forthcoming), 5–6.

[23] Richard McGregor, "Is this the end of Medieval Sufism? Strategies of Transversal Affiliation in Ottoman Egypt," in *Sufism in the Ottoman Era* (XVIe–XVIIIe siècle), ed. Rachida Chih and Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen (Cairo, 2010), 85.

[24] McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt,* 32; Jean-Claude Garcin, "Histoire et hagiographie de l'Egypte Musulmane à la fin de l'époque Mamelouke et au début de l'époque Ottomane," in idem, *Espaces, pouvoirs et idéologie de l'Egypte médiévale* (London, 1987), 304–11.

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progressively[25] laid out in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*. Namely, the author brought to the narrative forefront a contextualized plurality of events, behaviors, crises, legal and moral attitudes, and decisions, presented at the core of the Cairo Sultanate's history. Religious charismatic authority was fully integrated in this display as part of the broader narrative. On the other side, the text itself can be seen as organized to address various institutions and characters. Each of these dimensions thus shaped a specific historiographical space, with dedicated narratives, as was the case with religious charismatic authority. It is in that relationship between this historiographical production and the historiographical space related to the narrative layer of religious charismatic authority that the social, cultural, and political role of charismatic authority may be analyzed as part and parcel of the social order Ibn Ḥajar aimed to shape.

Abū Bakr al-Mallawī: Displaying Charisma and Setting Boundaries

> [In the year 841/1438 died] Abū Bakr ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ayyūb ibn Aḥmad al-Mallawī al-Miṣrī al-Shādhilī, the shaykh Zayn al-Dīn. His grandfather Ayyūb had a *zāwiyah* in al-Mallawī, and he was revered *(muʿtaqad)*. As for [Abū Bakr], he was born in 762 [1360–61], and became a companion of the *fuqarāʾ* and the pupil *(tulmidha)* of the shaykh Ḥusayn al-Ḥabbār,[26] and he remained [after his death] with the companion [of Ḥusayn al-Ḥabbār], Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Kalāʾī.[27] He talked in front of the people in the *zāwiyah* of al-Ḥabbār in Qanṭarat al-Mawsakī [in Cairo] and he explained the Quran, using his own opinion *(raʾy)* and following his master's rules *(qāʾidah)*. [The people] pointed out some of his mistakes, which they brought *(rufiʿa)* to the qadi Jalāl al-Dīn [al-Bulqīnī].[28] And he forbade him

[25] The writing of the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* seems to have lasted for fourteen years, and it is likely that Ibn Ḥajar adapted his narrative to new contexts. See Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ʿIzz al-Dīn, *Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī muʾarrikhan* (Beirut, 1987), 115.

[26] Misspelled in the edition of Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Ḥasan al-Hayyār). Al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥabbār (d. 791/1389) was a Sufi master of some renown, buried in al-Qarāfah (Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 1:385; al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ* [Beirut, 1992], 7:67).

[27] Misspelled in the edition of Ḥasan Ḥabashī (al-ʿAlāʾī). Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Kalāʾī (d. 801/1399), member of the Shādhilīyah *ṭarīqah* and follower of Ḥasan al-Ḥabbār. He became quite famous as a preacher *(wāʿiẓ)*. He succeeded his master as head of his *zāwiyah*. See Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 87; idem, *Dhayl al-durar al-kāminah,* ed. ʿAdnān Darwīsh (Cairo, 1992), 39.

[28] Likely Jalāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Sirāj al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī (d. 824/1421). Ibn Ḥajar, *Rafʿ al-iṣr ʿan quḍāt Miṣr* (Cairo, 1998), 226–29; idem, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 3:259–60.

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such speeches, unless [Abū Bakr] read from al-Baghawī's *tafsīr*[29] and that he aligned [with him].

And [Abū Bakr] met me on this matter. I found that he had a beautiful perception [of the Quranic text], but that he was bare of [religious] knowledge. Among what he told of what he saw in the word of the Almighty [in the Surah Hūd, was the following]:[30]

"[It is said in Surah Hūd] 'The people of Hūd rejected the Messengers [of God],'[31] and 'their brother Hūd told them.'[32] [But] what is meant in His words 'his brothers the Messengers'?"[33]

And I replied: "The ʿĀd."[34]

He said: "No, for it is not suitable for a Messenger [of God] to be described *(an yūṣafa)* as the brother of miscreants."[35]

Then I cited another verse: "And mention the brother of ʿĀd."[36]

And he went silent.[37] And he had [other] interpretations like that, but he performed a lot of *dhikr* and worship. He earned his living in the commerce of weaving *(al-ghazal)* and some people revered him strongly. He died in the night of Jumʿah the fifth of the month of Dhū al-Ḥijjah [30 May 1438]. A large number of people came to his funeral procession. He was the brother of Shams al-Dīn, head of the *muʾazzīn* in the *jāmiʿ* of Ibn Ṭūlūn, who has been called al-Musajjal.[38]

The above is but one example of how Ibn Ḥajar presents the many characters attached to what appears as religious charismatic authority in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*. Although specific differences are attached to this figure, he is quite representa-

[29] Al-Ḥusayn ibn Masʿūd al-Bajhawī (d. 516/1122), a *muḥaddith* following the Shafiʿi *madhhab*, author of a very famous work of *tafsīr,* especially after it was popularized by Walī al-Dīn (d. 743/1442). See John Robson, "al-Baghawī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., 1:893.

[30] Quran 11.

[31] Quran 11:53, 59.

[32] Quran 11:50. Namely, the ʿĀd, referred to indeed as "the people of Hūd" and his brothers.

[33] Abū Bakr pointing out that the term "their brother" could not refer to the ʿĀd, in relation to Hūd, a prophet of God.

[34] And not the messengers; Ibn Ḥajar correcting Abū Bakr's mistake concerning the Surah Hūd.

[35] Namely the ʿĀd.

[36] Quran 46:21, illustrating through another verse the effective qualification of a Messenger of God as a "brother" of the ʿĀd. Ibn Ḥajar again points out the error of Abū Bakr.

[37] Ibn Ḥajar thus illustrates the lack of knowledge of Abū Bakr, unable to answer, either because of his ignorance of the full Quranic text or maybe his inability to provide a coherent answer, implying in both cases his lack of religious knowledge.

[38] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 4:81.

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tive of the biographical notices of characters endowed with religious charisma. The individual depicted, Abū Bakr al-Mallawī (d. 841/1438), was a native of Cairo and a prominent Shādhilī. He appears as a pious and religious man. His poor and peculiar understanding of the Quran, in Ibn Ḥajar's view, allows the author not to point out "an unorthodox practice" but a misunderstanding and a lack of knowledge, reaffirming an "authoritatively prescriptive norm"[39] of understanding, which in this case could be asserted through legal sanction.

The narrative structure of this notice presents several common features of the chronicle's obituaries: an introduction with the character's *ism, naṣab, nisbah,* title (shaykh), and *laqab.* It then comes back to the origins and main features of Abū Bakr's personal background. A short exposition presenting his development and his main master and companions is followed by an account of his famous deeds. Next is a *peripeteia,* reporting an incident in which the reader would see an anecdotic story going far beyond the character's *persona* and context. The conflict, and its resolution, were illustrated as a case of normative theological, social, and political behaviors and moral exempla, constructed through the triple perspective of the qadi Jalāl al-Dīn, Abū Bakr, and Ibn Ḥajar himself. Abū Bakr's inclusion in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* also gives Ibn Ḥajar an opportunity to engage in self-promotion and present his opinion on a religious matter, while also adding a more authentic touch to the story. The end of the notice characterizes the main features of the character, namely what he may and should be remembered for, why he is included in the chronicle's metatextual narrative, and how he fits the stated purpose of Ibn Ḥajar's work of documenting the main events and characters of his times.

As a character in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*'s narrative, Abū Bakr al-Mallawī was particularly *mis en scène* to emphasize the specific question of the role of the trained ulama to frame and guide Islamic society: his only other mention in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* finds him directly associated with questions of religious authority and knowledge, and his obituary echoes a previous story in the work, concerning another of al-Mallawī's "reprehensible" stances:[40]

> A person called Abū Bakr al-ʿAzūlī,[41] who put himself forward as a shaykh and preached to the people, was brought to the Shafiʿi qadi. And they noticed among [his words]: "The Prophets are devoid of science *(ʿarāyā ʿan al-ʿilm),* according to the word of God: 'Exalted are You, we have no knowledge except what You have taught us.'"[42]

[39] Ahmad Shahab, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, 2016), 285, n. 85.

[40] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 3:226.

[41] A reference to al-ʿAzūlī's brother, "Shams al-Dīn, head of the *muʾazzīn* in the *jāmiʿ* of Ibn Ṭūlūn," allows us to identify him as Abū Bakr al-Mallawī. Ibid., 226.

[42] Quran 2:32.

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Although there is much to say about the theological aspects of the quoted examples, these are beyond the concern of the current article. Suffice it to say that if the rather balanced perspective in which Abū Bakr was described by Ibn Ḥajar in his obituary—that he was a good man despite his weaknesses in religious knowledge—was also put forward to underline Ibn Ḥajar's personal skills, it underlines more generally the role of religious knowledge and the mastery of religious sciences deemed necessary in the legitimation of religious authority, limiting the likelihood of beliefs assessed as blameworthy by prominent scholars like Ibn Ḥajar, who saw their role as paramount to establish, maintain, and supervise the norms of social and religious production and practice. The fact that Abū Bakr's words were brought to the qadi Jalāl al-Dīn, and that he came to Ibn Ḥajar to discuss this with him,[43] stresses some sort of pressure and power of coercion linked to the formulation of Abū Bakr's discursive stance, despite his apparent willingness and efforts toward truth. Thus, having reasserted the appropriation of the religious and social normative discourse, carrying its knowledge and powers, Ibn Ḥajar could conclude with a more gentle touch, recalling the piety and firm worshipping practices of Abū Bakr, a man whose *vox populi* had given him influence and prominence. It is this prominence that leads the reader to question the reputation and aura of such a character, which hints at the religious charismatic authority Abū Bakr was recognized for.

In fact, it seems the obituary itself was also shaped to remind the audience of this singular feature of Abū Bakr. After introducing Abū Bakr, the character's background is sketched: his grandfather had a *zāwiyah* and was revered *(fīhi iʿtiqād kabīr)* in the Upper Egyptian city of al-Mallawī, some 90 kilometers north of Asyūt. Here, Ibn Ḥajar was not only providing historical information about Abū Bakr, he was also presenting the religious, social, political, and historiographical categories and contexts in which Abū Bakr was to be understood, apprehended, and referred to.

According to Ibn Ḥajar's presentation strategy, Abū Bakr was to be remembered as a religious man with some knowledge in religious sciences. Abū Bakr's genealogical background also hinted at the honored status of his family, in the eyes of both God and men. This is why the "reverence" attributed to his grandfather immediately follows the main characterization of Abū Bakr as a member of the Shādhilī Sufi order, trained (badly, according to the author) in *tafsīr,* his commentaries being the subject of polemical disputes. The final portion of the notice, however, portrays Abū Bakr in a positive light, restoring him to the bosom of righteousness and finally stressing the main feature of his character: that he was

[43]It also allows Ibn Ḥajar to put himself forward through a parallel with the qadi Jalāl al-Dīn, a rival scholar of Ibn Ḥajar: if the qadi Jalāl al-Dīn had to take a decision concerning Abū Bakr al-Mallawī, the latter took steps to discuss it with Ibn Ḥajar.

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a great worshipper of God. Abū Bakr also was a man working in the weaving trade—thus trying to live combining the *ʿilm* and the *ʿamal*[44]—connected to some established Cairene scholars and mystics, as illustrated by his proximity to the Sufi shaykh al-Ḥabbār and his disciple and successor Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad—two prominent members of the Sufi environment of Cairo and recognized ulama. Thus, Abū Bakr's narrative space goes beyond the polemical dispute that claims the bulk of his *wafāyah* (obituary and biographical notice) in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr.*

Abū Bakr's life must also be put in perspective with the little information given about his grandfather, Ayyūb. Like him, he trained in a *zāwiyah.* Like him, he was revered by some people *(wa-li-jamāʿat min al-nāsi fīhi iʿtiqād kabīr),* a point reinforced by the important public gathering during his funeral procession. Abū Bakr al-Mallawī's influence and reputation were not specifically grounded in his knowledge of religious sciences but originated from his own personal ability to create a feeling of reverence in the personal opinions of others, reinforced by his genealogical background and his position as a preacher in the famous *zāwiyah* of al-Ḥabbār.

Abū Bakr thus did not only belong to a narrative pattern and social status documenting religious elites. His authority and qualities streamed from something more that made people believe in him *(aʿtaqada).* Such wording and features echo, within all due limits, the concept of charisma developed by Max Weber. Thus, Abū Bakr al-Mallawī was apparently someone whose narrative description fit the main features of a religious charismatic character, and whose figure was shaped precisely by Ibn Ḥajar so that Abū Bakr appeared as a very likely charismatic religious *persona.*

Charisma and Religious Charismatic Authority

Much has been written about charisma and its uses, gradually changing the way charisma is conceived of as a conceptual tool for social sciences. To better grasp the notion of religious charismatic authority that was widely displayed by Ibn Ḥajar in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* with an apparent normative purpose and narrative pattern, a brief explanation of this Weberian notion will prove useful.

Charisma, religious charismatic authority, and the notion of the charismatic leader were addressed in the writings of Max Weber.[45] Together, they became important features of Weber's contribution to social sciences, especially in regard to processes of institution building, religious studies, psychology, sociology of re-

[44]Kenneth Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and His Revival of the Religious Sciences* (Oxford, 2014), 40–55.

[45]For a summary of Weber's concept building, see John S. Potts, *A History of Charisma* (Basingstoke, 2009), 116–26.

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ligion, and political sciences.[46] Max Weber defined charisma as "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities"[47] and as a "quality beyond daily life." Charismatic authority thus signifies: "domination (be it external or internal) wielded upon men, and to which those who are dominated submit themselves, in accordance with belief in this quality, attached to this person in particular."[48] As Gary Dickson sums it up, "Weber's charisma is a particular gift, reserved for a special type of leader."[49]

Some major characteristics that mainly defined charisma and charismatic authority for Weber[50] may be summarized in a few propositions.[51] Charismatic authority was considered by Weber as a freely given recognition on the part of those subject to authority, consisting in devotion or trust for the charismatic *persona,* guaranteed by "what is held as a 'sign' or 'proof'";[52] the charismatic character would be seen as possessing exceptional or specific qualification for his followers, resulting in a capacity of influence or leadership for such a persona. The disappearance of such a sign or qualification would mean the end of his charismatic quality: thus, charismatic leaders only prosper if they can guarantee the permanence of such capacities. As Weber put it, "by its very nature, the existence of charismatic authority is specifically unstable."[53] Since the charismatic character is seen as legitimate because of his personal abilities, such abilities must be "constantly being proved"[54] and displayed. A charismatic holder may be abandoned by his following at some point because pure charisma[55] does not know any "legitimacy" other than the charismatic holder's personal ability, one which must constantly be proved.[56] The "distinction between charisma and charismatic lead-

[46] Ibid., 132–33.

[47] Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building,* ed. S. N. Eisenstat (Chicago, 1968), 48.

[48] Max Weber, *Sociologie des religions,* Textes réunis, traduits et présentés par Jean-Pierre Grossein, 2nd ed. (Paris, 2006), 370.

[49] Gary Dickson, "Charisma, Medieval and Modern," *Religions* 3 (2012): 765.

[50] Scott Appelrouth and Laura Desfor Edles, *Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theory: Text and Readings* (Los Angeles, 2008), 182.

[51] See Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization,* ed. Talcott Parsons (New York, 1964), 358–63.

[52] Ibid., 359.

[53] Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology,* ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York, 1946), 248.

[54] Max Weber, *The Sociology of Charismatic Authority,* reprinted in idem, *On Charisma and Institution Building,* 22.

[55] Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building,* 46–47.

[56] Ibid., 22.

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ership" matters,[57] for charisma is always limited to a particular relationship between the leaders and their followers,[58] whence stems the authority of the leaders and the behaviors of their followers, linked together through "an emotional form of communal relationship." Pure charisma was also specifically seen by Weber as foreign to economic considerations.[59]

Because of the nature of charismatic authority in the making,[60] and the challenges it may set for society, concerns usually arise among already established authorities that charismatic leaders are threats, being seen as "foreign to everyday routine structures."[61] Such a danger, or its perception, is grounded in the competition for religious legitimacy and is quite real, for what is at stake is "the monopoly of the legitimate exercise of the power to modify, in a deep and lasting fashion, the practice and world-view of lay people."[62] Coupled with the instability linked to charismatic authority, the rise of a charismatic leader would eventually lead, in Weber's theory, to what he called "the routinization of charisma,"[63] namely the "transformation of a great charismatic upsurge and vision into some more continuous social organization and institutional framework"[64] as the first step in the routinization of charisma, qualifying this ongoing process of change and stabilization in the everyday routines of society. In that way, the process of routinization of charisma, beyond the varied display of charismatic authority, has its own "principal motives," explaining why and how it usually takes place.[65]

This initial model was the subject of valid criticism pointing to a number of issues—especially by E. Schills—well analyzed in the context of early Islamic law by Jonathan E. Brockopp, who proposed an interesting and more dynamic framework to use the notion of charisma.[66] Particularly problematic were the strict di-

[57]Douglas F. Barnes, "Charisma and Religious leadership," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 17, no. 1 (1978): 2.

[58]Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization,* 361.

[59]Pure charismatic authority is an authority based entirely on charismatic grounds, and according to Weber, one of the three "pure types of legitimate authority," the two others being authority based on rational grounds and traditional grounds. Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building,* 46.

[60]For, as Weber put it, "in its pure form charismatic authority may be said to exist only in the process of originating." Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building,* 54.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Pierre Bourdieu, "Legitimation and Structured Interest in Weber's Sociology of Religion," in Sam Whimster and Scott Lash, *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity* (London, 1987), 126.

[63]Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization,* 363–73.

[64]Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building,* XXI.

[65]Ibid., 54–55.

[66]Jonathan E. Brockopp, "Theorizing Charismatic Authority in Early Islamic Law," *Comparative Islamic Studies* 1, no. 2 (2005): 129–58.

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chotomy laid out by Weber between "pure charisma" and "routinized charisma," and the rigid "binary opposition between tradition, law and routine on the one side, and charisma on the other," an element that could not be operative, especially in the late medieval Muslim world, when important religious charismatic figures often had a deep background both in hadith studies and *fiqh:*[67] as such, charisma could not in this context be opposed to rationality, contrary to Weber's thinking.[68] Taking note of these distinctions and of the necessity to identify the notion of charisma in a particular historical framework, its usefulness as an analytical category could not be understated, as illustrated by its common use in medieval studies, adapting the Weberian conception to a more contextualized and dynamic use.[69] In that regard, the terms "charisma" or "charismatic religious authority" can be deemed practical analytical and conceptual tools, evoked and understood here in a specific discursive and historical context: the ninth/fifteenth-century Cairo Sultanate in Ibn Ḥajar's *Inbāʾ al-ghumr.*

The *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* and the Narrative Representation of Charismatic Authority

Although it is difficult to categorize the "unique personalities requisite for charisma,"[70] narrative representation of religious charismatic authority in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* can be defined as a set of terms constituting specific kinds of behaviors, respect, and influence, underlying the main features of religious charismatic authority. In the order of discourse, it underlines features close to the main characteristics proposed by Weber regarding charismatic authority, albeit important differences in terms of economic considerations or forms of organizations, contextual situations, and relations to the law and tradition should be considered to understand the status of religious charismatic authority in a chronicle like the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr.* However, a specific lexicon seems indeed to have distinguished characters upon whom were bestowed religious charismatic authority.

[67] Ibid., 130 and 133.

[68] Ibid., 133.

[69] McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt;* Maria Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran* (Leiden, 2007); Jansen and Rubin, *Charisma and Religious Authority;* Denise Aigle, ed., *Les autorités religieuses entre charismes et hiérarchies: Approches comparatives* (Turnhout, 2011); Peter Iver Kaufman and Gary Dickson, "Charisma, Medieval and Modern," *Religions* 3 (2012), reprinted in Peter Iver Kaufman and Gary Dickson, eds., *Charisma, Medieval and Modern* (Edinburgh, 2014); Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak and Martha Dana Rust, *Faces of Charisma: Image, Text, Object in Byzantium and the Medieval West* (Leiden, 2018).

[70] Barnes, "Charisma and Religious Leadership," 2.

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As far as Ibn Ḥajar's chronicle is concerned, "routinized charisma," namely the acceptance and integration of some charismatic religious authorities in a society, seems to represent the bulk and vast majority of all forms of religious charismatic authority and the normative expression of charisma, bearing in mind that, in Islam, religious charismatic authority is always recognized by the *vox populi.*[71]

Ibn Ḥajar did not employ the term *"qadara"* (derived from the root *q-d-r,* referring to power, ability, and capacity) that may be used today to define a specific capacity or ability of a person, but he did use various terms that may be referring in one way or another to the notion of religious charisma. *Haybah,* a word often translated today as "charisma," is employed by Ibn Ḥajar, though sparsely. Related to some form of respect or veneration, with a degree of fear or apprehension *(al-ijlālu wa-al-makhāfah), haybah* could also be linked to piety.[72] Majd al-Dīn al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1415), with whom Ibn Ḥajar studied the Arabic language,[73] defined *haybah* as fear, piety, and dignity *(al-mahābah).*[74] As far as the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* is concerned, *muhayb* and *haybah* are mentioned nineteen times. Yet, their use does not distinguish people of religious background, as illustrated in many examples given by Ibn Ḥajar.

Thus, Muḥammad ibn Lājīn obtained an office as *wazīr* thanks to his firmness *(ṣawlah),* his vigilance *(yaqaẓah),* and his charisma *(haybah).*[75] In fact, it seems that many people serving in the administrative offices of the sultanic or ruling houses are designated as *"muhayb,"* in possession of *haybah:* the amir Īnāl al-Yūsufī (d. 794/1392), Muḥammad al-Farghanī (d. 796/1394), head of the chancery *(kātib al-sirr),*[76] and many others, with a connotation of prestige.[77] *Haybah* does not specifically imply religious charismatic authority in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* even if it does involve some form of personal charisma and influence, spreading both fear and respect, due to an individual's personal abilities and behaviors. Although it never implied, by itself, any sort of charismatic religious authority, it makes sense that *haybah* was also used for people more closely associated with a religious background or position linked to religious knowledge, as in the case of the qadi Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭrāblusī (d. 799/1397).[78] But if *haybah* was indeed

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[71] Denise Aigle, "Introduction," in idem, ed. *Les autorités religieuses entre charismes et hiérarchies: Approches comparatives* (Turnhout, 2011), 12.

[72] Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut, 1955), 1:789.

[73] Ibn Ḥajar, *Rafʿ al-iṣr ʿan quḍāt Miṣr,* 63. On al-Fīrūzābādī, see Vivian Strotmann, *Majd al-Dīn al-Fīrūzābādī (1329–1415): A Polymath on the Eve of the Early Modern Period* (Leiden, 2016).

[74] Al-Fīrūzābādī, *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ,* ed. Nuʿaym Muḥammad al-ʿArqsūsī (Beirut, 2005), 145.

[75] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:448.

[76] Ibid., 1:482

[77] Ibid., 1:385, 2:119, 3:81103 ,, etc.

[78] Ibid., 1:239.

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meant to refer to some sort of charisma in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* it was never used to qualify a religious charismatic form of authority *per se*.

A more common term related to such influence comes from the root *j-dh-b,* characterizing the attraction toward something, and from which originates the word commonly used to define social charisma today, *jādhibīyah.*[79] The term *jādhibīyah* was also used in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* appearing twenty-one times. This word is used in the chronicle in reference to religious people and women. It seems to have been employed by Ibn Ḥajar either to describe the attractiveness of a person to other people,[80] as in the case of Masʿūd al-Muraysī (d. 777/1375–76), or someone's attraction toward the divine (how strongly they are pulled to it), mainly referring to *majdhūbīn* characters scattered in the chronicle.[81]

As for *karāmāt,* the "visible trace of sainthood,"[82] it may also be considered in the narrative of the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* to be a sign of religious charismatic authority. *Karāmāt* has been a clear ground upon which the notion of religious charismatic authority was based in the medieval Islamic world, as illustrated by the bibliography dedicated to this concept.[83] Indeed, in Islamic medieval historiographical sources, *karāmāt* featured highly in the display of religious charismatic authority, since the accomplishment of outstanding deeds or premonitions thanks to the help of God could play a strong role in establishing one's charismatic authority, while attribution of such powers was a clear testimony of God's favor toward a character. It therefore functioned to bring influence over people who recognized the possessor of *karāmāt* as a religious charismatic authority, whatever his scholarly background. Attributions of the performance of *karāmāt* brought charisma and could help shape a person's religious charismatic influence. By itself, however, *karāmāt* was not enough to establish religious charismatic authority, and many blessed men performing *karāmāt* cannot be considered charismatic leaders, since they did not engage in activities that displayed any charismatic authority and had no dedicated groups of followers.

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[79] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab,* 1:257.

[80] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:50.

[81] Ibid., 1:125, 426, 442, 2:120, 250, 3:261, 4:28, etc.

[82] D. Gril, *La Risāla de Safî al-Dîn Ibn Abî l-Mansûr*: *Biographies des maîtres spirituels connus par un cheikh égyptien du VIIe/XIIIe siècle* (Cairo, 1986), 56.

[83] Al-Nabhānī, *Jāmiʿ karāmāt al-awliyāʾ* (Porbandar, 2001); Denise Aigle, "Sainteté et Miracles en Islam médiéval: l'exemple de deux saints fondateurs iraniens," *Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public* 25 (1994): 47–73; idem, ed., *Saints orientaux: Hagiographies médiévales comparées 1* (Paris, 1995); idem, *Miracles et karâma* (Turnhout, 2000); Christopher S. Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous*: *Ziyāra and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt* (Leiden, 1999); Daniella Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria: Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons under the Zangids and Ayyūbids (1146–1260)* (Leiden, 2007).

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The chronicle's mentions of *karāmāt* are rather sparse. Although it may have borrowed some tropes of hagiographic literature, it was not Ibn Ḥajar's intent to document the many wonders claimed to have happened in the midst of religious charismatic characters' deeds. Thus, there are only a few explicit mentions of people having *karāmāt* in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* which engaged twenty-eight times with this concept. Ibn Hajar used quite careful wording toward statements of *karāmāt,* and he only rarely implicitly associates himself with such claims with a direct affirmative and authoritative sentence, such as "he possessed *karāmāt*"[84] *(la-hu karāmāt),* either when reformulating a broad, well-known consensus, or talking about individuals unknown to his likely audience in the Cairo Sultanate (such as the Yemeni *faqīh* Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥaḍramī [d. 800/1398])[85] since there was little risk of being contradicted in such cases and his audience could marvel at the stories.

More than *karāmāt,* the notion of *barakah,* namely divine impulse or blessing—also conveyed by the *karāmāt* themselves—appears paramount in the acknowledgement of religious charismatic authority. *Barakah* designates the divine or "spiritual flow,"[86] granted by God. The question of *barakah* has been abundantly studied[87] due to its importance in the cult of saints, a fundamental marker of holiness and a deep presence in the social imagination of medieval Islamic societies. The term *mubārak* entails the idea of dissemination and movement, and underlines the spiritual, exceptional, and properly blessed character of people or places.

By itself, acknowledgement of a person's *barakah* does not lead to the rise of charismatic authority, nor can it be a proof of such: a blessed man living as an ascetic far from anyone, not engaging in preaching and having no disciples, would not appear as a charismatic religious leader, despite being *mubārak*. Nevertheless, it does emphasize religious charismatic authority if and when a blessed character would make others benefit from his blessings. One may say that people coming to a pious man in search of his *barakah,* and the commitment of the blessed man in engaging with these blessings, does necessarily imply religious charismatic authority, as it would entail a trust for the blessed *persona,* displaying a "sign" of his singular quality to his followers. Thus, it is the notion of *tabarruk*—the move

[84]For example, Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:184, 346.

[85]Ibid., 2:23

[86]Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore: Ibn ʿArabî, the Book, and the Law* (New York, 1993), 15. Josef W. Meri, "Aspects of Baraka (Blessings) and Ritual Devotion Among Medieval Muslims and Jews," *Medieval Encounters* 5, no. 1 (1999): 46; Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Berkeley, 2007), 130.

[87]See for example Joseph Chelhod, "La Baraka chez les arabes ou l'influence bienfaisante du sacré," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 148, no. 1 (1955): 68–88; Josef W. Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford, 2002), 101–8; idem, "Aspects of Baraka," 46–69.

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to ask for another's blessings—only concerning individuals with religious backgrounds, that conveys best to the giver of *barakah* a characteristic of religious charismatic authority. Such a term is only explicitly mentioned three times in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,*[88] which underlines, again, Ibn Ḥajar's very discreet attitude concerning such pretention, as well as the strength—its rarity making it all the more meaningful—attributed to that kind of ability.

In the end, whatever the terms and abilities used at some point to describe different religious charismatic persons holding sway over the lives of some believers, religious charismatic authority always meant popular recognition and some kind of fame, even at a local level. It follows that the only true measure of an established religious charismatic authority is that it is derived from the people, be it the elites of the ruling houses, established scholars, or common folks. Therefore, the most important among the terms emphasizing religious charismatic authority in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* are those derived from the root *ʿa-q-d,* through *iʿtaqada* and *yaʿtaqidu,* referring to the fact of strong belief. The persons subject to *iʿtiqād* were both those who believed strongly in God *(muʿtaqid),* and those in whom people strongly believed, the *muʿtaqad*s (revered persons)—with the implicit meaning of being favored in the eyes of God.[89] This specific feature should be distinguished from mentions concerning the affirmation of strong beliefs associated with some scholars, as a positive statement, or with specific doctrinal positions dealing with *ʿaqīdah* and *ʿaqāʾid.* It is thus not surprising that Nelly Amri, discussing the notion of *iʿtiqād,* recognized it as the primary notion used by sources to designate the saints in the late medieval Maghreb.[90] Such characters were taken in a triple movement of beliefs: they were recognized as being favored by God, and such belief was a testimony of their personal belief in God, producing an acknowledgment of their charisma, namely, that one could recognize them as favored by God and believe in their blessings, participating in producing defining characteristics of religious charismatic authority.[91]

The *muʿtaqad*s, as a regular element of narratives in chronicles like the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* have been greatly overlooked. Carl F. Petry, in his study of the civilian elite of Cairo, devoted a few pages to them.[92] It is, to my knowledge, the only academic work addressing the *muʿtaqad*s as a distinct category of people or a social class, not just as a feature of various characters, even if Berkey did note the attraction

[88] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:199, 2:311, 3:459.

[89] Jonathan Berkey also translates the term as "confidence." Jonathan Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Seattle, 2001), 26.

[90] Nelly Amri, *Croire au Maghreb Médiéval: La sainteté en question, XIVe–XVe siècle* (Paris, 2020), 43–46.

[91] Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization,* 358–59.

[92] Carl F. Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1981), 267–69.

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of *iʿtiqād* for biographers.[93] Petry distinguished the *muʿtaqad*s as a sub-category among the "religious functionaries." He also separated them from "Sufi Mystics." Such an understanding, although problematic, grasps an essential feature of the *muʿtaqad*s as having attained their status by applying themselves to worshipping, preaching, and study on religious matters.[94] The presentation of a clear categorization between groups of pious men with knowledge of religious sciences also raises problems of its own and might be revised: in Ibn Ḥajar's chronicle, it seems there is no clear causal link between *taṣawwuf* and the *muʿtaqad*s, the latter not always being Sufis or at least not necessarily being mentioned as such.[95] This fact was also noted by Petry himself. Petry described the *muʿtaqad*s with three distinct qualities: their rejection of a high standard of living for themselves; their peculiarity in the eyes of other people; their experiences of "extreme emotional crisis."[96] He stated that few could "claim identification with a family of the ʿulamāʾ" nor were they "related" to the civilian elites.[97] The data in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* seems to convey the same impression, though one may temper the statement concerning the ulama, since many of the characters linked to the notion of *iʿtiqād,* the *muʿtaqad*s themselves, were ulama trained in legal and religious sciences. It seems in fact that the *muʿtaqad*s fit physical and intellectual standards of the time but rarely engaged with judiciary or administrative activities, nor were they very connected to scholars employed in activities linked to administrative offices.[98] The fact that only a few people designated as *muʿtaqad*s engaged in these activities or were close to scholars on this career path tends only to show that "it is impossible to describe them as having a common profession,"[99] as Petry himself emphasized. So, the main distinct qualities the *muʿtaqad*s all seem to share, in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* are that they engaged in religious-linked activities and that they

[93]Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority,* 26.

[94]"Functionaries" is indeed a very vague category. It is not a social but a very large functional category. It includes "officials" working in an administration or performing an "official duty." In that regard, *muʿtaqad*s cannot be considered "religious functionaries," since being "revered" by some people does not entail any official duty and does not connect them to any state-linked administration, even if some of them could indeed be working in an official capacity for the state or a religious institution. The same could be said for Sufi mystics, who came from all fields and backgrounds and did not have to be related to any kind of official duty anywhere, even if they could be.

[95]As is the case for many of the *muʿtaqad*s, like Mūsá ibn ʿAlī al-Munāwī (Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 3:152), Abū Bakr al-Ṭuraynī (ibid., 3:332), Khalīfah al-Maghribī (ibid., 3:377).

[96]Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo,* 267.

[97]Ibid., 267.

[98]Yet some were, as in Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 4:82.

[99]Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo,* 267.

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were specifically mentioned as *muʿtaqad*s, this term carrying by itself a strong statement on a person.

Thus, introducing the *muʿtaqad*s as a specific category of people, as Petry did, makes sense, and this is also true in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*. The *muʿtaqad*s are indeed referred to as a distinct group in the chronicle's narratives, albeit not a social or functional one, and statements like "he was among [those] revered" *(kāna mimman yuʿtaqadu)*[100] or "one of those revered in Egypt" *(aḥadu al-muʿtaqadīn bi-Miṣr)* set the *muʿtaqad*s apart from other members of the religious environment of the Cairo Sultanate. In the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*—but one may certainly find many examples in other ninth/fifteenth-century historiographical works—they seem then to have been considered a specific group of discursive representation, and the most obvious candidates for identification as charismatic religious authorities.

References to such characters are numerous in Ibn Ḥajar's chronicle, with at least 121 *muʿtaqad*s explicitly mentioned.[101] This is a rather considerable portion of the nearly twelve hundred biographical notices included in the text. These references are, it seems, the most direct allusions in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* to clear forms of religious charismatic authority. They can be, and often are, coupled with other features implying charisma. Clear demonstrations of charismatic religious influence were, for example, emphasized through prostration[102] *(al-sujūd),* the reverence attributed to a *muʿtaqad* could be one of great faith or "excess" *(fīhi iʿtiqād zāʾid),*[103] or a *muʿtaqad* could also be a *majdhūb,* said to "possess" *jadhbah*[104] or *karāmāt.*[105] These features underline, among the *muʿtaqad*s, a difference of degree, nature, and moral assertion by the author, in what appears as a narrative archetype in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* used to establish the acceptability of religious practices, knowledge, preaching, and sociability. Some characters explicitly designated as Sufis are also mentioned as charismatic figures, but it is worth pointing out that most of the characters associated with religious charismatic authority were not related, in the *Inbāʾ,* to *taṣawwuf* or explicitly referred to as Sufis. Thus, even if it is quite possible that many of these characters did engage with Sufism in various ways, following the chronicle's narrative framework, religious charisma cannot be related to Sufism *per se* and Sufism does not appear as a corollary of religious charisma.

[100] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 2:410.

[101] This number comes from the listing of all the scholars mentioned explicitly associated with the notion of *iʿtiqād* based on the frequency list of the root *ʿaqd* in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* and a close reading of each of these references.

[102] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 2:308.

[103] Ibid., 2:495, 498.

[104] Ibid., 1:125, 442.

[105] Ibid., 1:203.

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Ibn Ḥajar, certainly well aware of criticism concerning the behaviors of some of the *muʿtaqad*s' followers,[106] was quite cautious concerning these charismatic figures, referring to generic formulas *("kāna yuʿtaqadu bi-*[such a region]*"* or *"kāna yaʿtaqiduhu al-nās").* Such detachment seems to have been a rather neutral statement and an assessment of something that was or had been, for Ibn Ḥajar sometimes made a clearer distinction regarding these beliefs that did not include himself discursively. It was specifically the case when mentioning the *madhjūb*s, such as in the obituary of Shaykh Ḥutaybah, "one of the *madhjūbīn* in whom believed the *ʿāmmah,*"[107] *de facto* implying that people outside the *ʿāmmah* did not revere this character. Such a narrative precision should not be seen as a way to inform about "popular religion" as opposed to the high culture and religious practices of a religious elite, for many among the *muʿtaqad*s seem to have been genuinely revered, in a particular region, by both the *ʿāmmah* and the *khāṣṣah.* Thus, a man like Mūsá ibn ʿAlī al-Shaybī (fl. eighth/fourteenth century), a *muʿtaqad* and a descendant of one of the most prestigious religious lineages of northern Tihāmah,[108] was clearly identified by Ibn Ḥajar as "a master of [mystical] unveilings *(mukāshafāt)* and divine favors *(karāmāt),*" features upon which there was a general consensus.[109]

Precision regarding funeral processions—beyond the historical documentation of an extraordinary event and a way for Ibn Ḥajar to introduce direct testimony—may also be understood as an attempt to double down on a *muʿtaqad*'s success, thus exemplifying the people's "reverence" for him. It is the case for some figures whose presence punctuates the chronicle, such as Abū Bakr al-Mallawī[110] or Abū Bakr al-Jubāʾī al-Miṣrī, a man one day drawn to God *(ḥaṣalat lahu jadhbatun),* for whom people had "an indescribable reverence" *(kāna lil-nās fīhi iʿtiqād yafūq al-waṣf),* and whose funeral ceremony was spectacular *(janāzatun ʿaẓīmatun)* "like during the day of *ʿīd* or rain [prayer] *(al-istisqāʾ),* or even more."[111]

It is worth emphasizing that most of the *muʿtaqad*s introduced in the chronicle were not linked to any training as scholars. Only a handful of them were explicitly referred to as Sufis or members of a Sufi network, that is, as being linked in the text to Sufi practices, thought, doctrinal engagement, a *ṭarīqah,* or terms directly associated with *taṣawwuf,* like *"ṣūfī"* or *"taṣawwuf."* Although the two works are not comparable in terms of their aims and narrative engagements, it is

[106] And being part of it himself. See ibid., 2:308, 495.

[107] Ibid., 2:331.

[108] Zacharie Mochtari de Pierrepont, *Espaces sacrés et lignages bénis dans la Tihāma yéménite: sociétés, identités et pouvoirs (VIe–IXe/XIIe–XVe siècle)* (Paris, 2018), 1:470–80.

[109] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 2:410.

[110] Ibid., 4:81.

[111] Ibid., 1:497.

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still interesting to note that only thirty-three characters are mentioned as receiving *iʿtiqād (al-nās)* in the *Durar al-kāminah,* Ibn Ḥajar's biographical dictionary concerning the eighth/fourteenth century. In the course of a hundred years, he deemed it useful to refer to only a third as many religious charismatic figures as he did in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr.* Add to that the very short notices concerning them, and they seem almost irrelevant in the general framework of this work of *ṭabaqāt.* One may wonder if the religious, cultural, and social environment of the Cairo Sultanate between the end of the eighth/fourteenth century and the first decades of the ninth/fifteenth allowed such a multiplication of religious charismatic figures, and if it may have been driven by the discomfort and troubles of the time, echoing one of the main features of the rise of charismatic authority.

All in all, it seems that the notion of *iʿtiqād* and that of *tabarruk* and *barakah* are the main markers of religious charismatic authority in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr.* They are only applied to characters with religious knowledge or a mystical tendency. Figures tied to *iʿtiqād* in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* are also specifically portrayed as distinct from other scholars, as is illustrated in the notice of the qadi Jalāl al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī.[112] In the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* this famous, high-profile scholarly figure is not mentioned as one with *iʿtiqād,*[113] but he is directly referred to as such in the *Rafʿ al-iṣr,*[114] Ibn Ḥajar's historiographical work documenting the life and deeds of the *quḍāt* of Egypt.[115] It is also the case of the qadi Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 797/1396–97),[116] who is mentioned as a *muʿtaqad* in the *Rafʿ* but not in the *Inbāʾ.*[117] Thus, the "revered" characters presented in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* were serving a different narrative purpose and may also be distinguished as a specific narrative type in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* itself, compared to the revered judges mentioned in the *Rafʿ al-iṣr ʿan quḍāt Miṣr,* emphasizing a different perspective in regard to the formal and informal status of religious and legal authorities, the audience, and the types of respect and reverence such figures were deemed to deserve.

