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THE BOOK IN FACT AND FICTION IN
PRE-MODERN ARABIC LITERATURE

edited by

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION:
THE BOOK IN FACT AND FICTION IN PRE-MODERN
ARABIC LITERATURE

Antonella Ghersetti

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As Johannes Pedersen stated in his seminal work: 'in scarcely any other culture did literary life play such a role as in Islam'.¹ Speedy dissemination of books, their transmission, authentication, production, reproduction and exchange testify to an enormous activity in the Arab-Islamic world. The result of these intellectual undertakings was great indeed: many Arabic scholars of the pre-modern period are famous for their prodigious output, which biographical sources reckoned in terms of pages, physical volumes and titles. According to Ibn al-Nadīm, the fourth/tenth century-scholar al-Marzubānī wrote over 38,000 pages! Books in both their concrete and intellectual sense were frequently a topic of discussion. Declarations of passionate love for books are quite common in Arabic literature, alongside literary representations of a passion for written materials – even verging on pathological attachment. The image of the personified book is also often found in the sources: it can be a trusted friend or might reveal itself as a generous teacher, always ready to inform and encourage conversation among people living in different times and places.

The study of the book as a material and intellectual item is multifaceted and covers all aspects related to book-production and their role in culture and society too. This encompasses delicate issues touching on problems of authorship; transmission of knowledge and knowledge control; the relationship between oral and written information, as well as freedom and books. Scholars have focused both on the material aspects of the book and on the great role it played as a cultural vehicle in the Arab-Muslim world. The material aspects of the Arabic book have been thoroughly investigated, mainly through a traditional bibliographic approach, whereas investigations into the book as an intellectual output have focused mainly on the relationship between written and oral. The classic work of Adolph Grohmann on *The Islamic Book* (Leipzig, 1929), and Johannes Pedersen's *The Arabic Book* remain

¹ Johannes Pedersen, *The Arabic Book* (Copenhagen, 1946; Engl. transl., Princeton, 1984), 37.

unequaled in many respects. Other works dedicated to more detailed aspects of the book as material entities have been produced later: notably, the works of Adam Gacek, *The Arabic Manuscript Tradition* (Leiden, 2001; plus *Supplement*, 2008) and *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers* (Leiden, 2009) and Jonathan Bloom, *Paper before Print. The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World* (New York, 2001), among others, have greatly improved our understanding of the techniques of production of the Arabic book.²

If a systematic and exhaustive investigation into the production and circulation of the book has greatly progressed in recent years, a thorough analysis of the book as a communication means, and its role as a vehicle of dissemination of knowledge has been somehow under-researched. A statistical approach in the vein of the French *Annales* school, consisting in the study of the way books are produced and consumed, and the ideologies that can be traced throughout the process, has been seldom applied to the case of the Arabic book. A detailed statistical inquiry would be an enormous and time-consuming task, but this would be a promising line of research to shed new light on the spread and reception of books in the pre-modern period. Also still in its embryonic stages for the study of the Arabic book is the approach espoused by ‘the history of books’, a relatively new discipline at the intersection of diverse fields of research, including codicology, book production and circulation, history of reading and reception, textual criticism. This covers several areas, such as authorship, the transmission of knowledge, and the passage from oral to written culture, which is a point of tremendous significance for our purposes. History of books, in Darnton’s words, aims at understanding ‘how ideas were transmitted through print and how exposure to the printed word affected the thought and behaviour of mankind during the last five hundred years’.³ Since it has been identified as a worthwhile field of research, the history of printed books in general has greatly progressed. An adaptation of its patterns and methodology to the history of the manuscript book is not only possible, but also desirable given that this equally affected—albeit in different proportions—the transmission of ideas and the thought and behaviour of those who came into contact with manuscripts. Much more remains to be done in this field, especially for the Arabic manuscript books.

² More bibliographic references are given in the dense pages of G. Endress, *Handschriftenkunden*, in W. Fischer (ed.), *GAP*, 1: *Sprachwissenschaft* (Wiesbaden 1982), 271 ff.

³ R. Darnton, ‘What is the History of Books?’, *Daedalus* 111/3 (1982), 65–83 (p. 65).

In his introduction to *The Book in the Islamic World*, George Atyeh claimed that there was still ‘a great need to look into the role of the book in the development of the Islamic world and its culture’ and the history of the book ‘not only as an artefact, but also in terms of intellectual content and physical properties, needs to be seriously explored’.⁴ Although our knowledge of some aspects of the Arabic book has been greatly expanded since then, it is nonetheless worthwhile responding to Atyeh’s implicit invitation and stimulate further reflection on some of the less well-investigated questions. Thus, *The Book in Fact and Fiction in Pre-Modern Arabic Literature* was conceived with a precise task in mind: to examine representations and images of the Arabic book in pre-modern period, both as reflected in the literary sources, and in the documentary evidence. It was intended as an operating tool to achieve a tentative definition of the concept of ‘book’, as a material and intellectual output, and of its role in cultural growth, as perceived by Arab-Muslim intellectuals of the pre-modern (and pre-print) period. The choice to restrict the investigation to this time-span was dictated by the enormous gravity of the manuscript tradition in the Middle East. Indeed, this tradition survived long after the introduction of printing, and coexisted with it (which, incidentally, resulted in a very long transition period). The desire to avoid the path of technical innovation, which would have involved questioning the issue of the ‘electronic book’, has also informed this choice of approach.

The potential issues invited in the call for papers included concepts of forgery and plagiarism; the circulation of forbidden, or non-canonical, books; books and the ways knowledge and intellectual exchange were transmitted; books as a means of dialogue between different cultures; cases of bibliophilia or bibliomania; motives driving to love, hate, accumulate or destroy books; literary representations of libraries, both public and private; the projection of the self upon the book as an intellectual product expressing some inner feeling; the dissemination of books and the roles of professionals; recommendations on handling books and writing materials; and the representation of, and appreciation for, professions involved in book-production and distribution.

Some of these issues found the favour of the authors and have been thoroughly investigated in single contributions. In other cases, they have been touched upon in articles whose contents overlap or intertwine. Other points that were raised in the call for papers remain unaddressed,

⁴ G. Atyeh, *The Book in the Islamic World. The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East* (Washington D.C., 1995), xv.

or have been addressed in a partial way, and call for further investigation. Indeed, I hope that they will be addressed in the future. In the process of assembling this volume, it soon became apparent that the two facets of the 'book', intended as a product of human intellectual and material activity, were more interrelated than expected. It was clear that an integrated approach, which combined the study of the material and intellectual sides of the Arabic book, could produce stimulating insights on the concept of book in addition to its impact on the development of intellectual life of the pre-modern Middle Eastern society. Some of the articles collected in this volume reflect the impossibility of sticking to a sharp separation between the two facets, and thus deal with the notion of 'book' as a global product involving physical and intellectual aspects in the same time.

A tentative synthesis of some points emerged in this volume of *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* could be useful to draw an outline of the preliminary results of this investigation. A substantial question was the relationship between freedom and books.⁵ This has always been a delicate point, as demonstrated by the systematic practice of controlling books in dictatorships. Arguably, the fear of the written word has run through the history of the humanity. The fear of printing (as opposed to handwriting) that pervaded Europe immediately after Gutenberg's invention⁶ was a consequence of the uncontrolled and virtually infinite reproducibility of the texts in the printing age, which made knowledge more difficult to control, and undermined the authority of religious élites. Chirographic, Arabic-Muslim society was no exception, and its diffuse and long-lived wariness of the written word echoes, *mutatis mutandis*, this same sentiment.

A glaring example of this is represented by the case study of the debate on free and individual access to the texts aroused in the Sufi circles in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and finely illustrated in this volume by Samuela Pagani. This also can be taken as an indication of reading-practice(s), a point tightly bound to the previous one, which has been raised at various junctures throughout this volume. The matter is especially relevant in a manuscript culture, in which reading out aloud was a primary practice in education and the canonical way of teaching and learning (and, in some respects, it still is). The

⁵ For illuminating reflections, see Luciano Canfora, *Libro e libertà* (Rome, 1994).

⁶ In this respect, the friar who stubbornly stood up against the use of printing in Venice of the sixteenth century, on the basis that this would distort sacred texts and corrupt knowledge by making it available to illiterate people, recalls the positions of many scholars of the pre-modern Middle East.

written word was intended to be read out, which explains why there was no need for punctuation marks to guide reading. Therefore, interpretation of the text made itself evident by virtue of pauses, segmentation, and the tone of the reader's voice. The significance of reading in the presence of a master, especially in the case of secret and/or religious knowledge, points to the importance of masters who could control access to the text, testify to true reading and, in the end, guarantee the 'correct' access to knowledge. This stands in sharp contrast with reading intended as an individual and silent practice, and its significance as a way of creating new meanings through the process of interpretation, a point underlined by the reception theory that describes it as an active process.

The cautiousness in approaching written texts—typical in educational circles, and all the more so in esoteric circles—is a topic touched on, at different levels, in articles dealing with the transmission and reception of texts. This mirrors the ambivalent attitude of Muslim intellectuals towards books, an issue which frequently emerges in this volume: books can be good or bad; dangerous or helpful; they can be widely circulated; hidden and even destroyed; they can be accumulated or sold and dispersed; they can be cherished or hated, or even feared. This sometimes implies dissociation between the imaginary and the factual: books of magic, for instance, were generally considered dangerous, but this did not prevent people from reproducing them nor hinder their circulation, as shown in Noah Gardiner's paper. This ambivalent attitude towards the object is no doubt grounded in wider opposition, more fiction than reality, between the two ways of transmission of knowledge: written and oral. The seminal works of Walter Ong and Jack Goody represent an essential point of departure for further inquiries. Nevertheless, they must be used with caution when applied to a 'writerly culture', a term befitting the 'graphomaniac tendency' that has characterised Arab-Islamic society in its long history.

The relationship between oral and written in Arabic sources has been carefully and widely investigated, and much more has been done in recent times.⁷ The antithesis of written and oral transmission is always present in the minds of Arab scholars and men of letters, and the issue of the reliability of written sources is a constant not only in the field of religious and legal studies, but also in more profane areas.

⁷ Not least by G. Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, ed., James E. Montgomery (London–New York, 2006); S. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr and Arabic Writerly Culture. A Ninth-Century Bookman in Baghdad* (London–New York, 2005).

The ambiguous relationships between these two alternative—and, in some measure, complementary—ways of transmitting knowledge has been addressed by almost all of the contributions, in tandem with the delicate balance between the need to depend on reliable and stable sources, and the wariness towards any forgery virtually implicit in any written source. In particular, the progressive reliance on written materials and the final acknowledgement of their status of trusted sources is thoroughly investigated in a case-study focusing on a specific literary genre, the ‘profane love treatises’, carefully explored in Monica Baldatillier’s article published herein.

This, and other contributions, also question, in different ways and in different respects, the concept of authorship and its various levels. The results are thought provoking and invite scholars to adopt cautious positions in accepting uncritically the attribution of some works in the huge corpus of the Arabic literature. The authority of many texts, whose reception and acceptance in the version(s) and form(s) are currently accepted, would probably not be so if submitted to thorough textual and philological scrutiny. This textual and authorial fluidity is also mirrored in the instability of the title, an issue that emerges patently in some papers: titles can change in the course of time; they can be transmitted orally; they can be attributed by the readers and not by the authors, and they can refer to works that consistently change their physiognomy as time goes by. Paradoxically, the fame of some personalities is tied to titles they never gave to their works, or to works they never conceived or published in the form(s) circulating later. As a matter of fact, it turned out that the concept of book as a well-defined textual unit, the final output of a single author to whom intellectual responsibility pertains, was probably much more fluid than that which we are accustomed to understand. While the existence of different levels of authorship relating to intervention and textual manipulation has long been acknowledged, the issue of a progressive construction of canonical texts has been much less investigated. The deep scrutiny of textual traditions carried out in a couple of contributions clearly demonstrates that, in some cases, by referring to ‘X book of X author’ we run the risk of making an inappropriate or ambivalent, if not false, statement. Through their case-studies, they convincingly show that two works circulating under the name of Ibn Saʿd, an historian of the formative period, and Aḥmad al-Būnī, the Sufi/‘magician’ of the seventh/thirteenth century are not—in their current forms and with their current titles—the original output of their putative authors. The results of their research point to a collective and long process of construction of ‘canonical books’, widely controlled

by qualified readers (teachers, initiates, professionals) who participated in different ways in the partial or global dissemination of diverse formats and traditions of the original textual nucleus.

An interesting and ground-breaking question is the applicability of methodologies conceived for new disciplines to the specific field of Arabic studies. In the wider frame of the 'history of books' two points emerged as particularly promising: the 'communication circuit' as expounded by Robert Darnton, and the trend stressing the importance of paratexts in the perspective of a sociology of texts. The so-called communication circuit, conceived to investigate how printed books come into light and spread in society, is based on the holistic view of the book as a means of communication. It tries to assess how the book history 'disparate segments can be brought together within a single conceptual scheme' starting from the assumption that 'books belong to circuits of communication that operate in consistent patterns'.⁸ The participants of the original pattern (author, publisher, printer, distributor, seller, reader) are obviously not all fitted to the study of manuscript culture. Nevertheless, this model can be readjusted to make it fit the reality of a manuscript culture. Indeed, Ahmad Nazir Atassi's contribution here aims precisely at testing the validity of such a model for the Arabic manuscript.

The 'participant-oriented' pattern of Darnton, criticised by some for its unbalanced approach that neglects the book as a product, was reoriented later into a more 'text oriented' model. In this vein some scholars focussed their attention on the significance of paratexts, i.e. the liminal elements that determine and reveal how the text is perceived by its readers.⁹ Being located at the fringe, paratexts constitute a transitional zone where the interaction between the text and its public can take shape. This issue deserves careful investigation since it can offer promising insights for the study of the Arabic manuscript books. This could be made on condition that the typological range of the texts originally covered by the hypronym 'paratext' is varied and adapted to its different historical settings. For instance, the paratext can also be intended as the trace left by the 'editors'/publishers of books (copyists), the 'professional' readers (scholars involved in the reception and dissemination of the texts contained in the books) and 'simple readers', such as those who used books for their private purposes adding notes and glosses, thus forming a 'bridge' between readers. *Iḡāzas*, reader's

⁸ Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?', 75 and 81.

⁹ See, for example, the work of Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris, 1987).

comments, corrections, and glosses can thus contribute to the reception and circulation of the books. The significance of paratexts is the issue addressed in Noah Gardiner's article that thoroughly investigates them (especially titles and notes) in the view of determining the interaction between text, readers and the textual transmission of authoritative works. This constitutes a stimulating hint at the circulation of a specific text, but also at the intellectual representations involved in the dissemination and the reception of a certain kind of knowledge.

The interdependence between the cultural and social significance of the text on the one hand, and its material shape on the other is precisely what defines the book as a cultural object: no text can circulate in a 'pure' form, i.e. without any material support to make it readable. The particular significance of the materiality of books points to the need of a thorough and intense research on the several aspects of books production and the role that the diverse craftsmen played in it. Being placed at the intersection of intellectual work (collation, proofreading) and material activity (copying, binding), and often involving a close connection with sacred and canonical texts, the status and role of the professionals of the book market is crucial for a better understanding of the book as a communication tool. Many specialisms were involved in the book business: the calligrapher (*ḥaṭṭāt*), the cutter of paper (*qāṭi'*), the gilder (*mudāhhib*), and the bookbinder (*muġallid*). Among them 'the immense importance of the *warrāq* to the world of books'¹⁰ must be emphasised. The *warrāq* probably had the same role that the printer and the bookseller (and sometimes the publisher) have in Darnton's 'communication circuit'. To know more about the professionals involved in book production we can turn to the material evidence of the physical item itself. This is no doubt a precious and first-hand contribution in terms of techniques of production (treatment of the paper, techniques of copying and bookbinding), but leaves aside the evaluation of their daily activity, their role in society, and the status they had in the eyes of their contemporaries. For that we must turn to the witness of the sources that—directly or indirectly—tell of the participants' relationship to the 'communication circuit'. In this respect, the treatises that the jurists wrote to regulate in detail the life of the *umma* are valuable sources. When explicit interdictions come into play, we must infer that they are grounded in real practices that the jurists felt as reprehensible. This kind of literature thus represents first-hand evidence of the intellectuals' attitude towards the book, both as a vehicle of transmission of

¹⁰ Pedersen, *op. cit.*, 52.

knowledge and as a physical item. This topic has also been explored in this volume with a particular focus on the Mamlūk era. The greater attention that Mamlūk jurists dedicated to the book corresponds to the remarkable growth and particular vitality in the book market which characterised this period, something that, from different points of views, emerges from Balda-Tillier's article dealing with the status of books as reliable sources or with the remarkable growth in the output of manuscripts.

The wealth of books in that period is reflected in many historical sources that describe remarkable libraries and book collections in laudatory terms. Throughout the history of the 'graphomaniac' Arab-Muslim culture, books were appreciated both as repositories of knowledge and as material objects, amassed for their aesthetic value and for their utility to scholars, giving birth to huge collections. Our knowledge of the Arab-Muslim libraries has been enriched by some seminal studies, such as Quatremère's very early pioneering study;¹¹ later works by Pinto,¹² Eche,¹³ Touati¹⁴ et al., and most recently by Hirschler.¹⁵ All in all, there is still much to know about libraries, and in particular private libraries and collections. Their organisation; systems of cataloguing; the location of volumes on the shelves; the role and activity of librarians, copyists, bookbinders and others involved in the maintenance and running of the library, doubtless deserve deeper investigation. Literary and historical sources do not usually offer meaningful insights in the everyday activities of libraries. Rather, they tend towards cursory references to some prominent scholars' collections or deal with libraries in connection with dramatic circumstances such as wars and riots that provoked their destruction.

The representation of libraries, both public and private, was among the points to be investigated. Two articles here elucidate these points. Through the lens of literary sources, the first outlines a picture of a scholar's private library also known for his bibliophilia; while the latter delves into some problematic aspects of cataloguing on the evidence

¹¹ É. Quatremère, *Mémoire sur le goût des livres chez les orientaux* (Paris, 1838).

¹² O. Pinto, 'Le biblioteche degli arabi nell'età degli Abbasidi', *La Bibliofilia* 30 (1928), 139–65; Eng. transl., 'The libraries of the Arabs during the time of the Abbasids', *Islamic Culture*, 3 (1929), 210–43.

¹³ Y. Eche, *Les Bibliothèques arabes publiques et semi-publiques en Mésopotamie, en Syrie et en Égypte au Moyen âge* (Damascus, 1967).

¹⁴ H. Touati, *L'Armoire à sagesse. Bibliothèques et collections en Islam* (Paris 2003).

¹⁵ K. Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh, 2012).

from first-hand sources. These studies also raise further questions, related to the exact interpretation of terms. To recall the title of an article by Franz Rosenthal, we can say that ‘of using many words to refer to books there is no end’.¹⁶ Clearly the term *kitāb* is not co-extensive with ‘book’ and remains somehow ambiguous, considering that in its primary meaning it referred to the result of the act of writing and could thus identify a letter, a charter, a note, or anything fixed by writing. Depending on the type of sources consulted concerning the discipline, the historical period and the cultural milieu, many other terms can be found to identify the item ‘book’. The result is that it is sometimes difficult to understand to which physical entity the terms exactly refer, and words like *daftar*, *muğallad*, *ğuz*,² *muṣḥaf* and so on, transmit different conceptual and physical entities.

Contemporary readers are seldom certain that the object they visualise corresponds to what the author had in mind and to what the pre-modern reader understood. Even if nowadays scholars can rely on valuable reference works, they could still feel a certain unease in interpreting the terms which should convey a precise mental image and thus depict a precise physical item. But even in the past conceptual ambiguities were difficult to avoid, for instance when the need of cataloguing prompted librarians to decide whether a certain physical item had to be ascribed to a conceptual category or another. Further contributions exploring the conceptual boundaries of the terms referring to the book in relation with well-defined historical periods, cultural milieux and disciplinary fields would no doubt be desirable.

The richness of the range of topics, periods and disciplines covered by the authors who generously participated in this enterprise, shedding light on the Arabic book in fact and fiction from diverse points of views, could only be partially represented by a quick and analytical glance at the individual contributions. The first article, by Peter Webb, focuses on the ideas of the famous polymath and bibliophile al-Ġāḥiz, and explores his conception of book as a vehicle to transmit knowledge, in connection with the intellectual heritage foreign to the purely Arabic tradition. This encompasses some intertwined debates about the status of books as repositories of authoritative knowledge, the position of Arab/non-Arab in the light of the *Šu‘ībiyya* movement, along with the position of the intellectual heritage of pre-Islamic ‘civilisations’. The evaluation of three key notions (book, knowledge, ethnicity) taken together sheds new light

¹⁶ F. Rosenthal, “‘Of Making Many Books There Is No End’: The Classical Muslim View”, in Atiyeh, *The Book in the Islamic World*, 33–56.

on aspects of al-Ġāhiz's—sometimes ambivalent—praise of books and writing against the background of the growing integration of multiple cultural traditions into Muslim 'civilisation'. The conclusions point to a re-evaluation of al-Ġāhiz's great respect for books, which was, actually a respect for 'Arabic' books – and, perhaps, notably his own. The 'ideal book' extolled by this polymath turns out to be a sample of the typically Arabic eloquence and stylistic elegance (*bayān*). This definitely puts it out of reach of competition with the literary outputs of other cultural traditions, and permits to ascertain its superiority in the name of the superiority of the Arabic language.

The article by Ahmad Nazir Atassi explores, through a sample study, the validity and adaptability of the 'communication circuit' elaborated by Darnton to the pre-print tradition in an Arab-Islamic context. In particular, Atassi elaborates a methodological framework to study the mechanics of survival of medieval Islamic books, which involves adapting, reducing or replacing some segments of the circuit. A focal point in this is the assessment of the role played by books (as material objects) in their trajectory in private and public spaces. In this respect, the production/reproduction and circulation of a book in a specific social circuit can act as a clue to a better understanding of how and where knowledge was disseminated, or hint at the perceived value of 'canonical' books. The inquiry focuses on the history of the earliest extant biographical dictionaries, Ibn Sa'd's (d. 230/845) *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, which, in its current textual form, turns out to be a product of the seventh/thirteenth century. The analysis of the book's transmitters and their historical contexts, based on *asānīd*, helps to trace the survival of this text's multiple recensions and their geographical diffusion. The issues raised by this article are manifold: the tension between the single item and the canon; the relationship between the whole textual unit and its segmentation (and the unequal circulation of these), as well as the unstable concept of authorship, and multiplicity and 'natural selection' of different recensions.

The process of construction of 'canonical' text books, which highlights a type of 'shared authorship' of the participants (teachers, students, readers and so on) and the fluid nature of canonical texts are also issues touched in the following article by Noah Gardiner. This article focuses on the transmission of the works attributed to Aḥmad al-Būnī, and consists of an extensive survey of a huge manuscript corpus. The output of the survey is an overview of the major works of the medieval Būnian corpus, the assessment of their authenticity and, as a side product, the acquisition of new information on al-Būnī's life.

Gardiner's conclusions also point to a new assessment of the authorship and dating of the work to which al-Būnī owe his fame, *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*, which, in the form of it that we have, turns out to be a product of the early eleventh/seventeenth century. From a methodological viewpoint, the perusal of the texts coupled with an extremely accurate study of paratexts (transmission certificates and ownership notices) seems very promising for an appropriate re-evaluation of the texts and of their circulation. A delicate question raised by this detailed case study is the unreliability of some printed editions for the reconstruction of the intellectual heritage of Islam, in particular in the field of esoteric disciplines.

The path of having recourse to the perusal of esoteric texts as a clue to the image of the Arabic book is also shared by Samuela Pagani, who proposes a case study focused on the educational function of Sufi books which took place at the end of the fourteenth century and beginning of the fifteenth. This alludes to a disputed question, the legitimacy of having recourse in the educational process to written textbooks as substitutes for masters, an issue that went well beyond the borders of esoteric circles, as attested by Ibn Ḥaldūn's intervention on the topic. This heated debate is also taken as an indicator of the growing importance of private reading in intellectual life and educational processes, an issue that ultimately refers back to the unending tension between orality and writing. The subjects treated in this article (the relationship between free access to knowledge and its control, the tension between private reading and the tendency towards innovation) deserve even further investigation in other periods and disciplines, which would cast new light on the development of relationships between authority and knowledge in Islamic cultural history.

The attitude of intellectuals towards their sources is the topic of Monica Balda-Tillier's contribution. It explores the tension between the use of written and oral sources and the shifting attitude towards acceptability as reliable authorities. Taking as a point of departure thirteen love treatises spanning from the fourth/tenth to the eleventh/seventeenth centuries, Balda-Tillier carries out an accurate survey of the techniques of quotations. The results demonstrate that the use of the traditional *isnād*, which boil down to a list of oral sources, tends to disappear to the advantage of citations of book-titles. At an individual level, to have recourse to written sources plausibly has to do with the assertion of a certain type of authorship, which consists of choosing and reshaping earlier materials. Put in its historical context, this shows a shifting attitude towards writing as a reliable way of

transmitting knowledge. It is not fortuitous that the turning point in this process proves to be a work of the Mamlūk period: the treatise of Muḡulṭāy (d. 762/1361), who lived in Cairo in a time when writing and written texts played a key role in education. The hypothesis put forward in this case study sketches out the interest of extending quantitative investigation to other ‘genres’ of Arabic literary output. This also seems a promising line of research to ascertain if there is a common turning point in the ‘never-ending affair’ of the tension between writing and orality in the intellectual history of the region.

The increasing confidence in books that seems to emerge in this period is parallel to the contemporary vitality of the book market, a side effect of the bookishness often attested in the sources for the Mamlūk period. But bibliophilia and the love of books seem to be a very typical feature of Arab-Muslim cultural history as a whole. References to cases of bibliophilia, reports of cases of exaggerate love for books, information about collections of books are scattered in the literary sources of all the periods. The paper by Letizia Osti investigates the image of a private library in the fourth/tenth century focusing on the quality and physical arrangement of books contained therein. The collection of Abū Bakr al-Šūlī, his love for books, and his reliance on writing as a source of knowledge (something which is severely censured in some biographical reports on him), are portrayed on the basis of the representations found in both contemporary and later sources. This presentation offers insights into the organisation of scholars’ private libraries, even more stimulating if we consider the renown of al-Šūlī as a passionate book-collector but also to his reputation as a scholar who was too dependent on written sources. Osti’s brief paper calls for further investigation on private libraries both as a contribution to a better knowledge of their contents and organisation, and their literary representations as symbols of intellectual and social phenomena: bibliophilia, the relationship between books and knowledge, the circulation of books in the scholars’ circles, the use of books as a status symbol and so on.

The study of libraries and books collections can also raise theoretical implications, like the definition of the concept of ‘book’, a challenging issue treated by Konrad Hirschler in his paper. The detailed investigation of a seventh/thirteenth-century library catalogue from Damascus shows that this concept in the Middle Period was far from being clear-cut, something that is also mirrored in the Formative Period. The perusal of the catalogue section dedicated to *maḡāmī*^c (miscellaneous volumes) and to the arrangement of the single items shows that the person in charge of the cataloguing had recourse to two different definitions of ‘book’. The

first is based on its immaterial aspects and corresponds to a textual unit. The second responds more to its material shape. This ambivalence, while showing the intricacy of finding a unique clear-cut operating definition, also hints at the intertwined nature of both material and immaterial aspects of books. Hirschler's contribution thus has a double interest: theoretical on the one side, and more practical on the other. It presents an unusual and rarely considered viewpoint on books: that of the 'librarian', who clearly had a different perspective from authors or readers, and whose role had probably to be based on perceived category distinctions. This also offers incisive views on the practical matter of arrangement that was faced in libraries, and on the role that professionals could have in handling and treating the books.

Related to the role of professionals of the book business is also the following essay by Giovanni Canova, who explores key aspects of the production and the handling of books through the eyes of the jurists and notably Ibn al-Ḥāǧǧ, Tāǧ al-Dīn al-Subkī and Ibn Ḡamā'a. The article consists of a critical selection and commentary of texts dating to the eighth/fourteenth century, a period in which jurists and 'ulamā' showed a particular interest in the activities involved in book production. They explored all the aspects of the book-business, including practical instructions on how to protect the volumes during consultation, how to put them in the stacks, and how to copy them, concerns which complement more general considerations on 'professional ethics'. Nor did they neglect to regulate craftsmen's everyday activities, giving detailed advice to the bookseller (*kutubī* or, more frequently, *warrāq*), the copyist (*nāsiḥ/nassāḥ*), the bookbinder (*muǧallid*), and the broker/bookseller (*dallāl*). The strong ethical slant of these treatises is particularly evident when the 'ulamā' urged the book artisans to act by following a strict Islamic moral code, on the ground of precepts such as the concept of *miṭāl* or 'pattern of behavior'; *adab* 'correct way to act,' and *niyya* or 'good purpose'. Their remarks no doubt constitute a significant—though indirect—contribution to our knowledge of the book market in the Mamlūk period. Along with documentary sources, such as *waqf* legal documents, they can help illuminate the role of 'professionals' involved in the processes of book production and circulation.

The multiple issues raised in this themed volume show the intricacies of the study of the pre-modern Arabic book in all its aspects, at a time when the traditional printed book meets new challenges, exactly like the manuscript books had to meet the challenges of printing – although admittedly in a less dramatic way. Indeed, the essays contained in this

(paradoxically) electronic volume are a witness to the great significance of the Arabic book in the intellectual history of the pre-modern period.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to those who responded to the call for papers and met the challenge of taking our knowledge of the Arabic book a step forward in a, hopefully, significant way. I also feel that I must express my gratitude to the editor of the *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, Alex Metcalfe, who accepted the idea of dedicating a volume of the journal to this theme, patiently edited the texts and helped us all keep to the deadlines. Working with him and with the colleagues who contributed (and who, presumably, share my love of books) has been a very enriching and extremely instructive experience for which I owe them my warmest gratitude.

‘FOREIGN BOOKS’ IN ARABIC LITERATURE: DISCOURSES ON BOOKS, KNOWLEDGE AND ETHNICITY IN THE WRITINGS OF AL-ĠĀḤIẒ

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Al-Ġāḥiẓ is one of the °Abbāsīd era’s most celebrated bibliophiles, and his praise of books and championing of ‘writerly culture’ in 3rd/9th-century Iraq are well documented. However, he also expressed distinctly negative appraisals of books that have hitherto received much less scholarly attention. This paper will examine the curiously paradoxical views of al-Ġāḥiẓ by considering his opinions on non-Arabic books in the context of scholarly debates in his contemporary Iraq. Al-Ġāḥiẓ’s conception of such books intersected debates regarding (a) the suitability of books to transmit knowledge, (b) rivalries between Arabs and non-Arabs in early °Abbāsīd Iraq, and (c) the merits of translating scholarly writings from pre-Islamic civilisations. Al-Ġāḥiẓ’s opinions on these issues led him to develop a particular conception of the ‘perfect book’ whereby he could unreservedly praise his own writings and extol °Abbāsīd literary culture, but at the same time subordinate foreign literary cultures to the non-literate pre-Islamic Arabians. Al-Ġāḥiẓ’s theories reveal that 3rd/9th-century Iraq had not yet become entirely a ‘civilisation of the book’, and that conceptions of language, ethnicity and knowledge influenced the formation of Muslim bibliophilia.

In the wake of the Islamic conquests of the 1st/7th century which amalgamated the various pre-Islamic civilisations of the Near East and Mediterranean into one empire, and with the subsequent emergence of Arabic as the region’s new lingua franca of cultural production, scholars in early °Abbāsīd Iraq (mid 2nd/8th to 3rd/9th centuries) experienced an environment responding to significant social and cultural change. From the later 2nd/8th century, the intellectual status quo was also confronted by technological developments which made the production of relatively inexpensive paper possible and facilitated a hitherto unprecedented opportunity for commercial book publication.¹ Scholars who formerly had relied largely on the aural acquisition of knowledge via lectures now could study from a growing library of books and disseminate their research and ideas to a wider reading public. The unique advantages of books to store and transmit knowledge were apparent to 3rd/9th-century

¹ See J. Bloom *Paper before Print*, discussed below, note 65.

intellectuals who praised writing specifically for this ability to communicate across time and space in ways that the oral/aural teacher/student relationship was physically unable to match.²

Akin to many such momentous epistemological and technological changes throughout history, the introduction of books and the integration of various ethnicities into the new social order of the 3rd/9th century were controversial and stimulated spirited debates which propelled Muslim civilisation along new trajectories. From the 4th/10th century, these eventually led to the bibliophilia and cultural unity for which medieval Muslim civilisation is famous.³ But in the 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries, scholars were in the midst of debate over whether a mute, inanimate book could sensibly replace a speaking, living lecturer as an authoritative source for knowledge, while the different ethnicities of the Muslim world vigorously jostled for status.⁴ These discourses collided with a third intellectual challenge when Arabic-speaking scholars began to translate and reflect on the books of Greco-Roman, Sāsānid Persian, Indian and other pre-Islamic cultures.

The ‘translation movement’, which began in the early 2nd/8th century (perhaps even before),⁵ made Arabic translations of pre-Islamic

² See, for example, the praise of *ḥaṭṭ* (writing) in both al-Ġāḥiẓ’s *R. al-Muʿallimīn (Rasāʾil, 3: 27)*, and *Ḥayawān* (1: 49–52).

³ Regarding the cultural bibliophilia, S. Toorawa identifies the late 4th/10th century as a time when ‘reliance on books would become *pro forma*’ (*Ibn Abī Ṭāhir*, 24). This was the period of Ibn al-Nadīm, whose lengthy *Fihrist* stands as a monument to the writerly culture of his generation. The cultural unity of the medieval Islamic world is well known, neatly encapsulated by a verse Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamaḡānī composed for his *al-Maqāma al-ʿilmiyya (Maqāmāt, 203)*:

Alexandria is my home, Should I settle there;

But in Syria I spend the night, and in Iraq, my day.

⁴ Extant evidence for the controversies surrounding these debates can be adduced from bans on selling certain books in 279 and 284 reported in al-Ṭabarī (*Tārīḥ*, 10: 27, 54) (also discussed by S. Toorawa *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir*, 20); the heated debate over writing Islamic traditions (M. Cook ‘The Opponents’); and the discordant pro-Arab/anti-Arab *Ṣuʿubiyya*-style polemics so commonly encountered in 3rd/9th century *adab* texts, including those of al-Ġāḥiẓ. L. Behzadi’s summary is apt: ‘ongoing discourses of [al-Ġāḥiẓ’s] time must have been much more colourful than we usually assume’ (*Sprache und Verstehen*, 175).

⁵ Traditionally, the translation movement has been associated with al-Maʾmūn (r. 198/813–218/833), but more recently, scholars have identified the urge to absorb and translate foreign knowledge from an earlier date, during the caliphates of al-Manṣūr (r. 136/754–158/775 and Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170/786–193/809), and perhaps the late Umayyad period (R. Rashed, ‘Greek into

scholarly texts widespread by the early 3rd/9th century.⁶ The translated texts differed starkly from the nascent Islamic sciences and Arabic philology, not only in terms of content, but also in form. Significantly, the translated texts were rooted in a manuscript tradition that contrasted with the Islamic and Arabic sciences where auralty was asserted as a key component of authority and authenticity. Furthermore, they were originally written in the distant past and in non-Arabic languages by peoples with neither geographical connection to Arabia, nor temporal proximity to Islamic history.

Muslim scholars in the late 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries thus simultaneously confronted issues of integrating diverse intellectual traditions of the Near East, theorising the acceptability of books as a means of transmitting knowledge, and accommodating multiple ethnicities into their social order. I suggest that these debates were interrelated and led 3rd/9th-century writers to adopt ambivalent positions which can be seen as steps on the way towards the more defined literate, bibliophilic and culturally inquisitive outlook of subsequent centuries. On the one hand, the budding bibliophilia of the 3rd/9th century would aid the favourable reception of both Arabic books and translated ‘pre-Islamic’ manuscripts, but the tensions inherent in the process of Arabicising a multi-ethnic society thrust non-Arabic writings into debates about how the polyglot heritage of the Muslim civilisation should be navigated. This paper will explore the way in which the Iraqi polymath, ‘Amr ibn Baḥr al-Ġāḥiẓ (d. 255/869) conceptualised ‘the book’ in the context of his views on non-Arabic peoples and the production of knowledge. Al-Ġāḥiẓ may not be a squarely ‘typical’ scholar of his time, if such a notion should indeed exist,⁷ but his writings on these debates are extensive and demonstrate their interrelatedness.

Arabic’, 161–7; G. Saliba, ‘Al-Ġāḥiẓ’, 41–2). The earlier beginnings of translation activity are also evidenced in the Islamic tradition: *al-Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm (written 377/938) notes the role of al-Manṣūr and al-Rashīd (*Fihrist*, 304–305, 333) and even suggests that the Umayyads commenced part of this venture, citing Hišām’s (r. 105/724–125/743) and al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ’s arabising of public records and translating some *‘ilm* (knowledge) into Arabic (*Fihrist*, 303).

⁶ ‘Foreign books’ commonly encountered in 3rd/9th century Arabic literature are Greek mathematical, scientific and philosophical writings, Sāsānid Persian historical and legendary court literature and collected aphorisms of a devotional and philosophical nature from Sāsānid Persia and India.

⁷ S. Toorawa criticises the trend in modern scholarship to identify al-Ġāḥiẓ with the ethos of the 3rd/9th century (*Ibn Abī Ṭāhir*, 124–7), however, I believe it may be difficult to ascribe to anyone the attributes of a ‘standard’ citizen of

Al-Ġāḥiẓ was a prolific writer⁸ and avid reader, identified in both medieval and modern writings as one of Islam's most famous bibliophiles.⁹ Some later biographers even reported that books caused his death, crushing him around his ninety-fifth year under a collapsed bookcase!¹⁰ But in contrast to reports of his bibliophilia, al-Ġāḥiẓ himself expressed ambivalent opinions on the utility of books. On the one hand, his well-known love of knowledge seems to have engendered his respect for books as vital carriers of knowledge and led him to adopt a markedly bibliocentric view of the world, whereby he appraised foreign peoples in correlation with their book production. This facet of al-Ġāḥiẓ has been often cited in modern scholarship,¹¹ but little attention has been given to a paradoxically contrary trend in his writings where he expressed doubts about books as symbols of knowledge and societal achievement, and even disparaged books and 'foreign book-producing' peoples. Resolving the contradiction of al-Ġāḥiẓ's ambivalent

his time: how would we go about defining one of these for the 20th century? Al-Ġāḥiẓ expressed views which were accepted by his patrons and contemporaries, and, as such, represents an entirely valid, while certainly not the only valid, point of reference in our understanding of this period.

⁸ According to Ch. Pellat, ('Nouvel essai', 119), he wrote 245 works. Many are better described as epistles, running some dozens of pages or less, though others are firmly 'books' in the 'modern' sense (G. Schoeler, 'Writing for a Reading Public', 52–3, 62–3): stand-alone texts with a set structure, and two in particular, *al-Ḥayawān* and *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn* have survived in multi-volume works.

⁹ Yāqūt relates the statement of Abū Hiffān: 'I have neither seen nor heard of anyone who loves books and the fields of knowledge more than al-Ġāḥiẓ' (*lam ara qaṭṭu wa-lā sami^ctu man aḥabba l-kutuba wa-l-^culūma akṭara mina l-Ġāḥiẓ*; *Mu^cjam*, 4: 474). See also al-Mas^cūdī (*Murūğ al-ḍaḥab*, 5: 104) and Ibn al-Nadīm (*Fihrist*, 130, 208). Al-Ġāḥiẓ's love of books is almost universally cited in modern writings about him, see Ch. Pellat 'al-Djāḥiẓ' on his wide readings; N. Angheliescu for his status as champion of literate culture (*Langage et Culture*, 63); and more generally S. Günther 'Praise to the Book!'

¹⁰ This famous but apocryphal-sounding account of his death is reported in Ch. Pellat *The Life and Works*, 9. Neither al-Baġdādī's nor Yāqūt's biographies of al-Ġāḥiẓ mention it, recording instead that al-Ġāḥiẓ was in his ninety-sixth year around the time of his death and that his physical condition was extremely poor, suffering from semi-paralysis (*fāliġ*) and gout (*niqris*), and thus not likely in a fit state to browse bookshelves in his last days (al-Baġdādī, *Tārīḥ*, 12: 214, Yāqūt, *Mu^cjam*, 4: 492, 496–8).

¹¹ See, particularly N. Angheliescu *Langage et Culture* and S. Günther 'Praise to the Book!'

bibliophilia must take into account the developing ‘writerly culture’¹² and conceptions of ‘foreign peoples’ in his contemporary Iraq. His writings highlight how the hallmarks of the medieval Islamic civilisation – bibliophilia, knowledge-seeking and a cosmopolitan outlook – were closely interrelated, though not definitively conceptualised, during the first ‘Abbāsīd century.

Interpreting al-Ġāhiz on ethnicity: a scholarly advisory

Akin to other volatile substances, analysis of al-Ġāhiz must come with appropriate caveats. He has been described as sarcastic, witty, rambling, emotive, unsystematic and elusive, more lyrical than meticulous,¹³ neatly summarised by one modern scholar: ‘who is to say what [al-Ġāhiz’s] true intentions are – perhaps not even [al-Ġāhiz] himself’.¹⁴ Al-Ġāhiz makes strong arguments, though his opinions can appear to shift from one text to the next, leading readers to question whether he possessed strong opinions at all, or whether his ambivalence is a mixture of his own confusion and/or scholarly interest in debating multiple, and conflicting angles of an argument. As such, al-Ġāhiz’s work does not lend itself to macrosynthesis of anecdotes from his vast oeuvre. Rather, each quotation demands microanalysis to infer its meaning in the context of the text in which it is contained.¹⁵ Despite these difficulties, I concur with some modern opinions that al-Ġāhiz may be more systematic than traditional Western research has assumed.¹⁶ Nonetheless, the complications of al-Ġāhiz are manifold and evident in his discussions of books and ethnic groups which are the focus of this paper. As for peoples of the world, in some cases we find al-Ġāhiz praising the merits of a people, while in a different text he sharply lampoons them.¹⁷ Political

¹² An appropriate term for the increasingly textual, book based approach to scholarly activity coined by S. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Tāhir* (1) to describe the *adab* culture of the 3rd/9th and succeeding centuries.

¹³ See S. S. Agha, ‘Language as a Component of Identity’, 70–3, 80. See also S. Enderwitz, ‘Culture History and Religion’, 229.

¹⁴ An opinion expressed by J. Lassner, *The Shaping*, 121.

¹⁵ This approach to al-Ġāhiz was proposed by S.S. Agha (‘Language as a Component of Identity’, 72–3) and is mirrored in J. Montgomery’s three-fold strategy to extrapolating meaning from a given Ġāhizian text (‘Speech and Nature. Part 3’, 114–15).

¹⁶ J. Montgomery, borrowing from Isaiah Berlin, alludes to al-Ġāhiz’s ‘despotic [intellectual] system’ (‘Speech and Nature. Part 3’, 114), and Behzadi considers al-Ġāhiz a ‘systematic’ thinker (*Sprache und Verstehen*, 173).

¹⁷ For example, in *al-Bayān wa-l-tabayīn* al-Ġāhiz denigrated the Zanj (a term particularly used to describe East Africans who arrived in al-Ġāhiz’s Iraq as

agendas and patronly tastes may have coloured al-Ġāḥiẓ's analysis in particular epistles;¹⁸ and we ought to exercise further caution in interpreting his texts at face value, for, in addition to the sarcasm and tongue-in-cheek sometimes apparent in his style, al-Ġāḥiẓ wrote in polemical genres which fostered exaggeration and embellishment at the expense of sober discourse.

It has been noted that al-Ġāḥiẓ was singularly influenced by discourses emanating from the genre *al-Maḥāsīn wa-l-Masāwī*' (good versus bad traits) which used dialectic as a means of analysis whereby everything is imagined to be relative and all ideas could be called into question.¹⁹ Gériès has suggested how al-Ġāḥiẓ used this methodology to good effect in his theological writings²⁰ and it appears that al-Ġāḥiẓ may have engaged in a similar logic regarding ethnicities. He is known to have written several contradictory pieces about peoples of the world: consider for instance a (now lost) work in praise of the South Arabian Qaḥṭān tribal group²¹, and an antithetical text praising the specific merits of their rivals, the North Arabian °Adnān *over* Qaḥṭān.²² Al-Ġāḥiẓ's

slaves) as 'disorganised rabble' (*Bayān*, 1: 137) and belittled their condition vis-à-vis other peoples (*Bayān*, 1: 384). In a separate, polemical essay entitled *Faḥr al-sūdān °alā l-bīḍān*, however, he argued their merits, describing the Zanj in entirely positive terms (*Rasā'il*, 1: 173–226, particularly 195–9).

¹⁸ Noted by J. Lassner regarding *Manāqib al-Turk* (Virtues of the Turks) which al-Ġāḥiẓ dedicated to the powerful Turkic *wazīr* al-Faṭḥ ibn Ḥāqān (*Rasā'il*, 3: 163; J. Lassner, *The Shaping*, 119–120); and Pellat proposed that al-Ġāḥiẓ's *al-Radd °alā al-naṣārā* (Rebuttal against Christians) was written for the Caliph al-Mutawakkil during a period of official anti-Christian sentiment (*Le Milieu Basrien*, 231).

¹⁹ I. Gériès, 'al-Maḥāsīn wa-°l-Masāwī,' *EF*, v, 1223–4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ In 3rd/9th-century Arabic writings, Qaḥṭān was identified as the legendary ancestor of all Southern Arabians (tribes who claimed a Yemeni origin). A rivalry between 'Northern' and 'Southern' Arabs fueled polemical treatises which tend towards a binary division of Arab tribes into these two groups. Qaḥṭān and °Adnān became virtual by-words for these two-halves of the Arab people.

²² *Rasā'il*, 1: 225. See also his *Faḥr al-sūdān* which defends the merits of *al-Sūdān* (lit. 'the blacks' from sub-Saharan Africa), but also contains a condescending approach and reserved praise: for example he concedes that African slaves in Iraq lack intelligence, but ascribes this to their status as slaves and their origin from a part of Africa where people are 'devoid of beauty and sagacity (*jamāl wa-°uqūl*). Al-Ġāḥiẓ 'promises' that in other parts of Africa, beautiful and more cultured peoples (*jamāl wa-kamāl*) could be found (*Rasā'il*,

ambivalence may thus represent his method for achieving a deeper understanding of his subject matter.

Notwithstanding the twists and turns of al-Ġāhiz's views on ethnicity, Lassner made an important observation regarding al-Ġāhiz's epistle *Manāqib al-Turk* (Virtues of the Turks). He ventured that a search for compatibility between the disparate elements of ʿAbbāsīd society lay at the root of al-Ġāhiz's writings on foreigners whereby al-Ġāhiz attempted to devise an integrating model in which non-Arabs, including al-Ġāhiz himself, could find a place in the social order.²³ The desire to formulate an integrating model certainly accords well with the trend in ʿAbbāsīd civilisation towards constructing a less divided social order. But the issue is more complex: as Pellat noted, al-Ġāhiz considered himself 'very much a member of the Arab community' and a 'passionate defender of the Arab heritage'.²⁴ Hence, al-Ġāhiz's interest in merging various ethnicities into one social order, or perhaps a 'cultural order' unified by *adab*, conflicted with an Arabian particularism in his writings. As discussed above, issues of ethnicity, knowledge extracted from non-Arabic sources and the authoritativeness of books were being debated simultaneously in al-Ġāhiz's Iraq and al-Ġāhiz's conflicting leanings regarding different peoples of the world interact closely with his paradoxical opinion of books.

'Foreigners' and 'foreign books' in al-Ġāhiz's writings

In the shadow of the burgeoning translation movement in 3rd/9th-century Iraq, the interplay of books and ethnicity in al-Ġāhiz's thought coalesce in his writings about 'foreigners'. His conceptions of ethnicity and the relationship between 'peoples' of the world (whom al-Ġāhiz generally labels *umam*)²⁵ are complex and worthy of deeper study,²⁶ but

1: 211–12).

²³ J. Lassner, *The Shaping*, 119–23.

²⁴ Ch. Pellat, *The Life and Works*, 3; idem, 'al-Djāhiz', 387.

²⁵ Al-Ġāhiz generally designates *umma* as the largest distinct grouping of a people. The basis upon which Al-Ġāhiz conceived *ummas* to be distinct is not always apparent, but his hierarchy of terminology which identifies *umma* as the largest group can be found in *Manāqib al-Turk* (*Rasā'il*, 3: 213). See also his usage of *umma* to distinguish the Kurds, Berbers, Africans, etc (*Bayān*, 1: 137); or to connote the constituent 'peoples' of the world generally, *Bayān*, 3: 12.

²⁶ Al-Ġāhiz's opinions on ethnicity have been considered by modern scholars in varying degrees of detail. In addition to J. Lassner's study of *Manāqib al-Turk*, Pellat considers some of al-Ġāhiz's reactions to his multi-ethnic milieu (*Le Milieu Basrien*, 224–234) and 'foreign literature' in 'Djāhiz et

for our purposes, a brief outline of al-Ġāhiz's conception of his community and the 'outside world' indicates how his worldview was in part formed through a 'bibliocentric lens'.

Common to any analysis of identity and foreignness, al-Ġāhiz's actual genealogy (which may have been black African (*aswad*) or at least not Arabian²⁷) is less of a concern than the community to which he expressed his belonging and upon which he based his conception of the 'outside world'. The answer to this is nuanced. Al-Ġāhiz was certainly a partisan of the Arabs and took up their defence against those whom he called *šu'ūbīs* (his contemporaries who lauded the past glories of non-Arabian pre-Islamic peoples and argued for their superiority over the Arabs).²⁸ But he usually refrained from identifying his own community as generically 'Arab'. At times, al-Ġāhiz divides the 'Arabs' temporally and geographically into pre-Islamic (*ġāhiliyyūn*), Islamic (*islāmiyyūn*), desert-dwelling (*badawiyyūn*) and settled (*ḥadariyyūn*).²⁹ These distinctions separate al-Ġāhiz's generation of urban Arabic speakers in both time and space from the 'pure Arabians' (*al-a'arāb al-ḥullaṣ*)³⁰ who inhabited desert spaces in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times.³¹ Al-Ġāhiz usually identifies his contemporary community as 'us' (*nahnu*),³² 'this nation' (*hādīhi al-umma*)³³ or 'our religious community' (*millatunā*).³⁴ In debates with *šu'ūbīs*, al-Ġāhiz does assume the position

la littérature comparé', although in the latter article Pellat does not discuss the parameters of 'foreignness', assuming that al-Ġāhiz treats the Persians, Greeks and Indians as foreign peoples. See also S. Enderwitz, 'Culture History and Religion' for al-Ġāhiz's view on foreigners and *adab* culture.

²⁷ On his non-Arabian origins, see Š. Dayf (*al-Fann wa-l-Maḍāhibuhu*, 154) and for mention of his 'aswad' roots see al-Baġdādī (*Tārīḥ Baġdād*, 12: 209), Yāqūt (*Mu'ġam*, 4: 473). On the other hand, °A. Arḥīla defends al-Ġāhiz's Arabian origins (*al-Kitāb*, 29).

²⁸ *Bayān wa-l-tabyīn* in particular refers to these partisans of pre-Islamic, non-Arabian peoples as *al-šu'ūbiyya* (see 1: 383; 3: 5, 29, 31, 89).

²⁹ *Bayān*, 1: 9.

³⁰ *Bayān*, 3: 29.

³¹ See *Bayān*, 1: 384 where he uses the expression °*arab al-ġāhiliyya wa ṣadr al-islām* to describe the first Arabs, as historically distinct, though related to those whom he calls in the same passage 'our community' (*ummatunā*).

³² E.g., *Bayān*, 3: 366, where he refers to the °Abbāsīd caliphs as 'our caliphs' (*ḥulafā'unā*).

³³ *Bayān*, 1: 368.

³⁴ *Bayān*, 1: 137. For the translation of *milla*, see Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān* (11: 631) where it is defined as *dīn wa-šarī'a* ('religion and religious law') and al-Ḥalīl, °*Ayn* (8: 324) where it is related specifically to the communal religious

of ‘the Arab’,³⁵ but his general reticence to label his community as simply ‘Arabs’ is evident and logical given the diverse ethnic backgrounds in 3rd/9th century Iraq. Thus, al-Ġāḥiẓ’s *umma* could perhaps be considered Arabicised without being Arabian,³⁶ maintaining a link to the ‘*arāb*’ Arabians to the extent of its preservation of their ‘correct’ Arabic language.³⁷ The maintenance of ‘proper Arabic’ emerges in al-Ġāḥiẓ’s writing as the privilege of scholars, betraying an intellectual elitism, much remarked upon in modern literature.³⁸ In brief, this restricted his community to the educated ‘reading public’³⁹ and he expressed little regard for the uneducated,⁴⁰ and even less for the group he labelled *a‘arīb*: inarticulate Arabic speakers of vile origin.⁴¹ Al-Ġāḥiẓ’s ‘us’ accordingly connotes a narrow band of literate, educated, Arabic speakers who inhabited the urban centres of the Muslim world and share ‘our religious community (*milla*), our religion (*dīn*), our language, our education/manners (*adab*), and our ethics (*aḥlāq*)’.⁴² Ties of religion, language, education and ethics appear more determinative than strict genealogy.

In terms of the rest of humanity, al-Ġāḥiẓ often presents a two-fold

law of a group of people.

³⁵ See, for example, his hypothetical dispute with the *šū‘ūbīs* where he and the Arabs are addressed collectively with the second person plural pronoun, *antum* (*Bayān*, 3: 14).

³⁶ By the term ‘Arabian’ I intend the Arabic-speaking peoples who inhabit the area now identified as the Arabian Peninsula. They are to be distinguished from Arabic speakers of the urban centres of the ‘Abbāsīd period. The urban Arabic speakers were also aware of this difference, commonly (although not exclusively) applying the term ‘*arāb*’ to connote the desert-dwelling Arabs. To use al-Jāḥiẓ’s terminology, I mean by ‘Arabians’, al-Jāḥiẓ’s *badwaiyyūn* of the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods. The ‘long-standing integration’ of non-Arabians like al-Ġāḥiẓ into an Arabised identity is discussed in Ch. Pellat, *Le Milieu Baṣrien*, which Pellat considers the cause for the non-Arabian al-Ġāḥiẓ to side with Arabians in contemporary racial debates (53–5).

³⁷ *Bayān*, 1: 145. The full text is translated below at note 147.

³⁸ See, for example, J. Montgomery, ‘Speech and Nature. Part 3’, 112, 118–19.

³⁹ Identified by Toorawa as ‘landlords, landowners, merchants, entrepreneurs, judges, jurists, physicians, poets, littérateurs, teachers and other scholars’ (*Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr* 1-2).

⁴⁰ For example, his definition of ‘general populace’ (*al-‘awāmm*) even explicitly excludes farmers, market sellers, tradesmen and the *hishwa* (‘lowlives’), *Bayān*, 1: 137.

⁴¹ *Bayān*, 1: 146.

⁴² *Bayān*, 1: 137.

division of *ummas*. He explicitly identified only four ‘noteworthy’ (*maḍkūr*) peoples of the world: ‘Arabs’ (perhaps he means particularly Arabs from pre-Islamic up to Umayyad times⁴³), Persians, Indians and the Rūm.⁴⁴ He cast the rest as *hamağ aw mā yušbih al-hamağ* (‘disorganised rabble to varying degrees’).⁴⁵ Al-Ġāḥiẓ’s restricting of praise to these four peoples mirrors his approach to his own community and demonstrates a pivotal role of the ‘book’ in shaping his worldview. Al-Ġāḥiẓ explains that his appraisal of world peoples was determined on an intellectual basis, declaring the above quartet as worthy of his esteem on account of their ‘manners, education, wisdom and learning’.⁴⁶ He further specifies the Persians, Indians and Rūm as the only peoples whom he believed had developed advanced conceptions of rhetoric (*balāgha*),⁴⁷ produced books and possessed commendable literary traditions.⁴⁸

⁴³ He notes that the Umayyads preserved the praiseworthy traditions and qualities of the pre-Islamic Arabs, whilst al-Ġāḥiẓ remarks that these traditions suffered a decline during the °Abbāsīd period. As such, the ‘Arabs’ are relatively historically remote in much of *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn* and many of the more excellent aspects of their culture seem, in al-Ġāḥiẓ’s view, to have passed (*Bayān*, 3: 366-367).

⁴⁴ *Bayān*, 1: 137, see also *Bayān*, 1: 384, *Ḥayawān*, 1: 53. The term ‘Rūm’ generally designates contemporary Byzantines in Arabic texts, but can also refer to the Greco-Roman civilization. What we refer to today as the Ancient Greek civilization is usually identified as *al-Yūnān*. However, there is occasional overlap in Arabic writings of the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries where the relationship between *Rūm* and *Yūnān* were variously interpreted, sometimes *al-Yūnān* were deemed as descended from *al-Rūm*. Al-Mas°ūdī helpfully summarises the various opinions and notes how the later *al-Rūm* lived in the same lands as *al-Yūnān* and adopted their language and ways (*madhhab*) (*Murūj* 2: 664). Al-Jāḥiẓ cites *al-Yūnān* as a ‘disappeared peoples’ (*umma bā’ida*) (*Bayān* 1: 188), although in his epistle *al-Radd ‘alā al-Našārā*, both *al-Rūm* and *al-Yūnān* are cited, indicating a perceived continuity between these two peoples in his worldview.

⁴⁵ *Bayān*, 1: 137, *Hamağ* derives from flies or gnats which cluster around sheep and donkeys (Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, 2: 393). It is applied to people by analogy on account of the diminutive size of gnats and disorganisation of their flight (ibid, al-Zamaḥṣarī, *Asās al-Balāgha*, 706). Rabble or riffraff could act as translations.

⁴⁶ They are described as *al-umam allatī fihā l-aḥlāq wa-l-ādāb wa-l-ḥukm wa-l-ilm* (*Bayān*, 1: 384).

⁴⁷ *Bayān*, 1: 88.

⁴⁸ *Bayān*, 3: 13, *Ḥayawān*, 1: 53.

As regards the outside world, therefore, al-Ġāhiz adopted a distinctly bibliocentric lens by which ‘foreign’ book producing peoples were accepted to join the ‘Arabs’ in the global hierarchy, while those whom al-Ġāhiz believed lacked literary traditions were excluded. Precisely why ‘the book’ could be utilised as an arbiter between *madhkūr* (worthwhile’) and *hamaj* (‘worthless’) peoples and the precise workings of this worldview in al-Ġāhiz’s writings, can be understood in the context of the conceptions of books and knowledge in al-Ġāhiz’s society.

The nexus of ‘book–knowledge–civilisation’ in Muslim thought

Al-Ġāhiz’s ‘intellectual elitist’ worldview indicates a profound respect for knowledge (*‘ilm*) and a conceptualisation of books (*kutub*) as representing physical embodiments of *‘ilm*.⁴⁹ The three ‘foreign’ peoples, *qua* book producers, generated *‘ilm* and so earned the right to exist alongside the Arabs whose *‘ilm* al-Ġāhiz vigorously defended in his writings. This seems to harbinger a model of ‘universal bibliophilia’ encountered in later medieval Arabic writing where literary output and the worth of foreign peoples are unambiguously connected.⁵⁰ This bibliophilia of the medieval period has led scholars to label the Muslim world a ‘civilisation of the book’⁵¹ and the role of books in al-Ġāhiz’s worldview seems to be an early expression of this ‘global’ aspect of Muslim bibliophilia. In seeking the origins of the Muslim partiality to books, Western scholars have traditionally considered that the prototypical respect of *kitāb* and *‘ilm* emanate directly from the Qur’ān.⁵² The Qur’ān does contain a literate-intellectualised conception

⁴⁹ Al-Ġāhiz’s esteem for knowledge is famous (Ch. Pellat, *Le Milieu Basrien*, 68), and al-Ġāhiz’s dual conception of books-knowledge has been noted by °A. Arhāla, *al-Kitāb* (see particularly 16, 66, 142) and N. Anghelescu, *Langage et Culture*, 59-59. Al-Ġāhiz wrote specifically on the topic of knowledge, composing texts entitled *Faḍl al-‘ilm*, *Risālat al-mu‘allimīn*, *al-‘Ālim wa-l-ġāhil* and three separate texts about *ma‘rifā*. Ch. Pellat, ‘Nouvel essai’, 130, 141, 147–8.

⁵⁰ For an archetypal expression of this bibliocentrism, see *Ṭabaqāt al-Umam* of Šā‘id ibn Aḥmad al-Andalusī (d. 462/1070). See note [65] below.