The charismatic religious figures in the *Inbāʾ,* through the notions of *iʿtiqād* and *barakah,* were not presented as wandering in the streets and campaigns of the Cairo Sultanate. As in the display of other types of powers and authorities, holders of religious charisma were often presented in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* in a set of specific places that, more than introducing to the chronicle's audience a geography of religious charismatic power, participated in the illustration of the routinization of charisma. Namely, they shaped the processes of institutionalization of religious

[112] Ibn Ḥajar, *Rafʿ al-iṣr ʿan quḍāt Miṣr,* 226–29.

[113] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 3:259–60.

[114] Ibn Ḥajar, *Rafʿ al-iṣr ʿan quḍāt Miṣr,* 229.

[115] On this work, see Mathieu Tillier, *Vies des cadis de Miṣr* (Cairo, 2002).

[116] Ibn Ḥajar, *Rafʿ al-iṣr ʿan quḍāt Miṣr,* 364–65.

[117] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:503.

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charismatic authority and powers, gradually translated in an impersonal evolution of power,[118] enclosed in a set of institutions.

The Production of Charismatic Authority and the Institutionalization of Religious Charisma: The Case of *Zāwiyah*s

If the idea of religious charismatic authority seems to be conveyed through a specific lexicon in the *Inbāʾ,* the power or influence of religious charismatic leaders—or rather the narrative representation of this influence—seems to be exercised and enclosed in a specific set of *loci*. Two particular spaces seem to be the main repositories of charismatic authority: Sufi *zāwiyah*s and mausoleums, a fact already emphasized by Petry.[119] Both convey a different aspect of charismatic authority, since the former was part of the living display of a religious leader's standing and reputation, and the latter was an ongoing memorial of such a past influence that actualized the standing of his successors and served as a reminder of their spiritual—and sometimes genealogical—affiliation, if any.

Sufi Institutions in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*

Sufi institutions—mostly *zāwiyah*s and *khānqāh*s[120]—were important to Ibn Ḥajar. As for *khānqāh*s, if we consider them as representing Sufi institutions,[121] they occupy a relevant narrative space in the chronicle and are quite well documented. Yet, contrary to *zāwiyah*s, it is noticeable that very few members of *khānqāh*s are mentioned in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* as being on the Sufi path, although some of them were. Thus, in contrast to Petry's analysis of late ninth/fifteenth-century biographical dictionaries, stressing that "the two khānqāhs of Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ and Baybarsiyya accounted for half of all references"[122] to Sufis, *khānqāh*s account for less than ten percent of all *explicitly* mentioned Sufis in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* with only 12 clearly identifiable Sufis directly associated with such institutions. In fact, the majority of the 99 references to *khānqāh*s in the text concern the hold-

[118] Carl J. Friedrich, "Political leadership and the problem of the charismatic power," *The Journal of Politics* 23:1, 13.

[119] Petry, *Civilian Elite of Cairo,* 268.

[120] The *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* includes limited references to *ribāṭ*s, the word only appearing 12 times in the chronicle. These do not seem to be *specifically* linked to Sufism in Ibn Ḥajar's chronicle, which seems to corroborate Muḥammad Amīn, Leonor Fernandes, and Donald P. Little's statements, the latter writing that *ribāṭ*s had "very little" relationship to Sufism. See Donald P. Little, "The Nature of Khānqāhs," 101–2.

[121] Ibid., 97–101.

[122] Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo,* 272.

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ers of the *khānqāh*s' *mashyakhah*s, the visit of a sultan to a *khānqāh,* or troubles and developments concerning these institutions. In that regard, both as institutions and as what they represented in the narrative frame of the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr, khānqāh*s were obviously viewed very differently from other Sufi institutions like *zāwiyah*s, and one of the recurrent topics attached to them was the question of the *mashyakhah,* the competition for *mansab*s, and the career paths and positions held by prominent ulama.[123] Ibn Ḥajar himself, who served as shaykh of the Khānqāh al-Baybarsīyah longer than any other holder of the position since its erection in 705/1306,[124] was obviously very interested—as, certainly, was a part of his target audience—in this competitive environment, in which he was personally involved.[125]

As for *zāwiyah*s, Ibn Ḥajar never documented these institutions in the same way as al-Maqrīzī, who, in a distinct section of his *Khiṭaṭ,* referred to twenty-six of them in Cairo.[126] Nonetheless, he still mentioned forty-two *zāwiyah*s scattered around the Syro-Egyptian territory, one in Iraq, and one in Yemen. Meccan and Ḥijāzī *zāwiyah*s were ignored,[127] although Ibn Ḥajar did refer to some Sufi *shuyūkh* of the holy city.[128]

It follows that, for Ibn Hajar, *zāwiyah*s were relevant to introduce the Sufi environment presented in his chronicle, but only as part of a broader picture. Among these institutions, thirty-eight Sufis are mentioned, in large part from outside Cairo, which means that a minority of the Sufis presented in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* are directly related to *zāwiyah*s.[129] This geographical display may also be linked to one of the main sources Ibn Ḥajar used for his coverage of Syria, the *Tārīkh* of Ibn Ḥijjī (d. 816/1413).[130] Most of these Sufis (thirty-three) were the heads of their *zāwiyah*s. *Zāwiyah*s in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* are generally mentioned *before* al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq's rule (r. 842–57/1438–53): the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* includes, to my knowledge, no references to such an institution between 841/1438 and 850/1446, although two of them are mentioned for the year 841/1437–38. That indicates a conscious shift

[123] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:229, 232, 290, 2:98, 112, 224, 3:45, 62, 151, 4:102, 230, etc.

[124] On this *khānqāh,* see Leonor Fernandes, "The Foundation of Baybars al-Jashankir: Its Waqf, History, and Architecture," *Muqarnas* 4, no. 1 (1986): 21–42.

[125] He completed the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* while trying to take back the *mashyakhah* of the Khānqāh al-Baybarsīyah that he had lost in 849/1445. ʿIzz al-Dīn, *Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī muʾarrikhan,* 77–78, 126–27; R. Kevin Jaques, *Ibn Ḥajar* (New Delhi, 2009), 140–41.

[126] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-al-iʿtibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-al-āthār* (Beirut, 1997), 4:307–16.

[127] Yet we know that some are mentioned in contemporary sources. For example, al-Fāsī, *Al-ʿIqd al-thamīn fī faḍāʾil al-balad al-amīn* (Beirut, 1998), 1:284, 4:450, 5:450.

[128] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:383, 4:25.

[129] Mochtari de Pierrepont, "Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's texts and contexts."

[130] Ibn Ḥijjī is quoted at least 97 times in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr.*

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in Ibn Ḥajar's narrative regarding the relevance of such institutions during Jaqmaq's reign, which may be connected to the personal display of piety of the sultan himself and his court,[131] but also to the decreased prestige and fame enjoyed by religious charismatic leaders under Jaqmaq, due to the sultan's personal policy on the matter.

Because of Ibn Ḥajar's attempt to precisely locate some of the *zāwiyah*s he refers to, the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* may seem at first to indicate his possible interest in mapping the Sufi topography of the Syro-Egyptian landscape. Thus, precision concerning the location of the *zāwiyah* near Bāb al-Jubān in Aleppo, where resided Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥalabī (d. 807/1404–5),[132] or Ḥusām al-Dīn, "in the neighborhood of Yaʿqūb, in the city of Safad,"[133] must be considered as carefully selected information in the life of some of the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* characters, while the bare mention of a *zāwiyah* is the only information provided about others, as in the case of ʿAlī al-Qalnadarī (d. 823/1420): we learn nothing about him except that he was the *"ṣāḥib"* of a *zāwiyah* outside Cairo, and one of those revered by the people *(muʿtaqad).*[134] Though the author may have been interested in the Sufi environment of the Cairo Sultanate, the small number of *zāwiyah*s mentioned in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* rather seems to indicate that Ibn Ḥajar's interest in these spaces lay elsewhere.

Indeed, the number of Cairo *zāwiyah*s mentioned (seven) is particularly low, which also indicates that, when it comes to the heart of the sultanate, Ibn Ḥajar had no specific interest in such locations. Having first-hand information about the Sufi environment of Cairo, such a lack of focus shows that mapping the Sufi *zāwiyah*s was by itself irrelevant to his historical chronicle. In the same way, many of the individuals praying and living in such places that were mentioned in Cairo by other historiographers are ignored in Ibn Ḥajar's *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* as can be seen from a brief look at al-Maqrīzī's or al-ʿAynī's works.[135] Not only were these Cairo institutions neglected, but Ibn Ḥajar also decided in the course of the 830–40s/1430–40s to emphasize for his readers different institutions from those previously mentioned in other historiographical works. Therefore, such mentions

[131] Mochtari de Pierrepont, "Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's texts and contexts," 18.

[132] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 2:311.

[133] Ibid., 3:24.

[134] Ibid., 3:229.

[135] See for examples al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* 6:312, 7:200. As for al-ʿAynī, he seems to mention very few *zāwiyah*s in the parts of the *ʿIqd al-jumān fī tārīkh ahl al-zamān* dealing with the ninth/fifteenth century. We could multiply the examples, but comparing some years in Ibn Ḥajar's chronicle with the same years in al-ʿAynī is enough to see a very different kind of account. See for example the year 841, where Ibn Ḥajar mentions two *zāwiyah*s (Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 4:81, 87) and al-ʿAynī none (al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-jumān fī tārīkh ahl al-zamān,* ed. Maḥmūd Razaq Maḥmūd [Cairo, 2010], 2:493–507).

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in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* were not intended to reference any implicit urban landscape nor to give insight into a broader Sufi environment. It seems that they had other purposes, one of which was certainly recording the places and institutions routinized by religious charismatic authority, the centers of a form of power that was relevant to documenting the history and social fabric of the Cairo Sultanate.

*Zāwiyah*s in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr:* Charisma and Ephemeral Institutions in a Troubled Context

As institutions, *zāwiyah*s have been largely neglected for a long time, as they seem to have been merely considered as small institutions, in the continuous "institutional spectrum that included *zāwiya, madrasa,* and *mosques*."[136] Muḥammad M. Amīn, Fernandes, Little, and Behrens-Abouseif are still the best studies of references to Sufi institutions and *zāwiyah*s in the Cairo Sultanate.[137] It is generally admitted that lines between *zāwiyah*s, *ribāṭ*s, and madrasahs were progressively blurred during the period of the Cairo Sultanate.[138] Indeed, all these structures participated in religious practice, teaching, and charitable activities, and "the social and intellectual assimilation of Sufis and Sufism into the mainstream intellectual life"[139] during the course of the eighth/fourteenth century certainly played a role in this blending. Yet, such assessment also seems to have constrained contemporary research, mostly excluding the study of medieval *zāwiyah*s as themselves presenting specific aspects. It may seem quite a bold supposition to accept that the linguistic process of distinction between different Sufi institutions used by contemporary historiographers did not reflect a different perception of their distinct nature, if not of their function. If al-Maqrīzī dedicated a whole chapter in his *Khiṭaṭ* to *zāwiyah*s and most ninth/fifteenth-century authors refer to *zāwiyah*s as a particular institution, it means that *zāwiyah*s were clearly distinct and identifiable for contemporaries, since they were presented as such, even if lines could sometimes be confused.

As a hypothesis, based on Ibn Ḥajar's presentation in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* I would like to propose here that *zāwiyah*s were partly distinguished from other Sufi institutions due to their role in the process of institutionalization of religious

[136]Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Oxford, 1992), 58.

[137]Muḥammad M. Amīn, *Al-Awqāf wa-al-hayāh al-ijtimāʿīyah fī Miṣr* (Cairo, 1980), 206–22; Fernandes, "The *zāwiya* in Cairo," 105–21; idem, "Some Aspects of the zawiya in Egypt," 9–17; Little, "The Nature of Khānqāhs, Ribāts, and Zāwiyas under the Mamluks," 91–105; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Change in Function and Form of Mamluk Religious Institutions," *Annales islamologiques* 21 (1985): 73–93.

[138]Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge,* 57–58.

[139]Ibid., 59.

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charismatic authority. That is also why it is possible to interpret the evolution put forward by Fernandes concerning ninth/fifteenth-century *zāwiyah*s in a multi-layered representation: that is, not only to consider the rising number of *zāwiyah*s in the Cairo Sultanate as evidence of a new trend in the religious needs of the faithful, but also as a reaction to incorporate and maintain a number of religious charismatic authorities in an approved institutional and social framework linking together military, intellectual, and cultural elites, which explains the new efforts of established elites and patrons to directly sponsor *zāwiyah*s.

Compared to other religious and pious foundations mentioned in the chronicle, *zāwiyah*s have three particularities in Ibn Ḥajar's chronicle.

First, most of these institutions, during the first half of the ninth/fifteenth century, belonged to a religious charismatic individual or a spiritual affiliate of a religious charismatic individual, so their success came in part from a charisma-driven authority. Thus, many (17) *muʿtaqad*s and shaykhs gifted with *karāmāt* or to whom people were looking for *tabarruk* are associated with a *zāwiyah*. This is never the case for a *khānqāh* or a *ribāṭ*: no charismatic religious figure said to be a *muʿtaqad* is associated with these institutions in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr.*

Second, *zāwiyah*s are always presented in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* with reference to a few characters, spanning generations, before disappearing from the narrative. They are presented as *contextual and ephemeral* institutions which would fit in the framework in which religious charismatic authority is usually understood.

Third, they are almost never linked in any way to the sultanic authority: the rulers had no sway upon these institutions, at least in the narrative representation offered by the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr.* The only time a direct connection with the sultanic office is mentioned in Ibn Ḥajar's chronicle, it is the subject of a moral assertion on corruption and failure.[140]

Therefore, some *zāwiyah*s are clearly spaces where religious charismatic authority was displayed, even if not all *zāwiyah*s were. Though not all Sufi *shuyūkh* of *zāwiyah*s are mentioned as *muʿtaqad*s or as gifted with important *barakah,* most *muʿtaqad*s *are* mentioned as being linked either to a *zāwiyah* or to a mausoleum, and many Sufi *shuyūkh* are associated with *karāmāt.* Thus, the main terms emphasizing religious charismatic authority were related to *zāwiyah*s. One may indeed say of a ninth/fifteenth-century *zāwiyah* shaykh that he, considering his defined group of disciples, exercises influence and authority over them because of their belief in his virtues or his *barakah.* They stood in reverence before of their charismatic leader, something said to have been experienced by Ibn Ḥajar himself.[141] Such reverence was attached to the persona of the master; it was not

[140] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 3:213.

[141] Geoffroy, *Le soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie sous les derniers mamelouks,* 87, n. 3, quoting al-Battanūnī, *Al-Sirr al-ṣafī,* 1:7.

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imposed institutionally from outside. Thus, even if many masters could be succeeded by one of their family members—since the *transmission of barakah* was stronger through blood—it was never an obvious pattern, for charismatic authority had to be proven and maintained on an everyday basis and renewed at each generation, which sometimes allowed prominent disciples to take over a *zāwiyah,* despite there being trained members in the founding shaykh's family. When religious charismatic leaders disappeared, *zāwiyah*s certainly carried on their functions as institutions of teaching and worship, but at that point they are rarely mentioned in Ibn Ḥajar's chronicle.

Because of the charismatic and mystical nature of the *zāwiyah,* allowing the institution to develop for a time around a recognized figure, *zāwiyah*s are only relevant enough to the chronicle to be mentioned for one or two generations. Most of the *zāwiyah*s included in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* are relatively new, having been established within the time frame covered by the work; the oldest *zāwiyah* of them, the Badrīyah, whose shaykh died in 776/1374,[142] is only mentioned once. Few masters are mentioned for each *zāwiyah,* nor are there usually more than two religious charismatic characters in succession. Usually, these are the founder of the *zāwiyah* or the founder of a movement and one successor, rarely more.[143] A process of "charismatic decay" does not seem to be directly proposed by Ibn Ḥajar, but he does refer frequently to the lower quality of the teachings and virtues of the successor, as in the cases of Ibrāhīm al-Māḥūzī or ʿAlī Wafāʾ.[144] That may lead us to consider Ibn Ḥajar's acknowledgment of the founder's virtues, but also his creation of a repetitive narrative structure emphasizing that the progressive rise of charismatic authority was linked to a decrease in the quality of Islamic moral virtues and might lead to blameworthy practices. While never condemning any great eponymous figure of spiritual authority, he was thus able to describe the moral balance deemed positive for the charismatic leader and assert such a role in a broader perspective, especially in relation to the political elites: *zāwiyah*s' masters were sometimes connected to leading members of amiral households.[145] The spaces of charismatic religious authority integrated in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* were thus incorporated in the general display of various forms and places of authority presented in the work as a framework upon which to reflect about Ibn Ḥajar's contemporary history and society.

[142]Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:78.

[143]For example, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn and his disciple ʿAbd Allāh ibn Khalīl al-Bisṭāmī (Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:167), Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī and his son (ibid., 1:497–98; 2:495), Maḥmūd al-ʿAyntābī and his son (ibid., 1:215).

[144]Ibid., 2:308–9, 2:495.

[145]Leonor Fernandes, "Some Aspects of the zawiya in Egypt," 11–12. For examples in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* see Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 3:349, 3:524–25, 4:52.

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To conclude, we have demonstrated that in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* Ibn Ḥajar used a set of narrative markers and a specific lexicon—especially through the notion of *iʿtiqād*—to display religious charismatic authority in the social fabric and history of his time. Religious charismatic authority was associated with a distinct historiographical space in the chronicle, shaping a category of power that can be identified. In the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr, zāwiyah*s were presented as the primary places in which such power and authority were performed and from which they could be constrained in a structured and institutional framework.

As spaces where a specific kind of authority, influence, and power resided, carried by singular men—holders of a charismatic religious authority—*zāwiyah*s were thus mostly integrated in Ibn Ḥajar's chronicle in such a way that they still retained their charismatic peculiarity.[146] In that way, Sufi *zāwiyah*s, *shuyūkh,* and famous mystical characters were presented in an environment linked not only to Sufism but also to the broader idea of religious charismatic authority. The limits of this authority, as well as of specific Sufi movements, were implicitly defined by the author in the framework of religious practices and theological discourses.

Ibn Ḥajar could express the role of such spaces and characters as enclosed in a form of normative social order, including the ambivalent relationship between charismatic religious authorities, scholars associated with the judiciary, the ruling elites, and the *ʿāmmah.* As part of a set of institutions displayed in a multilayered narrative representation, *zāwiyah*s and religious charismatic authorities played their roles in the crafting of history, identity, and society that Ibn Ḥajar chronicled.

Doing so, the author was a social, political, and cultural actor. On the one hand, Ibn Ḥajar was concerned with laying out a socio-historical reality, illustrated by a set of characters and events that he deemed important to include in his chronicle. This was a partial—voluntarily incomplete—staging of the interconnections between remarkable people—the *aʿyān,* those who were noteworthy and allowed themselves to be remarked—and events. Due to his fame and position in Cairo society, the careful selection made by Ibn Ḥajar, and his chosen wording, could also be counted as a subtle attempt of *damnatio memoriae,* either through omission or explicit contempt. Thus, on the other hand, the author was creating the framework of a new normative history passing into memory, assigning negative and positive opinions, comments, judgements, and appraisals, interjected either through his personal authoritative assessment or summoning high figures of consideration and authority.

[146] These narratives were consistent with the circumscribed purposes laid out by the author himself in his chronicle's introduction, namely documenting "the situation of states, through the examination of remarkable people." Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 1:4.

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For all its common aspects with other chronicles, the Inbāʾ al-ghumr was producing a historical meaning of its own and of Ibn Ḥajar's time. It expressed and made sense of a social order that may have seemed sometimes to turn upside down for his contemporary readers.[147] Such a social order was produced through narratives that participated in a process of legitimization and carved new memories in a deeply contextualized environment. The rise to power of al-Ashraf Barsbāy (under whom Ibn Ḥajar started his broad historiographical project[148]) and al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq (with whom Ibn Ḥajar had a difficult relationship)—the ways they ruled and how this was felt, the symbolic perception of these reigns and their displays, the different trends and changes affecting religious piety and judiciary customs and practice—were in that regard paramount features in the chronicle. Hence Ibn Ḥajar's relative insistence in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* on the notion of *iʿtiqād* and his staging of prominent characters like Sirāj al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī or his own self-promotion, amid which was introduced the multi-layered narrative representation of the various forms of power of the ninth/fifteenth century set in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*. The layer of religious charismatic authority that we engaged with was but one among them.

[147] A feeling that will also echo in later narratives. Jean-Claude Garcin, "The regime of the Circassian Mamlūks," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt* (Cambridge, 1998), 1:290–99; J. Loiseau, *Reconstruire la maison du sultan: ruine et recomposition de l'ordre urbain au Caire (1350–1450)* (Cairo, 2010), 143–214; idem, *Les Mamelouks, XIIIe-XVIe siècle : une expérience du pouvoir dans l'islam médiéval* (Paris, 2014), 124–37; J. Van Steenbergen and S. Van Nieuwenhuyse, "Truth and Politics in Late Medieval Arabic Historiography: The Formation of Sultan Barsbāy's State (1422–1438) and the Narratives of the Amir Qurqumās al-Shaʿbānī (d. 1438)," *Der Islam* 95, no. 1 (2018): 147–88.

[148] Indeed, it is in the 830s, after the coming to power of al-Ashraf Barsbāy, that Ibn Ḥajar started simultaneously to write the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* the *Durar al-kāminah fī aʿyān al-miʾah al-thāminah,* his biographical dictionary of the eighth/fourteenth century, and the *Dhayl al-durar fī aʿyān al-miʾah al-thāminah,* his biographical dictionary concerning people from the first decades of the ninth/fifteenth century.

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Professional Mobility in Ibn ʿArabshāh's Fifteenth-Century Panegyric Dedicated to Sultan al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq

Introduction

Those familiar with the name of the fifteenth-century rhetorician, litterateur, and belletrist-historian Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿArabshāh (791–854/1389–1450) recall him readily as the trenchant biographer of the Central Asian warlord and conqueror, Amir Temür (r. 771–807/1370–1405), Tīmūr, or Tamerlane. Scholarly interest in Ibn ʿArabshāh concerns primarily his authorship of the *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr fī nawāʾib Tīmūr* (The Wonders of destiny in the calamities wrought by Tīmūr) and his relationship to Timurid historiography. Seldom is Ibn ʿArabshāh himself approached as a participant in and product of the socio-political landscapes of fifteenth-century Syria (Bilād al-Shām) and Egypt in the context of the late medieval sultanate of Cairo. Through the cultural practice of historical writing Ibn ʿArabshāh, like many of his peers, sought to take advantage of new opportunities presented by the emerging political order during the successive sultanates of al-Ashraf Barsbāy (r. 825–41/1422–38) and al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq (r. 842–57/1438–53) to acquire a patronage position either at the court of the new sultan or elsewhere in the religio-political networks of the time.[1]

The current article, building on the previous life sketch of Ibn ʿArabshāh and his works established by Robert McChesney,[2] adds a more nuanced layer to the picture by historicizing the author's panegyric for the sultan al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq (d.

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[1]Konrad Hirschler points out that one need not necessarily sell oneself to a ruler; rather it was feasible to "attain a stable social position in the courtly world through a variety of relationships with different individuals." See: *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors* (London, 2006), 28.

[2]Robert D. McChesney, "A Note on the Life and Works of Ibn ʿArabshāh," in *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honor of John E. Woods*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer and Sholeh A. Quinn (Wiesbaden, 2006), 205–49. McChesney updated and condensed the

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857/1453), *Al-Taʾlīf al-ṭāhir fī shiyam al-Malik al-Ẓāhir al-qāʾim bi-nuṣrat al-ḥaqq Abī Saʿīd Jaqmaq* (The Pure composition on the character of the King al-Ẓāhir the supporter of divine truth Abī Saʿīd Jaqmaq).[3] Analysis of the latter text in relation to *The Wonders of Destiny* will demonstrate ways in which the author may have sought to instrumentalize the *Pure Composition* during a precise moment of political transformation. Examining the *Pure Composition* in the context of its creation helps identify and reconstruct some details of the social world in which Ibn ʿArabshāh operated and provides a window into the author's attempts to expand and define his key relationships in the hope of securing a new patron or better position.

The Homecoming of a Native Son

To understand the specific context of the *Pure Composition,* it is important to first comprehend the wider context of its social world. Some details of Ibn ʿArabshāh's life and travels thus concern us insofar as they reveal insights into the text.

Born in Damascus in late 791/1389, Ibn ʿArabshāh spent his childhood in the city until Temür's conquest in 803/1401, after which the victorious forces relocated him along with his female family members to Samarqand.[4] As a young man in Temür's capital he embarked on a lifelong career of studying both religious jurisprudence and literary *(adab)* sciences, including philology, rhetoric, logic, dialectics, and linguistics, with numerous scholars likewise held captive by Temür.[5] Af-

essay in 2018 for inclusion as the introduction to a republication of J. H. Sanders's translation of the *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr, Tamerlane: The Life of the Great Amir* (London, 2018), xvi–xxxiv.

[3]While this paper is based primarily on British Museum MS Or. 3026, there is a second manuscript in the Topkapı palace collection which I have not consulted. It is attributed to Raḍī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Ghazzī and titled "Sīrat al-Sulṭān al-Shahīd al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq" (Sultanahmet Kütüphanesi MS Ahmet III A. 2992). I wish to thank Marlis Saleh and Gowaart Van Den Bossche for providing me with reproductions of the British manuscript. I am equally grateful to Jo Van Steenbergen for sharing his notes on the physical copy. I also thank Manhal Makhoul for digitizing the manuscript. Two 2019 editions and studies of the text have recently been published by Muḥammad Shaʿbān Ayyūb as *Sīrat al-sulṭān al-Mamlūkī al-Ẓāhir Sayf al-Dīn Jaqmaq: Al-Taʾlīf al-ṭāhir fī shiyam al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Abī Saʿīd Jaqmaq* (Cairo, 2019) and by Torki Fahad Al-Saud as *Al-Najm al-zāhir fī shiyam al-Malik al-Ẓāhir al-qāʾim bi-nuṣrat al-ḥaqq Abī Saʿīd Jaqmaq* (Beirut, 2019).

[4]Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd al-farīdah fī tarājim al-aʿyān al-mufīdah*, ed. Maḥmūd al-Jalīlī (Beirut, 2002), 1:287–88, Yūsuf ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Beirut, 1992), 15:272; idem, *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī wa-al-mustawfá baʿda al-wāfī*, ed. Muḥammad M. Amīn and Saʿīd ʿĀshūr (Cairo, 1984–93), 1:140; Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ* (Beirut, 2003), 1:111.

[5]For a list of his teachers see Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 2:140–43; al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 1:111; McChesney, "Life and Works," 215–29.

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ter leaving Samarqand in 811/1408–9, Ibn ʿArabshāh, having achieved fluency in Persian and the Chaghatay Turkish language, floated around the various courts of Muslim West Asia in pursuit of further training and livelihood in al-Khitā, Khwārizm, the Dasht-i Qipchaq (Sarāy and Ḥājjī Tarkhān), and Crimea, rarely spending more than three to five years in each place. After the conclusion of the Ottoman civil war in 816/1413, accompanied by his wife and young children, Ibn ʿArabshāh relocated to the newly established court of Meḥmed Çelebī (r. 816–24/1413–21) in Edirne. When the Ottoman sultan died in 824/1421, Ibn ʿArabshāh chose once again to move on.

Thus, Ibn ʿArabshāh, at approximately 33 years of age, journeyed back to the territories of Bilād al-Shām, arriving first in Aleppo for several months before settling in Damascus in Rabīʿ II 825/April 1422.[6] As McChesney points out, however, it may have been a challenge for him to translate any acquired social or cultural capital from the Ottoman context into the new political reality rapidly taking shape in Cairo under the new sultan Barsbāy.[7] Without local connections to power or influence Ibn ʿArabshāh failed to benefit from any opportunities that the uncertainty may have presented to better-placed peers. The fierce competition for lucrative stipendiary positions *(manṣab*, pl. *manāṣib)* that provided officeholders with social prestige and material advantages has been well-established by modern studies.[8]

Perhaps unable to find a suitable entry point, Ibn ʿArabshāh remained in Damascus, scraping together a living through meager sales of his existing works and trying to compose new ones that would strengthen his profile. In the autobiographical *ijāzah* document he penned for his later student Abū al-Maḥāsin Yūsuf ibn Taghrībirdī (812–74/1409–70), Ibn ʿArabshāh suggests that during this period he had been unable to find anyone suitable with whom to train.[9] As he set about the task of networking with new contacts in Damascus and its suburban environs, Ibn ʿArabshāh also took on the realities of supporting his family through work as a notary *(shāhid)* in the courtyard of the Qaṣab Mosque outside Damascus.[10] At the same time, he continued to seek out important local scholars capable of helping him navigate the field of social relationships necessary to lo-

[6] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 2:143.

[7] McChesney, "Life and Works," 234.

[8] Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge, 1994), 90–93, 153–54; Alexander Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany, 1999), 57; Anne Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt: al-ʿAynī, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 85–107.

[9] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 2:143.

[10] Al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 1:112.

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cate opportunities relevant to his expertise as a courtly administrator, chancery scribe, and junior religious scholar.

Who Was Ibn ʿArabshāh?

As Azfar Moin has illustrated, in the decades following his death in the early fifteenth century, the memory of Temür continued to inspire awe and held a powerful grip on the cultural imagination of the time. Nevertheless, social and cultural memories of Temür developed along different lines when compared between the former lands of Temür's empire and the Syro-Egyptian sultanate of Cairo. For some later fifteenth-century rulers of Muslim West Asia (including also the sixteenth-century Ottomans and Moghuls), Temür inspired acts of mimesis as kingship continued to develop, firmly rooted in his mythical memory as a "dominant symbol of sovereignty."[11] In the lands of the Cairo Sultanate, however, particularly in Syria, which had tasted the full brunt of Temür's wrath, cultural attitudes toward his memory reflected horror, hatred, and a fear of civilizational catastrophe brought about from the east.[12]

In many ways, the fashioning of Ibn ʿArabshāh's textual identity statements may be read as a response to the cultural memory of Temür which had been cultivated in the major cities of the sultanate.[13] From his texts and the autobiographical *ijāzah* he composed for Ibn Taghrībirdī, it seems clear that Ibn ʿArabshāh's most profoundly altering life experience had been his kidnapping and relocation to Samarqand, where he spent nearly eight years learning from some of the best eastern Islamic scholars of the age.[14] The way he later wrote about Temür reflected his own traumatic experience and seems to have been composed for a largely contemporary (or near contemporary) audience that had likewise suffered

[11] Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York, 2012), 23–26. Although the Ottomans suffered equal if not greater destruction after Temür's invasion, many Ottoman historians and intellectuals remembered Temür and his legacy far differently. See Christopher Markiewicz, *The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam: Persian Emigres and the Making of Ottoman Sovereignty* (Cambridge, 2019), 151, 154–91; Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541–1600)* (Princeton, 1986), 276, 284–87.

[12] Elias Muhanna, *The World in a Book: Al-Nuwayri and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition* (Princeton, 2018), 16–19; Anne Broadbridge, "Royal Authority, Justice, and Order in Society: The Influence of Ibn Khaldūn on the Writings of al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taghrībirdī," *MSR* 7, no. 2 (2003): 232–33 (also n. 11).

[13] In their coverage of Barsbāy's 836/1433 campaign against Āmid, some contemporary historians compared its impact on Syria negatively with the effects of Temür's conquest of the region. Cf. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm al-zāhirah*, 14:203–4.

[14] Aḥmad ibn ʿArabshāh, *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr fī nawāʾib Tīmūr,* ed. Aḥmad Fāyiz al-Ḥimṣī (Beirut, 1986), 283–99; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 2:140–41; McChesney, "Life and Works," 214–21.

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Temür's invasion and that was interested in information about the conqueror consistent with living memory.

Modern scholars have tried to uncover Ibn ʿArabshāh's reasons for producing a biography of Temür in medieval Damascus nearly thirty-five years after the death of his subject. It is likely, especially in the early years following his return to Syria in 824–25/1422, that upon forging new acquaintances and establishing a new network of peers in the social circles of greater Damascus and Cairo, Ibn ʿArabshāh, in order to explain his reemergence in Syria and later Egypt, would have related some kind of explanatory personal narrative about his capture to curious listeners.[15] Expanding such an identity statement into a lengthy text chronicling the career of Temür was, in some ways, Ibn ʿArabshāh's attempt to interpret the past and connect it to the present in a meaningful way. By demonstrating his expertise on Temür in particular, Ibn ʿArabshāh instrumentalized that which distinguished him from his colleagues, thereby emphasizing the importance of the messages he wished to convey to his contemporaries.

If indeed Ibn ʿArabshāh intended to forge relationships of mutually-beneficial patronage in the major cities of the sultanate, what messages was he transmitting about himself in his texts? His identity "calling card," the story of his abduction by Temür and its later ramifications, was rife with meanings that comprised an important layer of his identity. It shaped how others interpreted and understood him in the social world with which he interacted. He surely related his autobiography personally to peers like Kamāl al-Bārizī, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, and later (with subtle changes) to his own younger students (and biographers), such as Ibn Taghrībirdī and al-Sakhāwī.[16] Even in abbreviated form, his story must have inspired listeners' sympathy while simultaneously transmitting socially beneficial messages that established him as: (1) an unparalleled living authority on the Timurids; (2) a highly accomplished, cosmopolitan scholar with links to urban civilian networks all over Muslim West Asia; (3) an unattached agent for hire; and (4) a homegrown product of Arabic cultural norms and sensibilities, who, by dint of his experiences, was simultaneously an "eastern" polyglot.

Ibn ʿArabshāh may have likewise felt pressure to prove his quality among the contemporary Arabophone scholars and literati of Damascus and Cairo by demonstrating a high proficiency of literary Arabic while also displaying his aestheticism and fluency in other tongues as an asset to scholastic or courtly service. He apparently lacked local connections in Syria who could offer support at a time in his career when it was still required and was at pains to demonstrate who he was to other scholars. Having retained the experiences of his past lives, he arrived

[15] McChesney suggests that Ibn ʿArabshāh may have had some kernel of an idea to compose such a text at least as early as his re-entry into Syria. See "Life and Works," 237.

[16] Ibid., 234.

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in Syria as a professionally evolving figure, though one, as McChesney rightly argues, who, in his thirties, was still in need of a local master to whom he could attach himself.

While the current article is not the place for the intense scrutiny and analysis warranted by Ibn ʿArabshāh's complex transregional network, to understand the *Pure Composition* it is nevertheless important to engage with four key contacts among his later Syro-Egyptian network of teachers and peers from approximately 836/1432 to 844/1440: ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Bukhārī, Kamāl al-Dīn ibn al-Bārizī, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, and Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī. Ibn ʿArabshāh's relationships with these scholars presents some insight into who he was at this point in his life, between the *Wonders of Destiny* (finalized between 840/1436 and 843/1440) and the *Pure Composition* (completed or abandoned before 845/1442).

ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Bukhārī (779–841/1379–1438)

In his autobiographical *ijāzah*, Ibn ʿArabshāh recounted 832/1428–29 as a significant year for its commencement of his patronage relationship with the Central Asian scholar ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Bukhārī, who had arrived in Damascus that year and stayed until his death. Ibn ʿArabshāh concedes that he had been able to accomplish little during his six years in Damascus until his world collided with that of al-Bukhārī.[17] Although McChesney described al-Bukhārī as "better known to his contemporaries than to posterity," there is rather a large amount of information on al-Bukhārī's life to be found in fifteenth-century Arabic historiographical sources.[18] For Ibn ʿArabshāh, al-Bukhārī combined everything he might have hoped for in an influential patron: a prestigious Hanafi-Māturīdī scholar and Sufi master from the east with expertise in *adab,* dialectics, rhetoric, and a common background that included pursuing teachers around the courts of Central Asia until he established himself with great religious authority in the courts of medieval Gulbarga in India, Mecca, Cairo, and ultimately Damascus.[19] During al-Bukhārī's stay in Cairo during the late 820/1420s and early 830/1430s, many of al-Muʾayyad Shaykh's and Barsbāy's religious elite sought his advice and drew

[17] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 2:143–44; al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 2:128.

[18] Cf. al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 3:126–27; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 11:84–85; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm al-zāhirah*, 15:214–15; al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 9:255–59; Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-jumān fī tārīkh ahl al-zamān: Ḥawādith wa-tarājim*, ed. ʿAbd al-Rāziq al-Ṭanṭāwī al-Qarmūt (Cairo, 1989), 505.

[19] Aḥmad ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr bi-anbāʾ al-ʿumr fī al-tārīkh* (Beirut, 1986), 9:29–30; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 11:84–85; idem, *Nujūm al-zāhirah*, 14:367–68; al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 9:256–57. The length of al-Bukhārī's stay in Cairo is unclear. Ibn ʿArabshāh places him there during the reign of al-Muʾayyad Shaykh, though most biographical sources suggest he was there for at least two years during the reign of Barsbāy.

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on his prestige. In describing al-Bukhārī's influence in the city, Ibn Taghrībirdī writes:

> Most scholars of our time from every *madhhab* studied with him, and everyone benefitted from his knowledge, reputation, and wealth. His authority grew *(ʿaẓama amruhu)* in Cairo and from the time of his arrival until his departure, he never had recourse to a single member of the notables of the government *(aʿyān al-dawlah)*—not even to the sultan—while all the notables of Egypt, from the sultan to his subordinates, went to him.[20]

Known for his pious abstemiousness *(zuhd)* and austere acts of worship, al-Bukhārī's attitude toward relationships formed between members of the ulama and the government was complicated at best. He opposed scholars who took wealth or positions from the ruling class.[21] Nevertheless, his bluntness and candidly harsh observations were said to have endeared him to Sultan Barsbāy and his entourage.[22] He offered them valued counsel while remaining aloof and able to rebuff their attempts to influence him, and he expected no less from those in his own orbit. The surviving image of al-Bukhārī created in the sources is of a man invested with enough social capital in his network to sway other scholars, equalize members of the political elite, and even humble the sultan. Al-Bukhārī's undoing in Cairo, however, had come from the ongoing discourse on the "Islamic standing" of the thirteenth-century mystical philosopher Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-ʿArabī (560–638/1165–1240). A staunch critic of the latter and his supporters, al-Bukhārī in 831/1427 violently confronted the chief Maliki qadi, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Bisāṭī (d. 842/1438), over his support for Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine of the unity of being *(waḥdat al-wujūd)*. The incident famously ended with al-Bukhārī screaming an ultimatum that Barsbāy must expel al-Bisāṭī from his post or else he would leave Cairo.[23] Learning of the matter some time later, Barsbāy shrewdly left it in the hands of his chief Shafiʿi qadi, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, who, while aligned with al-Bukhārī in principle, nevertheless allowed al-Bisāṭī to remain in office after he condemned the followers of Ibn al-ʿArabī'. Disgusted and humiliated, al-Bukhārī left Cairo, and after making the pilgrimage arrived in

[20] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 14:368. Al-Bukhārī allegedly held private counseling sessions with the four chief qadis of Cairo which the sultan was not permitted to attend (Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 11:85).

[21] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 11:84; al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 9:258.

[22] Ibn Hajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 8:207–8; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 11:85.

[23] Al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 9:256.

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Damascus with the returning hajj caravan in 832/1429.[24] Seizing on the chance to sit at the feet of a renowned master, Ibn ʿArabshāh swiftly established a place for himself in al-Bukhārī's new ring of disciples *(murīdūn)* and for nearly nine years "accompanied [al-Bukhārī] and became attached to his service *(lāzamtu khidmatahu)* until he died."[25]

When not immersed in pious retreats from society, al-Bukhārī sat with his Damascene students, including Ibn ʿArabshāh and his son Tāj al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (813–901/1411–95), as well as other local scholars such as ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī al-Qābūnī, Khiḍr al-Kurdī, Ibrāhīm ibn Maylaq, Abū Bakr ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, and Kamāl al-Dīn ibn al-Bārizī. Not long after his arrival in Damascus, al-Bukhārī received a large cash gift from his former patron, the Bahmanī ruler of Gulbarga. Although he refused to keep any of the money for himself, al-Bukhārī distributed part of the wealth to his students, clients, and dependents to help them pay off debts and defer living costs, and even treated some of them to a feast.[26] Remaining consistent with his lifestyle of pious *zuhd,* al-Bukhārī meanwhile continued to impart his negative views on paid government service to his circle of disciples. A biography written by his son claims that the Shafiʿi scholar Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah (779–851/1377–1448) was actively discouraged by al-Bukhārī from service as a qadi.[27] Likewise, Kamāl al-Dīn al-Bārizī (d. 856/1452), despite his family's well-known and longstanding history of official government service, still felt compelled to keep mum about his appointment as *kātib al-sirr* while attending al-Bukhārī's circle.[28] The sources imply that if and when al-Bukhārī had access to wealth, he kept nothing for himself while providing dependents (perhaps such as Ibn ʿArabshāh) with financial assistance to help supplement other sources of income.[29]

Al-Bukhārī continued to stir controversy from Damascus in the 830/1430s by writing a polemic against Ibn Taymīyah, calling for him to be stripped of his posthumous reputational status as *"shaykh al-islām"* and arguing that he was in

[24] Ibid., 9:256–57; Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi*, 204–9; Th. Emil Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn Al-Fāriḍ, His Verse, and His Shrine, Studies in Comparative Religion* (Columbia, SC, 1994), 59–60; Éric Geoffroy, *Le soufisme en Egypte et en Syrie sous les derniers Mamelouks et les premiers Ottomans: orientations spirituelles et enjeux culturels* (Damascus, 1995), 353.

[25] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 2:143; al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 1:112, 9:258.

[26] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 11:84; idem, *Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 14:367.

[27] Muḥammad ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah,"Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah bi-qalam ibnihi al-Badr Muḥammad ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah," ed. ʿAdnān Darwīsh, in *Majallat majmaʿ al-lughah al-ʿArabīyah bi-Dimashq* 58 (1983): 470. I thank Tarek Sabraa for sharing this reference.

[28] Al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 9:258. On the al-Bārizī family of scholars and administrators, see Konrad Hirschler, "The Formation of the Civilian Elite in the Syrian Province: The Case of Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Ḥamāh," *MSR* 12, no. 2 (2008): 106–8, 124–29; Martel-Thoumian, *Les civils et l'administration,* 249–66.

[29] Al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 9:257.

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fact an infidel—an act which fomented outrage in the scholarly circles of the Syrian cities as well as Cairo.[30] Despite al-Bukhārī's controversial pronouncements of excommunication against polarizing (and diametrically opposed) figures such as Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymīyah, his reputation with the sultan Barsbāy remained lofty and untarnished.[31]

In Ramaḍān 836/April 1433, in the context of Barsbāy's campaign against the Aqquyunlu Turkmen in Āmid, the sultan's entire court, including most of the military and religious officials, mobilized to demonstrate his might. After the conclusion of hostilities in 837/1433 Barsbāy, *en route* to Cairo, stopped in Damascus and, according to Ibn Taghrībirdī, went out of his way to visit al-Bukhārī in an unprecedented display of respect:

> Whenever the sultan had visited [al-Bukhārī while he lived in Cairo] he became in his assembly just like one of the amirs, from the time he sat until the time he got up to leave. Shaykh ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn would speak to [Barsbāy] about the welfare of the Muslims and in words free from embellishment *(ghayr munammaq)* admonish him beyond normal bounds while the sultan listened to him obediently. Likewise, when the sultan went to Āmid, as soon as he entered Damascus he rode to visit and greet [al-Bukhārī] which is something we have never seen happen to a single scholar of our time.[32]

From 832–41/1429–38, Ibn ʿArabshāh's life, thanks to his status as a client and disciple of al-Bukhārī, involved the composition of several texts of *adab*, rhetoric, linguistics, and historiography. Al-Bukhārī provided advice and his own personal recollections for Ibn ʿArabshāh's most important works in this period, including his versified literary opus *The Mirror of Literature (Mirʾat al-adab),*[33] and an earlier version of what would become his biography of Temür, known in its earlier stages as *Umūr Tīmūr.*[34] Ibn ʿArabshāh even paraphrased al-Bukhārī's *Risālah al-Malḥamah,* a Sufi work of *ʿaqīdah,* which he versified, dedicated to the sultan,

[30]The title of the text in question is "Muljimat al-Mujassimah." See al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 3:127; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 8:273, 277; al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ*, 9:257. See also: Caterina Bori, "Ibn Taymiyya (14th to 17th Century): Transregional Spaces of Reading and Reception." *Muslim World* 108, no. 1 (2018): 97–99; Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi*, 205–6; Geoffroy, *Soufisme*, 312, 357–58.

[31]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 11:85; al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 9:258.

[32]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 14:368.

[33]The text itself has not survived in manuscript form, although fragments of it have been preserved in the biographies of Ibn ʿArabshāh written by Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 2:134–36, and al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 1:112–13. Ibn ʿArabshāh also preserves a single *bayt* in his biography of Temür. See *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr,* 94.

[34]Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Taʾlīf," BM MS Or. 3026, fol. 6r; idem, *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr*, 49, 455; al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 1:288; McChesney, "Life and Works," 240.

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and renamed *Al-ʿIqd al-farīd fī al-tawḥīd.*[35] Demonstrating proximity to al-Bukhārī would therefore be something Ibn ʿArabshāh strove to demonstrate in the *Pure Composition*.

Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Bārizī (796–856/1394–1452)

Another slightly younger contemporary and notable member of Ibn ʿArabshāh's Syro-Egyptian network was a scion of the illustrious Banū al-Bārizī, a notable Shafiʿi family from Ḥamāh that successfully dominated the *dīwān*s and judiciary of the sultanate for nearly 120 years, and expanded its influence into Cairo during the reign of al-Muʾayyad Shaykh (r. 815–24/1412–21).[36] Kamāl ibn al-Bārizī, following in the footsteps of his father Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad (769–823/1368–1420), accepted chief chancery and judicial positions in Damascus and Cairo.

Based on Ibn al-Bārizī's family reputation, Barsbāy appointed him *kātib al-sirr* and chief Shafiʿi qadi in Damascus in 831/1427. As a holder of both positions, Ibn al-Bārizī enjoyed an esteemed reputation and was supported by many in the city. Even al-Bukhārī, according to Ibn Taghrībirdī, had ultimately been forced to adjust his famous stance in order to accommodate the rising star of his pupil in 835/1431–32:

> The very learned ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Bukhārī, whenever one of his students was appointed qadi or market inspector, would become angry at him and then prevent him from attending his lessons. But when he learned of the appointment of qadi Kamāl al-Dīn he rejoiced and said, "Now men will be safe in their property and lives." This is all you need to know about any man of whom Shaykh ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn has said this![37]

The next year Barsbāy summoned Ibn al-Bārizī to Cairo to serve as *kātib al-sirr* in Rabīʿ II 836/1432 shortly before his Āmid campaign. Ibn al-Bārizī retained the position in Cairo until 839/1436, when he lost it and returned to Damascus as chief Shafiʿi qadi and orator of the Umayyad mosque beginning in 840/1437. He

[35] Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Taʾlīf," fol. 67r.

[36] Hirschler, "The Formation of the Civilian Elite," 106–13; Martel-Thoumian, *Les civils et l'administration,* 249–66. Carl Petry describes them as "the most famous and influential civilian politicians in Cairo during the fifteenth century" (*The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* [Princeton, 1981], 207–8). Indeed, periods of stability allowed administrators like the Banū al-Bārizī and the Banū Muzhir to dominate the *dīwān*s and accumulate family fortunes. The sultans tolerated their influence but also expected them to purchase their positions the way other elites did. See Jean-Claude Garcin, "The Regime of the Circassian Mamlūks," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt,* vol. 1, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge, 1998), 307.

[37] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm al-zāhirah*, 15:291–92.

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ultimately remained in Damascus for another two years until he was summoned to Cairo to begin service as *kātib al-sirr* for Jaqmaq on 17 Rabīʿ II 842/September 1438, a position he kept until his death in 856/1452.[38] Adding a familial relationship to the patron-scholar tie he already had with Jaqmaq, al-Bārizī also became the sultan's brother-in-law after the latter's marriage to his sister Mughul bint al-Bārizī (d. 876/1472). This important tie increased the social standing of al-Bārizī, and made him a key contact for Ibn ʿArabshāh.

Ibn ʿArabshāh, who had returned from abroad to reside in the cities of Bilād al-Shām since 824/1422, knew Kamāl ibn al-Bārizī from al-Bukhārī's circle in Damascus during the 830s and must have been aware of his youth, family reputation, and literary and scribal abilities. When Ibn al-Bārizī moved to Cairo to take up his position in Jaqmaq's court, Ibn ʿArabshāh, beginning in 840/1437, likewise began making more trips to the city to build his own network and presumably went to some lengths to maintain his important contact with Ibn al-Bārizī. Ibn al-Bārizī was in Jaqmaq's service when the revolts of the Syrian deputy amirs broke out in 841–42/1438–39 in Aleppo and Damascus while Ibn ʿArabshāh was frequently traveling between Syria and Egypt. Although there are no explicit patronage ties connecting the pair in the biographical literature, several passages of the *Pure Composition* afford Ibn ʿArabshāh the opportunity to cast light on their relationship.

In Gaza in Ramaḍān 842/1439, *en route* to Cairo as the revolts of the amirs Taghrī Birmish and Īnāl al-Jakamī unfolded in Aleppo and Damascus, Ibn ʿArabshāh heard reports from Ṣafad stating that the governor of the city, Īnāl al-Ajrūd (later Sultan al-Ashraf Īnāl, r. 857–65/1453–61), had stated his intention to resist the rebellions and remain loyal to Jaqmaq in Cairo. Learning of the "good news" Ibn ʿArabshāh planned to arrange a meeting with "*makhdūminā* al-Muqarr al-Kamālī ibn al-Bārizī" in which he would also tell him about a group of survivors of the recent troubles in Syria who had approached him and asked him to carry news to Cairo about local suffering at the hands of military men now in open revolt against the sultan. Ibn ʿArabshāh hastened to Cairo and after arranging a rendezvous with Ibn al-Bārizī, spoke to him at length about those topics and many other things besides, particularly the state of politics in the region and the many threats to Jaqmaq in Cairo and Bilād al-Shām.[39]

While there is little information on the relationship between Ibn ʿArabshāh and Ibn al-Bārizī, the al-Bārizī family maintained influence in their home city

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[38] Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk,* ed. Muḥammad M. Amīn and Saʿīd ʿĀshūr (Cairo, 1956–73), 4:1084, 1098. Ibn ʿArabshāh also makes note of the appointment; see "Taʾlīf," fols. 84r, 90v.

[39] Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Taʾlīf," fols. 98r, 102r.

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of Ḥamāh, where Ibn ʿArabshāh was later said to have worked as a qadi.[40] We may hypothesize here that any position he potentially held in the city—however briefly—may have been facilitated by his links to the Banū al-Bārizī. McChesney similarly speculated that Ibn ʿArabshāh's trips to Cairo after 840 were, in part, related to petitioning the sultan for office in Syria. Kamāl ibn al-Bārizī, an old friend from Damascus and family member of the sultan, was thus an influential contact for Ibn ʿArabshāh to have the ear of.[41]

Shihāb al-Din Aḥmad ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (773–852/1372–1449)

Ibn Ḥajar, the notable Cairo-based hadith scholar and chief qadi—in the prime of his career at the time of his 836/1433 journey to Āmid in the sultan's retinue—also occasionally sojourned in Damascus. While the sultan's forces continued into the Anatolian frontier zone,[42] many religious elites stayed behind in Syria. Ibn Ḥajar, with his well-known links to the political elite and access to *manṣab* positions, could and did serve as a broker to many young scholars (such as Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqāʿī and al-Sakhāwī) and helped them acquire official postings. While waiting for the sultan's forces to complete their mission, Ibn Ḥajar was said to have invited local scholars to visit him outside the city in the small village of al-Qābūn al-Taḥtānī.[43] Residing in Damascus at the time, Ibn ʿArabshāh used the occasion

[40] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 15:549; Hirschler, "The Formation of the Civilian Elite," 112–13 (also n. 88).

[41] There is some evidence that Ibn ʿArabshāh maintained his effort to remain close to the family. In 850/1446, perhaps as a gesture of enduring respect for the Banū al-Bārizī clan, Ibn ʿArabshāh visited the home of Kamāl ibn al-Bārizī in 850/1446 in order to pray and compose consolation poetry for his wife and other female Bārizī family members stricken by the plague. Al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 1:115. See also McChesney, "Life and Works," 244–45.

[42] On the complex political situation and Barsbāy's aims and outcomes there, see Patrick Wing, "Submission, Defiance, and the Rules of Politics on the Mamluk Sultanate's Anatolian Frontier," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Third Series) (2015): 5–10; Jo Van Steenbergen and Stijn Van Nieuwenhuyse, "Truth and Politics in Late Medieval Arabic Historiography: The Formation of Sultan Barsbāy's State (1422–1438) and the Narratives of the Amir Qurqumās al-Shaʿbānī (d. 1438)," *Der Islam* 95, no. 1 (2018): 178–81.

[43] It is somewhat difficult to pinpoint Ibn Ḥajar's precise movements in this period. As Broadbridge points out, Ibn Ḥajar stayed at the home of al-ʿAynī in Aleppo in 836; see "Academic Rivalry," 99. However, he seems to have resided in *both* Aleppo and Damascus throughout the time of the campaign. According to Ibn Ḥajar's own account, he traveled through Damascus in Shaʿbān, before arriving in Aleppo in Ramaān, where he spent *ʿīd al-fiṭr* with al-ʿAynī and also attended sessions with Barsbāy before the latter continued on with the army to Āmid. When the army later returned to Damascus on the way home to Cairo, Ibn Ḥajar stayed behind in the city and mentions the *majlis* he attended near Damascus. See Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 8:274–78;

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to introduce himself and recite portions of his *Mirʾat al-adab* to Ibn Ḥajar's circle. According to al-Sakhāwī's later description of the encounter, Ibn Ḥajar was profoundly impressed with Ibn ʿArabshāh's talent and the pair indulged in a lengthy and jovial literary discussion. Ibn Ḥajar later returned to Cairo with high praise for the author and encouraged his own students to seek out this promising scholar who had lived in Temür's capital and survived to tell the tale.[44]

Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī (766–845/1365–1442)

Ibn ʿArabshāh appears to have had ambitions to make a name for himself in Cairo, perhaps encouraged by the strong praise he received from Ibn Ḥajar. It is difficult to know how often he left Damascus to visit Cairo during the first half of Barsbāy's reign. According to the historian Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī (766–845/1365–1442), however, Ibn ʿArabshāh began visiting him frequently during the years after 840/1436.[45] Ibn ʿArabshāh sought al-Maqrīzī's opinion on his biography of Temür, which, by 839/1435, was nearly complete.[46] Al-Maqrīzī acknowledges reading the text under its working title *Umūr Tīmūr.*[47] Ibn ʿArabshāh repeated his earlier pattern with Ibn Ḥajar by reciting poetry to al-Maqrīzī and demonstrating his knowledge of jurisprudence and Arabic linguistics. Al-Maqrīzī seems to have quickly recognized the value of Ibn ʿArabshāh's personal story and poetic insights into Temür, which he then converted into straightforward historiographical data for his own

R. Kevin Jaques, *Ibn Hajar* (Oxford, 2009), 113–15. Later sources written by Ibn Ḥajar's students al-Biqāʿī and al-Sakhāwī also make note of Ibn Ḥajar's stop in Damascus and its suburbs. See Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān fī tarājim al-shuyūkh wa-al-aqrān*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 2009–14), 2:62; al-Sakhāwī, *Jawāhir wa-al-durar fī tarjamat Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Ḥajar*, ed. Ibrāhīm ʿAbd al-Majīd (Beirut, 1999), 182. Although he wrote years later, al-Sakhāwī was a very close companion and disciple of Ibn Ḥajar and the source of the information comes from his lengthy biography of Ibn Ḥajar. If al-Sakhāwī was not a participant in the events, he was very likely told first-hand by Ibn Ḥajar himself.

[44] Al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 1:112–13; al-Sakhāwī, *Jawāhir,* 182. It was Ibn Ḥajar's high praise for Ibn ʿArabshāh that likely led the younger al-Sakhāwī to seek him out later in Cairo and write about him favorably. During his lifetime, Ibn Ḥajar maintained contact and corresponded with Ibn ʿArabshāh's son Tāj al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb; see *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 9:30. Ibn Ḥajar himself appears in the text of Ibn ʿArabshāh's *Pure Composition*. The author mentions meeting a young student from Samarqand who came west to Cairo to study Islamic sciences at the Baybarsīyah and become a master of hadith in order to return to his homeland and disseminate his learning. According to Ibn ʿArabshāh, there was no contemporary teacher or scholar of the same stature as Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī. See "Taʾlīf," fol. 54r.

[45] Al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 1:287.

[46] One Dār al-Kutub MS of the *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr* was completed in 841/1437 and the latest in 843/1439–40. Thus Ibn ʿArabshāh appears to have been heavily revising and supplementing his draft in 839–40. See Takao Ito, "Al-Maqrīzī's Biography of Tīmūr, " *Arabica* 62 (2015): 314.

[47] Al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 1:287.

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biographical dictionary of contemporaries, the *Durar al-ʿuqūd al-farīdah fī tarājim al-aʿyān al-mufīdah,* acknowledging his source at the end.[48] Apparently impressed with an accomplished first-hand historian of Temür's reign, al-Maqrīzī devoted an entry to Ibn ʿArabshāh in his biographical dictionary of notable contemporaries.[49] Ibn ʿArabshāh likewise, during his several meetings with al-Maqrīzī particularly in 842–43, consulted the latter's then unfinished *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk* to write the historiographical portion of his *Pure Composition,* which covers the Syrian revolts against the new sultanate of Jaqmaq after Rabīʿ I 842/ August 1438.[50]

We can only speculate about the precise nature and length of Ibn ʿArabshāh's meetings with al-Maqrīzī, which appear to have been consultative. It is worth pointing out that Ibn ʿArabshāh sought out al-Maqrīzī at a time when the latter likewise held no official posting. Several modern studies have demonstrated that al-Maqrīzī had difficulty attracting patrons among the elites after 1413.[51] Al-Maqrīzī similarly found the traditional roads of social advancement narrowing and after a sojourn in Mecca (834–40/1431–36) had returned to Cairo to finalize a number of his shorter *risālah*s and organize his legacy. It was at this time that

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[48] At least two modern studies have attempted to gauge al-Maqrīzī's indebtedness to Ibn ʿArabshāh's *Wonders of Destiny* as a source for his biographical writings about Temür. Takao Ito argues that several subsequent historians, including Ibn ʿArabshāh's student Ibn Taghrībirdī, appear to have used al-Maqrīzī's paraphrased biography of Temür rather than Ibn ʿArabshāh's text. See: Ito, "Al-Maqrīzī's Biography of Tīmūr," 321–22; Joseph Drory, "Maqrīzī in *Durar al-ʿUqūd* with Regard to Timur Leng," in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras,* Vol. 7, *Proceedings of the 16th, 17th and 18th International Colloquium organized at Ghent University in May 2007, 2008 and 2009*, eds. Urbain Vermeulen, Kristof D'hulster, and Jo Van Steenbergen (Leuven, 2013), 393–401. Among the authors who read Ibn ʿArabshāh's biography directly was the Damascene scholar and historian Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah. It is difficult to gauge Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's opinion of Ibn ʿArabshāh as a contemporary in Damascus, though both may have spent time in al-Bukhārī's circle. David Reisman also found a marginal note in Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's "Dhayl" (Chester Beatty MS 5527) demonstrating his reliance on Ibn ʿArabshāh's announcement of Temür's death in 807/1405. See review of *Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah,* vol. 4, ed. Adnan Darwich," *MSR* 5 (2001): 176. Another clue about Ibn ʿArabshāh's social standing in Damascus appears to come from one of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's manuscript notes, which, while corroborating Ibn ʿArabshāh's time as a notary, also takes a dismissive tone toward the author. After naming a series of scholars with full names and titles of dignity, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah identifies him only as "ʿArabshāh the Ḥanafī." I thank Tarek Sabraa for pointing this out.

[49] Al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 1:287–88.

[50] At the start of Ibn ʿArabshāh's annal for 841, he writes: "I communicate [from] the history of the learned shaykh and imam Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī—may Allāh Most High preserve him—in Egypt on 1 Shaʿbān 842…." See Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Taʾlīf," fol. 111v.

[51] Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry," 105; Jo Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate and Kingship in a Fifteenth-Century Literary History of Muslim Leadership and Pilgrimage: al-Ḏahab al-Masbūk fī ḏikr man ḥağğa min al-ḫulafāʾ wa-l-mulūk* (Leiden, 2016), 35, 38–39.

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Ibn ʿArabshāh, likely aware of al-Maqrīzī's reputation and unfinished historical work (the *Kitāb al-sulūk,* which, according to its author, was known even to the Timurids of Herat as early as 833/1429),[52] began seeking him out in Cairo and perhaps sensing in him a kindred spirit—isolated and frustrated, looking for new strategies for advancement in the same fiercely competitive social world. Both men were engaged in similar projects—finalizing important works for authentic transmission—as the socio-political world underwent major changes and realignments.[53]

During this period of visits with al-Maqrīzī, two important deaths occurred in 841/1438: in Damascus, Ibn ʿArabshāh's main patron, al-Bukhārī, and in Cairo, the sultan Barsbāy. Perhaps encouraged by the circumstances and inspired by his exchange of historical texts with al-Maqrīzī, Ibn ʿArabshāh thus chose to embark on his *Pure Composition* to offer practical insights and a legitimizing narrative for the court of the new sultan.[54]

Toward a Nuanced Understanding of the Text: Introducing Ibn ʿArabshāh's *Pure Composition*

As a text seemingly intended for Jaqmaq and composed early in his reign, the *Pure Composition* is a rich blend of *adab*, rhetoric, *Fürstenspiegel,* kingly lore, and historiography. The surviving text is rather curious for a variety of reasons. None of Ibn ʿArabshāh's biographers mentioned it among his works, most likely because it had remained unfinished and unknown at the time of his death in 854/1450. One manuscript, now housed in the British Museum Library (Or. 3026), is a later presentation copy prepared close to the time of Jaqmaq's death in 857/1453 in the hand of one Muḥammad al-Matbūlī al-Anṣārī. The first folio of the manuscript acknowledges the death of Ibn ʿArabshāh *(raḥimahu Allāh)*[55] and includes a brief obituary of the author in the annal of the lunar year 854.[56] Nevertheless, the

[52] Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate and Kingship,* 40, 51–52.

[53] Ibid., 51–52.

[54] This was not an uncommon proposition for a premodern Arabic panegyric. For a fourteenth-century example, see Jo Van Steenbergen, "Qalāwūnid Discourse, Elite Communication and the Mamluk Cultural Matrix: Interpreting a 14th-Century Panegyric," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 43 (2012): 1–2.

[55] Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Ta'līf," fol. 1r.

[56] Ibid., fols. 126r–v. The brief text of the obituary, which appears to have phrasing similar to Ibn Taghrībirdī's *Nujūm al-zāhirah* obituary, is as follows: "In [854] died the shaykh and learned imam Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ibrāhīm the Damascene Hanafi known as Ibn ʿArabshāh, far from his family and homeland at the Saʿīd al-Suʿadā' *khānqāh* on 15 Rajab. He had gone to the lands of Rūm [following] the attack of Tīmūr Lenk and [later] frequented Cairo. He became qadi of Ḥamāh and held a number of positions. He was a skilled leader

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author's many first-person intrusions into the text to announce his proximity to the events, actors, and text itself, indicate that the majority of the work, barring perhaps the several annals included at the end (mostly comprised of obituaries), were indeed the work of Ibn ʿArabshāh.

Based on the heavy coverage of the events of 841–42, the British orientalist Sanford Arthur Strong (1863–1904), who edited the first twelve folios of the text, hypothesized that Ibn ʿArabshāh most likely completed his portion of the original text in 843–44.[57] A contemporary reference to al-Maqrīzī (who was still alive at the time of writing)[58] suggests that the text was abandoned, or at least left in its final state, before his death in 845/1442. The main body of the text likewise lists no date past Dhū al-Ḥijjah 843, which suggests this as a possible *terminus post quem.*[59] It is a remark made by Ibn ʿArabshāh himself at the end of his chapter on the virtue of justice *(faṣl fī ʿadl wa-faḍlihi)* that implies that a large part of the text may have been composed in 843 during an invited stay at the citadel of Cairo:

> What I have mentioned in this brief exposition *(al-mukhtaṣar)* is but a drop of ocean and an atom's weight of mountain. For I had naught but the honor of kissing the ground and appearing before the honorable positions *(al-mawāqif al-sharīfah)* [of the sultan's court] for the easy period of about thirty days, in Rajab and blessed Shaʿbān of the year 843 [approximately 22 December 1439–21 January 1440] and they proved the happiest of days. The noble decree had arrived necessitating my honored presence while I was in Egypt, so I complied with that, seizing upon this happiness so that I might witness the honorable morals, good characteristics, and high-minded ambitions of the sultan.[60]

The most likely scenario thus appears that Ibn ʿArabshāh, during an honorary residency in Jaqmaq's citadel (perhaps secured through his connection with Kamāl al-Bārizī), drafted much of the text in Rajab and Shaʿbān 843 while—eager to curry favor at the new court—he reflected on the recent events of Jaqmaq's consolidation of power the previous year. The composition of the new text coincided

in many sciences: well-versed in *fiqh*, Arabic, rhetoric, grammar, dialectics, *adab*, and history. He was well-spoken, humble, and composed verse in three languages: Arabic, Persian, and Turkish." Cf. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm al-zāhirah*, 15:272.

[57] See: Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Panegyric on Sultan Jaqmaq," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 39, no. 2 (April 1907): 395–96.

[58] See note 50 above.

[59] This date is also the last mentioned in the *Wonders of Destiny*, suggesting that it too may have reached its final state at this time.

[60] Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Taʾlīf," fol. 73v.

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with Ibn ʿArabshāh's visits to the home of al-Maqrīzī, where he was able to read the latest additions to the *Sulūk,* which chronicled the recent death of Barsbāy, the investiture of his son ʿAzīz Yūsuf, and the advent of Jaqmaq. Perhaps even with his own copy of the latter work to peruse in his citadel chambers, Ibn ʿArabshāh set to work creating a new text to present alongside his renowned biography of Temür. He then continued to work on the text for much of 844, before ultimately abandoning it sometime the next year.

The *Pure Composition* is comprised of two distinct parts. The first (folios 1v–83v) is a somewhat meandering, rhetorical discussion of mankind, Sufi cosmology, and kingship, culminating in the author's presentation of the early years of Jaqmaq's life intertwined with a eulogy for al-Bukhārī. The first section contains fourteen small chapters covering the praiseworthy characteristics *(al-awsāf al-maḥmūdīyah)* the author believed resided in the new sultan, including soul, intellect, good character, knowledge, humility, forbearance, gratitude, generosity, tenacity, reliance on God, prudence, and justice. Each chapter typically begins with verses from the Quran, hadith attributed to the Prophet, stories of famous Iranian or Muslim kings (often drawn from al-Qushayrī's famous epistle on Sufism, or Ibn ʿArabshāh's own translation of Sadīd al-Dīn al-ʿAwfī's thirteenth-century *Jawāmiʿ al-ḥikāyāt*[61]), and then a brief statement affirming that Jaqmaq himself, through his piety, bears the quality.

Ibn ʿArabshāh begins the text by praising God's creation of mankind and subsequent division of the world among them. The author elevates mankind among created beings, locating analogies between human physiology and geological as well as astrological forms. To transition into his discourse on ideal kingship via Sufi cosmology, Ibn ʿArabshāh begins with al-Bukhārī's explanation of a hadith attributed to the Prophet likening people to minerals of silver and gold, in which he advocates separating mankind between good and bad, with some hearts interpreted as jewels of prophethood, sainthood *(wilāyah),* general knowledge *(ʿilm),* or mystical knowledge of God *(maʿrifat Allāh),* and that they should be organized by degrees of perfection.[62] The author thus posits that mankind inhabits a crossroads between the testamentary world *(ʿālam al-mulk* or *ʿālam al-shahādah)* and the invisible realm *(ʿālam al-malkūt* or *ʿālam al-ghayb)* of which man is ignorant "if he knows neither himself nor his lord."[63]

The author next observes that after the Prophet Muḥammad, the highest level of mankind was comprised of other prophets and disciples who called people to

[61] On Ibn ʿArabshāh's translation of Sadīd al-Dīn al-ʿAwfī's *Jawāmiʿ al-ḥikāyāt* from Persian to Turkish for the Ottoman sultan, see: Muḥammad Niẓámu'd-Dín, *Introduction to the Jawámi'u'l-hikáyát wa lawámi 'u'rriwáyát of Sadídu'd-Dín Muḥammad al-ʿAwfí* (London, 1929), 31.

[62] Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Ta'līf," fols. 1v–3r.

[63] Ibid., fol. 3r.

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Islamic monotheism *(tawḥīd)* and guidance, followed by kings and sultans who supported the law and acted in concert with religious authorities to enact the Sunnah of the Prophet.[64] Perhaps reflecting his own anxieties for securing livelihood for his family in uncertain socio-political contexts, Ibn ʿArabshāh, drawing on the so-called "circle of justice,"[65] writes that the livelihoods of men are linked to a strong sultan who can ensure order and perpetuation in society.[66]

Intertextuality and the Dichotomy of Good/Bad Rule

It is in this discourse that Ibn ʿArabshāh plants his version of sultan Barsbāy's meeting with al-Bukhārī after the Āmid campaign. Ibn ʿArabshāh's narrative spells out his master's advice for the ruler and emphasizes the choice between good and evil that al-Bukhārī placed before Barsbāy:

> The sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Abū al-Naṣr Barsbāy (Allāh Most High have mercy on him) went toward Diyār Bakr in the year 836 [1432–33]. When he returned at the end of the year, our late shaykh the divine doer, everlasting scholar, *axis mundi,* and *walī al-mulk,* the complete giver of all, Shaykh ʿAlāʾ al-Millah wa-al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Bukhārī ... went to visit him. He was, in those days, living in al-Shiblīyah in Sāliḥīyah, Damascus. When [the sultan] came to him he genuflected before [al-Bukhārī] and listened to that which he said to him: "O Barsbāy! Know that dominion of the world, before you, had been among those greater than you in *dawlah,* fiercer in force, and traversing a greater expanse. Among them are David and Solomon (peace and blessings be upon them), Dhū al-Qarnayn, the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, and those who followed them on their path. Also among them [i.e., on an alternate path] are Pharaoh, Nimrod, Shaddād, Nebuchadnezzar, and others who followed them in their way.[67] All of them left [this life] and passed to their fate in which they had not an atom's weight of power. They went to what [their deeds] had brought forth and have no power over what they did. Now, you have the power and for you is a share *(ḥaṣṣah)* of what had

[64] Ibid., fols. 4v–5r.

[65] The circle of justice is alluded to elsewhere in Ibn ʿArabshāh's later work, the *Fākihat al-khulafāʾ wa-mufākahat al-ẓurafāʾ*, ed. Muḥammad Rajab al-Najjār (Kuwait, 1997), 478–79.

[66] Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Taʾlīf," fol. 6r.

[67] Ibn ʿArabshāh reports elsewhere that Temür himself had taken issue with being compared (unfavorably in his opinion) to Nebuchadnezzar during his meeting with Ibn Khaldūn and demanded an explanation. See Ibn ʿArabshāh, *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr*, 453–54.

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> been for them. Before you, the path of both parties has emerged, and the good and the bad of them made clear to you, for you must choose among the comportment of any path you wish and follow any group of them you want. [...There is] only the path of David and Solomon (blessings and peace be upon them) so be gathered with them. This much speech is sufficient for you; the best speech is brief and beneficial.[68]

Waxing further on the dichotomy between good and evil, the tone having been set by al-Bukhārī's advice for Barsbāy, Ibn ʿArabshāh observes that the length of Temür's reign had matched the combined "forty-year" reign of Nūr al-Dīn Zangī (541–69/1147–74) and Saladin (564–89/1169–93) though he had filled his time in power with the precise opposite of what they did: subjugation, horror, and ruin. Returning to the theme of the choices that beset a ruler, Ibn ʿArabshāh hints that Jaqmaq likewise has a number of paths before him.

The social and political events unfolding around its initial creation, combined with the author's station as a client in search of a patron, led Ibn ʿArabshāh, as will be argued later, to taking on the act of writing the text as a distinct intellectual project stemming from his biography of Temür. Ibn ʿArabshāh's possible decision to abandon the *Pure Composition* presents complications for the exploration of its social function, agency, reception, and afterlife. Nevertheless, the work springs from a precise moment in the life of its author during a month-long residency in the Citadel of Cairo in 843/1439–40 and seems unlikely, as one theory contends, to have been penned as a plea for mercy during the author's later imprisonment by Jaqmaq shortly before the end of his life in 854/1450.[69]

The discourse of the *Pure Composition* engages closely with dichotomies of good and evil, praiseworthy and blameworthy. The meaning Ibn ʿArabshāh wishes to convey to Jaqmaq concerns a ruler's influence over the livelihoods of all men and thus he demonstrates the choices before the sultan to follow either the footsteps of the great (Solomon, David, Nūr al-Dīn Zangī, and Saladin) or the evil (Nimrod, Nebuchadnezzar, and Temür). Ibn ʿArabshāh, like al-Bukhārī, is adamant that there is no "third path." In linking the past to the present on the macro level, Ibn ʿArabshāh implies that the *dawlah* of Jaqmaq can right the wrongs of Temür and get history back on track, just as the author, on the micro level, wished to use

[68] Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Ta'līf," fols. 4r–v.

[69] Robert Irwin, "Mamluk Literature," *MSR* 7, no. 1 (2003): 2, 15. According to al-Sakhāwī, in his final months, Ibn ʿArabshāh, perhaps in the pursuit of a lucrative position, fell afoul of other better-connected competitors who complained to the sultan about him. After imprisonment and mistreatment, it seems highly unlikely that Ibn ʿArabshāh would have still seriously considered patronage by the sultan or someone close to him a possibility. See: al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ*, 1:115; McChesney, "Life and Works," 243–44.

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his *Pure Composition* to seek expiation of the "sins" committed by his *Wonders of Destiny* (see below).

To historicize the *Pure Composition* as a communicative agent of the author's elite identity, it is necessary to examine its chronological and ideological proximity to the *Wonders of Destiny.* Ibn ʿArabshāh likely began work on his biography of Temür not long after returning to Syria and worked on it sporadically during the reign of Barsbāy. He interviewed scholars that had been close to Temür, and even travelled to Anatolia in 839/1435–36 to complete research for the book before heading to Cairo to finalize and publicize it the next year.[70]

Ibn ʿArabshāh's reasons for writing Temür's biography were no doubt manifold and personal. He may have wanted to expunge painful memories of his family's captivity and the text reads as a powerful catharsis of anger and mourning for the victims of Temür's ambitions.[71] The author also may have seen it as a means of displaying his literary skills as a master of Arabic *sajʿ* prose in a way that might help hasten his reestablishment in the lands of his birth, where a morbid fascination fueled by hatred and the social memory of Temür's destruction of Damascus and Aleppo were part of the social fabric.[72] McChesney was ultimately unable to find a satisfactory answer as to *why* Ibn ʿArabshāh composed such an emotionally raw biography of Temür, yet in the early folios of the *Pure Composition*, Ibn ʿArabshāh lays bare his reasons:

> Before this felicitous composition, I compiled a history and called it *The Wonders of Destiny in the Calamities Wrought by Tīmūr* and mentioned in it some of the circumstances of Tīmūr the lame, than whom there has never been one more violent or recalcitrant in existence. [By doing so] I only intended to mention what happened to the worshippers and lands by that arrogant tyrant so that the governors of religion and the kings of Islam and Muslims may learn from it, because every life story has lessons, and every lesson has stories which are not devoid of ethical details, Arabic witticisms, stylistic marvels, astonishing constructions, and so on. Then, when I saw this just *dawlah* and brilliant, virtuous reign [of al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq], and that with which Allāh has blessed Islam and the Muslims through it, and how the twins of kingship and religion were rejoined after their separation [by Temür], I took blame upon myself for what I had let slip in my compilation of that book, and

[70] Ibn ʿArabshāh, *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr,* 227; McChesney, "Life and Works," 237.

[71] McChesney, "Life and Works," 206–7.

[72] On lingering fear and resentment toward Temür and his descendants in the Cairo Sultanate during the later fifteenth century, see: Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 13:193, 15:364.

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> found no way to erase those [potentially] bad deeds and thence correct the errors, except by writing a book containing the traces *(āthār)* of this felicitous *dawlah* and the establishment of some of its praiseworthy and righteous descriptions, thereby mentioning some small story of what Allāh Blessed and Most High permitted our master the sultan (may Allāh make his banners everlasting) and raising over the astral conjunctions his banners of good purpose, sincere inner intentions, and compassion for the flock and … with these praiseworthy characteristics … how he was distinguished over other kings and sultans…. The purpose in this is to teach the observer that our master the sultan is among the noblest type of mankind (apparent or hidden) and to let he who is hopeful know the power of this blessing so that he may always renew thankfulness to Allāh Most High and pray for its perpetuation and the elongation of its endurance. There are differences between the two compositions and humiliation between the two compositions, for Tīmūr the rebel was left alone to rule the world for about 40 years.[73]

In this rather remarkable passage, Ibn ʿArabshāh demonstrates cognizance of the potential agency residing in his own historical works and their ability to wield influence in the wider world around him. Fearing that the blameworthy examples set forth in his earlier book about Temür might in fact bring about *negative* change, he wishes to atone for any such possibility by offering a new text to the new ruler. Perhaps feeling as though he was in need of a fresh strategy for his time in Cairo,[74] the text of the *Pure Composition* appears to do an about-face on the very *raison d'être* of his most important (and increasingly acclaimed) work to date. Weighing questions about his own complicity in the divorce of kingship from religion in the wake of Temür, the author claims that there is no way to erase the bad without chronicling all of the inherent good promised at the ascent of Jaqmaq. It is thus that Ibn ʿArabshāh demonstrates concern and consciousness for the texts he produces and apprehension over who will consume them and how.

The *Pure Composition* therefore, according to its author, serves as an opposition to be juxtaposed against what he claims is the instructive narrative of Temür's

[73] Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Ta'līf," fols. 5v–6r.

[74] Although Ibn ʿArabshāh did not formally move to Cairo, he undertook lengthy trips to the city and lodged at the Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ *khānqāh*. As his family resided in Damascus, he only made extended trips to Cairo and commuted between the two regional capitals, though our sources fail to divulge how often, for how long, or exactly when.

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career in the *Wonders of Destiny.*[75] However, it is also in many ways a continuation, engaging with discourses of power, kingship, and the relationship between rulers and the ruled. Medieval Arabic authors of historiographical works like Ibn ʿArabshāh often endeavored to demonstrate immediate moral/didactic (or *ʿibar*) meanings from historical narratives to "provide a moral service and also entertain," all while underscoring God's authority and Islam's veracity before the political elites as well as the community at large.[76] In his criticism of Temür, Ibn ʿArabshāh presents the features of a terrible ruler, while in his panegyric for Jaqmaq, he offers, by way of antidote, the characteristics of a great one. The first provides lessons that ought *not* be followed (such as Temür's excessive anger with subordinates[77]), while the second offers the traits of an ideal Muslim sovereign. It is necessary to point out that following his harsh presentation of Temür, the *Wonders of Destiny* includes a closing chapter which recognizes a number of concessions to its subject's cunning prudence, *realpolitik,* and sagacious decision making.[78] While demonstrating his ability to praise a good ruler and defame a bad one, Ibn ʿArabshāh simultaneously positioned himself as an astute and objective judge of the princely character of rulers by dint of his first-hand experience.

Constructing the Early Career of Jaqmaq

Ibn ʿArabshāh describes the era before Jaqmaq as one of frequent disputes in which God withdrew mercy, favor, and the existence of a just *dawlah* capable of pouring forth safety and security. For the author, it was only the current age that God had blessed through the felicitous reign of Jaqmaq.[79] After a lengthy list of honorific titles for Jaqmaq, Ibn ʿArabshāh writes that sultans are God's servants and the helpers of his *awliyāʾ*.

Acknowledging that the *dawlah* of the new sovereign is still in its "easy period" after the subjugation of rivals, Ibn ʿArabshāh presents it as a foregone conclu-

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[75] Ibn ʿArabshāh, *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr*, 37–38.

[76] Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (New York, 1994), 191–92; Robert Irwin, *Ibn Khaldun: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton, 2018), 4–6; Konrad Hirschler, "Islam: The Arabic and Persian Traditions, Eleventh–Fifteenth Centuries," in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 2: 400–1400,* eds. Sarah Foot and Chase Robinson (Oxford, 2012), 276–78. For discussions of how some medieval Arabic historiographical works can be read as advice literature, see Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate and Kingship*, 82, 103–4; Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography,* 109–11.

[77] Ibn ʿArabshāh twice makes use of the tale of Temür's outrageous punishment of his advisor Muḥammad Kāwjīn. See: *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr*, 460–62; Ibn ʿArabshāh, *Fākihat al-khulafāʾ*, 492–93.