⁵¹ G. N. Atiyeh, *The Book in the Islamic World*, xiv. J. Pedersen’s *The Arabic Book* is the classic exploration of the paradigmatic ‘bibliophilia’ in Islam. See also J. Bloom *Paper Before Print* (116–23) for a description of the outpouring of ‘book culture’ and S. Günther’s ‘Praise to the Book!’, 126 for the scholarly backing of this enterprise.

⁵² J. Pedersen opens his classic work with the phrase ‘The Arabic book owes its origin to Islam’ (*The Arabic Book*, 3) and identifies the Qur’ān as the first ‘proper’ Arab book (ibid., 12–16). As for *‘ilm* (knowledge), F. Rosenthal

of human existence: it makes myriad citation of *kitāb* and *‘ilm*, it teaches that the *kitāb* will ‘release the people from darkness into light’ (Qur’ān 14:1), and it closely equates *‘ilm* with the ideal human condition, describing Muslims as those who have or seek *‘ilm*, in contrast to non-believers who act ‘without it’ (Qur’ān 31:20).⁵³ However, the inference that the Qur’ān is the basis of later expressions of Muslim intellectualised bibliophilia risks anachronism.⁵⁴

While the Qur’ān, al-Ġāhiz and later Muslim writers all seem united in the same knowledge-seeking bibliophilic chorus, current scholarship is revealing that the acceptance of books as authoritative depositories of *‘ilm* was a protracted process, the stages of which ought to be separated. First, in an insightful monograph, Madigan demonstrated that the Qur’ānic conception of the ‘enlightening *kitāb*’ was not a ‘book’ in the modern sense of a closed, definitive, authored text. Madigan argued that the Qur’ānic ‘*kitāb*’ is a symbol for God’s authoritative knowledge, representing the totality of His guidance to mankind. It thereby transcends terrestrial, time-bound texts,⁵⁵ and, in fact, the Qur’ān states

considered the history and importance of *‘ilm* throughout Muslim thought, proposing that prior to Islam the Arabians had a very limited appreciation for *‘ilm* (conceived as scholarly knowledge), and were left in a somewhat ‘dark age’ where knowledge was restricted to desert landmarks and practical matters of survival (*Knowledge Triumphant*, 9-16). According to Rosenthal, the revelation of the Qur’ān, with its particular emphasis on *‘ilm* (ibid., 20) ushered in the advanced theoretical epistemology (ibid., 2). See also ‘A. Arḥīla for the commonly held view that wide-ranging knowledge seeking is an integral aspect of Islamic belief (*al-Kitāb*, 19, 67).

⁵³ In the same vein, the Qur’ān chastises those who ignore *‘ilm* when it is taught/revealed to them (Qur’ān, 2: 145; 13: 37).

⁵⁴ Promulgators of this conception, such as Rosenthal, do note the multi-faceted meaning of *‘ilm* in Muslim thought. However, Rosenthal’s analysis implies the Qur’ān has retained a determinative role in shaping *‘ilm*’s parameters (Qur’ān, 42–5, 48–90). This analysis primarily relies on texts from the later 3rd/9th century, leaving the first 250 years of Muslim intellectual history as a stasis in which the Quranic ideal seemingly was little changed.

⁵⁵ For D. Madigan’s elucidation on the meaning of *kitāb* in the Qur’ān see *The Qur’ān’s Self Image*, 52–4; 70–2; 105; 145. According to Madigan, in the language of the Qur’ān, a printed copy of the text should not be referred to as *kitāb*, and for this reason, he proposes, the term *muṣḥaf* was adopted (ibid., 36–37). When the Qur’ān refers to written documents it eschews the verb *kataba* for physical writing (ibid., 108–9) and refers to physical ‘books’ with words like *ṣuḥuf* and *qirṭās* (ibid., 122–3).

that no human-authored book can approach the power of the *Kitāb*.⁵⁶ While the Qurʾān does establish a discursive framework in which *kitāb* and *ʿilm* are connected in a tremendously positive manner and the possession of *kitāb* symbolises ‘correct guided’ life, it is unlikely that the earliest Muslim audiences associated this symbolic grandeur with terrestrial *kutub* (understood as human authored texts or anything ‘written’⁵⁷). The elevation of terrestrial *kutub* to the centrepiece of later Muslim bibliophilia is a separate phenomenon achieved via the gradual maturation of the writerly culture.

Towards a ‘writerly culture’: the concept of the ‘book’ in 3rd/9th-century Iraq Muslim ‘writerly culture’, which began to emerge about one hundred years after the Qurʾān’s revelation, would eventually champion the human-authored book and provide the necessary theoretical backdrop to use the book in appraising peoples of the world.⁵⁸ But in al-Ġāhiz’s day, ‘writerly culture’ had not entirely matured and the status of books remained debated. Until the latter 2nd/8th century, scholars were primarily praised for their capacity to memorise.⁵⁹ In contrast, book ‘publication’ was extremely limited,⁶⁰ formal writing was restricted to

⁵⁶ See the Qurʾān 2: 79 for its extreme censure of the human act of claiming their writings to be like God’s *kitāb*.

⁵⁷ A definition drawn from the earliest Arabic dictionary *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, which identifies *kitāb* as the ‘verbal noun’ (*maṣdar*) of the verb *kataba* ‘to write’ (al-Ḥalīl, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, 5: 341).

⁵⁸ Madigan notes that the impetus to ascribe terrestrial *written* texts with *kitāb* was aided by the written codification of the Qurʾān in a written *muṣḥaf* during the 1st/7th century which began to elevate respect for the written word (*The Qurʾān’s Self Image*, 23, 47–8).

⁵⁹ Anecdotes recording the lampooning of traditionists in the 2nd century who relied on written notes and praising those who allegedly knew all their material from memory are frequently cited in debates about the authenticity of the *ḥadīth*, the permissibility of writing them and the development of a written *ḥadīth* tradition. Conversely, Schoeler stresses the important role of notebooks (*hypomnemata*) from early times (*The Oral and the Written*, 114–128). Irrespective of the private use of such notes, the public display of knowledge from memory was important, witnessed by the scale of anecdote in the Islamic tradition.

⁶⁰ Both Nabia Abbot (*Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*) and Fuat Sezgin (*Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 1) gathered evidence for scholarly writings in the latter first and second centuries of Islam. Subsequent research has cast doubt on these attempts to identify primordially early texts in the Islamic tradition (G. Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written*, 40).

bureaucratic matters and scholarly writing was limited to informal notebooks for personal use or shared between students. These writings, sometimes identified in the sources as *kutub*, should not be construed as ‘books’ in the sense of formally published closed-ended texts.⁶¹ Knowledge transmission was likely aided by written notes, and scholars did not only rely on their powers of memory. However, presumptions of 20th-century scholars in the tradition of Goldziher who sought to prove that the transmission of knowledge *relied* on writing have ignored the staunch opposition to writing as detailed by Cook and they lack evidence given the limited numbers of surviving papyri and other writing fragments from the period.⁶² The word of the scholar possessed greater value than his writings,⁶³ and the authority of human written texts seems to have been somewhat mistrusted across the Islamic world, and particularly in al-Ġāhiz’s hometown of al-Baṣra.⁶⁴ In this environment, the first translations of the ‘foreign’ texts from the Sāsānid Persian, Greek, and Indian traditions would have circulated primarily in the palaces and administrative centres and not ventured far into the circles of the wider Muslim scholarly community.⁶⁵ Overall, recourse to written notes was largely outside of public view,⁶⁶ books lacked authority as standalone repositories of knowledge and consequently there was therefore almost no scope in the first two centuries of Islam to accept either the notebook *kutub* or translations of non-Arabic texts as epitomes of authoritative knowledge transmission.

As noted above, the introduction of paper and perhaps a greater familiarity with the textual traditions of pre-Islamic Near Eastern

⁶¹ This theory was first proposed in the 19th century by Alois Sprenger and has been carefully developed in *The Oral and the Written* and *The Genesis of Literature* by Schoeler who identifies these writings as ‘notebooks’ / *hypomnema*. For a summary of the difference between *hypomnema* and *syngamma* (the published book) see G. Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature*, 21.

⁶² M. Cook, ‘The Opponents’, 440.

⁶³ Schoeler argues for a fairly wide use of the *hypomnema* (*The Oral and the Written*, 40–41). Similarly Abbott (*Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*) provides ample physical evidence for the writing heritage of the Umayyads, however neither gives an indication that books were upheld as praiseworthy repositories of *‘ilm* – this appears to have been the characteristic of the scholar, not his books.

⁶⁴ M. Cook, ‘The Opponents’, 444–6.

⁶⁵ C.E. Bosworth, ‘The Persian Impact on Arabic Literature’ and G. Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature*.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

cultures via the growing translation movement nudged the writerly culture forwards in the latter 2nd/8th century.⁶⁷ At this time Sībawayh (d. 180/796) ‘published’ *al-Kitāb*: one of the very first Arabic books definitively produced by its author and released to the public in written form.⁶⁸ Following Sībawayh’s model, books began, slowly and rather falteringly at first, to be ‘published’ to a growing reading public,⁶⁹ and during the lifetime of al-Ġāḥiẓ, the book was beginning to establish itself as a definitive repository of knowledge that could be read on its own.⁷⁰ With the human-authored text finally familiar and widespread in society, Muslim writerly culture could begin to conceptualise the human-authored book as synonymous with *‘ilm* and right-guided living in their vein of the Qur’ānic *kitāb*.⁷¹ As tangible objects, they became closely associated with their authors⁷² and as abstract symbols of knowledge,

⁶⁷ The role of translated materials is discussed by °A. Arḥīla, *al-Kitāb* 66–7 and the effects of increased paper production by J. Bloom, *Paper Before Print*, 91, 110–13. Other factors cited for the growing importance of books include the rise of administrative writings (S. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir*, 1–2, 9), a gradual development from increasing reliance on the scholarly notebooks (G. Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature*), the role of the Mu‘tazilite sect’s preference of reasoned thought over memorised facts (S. Günther, ‘Praise to the Book!’, 131) and a broadening of the literate public who sought books outside of a formally professional context (S. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir*, 1). It would seem logical that all of the above played a part.

⁶⁸ G. Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature*, 88–9 who identifies this book as a *syngramma* – akin to the modern concept of an authored, published ‘book’.

⁶⁹ Schoeler cites the written poetry anthology of al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī and Ibn Ishāq’s *al-Kitāb al-Kabīr* as examples (*The Oral and the Written*, 71). Abbott compiles a list of the surviving ‘books’ produced in the 3rd/9th century, indicating the growing frequency of formal publication (‘A Ninth-Century Fragment’, 147–9).

⁷⁰ Noted by S. Günther, ‘Praise to the Book!’ 139–140, who cites the earlier article of A. Ghersetti for evidence of the third-century opinion of the book as primary means of preserving knowledge (‘L’utilità della scrittura e la lode del libro’ [The Usefulness of Writing and Praise of the Book]).

⁷¹ Al-Ġāḥiẓ explicitly makes this connection, to be considered below.

⁷² The close association of authors and their books begins to appear in the 3rd/9th century and is even more apparent the succeeding period. The early identification of books with their authors can be noted with Mālik ibn Anas and *al-Muwattā‘*, al-Buḥārī and Muslim with their *ḥadīth* collections, and in the 4th/10th century we note Abū al-Faraġ al-Iṣfahānī became popularly identified as *ṣāhib al-Aġānī* indicating the association between author and his most famous work. In a similar vein, nations would similarly become identified by their

they became a readily deployable means to recognise cultured life. The possession of books therefore was directly linked to praiseworthy social status, opening the door for the application of a bibliophilic model to appraise other societies and past civilisations.

The writerly culture's maturation in the 3rd/9th century accords well with al-Ġāhiz's bibliophilic worldview, and the contrast with the seemingly retrenched orality of the earlier period has understandably led modern researchers to identify the 3rd/9th century as literate,⁷³ and writers such as al-Ġāhiz and Ibn Qutayba as veritable champions of the writerly culture.⁷⁴ The enthusiastic appraisal of this period's literacy, however, ought to be tempered: writerly culture and the lofty status of *kitāb* were in a formative stage during al-Ġāhiz's lifetime. Authors still relied on aural sources, even into the 4th/10th century,⁷⁵ and the degree of autodidacticism (from books), anecdotally noted in the 3rd/9th century does not appear to have entirely superseded aural study.⁷⁶ Genres such

books, and expressions such as *qālat al-Rūm* ('the Rūm say') or *fī kutub al-Rūm* ('in the books of the Rūm') are noted in texts of Ibn Qutayba (G. Lecomte, *Ibn Qutayba*, 190). The notion of authors acquiring a proprietary right in their book is a vast and under-explored ramification of the development of the writerly culture, however, its origins in the 3rd/9th century along with the development of the critique of plagiarism are introduced in S. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir*, 26–9).

⁷³ In the case of the Islamic sciences, see M. Cook ('The Opponents', 476), and more generally, S. Günther 'Praise to the Book!', and A. Ghersetti 'L'utilità della scrittura'.

⁷⁴ See for example, S. Günther, who comments on the 'vigorous stance' of Ibn Qutayba and al-Ġāhiz in promoting 'reading, writing and books' ('Praise to the Book!', 138); °A. Arḥīla, who identifies al-Ġāhiz as Islam's most renowned 'bookman' (*ašhar man aḥabba al-kutub*) (*al-Kitāb*, 15); N. Angheliescu, who describes al-Ġāhiz's era as 'temps d'ouverture intellectuelle' where intellectuals paid the book great reverence (*Langage et Culture*, 56–8); and G. Schoeler, who argues for a much wider readership of al-Ġāhiz compared to writers of previous generations ('Writing for a Reading Public', 59–60).

⁷⁵ This is the topic of W. Werkmeister's research *Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-°Iqd al-farīd des andalusiers Ibn °Abdrabbih* (246/860–328/940): *ein Beitrag zur arabischen Literaturgeschichte* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1983), and similar conclusions regarding *Kitāb al-Aġānī* and al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīḥ* are noted in G. Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written*, 37–9.

⁷⁶ The emergence of the autodidactic basis for self-study from books is noted by S. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir*, 15–16). While this clearly formed the basis for much of the intellectual activity of the period, in the 3rd/9th century, Schoeler's evidence suggests that the autodidactic process and *wiġāda* ('finding' information in books) still lacked the authority of learning from formal lessons

as philosophy and medicine may have been less fettered by oral legacies, but this should not distract us from conceiving the 3rd/9th century as one of transition.⁷⁷ Published texts were certainly widespread, but the concept of the human-authored book as an authority for *‘ilm* was novel and remained an open question. This seems to have influenced al-Ġāḥiẓ, and closer analysis of his contrary opinions on books and, consequently, foreigners reveals a more complex discourse.

Al-Ġāḥiẓ: an ambivalent bibliophile

Al-Ġāḥiẓ the ‘book-praiser’ is most evident in *al-Ḥayawān* and a shorter epistle on teachers (*Risālat al-Mu‘allimīn*) where, in an elaborate analysis of the literate traditions of past civilisations, he marshals ‘the book’ in a markedly bibliocentric manner. Al-Ġāḥiẓ as ‘book-censurer’, on the other hand, emerges in *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn* and other texts where he expresses different intentions which impacted upon his esteem for the bibliophilic literate epistemology and the relative merits of book producing peoples.

Al-Ġāḥiẓ: lover of books and knowledge

The bibliophilic tenor of *al-Ḥayawān* and *Risālat al-Mu‘allimīn* is well known.⁷⁸ al-Ġāḥiẓ extolled human authored books for their utility, durability and dependability which make them an easy reference, a more efficient store of information than memory (seemingly a direct critique of the aural Islamic tradition),⁷⁹ and the most robust method to preserve information against the ravages of time.⁸⁰ In short, he writes:

Were it not for the book, the stories of the past would become corrupted and the sayings of those absent would be cut off. Your tongue [can only

or *maġālis* (sessions) with other scholars (G. Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature*, 115–17).

⁷⁷ For the more ‘writerly’ context of the ‘foreign sciences’ see S. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir*, 9. He cites Rosenthal’s *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship* which stresses that ‘all branches of literature relied for their preservation on written fixation’ which, dating from 1947 seems to overstate the rapidity of the writerly culture’s advance in the 3rd/9th century (S. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir*, 11).

⁷⁸ In particular, S. Günther (‘Praise to the Book!’) and N. Angheliescu (*Langage et Culture*, 54–66) use excerpts from *al-Ḥayawān* to explore the bibliophilic leanings of al-Ġāḥiẓ.

⁷⁹ *Ḥayawān*, 1: 37. Al-Ġāḥiẓ’s critique of this tradition is the subject of S. Günther’s ‘Praise to the Book!’, 131, 138.

⁸⁰ See *al-Ḥayawān*, 1: 37–9 (in praise of books generally), 49–51 (merits of writing and the preservation power of the book).

inform] those present, while the pen [can inform] the absent – those who came before you and those who will come after. Thus, the benefit of the pen is greater, and the public administration (*dawāwīn*) in greater need of it.⁸¹

With his flamboyant description of the ‘book’ as ‘a vessel, full of knowledge, a container stuffed with cleverness, and a receptacle of mirth and sagacity’,⁸² al-Ġāḥiẓ portrays books as quintessential carriers of *‘ilm*, akin to the Qur’ānic *kitāb*, and in reporting that the Qur’ān and other books of revelation are the best *kutub*,⁸³ he implicitly groups all books, terrestrial and divine, in one conceptual category, the Qur’ān now being the ‘best book’, and not the ‘only book’.

Having established the intellectual value of books, al-Ġāḥiẓ describes their utility in developing a successful and right-guided society. He explains that ‘spending on books indicates a respect for *‘ilm*, and a respect for *‘ilm* indicates the nobility of the soul and its integrity from the intoxication of faults.’⁸⁴ He explicitly lauds this ‘bookish’ *‘ilm*, casting it in opposition to *jahl* (ignorance/passion), as the ‘pillar of the soul’, the ‘origin of all good things’,⁸⁵ and the basis for social order:

God does not take *‘ilm* from people. However, He takes away their scholars, and when there is no scholar left, the people choose ignorant rulers who govern without *‘ilm*, and they go astray and misguide [their people].⁸⁶

⁸¹ *Rasā’il*, 3: 27 (*Mu‘allimīn*): *wa-law lā l-kitāba la-ḥtallat aḥbāru l-māḍiyīn wa-nqaṭa‘at ātāru l-ġā‘ibīn wa-innamā al-lisānu li-l-šāhidi laka wa-l-qalamu li-l-ġā‘ibi ‘anka wa-l-māḍī qabla-ka wa-l-ġābiri ba‘daka fa-šāra naf‘uhu a‘amma wa-l-dawāwīnu ilayhi afqar*. See also *Rasā’il*, 4: 245 (*Šinā‘at al-kalām*) where book study is expressed as central to the proper learning of language.

⁸² *al-Kitābu wi‘ā‘un malī‘un ‘ilman wa-zarfūn ḥuṣiya zarfan wa-inā‘un šuḥina mizāḥan wa-ġiddan* (*Ḥayawān*, 1: 32).

⁸³ *Ḥayawān*, 1: 59.

⁸⁴ *Ḥayawān*, 1: 41.

⁸⁵ Such sentiments concerning *‘ilm* are frequently cited in *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn* and the *Rasā’il* of al-Ġāḥiẓ. See in particular *Bayān*, 1: 84–5, 1: 257 and 3: 12. The ‘pillar of the soul’/*‘imād al-rūḥ* quotation is from *Bayān*, 1: 77. For the praise of *‘ilm* as the origin of all good things: *wa-l-‘ilmu aṣlu li-kulli ḥayrin wa-bihi yanfaṣilu al-karamu mina l-lu‘mi wa-l-ḥalālu mina l-ḥarām* (*Rasā’il*, 3: 35, *Mu‘allimīn*).

⁸⁶ *Bayān*, 1: 257: *inna llāha lā yaqbiḍu l-‘ilma ntizā‘an yantazi‘uhu mina l-nāsi wa-lākin yaqbiḍu al-‘ulamā‘a ḥattā idā lam yabqa ‘ālimun ittaḥaḍa l-nāsuru‘asā‘a ḡuhḥālan fa-su‘ilū fa-aftaw bi-ġayri ‘ilmin wa-ḍallū wa-aḍallū*.

Taken together, al-Ġāḥiẓ's statements demonstrate that books transcend mere depositories of information: they are symbols for the pursuit of *ʿilm* and *prima facie* evidence for the existence of culture and learning.

In *al-Ḥayawān*, al-Ġāḥiẓ develops this bibliophilic reasoning into a world-historical vision whereby books become the *sine qua non* of humanity's intellectual development across time and space, which is the basis of his 'universal' bibliocentric outlook noted above. To prove it, he explains that humans, as created by God, are unable to live self-sufficiently and are dependent on one another.⁸⁷ From this principle, he argues that maintaining this necessary contact with neighbours is not always possible, hence the logical necessity of writing to communicate with those who are not immediately present.⁸⁸ Al-Ġāḥiẓ asserts that groups of people (*umam*) similarly rely on the passage of knowledge from past societies to advance their own learning and avoid mistakes of the past.⁸⁹ Arguing that books are the only remaining tangible link with the past,⁹⁰ al-Ġāḥiẓ concludes that books vitally maintain the venture of knowledge on earth.⁹¹ The cycle is also continuous: writing is an 'intellectual duty' for the present in order to edify future generations and allow them to develop *ʿilm* into new horizons.⁹²

The elevation of books into vessels of *ʿilm*, and the portrayal of *ʿilm* as the unifying force underwriting the sweep of human history from its origins and into the future neatly generates a global bibliocentric worldview whereby Muslim civilisation can locate itself as a participant in the historical endeavour of knowledge where each civilisation is a link in a chain soldered by books. Here al-Ġāḥiẓ presents one of the earliest formulations in Muslim writing of an intellectualised and bibliophilic worldview at its humanistic apogee: inclusive and cosmopolitan.

⁸⁷ *Ḥayawān*, 1: 34–5. The Qurʾān frequently considers mankind's lack of self sufficiency, although this is adduced as evidence of their inferiority to God (e.g. 92: 8, 96: 6–7). Al-Ġāḥiẓ echoes this principle, but has shifted the emphasis to the need for humans to look for mutual help from *each other*.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ḥayawān*, 1: 53

⁹⁰ Al-Ġāḥiẓ makes this statement on account of books' ability to survive whereas he believed architectural monuments and the other attempts of past civilisations to immortalise their accomplishments are more susceptible to the ravages of time than books. *Ḥayawān*, 1: 49–52.

⁹¹ *Ḥayawān*, 1: 59

⁹² *Ḥayawān*, 1: 60. See °A. Arḥīla (*al-Kitāb*, 35–39) for an alternative, though similar reading of *al-Ḥayawān* to that presented here.

Al-Ġāḥiẓ: respect for foreign book-writers

His intellectualised worldview weaves together the contemporary status of books, opinions on the merits of past peoples and the contemporary translation project into a discourse asserting the primacy of books in knowledge acquisition which enables him to use ‘the book’ as a means to appraise other peoples, automatically elevating the status of book producers and validating his own 3rd/9th-century *adab* culture which, via the translation project, was benefitting from past literary heritages.⁹³

Since many of the 3rd/9th-century intellectuals were not Arabian, it may seem unusual to refer to the intellectual heritage of Persians and Greeks as ‘foreign’, however, in light of al-Ġāḥiẓ’s intellectualised conception of world history, issues of ethnicity, as noted above, were less concerned with ‘blood relation’, and more with intellectual achievement. As such, al-Ġāḥiẓ’s discourse on ethnicities had a rearward looking aspect – the ‘Persians’ could be viewed as a past civilisation, and understood as contributors in the story of human knowledge production, assessable by the volume of their scholarly heritage. Societies that produced books earned a place for themselves in ‘history’, while those lacking literate traditions neither learned anything from those before them, nor could bequeath anything to posterity, and so had no place in al-Ġāḥiẓ’s view of history.⁹⁴ In *al-Ḥayawān*, al-Ġāḥiẓ thus commends his book writing intellectual predecessors, expressing his gratitude that Indian astronomy was preserved in their ‘scripts’ (*ḥuṭūṭ*)⁹⁵ and professing a high opinion of Aristotle, Plato, Ptolemy and Democritus as pioneers of science and learning.⁹⁶ In light of the close association of books with their authors in the emerging writerly culture, this intellectual, bibliocentric lens rendered foreign societies synonymous with their books. The wise Greek-thinkers and just Persian kings who emerge in Arabic *adab* as veritable stereotypes of Greeks and Persians

⁹³ Al-Ġāḥiẓ relied on these sources himself: Ch. Pellat (*The Life and Works*, 4–5) notes al-Ġāḥiẓ’s exposure to Persian and Indian influence in al-Baṣra (where al-Ġāḥiẓ was born) and increasing access to Greek influence in Baghdād (where he lived a long segment of his adult life).

⁹⁴ The role of the book in establishing the merits of past literate cultures has been similarly considered by N. Anghelescu, *Langage et Culture* 55–6, 59. She has, however, neglected to consider the negative opinions which al-Ġāḥiẓ expressed about books, and to attempt a synthesis of these paradoxical strands in his thought. Such an exploration and a possible synthesis will be offered below.

⁹⁵ *Ḥayawān*, 1: 36.

⁹⁶ *Ḥayawān*, 1: 52.

appear to have stepped off the pages of the translated Greek and Persian books and into the imaginations of °Abbāsīd writers. It is perhaps not coincidental therefore, that medieval Arabic literature generally gives more detailed accounts of the history of Greek books than it does the Greco-Roman political history.⁹⁷ The ‘inclusive’ aspect of the writerly culture of al-Ġāhiz’s day has been identified as the beginning of an increasingly ‘secular’⁹⁸ (perhaps better labelled cosmopolitan) conception of knowledge in °Abbāsīd circles as a widening audience consumed the knowledge of past peoples by *reading* their books. Based on the discourse in *al-Hayawān*, it seems straightforward to conclude that al-Ġāhiz squarely identified book production with worthy culture and that his bibliophilia transferred smoothly to xenophilia in the case of non-Arabic book-producing peoples.⁹⁹ But this discourse on the centrality of books and praise for book producing people also displays a more pointed self-serving element underlying his seemingly effusive bibliophilic cosmopolitanism.

Given that the Muslim civilisation of al-Ġāhiz’s day had built its intellectual edifice upon the collective traditions of Arabians, Persians, Indians and the Rūm, it is entirely logical that al-Ġāhiz would commend these peoples on the basis of books. His discourse asserts that their books were ‘worth reading’ and so argues for the usefulness of their further translation and study in °Abbāsīd Iraq. While the original authors were praised as a by-product of this argument, perhaps more importantly for al-Ġāhiz’s purposes, his equation of reading with the concept of social progression over time enabled him to theorise that his culture, which both consumed books of the past and wrote new books, stood at the pinnacle of human progression: the legitimate and worthy successor to

⁹⁷ While fourth-century Muslim world histories such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Mas‘ūdī or al-Maqrīzī give fairly sketchy accounts of Roman Emperors and Greek kingdoms, their contemporary Ibn al-Nadīm narrates in fine detail the transmission of Greek texts from their ancient origins to their Arabic translations (e.g. for medical texts see *Fihrist*, 345–6). Further analysis of this discrepancy would be interesting to explore, but it is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁹⁸ S. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir*, 129. Toorawa notes that the term ‘secular’ is of questionable application here, but intends by this the development of an *adab* culture in distinction to the scholarship specialised in the Islamic traditions.

⁹⁹ Perhaps this accounts for al-Ġāhiz’s mention in his epistle on the ‘Virtues of the Blacks’ that the term for the written text of the Qur’ān, *muṣḥaf*, derives from ‘Ḥabāshī’ origins which thereby attempts to delineate some literate element in African culture, and thus a point of merit (*Rasā’il*, 1: 202, *Faḥr al-sūdān*).

its polyglot past. This has been identified as one of the centrepieces of al-Ġāḥiẓ's thought and the theme of *al-Ḥayawān*.¹⁰⁰ Al-Ġāḥiẓ, in the guise of a bibliophilic xenophile could thereby claim that the °Abbāsīd scholars, via their translation of Persian, Greek and Indian sources had collated the *entirety* of humanity's knowledge and could legitimately consider themselves the most erudite nation yet. His outward cosmopolitan 'humanism'¹⁰¹ may thus be more inward looking and self-serving, linking with al-Ġāḥiẓ's discourses on ethnicity as an Arabian partisan in *al-Bayān wa-l-tabẓīn*. Pellat observed this tendency and related it to the character of *adab* culture to 'prendre de tout un peu' and to borrow from foreign cultures without accepting their superiority to Arab culture.¹⁰² This is an accurate observation, but these leanings of al-Ġāḥiẓ are tied to a more multifaceted theory about books and knowledge in general. The anti-book, xenophobic trend in his writing now calls for examination.

Al-Ġāḥiẓ the book cynic

Al-Ġāḥiẓ's bibliophilic introduction to *al-Ḥayawān* was a polemical treatise. He draws our attention to this, noting that he wrote it in self-defence against those whom he described as unjust critics of his writings.¹⁰³ Furthermore, the influence of *al-Maḥāsīn wa-l-Masāwī'* genre has been noted as operative in *al-Ḥayawān* more generally, which cautions an uncritical acceptance of the content of *al-Ḥayawān* at face value.¹⁰⁴ His extravagant description of books as 'the most humble teacher; the most capable companion; the least boring and least grating friend...the most ready support', and his florid analogy of the book as a tree having the 'longest lifespan and sweetest fruit which is most easily

¹⁰⁰ Al-Ġāḥiẓ is typically associated with this perceived cosmopolitan trend in Muslim culture of the 3rd/9th century (Ch. Pellat, 'al-Djāḥiẓ', 387; N. Angheliescu, *Langage et culture*, 54–5). Enderwitz proposed, based on analysis of *al-Ḥayawān*, that *adab* represents a fusion of the Arabian with the non-Arab cultural heritage and that al-Ġāḥiẓ considered *adab* books as the highest forms of historical human expression, behind only the Qur'ān (S. Enderwitz, 'Culture History and Religion', 235–237).

¹⁰¹ A term applied to al-Ġāḥiẓ in *Al-Ġāḥiẓ: a Muslim Humanist for our Time* ('Introduction', v) and to al-Ġāḥiẓ's cultural milieu by N. Angheliescu, *Langage et Culture*, 63, 66.

¹⁰² Ch. Pellat 'Djāḥiẓ et la littérature comparée', 95–6, 98.

¹⁰³ *Ḥayawān*, 1: 7–14.

¹⁰⁴ I. Gériès, 'al-Maḥāsīn wa-l-Masāwī', 1224.

picked¹⁰⁵ are all specifically intended to rebut the critic of *his* books.¹⁰⁶ In short, by promoting the virtues and social utility of books in general, al-Ġāhiz could defend his reputation as a writer and argue that *his* books ought to be read in the most positive possible light.¹⁰⁷ Al-Ġāhiz certainly saw himself as a worthy participant in an intellectual heritage mediated by books, but he neither claims that all books are of equal merit nor that all writers are deserving of equal esteem.

Even in *al-Ḥayawān*, al-Ġāhiz notes that other forms of communication are potentially as useful as books (depending on the circumstance), and that the pen and tongue are balanced in virtue, making no explicit statement of the written word's greater merit.¹⁰⁸ He expressly states that his only intention in writing *al-Ḥayawān*'s introduction was to 'expound the virtues of books'.¹⁰⁹ The fuller exploration of communication and knowledge hinted in *al-Ḥayawān* is taken up in *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn* where his treatment of books is not quite so effusive.

Even before turning to his other writings, a reader of *al-Ḥayawān* can perceive various criticisms of books. Al-Ġāhiz censured the books of the *zanādiqa* (Zoroastrian Persians), lamenting their lack of 'ilm, poor style and dismissing their stories of heroes, demons and wondrous adventure (à la *Šāhnāme*) as 'idle, inept legends' lacking 'useful' knowledge, wisdom, witticism or anecdote.¹¹⁰ In his opinion, expenditure on these books is wasteful: they are *ġāhil* (ignorant), misleading readers away from both self-improvement and religious enlightenment.¹¹¹ *Al-*

¹⁰⁵ *Ḥayawān*, 1: 33–4.

¹⁰⁶ *Ḥayawān*, 1: 23: *la'alla ra'yaka inda dālika an yataḥawwala wa-qawluka yatabaddal* (that perhaps your opinion [after reading this book] will transform and your [previous critique] will change).

¹⁰⁷ *Ḥayawān*, 1: 31.

¹⁰⁸ *Ḥayawān*, 1: 38, 50–1.

¹⁰⁹ *Innamā qaṣḍunā bi-kalāminā ilā l-iḥbāri 'an faḍīlati l-kitāb* (*Ḥayawān*, 1: 38).

¹¹⁰ Al-Ġāhiz describes the content of these books as '*ḥadr, wa-'iyy wa-ḥurāfa*', and the material they lack includes: *maṭal sār, ḥabar ṭarīf, ṣan'at adab, ḥikma ġarība, falsafa* (*Ḥayawān*, 1: 42)

¹¹¹ Al-Ġāhiz (*Ḥayawān*, 1: 43) explains this through the rhetorical question: *fa-ayyu kitābin aḡḥalu wa-ayyu tadbīrin afsadu min kitābin yūḡibu 'alā l-nāsi l-iṭā'a... wa-laysa fīhi ṣalāḥu ma'āsin wa-lā taṣḥīḥ dīn* (What book is more ignorant, or what work is more corrupting than a book which demands obedience from its readers, but lacks any element of bettering their lives or edifying their religion!?).

Ḥayawān also invokes *ḡahl* to describe books written by Muslims which are censured as ‘trashy’ (*kutub al-furrāḡ al-ḥula‘ā’*) or as ‘diversions and banter’ (*kutub al-malāhī wa-l-fukāhāt*). Similarly, he relates criticism of books authored by those with bellicose agendas, shallow values or affected by the ‘rancour of the *ḡāhiliyya*’.¹¹² Al-Ḡāḥiẓ narrates these opinions from the voice of a (hypothetical) critic, but it indicates what he conceived as the antithesis of *his* books. While we have seen that al-Ḡāḥiẓ equated some books with the Qur’ānic *kitāb*, i.e. as symbols of *‘ilm*, this was by no means a blanket endorsement for all books.

Outside of *al-Ḥayawān*, we find al-Ḡāḥiẓ denigrating the ‘writerly culture’, censuring those who read excessively and reproduce ‘book language’ as mere followers (*tābi‘*),¹¹³ especially criticising the *kuttāb* – the state secretaries whom modern scholars consider to be among the first movers towards the writerly culture at the end of the 2nd/8th century.¹¹⁴ These negative aspects of the writerly culture justify, for al-Ḡāḥiẓ, why God chose not to bestow skills in *al-ḥatt* (handwriting) on Muḥammad.¹¹⁵ And so al-Ḡāḥiẓ paradoxically undermines *al-Ḥayawān*’s framework for the transmission of knowledge across the sweep of human history by literate scholars.

Al-Ḡāḥiẓ hints at further suspicions regarding books in *al-Ḥayawān* in an insightful passage where he highlights the perilous journey of ‘book knowledge’ across time through the hands of copyists and translators. In particular, we read that the dual requirements for an ideal translator – (a) linguistically wholly proficient in the original and target language, and (b) intellectually on par with the authors whom he translates – can only exist in theory.¹¹⁶ Consequently, al-Ḡāḥiẓ notes that translations even in the ‘straightforward’ fields of geometry and philosophy (*al-handasa wa-l-falsafa*) can be found lacking, while errors are almost guaranteed in religious sciences, where precision and knowledge are paramount.¹¹⁷ In short, books emerge as twisted, corrupt and unreliable conveyors of

¹¹² *Ḥayawān*, 1: 23. Here al-Ḡāḥiẓ alludes to the Qur’ānic expression (48: 26) ‘*Ḥamiyyat al-ḡāhiliyya*’.

¹¹³ *Rasā’il*, 2: 192 (*Kuttāb*).

¹¹⁴ See G. Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature* and Ch. Pellat, *The Life and Works*, 4.

¹¹⁵ *Rasā’il*, 2: 189–90 (*Kuttāb*).

¹¹⁶ *Ḥayawān*, 1: 53–4.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

past knowledge as they pass through the ‘criminal hands’ of copyists.¹¹⁸ The above passage is enigmatic: it is not the direct speech of al-Ġāhiz, but again a ‘quotation’ from a hypothetical critic defending the Arabic oral poetic tradition. However, al-Ġāhiz does not refute any of these arguments and in fact adopts them himself elsewhere.¹¹⁹ Thus, with his signature ambivalence, al-Ġāhiz leaves to the reader the task of resolving the question of whether books can or cannot accurately transmit *‘ilm*. Akin to the linguistic quandary that bedevils translation, al-Ġāhiz also cites the negative effect of writerly culture on language generally. He explains that book culture tends towards *takalluf* (unnatural mannerism)¹²⁰ and readers who fashion their speech after books develop stiff and artificial language.¹²¹ Surprisingly for a bibliophile, al-Ġāhiz deems written language an inappropriate guide for good rhetoric!

Al-Ġāhiz’s well-reasoned bibliophilia and praise of books as symbolic embodiments of intellectual progress are therefore checked by his apparent belief that reading books neither guarantees accurate transmission of knowledge nor necessarily enables self-improvement, and that writerly culture can lack creativity and vitality. This sentiment closely mirrors a negative opinion of foreign civilisations and their books, which emerges from *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn* and other Ġāhizian epistles.

Al-Ġāhiz: censurer of book-writing foreigners

Al-Ġāhiz’s denigration of the literate foreign cultures which he elsewhere extolled is less commented upon in modern scholarship.¹²² Regarding the Sasanian Persians, al-Ġāhiz criticised their books and intellectual

¹¹⁸ *Ḥayawān*, 1: 55: *lā yazālu al-kitābu tatadāwaluhu l-aydī l-ġāniya* (the book continues being passed down by ‘transgressing’ hands [of copyists]).

¹¹⁹ See his discussion of problems with translations from Persian and the Rūmī language and problems with Christian theology, discussed in the next section and note 150, below.

¹²⁰ *Bayān*, 3: 29.

¹²¹ This even includes reading books authored by eloquent and/or wise writers (*kutub al-bulaghā’...wa-dawāwīn al-hukamā’*): *Rasā’il*, 3: 40–1 (*Mu‘allimīn*).

¹²² The only article of which I am aware which specifically considers al-Ġāhiz’s negative opinions of Persian, Indian and Rūmī books is Ch. Pellat’s ‘Djāhiz et la littérature comparée’ where Pellat attributes these comments to al-Ġāhiz’s method of grappling with the *adab* culture’s integration of foreign ideas. This shall be further considered below.

heritage. He considered their books exhibit a laboured style, which he attributed to the Persian authors' lack of natural brilliance and linguistic spontaneity, as, in his view, they copied from each other.¹²³ Further, he cast doubt on the authenticity of the translated Persian books circulating in °Abbāsīd Iraq, insinuating that they may have been, in part, forged by translators in the early °Abbāsīd era.¹²⁴ In this argument, he adopts the reasoning of that hypothetical 'book critic' from *al-Ḥayawān*: mistrusting books capacity to faithfully convey °ilm across time, and denying the 'Persian book' as a basis for praising the past Persian heritage.

Having discredited Persian books, al-Ġāḥiẓ censures his contemporaries who based their knowledge upon them in preference to the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*.¹²⁵ Repeating his critique of the book as *ġahl*, al-Ġāḥiẓ laments that the knowledge gained from Persian books is in fact *ġahl*¹²⁶ and sharply rebukes Ibn al-Muqaffa°, the epitome of the 2nd/8th-century Persian °Abbāsīd scholar/translator who championed Sasanian books and culture.¹²⁷ Evoking the Qur'ān (62:5), al-Ġāḥiẓ relates an anecdote comparing Ibn al-Muqaffa° to a donkey weighed down with books carrying much °ilm, but not benefiting in the least: 'his knowledge made him weak, his reason baffled him, his wisdom blinded him and his insight confused him'.¹²⁸ Persian books in al-Ġāḥiẓ's estimation are thus a far cry from authoritative, enlightening sources and there is little praise of Persian culture here.

Al-Ġāḥiẓ's censure of the ancient Greeks again focuses on a criticism of their writing style. He claims that their knowledge of philosophy and logic did not translate into elegant expressions, and that despite their theoretical understanding of language, the Greeks (*al-Yūnāniyyūn*) did not produce well-formed speech in practice (*pace* Demosthenes et al, of whom al-Ġāḥiẓ makes no mention).¹²⁹ Similarly, al-Ġāḥiẓ claimed that

¹²³ *Bayān*, 3: 28.

¹²⁴ *Bayān*, 3: 29.

¹²⁵ Examples he gives of these Persian books are the collections of anecdotes from the Sasanian king Ardašīr, sayings of the vizier Bozorgmehr, *Kalīla wa-Dimna* and the religious books of Mazdak. See *Rasā'il*, 2: 191–2 (*Kuttāb*).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2: 194–5.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2: 192, 195. Also, al-Ġāḥiẓ lists Ibn al-Muqaffa°'s Arabic language book *al-Adab* (which is commonly known today as *al-Adab al-kabīr*) among the Sasanian books of 'substandard' °ilm.

¹²⁸ *Rasā'il*, 2: 195 (*Kuttāb*).

¹²⁹ *Bayān*, 3: 27–8. He specifically notes that *Šāḥib al-manṭiq* (a sobriquet for Aristotle, see G. Lecomte, *Ibn Qutayba*, 191–2) was a poor speaker.

Ancient Greek society as a whole, notwithstanding the intelligence of their scholars, failed to make any practical application of their theoretical knowledge and wisdom.¹³⁰ Knowledge has no civilisational benefit if unapplied, al-Ġāḥiẓ argues, and accordingly, when comparing the Greeks to other peoples (*umam*) such as the Chinese, Persians, Turks and Bedouin Arabs (*A^crāb*), he concludes that the Greeks, for all their wisdom, do not deserve a higher status.¹³¹ Contemporary Byzantine (Rūmī) civilisation fared worse. Since Ancient Greek (*al-Yūnān*) writers lived in the distant past, al-Ġāḥiẓ rejects the possibility that their books and intellectual heritage could be claimed by contemporary generations of Byzantines. According to al-Ġāḥiẓ, contemporary Rūmī literary production was negligible and their language was so different from Classical Greek that they could not possibly invoke its past glories for their benefit.¹³²

As for the Indians, al-Ġāḥiẓ less frequently discusses them in his surviving writings,¹³³ but his extant appraisal of their culture similarly contains unenthusiastic evaluation of their books, which he describes as lacking both rhetorical power and creative spirit. They ‘only contain ancient meanings, not attributable to one scholar...they are merely heritage since time immemorial, well known, well rehearsed’.¹³⁴

Towards a resolution

Al-Ġāḥiẓ’s paradoxical style, the relative obscurity of his life and uncertain chronology of his writings¹³⁵ complicate a reconciliation of his ‘book loving’ and ‘book hating’ tendencies. But patterns in his seemingly contradictory statements indicate a certain coherency within a complex web of issues. His opinions about books varied, but al-Ġāḥiẓ was clearly preoccupied with books, indicating the maturation of the writerly culture in the 3rd/9th century. His analysis of foreign peoples also frequently cited books: whether al-Ġāḥiẓ wished to praise or

¹³⁰ *Rasā’il*, 3: 214–15 (*Manāqib al-Turk*).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 216–18. In al-Ġāḥiẓ’s opinion, here, these peoples excelled in a limited number of fields, but they failed to become all-round achievers.

¹³² *Rasā’il*, 3: 314–15 (*al-Radd ‘alā l-Naṣāra*).

¹³³ He apparently wrote books in which he considered their religious beliefs and idolatry which he cites in *Ḥayawān* (1: 8–9). These are now lost and al-Ġāḥiẓ’s conclusions are unknown.

¹³⁴ *Bayān*, 3: 27: *ammā l-Hindu fa-innamā lahum ma‘ānin mudawwanatun wa-kutubun muḥalladatun lā tuḍāfu ilā raġulin ma‘arūf... wa-innamā hiya kutubun mutawāriḥatun wa-ādābun ‘alā waġhi l-dahri sā’iratun maḍkura.*

¹³⁵ Ch. Pellat, *The Life and Works*, 10–14.

denigrate groups, he marshalled ‘the book’, categorically denigrating those peoples whom he believed possessed no literary culture,¹³⁶ and while privileging book producers, he cited shortcomings of their books as a means to criticise them. His critiques and praises of both books and foreign peoples also revolve around questions of language. Closer consideration of al-Ġāhiz’s conception of the praiseworthy book and the position of language in his worldview points towards a possible explanation of his paradoxical statements on literary culture.

The ideal book: ‘meaning and speech’

Al-Ġāhiz defined the ideal, unimpeachable book (*muḥkam, mutqan*)¹³⁷ as having ‘sound judgment, like the smooth face of bare rock, with precise and elegant meanings; and fine and eloquent wording’.¹³⁸ The allusions to good ‘judgement’ and ‘meaning’ reflect al-Ġāhiz’s belief that books can be repositories of authoritative knowledge, as discussed earlier. His inclusion of ‘wording’ (*lafz*), however, introduces a second component: ‘expression’ (*bayān*) and indicates the centrality of language in the constitution of a worthy book. The twin roles of ‘ilm/knowledge and *bayān*/expressive language as the basis of good communication are a major theme of *al-Bayān wa-l-tabayīn* and are similarly, though more briefly described in his other major work, *al-Ḥayawān*.¹³⁹ Al-Ġāhiz’s opinions of *bayān* have frequently been discussed in medieval and

¹³⁶ Even in *Manāqib al-Turk*, where he makes a fairly vigorous (and perhaps politically motivated, see above) defence of Turks, al-Ġāhiz does not promote them above book producers. Their skill in war and hardy attributes are praised, and while he equates their excellence in war with the Greek excellence in philosophy and the Sāsānid Persian achievements in statecraft, the Turks are not raised above these two (book writing) cultures (*Rasā’il*, 3: 217–18). Outside of the *Manāqib*, the Turks are never listed among ‘noteworthy peoples’. The non-book producing pre-Islamic Arabians are a special case, considered below.

¹³⁷ *Rasā’il*, 1: 350 (*al-‘Adāwa wa-l-ḥasad*).

¹³⁸ *Rasā’il*, 1: 351 (*al-‘Adāwa wa-l-ḥasad*): *al-kitābu... muḥṣafan ka-annahū matnu ḥaġarin amlasa bi-ma‘ānin laṭīfatin muḥkama*. This is, naturally(!), a description of one of his own books, though it conveys the ideal to which he strove in his own writing.

¹³⁹ The similarity of al-Ġāhiz’s approach to *bayān* (*Bayān*, 1: 75–88 and *passim* and *Ḥayawān*, 1: 29–31) is important as it implies a (rare) continuity and stability in al-Ġāhiz’s thought. The books were written at different times — *al-Bayān* before 237/851 and *al-Ḥayawān* before 232/846 — (Ch. Pellat, ‘Nouvel essai’, 133, 139) and with different aims, but notwithstanding this, their treatment of *bayān* is very similar.

modern scholarship.¹⁴⁰ Taking Montgomery's and Behzadi's recent analysis of *bayān* together, it becomes clear that al-Ġāḥiẓ afforded it importance not just as an 'intellectual playground',¹⁴¹ but as the cornerstone for all aspects of life including the means to understand God and both the nature and meaning of the Qur'ān in Mu'tazilite theology.

Such a profound appreciation for good style and appropriate language consequently had important ramifications in many of al-Ġāḥiẓ's intellectual preoccupations, and his promotion of style and clarity of expression as a primary component of the 'worthy book' seems the product of his deep-rooted interest in *bayān*. Here the specific book-language nexus will be further explored to understand how al-Ġāḥiẓ's opinions took their particular shape and to demonstrate how his seeming ambivalence regarding the book and foreign peoples is in fact part of a more coherent discourse.

Al-Ġāḥiẓ applied his belief in the supreme importance of communication directly to his intellectualised vision of world history. Whereas in *al-Ḥayawān* he emphasised the role of books in the historical venture of knowledge, it seems incorrect to assume that he considered books as the sole embodiment of this process. As noted above, even in *al-Ḥayawān*, he criticised the shortcomings of some books, and in *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, he more explicitly describes why. While books convey 'knowledge', al-Ġāḥiẓ stresses that appropriate and clear expression (*bayān*) is necessary to faithfully transmit any learning. Badly or imprecisely written books distort the knowledge they contain and risk misunderstanding. Such books categorically fail to transmit knowledge, and hence al-Ġāḥiẓ concluded that it is *bayān*, clear expression, that brings 'ilm to life.¹⁴² Al-Ġāḥiẓ believed that all of the different forms of communication (which he enumerates as speaking, writing, computation, gesturing and metaphor) can convey 'ilm, and their relative suitability

¹⁴⁰ See L. Behzadi, 'al-Ġāḥiẓ and his Successors' and *Sprache und Verstehen*. Also, the recent series of articles by Montgomery have carefully demonstrated the theological leanings of al-Ġāḥiẓ's 'nature/speech' dichotomy which figure prominently across his writings ('Speech and Nature').

¹⁴¹ L. Behzadi, *Sprache und Verstehen*, 173.

¹⁴² See, for example, *Bayān*, 1: 75: *al-ma'ānī l-qā'imatu fī šudūri l-nāsi l-mutašawwaratu fī aḍḥānihim... mastūratun ḥaḥīyyatun wa-ba'īdatun waḥšīyyatun wa-maḥḡūbatun maknūnatun... wa-innamā yūḥyī tilka l-ma'āniya ḍikruhum lahā wa-iḥbāruhum'anhā* ('the meanings in the souls of men and conceived in their minds...are hidden and obscured, remote and inaccessible, veiled and concealed...these meanings are only brought to life by [the scholars'] mentioning of them and informing of them').

depends on the circumstances.¹⁴³ Sometimes *ḥaṭṭ*, the written word, is ideal, but al-Ġāḥiẓ maintains that clarity of expression trumps the medium: the correct conveyance of *‘ilm* depends on the selection of the best method for the given circumstance. No single method suits all occasions: ‘the revelation of meaning occurs to the extent of semantic clarity, accuracy of expression, appropriate epitomisation [of meaning], and precision’.¹⁴⁴ The transfer of knowledge, therefore, cannot logically be the exclusive preserve of literary culture.

For al-Ġāḥiẓ, the perpetuation of intellectual culture via the communication of *‘ilm* through clear *bayān* begins with the Qur’ān since its excellent *bayān* is the means by which God teaches His *‘ilm*, and ideal *bayān* belongs to God.¹⁴⁵ But al-Ġāḥiẓ cites a definition of humans as the ‘living, clear speaking (*mubīn*)’¹⁴⁶ and so allows them to achieve degrees of eloquence too.¹⁴⁷ Al-Ġāḥiẓ thereby contrasts *bayān* with *‘iyy* (inhibited speech) just as *‘ilm* opposes *ġahl*.¹⁴⁸ As we have seen, he appraised books by their language and meaning together, and so it would appear, he appraised humans.

Crucially, al-Ġāḥiẓ ventures that the concordance of sound meaning and correct expression in human communication approaches the Divine:

[t]he best speech is that which is brief and obviates the need for protracted expression and the meaning of which is apparent in its expression; Almighty God grants [such speech] some of His loftiness and bestows upon it the light of His wisdom, according to the good intentions and piety of the speaker.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ *Bayān*, 1: 76–80 and *Ḥayawān*, 1: 29. In both texts, writing is generally lauded as one of the most efficient means of effecting good *bayān*, but it is not necessarily the most eloquent.

¹⁴⁴ *Bayān*, 1: 75: *‘alā qadri wuḍūḥi l-dalālāti wa-ṣawābi l-iṣārati wa-ḥusni l-iḥtiṣāri wa-dīqqati l-madḥali yakūnu izhāru l-ma‘nā.*

¹⁴⁵ *Bayān*, 1: 8–9.

¹⁴⁶ *Bayān*, 1: 77: *ḥayawān nāṭiq mubīn*, a marked, if subtle development from the usual Aristotelian conception of humans as *zoon logikon*, often construed as ‘rational animal’.

¹⁴⁷ *Bayān*, 1: 8.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Bayān*, 1: 83: *wa-aḥsanu l-kalāmi mā kāna qalīluhu yuġnīka ‘an kaṭīrihi wa-ma‘nāhu fī zāhiri lafẓihi wa-kāna llāh ‘azza wa-ġalla qad albasahu mina l-ġalālāti wa-ġaṣṣāhu min nūri l-ḥikmati ‘alā hasabi niyyati ṣāḥibihi wa-taqwā qā‘ilihi.*

Books and human activity thereby become both intellectually and *linguistically* construed. The Qurʾān represents the ideal concordance of meaning and language, but the model permits terrestrial communication to be appraised to the extent it approaches the Quranic standard.

Why al-Ġāhiz emphasised the centrality of *bayān* in the venture of knowledge and effectively promoted it above books may be explainable in part by the status of writerly culture in his day. As noted above, notwithstanding the growing importance of books in 3rd/9th-century intellectual circles, the ‘silent’ book had not replaced aural methods of knowledge transmission, and a respect for oral/aural skills and style would linger in Muslim culture for centuries.¹⁵⁰ As such, emphasis on oral and other non-written forms of communication is natural, and an exclusive praise of books as stand-alone authorities of *‘ilm* would have seemed radical and perhaps nonsensical. Consequently, writing is a component of *bayān*, and indeed is privileged by the bibliophile al-Ġāhiz, but the written word is not paramount, as one may expect could be the case in a more thoroughly ‘literate’ intellectual milieu. The as-yet immature writerly culture and writerly styles of communication may thus have curbed al-Ġāhiz’s bibliophilia.

In addition to these factors, issues of ethnicity also appear which point to another intertwined agenda at work in his thoughts on *bayān* and, as a consequence, books in general. At the centre of this lies al-Ġāhiz’s acceptance of the Qurʾān’s stylistic pre-eminence, which is uncontroversial. However, he elevates this into an ethnic discourse whereby his conception of *bayān* shifts from pure stylistic analysis into a means to create a hierarchy of world languages. Inasmuch as Arabic is the language of the Qurʾān, al-Ġāhiz asserted that Arabic *qua* language, must possess the best potential for *bayān*. He explains:

There is no language on earth more enjoyable, elegant or sweet to hear, more intimately connected with clear rational thought or more expressive than that heard from the correct-speaking, sound-minded Arabians (*ʿarāb*) and eloquent scholars.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ For the persistence of the ‘oral’ aspect of learning into the late medieval period, notwithstanding the penetration of books in all fields of scholarly activity, see J. Pederson, *The Arabic Book*, 17, 31–6.

¹⁵¹ *Bayān*, 1: 145: *innahu laysa fī l-arḍi kalāmun huwa amtaʿu wa-lā ānaqu wa-lā aladḍu fī l-asmāʿi wa-lā ašaddu ittišālan bi-l-ʿuqūli l-salīmati ... wa-lā aḡwadu taqwīman li-l-bayāni min ṭūli stimāʿi ḥadīṭi l-ʿarābi l-ʿuqalāʿi l-fuṣahāʿi wa-l-ʿulamāʿi l-bulaḡāʿ.*

Al-Ġāhiz's intellectual elitism is again at work here; his conception of *bayān* promotes the Arabians and his own 'Arabised' scholarly community above all others and disadvantages foreign cultures from the outset. Al-Ġāhiz directed this thought to its logical conclusion: applying *bayān* to a global worldview, he conceded that all peoples can express themselves, even if only by 'crude expression, poor meaning and 'brutish language',¹⁵² but in his opinion, only Arabic speakers are truly proficient in *bayān*, while a group of 'foreigners' (here he means the Persians) also had some, though lesser, expertise.¹⁵³ The 'four noteworthy peoples' (*madhkūrūn*) of book producers, thus reduce to at most two (more likely one-and-a-half) when the secondary hurdle of *bayān* is erected before them.

The practical effects of this were far reaching. Speakers of imperfect languages, according to al-Ġāhiz's logic, necessarily possess imperfect knowledge: their expressions cannot accurately articulate what they intend to say. Hence al-Ġāhiz attributed 'errors' of Christian theology (i.e. where Christian dogma differed from Islamic) to Rūmī linguistic deficiencies which prevented the accurate conveyance of the teachings of Jesus.¹⁵⁴ In contrast, al-Ġāhiz believed Arabic speaking theologians were better protected from theological error by the clarity of the Arabic language.¹⁵⁵ The addition of the linguistic parameter in judging knowledge starkly handicaps non-Arabic speaking peoples and enables al-Ġāhiz to acknowledge their literary heritage while maintaining that their books lack the fundamental linguistic component of the *kitāb muḥkam mutqan*, which he believed only Arabic could truly produce, and so justifying his negative opinions of non-Arabic books

¹⁵² *Bayān*, 3: 12–13: *hattā inna l-Zanġa ma^ca l-ġaṭārati... li-tuṭīla l-ḥuṭab... wa-in kānat ma^cānīhā aġfā wa-aġlaṣa wa-alfāzuhā aḥṭala wa-aġhala.*

¹⁵³ Al-Ġāhiz does not specify particular foreign groups in his, stating: 'with [*bayān*] the Arabs are duly proud and with *bayān* some of the ^c*Aġam* claim precedence' (*wa-bi-dālika [al-bayān] tafāḥarat al-^cArabu wa-tafāḍalat aṣnāfu l-^cAġam*, *Bayān*, 1: 75). Later on he specifies that the Persians are the other group who maintained an acceptable standard of *bayān*, although this is expressly inferior to the Arabic (*Bayān*, 3: 27–9).

¹⁵⁴ See *Rasā'il*, 3: 334 (*al-Radd ^calā l-Naṣārā*).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 337. Al-Ġāhiz did concede, alluding probably to the *kalām* debate in his own society, that not all Arab scholars understand the most complex points of theology because even the *bayān* of Arabic, as written by humans, can fall short of conveying such complex ^c*ilm*. This, however, was not, for al-Ġāhiz, a weakness of Arabic, but rather, a warning to scholars of the almost certain failure that will befall theological speculation in any *other* tongue.

Arabians and al-Ġāḥiẓ's emphasis on Bayān

While later medieval commentators attributed al-Ġāḥiẓ's partisanship of the Arabic language to his defence of the Qur'ān, and while very similar arguments for the primacy of Arabic among world languages would appear in the *i'ġāz al-Qur'ān* genre¹⁵⁶, this is unlikely the only or indeed primary reason for al-Ġāḥiẓ's stance. *Al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn* does not particularly defend the Qur'ān – perhaps he felt it could handle such matters itself¹⁵⁷ – but instead, as noted by Pellat in 'Djāḥiẓ et la littérature comparée' and Behzadi in *Sprache und Verstehen*, it marshals arguments for a cultural defence of the Arabs. Indeed, as Behzadi argues, al-Ġāḥiẓ utilised *bayān* for deeper purposes than merely asserting Arabian superiority, but he certainly found *bayān* a very useful tool in *šū'ūbī* arguments, and, if we consider how his conceptions of *bayān* and the Arabians fit into the context of books, we can see how the pro-Arabian foundation of al-Ġāḥiẓ's *bayān* is in fact paramount. The *Kitāb al-^ʿaṣā* (The Book of the Stick), the most expressly pro-Arabian tract in *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, 'also contains some of al-Ġāḥiẓ's most detailed statements on both books and *bayān*. Indeed, the precise way in which his conception of *bayān* interacts with writerly culture and the cultural defence of the Arabians seems a good indication that these debates were intimately related. °Abbāsīd scholars believed that the Arabians lacked a 'book culture' in pre-Islamic times,¹⁵⁸ yet these 'bookless' Arabians

¹⁵⁶ The study of the inimitability of the Qur'ān. See the defence of the Qur'ān by al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) which utilises the same linguistic arguments as al-Ġāḥiẓ and al-Bāqillānī similarly dismisses the merits of foreign languages and their books (*I'ġāz al-Qur'ān*, 29–32). The opinion of al-Ġurġānī regarding al-Ġāḥiẓ and defence of the Qur'ān is discussed by L. Behzadi, 'Al-Ġāḥiẓ and his Successors', 129–30.

¹⁵⁷ He does expressly note the superiority of the Qur'ān's language which constitutes evidence of its Divinity (*Bayān*, 1: 383), but a purposeful linguistic defence of the Qur'ān is not expressed as a primary concern of *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn* as it would become in the later *i'ġāz al-Qur'ān* books of the 4th and 5th centuries.