[78] Ibn ʿArabshāh, *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr*, 450–87.

[79] Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Taʾlīf," fol. 5v.

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sion that Jaqmaq's reign will bring good.[80] The author continues his well wishes for Jaqmaq and congratulates his victory, mentioning candidly that he himself had wandered the lands of Islam and Anatolia *(al-mamālik al-islāmīyah wa-abwāb al-Rūm)* and elsewhere, implying that no lands approached the ideal represented by Jaqmaq's *dawlah.*[81]

The author, emphasizing the new sultan's piety, argues that Jaqmaq had successfully vanquished his political enemies in a very short time in a significant departure from recent kings and sultans, including al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (784–801/1382–99), al-Nāṣir Faraj (801–15/1399–1412), al-Muʾayyad Shaykh (815–24/1412–21), and al-Ashraf Barsbāy (825–41/1422–38), all of whom had faced protracted periods of threats to their political order and endured difficulty eliminating rivals during their reigns. Sweeping away convoluted political processes, Ibn ʿArabshāh thus connects Jaqmaq to a continuous version of history and political order while suggesting the paradox that while he had emerged from what came before, he was also superior to it by virtue of his swift efficiency in dealing with rebels and in his unique connection to God and the pious.[82]

The author expands further on these themes in his chapter devoted to the period of Jaqmaq's youth until he became a "just imam."[83] Having come to the throne in his sixties as the result of complex processes of integration which involved the recycling of elites into new political contexts, Jaqmaq had already acquired a rich life story full of socio-political experience prior to the initiation of his sultanate.[84] Since in 843–44/1439–40 little could have been written retrospectively about the *entire reign* of Jaqmaq, one wonders about Ibn ʿArabshāh's sources on the origins and coming of age of the sultan (if not a combination of what he had been told by al-Bukhārī, read in al-Maqrīzī, or learned from other elites and courtiers).

According to the author, Jaqmaq, in early life, had balanced his time between playing war games, training for jihad, and practicing archery and horsemanship *(furūsīyah)* while at the same time remaining steadfast in prayers at the Almās mosque in Cairo, participating in Quranic recitation that was sonorous and pleasing to mendicant Sufis, and inclining toward spending time with the pious.[85]

[80] Ibid., fol. 7r.

[81] Ibid., fol. 7v.

[82] Ibid., fol. 8r.

[83] Ibid., fols. 8r–11v.

[84] Jo Van Steenbergen, "Appearances of *dawla* and Political Order in Late Medieval Syro-Egypt: The State, Social Theory, and the Political History of the Cairo Sultanate (Thirteenth–Sixteenth Centuries)," in *History and Society during the Mamluk Period (1250–1517): Studies of the Annemarie Schimmel Institute for Advanced Study II*, ed. Stephan Conermann (Göttingen, 2016), 79–80. See also Garcin, "The Regime of the Circassian Mamluks," 293.

[85] Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Ta'līf," fol. 10r.

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Ibn ʿArabshāh's narrative then jumps forward to a scene from the troubled reign of the sultan al-Nāṣir Faraj (who the author acknowledges was cruelly assassinated along with his supporters), when a younger Jaqmaq, along with a group of amirs that opposed the sultan, was arrested. Faraj executed the conspirators one by one but granted Jaqmaq a reprieve as he paused for a night's sleep. Faraj had a troubling dream in which an ominous voice warned him not to harm Jaqmaq. Waking in a cold sweat, he freed the captive future sultan. Ibn ʿArabshāh ties the anecdote to the observation that God always creates an exit from trouble for the faithful.[86]

Following a brief detour in which the Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd is likewise thwarted in his attempts to kill a pious enemy, Ibn ʿArabshāh returns to his narrative of Jaqmaq's early adulthood, stating that he became chief chamberlain *(ḥājib al-ḥujjāb)* in Egypt and continued taking on positions of honor under sultans Shaykh, Ṭaṭar, and, finally, Barsbāy, until the latter's journey to Āmid with his entire court, during which Jaqmaq served as supervisor of the royal stables *(amīr akhūr).*[87] It is here that Ibn ʿArabshāh revisits the Āmid campaign following which Barsbāy's army alighted in Barza, Syria, and many local religious scholars showed their respect and jockeyed for favor among prominent men in the sultan's retinue. According to Ibn ʿArabshāh, as an amir Jaqmaq had been preceded by his reputation for generosity and distributing gifts. Thus many, including the author himself, went to see him in hopes of benefitting from his largesse.

Ibn ʿArabshāh claims at this point that al-Bukhārī was among those who used to praise Jaqmaq. Having re-introduced his late master into the narrative, the author takes the occasion to insert brief biographical details of his shaykh, which have some overlap with Jaqmaq's early career and demonstrate to the reader that al-Bukhārī had often been privy to (and had perhaps even spiritually overseen) key moments of promotion or status change in Jaqmaq's career.

With the completion of the first part of the text, Ibn ʿArabshāh then embarks on a historical narrative complimentary toward the new political formation established by Jaqmaq and his supporters. The second historiographical portion of the text, titled "Chapter *(fasl)* on the Beginning of the Accession *(wilāyah)* of Our Master the Sultan and Mention of the Events of his Time …," is presented as a literary history of Jaqmaq's reign broken into thematic subject headings (84r–111v) followed by annals from 841–42 to 857 (111v–129v). Although the manuscript gives the outward appearance of being a history of Jaqmaq's sultanate, Ibn ʿArabshāh, who preceded Jaqmaq in death by three years, only covers the first year of his reign. The main historiographical focus of the second portion appears to be the revolts of a number of amirs closely tied to the previous socio-political order es-

[86] Ibid., fol. 9r.

[87] Ibid., fol. 9v.

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tablished by Barsbāy who were suddenly alienated by Jaqmaq's ascent in Rabīʿ I 842/August 1438 and who sought to oppose him directly or otherwise strike out independently in Syria with new polities of their own.[88] Ibn ʿArabshāh devotes several sections to what he describes as the "disobedience" *(ʿiṣyān)* of the amirs Qurqumās al-Shaʿbānī (d. 842/1438), Īnāl al-Jakamī (d. 842/1439), and Taghrī Birmish (d. 842/1439). In Ramaḍān 841/February 1438, he may have been on hand in al-Mazza, Damascus, easing al-Bukhārī into his final journey, though it was his son Tāj al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb who wrote to Ibn Ḥajar notifying him of the shaykh's death.[89] If Ibn ʿArabshāh had been in Damascus for the funerary rites, he must have returned to Cairo shortly thereafter to observe the political fallout following the death of Barsbāy and perhaps go in search of official positions in the new political order. Ibn ʿArabshāh places himself in Gaza in Ramaḍān 842/1439 and arrives in Cairo to meet with Ibn al-Bārizī well before his 30-day residency in the citadel in Rajab and Shaʿbān of 843/1439–40.[90] The subsequent annals from 843 to 857 consist of brief necrologies of scholars and political figures rather than historical facts.

Al-Bukhārī: Axis Mundi *(Quṭb al-Aqṭāb)*

Ibn ʿArabshāh's placement of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Bukhārī in Cairo as early as the reign of al-Muʾayyad Shaykh allowed al-Bukhārī to cross paths with a younger version of Jaqmaq in the narrative.[91] Ibn ʿArabshāh eventually halts the progression of Jaqmaq's career altogether to focus on al-Bukhārī's reinvention of a number of sciences, his strict reliance on Islamic texts rather than interpretation, his reputation among students, and importantly, the report from another Damascene colleague, Shaykh ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Qābūnī, who dreamed that al-Bukhārī had ascended to the rank of *quṭb* of the age.[92]

After a brief digression about al-Bukhārī's uncanny ability to read minds and intuitively become aware of answers to unasked questions as a true Sufi *ʿārif,* Ibn ʿArabshāh directly takes on his master's famous stance on paid government service. Mentioning an 843 encounter in Damascus with Yaḥyá ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, a former student of al-Bukhārī during his time in Cairo and a current client of Kamāl ibn al-Bārizī, Ibn ʿArabshāh recounts the story of how Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār in 824/1421

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[88] On Qurqumās al-Shaʿbānī, one of the amirs in question as a case in point, see Van Steenbergen and Van Nieuwenhuyse, "Truth and Politics."

[89] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 9:30.

[90] Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Taʾlīf," fol. 98r.

[91] The precise length of al-Bukhārī's sojourn in Cairo is difficult to pinpoint. Al-Sakhāwī claims he stayed in the city for only two years (*Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 9:256).

[92] Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Taʾlīf," fols. 9v–11r.

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caught the eye of the amir Jaqmaq (at that time a *khazindār*), who invited him into service as an inkwell bearer *(dawādār)*.[93] Apparently content with his patron-client *(mulāzamah)* arrangement with al-Bukhārī, Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār declined the offer and went to tell his master what had happened. Al-Bukhārī, upon weighing the situation, told his apprentice that it was indeed favorable to forsake such a position, though he emphasized one's personal choice in such a perilous matter because a prominent amir such as Jaqmaq was no doubt destined for the sultanate or another lofty position of greatness—with the unwritten subtext that spurning such favor might come back to haunt Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār later. Ibn ʿArabshāh, quoting the latter, confirms that al-Bukhārī had been in the habit of imparting such advice to many others over the years.[94]

Although the anecdote seems peculiar in place and tone, it accomplishes two discursive goals in the author's narrative. It establishes some elasticity (derived from necessity) in al-Bukhārī's (perhaps inconvenient) opinion and thus affords Ibn ʿArabshāh room to maneuver if he ever finds himself in circumstances similar to those of Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār or Kamāl ibn al-Bārizī. In other words, if Ibn ʿArabshāh formally sought public positions in the 840s, he was not deviating from the legacy of his late teacher. At the same time, the anecdote announces that Jaqmaq was very much on al-Bukhārī's radar as a dominant political figure at least two decades before his sultanate began.

Although al-Bukhārī features heavily in the early part of the text, it was not the intention of Ibn ʿArabshāh (who did not overtly wade into the controversies ignited by al-Bukhārī in his own texts) to "defend" his master from enemies or apologize for past polemical storms.[95] Instead the author sets him forth as a paragon of spiritual greatness who had the ear of influential men and respected them behind closed doors.[96] With the death of his benefactor, Ibn ʿArabshāh needed to attach himself to a source of cultural capital powerful enough to bring him to the

[93] On the immediate social and material benefits of entering an amiral household, see Clément Onimus, *Les maîtres du jeu: Pouvoir et violence politique à l'aube du sultanat mamlouk circassien (784–815/1382–1412)* (Paris, 2019), 98–99; Mathieu Eychenne, "Le bayt à l'époque mamlouke: Une entité sociale à revisiter," *Annales islamologiques* 42 (2008): 275–95.

[94] Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Taʾlīf," fols. 10v–11r. Although Ibn ʿArabshāh does not mention the episode concerning Kamāl ibn al-Bārizī reported by Ibn Taghrībirdī in 835/1431–32, he nevertheless must have been privy to it.

[95] Ibn ʿArabshāh glosses over the controversies by merely observing that when his master was in Egypt "things happened there with the ulama." It is an interesting point to consider the strikingly reverse strategies of establishing credibility used (negatively) by al-Bukhārī in challenging contemporary understandings of what Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymīyah represented by pronouncing *takfīr* on them—compounded by Ibn ʿArabshāh's subsequent (positive) choice of attaching to this legacy via his expression of association with and acclaim for al-Bukhārī.

[96] Ibn ʿArabshāh, "Taʾlīf," fols. 9v–11r.

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attention of his next potential patron. Read positively, Ibn ʿArabshāh's chapter on the early life of Jaqmaq appears as an act of sincere loyalty to al-Bukhārī that called attention to the socio-religious contributions of his master. Perhaps tellingly, Ibn ʿArabshāh himself seems aware that these intrusions into his own narrative may be awkward, as he tries to explain them: "My only purpose in mentioning the shaykh in the book is to praise him, because with mention of the righteous, mercy *(raḥmah)* descends."[97] Thus, by evoking al-Bukhārī, Ibn ʿArabshāh seems to suggest divine sanction for his project, thereby channeling the late shaykh's *barakah* into his work.

Ibn ʿArabshāh's experiences, interactions, and changing environments made him part of a complex and multi-layered "life-world" which left traces in his texts.[98] Far more than just an *evolving* scholar, however, it is useful to consider Ibn ʿArabshāh as equally mutable or protean. His own writings and the writings of his biographers leave us with the image of one willing to change his outlook or actions in order to achieve his objectives. While he was not simply an "operator" looking to advance by manipulating others (or manipulating memories), being *changeable* in order to achieve objectives no doubt made a certain amount of sense in light of his background and the traumatic circumstances of his early life. At age 11 he and his mother and sisters had been taken, against their will, a third of the way across Asia at the mercy of Temür's victorious army.[99] This, in part, may have produced in him some malleability and openness to social possibilities. He does not appear to have shared al-Bukhārī's aversion to paid public service, and was aware of the realities of social hierarchy, the competitive nature of *manṣab* positions, and what one had to do to realize professional aspirations. This is not to impugn the sincerity with which he undoubtedly wrote about al-Bukhārī's legacy and argue that he only used it calculatingly for mobility.

On the one hand, worldly concerns indeed motivated the actions and practices of aspiring courtiers and *manṣab*-holders; on the other, authentic conviction and religious sincerity served as guiding lights. These approaches were not necessarily mutually exclusive when a social actor such as Ibn ʿArabshāh completed cultural and ideological work in tandem with his sincere beliefs. If indeed he shared al-Qābūnī's view that al-Bukhārī was the *quṭb* or *axis mundi,* the true Sufi saint that had attained the highest level, then his enduring allegiance and fidelity to him as a faithful *murīd* was likely rooted in that belief.[100] However, according to al-Bukhārī's own arch-nemesis Ibn al-ʿArabī, the notion of the *quṭb* (pole) went

[97] Ibid., fol. 9v.

[98] Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago, 2000), 12.

[99] McChesney, "Life and Works," 214.

[100] Al-Bukhārī's titles of respect in the final text of *The Wonders of Destiny* include "*quṭb al-zamān*." See: *ʿAjāʾib al-maqdūr*, 49.

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far deeper than a grand rank in Sufism. Rather the *quṭb* was the true head of the community of his time *(sayyid al-jamāʿah fī zamānihi),* akin to a caliph (that had both religious and political authority) and held a far grander position of spiritual sovereignty for which more mundane and corporeal holders of power, such as the sultan, were merely substitutes.[101]

Thus, the fundamental question remains one of context: why is hagiographic material about al-Bukhārī being wrapped up in a panegyric for the sultan? How did it function in an apparently didactic work? Ibn ʿArabshāh's choice to give al-Bukhārī a central place early in the text implies that the latter's reputation continued to resonate in the ruling circles of the Cairo Sultanate. As a result, Jaqmaq may well have harbored an enduring respect for the name of al-Bukhārī, especially having appointed former students of the shaykh like Kamāl al-Dīn al-Bārizī.

Ibn ʿArabshāh's anecdotes and stories about al-Bukhārī were written at a later time, after Jaqmaq had become sultan. They appear to reflect alternate and balanced hierarchies of power: Jaqmaq and his circle atop one, and al-Bukhārī and his students atop another. Thus for the intended audience of the *Pure Composition*—most likely the social and political elites of the new *dawlah*—Ibn ʿArabshāh may have been positioning al-Bukhārī on equal terms with Jaqmaq as a leader in his own right. By recounting stories of al-Bukhārī in Syria, Ibn ʿArabshāh was reproducing the moral landscape and points of reference he believed and operated in. He wanted to have an impact on the new sultan by writing him into the moral framework which spoke to Ibn ʿArabshāh's clear vision of what it meant to be a good Muslim ruler.

One essential question posed by this material concerns the processes of meaning-making that occur in the author's story of Jaqmaq's rise. On the surface level, al-Bukhārī seems to have had little to do with the ostensible purpose of the text, which was to praise and congratulate Jaqmaq on his reign, suggesting that the true purpose of mentioning al-Bukhārī was for Ibn ʿArabshāh to strengthen his own reputation and improve his chances of finding a new patron in Jaqmaq or someone close to his court, such as Kamāl ibn al-Bārizī. Like all works of literature, the *Pure Composition* manifests an act of communication,[102] so what was Ibn ʿArabshāh trying to communicate? To appreciate the interwoven meanings thus imbued in the early part of the text, it is first necessary to unravel the anecdotes in the context of a text praising Jaqmaq early in his reign. The implied relation-

[101] Michel Chodkiewicz, "The Esoteric Foundations of Political Legitimacy in Ibn ʿArabi," in *Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi: A Commemorative Volume*, eds. Stephen Hirtenstein and Michael Tiernan (Shaftesbury, 1993), 194.

[102] Thomas Bauer, "Mamluk Literature as a Means of Communication," in *Ubi Sumus? Quo Vademus?: Mamluk Studies, State of the Art,* ed. Stephan Conermann (Göttingen, 2013), 23–24, 29.

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ships outlined in the *Pure Composition* chapter on Jaqmaq's youth are compelling and require tracing the constellation that includes al-Bukhārī, Barsbāy, Jaqmaq (as the presumed addressee), Ibn al-Bārizī, and Ibn ʿArabshāh, whose own presence in the text is sometimes as observer, sometimes as participant.

While Ibn ʿArabshāh presents a seemingly innocuous retracing of Jaqmaq's career during the reigns of Faraj, Shaykh, and Barsbāy, the true purpose is to anchor al-Bukhārī's legacy to the ascendant star of the new sultan. Ibn ʿArabshāh uses the early part of the *Pure Composition* to establish himself as an important participant in al-Bukhārī's social and intellectual network while simultaneously creating an image of himself as one able to serve Jaqmaq with perspective on good and bad kingship.

Preliminary Conclusions

What are the expectations, circumstances, settings, and purposes that endow actions with their meanings? Given his work's placement in broader cultural patterns of authors praising rulers and commenting on society in advisory texts, Ibn ʿArabshāh sought to mirror social reality in a text that he imagined using to transform the socio-political order and also to help him find his own place within it.[103] In the *Pure Composition*, Ibn ʿArabshāh therefore presents the historical world in a way in which kings, necessarily good or evil, guide history through their actions and choices. The moment of inscription, when the author began ascribing meaning to the actors of his own time, is the 34-year period between the death of Temür and the start of Jaqmaq's reign as sultan.[104] For Ibn ʿArabshāh, who began a series of extended stays in Cairo from the 840/1440s until his death in 854/1450, this represents the moment of choice, decision, and action that creates the "social reality" of his text, which, as Gabrielle Spiegel suggests, exists inside and outside the particular performance he incorporated into the work.[105]

The cultural practice of composing a genre-straddling work like the *Pure Composition* as both a didactic and historically informative text was the product of Ibn ʿArabshāh's personal context as well as what he perceived as his specific reality and the most pressing needs of the broader "post-Temür" age. Although he had spent at least three decades absent from the region of his birth, he had nevertheless been privy to similar upheaval and transformation affecting the Muslim

[103] Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore, 1997), 24.

[104] In the lands of the Cairo Sultanate, this period (roughly 807–41/1405–38) coincides with an intense era of transformation and socio-political change accompanied by profuse textual production.

[105] Spiegel, *Past as Text*, 26.

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societies of Transoxiana and Western and Central Asia in the wake of Temür.[106] Perhaps unlike other Cairo-based contemporaries like Ibn Ḥajar and Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-ʿAynī—both of whom benefitted from frequently shifting political alignments in their pursuit of the patronage and intellectual impact that helped them reassert themselves into new socio-political orders—Ibn ʿArabshāh's struggle, over many years, to reemerge among the elite seems to have been slower and slightly more uphill. In the context of a new political formation taking shape between 841–43/1438–40, Ibn ʿArabshāh tried to articulate his versatility, convey his impressive background, skills, and connections, and demonstrate his past proximity to sources of political power and religious authority. The second act of his life, which unfolded in his "old homeland" *(al-waṭan al-qadīm)* of medieval Bilād al-Shām, was a time of frequent travel between Damascus and Cairo, as he tried to stoke interest in his growing body of literary and historiographical works to attract the attention of a new benefactor.[107] After leaving the citadel of Cairo in early 1440, Ibn ʿArabshāh seems to disappear from the historical record until about 1446,[108] and it remains unclear whether he was successful in finding patronage or salaried religious positions between Cairo and the Syrian cities. He later told Ibn Taghrībirdī that he had held a variety of religious positions including a qadiship in Ḥamāh, though this cannot be confirmed in any other historical source and was later dismissed outright by al-Sakhāwī.[109]

The death of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Bukhārī in Syria coincided with the formation of Jaqmaq's state at a key moment when Ibn ʿArabshāh endeavored to demonstrate that he had evolved from a learned disciple into an independent scholar. It may be that the reputational boost he received from two well-established peers of his generation—Ibn Ḥajar and al-Maqrīzī—combined with the death of his mentor may have finally transformed him, in terms of his social status, from a student seeking instruction to a master in his own right.[110]

It was thus Ibn ʿArabshāh's intention in the *Pure Composition,* which he may have envisioned as a formal application to enter service in Cairo, to establish his own literary credentials, instrumentalize his expertise on Temür, and remind readers of his proximity to leading political and religious figures locally and across Muslim West Asia, while also textually strengthening the legacy of al-Bukhārī. At the same time, forces loyal to Jaqmaq had recently defeated politi-

[106] Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, 21.

[107] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 2:143–44.

[108] McChesney, "Life and Works," 241.

[109] Al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 1:115.

[110] McChesney, "Life and Works," 232. This is further confirmed in McChesney's observation that in the years after 850/1446, Ibn ʿArabshāh was sought out by younger scholars such as Ibn Taghrībirdī and al-Sakhāwī.

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cal opponents in Cairo, Aleppo, and Damascus. Ibn ʿArabshāh combined these threads in the early rhetorical section of his text before tackling the latter events directly in his historical writing.

Ibn ʿArabshāh's *Pure Composition,* as a text reflecting the complexities of its era, appears to have been intended to make changes in the social reality by emphasizing to Jaqmaq and his court the choices available to them.[111] Despite expressing his concerns in the *Pure Composition* that the subject matter of the *Wonders of Destiny* might have a negative impact in the world, the author ultimately chose to allow the latter to go forth and "live its life," while possibly suppressing or abandoning the former. It may, however, not have been entirely *his* choice, as one (the biography of Temür) succeeded in helping him to acquire social capital while the other (the panegyric for Jaqmaq) evidently failed to secure him an entry at court.

While attempting to avoid characterizing Ibn ʿArabshāh and his texts as merely reactive to outside socio-political forces, it is difficult to comment on any influence he or his texts were able to exert. The final agency of the text may have rested in the hands of someone like Muḥammad al-Matbūlī, who may have completed the text and helped deliver a "finished" version of it to us so that it did not disappear in obscurity. Engaging with Ibn ʿArabshāh's original text, in whatever final form it took, al-Matbūlī, with his own interests in the text, copied and presented it to its final patron (most likely not the library of Jaqmaq), thereby adding his own layers of meaning. By contextualizing the *Pure Composition* in the politics and historical chronology of Ibn ʿArabshāh's life, we identify the early part of the text as a product inhabiting a specific reality and representing a unique moment in the author's life.

[111] Bauer, "Mamluk Literature," 32.

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A Tale of Hybrid Identities: Notes on Ibn Taghrībirdī's Textual and Authorial "Self-Fashioning"

Introduction

The life trajectory of Ibn Taghrībirdī and his career has stirred considerable curiosity and interest among medieval historians and modern researchers. Through their biographical depictions and pointed analysis, they all endeavor to construct a comprehensive rendering of his various historiographical undertakings. Only a few decades after his death in 874/1470, a number of medieval historians began to trace his life-story and career. Among them were al-Sakhāwī (830–902/1427–97) and al-Ṣayrafī (819–900/1416–95), who shed a critical light on his works and his whole venture in history writing.[1] The subsequent generation of sixteenth-century historians, conversely, showed a more positive assessment of his achievement in the field. Thus, under the pen of Ibn al-ʿImād al-Ḥanbalī,[2] Ibn Taghrībirdī appears as one of the greatest historians of his time. His accounts on Egypt's rulers, filtered through his courtly and somewhat Turkish perspective, even earned him the appreciation of the Ottoman sultan Selim I (1470–1520) who, during his conquest of Egypt in 1517, commissioned a Turkish translation of two of his works: *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah* and *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī*.[3] Some centuries later, the 1792 publication of a first edition of his *Mawrid al-Laṭāfah* sparked renewed interest in Ibn Taghrībirdī.[4] His other works came thence to the attention of European scholarship through a series of annotated editions and translations, increasing his profile among modern researchers who strove to interpret his narrative represen-

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[1] See respectively: al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ* (Beirut, 1992), 10:305–8; al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafī, *Inbāʾ al-haṣr bi-abnāʾ al-ʿaṣr,* ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 2002), 175–82.

[2] Ibn al-ʿImād al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab,* ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir and Maḥmūd al-Arnāʾūṭ (Beirut, 1986), 9:472–73.

[3] The Turkish translation of *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī* has survived to the present day. See: William Popper, tr., *History of Egypt, 1382–1469 A.D.: Translated from the Arabic Annals of Abu l-Maḥasin ibn Taghrî Birdî* (Berkeley, 1954), 1:xxiii, n. 24.

[4] Ibid., xxii.

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tations of premodern Egyptian rulers.[5] To better ascertain the value of his historiographical works, several attempts to contextualize his writings were made. In 1929–30 Gaston Wiet published "L'Historien Abul-Maḥāsin."[6] William Popper composed a biographical notice on Ibn Taghrībirdī in his translated edition of the *Nujūm,* which considered the latter's social background, training, and achievements as a historian. Several studies followed, in some cases coming from different perspectives, like Aḥmad Darrāj's article "La vie d'Abū L-Maḥāsin Ibn Taġrī Bardī et Son Œuvre"[7] and Hani Hamza's survey, which approaches the author's life and career through the study of *waqf* documents.[8] Despite decades of extensive research involving Ibn Taghrībirdī, few studies have evolved beyond treating his historiographical works as mere "containers of facts" or contextualizing the man and his oeuvre against a complex socio-political background. We are left with a wide-open lane for inquiry to bring a new impetus to his life-story and achievements in historical writing. To help plot a new way forward, the current article will question "dominant narratives" related to Ibn Taghrībirdī's life and historiographical contributions. What we mean by "dominant narratives," in this particular context, is the bulk of medieval, stereotyped representations and the modern assumptions that engage with his individual trajectory and career, and in which he was regarded as a member of the *awlād al-nās* or else as a semi-official court historian.

By relying on a textual and narratological analysis of his chief historiographical works—his biographical dictionary, *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* and his annalistic and dynastic histories, *Ḥawādith al-duhūr* and *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah*—the present study will engage with his multi-layered narrative of identity. In order to move beyond pre-established apprehensions of his life and writings, this study will utilize a literary textual-oriented approach that acknowledges the importance of texts as an alternative resource for reconstructing the author's social and cultural milieu. It will hence appropriate some theoretical outcomes from literary studies, mainly Stephen Greenblatt's notion of "self-fashioning." The latter concept was devised and first employed in Greenblatt's 1980 volume *Renaissance Self-fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* to denote the process of identity-making/formation in Re-

[5]Ibid. Some sections referring to the Crusades in his *Nujūm* appeared in 1841. Complete editions of his chronicle began to appear at the end the nineteenth century, such as Theodor W. J. Juynboll's volumes (1855–61) or the subsequent editions published by the University of California Press (1909) and the Egyptian National Library in Cairo (1929).

[6]Gaston Wiet, "L'Historien Abul-Maḥāsin," *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 12, no. 1 (1929–30): 89–105.

[7]Aḥmad Darrāj, "La Vie d'Abū L-Maḥāsin Ibn Taġrī Bardī et Son Œuvre," *Annales Islamologiques* 11 (1972): 163–81.

[8]Hani Hamza, "Some Aspects of the Economic and Social Life of Ibn Taghrībirdī Based on an Examination of His Waqfīyah," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 12, no. 1 (2008): 139–72.

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naissance literary writings. This particular notion of self-fashioning as "a sense of personal order, a characteristic mode of address to the world, a structure of bounded desires and always some elements of deliberate shaping in the formation and expression of identity,"[9] will be considered in our analysis of Ibn Taghrībirdī's narrative construction of his authorial identity. Recent appropriation of the concept in medieval historical scholarship, notably in Laura Delbrugges' collected essays, presents it as a compelling lens through which one can approach medieval historiography.[10] Drawing on this, our study will focus on the individual intentions and agency in Ibn Taghrībirdī's self-representation. Eventually, this will facilitate a more thorough understanding of how the author engaged with his texts and with the practice of historical writing as whole.

Ibn Taghrībirdī in the Eyes of Historians

Among the obvious questions that arise when we start dealing with Ibn Taghrībirdī's life and career are the following: how was he portrayed in contemporary and later medieval accounts? Is it possible to discern the distinguishing features that characterized his varied representations? To what extent were these depictions effective in shaping our understanding of his individual path and career trajectory? Answering these questions will, in fact, enable us to disentangle the compound and intricate narrative that was steadily built around the author and his historiographical projects. Furthermore, this appears to be an unavoidable step that we must go through to arrive at a better understanding of Ibn Taghrībirdī's identity-making process and self-fashioning maneuvers.

An obvious place to start would be the biographical sketches devoted to him in various historiographical compendia. With regard to this it should be noted that we derive the bulk of our information about Ibn Taghrībirdī's life and career from references in the following biographical dictionaries and chronographies: *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* within which we have a sort of autobiography of the author written by his presumed student Aḥmad Ibn Ḥusayn al-Turkmānī al-Marjī; al-Ṣayrafī's *Nuzhat al-nufūs* and *Inbāʾ al-haṣr;* al-Sakhāwī's *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ, Al-Tibr al-masbūk,* and *Al-Dhayl al-tāmm;* al-Malaṭī's (844–920/1440–1514) *Nayl al-amal;* Ibn Iyās' (852–930/1448–1524) *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr;* and Ibn al-ʿImād al-Ḥanbalī's (1032–89/1623–79) *Shadharāt al-dhahab.*[11] When examining the biographical data related

[9] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980), 1.

[10] For further details see Laura Delbrugge, *Self-Fashioning and Assumptions of Identity in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* (Leiden, 2015), 1–7.

[11] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī wa-al-mustawfá baʿda al-wāfī,* ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo, 1984–2009); al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa-al-abdān fī tawārīkh al-zamān,* ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1970–94); idem, *Inbāʾ al-haṣr;* al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ;* idem, *Al-Tibr al-masbūk fī dhayl al-sulūk,* ed. Najwá Muṣṭafá Kāmil and Labībah Ibrāhīm Muṣṭafá (Cairo,

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to Ibn Taghrībirdī in these compilations, the first observation to be made is that they differ in terms of tone, form, and length. Thus, aside from factual details spread over numerous pages, such as the account given in al-Ṣayrafī's *Inbāʾ al-haṣr,* which is the most detailed and lengthy biographical account that came down to us—not counting the author's autobiography in *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī*[12]—one can find some brief obituaries, such as the one dedicated to him in the *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr* of Ibn Iyās,[13] as well as information scattered across individual chronicles (e.g., *Al-Tibr al-masbūk* by al-Sakhāwī) that report particular anecdotes about his life or mention certain figures from his entourage.[14] Considered from a chronological standpoint, these biographical reports could be classified as follows: contemporary accounts compiled during the author's lifetime, near-contemporary accounts written in the decades after his death by historians who had known him, and late accounts produced almost a century after his death. With regard to the contemporary accounts, a particular mention must be made of the biographical note written by Ibn Taghrībirdī's otherwise unknown student—and likely personal scribe—Aḥmad al-Turkmānī al-Marjī.[15] The latter's account was appended to a manuscript copy of *Al-Manhal* written at his master's request, in which he states:

> When I was called to serve the author of this book, his excellency the virtuous and the right honorable amir [Ibn Taghrībirdī], the most exceptional of all time, the noblest of men and the dean of historians, and [when] he kindly tasked me with copying this splendid *Tārīkh,* which was indeed a great benefaction that he conferred upon me.... I thought it necessary to include his biography, for usually historians do not write their autobiography.[16]

In terms of its structure, al-Marjī's account conforms with common patterns used in other contemporary scholars' biographies. It begins with a section high-

2002–7); idem, *Al-Dhayl al-tāmm ʿalá Duwal al-Islām lil-Dhahabī,* ed. Ḥasan Ismāʿīl Marwah and Maḥmūd al-Arnaʾūṭ (Kuwait, 1992); al-Malaṭī, *Nayl al-amal fī dhayl al-duwal,* ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī (Sidon-Beirut, 2002); Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá (Beirut, 1975–92); Ibn al-ʿImād al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab.*

[12] *Inbāʾ al-haṣr,* 175–82; for further comparison see *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 12:375–81.

[13] *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr,* 3:45–46; *Nayl al-amal,* 6:415–16.

[14] For instance, in his annal for 849/1445 al-Sakhāwī reports that Ibn Taghrībirdī went on hajj and was appointed as *bāshā al-maḥmal* in the pilgrimage convoy. Later he makes allusions, in the obituary sections, to Ibn Taghrībirdī's niece Sāra bint al-Ātabik Āqbughā al-Timrāzī and to his servant Badr al-Dīn as well. See: *Al-Tibr al-masbūk,* 1:262–63; 2:201; 4:77.

[15] The biographical dictionaries and chronicles of the time do not reveal any trace of Aḥmad al-Turkmānī al-Marjī or even any evidence that connects him with the Cairene scholarly circles. This suggests that he was a relatively unknown personal scribe employed by Ibn Taghrībirdī.

[16] Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī, 12:375.

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lighting Ibn Taghrībirdī's social background, followed by a second section providing evidence of his thorough training in different religious and literary disciplines through a detailed listing of his different masters,[17] his numerous *ijāzah*s (a license or authorization to transmit certain texts),[18] and *samāʿāt,* or listening certificates.[19] This section is followed by one notifying readers of the author's training in horsemanship and related arts like archery, the art of hurling palm sticks, and playing polo.[20] The following section is, however, devoted to his personal profile and individual qualities. He is portrayed as an exceptional figure in whom all virtues, such as humility, decency, ineffable charity, and erudition, are projected.[21] In the closing section of this biographical record, al-Marjī presents Ibn Taghrībirdī's works, which cover, he argues, a vast array of fields related to history, literature, and music.[22] The account ends with the quotation of verses composed by Ibn Taghrībirdī himself. Another contemporary biographical account is by al-Ṣayrafī, whose chronicle *Nuzhat al-nufūs* presents a sketch on Ibn Taghrībirdī inserted in the obituary of his father, the *atābak* Taghrībirdī al-Yashbughāwī. Having extolled the latter's virtues as a righteous governor and learned man who "made contributions in some legal matters and other issues,"[23] al-Ṣayrafī declares that:

> [Ibn Taghrībirdī's father]'s shining name is still spoken since he left a good and virtuous son, who is a great master of history and several other disciplines like the art of archery, lance hurling, and music, who has penned eminent works, and whose bearing is splendid. He is currently the go-to person in the field of history…and he is my most esteemed as my great master in that trade.[24]

Both accounts demonstrate that the earliest depictions of Ibn Taghrībirdī put a special focus on his personal qualities. Many skills and virtues were attributed to him by contemporaries who preserved an image of him as the "master of all trades." This eulogistic representation of the author stands in striking contrast to a decidedly darker and more derogatory image of him that appears in some biographical depictions composed after his death.

[17] Ibid., 376–77.

[18] Ibid., 378–79.

[19] Ibid., 377–78.

[20] Ibid., 379.

[21] Ibid., 379, 380.

[22] Ibid., 380–81.

[23] Al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs,* 2:320.

[24] Ibid., 321.

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Examining obituaries of him in later, near-contemporary works (al-Sakhāwī's *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,*[25] al-Ṣayrafī's *Inbāʾ al-haṣr,*[26] and al-Malaṭī's *Nayl al-amal*),[27] we can observe a marked stream of criticism leveled at Ibn Taghrībirdī. Several critical comments address perceived inaccuracies in his historiographical works and take aim at his even undertaking the field. The most scathing among these is al-Sakhāwī's notorious criticism of Ibn Taghrībirdī that has piqued the interest of some modern scholars.[28] While it is unnecessary to reiterate al-Sakhāwī's full litany of charges and accusations of error, which have been amply discussed by William Popper,[29] it is worth noting that al-Sakhāwī devoted more than half of his biographical account of Ibn Taghrībirdī to listing and rectifying these "errors," thereby casting serious doubts on the author's legacy as a historian. Al-Sakhāwī underscores his meticulous list with an emphatic closing declaration: "I was told by many prominent Turks and by knowledgeable experts among them that [Ibn Taghrībirdī] was even quite deficient in Turkish affairs. Seeing that, one definitely cannot rely on what he presents" *(wa-ḥīnaʾidhin famā baqiya ruknun li-shayʾin mimmā yubdīhi).*[30]

Following a similar pattern, al-Ṣayrafī's account in the *Inbāʾ al-haṣr* was in its bulk devoted to pointing out not only Ibn Taghrībirdī's errors but also a number of his deficiencies. From the standpoint of a seasoned scribe, al-Ṣayrafī starts his critical comments by underlining the author's poor handwriting, which he found unworthy even of minor scribes *(ṣighār al-kuttāb al-mutaʿallimīn).*[31] He then makes some additional remarks about his awkward writing style and distorted use of Arabic words. In that regard he states:

> He [Ibn Taghrībirdī] went so far in doing ludicrous things that he added an *h* at the end of *ḥattá*. This kind of error is frequent in his autograph compilations to such an extent that one is unable to fix

[25] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 10:305–8.

[26] Al-Ṣayrafī, *Inbāʾ al-haṣr,* 175–82.

[27] Al-Malaṭī, *Nayl al-amal,* 6:415–16.

[28] William Popper and later Aḥmad Darrāj have pointed out that al-Sakhāwī's criticism of the author was biased and resulting from his resentment towards him. As they argued, Ibn Taghrībirdī's social privileges and familiarity with the Cairene court were among the main reasons behind the criticism of his contemporaries. See respectively: Darrāj, "La Vie d'Abū L-Maḥāsin," 173–74; William Popper, "Sakhāwī's Criticism of Ibn Taghrī Birdī," in *Studi Orientalistici in Onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida II* (Rome, 1956), 377–78, 387–89.

[29] For further details see Popper, "Sakhāwī's Criticism," 371–89.

[30] *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 10:308.

[31] *Inbāʾ al-haṣr,* 179.

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> them; for his works overflow with perverted prose and distorted expressions.[32]

Apart from that, al-Ṣayrafī evokes other types of errors frequently made by the author, such as mistaken uses of scholars' names and titles, which led him often to confuse *shaykh* with *ṭālib* and vice versa.[33] He accuses Ibn Taghrībirdī of favoritism and indulgence toward members of the military elite, a claim that was raised against him by al-Sakhāwī as well.[34] The numerous inaccuracies and errors found in Ibn Taghrībirdī's works show, he argued, both his ignorance and the unreliability of his reports. To go even further than al-Sakhāwī in belittling Ibn Taghrībirdī's experimentation in history writing, al-Ṣayrafī claims that he was little more than an ignorant commoner *(ʿāmmīyun dāṣ).*[35] Interestingly, this contemptuous depiction stands in sharp distinction from the eulogistic image of "the master of all trades" that he drew of him in earlier writings, notably in *Nuzhat al-nufūs*.

In the same vein, ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ Ibn Khalīl al-Malaṭī confirms that Ibn Taghrībirdī received training but was unsuccessful.[36] Commenting upon his works he then states that: "[Ibn Taghrībirdī] compiled several works of history *(tawārīkh),* though in very poor language and style and overflowing with inaccuracies and misinformation."[37] This note employs the same arguments used by al-Sakhāwī and Ibn al-Ṣayrafī to belittle his achievement in history writing: a second-rate historian, whose writings are no more than middling. Another common feature among the near-contemporary accounts is the concentrated focus on Ibn Taghrībirdī's writings. In terms of a comparison with earlier accounts we noticed that the focus has shifted away from depicting the author's personal qualities or training. Such a change of textual perspective can be regarded as an attempt to portray him in a negative light, as he was intentionally placed in the light of his supposedly "poor" writings rather than of his "noble" origin or personal virtues, as had been the case in contemporary accounts.

Quite the opposite, in later accounts Ibn Taghrībirdī is again presented in a more positive light. He is portrayed in the sixteenth-century chronicles as an accomplished historian and an exceptional figure of his time. Some later biographical depictions of Ibn Taghrībirdī emphasize his numerous virtues and achieve-

[32]Moreover, he confirms that Ibn Taghrībirdī actually resorted to some experts in the Arabic language to amend his works: ibid., 180.

[33]Ibid., 181.

[34]Ibid., 180–81.

[35]Ibid., 179.

[36]Al-Malaṭī, *Nayl al-amal,* 6:416 *(qaraʾa shayʾan lakinnahu lam yanjub).*

[37]Ibid.

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ments in history writing. In Ibn Iyās' account, for instance, he is described as the son of a notable amir and a learned man "keen on history writing" *(mashghūfan bi-kitābat al-tārīkh)*[38] and as a prolific writer who penned several *"tawārīkh"* and many other works.[39] On these grounds, he was considered "an exception among his fellows" *(nādiratan fī abnāʾ jinsihi).*[40] Correspondingly, he is presented by Ibn al-ʿImād al-Ḥanbalī in glowing terms as an authoritative and accomplished historian:

> Then he [Ibn Taghrībirdī] grew fond of the discipline of *tārīkh*. Thus, he followed the renowned historians of his time like al-Maqrīzī and al-ʿAynī. The great diligence that he has shown in that respect and his sharp wit, which he combined with a great sense of discernment, helped him to succeed in his undertaking…. Thus, he became the greatest master of the trade in his time.[41]

Two main points emerge from these accounts: first, a recognition of Ibn Taghrībirdī's exceptional achievement compared to his fellows from the Turks and the sons of the elites, expressly underscored by Ibn Iyās; second, his successful undertaking in history writing, since he was regarded as the greatest historian of his time. What can be inferred here is that Ibn Taghrībirdī's contrasting representations were fixed in the stereotypical image of the notable son of the elites and the historian. Despite biased or contrasting depictions by contemporaries and near-contemporaries, Ibn Taghrībirdī was essentially viewed from two perspectives: that of his Turkish background and that of his legacy as a historian. The two-sided story that was made up about his life and career in medieval accounts rehearses in fact the classic story of the military elite scion who embarked on a scholarly career, which can be paralleled with the life patterns and careers of many of his predecessors, like Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī (696–764/1297–1363), Ṣārim al-Dīn Ibrāhīm Ibn Duqmāq (d. 809/1407), and Abū Bakr Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī (fl. 709–35/1309–35).

The prevailing and pre-existing narrative of the author's life went on to shape, in some measure, modern assessments of his historiographical venture. Thus, modern scholarship tends to approach Ibn Taghrībirdī from this two-fold perspective. Based on explorations of his texts, a number of studies endeavored to engage with his life and works, of which three examples in particular ought to be mentioned here: Émile Amar's "La valeur historique de l'ouvrage biographique intitulé al-Manhal al-Ṣāfī par Abū-l-Maḥāsin Ibn Taghrī-Birdī," published in 1909;

[38] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr,* 3:45–46.

[39] Ibid., 46.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibn al-ʿImād al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab,* 9:472–73.

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Gaston Wiet's article "L'Historien Abul-Maḥāsin," published in *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* in 1930; and William Popper's survey on "Sakhāwī's Criticism of Ibn Taghrī Birdī," published in 1956.[42] Aside from highlighting his historical method[43] and the importance of his historiographical works, especially in dealing with the ruling elite and political affairs,[44] or else their critical receptions by contemporary historians, these investigations set out in detail his social background and *cursus studiorum.*[45] Particular attention was also given, in Gaston Wiet's article and in Muṣṭafá Ziyādah's chapter "Abū al-Maḥāsin wa-muʿāṣirūhu," to his father's career and achievements.[46]

The impact of his social background on his writings and particularly on his reception by contemporary historians was surveyed in Popper's study.[47] In line with this, Ulrich Haarmann addressed Ibn Taghrībirdī, in a series of surveys devoted to members of the *awlād al-nās,* as one of the prominent representatives of these "mamluk scions" who ventured into scholarly careers and who became not only cultural brokers/interpreters but also important protagonists in the intellectual life of their own time.[48] These attempts at contextualization were furthered by other surveys, like Aḥmad Darrāj's 1972 article "La vie d'Abū L-Maḥāsin Ibn Taġrī Bardī et Son Œuvre," in which the author sheds more light on Ibn Taghrībirdī's social network, more precisely on his relationships with different sultans' courts and influential state officers and on how he leveraged this to maintain his financial privileges and social standing.[49] In the same vein, Hani Hamza proposed a new reading of the author's life through his *waqfīyah.* By examining the layout of Ibn Taghrībirdī's mausoleum and its financial outlay, more specifically its yearly expenses, which were compared with royal foundations, Hamza tried to clarify

[42]See respectively: Émile Amar, "La valeur historique de l'ouvrage biographique intitulé al-Manhal al-Ṣāfī par Abū-l-Maḥāsīn Ibn Taghrī-Birdī," in *Mélanges Hartwig Derenbourg* (Paris, 1909), 245–54; Wiet, "L'Historien Abul-Maḥāsin"; Popper, "Sakhāwī's Criticism."

[43]Wiet, "L'Historien Abul-Maḥāsin," 96–97, 100–3; Popper, "Sakhāwī's Criticism," 381–87.

[44]Popper, "Sakhāwī's Criticism," 385–86.

[45]Wiet, "L'Historien Abul-Maḥāsin," 91–95; Popper, "Sakhāwī's Criticism," 378–80.

[46]Wiet, "L'Historien Abul-Maḥāsin," 90–91; Muḥammad Musṭafá Ziyādah, "Abū-l-Maḥāsīn wa-muʿāṣirūhu," in *Al-Muʾarrikhūn fī Miṣr fī al-qarn al-khāmis ʿashar mīlādī* (Cairo, 1949), 26–27.

[47]Popper, "Sakhāwī's Criticism," 377–78, 381, 388–89.

[48]Ulrich Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamluks and Their Sons in The Intellectual Life of Fourteenth-Century Egypt and Syria," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33, no. 1 (1988): 112–14; idem, "Joseph's Law: the Careers and Activities of Mamluk Descendants before the Ottoman Conquest of Egypt," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society,* ed. Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann (Cambridge, 1988), 81–82; idem, "The Writer as an Individual in Medieval Muslim Society," in *Individu et Société dans le Monde Méditerranéen Musulman: Questions et Sources,* ed. Robert Ilbert and Randi Deguilhem (Aix-en-Provence, 1998), 85–87.

[49]Darrāj, "La vie d'Abū L-Maḥāsin," 168–72.

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some aspects of his life. He pointed out that Ibn Taghrībirdī enjoyed a high social standing and a considerable fortune that somehow supported his scholarly undertaking.[50] Overall, to varying degrees, the bulk of modern studies of Ibn Taghrībirdī put much emphasis on his social background, particularly on his familiarity with the ruling circles and sultans' courts, which researchers considered the real motive behind the criticism of his contemporaries and simultaneously the key to his success as a historian.

More recent studies, however, have considered his authorial voice and agency with increased interest. In a series of articles devoted to Ibn Taghrībirdī's accounts of the first Turkish rulers, Irmeli Perho undertakes to examine the narrative spin of his different stories and to explore some aspects of his authorial voice.[51] Her attempts to track Ibn Taghrībirdī's voices sheds some new light on his storytelling techniques and on the didactic import of his stories, which were managed, as she points out, to fit the broader scope of his court-centered chronicle *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah*. Also of note is Li Guo's "Songs, Poetry, and Storytelling: Ibn Taghrībirdī on the Yalbughā Affair,"[52] in which he examines Ibn Taghrībirdī's manipulation of poetry, particularly *ballīq* ballads, and how he employed this to provide performativity and agency to his stories.

On the whole, Ibn Taghrībirdī's appearance in modern scholarship was shaped, at least in the earliest studies, by the stereotypical pattern of the son of the elites who engaged in the career of a historian, and his works were considered in this light. The interest of modern historians in the man and his writings was largely due to his familiarity with the ruling circles of Cairo. Even though important efforts have been made, in the latest studies, to unearth his authorial voice and the way he constructed his stories about the Turkish rulers, we still know very little about how he crafted *his own* story. Questions regarding Ibn Taghrībirdī's self-representation through his writings and the social stakes that guided and determined his undertaking as a historian remain uncharted.

[50] Hamza, "Some Aspects of the Economic and Social Life of Ibn Taghrībirdī," 139–72.

[51] Irmeli Perho, "Ibn Taghrībirdī's Voice," in *Traveling Through Time: Essays in Honour of Kaj Öhrnberg,* ed. Sylvia Akar, Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, and Inka Nokso-Koivisto (Helsinki, 2013), 135–47; idem, "Ibn Taghrībirdī's Stories," in *Mamluk Historiography Revisited: Narratological Perspectives,* ed. Stephan Conermann and Bethany J. Walker (Göttingen, 2018), 137–52.

[52] Li Guo, "Poetry and Storytelling: Ibn Taghrībirdī on the Yalbūghā Affair," in *Developing Perspectives in Mamluk History: Essays in Honor of Amalia Levanoni,* ed. Yuval Ben-Bassat (Leiden, 2017), 189–200.

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The Split "Self-Fashioning" of Ibn Taghrībirdī

Aspects of Ibn Taghrībirdī's Authorial "Self-Fashioning"

To track the manifold ways in which medieval authors introduce themselves to their learned audiences, a modern researcher can often mine clues from the introductory prologues of historiographical works. Indeed, such prefatory sections of many fifteenth century historical writings showcase the varied strategies and the performative modes that authors employed to ingratiate themselves with their readers.[53] They likewise illustrate how authors crafted their identities and constructed their authority as writers. With this in mind, we can begin an inquiry into Ibn Taghrībirdī's self-fashioning maneuvers by exploring the opening sections of his main works, *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī* and *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah*. It is clear from a cursory reading that the construction of his prologues, in both *Al-Manhal* and *Al-Nujūm,* reproduces common patterns often utilized by his predecessors and contemporaries.[54] Aside from being elaborated in a sophisticated prose style, these introductions typically start with a laudatory section that consists of a doxology praising God and the Prophet Muḥammad. This section is followed by eulogistic statements about the utility of history as a repository of every type of life-experience, and ends with an explicit reference to the purpose and the title of the volumes that follow. The concluding section provides a general outline on the time span, the layout, and the author's way of proceeding.[55] With regard to their broad features, these preambles seem unoriginal and stylized insofar as they embody the characteristic elements of the "prefatory topoi," used in medieval historiographical works, like doxologies, statements about the utility of history, and the "topos of commission."[56] However, underneath their conventional aspects and stereotypical structure we can identify some textual cues that attest to Ibn Taghrībirdī's purposeful and deliberate shaping of his authorial persona. For instance, as conventional as it may seem, the fact that he engages in a sophis-

[53]For further details about the structure of prologues in medieval historiographical works, their formulaic nature, and their relevant role as key sources for understanding authorial intention see: Justin Lake, "Authorial Intention in Medieval Historiography," *History Compass* 12, no. 4 (2014): 350–51.

[54]By examining the opening sections of a number of historiographical works dating from the fifteenth century, we can observe that they were arranged according to a predefined pattern which often includes these elementary sections. See for instance: Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Al-Durar al-kāminah fī aʿyān al-miʾah al-thāminah* (Beirut, 1993), 1:4–5; idem, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr bi-anbāʾ al-ʿumr,* ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī, (Cairo, 1969–98), 1:3–5; al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd al-farīdah fī tarājim al-aʿyān al-mufīdah,* ed. Maḥmūd al-Jalīlī (Beirut, 2002), 1:62; idem, *Al-Sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk,* ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā (Beirut, 1997), 1:101–4; al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Tibr al-masbūk,* 1:33–39.

[55]See: Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 1:17–19; idem, *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah,* ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl and Muḥammad Fahīm Shaltūt (Cairo, 1963–72), 1:1–3.

[56]Justin Lake, "Authorial Intention in Medieval Historiography," 350–51.

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ticated writing style in these sections reveals his desire to be properly introduced to his audience. In other words, using such a rhetorical mode is basically meant to make a good first impression.

More than that, the notable changes that he makes to the "topoi of commission," especially when he claims not to be writing for any dedicatee or addressee but himself, seem revealing. Ibn Taghrībirdī states in his *Manhal al-ṣāfī* that the numerous and informative life-experience stories that he came across in history books are actually the main things that inspired him to compile his own biographical dictionary. Interestingly, the author claims no patron or any fellow for his work.[57] Almost the same intentions and the same structure are reproduced later in his *Nujūm al-zāhirah,* though with a slight shift regarding his motives for writing, which are more focused on the merits of Egypt.[58] By excluding a dedicatee and mentioning no explicit request to write the work, he evinces his clear intention to compose historical works that transcend conventional expectations. Assigning a dedicatee or a particular occasion to literary and historiographical compilations was a common practice among writers in these times. More than that, it was a "strategic device" often used to ensure the author attention and increased influence.[59] Considering this, Ibn Taghrībirdī's first aim appears to have been to ward off any potential charges of arrogance or presumption by his possible detractors or opponents. Beyond that, his particular claim of individual fulfillment and a search for companionship behind this undertaking may represent his attempt to feature himself as the decent learned man who always took solace in books as his best companion.[60]

How Ibn Taghrībirdī introduces himself to his audience seems less sophisticated than the assertive and arguably more ostentatious manner used in the

[57] *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 1:18–19 *(ghayra mustadʿan ilá dhāka min aḥadin min aʿyān al-zamān wa-lā muṭallab bi-hi min al-aṣdiqāʾ wa-al-ikhwān wa-lā mukallaf li-taʾlīfihi wa-tarṣīfihi min amīr wa-lā sulṭān).*

[58] As to affirming the absence of any dedicatee or any addressee for his current compilation Ibn Taghrībirdī declares explicitly: *"wa-lam aqul ka-maqālati al-ghayri innanī mustadʿan ilá dhālika min amīrin aw sulṭān wa-lā muṭalabin bi-hi minā al-aṣdiqāʾi wā-al-ikhwān": Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 1:2. In line with this, he does not specify any dedicatee or addressee for his other works: *Mawrid al-laṭāfah* and *Ḥawādith al-duhūr.* Moreover, he does not mention, in their respective prologues, his previous works, his peers, or even his masters except for *Ḥawādith al-duhūr* or his continuation of al-Maqrīzī's *Sulūk,* in which he, of course, refers to him as his master. See respectively: Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Mawrid al-laṭāfah fī man waliya al-salṭanah wa-al-khilāfah,* ed. Nabīl Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Aḥmad (Cairo, 1997), 1:3–4; *Ḥawādith al-duhūr fī madá al-ayyām wa-al-shuhūr,* ed. Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ʿIzz al-Dīn (Riyadh, 1990), 1:51–52.

[59] Thomas Bauer, "Mamluk Literature as a Means of Communication," in *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus? Mamluk Studies, State of the Art,* ed. Stephan Conermann (Göttingen, 2013), 29.

[60] *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 1:19, and *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 1:2 *(li-yakūna lī fī al-wiḥdatī jalīsan).*

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same context by his master, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (773–852/1372–1449), or his contemporary, al-Sakhāwī. References to their masters and their achievements in the field, especially through intertextual references to their previous works, along with references to a notable dedicatee, often utilized by the latter historians, appear more authoritative and convincing than Ibn Taghrībirdī's claim to be merely writing for his own pleasure *(allaftuhu li-nafsī)*.[61] This may suggest that he was not thoroughly engaged, or at least less concerned than his peers, with his authorial image in the opening section of his works. On the whole, what can be inferred from the above is that Ibn Taghrībirdī did proceed differently and that he may have opted to display his credentials as a historian, in more pragmatic terms, throughout the body of his works and not in their introductory parts. In any case, the idiosyncratic way in which he introduces himself to the audience in the prologues of *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī* and *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah* provides a hint at his self-fashioning maneuvers. A diachronic reading of his writings offers some additional clues to this subtle shaping of his authorial persona. As we came to notice, Ibn Taghrībirdī's self-representation varied markedly throughout his compilations. These variations, basically stemming from his shifting self-positioning in his texts and in different historical narratives, may point to both his maturation as a writer and the evolving aspects of his self-fashioning. Before going through a diachronic analysis of the author's self-depiction, we want to elucidate a few points regarding the timeline of his works. By so doing, we aim to gain a better grasp of the multiple and shifting representations of his authorial persona. First it should be noted that we still know very little about when Ibn Taghrībirdī began his career as a historian or when he began compiling his earliest work, *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī*. Save for a casual and vague reference, in which al-Sakhāwī reportedly states that Ibn Taghrībirdī started recording events *(iʿtaná bi-kitābati al-ḥawādithi)* in 840/1436–37, we have no other clear indications about the dating of his works.[62] In addition, we cannot nail down exactly which compilation al-Sakhāwī was referring to, whether *Al-Manhal* or *Al-Nujūm*. His allusion to *"ḥawādith,"* or events, which implicitly evokes some sort of chronicle, suggests that he was perhaps

[61]By looking in the prefatory sections of several historiographical works dating from the fifteenth century we noticed a number of disparities, in terms of style and the nature of data provided, between the condensed prologues of Ibn Taghrībirdī and the more extended preambles of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, al-Maqrīzī, al-Sakhāwī, or ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ Ibn Khalīl al-Malaṭī. For further comparison see respectively: Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr,* 1:3–5; al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd al-farīdah,* 1:61–62; idem, *Al-Sulūk,* 1:101–4; al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Tibr al-masbūk,* 1:33–39; al-Malaṭī, *Nayl al-amal,* 1:77–78.

[62]Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 10:306. Seemingly, al-Sakhāwī drew this dating reference from Ibn Taghrībirdī's *Manhal al-Ṣāfī,* more precisely from the brief note he makes in al-Maqrīzī's biography and in which he states that he began compiling a continuation of his master's chronicle in 840/1436–37. See: *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 1:418.

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referring to the *Nujūm.*[63] Also of note, Ibn Taghrībirdī's biography, written by his presumed student Aḥmad al-Marjī, and the prologues of his works do not help much, for they often do not provide date references or other indications of when he began or stopped working on a given compilation.[64]

References to the time span or the coverage of his works, usually made in the prologue, and particularly allusions evoking the sultan under whose rule the current compilation should end, cannot be considered as conclusive. Likewise, the dates that can be inferred from the yearly records in his chronicles, or even from the listing of the sultans to whom he devoted a biographical note in *Mawrid al-laṭāfah,* do not represent, in any respect, concrete time limits that would indicate when he stopped working on individual compilations. Regarding the *Nujūm,* for instance, while Ibn Taghrībirdī states that the coverage of his chronicle would run until Sultan Īnāl's rule (r. 857–65/1453–61) and the yearly record indicates Rajab 872/January 1468 as the ultimate date, textual evidence shows that the last note was probably added after Rabīʿ I 873/September 1468.[65] The same holds true for *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* considering that its coverage supposedly goes to 855–56/1451–52,[66] whereas the most advanced date which we came across points to Rabīʿ II 868/December 1459.[67] However, overlaps and shadings related to the timeline of Ibn Taghrībirdī's works can be cleared up if we attend to his frequent allusions to his previous compilations or to date references throughout his writings. Cross-referencing these scattered data can be somewhat insightful as regards both the time-

[63] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 10:306.

[64] When he draws up the list of Taghrībirdī's different compilations, whether historical or literary, Aḥmad al-Turkmānī al-Marjī only mentions that he compiled them during his youth, without providing any further details *"kullu dhālika fī ʿunfuwāni shabībatihi":* ibid., 12:380.

[65] The death of the deposed sultan al-Ẓāhir Yalbāy on the first of Rabīʿ I 873/19 September 1468 represents the most advanced date that we came upon in the *Nujūm.* See: *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 16:371. Regarding the time references made, whether in the prologue of the latter compilation or in its last volume, see: ibid., 1:3; 16:395.

[66] The manuscript held in Paris, which represents the earliest copy of *Al-Manhal* handed down to us and the basic copy-text used in modern editions, refers to 855–56/1451–52 as the latest date retained for the work. For further details see: *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 1:12; William Popper, "Abu ʿl-Maḥāsin Djamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf b.Taghrībirdī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., 1:138.

[67] As suggested by William Popper then by Julien Loiseau, Ibn Taghrībirdī stopped engaging with his biographical dictionary in the opening years of sultan Īnāl's rule (r. 1453–61): Popper, "Abu ʿl-Maḥāsin," 138; Julien Loiseau, "L'émir en sa maison: Parcours politiques et patrimoine urbain au Caire, d'après les biographies du Manhal al-Ṣāfī," *Annales Islamologiques* 36 (2002): 122–23. This seems to be in line with what we came upon through our textual analysis. More precisely, exploring the biographical sketches of the bulk of the figures who died after 855–56/1451–52, like Saʿd al-Dīn Ibn al-Dīrī, pushes this time limit slightly to the end of Īnāl's rule, notably to Rabīʿ II 868/December 1459. The latter represents roughly the most advanced date referred to in *Al-Manhal.* See: *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 5:395.

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line of his works and his working method. By and large, intertextual references to his previous works and date indications interspersed in his writings suggest that Ibn Taghrībirdī started his career as a historian by the end of Sultan Barsbāy's rule (r. 1422–38) with the writing of his biographical dictionary *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī*. Later, during Sultan Jaqmaq's reign (r. 1438–53), he concurrently engaged in a new project that consisted of compiling a monumental court chronicle, *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* dedicated to the latter's son and heir, Muḥammad. Simultaneously, he penned other works like *Al-Dalīl al-shāfī ʿalá Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī* and *Mawrid al-laṭāfah fī man waliya al-salṭanah wa-al-khilāfah,* summaries of *Al-Manhal* and the *Nujūm* respectively, and a continuation of his master al-Maqrīzī's chronicle *Al-Sulūk,* which he titled *Ḥawādith al-duhūr fī madá al-ayyām wa-al-shuhūr.*

It has to be said that Ibn Taghrībirdī's working method, as projected through the timeline of his works, and especially the fact that he juggled several projects at once, makes it difficult to chart the evolving aspects of his authorial self-fashioning. Nonetheless, the exploration of different sections of *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī, Ḥawādith al-duhūr,* and the *Nujūm,* and more specifically of the author's variant self-positioning in the course of events that he reports or else in relation to some figures from his entourage, reveals gradual developments in his self-consciousness and accordingly in the shaping of his authorial persona.

A fine example of this is his self-positioning in relation to his father throughout his writings. Indeed, the shifting of Ibn Taghrībirdī's word choices for "father" pointedly shows how he passed from a diffident son of an amir, who first sought to preserve his father's memory in his earliest writings, to an assertive court-historian. In fact, by peering through his writings one can observe that he moved from using *"wālidī"* to refer to his father in his earliest writings—specifically in *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī*—to a more neutral *"al-wālid,"* which he extensively employed in later works like the *Nujūm, Mawrid al-laṭāfah,* and *Ḥawādith al-duhūr.*[68] If considered linguistically, the variants of "father" can be revealing as regards the author's state of self-awareness. For example, the term *"wālidī"* uses the possessive ending "my" as in "my father," which may connote a more immature or juvenile connotation of "daddy," whereas *"al-wālīd"* uses the definite article "al-" "the" as in "the father," which establishes distance and sets Ibn Taghrībirdī apart as an individual. Such changes document, indeed, the narrative distance that he deliberately created between himself and his father in his subsequent compilations.

[68] An analysis of the occurrence of both terms in his writings has shown that Ibn Taghrībirdī employed exclusively the term *"wālidī"* to refer to his father in *Al-Manhal* in its first seven volumes. Then he shifted gradually to the use of *"al-wālid"* which co-occurred with *"wālidī"* from volume 8 to 12. In *Ḥawādith al-duhūr,* however, the latter term is used only once and *"al-wālid"* twice. When it comes to *Al-Nujūm* and *Mawrid al-laṭāfah* the author employs exclusively the term *"al-wālid."* For further details see for instance Ibn Taghrībirdī's shifting use of "father" in the biography of al-Nāṣir Faraj: *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 8:380–81.

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These variant word choices provide some further clues as regards the timeline of his works. Upon close reading of his biographical dictionary we noticed that Ibn Taghrībirdī's exclusive use of the term *"wālidī"* to refer to his father in the first seven volumes represents a distinctive feature of his very early writings. Eventually, the latter writings were marked not just by the utilization of the possessive form *"wālidī"* but also by frequent more general references to his own father. This could make some sense if we consider that Ibn Taghrībirdī initially wrote the dictionary to commemorate the memories of his father and his fellows from the Ẓāhirīyah faction.[69] Furthermore, he may possibly have intended, not least in his early career, to leverage his father's legacy to ingratiate himself with his audience.

Among other important instances that showcase Ibn Taghrībirdī's changing self-representation across his different works, are the varying depictions that he provides for some events which he witnessed at Barsbāy's court. For example, when he reports in Shāh Rukh's (d. 1447) biography in *Al-Manhal* the arrival of the latter's emissaries to Cairo and how they were harshly beaten under sultan Barsbāy's orders and eyes, he casts himself as a mere witness or passive attendant. His descriptive depiction of the event, which focuses on the sultan's brutal response to Shāh Rukh's request to provide the ceremonial covering for the Kaʿbah and subsequently on the caning of the convoy members, shows that he was astounded by the sultan's attitude.[70] The image of himself as the overwhelmed witness stands in sharp contrast to the portrait he draws of Sultan Barsbāy as a rigorous and powerful man.

In his subsequent writings, when he relates for instance in the *Nujūm* the events that occurred during the latter sultan's second campaign against Cyprus (829/1426), Ibn Taghrībirdī portrays himself as an active participant. According to him, shortly after the departure of the army from Cairo Sultan Barsbāy was informed that when they reached Rosetta (Rashīd) four ships were wrecked and ten men drowned.[71] After hearing this news, "he was extremely disturbed so that he almost died; he wept bitterly and became so restless that the Citadel became too confining for him, and he decided that the campaign should not be continued."[72] With regard to this event, Ibn Taghrībirdī depicts himself as a self-controlled man who intervened to break the tension that prevailed among the sultan's entourage and announced a forthcoming victory. He therefore states that "Emir Jarbâsh left to journey to them, leaving the Sultan confused like all the men, but I announced victory from that day and said, 'After the fracture comes only the setting'; and so

[69] As pointed out by Julien Loiseau, Ibn Taghrībirdī tried in his biographical dictionary to reconstruct his father's network of fellows from the Ẓāhirīyah faction: "L'émir en sa maison," 117–37.

[70] *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 6:201–2.

[71] *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 14:289.

[72] Popper, *History of Egypt,* 4:34.

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it happened later."[73] Interestingly, the roles are reversed in this account since the sultan is depicted as confused and distressed and Ibn Taghrībirdī is portrayed as self-assured and wise. To sum up, Ibn Taghrībirdī's self-positioning in relation to Sultan Barsbāy, in both accounts, conjures some aspects of his self-fashioning. More particularly, it suggests how he evolved, throughout his writings, from a passive court attendant to an assertive actor who would openly express his views about affairs of governance.

Along with these notable shifts in his self-depiction we noticed, upon a careful reading of *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī* and *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* that Ibn Taghrībirdī's deliberate shaping of his authorial persona correlated with multiple and varied claims of identity that ostensibly engage with a multilayered and encompassing narrative. Performing within "the psychology of a middleman," to borrow Haarmann's words,[74] Ibn Taghrībirdī developed a discrete mode of self-fashioning. Thus, he tended to claim a volatile authorial identity which he carefully negotiated along contrasted cultural platforms. These appeared in particular as the Sunni-Islamic identity, the Turkish alien identity, and the litterateur/highbrow identity.

The Sunni-Islamic Identity

With a view to fit the patterns of an Islamic framing narrative, Ibn Taghrībirdī reached for specific rhetorical and literary devices such as interspersing his writings with hadith quotations,[75] introducing the theme of the sacred in his historical narratives through stories about the first Islamic community (the companions of the Prophet), and presenting tales of dreams, particularly visions of the Proph-

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[73] Ibid.

[74] Ulrich Haarmann, "The Sons of Mamluks as Fief-Holders," in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in The Middle East,* ed. Tarif Khalidi (Beirut, 1984), 144.

[75] It has to be underlined, in this respect, that the author engaged in quoting hadith especially in his early accounts of the Islamic caliphate. Almost the same narrative technique is used later (though without the same balance) in other works such as *Mawrid al-laṭāfah* and *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfi*. Furthermore, a diachronic analysis focused on the frequency of hadith quotations in his historiographical works shows that he was more engaged with hadith issues in his earliest compilations—particularly in *Al-Manhal*. That might hint at his intention to display his religious training before the reading public at the beginning of his career: *Mawrid al-laṭāfah,* 1:27, 58, 95; *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 2:181, 186, 4:32, 120, 181, 5:115; *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 4:112, 163, 5:68. Regarding the influence of hadith sciences in the practice of historical writing and how it relates to an established traditionalism in Islamic historiography see: Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003), 83–97. Concerning the use of hadith as a legitimating device in historiography see: Mimi Hanaoaka, *Authority and Identity in Medieval Islamic Historiography: Persian Histories from the Peripheries* (New York, 2016), 10, 118–21, 137.

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et Muḥammad.[76] In dealing with the theme of the sacred, Ibn Taghrībirdī resorted to the literary topoi used by his predecessors. Following the common patterns of medieval historians, his sacred stories clustered basically around the vision of the Prophet and his healing power and miracles, and around the *barakah* embodied by certain saintly figures. One such example is his report about a violent dust storm that struck the coasts of Damietta and the whole country in 826/1423, in which he ends his detailed "tableau" with a tale of a dream. According to him, during the terrifying disaster a renowned holy man received a vision in which an oracle dissipated his fears and told him that Egypt has been preserved due to the Prophet's intercession.[77] In the same vein, he recounts elsewhere the gripping story of Amir Ṣardāḥ's miraculous recovery. Reportedly, it all started when this amir from the Hijaz was imprisoned and blinded *(kuḥḥila)* on Barsbāy's order. Having undergone such tribulation, the amir visited the Prophet's tomb and asked for his blessings. Shortly after this he miraculously recovered his sight.[78] To all this should also be added references made in Ibn Taghrībirdī's writings to legal norms and practices, to the Sunni-Shiʿi struggle (especially in the accounts of the Meccan sharifate) and to inter-*madhhab* rivalry, as related aspects of his engagement with this central "Sunni-Islamic" narrative.[79] All too often Ibn Taghrībirdī's accounts on events and figures of the distant past are interspersed with various allusions and analogies deliberately chosen to evoke theological controversies and dogmatic issues focused on heresy.[80]

Correspondingly, his attempt to fashion a scholarly identity, or at least to share the orthodox stance of religious scholars, can be seen in his fierce condemnation

[76]For more details about the use of dreams as a narratological device in medieval Islamic historiography, see Konrad Hirschler's study on the tales of dreams of Abū Shāmah and how he utilized them to fashion his authorial identity: *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors* (London, 2006), 39–40. See also: Hanaoaka, *Authority and Identity,* 14, 20, 76–78, 82–84.

[77] *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 14:252.

[78] *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 6:340.

[79]See respectively: *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 5:109, 15:52, 9:267, 283, 11:139–40; *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 2:43, 12:313. For further details about the Sunni-Shiʿi struggle and its key role in the formation of the sectarian Sunni identity see: Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600–1800* (Cambridge, 2003), 141–43.

[80]The layout and the selected materials used in the accounts of the Fatimid Caliphate and the Sunni-Shiʿi struggle during Ayyubid times provide insightful examples of how Ibn Taghrībirdī engaged with the scholarly intellectual mainstream. Moreover, the biographies of some heretic figures such as a Sufi shaykh named Ibn Sabʿīn show even better his attempts to be a strong proponent of orthodoxy and the values of Sunni Islam. See respectively: *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 5:11–12, 6:250, 7:133–34, 232–33; *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 1:377, 5:333, 7:144–47. With regard to this, Jonathan Berkey points out that condemnation of innovation *"bidʿah"* and different forms of heresy constituted a theme of predilection in medieval Islamic religious writings and a distinctive feature of its marked traditionalism: *The Formation of Islam,* 149, 202.

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of the appointment of Christians to high offices. In that regard, he states that one of the greatest achievements of Sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh, which might in fact be considered his sole merit, was the eviction of Christians from state positions.[81] Thus, he says:

> The scholars conferred a long time with the Sultan on the subject, until it was decided that no Christian should fill any position in the Sultan's bureau or under any of the emirs … I say: Perhaps God (Who is praised and exalted) will forgive for this action all of al-Malik al-Muʾayyad's sins, for it was one of the greatest measures for the supremacy of Islam, while the-administration of these Christians in the bureaus of Egypt is one of the greatest evils from which results the magnification of Christianity.[82]

Willing to push the stakes even higher, Ibn Taghrībirdī vehemently criticizes the way Coptic viziers, like ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Aslamī called al-Khaṭīr, were given the official title of qadi and accordingly equated with prestigious scholars.[83]

> Al-Khaṭîr was a recent convert to Mohammedanism who had been of high rank in Christianity, administering offices for al-Malik al-Ashraf when al-Ashraf was an emir; then al-Ashraf promoted him to this office, and after having been addressed as "Shaikh al-Khaṭîr," he began to be called "Cadi." This was one of the greatest disgraces, that one who is a Christian and is forced to become a Mohammedan (or professes to be one) for one reason or another, is soon called "Cadi," and in this designation is a partner with Cadis of the great religious law; but this wrong has been current of old and anew in the realm. I do not blame the rulers for advancing such men, for they need them on account of their knowledge of all branches of administration, but I hold that a ruler when he raises one of them to some rank could avoid using the title "Cadi" of him, and characterize him as "Head" or "Secretary," or give him such an honorific name as "Walî ad-Daula" or "Saʿd ad-Daula", leaving the title "Cadi" for the judges of the religious law, the confidential secretary, the controller of the army, and the Mohammedan scholars.[84]

[81] *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 14:82.

[82] Popper, *History of Egypt,* 3:68.

[83] *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 14:275.

[84] Popper, *History of Egypt,* 4:23–24; *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 14:275; Elsewhere, Ibn Taghrībirdī provides a quite original depiction of another Christian high officer, namely the Armenian vizier and *ustadār* Fakhr al-Dīn Ibn Naqūlah. Interestingly, he states that this vizier was a man of abusive deeds, which was expected from a person who inherited the tyranny of the Armenian

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How he engages with the shared Islamic norms and values is further highlighted in his historical narratives and more specifically in the way he uses religious references to craft his moralizing stories about Turkish rulers. His account on sultan Īnāl is a case in point here. In fact, when trying to appraise this sultan's eight-year rule, and in particular his chief deficiencies in terms of governance, Ibn Taghrībirdī points first to his great ignorance and indifference regarding religious matters and shariʿah laws. Thus he affirms that:

> [Īnāl] probably would not have known how to read well the first chapter [al-fātiḥah], or any other passage, of the precious Koran. His prescribed prayers were astounding prayers, curious sounds which he uttered and to which God paid no attention; and with this wonderful manner of praying he did not like the embellishment or prolongation of supplications after the formal prayer, but often forbade the one praying to prolong his prayer... In general his commands and his decrees were contrary to the religious law, particularly in what his purchased mamlûks started; for they turned legal decrees *[aḥkāmah al-sharīʿati]* upside down, while he permitted this to them although by all means he could have deterred them therefrom, and anyone who says differently can be refuted. One of the words of rebuttal is that someone might say, "what is the power of the sultanate if it lacks the ability to turn back this small group when the world hates them and they are too weak to confront even a part of the populace?"—and how much more would this be true if he had sent against them one of the many other groups of mamlûks? And there are many arguments of this import.[85]

Considering the above, Ibn Taghrībirdī arguably tried throughout his writings to evince his keen commitment to Islamic religious norms and culture. The handful of instances that we were able to discuss here illustrate how he tended to cast himself as a Sunni scholar or at least one who shared the same "orthodox" point of view and values as Sunni scholars.

What is in an Alien Identity?

One of the salient features that distinguishes Ibn Taghrībirdī's writings, specifically his *Manhal* and *Nujūm,* is the particular focus they lend to Turkish culture

people, the deceit of the Christians, and the evilness of the Copts *"kān ʿindahu jabarūtu al-arman wa-dahāʾu al-naṣārá wa-shayaṭanatu al-aqbāṭ": Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 153.

[85] Popper, *History of Egypt,* 6:109–10.

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and to its representative group.[86] The fact that these compilations are primarily concerned or suffused with the Turkish and military culture of the ruling elite is noticeable to even a casual reader. This is perhaps not surprising, since we already know that Ibn Taghrībirdī himself was a son of a notable amir and a member of the military elite. What matters, though, is to see how commitment to that culture is displayed in his writings and how he represents the identity of the social group of which he claims to be a fierce exponent. At the outset, it is important to stress that Ibn Taghrībirdī's commitment to the Turkish culture is displayed in different ways, whether in *Al-Manhal* or in the *Nujūm;* accordingly, it was expressed through varied textual and narrative strategies.

At the linguistic and semantic level, for instance, when reading the biographical sketches devoted to Turkish figures or else the yearly records of events we immediately notice the particular attention and concern that Ibn Taghrībirdī shows for the signification and the applications of Turkish words. Indeed, regardless of whether it is a name or an expression, references to Turkish words in his writings are often followed by brief notes that provide phonetic transcriptions, Arabic translations, and plausible explanations of their meaning.[87] His keen interest in Turkish languages can be also seen in the critical comments that he often makes about the ignorance of local scholars regarding Turkish matters and language. He states that the great ignorance shown by Arab historians regarding the Turkish language is actually the main cause behind their confused and distorted accounts of rulers and court affairs.[88] Among the numerous examples he mentions is Ibn Ḥajar's account about Sultan Barsbāy. He declares that his master Ibn Ḥajar was actually mistaken when he reported that Barsbāy was manumitted by the amir Duqmāq al-Muḥammadī, which he excuses as understandable for someone who knows little about the Turkish language and who was poorly acquainted with Turks *(maʿdhūrun fī mā naqalahu li-buʿdihi ʿan maʿrifat al-lughah al-turkīyah wa-mudākhalat al-atrāk).*[89] Ignorance of Turkish constitutes a basic argument upon which Ibn Taghrībirdī rests his vehement criticism of Arab scholars, whose ac-

[86]Regarding the representation of the Turks and Turkish identity in medieval Arabic sources see: Ulrich Haarmann, "Ideology and History, Identity and Alterity: The Arab Image of the Turk from the Abbasids to Modern Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2 (1988): 175–96.

[87]See for example the lexicographic annotations that he devoted to some Turkish names such as Qarāwish or Ṭughrilbīk, to some expressions like "yāghā qashtā" or "kukṣū," and to political terms like "al-Tūrā" and "al-Yasaq": *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 5:49, 6:135–36, 268–69, 7:167; *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 4:108.

[88]See for instance his comments on Barqūq's name, in which he criticizes the distorted accounts reported by Arab historians, specifically al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah, and Abū Zurʿah al-ʿIrāqī: *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 11:224–25.

[89]Ibid., 14:243–44.

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counts of Turkish rulers, he argues, overflow with inaccuracies and misinformation.[90]

Such criticism was, interestingly, not restricted to Arab scholars, since he levelled similar criticisms against members of the military elite. For instance, following a brief commentary on the great alterations that affected several languages, like Arabic or Persian, and their distorted uses at the present time, he declares that the Turkish language, particularly the Mongol tongue *(lisān al-mughul),* experienced similar distortions. For, as he affirms, military troopers *(jund)* have lost their knowledge of that language. According to him, they not only stopped speaking the Mongol tongue but would also not understand it if they heard it.[91] Elsewhere, he goes on to blame state officers and high-ranking amirs for their lack of proficiency in Turkish. One example is his critical statements about the great *dawādār* Arikmās al-Ẓāhirī. With respect to this, he maintains that among other reasons that made the latter amir ill-suited for the office is his barbarous speech *(ghutmīyan)* and ignorance of Turkish.[92] It has to be underlined, though, that Ibn Taghrībirdī's close interest in Turkish, being the official language of the ruling elite and the Cairene court for centuries, was mostly centered on individuals' names. As we came to notice, after a careful reading of his writings, most of the instances that discuss the accurate use and significance of Turkish words were concerned with amirs' names. The detailed story of sultan Barqūq's name is a case in point here. Following a brief review of this sultan's enthronement and career trajectory, which was set as an introduction to the account of his reign in the *Nujūm,* Ibn Taghrībirdī evokes the bulk of misinformation circulated in contemporary chronicles about his original name. Regarding these distorted accounts he states that

> when I read these curious statements which have been transmitted concerning Barqûq's name, I personally questioned the older men among Barqûq's mamlûks about them, and each one whom I questioned answered: "This assertion has never come to my ears before this day" …. One of them, in fact, said to me: "It is a Circassian name, while Yalbughâ is Tatar, of unknown meaning." Then he told me what the meaning of Barqûq is, saying: "The name was originally Malî Khuq, meaning in Circassian 'shepherd,' malî in that

[90] See *Mawrid al-laṭāfah,* 2:27.

[91] *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 1:61. For further details about the different Turkish dialects, whether those spoken in the Golden Horde or by the military elite of Egypt, see: Julien Loiseau, *Les Mamelouks XIIIe–XVIe siècle: Une expérience du pouvoir dans l'Islam medieval* (Paris, 2014), 188–89.