¹⁵⁸ Much has been made in Western scholarship of certain references to writing materials in pre-Islamic poetry and the odd treaty which the Islamic tradition informs us was 'written'. These oft repeated references concerning literacy in pre-Islamic times have overshadowed the lack of any admission, rightly or wrongly, by °Abbāsīd scholars of the existence of significant literacy in pre-Islamic Arabia. See, for example, Ibn Qutayba's *Kitāb Faḍl al-^ʿArab wa-l-tanbīh ^ʿala ^ʿulūmihā* (Virtue of the Arabs and an Explication on their Sciences) where he lists the major fields of pre-Islamic *ʿilm*. Writing is absent, the closest is a description of *ḥaṭṭ* defined as divination via making lines in the

under the flag of Islam conquered ancient and learned civilisations. The incongruity of the ratio between Arabian military strength and their literacy would become problematic as the ‘book’ began to be culturally revered in the maturing writerly environment of the 3rd/9th century. When the parameters for esteem and power no longer rested on the force of arms alone,¹⁵⁹ the descendants of the ‘literate’ Persians, Greeks and Indians could marshal the new ‘bookish’ benchmarks to claim their heritage was superior to the Arabians whose lack of an ancient literary tradition became an obvious source of embarrassment.

By stressing the dual intellectual and linguistic foundation of the ‘praiseworthy book’, and by focusing on the importance of *bayān* in underwriting *‘ilm*, al-Ġāḥiẓ articulated a firm argument for a non-bookish conception of *‘ilm*. He pursued this reasoning and defined the ideal *bayān* as epitomised in spontaneous good speech (*badīha, irtiġāl*) – the attributes of skilled orators; while chiding the studied affectation (*takalluf*) of written language.¹⁶⁰ He thus ventured that the best language actually has no need for books and so deftly parried any cultural disgrace attaching to the ‘bookless’ pre-Islamic Arabians: their lack of a literate tradition was transformed into a cultural strength. Al-Ġāḥiẓ frequently cited the above conception of *bayān* to laud the Arabians and maintained that their eloquent speech was an inborn virtue,¹⁶¹ a linguistic genius born from their desert environment, while he expressly denigrated the retrograde language of urban dwellers.¹⁶² In sum, the non-book-producing Arabians emerge at the summit of knowledgeable peoples for their lack of books was more than compensated by their excellent *bayān*. Al-Ġāḥiẓ could cogently demonstrate that their *‘ilm* was an *‘ilm* of the most useful order, expressed, as it was, in what al-Ġāḥiẓ deemed the most eloquent language. Simultaneously, the conquered non-Arabs and

sand (*Faḍl*, 143). *Ḥaṭṭāṭ* in pre-Islamic lore meant this sort of diviner, not the modern concept of a calligrapher (ibid.)!

¹⁵⁹ Military power was, by the 3rd/9th century, considered the preserve of the Turks whom al-Ġāḥiẓ noted for their martial abilities (cf. his *Manāqib al-Turk*), but this did not elevate them to the tier of ‘noteworthy peoples’.

¹⁶⁰ *Bayān*, 3: 28.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Al-Ġāḥiẓ commonly alludes to the linguistic eloquence of the Bedouin over the city dweller (*Bayān*, 1: 13, 96–7), noting that ‘city eloquence’ is learned in any event and lacks the innate accuracy of the Bedouin (ibid., 145) and he specifically notes the corrupting influence of city language (*ifsād*), which he admits even affects his own language and the *‘Abbāsīd* scholarly community (ibid., 162–3).

their book culture were structurally subordinated. Interestingly, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn* is also silent on the translation project undertaken by the °Abbāsīd caliphs, particularly al-Maʿmūn, a figure traditionally considered its prime architect.¹⁶³ Al-Ġāḥiẓ dedicated a book to al-Maʿmūn which was apparently well received,¹⁶⁴ but al-Ġāḥiẓ's writings are devoid of praise for the caliph's interest in foreign books, instead his praise for al-Maʿmūn, is on 'Arabic' grounds – concerning the caliph's eloquence.¹⁶⁵

Al-Ġāḥiẓ's maintenance of this linguistic underpinning of *ilm* and support for the Arabians led him, somewhat unusually for an °Abbāsīd writer, to express strong admiration for the Umayyads. When al-Ġāḥiẓ enumerates Arab rulers who displayed proficiency in *bayān*, he emphasises the Umayyads (Muʿāwīya, Yazīd, al-Walīd and Sulaymān) as well their Arabian rival, Ibn Zubayr, whereas the °Abbāsīd caliphs are expressly secondary.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, despite the °Abbāsīd interest in book learning, al-Ġāḥiẓ even commends the Umayyads for maintaining the linguistic and cultural traditions of the pre-Islamic Arabians and laments that the °Abbāsīds eschewed what al-Ġāḥiẓ considered the more virtuous Arabian orality as they turned instead towards the urban writerly culture.¹⁶⁷ Can this be taken as an indirect slight on the °Abbāsīds for too eagerly adopting the writerly culture and manners of the Persian state secretaries?

Conclusion

Al-Ġāḥiẓ's disparate opinions of books, ethnicities and learning merge under the umbrella of his theories about the human intellectual heritage. As a member of the burgeoning writerly culture of Iraq and reader of

¹⁶³ For example, Ibn al-Nadīm some 125 years after al-Ġāḥiẓ's death recounts the portentous dream of al-Maʿmūn in which the caliph had a vision of Aristotle who urged him to find Greek books for translation (*Fihrist*, 303–4).

¹⁶⁴ Al-Maʿmūn's praise for the quality of this book is reported by al-Ġāḥiẓ (*Bayān*, 3: 374).

¹⁶⁵ See *Bayān*, 1: 91, 115, 3: 374–8. Al-Maʿmūn's opinions about good books, containing excellent meaning and language together is also cited by al-Ġāḥiẓ, but this concerns his interest primarily in Arabic books. See *Rasāʾil*, 1: 351 (*al-Radd ʿalā l-Naṣarā*).

¹⁶⁶ *Bayān*, 1: 383. He expressly notes that the speech of Arab rulers other than the Umayyad era figures mentioned lacked what could be considered proper *bayān*, thereby placing the °Abbāsīds in a secondary role. al-Maʿmūn is mentioned as an outstanding °Abbāsīd, however no mention is made of his interest in translating foreign books.

¹⁶⁷ *Bayān*, 3: 366.

translations from non-Arabic sources, he accepted books as valid transmitters of *‘ilm* and theorised a structure of knowledge transmission via books in which the translation project and the foundations of ‘Abbāsīd *adab* culture could be legitimised. So, in *al-Ḥayawān* in particular, al-Ġāḥiẓ appears as the bibliophilic humanist and icon of the cosmopolitan book consuming medieval Muslim civilisation.¹⁶⁸ But this bibliocentric worldview risked an implicit denigration of the bookless Arabians in the ethno-cultural debates of al-Ġāḥiẓ’s intellectual milieu. To bolster the status of the Arabians in the story of human intellectual heritage, al-Ġāḥiẓ played to their strengths, and found in his conception of *bayān* a cogent means to establish the parameters of *‘ilm* around good language which he argued was the preserve of the Arabians.

In 3rd/9th-century Iraq, books by no means dominated the process of knowledge acquisition, and communication retained an oral/aural aspect. This background played into al-Ġāḥiẓ’s hands, permitting him to refrain from unequivocally praising all written texts as authoritative sources of knowledge and to stress the importance of appropriately expressive language in the parameters of the ‘praiseworthy book’. While he accepted that some books could be veritable paragons of cultured thought, not all books are equal, and he wielded this re-conceptualised ‘ideal book’ against the very cultures that based their own superiority on ‘book culture’. Construing books in this fashion had another self-serving angle, as his theory implicitly assures that books written in Arabic (such as his own), must be the very best for all time.

Al-Ġāḥiẓ’s dilemma of lauding book culture as legitimator of *adab*, and disparaging books to defend the Arabian heritage continued to confront later writers. In the mature writerly culture and on account of their own esteem of books, some would adopt an unambiguously bibliocentric lens to appraise the world, scorning not the non-believing *kāfir* but instead illiterates, and they even laud the polytheistic Babylonians and Pharaonic Egyptians as praiseworthy peoples on account of their perceived book production. But other later scholars would retreat into Arabian particularism, particularly in defence of the Qur’ān. Later cosmopolitan bibliophilia would thus continue to be cleft by issues of language and theology.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ See Enderwitz and Saliba for recent spirited arguments for a synthesising and cosmopolitan al-Ġāḥiẓ. Ch. Pellat (*The Life and Works*, 12) gives more weight to al-Ġāḥiẓ’s polemical and pro-Arab, pro-Islam stance, but also indicates that the cosmopolitan spirit of *adab* tempered this to some extent.

¹⁶⁹ See Ṣā’id al-Andalusī’s *Ṭabaqāt al-umam* for a paradigmatic example of

Al-Ġāhiz was unequivocally a bibliophile, but in his particular Ġāhizian way. I suspect his bibliophilia was at its most effusive when he assessed his own books: while he respected non-Arabic books as sources of knowledge upon which he believed his 3rd/9th-century Muslim civilisation was founded, he probably loved his own writings best.¹⁷⁰ Al-Ġāhiz's theoretical framework enabled him to borrow from foreign *ilm* without having to 'pay' for it by expressing respect for their cultures, since their languages were structurally subordinated. Al-Ġāhiz could thus comfortably extol the virtue of books and write books to his heart's content, confident that he would never have to concede that Aristotle, Bozorgmehr or Ibn al-Muqaffa' could possibly be his equals.

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an essay where book production and cultural achievement are treated as synonymous in a remarkably cosmopolitan bibliocentric worldview. His support for the merits of Babylonians and Egyptians based on book production is referenced in *Ṭabaqāt*, 52–5, 29–30. See al-Bāqillānī (*Iğāz al-Qur'ān*, 31–2) for a foreign book censuring defence of the Arabic language and the Qur'ān.

¹⁷⁰ Pellat considered that al-Ġāhiz dispensed with the format of Greek zoological works in *al-Ḥayawān* because he was 'convinced that he [had] no need of recourse to Greek ideas, given that all that is found in the zoological works of the 'philosophers' [the Greco-Roman scholars] is known already to the Bedouins.' (Ch. Pellat, 'Ḥayawān', 312).

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THE TRANSMISSION OF IBN SA°D'S BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY *KITĀB AL-ṬABAQĀT AL-KABĪR*

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This article develops the concepts and tools for the systematic study of the mechanics of survival for medieval Islamic books. These concepts and tools are then applied to studying the history of the earliest extant biographical dictionary of the Islamic tradition: Ibn Sa°d's *Ṭabaqāt*. First, the book's transmitters and their historical contexts are investigated using a large number of transmission chains. Then, conclusions are extracted from this data concerning the book's authorship, the survival process of its many versions, and the trajectories of its geographical diffusion at different phases of its long life.

About the Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr

The *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* (literally, 'The Great Book of Strata', henceforth *KTK*) was compiled by the Baghdadi *ḥadīth* transmitter and historian Muḥammad Ibn Sa°d (d. 230/845).¹ The book belongs to the Islamic genre of biographical dictionaries of *ḥadīth* transmitters (*tarāḡim*). Within that tradition, it belongs to a specific sub-genre made up of lists of biographies of *ḥadīth* transmitters (*muḥaddiṯīn*) organized by generation. Such works are usually called 'books of strata' or *kutub al-ṭabaqāt*. Ibn Sa°d's *KTK* stands out among its contemporaries in this genre, and even among historically minded compositions of the late second and early third Islamic centuries because the latter are basically lists of names, short lineages, dates of birth and/or death,² whereas the *KTK* has full biographies organized according to a number of criteria.³

¹ This article arises from research undertaken for my unpublished doctoral dissertation *A History of Ibn Sa°d's Biographical Dictionary Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr* (Santa Barbara: University of California at Santa Barbara, 2009). For the most up-to-date biography of Muḥammad Ibn Sa°d, see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 34–95.

² Surviving examples of such compositions in the *ṭabaqāt* of *muḥaddiṯīn* genre are: Ḥalīfa b. Ḥayyaṯ al-°Uṣfurī's (d. 240/850) *Ṭabaqāt*, and Ibn Sa°d's *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣaḡīr* (still in manuscript).

³ For a good description of the *KTK* see J. W. Fück 'Ibn Sa°d'. The first modern edition of the book was issued in eight volumes (plus a volume of indices) in Leiden by E. Sachau. The first two volumes constitute a biography of the

Being the earliest surviving biographical dictionary, and later a staple of the Sunnī tradition, it is surprising that Ibn Saʿd's *KTK* has not received the attention it deserves, or at least as much attention as al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīḥ*, for example.⁴ This paper will remedy some of this 'injustice' by tracing the history of survival and transmission of the *KTK*.⁵ In the process, we will also explore what it means to study the history of a medieval Islamic book and how the notions of transmission and survival fit into that history.

Sources, data, and methodology

The aim here is to study the 'survival dynamics' of the *KTK* through an investigation of its communication circuit in each generation. The elements of the communication circuit (at least the ones that can be accessed from the available data) are the *KTK* author(s), its transmitters/teachers, its copyists/students, and its readers/users. Our first task then is to establish a pool of candidates for these roles, and assign one or more roles in the circuit to each person in that pool. For this we need to locate the *KTK*'s extant manuscripts and extract their different chains of transmission, and to locate the later compilations that contain Saʿdī reports and extract the transmission chains of such reports.

There is no single complete manuscript of the *KTK*, only fragments of it, with some overlaps.⁶ Therefore, for these manuscripts, it is important to determine whether they represent a single recension of the work, a number of overlapping recensions, or widely different ones that cannot

Prophet Muḥammad. The third and fourth volumes deal with three strata of Muḥammad's companions. The fifth volume basically contains biographies of *ḥadīth* transmitters from Medina, the sixth from Kufa, the seventh from Basra and Baghdad. The eighth is dedicated to women companions and transmitters of *ḥadīth*.

⁴ The existing literature about the *KTK* amounts to four works written during a period of about one hundred thirty years: O. Loth, *Das Classebuch des Ibn Saʿd*; E. Sachau's introduction to the third volume of the Leiden edition of the *KTK*, vol. 3, part I, v–xlili; ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿUmar Mūsā, *Ibn Saʿd*; and M. Cooperson, 'Ibn Saʿd'. To these four works one must add ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿUmar's insightful introduction to the Ḥānḡī edition of the *KTK*. For a detailed description of these and other works, see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 18–29.

⁵ O. Loth's short study briefly discussed different transmission routes of the *KTK* while studying the authenticity of the book's different available manuscripts. In addition to reconstructing the outlines of Ibn Saʿd's life, Loth discussed the accuracy of the book's attribution to Ibn Saʿd, the issue of Ibn Ḥayyuwayh's role in editing and popularizing it, and the issue of Ibn Fahm's 'mysterious' version of the book.

⁶ For a list of these manuscripts, see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 211–24.

be, or should not be, reconciled. Fortunately, this work was done for us by the successive editors of the printed editions of the *KTK*.⁷ Next, several transmission trees of the *KTK*'s recensions represented by the extant manuscripts are drawn.⁸ Studying the transmission chains of Sa°dī reports within later compilations helps add more branches to these trees.⁹ Using biographical information of the persons involved in the aforementioned transmission trees (manuscripts and other recensions), we can study the temporal and geographical diffusion of the *KTK*.

Moreover, comparing these reports to corresponding ones in the printed edition of the *KTK* helps to establish the existence and character of other recensions, compared to the one available to us, and to give an approximate date to their disappearance from circulation; thus describing the process of crystallization of the book.¹⁰ Counting the frequency of Sa°dī reports in different compilations helps draw a picture of the *KTK*'s

⁷ Several editions appeared in the Arab world that were based on the Leiden edition; namely the editions of Dār Bayrūt, 1957; Dār Şādir 1960; Dār Bayrūt li-l-Ṭibā°ah wa-l-Naşr, 1978; Dār al-Tahrīr, 1968. In 1983, Ziyād M. Mañşūr published the part missing from the Medinan *şabaqāt*. In 1998, Dār al-Kutub al-°Ilmiyya, with M. °Abd al-Qādir °Atā as editor, published the more complete, but a worst, version of the *KTK*. In 1994, Muḥammad Şāmil al-Salamī published the fifth stratum of the companions. The fourth stratum of companions appeared in 1995 in a volume edited by °Abd al-°Azīz al-Sallūmī. Finally, in 2001 Maktabat al-Ḥānġī in Cairo published the most complete version of the *KTK* edited by °Alī Muḥammad °Umar. For a detailed investigation of the overlapping of the extant manuscripts, see the introductions to the different volumes of the Leiden edition. In fact, we show here that the manuscripts and the Sa°dī reports in compilations written after the fifth/eleventh century come from the fusion of two recensions.

⁸ Due to space restrictions, these trees are not included in this paper, only a list of the major transmitters organized in generations is given. Readers interested in diagrams of these trees are referred to in Atassi, *History*, Appendices I and II.

⁹ How can we distinguish between a book-transmission chain and a report-transmission chain? I noticed that a good number of reports in later compilations share a portion of their transmission chains with those of the extant manuscripts; i.e. the portion covering the period from Ibn Sa°d's time to the fifth/eleventh century. Therefore, when encountering a large number of such reports, I assumed that they were drawn from copies of the same recensions as those of the manuscripts. For example, we can confirm this assumption for Ibn Ḥaġar al-°Asqalānī's works because he tells us the sources of his copies of the *KTK* in his *al-Mu°ġam al-mufahras*, 1: 168–70.

¹⁰ Such analysis is detailed in Atassi, *History*, Ch. 4.

literary diffusion according to genre.¹¹ This diffusion is an indication of how different generations perceived and classified the *KTK*. This classification, combined with the transmitters' historical context, should orient later investigations concerning the reasons behind the *KTK*'s survival; and hence how and why its authority as a book of tradition was gradually established. Finally, comparing borrowings with extant manuscripts should give us an idea about the accuracy of book transmission within the medieval Islamic culture, which is, as we have mentioned, related to the rise of what we called the textbook.

The sample of compilations

Having combed a hundred or so medieval compilations looking for Sa[°]dī material, I noticed the existence of two major time periods according to the number of compilations that contained Sa[°]dī reports and the number of such reports within each compilation. Beyond the sixth/twelfth century, compilations containing Sa[°]dī reports increased dramatically and so did the number of such reports in each compilation. Therefore, for this period I only included in my study the compilations that supplied the transmission chains of their Sa[°]dī reports. I ignored the compilations that borrowed from Ibn Sa[°]d's works without specifying which one or how it was obtained. Before this date, I included all the compilations containing Sa[°]dī material that I could find, except when several of them belonged to the same compiler and featured similar numbers of Sa[°]dī reports. In the latter case, I selected a representative compilation of the compiler's work which were then grouped into six genres: *tarāğim* (biographies) books¹², *sīra* and *mağāzī* books¹³, history (or historiography) books¹⁴, *ḥadīṭ*

¹¹ The counting was done electronically with the help of digitized versions of the books consulted and the help of al-Maktaba al-Šāmila; see Atassi, *History*, 208–11.

¹² By *tarāğim* books I understand books that contain a succession of indivisible parts (*tarğama*, or biography) each containing information relating to one person. In this category I include books from the *ṭabaqāt* genre such as Ḥalīfa b. Ḥayyāt's *Ṭabaqāt*, *ansāb* books such as Balāḍurī's *Ansāb al-ašrāf*, and biographical compilations such as al-Ḥaṭīb's *Tārīḥ Bağdād*.

¹³ By *sīra* and *mağāzī* books I understand biographies of Muḥammad (*sīra*), monographs about his battles (*mağāzī*), and books glorifying his personality traits and his acts (*šamā'il* and *faḍā'il* books).

¹⁴ By history books I understand books of reports organized in any format other than the *tarāğim* format. Such books include Ḥayyāt's *Tārīḥ*, Ibn Ḥabīb's *al-Munammaq* and his *al-Muḥabbar*, al-Wāqidī's *Futūḥ al-Šām*, al-Ya[°]qūbī's *Tārīḥ* and his *Aḥbār al-zamān*, Ṭabarī's *al-Tārīḥ al-kabīr*, and al-Mas[°]ūdī's *Murūğ al-ḍaḥab*. Other books containing the word *tārīḥ* in their titles, such as al-Ḥaṭīb's

books¹⁵, *fahāris* (*ma^cāğim al-šuyūh* or *mašyahāt*) books¹⁶, and books belonging to the Shī'a tradition. Table 1 features a list of the compilations in my sample organized chronologically according to their compilers' death dates.

According to Table 1 (below), *tarāğim* books are disproportionately represented in my sample than any other genre, followed by *hadīṭ* compilations, and then historiographies. Books of the Shī'a tradition, *sīra* and *mašyahāt* lists are almost equally thinly represented in the sample. This imbalance may seem a great obstacle facing any serious conclusion as to the frequency of Sa^cdī reports as a function of genre. However, the representation of different genres in my sample reflects their real representation in the entire Islamic tradition. Books of *tarāğim*, *hadīṭ* and historiography are the most common. *Sīra* books are few and well known given the obvious limitation on their multiplication (i.e. the limited number of reports about Muḥammad's life and person).

Table 1. Compilations containing Sa^cdī reports, the number of these reports in each compilation, its genre, and its compiler; the compilers' death dates, and main place of residence.

Death (AH)	Reports	Compilation title	Compiler	Genre	Residence
262	2	<i>Tārīḥ al-Madīna</i>	Ibn Šabba	history	Baghdad
272	1	<i>Sunan</i>	Abū Dāwūd	<i>hadīṭ</i>	Baghdad
279	>250	<i>Ansāb al-Ašraf</i> *	Al-Balāḍurī	<i>tarāğim</i>	Baghdad
282	3	<i>al-Musnad</i>	Ibn Abī Usāma	<i>hadīṭ</i>	Baghdad
306	22	<i>Aḥbār al-Qudāt</i> *	Wakī ^c	<i>tarāğim</i>	Baghdad
310	250	<i>Tārīḥ al-rusul wa-l-mulūk</i> *	Al-Ṭabarī	history	Baghdad
317	20	<i>Mu^cğam al-ṣaḥāba</i> *	al-Bağawī	<i>tarāğim</i>	Baghdad
327	2	<i>al-Ğarḥ wa-l-ta^cdīl</i>	Ibn Abī Hātim	<i>tarāğim</i>	Rayy
4 th century	2	<i>Kifāyat al-Aṭar</i> *	Abū al-Qāsim al-Qummī	Shī'a tradition	Rayy

Tārīḥ Bağdād and Ibn ^cAsākir's *Tārīḥ Dimašq*, do not fall in this category because the bulk of them are organized according to the *tarāğim* format.

¹⁵ By *hadīṭ* books I understand compilations of prophetic sayings and deeds organized in any way: thematically like *Buḥārī*'s *Šaḥīḥ* or the thematic monographs of Ibn Abī al-Dunyā; the *hadīṭs* transmitted by one *rāwī* like the *masānīd*; or any book listing *hadīṭs* without any other kind of reports. In this category I include *hadīṭ* criticism (*ğarḥ wa-ta^cdīl*) books such as Ibn Ḥanbal's *ʿIlal*, Ibn Šāhīn's *Tārīḥ Asmā^c al-tiqāt*, Ibn Mākūlāh's *al-Ikmāl*, and Ibn Ḥibbān's *al-Tiqāt* and his *al-Ḍu^cafā^c*, and al-Ḍahabī's *al-Muğnī fī al-ḏu^cafā^c*.

¹⁶ Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* was very useful. However, the *mašyaha* books, such as *Fahrasat Ibn Ḥayr al-Isbīlī* and Ibn Ḥağar al-^cAsqalānī's *al-Mu^cğam al-mufahras*, produced the most spectacular information.

360	>20	<i>al-Mu'ğam al-kabīr*</i>	Ṭabarānī	<i>tarāğim</i>	Işfahān
356	3	<i>Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn*</i>	Abū al-Farağ al-Işfahānī	Shī'a	Aleppo
365	2	<i>al-Kāmil fī du'afā' al-riğāl*</i>	Ibn °Adī al-Ġurğānī	<i>tarāğim</i>	itinerant
374	2	<i>al-Maḥzūn fī 'ilm al-ḥadīṭ</i>	Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Azdī	<i>ḥadīṭ</i>	Mosul
385	1	<i>Tārīḥ asmā' al-ṭiqāt</i>	Ibn Šāhīn	<i>tarāğim</i>	Baghdad
385	1	<i>Sunan</i>	al-Dāraquṭnī	<i>ḥadīṭ</i>	Baghdad
405	6	<i>al-Mustadrak*</i>	al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī	<i>ḥadīṭ</i>	Nīsāpūr
409	1	<i>Kitāb al-mutawārīn</i>	°Abd al-Ġanī al-Azdī	history	Cairo
430	10	<i>Hilyat al-awliyā'*</i>	Abū Nu°aym al-Işfahānī	<i>tarāğim</i>	Işfahān
430	20	<i>Ma'rifat al-şahāba</i>	Abū Nu°aym al-Işbahānī	<i>tarāğim</i>	Işbahān
450	1	<i>Riğāl al-Nağāşī</i>	al-Nağāşī	Shī'a tradition	Baghdad
458	4	<i>Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*</i>	al-Bayhaqī	<i>sīra</i>	Nīsāpūr
463	>250	<i>Tārīḥ Bağdād</i>	al-Ḥaṭīb al-Bağdādī	<i>tarāğim</i>	Baghdad
463	>250	<i>al-Istī'āb fī ma'rifat al-aşḥāb</i>	Ibn °Abd al-Barr	<i>tarāğim</i>	Andalusia
571	>250	<i>Tārīḥ Dimaşq</i>	Ibn °Asākir	<i>tarāğim</i>	Damascus
575		<i>Fahrasat Ibn Ḥayr</i>	Ibn al-Ḥayr al-Işbīlī	<i>maşyahāt</i>	Andalusia
734	>250	<i>°Uyūn al-aṭar</i>	Ibn Sayyid al-Nās	<i>Sīra</i>	Andalusia
748	>250	<i>Taḍkirat al-ḥuffāz</i>	Ḍahabī	<i>tarāğim</i>	Damascus
852		<i>al-Mu'ğam al-mufahras</i>	Ibn Ḥağar al-°Asqalānī	<i>maşyahāt</i>	Cairo

* Compilations that use recensions different from those in the printed edition of the *KTK*.

Transmitters of the *KTK*

According to the chains of transmission of the *KTK*'s extant manuscripts,¹⁷ the material contained in these manuscripts is the fusion of two recensions, the first transmitted by Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥārīṭ b. Muḥammad Ibn Abī Usāma al-Tamīmī (186/802–282/895),¹⁸ and the

¹⁷ For details about the transmitters of the *KTK* inferred from Sa°dī reports that were included in later compilations see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 211–250 and references therein; see also Appendix II for transmitters of the extant manuscripts only.

¹⁸ He resided in Baghdad and was probably a copyist and a tutor for hire. He has a *musnad* compilation (*ḥadīṭs* organized according to selected transmitters, usually the first after Muḥammad) attributed to his name; but generally he was

second transmitted by Abū °Alī al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. °Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Fahm (211/826–289/901) who is the more problematic of the two.¹⁹ Both transmitters were second-tier *muḥaddiṡs* and possibly teachers by vocation. In the second generation, Abū al-Ḥasan Aḥmad b. Ma°rūf al-Ḥaššāb (d. 321 or 322/933 or 934) transmitted on the authority of both Ibn Abī Usāma and Ibn Fahm. He was an obscure *muḥaddiṡ* from Baghdad. It is difficult to ascertain his profession from the designation al-Ḥaššāb (literally, ‘the carpenter’ or ‘wood handler/cutter’). However, it would not be far-fetched for the *muḥaddiṡs* of the pre-*madrasa* era to teach *ḥadīṡ* and related material as an avocation.²⁰ Also in the second generation is Abū Ayyūb Iṣḥāq b. Sulaymān al-Ġallāb (d. 334/945), another minor *muḥaddiṡ* from Baghdad, whose profession could have been a carrier given his designation al-Ġallāb. He transmitted on the authority of Ibn Abī Usāma only.²¹ Al-Ġallāb’s role as a transmitter of the *KTK* is inferred from transmission chains of Sa°dī reports in later compilations; especially Ibn °Asākir’s *Tārīḥ madīnat Dimashq*.

The third generation is even more problematic than the first two for it contains one person only; namely Abū °Umar Muḥammad b. Ḥayyuwayh al-Ḥazzāz (295/907–382/992). Both manuscripts and Sa°dī reports give us this one transmitter. He lived in Baghdad and, according

not a major figure of the Baghdadi *ḥadīṡ* scene. It is noteworthy that the *sīra* part of the extant manuscripts is transmitted by Ibn Abī Usāma alone, the eldest of the two transmitters of the *KTK*. This lends credence to the claim that the *sīra* part of the Leiden edition of the *KTK* used to be circulated as a separate book.

¹⁹ An *aḥbārī* (transmitter of historical reports), a minor *ḥadīṡ* transmitter, and a learned person, Ibn Fahm was nineteen years of age when Ibn Sa°d died. This puts him at around age fifteen when he started studying under Ibn Sa°d, a typical age for third/ninth century youngsters to start their advanced studies. Does that make the fate of the *KTK* dependent on one teenager? Not necessarily, because many students of different ages may have attended the dictation of the book (or parts of it), but only two persons decided to teach it and Ibn Fahm is one of them.

²⁰ We have a confirmation that Ibn Ma°rūf had taught Ibn Sa°d’s *Sīra*: the *KTK*’s transmission chain in Ibn Sayyid al-Nās’ *°Uyūn al-aṡar*, 2: 440–1, states that Ibn Sa°d’s *Sīra* was ‘recited back to’ Ibn Ma°rūf in the month of *ša°bān* of the year 318/930.

²¹ In both al-Ḥaṡīb’s *Tārīḥ Baġdād* and Ibn °Asākir’s *Tārīḥ Dimašq*, al-Ġallāb transmits Sa°dī reports exclusively from Ibn Abī Usāma. He also frequently transmits reports from Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī (d. 285/898), a famous compiler from Baghdad. Therefore, we can safely claim that al-Ġallāb was a ‘teacher’ and not a compiler himself, which is something we will note about most transmitters of the *KTK*.

to his designation (*ḥazzāz*), he might have been a maker of silk yarn. We have no complete manuscript of the *KTK* with only Ibn Abī Usāma or Ibn Fahm in the chain of transmission. However, all available manuscripts include Ibn Ḥayyuwayh in their transmission-chains as the only transmitter at the third level after the author.²² It is possible that Ibn Maʿrūf had collected the entire *KTK* before Ibn Ḥayyuwayh; but it is the latter who seems to have propagated it. Al-Baġdādī mentions that Ibn Ḥayyuwayh ‘heard plenty and wrote [i.e. copied] all his life and transmitted large compilations such as the *Ṭabaqāt* of Ibn Saʿd, the *Maġāzī* of al-Wāqidī, the compilations of Abī Bakr b. al-Anbārī, the *Maġāzī* of Saʿīd al-Umawī, the *History* of Ibn Abī Ḥayṭama, and many others’.²³ One of the manuscripts’ transmission-chains states that Ibn Ḥayyuwayh copied the corresponding section of the *KTK* while the text was being recited back to Ibn Maʿrūf in the month of *Šaʿbān* of the year 318/930. This means that Ibn Ḥayyuwayh was then twenty years old and that Ibn Maʿrūf was at the end of his life. We notice here the same pattern we observed in the transmission of the *KTK* from Ibn Saʿd to Ibn Fahm; i.e. a young student tries to get the teacher’s book as early as possible in his career and as late as possible in the teacher’s life. This was a common practice among *muhaddiṯ*s because it lowered the number of transmitters between the last in a chain and the Prophet.²⁴ We must also remark that collecting and transmitting such large works possibly needed full time dedication. It is difficult however, given the dearth of information about these transmitters, to ascertain their professions, and whether or not they practiced teaching.

In the fourth generation we encounter three transmitters of the *KTK*, all of whom seem to have been teachers by vocation. The two transmitters supplied by the manuscripts are Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Ġawharī (363/973–454/1062), and Abū Iṣḥāq Ibrāhīm b. ʿUmar al-Barmakī (361/971–445/1053). The one transmitter supplied by Saʿdī reports is Abū al-Qāsim ʿUbayd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Azharī

²² If it were not for earlier books that mentioned Ibn Saʿd and his *KTK* with numerous borrowings that matched the *KTK* verbatim, I would have suggested considering Ibn Ḥayyuwayh as the ‘real’ compiler of the *KTK*. Nonetheless, it is possible that he had an impact on the *KTK* in terms of selection of recensions, organization of reports, and addition of some information. For a discussion of Ibn Ḥayyuwayh’s partition of the *KTK* in twenty four parts (*aġzāʿ*), as well as other known partitions, see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 239–41.

²³ Al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī, *Tārīḥ Baġhdād*, 3: 121, no. 1139.

²⁴ Receb Şentürk, *Narrative Social Structure*, 1–28.

(355/965–435/1043). According to al-Ḥaṭīb's *Tārīḥ Baġdād*, al-Ġawharī resided in Darb al-Za^ʿfarānī, where many *muḥaddiṡs* used to live. Al-Dahabī's *Siyar a^ʿlām al-nubalā^ʿ* adds that 'he was steeped in transmission, he transmitted abundantly, and held many dictation sessions'.²⁵ Al-Barmakī resided in Baghdad and was a Ḥanbalī *muftī*, with a teaching circle (*ḥalqa*) at the al-Manṣūr mosque.²⁶ Al-Ḥaṭīb also alludes to the fact that al-Azharī taught large compilations, such as the *KTK*, when he says: 'we heard from him large compilations and long books'.²⁷

In the fifth generation, we know of five transmitters of the *KTK*; three of them through the manuscripts and two through Sa^ʿdī reports. All of these transmitters were from Baghdad, and most of them seem to have been teachers. For example, Abū Bakr al-Qāḍī Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Bāqī (442/1050–535/1140) was a scholar and a teacher.²⁸ Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan (434/1042–510/1116) had two teaching circles in Baghdad, which he took over after his father, one of them being at the famous al-Manṣūr's mosque.²⁹ To this generation belongs al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī (d. 463/1071), the compiler of the famous *Tārīḥ Baġdād*.³⁰ In the sixth generation, we know of five transmitters, all from Baghdad. The manuscripts give us only one, but the most renowned. He is Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh b. Duḥbul b. Kāra (d. 599/1202).³¹ To this generation belongs Ibn ʿAsākīr (499/1105–571/1176), the compiler of the famous *Tārīḥ madīnat Dimašq*.³² The sixth generation is practically the last of the known Baġdadī generations of *KTK* transmitters.³³

²⁵ Al-Dahabī, *Siyar a^ʿlām al-nubalā^ʿ*, 18: 68.

²⁶ Al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī, *Tārīḥ Baġhdād*, 6: 139, no. 3180. The mosque of al-Manṣūr, which should be located close to al-Manṣūr's palace (Qaṣr al-Ḥuld), was the main mosque on the western side (i.e. the old city) of the Tigris. Important teachers of all disciplines had teaching circles in that mosque.

²⁷ Ibid, 10: 385, no. 5559.

²⁸ Al-Dahabī, *Siyar*, 20: 23. He mentions in page 28 that Abū Bakr al-Qāḍī taught 'Ibn Sa^ʿd's *Ṭabaqāt*;' see also ibid., 19: 386, no. 228.

²⁹ Ibn al-ʿImād, *Šaġarāt al-ġahab*, 4: 27.

³⁰ See A.N. Atassi, *History*, 229, for a discussion of whether al-Ḥaṭīb taught the *KTK* or not, and his probable role in introducing it to Damascus.

³¹ For Ibn Kāra's mention in the available manuscripts see ibid, 222, 244–245, 247. We also know from Ibn Ḥaġar al-ʿAsqalānī's transmission chain of the *KTK* that Ibn Kāra taught the book to a certain Ibn al-Ḥaġġāġ.

³² See ibid, 232–3 for a discussion of Ibn ʿAsākīr's popularization of the *KTK* in Syria.

³³ In fact, Ibn Ḥaġar al-ʿAsqalānī, in *al-Mu^ʿġam*, 1: 168–70. supplies us with

Beyond the sixth/twelfth century the book was taught mostly in Syria and Egypt.

The seventh generation would see the book appearing in Egypt-Syria through three persons who acquired it in Baghdad and then later passed it on in their cities of residence. Abū l-Faraġ al-Ḥarrānī (587/1191–672/1273) brought it to Cairo.³⁴ Ibn °Abd al-Dā°im (575/1179–668/1269) brought it to Damascus.³⁵ But, most important among them is Abū l-Ḥaġġāġ b. Ḥalīl (555/1160–648/1250), who brought it to Aleppo.³⁶ Most transmitters in the eighth generation received the *KTK* in Aleppo from Abū l-Ḥaġġāġ. The most notable teacher of the *KTK* in the eighth generation is Šaraf al-Dīn al-Dimyāfī (613/1216–705/1305), who received it from Abū l-Ḥaġġāġ.³⁷ The transmitters of the eighth generation and beyond (up to the ninth/late sixteenth century) acquired the *KTK* and passed it on either in Aleppo, Damascus, or Cairo.³⁸

Aspects of transmission

Whether in Baghdad, Aleppo, Damascus, or Cairo, transmitters of the *KTK* who spent time actually teaching it were second-tier *muḥaddiṡ*s and/or scholars. None of them had composed any compilation of their own. They were *muḥaddiṡ*s who specialized in transmitting large works, such as al-Ḥaššāb, Ibn Ḥayyuwayh, Abū Bakr al-Qādī, al-Ġawharī, Ibn Kāra, Abū l-Ḥaġġāġ, and al-Dimyāfī. It is also noteworthy that many Baghdādī transmitters of the *KTK*, such as al-Barmakī, Abū Bakr al-Qādī, and Abū Naṣr, were Ḥanbalīs. Moreover, both al-Barmakī and Abū

a name, Ibn al-Ḥayyir (563/1167–648/1250), who could be viewed as a seventh generation of Baghdādī transmitters; for a biography see al-Dāhabī, *Siyar*, 23: 235, no. 155.

³⁴ This information is contained in the transmission chain supplied by Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (d. 734/1333), who was a resident of Cairo, in his °*Uyūn al-aṭar*, 2: 440-1. It is possible that this al-Ḥarrānī was not a ‘true’ teacher of the *KTK*, for Ibn Sayyid al-Nās mentions that the former supplied him with a part of the book through an *iġāza*. For a biography of al-Ḥarrānī see Abū l-Ṭayyib al-Makkī, *Dhayl al-Taḳyīd*, 2: 148, no. 1324.

³⁵ For a biography see *ibid.*, 1: 326, no. 649.

³⁶ Al-Dāhabī, *Siyar*, 23: 151, no. 104.

³⁷ Al-Dāhabī mentions that al-Dimyāfī has related to him Ibn Sa°d’s *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* on the authority of Ibn Ḥalīl (Abū l-Ḥaġġāġ); see al-Dāhabī, *Taḍkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 2: 11, no. 431.

³⁸ Our information about these later generations comes from two very detailed transmission chains, one is supplied by Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, °*Uyūn al-aṭar*, 2: 440–1, and the other is supplied by Ibn Ḥaġar al-°Asqalānī (d. 852/1449), *al-Muġam al-Mufahras*, 1: 168–70.

Naṣr taught at al-Manṣūr's mosque.³⁹ Although al-Madrasa al-Nizāmiyya was built in 459/1066, none of the aforementioned teachers taught there because the vizier Nizām al-Mulk, the founder of the school, prohibited non-Šāfi'ites from teaching at al-Nizāmiyya.

In Syria and Egypt, we know that transmitters of the *KTK* were also full-time teachers, while famous compilers remained mostly users of the *KTK*. While many Baghdadi transmitters of Ibn Sa'd's work taught in the neighborhood of al-Karḥ (south of Baghdad where the aforementioned Darb al-Za'farān was located) or in al-Manṣūr's mosque in the walled city, their Syrian and Egyptian counterparts taught in institutions sponsored by the ruling elite, such as the network of *madrasas* patronized by the Mamlūk rulers and their *amīrs*. Moreover, while the Baghdadi transmitters were possibly religious scholars by avocation, their Syrian and Egyptian counterparts were professional scholars, judges, and members of the religious elite⁴⁰

Islamic 'tradition' has a well-known fragmentary nature. The prevalent way of transmitting this tradition continued to be the individual report, which consisted of a transmission chain attached to the report's text. Instead of continuous narratives, what emerged are compilations of reports which preserved the fragmentary nature of the original reports, and made possible their own re-fragmentation. Medieval Muslim compilers tended to fragment the works of their predecessors into individual reports (the same report could even be fragmented into many smaller ones to suit the needs of the user), and then include these fragments into their own works. Compiling and fragmenting knowledge were two distinct and opposing processes always active in the production and transmission of medieval Islamic knowledge. It is puzzling, but it seems that students of medieval knowledge had an aversion toward teaching books that they collected in their travels. Instead, they fragmented what they learned and wrote their own compilations which they later taught. In the current study, I suggest that people who chose to teach others' compilations tended not to write any of their own.

³⁹ It is probable that this mosque and the neighboring district of Bāb Ḥarb, at whose cemetery some of these transmitters were buried, had strong ḥanbalī affiliations. It is possible that the ḥanbalites' strong attachment to tradition may explain their interest in the *KTK*, given that it was one of the earliest works to deal with early Islamic history. This intellectual, and maybe social, aspect of the *KTK*'s history still needs further investigation.

⁴⁰ Such information is included in the biographies of the different transmitters referenced in this paper when each of them is mentioned for the first time. See, for example, footnotes 40–4.

Attempting to explain this observation, I suggest that in medieval Muslim societies, intellectual prestige was built through the writing of compilations and legal texts, dictating them rather than teaching older compilations. Legal texts required competency, but compilations only required fragmenting older works and reassembling them. Seekers of intellectual capital (converted later into social and financial capitals) did just that. Otherwise, in the presence of Ibn Saʿd's *KTK*, why would al-Bağawī (d. 317/929) produce his *Muʿğam al-ṣaḥāba*, or al-Ṭabarānī his *al-Muʿğam al-kabīr*, or Ibn Shāhīn's *Tārīḥ asmāʾ al-ṭiqāt*, or Abū Nuʿaym's *Maʿrifat al-ṣaḥāba*, or Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr's *al-Isṭīʿāb fī maʿrifat al-aṣḥāb*? These authors could not possibly have known more about any of Muḥammad's companions than did Ibn Saʿd.

In this atmosphere of enhancing one's reputation as a scholar by absorbing and building upon the works of predecessors, the survival of older books becomes quite difficult: for that to happen, a group of dedicated transmitters, whose task is to popularize a selected group of works, has to exist. What would then make transmitting rather than compiling attractive to these teachers? This is a hard question to answer, but the transmission of entire books transformed these books into authoritative sources of tradition by virtue of a process of selection, at the heart of which were those dedicated teachers. In fact, such dedicated transmitters defined and preserved the 'canonical' books of tradition. This exact process transformed the *KTK* into an authoritative source of the Islamic tradition.

Methods of transmission of the KTK

It is noteworthy that by and from the ninth/late fourteenth century, the transmission of the *KTK* happened mostly by *iğāza*. The clearest example is Ibn Ḥağar, who obtained five different permissions to use the *KTK*. It was also common for calculating parents to take their young boys (at age three or four) to hear a famous and old teacher for a while and then obtain a permission from this teacher for their son. This was the case, for example, of Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (671/1272–763/1361) who, while a child, obtained a permission from Abū l-Farağ al-Ḥarrānī (587/1191–672/1273).⁴¹

The use of *iğāza* in the transmission of the *KTK* was known since the third/tenth century, and, according to Ibn Ḥağar, even Ibn Ḥayyuwayh in the fourth/tenth century obtained parts of the *KTK* by an *iğāza* from Ibn Maʿrūf al-Ḥaššāb. Tracking the use of *iğāza* in the transmission-

⁴¹ Abū l-Ṭayyib al-Makkī, *Dayl al-Taḥyīd*, 2: 148, no. 1324.

chains of Ibn Sayyid al-Nas and Ibn Ḥaḡar, we notice a steady increase in this usage as time progressed. By Ibn Ḥaḡar's time (the ninth/fifteenth century), it was possible to obtain an *iḡāza* by mail and without even seeing the person granting it.⁴² This is an indication that the *KTK* had acquired such stability in its form that one could acquire a copy of it and then authenticate that copy through one or multiple *iḡāzas* from different teachers. It was not required for the grantor of the *iḡāza* to have heard the entire book from a teacher either, only a status of scholarship and a reputation of trustworthiness sufficed for the chain of authentication to be valid and to carry the weight of *samā'* (hearing), the ultimate source of authenticity.⁴³

By the ninth century, the *KTK* had become fixed. No one could alter its content or form without attracting the attention of scholars and copyists both in Syria and in Egypt, who were capable of detecting such a change. The *KTK* had become a staple of the Islamic tradition, and possibly even textbook. Not many books attained a level at which survival was no longer an issue and did not depend on the efforts of a few dedicated transmitters. Beyond the seventh/fourteenth century, the survival of the *KTK* was assured by the increase in the number of students copying it, as well as by the multiplication of copies later authenticated by permissions from reputed scholars.

Authorship of the KTK

The bibliographer Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/ 995 or 388/998) in his *Fihrist* claims that Ibn Sa'd has only one book, which coincides with the *sīra* part of the printed edition of the *KTK*.⁴⁴ However, Ibn al-Nadīm also added that Ibn Sa'd had 'compiled his books', thus insinuating that Ibn Sa'd might have had more than one book.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Ibn al-Nadīm claims that Ibn Sa'd was 'knowledgeable about the *ṣaḡāba* and the

⁴² Ibn Ḥaḡar al-°Asqalānī, *al-Mu°ḡam al-mufahras*, 1: 169, mentions that 'Abū al-°Abbās ... informed us in his letter from Damascus that Abū °Abd Allāh ... informed us in his letter from Cairo...'

⁴³ Lists of the different methods of acquiring the *KTK* by later generations of transmitters (beyond the ninth/fifteenth century) are given in A.N. Atassi, *History*, 137–8, 250.

⁴⁴ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, *al-Fann al-awwal min al-maqāla al-tālīqa*, biography of Muḡammad b. Sa'd's *kātib*, al-Wāqidī.

⁴⁵ Idem. Ibn al-Nadīm also claims that these alleged works were a mere reworking of al-Wāqidī's compilations (Ibn Sa'd's main teacher and source of reports).

tābi^cūn'.⁴⁶ Since the bulk of the *KTK* is composed of biographical information about the two classes of persons identified by Ibn al-Nadīm as Ibn Sa^cd's area of expertise, it is then possible that the latter wrote something about that topic in order to establish his authority. Ibn al-Nadīm also attributes a book of *ṭabaqāt* to Ibn Sa^cd's teacher and main source, al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823).⁴⁷ Given that he is the only bibliographer who has ever made such a claim, and since he considered that Ibn Sa^cd's works were mere plagiarism of al-Wāqidī's work, it is possible that he attributed the *ṭabaqāt* work (one of possible two) to the teacher rather than to the student. Finally, when listing the books of which he was aware and whose authors were not known to him, Ibn al-Nadīm names a certain *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt* and attributes it to a certain Muḥammad b. Sa^cd.⁴⁸ It seems to me that Ibn al-Nadīm either did not double check his sources or intentionally downplayed Ibn Sa^cd's importance.⁴⁹

If Ibn al-Nadīm cannot always be trusted in ascribing books to their rightful authors, it is necessary to use other sources to confirm that our Ibn Sa^cd had written a work of *ṭabaqāt* that can be confidently identified with the *KTK*. This was indeed possible since the third/ninth century-genealogist al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892) in his *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* mentions in passing that 'Muḥammad b. Sa^cd, the scribe of al-Wāqidī,' has to his name a book of '*ṭabaqāt* of *muḥaddiṭīn* and *fuqahā*,'⁵⁰ from which he has extensively borrowed. The borrowed material exists in the *KTK*, which proves that the third/ninth century compiler Muḥammad b. Sa^cd is indeed the author of the *KTK*. In fact, we have in our hand a recension of the *KTK* which is different from the recension used in al-Balādhurī's book.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Idem.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 'Aḥbār al-Wāqidī'.

⁴⁸ Ibid., *al-Fann al-tānī min al-maqāla al-rābi'a: Dīkr mā wağadtu min al-kutub al-muṣannaḥa fī l-ādāb li-qawm lam yu^craf ḥāluhum 'alā l-iṣtiqṣā'*.

⁴⁹ In comparing Ibn al-Nadīm's biography of al-Wāqidī and the latter's two biographies in the *KTK*, we are led to conclude that Ibn al-Nadīm's biography of al-Wāqidī is a type of summary of the two biographies given in the *KTK*. Ibn al-Nadīm also mentions that his source was none other than Ibn Sa^cd, al-Wāqidī's scribe; see ibid., *al-Fann al-awwal min al-maqāla al-tālīya: Aḥbār al-Wāqidī*.

⁵⁰ Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-aṣrāf*, 2: 263. Another third/ninth century author, Wakī^c (d. 306/918), in his *Aḥbār al-quḍāt* mentions, also in passing, that 'Muḥammad b. Sa^cd, the scribe of al-Wāqidī,' has a book of *ṭabaqāt* attributed to his name. Wakī^c, *Aḥbār al-quḍāt*, 2: 397; 3: 269.

⁵¹ In A.N. Atassi, *History*, 106–108 and 164–5, I suggest that Ibn Sa^cd started writing the *KTK* sometime after 207/823, finished the bulk of it

The Egyptian author Ibn Ḥallikān (d. 681/1282), in his *Wafayāt al-a'yān*,⁵² mentions that Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt* was a large (*kabīr*) book of fifteen volumes. Moreover, we learn there that there existed another work of *ṭabaqāt* that is a shorter (*ṣuġra*) version of the first. Here *kabīr* and *suġra* are used simply as adjectives to describe the works and not as parts of the works' titles. It is Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (d. 734/1333) in his *Uyūn al-aṭar* who first calls Ibn Sa'd's book *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*.⁵³ Al-Ḍahabī (d. 748/1348), in his *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, gives us a summary of the different biographies previously written about Ibn Sa'd, interspersed with praise fit for the now famous author of [*Kitāb*] *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* and [*Kitāb*] *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ṣaġīr*.⁵⁴ Ibn Sa'd's works are no longer 'large' and 'small' but are named *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* and *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ṣaġīr*. The earlier adjectives of these titleless works have become grandiose titles. Al-Ḍahabī, in his *Taḍkirat al-ḥuffāz*, states that 'Ibn Sa'd is the compiler of *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr* and *al-Ṣaġhīr* and the compiler of *al-Tārīḥ* ... our teacher Šaraf al-Dīn al-Dimyāṭī has dictated to us his [Ibn Sa'd's] *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*'.⁵⁵ Is this a play on adjectives, or is *al-kubrā* really different from the *KTK*? We have previously concluded, when discussing Ibn al-Nadīm's claims, that Ibn Sa'd's *Tārīḥ* and *Sīra* (the first two volumes of the Leiden edition of the *KTK*) are most likely one and the same book. But it is curious that al-Ḍahabī mentions the *Tārīḥ* as if it were separate from the *Ṭabaqāt*. Cooperson thinks that the *Sīra* book 'may have been intended to stand as a separate text'.⁵⁶ We also know that the manuscripts upon which the

sometime around 213/828 (and started teaching it, which accounts of Ibn Abī Usāma's recension); and kept editing and adding new material to it until 228/842, or until shortly before he died (I dated the writing of Ibn Fahm's recension to around the interval 226/840–230/845).

⁵² Ibn Ḥallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, 4: 160, no. 645. In fact, al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī mentions that Ibn Sa'd has compiled a 'large' (*kabīr*) book in the *ṭabaqāt* genre. Al-Ḥaṭīb, *Tārīḥ Baġdād*, 5: 321, no. 2844.

⁵³ Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *Uyūn al-aṭar*, 2: 440.

⁵⁴ al-Ḍahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 10: 664, no. 242.

⁵⁵ al-Ḍahabī, *Taḍkirat al-ḥuffāz*, 2: 431. Šaraf al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad °Abd al-Mu'min b. Ḥalaf al-Dimyāṭī is a famous Egyptian teacher who resided in Cairo.

⁵⁶ M. Cooperson, 'Ibn Sa'd,' 201. This claim finds additional support in the fact that the manuscript of *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣaġīr* (Süleymaniye Library, Özel 216) does not include the *Sīra* or any abridgement of it; which could mean that the original *Ṭabaqāt* project that materialized in the *KTK* did not include a *Sīra* part.

Leiden team depended for their edition were either transmitted or approved by al-Dimyāṭī,⁵⁷ al-Dahabī's teacher who taught him *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*. It is then possible that when the *Sīra* was added to *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, the two together became known as *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*. This lumping together of the *Sīra* and the *Ṭabaqāt* in one book may have been the work of al-Dimyāṭī. It is also possible that the two books, despite being separate entities, were transmitted together by the same teachers (al-Dimyāṭī, for example), and were thereafter treated as one book.

In al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baḡdādī's *Tārīḥ Baḡdād*, we encounter a report that matches verbatim the biography of Ibn Sa'd that appears in the printed edition of the *KTK* at the end of the section dedicated to Baghdadi transmitters.⁵⁸ However, the *isnād* says explicitly that Ibn Fahm, a major transmitter of the *KTK* manuscripts, was the writer of the biography. It seems that Ibn Fahm has added it after the death of his teacher. It seems normal that the student pays homage to his teacher by informing the reader about him. However, there is more. The best example of a biography that Ibn Sa'd could not have written is that of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855).⁵⁹ First of all, Ibn Ḥanbal died ten years after Ibn Sa'd's death. Second, the biography mentions that 'Ibn Ḥanbal was summoned to appear before al-Mutawakkil and was later offered money which he refused to take'.⁶⁰ The °Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil took office in 232/847, two years after Ibn Sa'd's death. Therefore, Ibn Sa'd could not have known this information. Moreover, the biography contains a description of Ibn Ḥanbal's funeral. There are also many biographical entries dedicated to persons who died after 230/845. Their author is possibly Ibn Fahm, but other transmitters of the book should not be dropped from consideration.⁶¹

Now, we must deal with the question of who put together the recension represented in the *KTK*'s printed edition from different available recensions. Although all the transmission trees converge to a focal point at Ibn Ḥayyuwayh (295/907–382/992), I think that Ibn

⁵⁷ See A.N. Atassi, *History*, 211–4 for an extensive discussion of the eighth generation of transmitters.

⁵⁸ Al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baḡdādī, *Tārīḥ Baḡdād*, 5: 370, no. 876; Ibn Sa'd, *KTK*, 7: 258.

⁵⁹ Ibn Sa'd, *KTK*, 7: 253.

⁶⁰ *Idem*.

⁶¹ For an extensive discussion of biographies contained in the printed edition of the *KTK*, but that were possibly added after Ibn Sa'd's death, see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 113–29.

Ma[°]rūf al-Ḥaššāb started the process.⁶² All reports coming from Ibn Fahm were related by Ibn Ma[°]rūf only, without any exception. Moreover, we have not detected any Sa[°]dī report transmitted by Ibn Fahm with a chain different from that of the extant manuscripts. Therefore, it seems that Ibn Fahm bequeathed his recension of the *KTK* only to an otherwise ordinary student, namely Ibn Ma[°]rūf. Furthermore, Ibn Ma[°]rūf also transmitted reports from Ibn Abī Usāma, who also passed on a large number of Sa[°]dī reports, if not the entire *KTK*, to many students such as Wakī[°] and al-Ṭabarī. These reports came, as we will show in the next section, from Ibn Abī Usāma's own recension of the *KTK*. Why then would Ibn Ma[°]rūf be the only person interested in collecting two different recensions and passing them on to future generations? If Ibn Ma[°]rūf was interested in teaching the *KTK*, why did he then bequeath his collection or recensions only to Ibn Ḥayyuwayh, who later took charge of its distribution on a large scale? Ibn Ḥayyuwayh also collected parts, or all, of Ibn Abī Usāma's recension from al-Ġallāb. What impact did Ibn Ḥayyuwayh, or for that matter Ibn Ma[°]rūf, have on the *KTK*, in addition to transmitting it?

The discovery of Ibn Ḥaġar's detailed transmission chain of the *KTK* puts everything back into question.⁶³ It shows that Ibn Ma[°]rūf transmitted the two recensions of the *KTK* (those of Ibn Fahm and Ibn Abī Usāma) with sizeable lacunae, even at the biography level. It also shows that Ibn Ḥayyuwayh used most of Ibn Ma[°]rūf's material except for certain sections that he obtained from al-Ġallāb. In fact, we can say the same thing about Ibn Ma[°]rūf. That is, he had the complete recensions of Ibn Fahm and Ibn Abī Usāma but preferred to combine them, just as Ibn Ḥayyuwayh did. It seems that there is enough room for arguing that the *KTK* was actually put together by Ibn Ma[°]rūf and later improved upon by Ibn Ḥayyuwayh. This conclusion is confirmed by the analysis of individual Sa[°]dī reports in compilations written before the fifth/eleventh century, as the next section will show. Ibn Abī Usāma's recension differs in many instances from the one available to us, because Ibn Fahm's recension was the one relied upon in our version of the *KTK* and not that

⁶² In a report in al-Naġāṣī's *Riġāl* we encounter the first mention of the chain Ibn Abī Usāma and from Ibn Fahm to Ibn Ma[°]rūf. This strengthens my claim that Ibn Ma[°]rūf was the first to harmonize the recensions of Ibn Abī Usāma and Ibn Fahm; a work that was completed by Ibn Ḥayyuwayh.

⁶³ For a detailed analysis of Ibn Ḥaġar's transmission chain see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 238–50.

of Ibn Abī Usāma.⁶⁴ Therefore, we can say that the work of Ibn Ma^crūf and Ibn Ḥayyuwayh was a process of selection and fusion of the two recensions of the *KTK* available to them. Finally, we have showed earlier that Ibn Fahm, and possibly Ibn Abī Usāma, had added to the *KTK*. It is possible then to say that all members of these three generations of transmitters had an impact on the form and content of the *KTK*.⁶⁵

Towards the definitive text of the KTK

Since our first encounter with Sa^cdī reports, we notice that expecting a verbatim match between the reports found in a consulted compilation and the corresponding report in the printed *KTK* is unrealistic. The differences range from minor differences in word selection to major rewording of the report (while at the same time preserving certain core sentences). Other minor changes involve the order of a number of reports in a sequence, or changing the last transmitter (i.e. the source of the compiler). Major changes involve truncation of a long report, fragmentation of several reports and regrouping of selected fragments, grouping of several reports, and finally an extensive rewording of one or more reports. These changes can be consciously induced by the compilers or due to differences between the recensions used in the compilations consulted.⁶⁶

We can distinguish three phases in the history of the *KTK*'s recensions. The first phase stretches from the book's compilation by Ibn Sa^cd early in the third/ninth century until the writing of *Tārīḥ Baġdād* by al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī in the first half of the fifth century. This is a period of relative obscurity and possible openness of the book. Any additions and/or modifications to the *KTK* must date to this phase. During this phase, we can talk about the possible existence of six recensions of the

⁶⁴ For the analysis of Ibn Abī Usāma's recension and how it differs from the Leiden edition of the *KTK* see A.N. Atassi, *History*, 160–5, 166, 168, 169–170.

⁶⁵ This agrees with Schoeler's conclusion, *The Oral and the Written*, 45, that the sources of these compilations (for example of Malik's *Muwatta*, of Tabarī's *Tārīḥ* and Quranic commentary, and of Abū l-Faraġ al-Isfahānī's *Kitāb al-Aġānī*) are in most cases lessons given by the *ṣayḥ*s on the basis of written notes (jottings), that they read or recited and which the pupils heard and wrote down (or took notes of). Most of them were not written works in book form, which authors definitively composed and published. Most of them were not purely oral transmission, meaning that the *ṣayḥ* and his audience did not keep the transmitted material exclusively in their memories.

⁶⁶ A lengthy and detailed discussion of the different recensions of the *KTK* that may have been used by later compilers is given in A.N. Atassi, *History*, 146–93.

KTK that exhibit differences from the printed edition.⁶⁷ The two most important recensions of which we have numerous quotes are those of al-Balāḍurī and Ibn Abī Usāma as we have seen this recension was not fully incorporated in the available manuscripts.⁶⁸ There are also two possible recensions of unknown provenance: one used by Abū l-Qāsim al-Baḡawī,⁶⁹ and the other used by al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066).⁷⁰ The remaining two possible recensions can be attributed to the Baghdadi transmitters (1) °Ubayd b. Muḥammad al-Yazīdī (d. 284/815), used by al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/970);⁷¹ and (2) al-Ḥusayn b. al-Faraḡ (d. third/ninth century), used by al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī (d. 405/1014).⁷²

This period was covered in the manuscripts by the following transmitters: Ibn Abī Usāma and Ibn Fahm; Ibn Ma°rūf and al-Ġallāb; Ibn Ḥayyuwayh; and finally al-Ġawharī. The book has crystallized during this period with only one recension surviving, i.e. the one compiled by Ibn Ḥayyuwayh based on Ibn Abī Usāma's and Ibn Fahm's recensions. This recension of the *KTK* was actually the only one to have survived. Although many persons acquired the *KTK* from Ibn Sa°d or from Ibn Abī Usāma, very few of them decided to teach it to future generations. Most Sa°dī reports encountered between the third/ninth and fifth/eleventh centuries were transmitted individually, not as part of a wholesale transmission of the *KTK*. It is remarkable and worthy of investigating that Ibn Ma°rūf al-Ḥaššāb learned the *KTK* from Ibn Abī Usāma and Ibn Fahm then taught it to Ibn Ḥayyuwayh, who collected the material and divided it into systematic sections and then taught it to al-Ġawharī, al-Azharī and few others. Beyond al-Ġawharī's generation, many persons will be involved in teaching the *KTK*. In summary, we can say that the *KTK* crystallized by the process of dying out of all other recensions and the fusion together of Ibn Abī Usāma's and Ibn Fahm's recensions in a book that found generations of dedicated teachers.

The second phase stretches from the fifth century to the seventh century, ending with al-Dimyāḡī. During this phase the definitive text of

⁶⁷ For a description of these differences see Atassi, *History*, 159–60, 165.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 152–60 for al-Balāḍurī's recension; and 160–5, 166, 168, 169–71, 172–3, 174–7 for Ibn Abī Usāma's recension. The later recension was used by Wakī°, al-Ṭabarī, al-Qummī, Abū al-Faraḡ al-Iṣfahānī, Abū l-Faḡ al-Azdī and al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 167, 171–2, 172–3, 179–81. The recension used by al-Baḡawī was also used by al-Ġurḡānī, Abū l-Faḡ al-Azdī, and Abū Nu°aym al-Iṣfahānī.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 182–6.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 174–7.

the book spread outside Baghdad to Syria and Egypt, the two main centers of its later teaching. This phase saw an accurate and precise transmission of the *KTK* through the dictation-writing procedure. All our extant manuscripts go back to the end of this period. The third phase stretches from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries. During this phase the *KTK* continued being transmitted with the old dictation-writing procedure, but also saw the transformation of manuscripts into commodities bought, sold and inherited. This is how the extant manuscripts reached us.

Geographical diffusion of the KTK

We have seen that the *KTK* remained in Baghdad, and was kept alive by the efforts of generations of valiant transmitters until the end of the sixth or beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century. It then moved to Aleppo, Damascus, and Cairo, the new centers of its diffusion. It was not the Mongol invasion that pushed the book west to Syria and Egypt, but it was certainly the reason that made Syria and Egypt the only centers of its diffusion. We have also seen that the appearance of the *KTK* in Aleppo, Damascus, and Cairo was almost simultaneous: Abū l-Ḥağğāğ (555/1160–648/1250) in Aleppo; Ibn ʿAbd al-Dāʿim (575/1179–668/1269) in Damascus; and Abū l-Farağ al-Ḥarrānī (587/1191–672/1283) in Cairo. Although all of these transmitters have passed the *KTK* to local and traveling students, Abū l-Ḥağğāğ is the most frequently mentioned for the beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century. For example, all extant manuscripts were transmitted via Abū l-Ḥağğāğ. Many Cairene and Damascan scholars came to Aleppo to learn the *KTK* under this teacher. Notable among them is al-Dimyāṭī, a resident of Cairo, who became the main source of authentication of the *KTK* in the seventh/thirteenth century.⁷³

We have evidence (from Ibn Sayyid al-Nās and Ibn Ḥağar al-ʿAsqalānī) that both Ibn ʿAbd al-Dāʿim and Abū l-Farağ al-Ḥarrānī taught the *KTK* during the seventh/thirteenth century in Damascus and Cairo, respectively. These two cities became centers for the diffusion of the *KTK*. However, the trend for the seventh/thirteenth, eighth/fourteenth, and ninth/fourteenth centuries is the increased influx of Syrian scholars into Cairo. For example, al-ʿUqaylī (632/1234–704/1304) acquired the *KTK* from Abū l-Ḥağğāğ and then moved to Cairo because of a judgeship appointment. Al-Daštī (634/123–713/1313), also a student of Abū l-Ḥağğāğ, also ended up as a teacher in

⁷³ Atassi, *History*, 236–8, 244–5, 247–8.

Cairo after a long stay in Damascus; al-Dahabī actually went to Cairo to learn the *KTK* under al-Dimyāfī; Ibn Abī al-Mağd (707/1307–800/1397), a famous preacher and teacher in Damascus, was invited to teach in Cairo by an official of the Mamlūk establishment, Ibn Ḥagar al-°Asqalānī, who acquired the *KTK* through multiple channels (mostly from Damascus), later settled and taught in Cairo. This is not a surprise since power shifted from Baghdad to Cairo during the reigns of the Ayyūbids (564/1168–659/1260) and the Bahrī Mamlūks (648/1250–784/1382).⁷⁴

Literary diffusion of Sa°dī reports

Although we differentiated between the *KTK* and individual Sa°dī reports, the diffusion of Sa°dī reports is an accurate measure of the diffusion of the *KTK* since most Sa°dī reports came from the *KTK*, and after the fifth/eleventh century most of them came from one recension of the *KTK*. The most fruitful in terms of producing Sa°dī reports are *tarāğim* books. *Sīra* and *mağāzī* books and historiography books produced less Sa°dī reports than I originally expected. *Ḥadīṭ* compilations produced the least amount of information about the *KTK* or about Ibn Sa°d (books of *ḥadīṭ* criticism only produced short quotes and some clarifications). In fact, very few *ḥadīṭs* were transmitted on Ibn Sa°d's authority. Most of them come from one source, i.e. one of Ibn Sa°d's students, namely al-Ḥārīṭ b. Abī Usāma who was also a transmitter of the *KTK*.⁷⁵ The majority of Sa°dī reports were biographical in nature. It came as a surprise to me that Sa°dī reports were less represented in historiography and *ḥadīṭ* books than in biographical dictionaries. It is a common practice in our field, when having general, collegial discussions of topics related to early Islamic periods, to talk in equal terms about historiographies and about biographical dictionaries; the latter usually being valuable sources of historical information. Moreover, given the lengthy biographies of the *KTK*, it is always considered a book of historiography. The previous results constitute a strong reminder that the two genres, namely historiography and biography, are not to be confused. They are actually very different in nature and often serve very distinct purposes. It seems that traditionalists

⁷⁴ Atassi, *History*, 236, 245–8.

⁷⁵ *Mu°ğam al-šuyūḥ/mašyahāt* books only contain chains of transmission and not reports; therefore, this category will be dropped from the analysis of the *KTK*'s literary diffusion.

have always regarded the *KTK* as a source for biographical information that is best suited for writing other biographical dictionaries.

Even as a biographical dictionary, the *KTK* is different from the ones dedicated to *ḥadīth* transmitters such as Ḥalīfā's *Ṭabaqāt*, Buḥārī's *al-Tārīḥ al-kabīr*, or al-Ṭabarānī's *al-Mu'ğam al-kabīr*. The latter books are terse and usually focus on the trustworthiness of transmitters. Biographies written by Ibn Sa'd are longer, contain more biographical and historical information, and follow a general model. At least for the biographies of Muḥammad's companions and the Medinan *ḥadīth* transmitters, the model seems to be Ibn Sa'd's biography of Muḥammad, since it is organized thematically rather than chronologically. These biographies are best described as hagiographies; the epic life-stories of the founders of the *ḥadīth* movement. After all, most of the book is dedicated to the companions and the Medinan transmitters; only two shorter sections are dedicated to Kufan and Basran transmitters; and even shorter sections relate to all other transmitters from the rest of the ʿAbbasid empire. It is no surprise then that most borrowings from the *KTK* come from the sections dedicated to Muḥammad's companions.

Conclusions

For the *KTK*, the paper has showed Ibn Sa'd was indeed its original compiler, but it also showed that three successive generations of transmitters had contributed to, or modified, it. Many recensions of the book circulated until the fourth/tenth century when a well known Baghdādī teacher called Ibn Ḥayyuwayh produced an authoritative recension. Beyond the fifth/eleventh century, only this recension dominated the market until modern times. Studying the geographic and temporal diffusion of the *KTK*, it became clear that its real popularity was ushered in by al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī's (fourth/tenth century) intensive borrowing from it in his *Tārīḥ Baġdād*. It was the Damascene scholar Ibn ʿAsākir (sixth/twelfth century) who brought the book from Baghdad to Damascus and extensively borrowed from it in his *Tārīḥ Dimašq*, thus popularizing it in the Muslim west. It is possible that he found in it a great help for his quest to implement the *ġihād* agenda of Nūr al-Dīn Zankī against the crusaders. The *KTK* was taught exclusively in Baghdad until the early seventh/thirteenth century when almost simultaneously it started being taught in Aleppo, Damascus, and Cairo where it reached the zenith of its popularity. Studying the *KTK*'s transmission methods showed that, by the ninth/fifteenth century, it was mostly transmitted by *iġāza* (authentication, permission to teach). Starting from the third/ninth century, this usage increased as time progressed. By the ninth/fifteenth

century, it was possible to obtain an *iğāza* by mail. This is an indication that the *KTK* had acquired a stable form and had possibly become a textbook. Finally, the paper observed that *tarāğim* books (biographical dictionaries) showed the most frequency of occurrence of Sa[°]dī reports. *Sīra* books and historiography books produced less Sa[°]dī reports. *Ḥadīṭ* compilations produced the least number of such reports. It seems that traditionalists have always regarded the *KTK* as a source for biographical information that is best suited for writing other biographical dictionaries.

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FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE? NOTES ON THE PRODUCTION, TRANSMISSION, AND RECEPTION OF THE MAJOR WORKS OF AḤMAD AL-BŪNĪ*

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This article is a preliminary presentation of findings from an extensive survey of the large manuscript corpus of works attributed to the 7th/13th-century Sufī and putative ‘magician’ Aḥmad al-Būnī. In addition to addressing the texts themselves, the survey has included attention to patterns over time in the reproduction of works, and to paratexts such as transmission certificates and ownership notices. Through detailed presentation of the latter, the article serves in a part as a methodological demonstration. It presents: 1) new information on al-Būnī’s life; 2) a brief overview of the major works of the medieval Būnian corpus, with a proposal that five of these works can be attributed most securely to al-Būnī; 3) a discussion of the spread of Būnian works between the 8th/14th and 10th/16th centuries; and 4) evidence that the work through which al-Būnī is best known, *Shams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā*, is in significant ways a product of the early 11th/17th century, and that at least two lines of teachers claimed for al-Būnī in this work were plagiarized from the works of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī. It is argued that the tenor of al-Būnī’s teachings and the history of their reception have been broadly misunderstood due to reliance on printed editions and a modern scholarly disinclination to regard the occult sciences as a serious topic of inquiry. It ends with a call for more complete integration of manuscript studies into the broader field of Islamic historical studies.

Introduction

In both popular and scholarly imaginations there exists an image of the book of magic, the ‘grimoire,’ as a tome of dubious authorship filled with strange glyphs, secret alphabets, and unpronounceable names. It is often given as an artifact possessed of an aura of menace, something dangerous to have from a social, legal, or even soterial standpoint. As the Europeanist medievalist Richard Kieckhefer puts it, ‘[a] book of magic is also a magical book’,¹ and thus a potential ‘source of spiritual and

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psychological contagion'.² In some sense, then, the book of magic is a placeholder for everything that is most dangerous about books: their ability to convey knowledge and powers that, to the minds of many, would best be contained; their ability to deceive and lead astray. For such reasons books of magic are famously flammable as well, as countless literary and historical examples testify. In *Acts*, the magicians of Ephesus burned their scrolls on magic before the apostle Paul as a sign of repentance for their sorcery,³ and in medieval Florence, the archbishop Antoninus is said to have seized a book of incantations which, when burned, put forth a thick cloud of dark smoke as a result of the multitude of demons residing therein.⁴

In the context of premodern Arabic-Islamic literature, the individual most often associated with books of magic is the seventh/thirteenth-century author Aḥmad al-Būnī, whose modern fame or infamy rests largely on printed editions of a work entitled *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*.⁵ Indeed, in his broadly framed survey, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*, the historian Owen Davies refers to al-Būnī as a 'famed magician,' and singles out *Šams al-ma'ārif* as 'the most influential magic book in Arabic popular culture'.⁶ Without a doubt both the modern printed editions of *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* and the premodern manuscripts of certain Būnian works would appear to fit the bill of 'grimoires,' replete as they are with complex talismans, secret alphabets, and so on. That al-Būnī's ideas participate in the long Islamicate tradition of the occult science of letters (*'ilm al-ḥurūf*), a praxis with roots in early 'extremist' Shī'ite thought that posits the metaphysical entanglement of the letters of the alphabet and the created world,⁷ only adds to the

¹ Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, 4.

² *Ibid.*, 6.

³ *Acts* 19:19.

⁴ Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, 6–7.

⁵ Or some variant thereof, particularly *Šams al-ma'ārif wa-laṭā'if al-'awārif*, although this should not be confused with the medieval work of that name, regarding which see the second section of this paper. In his recent entry on al-Būnī in *Enclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., Constant Hamès notes that there have been 'scores' of printed editions since around the turn of the twentieth century, mostly emanating from Cairo and Beirut.

⁶ Davies, *Grimoires*, 27.

⁷ For an excellent examination of the occult science of letters, see Denis Gril's treatment of the subject in Ibn 'Arabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*: 'The Science of Letters'. Equally important are the several essays on the subject by Pierre Lory, recently gathered in the volume *La Science des lettres en islam*.

potential thaumaturgic charge of Būnian books-as-objects. It is therefore tempting to project onto al-Būnī's works, in their premodern setting, the role of books of forbidden knowledge, imagining the codices and perhaps even their owners as ripe for *autos-da-fé* at the hands of zealous medieval Muslim jurists. Book-burnings were not unheard of in the premodern Islamic world, and al-Būnī's works seem a likely target for just that when reading the firebrand Ḥanbalī preacher and theologian Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 728/1328) accusation that al-Būnī and others of his ilk were star-worshippers in the thrall of devils,⁸ or the historian and judge Ibn Ḥaldūn's (d. 808/1406) stern admonition that, despite its religious trappings, the occult science of letters was in reality a form of sorcery (*siḥr*) and thus a violation of God's law.⁹ Such persecutorial imaginings on the part of the modern reader are at least somewhat controverted, however, by the existence of hundreds of as-of-yet-unburned codices of Būnian works in libraries around the world, some of them as old as the seventh/thirteenth century. This remarkable phenomenon was the inspiration for the research the initial results of which are presented in this article – results that demonstrate the need to historicize both the image of 'al-Būnī the magician' and the notion of 'books of magic' in premodern Islamic society.

Despite the wealth of surviving manuscripts of different works attributed to al-Būnī, modern scholars have relied almost exclusively on printed editions of *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* in their discussions of his ideas. Although many have pointed out anachronisms in the text relative to the widely accepted death for al-Būnī of 622/1225—instances ranging from references to slightly later actors such as Ibn Sab'īn (d. 669/1269–70) to a mention of *Amrīka*—they nonetheless have utilized it as their main source.¹⁰ Dissatisfied with such compromises, and inspired by recent suggestions that the 'corpus Būnianum' has a richly complex

⁸ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'*, 10: 251.

⁹ Ibn Ḥaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, 664–8 (transl. Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, 3: 171–82).

¹⁰ For one of the most recent discussions of anachronisms in *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*, see Constant Hamès entry on al-Būnī in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed. For the major statements on al-Būnī, see the works in the bibliography by Abel, Cordero, Dietrich, El-Gawhary, Fahd, Francis, Lory, Pielow, Ullmann, and Witkam. Many of these scholars have discussed the manuscript corpus briefly, but their investigations of it have been rather limited in scope. With the exception of Witkam, the bulk of their assessments have been drawn from *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*.

history,¹¹ I resolved to eschew the printed editions of al-Būnī altogether in favor of an examination of the manuscript corpus. While originally I had hoped merely to gain access to texts authentic to al-Būnī, exposure to the finer points of manuscript studies made clear to me that, given a certain mass of data, more could be achieved, including a picture of the spread and development of the corpus in time and space, and some understanding of the actors who produced, transmitted, and read these hundreds of codices. With such goals in mind, I undertook an examination of the manuscript corpus *in extenso*; that is to say, of as many codices as possible of works attributed to al-Būnī, as well as those of some of his interpreters/commentators. At the time of this writing I have examined over 200 codices containing almost 300 works,¹² paying attention not only to the texts contained in the main bodies of the

¹¹ The University of Leiden manuscript studies scholar Jan Just Witkam has recently coined the term ‘corpus Būnianum’ to describe the chaotic wealth of Būnian material that survives in manuscripts, a reference to similar appellations for large bodies of occult writings considered to be of questionable/multiple authorship, e.g. the corpora Hermeticum and Ġābirianum. He proposes that the Būnian corpus is ‘the product of the work of several generations of practicing magicians, who arranged al-Būnī’s work and thought... probably while mixing these with elements of their own works’ (Witkam, ‘Gazing at the Sun’, 183). The Mamlūkist Robert Irwin presents a ‘strong’ version of a multiple-authorship hypothesis in a recent review article, stating: ‘It seems likely that the ascription of writings to [al-Būnī] was intended to suggest the nature of their contents rather than indicate their actual authorship’; that ‘[a]l-Buni, like Jabir ibn Hayyan, was used as a label for an occult genre’; and that ‘the writings of both these semi-legendary figures were almost certainly produced by many anonymous authors’ (Irwin, ‘Review of *Magic and Divination in Early Islam*’, 107).

¹² Research for this project has involved examination of the digital or microfilm surrogates of hundreds of Būnian manuscripts and those of related works, and when useful and possible the codices themselves have been physically inspected. In a minority of cases where direct examination of the surrogates or codices was not possible, information has been drawn from catalogs and articles describing members of the corpus. The bulk of this research was conducted in the summers of 2009 and 2011, entailing visits to the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, the Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, the Schloss Friedenstein Library in Gotha, the Berlin Staatsbibliothek, the British Library in London, the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, the Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi in Istanbul, the Manisa Kütüphanesi, the Konya Bölge Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, and the Dār al-Kutub (Egyptian National Library) in Cairo; digital resources have also been utilized.

manuscripts, but also to the transmission paratexts that populate many of them, and details of the codices' physical construction.

Transmission paratexts—authorial and scribal colophons, 'audition' (*samāʿ*) certificates, patronage statements, ownership notices, and so on—have provided an almost granular level of detail about certain points in the history of the corpus, and even some revelations about the life of al-Būnī himself. Readers unaccustomed to working with these paratexts may find the parts of this paper that deal with them to be something of a trip down the rabbit hole, but I have attempted to explain in detail my work with the most important of them in hopes that the value of paying close attention to such 'marginal' sources will become clear as the article proceeds. At the other end of the scale, the amassing of fairly mundane data such as titles, dates of copying, and the names of copyists and owners has allowed for certain kinds of wide-angle analysis of the corpus, including some measure of the popularity of different works based on the number of surviving copies, an overview of the corpus' trajectory across time and space, and some rudimentary prosopographical analysis of the people involved with it. In this paper these are utilized for evaluating the relative importance of texts during a given century, dating the appearance of certain texts, and assessing some social features of the spread of the corpus. Certain weaknesses are inherent to these wide-angle methods insofar as the number and variety of surviving codices undoubtedly give an incomplete picture of the books that were in circulation and the actors involved, and the conclusions derived from them are liable to alternative interpretations, as well as to revision in the face of further data. I have found them good to think with nonetheless.¹³ As discussed briefly at the end of this paper, I am of the opinion that the abundance of Islamicate manuscripts in libraries around the world has far more to offer to scholarship than has typically been asked of it, and it is my hope that other researchers will find approaches similar to the ones employed here useful in their own projects.

The notes that constitute this article are in four somewhat discontinuous parts (followed by a brief conclusion), and are intended to introduce several findings that are, to the best of my knowledge, new to modern scholarship on al-Būnī. The first part concerns what can be known of al-Būnī's life, including some details of his education and how he produced and transmitted his works. The second discusses the eight

¹³ Some of these methods were inspired by the literary historian Franco Moretti's notion of 'distant readings'; see his *Atlas of the European Novel* and *Graphs, Maps, Trees*.

major works of the medieval Būnian corpus; that is to say, those texts that appear numerous times in medieval codices or are otherwise of obvious importance, and which largely have been kept in the shadows by the scholarly focus on *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā*. It argues that five of these works are most reliably attributable to al-Būnī himself, and discusses what may have been the important role of readers' interests in shaping the corpus. The third concerns the spread and reception of the corpus in the eighth/fourteenth through tenth/sixteenth centuries, and includes discussions of means through which works were transmitted, a sketch of some of the elite social networks in which Būnian works flourished during this period (including the neo-*Ihwān al-ṣafā'*), and the legality of codices bearing Būnian works. The fourth concerns *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā*, the work on which so much of al-Būnī's modern reputation is based. It addresses the apparent emergence of this work in its best-known form in the eleventh/seventeenth century, and examines the origins of some of the chains of transmission (*asānīd*) that are alleged in the work to be al-Būnī's.

Al-Būnī's life and death

One of the enduring problems in the study of al-Būnī is a lack of reliable biographical information. He is absent from the medieval biographical dictionaries except for a largely unreliable *tarğama* in Taqī l-Dīn al-Maqrīzī's (d. 845/1442) unfinished biographical work, *al-Muqaffā al-kabīr*.¹⁴ The entry for him in the Egyptian scholar °Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Manāwī's (d. 1021/1631) turn-of-the-eleventh/seventeenth-century Sufī *ṭabaqāt* work contains no biographical information.¹⁵ In the vast majority of medieval manuscripts his name is given as Abū l-°Abbās Aḥmad b. °Alī b. Yūsuf al-Qurašī l-Būnī, with his father's name sometimes elaborated as *al-šayḥ al-muqrī* Abū l-Ḥasan °Alī. Various honorifics precede al-Būnī's name in titlepages and opening formulae, such as *al-šayḥ*, *al-imām*, etc., and frequently also *tāğ al-dīn* (crown of religion), *šihāb al-dīn* (brand of religion), *muḥyī l-dīn* (reviver

¹⁴ This *tarğama* has only recently been brought to my attention, and, to the best of my knowledge, has not been adduced in previous Western scholarship on al-Būnī. Although I believe the biographical information it contains to be incorrect (starting with an erroneous rendering of al-Būnī's name), it is of great interest nonetheless, and I plan to discuss it in detail in a separate article. For a printed edition see *Kitāb al-Muqaffā al-kabīr*, ed. Ya°lāwī, 1: 750–3.

¹⁵ Al-Manāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya*, 2: 38. For a discussion of entries on al-Būnī in the works of modern Mağribī bio/hagiographers, see Francis, *Islamic Symbols and Sufī Rituals*, 97–9.

of religion), and *qutb al-‘arīfīn* (pole of the gnostics). He seems to have died in Cairo in the seventh/thirteenth century (his death date is discussed below), and the location of his gravesite is noted in Ibn al-Zayyāt’s early ninth/fifteenth-century visitation guide to the Qarāfa cemeteries.¹⁶ The lack of substantive information about al-Būnī’s life has invited projections of the image of ‘al-Būnī the magician,’ but some of the new information presented here provides a somewhat clearer picture.

Although the *nisba* al-Būnī suggests that he was from the city of Būna (Roman Hippo Regius, now ‘Annāba) on the coast of present-day Algeria, some scholars have questioned the accuracy of this, and have taken to referring to al-Būnī as an Egyptian.¹⁷ However, an important new piece of information regarding al-Būnī’s life and training supports the notion that he was of Ifrīqiyan origin. This is from the work ‘*Ilm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihdā’ fī šarḥ asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā*—a major text of al-Būnī’s that has been all but entirely ignored by modern scholars—wherein al-Būnī identifies as his personal *šayḥ* (*šayḥunā*) Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Abī Bakr al-Qurašī l-Mahdawī (d. 621/1224), the head of a center for Sufi instruction in Tunis. Al-Būnī recounts two incidents involving al-Mahdawī, the first of which includes a conversation that occurred ‘while I [al-Būnī] was sitting with him [al-Mahdawī]’ (*wa-kuntu ḡālisān ‘indahū*), confirming a face-to-face relationship between them.¹⁸ This is highly significant insofar as it is, to the best of my knowledge, the only place in a major work of the medieval corpus in which al-Būnī identifies one of his own *šayḥs*.

Beyond its value as a rare datum in al-Būnī’s biography, the fact that al-Mahdawī also exercised a great deal of influence over the development of the famous Andalusian mystic Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240) is of great interest as well. Ibn ‘Arabī resided at al-Mahdawī’s school (*dār tadrīsihi*) twice, once in 590/1194 for as much as six or seven months, and for a somewhat longer stay in 597–8/1201–2.¹⁹ Al-Būnī unfortunately provides no dates for his time in Tunis that might indicate if the two ever met. Al-Mahdawī is the *šayḥ* to whom Ibn ‘Arabī dedicated his great work, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, and Gerald Elmore

¹⁶ Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Kawākib al-sayyārah*, 268.

¹⁷ E.g. the full title of Witkam article, ‘Gazing at the Sun: Remarks on the Egyptian Magician al-Būnī, and Carl Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 92.

¹⁸ Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1, fol. 179b. For the second account involving al-Mahdawī, see fol. 238b.

¹⁹ Elmore, ‘Shaykh Abd al-Aziz al-Mahdawi’, 593–4.

notes that *al-ṣayḥ al-akbar* praised al-Mahdawī highly for ‘his magisterial discretion in translating the more indigestible esoteric knowledge of the Secrets of Unveiling into a pedagogical pabulum suitable to the capacities of the uninitiated’.²⁰ That al-Būnī also took instruction from al-Mahdawī places him at least roughly within the same nexus of Western (i.e. Maghribī and Andalusī) Sufism from which Ibn ʿArabī emerged, a milieu in which the science of letters (*ʿilm al-hurūf*) had played a prominent role since the time of Ibn Masarra al-Ġabalī (d. 319/931).²¹ It also grants some credit to the Granadan litterateur Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb and his friend Ibn Ḥaldūn’s close linkings of al-Būnī and Ibn ʿArabī as ‘extremist’ Sufis who were masters of the occult science of letters, a connection that some modern scholars have questioned or dismissed as polemical rhetoric.²² Elements in al-Būnī’s writing that suggest a common source for some of his and Ibn ʿArabī’s metaphysical/cosmological speculations are briefly discussed in the second section of this paper, while the tendency of many later commentators (negative and positive) to closely associate the two men’s works is addressed in the third.

That al-Būnī would have traveled from Būna to Tunis for instruction, and that he would have continued on from there to Egypt, is not difficult to imagine. Indeed, he would seem to have been one of a number of Western Sufis who migrated eastwards in the seventh/thirteenth century, perhaps due in part to the controversial nature of their teachings, including Ibn ʿArabī, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ḥarallī (d. 638/1240), Abū l-Ḥasan al-Šādīlī (d. 656/1258), and Ibn Sabʿīn (d. 668–9/1269–71). It is noteworthy that the teachings of all these men were intertwined with, or at least somehow implicated in the science of letters and other occult praxeis.²³ Throughout the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries the generally Mālikī-dominated Islamicate West was home to many controversial Sufis with esotericist tendencies who ran afoul of the reigning political and religious authorities, such as Ibn Barraġān and Ibn

²⁰ Ibid., 595.

²¹ According to Gril, ‘[b]etween Ibn Masarra and Ibn ʿArabī, al-Andalus was probably never without a master in the science of letters.’ Gril, ‘The Science of Letters’, 140–1.

²² Morris, ‘An Arab Machiavelli?’, 256, 271ff., 279; Chodkiewicz, ‘Toward Reading the *Futūḥāt Makkiya*’, 25.

²³ On controversies regarding al-Ḥarallī, see Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 65. On the esoteric nature of al-Šādīlī’s teachings, see Lory’s entry on him in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. On Ibn Sabʿīn see al-Taftazani and Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 346–9.

al-°Arīf, two prominent *ṣayḥs* who may have been assassinated by the Almoravids in 536/1141, perhaps due to their growing political influence;²⁴ and Ibn Qasī, a Sufi *ṣayḥ* who took the extraordinary step of declaring himself ‘*Imām*’ and entering into open rebellion against the Almoravids in the Algarve, an adventure that ended with his assassination in 546/1151.²⁵ The precise impact of the Almohad revolution on Western Sufism requires further study, but suffice it to say that a prudent esotericist Sufi might have thought it best to decamp eastward. Of course, Cairo’s appeal as a major economic and intellectual capital whose foreign military elites were generous with their patronage and protection of exotic Sufi masters may have been sufficient incentive in itself for migration.²⁶

Most other details of al-Būnī’s life remain obscure, and even the date of his death is open to question. For the latter, the date of 622/1225 is given at several places in Ḥāḡḡī Ḥalīfa’s *Kaṣf al-zunūn*, although 630/1232–33 is given in one entry.²⁷ No earlier source corroborating either date has yet been discovered. Modern scholarship has generally accepted the earlier date, although many scholars have expressed serious reservations on account of dates and people mentioned in certain Būnian texts which would suggest a later date (discussed below). However, on the basis of some of the transmission paratexts surveyed for this article it now at least can be established that al-Būnī ‘flourished’ in Cairo in 622/1225 as a revered Sufi *ṣayḥ*.

The primary cluster of evidence to this effect is a series of paratexts not previously adduced in scholarship on al-Būnī. The first of these is an authorial colophon for the work *°Ilm al-hudā* reproduced identically in three eighth/fourteenth-century codices: Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1 (copied in Damascus in 772/1370), Beyazid MS 1377 (copied in 773/1371), and Süleymaniye MS Kılıç Ali Paşa 588 (copied in 792/1390). In this authorial colophon al-Būnī states that he began *°Ilm al-hudā* in the first part of Dū l-Qa°da of 621, finishing it some weeks later on 27 Dū l-Ḥiḡḡa in the same year, and that this occurred on the

²⁴ For a review of scholarship on these events, see Addas, *Andalusī Mysticism*, 919–29.

²⁵ *Ibid.*; also Dreher, ‘Das Imamat’, *passim*.

²⁶ On Cairene foreign military elites’ enthusiasm for exotic Sufis, see Knysh, *Ibn °Arabī*, 49–58. For a discussion of Western Sufis who took refuge in Damascus, see Pouzet, *Maḡrēbins à Damas*, *passim*.

²⁷ For the 622 date, see, for example, the entry on *Šams al-ma°ārif wa-laṭā°if al-°awārif*, 062; see 161 for the 630 date.

outskirts of Cairo (*bi-zāhir Miṣr*),²⁸ by which is probably meant the Qarāfa cemeteries, as is evident from other statements discussed below.

That authorial colophon is supported by a collection of paratexts in a two-part copy of the same work, Süleymaniye MSS Reşid efendi 590.1 and 590.2, copied in Cairo in 798/1396. In a multipart paratext on the final folio of the second part the copyist states that he collated his copy of *‘Ilm al-hudā* against one copied in 738/1337 at the al-Muḥassaniyya *ḥānqāh* in Alexandria, and that that copy had itself been collated against a copy bearing an ‘audition’ certificate (*samā’*) with the signature (*ḥatt*) of the *muṣannif* (author or copyist).²⁹ As discussed below, this most likely indicates that al-Būnī himself presided over this session and signed the statement, although the original audition certificate is not reproduced in full. This audition process—a reference is made to *mağālis*, i.e. multiple sessions—is said to have ended on the twenty-third of Rabī^c al-awwal, 622/1225, with the exemplar that bore the audition certificate having been completed in the Qarāfa al-Kabīra cemetery *bi-zāhir Miṣr* on the twenty-seventh of Dū l-Ḥiğga, 621, having been begun in the first part of Dū l-Qa^cda of the same year; i.e. the same dates and place of composition as those in the authorial colophon reproduced in the three aforementioned manuscripts.³⁰

Finally, the occurrence of the audition sessions referred to in MS Reşid efendi 590.2 is supported by an audition certificate reproduced in full in BnF MS arabe 2658, a codex of the work *Laṭā’if al-iṣārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-‘ulwiyyāt* copied in Cairo at al-Azhar Mosque in 809/1406. This reproduced certificate, which the copyist states was found at the back of the exemplar in a hand other than that of the copyist of the main text, states that the exemplar was auditioned in the Qarāfa al-Kabīra cemetery in the first part of Rabī^c al-awwal, 622/1225.³¹ This is earlier in the same month that the prime exemplar referenced in MS Reşid efendi 590.2 was auditioned, which suggests that *‘Ilm al-hudā* and *Laṭā’if al-iṣārāt* were auditioned back-to-back during the course of these *mağālis*. What is more, a reference within the text of *Laṭā’if al-iṣārāt* to events in Mecca in 621, combined with the above statement, provides us with *termini post* and *ante quem* for the composition of that work as well, i.e. sometime between 621 and Rabī^c al-awwal of 622.

²⁸ Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1, fol. 239b.

²⁹ Süleymaniye MS Reşid efendi 590.2, fol. 130b. The date of copying for the set is in the colophon of 590.1, on fol. 64b.

³⁰ Süleymaniye MS Reşid efendi 590.2, fol. 130b.

³¹ BnF MS arabe 2658, fol. 90a.

This cluster of paratexts reveals at least two important points. The first is that al-Būnī was indeed alive and composing two of his major works in 621 and early 622. The second is that both of these works were auditioned in sessions at the Qarāfa cemetery on the outskirts of Cairo over the course of Rabīʿ al-awwal of 622. Book-audition (*samāʿ*) sessions—which are not to be confused with the meditative scripture and/or poetry recitation practices of the same name also common among some Sufīs—were gatherings at which a work was read aloud before the author, or someone in a line of transmission from the author, thereby inducting the auditors into the line of transmission for that work.³² Neither of these references to audition sessions states explicitly that al-Būnī presided over them, but there are strong reasons to conclude that this was the case. The typical formula for an audition certificate is: *samiʿa hādā l-kitāb ʿalā al-šayḥ fulanⁱⁿ fulān^{um} wa-fulān^{um}*, with the presiding *šayḥ* (the grammatical object of *samiʿa ʿalā*) ideally being the author of the work being ‘heard’ or someone in a direct line of transmission from the author, and the other named individuals (the grammatical subjects) being the auditors who are gaining admittance to the line of transmission of the work through the audition, and who are thereby granted the authority to teach and further transmit the work.³³ The statement copied in BnF MS arabe 2658, however, gives the names only of two of the auditors (*al-qādī l-aʿdal al-šāliḥ al-zāhid qādī l-fuqarāʾ wa-ʿumdat al-šulahāʾ*) ʿUmar b. Ibrāhīm and his son Ibrāhīm) while omitting the name of the presiding *šayḥ*. Meanwhile, as mentioned above, the statement in Süleymaniye MS Reşid efendi 590.2 states of the prime exemplar only that *ʿalayhā samāʿ al-muṣannif wa-ḥaṭṭuhu*, i.e. that it bore an audition certificate (*samāʿ*) from the *muṣannif* (author or copyist) and his signature (*ḥaṭṭuhu*). The omissions in these statements of the precise identity of the presiding *šayḥ* leave room for varying interpretations, but the most likely one, in my estimation, given the proximity of the dates and place of composition to those of the audition sessions, is that al-Būnī himself presided over these sessions.

³² On the importance of audition practices in knowledge and book transmission, see Rosenthal, *Technique and Approach*, 20–1; Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 140–146; Berkey, *Transmission of Knowledge*, 21–35; Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 133–51. See also footnotes 33, 34, and 36 below.

³³ On audition certificates, see Gacek, *Vademecum*, 52–3; Déroche, *Islamic Codicology*, 332–4; and (for examples thereof) Vajda, *Album de paléographie*, pl. 20 *bis*.

The fact that some of al-Būnī's works were being auditioned in Cairo at this time is valuable in assessing his standing among Egyptian Sufis, and the image of an audition session among a group of Sufis gathered in the Qarāfa cemetery is compelling. In his study of medieval tomb visitation practices, Christopher Taylor characterizes the Qarāfa, as 'a place of ancient sanctity' that 'played an extraordinary role in the social and moral economy of medieval Cairene urban space,' a liminal zone of social mixing and collective religious practice that was 'enticingly beyond the reach of the *ulamā*.'³⁴ If al-Būnī's teachings were indeed 'fringe' according to many *ulamā* of the time, then this choice of location may have been a reflection of that situation. Although the majority of the scholarship on book-audition practices has focused on their use in transmitting *ḥadīṭ* collections, book-audition was employed across a variety of scientific (*ilm*) traditions, religious and natural-philosophical. It functioned as a means not only of transmitting works accurately, but also of ritually passing on the authority to teach and utilize their contents. As pietistic events, book-audition sessions grew during the Ayyūbid period to have a great deal of appeal even among non-scholars,³⁵ and Erik Ohlander recently has argued that they were also a key aspect of Abū Ḥafs 'Umar al-Suhrawardī's (d. 632/1234) strategies for legitimizing *ṭarīqa* Sufism in sixth/twelfth and early seventh/thirteenth-century Baghdad.³⁶ While al-Būnī was certainly no Abū Ḥafs, the fact that he was able to command an audience for an audition of his freshly composed works strongly suggests that he was a respected Sufi *ṣayḥ* at the height of his powers in 622/1225. That he was even regarded as a 'saint' by some residents of the city, at least eventually, is shown by the mention of the location of his tomb in Ibn al-Zayyāt's *Kawākib al-sayyāra*, which indicates that it was a site of veneration in the centuries after his death. Furthermore, as Hamès has recently noted, a note in Latin from 1872 on a flyleaf of BnF MS arabe 2647 (*Šams al-ma'ārif wa-laṭā'if al-awārif*) suggests that al-Būnī's tomb was still a ceremonial site in the latter half of the nineteenth

³⁴ Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous*, 56–8.

³⁵ On non-scholarly participation in audition sessions, see Dickinson, 'Ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī' *passim*. On the closely related topic of ritual and even 'magical' uses of *ḥadīṭ* works, see Brown, *The Canonization of al-Buḥārī and Muslim*, 335–48.

³⁶ Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 53–5. Cf. Osman Yahia's notation of the chains of transmission for Ibn 'Arabī's works, *Histoire et classification*, 539–44.

century. It states: ‘This man is said to be famous among Muslims not only for his teaching, but also for his piety, and his tomb is visited for the sake of religion. Commonly, they call him Sheikh Albouni’.³⁷

In my estimation, the date of al-Būnī’s death must remain an open question for now. The paratextual statements adduced above demonstrate that he had a Cairene following in 622/1225, which would suggest that he was at something of an advanced age at that point. As discussed in the following section, there are elements within the medieval text of *Šams al-ma‘ārif wa-laṭā‘if al-‘awārif* which raise the possibility that al-Būnī may have lived somewhat beyond 622/1225, although none is probative due to likely instances of interpolation in that work by later actors. Given that Ḥāğğī Ḥalīfa worked from many of the same manuscript collections now held in the libraries of the Republic of Turkey that were surveyed for this project, it is quite possible that he inferred the dates in *Kašf al-zunūn* through consulting some of the same manuscripts and paratexts as those adduced above, and that he arrived at the 622/1225 date due to a lack of later notations regarding al-Būnī. This is, of course, conjecture; it fails to explain the instance in which 630/1232–33 is given, and it must be considered that Ḥāğğī Ḥalīfa undoubtedly had access to codices and other sources that I have overlooked or that are now lost.³⁸

Few other details of al-Būnī’s life are revealed in paratextual statements such as the ones above, although that his ambit extended at least to Alexandria is attested in another statement at the end of Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1, a gloss that the copyist notes was found in the margin of the exemplar from which he worked (*ḥāšiyya ‘alā ḥāmīš al-aṣl al-manqūl minhu*). The author of the original gloss, writing sometime between 622/1225 and 772/1370 (i.e. between the dates of the composition of *‘Ilm al-hudā* and of the copying of MS Hamidiye 260.1), states that he obtained the book and read it under the supervision of his master, Abū l-Faḍl al-Ġumārī,³⁹ and that al-Ġumārī had encountered al-Būnī (*laqiya al-mu‘allif*) in Alexandria, where al-Būnī had ‘bestowed upon him the meanings of the path and the secrets of certainty’ (*wa-*

³⁷ BnF MS arabe 2647, upper flyleaf: *Hic vir apud Mohamedanos non solum doctrina sed etiam pietate insignis perhibetur, eiusque sepulchrum religionis causa visitatur. Vulgo Sheikh Albouni illum appellant.* See Constant Hamès, ‘al-Būnī’, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed.

³⁸ On the use of paratexts as sources by premodern bio/bibliographical writers, see Rosenthal, *Technique and Approach*, 20–1.

³⁹ I assume this is a locative *nisba*. Yāqūt lists a handful of place names from which ‘al-Ġumārī’ could be derived (*Mu‘ğam al-buldān*, 211–13), although an argument could be made for ‘al-Ġimārī’ as well.

afādahu fī maʿānī al-sulūk wa-l-asrār al-yaqīniyya), teachings which al-Ġumārī had later passed on to his pupil, the glossator of the intermediary copy whose name is unfortunately lost.⁴⁰ In reference to the quality of al-Būnī's teachings, another gloss on the same folio of MS Hamidiye 260.1 records a statement attributed to one of al-Būnī's students: 'I swear by God that his utterances are like pearls or Egyptian gold. They are treasures the mystery of which is a blessed talisman for one who has deciphered [them] and who understands' (*li-baʿḍ talāmīdīhi: uqsimu bi-llāh la-alfāzuhu ka-al-durar aw ka-al-ḍahab al-miṣrī, fa-hiyya kunūz sirrahā ṭilsam ṭubā li-man ḥalla wa-man yadrī*).⁴¹ Praise such as this, as well as the records of audition sessions and the anecdotes of al-Ġumārī taking personal instruction from al-Būnī, suggest that during his lifetime the transmission of his teachings and the production of books therefrom were conducted well within the contours of traditional modes of Islamic instruction, which valorized 'personalist' modes of teaching and textual transmission.⁴² Thus, regardless of what some doubtless regarded as the heterodoxy of al-Būnī's teachings, they seem to initially have been delivered and received through highly conventional means.

Major works of the medieval Būnian corpus

Any suggestion that al-Būnī may have been 'just another' Sufi *ṣayḥ* will strike as strange readers familiar with him only through *Šams al-maʿārif al-kubrā*, a veritable encyclopedia of the occult sciences that seems an entirely different animal from most late medieval Sufi texts. Indeed, such an impression would be misleading insofar as al-Būnī's setting down in writing of techniques of the applied science of letters appears to have been groundbreaking; as Denis Gril notes: 'Al-Buni was undoubtedly acting deliberately when he published what others either had kept under greater cover or had limited to oral transmission'.⁴³ However, the impression given by *Šams al-maʿārif al-kubrā* that al-Būnī's writings were almost entirely concerned with practical implementations of the occult sciences is also misleading, as this overview of the major works of the medieval Būnian corpus endeavors to demonstrate.

⁴⁰ Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1, op. cit.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² As Makdisi observes: 'The numerous certificates of audition written and signed by the authors of books, or by persons duly authorized in succession, attest to the perennial personalism of the Islamic system of education' (*Rise of Colleges*, 145–6).

⁴³ Gril, 'The Science of Letters', 143.

Carl Brockelmann listed almost forty works attributed to al-Būnī,⁴⁴ while Jaime Cordero's recent survey of Būnian works as they appear in various bibliographical works and the catalogs of major libraries found seventy titles.⁴⁵ Both lists are of great value, although several items within each can be shown to be either single works under variant titles⁴⁶ or works by other authors misattributed to al-Būnī.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, a large array of distinct works remains to be accounted for, and there are well-founded questions surrounding how many and which of the numerous works attributed to al-Būnī were actually composed by him.⁴⁸ What follows does not claim to resolve all of these issues, or even to address the majority of the titles in question. It is rather a brief overview of the eight *major* works of the medieval corpus, by which is meant those works that appear in pre-tenth/sixteenth century codices with sufficient consistency and frequency to be accounted as having been in regular circulation. Works of which only one or two copies survive, or the earliest surviving copies of which postdate the ninth/fifteenth century, are not included in this discussion, although two texts that appear only rarely, *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn wa-nihāyat al-wāṣilīn* and *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt fī asrār al-riyādāt*, are included because they are cited in a number of better-represented early works. The numerous works attributed to al-Būnī that seem to have survived only in one or two copies are certainly worthy of attention, although they fall outside the scope of this article. That such 'minor' works began to proliferate somewhat early in the career of the corpus is attested by a bibliographical paratext from a codex copied in

⁴⁴ Brockelmann, *GAL*, 1: 497.

⁴⁵ Cordero, *El Kitāb Šams al-Ma'ārif al-Kubrā*, ix–xviii.

⁴⁶ For example, Brockelmann lists *al-Lum'a al-nūrāniyya* and also notes a *Risāla fī l-ism al-a'zam*, a common alternate title for *al-Lum'a al-nūrāniyya*. Cordero lists *Tarīb al-da'awāt fī taḥṣīṣ al-awqāt* and *Kitāb manāfi' al-Qur'ān* as separate works, when they in fact are alternate titles for the same work, and does the same with *ʿIlm al-hudā*, counting it again under one of its common alternate titles, *Mūḍīḥ al-ṭarīq wa-qusṭās al-taḥqīq*.

⁴⁷ Both Brockelmann and Cordero count *al-Durr al-munazzam fī l-sirr al-a'zam* as among works attributed to al-Būnī, when it is properly assigned to Ibn Ṭalḥa (regarding whom, see the discussion of *Šams al-ma'ārif wa-laṭā'if al-awārif* in this section). Cordero also attributes to al-Būnī a work called *al-Durr al-faḥira*, which was written by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī (regarding whom see the third section of this paper). None of these instances are particularly blameworthy, as the misattribution/miscataloging of occult works is quite common, in large part because so little scholarship has been done on them.

⁴⁸ See footnote 11, above.

772/1370 that names a number of works of which almost no trace has survived.⁴⁹

Of the eight major medieval works, there are five that, in my estimation, can be most directly attributed to al-Būnī, and that can be considered to constitute the ‘core’ of the corpus as conceived by al-Būnī: *Šams al-ma‘ārif wa-laṭā‘if al-‘awārif* (not to be confused with *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā*, see below and section four of this paper); *Hidāyat al-qāšidīn wa-nihāyat al-wāsilīn*; *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt fī asrār al-riyādāt*, ‘*Ilm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidā’ fī šarḥ asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, and *Laṭā‘if al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-‘ulwiyyāt*. The three major medieval works that I consider to fall outside this ‘core’ category, *al-Lum‘a al-nūrāniyya fī awrād al-rabbāniyya*; *Tartīb al-da‘awāt fī taḥṣīṣ al-awqāt ‘alā ḥtilāf al-irādāt*, and *Qabs al-iqtidā’ ilā waḥq al-sa‘āda wa-nağm al-ihtidā’*, are hardly less important. They may well also have been composed by al-Būnī himself, or by his immediate students/amanuenses; alternatively, some may be forgeries that were convincing enough to have entered the ‘canon’ of Būnian works early on, such that they survive in numerous pre-tenth/sixteenth-century codices as well as in later ones. Whatever the facts of their authorship, they must be considered important in terms of the medieval reception of al-Būnī’s thought, even if there is a chance they may not be the direct products of his compositional efforts. *Al-Lum‘a al-nūrāniyya*, for example, is certainly one of the most important Būnian works due to its enduring popularity into the twelfth/eighteenth century, while two of the five ‘core’ works seem hardly to have made an impression.

The list of five works most directly attributable to al-Būnī is derived from references to other Būnian works made within the texts of ‘*Ilm al-hudā* and *Laṭā‘if al-išārāt*, these being the two works which can be most firmly associated with al-Būnī due to the authorial colophon and audition certificates discussed in the previous section. Within these two works, references are made, in many cases repeatedly, to the three others in the group: *Šams al-ma‘ārif wa-laṭā‘if al-‘awārif*; *Hidāyat al-qāšidīn wa-*

⁴⁹ Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260, fol. 239b. The works in question are *Kitāb Mawāqif al-bašā‘ir wa-laṭā‘if al-sarā‘ir*; *Kitāb Taysīr al-‘awārif fī talḥiṣ Šams al-ma‘ārif*; *Kitāb Asrār al-adwār wa-taškīl al-anwār*; *Kitāb Yā’ al-tašrīf wa-hullat(?) al-ta‘rīf*; *Risālat Yā’ al-waw wa-qāf al-yā’ wa-l-‘ayn wa-l-nūn*, and *Kitāb al-Laṭā‘if al-‘ašara*. The first, third, and last of these receive one-line mentions in *Kašf al-zunūn*, although to the best of my knowledge no manuscript copies of them have been located.

nihāyat al-wāsilīn, and *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt fī asrār al-riyādāt*. What is more, these three works make repeated references to one another, as well as to *‘Ilm al-hudā* and *Laṭā’if al-iṣārāt* (the apparent paradox of the latter point is discussed immediately below). As shown in the chart at the end of this paper, the five works comprise a closed inter-referential circuit, i.e. they make references only to one another, and not to any of the other Būnian works. The majority of these references occur immediately after a somewhat gnomic statement on one esoteric topic or another, stating that the matter is explained in another of the five works. The whole effect can be taken as an example of the esotericist writing strategy—best known from the Ġābirian corpus—of *tabdīd al-‘ilm*, ‘the scattering of knowledge throughout the corpus with elaborate cross-references, to make access to the ‘art’ difficult for the unworthy.’⁵⁰

In several cases, pairs of works within the group contain references to one another, indicating the ongoing insertion of references into the works over time – unless one would embrace the unlikely possibility of all five having been written simultaneously. Such insertions are not necessarily indicative of interpolations by actors other than al-Būnī, as they are the sort of thing that the *ṣayh* might have added during an audition of a work, even years after it was originally composed. Indeed, they are typically phrased in the first person, e.g. *wa-qad šarahñahu fī kitābinā Šams al-ma‘ārif wa-laṭā’if al-‘awārif*.⁵¹ Certain references seem more likely to have been added late in the process, such as the single reference to *‘Ilm al-hudā* in *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt*, which occurs in the very last sentence of the work prior to the closing benedictions, and thus could easily have been inserted there at a later date.⁵² Others, such as the multiple ones throughout *‘Ilm al-hudā* and *Laṭā’if al-iṣārāt*, seem rather more integral to the texts in which they appear. Indeed, the wealth of references in these two works suggests that they were the last two to be composed, with *Laṭā’if al-iṣārāt* most likely being the final addition to the group due to its multiple references to *‘Ilm al-hudā*. Similarly, as *Šams al-ma‘ārif wa-laṭā’if al-‘awārif* is the only work cited in all four of the others, one could speculate that some version of *Šams al-ma‘ārif wa-laṭā’if al-‘awārif* preceded the other four works – although see below for arguments regarding the multiple difficulties involved in dating the medieval text of that work.

These five works are closely related as regards much of their content

⁵⁰ Heinrichs, ‘Ramz’ (part 2a), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 8: 426.

⁵¹ Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1, fol. 130b.

⁵² Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2160.2, fol. 80a.

and technical vocabulary, although each has its particular foci. The science of letters permeates all of them to varying degrees, but instructions for making and using talismans are included in only two: *Šams al-ma‘ārif wa-laṭā‘if al-‘awārif* and *Laṭā‘if al-išārāt fī l-hurūf al-‘ulwiyyāt*, while the other three works deal to a greater extent with matters more traditionally found in Sufi literature and other pietistic genres. *Hidāyat al-qāšidīn wa-nihāyat al-wāšilīn* and *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt fī asrār al-riyāḍāt* are both relatively short works (typically 30 to 40 folia depending on the number of lines per page) that primarily discuss topics immediately identifiable as Sufi theory and practice. *Hidāyat al-qāšidīn* establishes various stages of spiritual accomplishment, with a ranking of aspirants into three basic groups, *sālikūn* (seekers), *murīdūn* (adherents), and *‘arifūn* (gnostics). *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt fī asrār al-riyāḍāt* deals mainly with practices such as ritual seclusion (*ḥalwa*), but also touches upon matters taken up at length in the many of the other ‘core’ works, such as prophetology, metaphysics/cosmology, the invisible hierarchy of the saints, and the natures of such virtual actors as angels, devils, and *ġinn*. Many of those topics are discussed at greater length in *‘Ilm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidā‘ fī šarḥ asmā‘ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, a large work (250 folia on average) structured as a discussion of the names of God, with each section devoted to a single divine name and each name marking a distinct station (*maqāma*) in a Sufi’s progress.

The statements and stories of a host of ‘sober’ Sufi and quasi-Sufi authorities posthumously well-regarded in al-Būnī’s lifetime are cited in these works, such as those of Ibrāhīm b. Aḍam (d. 161/777–78), Ma‘rūf al-Karḥī (d. 200/815–16), Bišr al-Ḥāfī (d. 226/840 or 227/841–42), Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907), al-Ġunayd al-Baġdādī (d. 298/910), Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), Abū ‘Alī al-Daqqāq (d. 405/1015), and al-Daqqāq’s best-known student, ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Qušayrī (d. 465/1072). A number of somewhat more risqué figures associated with speculative mysticism and/or ‘drunken’ Sufism are referenced frequently as well, including Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī (261/874 or 264/877–8), Dū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 246/861), and Abū Bakr al-Šiblī (d. 334/945). Some statements and stretches of poetry attributed to the famously controversial al-Manšūr al-Ḥallāġ (d. 309/922) are discussed near the end of *Hidāyat al-qāšidīn*, while al-Ḥallāġ’s great interpreter and redactor Ibn Ḥafīf al-Širāzī (d. 371/982) and Ibn Ḥafīf’s disciple Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Daylamī⁵³ (d. ca. 392/1001) are both

⁵³ Regarding al-Daylamī, see Meisami (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, 1: 185–6.

referenced in *‘Ilm al-hudā*. Ideas and statements attributed to Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), the great Sufī theorist cited extensively—though perhaps spuriously—in Ibn Masarra’s *Kitāb Ḥawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf*,⁵⁴ appear regularly throughout the corpus. Thorough analyses of *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn*, *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt*, and *‘Ilm al-hudā* will be required to determine the extent to which al-Būnī’s discussions of topics widely discussed in Sufī literature were derivative or innovative in regard to those of his predecessors. *‘Ilm al-hudā* certainly participates in a lengthy tradition of studies on the names of God, a field most famously represented by Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ġazālī’s (d. 505/1111) *Al-Maqaṣad al-asnā fī šarḥ asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā*. Ḥāġġī Ḥalīfa, in his list of numerous works from this genre, compares al-Būnī’s work to that of the Magribī Sufī Ibn Barraġān.⁵⁵ While this comparison seems based on the considerable lengths of both works (*wa-huwa šarḥ kabīr ka-šarḥ Ibn Barraġān*),⁵⁶ Elmore’s note that Ibn ‘Arabī studied at least one of Ibn Barraġān’s works under al-Mahdawī suggests the possibility that al-Būnī may have been similarly exposed to Ibn Barraġān’s writings.⁵⁷

To the limited extent that the number of surviving copies is a reliable guide, neither *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn* nor *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt* seem to have been widely copied; the survey for this project has found only three copies of *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn* and nine of *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt*, a few of the latter being abridgements or fragments.⁵⁸ *‘Ilm al-hudā* appears to have been copied most widely in the eighth/fourteenth century and far less so in ensuing centuries. Of the eleven colophonically dated copies surveyed for this project (out of seventeen total), eight were produced between 739/1339 and 798/1396. Many of these early copies are high-quality codices in elegant Syro-Egyptian hands, with the text fully vocalized. The finest is Süleymaniye MS Baġdatlı Vehbi 966, an oversized and

⁵⁴ On the possibly spurious nature of Ibn Masarra’s citations of al-Tustarī, see Michael Ebsstein and Sara Sviri’s recent article ‘The So-Called *Risālat al-ḥurūf*’, 221–4 and *passim*.

⁵⁵ See the bibliography for Purificación de la Torre’s edition of Ibn Barraġān’s work.

⁵⁶ Ḥāġġī Ḥalīfa, *Kašf*, 1033.

⁵⁷ Elmore, ‘Šayḥ Abd al-Aziz al-Mahdawi’, 611.

⁵⁸ The copies of *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn* and *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt* consulted for constructing the chart of intertextual references above are bound together as the first two works of the compilatory codex Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2160. All the works in the codex are in a single hand, and a *terminus ante quem* for the date of its production can be set at the year 914/1508–9 due to a dated ownership notice on fol. 1a, but it is probably considerably older.

austerely beautiful codex with only fifteen lines of text per page. Probably of Egyptian origin, it is undated but almost certainly comes from the eighth/fourteenth century too. The high production values of many of these undoubtedly expensive codices of *‘Ilm al-hudā* bespeak a work that, at least in certain circles, was quite highly regarded, which makes its apparent decline in popularity all the more striking. For no other work in the corpus are there such disproportionate numbers of early copies over later ones. Indeed, as shown in the table at the end of this article, the surviving codices of other medieval Būnian works suggest that they were copied far more frequently in the ninth/fifteenth century than in the preceding ones. It is possible that this decline reflects shifting tastes among readers and producers of Būnian works, and I would suggest that it may have been due to the relative lack of practically oriented occult-scientific material in *‘Ilm al-hudā*, a factor that also may account for the relative paucity of copies of *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn* and *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt*. The works of the medieval corpus that remain to be discussed contain a good deal more material that can be characterized as occult-scientific with a practical bent, and also boast a greater numbers of surviving copies.

Of the five core works, the two with the greatest abundance of practical occult-scientific material are *Šams al-ma‘ārif wa-laṭā‘if al-‘awārif* and *Laṭā‘if al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-‘ulwiyyāt*. As the table shows, the number of surviving copies suggests that they were more widely copied than the other three core works, and *Šams al-ma‘ārif* far more so than *Laṭā‘if al-išārāt*. It is a point of interest that the two were sometimes conflated. BnF MS arabe 6556, a copy of *Laṭā‘if al-išārāt* copied in 781/1380, has a titlepage (probably original to the codex) bearing the name *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-ṣuġrā wa-laṭā‘if al-‘awārif*, while Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2799, a copy of *Laṭā‘if al-išārāt* copied in 861/1457, is simply titled *Šams al-ma‘ārif*. Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2802, an undated but most likely ninth/fifteenth-century copy of *Laṭā‘if al-išārāt*, is declared on its opening leaf to be ‘the book *Šams al-ma‘ārif* of which no [other] copy exists,’ with a further claim that ‘this copy is not the one found among the people, and in it are bonuses and additions to make it complete’ (*Kitāb Šams al-ma‘ārif allati laysa li-nuṣṣatihā wuġūd wa-hādīhi al-nuṣṣa laysa [sic!] hiyya al-nuṣṣa allatī mawġūda bayna al-nās wa-fihā fawā‘id wa-zawā‘id ‘alā al-tamām*).⁵⁹ One suspects this note was penned by a bookseller with enough experience in peddling Būnian

⁵⁹ Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2802, fol. 1a.

works to recognize in the codex an opportunity to promote a ‘secret’ version of *Šams al-ma‘ārif*.

Šams al-ma‘ārif presents some of the greatest difficulties in the study of the Būnian corpus, and the notion that al-Būnī produced short, medium, and long redactions of it (*al-ṣuġrā*, *al-wuṣṭā*, and *al-kubrā*) is at the heart of much of the confusion and speculation surrounding this work.⁶⁰ However, the surviving medieval corpus fails to bear out that there actually were different redactions circulating under those three names in that period, at least not in any consistent sense. This is to say that, among medieval codices, the title *Šams al-ma‘ārif wa-laṭā‘if al-‘awārif* appears in almost every case without any extra size-appellation, and, aside from obvious instances of mis-titling,⁶¹ almost all of these codices contain a single fairly consistent and readily identifiable text.⁶² Such textual consistency is lacking entirely in the small handful of medieval codices entitled *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-ṣuġrā*,⁶³ and I cannot confirm the existence of any medieval codices bearing the title *Šams al-*

⁶⁰ This notion appears to have originated fairly early in the career of the corpus, as evidenced by the title *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-ṣuġrā wa-laṭā‘if al-‘awārif* having been assigned to BnF MS arabe 6556 in the eighth/fourteenth century. To the best of my knowledge, the first bibliographical notice mentioning three redactions of *Šams al-ma‘ārif* is al-Manāwī’s entry on al-Būnī in *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tarāġim al-sārat al-ṣūfiyya*, a work completed in 1011/1602–3, although al-Manāwī mentions only that short, medium, and long versions exist, without giving incipits or other clues as to their contents (2: 38). Hāġġī Ḥalīfa, writing a few decades after al-Manāwī, does not list three versions of *Šams al-ma‘ārif* in *Kaṣf al-ẓunūn*, although he does include a very brief entry for a work called *Fuṣūl Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā*, which he says ‘is perhaps *Šams al-ma‘ārif* (*la‘allahu Šams al-ma‘ārif*)’ (1270), and he makes a passing reference to *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā* in the entry for Ibn Ṭalḥa’s *al-Durr al-munazzam fī sirr al-a‘zam* (734). The notion of three redactions has since been taken up by many modern scholars, beginning with a 1930 essay by Hans Winkler (see bibliography).