[92] Thereupon he says: "This was because Arikmâs had no knowledge of the laws, and was little-experienced in affairs; his speech was barbarous, he did not know Turkish and much less Arabic." Popper, *History of Egypt,* 4:130; *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 15:69.

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> language being a word for 'sheep'; the name Malî Khuq was then, for ease in pronunciation, changed to Barqûq." He mentioned also many other names the original form of which differs from what it is at present; e.g., Bâizîr, which has become Bâizîd and is by some made into a name compounded with abû, Abû Yazîd; or such as Âl Bâi, become now ʿAlî Bâi; and others too numerous to explain.[93]

To end his detailed enquiry about Barqūq's name, he calls the reader's attention to his treatise on the matter, stating that he has "treated this and similar subjects at length in a separate work dealing with the alteration, by the Arab-speaking population, of Turkish and Persian personal names and names derived from place names."[94] As can be seen from the above, Ibn Taghrībirdī's concern about the alteration of Turkish names was not limited to those of sultans, even though he used the story of Barqūq (r. 1382–89, 1390–99) as a foremost example. Such concerns seem to be related to what individuals' names represented for the military elite and in their culture. More particularly, they hint at a particular perception and understanding of their shared identity, which are brought into focus through Ibn Taghrībirdī's critical statements. Briefly put, what can be inferred from the above is that the "Turkish-ness" of the military and ruling elite displays, inter alia, through personal names.[95]

Among other identity markers that stand out even more markedly in Ibn Taghrībirdī's writings are horsemanship and martial arts. Allusions to military arts, to practices of warfare, and to the chivalric codes of the ruling elite are frequent in his historical narratives. More than that, they appear to be consistent with his particular claim of a "Turkish-martial" identity.[96] With a view to

[93]Popper, *History of Egypt,* 1:4–5.

[94]Ibid., 5. The compilation in question here is entitled *Taḥārīf awlād al-ʿArab fī al-asmāʾi al-Turkīyah.*

[95]The importance of Turkish names as a basic marker of the military's elite identity has already been underlined by Julien Loiseau. As he points out in his chapter "L'identité Mamelouke," names of Turkish amirs, whose signification often refers to animal figures, formed something like personal emblems that marked their singular identity and distinguished them from other social groups. Most importantly, they were part and parcel of the vocabulary of power of this military elite and of their hegemonic discourse of domination: *Les Mamelouks,* 152–53. For more details about the Turkish identity of the ruling elite and how it relates to a hegemonic discourse and perception of political domination see: Jo Van Steenbergen, "'Nomen est omen: David Ayalon, the Mamluk Sultanate, and the Rule of the Turks," an essay produced within the context of the ERC project "The Mamlukisation of the Mamluk Sultanate" and presented in the April 2011 conference ("Egypt and Syria under Mamluk Rule: Political, Social and Cultural Aspects") at the University of Haifa, https://www.academia.edu/4510845/_Nomen_est_omen_David_Ayalon_the_Mamluk_Sultanate_and_the_Rule_of_the_Turks_, 13–14.

[96]Concerning the significance of horsemanship and martial arts in the military culture of the Turkish ruling elite and their political meaning and ramification see: Loiseau, *Les Mamelouks,*

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demonstrating his commitment to that culture, Ibn Taghrībirdī tried on every available occasion to remind his audience of his great mastery in military arts. This happened through recurrent references to his masters in the field and even through his critical and informative statements about military processions and hierarchy. When he mentions, for example, the meticulous and hierarchical ordering of the different troops during official parades or military campaigns, he intrudes upon the text to remind his audience that he was trained in this art by Ṭurunṭāy al-Ẓāhirī and the *atābak* Aqbughā al-Timrāzī, who himself learned it from his *ustādh,* Timrāz al-Nāṣirī.[97] Regarding this he states:

> In thus drawing up the battalions he [Sultan Barqūq] changed in each case the previously customary formation; *I have retained in my memory most of its details as I learned them from my instructor* [ustādh], *Aqbughâ at-Timrazî, commander-in-chief, who in turn had learned of it from his instructor, Timrâz an-Nâṣirî the viceroy* [emphasis added]; and were it not for the fear of prolixity and digression I would sketch the arrangement here by means of dots.[98]

The *ijāzah*-like form that Ibn Taghrībirdī uses to refer to his military training seems somewhat original insofar as it equates the military arts and horsemanship with religious knowledge *(ʿilm).* Beyond bringing authority and legitimacy to the author's training, this simile can possibly be regarded as an attempt to extoll the military ethos and values of the ruling elite.

Ibn Taghrībirdī's close interest in martial arts and practices of warfare, of which he was seemingly a "great fan,"[99] is even more obvious in his historical narratives. In fact, the largest part of his stories about Turkish rulers and leading figures from their entourages was crafted with due reference to the chivalric codes and ethos of the military elite. More precisely, his narrative reconstructions of events and of characters' life trajectories were marked, in many cases, by a certain military-oriented outlook. A fine example of this is his account of the downfall of Qurqumās al-Shaʿbānī (d. 1438) and the dramatic end of his high-profile career. When he draws the latter's story as a profile of a "transgressor" Ibn Taghrībirdī makes judgmental references invoking martial and horsemanship skills. One of the dominating arguments that he uses to discredit Qurqumās and

155–56.

[97] *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 12:53, 14:47.

[98] Popper, *History of Egypt,* 1:145.

[99] Jo Van Steenbergen and Stijn Van Nieuwenhuyse, "Truth and Politics in Late Medieval Arabic Historiography: The Formation of Sultan Barsbāy's State (1422–1438) and the Narratives of the Amir Qurqumās al-Shaʿbānī (d. 1438)," *Der Islam* 95, no. 1(2018): 158.

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to show how he deserved his dramatic fate—being decapitated—is his deficiency in certain horsemanship skills. Thus, he states that:

> Despite his courage and fearlessness he [Qurqumās] was never very successful in combat *(fī l-ḥurūb),* because of the lack of coordination between his feet and his hands *(li-ʿadam muwāfaqat rijlayhi li-yadayhi):* every time he entered combat *(al-ḥarb),* he stopped moving his feet to spur on his horse because of his pre-occupation with his hands—this is a grave handicap for a horseman, which is also known to have affected some predecessors among the horsemen of rulers.[100]

This brief note shows how the life story and career of a leading amir like Qurqumās al-Shaʿbānī can be reduced, discredited, and even wiped out on the grounds of a deficiency in horsemanship. Judgmental references based on martial skills, as pointed out by Jo Van Steenbergen and Stijn Van Nieuwenhuyse, appear to be fundamental in the narrative construction of this amir's story and even integral to Ibn Taghrībirdī's discrete "politics of historical truth."[101]

Whatever the case may be, Ibn Taghrībirdī's keen commitment to the Turkish culture and his particular claims of a "Turkish-martial" identity tend to culminate when he proclaims himself to be "the memorialist and the censor"[102] of the ruling elite. His attempts to perform as the "self-appointed" memorialist of *"Dawlat al-Atrāk"* and its political elite are displayed clearly in his dynastic history *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* and in particular in connection with courtly issues. For instance, his constant references to court customs in the work, and the meticulous attention that he gives to the court protocols and ceremonial in particular, as well as to the ranks of various amirs and military troopers, show how he engages with that "memorialist" persona. Also of note are the vivid descriptions that he draws of official ceremonies held in the citadel or of outdoor processions and the brief notes that he provides, in each annal record, about the sultans' customary activities, such as the seasonal changing of clothing.[103]

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[100] Ibid., 157.

[101] In their study of the different narratives related to Qurqumās al-Shaʿbānī's career and downfall story, the latter researchers demonstrate how references to horsemanship skills in Ibn Taghrībirdī's account were "highly informative" to such an extent they would equate invocation of Quranic rulings used, in the same context, by al-Maqrīzī: ibid., 158.

[102] The latter expressions are the translation of the French "mémorialiste et censeur" which were used by Julien Loiseau to denote the importance of Ibn Taghrībirdī's writings as regards the Turkish military elite and its affairs. See: *Les Mamelouks,* 158, 176–77; "L'émir en sa maison," 119.

[103] *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 14:251, 15:69, 16:119, 133, 219, 227, 268, 297, 301, 307.

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Furthermore, his critical comments about the noncompliance of the late Turkish rulers and their entourage with the courtly customs, which he often refers to as "the customs" *(al-ʿādah)* or "the royal customs" *(ʿādat al-mulūk),* betray his aim to play the "censor" of the ruling elite.[104] One example worth mentioning here is the critical note that he provides about the visit to Siryāqūs, in which he states the following:

> The ceremonies of the visit to Siryâqaus had been like the ceremonies customary at the Race Course; the ceremonies of the Race Course were abolished by al-Malik aẓ-Ẓāhir [Barqūq], and those of Siryâqaus by al-Malik an-Nāṣir. Thereafter each succeeding sultan abolished some part of the institutions of Egypt, so that at the present time all the practices of former rulers have disappeared and the difference between the sultanate of Egypt and the vice-regency of Abulustân, for example, lies only in the title "sultanate" and the wearing of the cap—nothing more.[105]

By and large, the examples discussed above show how important the "Turkish-martial identity" was to Ibn Taghrībirdī's authorial self-fashioning and how it affected his practices as politics of historical writing.

Featuring the Erudite Historian

In examining how Ibn Taghrībirdī engaged with poetry in his writings some additional identity claims unfold. Conventional as it may seem, the frequent quotation of poetry, whether in the biographical sections of his works or in the yearly accounts of events, betrays his intention to appear as a polished man of letters. Apart from presenting his stories in a sophisticated style, in accordance with the dominant literary tastes, he actually intended to epitomize the image of the *adīb par excellence* before his audience. This self-positioning in an elite literary culture is expressed through a variety of textual and narrative forms. For instance, in his earliest writings, and especially in *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* the author seems more engaged in providing evidence of his training in literature. Thus, he frequently uses the *isnād* form to introduce his poetry quotations. The *"sanad"* of any given verses usually starts with *"anshadanā"* or *"wa-min naẓmihi anshadanā"* and explicitly refers to a particular *ijāzah* or "*samāʿ*" that he attained from different masters.[106]

[104] Ibid., 14:101, 15:10–11, 36, 303, 16:24, 55, 61, 306, 356, 387.

[105] Popper, *History of Egypt,* 1:153–54.

[106] *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī,* 1:142, 162, 2:27–28, 7:102–6, 248–49 , 373.

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Displaying the poems of his biographical subjects in some lengthy pages was another practice that he resorted to particularly in *Al-Manhal.*[107] In his annalistic account of events, Ibn Taghrībirdī proceeds differently since he employs poetic quotations, as a rhetorical device, to forward some critical comments upon events and characters' deeds. Therefore, it is quite common to find that verses are preceded, in the *Nujūm,* by a number of expressions, such as *"ka-qawl al-qāʾil"* or *"aḥsanu mā qīla fī hādhā al-maʿná"* or *"wa-lillāh darru al-qāʾil"* or even *"wa-kān ḥāluhu ka-qawl al-qāʾil,"* which operates as a connecting locution that links sections of poetry with narrative materials.[108] Among other instances that showcase the use of poetry for critical comments is the poetic jousting about the collapse of the minaret of the mosque of al-Muʾayyad Shaykh—in which notable scholars like Ibn Ḥajar and al-ʿAynī partook—that Ibn Taghrībirdī reports.[109] However, it is important to note that quotation of poetry was not only used for making summary remarks on events and characters. Occasionally, quoted poetry is followed by literary commentary on the figures of speech and rhetorical devices displayed in these verses.[110] Such comments were apparently intended by the author to be evidence of his literary credentials. On the whole, considering the general layout of the *Nujūm* and its narrative plot, it seems that poetry quotations were used to create breaks in the narrative that served both to soften the transitions between the author's intricate and entangled stories and to establish a *mise en scène* in which to place himself.[111] Poetic interludes, as can be seen from the above examples, gave Ibn Taghrībirdī space to perform as a polished litterateur or *adīb.*

Tracking Ibn Taghrībirdī's Narrative: The Tale of a Cairene Courtier

To reach a comprehensive reading of Ibn Taghrībirdī's personal narrative one must start by defining how his various textual maneuvers performed together as a coherent ensemble within a broader set of representations. This entails

[107] See for instance the biography of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ḥijāzī al-Miṣrī (d. 1470), a famous contemporary poet, in which Ibn Taghrībirdī dedicates almost 18 pages to one of the latter's poetry collections "Kurrās": ibid., 2:193–209.

[108] *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 2:127, 189, 11:57, 13:174, 14:181, 313, 15:437, 528, 16:229, 248, 308.

[109] Ibid., 14:75–76.

[110] See for instance the explanatory notice that he provides for some poetry verses quoted about the different arts displayed in the *maḥmal* processions *"sawq al-maḥmal":* ibid., 7:312.

[111] For further details about the role of poetry in the narrative plot and construction of events in Ibn Taghrībirdī's chronicles see: Li Guo, "Poetry and Storytelling," 189–200. For a broader idea about different uses of poetry quotations in Islamic historiography and how they lend authority to historical narratives see: Geert Jan Van Gelder, "Poetry in Historiography: Some Observations," in *Problems in Arabic Literature,* ed. Miklós Maróth (Piliscsaba, Hungary, 2004), 1–13.

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highlighting the distinctive aspects of his authorial self-fashioning as his way of proceeding. By examining the different maneuvers analyzed above, one can observe that Ibn Taghrībirdī's identity-shaping was performed through contrasts and criticism. Juggling multiple identities, from Muslim scholar to noble "knight" to erudite man, is one among many illustrative examples. Also of note is the way he uses criticism to shape a discrete authorial persona. In fact, the vehement criticism that Ibn Taghrībirdī directs either toward local scholars or toward his Turkish fellows is focused on their respective ignorance of Arabic or Turkish or of religious norms, and reveals his implied intention to stake out a singular identity.[112] His claim of singularity displays markedly when he speaks about his undertaking in writing history; not least when he declares in the prologue of the *Nujūm* that he, unlike some others, will not claim for his work any sultan, amir, or other.[113] Additional contrasts unfold when we compare the self-effacement that Ibn Taghrībirdī shows in the preambles of both *Al-Manhal* and *Al-Nujūm* and the self-aggrandizement that then comes out in the bodies of these texts.[114] The figure of the humble scholar that he tries to feature in the opening sections of these works, claiming no dedicatee and no addressee but himself, stands in sharp contrast to the image of the self-appointed writer that is displayed in the subsequent sections. His self-assured style comes into view especially clearly when he makes assertive statements via expressions like "for my part I say" *(wa-anā aqūl).*[115]

In brief, Ibn Taghrībirdī's method may hint at both his versatility as a writer and the melded nature of his personal narrative, which seems to be a perfect match with his background as a member of the sons of the elites, or *awlād al-nās.* One should remember that it was long assumed that scions of the military elite were a kind of "given middlemen," cultural brokers who stood between two classes and who allegedly found in writing and scholarship an alternative avenue

[112]See for instance the critical comments that he makes about the ignorance of notable scholars like Ibn Ḥajar and al-Maqrīzī, in dealing with the Turkish language and customs or about the distorted Arabic accent of some mamluk amirs and their nescience as regards the Islamic religion: *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 11:171–72, 226, 14:20–21, 243–45, 15:69.

[113]Ibid., 1:2.

[114]Regarding Ibn Taghrībirdī's attempt to feature the humble learned man in the preamble of these works, see above.

[115]*Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 3:128, 5:306, 14:209, 15:307, 423, 504. It has to be underlined that Ibn Taghrībirdī performed the self-appointed writer especially through criticism and assertive statements about the sultans and the Cairene court in general. For further comparison see for instance the biography of sultan Jaqmaq in *Mawrid al-laṭāfah,* in which he pointedly asserts that the latter was the most virtuous among the Turkish rulers via expressions such as: "and I know what I am talking about" *(wa-anā adrī mā aqūl): Mawrid al-laṭāfah,* 2:161.

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to assert their identity and gain social visibility.[116] Indeed, Ulrich Haarmann repeatedly pointed out in his surveys that the *awlād al-nās* were a marginalized group, squeezed between two firmly established classes: the local civilian elite and the Turkish ruling elite, with an informal status and with careers marked by frustration and blockades from both sides. As he underlined, their longing for acceptance and attempts to embrace the dominant culture are visible in both their writings and their careers.[117] In short, if considered from this holistic perspective, Ibn Taghrībirdī's narrative may appear as a melded tale of a man with a "hybrid identity," constantly in pursuit of self-assertion.[118] His claim of a multiple identity as well as the versatility that he shows in his writings can be read, in this light, as an attempt to comply with the expectations of both the Turkish ruling elite and the local scholars.

However, beyond this encompassing view, when we peer into his unstated assumptions about the Cairene court, the courtly entourage, and how things should be run in this particular context, we observe that his tale is perhaps not as "frustrated" as one might imagine and that meaning can be drawn out of its disparities. In other words, beneath this first layer of meaning that evinces the author's belonging to the sons of the elites or his presumed yearning for acceptance there is another layer that should be considered, notably the one referring to the Cairene court and to his unstated longing for courtly positions. In this regard, it should be stressed that Ibn Taghrībirdī's claim of the courtier's persona unfolds particularly in his chronicle *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah*. In many respects, this work was, more than any of his other compilations, "a work by a courtier for courtiers."[119] Actually, among his historiographical compilations, *Al-Nujūm* is the only one that was associated with a courtly figure, namely Sultan Jaqmaq's son and heir Muḥammad (d. 847/1444), who was declared to be its original dedicatee.[120] Moreover, as pointed out by Irmeli Perho, the basic structure of this chronicle, which was designedly divided into self-contained units corresponding

[116]Haarmann, "Joseph's Law," 61–62, 83; idem, "The Sons of Mamluks as Fief-Holders," 143–44; idem, "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage," 104–5, 109; idem, "The Writer as an Individual in Medieval Muslim Society," 85.

[117]See for instance Haarmann's survey of Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī's writings: "The Writer as an Individual," 83–84.

[118]For further details see: Haarmann, "The Sons of Mamluks as Fief-Holders," 143–44.

[119]Donald P. Little, "Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamluk epochs," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt,* vol. 1, *Islamic Egypt, 640–1517,* ed. Carl Petry (Cambridge, 1998), 439.

[120]*Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 15:504.

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to different sultans' periods of rule, evinces how it was managed for the purpose of reading in courtly sessions.[121]

In addition to that, Ibn Taghrībirdī's assumptions about the didactic function of history in this chronicle further shows its courtly orientations. In particular, his assertions about the leading role of the historian in guiding sultans to righteous rule subtly reveals his aim to occupy the same position held by Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī (762–855/1360–1451) in Barsbāy's court as the sultan's private counselor. In that respect, Ibn Taghrībirdī explicitly states that:

> He [al-ʿAynī] deterred him [Sultan Barsbāy] many times from acts of injustice, so that a remark made by al-Ashraf in public was often repeated, *"Had it not been for Cadi al-ʿAinî our Islam would not have been good and we would not know how to proceed in government." And because of what he heard through al-ʿAinî's reading of history to him, al-Ashraf could dispense with the council of the emirs in regard to important matters, for he became expert through listening to the experiences of past rulers. I say what al-Ashraf said in regard to al-ʿAinî is true;* for al-Ashraf when he became Sultan was uneducated and young in comparison with the rulers among the Turks who had been trained in slavery; for at that time he was something over forty years old, inexperienced in affairs, had not been put to the test. Al-ʿAinî by reading history to him educated him and taught him matters which he had been incapable of settling previously.... *For this reason al-ʿAinî was his greatest boon companion and the one nearest to him, despite the fact that he never mixed in government affairs; on the contrary, his sittings with him were devoted only to the reading of history, annals, and the like, and from that day I, too, had a liking for history, preferred it, and made it my occupation* [emphasis added].[122]

As can be seen here, beyond demonstrating to us how Ibn Taghrībirdī converted to history writing, these excerpts also point to his longing to be the sultan's advisor. To follow from that, he recalls elsewhere the particular attention shown by some emblematic rulers, like Sultan Baybars (r. 1260–77), toward his-

[121] Irmeli Perho "Ibn Taghrībirdī's stories," 137. Concerning the structure of *Al-Nujūm* and its layout, Ibn Taghrībirdī makes clear statements on how he arranged it in self-contained sections devoted to Egypt's rulers. Therein he declares: "for I proposed, in arranging the work, with its mention of king after king, that if he [Muḥammad ibn Jaqmaq] should become Sultan this work would be concluded with an account of him, in the manner of a biography, relating in detail the circumstances and·events of his life": Popper, *History of Egypt,* 5:192.

[122] Ibid., 4:158.

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tory. Thus, he states that Baybars "was keen on learning *Tārīkh* and very partial to historians; and he often says: 'hearing history is far more constructive than life-experiences.'"[123] Seemingly, the authoritative position in which history is held, in both excerpts, and the significant role assigned to the historian in terms of political guidance, was used to advance his claims. Ibn Taghrībirdī's longing to be the sultan's counselor comes into sight, more particularly, when he describes his close relationship with Jaqmaq's son and heir Muḥammad and how he was affected by his early death. In the latter's obituary Ibn Taghrībirdī openly expresses his regret about his passing, which he considers a salutary event and a misfortune. Therein he declares:

> [Muḥammad ibn Jaqmaq] used constantly to question me about abstruse, confused questions of history concerning which no one after him to the present day has ever questioned me.... It was on his account that I composed this work *[Nujūm],* without any command from him to write it.... I hinted this to him, and he almost flew for joy; then while we were engaged in this he was transferred to the mercy of God the Exalted; and my relations with him were as Masʿûd ibn Muḥammad the poet has said:
>
> As my father dear came my love to me, he was in
> disguise,
> but he saw the spies and he straightway turned and he
> fled afar;
> And to me it seemed as though I and he, and as also they
> were a hope and gain and between them death to their
> league was bar.[124]

Aside from that, the critical statements that he makes in the *Nujūm* regarding some high amirs he rubbed shoulders with at Barsbāy's court or about certain figures from the courtly entourage of Sultan Jaqmaq can be considered from this same perspective: as unstated claims for courtly positions. For instance, in his depictions of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Rūmī, a Hanafi scholar and close companion of Sultan Jaqmaq, Ibn Taghrībirdī lays a particular emphasis on his defects and worthlessness. According to him, although he was successful in gaining the favor of many sultans, al-Rūmī was nothing but a man devoid of knowledge and merit, and it was above all due to chance and the blindness of sultans that he achieved such an influential position. With regard to this he states:

[123] *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 7:182.

[124] Popper, *History of Egypt,* 5:191–92.

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> he had attained good fortune from the rulers of Egypt, particularly from al-Malik aẓ-Ẓâhir Jaqmaq; in his reign he became extremely influential; prosperity came to him, and he was reckoned as one of the leaders, although he was not worthy of this. *But the rulers of our time are like the blind; one puts his hand on the shoulder of another and whatever moves the first one makes the second move in the same way* [emphasis added]. The first one who favored this Shams ad-Dîn was aẓ-Ẓâhir Ṭaṭar; and all the Sultans who came after him copied him in favoring Shams ad-Dîn...."[125]

It should be noted, however, that Shams al-Dīn al-Rūmī's portrayal in the *Nujūm* seems biased when compared to his depiction in *Ḥawādith al-duhūr* or in contemporary works like *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ* of al-Sakhāwī. In the *Ḥawādith,* for example, he is presented in a far more neutral manner as an influential man who was favored by many sultans, and in particular by Sultan Jaqmaq, during whose reign he became the "go-to person" for state affairs *(al-mushāru ilayhi fī al-dawlah).*[126] Interestingly, in the latter chronicle Ibn Taghrībirdī did not charge him with ignorance and instead confirmed that this al-Rūmī was skilled in writing the proportionated script *(al-khaṭṭ al-mansūb)* and conversant in history and literature.[127] In the same vein, this al-Rūmī was depicted in *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ* as a man of many qualities. As reported by al-Sakhāwī, apart from being virtuous and decent al-Rūmī was quite familiar with the courtly etiquette and the art of addressing sultans *(dariban bi-ṣuḥbat al-mulūk),* not to mention his broad knowledge of history, literature, and other matters.[128] It is therefore clear that his depiction in *Al-Nujūm* was designed to serve Ibn Taghrībirdī's personal agenda, most of all his claims for a similar career in the Cairene court. In another respect, this shows how he engaged with a different persona in the *Nujūm,* which appears distinct from the persona of the historian that he performed in *Ḥawādith al-duhūr.*[129]

Among other instances that showcase his engagement with that discrete persona is the biographical depiction provided in *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah* for Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn al-Aqṭaʿ, the governor of Alexandria and one of the close companions of Sultan Barsbāy.[130] Interestingly, when he sets forth the latter's life-trajectory and career, Ibn Taghrībīrdī goes somewhat beyond mere criticism to

[125] Ibid., 5:233.

[126] *Ḥawādith al-duhūr,* 2:347–48.

[127] Ibid., 348.

[128] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 10:112.

[129] For further details about the disparities between both chronicles see: Donald P. Little, "Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamluk epochs," 439–40.

[130] See *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 15:170–71.

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define, although implicitly, how a sultan's advisor and companion should be. Hence, he starts his accounts on Shihāb al-Dīn with pinpointing his low origin, specifically the fact that he was the son of a low ranking mamluk who served as a groom in the royal stables. His father's name, al-Aqṭaʿ, refers, Ibn Taghrībirdī argued, to his humble background, since it suggests that "he was a man one of whose hands had been cut off and who made his living by begging."[131] In addition to that, Ibn Taghrībirdī brings into focus Shihāb al-Dīn's complete ignorance in quite original ways. He confirms that Ibn al-Aqṭaʿ was not only devoid of any knowledge but not even able to pronounce words correctly, a fact that he came to notice upon his close acquaintance with him. He states that

> Aḥmad also when he spoke pronounced words in the manner of the common market keepers; I often sat with him at the court services, and I did not find that he had a knowledge of any branch of science or any kind of learning. And when he undertook to use the niceties and subtleties of speech he would change the pronunciation of a word and say "bi-tisrad shai"; and I would tell him privately that he should say "tisrat," and make plain to him that it is an alteration of "tishrab"; he would understand it after much effort, then after a long time he would forget it and again enunciate it with *d;* and I do think that he continued this until he died.[132]

Furthermore, when he traces the latter's career and his rise from serving troopers to holding high positions in Barsbāy's court,[133] he insinuates it was due to favoritism and to sultans' blind partiality for pretentious attendants[134] in their court. In this respect, Ibn Taghrībirdī declares:

> I do not know for what reason this Aḥmad and ʿAlî Ibn Fuḥaima as-Silâkhûrî ["the fodderer"] won favor with the Sultan [Barsbāy] despite the fact that they both *combined in themselves extreme ignorance, an ugly appearance, and low origin* [emphasis added].[135]

Beyond possible bias or personal claims, these statements highlight Ibn Taghrībirdī's conception of the proper comportment of a sultan's companion

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[131] Popper, *History of Egypt,* 4:189.

[132] Ibid., 190.

[133] Ibid., 189–90.

[134] Regarding the pretentious attitude of Ibn al-Aqṭaʿ Ibn Taghrībirdī specifies that: "he was pretentious, made claims to knowledge and wisdom, especially when he would cite the proverbs of the lower classes, for the Turks would admire this, praise his taste, knowledge, extensive learning, and excellence in carrying on a conversation with him." Ibid., 190.

[135] Ibid.

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and court attendant. It is arguable that his criticism of Ibn al-Aqṭaʿ and ʿAlī Ibn Fuḥaymah may be an attempt to present himself, in juxtaposition to them, as the perfect candidate for court attendance and courtly offices.[136] Nevertheless, the defects that he ascribes to them, such as ignorance, ugly appearance, and low origin, hint at a number of qualities which he presumably considers necessary for a court attendant. Read in reverse, these defects could indicate the ideal model that he propounds. Seemingly, from his point of view a court attendant, and in a more specific context the sultan's companion and counselor, should be a man of knowledge whose expertise covers varying fields. For as he demonstrates through the example of Ibn al-Aqṭaʿ, a court attendant ought to instigate and perpetuate constructive discussions with the sultan,[137] must be a physically attractive person who cares about grooming and manners, and, finally, should come from good stock and not be a commoner like Ibn Fuḥaymah.[138] On the other side of the coin, Ibn Taghrībirdī's statements about Ibn al-Aqṭaʿ may have some didactic bearing. We cannot discount the possibility that he tried to offer, through the latter's story with Barsbāy, an instructive example for subsequent sultans and perhaps even to indicate to them how to choose court attendants appropriately.

The courtier's persona that Ibn Taghrībirdī tried to set in broad strokes, or that he perhaps aimed to feature throughout the *Nujūm,* was not utterly absent from his other works. Though markedly more visible and quite entrenched in *Al-*

[136] Yet al-Marjī's depiction of Ibn Taghrībirdī's personality and innumerable virtues invokes an opposite model. In fact, in stark contrast with the latter courtiers, he is said to be "a man of pleasant appearance, affable in companionship, and a good conversationalist; and with a reputation, besides, for piety and moral uprightness." Ibid., 1:xviii.

[137] Ibn Taghrībirdī demonstrates through this example how important it is for a court attendant to be practiced in conversing with sultans and a courtly audience. For further details see the author's reports of his private talks with Ibn al-Aqṭaʿ and the latter's middling discussions in court services and gatherings: ibid., 190.

[138] It should be noted that Ibn Taghrībirdī's assumptions about the chief qualities required in a court attendant have some common ground with the criteria established, in other contexts, by Renaissance courtiers, specifically by Baldesar Castiglione (1478–1529). In his "libro del cortegiano" (The Book of the Courtier) the latter evokes in more elaborate and sharp terms the defining features of the perfect courtier. Among other chief conditions and qualities that he mentions are: first, the noble origin of a courtier, who has to be well-born; second, he should be well-spoken and fair-languaged so that he can be wise and make a good appearance in his discourses upon political affairs; and third, he has to be good looking and cleanly in his apparel. Although Ibn Taghrībirdī's assumptions and ideals regarding court attendants appear less elaborate, they still share some common features or at least a similar conception that correlate with the sophisticated model propound by Castiglione. See: Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier: The Singleton Translation,* ed. Daniel Javitch (New York, 2002), 21–30, 35. For further details about the profile and the ethics of rulers' counselors see: Stephen Kolsky, *Courts and Courtiers in Renaissance Northern Italy* (Farnham, 2003), 5–29, 34–60.

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Nujūm, the author's courtly orientations did extend to his other writings, not least to his second chronicle, *Ḥawādith al-duhūr.* As a continuation of al-Maqrīzī's *Sulūk,* the latter chronicle actually retained the traditional annalistic format. In view of its general layout and the nature of the data it offers,[139] the *Ḥawādith* seems less court-oriented than *Al-Nujūm* or *Al-Manhal.* Being written in a different context and for a different audience, it followed other designs and purposes. It would appear that it was arranged to fit Ibn Taghrībirdī's claim for his master's legacy. This is clearly displayed in its prologue, especially when the author positions himself as the legitimate heir of al-Maqrīzī (766–845/1364–1442).[140] However, while trying to epitomize the seasoned historian, Ibn Taghrībirdī remained relatively swayed by the courtier's persona. His occasional references in *Ḥawādith al-duhūr* to Turkish names and their Arabic meanings (such as Bīnī Bāziq, which he renders as "the thick-necked man" *[ghalīẓ al-raqabah])* betray close parallels to the court-oriented tone that prevails in his *Nujūm.*[141] In addition, critical comments, such as the concerns he voices regarding the abolition of many courtly customs and offices by later sultans, show how he reverts, although occasionally, to that courtier persona. For example, when he reports in the yearly account of 855/1451 that Sultan Jaqmaq repealed the Thursday court service *(khidmat yawm al-khamīs),* he goes into great detail listing the bulk of court rituals that were abolished by different sultans from Barqūq to Jaqmaq and specifying how consecutive abolition measures taken by the latter sultan had impaired the prestige of the sultanate.[142] With regard to this he states:

> Since he [Jaqmaq] ascended the throne to this very day he, unlike other Turkish rulers, abolished many of the symbols of royal authority *(shiʿār al-mamlakah).* For indeed the last Turkish rulers

[139] In the same vein as al-Maqrīzī's *Al-Sulūk,* the latter chronicle offers more details about the economic life in Egypt. Prices of goods and fluctuations in their production are included in almost each yearly account. For further comparison with *Al-Nujūm* see the yearly account of 859/1454 in both chronicles: *Ḥawādith al-duhūr,* 2:515–48; *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 16:84–94.

[140] With regard to this, Ibn Taghrībirdī states that after al-Maqrīzī's death the scene was left without any reliable master. Save for Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī, who himself became less proficient at recording events given his advanced age, there was no other reliable historian to mention. Seeing that, he decided to continue his master's project and to compile a chronography starting from 845/1441: *Ḥawādith al-duhūr,* 1:32.

[141] Ibid., 1:106. The brief explanation that Ibn Taghrībirdī provides for Bīnī Bāziq's name is one of the rare cases that we came upon in *Ḥawādith al-duhūr.* However, it remains a significant hint as it recalls similar and more frequent indications interspersed in the *Nujūm,* which represent some of its salient courtly features.

[142] Ibid., 2:339. It should be noted here that the abolition of the Thursday court service was exclusively mentioned in the *Ḥawādith.* In *al-Nujūm* there is no allusion whatsoever evoking this event in the yearly record of 855/1451. For more details see: *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah,* 15:432–39.

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> abrogated some of the practices of former rulers. And the first who began to repeal these good features *(al-maḥāsin)* was al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Barqūq, who abolished race courses a long time after his enthronement. Then al-Malik al-Nāṣir Faraj abolished the visit to Siryāqūs and then al-Malik al-Muʾayyad Shaykh abolished the vice-regency of Egypt, and so al-Malik al-Ashraf Barsbāy abolished the adornment of ships during the breaking of the dam *(kasr al-baḥr),* meaning during the Nile inundation; but what al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq has abolished was numerous.[143]

Following that, Ibn Taghrībirdī specifies that among other important royal symbols Jaqmaq revoked is the guard of the lady *(nawbat khātūn),* which used to beat the drums at the Citadel at sunrise and sunset. According to him this daily ceremony lent the sultanate "pomp and greatness; also it spread fear and prestige among those who have no knowledge of the ascent to the Citadel. And all that has vanished."[144] What can be observed here is that Ibn Taghrībirdī is, as suggested above, converting to the role of the "censor" of the ruling elite[145] that he often played in *Al-Nujūm*. Overall, these instances—even if they are sporadic and infrequent—further show how attached he remained to the courtier persona and its particular approach. Perhaps this is understandable if we consider that Ibn Taghrībirdī's vocation as a historian was deeply affected by his personal experience in Barsbāy's court and most importantly by al-ʿAynī's achievement in that court. All in all, if considered from the inner perspective of his unstated intentions and in particular his longing for a courtly career, Ibn Taghrībīrdī's versatility as a historian can be read differently. Hence, we may regard the multiplicity of authorial voices and identities on display in his writings, particularly but not exclusively in the *Nujūm,* as an attempt to fulfill the expectations of the courtly audience he addressed.

[143] *Ḥawādith al-duhūr,* 2:340. Similar instances and statements can be often found in *Al-Nujūm*. Regarding the abolition of the visit to Siryāqūs, for example, Ibn Taghrībirdī declares, in a similar vein and in almost identical words, that: "the ceremonies of the Race Course were abolished by al-Malik aẓ-Ẓâhir, and those of Siryâqaus by al-Malik an-Nâṣir. Thereafter each succeeding sultan abolished some part of the institutions of Egypt, so that at the present time all the practices of former rulers have disappeared and the difference between the sultanate of Egypt and the vice-regency of Abulustân, for example, lies only in the title 'sultanate' and the wearing of the cap—nothing more." Popper, *History of Egypt,* 1:154.

[144] *Ḥawādith al-duhūr,* 1:339–40. Regarding *"nawbat khātūn"* and court ceremonials in general see: Jo Van Steenbergen, "Ritual, politics and the city in Mamluk Cairo: the Bayna l-Qasrayn as a Dynamic Lieu de Mémoire, 1250–1382," in *Court Ceremonies and Ritual of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean,* ed. Alexander Beihammer, Stavroula Constantinou, and Maria Parani (Leiden, 2013), 227–77.

[145] Julien Loiseau, *Les Mamelouks,* 158.

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Concluding Remarks

To consider Ibn Taghrībirdī's life and career in a new light, we shifted our attention away from the stereotypical representations constructed around him in medieval accounts and modern renderings concerned with his achievements as a historian. Instead, we examined his own narrative and highlighted particular circumstances as the individual intentions that determined his historiographical enterprise. By identifying and scrutinizing different narrative techniques and textual maneuvers that engage with his authorial identity, we are able to elucidate the development of Ibn Taghrībirdī's subtle though deliberate methods of historical writing, particularly the way he tended to negotiate multiple and contrasting identities and, accordingly, to cast himself in different roles, such as Muslim scholar, notable Turkish strongman *par excellence,* polished litterateur. These self-fashioning maneuvers made it possible to observe both how he created a powerful aura around his authorial persona and how he built up his authority as a historian.

Analysis of his identity-shaping maneuvers allows us to consider self-fashioning as an authorial practice that engages with a whole process of meaning-making that involves not only the production of the author's individual identity but also of the social and cultural environment within which he operates. By considering this we came to decipher the entangled meanings of Ibn Taghrībirdī's personal narrative, which appeared, on a first reading, as the tale of a *walad al-nās,* a "son of the elite," whose hybrid identity transpired through contrasting and diverse claims. However, when placed in a broader semantic context, this melded tale transforms into a coherent narrative: that of the Cairene courtier. Seen from that particular perspective, the versatility of Ibn Taghrībirdī as a writer and his whole undertaking as a historian can be read as an attempt to comply with the expectations of the highly competitive milieu of the constantly changing courts of several sultans. His self-fashioning can be regarded as artful maneuvers aimed at social advancement and mobility in the Cairene court. Beyond its entangled meanings and puzzling contrasts, the polysemic personal narrative of Ibn Taghrībirdī skillfully mirrors the cosmopolitan world localized and reflected by the medieval Cairene court.

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How to Make it in Cairo: The Early Career of Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqāʿī

Introduction

How it all went wrong for Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqāʿī (809–85/1406–80), a fifteenth-century Quran exegete and historian active in Cairo, has been well covered. Modern scholarship has discussed in detail the downward trajectory of his later career from 868/1464, in which his embroilment in two controversies—respectively on the use of the Bible in *tafsīr* and the poetry of Ibn al-Fāriḍ—so eroded his position in Cairene society that he was forced to flee to Damascus in 880/1475. A third controversy—on the theodicy of al-Ghazālī—incensed the Damascene populace, and he died destitute in 885/1480.[1] While charting his declining fortunes reveals much about the religio-intellectual environment in which he operated, these three episodes all date from after al-Biqāʿī had succeeded in securing himself a position in Cairo as the resident Quran exegete at the Ẓāhirīyah Mosque, and also as first the personal tutor of Sultan Jaqmaq and then as a confidant of Sultan Īnāl. The issue, however, of how it all went *right* for al-Biqāʿī is relatively overlooked.

This article is aimed at two complementary purposes. Firstly, it will provide an overview of how al-Biqāʿī sought to increase the social and cultural capital

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[1] For the Bible controversy, see in particular Walid A. Saleh, "A Fifteenth-Century Muslim Hebraist: Al-Biqāʿī and His Defense of Using the Bible to Interpret the Qurʾān," *Speculum* 83, no. 3 (2008): 629–54. For an edition of al-Biqāʿī's treatise in defense of the Bible, see Walid A. Saleh, *In Defense of the Bible: A Critical Edition and an Introduction to Al-Biqāʿī's Bible Treatise,* Islamic History and Civilization, v. 73 (Leiden, 2008). For the controversy over the poetry of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, see Th. Emil Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn al-Fāriḍ, His Verse, and His Shrine,* Studies in Comparative Religion (Columbia, SC, 1994), 55–75. For al-Biqāʿī's involvement in the debate on the best possible world, see Eric L. Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute Over Al-Ghazālī's "Best of All Possible Worlds"* (Princeton, 1984), 135–60.

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resources which he had at his disposal to build and expand the social network that underpinned his career in Cairo, and which subsequently crumbled under the weight of the later controversies. In doing so, it will outline in more detail al-Biqāʿī's origins, before moving to discuss the key relationships—particularly his patron-client relationships—he established and how these facilitated his making his way in Cairo. Having done so, it will turn to its second purpose: namely, it will argue that the descriptive reconstruction of al-Biqāʿī's life and career should be read against the interpretative frameworks employed by the authors of our sources, and that doing so leads to a deeper understanding of not only al-Biqāʿī himself, but of the social contexts in which he operated.