⁶¹ Such as Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2799, discussed in the previous paragraph.

⁶² This is the text that averages around 120 folia in length and begins with the incipit (following the *basmala*): *al-ḥamd li-llāh alladī aṭla‘a šams al-ma‘ārif min ġayb al-ġayb*, or some close variation thereof.

⁶³ Thus, BnF MS arabe 6556 is actually *Laṭā‘if al-iṣārāt*, while Harvard MS Arab 332 and Dār al-Kutub MS Ḥurūf M 75 each appear to be entirely disparate works, neither of which has surfaced elsewhere. I have not seen Tunis MS 6711, and cannot comment on its date or contents.

ma^cārif al-wuṣṭā.⁶⁴ Finally, in at least one case, a turn-of-the-tenth/sixteenth-century codex marked as *al-kubrā* contains the same text found in copies with no size-appellation, i.e. the usual medieval text. What is more, the *al-kubrā* designation appears to have been added to the titlepage at a later date.⁶⁵ On the basis of all this, I would argue that:

1) there is only one widely copied, fairly consistent medieval text that can be called *Šams al-ma^cārif wa-laṭā'if al-^cawārif*;

2) the notion of three redactions of *Šams al-ma^cārif* was a sort of a self-fulfilling rumor that gained momentum with time, such that the appellation *al-ṣuġrā* was applied to various shorter Būnian or pseudo-Būnian texts while others were subsequently labeled *al-wuṣṭā* and *al-kubrā*, and

3) this rumor was later exploited by the actor or actors who produced the eleventh/seventeenth-century work known as *Šams al-ma^cārif al-kubrā*.

Even if these hypotheses could be tested conclusively, however, it would not solve all the problems of *Šams al-ma^cārif*, as even the fairly stable medieval text presents at least two serious conundrums with regard to dating. One is a mention of *al-Durr al-munazzam fī l-sirr al-a^czam*, a work by the Damascene scholar, *ḥaṭīb*, occasional diplomat, and author of apocalyptic literature, Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Ibn Ṭalḥa (d. 652/1254).⁶⁶ Mohammad Masad, who devotes a chapter to Ibn Ṭalḥa

⁶⁴ I know of three codices bearing the title *Šams al-ma^cārif al-wuṣṭā*. Two of these are probably of eleventh/seventeenth century origin, and of these two one is a fragment and the other contains the same text found in the numerous medieval copies with no size-appellation. I have no basis upon which to comment on the third, Tunis MS 7401.

⁶⁵ This is BnF MS arabe 2649 (copied in Cairo in 913/1508). That the *al-kubrā* may have been added to the titlepage at a later date (perhaps by a bookseller?) is indicated by the fact that it is written in smaller letters, tucked in above the leftmost end of the rest of the title.

⁶⁶ The story begins with a holy man in Aleppo who has a vision of a mysterious tablet, and, in a subsequent vision, is instructed by °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib to have the tablet explained by Ibn Ṭalḥa; we are then informed that Ibn Ṭalḥa recorded his interpretation of the tablet in his work *al-Durr al-munazzam fī l-sirr al-a^czam*. This is a work of apocalyptic literature of which numerous copies survive, although some of these appear to have been wrongly attributed to al-Būnī (Cordero, *El Kitāb Šams al-Ma^cārif al-Kubrā*, x). To further confuse matters, a version of *al-Durr al-munazzam* is entirely incorporated into *Šams al-ma^cārif al-kubrā*, along with an additional frame story that implies al-Būnī's personal involvement in these events. Given the importance of Ibn Ṭalḥa's work in apocalyptic traditions of the late medieval and early modern periods,

in his dissertation on the medieval Islamic apocalyptic tradition, argues that *al-Durr al-munazzam* was probably completed in the first half of 644/1246,⁶⁷ and the dating conundrum arises from the fact that *Šams al-ma‘ārif* is cited extensively in *‘Ilm al-hudā* and *Laṭā‘if al-išārāt*, both of which were auditioned in 622/1225. If Masad’s date is correct then this portion of the *Šams*, or at least this mention of the title of Ibn Ṭalḥa’s book, must be a post-622/1225 interpolation. This does not necessarily indicate an instance of pseudepigraphical interpolation however, insofar as, if the date for al-Būnī’s death given in *Kašf al-zunūn* can be set aside, it is conceivable that al-Būnī lived long enough to make this addition himself. The other, more glaring anachronism is the citation of a statement made in the year 670 (the date is given in the text) by *al-imām al-‘arīf al-‘alāma* Faḥr al-Dīn al-Ḥawārazmī.⁶⁸ Al-Ḥawārazmī’s name is followed by a standard benediction for the dead, *qaddasa Allāh rūḥahu*, indicating that this section of the text postdates 670/1271–2. That this interpolation was made somewhat early in the life of the corpus is shown by the fact that the statement and date appear in the earliest copy of *Šams al-ma‘ārif* surveyed for this project, BnF MS arabe 2647. The codex lacks a dated colophon, but the Baron de Slane estimated that it is from the late seventh/thirteenth century,⁶⁹ and it certainly is no more recent than the eighth/fourteenth century. All of the colophonically dated copies of *Šams al-ma‘ārif* were produced in the ninth/fifteenth century or later, and this stretch of text is a standard feature of those copies as well. Although it may be conceivable that al-Būnī could have lived to such an advanced age as to have made the interpolation himself, it is far more likely that it was done by someone other than al-Būnī, possibly one of his students.

The extant medieval text of *Šams al-ma‘ārif* is decidedly dedicated to occult–scientific matters, as made clear in a declaration in the introduction that it contains ‘secrets of the wielding of occult powers and the knowledge of hidden forces’ (*fī ḍimnihi min laṭā‘if al-taṣrīfāt wa-‘awārif al-ta‘īrāt*), with the accompanying injunction: ‘Shame unto anyone who has this book of mine in hand and reveals it to a stranger, divulging it to one who is not worthy of it’ (*fa-ḥarām ‘alā man waqa‘a*

especially in the influential writings of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī (about whom see the third section of this paper), the entire matter is worthy of closer scrutiny.

⁶⁷ Masad, *The Medieval Islamic Apocalyptic Tradition*, 71–3.

⁶⁸ BnF MS arabe 2647, fol. 46a.

⁶⁹ Slane, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabe*, entry no. 2647.

kitābī hāqā bi-yadihi anna yubdīhi li-ğayr ahlihi wa yubūhu bi-hi li-ğayr mustahiqqihī). Following the opening and introduction, the work commences with the presentation of a system associating the letters of the alphabet with various metaphysical/cosmological entities, e.g. the divine throne (*‘arš*), the planetary spheres, and the four elements. Other chapters contains such things as discussions of the names of the *ğinn* imprisoned by the prophet Sulaymān; comments on the nature of angels, and instructions on the construction and use of certain *awfāq* (cryptograms),⁷⁰ although all of this is leavened with elements of Sufi theory and devotional practices (*ilhām*, *dīkr*, *ḥalwa*, etc.). Strikingly, one section is a discussion of alchemy in which Ğābir b. Hayyān is cited, although the above-mentioned instances of interpolation might be grounds to question whether this was part of the original composition. If the ‘Abū l-Qāsim’ cited in this section is Abū l-Qāsim al-‘Irāqī (fl. 660s/1260s) then this is all the more likely. There is still hope that an early seventh/thirteenth-century copy of *Šams al-ma‘ārif* might be located,⁷¹ but a thorough textual comparison of known medieval copies

⁷⁰ A *wafq* (pl. *awfāq*), lit. ‘conjunction,’ is a written grid of letters and numbers used as a talisman. In some cases these are of the type known within mathematics as ‘magic squares,’ i.e. grids containing all the numbers from 1-*n* where the rows and columns all add to the same total. More often within the Būnian texts, however, these grids have no obvious mathematical properties, and the term ‘cryptogram’ is perhaps best suited to avoiding confusion on this point.

⁷¹ A number of modern scholars, beginning with Toufic Fahd (*La Divination arabe*, 230–231), have expressed the hope that Manisa MS 45 HK 1445 might be the earliest surviving copy of *Šams al-ma‘ārif*, due to a catalog entry that lists it as a copy of that work and notes that its colophon is dated AH 618. Unfortunately for those who had anticipated that it might be the magic bullet in resolving the issues discussed above, the codex in fact bears the title (in the copyist’s hand) *Kitāb Šumūs li-l-‘arīf laṭā‘if al-išārāt* and the text is that of *Laṭā‘if al-išārāt* rather than *Šams al-ma‘ārif*. Furthermore, while the colophon indeed does appear to say 618, the possibility of this being accurate is obviated by an anecdote from 621 mentioned in the text (on fol. 38a, in this particular codex). The date is written in Hindi–Arabic numerals rather than spelled out in full, as is more common in colophons. Unless this was a particularly clumsy attempt to backdate a codex, it must be assumed to be either a slip of the pen or a peculiar regional letterform for the initial number, which should perhaps be read as an eight or a nine instead of a six. A physical inspection of the codex yields no indication that it is especially old. The text is copied in an Eastern hand, i.e. one with Persianate tendencies, quite unlike the Syro-Egyptian hands that predominate among the great majority of early Būnian codices. The fact

of the work is needed in any eventuality – hopefully, not at the expense of continuing negligence of the rest of the Būnian corpus.

Laṭāʿif al-iṣārāt fī l-hurūf al-ʿulwiyyāt deals with subject matter somewhat similar to that of *Šams al-maʿārif*, although the work is more methodically structured and contains no glaring anachronisms. It opens with a lengthy emanationist account of cosmogenesis/anthropogenesis in which the letters of the Arabic alphabet play a constitutive role in the structure of the worlds and of humans. This is followed by a series of shorter sections, each dedicated to a single letter of the alphabet, explicating their metaphysical and cosmological properties through inspired interpretations of the Qurʾān, various *hadīṭ*, and statements attributed to past Sufī masters. The majority of these latter sections are accompanied by one or more elaborate talismans which, we are told, if gazed upon in conjunction with various programs of supererogatory fasting and prayer, are capable of enabling the practitioner to witness certain mysteries and wonders of God’s creation. In addition to this visionary praxis, instructions are given whereby certain of the designs and/or various *awfāq* can be rendered as talismans, the wearing of which will afford the bearer more down-to-earth benefits, such as freedom from fear, provision of sustenance (*rizq*), etc. It is a possible point of interest that the exordium begins with what may be the earliest surviving written rendition of a *hadīṭ* in which Muḥammad berates the Companion Abū Darr that *lām–alif* must be considered the twenty-ninth letter of the Arabic alphabet.⁷² This *hadīṭ* seems to have played a key role in Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī’s (d. 796/1394) ideas about language that helped drive the millenarian Hūrūfī sect of eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth-century Iran and Central Asia.⁷³

Laṭāʿif al-iṣārāt contains what may be the most highly developed forms of Būnian concepts and technical vocabulary that are shared across all five of the core works. One important example is a notion of the creation and the sustaining of the cosmos occurring in two overarching

that the support is an Oriental laid paper rather than a European one suggests that it quite possibly was produced prior to the end of the ninth/fifteenth century, although it is far from probative. Perhaps the most interesting item to note about Manisa MS 45 HK 1445 is that the full name given to al-Būnī on the titlepage is quite unique, granting him descent from *al-Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib*.

⁷² BnF MS arabe 2658, fol. 3a–b.

⁷³ Regarding the role of this *hadīṭ* in Astarābādī’s thought see Bashir, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis*, 69 ff. To the best of my knowledge this likely connection to al-Būnī has not been noted by modern scholars of Hūrufism.

‘worlds’ or planes, *‘ālam al-iḥtirā‘* and *‘ālam al-ibdā‘* – terms Pierre Lory renders as ‘ideal creation’ and ‘the creation of forms’ in his remarkable article on al-Būnī’s thought as salvaged from printed editions of *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā*.⁷⁴ While these two planes/phases are discussed to varying degrees in all five works, in *Laṭā‘if al-išārāt* they are further subdivided into first and second stages, and each of the resulting four stages is discussed through allusions to numerous discourses. Thus the first and highest stage of God’s creative action, *‘ālam al-iḥtirā‘ al-awwal*, is identified with ‘the Cloud,’ *al-‘amā‘*, wherein God formed the clay of Adam, arranging and implanting the letters of the alphabet into Adam in such a way that his intellect would aspire to communion with *al-ḥaḍra al-‘amā‘iyya* (‘the nubilous presence’), the highest point of union with divinity that the human mind can attain. This phase is further associated with the letter *alif*, the divine Throne (*al-‘arš*), and the First Intellect of a Neoplatonized Aristotelian metaphysics.⁷⁵ The process of Creation proceeds through three more stages, each of which is associated with further letters of the alphabet, Adamic faculties, Qur’ānic mythologems, and Neoplatonic hypostases. Thus the second plane/presence, *‘ālam al-iḥtirā‘ al-thānī*, is that of ‘the Dust,’ *al-habā‘*, and is associated with the letter *bā‘*, the spirit (*rūḥ*), the heavenly Pen (*qalam*), and the Second Intellect. The third, *‘ālam al-ibdā‘ al-awwal*, is the atomistic plane, *ṭawr al-ḍarr*, associated with the letter *gīm*, the soul (*naḥs*), the Footstool (*al-kursī*), and the Universal Soul. The fourth, *‘ālam al-ibdā‘ al-thānī*, is the plane of composition, *ṭawr al-tarkīb*, associated with the letter *dāl*, the heart (*qalb*), the heavenly Tablet (*lawḥ*), and the four elements. The whole is a remarkable exposition of a cosmos inextricable from the letters of the alphabet and the divine names. That the accompanying talismans are, in part, intended as aids in gaining supra-rational understandings of the reality of this cosmos gives the lie to any notion that al-Būnī’s works, even in their ‘practical’ aspects, were devoted solely to mundane ends.

The notion of ‘the Cloud,’ *al-‘amā‘*, as the initial stage of creation and its use as a cosmological term of art are better known from Ibn ‘Arabī’s later writings. The term and concept derive from a well-attested *ḥadīth* in which, when asked where God was prior to Creation, the Prophet responded: ‘He was in a cloud’ (*kāna fī ‘amā‘*).⁷⁶ In both men’s writings the Cloud is conceived of as the very first place of manifestation, the

⁷⁴ Lory, ‘Science des lettres et magie’, 97.

⁷⁵ BnF MS ar. 2658, fol. 5a–b and marginal addition.

⁷⁶ For references in the *ḥadīth* literature, see Wensinck, *Concordance*, 4: 388.

juncture (*barzah*) between the Creator and his creation from whence the worlds unfold.⁷⁷ To the best of my knowledge, Ibn ʿArabī put down in writing his cosmological conception of *al-ʿamāʾ* only in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* and *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam*, neither of which are thought to have been disseminated widely until after Ibn ʿArabī’s death in 638/1240. Thus, given the 622/1225 dating of the audition notice for *Laṭāʾif al-iṣārāt* cited above, this would *not* appear to be a case of al-Būnī borrowing from Ibn ʿArabī, short of positing an undocumented living relationship between the two. Given that their systems are quite similar on certain points but hardly identical, it well could be an instance in which the influence of al-Mahdawī on both men can be detected.

As mentioned previously, the remaining three major medieval works are distinguished primarily by their omission from the inter-referential circuit that binds together the other five. While this in no way disqualifies them from having been authored by al-Būnī, it does deny them the link to al-Būnī that a reference in *Laṭāʾif al-iṣārāt* or *ʿIlm al-hudā* would provide. As measured by the number of surviving copies, *al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya fī awrād al-rabbāniyya* is by far the most important of these works, and one of the most important works of the corpus as a whole. The survey for this project found forty copies of the work, not all of them complete. One survives from the seventh/thirteenth century (Chester Beatty MS 3168.5), and the greatest number come from the ninth/fifteenth century. As with many of the other works, certain of these codices are professionally copied and fully vocalized, suggesting that the work was prized by some. It is in four parts:

1) a collection of invocatory prayers keyed to each hour of each day of the week, with brief commentaries on the operative functioning of the names of God that appear in each prayer;

2) a division of the names of God in ten groupings (*anmāʾ*) of names the actions of which in the world are closely related;

3) a further series of invocatory prayers for when various religious holidays, such as the Night of Destiny (*laylat al-qadr*), fall on a given day of the week, and

4) instructions for the composition of *awfāq*. The whole is conceived as a comment on the Greatest Name of God (*al-ism al-ʿaẓam*) and is organized according to the proposition that the Greatest Name is situationally relative; that is to say, it could be any of the known divine

⁷⁷ For references to the topic in Ibn ʿArabī’s writings see Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 125–7; Hakīm, *al-Muʿġam al-ṣūfī*, 820–6; Ebstein and Sviri, ‘The So-Called *Risālat al-ḥurūf*’, 221–4.

names, varying according to the time and purpose for which it is invoked, the level of spiritual advancement of the practitioner, and so on. Due to this focus on the Greatest Name, the work sometimes appears under the title *Šarḥ al-ism al-‘aẓam*.

Beyond the large number of surviving copies, the popularity of *al-Lum‘a al-nūrāniyya* is attested by the numerous references to it in mentions of al-Būnī by authors in the centuries following his death. It is almost certainly the work Ibn Taymiyya intended when he referred to al-Būnī as the author of *al-Šu‘la al-nūrāniyya* (an essentially synonymous title),⁷⁸ and it is the only work mentioned by name in Ibn al-Zayyāt’s notice regarding al-Būnī’s tomb. In all likelihood it is also the work referred to by Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb as *Kitāb al-anmāt*, due to the section in which the divine names are divided into ten groups. In describing this work, Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb mentions the invocatory prayers arranged according the days of the week (*al-da‘awāt allatī rattabahā ‘alā al-ayyām*), expressing his concern that an ordinary Muslim might mistake the work for a simple book of prayers, not realizing the occult powers (*al-taṣrīf*) that could be brought into play if the prayers were performed.⁷⁹ Ibn Ḥaldūn also mentions *Kitāb al-anmāt*, although he is most likely following Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb in this. As discussed in the following section of this paper, *al-Lum‘a al-nūrāniyya* was also the subject of a lengthy commentary by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī (regarding whom, see the following section) in the early ninth/fifteenth century, which was no doubt a factor in its enduring popularity.

Tartīb al-da‘awāt fī taḥṣīs al-awqāt ‘alā ḥtilāf al-irādāt, which often appears under the title *al-Ta‘līqā fī manāfi‘ al-Qur‘ān al-‘aẓīm*, has been described (on the basis of Leiden MS oriental 1233) by Jan Just Witkam in his article on al-Būnī. Bristling with complex talismanic designs and ending with the key to an exotic-looking Alphabet of Nature (*al-qalam al-ṭabī‘ī*), the work is perhaps the most ‘grimoire-ish’ of all the members of the medieval corpus. Indeed, one would think it to have been the work most likely to draw the ire of ‘conservative’ Muslim thinkers, insofar as it is almost exclusively dedicated to the construction and use of talismans toward concrete, worldly ends, including in some cases the slaying of one’s enemies. That in many cases these talismans are derived from the Qur‘ān through the ‘deconstruction’ of the letters of a given *āya* into a complex design to be inscribed on parchment or a given type of metal would be unlikely to assuage suspicions that it is a book of sorcery.

⁷⁸ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘*, 10: 251.

⁷⁹ Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, *Rawḍat al-ta‘rīf*, 327.

Nonetheless, the earliest surviving copy found in the survey for this project was copied into the compilatory codex Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260 (copied in 772/1370) alongside *ʿIlm al-hudā*, the most obviously pious-seeming of al-Būnī's works, which suggests that at least some medieval actors perceived no irreconcilable contradiction between them. The text of this work seems particularly unstable across various copies, and that it was often designated as a 'notebook' (*taʿlīqa*) might suggest that it was an unfinished work, or at least that it was regarded as such.

Finally, the short work *Qabs al-iqtidāʾ ilā waḥq al-saʿāda wa-naḡm al-ihtidāʾ* is somewhat tame in comparison to *Tartīb al-daʿawāt*, although, as the title implies, it does contain instructions on the devising and use of *awḥāq*. The fact that the earliest dated copies of this work are from the ninth/fifteenth century calls its authorship into question more so than the others. It cites the famed Maghribī *ṣayḥ* Abū Madyan (d. 594/1197), with whom al-Mahdawī was affiliated, as well as Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Quraṣī (d. 599/1202), another disciple of Abū Madyan, and al-Quraṣī's own student Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Qaṣṭallānī (d. 636/1238).⁸⁰ If the work is authentic to al-Būnī then the mentions of these Western Sufis may hint at some further details of his life and training, although he claims no direct connection to them. As discussed in the fourth section of this paper, these *ṣayḥs* also appear in some of the *asānīd* alleged to be al-Būnī's in *Šams al-maʿārif al-kubrā*, although it is far more likely that *Qabs al-iqtidāʾ* was the source of these names rather than that the two works can be taken as independently corroborating one another.

In closing this survey of the major works of the medieval corpus, it must be noted that the general observation made here that occult-scientific themes predominate over Sufistic ones in some works (and vice-versa in others) is in no way intended to suggest that clear divisions between these categories are instantiated in al-Būnī's writings, or that there is any indication that some works of the medieval corpus were originally intended for 'Sufis' while others were intended for 'occultists.' To the contrary, the themes typically are integrated seamlessly in medieval Būnian writings, such that a division between them is a matter of second-order analysis rather than something native to the texts. That important interpreters of al-Būnī such as ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī viewed the science of letters 'as a rationally cultivable path to achieve the same knowledge of the divine and of the cosmos that was attainable

⁸⁰ Süleymaniye MS Laleli 1594.5, fol. 96a–97b.

by mystics through inspiration'⁸¹ should be seen as one possible response to the centuries of debates about whether the science of letters belonged to the 'foreign' or the religious sciences.⁸² For al-Būnī, that various forms of divine inspiration were the very essence of the science of letters, distinguishing it from many other sciences, is made clear near the end of *Laṭā'if al-iṣārāt*:

O my brother, know that the secrets of the letters cannot be apprehended by means of analogical reasoning, such as some of the sciences can be, but are realizable only through the mystery of providence, whether through something of the mysteries of inspiration, something of the mysteries of prophetic revelation, something of the mysteries of unveiling, or some [other] type of [divine] communication. Whatever strays from these four categories is but self-deception, in which there is no benefit at all.⁸³

Indeed, it is made clear at many points in the medieval corpus that for al-Būnī the science of letters was the 'science of the saints,' and thus a secret teaching at the heart of Sufism rather than a separate or auxiliary body of knowledge.

That there was a process of selection on the part of readers of Būnian works in favor of material with a practical occult–scientific bent is suggested by the predominance of copies of *Šams al-ma'ārif*, *al-Lum'a al-nūrāniyya*, and (to a lesser extent) *Laṭā'if al-iṣārāt* and *Tartīb al-da'awāt* among surviving ninth/fifteenth-century codices, and by the lesser numbers of copies of *ʿIlm al-hudā*, *Hidāyat al-qāsidīn*, and *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt* in the same period – although it must be admitted that this could be due in whole or in part to accidents of survival and limitations in the data gathered for this project. As discussed in the following sections, certain trends in the reading of al-Būnī alongside other Sufī writers, especially Ibn ʿArabī, bolster the notion of a process of selection along these lines, as does the form taken by *Šams al-ma'ārif*

⁸¹ Fleischer, *Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences*, 234. Cf. Gril, *Ésotérisme contre hérésie*, 186.

⁸² For an excellent overview of the contours of this debate, see the section 'Lettrism in classifications of the sciences' in Matthew Melvin-Koushki's forthcoming essay, *Occult Philosophy and the Millenarian Quest*, (19–25 in the draft copy).

⁸³ *I'lam yā aḥī anna asrār al-ḥurūf lā tudraku bi-šay' min al-qiyās kamā tudraku ba'd al-ʿulūm wa-lā tudraku illā bi-sirr al-ʿināya ammā bi-šay' min asrār al-ilqā' aw šay' min asrār al-wahy aw šay' min asrār al-kašf aw naw' min anwā' al-muḥātabāt wa-mā ʿadā hādīhi al-aqsām al-arba'a fa-ḥadīt nafs lā fā'idata fīhi*. BnF MS arabe 2658, fol. 89b.

al-kubrā when it appeared around the start of the eleventh/seventeenth century.

The transmission and reception of Būnian works from the eighth/fourteenth to the tenth/sixteenth centuries

An understanding of the social milieu in which the works of the Būnian corpus circulated, and of the ways in which they were taught and reproduced, is crucial to assessing the career of the corpus, as well as to examining the relationship(s) of al-Būnī's teachings to ever-shifting notions of Islamic 'orthodoxy.' What follows addresses the geographical spread of the corpus, some prosopographical observations about actors involved with Būnian works, notes on some transmission practices that were used, and a brief assessment of what all this suggests about the role of Būnian works in certain social and intellectual trends of the eighth/fourteenth through tenth/sixteenth centuries. Finally, there is a brief discussion of the legal status of Būnian codices and the notion that risks may have accompanied the production and/or ownership of them.

Some general comments can be made about the geographical spread of the corpus in the centuries after al-Būnī's death, although these are limited both by the rarity of locative notations in colophons and other paratexts, and by the fact that the data for this article does not include much detailed information on codices in Iranian, northwest African, and southern European libraries. The vast majority of the pre-ninth/fifteenth-century codices examined thus far appear to have originated in Egypt and Syria, judging by paratextual statements, the copyists' hands, and certain physical characteristics such as the papers used and the few surviving original covers. A handful of these earliest codices are definitively located, e.g. Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260, a collection of Būnian works copied in Damascus in 772/1370; Süleymaniye MSS Reşid efendi 590.1 and 590.2, a two-part copy of *ʿIlm al-hudā* copied in Cairo which also notes that its exemplar was copied near Alexandria; and Süleymaniye MS Reisulkuttab 1162.17, a copy of *al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya* copied in Damietta in 789/1387. The only definitively located outlier among these early codices is BnF MS arabe 2657, a copy of *Laṭāʾif al-iṣārāt* copied in Mecca in 788/1386; how long it remained there is unknown, but it had found its way to Aleppo by 949/1542, as evidenced by a *duʿāʾ* inscribed on its titlepage written to protect that city from *al-ṭāʿūn*, the Black Death.

Codices from the ninth/fifteenth century were produced as far north as Aleppo (the compilatory codex Süleymaniye MS Laleli 1549, copied in 881/1476), and as far west as Tripoli (the compilatory codex Princeton

MS Garrett 1895Y, copied in 834/1430). On the basis of Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb's knowledge of al-Būnī, however, it must be the case that Būnian works were circulating in the Maghrib and al-Andalus (at least in Granada) during the eighth/fourteenth century, and their continuing presence in the West is attested by Leo Africanus' observation of Būnian works circulating in Fez around 905/1500.⁸⁴ As for the northern and eastern stretches of the Muslim world, the first codices that can be tied definitively to Istanbul do not appear until the latter half of the tenth/sixteenth century, as does a single codex that appears to have been copied in Valjevo, Serbia in 963/1556, not long after Ottoman rule was established there (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek MS A.F. 162a). However, several earlier codices copied in distinctly Eastern hands strongly suggest that Būnian works were circulating well north and east of Syria by the end of the ninth/fifteenth century, as does evidence of their circulation in a certain transregional intellectual network discussed below.

Beyond the issue of geographical diffusion are questions of the social milieux in which Būnian works were transmitted and presumably put to use. In other words, what sorts of people were copying and/or purchasing these hundreds of manuscripts containing knowledge that is frequently assumed to have been quite heterodox in relation to dominant expressions of Islam? One method of approaching these questions undertaken for this project has been the compilation of a rudimentary prosopography of the human actors (auditors, copyists, owners, patrons, etc.) involved in the production and transmission of the corpus, the result being a list of just over a hundred individuals. There are serious limitations to this approach, insofar as many codices lack colophons, ownership statements, or other paratexts that would be of use in this regard, and because those actors who did leave traces in the corpus most often recorded only sparse information about themselves. Nonetheless, the compilation of what data exist allows for the deduction of some compelling observations, especially when viewed in relation to literary evidence and other sources.

Almost one-third of the actors involved with the corpus identified themselves as Sufis, most commonly through inclusion of the title *al-faqīr* or some variant thereof prior to their name, and their prevalence among the producers and owners of Būnian works supports the general notion that the spread of the corpus was abetted by the continuing growth in popularity of Sufi modes of piety. The earliest example comes from

⁸⁴ Hamès, 'al-Būnī', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed.

the string of titles attached to °Umar b. Ibrāhīm, one of the auditors of *Latā'if al-iṣārāt* in Cairo in 622/1225, which include *al-qāḍī*, 'the judge,' *al-zāhid*, 'the ascetic,' and *qāḍī al-fuqarā'*, 'judge of the Sufis (the poor ones).' Another thirty-three actors, spread more or less evenly between the eighth/fourteenth and twelfth/eighteenth centuries, each identified themselves as *al-faqīr*, and a number of instances in which the title *al-ṣayḥ* was claimed are probably indicative of Sufis as well. In only a handful of statements did actors label themselves as adherents of a particular order. One finds, for example, °Utmān b. Abī Bakr *al-Qādirī al-Ḥanafī* as the copyist of a large compilation of Būnian works produced in 893/1488 (Süleymaniye MS Carullah 2083), and *al-faqīr Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. °Alī al-°Awlawī[?]* *al-Qādirī murīdan al-Ḥanafī madḥaban* as the copyist of a codex of *Šams al-ma°arīf* produced in 903/1498 (Süleymaniye MS Nuruosmaniye 2835). Beyond these two Qādirīs, the Rifā°ī, Shāḍilī and Mevlevī orders are also represented, each by a single actor. As is apparent from some of these examples, affiliation with a particular *madḥab* was occasionally recorded as well; eight self-identified Shafī°īs and five Ḥanafīs are represented in the data accumulated for this study.

As a number of recent studies have shown, in late medieval Egypt and Syria the spread and growing social influence of Sufism was facilitated to a significant degree by the championing and financial sponsorship of various individual Sufis and Sufi institutions by Turkish military elites (i.e. *mamlūks*), as well as by the participation of Arab civilian elites who filled bureaucratic, judicial, and teaching positions in the regimes of the former. This manifested in many cases in the construction of *ḥānqāhs* and tombs for Sufi saints by wealthy elites, and sometimes also in their defense of controversial Sufis and their followers from attempts by 'conservative' factions among the *°ulamā'* to curb their perceived doctrinal and praxic excesses. Some of the best-documented cases of the latter stem from the numerous controversies throughout the Mamlūk period surrounding the poet *cum* saint Ibn al-Fāriḍ, as explored by Emil Homerin.⁸⁵ In light of the prevalence of such Sufi-*mamlūk* relationships in the late medieval and early modern periods, it is of no small interest that another category of actors intertwined with the Būnian corpus is members of the ruling elite and their households. For example, *al-mamlūk Ḥasan Qadam al-Ḥanafī madḥaban* was the owner of a copy of

⁸⁵ Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint*, 55–77. For broader studies of the interactions of military elites and Arab scholars, Sufis, and bureaucrats, see the works by Chamberlain and Berkey listed in the bibliography.

°*Ilm al-hudā*, Süleymaniye MS Kılıç Ali Paşa 588 – the codex was copied in 792/1392, with Ḥasan Qadam acquiring it in 840/1436. BnF MS arabe 2649, a handsomely rendered copy of *Šams al-ma‘ārif* copied in Cairo in 913/1508, includes on its titlepage a patronage notice linking it to *sayyidī* °Alī, *al-dawādār* of the household of *al-amīr* Ṭūgān al-Nawrūzī.⁸⁶ Similarly, the colophon of a copy of °Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī’s commentary on *al-Lum‘a al-nūrāniyya* (Süleymaniye MS Carullah 1560, copied 952/1546) registers it as being from the library (*ḥizāna*) of the *amīr* Pīrī [Mehmed] Pāšā b. Ramaḍān (d. 974/1567), the head of a *beylik* centered in Adana, and notes that it was copied by his *mamlūk* Ibn °Abd Allāh.⁸⁷

Many of the more lavishly produced copies of Būnian works were no doubt made for elite households. One that was certainly a patronage gift, although no recipient is named, is Süleymaniye MS Nuruosmaniye 2822, a copy of *Tartīb al-da‘awāt* (but bearing the title *Šarḥ asmā‘ Allāh al-ḥusnā*). Copied in 814/1411 and penned in an elegant Syro-Egyptian hand, its most outstanding feature is that all of the many complex talismans are exquisitely rendered in gold ink (i.e. chrysographed), with section headings in blue ink – a combination of colors predominant in illuminated codices produced for Mamlūk courts. An interest in the occult sciences at many Muslim courts is well attested,⁸⁸ and that this would have intersected with many late medieval and early modern rulers’ enthusiasm for Sufism is hardly surprising. Any science that promised the ability to predict future events was of great interest to those in power, and the defensive aspects of Būnian talismanic praxis were no doubt appealing to players in such dangerous arenas as Mamlūk and Ottoman politics. Cornell Fleischer has argued for the general importance of the occult sciences at Ottoman courts,⁸⁹ and Hasan Karatas has recently discussed the role of defensive *awfāq* in early tenth/sixteenth-century court intrigue in Istanbul.⁹⁰ The elaborately *wafq*-covered talisman shirts of Ottoman sultans of the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth

⁸⁶ BnF MS Arabe 2649, fol. 1a.

⁸⁷ Süleymaniye MS Carullah 1560, fol. 123b. Regarding Pīrī Mehmed Pāšā see Y. Kurt’s entry ‘Pīrī Mehmed Paşa, Ramazanoğlu’ in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, and F. Babinger’s entry ‘Ramaḍān Oğulları’ in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

⁸⁸ Brentjes, ‘Courtly Patronage of the Ancient Sciences in Post-Classical Islamic Societies’, 416 ff.

⁸⁹ Fleischer, ‘Shadow of Shadows’, and ‘Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences’.

⁹⁰ Karatas, ‘The Mastery of Occult Sciences as a Deterrent Weapon’, *passim*.

century can be regarded as one outgrowth of the embrace of these occult technologies by preceding rulers.⁹¹

In addition to *mamlūks*, certain names in the prosopography are suggestive of individuals of Arab descent working as bureaucrats under military regimes, such as the copyist of Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260, °Alī b. °Abd Allāh b. °Umar, *kātib al-qawāsīn* (secretary of the archers), or the *qāḍī al-Šām* °Abd al-Raḥmān, who owned what is probably a tenth/sixteenth-century copy of *Šams al-ma°arīf* (Süleymaniye MS Murad Buhārī 236). That bureaucrats and others with close ties to military elites were sometimes among the readers of the corpus is also suggested by the mention of al-Būnī's works in al-Qalqašandī's (d. 821/1418) great secretarial manual, *Šubḥ al-a°šā fī šinā°at al-inšā°*, wherein he lists *Laṭā°if al-išārāt* and *Šams al-ma°arīf* as works in circulation among the learned of his day.⁹² In addition to sharing the interests of their rulers in the predictive and defensive aspects of Būnian praxis, that the central role of complex talismans rendered it an inherently scribal praxis may have added to its appeal for 'men of the pen.'

As for the means through which Būnian teachings were transmitted in the centuries after al-Būnī's death, there is evidence that knowledge of the texts at least sometimes was passed through recognized lines of teachers. This comes from the writings of the Antiochene scholar °Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 858/1454), who helped facilitate the continuing popularity and spread of the Būnian corpus with his commentary on *al-Lum°a al-nūrāniyya* (entitled *Rašḥ aḍwāq al-ḥikma al-rabbāniyya fī šarḥ awfāq al-Lum°a al-nūrāniyya*) and his other works that drew heavily on Būnian writings. In *Rašḥ aḍwāq al-ḥikma*, al-Biṣṭāmī notes that while in Cairo in 807/1404–5, he 'read' *al-Lum°a al-nūrāniyya* under the instruction of *šayḥ* Abū °Abd Allāh °Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ğamā°a al-Kinānī (*qara°tu kitāb al-Lum°a al-nūrāniyya °alā al-šayḥ... Muḥammad ibn Ğamā°a*).⁹³ The *qara°a °alā* construction used by al-Biṣṭāmī is indicative of a mode of face-to-face textual transmission closely related to audition (*sami°a °alā*). While 'reading' a text before a *šayḥ* seems generally to have been regarded as one step lower in the hierarchy of textual transmission practices than 'hearing' one, it was nonetheless regarded as a valid means of passing on the authority to

⁹¹ For an excellent photographic catalog of these shirts held in the collection of the Topkapı Palace Museum, see Tezcan's new edition of *Tılsımlı Gömlekler*.

⁹² Al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḥ al-a°šā*, 1: 475.

⁹³ Süleymaniye MS Carullah 1543.1, fol. 5b.

utilize and teach a text, and as far preferable to simply reading a book by oneself.⁹⁴ The same grammatical construction was used by the glossator of the exemplar for Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1 to describe his reading of *°Ilm al-hudā* under the tutelage of Abū l-Faḍl al-Ġumārī, indicating that this practice was already being employed at one step of remove from al-Būnī himself. Al-Biṣṭāmī's mention of having read the book under the supervision of °Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad indicates that at least one of al-Būnī's works was still being taught through a living line of authorities at the dawn of the ninth/fifteenth century. That al-Biṣṭāmī felt that his having read *al-Lum°a al-nūrāniyya* under °Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad was something worth mentioning indicates that he regarded that act of transmission as licensing his own commentary on the work, and that his readers would have recognized this as well.

The identity of the *ṣayḥ* before whom al-Biṣṭāmī read *al-Lum°a al-nūrāniyya* is also noteworthy. °Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ġamā°a (d. 819/1416–17) was a scion of the Ibn Ġamā°a scholarly 'dynasty', and his immediate forbears had served for three generations in some of the highest civilian offices of Mamlūk Cairo and Jerusalem, while also being known for their devotion to Sufism. °Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad's great grandfather, Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 733/1333), served as the Ṣafī°ī grand *qāḍī* of Cairo and *ṣayḥ al-ṣuyūḥ* of the Sufi fraternities on and off between 690/1291 and 727/1327,⁹⁵ and his grandfather, °Izz al-Dīn °Abd al-°Azīz (d. 767/1366), and paternal uncle, Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm (d. 790/1388), had similarly illustrious careers.⁹⁶ Although the family's power in Cairo waned during °Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad's lifetime, the Syrian branch of the family maintained a high standing in Damascus and Jerusalem well into the Ottoman period under the *nisba* al-Nābulusī. °Abd al-Ġānī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731), one of the great interpreters of both Ibn °Arabī and Ibn al-Fāriḍ, was a distant relation of °Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad.⁹⁷ That °Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad was regarded (at least by al-Biṣṭāmī) as an authorized transmitter of al-Būnī's teachings further bolsters the notion that al-Būnī's works had something of a following among Arab scholarly elites with close ties to the ruling military

⁹⁴ Regarding the difficult question of the distinction between the practices recorded as *sami°a °alā* and *qara°a °alā*, see Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 241–3.

⁹⁵ Although the fact that Badr al-Dīn called for destruction of copies of some of Ibn °Arabī's works suggests he most likely would have disapproved of al-Būnī's works. See Knysh, *Ibn °Arabī*, 123–4.

⁹⁶ Salibi, 'The Banu Jama°a', 97–103.

⁹⁷ Sirriyeh, 'Whatever Happened to the Banu Jama°a?', 55–64.

households. Indeed, al-Biṣṭāmī's exposure to, and continued interest in, al-Būnī's works can be taken as further evidence of this, insofar as al-Biṣṭāmī was a sort of professional court intellectual whose career bridged Mamlūk and early Ottoman ruling households in Cairo and Bursa.

Fleischer notes that, while in Cairo, al-Biṣṭāmī 'established contact with the 'Rumi' (Rumelian and Anatolian) scholarly circles that had for several decades journeyed to the Mamlūk capital for education and for the lively spiritual life the city offered.'⁹⁸ Eventually returning to reside at the Ottoman court in Bursa, al-Biṣṭāmī came to be a leading participant in 'an extraordinary network of religious scholars, mystics, and intellectuals' connecting Mamlūk, Timurid, and Ottoman courts of the late eighth/fourteenth through ninth/fifteenth centuries, a network whose ideas were loosely unified by shared interest in the occult sciences (especially the science of letters), millenarian speculation, and—though al-Biṣṭāmī and many others identified as Sunnīs—reverence for °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and many of his descendants as recipients of ancient wisdom that had passed down through the prophets since Adam.⁹⁹ Al-Biṣṭāmī often referred to himself and others in this far-flung intellectual collective as the 'Brethren of Purity and Friends of Fidelity' (*ihwān al-ṣafā' wa-hullān al-wafā'*),¹⁰⁰ an evocation of those proto-Ismā'īlī provocateurs of fourth/tenth-century Iraq, whose *Epistles* (*Rasā'il ihwān al-ṣafā'*) constitute one of the great bodies of 'golden age' Islamic occult-scientific literature. A key early figure in this network seems to have been Muḥammad b. °Abd Allāh b. Ḥusayn al-Aḥlāṭī (d. 799/1397), a perhaps-Damascene physician, alchemist, and astrologer who served in the court of the Mamlūk sultan, al-Malik al-Zāhir Sayf al-Dīn Barqūq (d. 801/1399).¹⁰¹ Three of al-Aḥlāṭī's students also have been associated by modern scholars with the neo-*Ihwān al-ṣafā'*: the Timurid thinker Sā'in al-Dīn Turka Iṣfahānī (d. 835/1432), a theorist in the science of letters whose 'stated goal was to create a universal science that would encompass history and the cosmos and unify all of human knowledge under its aegis,' and who a number of times was forced to defend himself against charges of heresy;¹⁰² Sharaf al-Dīn °Alī Yazīd (d. 858/1454), the Timurid historian (and biographer of Timur himself) who was also known as an expert in the occult sciences and cryptographic poetry

⁹⁸ Fleischer, 'Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences', 232.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.; cf. Gril, *Ésotérisme contre hérésie*, 186.

¹⁰¹ Binbaş, Sharaf al-Dīn °Alī Yazdī, 139 ff.

¹⁰² Melvin-Koushki, *Occult Philosophy and the Millenarian Quest*, 2.

(*mu^cammā*); Molla Fenārī, (d. 834/1431), the first *ṣayḥ al-islām* under the Ottomans;¹⁰³ and Ṣayḥ Badr al-Dīn al-Simāwī (d. ca. 821/1418), an erstwhile student of Mubārakšāh al-Manṭiqī (d. 815/1413) who became a ‘millenarian activist’ under al-Aḥlāṭī’s influence, went on to become well known as a judge and as a commentator on Ibn ‘Arabī’s works, and ended his life as a leader of an ultimately unsuccessful rebellion fuelled by millenarian expectations that ‘shook the Ottoman State’ in 819/1416.¹⁰⁴

The origins, extent, and duration of this neo-*Iḥwān al-ṣafā* ‘movement’ (if indeed it ever achieved a level of coherence worthy of that label), and the precise contours of the political and/or religious convictions its members shared, are the topics of much current research, most of it focused on the ninth/fifteenth century.¹⁰⁵ It is of no small interest then, that in the multipart paratext at the end of Süleymaniye MS Reşid efendi 590.2, the aforementioned copy of *‘Ilm al-hudā* completed in Cairo in 798/1396, the collator Ayyūb b. Quṭlū Beg *al-Rūmī al-Ḥanaḩī* notes the following about the exemplar from which he had worked: ‘The copy of the text against which this copy was collated has written at the end of it that it was collated, as well as possible, in the presence of the Brethren of Purity and Friends of Fidelity at the Muḩassaniyya *ḩānqāh...*’ (*Wa-l-nuṣṣa allatī qūbilat ḩāḩihi ‘alayḩa maktūb fī āḩirihā wa-qūbilat ḩasab al-imkān bi-ḩāḩrat iḩwān al-ṣafā’ wa-ḩullān al-wafā’ bi-l-ḩānqāh al-muḩassaniyya bi-ṭaḩr al-Iskāndariyya...*). It is noted in the colophon to the first part of this set (MS Reşid efendi 590.1) that this exemplar was produced in 738/1337. Thus, if this statement is a direct quote of what was found in the exemplar—which the phrasing certainly suggests—it would appear that the self-designation *iḩwān al-ṣafā’ wa-ḩullān al-wafā’* was in use among some of those involved with the Būnian corpus more than sixty years prior to al-Biṣṭāmī’s studying of *al-Lum^ca al-nūrāniyya* in Cairo, a date that would push the origins of the movement at least to the time of al-Aḥlāṭī’s youth. Alternatively, it could be supposed that Ayyūb b. Quṭlū Beg *al-Rūmī*, himself perhaps a

¹⁰³ Binbaş, *Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī*, 100.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 144–5.

¹⁰⁵ See Fleischer, *Ancient Wisdom*; Binbaş, *Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī*, 99–106; Melvin-Koushki, *Occult Philosophy and the Millenarian Quest*, 11–12 and 25; Fazioğlu, ‘İlk Dönem Osmanlı İlim’; Gril, *Ésoterisme*. Binbaş has made the strongest claims for the group’s coherence in arguing that the neo-*Iḩwānīs* were ‘a non-hierarchical intellectual collectivity’ (106).

member of the Cairene *Rūmī* circles Fleischer describes, retrojected this appellation onto the earlier gathering.

Al-Būnī's works were certainly in circulation among some 'members' of the neo-*Iḥwān al-safā'* by the late eighth/fourteenth and early ninth/fifteenth centuries, and likely were an ingredient of al-Aḥlāṭī's teachings. Elements of Būnian praxis, typically in combination with interpretations of Ibn ʿArabī's thought, feature prominently in many of al-Biṣṭāmī's other works beyond his commentary on *al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya*, especially in his *Šams al-āfāq fī ʿilm al-ḥurūf wa-l-awfāq*. Šāʿin al-Dīn Turka acknowledged the efficacy and legitimacy of Būnian praxis, although he too drew heavily on Ibn ʿArabī and positioned his own interest in the science of letters as serving philosophical rather than practical ends.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, it seems as if a dynamic may have emerged in this period whereby the works of al-Būnī were understood to convey the practical application of the science of letters while those of Ibn ʿArabī were credited with propounding its philosophical/theoretical dimensions. Certainly their works seem often to have been read together, as indicated by the numerous compilatory codices of the ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth centuries (and beyond) in which both men's writings are bound, or in which Būnian works appear alongside those of Ibn ʿArabī's famous interpreters, such as Šadr al-Dīn al-Qunāwī (d. 673/1274). Such pairings are all the more striking in light of al-Būnī and Ibn ʿArabī both having been students of al-Mahdawī, and the apparent popularity of *ʿIlm al-hudā* in the eighth/fourteenth century suggests that many readers would have been aware of this shared background. Of course, parallels between al-Būnī and Ibn ʿArabī's ideas, such as the aforementioned notion of 'the Cloud' as the first stage of creation, were no doubt apparent to readers of the period as well, and the emphasis on the practical value of al-Būnī's writings and the preference for Ibn ʿArabī as a theorist may have been factors in readers' selections of which Būnian works were worthy of reproduction.

The understanding of al-Būnī and Ibn ʿArabī as two sides of the same coin is also seen in the writings of some of their critics. Both Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb and Ibn Ḥaldūn closely associated al-Būnī with Ibn ʿArabī, grouping them with other Sufīs whose teachings they considered radical, such as Ibn Barraġān, Ibn Qasī, Ibn Sabʿīn, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *et al.* Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, in his *Rawḍat al-taʿrīf bi-l-hubb al-šarīf*, referred to this grouping under the rather dubious heading of the 'accomplished [mystics] who consider themselves to be perfect' (*min al-mutammimīn*

¹⁰⁶ Melvin-Koushki, *Occult Philosophy and the Millenarian Quest*, 17.

bi-za‘mihim al-mukammalīn),¹⁰⁷ while the more critical Ibn Ḥaldūn referred to them as ‘extremist Sufis’ (*al-ġulāt min al-mutaṣawwifa*).¹⁰⁸ Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb’s explanation of the cosmological presuppositions of the science of letters allegedly shared by these Sufis is in fact closely adapted from the section of *Laṭā‘if al-iṣārāt* wherein al-Būnī’s four-fold scheme of creation is initially presented, though Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb does not identify al-Būnī as his source.¹⁰⁹ Ibn Ḥaldūn’s presentation of the same topic in *Šifā‘ al-sā‘il li-tahdīb al-masā‘il* in turn appears to be greatly indebted to Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb’s text.¹¹⁰

Ibn Ḥaldūn’s critique of the ‘extremist’ Sufis was multi-faceted, and included charges that their obscure terminology and speculative theosophy distracted from the true duty of Muslims to obey God’s law, accusations that they were crypto-agents of millenarian Ismā‘īlī theories of the *mahdī* (with the Shī‘ite *mahdī* replaced by the Sufi ‘pole [*quṭb*] of the age’), and of course his indictment of the science of letters as a form of sorcery in Sufi garb. Alexander Knysh has argued that Ibn Ḥaldūn’s misgivings were motivated by ‘sociopolitical rather than theological considerations,’ and that they ‘should be seen against the background of the turbulent Maghribi history that was punctuated by popular uprisings led by self-appointed *mahdīs* who supported their claims through magic, thaumaturgy, and occult prognostication’.¹¹¹ Taking a somewhat different tack, James Morris has recently argued that Ibn Ḥaldūn’s accusations were not theological or social critiques so much as strategic elements in a rhetorical offensive aimed at the elimination of ‘any suspicion of an intellectually and philosophically serious alternative to Ibn Ḥaldūn’s own understanding of the proper forms and interrelations of Islamic philosophy and religious belief’.¹¹² Without quite contradicting either of these analyses, I would put forward the proposition that, at least with respect to his attack in *al-Muqaddima* on al-Būnī and Ibn ‘Arabī as promulgators of the science of letters, Ibn Ḥaldūn may have been responding to the more tangible and immediate threat of millenarian and occult-scientific ideas circulating at the Cairene court and in elite circles

¹⁰⁷ Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabī*, 179.

¹⁰⁸ Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Muqaddima*, 664 (transl. Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, 171).

¹⁰⁹ Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, *Rawḍat al-ta‘rīf*, 324–6.

¹¹⁰ Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Šifā‘ al-sā‘il*, 212–15. Regarding Ibn Ḥaldūn’s likely borrowings from Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb in regard to Ibn ‘Arabī, see Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabī*, 195.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Morris, ‘An Arab Machiavelli?’, 256.

orbiting it. Gril observes that this section of *al-Muqaddima* does not appear in the version of the work that Ibn Ḥaldūn drafted while still in the Maghrib,¹¹³ which suggests that he added it sometime after his arrival in Cairo in 784/1382 – the same year that al-Aḥlāṭī's patron Barqūq first attained the sultanate. Given that al-Būnī and Ibn ʿArabī's writings seem to have played a prominent role of in the thought of the neo-*Iḥwān al-ṣafāʾ*, the pro-ʿAlid mythology and occult and millenarian preoccupations the group cultivated, and the fact that they seem to have been active in Egyptian elite circles as least as early as al-Aḥlāṭī's tenure at Barqūq's court, but possibly decades earlier, I think the possibility must be entertained that this section of *al-Muqaddima* was aimed at the intellectual foundations of the neo-*Iḥwān al-ṣafāʾ*, or some germinal form of the group.

That Ibn Ḥaldūn was not averse to attempts to enforce his views on these matters is clear from the *fatwā* he issued while in Egypt calling for the destruction by fire or water of books by Ibn ʿArabī, Ibn Sabʿīn, Ibn Barraḡān, and their followers, on the grounds that they were 'filled with pure unbelief and vile innovations, as well as corresponding interpretations of the outward forms [of scripture and practice] in the most bizarre, unfounded, and reprehensible ways'.¹¹⁴ Although al-Būnī's works are not specified in the *fatwā*, that they would be included in this general category seems clear from Ibn Ḥaldūn's earlier writings. Of course, that a *fatwā* was issued hardly guarantees that it was carried out, and I am aware of no evidence that action was taken on Ibn Ḥaldūn's injunction. This raises the fascinating question of whether or not codices containing Būnian works were ever the targets of organized destruction, or otherwise suffered the status of legally hazardous objects that books of magic have often borne in other cultural milieux.

The Damascene *mudarris* and *ḥaṭīb* Tāḡ al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) dictated in his *Muʿīd al-niʿam* that booksellers were forbidden from peddling works by heretics or astrologers.¹¹⁵ The subject is not touched upon in Ibn al-Uḥuwwa's (d. 729/1329) acclaimed guide to supervision of the public markets, *Maʿālim al-qurba fī aḥkām al-ḥisba*, and neither is anything else pertaining to the supervision of booksellers by city authorities, suggesting that enforcement of such dictates via the *muḥtasib*

¹¹³ Gril, 'The Science of Letters', 143.

¹¹⁴ Morris' translation (An Arab Machiavelli?', 249).

¹¹⁵ Shatzmiller, 'Tidjāra', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

was uncommon in this period.¹¹⁶ To the best of my knowledge there is no record in the literary sources of organized destruction of Būnian works having occurred. What is more, the numerous surviving Būnian codices that are finely wrought objects with signed colophons, ownership notices, patronage statements, etc. hardly suggest works that were regularly subject to legal interdiction. As for how they were obtained, some were certainly copied by those who wanted to own them, but certain data suggest that copies of Būnian works also could be purchased in the same ways as those of other sorts of works. Süleymaniye MS Hafid efendi 198 is a copy of *Šams al-ma‘ārif wa-laṭā‘if al-‘awārif* rendered in a highly readable Syro-Egyptian *nash* in 855/1451 by one Muḥammad b. Ḥağğī al-Ḥayrī al-Šafī‘ī. As this name is rather distinctive, it is almost certain (and slightly ironic) that this is the same Muḥammad b. Ḥağğī al-Ḥayrī al-Šafī‘ī who in 870/1465–66 produced a copy of Ğalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī’s commentary on al-Subkī’s own *Ġam‘ al-ğawāmi‘ fi uṣūl al-fiqh* (Chester Beatty MS 3200). While it is possible that al-Ḥayrī copied both al-Būnī’s work and this volume on *fiqh* for his own use, it is at least as likely that he worked as a professional copyist, producing both codices under commission. Another example, albeit a very late one, is two complete copies (i.e. not the two halves of a set) of *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā* produced in Jerusalem, Süleymaniye MSS Hekimoğlu 534, copied in 1118/1707, and Hekimoğlu 537, copied in 1119/1708, both of which were copied by one Muḥammad Nūr Allāh *al-ḥāfiẓ li-kalām Allāh*. This suggests that *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā* was part of Muḥammad Nūr Allāh’s standard repertoire, and, especially given the technical difficulties involved in the rendering of complex talismans, it is quite conceivable that some earlier copyists also may have ‘specialized’ in Būnian works to the extent of including them in their regular offerings. Of course, it is also quite possible that some scribes refused to do such work on religious grounds.

In summary, while it is possible that, as Yahya Michot proposes, Būnian works were popular among street-level astrologers and other ‘magical’ practitioners serving the general public,¹¹⁷ there is nothing to indicate that such people were especially responsible for the corpus’ spread. Neither is there any indication that codices of Būnian works were marked as particularly illicit objects. Indeed, the books seem frequently

¹¹⁶ Ibn al-Uḥuwwa does deal with astrologers operating in the *sūq*, although his directives regarding them are fairly mild. See Michot and Savage-Smith, *Ibn Taymiyya on Astrology*, 280.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 279–80.

to have moved among a rather elite readership, close to the centers of power, as well as through wider Sufi circles, and to have been transmitted and copied in essentially the same ways as works on other topics, including—at least until the turn of the ninth/fifteenth-century—transmission through ‘authorized’ lines of teachers. However, as discussed in the following section, it seems to be the case that whatever slight protection against undue alteration and/or forgery that such transmission practices may have provided largely had fallen by the wayside by the turn of the eleventh/seventeenth century.

Al-Būnī in the eleventh/seventeenth century: Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā
Al-Būnī’s modern reputation as a master of magic rests largely on the lengthy, talisman-laden miscellany on the occult sciences entitled *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā* (sometimes called *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā wa-laṭā’if al-‘awārif*, or just *Šams al-ma‘ārif wa-laṭā’if al-‘awārif*, although it is drastically different from the medieval work by that name), a work that apparently was introduced to the Western scholarly community by Wilhelm Ahlwardt’s late nineteenth-century catalog entry detailing the contents of a codex held in Berlin, and which has appeared since around the same time in a number of commercial Middle Eastern printed editions.¹¹⁸ A scholarly consensus has emerged that large parts of the work probably are interpolations by authors other than al-Būnī.¹¹⁹ What follows supports this by verifying the late production dates of the numerous surviving manuscript copies of the work, as well as by identifying the origins of some of the *asānīd* near the end of the work

¹¹⁸ Ahlwardt, *Verzeichniss*, entry no. 4125.

¹¹⁹ *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā* is a lengthy and rather uneven work. It is divided into forty chapters (*fuṣūl*) which are largely self-contained texts on a variety of occult-scientific topics. Many scholars have noted multiple problems of coherence and consistency between the various chapters of the work, particularly in various schema of correspondences between the letters of the Arabic alphabet and sundry astrological forces, e.g. Francis, ‘Islamic Symbols’, 149-58. Pierre Lory offers the most generous and considered defense of *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā* in asserting that, while it may not aspire to systematic philosophical coherence, it at least expresses a generally consistent view of a world determined by the metaphysical action of the divine names and hence manipulable thereby (*La science des lettres*, 96). Above and beyond the issue of internal coherence, a number of scholars, beginning in the 1960s with Mohamed el-Gawhary and Toufic Fahd, have noted serious difficulties in reconciling parts of the *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā* with the widely accepted death date for al-Būnī of 622/1225.

that are claimed to be al-Būnī's, and which many modern scholars have puzzled over.

The most basic observation regarding *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* to have emerged from the survey conducted for this project is that, of the twenty-six colophonically dated copies of the work (out of fifty-one total), the earliest, Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek MS 2755, is dated 1623 in a handlist of the collection. Of the fourteen undated copies that I have been able to view, none is possessed of any features that suggest an earlier date of production, but rather they are remarkably similar in their *mise-en-page*, hands, and other features to the dated copies. Given the plethora of dated copies of other Būnian works stretching back to the seventh/thirteenth century, there is no compelling reason that, if such a lengthy and important work were composed much earlier than the eleventh/seventeenth century, not even a single earlier dated copy would have survived. The fact that al-Manāwī mentions *ṣuġrā*, *wuṣṭā*, and *kubrā* versions of *Šams al-ma'ārif* in *al-Kawākib al-durriyya* (completed in 1011/1602-3) could indicate a slightly earlier origin for the work,¹²⁰ but, as argued above, the use of this designation could just as well have been the result of owners or booksellers with copies of the medieval *Šams* reacting to the presence of other texts marked as *Šams al-ma'ārif al-ṣuġrā*. Whatever its precise date of origin, the encyclopedic *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* is certainly a product of one or more early modern compilers, and not of al-Būnī or his amanuenses.

A section of *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* that has commanded a great deal of attention from modern scholars is a set of *asānīd* for al-Būnī near the end of the work, which claim to identify al-Būnī's mentors in the science of letters and other areas of knowledge, as well as to identify the lines of teachers preceding al-Būnī's masters through whom this knowledge was passed down. Indeed, some of the oft-noted issues of anachronism in *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* stem from these *asānīd*, insofar as they place people assumed to have been younger than al-Būnī several steps before him in the chain of transmission, such that, for example, he is said to have received the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī through five intermediaries, and those of al-Shāḍilī's pupil Abū l-'Abbās al-Mursī (d. 686/1287) through three intermediaries.¹²¹ Several modern researchers have commented on these issues, although Witkam has done the most thorough analyses of the *asānīd* based on the forms they take in printed

¹²⁰ Al-Manāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya*, 2: 38.

¹²¹ Lory, *La science des lettres*, 92; Witkam, 'Gazing at the Sun', 194.

editions of the work, and I have drawn in part on Witkam's work in what follows.¹²²

It can now be shown that at least two of the *asānīd* were copied from the writings of °Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī, where they were originally presented as al-Biṣṭāmī's own chains. The first instance is the chain that, in *Šams al-ma°arīf al-kubrā*, claims to trace one of the lines through which al-Būnī's knowledge of the science of letters was developed back to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī; this is 'Pedigree C' in Witkam's analysis.¹²³ Table 1 below shows the *asānīd* as they appear in three sources: the left-hand column is from Süleymaniye MS Bağdatlı Vehbi 930, a codex copied in 836/1433 of a work by al-Biṣṭāmī bearing the title *al-°Uğāla fī ḥall al-anmāṭ al-mu°arrafa bi-ğam° Abī l-°Abbās Aḥmad*.

Table 1: First example of a plagiarized *isnād*

MS Bağdatlı Vehbi 930 fol. 6 ^p -7 ^a	MS Beşir Ağa 89 fol. 213 ^b	Witkam 2007 'Pedigree C'
°Alī b. Abī Ṭālib		
Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī	Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī	Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī
Habīb al-°Ağamī	Habīb al-°Ağamī	Habīb al-°Ağamī
Dāwūd al-Ṭā°ī	Dāwūd al-Ṭā°ī	Dāwūd al-Ġabalī
Ma°rūf al-Karḥī	Ma°rūf al-Karḥī	Ma°rūf al-Karḥī
Sarī al-Saqāṭī	Sarī al-Saqāṭī	Sarī al-Dīn al-Saqāṭī
Ġunayd al-Bağdādī	Ġunayd al-Bağdādī	Ġunayd al-Bağdādī
Mimšād al-Dīnawarī	Mimšād al-Dīnawarī	Ḥammād al-Dīnawarī
Aḥmad al-Aswad	–	Aḥmad al-Aswad
Aḥī Faraj al-Zinjānī	–	–
Aḥmad al-Ġazālī	Aḥmad al-Ġazālī	Muḥammad al-Ġazālī
Abū l-Nağīb al-Suhrawardī	Abū l-Nağīb al-Suhrawardī	Abū l-Nağīb al-Suhrawardī
Quṭb al-Dīn al-Abḥārī	Muḥammad al-Suhrawardī	–
Rukn al-Dīn al-Sağāsī(?)	–	–
Aşıl al-Dīn al-Şirāzī	Aşıl al-Dīn al-Şirāzī	Aşıl al-Dīn al-Şirāzī
°Abd Allāh al-Balyānī	°Abd Allāh al-Balyānī	°Abd Allāh al-Bayānī
Qāsim al-Şirāzī	Qāsim al-Şirğānī(?)	Qāsim al-Sarğānī
Qawwām al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Biṣṭāmī	Qawwām al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Biṣṭāmī	°Abd Allāh al-Biṣṭāmī
Alā° al-Dīn al-Biṣṭāmī	Alā° al-Dīn al-Biṣṭāmī	
Šams al-Dīn Abū °Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Aṭ°ānī	Abū °Abd Allāh Šams al- Dīn Muḥammad al-Aṭ°ānī	Abū °Abd Allāh Šams al- Dīn al-Işfahānī
°Abd al-Raḥman al-Biṣṭāmī	Al-Būnī	Al-Būnī

¹²² Ibid., 190–7.

¹²³ Ibid., 193.

Although the work is obviously related to al-Būnī, al-Biṣṭāmī is clearly listing his own credentials in supplying this list. The middle column is from Süleymaniye MS Beşir Ağa 89, a copy of *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā* produced in 1057/1647, one of the earlier dated copies of the work. When these two are compared side by side, it is quite clear that al-Biṣṭāmī’s *isnād* has been arrogated to al-Būnī, with a few names having been omitted. Even some of the language al-Biṣṭāmī uses to open the presentation of his *asānīd* is reproduced in *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā*,¹²⁴ and the language used within the *isnād* regarding modes of transmission is also identical. Finally, the right-hand column is from Witkam’s article; it reflects the Murad printed edition of *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā*. In addition to the swapping out of al-Biṣṭāmī’s name for al-Būnī’s, one can see a cumulative loss of information from one chain to the next as names drop out or become garbled.

A similar process appears to have occurred with regard to al-Būnī’s alleged *isnād* for knowledge of *kalimat al-šahāda*, ‘Pedigree A’ in Witkam’s analysis. In the Table 2 (shown overleaf), the source for al-Biṣṭāmī’s *isnād* is Süleymaniye MS Carullah 1543.1, an abridged copy of *Rašh adwāq al-ḥikma* that probably was produced in the tenth/sixteenth century, in which the *isnād* is given as al-Biṣṭāmī’s source for knowledge of *‘ilm al-ḥurūf wa-l-awfāq*. In this case, where al-Biṣṭāmī abbreviated the list by skipping the names of the ‘poles’ (*aqṭāb*) between al-Šāḍilī and the Prophet Muḥammad, those names have been supplied in *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā*, albeit with al-Šāḍilī’s name suppressed. A similar degeneration of information as that noted for the previous set of chains occurs here as well.

In Table 2, the proof of plagiarism lies in the names at the top of the list, particularly in that of Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Kūmī (al-Tūnisī), a known figure whom Brockelmann identifies as having been writing in 810/1407,¹²⁵ and whom al-Biṣṭāmī claimed as a personal teacher. That al-Kūmī could have been four steps removed from al-Šāḍilī and also have been al-Biṣṭāmī’s teacher is perfectly conceivable. The same obviously cannot be said of him and al-Būnī.

¹²⁴ This being the sentence that begins ‘*ḥātima fī dīkr sanad šaykinā qaddasa llāh sirrahu...*’

¹²⁵ *GAL*, SII: 358.

Table 2: Second example of a plagiarized *isnād*

MS Carullah 1543.1 fol. 5 ^b –6 ^a	MS Beşir Ağa 89 fol. 213 ^{a-b}	Witkam 2007 'Pedigree A'
Al-Bistāmī	Al-Būnī	Al-Būnī
Abū °Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Ya°qūb al- Kūmī	Abū °Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ya°qūb al- Kūmī	Abū °Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ya°qūb al- Fakūnī
Abū l-°Abbās Aḥmad al- Duhhān(?)		
Abū l-°Abbās Aḥmad al- Ġāfī(?)	Abū l-°Abbās al-Ḥāfī	
Abū l-°Azā°im Māḍī b. Sultān	Abū l-°Azā°im Māḍī	Māḍī l-°Azā°im
Abū l-Ḥasan al-Şādīlī	Abū °Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī al- Ḥasan °Alī b. Ḥawārazm	Abū °Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī al- Ḥasan °Alī b. Ḥirzhum
Pole after pole to... (<i>Wa- huwa aḥaḍa °an qutb ba°da qutb ilā...</i>)	Abū Muḥammad Şāliḥ b. Bayḍā°(?) b. ??? al- Dukkānī al-Mālikī	Abū Muḥammad Şāliḥ b. °Aqbān al-Qākīlī al- Mālikī
–	Abū Madyan Şu°ayb b. al-Ḥasan al-Andalusī al-Işbīlī	Abū Madyan Şu°ayb b. al-Ḥasan al-Andalusī al- Işbīlī
–	Abū Yi°zā al- Haşkūrī(?)	Abū Şu°ayb Ayyūb b. Şa°id al-Şinhāḡī
–	Şu°ayb Ayyūb b. Şa°id al-Şinhāḡī	Abū Ya°zā al-Ma°arrī
–	Ibn Muḥammad Tubūr(?)	
–	Abū Muḥammad °Abd al-Ġalīl b. Maḡlān(?)	Abū Muḥammad b. Manşūr
–	Abū °Abd Allāh b. Abī Bişr	Abū l-Faḍl °Abd Allāh b. Abī Bişr
–	Mūsā al-Kazīm	Mūsā al-Kazīmī
–	Abū Ġa°far al-Şādiq	Abū Ġa°far al-Şādiq
–	Ġa°far al-Şādiq	
–	Muḥammad al-Bāqir	Muḥammad al-Bāqir
–	Zayn al-°Ābidīn	Zayn al-°Ābidīn
Ḥasan b. °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, who took from his grandfather...	Al-Ḥusayn b. °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib	Al-Ḥusayn b. °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib
–	°Alī b. Abī Ṭālib	°Alī b. Abī Ṭālib
Muḥammad	Muḥammad	Muḥammad

Although certain of al-Būnī and al-Biṣṭāmī's works perhaps could easily be mistaken as a work of the other (several modern catalogers have done so), I find it difficult to conceive of a scenario in which the arrogation of al-Biṣṭāmī's *asānīd* to al-Būnī could have occurred other than through a deliberate act of forgery, especially as al-Biṣṭāmī refers to himself in the third person in his versions of these chains. These are only two of eleven *asānīd* given for al-Būnī in *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*, and it is possible that some of the others may contain valid information, although these two instances of plagiarism are hardly positive indicators of that. As noted in the second section of this paper, Abū Madyan and two other *šayḥs* mentioned in *Qabs al-iqtidā'* also appear in certain of these chains, although I am of the opinion that *Qabs al-iqtidā'* was probably the source upon which these chains were constructed. In short, I think it much more likely that the others chains in *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* also are borrowed from other non-Būnian sources, construed from other Būnian or pseudo-Būnian texts, or simply fabricated from whole cloth.

That al-Biṣṭāmī's chains were assigned to al-Būnī provides important clues as to the way *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* as a whole was created. While certain parts of the work clearly were taken from earlier Būnian works,¹²⁶ I would propose that al-Biṣṭāmī's writings were likely the source of other parts of the text beyond these two chains. Even at a glance, the talismans in *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* (particularly the complex borders around many talismans in which the name Allāh is written repeatedly) are far more similar to the talismans in al-Biṣṭāmī's *Šams al-āfāq fī 'ilm al-ḥurūf wa-l-awfāq* and other of his works than to any of those in the medieval Būnian corpus. Of course, some parts of the *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* may be entirely original to it, and a careful study of both men's writings and similar works will be required to establish the provenance of the text's many parts.

That the arrogation of al-Biṣṭāmī's *asānīd* to al-Būnī seems to have gone unnoticed and/or unchallenged suggests that living lines of authorized transmission of Būnian works had died away in this period, and/or that *asānīd* generally had become primarily notional markers of a text's age and good provenance rather than organizing principles for living communities of readers/practitioners. The success of *Šams al-*

¹²⁶ For example, large parts of the opening of the medieval *Šams al-ma'ārif wa-laṭā'if al-awārif* are incorporated into that of *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*, although the latter has a different incipit: *Šahāda azal fa-min nūr hādīhi šahāda...*

ma'ārif al-kubrā suggests that it met some real demand in the marketplace for a work of this sort, and the text and its numerous codices are incredibly important sources for the study of the occult sciences in the eleventh/seventeenth-century and beyond. They are not, however, reliable sources for the study of al-Būnī's thought as it was originally presented, or the medieval reception thereof. It is hoped that this distinction will take root as studies of al-Būnī and the Islamicate occult sciences move forward.

Conclusion

Al-Būnī and the full range of his works have been excluded too long from serious consideration in the historiography of Islamic thought and society, particularly with regard to what may have been his transformative role in Sufism. In modern times, al-Būnī often has been regarded as an archetypal 'magician,' a development that I think was largely the result of a centuries-long process of selection on the parts of readers and producers of his works in favor of practical occult–scientific aspects of his thought, the more pietistic and philosophical elements having been largely overshadowed by and integrated with the thought of Ibn 'Arabī by their shared interpreters – one important and late product of this process being *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*. However, the scholarly misapprehension of al-Būnī has also been the result of a major failure of textual scholarship conditioned by a modern academic predisposition to downplay the historical importance of the occult sciences. Many mid-twentieth-century scholars of Islamicate history participated in a tendency, well entrenched in the humanities and social sciences of their time, to regard 'magic' as an ancient but persistent detritus, an irrational and antisocial atavism thriving primarily among the poorly educated and flourishing in moments of cultural decline.¹²⁷ That many of these scholars were content to draw on the easily available *Šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā* as the main representative of al-Būnī's thought is, in my estimation, symptomatic of their presumption of his fundamentally irrelevant and/or deleterious role in Islamic thought. Armand Abel, in his essay on the occult sciences as a sign of the 'decadence' of late-medieval thought and culture, derided the 'confused doctrine' and jumbled

¹²⁷ For some excellent accounts of the history of 'magic' as an analytical category in the modern social sciences and humanities, see Styers, *Making Magic*, and Hanegraaff, 'The Emergence of the Academic Science of Magic'. Specifically in regard to the Islamicate occult sciences, see Francis, 'Magic and Divination', and Lemay, 'L'islam historique et les sciences occultes'.

contents of *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā*.¹²⁸ The historian of Islamic science Manfred Ullmann declared al-Būnī to have been a ‘credulous’ man and the work a collection of popular magical recipes with no roots in Arabic literary traditions.¹²⁹ In the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Dietrich calls *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā* al-Būnī’s ‘main work,’ and describes it as ‘a collection both muddled and dreary’ of popular magical materials.¹³⁰ In short, it seems that for these scholars *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā* was convenient evidence of what they assumed to be the intrinsic incoherence of magical thinking, and thus they saw no need to inquire further into the textual tradition. More puzzling is the reliance on *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā* by scholars not at all hostile to al-Būnī or to magic and the occult sciences generally, though the modern fame of the work and ease of access undoubtedly have played important roles. I believe it to be imperative that, as research proceeds, more attention is paid to the full range of major medieval Būnian works. Of course a great deal of work also remains to be done on the numerous works attributed to al-Būnī which survive in only one or two copies.

Were al-Būnī’s works ‘books of magic?’ It is highly unlikely that anyone who owned and used them regarded them as books of ‘sorcery’ (*siḥr*), insofar as *siḥr* was primarily an accusatory designation for marking certain activities as intrinsically un-Islamic.¹³¹ A number of other terms the meanings and moral implications of which were more fluid are far more pertinent to the discussion of Būnian works, especially *‘ilm al-ḥurūf* and *sīmiyā’*.¹³² To my mind the expressions of piety that run through out al-Būnī’s works absolutely cannot be dismissed as a mere veneer on ‘pre-Islamic’ beliefs and practices, especially given their rootedness in *‘ilm al-ḥurūf*, a tradition that, however controversial, has a lengthy pedigree in Islamic thought and is thoroughly suffused with veneration for the Qur’ān. It is in fact hard to ascertain that al-Būnī’s works were popular among the unlettered masses so commonly associated with ‘magical’ practices in modern scholarship, while the evidence certainly indicates an audience among the elites. That Ibn Ḥaldūn and others tried to portray al-Būnī’s works as sorcerous is almost

¹²⁸ Abel, ‘La place des sciences occultes’, 302 ff.

¹²⁹ Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften*, 390–1.

¹³⁰ Dietrich, ‘al-Būnī’, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

¹³¹ For an excellent discussion of Qur’ānic notions of *siḥr* and related terms, see Hamès – Hamès, ‘La notion de magie’, passim.

¹³² On the latter term, see MacDonald [Fahd], ‘Sīmiyā’’, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.; also Lory, ‘Kashifī’s *Asrār-i Qāsimī*’, 531–5.

certainly evidence that the works were gaining an alarming (to the critics) degree of acceptance among ‘people who mattered,’ rather than of their having been primarily ‘popular’ practices widely looked down upon by the educated.

In keeping with Kieckhefer’s axiom noted at the outset of this article, it must also be asked if al-Būnī’s works were ‘magical books?’ Whether or not the books themselves were regarded as especially powerful artifacts is one of many questions that require further investigation. That some of them contained talismanic designs does not imply that these designs would have been regarded as ‘charged’ talismans, insofar as a variety of other practices (supererogatory fasting and prayer, construction at specific times, etc.) were required for them to be effective, and in many cases they were meant to be inscribed on specific metals or other media. On the other hand, it is very common to find numerous *awfāq* scrawled on the flyleaves of Būnian works, often accompanied by the texts of brief invocatory prayers, which suggests that their inscription in a Būnian work rather than in some other book was believed to enhance their efficacy.

I cannot help but add that, in the grand sense that Būnian works may have helped reshape the contours of Sufism and other arenas of Islamic thought, they were magical books indeed. Despite the attempts of many twentieth-century Sufi studies scholars to construct ‘Sufism proper’ as concerned exclusively with interior spiritual discovery and/or ascetic withdrawal, it has increasingly been recognized of late that Sufism, always polyphonic, was never entirely innocent of claims to occult power in the everyday world.¹³³ Such claims do seem to have come to the fore in the late medieval period, and, without suggesting any simplistic causality, I would observe that it is likely no mere coincidence that this is roughly the same period in which certain Sufi leaders and groups began unmistakably to flex their sociopolitical muscles and to be incorporated into existing circles of power. Insofar as, at various times and places, al-Būnī’s works seem to have been some of the primary vehicles through which ‘occult’ aspects of Sufism were expressed in elite circles, they were no doubt dangerous and powerful books in the eyes of some.

Finally, as a methodological coda, I would note that al-Būnī’s general exclusion from Ṣūfī studies and other wings of Islamic social and intellectual history is to some degree due to a general negligence of

¹³³ On this still-controversial topic, see Lory, ‘Sufism et sciences occultes’, *passim*; Morris, ‘Situating Islamic “Mysticism”’, *passim*.

important aspects of the manuscript inheritance among Islamicist premodernists. I originally came to engage with manuscript studies due to the absence of reliable scholarly editions of Būnian works,¹³⁴ but soon came to realize that these codices offer far more than potential ‘corrected texts.’ Exposure to the field has made strikingly clear to me that manuscripts commonly are treated as if they were never more than text-containers, the ‘material support’ for written ideas rendered expendable once a scholarly edition has been produced, and readable like any other book. In reference to the tendency of many edition-makers and readers to ignore the wealth of paratexts and extratextual data found in premodern manuscripts, the Europeanist medievalist John Dagenais noted drily in 1994: ‘Medievalism, as it has been practiced over the past two centuries, is the only discipline I can think of that takes as its first move the suppression of its evidence’.¹³⁵ I am of the opinion that this critique applies equally well to current Islamicist premodern studies, a field that, with certain important exceptions, seems to have remained largely innocent of the manuscript-centric methodologies of the ‘New Philology’ that swept through Europeanist medievalism in the past few decades,¹³⁶ and of the discourses on the sociology and history of the book that have so influenced many other fields of sociopolitical and intellectual-historical inquiry.¹³⁷ A small body of excellent scholarship exists on how books were produced and used in premodern Islamicate contexts, and on

¹³⁴ An absence now partially filled by Cordero’s production of an excellent scholarly edition of the first volume of *Šams al-ma‘ārif al-kubrā*; see bibliography.

¹³⁵ Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading*, xviii. On some of the pitfalls of editing practices in relation to Islamic texts, see Witkam, ‘Establishing the Stemma’, passim.

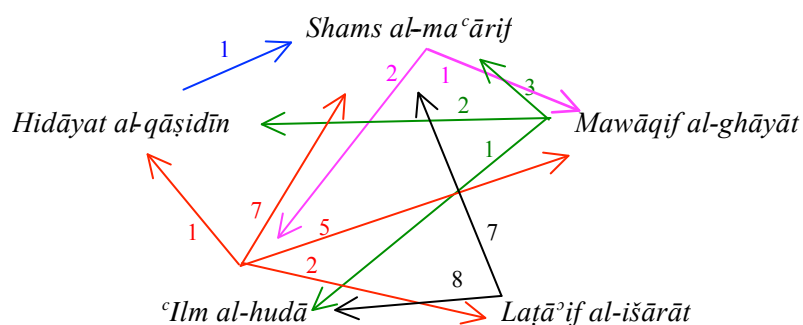
¹³⁶ For a number of examples of the fruits of this movement, see *Speculum* 65, no. 1 (1990), an issue dedicated to New Philology edited by Stephen Nichols. The issue opens with Nichols’ presentation of his since-influential notion of notion of the ‘manuscript matrix,’ wherein multiple contesting actors (authors, copyists, glossators, illuminators) contributed to the constitutions of a given codex. Dagenais’ critique of the New Philology in the preface to *The Ethics of Reading* is highly worthwhile as well.

¹³⁷ Key works include McKenzie’s ‘The Sociology of a Text,’ Darnton’s ‘What is the History of Books?’, Chartier’s *The Order of Books*, etc. Some important recent additions to this general area of inquiry are Fraser’s *Book History through Postcolonial Eyes*, and Barber’s *The Anthropology of Texts*. On the impact of some of these authors on the broader field of intellectual history, see Grafton, ‘The History of Ideas’, passim.

how the conditions of their production and use impacted the perceived epistemological value of their contents, but all too rarely has this scholarship been integrated with the broader study of premodern texts.¹³⁸ I hope that this article can serve as a demonstration, however flawed, of some of what can be achieved through combining attention to transmission paratexts and other aspects of manuscript evidence with more conventional methods of intellectual and sociopolitical historiography. This may be especially relevant to the recovery of a figure such as al-Būnī, who has been obscured and misrepresented in the historical record for a variety of reasons both medieval and modern, but I strongly suspect that a return to the manuscripts of many better known authors – particularly those of the late medieval and early modern periods, from which so many codices survive – would yield a wealth of information about the lived worlds in which their works were read that has not yet been taken into account.

Chart: Inter-referentiality among the five ‘core’ works.

Numbers indicate the number of references each work makes to its partners, e.g. *‘Ilm al-hudā* makes seven references to *Šams al-ma‘ārif*. N.B: the *Šams al-ma‘ārif* referred to here is the medieval *Šams*, not the *Kubrā*!



¹³⁸ E.g. Pedersen’s *The Arabic Book*; Rosenthal’s ‘Technique and Approach’; several sections of Makdisi’s *Rise of Colleges*, and, more recently, Gacek’s *Vademecum* and Déroche’s *Islamic Codicology*. There are obvious exceptions to the critique leveled here, including the works cited previously by Chamberlain, Berkey, Ohlander, and Dickinson, although these do not draw on specific codices so much as they present innovative general explorations of the use of books. Bauden’s series of *Maqriziana* articles must be mentioned as making groundbreaking use of manuscript sources, and I am no doubt missing several other scholars whose names also should be included here.

Copies of major Būnian works.

A number without parentheses indicates the number of colophonically dated copies. A number in parentheses indicates undated codices that can be assigned to a century with a reasonably high degree of confidence on the basis of certain physical characteristics (especially paper), *mise-en-page*, etc. In cases where the number in the total number of copies column does not add up to the columns preceding it, this is a result of some number of undated copies for which I have no basis to estimate a date. Some of the copies of works counted here are abridgements or fragments.

Table 3: Copies of major Būnian works, by century.

Work	7th/13th c.	8th/14th c.	9th/15th c.	10th/16th c.	11th/17th c. or later	Total copies
<i>Šams al-ma^cārif</i>	–	(3)	12 (6)	4 (6)	4 (4)	43
<i>Hidāyat al-qāsidīn</i>	–	–	(1)	1	–	3
<i>Mawāqif al-ġāyāt</i>	–	1	2	2	2	9
<i>‘Ilm al-hudā</i>	–	8 (1)	(1)	2 (1)	2 (1)	17
<i>Laṭā’if al-išārāt</i>	1?	2 (1)	4 (3)	1 (2)	1 (2)	20
<i>al-Lum^a al-nūrāniyya</i>	1	3 (2)	9 (6)	3 (5)	5 (3)	40
<i>Tartīb al-da^cawāt</i>	–	1	3 (3)	2 (1)	1 (2)	16
<i>Qabs al-iqtidā’</i>	–	(1)	4 (2)	(1)	3	12
<i>Ḥawaṣṣ asmā’ Allāh</i>	–	–	1	1 (3)	–	7
<i>Risāla fī faḍā’il al-basmala</i>	–	–	–	(1)	3 (6)	10
<i>Al-Uṣūl wa-l-dawābiṭ</i>	–	–	–	(1)	5 (2)	8
<i>Šams al-ma^cārif al-kubrā</i>	–	–	–	–	26 (15)	51

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What follows lists only the codices directly cited within this article, and it reflects a little more than one-tenth of the manuscripts surveyed for this project. Because manuscripts have been referred to by their shelfmarks when discussed in the article, and because of the alternate titles by which many of the works/manuscripts are cataloged by the collections that hold them, this list is alphabetized by shelfmark rather than by title. In each case, if a title is given in the manuscript, then it is noted immediately after the author; a standardized title follows in brackets if it differs from the given title. In cases where no title is given in the manuscript, only the bracketed standardized title is given.

- Beyazid MS 1377, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šarḥ asmāʾ al-ḥusnā* [*ʿIlm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidā fī šarḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*], dated 773/1371, 174 folia.
- BnF MS arabe 2647, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maʿārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ʿawārif*, undated (late 13th or 14th century), 148 folia.
- BnF MS arabe 2649, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maʿārif al-kubrā wa-laṭāʾif al-ʿawārif* [*Šams al-maʿārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ʿawārif*], dated 913/1508, 110 folia.
- BnF MS arabe 2657, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī asrār al-ḥurūf al-ʿulwiyyāt* [*Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ʿulwiyyāt*], dated 788/1386, 67 folia.
- BnF MS arabe 2658, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī asrār al-ḥurūf al-ʿulwiyyāt* [*Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ʿulwiyyāt*], dated 809/1406, 93 folia.
- BnF MS arabe 6556, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maʿārif al-ṣuġrā wa-laṭāʾif al-ʿawārif* [*Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ʿulwiyyāt*], dated 781/1380, 58 folia.
- Chester Beatty MS 3168.5, Aḥmad al-Būnī, [*al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya fī awrād al-rabbāniyya*], dated 686/1287.
- Chester Beatty MS 3200, al-Maḥallī's commentary on al-Subkī's *Ġamʿ al-ġawāmiʿ*, dated 870/1465–66.
- Dār al-Kutub MS Ḥurūf M 75, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maʿārif al-ṣuġrā* [unknown], undated.
- Dār al-Kutub MS Ḥurūf Ṭalʿa 159, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maʿārif al-kubrā wa-laṭāʾif al-ʿawārif al-mawṣilat ilā saʿādat al-dunyā wa-l-āḥira* [*Šams al-maʿārif al-kubrā wa-laṭāʾif al-ʿawārif*], dated 1051/1641, 217 folia.

- Harvard MS Arab 332, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams šuġrā* [unknown], undated, 67 folia.
- Leiden MS oriental 1233, Aḥmad al-Būnī, [*Tartīb al-daʿawāt fī taḥṣīṣ al-awqāt ʿalā ḥtilāf al-irādāt*], dated 812/1409, 174 folia.
- Manisa MS 45 HK 1445, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šumūs li-l-ʿarīf laṭāʾif al-išārāt* [*Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ʿulwiyyāt*], see footnote 71 *supra* regarding the dating, 60 folia.
- Österreichische Nationalbibliothek MS A.F. 162a, Aḥmad al-Būnī, [*Tartīb al-daʿawāt fī taḥṣīṣ al-awqāt ʿalā ḥtilāf al-irādāt*], dated 963/1556, 96 folia.
- Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2160.1, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn wa-nihāyat al-wāṣilīn*, copied prior to 914/1508, 40 folia.
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- Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2802, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maʿarīf* [*Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ʿulwiyyāt*, see n. 59 of this article], undated, 75 folia.
- Süleymaniye MS Bağdatlı Vehbi 930, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī, *al-ʿUġāla fī ḥall al-anmāʾ al-muʿarrafa bi-ġamʿ Abī al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad*, dated 836/1433, 52 folia.
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- Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šarḥ asmāʾ al-ḥusnā* [*ʿIlm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidāʾ fī šarḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*], dated 772/1370, 239 folia.
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IL LIBRO COME MAESTRO: SUFISMO E STORIA DELLA LETTURA NEL MEDIOEVO ISLAMICO

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Between the end of the 8th/14th century and the beginning of the 9th/15th, the literate elites in Yemen and al-Andalus publicly debated the legitimacy and the educational function of Sufi books. In Yemen, where Ibn ʿArabī's 'school' thrived, some jurists urged the ban of his books, while ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Ġīlī and his associates extolled their educational virtue for Sufi novices. In al-Andalus, the debate focused on whether books could take the place of the master in Sufi education, an issue whose relevance was felt well beyond Sufi circles, prompting Ibn Ḥaldūn to join the discussion. These controversies, even though they were connected to specific local contexts, are significant in a general way because they offer evidence for the spread of private reading among Sufis in the later Middle Ages. To appreciate the historical importance of this, one should ask how far it is new and whether it is limited to Sufism. These two questions are addressed in the first two parts of this article. The first part outlines key changes relating to Sufi literary output in the 12th and 13th centuries. In particular, it examines the tension between orality and writing within Sufism, and the ways in which the written transmission of mystical knowledge was controlled or repressed. The second part draws attention to shared paradigms of both esoteric and exoteric knowledge as the connection between private reading and innovation, and the preservation of oral symbolism in written transmission. Finally, the third part re-examines the 14th and 15th-century debates from the angle of the history of reading in medieval Sufism. The arguments exchanged in these debates bear witness to changes in reading practice linked to the shifting relationships between authority and knowledge in Islamic cultural history.

Introduzione

Tra la fine del VIII/XIV secolo e l'inizio del IX/XV, le élites erudite dell'Andalusia e dello Yemen sono state coinvolte in due animati dibattiti pubblici intorno alla legittimità e alla funzione pedagogica dei libri nel sufismo. In Yemen, dove la scuola di Ibn ʿArabī ebbe in quest'epoca un momento di grande espansione, alcuni giuristi cercarono di far mettere al bando i libri di Ibn ʿArabī, mentre ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Ġīlī e altri sufi ne celebrarono il valore formativo e ne promossero la divulgazione. In Andalusia, si discusse se i libri potessero sostituire il maestro nell'educazione dei sufi. L'importanza della questione fu avvertita ben al di là dei circoli sufi, a tal punto da indurre Ibn Ḥaldūn a

intervenire nel dibattito. Per quanto legate a specifici contesti locali, queste due controversie, sorte negli stessi anni ai due estremi del mondo arabo, sono il segno di una sempre maggiore diffusione della pratica della lettura privata in ambito sufi.

Per cogliere la portata storica di un tale fenomeno, occorre chiedersi in che misura esso costituisca una novità e sia limitato specificamente al sufismo. Le prime due parti di questo studio cercano di rispondere a queste due domande. La prima parte descrive alcune trasformazioni che si sono prodotte nel rapporto con il libro già nel sufismo dei due secoli precedenti ai dibattiti del VIII/XIV–IX/XV secolo, soffermandosi soprattutto sul problema della tensione fra oralità e scrittura all'interno del sufismo e sulle modalità di controllo o di repressione della divulgazione scritta della conoscenza mistica. La seconda parte mette in evidenza alcuni paradigmi comuni alle scienze religiose tradizionali e al sufismo, come il nesso fra lettura privata e innovazione, e la persistenza del simbolismo orale nella trasmissione scritta.

Dopo questo inquadramento generale, la terza parte riprende in esame le controversie del VIII/XIV–IX/XV secolo, cercando di metterne in evidenza l'interesse dal punto di vista della storia della lettura e del ruolo del libro nel sufismo del tardo medioevo. Questi dibattiti mostrano che la possibilità che la lettura privata di un libro sostituisca l'insegnamento orale non è soltanto una prassi più o meno tollerata, ma è un metodo che alcuni autori giustificano anche da un punto di vista teorico. Gli argomenti discussi consentono di vedere in un contesto preciso come il cambiamento nella pratica di lettura si colleghi ai mutevoli rapporti fra autorità e conoscenza nella storia culturale.

Esoterismo e divulgazione nel sufismo fra VI/XII e VIII/XIV secolo

Il sufismo è un caso particolarmente interessante dell'ambivalenza verso lo scritto nella civiltà arabo-islamica, dove la centralità religiosa del testo sacro e il culto del libro e dell'arte della scrittura coesistono con l'idea che l'insegnamento orale sia più autentico e autorevole dei testi scritti. In generale, il sufismo condivide con le altre scienze religiose musulmane l'idea che l'accesso al testo debba essere controllato da maestri autorizzati a trasmetterlo e a interpretarlo. Nel caso del sufismo, questo principio assume però un'importanza particolare, perché la conoscenza sufi è per definizione riservata a pochi. Pertanto, la possibilità e le condizioni della divulgazione in forma scritta di questa conoscenza hanno costituito un problema centrale sin dalle origini del sufismo. I dibattiti pubblici del VIII/XIV secolo intorno alla validità di una formazione mistica basata esclusivamente sui libri si inseriscono in

questa problematica generale, che ha assunto in quest'epoca una nuova urgenza in seguito alla fioritura di libri sugli aspetti teorici del sufismo nei due secoli precedenti. In questione non è dunque soltanto la pratica della lettura privata, ma la stessa legittimità della letteratura mistico-filosofica, contestata non solo dagli 'ulamā' ostili al sufismo, ma anche all'interno del sufismo.

Nella storia del sufismo, il principio dell'esoterismo, vale a dire l'obbligo di tenere il segreto fra chi è degno di riceverlo, distinto dal problema dell'indicibilità dell'esperienza mistica, ha un valore fondatore. L'opposizione alla divulgazione serve infatti sin dalle origini a contraddistinguere la corrente 'sobria' e 'moderata' del sufismo dalle sue manifestazioni eterodosse. Secondo la tradizione sufi, la 'divulgazione del segreto' (*ifšā' al-sirr*) è stata la causa della rottura di al-Ġunayd (m. 298/910), l'autorità di riferimento della scuola di Baghdad, con al-Ḥallāğ, già prima che questi fosse giustiziato nel 309/922.¹ I copisti di Baghdad, dopo la condanna di al-Ḥallāğ, dovettero giurare di non far circolare, né vendere, né comprare i suoi libri.² D'altra parte, tutti gli scritti di Ġunayd sono lettere inviate ad altri sufi, la cui diffusione doveva essere ristretta a un circolo di iniziati; nemmeno per lettera, tuttavia, Ġunayd riteneva ammissibile uno stile troppo esplicito.³

Dato che il libro è un oggetto destinato a circolare, che 'può cadere in mano a chiunque, chi ne è degno come chi non ne è degno',⁴ la conservazione del segreto esige in linea di principio una comunicazione esclusivamente orale. Un discorso esoterico ma scritto è di per sé un paradosso, perché vi si uniscono la segretezza legata all'oralità e la pubblicità legata alla scrittura. Tutta la letteratura sufi si è misurata con questo paradosso, comune ad altre tradizioni mistiche e filosofiche e particolarmente importante nella filosofia arabo-islamica.⁵ D'altra parte, la registrazione scritta degli insegnamenti dei grandi maestri del passato nei manuali composti fra IV/X e V/XI secolo è indispensabile per affermare il sufismo come *madḥab*, cioè come una disciplina religiosa

¹ A.T. Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 25.

² Z. Szombathy, 'Freedom of Expression', 18; cfr. anche L. Massignon, *Passion*, 1: 676–8.

³ A.T. Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 18. Anche i cabalisti più contrari alla diffusione del segreto scrivono lettere: cfr. M. Idel, *Kabbalah*, 22.

⁴ Al-Ša'arānī, *Durar al-ğawwās*, 4 (*wa-l-kitāb yaqa'u fī yad ahlihi wa-ğayr ahlihi*).

⁵ Cfr. L. Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*; R. Brague, 'Athens, Jerusalem, Mecca'. Per una critica dell'interpretazione dell'esoterismo filosofico in Leo Strauss, cfr. M. Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation*, 67, 136, 162.

equiparabile alle discipline religiose tradizionali.⁶ Come le scuole di diritto, il sufismo costituisce una ‘comunità testuale’,⁷ identificata da un corpus di testi di base, attribuiti al fondatore eponimo o considerati come la registrazione scritta dei suoi detti, che costituiscono una letteratura specializzata la cui trasmissione e interpretazione deve essere controllata dai maestri.

I manuali sufi mantengono uno stretto legame con l’oralità sia per la forma che per la tecnica di scrittura. Per la forma perché, strutturati principalmente come raccolte di detti e aneddoti, adottano uno stile letterario che riproduce la parola detta, conformemente al modello della trasmissione del *ḥadīṭ*, ma anche della letteratura monastica tardo-antica.⁸ Per la tecnica di scrittura, perché il linguaggio dei manuali, caratterizzato dalla natura specializzata del lessico tecnico (*iṣṭilāḥ*) e dall’oscurità dell’allusione (*iṣāra*), presume la mediazione di un commento orale da parte di un maestro vivente capace di leggere fra le righe.⁹ Questo non ha impedito che i manuali servissero sin dal periodo classico come guida alla purificazione dell’anima inferiore in sostituzione di un maestro.¹⁰ L’uso dei manuali come guide alla fase preliminare del percorso spirituale, divenuto sempre più comune nei secoli successivi, non è però troppo problematico, perché la disciplina dell’anima non è una dottrina segreta ma un insegnamento pratico che si ispira spesso direttamente ai modelli stabiliti nella sunna.

Anche al-Ġazālī (m. 505/1111), come lui stesso racconta nella sua autobiografia, avrebbe avuto la sua prima iniziazione al sufismo

⁶ Cfr. M. Malamud, ‘Sufi organizations’, 429–30. Per una descrizione sintetica del contesto storico in cui sono nati questi manuali si veda A.T. Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 83–113.

⁷ Su questa nozione, si veda B. Stock, *Listening for the Text*.

⁸ Sugli *apophthegmata patrum* come paradigma di ‘oralità fittizia’ nella letteratura cristiana si veda K.S. Frank, ‘Fiktive Mündlichkeit’. Sulla possibilità che questa letteratura monastica abbia offerto un modello agli autori sufi anche attraverso canali di trasmissione scritta, si veda S. Chialà, ‘Les mystiques musulmans’. Questa relazione avrebbe in seguito favorito l’imitazione dell’*Iḥyāʾ* di al-Ġazālī nella letteratura religiosa siriana del XIII secolo: vedi *Ibid.*, 366–7.

⁹ Si veda C.W. Ernst, ‘Mystical Language’, 192–4; S.H. Nasr, ‘Oral Transmission and the Book’. Per paralleli nella filosofia e nella mistica ebraica cfr. R. Brague, ‘Athens, Jerusalem, Mecca’, 243–4; E. Wolfson, ‘Beyond the Spoken Word’, 193.

¹⁰ Come nel caso di al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidī (m. tra il 295/905 e il 300/910 ca.): si veda B. Radtke e J. O’Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood*, 1–2, 17.

attraverso la lettura di tali libri.¹¹ Il suo *Ihyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, uno dei più grandi ‘best-seller’ del medioevo islamico, si differenzia dai manuali che lo hanno preceduto perché, destinato a un pubblico più ampio, ha avuto un ruolo fondamentale nel promuovere il sufismo come ‘letteratura’¹² La novità di al-Ġazālī non sta nella presunta riconciliazione del sufismo con l’ortodossia, che risale a un periodo anteriore, ma nel progetto di presentare il sufismo come parte integrante della ‘cultura’ degli *ʿulamāʾ*, promuovendo il sufismo più come *adab* che come *madhab*. L’*Ihyāʾ*, proponendosi di introdurre gli ambienti scolastici alla pietà sufi, era espressamente rivolto a un pubblico di letterati non-iniziati, e destinato a circolare indipendentemente dall’insegnamento orale. Al termine dell’introduzione generale dell’opera, al-Ġazālī afferma di avere disposto la materia in modo simile ai trattati di diritto per invogliare alla lettura (*muṭālaʿa*) del libro i lettori privi di familiarità con i testi sufi, allo stesso modo in cui certi autori di trattati medici avevano scelto una veste grafica che imitava le tavole e i diagrammi dei testi astronomici.¹³ Non solo il termine *muṭālaʿa* rinvia specificamente alla lettura visiva e silenziosa, distinta dalla *qirāʾa*, che designa ugualmente la lettura ad alta voce, ma il paragone scelto da al-Ġazālī evoca un manufatto librario destinato allo sguardo.

Nell’atto di pubblicare il libro, al-Ġazālī si premura di chiarire preliminarmente che la sua trattazione è limitata all’unico aspetto della conoscenza sufi che può essere legittimamente comunicato, vale a dire la sua dimensione etica, o ‘scienza dell’azione’ (*ʿilm al-muʿāmalā*), contrapposta alla dimensione teorica, o ‘scienza dello svelamento’ (*ʿilm al-mukāšafa*). In linea con una convenzione sufi ben stabilita, al-Ġazālī dichiara infatti che la seconda non può essere scritta nei libri, ma se ne può parlare solo a chi ne è degno (*ahluhu*), attraverso l’insegnamento orale (*muḍākara*) o ‘al modo dei segreti’ (*bi-ṭarīq al-asrār*).¹⁴ Questa

¹¹ Al-Ġazālī, *Munqid*, 100–1.

¹² Sulla valorizzazione della scrittura nell’*Ihyāʾ* come strumento di conoscenza almeno in parte indipendente dalla tradizione orale, vedi E. Moosa, *Ghazālī*, soprattutto 93–117. Moosa interpreta l’*Ihyāʾ* come la scoperta da parte di al-Ġazālī di una scrittura libera dall’ideologia dell’oralità e dall’autoritarismo che questa comporta. Anche se questa chiave di lettura decostruzionista è deliberatamente anacronistica, l’analisi del rapporto fra oralità e scrittura nell’opera di al-Ġazālī ha un indubbio interesse storico-letterario.

¹³ Al-Ġazālī, *Ihyāʾ*, 1: 4–5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 19. Questo passo è tradotto e commentato in T.J. Gianotti, *Al-Ghazālī’s Unspeakable Doctrine*, 52–6. Si veda anche A. Gilʿadi, ‘On the Origin of Two Key-Terms’.

‘comunicazione segreta’ va intesa probabilmente come una comunicazione scritta ma chiusa; al-Ġazālī infatti spiega altrove che i veri ‘ulamā’, come ‘eredi dei profeti’, devono imitare il riserbo di questi, che hanno trasmesso le conoscenze nascoste in una forma indiretta e allusiva, decifrabile solo dai pochi a cui l’accenno basta.¹⁵

Malgrado queste dichiarazioni programmatiche, l’*Ihyā’* è attraversato da continue allusioni alla ‘scienza dello svelamento’.¹⁶ °Ayn al-Qudāt Hamadānī (m. 525/1131), un autore che fu condannato a morte per eresia con il pretesto che aveva mescolato gli insegnamenti dei sufi con quelli dei filosofi, si considerava ‘discepolo dei libri di al-Ġazālī’. Nell’apologia che scrisse in carcere prima di essere giustiziato, °Ayn al-Qudāt rivendica che le affermazioni condannate nei suoi scritti si ritrovano alla lettera nelle opere del suo autorevole predecessore.¹⁷

I libri di al-Ġazālī, malgrado o forse a causa del loro successo, non hanno sempre avuto vita facile. In al-Andalus, oltre ad essere condannati al rogo dai *fuqahā’* mālikiti del periodo almoravide¹⁸, sono stati criticati da Ibn Ṭufayl e da Ibn Rušd per avere trasgredito l’esoterismo politico proprio dei *falāsifa*. Ibn Rušd dichiara senz’altro che i libri di al-Ġazālī andrebbero proibiti agli incompetenti, perché, con la loro mescolanza dei livelli del discorso, sono colpevoli di una divulgazione dell’esegesi razionalista che li rende ben più dannosi dei libri dei filosofi.¹⁹ Fra VII/XIII e VIII/XIV secolo, del resto, le parti dei libri di al-Ġazālī consacrate allo ‘svelamento’ e al mondo invisibile suscitavano in Maghrib la diffidenza anche di alcuni sufi di tendenza tradizionalista (cfr. *infra*, par. 3).

Ciò nonostante, l’*Ihyā’* resta essenzialmente, come nelle intenzioni del suo autore, un’enciclopedia della ‘scienza pratica’ del sufismo. Nell’ambito della ‘scienza teorica’, il suo corrispettivo sono le *Futūḥāt makkīyya* di Ibn °Arabī (m. 638/1240), un autore che ha in comune con il suo predecessore l’ambizione di offrire una sintesi universale con il

¹⁵ Cfr. T.J. Gianotti, *Al-Ghazālī’s Unspeakable Doctrine*, 50–1, 55–6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 57–61.

¹⁷ F. Griffel, *al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, 81–7; si veda anche O. Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 162, 172–5.

¹⁸ Si veda M. Fierro, ‘Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus’, 186, 191–5; F. Griffel, *Apostasie*, 365, 378; *Idem*, *al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, 80–1; M. Cook, *Commanding Right*, 455–6.

¹⁹ Averroè, *Il trattato decisivo*, 90. Cfr. anche D. Mallet, ‘Les livres de Ḥayy’; R. Brague, ‘Athens, Jerusalem, Mecca’, 247; F. Griffel, *Apostasie*, 412 e 415.

compito di infondere un nuovo spirito nella cultura religiosa del suo tempo.²⁰

Ibn ʿArabī condivide con al-Ġazālī anche un’ambizione divulgatrice. Che le sue idee mistiche, attraverso un canale comunicativo come la poesia, potessero raggiungere anche i letterati contemporanei, colpendoli per motivi estetici oltre che spirituali, è attestato dalla più antica notizia biografica su di lui, conservata nella antologia poetica di Ibn al-Šaʿar al-Mawṣilī (m. 654/1256). Al termine della biografia, prima delle poesie, si trova un elogio dello stile dell’autore, il cui ‘bel discorso sulla realtà essenziale’ (*kalām ḥasan fī l-ḥaqīqa*), prodotto di una diretta ispirazione, ‘confonde le menti quando viene ascoltato e trascina i cuori quando è recitato’.²¹ Il fatto che il testo sufi abbia valore in se stesso per il suo carattere poetico non è una novità, visto che nelle letterature islamiche il confine fra poesia profana e poesia mistica è incerto. Nel caso di Ibn ʿArabī, tuttavia, l’autonomia poetica del testo si estende anche alla prosa teorica, che trasforma creativamente lo stile descrittivo e prescrittivo dei manuali tradizionali facendone sorgere significati inediti e paradossali.²²

La divulgazione, non necessariamente sinonimo di facilità, è in primo luogo legata a una rivendicazione di autorità. Nell’introduzione ai *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Ibn ʿArabī racconta che questo libro gli è stato trasmesso dal Profeta in una visione con l’ordine di divulgarlo: il libro del santo può essere legittimamente ‘pubblicato’ perché si colloca nel quadro di una storia sacra, come un prolungamento del messaggio profetico di cui condivide non la dimensione normativa, ma il fatto di trasmettere una conoscenza utile alla salvezza. Sui *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, più facilmente accessibili delle *Futūḥāt*, si sono concentrate le accuse contro Ibn ʿArabī nel ‘processo postumo’ che segna la storia religiosa dell’Islam pre-moderno a partire dal VIII/XIV secolo. Gli avversari hanno a più riprese raccomandato di distruggere i suoi libri, anche se tali drastiche misure sono state applicate solo occasionalmente e hanno avuto un successo limitato.²³

²⁰ Sul parallelo fra al-Ġazālī e Ibn ʿArabī e le affinità fra i loro progetti di ‘rinnovamento’: cfr. S. al-Ḥakīm, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 35–6; M. Mansiyya, ‘al-Iġtihād’, 125, 142–3; F. Rosenthal, ‘Ibn ʿArabī between ‘Philosophy’ and ‘Mysticism’’, 3–5, 34–5; J.W. Morris, ‘Ibn ʿArabī’s ‘Esotericism’’, 39; G.T. Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, 3, 10, 189–90.

²¹ G.T. Elmore, ‘New Evidence’, 60 e 69.

²² Si veda Chodkiewicz, ‘*Miʿrāj al-kalima*’.

²³ M. Chodkiewicz, ‘Le procès posthume’; A. Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 124, 126, 127, 253, 261, 265; F. Rosenthal, ‘Of Making Many Books’, 39.

La cautela—o l’aperta ostilità—nei confronti dei libri di Ibn ʿArabī è dovuta anche al fatto che i commentatori di Ibn ʿArabī, a partire dalla seconda metà del VII/XIII secolo, hanno creato sulla base delle sue opere una scuola mistico-filosofica che è stata uno dei principali canali di riabilitazione della filosofia soprattutto di matrice avicenniana nel tardo medioevo. In questo ambito si è costituita una nuova biblioteca di ‘libri sulla *ḥaqīqa*’ che rappresentano un genere a sé stante nella letteratura sufi. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Ġīlī, uno dei più originali rappresentanti della scuola di Ibn ʿArabī, in un testo importante su cui ritorneremo nel terzo paragrafo, definisce i ‘libri sulla *ḥaqīqa*’ come quelli che si occupano espressamente dell’‘essere’ (*wuġūd*), fondando una ‘gnosi salvifica’ (*ʿirfān*) che può essere coltivata attraverso lo studio individuale anche indipendentemente dal percorso di purificazione interiore²⁴. ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī (m. 730/1329), noto commentatore dei *Fuṣūṣ*, aveva scritto qualche decennio prima un dizionario dei termini tecnici del sufismo pensato per questo stesso tipo di lettori autodidatti, e più specificamente per intellettuali appartenenti alla tradizione filosofica avicenniana, non sufi anche se con inclinazioni per la mistica; che il dizionario di al-Qāshānī sia concepito come un ausilio alla lettura solitaria è indicato anche dalla disposizione dei lemmi in ordine alfabetico, un altro punto per il quale si discosta dai lessici contenuti nei manuali classici del sufismo.²⁵

L’importanza dell’opera di Ibn ʿArabī nella storia del sufismo è paragonabile a quella dello *Zohar* nella storia della mistica ebraica, a prescindere dalle affinità di contenuto e di stile, per il modo di trasmissione. La comparsa dello *Zohar* nella Spagna settentrionale della fine del VII/XIII secolo rappresenta infatti il punto di arrivo dello sviluppo di un corpus letterario svincolato dalla tradizione orale, che è stato considerato come il segno della transizione da una cultura orale a una cultura scritta.²⁶ Anche se i cabalisti continuano ad aderire a un codice esoterico che impedisce la completa esposizione scritta di argomenti teorici o pratici particolarmente delicati,²⁷ l’esistenza di un corpus letterario indipendente si presta allo studio individuale e apre la strada all’appropriazione della *qabbalah* da parte di filosofi non cabalisti, che la interpretano liberamente come una tradizione speculativa da

²⁴ Al-Ġīlī, *Marātib*, 7–12.

²⁵ C.W. Ernst, ‘Mystical Language’, 183 e 186–7.

²⁶ Si veda M. Halbertal, ‘From Oral Tradition’; idem, *Concealment and Revelation*, 92–104; E. Wolfson, ‘Beyond the Spoken Word’, 177.

²⁷ Vedi *ibid.*, e M. Idel, *Kabbalah*, 20–2.

affiancare al sapere filosofico rigettato in linea di principio dalla mistica ebraica tradizionale. Questo fenomeno, che assume particolare rilevanza nell'ebraismo italiano, diventerà uno dei più importanti stimoli del pensiero rinascimentale.²⁸

Un altro notevole parallelismo fra la mistica ebraica e il sufismo del VII/XIII secolo e oltre è il nesso fra rivelazione del segreto e messianismo, nel contesto di una concezione della storia vista come il dispiegarsi di una sempre maggiore chiarezza nella conoscenza delle realtà metafisiche e nella loro 'pubblicazione'. Questa visione dinamica della storia implica che la disciplina del segreto ha un carattere solo provvisorio, diventando meno rigorosa man mano che ci si avvicina all'era messianica.²⁹

Sia nell'ebraismo che nell'islam, questi sviluppi nelle forme comunicative e nelle idee a cui sono collegate hanno incontrato resistenze all'interno delle rispettive tradizioni mistiche. In entrambi i casi infatti la trasformazione della tradizione esoterica in 'letteratura' e la sua trascrizione in libri che possono finire in mano a chiunque mettono in pericolo la nozione stessa di 'tradizione', che è alla base tanto della *qabbalah* (che significa appunto 'ricezione' di qualcosa che è trasmesso oralmente), quanto del sufismo (che si ricollega al Profeta attraverso la 'catena iniziatica' [*silsila*], corrispettivo sufi dell'*isnād*).³⁰

In ambito islamico, i sufi 'moderati', fra i due estremi dei fautori della distruzione dei libri di Ibn ʿArabī e della loro divulgazione, sostengono che questi libri non vanno messi nelle mani di chiunque e ne sconsigliano la lettura ai novizi. Per questo motivo, l'influenza di Ibn ʿArabī sulle confraternite, per quanto importante, è rimasta spesso implicita.³¹

L'esistenza di libri specializzati non pone di per sé in questione la necessità del maestro né nella tradizione sufi né nelle altre scienze religiose. Il sufismo, come è noto, insiste sin dal periodo classico sulla

²⁸ Si veda B. Ogren, *Renaissance and Rebirth*, 27–30 e 37.

²⁹ Per alcune testimonianze in tal senso nell'ebraismo del XIII secolo si veda R. Brague, 'Athens, Jerusalem, Mecca', 249; E. Wolfson, 'Beyond the Spoken Word', 178–9; M. Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation*, 33, 105–13. Sullo sviluppo di questi concetti nel sufismo, e in particolare sulla relazione fra il 'discorso chiaro' (*bayān*) del santo perfetto e l'attesa di un 'rinnovamento' in Ibn ʿArabī e nei suoi epigoni, si veda S. Pagani, *Il rinnovamento*, 53–66 e 95–140.

³⁰ Sulle obiezioni contro il libro nella mistica ebraica si veda M. Idel, *Kabbalah*, 19–20; E. Wolfson, 'Beyond the Spoken Word', 175–6; M. Halbertal, 'From Oral Tradition'; idem, *Concealment and Revelation*, 71–2, 136.

³¹ M. Chodkiewicz, *Océan*, 17–37; idem, 'Le procès posthume', 116.

necessità del maestro: secondo un detto celebre attribuito a al-Bistāmī (m. 261/874 o 264/877), ‘Satana è l’*imām* di chi non ha maestro’.³² Ma la relazione maestro-discepolo si è evoluta nel tempo: la progressiva istituzionalizzazione del sufismo ha portato infatti a una formalizzazione di questa relazione, così come in genere della condotta dei discepoli e dei loro rapporti reciproci, fino alla fissazione di vere e proprie regole fra VI/XII e VII/XIII secolo. Nella codificazione del rapporto maestro-discepolo ha un posto di primo piano il dovere di ubbidienza assoluta, base del principio di autorità nelle confraternite (*turuq*) che si costituiscono a partire dal VI/XII secolo.³³

Una delle più antiche regole sufi conservate prescrive di ‘legare il cuore al maestro’: il discepolo deve imprimere nel proprio cuore l’immagine del maestro, in modo che questo sia sempre presente davanti al suo occhio interiore.³⁴ In questo forte legame personale, la parola del maestro ha una funzione essenziale, non tanto per l’insegnamento che trasmette, quanto per il suo potere di trasformare interiormente l’allievo.³⁵ La parola del maestro si iscrive nel cuore dell’allievo come la parola rivelata nel cuore del Profeta³⁶. Al-Šāḍilī, quando gli venne chiesto perché non avesse scritto libri, rispose: ‘I miei libri sono i miei allievi’ (*kutubī aṣḥābī*).³⁷

Questa pedagogia spirituale, in cui tanta parte ha la presenza fisica del maestro, con la gestualità extra-verbale legata a questa presenza, caratterizza il ‘maestro educatore’ (*šayḥ murabbī*), cioè colui che ha il

³² Al-Qušayrī, *Sendschreiben*, 538. Cfr. A.T. Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 117; M. Malamud, ‘Sufi organizations’, 440 nota 33; L. Silvers-Alario, ‘The Teaching Relationship’.

³³ Su questo processo si veda F. Meier, ‘Khurāsān’; idem, ‘Qusāyri’s *Tartīb*’. M. Malamud, ‘Sufi organizations’, riesamina in parte le stesse fonti aggiungendo interessanti osservazioni sul parallelismo fra i sistemi di trasmissione del sapere nel sufismo e nelle scuole legali. Sul rapporto tra la fissazione di ‘regole’ scritte e la nascita delle confraternite si veda B. Radtke, ‘The eight rules’.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 496.

³⁵ Cfr. le descrizioni della dettatura della formula di invocazione (*talqīn al-dīkr*): E. Ohlander, *Sufism*, 224–5; M. Chodkiewicz, ‘Note complémentaire’, 49. Sul *talqīn* anche A.T. Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 135, n. 16. L’attribuzione di un potere creativo alla parola dello *šayḥ* sembra peraltro coincidere con l’emergere delle *turuq* nel XII secolo: cfr. S. Sviri, ‘*Kun* – the Existence-bestowing Word’, 37–8.

³⁶ Cfr. la descrizione dell’inizio della rivelazione in Ibn Ishāq, cit. in Piemontese, ‘Sistema e strumenti dell’Islam’, 286. Sul tema della ‘scrittura del cuore’ nell’Islam cfr. anche A. Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text*, 163–8.

³⁷ Ibn ‘Atā’ Allāh, *Laṭā’if*, 50.

compito di ‘allevare’ l’aspirante, piuttosto che di ‘istruirlo’ trasmettendogli un sapere. Come vedremo nel terzo paragrafo, i due modelli educativi della ‘pedagogia spirituale’ (*tarbiya*) e dell’‘insegnamento dottrinale’ (*ta‘līm*) possono entrare in conflitto, anche se idealmente sono complementari, come dovrebbero esserlo teoria e prassi, speculazione e rituale, *ḥaqīqa* e *ṭarīqa*.

La fioritura, nello stesso periodo della nascita delle confraternite, di ‘libri sulla *ḥaqīqa*’ che pretendono di costituire un accesso privilegiato a una conoscenza salvifica descritta come l’essenza dell’eredità profetica,³⁸ è una sfida potenziale per gli *ṣayḥ* delle *ṭuruq*, custodi di un’altra variante dell’eredità profetica, la facoltà di istituire *sunan* (le regole e i rituali della *ṭarīqa*) e di essere quindi un modello per l’azione, oggetto di imitazione al pari del Profeta.³⁹

Oltre che i modelli educativi, il conflitto può riguardare anche i contenuti, come indica il fatto che ad alcuni grandi maestri di confraternite è attribuita la distruzione di testi mistici e filosofici. Nel caso di ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Ġīlānī (m. 561/1166), fondatore eponimo della Qādiriyya, la distruzione si inserisce in un racconto agiografico, ed è presentata come un miracolo:

Una volta, quand’ero giovane, mi presentai al cospetto dello *ṣayḥ* ‘Abd al-Qādir—che Dio sia soddisfatto di lui!—con una numerosa compagnia. Avevo con me un libro che trattava di filosofia e di scienze spirituali (*‘ulūm al-rūḥāniyyāt*). Appena fui entrato alla sua presenza, lo *ṣayḥ* mi parlò, rivolgendosi direttamente a me, non al resto del gruppo. Prima ancora di avere esaminato il libro, o di avermi interrogato sul suo contenuto, mi disse: ‘Quel tuo libro è un cattivo compagno. Faresti meglio a cancellarlo con l’acqua!’ Pensai allora di allontanarmi, chiudere il libro da qualche parte, e astenermi in seguito dal portarlo con me, per timore di offendere lo *ṣayḥ*. La mia anima inferiore non poteva accettare l’idea di cancellarlo con l’acqua, perché gli ero molto affezionato e alcune delle sue teorie e dei suoi principi avevano risvegliato la mia curiosità intellettuale. Mentre stavo per alzarmi ed andarmene, con l’intento di mettere in atto il mio proposito, lo *ṣayḥ* mi lanciò una tale occhiata, che fui incapace di alzarmi. Mi sentivo come paralizzato. Ma lui mi disse: ‘Dammi quel tuo libro!’ Allora lo aprii, e—guarda un po’!—vidi che non conteneva altro che fogli bianchi, senza che vi fosse scritta una sola lettera. Quindi lo diedi allo *ṣayḥ*, che lo sfogliò e poi disse: ‘Questo è il *Libro delle eccelse virtù del Corano* di Muḥammad Ibn al-Durays’ Quando me lo restitui, vidi che era proprio quel libro lì, scritto in una magnifica calligrafia. Quindi lo *ṣayḥ* mi disse: ‘Sei pronto a

³⁸ Così in chiara sintesi al-Ġīlī nel prologo dei *Marātib*, 7–12.

³⁹ Cfr. D. Gril, ‘Le saint fondateur’.

pentirti per aver detto con la lingua qualcosa che non è nel tuo cuore?’ ‘Sì, maestro’, risposi. Infine mi ordinò di alzarmi. Ubbidii, ed ecco che avevo dimenticato tutto della filosofia e dei principi di spiritualità. Erano stati completamente cancellati dalla mia interiorità, come se non me ne fossi mai occupato.⁴⁰

In questo racconto, dove l’ubbidienza dovuta allo *šayḥ* si contrappone all’infatuazione per la filosofia e le ‘scienze spirituali’, il libro proscritto resta anonimo. Più tardi, il grande sufi *kubrawī* °Alā° al-Dawla al-Simnānī (m. 736/1336), noto per le sue polemiche contro la scuola di Ibn °Arabī, racconta che il suo maestro Nūr al-Dīn al-Isfarāynī (m. 717/1317) ‘soleva proibire la lettura degli scritti di Ibn °Arabī, ed era così severo al riguardo che, avendo sentito che [...] due dei suoi allievi davano lezione sui *Fuṣūṣ* a certi studenti, si presentò laggiù quella stessa notte, strappò loro di mano il manoscritto, lo stracciò e ingiunse il divieto assoluto di leggerlo’.⁴¹

Uno dei casi meglio documentati di distruzione di libri da parte di un maestro sufi è quello di °Umar al-Suhrawardī (m. 632/1234), come °Abd al-Qādir fondatore eponimo di una *ṭarīqa*. Autore di libri sulla *mu°āmala* considerati ‘buoni’ anche dai più severi censori del sufismo, al-Suhrawardī ha combattuto la tradizione filosofica ellenizzante non solo per scritto ma anche attraverso la distruzione materiale. Egli stesso si è infatti vantato di avere cancellato con l’acqua lo *Šifā°* di Avicenna, nel contesto della sua collaborazione con il califfo °abbaside al-Nāṣir, la cui politica religiosa portò a roghi di biblioteche che si sospettavano contenere letteratura filosofica e alla cancellazione di singoli libri particolarmente ‘pericolosi’.⁴²

Questi tre casi presentano una notevole differenza rispetto alle distruzioni di libri attribuite ad asceti più antichi, come Sufyān al-Ṭawrī (m. 161/778), Dāwūd al-Ṭā°ī (m. 165/781-2) e Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (m. 205/820 o 215/830), citati da al-Tawḥīdī (m. 411/1023) come precedenti nell’epistola in cui giustifica la scelta di bruciare le sue stesse opere. Per questi personaggi infatti la distruzione dei libri coincide con

⁴⁰ al-Tāḍīfī, *Necklaces*, parte 8. Lo stesso testo è citato in A. Rippin, *Muslims*, 146.