A Fruitful Tension

When discussing the life of al-Biqāʿī, invaluable testimony is provided by his *ʿUnwān al-zamān bitarājim al-shuyūkh wa-al-aqrān*, a biographical dictionary of his shaykhs and peers.[2] The *ʿUnwān al-zamān* contains biographies of his father, ʿUmar ibn Ḥasan al-Rubāṭ,[3] one of his uncles, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan al-Rubāṭ,[4] and an autobiography.[5] This can be supplemented by al-Biqāʿī's chronicle, the *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr li-asrār ahl al-ʿaṣr,* which contains considerable autobiographical material.[6] Aside from al-Biqāʿī's own writings, the following discussion also relies heavily upon *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ* of al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497).

[2]Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān bi-tarājim al-shuyūkh wa-al-aqrān,* ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 2001), 2:61–85. This edition of the *ʿUnwān al-zamān* is incomplete, and it is not clear upon which manuscripts it is based. In the preparation of this article, I have therefore relied primarily upon two manuscripts of the *ʿUnwān al-zamān*—Köprülü Kütüphanesi MS Köprülü 1119, and Maulana Azad Library MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40—which date from the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries respectively. Nevertheless, I have included references to the edition, which is more readily available. MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40 includes additions by al-Biqāʿī, which are otherwise absent in both the edition and the MS Köprülü 1119. On the problematic nature of the edition, see Muḥammad Ajmal Ayyūb al-Iṣlāḥī, *Fihrist muṣannafāt al-Biqāʿī: ʿan nuskhah manqūlah min khaṭṭih* (Riyadh, 2005), 171.

[3]MS Köprülü 1119, fols. 184r–v; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 4:116–18.

[4]MS Köprülü 1119, fols. 7v–8r; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fols. 12v–13r; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 1:66–67.

[5]MS Köprülü 1119, fols. 71v–79r; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fols. 96r–107r; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 2:61–85. On the autobiography, see Kenneth A. Goudie, "Al-Biqāʿī's Self-Reflection: A Preliminary Study of the Autobiographical in his *ʿUnwān al-Zamān,*" in *New Readings in Arabic Historiography from Late Medieval Egypt and Syria,* ed. Jo Van Steenbergen and Maya Termonia (Leiden, forthcoming).

[6]Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar al-Biqāʿī, *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr li-asrār ahl al-ʿaṣr: Tārīkh al-Biqāʿī,* ed. Muḥammad Sālim ibn Shadīd ʿAwfī (Riyadh, 1992). On the autobiographical material in the *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr,* see Li Guo, "Al-Biqāʿī's Chronicle: A Fifteenth Century Learned Man's Reflection on His Time and World," in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt, C.950–1800,* ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden, 2001), 121–48; idem,

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Al-Sakhāwī had both a dislike of and obsession with al-Biqāʿī: his biography of al-Biqāʿī veritably drips with invective, and he also includes the biographies of many people who crossed paths with al-Biqāʿī. This, coupled with the scope of *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ*, makes it an invaluable resource in reconstructing the network of connections that al-Biqāʿī made.

Of course, these sources cannot be treated as disinterested and innocent witnesses that mimetically reproduce the historical reality of al-Biqāʿī's career. Rather, they should be understood as carefully crafted literary works in their own rights, which served as a means through which their authors could mediate their own perspectives and understandings of that reality. What this means for our present purpose is that we are ultimately not in the process of reconstructing al-Biqāʿī's social advancement as it actually happened, but rather how and in what ways his social advancement was perceived by both al-Biqāʿī himself and by his greatest rival. To do so requires a deeper understanding of the interpretative frameworks employed by al-Biqāʿī and al-Sakhāwī.

Turning first to al-Biqāʿī's writings, the *ʿUnwān al-zamān* is essentially a record of al-Biqāʿī's intellectual development: it was designed to emphasize his membership in the intellectual elite by memorializing and stressing those links he had established with other scholars. In this regard, the autobiography—the core of which was written in 841/1437, shortly before he secured his first appointments as the *mufassir* of the Ẓāhirīyah Mosque and as Sultan Jaqmaq's personal tutor—is a distillation of the *ʿUnwān al-zamān:* it stresses those relationships and links that al-Biqāʿī prized over all others. Yet this is only one way in which we can read the autobiography: as I have argued elsewhere, it can be read not merely as a description and justification of his membership amongst the intellectual elite, but also as an attempt to semiotize his life.[7] In the autobiography, al-Biqāʿī frames his life as fundamentally guided by God and defined by trial and hardship, particularly the death of his father and the opposition that he faced in Cairo; he overcomes these with the assistance of God, and it is through God's will that he achieves his successes.

This sense of divine immanence continues in al-Biqāʿī's *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr*, which Li Guo has argued was fundamentally eschatological, being concerned with the internal turmoil and self-destruction that al-Biqāʿī saw as endemic in fifteenth-century Cairene society.[8] He further argues that al-Biqāʿī interpreted his own life within the context of this eschatological outlook. Simply put, al-Biqāʿī saw the

"Tales of a Medieval Cairene Harem: Domestic Life in al-Biqāʿī's Autobiographical Chronicle," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 9, no. 1 (2005): 101–21.

[7]Goudie, "Al-Biqāʿī's Self-Reflection: A Preliminary Study of the Autobiographical in his *ʿUnwān al-Zamān*."

[8]Guo, "Al-Biqāʿī's Chronicle," 139.

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trials and tribulations he underwent as parallels to the trials and tribulations of the Muslim community-at-large: just as the Muslims would be triumphant, so too would he triumph over his opponents and detractors. In both cases, Guo argues, this is because the eventual triumph of al-Biqāʿī and the Muslim community-at-large was predictable in accordance with God's divine plan.[9] Thus, when approaching any of al-Biqāʿī's more historically-minded works, we need to recognize that these works—the autobiography in a more explicit way, but the *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr* also—are not simply descriptions of al-Biqāʿī's life, to be mined uncritically for biographical information, but attempts to reify the very story they purport to describe: they are not merely witnesses but actors in their own right.

The same can be said about al-Sakhāwī's *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ*. The writing of biographical collections is fundamental to the formation and maintenance of group identities: the periodic updating and compilation of these works is an attempt to assert continuity between the present and the past, because the present gains its authority by virtue of the weight of memory. More than this, however, biographical collections of contemporaries are attempts to direct the transition from communicative memory to cultural memory. Where communicative memory exists in the everyday and has a relatively short time depth, stretching back no further than eighty years, cultural memory is preserved and re-embodied to subsequent generations through mnemonic institutions such as monuments, museums, and archives—like biographical dictionaries. Further, where communicative memory is diffuse and egalitarian, cultural memory is specialized and tends towards elitism: it requires specialists for its preservation and transmission.[10] While both are shared by a group of people, cultural memory conveys to these people a collective *cultural* identity. Thus, biographical collections sought to control the continued maintenance and development of the group's identity by setting the boundaries of the imagined community: inclusion in such works was the means whereby an individual had his position within the imagined community substantiated.

In this context, al-Sakhāwī's biography of al-Biqāʿī, as voyeuristic and vitriolic as it is, is not merely the invective of a man against his erstwhile arch-rival, but an attempt to write *his* opinion of al-Biqāʿī as *the* opinion of al-Biqāʿī. This is, in many ways, more invidious than a simple attempt at *damnatio memoriae,* for rather than simply exclude al-Biqāʿī, al-Sakhāwī instead opts to defame. He paints a portrait of a vainglorious and deceitful man who was "ruined by his pride, his vanity, and his desire for rank and reputation,"[11] all of which led him to overreach and go far

[9] Ibid.

[10] The demarcation of two conceptual categories of collective memory arises from the research of Jan Assmann. On this, see Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies,* ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin, 2010), 109–18.

[11] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ* (Beirut, 1966), 1:103.

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beyond the limits of his intellect: according to al-Sakhāwī, al-Biqāʿī composed no works at all and failed even to complete his studies of the six canonical collections of hadith. In short, al-Biqāʿī was no scholar, merely a scribe and a children's tutor, a peasant interloper who could not even read Arabic correctly.

Much of this is, of course, half-truth, which reveals a tension between what we might consider the historical reality of al-Biqāʿī—that he was an accomplished scholar whom Ibn Ḥajar patronized—and al-Sakhāwī's hatred of al-Biqāʿī. Indeed, this biography was but one of a number of tools with which al-Sakhāwī sought to discredit his arch-rival: al-Sakhāwī also composed a work titled *Aḥsan al-masāʿī fī īḍāḥ ḥawādith al-Biqāʿī,*[12] which was devoted to enumerating and outlining the scandals in which al-Biqāʿī was involved. Unfortunately the work does not survive, but the fact that it was written in the first place speaks to the depths of al-Sakhāwī's feelings. Read in this way and in this context, al-Sakhāwī's *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ* is not merely a description of fifteenth-century society, but al-Sakhāwī's attempt to define how that society—and members of that society—should be remembered.

The contention of this article is that the tension and contradiction between these two emplotments of the historical reality of al-Biqāʿī, between al-Biqāʿī's divinely-ordained self and al-Sakhāwī's shameless charlatan, is not an insurmountable obstacle in the recovery of the historical reality of al-Biqāʿī. Rather, by recognizing how thoroughly entangled our authors and texts are and by appreciating their discursive strategies and intentions, we can arrive at a more nuanced understanding of al-Biqāʿī's life. What follows is an interpretation of these sources, after which we will return to the issue of their historicity.

From Humble Origins

Turning first to al-Biqāʿī's origins, he was born into humble circumstances, with neither impressive genealogy nor wealth to ease his social advancement. In his autobiography, al-Biqāʿī begins with an extended discussion of his genealogy. After providing his full genealogy—Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar ibn Ḥasan al-Rubāṭ ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Bakr—al-Biqāʿī positions himself within the Banū Ḥasan, which comprised three branches: the Banū Yūnus, the Banū ʿAlī, and the Banū Makkī. Although the Banū Ḥasan originated in the village of Khirbat Rūḥā in al-Biqāʿ al-ʿAzīzī, where al-Biqāʿī himself was born, the three branches were broadly dispersed through al-Shām and Egypt, though the largest contingent seems to have resided in Khirbat Rūḥā.[13] Al-Biqāʿī's immediate family, however—including both his father and his uncle—were uncertain of their genealogy beyond Abū Bakr, al-

[12] Ibid., 8:17.

[13] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 71v; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fol. 96r; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 2:61.

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Biqāʿī's great-great-grandfather. Al-Biqāʿī surmises that they were members of the Banū Makkī. He reached this conclusion by comparing his genealogy with those of two of his relatives, whom he calls his *ibn ʿamm*. As his relatives—Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn Makkī ibn ʿUthmān ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥasan and ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn ʿAlī ibn Yūnus ibn Ḥasan—both count only four generations between themselves and Ḥasan, and that because they claim descent from ʿAlī ibn Ḥasan and Yūsuf ibn Ḥasan respectively, al-Biqāʿī argues that he must be descended from Makkī ibn Ḥasan.

Additionally, al-Biqāʿī notes that while no one in the Banū Ḥasan could outline their genealogy beyond Ḥasan, he had been told that they "traced their genealogy to Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ al-Zuhrī, one of those who will witness Paradise," and that the uncle of Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan believed that they had a *nisbah* which confirmed this.[14] That the Banū Ḥasan were descended from Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqās was likely a family myth or legend, but the attraction to him is nevertheless obvious. He was one of the first Muslims and—as al-Biqāʿī himself tells us—one of those to whom paradise had been promised.[15] Furthermore, the Prophet was reported to have acknowledged him as his maternal uncle; Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqās and the Prophet's mother, Āminah bint Wahb, were both members of the Banū Zuhrah, a clan of the Quraysh.[16] Al-Biqāʿī's attempts to discover this *nisbah*, however, were confounded. While traveling toward Āmid with Ibn Ḥajar as part of the 836/1433 campaign of al-Ashraf Barsbāy against Qarā Yulūk, he asked a group of his relatives in Damascus about the *nisbah;* although they deemed it credible, the *nisbah* itself was unknown.[17]

Turning to al-Biqāʿī's immediate kin, although no member of his family beyond his father's generation is included in the *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* the biographies of his father and uncle allow us to reconstruct to some extent the context of his family. His father, ʿUmar ibn Ḥasan al-Rubāṭ, was born after 780/1378–79 in Khirbat Rūḥā and had six brothers: three of these—Abū Bakr, Dāwūd, and Muḥammad Suwayd—were full brothers; the other three—Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad, Yūsuf, and ʿAlī—were paternal brothers. Concerning his grandfather, Ḥasan al-Rubāṭ, al-Biqāʿī explains that he earned his *laqab,* al-Rubāṭ, because he was very tall and people compared

[14] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 71v; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fol. 96r–v; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 2:62.

[15] Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-kabīr,* ed. Bashshār ʿAwwad Maʿrūf (Beirut, 1996), 6:100, no. 3747; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah,* ed. Bashshār ʿAwwad Maʿrūf (Beirut, 1998), 144, no. 133; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd,* ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnaʾūṭ and Muḥammad Kāmil Qarah Balilī (Damascus, 2009), 7:46, no. 4649.

[16] Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-kabīr,* 6:104, no. 3752.

[17] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 71v; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fol. 96v; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 2:62. For more on his genealogy, see Goudie, "Al-Biqāʿī's Self-Reflection: A Preliminary Study of the Autobiographical in his *ʿUnwān al-zamān*."

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him to a rope: the *ḍammah* in place of the *kasrah* was due to their speech being ungrammatical.[18] Otherwise, all Biqāʿī knew about his grandfather was that "he was the bravest of the people of that country, the most persistent in wounding, and the most attractive in appearance."[19]

The biography of his father is essentially a laudation of the man, wherein al-Biqāʿī praises him as a paragon of virtue, intellect, and martial ability. It reads as a touching tribute to his father, though in terms of factual—and I use the term loosely—material, it is somewhat lacking. The main impression that emerges from it is how close to violence the family lived: one story describes how his father faced sixty mounted men, all of whom were afraid of him.[20] The main value of his father's biography, however, is the detail it provides concerning the formative event of al-Biqāʿī's childhood. In Shaʿbān 821/September 1418, his family was attacked by an unnamed group who murdered his father, two uncles, and six other relatives.[21] The event comes into sharper focus through his father's biography: although the perpetrators are still unnamed, we are told that it was his uncles ʿAlī and Muḥammad Suwayd who were killed, and that the killers dumped their bodies in a well near the village of al-Shamsīyah in "the lands of the Rāfiḍah."[22] This led to two years of wandering until his mother and maternal grandfather took him to Damascus in 823/1420, whereupon he embarked upon his *riḥlah fī ṭalab al-ʿilm*.

Alongside this violence, however, we learn that his uncle, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad, was a *faqīh*. Born sometime after the year 770/1368–69 in Khirbat Rūḥā, Aḥmad devoted himself to the memorization of the Quran and developed beautiful handwriting: so beautiful was his handwriting that he became skillful in the art of letter writing and supported himself by penning letters for the Turkmen.[23] Before his death, which al-Biqāʿī places somewhat uncertainly before 820/1417–18, he taught al-Biqāʿī how to write: al-Biqāʿī describes the relationship as beneficial. Al-Biqāʿī returned the favor when, in 840/1437, one of Aḥmad's sons, Yūsuf, traveled to Cairo: al-Biqāʿī taught him penmanship for roughly a month, before Yūsuf demonstrated an aptitude for bookbinding and returned to Damascus.[24]

The impression that al-Biqāʿī gives is that his family lived a relatively common life, which makes his rise to prominence particularly striking. While previous scholarship, notably the work of Michael Chamberlain and Ira M. Lapidus, argued

[18] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 7v; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fol. 12v; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 1:66.

[19] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 184r; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 4:116.

[20] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 184r; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 4:116.

[21] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 184v; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 4:118.

[22] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 184v; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 4:118.

[23] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 7v; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fol. 12v; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 1:66.

[24] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 8r; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fols. 12r–13v; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 1:67.

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that membership in the ulama was relatively open, with there being no strong barriers to advancement,[25] the more recent work of Irmeli Perho has demonstrated that Muslim society was not quite as egalitarian and open to social mobility as had previously been believed. Drawing upon Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's *Al-Durar al-kāminah fī aʿyān al-miʾah al-thāminah,* Perho demonstrates how a number of commoners advanced their position in life. While individual merits, particularly intelligence and literacy, were important ingredients in social advancement, they were not enough to guarantee it. Success stories like al-Biqāʿī's were few and far between: the trajectory of al-Biqāʿī's cousin, Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan al-Rubāṭ, wherein there was a gradual increase of status across generations, was likely the more typical.[26]

While gradual mobility across generations was likely the experience of most people attempting to climb the social ladder, Perho provides examples of three ways in which this process might be accelerated: through the development of a network of contacts; through the combination of talent and patronage; and through the accumulation of wealth. Al-Biqāʿī relied upon his intellectual merits, which, as Perho notes, required a network of contacts if they were to be fully and profitably exploited.[27] The key relationships that al-Biqāʿī made and exploited to advance his situation can be divided into two broad and occasionally overlapping categories: intellectual and political.

A Supportive Shaykh

Al-Biqāʿī had many teachers, ranging from the fameless to the famous, the links with whom his *ʿUnwān al-zamān* was designed to memorialize. In his autobiography, he focuses on a select few of these shaykhs. Thus, he describes relationships with Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mashạrāʾī (d. 825/1422),[28] a pre-eminent scholar of the *qirāʾāt;* with Tāj al-Dīn Ibn Bahādur al-Jalālī (d. 831/1428)—with whom he studied grammar, morphology, and *fiqh*—noting that he "did not profit from anyone as

[25] Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350,* Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge, 1994), 64; Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1967), 107–10.

[26] For an example of this, see Irmeli Perho, "Climbing the Ladder: Social Mobility in the Mamluk Period," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 15 (2011): 23–25.

[27] Ibid., 25–28. See also Irmeli Perho, "The Arabian Nights as a Source for Daily Life in the Mamluk Period," *Studia Orientalia* 85 (1999): 139–62. For a more systematic discussion of social and political mobility, see Konrad Hirschler, "The Formation of the Civilian Elite in the Syrian Province: The Case of Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Ḥamāh," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 12, no. 2 (2008).

[28] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 72r; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fols. 96v–97r; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 2:62.

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he profited from him";[29] and with one al-ʿImād Ismāʿīl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Sharaf, with whom he studied *ḥisāb* in Jerusalem.[30] Likewise, he tells us about his studies with two prominent scholars, Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429) and Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah (d. 851/1448);[31] these relationships do not, however, seem to have been particularly enduring.

From 834/1430–31, however, he focuses almost entirely on one relationship: that which he cultivated with Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449), and which began when he traveled to Cairo in that year with the express purpose of studying with him. How and why Ibn Ḥajar accepted al-Biqāʿī as a student is relatively unclear. We know, for example, that Ibn Ḥajar was in the practice of distributing his *manāṣib* among his more promising students, acting as something of a career-making broker for them;[32] as will be seen, this was precisely the role he played for al-Biqāʿī. The question remains, however, what Ibn Ḥajar hoped to gain from this: was he simply attempting to build a network of people who were both loyal and indebted to him?

Regardless of how and why the relationship arose, it would nonetheless prove to be influential and important. Among the works he studied with Ibn Ḥajar were the *Sharḥ nukhbat al-muḥaddithīn* (from which al-Biqāʿī tells us he benefited greatly), *Al-Tārīkh al-mufannan,* and the majority of *Sharḥ alfīyat al-ʿIrāqī fī ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*. Ibn Ḥajar had a formative impact upon al-Biqāʿī. Al-Biqāʿī attests to this himself frequently in the biography, stating for instance that he was increasingly humbled by and in awe of his teacher as the years passed,[33] and that he continued being eager for Ibn Ḥajar's company.[34] Furthermore, in the introduction to the *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* al-Biqāʿī explains that it was only when he met Ibn Ḥajar that he found a teacher whose interest in the personal qualities of transmitters matched his own, and that it was out of this interest that the *ʿUnwān al-zamān* arose.[35] Likewise, his introduction to the *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr* explicitly describes the work

[29] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 72r; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fol. 97r; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 2:63. For al-Biqāʿī's biography of him, see MS Köprülü 1119, fols. 233v–234r; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 5:112–14.

[30] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 72r; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fol. 97r; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 2:63. For al-Biqāʿī's biography of him, see MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 92v; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fol. 123r; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 2:135.

[31] For more on his relationships and studies with these scholars, see Goudie, "Al-Biqāʿī's Self-Reflection: A Preliminary Study of the Autobiographical in his *ʿUnwān al-Zamān*."

[32] See Sabri Khalid Kawash, *Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (1372–1449 A.D.): A Study of the Background, Education and Career of a ʿAlim in Egypt* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1970), passim.

[33] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 24v; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fol. 35r; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 1:138.

[34] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 32v; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fol. 46r; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 1:171.

[35] Al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 1:33; MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 1v. The introduction in MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40 is wildly different, and was evidently written by a later hand: this is made clear on

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as a continuation of Ibn Ḥajar's *Inbāʾ al-ghumr bi-anbāʾ al-ʿumr fī al-tārīkh;*[36] discrepancies between the style and structure of the two works, not to mention the five-year gap between the end of the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* and the beginning of the *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr,* do not undermine the spirit of al-Biqāʿī's statement.

Beyond the formative impact on his intellectual development, Ibn Ḥajar played a much more prominent role as al-Biqāʿī's patron. Al-Biqāʿī describes himself as Ibn Ḥajar's *mulāzim,* meaning either an adherent or follower, but which might be more fruitfully understood as "disciple." *Mulāzim* denotes the junior partner in a *ṣuḥbah* or *mulāzamah* relationship, terms which both connote a long and enduring personal relationship, wherein one follows or adheres to a master, a *ṣāḥib,* and works under his direction.[37]

The *ṣuḥbah* relationship was first explored within the context of the educational field by Makdisi, but has more recently been understood by scholars such as Berkey, Hirschler, and Eychenne as an important bond between individuals in other social fields.[38] Eychenne especially has framed the *ṣuḥbah* relationship as one of those practices whereby individuals could acquire loyalties and connections which were both socially and politically useful, and has focused in particular on its appearance in and between the civilian and military elites.[39] He understands the *ṣuḥbah* relationship as the base for the foundation of those temporary groups which constituted the social network;[40] in this, he follows Hirschler who conceptualized it as expressing "the highly personalized nature of relationships within formative and medieval society as a whole."[41]

It has been more schematically defined by Hirschler, who has highlighted four key features of this type of relationship: it was hierarchical, formal, mutually exclusive, and advantageous. Thus, it was the socially weaker partner who would accompany the socially stronger in a relationship that was not merely stable but which had been explicitly established. Concomitant with this formalization, the relationship would typically be exclusive, especially on the part of the junior

fol. 3r.

[36] Al-Biqāʿī, *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr li-asrār ahl al-ʿaṣr,* 1:63.

[37] George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh, 1981), 128.

[38] Ibid., 128–29; Jonathan Porter Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education,* Princeton Studies on the Near East (Princeton, 1992), 34–35; Konrad Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors,* SOAS Routledge Studies on the Middle East 5 (London, 2006), 19; Mathieu Eychenne, *Liens personnels, clientélisme et réseaux de pouvoir dans le sultanat Mamlouk: milieu XIIIe–fin XIVe siècle* (Beirut, 2013), 41–44.

[39] Eychenne, *Liens personnels, clientélisme et réseaux de pouvoir dans le sultanat Mamlouk,* 43.

[40] Ibid., 42–43.

[41] Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography,* 19.

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partner: where the more senior partner might have multiple such relationships, especially when the social gulf was particularly extreme, it was uncommon for the socially weaker partner to do so. Finally, and most importantly, both members of the relationship expected to benefit in some way from their association.[42]

It is clear that al-Biqāʿī's relationship with Ibn Ḥajar followed this pattern. Their relationship was particularly enduring, with al-Biqāʿī stating that it was ongoing from 834/1430–31 through 846/1442–43:[43] this was the year in which he composed his biography of Ibn Ḥajar and, given its laudatory tones, it is likely that the relationship continued until Ibn Ḥajar's death. Al-Biqāʿī also accompanied Ibn Ḥajar when the latter was part of al-Ashraf Barsbāy's 836/1433 campaign to Āmid. Further, we know of a letter sent by al-Biqāʿī to Ibn Ḥajar, and included in the latter's *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* wherein al-Biqāʿī described his personal experience of the Rhodes campaign of 847/1443.[44] Most important, however, are the tangible advantages which al-Biqāʿī garnered from his relationship with Ibn Ḥajar. These advantages were both professional and social.

Dealing with the more straightforward first, Ibn Ḥajar was responsible for al-Biqāʿī receiving his appointment as Sultan Jaqmaq's hadith teacher in 842/1438, and defended him during the controversy which had erupted upon his nomination.[45] In his autobiography, al-Biqāʿī states that:

> When Sultan al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Abū Saʿīd Jaqmaq obtained the sultanate in the year 842/1438, I inquired of the *qāḍī al-qudāh;* and therefore did he speak on my behalf concerning the reading of al-Bukhārī in his—the sultan's—presence, because he who had been reading in that capacity was no longer competent for it. He assented and described me in my absence with reference to many attributes, amongst which was that the handsomeness of my reading was excellent. The slanderers sought to undermine that, exerting themselves and acting deceitfully.
>
> And so, on the day on which he would select someone to read, the *qāḍī al-qudāh* inquired of the sultan before the reading. He said: "The one about whom you have spoken—may he be greatly rewarded." And he praised me concerning my knowledge and my

[42] Ibid., 19–20.

[43] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 24v; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fol. 35r; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 1:138.

[44] On this, see Yehoshua Frenkel, "Al-Biqāʿī's Naval War-Report," in *History and Society during the Mamluk Period (1250–1517),* ed. Stephan Conermann, Mamluk Studies 5 (Göttingen, 2014), 9–19.

[45] MS Köprülü 1119, fol. 72r; MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fol. 97r; al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 2:64.

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> compositions, and said: "Tomorrow, he will read and he will astonish the sultan."[46]

Although it is uncertain how al-Biqāʿī became the Quran exegete of the Ẓāhir Mosque, it was likely around the same time that he gained this appointment.

That al-Biqāʿī relied upon Ibn Ḥajar as a continuing source of support in Cairo is suggested by the fact that the tumult Ibn Ḥajar experienced in his later career coincided with a period of tumult in al-Biqāʿī's life. When, after the old minaret of the Fakrīyah madrasah collapsed and killed many people, Ibn Ḥajar lost his position as *qāḍī al-qudāh* on 11 Muḥarram 849/19 April 1445, and when later that year on 20 Jumādá I/24 August Ibn Ḥajar was ousted as the shaykh of the Baybarsīyah *khānqāh,* al-Biqāʿī lost his immediate source of support in Cairo. While his position remained secure in the short term, Ibn Iyās notes that al-Biqāʿī was dismissed as Sultan Jaqmaq's hadith teacher in Rajab 851/September 1447 and imprisoned in the Maqsharah before being banished to India.[47] His eventual return was facilitated by a group of amirs whose names, unfortunately, we do not know. That it was amirs who were responsible for his pardon suggests that al-Biqāʿī's network had expanded and evolved in the 840s.

Further hardship followed when, a few months after the death of Ibn Ḥajar (on 28 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 852/22 February 1449), al-Biqāʿī was dismissed from his position as the Quran exegete of the Ẓāhirīyah in Rabīʿ II 853/May 1449. He would not recover the position until Jumādá I 857/May 1453, after al-Ashraf Īnāl had become sultan. While it may well be coincidence that the upheaval experienced by both Ibn Ḥajar and al-Biqāʿī overlapped, that Ibn Ḥajar was so instrumental in al-Biqāʿī's career suggests otherwise. The social advantages which pertained to al-Biqāʿī's relationship with Ibn Ḥajar, to which we now turn, are somewhat more opaque and best exemplified by al-Biqāʿī's marriages.

Matrimonial Maneuvers

Two marriages of al-Biqāʿī are documented: the first was to Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad (d. 884/1479) and the second to Suʿādāt bint Nūr al-Dīn al-Būshī (d. after 902/1497). While both marriages have been discussed before by such schol-

[46] MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fols. 106v–107r.

[47] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr* (Beirut, 1973), 2:259. Al-Biqāʿī himself tells us that it was by his own volition that he departed his position as Jaqmaq's hadith teacher, being replaced first by the protégé of al-Safṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Amānā, and then by Wālī al-Dīn al-Asyūṭī, protégé of the *nāẓir al-khāṣṣ.* The sultan, however, sought to enforce the position upon al-Biqāʿī, but he resolved never to do it because of the opinions of the religious notables; in the face of further urging, al-Biqāʿī remained silent until finally God intervened and repelled it from him. Al-Biqāʿī, *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr li-asrār ahl al-ʿaṣr,* 1:413.

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ars as Rapoport and Guo,[48] only the marriage to Suʿādāt has been covered in any great detail: al-Biqāʿī's marriage to Fāṭimah is treated as a mere marriage of convenience that he left when "his luck changed for the better."[49] Rapoport and Guo's understanding of the marriage to Fāṭimah is based on al-Sakhāwī's acerbic biography of her, wherein he describes her as "one of those [women] who married al-Biqāʿī when he was insignificant and poor and whom—as soon as he came into his prime—he abandoned and divorced."[50] Suʿādāt, the daughter of the late shaykh of the *khānqāh* in Siryāqūs, is presented as being a much more advantageous match than Fāṭimah, the daughter of a Cairene perfume merchant.[51] While al-Biqāʿī did divorce Fāṭimah and did marry Suʿādāt, further exploration of Fāṭimah's family sheds light onto how the marriages both functioned as attempts to consolidate his position in Cairo.

Fāṭimah was, like al-Biqāʿī, an immigrant to Cairo. She had moved from her native Sunbāṭ, near Cairo, in 831/1427–28 with her father, Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-ʿAṭṭār (ca. 784 to 849/1382 to 1445–46) and her younger brothers, Muḥammad (816 to 891/1413–14 to 1486) and ʿAbd al-Laṭīf (819/1416 to after 902/1497). As her father's *nisbah* suggests, the family made its money in the perfumery trade; they were also particularly well-regarded. Fāṭimah's great-grandfather, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Masʿūd al-ʿAlim al-Bahāʾ ibn al-ʿAlim, was highly regarded and was one of those upon whom an unidentified *nāẓir al-jaysh* bestowed favor. Her grandfather, Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad (d. 816/1413–14),[52] was counted among the most reputable men of the country, as was her father.[53] After moving to Cairo, Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-ʿAṭṭār established a shop near the Zuhūmah Gate at the market of the ʿAnbārīyūn;[54] his younger son, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf, helped run the shop, taking it over upon his death.

Although we do not know the date of the marriage, if al-Sakhāwī is to be believed that it took place before al-Biqāʿī established himself in Cairo, then it

[48] Yossef Rapoport, *Marriage, Money and Divorce in Medieval Islamic Society,* Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation (Cambridge, 2005), 87–88; Guo, "Tales of a Medieval Cairene Harem," 103–9.

[49] Rapoport, *Marriage, Money and Divorce in Medieval Islamic Society,* 87; Guo, "Tales of a Medieval Cairene Harem," 103. Both Rapoport and Guo use the same phrase.

[50] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 12:105, no. 665.

[51] Rapoport, *Marriage, Money and Divorce in Medieval Islamic Society,* 87; Guo, "Tales of a Medieval Cairene Harem," 103.

[52] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 9:46.

[53] Ibid., 9:198, no. 487.

[54] William Popper, *Egypt and Syria under the Circassian Sultans, 1382–1468 A.D.: Systematic Notes to Ibn Taghrî Birdî's Chronicles of Egypt* (Berkeley, 1955), 1:28–29.

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must have been sometime between 834/1430–31 and 842/1438.[55] There is the question, then, of why this good local family, which was evidently well-respected and successful, would have accepted al-Biqāʿī as a son-in-law. The biographies of Fāṭimah's brothers suggest a possible reason. According to al-Sakhāwī, both brothers studied with Ibn Ḥajar, performed the hajj, and resided in the Ḥijāz, suggesting that the marriage was arranged on the basis of personal links between Fāṭimah's brothers and al-Biqāʿī, which were formed by all three being students of Ibn Ḥajar.

Al-Sakhāwī provides more information about the two brothers. After the death of their father, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf married the daughter of a certain Shaykh Muḥammad al-Fawī, had many children, and became rich. At the same time, he patronized the *khānqāh* of Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ; after the death of his brother, he devoted himself to his *ṭarīqah,* leaving the running of the perfume shop to his son.[56] Unlike ʿAbd al-Laṭīf, however, Muḥammad enjoyed a much broader reputation as a scholar: al-Sakhāwī describes him as *qidwat al-muḥaddithīn wa-al-māḍī,* and states that he "became an authority concerning books and their study for those who desired that." Upon his death, he was buried in the *turbah* of Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ.[57]

Muḥammad's biography is particularly illuminating; by digging deeper into it, it is possible to reconstruct his intellectual network. Aside from Ibn Ḥajar, al-Sakhāwī singles out six shaykhs with whom Muḥammad studied: Sharaf al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 840/1437), Shams al-Dīn al-Qāyātī (d. 850/1446), Shams al-Dīn al-Wanāʾī (d. 849/1445), ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī (d. 856/1452), Abū al-Qāsim al-Nuwayrī (d. 857/1453), and al-Maqrīzī. With the exceptions of Ibn Ḥajar and al-Maqrīzī, none of these scholars are particularly famous; nevertheless, they were all important figures in fifteenth-century Cairene society.

Biographies of these men are provided in the Appendix, but suffice it to say here that there is a striking concentration of high positions within this group, both in institutions of learning and administrative posts. Shams al-Dīn al-Qāyātī and Shams al-Dīn al-Wanāʾī were, like Ibn Ḥajar, *qāḍī al-quḍāh al-shāfiʿīyah;* indeed, the three men seem to have passed the position between themselves for much of the 840s. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī sought to be *qāḍī al-quḍāh al-shāfiʿīyah* of Damascus and was also a candidate to be *qāḍī al-quḍāh al-shāfiʿīyah* of Egypt, but was unsuccessful in both cases. Conversely, the Maliki scholar Abū al-Qāsim al-Nuwayrī refused all the judgeships he was offered because he was opposed to salaried positions, though he had previously been deputized as the *qāḍī al-quḍāh al-mālikīyah* in Egypt.

[55] Al-Sakhāwī raises some ambiguity with this when he states that the marriage to Suʿādāt occurred "[...] at the time of his separation" from Fāṭimah. See al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 12:62.

[56] Ibid., 4:337–38, no. 937.

[57] Ibid., 9:272–74, no. 707.

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In terms of teaching positions, these men taught at some of the most important and prestigious madrasahs in Cairo and Egypt: the Ashrafīyah, the Baybarsīyah, the Gharābīyah, the Ḥasanīyah, the Ṣāliḥīyah, the Shaykhūnīyah, and the Ẓāhirīyah. Of these, the Shaykhūnīyah was perhaps the most important, with Shams al-Dīn al-Wanāʾī being followed by Shams al-Dīn al-Qāyātī and then ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī as the *mudarris al-fiqh* there. Additionally, the *khānqāh* of Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ also played a prominent role in the network: Shams al-Dīn al-Qāyātī was the *shaykh al-shuyūkh* there from 839/1435–36, and was buried there alongside Sharaf al-Dīn al-Subkī. This *khānqāh* was the oldest in Cairo—having been founded by Saladin in 569/1173–74—and one of the most prestigious: its *shaykh al-shuyūkh* was drawn from men deeply involved in affairs of state, and it attracted numerous scholars from throughout the Islamic world.[58]

What, however, does this have to do with al-Biqāʿī's marriage to Fāṭimah, and al-Biqāʿī's relationship with Ibn Ḥajar? First, Muḥammad studied with several shaykhs who would go on to hold a significant number of important teaching and administrative positions during the reign of Sultan Jaqmaq. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf also studied with Ibn Ḥajar and, though he failed to develop any reputation as a scholar, it is likely that he patronized the same shaykhs as his brother. Likewise, both of Fāṭimah's brothers devoted themselves to the *khānqāh* of Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ. This suggests that Fāṭimah's family was not merely a "good" local family, but was an aspirational family, the younger son of which was making a good case for his *own* social advancement on the basis of his intellect and network of scholarly and administrative contacts—contacts who would themselves go on to prominence.

Second, the network of Muḥammad overlaps with that of al-Biqāʿī: in addition to Ibn Ḥajar and al-Maqrīzī, al-Biqāʿī studied with all five of these shaykhs. More importantly, al-Sakhāwī states that al-Biqāʿī was part of a group of young students—which included Muḥammad, Ibn Fahd (d. 885/1480), and Taqī al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī (d. 871/1466), younger brother of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn—who visited these shaykhs together. In other words, not only did al-Biqāʿī study with the same shaykhs as Muḥammad, he studied with them at the same time.[59] The question raised here is, of course, whether the relationships that al-Biqāʿī established with these shaykhs preceded or followed his marriage to Fāṭimah. That is to say, were these relationships a factor in Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-ʿĀṭṭar's acceptance of al-Biqāʿī as a son-in-law, or were these relationships a consequence of al-Biqāʿī becoming the brother-in-law of Muḥammad?

[58] For an overview of the history of the Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ, see Carl F. Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 2014), 327–28. For its early history, see Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173–1325* (Edinburgh, 2015), 35–102.

[59] Al-Sakhāwī, Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ, 9:272–73.

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Given our current knowledge, this question is a thorny one to say the least. Al-Biqāʿī himself tells us that he traveled to study with Ibn Ḥajar in 834/1430–31, though whether the relationship became formalized in the same year is unclear; there may be an element of retrospective revision in al-Biqāʿī's telling. Al-Biqāʿī likewise tells us that he studied with al-Sharaf al-Subkī in 834/1430–31, though the relationship seemingly did not become as enduring as the one he had with Ibn Ḥajar. His study with al-Maqrīzī, al-Biqāʿī states, took place when al-Maqrīzī traveled to al-Shām; although no date is ascribed to this by al-Biqāʿī, on balance it seems more likely that this was before 834/1430–31, when al-Biqāʿī traveled to Cairo, though it cannot have been during al-Maqrīzī's longer residence in Damascus, at which point al-Biqāʿī was still living in Khirbat Rūḥā.[60] Al-Biqāʿī provides no information about how or when the relationships with the other scholars began.

In either case, these relationships cast the marriage in new light: whether they preceded or followed the marriage, the marriage was nevertheless an attempt by al-Biqāʿī to establish his footing in Cairo, either by facilitating his entry into the scholarly elite or by consolidating his position within that elite. Regardless, we do know that his relationship with Ibn Ḥajar was the first he established in Cairo, through which it is likely that he was first introduced to the family of Fāṭimah. Thus, against the background of al-Biqāʿī's intellectual network, the marriage to Fāṭimah is functionally similar to his marriage to Suʿādāt.

As noted above, the marriage to Suʿādāt has been covered before: Guo's discussion is so extensive that it can be discussed here with brevity.[61] On 24 Ṣafar 858/23 February 1454, when al-Biqāʿī was in his late forties, he married Suʿādāt, daughter of Nūr al-Dīn al-Būshī (790–856/1388–1452), the late shaykh of the *khānqāh* in Siryāqūs. While both al-Biqāʿī and Suʿādāt were reputedly excited for the wedding, this happiness quickly turned to acrimony.[62] According to al-Sakhāwī, al-Biqāʿī's behavior towards her was abusive and, after a year and a half of marriage—during which she gave birth to a son on 12 Rabīʿ I 859/1455—she could take it no more and asked him for a divorce. The straw that seems to have broken the camel's back is a marriage which al-Biqāʿī concluded in Damascus while he was there overseeing the construction of a *khān al-funduq* on behalf of Birdibak al-Qubrusī (d. 868/1464), the *dawādār thānī* and powerful son-in-law of the sultan; he was absent from Cairo from shortly after Dhū al-Qaʿdah 858/November 1454 until Shawwāl 859/September 1455. The conditions of the divorce settlement, and the bitterness

[60] al-Biqāʿī, *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* 1:110.

[61] Guo, "Tales of a Medieval Cairene Harem," 103–9.

[62] For al-Biqāʿī's account of the wedding, see al-Biqāʿī, *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr li-asrār ahl al-ʿaṣr,* 2:20–23.

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which accompanied their negotiation, have been outlined so extensively by Guo that they need not concern us here.[63]

Rather, from the perspective of al-Biqāʿī's strategies of social advancement, there are two aspects of this wedding which bear further investigation. The first is Suʿādāt's father, Nūr al-Dīn al-Būshī. He had held the position of shaykh of the Siryāqūs *khānqāh* since the end of 830/1427. Located some twelve miles north of Cairo, this *khānqāh* was preeminent, particularly during the fourteenth century, and was the most important outside of the city proper.[64] Nūr al-Dīn al-Būshī had also been—at least tangentially—related to the same network of scholars and administrators as al-Biqāʿī; as shaykh of the Siryāqūs *khānqāh,* he had proven beneficial to various eminent people, including Shams al-Dīn al-Wanāʾī. Likewise, he was linked by way of the Siryāqūs *khānqāh* to Abū al-Qāsim al-Nuwayrī, who established a madrasah there. Additionally, Nūr al-Dīn al-Būshī had been offered the position of qadi of Egypt, but had declined it.[65] The marriage to Suʿādāt thus appears to have come out of the same nebulous network as the marriage to Fāṭimah.