⁴¹ H. Landolt, ‘Der Briefwechsel’, 75.

⁴² A. Hartmann, *an-Nāṣir*, 255–62; E. Ohlander, *Sufism*, 291–300; cfr. anche F. Griffel, *Apostasie*, 353. Tra le vittime più illustri di questa persecuzione ci fu un nipote di °Abd al-Qādir al-Ġīlānī: Rukn al-Dīn al-Ġīlī (m. 611/1214), la cui biblioteca di testi scientifici e filosofici fu bruciata nel 588/1192–3; cfr. A. Hartmann, *an-Nāṣir*, 256–60; L. Richter-Bernburg, ‘Ibn al-Māristānīya’, 274.

l'inizio della vita ascetica, ovvero con una rinuncia al mondo, le cui vanità includono un sapere inutile ai fini della salvezza.⁴³ In questo caso, la distruzione dei libri è il segno di un atteggiamento anti-scolastico ben compendiato nel detto attribuito a al-Biṣṭāmī in cui il mistico contrappone da parola viva della conoscenza spirituale alla lettera morta degli *‘ulamā’*: ‘Avete preso la vostra scienza morta da morto, mentre noi abbiamo preso la nostra dal Vivo che non muore’.⁴⁴ Al contrario, la distruzione di libri da parte di autorevoli maestri di *turuq* è una deliberata opera di censura di tradizioni sapienziali e spirituali concorrenti all'interno di una cultura sufi che nel frattempo si è uniformata in buona parte alle modalità scolastiche della trasmissione del sapere. °Abd al-Qādir, nel suo ‘miracolo’, sostituisce un libro ‘utile’ a un libro ‘pericoloso’, ma non bandisce lo studio e la lettura in sé – anzi promuove lo studio di un classico delle scienze religiose tradizionali. °Umar al-Suhrawardī, da parte sua, contribuisce a cancellare una tradizione filosofica a cui sostituisce i suoi stessi libri, portatori di una gnosi intuitiva (*‘irfān*) contrapposta alla ragione dimostrativa (*burhān*).⁴⁵ Inoltre, l'istituzionalizzazione del ‘maestro educatore’ (*ṣayḥ al-tarbiya*), alla quale al-Suhrawardī ha dato un contributo teorico decisivo, è perfettamente compatibile con lo studio. In effetti, l'educazione può anche farsi a distanza, attraverso il libro del maestro, e in questo caso l'iniziazione coincide con l'autorizzazione a trasmettere i suoi libri.⁴⁶ Anche se i maestri possono esercitare la loro autorità come censori, le *turuq* alimentano un'ampia produzione manualistica, agiografica e devozionale che contribuisce alla diffusione del libro e della lettura.

⁴³ al-Qādir, ‘Scholars and Their Books’, 627–8, 630–1, 638–9. Cfr. anche F. Rosenthal, ‘Of Making Many Books’, 39–43.

⁴⁴ Cfr. Ibn °Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:198, 254, 257, 280; 2: 252–3. Sulla contrapposizione fra conoscenza ispirata e conoscenza libresca in Ibn °Arabī, cfr. F. Rosenthal, ‘Ibn °Arabī between ‘Philosophy’ and ‘Mysticism’’, 32. Nell'autobiografia di al-Ša°rānī, la rinuncia ai libri (che tuttavia non vengono distrutti, ma venduti, dando il ricavato in elemosina), rappresenta la prima tappa del suo discepolato con il maestro ‘illetterato’ °Alī al-Ḥawwāš. Ma questo doloroso distacco (‘fu come se fossi stato spogliato della scienza’ – *ḥattā ka’annī sulibtu min al-‘ilm*) prelude alla trasformazione dell’allievo in uno scrittore originale, che può mettere per iscritto le proprie intuizioni ‘senza avere più bisogno di guardare nei libri degli autori’: al-Ša°rānī, *Latā’if*, 84–5.

⁴⁵ Si veda E. Ohlander, *Sufism*, 302.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

Autodidattismo, tradizione e innovazione nelle scienze religiose tradizionali e nel sufismo

L'esigenza di controllare un sapere scritto in costante espansione è comune in questo periodo al sufismo e alle altre scienze religiose. In effetti, fra VII/XIII e VIII/XIV secolo, l'autodidattismo e la trasmissione testuale svincolata dalle forme tradizionali di verifica orale sembrano essersi intensificati anche nell'ambito della *madrassa*.

In Maghrib, nella seconda metà del VIII/XIV secolo, alcuni autori denunciano che fra gli studenti di Granada e di Fez si è diffusa la pratica di studiare individualmente i compendi di diritto, trascurando l'insegnamento orale dei maestri.⁴⁷ Qualche decennio prima, nell'Egitto mamelucco, il giudice šāfi'ita Ibn Ġamā'a (m. 733/1333), nel suo libro sull'educazione nelle scienze religiose, mette in guardia dal prendersi come maestri coloro che hanno 'studiato i significati reconditi delle pagine (*buṭūn al-awrāq*) ma non hanno frequentato un maestro esperto' – un fenomeno che viene definito sprezzantemente *tašyīḥ al-ṣaḥīfa*, 'trasformare la pagina in maestro'.⁴⁸ In effetti, secondo Ibn Ġamā'a, 'la conoscenza non può essere tratta dai libri: questa è una delle più dannose cause di corruzione' (*al-ilm la yuḥadu min al-kutub fa-innahu min aḍarr al-mafāsīd*)⁴⁹. Questo ovviamente non significa che uno studente non possa leggere da solo, ma che, per evitare errori, prima di memorizzare un testo, deve verificarne la correttezza con un maestro o con un ripetitore designato da questi.⁵⁰ Inoltre, lo studente principiante deve affidarsi al maestro e non ai libri per l'interpretazione dei testi.⁵¹

In altri termini, la lettura solitaria dei principianti va regolata per garantire la corretta trasmissione e interpretazione dei testi, ma è ovviamente parte integrante dell'educazione. Ibn Ġamā'a dedica infatti un intero capitolo alle 'regole da osservare con i libri che sono lo strumento del sapere',⁵² dove raccoglie varie raccomandazioni sul metodo da seguire nella lettura privata. La 'metodologia dello studio

⁴⁷ Si veda P. Nwyia, *Ibn 'Abbād*, xlvii–xlviii. Cfr. anche V. Cornell, *Realm*, 127–8.

⁴⁸ Ibn Ġamā'a, *Taḍkira*, p. 116. Su questa formula cfr. anche W.A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, 104.

⁴⁹ Ibn Ġamā'a, *Taḍkira*, 131. Su questi passi e altri esempi in proposito: J. Berkey, *Transmission*, 26; D. Ayalon, *Reading Palestine*, 111–12; E. Moosa, *Ghazālī*, 97–8.

⁵⁰ Ibn Ġamā'a, *Taḍkira*, 131.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 129–30.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 143–51. Su questo capitolo dell'opera e la sua rielaborazione nel XVI sec., si veda F. Rosenthal, *Technique*, 7–18.

individuale' (*ādāb al-muṭālaʿa*) diventa oggetto di una trattazione specifica alla fine del XI/XVII secolo, da parte del famoso astronomo ottomano e sufi *mawlawī* Aḥmad Dede ibn Luṭfallāh Müneḡḡim Baṣī (m. 1113/1702),⁵³ ma in questo caso l'autore innova perché si propone deliberatamente di facilitare e incoraggiare l'apprendimento senza maestri. Nella sua opera infatti la *muṭālaʿa* è descritta come un esercizio intellettuale che consiste nell' 'estrarre i significati delle espressioni linguistiche attraverso la lettura visiva e la riflessione', e si oppone per definizione al *taqlīd*, la ricezione di una conoscenza in base al solo principio di autorità, senza conoscerne la prova.⁵⁴

Per quanto riguarda la trasmissione materiale del libro, nel corso del medioevo il principio del controllo orale si mostra sempre più come una fiction, il cui mantenimento è determinato in primo luogo da ragioni ideologiche, come osserva G. Vajda a proposito di forme di 'autorizzazione a trasmettere' che non comportano il diretto ascolto dei testi, come l'*iḡāza* 'generale', o quella trasmessa per lettera, o quella accordata a bambini o a persone non ancora nate.⁵⁵

In uno studio recente, Denis Gril ha mostrato che l'abitudine di collezionare e moltiplicare le *iḡāzāt* ha un corrispettivo 'esoterico' nella creazione, a partire dal periodo ayyubide, di repertori di catene iniziatiche diffusi in un ambiente di 'ulamā' sempre più aperto al sufismo. Le catene iniziatiche registrate in questi repertori, costruite sul modello dell'*isnād* nel *ḥadīth*, sono trasmesse spesso sulla base di altri testi, cioè in modo puramente libresco, sebbene questo non sia esplicitato. Non sono dunque la testimonianza del perpetuarsi della tradizione vivente di un insegnamento da maestro a discepolo, ma servono piuttosto a stabilire un legame simbolico con i grandi maestri del passato, e, attraverso di loro, con il Profeta. Come osserva Denis Gril nella conclusione del suo studio, 'cette évolution se situe dans le cadre plus large d'une économie du savoir et du milieu qui le porte'.⁵⁶

In effetti, un'evoluzione importante si è verificata nel VII/XIII secolo nelle scienze del *ḥadīth*, paradigma della centralità della trasmissione orale nel sapere religioso islamico. La trattatistica dell'epoca testimonia

⁵³ Cfr. J.H. Kramers, 'Müneddjim Bāshī,' *EP*².

⁵⁴ Mawlawī, *Fayḍ al-ḥaram*, f. 3a (*istiḥrāḡ al-maʿānī min al-ʿibārāt bi-muḡarrad mulāḥaḡatihā wa-l-naḡar fihā* [...]. *al-ʿilm al-taqlīdī laysa bi-maʿḥūd min al-dalīl fa-ḡaraḡuhu min al-muṭālaʿa an yuḡaqqiqa ḡālika al-ʿilm bi-aḡḡihi min al-dalīl*).

⁵⁵ Cfr. G. Vajda, 'Idjāza,' *EP*².

⁵⁶ D. Gril, 'De la *khirqa* à la *ṭarīqa*', 80.

la diminuita importanza dell'*isnād* come strumento di autenticazione delle tradizioni: una copia autenticata del testo è sufficiente garanzia di autenticità, e può essere copiata direttamente. In queste mutate condizioni, la trasmissione testuale è affiancata da forme 'ritualizzate' di trasmissione orale, mentre gli *isnād* si continuano a collezionare per interesse 'spirituale': particolarmente apprezzati da questo punto di vista sono quelli con il minor numero di garanti, perché accorciano la distanza fra il ricevente e il Profeta.⁵⁷

La pratica della lettura privata, scontata nelle 'scienze straniere' e nell'*adab*, dove non a caso il libro è lodato anche per il suo silenzio,⁵⁸ è scoraggiata nelle scienze religiose perché mette in pericolo la continuità della tradizione. Avere una biblioteca permette di viaggiare nel tempo, ma questa libertà di movimento elimina la mediazione delle autorità che controllano l'interpretazione dei testi. I grandi 'innovatori' sono quelli che viaggiano a ritroso nel tempo. Lo mostra bene, nel campo del diritto di questo periodo, il caso di due personalità per tanti versi opposte, ma unite dalla rivendicazione dell'*ig̃tihād*, come Ibn ʿArabī e Ibn Taymiyya (m. 728/1328).

Ibn ʿArabī scavalca l'autorità dei *fuqahāʾ* mālikiti contemporanei rifacendosi direttamente a Ibn Ḥazm (m. 456/1064), esponente anticonformista del *madhhab* zāhirita. Secondo Ibn Ḥaldūn, questa scuola giuridica minoritaria era sopravvissuta solo attraverso i libri, e Ibn Ḥazm, come altri seguaci della scuola, avrebbe avuto il torto di apprendere i principi studiando i testi senza passare attraverso la mediazione dei maestri. L'indipendenza di giudizio e la mancanza di rispetto per le autorità legate a questo metodo di studio individualistico avrebbero fatto incorrere Ibn Ḥazm nella disapprovazione, a tal punto che i suoi stessi libri in certe occasioni furono vietati e distrutti.⁵⁹ Comunque sia, la

⁵⁷ E. Dickinson, 'Ibn al-Ṣalāh'.

⁵⁸ Si veda A. Ghersetti, 'L'utilità della scrittura'. Sul valore del libro come strumento di perfezionamento nella letteratura filosofica, si veda D. Mallet, 'Les livres de Ḥayy', 4.

⁵⁹ Ibn Ḥaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 3: 6. Sulla tendenza a basarsi esclusivamente sui libri come caratteristica della scuola zāhirita si veda C. Melchert, *The Formation*, 189-90. È possibile in ogni caso che Ibn Ḥaldūn insista sul fatto che la dottrina di Ibn Ḥazm fosse basata solo sui libri allo scopo di stigmatizzarla. Sembra infatti che Ibn Ḥazm abbia avuto almeno un maestro zāhirita: si veda C. Adang, 'The Spread of Zāhirism', 302. Si veda anche ibid., 303, sulle circostanze che portarono alla distruzione dei libri di Ibn Ḥazm. In al-Andalus, i rapidi cambiamenti di ortodossia portarono anche al rogo di libri mālikiti: si veda I. Goldziher, *The Zāhirīs*, 160.

tentazione di seguire questa scuola senza maestri viventi riemergeva regolarmente, e il caso di Ibn ʿArabī sembra confermarlo, dato che egli se ne ispira nella sua ermeneutica legale, anche se la sua effettiva adesione alla scuola è dibattuta.⁶⁰

Per quanto riguarda Ibn Taymiyya, la sua rottura del *consensus* è imputata dal suo avversario Taqī l-Dīn al-Subkī (m. 756/1355) al fatto che non avrebbe avuto un maestro: ‘Il diavolo era con lui perché il diavolo sta con chi è solo’.⁶¹ Ibn Taymiyya stesso aveva peraltro criticato l’ubbidienza incondizionata degli adepti nei riguardi dei maestri sufi, dedicando uno scritto indipendente alla critica del celebre adagio sufi secondo il quale ‘satana è il maestro di chi non ha maestro’.⁶²

La combinazione di lettura solitaria e rivendicazione dell’*iğtihād* è ugualmente presente nella carriera di un ʿālim-sufi come Ğalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī (m. 911/1505), forse l’autore più prolifico del periodo premoderno, che secondo uno dei suoi biografi era stato soprannominato ‘figlio dei libri’ (*ibn al-kutub*) perché era nato in una biblioteca. Al-Suyūfī fu criticato molto violentemente da alcuni contemporanei perché aveva avuto scarsi rapporti diretti con i maestri e aveva ricevuto gran parte della sua istruzione solo attraverso i libri. A queste accuse si aggiungono quelle di plagio – come se l’accesso incontrollato ai testi predisponesse al furto e al saccheggio.⁶³

Al-Suyūfī oltretutto pretendeva di ricevere direttamente dal Profeta informazioni sull’autenticità del *ḥadīth*. In una lettera, scrive di avere avuto fino a quel momento settantacinque incontri spirituali con il Profeta, e che tali incontri sono uno strumento indispensabile per la sua attività di tradizionalista.⁶⁴ Alla base di questa rivendicazione c’è con ogni probabilità la dottrina di Ibn ʿArabī secondo la quale lo ‘svelamento’ è un criterio valido per stabilire l’autenticità del *ḥadīth*.⁶⁵ Eppure, l’idea di una ricezione diretta del *ḥadīth* dal Profeta si riscontra anche nella scienza del *ḥadīth* come viene codificata nel VII/XIII secolo. Come si è

⁶⁰ Cfr. M. Chodkiewicz, *Océan*, 78; G.T. Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood*, 43.

⁶¹ C. Bori, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 166–8.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 168. Più tardi, anche la dottrina di Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, grande ammiratore di Ibn Taymiyya, sarebbe stata considerata dai detrattori il frutto di una immoderata lettura solitaria, non bilanciata dallo scambio orale con i detentori viventi della scienza: si veda M. Cook, ‘On the Origins’, 191.

⁶³ Si veda E.M. Sartain, *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī*, 1: 24 e 74–5.

⁶⁴ La lettera è citata in al-Šaʿrānī, *al-Mizān al-kubrā*, 1: 35. Cfr. anche É. Geoffroy, *Le soufisme*, 100, n.70.

⁶⁵ Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1: 150, 224–5; 2: 97, 254; 3: 13, 413. Cfr. anche M. Chodkiewicz, *Sceau*, 80 e 99.

accennato, a quest'epoca si afferma la tendenza a collezionare *ḥadīṭ* con l'*isnād* più breve possibile, a cui si attribuiva un particolare valore 'spirituale' perché accorciava la distanza dal Profeta. Questo procedimento, come commenta E. Dickinson, 'made time elastic and gave those unlucky enough to have been born late the opportunity to enjoy the spiritual superiority of earlier generations';⁶⁶ [...] 'the general thrust was that one should avoid intermediaries. This argument was almost subversive, for the whole theoretical justification for *ḥadīth* transmission rested on the principle that one must accept information from trustworthy intermediaries'.⁶⁷ Infatti, poiché il fine era quello di accorciare le distanze, si poteva arrivare a saltare del tutto gli intermediari, ricevendo il *ḥadīṭ* in sogno direttamente dal Profeta: un privilegio rivendicato da autorevoli tradizionalisti e giuristi di questo periodo e anche di epoche precedenti.⁶⁸

In un trattato in cui sostiene, basandosi principalmente su al-Suyūṭī, la validità dell'autorizzazione a trasmettere ricevuta in sogno, 'Abd al-Ġanī al-Nābulusī (m. 1143/1731) afferma che questo tipo di autorizzazione equivale a un'autorizzazione generale' (*iġāza ʿāmma*): anche quest'ultima infatti è svincolata da una trasmissione orale, in quanto l'autorizzato non ha ascoltato il testo dalla viva voce del trasmettitore. Il sogno, dunque, è un sostituto fittizio della trasmissione orale, allo stesso titolo dell'*iġāza* che non comporta un ascolto effettivo. Entrambe le modalità hanno soltanto una funzione di *baraka*, per cui la validità del testo ricevuto in sogno o per trasmissione indiretta dev'essere verificata controllandone la corrispondenza con il testo trasmesso secondo le regole.⁶⁹

La 'visione' di un autore del passato non è necessariamente il segno di un'esperienza mistica, ma l'espressione simbolica della contemporaneità con l'autore che si verifica nel rapporto diretto e personale fra il lettore e il testo.⁷⁰ L'aspirazione al 'faccia a faccia' con l'autore del passato, o con la fonte di autorità per eccellenza – il Profeta, o il Corano –, è in conflitto con il principio della mediazione attraverso una catena affidabile di trasmettitori e di interpreti. La tensione fra

⁶⁶ E. Dickinson, 'Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ', 504.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 496.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 494, 503–4. Si veda anche L. Kinberg, 'Dreams', 79–99.

⁶⁹ Al-Nābulusī, *Rawḍ al-anām*. Al-Nābulusī racconta altrove di avere lui stesso ricevuto una *iġāza* in sogno da al-Ḥaḍīr: cfr. B.R. von Schlegell, *Sufism*, 201.

⁷⁰ Si vedano a proposito del commento medievale le belle pagine di E. Coccia, *La trasparenza delle immagini*, 3–19.

queste due forze è una costante della cultura islamica, che, come mostra la moda dell'*isnād* abbreviato nella scienza del *ḥadīṭ*, è presente nel cuore stesso del sapere religioso. Questa tensione caratterizza anche il sufismo, proprio in quanto è parte di un contesto culturale al tempo stesso orale e scritto. Nel sufismo, le 'innovazioni' si presentano come la rottura della trasmissione orizzontale del sapere veicolata dalla catena iniziatica della *ṭarīqa* e il ritorno a un'autorità anteriore, che può essere un santo del passato, o il Profeta, o Dio stesso. L'iniziazione attraverso la contemplazione della 'forma spirituale' (*rūḥāniyya*) di un santo assente o defunto è definita *uwaysī*, sul modello di Uways al-Qaranī, un personaggio che secondo la leggenda sarebbe vissuto in Yemen all'epoca del Profeta e avrebbe comunicato telepaticamente con lui.⁷¹ Le iniziazioni di tipo *uwaysī* servivano spesso a giustificare trasformazioni significative della tradizione, o a segnare la nascita di nuovi rami di una confraternita.⁷²

Il maestro che istruisce a distanza di spazio o di tempo spesso è l'autore di un libro, o il libro stesso. Per esempio, il sufi persiano Kāzarunī (m. 426/1033), nel periodo in cui cercava invano un maestro, sognò che qualcuno venne da lui con un cammello carico di libri e gli disse: 'Questi sono i libri dello *ṣayḥ* Ibn Ḥafīf (m. 371/982), che li ha mandati apposta per te con questo cammello'.⁷³ Un sufi *ṣādīlī* magrebino della fine del VIII/XIV secolo affermava di essere allievo di Ibn °Aṭā° Allāh al-Iskandarī (m. 709/1309), anche se questo era già morto da tempo, perché aveva letto le sue *Ḥikam* e il commento che ne aveva fatto Ibn °Abbād di Ronda (m. 792/1390).⁷⁴

Il fenomeno dell'iniziazione attraverso la 'forma spirituale' di un autore è particolarmente frequente nella scuola di Ibn °Arabī, dove lo studio dei libri del maestro era considerato fondamentale. Ḥasan al-°Uḡaymī (m. 1113/1702) dà come esempio di *ṭarīqa uwaysiyya* l'iniziazione del proprio maestro attraverso la *rūḥāniyya* di Ibn °Arabī.⁷⁵ D'altra parte, °Abd al-Ḡanī al-Nābulusī, che dichiara di 'essere cresciuto succhiando dal seno [di Ibn °Arabī] attraverso i suoi libri e le sue opere', racconta di avere sognato di essere il figlio di Ibn °Arabī.⁷⁶ Lo stesso Ibn

⁷¹ Cfr. J. Baldick, 'Uwaysiyya,' *EF*²; M. Chodkiewicz, 'Rūḥāniyya,' *EF*²; idem, 'Note complémentaire', 54–8; F. Meier, 'An Exchange of Letters', 60–1, 74.

⁷² Cfr. J. ter Haar, 'The Importance of the Spiritual Guide'.

⁷³ A. Schimmel, *Die Träume des Kalifen*, 179.

⁷⁴ P. Nwyia, *Ibn °Abbād*, xlviii.

⁷⁵ D. Gril, 'De la *khirqā* à la *ṭarīqa*', 74.

⁷⁶ Al-Ḡazzī, *al-Wird al-unsī*, f. 184a.

°Arabī, all'inizio di un suo compendio delle dottrine di Ibn Ḥazm, racconta di avere scoperto la grandezza di questo autore attraverso una visione prima ancora di sapere chi fosse e di leggerne le opere.⁷⁷ In altri termini, l'incontro con l'autore di un testo nel mondo immaginale ristabilisce fra lui e il suo lettore il rapporto personale proprio dell'oralità.

La tendenza a vedere il libro come una persona ha radici remote che risalgono alla teologia del logos. La riflessione sulla parola divina come mediatrice fra trascendenza e immanenza è comune alle tre religioni monoteiste, anche se il logos nell'islam e nel giudaismo ha finito col cristallizzarsi nella forma di un libro piuttosto che di una persona.⁷⁸ Il libro ipostatizzato si presta però anche nell'islam e nel giudaismo a essere rappresentato in forma umana, un fenomeno che ha trovato sviluppi particolarmente notevoli nella mistica. Così, in un capitolo dello *Zohar*, la Tora è descritta come una fanciulla nascosta, che si 'rivela faccia a faccia' solo al suo vero amante,⁷⁹ mentre il Corano si manifesta a Ibn °Arabī in forma di fanciullo nella visione inaugurale delle *Futūḥāt*, ordinandogli di 'sollevare i suoi veli e leggere ciò che racchiudono le sue iscrizioni'.⁸⁰

L'iniziazione personale attraverso un autore del passato può essere insomma considerata un riflesso dell'ipostatizzazione del libro rivelato, parola vivente la cui sacralità si riverbera anche sui libri che derivano da essa, come in linea di principio lo sono quelli scritti dagli 'eredi del Profeta'.⁸¹

⁷⁷ I. Goldziher, *The Zāhirīs*, 170–1.

⁷⁸ Cfr. D.A. Madigan, *The Qur'ān's Self-Image*, 123–4, 182–3; A. Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text*, 158–68; D. Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 89–127.

⁷⁹ *Zohar*, 125; cfr. anche E. Wolfson, 'The Body in the Text'.

⁸⁰ M. Chodkiewicz, *Océan*, 126. Sull'identificazione del Corano con l'Uomo Perfetto si veda *ibid.*, 50–4, 124–8; cfr. anche al-Ġīlī, *al-Insān al-kāmil*, 2: 138–9 (*al-kitāb huwa l-insān al-kāmil*); R.A. Nicholson, *Studies*, 104, 138–40. La rappresentazione del Corano in forma umana non è in ogni caso esclusiva della mistica; cfr. al-Ġazālī, *Kitāb al-Durra*, 119: 'Il Giorno della Resurrezione, il Corano verrà nell'immagine di un uomo, bello di volto e di carattere, intercederà e sarà esaudito'.

⁸¹ Per questo motivo, mi sembra poco convincente vedere nella scrittura mistica, come fa E. Moosa leggendo al-Ġazālī alla luce di J. Derrida, il progetto di emanciparsi dal 'logocentrismo' della cultura islamica e dalla 'metafisica della presenza', ovvero dalla 'fiction della referenza diretta' (E. Moosa, *Ghazālī*, 96, 100, 112). Sulla sacralità dei 'libri' nell'islam si veda in generale A.M. Piemontese, 'Sistema e strumenti dell'Islam'. Sui testi di °Abd al-Qādir, Ibn

Le controversie in Yemen e in al-Andalus

A partire dal VII/XIII secolo, con l'espansione delle confraternite e la sempre maggiore penetrazione del sufismo a tutti i livelli della società, il pubblico dei lettori di testi sufi si allarga. I vari generi della letteratura sufi rispondono alle esigenze di diverse tipologie dei lettori – devozione, edificazione morale o ricerca intellettuale. La diffusione della letteratura sufi si accompagna a sua volta a un incremento della pratica della lettura privata. In ambito sufi, come segnala la tradizione biografica, i *kutub al-mu'āmalā* possono sostituirsi al maestro già nel periodo classico, un fenomeno che diventa sempre più frequente nei secoli successivi.⁸² Nel tardo medioevo, questi testi, ormai parte delle biblioteche della *madrasa*, sono letture standard dei pii *'ulamā'*, in funzione di un perfezionamento morale che non comporta necessariamente un'affiliazione al sufismo.⁸³ Anche i *kutub al-mukāšafa* sono studiati al di fuori dell'ambito strettamente sufi. Come si è visto, il dizionario specializzato di al-Qāšānī presuppone un pubblico di lettori-filosofi che continuano a coltivare nell'oriente islamico la tradizione avicenniana. D'altra parte, in Andalus, il libro sull'amore mistico del celebre storico e visir Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb (m. 776/1375), la *Rawḍat al-ta'rif bi-l-ḥubb al-šarīf*, è un esempio dell'integrazione della mistica speculativa e della *falsafa* nella letteratura profana da parte di un letterato che non è lui stesso un sufi.⁸⁴

Come testimoniano i dibattiti della fine del VIII/XIV secolo, questa evoluzione storica ha suscitato vive reazioni fra i contemporanei. Le controversie non riguardano solo il valore educativo della lettura privata, ma la stessa legittimità dei 'libri sullo svelamento', o dei 'libri sulla

⁸² °Arabī e Rūmī come libri direttamente ispirati dalla realtà sottile del Profeta, cfr. H. Algar, 'The Centennial Renewer', 305–6.

⁸³ Cfr. H. Landolt, *Correspondance*, 9–10 (a proposito di Simnānī, m. nel 736/1336); Ibn °Abbād, *Lettres*, 191; al-Ša°rānī, *Laṭā'if*, 84–5. Ibn °Arabī peraltro avrebbe affermato che il suo manuale di disciplina spirituale intitolato *Mawāqī' al-nuḡūm* 'può dispensare dal maestro, anzi è il maestro ad averne bisogno' (*yuḡnī °an al-ustād, bal al-ustād muḥtāḡ ilayhi*): cfr. Nābulusī, *Rusūh*, f. 189b–190a (dalle *Futūḥāt, bāb al-ṭahāra*).

⁸⁴ Ibn Ġamā°a, *Taḍkira*, 76–7, menziona tra le regole di condotta del maestro la purificazione dai vizi interiori tipici dei dotti, come l'invidia, la superbia, l'ipocrisia. La medicina che li cura si trova nei 'libri della delicatezza' (*kutub al-raqā'iq*), come l'*Iḥyā'*, il *Qūt al-qulūb* di al-Makkī e la *Ri°āya* di al-Muḥāsibī. Si veda anche R. Pérez, 'Introduction', 28; M. Fierro, 'Opposition to Sufism', 193.

⁸⁴ A. Knysh, *Ibn °Arabi*, 176–9.

ḥaqīqa'. Per quest'ultimo aspetto, il dibattito intorno al libro si colloca nel contesto delle polemiche dottrinali intorno alla scuola di Ibn ʿArabī.

Questo è particolarmente evidente nelle controversie in Yemen. Qui, tra la fine del VIII/XIV secolo e l'inizio del IX/XV, i sultani della dinastia rasulide (1235–1454) avevano adottato una politica religiosa risolutamente favorevole al sufismo, facendo della loro capitale Zabīd un centro importante di attività sufi.⁸⁵ I sovrani privilegiarono i rappresentanti della scuola di Ibn ʿArabī, come lo *ṣayḥ* Ismāʿīl al-Ġabartī (m. 806/1403), che fu il più prossimo amico e consigliere del sultano al-Ašraf Ismāʿīl (r. 1376–1400), e Aḥmad ibn Abī Bakr al-Raddād (m. 821/1417-1418), che divenne genero del sultano al-Nāṣir Aḥmad (m. 827/1424) e fu da lui nominato *qāḍī* supremo dello Yemen rasulide.⁸⁶

La protezione ufficiale della scuola di Ibn ʿArabī suscitò lo scontento di numerosi *ʿulamāʾ*, alimentando una serie di violente polemiche che si trascinarono per decenni e che costituiscono un capitolo importante della storia politico-religiosa dello Yemen medievale. In queste polemiche, il libro ha un ruolo fondamentale. Infatti, i libri di Ibn ʿArabī e dei suoi commentatori, base della dottrina dell'«unità dell'essere», erano diventati «una fonte di identità per la comunità sufi locale».⁸⁷ Per gli avversari, l'origine della corruzione morale e dottrinale della loro epoca va cercata innanzitutto nei libri di Ibn ʿArabī e della sua scuola,⁸⁸ di cui raccomandano il divieto o la distruzione in vari avvisi legali.⁸⁹ Al-Ġabartī, da parte sua, impone ai suoi discepoli lo studio dei *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, esigendo che ne portino sempre una copia con sé,⁹⁰ mentre Ibn al-Raddād, forte della sua autorità di giudice supremo, promuove una legittimazione ufficiale di Ibn ʿArabī, sanzionando la diffusione dei suoi libri nelle zone sotto la sua giurisdizione.⁹¹ La promozione di queste letture non solo fra i sufi più avanzati, ma fra i novizi e il lettore comune, scandalizza gli avversari come un atto di audacia senza precedenti.⁹²

È in questo contesto che ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Ġīlī ha formulato una delle più articolate difese del valore formativo del libro nella mistica

⁸⁵ Sui rasulidi e i sufi e la polemica intorno a Ibn ʿArabī si veda *ibid.*, 225–69; M. Chodkiewicz, «Le procès posthume», 105–9.

⁸⁶ A. Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi*, 241–2, 248.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 250.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 243, 258.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 253, 261, 265.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 242.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 255.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 269.

speculativa. Al-Ġīlī, originario dell'India, trascorse gli ultimi decenni della sua vita in Yemen, dove si inserì nell'ambiente cosmopolita animato dal circolo di al-Ġabartī e dove morì all'inizio del IX/XV secolo.⁹³ Il prologo del *Libro sui gradi dell'essere*, dove al-Ġīlī celebra la funzione dei 'libri sulla *ḥaqīqa*' nell'educazione dei sufi, illustra perfettamente il ruolo centrale del libro nella scuola di Ibn ʿArabī, oltre a offrire un'importante testimonianza storica sui metodi pedagogici praticati dai sufi ibnarabiani alla sua epoca.

Per al-Ġīlī, i libri sulla *ḥaqīqa* sono il veicolo per eccellenza di un ʿilm salvifico che coincide con la conoscenza dell'essere e della sua unità fondamentale. Questa conoscenza va perseguita piuttosto attraverso lo studio che attraverso l'attesa passiva dell'illuminazione:

Mi è stato raccontato che il mio maestro Ismāʿīl al-Ġabartī disse a un allievo, uno dei miei fratelli: 'Studia i libri (*ʿalayka bi-kutub*) dello *ṣayḥ Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī!*' 'Signore', rispose l'allievo, 'non è meglio che pazienti finché Dio stesso mi illumini attraverso la sua effusione?' Il maestro gli disse: 'Quello che vuoi aspettare è proprio ciò di cui lo *ṣayḥ* parla per te in questi libri'.⁹⁴

La lettura è più produttiva della purificazione morale attraverso le pratiche devote, e può essere perseguita indipendentemente da esse. Infatti, lo studioso intelligente:

impara tutto dai libri e consegue attraverso di essi tutto ciò che si propone. Ho visto in questa nostra epoca un numeroso gruppo di gente di ogni razza—arabi, persiani, indiani, turchi, e altri ancora—raggiungere attraverso la lettura (*muṭālaʿa*) dei libri sulla *ḥaqīqa* il livello dei [grandi] uomini, e realizzare attraverso di essi l'oggetto delle loro speranze. Chi poi in seguito aggiunge alla scienza (*ʿilm*) e alla virtù la pratica e l'ascesi (*sulūk wa-iġtihād*) diventa un perfetto, entre chi si ferma dopo avere conseguito la scienza diventa uno gnostico.⁹⁵

Al-Ġīlī ammette che l'accesso a questi libri possa essere limitato per motivi di prudenza o di opportunità pedagogica:

La proibizione della lettura dei libri sulla *ḥaqīqa* espressa a volte dalla gente di Dio nei riguardi di alcuni allievi è dovuta al fatto che la persona di

⁹³ A. Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 232, 248–52. L'incertezza sulla data di morte di al-Ġīlī è dovuta alla scarsità di fonti biografiche su di lui. La data più comunemente fornita è l'832/1428, ma fonti manoscritte indicano l'811/1408 o l'826/1423: si veda M. Chodkiewicz, 'Le procès posthume', 105.

⁹⁴ Al-Ġīlī, *Marātīb*, 9–10.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

scarsa comprensione può interpretare le parole degli autori in un senso diverso da quello che essi hanno inteso, per poi metterle in pratica e andare incontro alla perdizione; oppure egli rischia di perdere la vita compulsando i libri senza profitto. In tal caso è necessario che il maestro vieti la lettura affinché l'allievo si occupi di qualcos'altro che gli sia più utile.⁹⁶

La lettura è però raccomandata anche ai principianti, che grazie ad essa superano i più anziani. I maestri infatti raccomandano agli allievi lo studio

per far loro percorrere più rapidamente grandi distanze e per facilitare loro le difficoltà del cammino, perché un aspirante può ottenere, attraverso [la comprensione] di una sola questione di questa nostra scienza, un risultato che non raggiungerebbe in cinquant'anni di ascesi (*muğāhada*).⁹⁷ [...] 'Ho visto io stesso dei fanciulli (*šibyān*), fra i miei fratelli nella Via, arrivare in pochi giorni, attraverso la sola lettura di questi libri, a un livello superiore a quello raggiunto dagli uomini adulti (*riğāl*) in quaranta o cinquant'anni di ascesi, malgrado il fatto che erano stati questi adulti a iniziare alla Via quei fanciulli: infatti gli adulti si erano limitati alla pratica (*sulūk*), mentre i fanciulli erano passati alla lettura e alla comprensione dei libri sulla *haqīqa*, così che i fanciulli sono diventati in senso proprio anziani, mentre i loro anziani maestri sono diventati fanciulli (*šāra al-šibyān šuyūh fī l-haqīqa wa-l-šuyūh lahum šibyān*).⁹⁸

Il giovane lettore può superare il vecchio devoto perché attraverso la comprensione del testo diventa pari all'autore del passato:

Quando l'aspirante ricercatore comprende il senso della questione esposta in un libro e lo conosce, egli diviene l'eguale dell'autore nella conoscenza di quella questione (*istawā huwa wa-muṣannifuhu fī maʿrifat tilka al-masʿala*), e consegue per mezzo di essa ciò che l'autore ha conseguito. Allora questa conoscenza gli appartiene (*šārat lahu mulk*) come appartiene all'autore. E così ogni volta che qualcuno prende una questione dai libri, se la comprende in modo esatto, è come se la prendesse dalla stessa fonte (*maʿdan*) da cui l'ha presa l'autore.⁹⁹

R. Atlagh, che ha visto in questo passo una delle più brillanti sintesi della nozione di originalità nel sufismo, ha osservato: 'Questa concezione della cultura cancella la nozione di autore e di plagio nella conoscenza

⁹⁶ Al-Ġīlī, *Marātib*, 9.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Al-Ġīlī, *Marātib*, 11.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 8-9. Nel testo stampato manca la frase *fa-inna al-āḥid lahā min al-maʿdan alladī aḥada minhu muṣannifuhu*, che si trova però nella citazione di questo passo in al-Nābulusī, *Kitāb al-rusūh*, f. 192b.

sufi e rende difficile la ricerca dell'originalità di un autore: il sapere sufi appartiene a tutto un gruppo e non a delle persone-autori'.¹⁰⁰ In questa prospettiva, l'originalità non consiste in una innovazione individuale, ma nella capacità di accedere direttamente alla fonte divina della conoscenza: attraverso la comprensione del testo del santo, il lettore riattualizza l'ermeneutica spirituale della rivelazione che lo ha prodotto, emancipandosi dall'imitazione passiva dei maestri.

La contrapposizione della 'comprensione' all'imitazione' corrisponde a una tensione fra una concezione aperta e una concezione chiusa del sapere che caratterizza in generale il conflitto fra discipline razionali e tradizionali. Ma il conflitto fra indipendenza intellettuale e fedeltà alla tradizione si ritrova anche all'interno delle tradizioni mistiche, nella tensione fra speculazione e trasmissione orale, ed è ugualmente presente nella dialettica fra autorità delle scuole e interpretazione personale nel diritto islamico. Il grado dell'*ig̃tihād* non implica infatti necessariamente l'aggiunta di una nuova dottrina, ma può limitarsi alla 'comprensione' delle dottrine dei predecessori.¹⁰¹

Una concezione del sapere come quella esposta da al-Ġīlī, per il quale i giovani superano i vecchi e i moderni possono stare alla pari con gli antichi,¹⁰² spiega bene la resistenza degli '*ulamā*' conservatori a questa scuola mistica, anche indipendentemente dall'ortodossia dei suoi contenuti dottrinali. La scienza autorevole contenuta nei libri sulla *ḥaqīqa* minaccia anche l'autorità dei 'vecchi' sufi: la relativa svalutazione delle pratiche di mortificazione e purificazione nel testo di al-Ġīlī è infatti l'espressione di una tensione fra conoscenza e azione, o '*irfān* e *sulūk*', all'interno del sufismo. La sostanza della contesa intorno al libro nel sufismo sembra risiedere proprio in questo contrasto. Con la sua 'lode del libro', al-Ġīlī si propone di esaltare la conoscenza, ma non di sminuire il ruolo del maestro. Nella conclusione dice infatti:

Ti ho riferito tutte queste storie nell'introduzione di questo libro per farti comprendere il valore di questa scienza e l'elevatezza del suo rango, e ispirarti così il desiderio di conseguire questa nobile arte attraverso la lettura di questi libri, il loro studio, e la discussione su di essi con le persone che li conoscono, dovunque si trovino. Infatti, una di queste persone può insegnarti con una sola parola più di quanto possano insegnarti tutti i libri in

¹⁰⁰ R. Atlagh, 'Le point et la ligne', 162-3.

¹⁰¹ Cfr. S. Pagani, 'The meaning', 20.

¹⁰² Cfr. anche al-Ġīlī, *Marātib*, 8, dove l'autore contesta certi sufi secondo i quali nelle epoche tarde l'ispirazione è quasi scomparsa, suggerendo che essa è semmai diventata invisibile, perché Dio non cessa mai di manifestarsi.

una vita intera [...]. La lettura dei libri sulla *ḥaqīqa*, secondo coloro che comprendono la realtà delle cose, è superiore alle opere di devozione dei praticanti, ma la frequentazione (*muğālasa*) della gente di Dio e l'educazione (*ta'addub*) che si riceve da essa è superiore alla lettura di tutti i libri messi insieme.¹⁰³

Lo stesso al-Ġīlī ha celebrato altrove il proprio maestro, Ismā'īl al-Ġabartī, in termini iperbolici. In seguito a una visione ricevuta a Zabīd nel 796/1393, avrebbe infatti riconosciuto in lui la manifestazione del Profeta, ovvero dell'Uomo perfetto, che si rivela in un'unica persona in ogni generazione.¹⁰⁴ Per questo motivo, al-Ġīlī fu accusato dagli avversari, insieme ad altri seguaci di al-Ġabartī, di 'adorare' il maestro.¹⁰⁵ 'Adorazione' del maestro ed esaltazione del libro non sono contraddittorie: al-Ġīlī afferma infatti che l'Uomo perfetto, come espressione del logos divino, si identifica con il Corano.¹⁰⁶

Alla fine del XI/XVII secolo, il testo di al-Ġīlī sui libri è stato copiato quasi integralmente da 'Abd al-Ġanī al-Nābulusī in un opuscolo che difende il ruolo del libro nell'educazione sufi. Rifacendosi innanzitutto a al-Ġazālī, anche al-Nābulusī mette al centro della sua argomentazione la superiorità della conoscenza sulla pratica, nel contesto di una polemica rivolta al tempo stesso contro i dottori essoterici e contro i maestri delle confraternite. Al-Nābulusī ammette qui esplicitamente che del maestro si possa fare a meno, sebbene questo non sia auspicabile di per sé, ma sia dovuto all'indegnità dei contemporanei.¹⁰⁷ Infatti, al-Nābulusī definisce altrove gli autori morti i cui libri leggeva durante la sua reclusione come 'i viventi', e i contemporanei viventi che aveva scelto di abbandonare come 'i morti'.¹⁰⁸

Negli stessi anni delle polemiche yemenite, un altro grande dibattito intorno alla lettura dei libri sufi si è svolto in Andalus e in Maghrib. Nel

¹⁰³ Al-Ġīlī, *Marātīb*, 11–12.

¹⁰⁴ Al-Ġīlī, *al-Insān al-kāmil*, 2: 74; cfr. A.R. Nicholson, *Studies*, 105.

¹⁰⁵ A. Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*, 251.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Ġīlī, *al-Insān al-kāmil*, 2: 138–9 (*al-kitāb huwa l-insān al-kāmil*); cfr. la quasi identica affermazione di Ibn 'Arabī: 'L'Uomo universale (*al-insān al-kullī*) è il Corano': M. Chodkiewicz, *Océan*, 125. Nello stesso testo, 1: 124, al-Ġīlī afferma che il Figlio della trinità cristiana va interpretato nel senso di Libro (*al-murād bi-l-ibn al-kitāb*); cfr. A.R. Nicholson, *Studies*, 140.

¹⁰⁷ Al-Nābulusī, *Kitāb al-rusūḥ*. Sulle prese di posizione di al-Nābulusī intorno alla questione del libro e del maestro cfr. B.R. von Schlegell, *Sufism*, 198–9; S. Pagani, 'Scholasticism', 285–6; S. Akkach, 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi', 34–5.

¹⁰⁸ S. Akkach, *Letters*, xi.

774/1372, il libro del visir Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb sull'amore mistico era stato bruciato pubblicamente nella piazza del mercato di Granada, alla presenza di eminenti *‘ulamā’*.¹⁰⁹ Nella stessa città, e nello stesso anno, la comunità sufi fu scossa da un'aspra controversia intorno alla questione se i libri possano sostituire il maestro. Secondo la tarda testimonianza del sufi šāḍilīta Aḥmad Zarrūq (m. a Fez nell'899/1493), la disputa fu così violenta che i contendenti giunsero a prendersi a colpi di scarpa.¹¹⁰ Il dibattito coinvolse anche i giuristi. Il grande teorico del diritto Abū Ishāq al-Šāṭibī (m. 790/1388) scrisse una memoria della controversia, che inviò, insieme alla richiesta di un parere, al giurista mālikita Aḥmad al-Qabbāb (m. 1376) e al sufi šāḍilīta Ibn ‘Abbād di Ronda. La memoria di al-Šāṭibī è conservata integralmente nello *Šifā’ al-sā’il wa-tahqīb al-masā’il* di Ibn Ḥaldūn (m. 780/1406),¹¹¹ che, pur non essendo stato consultato direttamente, interviene con quest'opera in margine al dibattito. La trascrizione commentata della controversia è preceduta da una lunga introduzione in cui Ibn Ḥaldūn espone in una prospettiva critica la storia e le dottrine del sufismo.

Il dossier relativo a questa controversia è stato letto dalla maggior parte degli storici moderni nel quadro del conflitto fra giuristi e sufi, ovvero fra il sufismo dei dotti e il sufismo popolare.¹¹² Questo punto di vista è giustificato dalla situazione del Maghrib nel periodo marinide (1258-1465), dove, nel contesto della rivalità fra *‘ulamā’* mālikiti e guide carismatiche delle confraternite, i giuristi si oppongono alla venerazione degli *šayḥ*. Questo schema interpretativo però impedisce di cogliere le complesse sfumature del dibattito, facendo sorgere notevoli contraddizioni.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Cfr. R. Pérez, 'Introduction', 39–40; A. Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabi*, 174.

¹¹⁰ Zarrūq, *‘Umdat al-murīd*. Nel manoscritto che ho consultato è scritto che la controversia si svolse *bayna fuqahā’ al-Andalus*, ma bisogna probabilmente leggere *fuqarā’*: cfr. P. Nwyia, *Ibn ‘Abbād*, xlvi, e R. Pérez, 'Introduction', 14, che si basano su altri manoscritti della stessa opera. Zarrūq parla della controversia andalusa anche in *Qawā’id*, 54–5 (cap. 67).

¹¹¹ Cfr. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Šifā’ al-sā’il*, che contiene un'appendice con le risposte di al-Qabbāb e Ibn ‘Abbād, e anche una breve *risāla* sullo stesso argomento del letterato marocchino Yūsī (m. 1102/1691). Del testo di Ibn Ḥaldūn esiste un'ottima traduzione francese ampiamente annotata a cura di R. Pérez: Ibn Ḥaldūn, *La voie et la loi*.

¹¹² Mahdi, 'The Book and the Master'; R. Pérez, 'Introduction'; V. Cornell, 'Faḳīh versus Faḳīr', 202–3.

¹¹³ Gli avversari del sufismo popolare andrebbero identificati secondo Mahdi con i sostenitori dell'indispensabilità del maestro ('The Book and the Master',

Una diversa prospettiva è stata adottata da P. Nwyia in uno studio esemplare del 1961. Dopo avere accennato alla diffusione dell'apprendimento attraverso i libri tra gli studenti di diritto nel Maghrib della seconda metà del VIII/XIV secolo, Nwyia osserva: 'ce qui signifie que d'une civilisation orale, on est en voie de passer à une civilisation du livre. Et si ce passage est loin encore d'être réalisé en ce qui concerne les sciences légales, il semble par contre que les soufis aient fait quelques pas dans cette voie'.¹¹⁴ Nella sua sintesi della controversia, Nwyia si sofferma quindi sulla questione essenziale di quali libri sufi fossero studiati e contestati nel Maghrib di questo periodo.¹¹⁵

In effetti, il dossier relativo alla controversia di Granada è una testimonianza storica di primo piano sul ruolo del libro nel sufismo medievale, e in quanto tale può essere affiancata, al di là delle specificità locali, alla controversia yemenita. Come i dibattiti contemporanei in Yemen, anche quelli dell'occidente musulmano possono essere letti come il risultato di un duplice contrasto: da un lato l'opposizione legale contro la diffusione dei 'libri sullo svelamento', dall'altro la tensione interna al sufismo fra la conoscenza, basata sui libri, e l'azione, basata sull'esempio dei maestri.

L'opposizione legale contro la diffusione dei 'libri sullo svelamento' è chiarita dagli interventi di Aḥmad al-Qabbāb e di Ibn Ḥaldūn. L'argomentazione comune a entrambi è che mentre nel perfezionamento morale si può fare a meno del maestro, affidandosi ai manuali sufi sulla scienza pratica (*mu'āmalā*), il maestro è indispensabile nella ricerca dello 'svelamento' (*mukāšafa*), perché questa via è piena di pericoli e i libri che ne parlano, lungi dall'essere utili, sono dannosi. Persino i libri di al-Ġazālī, secondo al-Qabbāb, dovrebbero essere espurgati di tutti i passaggi in cui si parla delle realtà del mondo invisibile; un santo maghrebino del secolo precedente li aveva del resto condannati insieme a quelli di al-Quṣayrī, dichiarando che avrebbe volentieri buttato a mare questi ultimi.¹¹⁶

9), e secondo R. Pérez con i sostenitori della sua *non* indispensabilità ('Introduction', 31–2; 47–8 e 259 n. 29). M. Mahdi presuppone che i libri in questione siano 'manuali popolari', ma dalla controversia questo non appare chiaramente.

¹¹⁴ P. Nwyia, *Ibn 'Abbād*, xlviii.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xlviii–lx.

¹¹⁶ Cfr. P. Nwyia, *Ibn 'Abbād*, 1 e lvi; R. Pérez, 'Introduction', 34, 51, 259; M. Mahdi, 'The Book and the Master', 5. Cfr. il testo della *fatwā* di al-Qabbāb in Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Šifā' al-sā'il*, 203.

Ibn Ḥaldūn, da parte sua, concentra la sua polemica contro le deviazioni dottrinali dei libri sullo svelamento scritti dalle scuole ‘moderne’ della ‘teofania’ (*tağallī*) e dell’unicità’ (*waḥda*), illustrate rispettivamente da Ibn ʿArabī e dall’altro mistico andaluso Ibn Sabʿīn (m. 668/1269 o 669/1271).¹¹⁷ Chi aspira a intraprendere il cammino dello svelamento, se non riesce a trovare un maestro, piuttosto che studiare questi libri, farebbe meglio a rinunciare del tutto all’impresa.¹¹⁸ L’argomentazione di Ibn Ḥaldūn si discosta dal discorso puramente legalista perché la sua critica al sufismo si basa anche sulla sua adesione alle scienze razionali, che gli fa riprendere le obiezioni epistemologiche contro la conoscenza mistica tipiche dei filosofi.¹¹⁹ Un punto di vista esclusivamente legalistico è adottato comunque da Ibn Ḥaldūn in una *fatwā* posteriore, risalente al suo periodo egiziano, in cui prescrive che i libri di Ibn ʿArabī e di Ibn Sabʿīn siano dati alle fiamme o lavati con l’acqua.¹²⁰ In ogni caso, sostenere la necessità del maestro nel cammino verso lo ‘svelamento’ equivale per Ibn Ḥaldūn a vietarne la trasmissione scritta.

Mentre le risposte di al-Qabbāb e di Ibn Ḥaldūn esprimono l’opposizione legale contro la mistica speculativa, l’intervento di Ibn ʿAbbād di Ronda illustra bene le tensioni interne al sufismo.¹²¹ Ibn ʿAbbād, che ha esercitato il suo insegnamento soprattutto per lettera – una modalità che Ibn Ḥaldūn rigetta espressamente,¹²² – afferma all’inizio del testo di essersi formato sui libri.¹²³ Ciò nonostante, Ibn ʿAbbād prende le distanze da entrambe le fazioni contendenti ed evita di pronunciarsi in termini categorici, perché ritiene che una tale questione non dovrebbe essere oggetto di una decisione legale. La sua risposta è così sfumata che è stata intesa diversamente dagli studiosi moderni: per esempio, secondo M. Mahdi, Ibn ʿAbbād si pronuncia ‘in pratica’ per l’indispensabilità del maestro,¹²⁴ mentre F. Meier sottolinea che per Ibn

¹¹⁷ Ibn Ḥaldūn, *La voie et la loi*, 180, 183.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 245.

¹¹⁹ Cfr. J.W. Morris, ‘An Arab Machiavelli?’.

¹²⁰ Cfr. la trad. del testo in Ibn Ḥaldūn, *La voie et la loi*, 251–4.

¹²¹ Per i testi si veda Ibn ʿAbbād, *Lettres*, 130–40, 190–204. Il testo della prima lettera è parafrasato da P. Nwyia nel suo *Ibn ʿAbbād*, 209–13.

¹²² Ibn Ḥaldūn, *La voie et la loi*, 247.

¹²³ Ibn ʿAbbād, *Lettres*, 191. E’ possibile che Ibn ʿAbbād, pur essendo un’autorità nella tradizione šāḍilīta, non avesse ricevuto un’iniziazione formale alla *ṭarīqa*: cfr. S. Kugle, ‘Usūlī Sufis’, 185–6.

¹²⁴ ‘The Book and the Master’, 6.

°Abbād il libro può ‘in pratica’ sostituire il maestro.¹²⁵ Quest’ultimo punto di vista è confortato dalla sintesi di Aḥmad Zarrūq:

La risposta del mio signore Ibn °Abbād è che la cosa dipende dagli individui e dalle situazioni: il maestro insegnante (*šayḥ al-ta°līm*) può essere sostituito dai libri per chi è dotato di intelligenza e ragione, mentre il maestro educatore (*šayḥ al-tarbiya*) è obbligatorio solo per lo stupido, anche se certamente consigliabile anche agli altri.¹²⁶

Il punto centrale dell’intervento di Ibn °Abbād è appunto la distinzione fra ‘maestro insegnante’ e ‘maestro educatore’. Si tratta di un punto di grande importanza nella storia del sufismo, dato che l’ascesa del ‘maestro educatore’ è una tappa decisiva nella formazione delle confraternite.¹²⁷ Ibn °Abbād descrive l’imposizione del ‘maestro educatore’ come un’innovazione ‘moderna’, cioè una deviazione dal sano sufismo delle origini, dovuta a un’abusiva enfasi sulla pratica piuttosto che sulla conoscenza.¹²⁸ Così, Ibn °Abbād critica l’aspetto istituzionale dell’evoluzione ‘moderna’ del sufismo, al contrario di Ibn Ḥaldūn, che ne critica l’aspetto dottrinale, ma include un ‘maestro educatore’ ‘moderno’ come °Umar al-Suhrawardī nella sua lista di letture consigliate.¹²⁹

Ciò che è decisivo, nella distinzione fra i due tipi di maestro, e dunque anche nella questione della loro necessità, è il contenuto dell’insegnamento: lo *šayḥ al-ta°līm*, come dice il suo stesso nome, deve trasmettere una conoscenza, mentre l’educazione impartita dallo *šayḥ al-tarbiya* riguarda la sfera pratica. La questione di fondo è dunque in questo testo, come in quello contemporaneo di al-Ġīlī, il primato della conoscenza o dell’azione. Per Ibn °Abbād, il nucleo autentico e originario del sufismo è la conoscenza, mentre la dimensione pratica e rituale istituzionalizzata dalle confraternite è uno sviluppo secondario, concomitante con l’attribuzione di un’indebita autorità al ‘maestro educatore’. Al contrario dell’educazione pratica, la conoscenza è essenziale e va raggiunta con ogni mezzo. Il mezzo privilegiato sarebbe il maestro, ma in sua assenza si può ricorrere anche al libro: anzi maestro e libro sono praticamente equiparati in quanto il libro, come fonte autorevole di conoscenza, è un autentico ‘sostituto’ del maestro.¹³⁰ Sia il

¹²⁵ ‘Khurāsān’, 192.

¹²⁶ Aḥmad Zarrūq, *°Umdat al-murīd*, f. 48b.

¹²⁷ Cfr. F. Meier, ‘Khurāsān’.

¹²⁸ Cfr. Ibn °Abbād, *Lettres*, 194.

¹²⁹ Ibn Ḥaldūn, *La voie et la loi*, 174.

¹³⁰ Cfr. Ibn °Abbād, *Lettres*, 192–3.

libro sia il maestro sono semplici ‘mezzi’, o ‘cause seconde’, di una illuminazione che dipende in realtà solo da Dio.¹³¹ Ma questo non significa che si debba stare fermi ad aspettare passivamente, rinunciando a mettersi in cammino in assenza di un maestro.¹³² Anche su questo punto, la posizione di Ibn ʿAbbād è contraria a quella di Ibn Ḥaldūn, che raccomanda di rinunciare a incamminarsi senza un maestro.

Mi pare che nelle sue linee essenziali il ragionamento di Ibn ʿAbbād sia identico a quello di al-Ġīlī: il punto centrale è che il sufismo autentico è un ʿilm salvifico accessibile anche solo attraverso i libri, aggirando al tempo stesso l'autorità dei maestri delle confraternite e la censura dei giuristi. La differenza fra i due autori sta essenzialmente nelle letture consigliate: mentre per al-Ġīlī queste sono in generale i ‘libri sulla *ḥaqīqa*’ e in particolare Ibn ʿArabī, per Ibn ʿAbbād sono i classici della tradizione *ṣāḍilīta* e in particolare Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh.¹³³ Il ʿilm coltivato nella confraternita *ṣāḍilīta* si differenzia per molti aspetti, relativi allo stile espositivo forse ancor più che ai contenuti dottrinali, da quello dei sufi-filosofi.¹³⁴ Ibn ʿAbbād in ogni caso, a differenza di altri sufi, oltre che di molti giuristi, non è un censore: lo dimostra il suo atteggiamento verso Ibn Sabʿīn, che si guarda bene dal condannare pur ritenendo personalmente che non valga tutto lo sforzo che la sua lettura richiede.¹³⁵

Sulla questione del libro e del maestro, Ibn ʿAbbād è il principale ispiratore, un secolo dopo, di Aḥmad Zarrūq, un altro maestro *ṣāḍilīta* che ha prestato particolare attenzione alla questione. Zarrūq, come Ibn ʿAbbād, tende a ridimensionare l'autorità carismatica del maestro sul discepolo e si considera un ‘maestro insegnante’ piuttosto che un ‘maestro educatore’. La sua scarsa stima per i maestri contemporanei gli fa peraltro ammettere che la guida dei libri possa dispensare da un maestro vivente.¹³⁶ Zarrūq giunge a distinguere dieci tipologie di sufi in base ai loro libri di riferimento. Anche i libri di Ibn ʿArabī hanno il loro

¹³¹ Ibn ʿAbbād, *Lettres*, 197–8. Un'idea frequente nella tradizione sufi, da accostare alla tesi del *De magistro* di Agostino.

¹³² Ibid., 133, 201.

¹³³ Ibid., 121–2; cfr. anche Aḥmad Zarrūq, *ʿUmdat al-murīd*, f. 46a–47b. Sul ruolo centrale della meditazione sulle *Hikam* di Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh nella tradizione sufi che risale a Ibn ʿAbbād si veda anche S. Kugle, ‘Usūlī Sufis’, 184. Sull'importanza dello studio dei classici del sufismo sin dalle origini della *Shādhiliyya*, cfr. D. Gril, ‘L'enseignement d'Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh’.

¹³⁴ É. Geoffroy, ‘Entre ésoterisme et exotérisme’.

¹³⁵ Cfr. P. Nwyia, *Ibn ʿAbbād*, lviii.