Secondly, and crucially, it also points to the continuing evolution of his network. We noted earlier that al-Biqāʿī's pardon and return from exile was facilitated by a group of anonymous amirs, and that this suggested that his network had expanded and evolved in the 840s. The detailed guest list al-Biqāʿī describes in his own recollection of his wedding is a clear statement of the new circles within which he was moving. His wedding was, he tells us, the first wedding ever in Khānkah to be attended by the elite of Cairo. Alongside the Hanbali *qāḍī al-quḍāh* and the shaykhs of the Baybarsīyah, Barqūqīyah, Ashrafīyah, and Jamālīyah madrasahs, the wedding was attended by the *wakīl bayt al-māl,* the *nāẓir al-māristān,* the *nāẓir al-isṭabal,* the *khaṭīb* of the Great Mosque in Mecca, various Sufi shaykhs, and various members of the court, including the *muqaddam al-mamālīk,* ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Tuwāshī, the aforementioned Birdibak al-Qubrusī, and—last but by no means least—Sultan Īnāl himself.[66] This guest list shows us how strikingly composite al-Biqāʿī's social network had become, and how it had moved beyond the realm of the intellectual and into the political: he had a new patron, Sultan Īnāl.

[63] Guo, "Tales of a Medieval Cairene Harem," 107–8. For al-Biqāʿī's own account of the divorce proceedings, see al-Biqāʿī, *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr li-asrār ahl al-ʿaṣr,* 2:143–45.

[64] On the Siryāqūs *khānqāh,* see Leonor E. Fernandes, *The Evolution of a Sufi Institution in Mamluk Egypt: The* Khanqah (Berlin, 1988), 29–32.

[65] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 5:178.

[66] Al-Biqāʿī, *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr li-asrār ahl al-ʿaṣr,* 2:20–21.

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A Political Patron

Although al-Biqāʿī began his career in the reign of Sultan Jaqmaq as the sultan's hadith teacher, a position which he held for almost a decade, there is nothing to suggest that the relationship was particularly close. The only information which survives about their relationship is found in al-Biqāʿī's *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr,* which begins in 855/1451; that is, some four years after al-Biqāʿī was stripped of his position, imprisoned, and sent into exile. Consequently, there was no love lost for al-Biqāʿī when it came to Sultan Jaqmaq, whom he excoriated in the *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr.*

Aside from ascribing all of the turmoil and chaos of the reign to the sultan himself, al-Biqāʿī records scandalizing anecdotes about Sultan Jaqmaq—such as his taking his son's bride-to-be for himself, and his inability to consummate the marriage—and details the mistreatments which Jaqmaq inflicted upon the ulama at large. Thus, he tells us how Jaqmaq threatened to have Ibn Ḥajar paraded through the streets of Cairo on the back of a donkey and imprisoned in the Maqsharah. Likewise, he also threatened the *qāḍī al-quḍāh al-ḥanafīyah,* Saʿd al-Dīn ibn al-Dīrī, with the Maqsharah, and severely mistreated the *qāḍī al-quḍāh al-shāfiʿīyah,* ʿAlam al-Dīn al-Ṣāliḥ ibn al-Sirrāj al-Bulqīnī.[67]

Al-Biqāʿī's standing does, however, seem to have improved somewhat in the last days of Sultan Jaqmaq's reign. At some point during Muḥarram 857/January 1453, when Jaqmaq's health was rapidly deteriorating and rumor spread that he had died, al-Biqāʿī was appointed to teach the *ʿilm al-qirāʾāt* at the Muʾayyadīyah mosque in place of the position he had lost.[68] Whether he was appointed by the ailing sultan or whether his appointment was due to shifting balances in the court of Jaqmaq is, however, unclear. Nevertheless, it was during his involvement at the court of Sultan Jaqmaq that al-Biqāʿī met Īnāl, the powerful *amīr al-kabīr,* and entered into his circle; pinpointing when this occurred is another matter.

Al-Biqāʿī tells us that it was when he participated in the jihad of Rhodes that he met Īnāl and found favor with him, becoming one of his close and intimate companions.[69] During the reign of Sultan Jaqmaq, three expeditions were sent against Rhodes: the first was in late 844/1440, the second in 847/1443, and the third in 848/1444. The first expedition was led by the amir Taghrī Birmish al-Zardkāsh (d. 854/1450) and the *amīr ākhūr* Yūnus al-Muḥammadī, and proved insufficiently strong to overwhelm the defenders of the city of Rhodes and was forced to withdraw. The second and third expeditions were both led by Īnāl. The second succeeded only in capturing Castellorizo; the third laid siege to the city of Rhodes for

[67] Ibid., 1:304–5.

[68] Ibid., 1:269–70.

[69] Ibid., 1:412–13.

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forty days, but counterattacks by the Knights Hospitaller forced the expedition to retreat to Egypt.[70]

As mentioned above, al-Biqāʿī took part in at least the second Rhodes campaign, in 847/1443.[71] While Īnāl was in charge of this expedition, al-Biqāʿī's report of the campaign, included by Ibn Ḥajar in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* makes clear that he was not yet within Īnāl's circle. Concerning the retreat from Rhodes, al-Biqāʿī states that

> On Sunday (3 Rağab/27 October) in the forenoon the flotilla sailed. At morning it reached Finike. Because the night was dark and the wind light, the fleet dispersed. It anchored there for two days and sailed afterwards. The wind intensified and the flotilla anchored on the western side of Raʾs aš-Šalidūn, in a bay named Qarā Bālık (the Black Fish). The fleet scattered all over. No one knew the place of the others. Then the wind intensified and the flotilla reassembled. All the vessels regrouped, only the ship of the emir Īnāl ad-Duwaydir was missing. He was the senior among the commanders and they sent a light boat to enquire about his fate, but failed to obtain any information whatsoever. After a while it became known that due to the light wind, Īnāl was anchoring at al-Qayqabūn together with his retinue. The commander of the navy ordered the war-vessels *(aġriba)* to sail and join Īnāl.[72]

Al-Biqāʿī did compose a longer work, titled *Al-Isfār ʿan ashraf al-asfār wa-al-ihkbār bi-aẓraf al-akhbār,* which was an eyewitness account of his experience of the campaigns against Cyprus and Rhodes. The work is, unfortunately, lost.[73]

It may well have been during the expedition of 848/1444 that al-Biqāʿī was properly inducted into the circle of Īnāl; although there is no evidence of al-

[70] See in particular C. Edmund Bosworth, "Arab Attacks on Rhodes in the Pre-Ottoman Period," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 6, no. 2 (1996): 162–64; S. Soucek, "Rodos," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_6309.

[71] On this, see Frenkel, "Al-Biqāʿī's Naval War-Report."

[72] Ibid., 16–17; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr bi-anbā al-ʿumr,* ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1998), 4:215.

[73] There is some disagreement over the title of the work. Ḥājjī Khalīfah gives the title as *Al-Isfār ʿan ashridat al-asfār,* and is followed in this by Li Guo. See Ḥājjī Khalīfah, *Kashf al-ẓunūn ʿan asāmī al-kutub wa-al-funūn* (Beirut, 1992), 1:86; and Guo, "Al-Biqāʾī's Chronicle," 125. Ḥājjī Khalīfah does, however, seem to have been mistaken. Muḥammad al-Iṣlāḥī, who edited a medieval handlist of al-Biqāʿī's work, gives the title as *Al-Isfār ʿan ashraf al-asfār wa-al-ihkbār bi-aẓraf al-akhbār.* Al-Iṣlāḥī, *Fihrist muṣannafāt al-Biqāʿī,* 149–50. Further, al-Biqāʿī refers to a work by this title in his *Akhbār al-jilād fī futūḥ al-bilād*. See Bibliothèque Nationale de France MS Arabe 5862, fol. 467v.

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Biqāʿī's involvement in this expedition, it is not unlikely. Al-Biqāʿī had a deep-seated interest in jihad, dating back at least to the 830s when he performed jihad twice. He even tells us that so great was his passion for jihad that he devoted himself to the practice of archery and swordsmanship, hoping to master both. He states that he furthermore began to compose a work on the science of the sword, which he hoped would become paradigmatic; if the work was ever completed, it does not survive.[74]

In this regard, al-Biqāʿī appears emblematic of one of the broader changes in fifteenth-century social order; namely, the blending and blurring of the traditional roles played by the "men of the sword" and the "men of the pen."[75] There is of course the question of why al-Biqāʿī was so keen to practice jihad. It is unlikely that it was a deliberate attempt to ingratiate himself with the military elite, given how enduring his interest appears to have been; it is tempting to interpret it as a post-traumatic response to the attack on his family, which instilled within him a desire to become proficient in self-defense and warfare. In any case, al-Biqāʿī's penchant for jihad so puzzled al-Sakhāwī that the latter said concerning it that "God knows his reason for all of that."[76]

Al-Biqāʿī did not only practice jihad; he also preached it. He wrote two works on jihad, *Al-Istishhād bi-āyāt al-jihād* and *Dhayl al-istishhād bi-āyāt al-jihād.*[77] The latter is an example of the forty *aḥādīth* genre, which found its impetus in variants of a hadith wherein the Prophet praised the collection of forty *aḥādīth* which would benefit the Muslim community, and had been a popular vehicle for the encouragement of jihad since the second half of the twelfth century.[78] Given al-Biqāʿī's involvement in the campaign of 847/1443, it is likely that both works were

[74] MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fol. 106r–v.

[75] For a summary of this, see Jo Van Steenbergen, Patrick Wing, and Kristof D'hulster, "The Mamlukization of the Mamluk Sultanate? State Formation and the History of Fifteenth Century Egypt and Syria: Part I—Old Problems and New Trends," *History Compass* 14, no. 11 (November 2016): 552, https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12357. For particular studies of the blending of traditional roles, see in particular Toru Miura, "Urban Society in Damascus as the Mamluk Era Was Ending," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 10, no. 1 (2006): 157–93; Robert Irwin, "The Privatization of "Justice" under the Circassian Mamluks," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 6 (2002): 63–70.

[76] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 1:102.

[77] Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar al-Biqāʿī, *Al-Istishhād bi-āyāt al-jihād,* ed. Jumʿah ʿAlī and Marzūq ʿAlī Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 2002); on the *Dhayl* in particular, see Stephen R. Burge, "The "Ḥadīṯ Literature": What Is It and Where Is It?," *Arabica* 65, no. 1–2 (27 February 2018): 64–83. Al-Biqāʿī's interest in jihad is also suggested by his *Al-Iʿlām bi-sann al-hijrah ilá al-Shām*. See Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar al-Biqāʿī, *Al-Iʿlām bi-sann al-hijrah ilá al-Shām,* ed. Muḥammad Mujīr al-Khaṭīb al-Ḥasanī (Beirut, 1997).

[78] On the use of the forty *aḥādīth* genre in jihad preaching, see Kenneth A. Goudie, *Reinventing Jihād: Jihād Ideology from the Conquest of Jerusalem to the End of the Ayyūbids (c. 492/1099–647/1249),* The Muslim World in the Age of the Crusades 4 (Leiden, 2019); Suleiman A. Mourad and James E. Lindsay, *The Intensification and Reorientation of Sunni Jihad Ideology in The Crusader Period: Ibn*

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composed during the 840s. Further, as Burge notes, that the *Dhayl* in particular is a hadith collection suggests that it was composed during the earlier part of his career when he was more involved in hadith;[79] this would place it during his time as Sultan Jaqmaq's hadith teacher.

Thus al-Biqāʿī appears as something of an adventurer, and it is not inconceivable that he took part in the 848/1444 expedition; indeed, it is possible—perhaps even likely—that it was his martial ability that endeared him to Īnāl in the first place. Furthermore, it is possible that the group of anonymous amirs who intervened on his behalf and had his exile overturned included Īnāl and other members of his circle.

Much like his relationship with Ibn Ḥajar, al-Biqāʿī's relationship with Īnāl would prove both beneficial and enduring. Indeed, al-Biqāʿī refers to Īnāl as his *ṣāḥib,*[80] and was close to him throughout his reign. As noted above, it was after Īnāl's enthronement that al-Biqāʿī was returned to his position as the *mufassir* of the Ẓāhirīyah mosque. It is also likely, though not certain, that it was during Īnāl's reign that he was appointed to teach at the Sharfīyah madrasah, and as the *nāẓir* of the Fakkāhīn Mosque. He would step down from these positions in 869/1464, the same year in which he resigned or was removed from his position as *mudarris* at the Muʾayyadīyah madrasah.[81]

Aside from holding these teaching positions, al-Biqāʿī acted on behalf of Sultan Īnāl. He describes himself at one point as Īnāl's secretary,[82] and spends considerable time discussing his supervision of the *waqf* of a *khān al-funduq* in Damascus on behalf of both the sultan and his son-in-law, the *dawādār thānī* Birdibak al-Qubrusī.[83] He was in charge of a group of distinguished members of the *fuqahāʾ* and the *fuqarāʾ,* including the Maliki and Hanbali qadis of Damascus, which was tasked with both the examination and recording of the properties attached to the *waqf* of the *khān al-funduq,* but also their renovation. By al-Biqāʿī's own account, he was successful and the sultan was happy with his work. Consequently, al-Biqāʿī's close relationship with Īnāl solidified his position within the courtly elite, and offered him the opportunity to build relationships with leading members of Īnāl's court.

During his reign, Sultan Īnāl founded his leadership and authority on the relationships, wealth, and charisma of his family. Aside from his wife, Zaynab

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ʿAsakir of Damascus (1105 1176) and His Age, with an Edition and Translation of Ibn ʿAsakir's The Forty Hadiths for Inciting Jihad (Leiden, 2013).

[79] Burge, "The "Ḥadīṯ Literature"," 72.

[80] Al-Biqāʿī, *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr li-asrār ahl al-ʿaṣr,* 1:305.

[81] Guo, "Al-Biqāʾī's Chronicle," 123.

[82] Al-Biqāʿī, *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr li-asrār ahl al-ʿaṣr,* 2:20.

[83] Ibid., 2:111–28.

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bint Ḥasan ibn Khāṣṣ Bak (d. 884/1479), and son Aḥmad (d. 893/1488), it was the husbands of his daughters, the *dawādār kabīr* Yūnus al-Aqbāʾī (d. 865/1461) and the *dawādār thānī* Birdibak al-Qubrusī, who played an increasingly central role.[84] Al-Biqāʿī developed a particularly close relationship with Birdibak al-Qubrusī. Indeed, Birdibak al-Qubrusī is one of the more frequently mentioned figures in the *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr,* appearing as both al-Biqāʿī's source of information and—on occasion—his traveling companion. Their closeness is further attested by al-Biqāʿī's attempt to absolve Birdibak al-Qubrusī from any blame for the problems of Īnāl's reign, or the failure of Aḥmad ibn Īnāl to successfully succeed his father. The latter was in distinct contrast to the writings of his contemporary, Ibn Taghrībirdī, who imputes a large part of the failure of Aḥmad ibn Īnāl to his reliance upon Birdibak al-Qubrusī.[85]

It is clear also that al-Biqāʿī sought to maintain his association with the family of Īnāl after Īnāl's death. In addition to his relationship with Birdibak al-Qubrusī, al-Biqāʿī laid the groundwork for a relationship with Aḥmad ibn Īnāl. At the beginning of Jumādá II 865/March 1461, al-Biqāʿī went to the new sultan to congratulate him on his accession;[86] a little over a month later, on 18 Rajab 865/29 April 1461, he recited to the sultan a panegyric which he had composed.[87] His efforts, however, proved futile, for Aḥmad ibn Īnāl was deposed by Khushqadam in Ramaḍān 865/June 1461—some four months after his sultanate began; at the same time, Birdibak al-Qubrusī was imprisoned and mulcted, and was sent to live in Mecca in Shawwāl 866/July 1462.[88]

This is, of course, only scratching the surface of what can be said about al-Biqāʿī's relationships with the key figures of Sultan Īnāl's court, particularly how and when these relationships developed. In particular, there is the question of how the triangle of Sultan Īnāl, Birdibak al-Qubrusī, and al-Biqāʿī functioned in actuality. Was, for instance, al-Biqāʿī closer to either of them, and could he be both the sultan's man and representative while also being close to Birdibak? To answer this, however, would be to go far beyond the scope of the current article; it will require deeper analysis of how, why, and around which themes contemporary

[84]See in particular Lucian Reinfandt, *Mamlukische Sultansstiftungen des 9./15. Jahrhunderts: nach den Urkunden der Stifter al-Ašraf Īnāl und al-Muʾayyad Aḥmad ibn Īnāl* (2003). See also Jo Van Steenbergen, "Īnāl Al-Ajrūd, al-Malik al-Ashraf," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Three,* http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_32454.

[85]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah,* ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shams al-Dīn (Beirut, 1992), 16:200–1.

[86]Al-Biqāʿī, *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr li-asrār ahl al-ʿaṣr,* 3:228.

[87]Ibid., 3:249.

[88]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith al-duhūr fī madá al-ayyām wa-al-shuhūr,* ed. William Popper (Berkeley, 1932), 3:405, 407, 428.

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historiographical material concerning the dynamics of Īnāl's court was produced by both al-Biqāʿī and other fifteenth-century historians.

The above cursory sketch should nevertheless demonstrate how al-Biqāʿī established and tried to establish relationships with the sultanic court, and it is perhaps not coincidental that the weakening of al-Biqāʿī's position in Cairo—as evidenced by his inability to weather the controversies on use of the Bible in *tafsīr* and the poetry of Ibn al-Fāriḍ—followed the dismantling of Sultan Īnāl's political order; indeed, it may even suggest that al-Biqāʿī deliberately courted these controversies in order to establish his intellectual credentials in the new political order of Khushqadam.

Conclusion

This article has pursued two lines of enquiry. On the one hand, it has sought to clarify how al-Biqāʿī increased the social and cultural capital resources that he had at his disposal to build and expand the social network that underpinned his career in Cairo. Thus having no social capital but his intelligence and knowledge, al-Biqāʿī leveraged this to develop relationships with leading scholars, particularly Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, through whose patronage he was able to enter the orbit of Sultan Jaqmaq. His association with Jaqmaq's court offered him the opportunity to cultivate relationships with leading members of the court, relationships that would prove beneficial when the political order of Jaqmaq was replaced with that of Īnāl. At the same time, he sought to enhance and operationalize the social capital accrued through his scholarly and political connections by marrying into leading ulama families in Cairo.

This is not, of course, to suggest that there was some sort of Machiavellian plan behind al-Biqāʿī's career. While he was no doubt ambitious—why else would he have left Damascus for Cairo?—and capable, there is nothing to suggest that he viewed the relationships he cultivated as mere means to an end. Likewise, we must not strip his teachers, his peers, or his wives of their agency; they were not merely stepping stones on al-Biqāʿī's path to success, but were themselves actors with their own goals and intentions. Rather, the point to be made is how these different relationships all opened up different avenues for al-Biqāʿī while at the same time closing others: to do otherwise is to approach al-Biqāʿī's life and career teleologically.

This interpretation of al-Biqāʿī's life and career has relied primarily on three sources, two written by al-Biqāʿī and one by al-Sakhāwī. As noted earlier, these sources cannot simply be mined for historical information without considering why they were written. Rather, they should be understood as carefully crafted

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literary works in their own rights, which served as a means through which their authors could mediate their own perspectives and understandings of that reality.

Literary does not necessarily mean fictional as, for instance, postmodernists following in the footsteps of White would have us believe.[89] Rather, if these works are fictional then it is, to borrow the words of Geertz, fictional "in the sense that they are 'something made,' 'something fashioned'—the original meaning of *fictiō*—not that they are false, unfactual, or merely 'as if' thought experiments."[90] If we consider the events of al-Biqāʿī's life to be raw data, then we can consider al-Biqāʿī's autobiographical writings and al-Sakhāwī's biography to be attempts to fashion this raw data into something meaningful. This is done through the judicious selection of which events to focus on, which relationships to emphasize, and by rationalizing al-Biqāʿī through different themes and motifs.

There is, as was noted, considerable contradiction between al-Biqāʿī's and al-Sakhāwī's emplotments of al-Biqāʿī's life and career—between al-Biqāʿī's self-ordained self and al-Sakhāwī's shameless charlatan. This does not mean that the images of al-Biqāʿī which they create are irreconcilable. We know, for instance, that al-Sakhāwī was familiar with the *ʿUnwān al-zamān,* and used it as a source for his biography of al-Biqāʿī. Crucially, then, we can see how al-Sakhāwī chose to incorporate this material and how these choices influenced the al-Biqāʿī who emerges from *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ*.

Thus while al-Sakhāwī might jettison all of al-Biqāʿī's discussion of his childhood—so essential as it was for al-Biqāʿī's sense of self—and while he might minimize the importance of certain relationships, as he does with Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, or turn supportive relationships critical, as he does with ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī, he cannot deny the historicity of these relationships. Likewise, what may appear as nothing but the specious insults of a rival are confirmed by al-Biqāʿī, who tells us that he was conscious of his pronunciation of Arabic, and that he occasionally had difficulties reading.[91] Al-Sakhāwī and his biography of his arch-rival are still essential for our understanding of al-Biqāʿī. As Walid Saleh argues,

> the significance of al-Sakhāwī's biography is that, despite all the self-disclosure that al-Biqāʿī offers his readers, one needs an outsider's view of our author in order to corroborate his self-understand-

[89] For succinct criticism of White and the postmodernists, see Lubomír Doležel, "Fictional and Historical Narrative: Meeting the Postmodernist Challenge," in *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis,* ed. David Herman, Theory and Interpretation of Narrative Series (Columbus, 1999), 248–51.

[90] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, 1973), 15.

[91] MS ʿArabīyah akhbār 40, fols. 106v–107r.

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> ing. It takes an opponent to describe for us the circle of influences that shaped al-Biqāʿī.[92]

The issue at stake, then, is not so much one of historicity as of interpretation. Both emplotments are founded upon a fundamental and shared layer of historicity: the "historical reality" of al-Biqāʿī. That is to say, these emplotments are circumscribed by the social contexts in which both al-Biqāʿī and al-Sakhāwī operated, and it is at these social contexts that the emplotments meet and from which they depart. They use the same basic information—particularly the relationships that al-Biqāʿī cultivated—to create wildly different understandings of al-Biqāʿī; their use of this basic information was filtered through their respective lenses, and colored by their feelings about al-Biqāʿī. While al-Sakhāwī may exclude or reframe material, he nevertheless confirms al-Biqāʿī's own reflections that he faced hardship and opposition from the intellectual elite of Cairo, who disputed his presence among them. Al-Sakhāwī's biography of al-Biqāʿī is this opposition made manifest.

Consequently, this article has argued that by recognizing how thoroughly entangled our authors and texts are—and by appreciating their discursive strategies and intentions—we can begin to disentangle the emplotments of al-Biqāʿī's life from the social contexts. In this way, we develop a more nuanced understanding of both who al-Biqāʿī was and the social contexts themselves. What this has meant for our present purpose is that we were not in the process of simply reconstructing al-Biqāʿī's life and career as it actually happened, but rather of also exploring how and in what ways his life and career were perceived and emplotted by both al-Biqāʿī himself and his greatest rival. In doing so, we arrive at a multilayered representation of al-Biqāʿī, one which eschews the positivist tendency to seek the "answer" to historical figures, and which is perhaps closer to the historical al-Biqāʿī, in all his complexity and contradiction.

[92] Saleh, *In Defense of the Bible,* 10.

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Appendix: Biographies of Shaykhs

Here follow brief biographies of the shaykhs with whom both Muḥammad, brother of Fāṭimah, and al-Biqāʿī studied.

Sharaf al-Dīn Mūsá ibn Aḥmad ibn Mūsá ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sulaymān al-Subkī (ca. 762–840/1361–1437)[93]

A scion of the Banū al-Subkī, Sharaf al-Dīn al-Subkī was a prominent scholar well-versed in *fiqh, uṣūl,* and Arabic. He was a *mulāzim* of Burhān al-Dīn al-Abanāsī, to whom he was related by marriage. He was appointed to teach at the Gharābīyah madrasah, and would also read either *Al-Tanbīh, Al-Ḥāwá,* or *Al-Minhāj* by himself in the Azhar. After his death in 840/1437, he was buried in the *turbah* of *Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ.*

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Qāyātī (c. 785–850/1384–1446)[94]

Shams al-Dīn al-Qāyātī had a career as both a *mudarris* and an administrator. Supporting himself initially by working as a *shahīd* out of the Ṣāliḥīyah Mosque in Cairo, he studied at the Muʾayyadī Mosque before being appointed the *mudarris* of hadith at the Ẓāhirīyah (Barqūq) Mosque and then the Shafiʿi *mudarris* at the Ashrafīyah mosque in 830. Subsequently he became the Sufi shaykh of the *khānqāh* Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ in 839 (held until he replaced Ibn Ḥajar),[95] the *mudarris* of the Gharābīyah after the death of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Subkī, and then the *mudarris* of *fiqh* at the Shaykhūnīyah and the Ṣāliḥīyah after the death of al-Wanāʾī. He replaced Ibn Ḥajar as both the shaykh of the Baybarsīyah and as the *qāḍī al-qudāh al-shāfiʿīyah* in 849/1445. He continued to hold these positions until his death in 850/1446; he was buried in the *turbah* of Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ.

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Wanāʾī (788–849/1386–1445)[96]

Shams al-Dīn al-Wanāʾī, a companion of Shams al-Dīn al-Qāyātī, likewise supported himself as a *shahīd* before embarking upon a career as a *mudarris* and administrator. His first position was a *mudarris* at the Tankizīyah, fol-

[93] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 10:176–77; MS Köprülü 1119, fols. 369r–370v.

[94] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 8:212–14.

[95] Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-jumān fī tārīkh ahl al-zamān: Ḥawādith wa-tarājim,* ed. ʿAbd al-Rāziq al-Ṭanṭāwī Qarmūṭ (Cairo, 1989), 2:640–41.

[96] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 7:140–41.

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lowed by *mudarris al-fiqh* at the Shaykhūnīyah. During the reign of Barsbāy, al-Maqrīzī tells us that he was patronized by a number of the *aʿyān,* among them the amir Jaqmaq; when Jaqmaq became sultan, al-Wanāʾī frequently attended his councils until he was given responsibility in government.[97] Al-Wanāʾī's career in government would, however, prove to be tumultuous. In Rabīʿ I 843/August 1439, Jaqmaq appointed him the *qāḍī al-quḍāh al-shāfiʿīyah* of Damascus; he was removed from this position in Ramaḍān 843/February 1440. After traveling to Mecca, he returned to Cairo and was appointed the *qāḍī al-quḍāh al-shāfiʿīyah* in Ṣafar 844/July 1440; he was quickly replaced by Ibn Ḥajar. He then returned to Damascus, and in Rajab 844/December 1440 or Shaʿbān 844/January 1441 was once again made *qāḍī al-quḍāh al-shāfiʿīyah* of Damascus, a position which he successfully held until the end of 846/1443. Once again he returned to Cairo and once again he was appointed *qāḍī al-quḍāh al-shāfiʿīyah*. He resigned in Muḥarram 848 and devoted himself to teaching *fiqh* until his death in 849.

ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad ibn Ismāʿīl ibn Muḥammad al-Qalqashandī (788–856/1387–1452)[98]

ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Qalqashandī was the scion of a prominent family of Cairene ulama, and enjoyed a reputation as a scholar, particularly of hadith. He was appointed the shaykh of the madrasah endowed by the *dawādār al-kabīr* Taghrībirdī al-Muʾayyadī, and was at one point the librarian of the Ashrafīyah. He sought to be *qāḍī al-quḍāh al-shāfiʿīyah* of Damascus and was also a candidate for the *qāḍī al-quḍāh al-shāfiʿīyah* of Egypt, but was unsuccessful in both cases. He was more successful later in life: he was appointed the Shafiʿi *mudarris al-fiqh* at the Shaykhūnīyah after the death of Shams al-Dīn al-Qāyātī in 850/1446, and was appointed to teach hadith at the Mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn after the death of Ibn Ḥajar in 852/1449. He also taught the *qirāʾāt* at the Ḥasanīyah madrasah, and in 853/1449 he was appointed the *mudarris* of the Khashābīyah—a *zāwiyah* in the Mosque of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ.[99] He resigned the appointed soon after because this position had been held by scions of the Bulqīnī family for some sixty years.

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[97] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk,* ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā (Beirut, 1997), 7:438.

[98] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 5:161–62.

[99] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith al-duhūr fī madá al-ayyām wa-al-shuhūr,* ed. Fahīm Muḥammad Shaltūt (Cairo, 1990), 1:164.

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Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Nuwayrī al-Mālikī (801–57/1399–1453)[100]

A scholar of some repute, Abū al-Qāsim al-Nuwayrī was eulogized by al-Sakhāwī as "a shaykh greatly exalted, revered, and essential to his *madhhab*."[101] He was offered numerous judgeships, including of Jerusalem, Egypt, and al-Shām. He rejected all of these because he was opposed to taking salaried positions, though he had previously deputized for his shaykh Shams al-Dīn al-Bāsaṭī (d. 842/1439), as the *qāḍī al-quḍāh al-mālikīyah* in Egypt.[102] He is reputed to have said on one occasion that "Verily, Jaqmaq desires to bind me in conformity to him with this salary!"[103] He established a madrasah at the Siryāqūsīyah *khānqāh,* to which he bequeathed his landed property, with the surplus going to his children.

[100] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 9:246–48.

[101] Ibid., 9:248.

[102] Ibid., 9:247; on Shams al-Dīn al-Bāsaṭī, see ibid., 7:5–8.

[103] Ibid., 9:248.

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Book Reviews

Developing Perspectives in Mamluk History: Essays in Honor of Amalia Levanoni, edited by Yuval Ben-Bassat (Leiden: Brill, 2017). Pp. XXVII + 414. (Islamic History and Civilization, 143)

Reviewed by Albrecht Fuess, Philipps-Universität Marburg

This festschrift is well deserved. Amalia Levanoni, emerita for Middle Eastern History at the University of Haifa, not only developed many new perspectives in Middle Eastern history, but has left a considerable mark on Mamluk studies and continues to do so. Her *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn (1310–1341)* from 1995 (the tenth volume of the Brill series in which this festschrift now appears as volume 143) revealed a new perspective on the reign of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, which had previously been perceived in the scholarship as the heyday of Mamluk rule. Levanoni showed that many developments which would haunt the Mamluk realm in the second half of the century were apparently set in motion by the policies of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.

Her contributions to the field are highlighted in a *laudatio* by Michael Winter, her dear, long-time colleague from Tel Aviv, who sadly passed away this year. He will be remembered by many in the field for his own contributions as well as for his collaborations with Levanoni.

The present festschrift was assembled by Yuval Ben-Bassat, who is Senior Lecturer in Ottoman and Turkish History at the University of Haifa. Despite not being a Mamlukist himself, he organized the work of the contributors convincingly in five parts that reflect Levanoni's areas of expertise.

Part 1 deals with social and cultural issues and contains five contributions. In the first of these, Carl F. Petry shares his "criminal" insights based on his wide-ranging expertise on narrative sources. The cases he presents here lead him to conclude that elite status could sometimes be used in order to transgress shariʿah regulations. He especially shows this for alcohol consumption and abusive behavior toward subjects. Koby Yosef follows with a long and very detailed article on kinship terminology in the sultanate. His argument proves to be inspiring as it demystifies the notion of the "Mamluk family" that David Ayalon presented as specifically Mamluk. In scrutinizing the terminology the Mamluks used for kinship he shows that Mamluk usage is in line with the usual practices in other Muslim societies and not so exceptional. Moreover, he traces kinship terminology with actual case studies from the sources, which presents a very welcome contribution to the social history of the Mamluks. The same is true of Limor Yungman's paper, which offers insights by peering into Mamluk pots and pans. Her

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paper deals with Mamluk tastes and offers some recipes as well. Mamluks liked it sweet, which is no surprise for people from the Middle East, but they also insisted, because of their early Central Asian origins, on the consumption of horse meat, which was disliked and criticized by contemporary Arabs. She underlines her source examples convincingly with theoretical approaches from Cultural Studies about taste and food culture. In any case it is still hard to imagine how a Mamluk horse stew or other dishes really smelled and tasted. More research in this area is warmly welcome.

Bernadette Martel-Thoumian presents (in French) the life and fate of Aṣalbāy, the concubine of Qāytbāy who would then be the mother, sister, wife, and widow of subsequent sultans and as such a leading female figure of the late Mamluk empire. In fact, she was so important that Sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī decided to establish her in Mecca, where she died. This contribution is quite narrative and might have fit better in part 2, which deals with women in the Mamluk sphere. Another missed opportunity is that the author does not compare Aṣalbāy with Qāytbāy's wife Fāṭimah bint ʿAlī ibn Khaṣṣbak, her long-term rival with a similarly colorful life.

The last paper in this part is presented by Daisuke Igarashi, who sheds light on the office of supreme *ustādār* in the late Mamluk empire. He shows the function of this office in the financial administration and demonstrates through an analysis of the actual officeholders that they were drawn from the military and the learned elite alike, and that the mix between these two groups in office seems to have been oriented according to competency, i.e., people were chosen because of their qualifications.

In Part 2 three papers deal with the role of women in Mamluk times. Yaacov Lev writes about women in the urban space and reports that they were usually separated according to social class. Poor women had to work outside whereas life was more restricted for middle- and upper-class women, who would stay in the home with their larger families. Despite the constant repetition of rules on "correct" female behavior, it could be seen that the reality was actually different. Yehoshua Frenkel follows with a paper on slave girls and learned teachers, which provides glimpses into the lives of slave girls. The interactions between these women and legal wives could have been explained further, and it is not that clear what is meant by "learned teachers," as some of the examples presented as pious and religious teachers are enslaved women as well. The last point in this section of the book is made by Boaz Shoshan, who looks at marriage and divorce practices in Damascus using Ibn Ṭawq's diary. In reading these stories of ongoing divorces and (re-)marriages one gets the impression that medieval Mamluk daily life was, in terms of conjugal matters, much nearer to contemporary patchwork practices than to pre-modern Europe.

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Part 3 is more diverse in its subject matter. Li Guo works on a colloquial poem which apparently provoked a falling-out between Amir Yalbughā al-ʿUmarī (d. 1366) and Sultan Ḥasan, a breach that did not go well for the sultan in the long run. Apparently, artists insulted Yalbughā during a presentation at court and the sultan laughed out loud, offending Yalbughā deeply. While it is not clear whether this incident really happened as described, Guo explores an increase of mockery in poetry and the diverse poetic forms in Mamluk literature, and argues for the increased use of poems in the reconstruction of Mamluk history.

Frédéric Bauden describes in his Maqriziana XIII an exchange of letters between al-Qalqashandī and al-Maqrīzī about formal questions in diplomatic writings that can be found in a manuscript of al-Qalqashandī's son. It is quite fascinating to see two such eminent scholars writing letters in which they try to outdo and impress each other in their use of terminology and vocabulary, whether out of actual competitiveness or just for the sake of fun. Bauden says that much more information remains to be discovered in these literary encounters between scholars than has so far been recognized.

The late Michael Winter impresses with a contribution on Evliya Çelebi's (d. ca.1095/1684) fictitious story of Sultan Selīm in Egypt during the conquest in 1517. Interesting in this context are the mythological dreams that, according to this author, the Ottoman sultan has in Cairo. The article gives insight into Ottoman storytelling, which actually resembles, to a certain extent, twenty-first-century Turkish and Arab television series about the Ottoman conquest into Arab lands. Evliya Çelebi might therefore be seen as a sort of pre-modern fantasy author. It seems that everyday life of the period was marked by these myths and stories and some decisions made by rulers might have been based on them.

Part 4 looks at material culture. Warren Schultz opens the discussion with a look at coinage and shows special specimens. A vital finding is that some titles on coins were only used for limited times. Schultz raises the question of whether they were cast for specific events. In general, he argues that a single coin might not tell us much, but in combination with other sources and new lines of analysis, like a new look at *laqab*s, this might change the picture. Hana Taragan then looks at the use of Crusader *spolia* in Jerusalem and shows how they were even used into Ottoman times to continue to reflect the great victory of Islam against Christianity. She sees one case in point for this in the free-standing mausoleum *(turbah)* of ʿAlāʾ al-Din Aydughdī al-Kubakī, situated on the eastern side of the Mamilla Cemetery outside the Old City.

Bethany Walker follows with an examination of the water culture of Syria. She uses archaeological evidence to show how the rural population was dependent on water at the time. She also undertakes an investigation of the question of whether contemporary manuals on agriculture were in practice useful for man-

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aging water resources in Syria, especially when it was confronted with recurrent droughts in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Élise Franssen examines book culture by analyzing a book that consisted of a collection of different religious manuscripts. The manuscript, which is currently at the University of Liège, was copied at the request of the amir Taghrī Barmish. With the help of this book she then attempts to reconstruct the intellectual and religious interests of an ordinary Mamluk officer.

In Part 5, on regional and local politics, Reuven Amitai shows the role of post-Crusader Acre and argues that there was considerable activity there during the Mamluk period despite its being destroyed after the expulsion of the Crusaders in 1291. He supports his argument with construction evidence, like the building of a tower in Acre. I do not think, however, that Acre's role as a regional trade center should be overemphasized. It functioned as a harbor for Jerusalem and the hinterlands, but it did not constitute the thriving, well-fortified center it had been during Crusader times.

The final contribution is by Joseph Drory, who tells the colorful history of the career of Ṭashtamur Ḥummuṣ Akhḍar, whose nickname had to do with the fact that he liked green chickpeas. Drory presents his life as an example of the *cursus honorum* until he finally fell into disgrace and was killed by the sultan in 1342.

Overall, this is a very sound festschrift for Amalia Levanoni, and the selection of authors and articles reflects her scholarly personality well. It represents many aspects of the variety and the state of the art of Mamluk Studies and should therefore be very interesting to the readers of *Mamlūk Studies Review*.

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ء	ʾ	خ	kh	ش	sh	غ	gh	م	m
ب	b	د	d	ص	ṣ	ف	f	ن	n
ت	t	ذ	dh	ض	ḍ	ق	q	ه	h
ث	th	ر	r	ط	ṭ	ك	k	و	w
ج	j	ز	z	ظ	ẓ	ل	l	ي	y
ح	ḥ	س	s	ع	ʿ				
		ة	h, t (in construct)			ال	al-		

ـَ	a	ـُ	u	ـِ	i
ـً	an	ـٌ	un	ـٍ	in
آ	ā	ـُو	ū	ـِي	ī
ـَا	ā	ـُوّ	ūw	ـِيّ	īy (medial), ī (final)
ى	á	ـَو	aw	ـَي	ay
				ـَيّ	ayy

Avoid using apostrophes or single quotation marks for *ʿayn* and *hamzah*. Instead, use the Unicode characters ʿ (02BF) and ʾ (02BE).

Capitalization in romanized Arabic follows the conventions of American English; the definite article is always lower case, except when it is the first word in an English sentence or a title. The *hamzah* is not represented when beginning a word, following a prefixed preposition or conjunction, or following the definite article. Assimilation of the *lām* of the definite article before "sun" letters is disregarded. Final inflections of verbs are retained, except in pausal form; final inflections of nouns and adjectives are not represented, except preceding suffixes and except when verse is romanized. Vocalic endings of pronouns, demonstratives, prepositions, and conjunctions are represented. The hyphen is used with the definite article, conjunctions, inseparable prepositions, and other prefixes. Note the exceptional treatment of the preposition *li-* followed by the article, as in *lil-sulṭān*. Note also the following exceptional spellings: Allāh, billāh, lillāh, bismillāh, miʾah, and ibn (for both initial and medial forms). Words not requiring diacritical marks, though following the conventions outlined above, include all Islamic dynasties, as well as terms which are found in English dictionaries, such as Quran, sultan, amir, imam, shaykh, Sunni, Shiʿi, and Sufi. Common place-names should take the common spelling in American English. Names of archaeological sites should follow the convention of the excavator.

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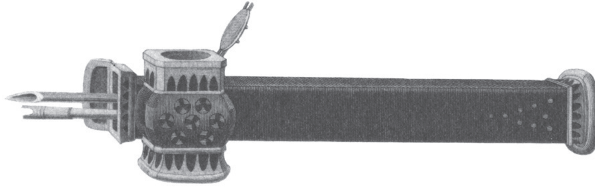

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