¹³⁶ Cfr. S. Kugle, *Rebel*, 151–4; idem, ‘Usūlī Sufis’, 190–6; F. Meier, ‘Khurāsān’, 219.

posto in questa lista, dove servono a identificare la tipologia del ‘saggio’ (*ḥakīm*). Ma il sufi davvero perfetto è quello che fa riferimento ai libri della confraternita *šādīlīya*.¹³⁷ Poiché per Zarrūq il sufi perfetto è il giurista che fonda la propria condotta sui testi rivelati, la sua valorizzazione della lettura individuale si ricollega allo stesso tempo alla tradizione intellettuale del sufismo e alla tendenza al ritorno alle fonti di un *muğtahid* riformista.

Conclusione

La letteratura sufi, per la sua varietà e per la sua diffusione a vari livelli della società, potrebbe costituire un oggetto di studio privilegiato in una storia della lettura nell’islam premoderno. Ma il ruolo del libro sufi nella storia sociale e intellettuale dell’islam ha cominciato a essere esplorato in modo abbastanza sistematico solo per quanto riguarda il XIII/XIX secolo, il momento di passaggio dalla cultura manoscritta alla cultura della stampa nel mondo islamico.¹³⁸

Sulla base delle fonti prese in esame in questo articolo, sembra comunque possibile affermare che il sufismo abbia avuto un ruolo importante nella promozione della lettura privata nell’ambito delle scienze religiose. A partire dal VII/XIII secolo, la diffusione dell’opera di Ibn ‘Arabī ha certamente incoraggiato la valorizzazione del libro e dello studio individuale. Anche nel caso dell’ebraismo, come si è visto, alcuni storici ritengono che la nascita di una letteratura mistica nel VII/XIII secolo abbia svolto un ruolo particolarmente importante nella transizione da una cultura orale a una cultura del libro.

La trasformazione delle pratiche di lettura e della forma del manoscritto prima dell’avvento della stampa è stata oggetto di un’attenzione particolare da parte degli storici dell’Europa medievale e della prima età moderna, in reazione alla tradizione storiografica che ha attribuito alla stampa la rivoluzione decisiva nelle pratiche di lettura.¹³⁹ Secondo P. Saenger, tali trasformazioni potrebbero essere state in parte il risultato dell’imitazione dei manoscritti arabi negli *scriptoria* spagnoli dove si tradussero testi filosofici e scientifici dall’arabo.¹⁴⁰

Comunque sia, è certo che il libro silenzioso è per eccellenza il libro tradotto. Proprio per questo, nella civiltà islamica classica, che è stata inaugurata da una straordinaria attività di traduzione, la trasmissione orale

¹³⁷ Cfr. A. Zarrūq, *Qawā‘id*, 51 (cap. 60).

¹³⁸ Cfr. R. Chih-Mayeur-Jaouen-R. Seesemann (eds.), *Sufism, Literary Production and Printing*.

¹³⁹ S. Landi, ‘Stampa’, 52.

¹⁴⁰ P. Saenger, *Space Between Words*, 124–5.

e la lettura privata hanno coesistito sin dall'inizio. Nel periodo classico però la 'lode del libro', cioè la valorizzazione del suo autonomo valore formativo, è legata soprattutto all'*adab* e alle 'scienze straniere', mentre le scienze religiose hanno insistito soprattutto sulla funzione pedagogica della trasmissione orale.

Nelle scienze religiose, la contrapposizione fra il libro e il maestro è in buona parte ideologica, perché la lettura privata è collegata a valori che minacciano la continuità della tradizione, come l'indipendenza intellettuale e il rovesciamento delle gerarchie tradizionali basate sull'anzianità o l'antichità. La dialettica fra fedeltà alla tradizione e confronto diretto con i testi è un dato strutturale in una cultura al tempo stesso orale e scritta. Il sufismo, parte integrante della cultura religiosa medievale, ha contribuito a rafforzare entrambi i poli di questa dialettica. Se il modello di educazione sufi è servito a confermare il principio dell'ubbidienza dovuta al maestro nella *madrassa* tardo-medievale,¹⁴¹ l'insistenza sul valore formativo del libro da parte di alcuni autori sufi si accompagna al recupero della cultura filosofica negli studi teologici e alla promozione di un'ermeneutica 'rinnovata' delle fonti del diritto. Contrariamente a quanto riteneva Louis Massignon, la scuola di Ibn ʿArabī non ha riservato 'l'apanage de la mystique, science ésotérique qui ne doit pas être divulguée, à des cercles initiatiques fermés'.¹⁴² Le reazioni di Ibn Ḥaldūn e di altri autori dell'epoca mostrano infatti la rilevanza culturale e politica della diffusione dei 'libri sullo svelamento' prodotti da autori 'moderni' come Ibn ʿArabī e Ibn Sabʿīn. L'ulteriore espansione della letteratura prodotta dalle confraternite nel periodo ottomano meriterebbe di essere studiata nella prospettiva della storia sociale di una prima modernità islamica che, malgrado differenze di grande importanza, come la mancata adozione della stampa, presenta paralleli inesplorati con la storia europea.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Ibn ʿArabī, *Taḍkīra*, 117, cita a questo proposito al-Ġazālī ('l'errore del maestro è più utile al discepolo della propria opinione corretta'), che rinvia a sua volta all'esempio di Mosè e al-Ḥaḍīr. Cfr. anche F. Meier, 'Khurāsān', 218.

¹⁴² L. Massignon, *Essai*, 80.

¹⁴³ Un'interessante visione sintetica del ruolo del libro nelle trasformazioni religiose della prima età moderna, che sottolinea le evoluzioni parallele nei tre monoteismi, in Europa e nell'Impero ottomano, si trova in C. Mayeur-Jaouen, 'Hagiographies'; eadem, 'Saint et sainteté'. Ringrazio l'autrice per avermi permesso di leggere questi due articoli prima della loro pubblicazione.

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LA PROSE AMOUREUSE ARABO-ISLAMIQUE : DE L'ISNĀD TRADITIONNEL AUX SOURCES LIVRESQUES

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This article focuses on the method of transmission in *aḥbār* belonging to the Arabic literary genre of love prose. The survey of the system of quotations in thirteen love treatises written between the 4th/10th and the 11th/17th centuries indicates that the traditional *isnād*, in which the names of the transmitters are included, was progressively abandoned. Authors starting from Muḡulṭāy (d. 762/1361) chose instead to favour quotations of books by their titles, even though the preferred method of transmitting knowledge was still oral during the Mamluk period. Use of written 'references' not only indicates a formal change of conventional practice, but also implies the willingness of later authors to claim a kind of authorship in reshaping stories taken from old material.

L'histoire de la littérature arabo-islamique compte une quinzaine de traités d'amour conservés, dont la production s'est étendue sur huit siècles environ. Du point de vue chronologique, les premières monographies sur l'amour ^uḍrite, contenant une discussion théorique sur l'amour-passion (ⁱṣq)¹ et pouvant être considérées comme de véritables traités d'amour, sont la *Risāla fī l-ⁱṣq wa-l-nisā'* et la *Risālat al-qiyān* d'al-Ġāḥiḡ (m. 255/869). Le plus tardif des ouvrages de ce type publiés à ce jour est le *Kitāb ḡawānī l-aṣwāq fī ma^cānī l-ⁱṣṣāq* d'Ibn al-Bakkā' al-Balḡī (m. 1040/1630). Tous les ouvrages qui traitent exclusivement de l'amour 'courtois' et qui furent écrits entre ces deux extrêmes, partagent, malgré leurs différences, un certain nombre de thèmes communs, comme l'essence de l'amour-passion (*māhiyyat al-ⁱṣq*) et les états (*aḥwāl*) des amants,² ce qui permet d'évoquer un véritable 'genre littéraire'. Dans tous ces traités d'amour, une discussion théorique sur l'attitude à adopter face à l'amour-passion est accompagnée et étayée par des notices relatant l'histoire d'amants éprouvés par le ⁱṣq, chaque auteur introduisant un nombre limité d'histoires originales.³ Cet

¹ A. Cheikh-Moussa, 'La négation d'éros', 73.

² L. A. Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love*, xiii et xv.

³ Stefan Leder observe, à propos de la transmission du *ḡabar* littéraire, que 'authors of compilations are [...] not supposed to have produced the texts they present. In most of our sources we find quotations mostly without any indication

article analyse les déclarations des auteurs concernant les sources qu'ils utilisèrent, ainsi que les passages où ils exposent au lecteur la méthode adoptée dans la rédaction de leurs notices. Cette étude de cas se fonde sur un corpus limité aux traités d'amour, dont l'histoire peut être considérée comme représentative de tendances plus générales dans l'évolution de la littérature de langue arabe.

L'authentification du *ḥabar* par la mention de son origine fut très tôt introduite dans l'*adab*,⁴ bien que les auteurs fassent souvent une utilisation 'allégée' de cet instrument.⁵ L'*isnād* de l'*adab* n'a d'ailleurs pas la même fonction que dans le *ḥadīth*, car il ne sert pas véritablement à établir l'origine d'un texte.⁶ La méthode de l'*isnād* est traditionnellement liée à l'oralité. Il témoigne de la *riwāya*, ou transmission orale d'un texte écrit. Bien qu'elle fasse souvent référence à l'écrit, la *riwāya* est donc strictement liée au concept de tradition orale.⁷ Le prestige de cette forme de transmission du savoir, née entre la fin du II^e/VIII^e siècle et le début du III^e/IX^e siècle, lorsque les premières collections de *ḥadīths* (*muṣannafs*

of the written sources used – from scholars who were themselves occupied with the collection and transmission of *akhbār*' (S. Leder, 'The Literary Use of the *Khabar*', 380). Malgré cela : 'Comparison of parallel narratives have demonstrated the proportion of divergences and shown that the editing of *akhbār* implies operations similar to authorship.' (ibid., 384).

⁴ Jacqueline Sublet remarque qu'avec les traditions, on enseigne 'les sciences religieuses' (*ilm* et *ma'rifa*) qui sont à considérer en relation constante avec la science que l'on peut dire profane (*adab*). Dans l'*adab* qui concerne l'ensemble des connaissances reçues notamment des ancêtres que l'on prend pour modèles, on trouve toute une culture profane qui inclut la poésie, l'art oratoire, la rhétorique, la grammaire, mais aussi les traditions historiques et tribales des anciens arabes. Ces trois aspects de la science, *ilm*, *ma'rifa* et *adab* restent étroitement liés et sont véhiculés ensemble, horizontalement chez les contemporains et dans l'étendue de l'aire de l'Islam ; verticalement dans le temps de génération en génération ; ils sont transmis par voie orale et écrite selon des modalités bien définies.' (J. Sublet, 'Le modèle arabe', 14).

⁵ Une exception, dans un genre littéraire différent, est représentée par Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (m. 328/940) qui déclare dans l'introduction du *'Iqd al-farīd* 'that *akhbār* stand alone on their own merits, without the authentication of long *isnāds* which would destroy their brilliance' (J. Bray, 'Abbasid Myth and the Human Act', 15). J. Bray remarque également qu' 'Ibn 'Abd Rabbih puts his trust in the wisdom of books and the individual exercise of reason by the reader, instead of in the methods of orally based teaching which subject the individual to the consensus of the study circle and the authority of a master' (ibid., 17).

⁶ H. Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs*, 95.

⁷ S. Leder, 'Spoken Word and Written Word Text', 1.

et *musnads*) furent couchées par écrit,⁸ s'est perpétuée dans la culture arabo-islamique jusqu'à une époque très tardive⁹. À partir de la deuxième moitié du II^e/VIII^e siècle, la transmission du *ḥabar* devint une discipline à part, bien qu'elle continuât à utiliser la méthode de l'*isnād*.¹⁰ Jonathan Berkey remarque que le prestige de cette méthode de transmission demeura intact pendant longtemps et que la valeur de la connaissance acquise par les livres continua à faire l'objet de doutes à l'époque mamelouke. Selon lui, la véritable connaissance venait, encore à cette époque, uniquement d'une personne instruite.¹¹

Cet article propose d'analyser les passages qui font référence à la transmission des notices dans un corpus de treize traités d'amour, couvrant une période d'environ sept siècles. La première partie de ce travail relève et compare les données textuelles concernant la transmission des notices sur les amants dans les ouvrages qui précèdent chronologiquement *al-Wāḍiḥ al-mubīn fī ḍikr man ustūshida min al-muḥibbīn* de Muḡulṭāy (m. 762/1361). La seconde partie est entièrement consacrée au *Wāḍiḥ*, qui représente un tournant dans l'histoire de la citation de références livresques explicites. Enfin, la troisième partie se penche sur l'évolution des méthodes de citation chez les auteurs postérieurs à Muḡulṭāy.

A. Les sources des notices sur les amants avant Muḡulṭāy (m. 762/1361)

Comme tout ouvrage d'*adab*, les traités d'amour mêlent poésie et prose, auxquelles s'ajoutent des citations du Coran et du *ḥadīṭ*. Chacune de ces composantes (à l'exception des citations coraniques) est traditionnellement précédée d'un *isnād*¹² dans lequel figurent les noms

⁸ J.A.C. Brown, *Hadith. Muhammad's Legacy*, 31.

⁹ Gregor Schoeler remarque à ce propos : 'The claim of 'heard/audited transmission' (*al-riwāya al-masmū'a*) was in principle still in force even in the age of *madrasa*, irrespective of the fact that, in most cases, transmission took place on the basis of books. 'Heard transmission' continued to play a practical role and beginning from the fourth/tenth and the fifth/eleventh centuries, assumed new forms : a book heard from or read to an author was tagged with a written 'endorsement', the *iḡāzat al-samā'*. Arab scholars always regarded and still regard manuscripts with such a *samā'* 'endorsement' as superior to those without it.' (G. Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written*, 44).

¹⁰ S. Leder, 'The Literary Use of the *Khabar*', 313.

¹¹ J. Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge*, 26.

des transmetteurs du *matn* (contenu). L'ensemble de l'*isnād* et du *matn* constitue le *ḥabar* ou 'unité d'information'.¹³

Dans les traités d'amour qui suivent, tous antérieurs au *Wāḍiḥ*, la méthode suivie par chaque auteur pour renvoyer à ses sources a été relevée.¹⁴

1) *L'I'tilāl al-qulūb fī aḥbār al-ʿuṣṣāq wa-l-muḥibbīn d'al-Ḥarāʾiṭī* (m. 327/938). *L'I'tilāl al-qulūb fī aḥbār al-ʿuṣṣāq wa-l-muḥibbīn* d'Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ḡaʿfar al-Sāmarrī al-Ḥarāʾiṭī, qui enseigne le *ḥadīṭ* à Damas¹⁵, est le premier d'une série d'ouvrages sur l'amour à caractère moralisant et d'inspiration religieuse. Par la suite, les ḥanbalites Ibn al-Ḡawzī (m. 597/1200) et Ibn Qayyim al-Ḡawziyya (m. 751/1350) reprendront dans leurs traités plusieurs idées et exemples apparaissant dans l'*I'tilāl*.¹⁶ Le livre est composé dans une perspective religieuse et éthique, son auteur essayant de combattre la tradition littéraire amoureuse profane sur la base du Coran, du *ḥadīṭ* et d'anecdotes pieuses.¹⁷ Beatrice Gruendler observe qu'il rapporte sans les commenter une grande variété d'opinions différentes à propos de l'amour.¹⁸

Dans cet ouvrage, al-Ḥarāʾiṭī emploie une méthode de transmission traditionnelle, quel que soit le domaine auquel appartient l'information qu'il donne. Il mentionne un grand nombre de *ḥadīṭs* munis de chaînes de garants qui témoignent, du moins formellement, d'une transmission orale. Pas une seule source écrite n'est citée explicitement. Parmi les noms des transmetteurs qu'il mentionne dans ses *isnāds*, ceux de Wahb b. al-Munabbih,¹⁹ d'al-Hayṭam b. ʿAdī,²⁰ d'al-Zubayr b. Bakkār²¹ et d'al-ʿAbbās b. Hišām al-Kalbī²² reviennent très souvent. Il s'agit de

¹³ 'The basic meaning of *ḥabar* denotes 'a piece of information' as reflected also by the verbal use of this root. In a literary context, however, the notion applies to narration in a more general sense.' (S. Leder, 'The Literary Use of the *Ḥabar*', 279).

¹⁴ Nous avons consacré plus ou moins de place à chaque auteur de traité d'amour en fonction de l'intérêt que sa méthode de citation des sources présente pour notre étude.

¹⁵ (Réd.), *ʿal-Kharāʾiṭī*, *EF*, iv, 1088b.

¹⁶ L.A. Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love*, 16.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ B. Gruendler, 'Pardon Those Who Love passionately', 191.

¹⁹ *Al-Ḥarāʾiṭī, I'tilāl al-qulūb*, 50, 57, 65, 129, 165.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 61, 95, 157, 211, 212, 231, 233, 234, 237, 259, 267.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 79, 80, 81, 86, 88, 97, 100, 101, 151, 167, 178, 182, 207, 208, 210, 214, 223, 253, 254, 255, 261, 270, 283, 286, 300, 320, 305, 322, 326, 346, 349 (2 fois).

²² *Ibid.*, 114, 213, 242, 269, 272, 320.

personnalités célèbres, connues comme transmetteurs d'*aḥbār*. Ces auteurs seraient parmi les premiers à avoir couché par écrit des histoires d'amour de poètes bédouins, qui étaient auparavant connus pour leur valeur guerrière, et à les avoir ainsi transformés en héros de romans 'courtois'.²³ Même si al-Ḥarāʾiṭī a utilisé leurs livres ou leurs cahiers de notes, il ne le mentionne pas clairement. Dans son ouvrage, le prestige de l'*isnād* traditionnel, qui donne l'illusion d'une transmission orale, demeure intact.

2) Al-Maṣūn fī sirr al-hawā l-maknūn d'Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī al-Ḥuṣrī al-Qayrawānī (m. ap. 413/1022)

Le *Kitāb al-Maṣūn fī sirr al-hawā l-maknūn* d'al-Ḥuṣrī pose tout particulièrement la question de savoir quand l'on doit, ou quand l'on peut, garder ses sentiments secrets. L'œuvre constitue un lien essentiel dans la transmission de la matière littéraire sur l'amour entre les auteurs du III^e et ceux du IV^e siècle de l'hégire.²⁴ Elle représente probablement l'anneau de jonction entre l'histoire du *ʿišq* profane et le soufisme.²⁵ Pour la première fois, amour profane et amour divin sont mélangés.

Dans le *Maṣūn* les chaînes de transmission traditionnelles sont dans la plus part des cas omises. Al-Ḥuṣrī introduit ses *aḥbār* à la première personne,²⁶ par un seul nom (*qāla fulān*), ou par une vague indication qui ne donne aucune information sur l'identité de celui qui parle.²⁷ Dans deux cas seulement, les titres d'ouvrages écrits remplacent ces mentions.²⁸ La référence aux sources reste donc imprécise chez al-Ḥuṣrī, qui ne fait pas usage de l'*isnād* nominal traditionnel et n'applique guère non plus la méthode 'moderne' de citations 'livresques'.

3) Ṭawq al-ḥamāma fī l-ulfa wa-l-ullāf d'Ibn Ḥazm (m. 456/1064)

Le *Ṭawq al-ḥamāma* du célèbre juriste andalous Ibn Ḥazm constitue un cas particulier dans l'histoire du genre littéraire des traités d'amour. Bien qu'Ibn Ḥazm reste fidèle à la tradition orientale,²⁹ les critiques ne manquent pas de souligner l'originalité de son ouvrage et le tour

²³ Voir à ce propos l'article de R. Blachère, 'Problème de la transfiguration du poète tribal'.

²⁴ L.A. Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love*, 21.

²⁵ R. Ben Slama, *al-ʿIṣq wa-l-kitāba*, 219.

²⁶ Cf., '*Fa-waḡadtu*' (al-Ḥuṣrī, *al-Maṣūn*, 15).

²⁷ Cf., '*wa-qāla baʿd al-ḥukamā*', '*wa-qāla baʿd al-tarāḡima*' (ibid., 17).

²⁸ Il s'agit du *Kitāb Fiḥ al-luḡa* et d'*al-Kitāb al-mubhiḡ* d'al-Ṭaʿālibī (ibid., 166 et 331).

²⁹ G. Martinez, 'L'amour-trace !', 1.

autobiographique, marqué par la sincérité,³⁰ qu'il possède. Ibn Ḥazm a souvent été témoin des histoires qu'il raconte et il déclare ne pas s'intéresser aux récits des anciens Arabes (*al-a^crāb al-muqaddamūn*), comme d'autres l'ont fait, car les notices qui les concernent ont déjà été transmises par un grand nombre d'auteurs. Le traité d'Ibn Ḥazm se caractérise ainsi par un nombre très réduit d'*isnāds* ; en lieu et place, l'auteur déclare avoir été le témoin des événements ou avoir entendu personnellement raconter l'histoire, mais sans nommer ses sources, par souci de discrétion. La mention de sources écrites y est presque absente : il ne cite que quatre titres et ne nomme qu'un seul auteur.³¹

4) Maṣārī^c al-^cuṣṣāq d'al-Sarrāġ (m. 500/1106)

Célèbre traditionniste ḥanbalite de Bagdad, al-Sarrāġ est également connu pour son œuvre poétique. Il se serait consacré en priorité à deux types de travaux littéraires : la versification de livres de *fiqh* ou à sujet religieux, et des ouvrages d'édification morale relevant de l'*adab*. Le *Maṣārī^c* ressortit à cette seconde catégorie.³² Le titre du livre (*Trépas des amants*) donne le ton de l'ouvrage. Dans cette anthologie dont les notices évoquent toutes des amours tragiques, les histoires des amants ne sont apparemment pas classées selon un ordre précis,³³ et les thèmes évoqués par les vers et les anecdotes sont conformes à ceux des autres traités d'amour.

À la différence de ses deux prédécesseurs, al-Ḥuṣrī et Ibn Ḥazm, et selon ses propres déclarations, al-Sarrāġ aurait recouru à la méthode traditionnelle de transmission du *ḥabar*, à laquelle il accorde une grande importance. Ses chaînes de transmission, très précises, comportent fréquemment la date et/ou le lieu où la transmission orale s'est produite.³⁴ L'auteur cite souvent le nom du maître qui lui a transmis les

³⁰ R. Arié, *Études sur la civilisation de l'Espagne musulmane*, 225.

³¹ Il s'agit du premier livre de la *Toraḥ* (*al-Sifr al-awwal min al-Tawra*), du *Aḥbār al-^cArab*, d'une *Siyar Mulūk al-Sūdān* et du *Kitāb al-Lafẓ wa-l-iṣlāḥ* d'Abū l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Ishāq al-Rāwandī (Ibn Ḥazm, *Ṭawq al-ḥamāma*, 88, 141, 155 et 267).

³² S. Leder, ^cal-Sarrādī², *EF*², ix, 66–7.

³³ J.-C. Vadet, *L'esprit courtois*, 380–1.

³⁴ Voici quelques exemples d'indications précises sur la transmission : *aḥbaranā Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ardastānī bi-Makka fī Masġid al-Ḥarām sana sitta wa-arba^cin wa-arba^cimi²a* (al-Sarrāġ, *Maṣārī^c al-^cuṣṣāq*, 1 : 157) ; *aḥbaranā l-amīr Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ^cIsā b. al-Muqtadir bi-Allāh qirā²atan ^calayhi fī dārihi bi-l-Ḥarīm al-Ṭāhirī sana ṭamān wa-ṭalāṭīn wa-arba^cimi²a*, (ibid., 1 : 308) ; *aḥbaranā Abū al-Qāsim ^cAbd al-^cAzīz b. Bandār*

notices qu'il rapporte.³⁵ À plusieurs reprises, l'auteur fait allusion à un texte écrit dont il aurait tiré certaines de ses notices,³⁶ mais il n'en cite pas le titre. Seuls six titres d'ouvrages écrits sont cités explicitement.³⁷

5) *Rawḍat al-qulūb wa-nuzhat al-muḥibb wa-l-maḥbūb d'al-Šayzarī (XI^e siècle)*
L'auteur de la *Rawḍa* est peu connu. Tout au plus peut-on établir qu'il fut juge à Ṭabariyya. La date de sa mort est inconnue, mais son moment de gloire peut être situé dans le dernier quart du XI^e siècle.³⁸ Parmi les traités d'amour qui nous sont parvenus, le *Wāḍih* est le premier, chronologiquement, à citer la *Rawḍat al-qulūb*. Les auteurs des traités

al-Šayzarī bi-qirā'atī 'alayhi fī masǧid al-Ḥarām bayna bāb Banī Šayba wa-bāb al-Nabī tuǧāh al-Ka'ba (ibid., 2 : 65).

³⁵ La mention *bi-qirā'atī 'alayhi*, parfois suivie de la date et/ou du lieu où la transmission est advenue, apparaît dans les passages suivants : 1 : 11, 12, 15, 21 (date), 21 (lieu), 26 (lieu), 31, 33, 36, 44, 49, 55, 67 (lieu), 85, 87, 91, 100, 102 (le lieu) ; 107, 113, 115, 120, 122, 124, 126, 127, 128, 131 (lieu), 138, 154 (date), 156 (date et le lieu), 161, 162 (lieu et date), 164, 167, 16 (lieu et date), 172, 174, 176, 181 (date), 184 (date et le lieu), 186 (date et le lieu), 187 (lieu), 193, 199 (date et le lieu), 207, 238, 245 (date et le lieu), 255, 267 (2 fois), 269 (date), 275, 292, 309, 312. 2 : 7, 18 (date), 20 (lieu), 25 (lieu), 41, 50, 56 (date), 86, 94, 98, 113, 192, 199, 253, 285, 287.

Les mentions *iǧāzatan lanā ; fī mā aǧāza lanā, fī mā aǧāzahu lī*, apparaissent dans les passages suivants : 1 : 112, 147, 150, 153, 238 ; 2 : 108, 250, 112, 147, 150, 153, 238. *Aḥbaranā Abū Ġa'far b. Maslama fī-mā aǧina la-nā fī riwāyatihi* : 1 : 283. *Fī-mā aǧina lanā fī riwāyati-hi* : 1 : 42, 306, 313 ; 2 : 61.

³⁶ *Kataba ilayya* : 1 : 62, 227 ; *aḥbaranā Abū Ġālib Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Sahl b. Bišrān fī kitābihi ilaynā min Wāsiṭ al-'Irāq* : 1 : 82 ; *fī-mā kataba bihi ilaynā* : 1 : 63 ; *waǧadtu bi-ḥaṭṭ* : 1 : 84 ; 2 : 130 ; *naqaltuhu min ḥaṭṭihi* : 1 : 250, 288, 313, 314 ; 2 : 104, 107, 115, 275, 280 ; *naqaltuhu min ašlihi* : 1 : 39, 251 ; 2 : 26 ; *waǧadtu bi-ḥaṭṭ Abī 'Umar Muḥammad b. al-'Abbās b. Ḥuyyawayh* : 2 : 283 ; *naqaltuhu minhu* : 1 : 280 ; *naqaltu min ḥaṭṭ Ibn Ḥuyyawayh* : 1 : 317 ; *min ḥaṭṭ Ibn Ḥuyyawayh 'anhu* : 1 : 323 ; *waǧadtu bi-ḥaṭṭ Abī 'Umar b. Ḥuyyawayh wa-naqaltuhu min kitābihi* : 1 : 92 ; *ḥaddaṭa-nā Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī Naṣr al-Mu'addin min lafzihi wa-kitābihi* : 1 : 94.

³⁷ 1) *Aḥbaranā Abū l-Faraǧ al-Isfahānī fī Kitāb al-Aǧānī* : 1 : 62 ; *ḥaddaṭanā Abū l-Faraǧ Muḥammad b. 'Alī l-Isfahānī fī Kitāb al-Aǧānī* : 1 : 227 ; 2) *aḥbaranā Abū Ḥaṣṣ 'Umar b. Muḥammad al-Makkī šāḥib Qūt al-qulūb* : 1 : 174 ; 3) *wa-bi-isnādihi qāla ḥaddaṭanā l-Qālī qāla ; qara'tu fī Nawādir Ibn al-A'rābī* : 1 : 257 ; 4) *ḍakara lī annahu qara'a 'alayhi Dīwān al-šabāba wa-qara'tuhu 'alayhi ḡamī'ahu bi-Dimašq* : 1 : 302 ; 5) *aḥbaranā [...]* *bi-qirā'atī 'alayhi bi-Tinnīs fī Kitāb al-Tasallī* : 1 : 24 ; 6) *ḍakara Abū l-Qāsim Maṣṣūr b. Ġa'far al-Šīrafi fī kitābihi Kitāb al-Muǧālasāt* : 2 : 243.

³⁸ D. Semah, 'Rawḍat al-qulūb'.

d'amour qui ont vécu après al-Šayzarī, que ce soit avant ou à la même époque que Muğultāy (Šihāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd et Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyya), ne semblent pas connaître ce traité.

La *Rawḍa* n'inclut pas de véritables *isnāds*. Les *aḥbār* sont souvent introduits par des expressions vagues dont les plus fréquentes sont *ḥakā fulān* (Untel raconta),³⁹ *ḥukiya* (on raconta)⁴⁰ et *qīla* (on dit).⁴¹ Seuls deux ouvrages écrits, dont al-Šayzarī affirme être l'auteur, y sont mentionnés comme sources.⁴²

6) *Damm al-hawā d'Ibn al-Ġawzī* (m. 597/1200)

Ibn al-Ġawzī est un des plus hauts représentants de l'école ḥanbalite et exerça une influence majeure sur le ḥanbalisme à l'époque ayyoubide.⁴³ Son *Damm al-hawā* eut une influence capitale, dans la forme comme dans le fond, sur la *Rawḍat al-qulūb* du ḥanbalite plus tardif Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyya (m. 751/1350).⁴⁴ Le caractère moralisant de l'ouvrage, qui transparait déjà dans son titre, est confirmé par le contenu. Ibn al-Ġawzī défend un enseignement traditionnel relatif à l'amour, en réaction à certaines pratiques soufies et aux théories d'Ibn Dāwūd et d'Ibn Ḥazm.⁴⁵ Le *Damm al-hawā* diffère des autres ouvrages du genre par sa discussion originale du désir et de la passion amoureuse. Les citations y ont une portée didactique, religieuse, morale et philosophico-éthique. Se présentant comme un médecin ou un éducateur, Ibn al-Ġawzī propose de guérir de la convoitise charnelle et de l'amour malheureux.⁴⁶

Les *isnāds* d'Ibn al-Ġawzī ne laissent apparaître qu'une seule mention explicite de livre comme source.⁴⁷ Dans ses chaînes de transmission

³⁹ Al-Šayzarī, *Rawḍat al-qulūb*, 11, 38, 41, 44, 49, 57, 59, 62, 64, 70, 71, 80, 105, 107, 109, 119, 122 (2 fois), 124, 138, 167, 163, 169, 179, 203, 215, 219, 248, 252, 259, 275, 285, 287, 295.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 34, 69, 184, 189, 194, 200, 223, 251 (2 fois), 272, 276, 288, 289, 294.

⁴¹ Ibid., 60, 196, 197, 199 (2 fois), 200, 249, 250, 261, 277, 178, 280, 289, 290, 291 (2 fois), 296.

⁴² *Wa-qad ḍakartu fī kitābī l-ma'rif bi-l-Tuḥfa wa-l-turfā ; wa-fī kitābī l-ma'rif bi-l-Ḥadā'iq wa-l-timār fī nawādir al-quḍāt wa-l-buḥalā'* : ibid., 234 et 297.

⁴³ H. Laoust, 'Ibn al-Djawzī', *EF*², iii, 774–5.

⁴⁴ J. N. Bell, *Love Theory*, 9.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁶ S. Leder, *Ibn al-Ġawzī*, 70.

⁴⁷ *Wa-qad ḍakara Abū Bakr b. Dāwūd fī Kitāb al-Zahra* (Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Damm al-hawā*, 319). Dans un autre passage, Ibn al-Ġawzī mentionne le *Kitāb Ḡamīl Buṭayna wa-ʿAfrā' wa-ʿUrwa wa-Kuṭayyir*. Beaucoup de ces 'ouvrages' portant le mot *kitāb* suivi du nom de deux amants sont mentionnés dans le *Fihrist* d'Ibn al-Nadīm (*Fihrist*, 478). Il ne s'agit probablement pas de véritables

‘traditionnelles’, les noms des mêmes ‘logographes’ et *quṣṣās* cités par son prédécesseur ḥanbalite al-Ḥarāʾiṭī sont particulièrement récurrents.⁴⁸

7) *Manāzil al-aḥbāb wa-manāzih al-albāb de Šihāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd (m. 725/1325)*

L’auteur du *Manāzil al-aḥbāb wa-manāzih al-albāb* est un cadī ḥanbalite. Son livre aurait influencé ses successeurs – en particulier Muḡultāy, qui connaissait cet ouvrage,⁴⁹ et Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyya.

Comme dans le *Maṣūn* d’al-Ḥuṣrī et à différence du *Maṣāriʿ al-ʿuṣṣāq* d’Ibn al-Sarrāġ et du *Damm al-hawā* d’Ibn al-Ġawzī, ses notices sont en général introduites soit par la mention d’un seul nom,⁵⁰ soit par de vagues indications qui ne renseignent nullement ses lecteurs sur la source du *ḥabar*.⁵¹

Le *Manāzil* contient les titres de huit ouvrages écrits, pour un total de quatorze références explicites à des livres.⁵² Dans cinq de ces citations apparaît la mention *bi-isnād ḍakarahu*. Ce renvoi du lecteur à un *isnād* apparaissant dans un autre ouvrage semble représenter la première déclaration explicite de l’utilisation d’un livre comme source.

livres, mais de cahiers de brouillon servant d’aide-mémoire à l’usage des conteurs. M. Balda, ‘Genèse et essor d’un genre littéraire’, 124.

⁴⁸ Wahb b. al-Munabbih (Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Damm al-hawā*, 24, 43 ; 132, 215, 449) ; al-Hayṭam b. ʿAdī (ibid., 49, 450) ; al-Zubayr b. Bakkār (ibid., 33, 136, 189, 191, 203, 217, 219, 248, 259, 264, 274, 290, 315, 373, 482, 483, 487, 491).

⁴⁹ Par, exemple, le *Wāḍih* (255–259, 259–260 et 337–338) cite directement comme source le *Manāzil al-aḥbāb* dans trois notices, dont deux se suivent.

⁵⁰ Cf. par exemple, ‘*yuhkā ʿan ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. al-ʿUmarī*’ (Šihāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd, *Manāzil al-aḥbāb*, 89).

⁵¹ Cf. par exemple, ‘*suʾila baʿḍ al-ʿulamāʾ ʿan ahl al-hawā fa-qāla*’ (ibid., 63).

⁵² *Ḍakara Ibn al-Aʿrābī l-maʿrūf bi-l-Waṣṣāʾ fī kitābihi bi-isnād ḍakarahu* (ibid., 11) ; *wa-min asmāʾihi wa-waṣafātihi allatī ḍakaraha al-Ḥuṣrī fī kitābihi* (ibid., 50) ; *qad ḍakara al-Marzubānī fī Kitāb al-Riyāḍ* (ibid., 67) ; *wa-huwa muṣannaf fī Kitāb al-Zahra fī al-maġāmiʿ al-šiʿriyya* (ibid., 86) ; *wa-ḥakā Abū Bakr b. Dāwūd ʿan Taʿlab bi-isnād ḍakarahu fī Kitāb al-Zahra* (ibid., 205) ; *ḍakara Abū Bakr b. Dāwūd fī ḥabarihi* (ibid., 223) ; *wa-ḥakā al-Ḥasan al-Qārī fī Kitāb Maṣāriʿ al-ʿuṣṣāq bi-isnād ḍakara-hu* (ibid., 218) ; *wa-fī Kitāb Aḥbār al-Aʿrāb bi-isnād ḍakarahu* (ibid., 231) ; *wa-ḍakara Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ġaʿfar al-Ḥarāʾiṭī fī Kitāb Iʿtilāl al-qulūb bi-isnād ḍakarahu* (ibid., 247) ; *mā ḥakā al-Ḍiyāʾ fī Kitāb Iʿtilāl al-qulūb* (ibid., 249) ; *ḍakara al-ṣayḥ Ġamāl al-dīn Abū Faraġ b. al-Ġawzī fī kitāb lahu yusammā l-Miftāḥ* (ibid., 279).

B. *Le cas d'al-Wāḍiḥ mubīn fī ḍikr man ustušhida min al-muḥibbīn de Muḡultāy (m. 762/1361)*

Dans les traités d'amour qui précèdent Muḡultāy, deux techniques distinctes de renvoi aux sources sont adoptées. Al-Ḥarā'itī, Ibn al-Sarrāḡ et Ibn al-Ġawzī utilisent en priorité des chaînes de transmission comportant plusieurs noms, qui ressemblent, au moins formellement, aux *isnāds* employés pour la transmission du *ḥadīṭ*. Cela tient en partie au caractère moralisant de leurs ouvrages, qui les rapproche du *ḥadīṭ* et de la *sunna*. Dans *al-Maṣūn*, *Ṭawq al-ḥamāma*, *Rawḍat al-qulūb* et *Manāzil al-aḥbāb*, les références aux sources restent en revanche imprécises et peu documentés, peut-être à cause du caractère supposé plus 'léger' de ces ouvrages et, dans le cas du *Ṭawq* et de la *Rawḍat al-qulūb*, du rôle de témoin direct des événements narrés que joue l'auteur. Tous les ouvrages mentionnés ont néanmoins en commun le nombre très réduit de sources écrites mentionnées et le fait que l'auteur ne précise jamais comment il s'est servi des ouvrages dont il mentionne les titres.

Le *Wāḍiḥ al-mubīn fī ḍikr man ustušhida min al-muḥibbīn*, ou *Précis des martyrs de l'amour*, fut écrit par Muḡultāy, auteur d'origine turque qui vécut dans Le Caire des Mamelouks. Il mentionne quatre-vingt-deux ouvrages différents,⁵³ dont plusieurs sont cités plus d'une fois, mais sans

⁵³ Muḡultāy, *al-Wāḍiḥ al-mubīn*: *Kitāb al-Kāmil*, *Kitāb al-Daḥīra* et *Taḍkirat al-ḥuffāz* (19); *Ta'riḥ Nīsābūr* (19 et 42); *Rustāq al-ittifāq fī mulah šu'arā' al-āfāq* (21 et 91); *Kitāb al-I'tilāl* (23, 24, 61, 238 et 342); *al-Taḥsīn* (Kawāšī) et *al-Taḥsīn* (Sufyān b. Sa'īd al-Ṭawrī, 2 fois) (23); *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* et *Musnad Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq al-Sarrāḡ* (24); *al-Mubtadā'* et *Tadbīr al-aḡsām* (29); *Imtizāḡ al-rūḥ* ou *Imtizāḡ al-nufūs* (30, 31, 43, 48, 62, 124, 137, 228, 229, 401 et 402); *Rabī' al-abrār* (33); *Maydān al-āšiqīn fī šarḥ aḥwāl al-wāmiqīn* (34); *Miḥnat al-zirāf* (37, 93, 278, 286, 307, 326 et 403); *Kitāb al-Ḥikma* (41, 103); *al-Awṣaṭ* et *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt* (42); *al-Naqā'id* (44 et 125); *al-Mantūr wa-l-manzūr* (44, 46, 61, 72 et 236); *al-La'ālī fī šarḥ al-Amālī*; *Qadh al-ālī fī al-Kalām al-La'ālī*; *Kitāb al-Fāsil bayna al-ḥāfil*; *Kitāb al-Kāmil* et *Kitāb al-Niṣwār* (44); *Kitāb al-Mutayyamīn* (49); *al-Ġāmi'* (50); *al-Maṣūn* (53., 61, 69, 72, 350); *al-Muḥayr'* (54); *Bahḡat al-maḡālis* (62); *Kitāb al-Azmina* (66); *Kitāb al-Alfāz* et *Kitāb al-Talḥīṣ* (70); *Rawḍat al-qulūb wa-nuzhat al-maḥabba wa-l-maḥbūb* (71, 144, 186, 216, 260, 337 et 367); *Nawādir al-uṣūl* (88 et 236); *al-Muṣtabah* et *Kitāb al-Ruwāt* (90); *Ta'riḥ Dimašq* (91); *al-Mufaṣṣal li-l-Nāsi'* (106); *Kitāb al-Ṭawq* (116); *Ḍamm al-hawā* (116 et 395); *Kitāb al-Zahra*, *Kitāb al-ṣaḥāba*; *Usd al-ḡāba* et *Kitāb al-Ibāna* (131); *Amālī* (Ibn Durayd) (154); *Amālī* (Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Anbārī) (155); *Fiqh al-luḡa* (158); *al-Ṭabaqāt* (Ibn Qutayba) (163, 233 et 380); *al-Mu'ḡam* (al-Marzubānī) (179 et 261); *al-Mustanīr* et *Tark al-mirās fī l-ziyāda 'alā Mu'ḡam al-šu'arā'* (179); *Kitāb al-Anīs* (181 et 264); *Amālī* (Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b.

qu'aucun ne se distingue véritablement des autres par le nombre de citations. Les livres mentionnés par Muğultāy relèvent de genres variés. Ils vont du traité de grammaire et de langue à l'anthologie littéraire, en passant par les recueils de *ḥadīṭ* et les ouvrages historiques, sans oublier les autres traités d'amour. Muğultāy privilégie clairement les citations 'livresques'. Certains passages renvoyant à des sources écrites témoignent également de la méthode utilisée par Muğultāy dans la rédaction de son ouvrage et de l'utilisation littéraire qu'il en fait.

1) *Le choix de la 'bonne' version*

À travers l'histoire de Bišr et Hind⁵⁴ qu'il affirme avoir tirée du *Musnad* de Šaraf al-Dīn al-Miṣrī, Muğultāy expose à ses lecteurs la méthode qu'il a adoptée dans le choix de la 'bonne' version de l'histoire. Le *Wāḍiḥ* relate ainsi qu'une femme mariée, nommée Hind, tomba amoureuse de Bišr, un homme qui passait chaque jour devant chez elle lorsqu'il allait trouver le Prophète Muḥammad. Elle lui envoya des vers où elle lui exposait ses sentiments, mais Bišr lui conseilla de prier Dieu afin de ne pas tomber dans l'adultère. Malgré cet avertissement, Hind insista tant qu'il décida de changer de chemin. Elle en tomba malade de chagrin, puis réussit à convaincre son mari de s'installer sur la route que Bišr empruntait désormais. Le voir à nouveau la guérit de sa langueur. Un jour, elle s'ouvrit à une vieille femme qui lui promit que son amour serait satisfait. Elle attira Bišr chez Hind par la ruse et les enferma ensemble. Le mari de Hind rentra plus tôt que prévu et, trouvant sa femme avec un autre homme, la répudia, puis alla demander au Prophète justice contre Bišr. Ce dernier convoqua Hind et la vieille femme, qui avouèrent leur méfait. Bišr tomba amoureux de Hind et demanda sa main, mais Hind

Ġa^cfar al-Qanṭarī (187) ; *Uqalā l-mağānīn* (191 et 301) ; *Kitāb al-Qiyān* (205, 272 et 389) ; *Kitāb al-Ḍuhūl* (207, 235, 241, 277, 325, 381 et 396) ; *Ta^rrīḥ al-Quds* (220) ; *al-Šāmil al-muḥīd* (223 et 383) ; *Aḥbār* (al-Ḥāfiṣ Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. °Alī l-Anbūsī) (224) ; *Kitāb* Hišām b. al-Kalbī (226) ; *al-Ta^rrīḥ al-kabīr* (Abū l-Farağ al-Iṣfahānī) (230 et 399) ; *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt* (Ibn Qutayba) ; *Kitāb al-Lubāb* (238) ; *Rūḥ al-arwāḥ* (260) ; *Kitāb al-Muwallahīn* (281) ; *Ġāmi^c al-laḍḍa* et *Kitāb al-Tiğān* (284) ; *Amālī* (Abū °Alī Hārūn b. Zakariyā al-Ḥağarī) (288 et 327) ; *Kitāb al-Tasallī* (297) ; *Nawādir* (al-Ḥağarī) (300) ; *Ta^rrīḥ* (°Alī b al-Ḥusayn al-Kātib) (312) ; *Ta^rrīḥ* (Abū Bakr b. Abī l-Azhar) (338) ; *Amālī* (Ṭa^clab) (350) ; *al-Miftāḥ* (366) ; *Kitāb al-Amṭāl* (378) ; *Kitāb al-Iḥtiḫāl*, *Mu^cğam al-amṭāl* (al-Zamaḥšarī), *Mu^cğam al-amṭāl* (al-Maydānī) et *Mu^cğam al-amṭāl* (Ibn al-Sikkīt) (380) ; *Kitāb Aḥbār al-a^crāb* (384) ; *Kitāb al-Zubayrī* (393) ; *Kitāb al-Ḍu^cafā^c* (402).

⁵⁴ Ibid., 125–31.

refusa pour se venger de l'humiliation subie. Bišr en mourut de douleur. Informée de sa mort, Hind trépassa à son tour. À la fin du *ḥabar*, l'auteur du *Wāḍiḥ* écrit :

*wa-qad dakara ba^cd hāḍihi l-qišsa al-ḥāfiẓān Abū Mūsā al-Madīnī fī Kitāb al-Ṣaḥāba wa-Ibn al-Aṭīr fī Usd al-ġāba wa-taraka šay³an yalzimuḥu ḍikruhu staḍkarnāhu min Kitāb al-Ibāna.*⁵⁵

La version du *Usd al-ġāba* d'Ibn al-Aṭīr⁵⁶ ne comporte qu'une brève allusion à une histoire plus longue, avec un renvoi à un autre ouvrage pour la version complète. La mort des deux amants à cause de leur passion est omise. Or le *Wāḍiḥ* se fonde sur le célèbre *ḥadīṭ* prophétique : *man^c ašīqa fa-^caffa fa-māta māta šahīdan* (celui qui aime passionnément, reste chaste et meurt à cause de cet amour, meurt en martyr).⁵⁷ Toutes les notices sur les amants que Muġultāy rapporte se terminent avec la mort des amants en martyrs. La version du *Usd* ne convenait pas au projet littéraire de Muġultāy et l'auteur du *Wāḍiḥ* dut chercher dans une autre source une version adéquate de l'histoire. Notre auteur évoque cette recherche en citant les livres qu'il a consultés, au lieu de mentionner les versions différentes de la notice accompagnées d'*isnāds* traditionnels. De cette manière, il avoue également avoir croisé

⁵⁵ 'Abū Mūsā al-Madīnī dans *Kitāb al-Ṣaḥāba* et Ibn al-Aṭīr dans *Usd al-ġāba* ont mentionné des passages de cette histoire, mais ils en ont négligé d'autres qu'il était nécessaire de rapporter et que nous avons donc tirés du *Kitāb al-Ibāna*. (La citation de ce livre est trop vague pour pouvoir identifier ce dernier ouvrage.) Ibid., 131.

⁵⁶ Voici l'histoire dans *Usd al-ġāba* : *annahū kāna fī bid³ al-islām raġul šābb yuqālu lahu Bišr kāna yaḥtalifu ilā rasūl Allāh ṣallā llāh^c alayhi wa-sallama wa-kāna min banī Asad b. ^cAbd al-^cUzza wa-kāna ṭarīquhu idā ġadiya ilā rasūl Allāh ṣallā llāh^c alayhi wa-sallama aḥḍ^c alā Ġuhayna wa-idā fatāt min Ġuhayna naẓarat ilayhi fa-ta^caššaqaṭhu wa-kāna bihā min al-ḥusn wa-l-ġamāl ḥaṭṭ^c aẓīm wa-kāna li-l-fatāt zawġ yuqālu lahu Sa^cd b. Sa^cīd wa-kānat al-fatāt taq^cud kull ġadāt li-Bišr ^calā an yaġtāzu bihā li-yanzura ilayhā fa-lammā ġāzahā aḥḍahā ḥubbuhu... wa-dakara l-qišsa bi-ṭūlihā dakarahā Ġa^cfar al-Mustaġfarī. Au début de l'Islam, un jeune homme appelé Bišr allait fréquemment voir le Prophète – la Prière et le Salut de Dieu soient sur lui. Il appartenait à la tribu des Banū Asad b. ^cAbd al-^cUzzā. Pour se rendre chez le Prophète, il empruntait la route passant par Ġuhayna. Une jeune femme de cette tribu le vit et s'éprit de passion pour lui. Elle était très belle et avait un mari appelé Sa^cd b. Sa^cīd. Elle s'asseyait tous les matins de manière à ce qu'il la voie en passant. Elle finit par tomber amoureuse de lui. Ġa^cfar al-Mustaġfarī a raconté l'histoire complète. (Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Usd al-ġāba*, 5 : 560–1).*

⁵⁷ Voir à ce propos M. Balda-Tillier, *Un traité d'amour tardif*, 129–54.

plusieurs sources et remodelé le *ḥabar* à sa guise. Or, selon la méthode traditionnelle, les auteurs n'admettent aucune participation dans l'élaboration d'un récit, ce qui donne l'impression que son contenu n'a aucunement été touché par leur créativité.⁵⁸

Un autre exemple de la valeur accordée par Muḡultāy aux sources livresques transparait dans ce bref passage : *lammā ḡāwaza Abū l-^cAbbās al-Ṭaqaḡī bi-Makka wa-waḡadtu bi-nuṣṣa : Abū l-^cAnbas*.⁵⁹ Le terme *nuṣṣa* renvoie à un texte écrit, et non à une *riwāya*.

2) Les biographies

Dans un autre cas,⁶⁰ Muḡultāy apporte des précisions sur un personnage qu'il cite dans une de ses notices :

wa-^cAbd Allāh b. ^cAqlama hādā lam yaḡkurhu al-Marzubānī fī mu^cḡamihi wa-lā fī kitābihi al-Mustanīr wa-lā Abū l-Faraḡ al-Umawī wa-ḡakartuhu fī kitābī l-musammā Tark al- mirās fī ziyāda ^calā Mu^cḡam al-^šu^carā.⁶¹

Ces références 'bibliographiques' précises semblent avoir pour fonction de permettre au lecteur de retrouver des informations sur le personnage cité.

3) De nouvelles histoires

Muḡultāy dit avoir tiré l'histoire de Naṣr b. al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ⁶² du *Kitāb al-Amṭāl* de Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī.⁶³ Les autres sources de cette notice qu'il indique par la suite sont *Kitāb al-Iḥtiḡāl* d'Abū ^cUbayd al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaḡāt* d'Ibn Qutayba, *Mu^cḡam al-amṭāl* d'al-Zamaḡṣarī, *Mu^cḡam al-amṭāl* d'al-Maydānī, *Kitāb Nuzhat al-anfus fī l-amṭāl* d'Ibn Sa^cd et un ouvrage sans titre par al-Marzubānī. Aucun *isnād* n'est mentionné, bien que parmi les personnages cités apparaisse le calife ^cUmar et que la notice touche donc à la morale islamique et à l'histoire religieuse.

Les sources que Muḡultāy cite pour cette notice ne sont pas des traités d'amour⁶⁴ et la notice ne se trouve, à notre connaissance, dans aucun des

⁵⁸ S. Leder, 'The Literary Use of the *Khabar*', 307–8.

⁵⁹ Muḡultāy, *al-Wāḡiḡ al-mubīn*, 226.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 179.

⁶¹ 'Ni al-Marzubānī dans son *Mu^cḡam* et dans son *Kitāb al-Mustanīr*, ni Abū l-Faraḡ al-Umawī ne mentionnent ce ^cAbd Allāh b. ^cAqlama, alors que je le mentionne dans mon livre *Tark al-mirās fī l-ziyāda ^calā Mu^cḡam al-^šu^carā*'.

⁶² Muḡultāy, *al-Wāḡiḡ al-mubīn*, 378–82.

⁶³ Ibid., 378.

⁶⁴ La seule exception est représentée par Ibn al-Marzubān, cité à la page 381, qui est bien l'auteur d'un traité d'amour. Malgré cela nous ne l'avons pas pris en compte, car Muḡultāy ne rapporte pas sous l'autorité de ce transmetteur l'histoire dans sa totalité, mais uniquement le fait que la *mutamanniya* du

traités conservés antérieurs au *Wāḍiḥ*. Notre auteur déclare explicitement avoir comparé plusieurs versions écrites du *ḥabar* pour choisir celle qui convenait le mieux à son propos et l'avoir ensuite introduite dans la tradition amoureuse dont elle ne faisait pas encore partie.

4) Variations sur le thème de l'amour

La mention de sources 'livresques' en lieu d'*isnād* offre à notre auteur la possibilité d'apporter des variations dans les histoires qu'il relate. Muḡultāy dit ainsi avoir tiré cette brève notice du *Kitāb al-Zahra* d'Ibn Dāwūd :

ḏakara Ibn Dāwūd fī Kitāb al-Zahra anna fatā yuqālu lahu Imru^o al-Qays hawā fatātan min ḥayyihi fa-lammā ^calimat bi-ḥubbihi lahā ḥaḡarathu fa-zāla ^caqluhu wa-ašfā ^calā l-talaḡ wa-šāra raḡma li-l-nās fa-lammā balaḡahā ḏālika atat fa-aḡadat bi-^ciḏadatay l-bāb wa-qālat : Kayfa aḡiduka Imr^oa l-Qays? Fa-qāla : ^catat wa-ḥiyāḏu al-mawti baynī wa-baynahā//wa-ḡādat bi-waḡlin ḥīna lā yanfa^cu l-waḡlu.⁶⁵

Dans la tradition amoureuse, cette histoire apparaît dans les ouvrages suivants : *Kitāb al-Zahra* d'Ibn Dāwūd (m. 294/909) ;⁶⁶ *I^ctilāl al-qulūb* d'al-Ḥarā^oiṭī (m. 327/939) ;⁶⁷ *Ḍamm al-hawā* d'Ibn al-Ġawzī (m. 597/1200) ;⁶⁸ *Manāzil al-aḡbāb* de Šihāb al-dīn Maḡmūd (m. 725 /1325) ;⁶⁹ *Tazyīn al-aswāq bi-taḡḡīl aswāq al-^cuḡḡāq* de Dāwūd al-Anṭākī (m. 1008/1599).⁷⁰ Dans le *Kitāb al-Zahra*, l'histoire est la même, mot pour mot, que dans le *Wāḍiḥ* ; comme dans l'ouvrage de Muḡultāy, elle ne comporte qu'un vers. Dans *I^ctilāl al-qulūb*, dans *Ḍamm al-hawā*,

proverbe cité à propos de ce récit (*aḡabb min al-mutamanniya*) serait la grand-mère d'al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ. Cf. Muḡultāy, *al-Wāḍiḥ al-mubīn*, 381.

⁶⁵ 'Ibn Dāwūd mentionna dans le *Kitāb al-Zahra* qu'un jeune homme appelé Imru^o al-Qays tomba éperdument amoureux d'une jeune femme de son clan. Quand elle sut qu'il l'aimait, elle se détourna de lui. Il en perdit la raison et dépérit, ce qui suscita la compassion des gens. Quand elle sut qu'il était au bord de la tombe, elle alla le trouver. Apparaissant dans le cadre de la porte, elle s'exclama : 'Comment vas-tu, Imru^o al-Qays ?'. Il répondit par ce vers :

Elle vint alors que l'abîme de la mort était déjà entre elle et moi ;
Elle m'accorda une visite lorsque la visite n'était plus d'aucune utilité.
Et il mourut.' (Muḡultāy, *al-Wāḍiḥ al-mubīn*, 121–2).

⁶⁶ Ibn Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-Zahra*, 51.

⁶⁷ Al-Ḥarā^oiṭī, *I^ctilāl al-qulūb*, 187.

⁶⁸ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Ḍamm al-hawā*, 383–4.

⁶⁹ Šihāb al-Dīn Maḡmūd, *Manāzil al-aḡbāb*, 215–16.

⁷⁰ Dāwūd al-Anṭākī, *Tazyīn al-aswāq*, 208.

dans *Manāzil al-aḥbāb* et dans *Tazyīn al-aswāq*, l'histoire est beaucoup plus longue et mentionne trois vers au lieu d'un seul.

Bien que la partie en prose soit presque identique, une comparaison entre le vers du *Kitāb al-Zahra* et celui du *Wāḍiḥ* montre que, même si les deux versions sont semblables au point de vue du sens, elles présentent des variantes significatives. Dans *Kitāb al-Zahra*, nous trouvons en effet :

*danat wa-zalālu l-mawti baynī wa-baynahā//wa-³adlat bi-waṣlin ḥīna lā
yanfa^cu l-waṣlu*

Alors que le *Wāḍiḥ* mentionne :

*danat wa-ḥiyāḍu l-mawti baynī wa-baynahā//wa-ḡādat bi-waṣlin ḥīna lā
yanfa^cu l-waṣlu*

Trois mots différents dans la version du *Wāḍiḥ* par rapport à celle du *Kitāb al-Zahra*⁷¹ : *atā* à la place de *danat*, *ḥiyāḍ* à la place de *zilāl* et *ḡādat* à la place *adlat*. Le verbe *atā* a le sens de venir et *danā* celui de se rapprocher. *Zilāl* est le pluriel de *zill*, ombre. Le terme peut avoir la connotation positive d'absence d'ardeur du soleil et indiquer le Paradis par opposition à la chaleur de l'Enfer, ou une connotation négative et signifier alors les ténèbres. *Ḥiyāḍ* signifie en revanche, selon le *Lisān al-^carab*, la fosse que l'on creuse pour y récolter de l'eau. Quant à *adlat*, il s'agit de la quatrième forme de *dalā* et le verbe a le sens de 'tendre, présenter quelque chose avec la main' (un cadeau, par exemple). *Ḡādat* signifie 'être généreux'.

La version du *Kitāb al-Zahra* est beaucoup moins récurrente et n'apparaît que dans trois ouvrages, qui font tous partie de la tradition amoureuse (*I^ctilāl al-qulūb*, *Ḍamm al-hawā* et *Tazyīn al-aswāq*). La version du *Wāḍiḥ* est en revanche présente dans un nombre relativement important d'ouvrages qui n'appartiennent pas au même genre littéraire, notamment : *Mu^cḡam al-udabā³* de Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (m. 626/1229) ;⁷² *Uyūn al-anbā³ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā³* d'Ibn Abī Uṣaybi^ca (m. 668/1270) ;⁷³

⁷¹ Nous sommes conscient que ces variantes pourraient être dues non pas à une intention explicite de l'auteur, mais à la fluidité textuelle qui accompagne la transmission des textes anciens. Dans le cas du *Wāḍiḥ*, la version du *ḥabar* donnée dans l'édition imprimée est néanmoins identique à celle d'un manuscrit copié du vivant de l'auteur. Ms Istanbul (Süleymaniye), *Fātiḥ*, 4143, f. 48v l. 13–f. 49r l. 2.

⁷² Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu^cḡam al-udabā³*, 5 : 467.

⁷³ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi^ca, *Uyūn al-anbā³*, 660.

Al-Faḥrī fī l-ādāb al-sultāniyya d'Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā (m. 709/1309);⁷⁴ *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-ʿArab* d'al-Nuwayrī (m. 733/1333);⁷⁵ *al-Wāfī bi-l-wāfayāt* d'al-Ṣafādī (m. 764/1363);⁷⁶ *al-Kaškūl* d'al-ʿĀmilī (m. 1030/1621).⁷⁷

Dans un seul de ces ouvrages, *al-Kaškūl* d'al-ʿĀmilī (qui est postérieur au traité de Muḡultāy), le vers est mentionné dans le même contexte que dans le *Wāḍiḥ* et rattaché à la même histoire. Le *Muʿḡam al-udabāʾ*, *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ*, *Nihāyat al-arab* et *al-Wāfī bi-l-wāfayāt* racontent tous qu'Abū Faḍl al-Kaḥḥāl aurait offert à Šaraf al-Dīn Ibn ʿUnayn un agneau qu'il trouva trop maigre. Al-Kaḥḥāl lui aurait alors envoyé un long poème qui se terminait par le vers cité dans le *Wāḍiḥ*. Le vers est utilisé, dans ce cas, afin de railler un cadeau 'radin', ici un agneau trop maigre.

Dans une troisième anecdote, uniquement présente dans *al-Faḥrī* d'Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā, l'auteur relate l'histoire d'un vizir du calife al-Muqtafī (r. 530/1136–554/1160) qui le servit pendant longtemps, puis fut déchu et mourut de privations. Juste avant sa mort, le vizir aurait récité le vers en question (i.e. la version du *Wāḍiḥ*) au calife qui était venu, enfin, lui rendre visite.

Un même vers, dont l'auteur n'est jamais mentionné, est donc utilisé dans trois contextes différents. Cependant, la version citée dans le *Kitāb al-Zahra* d'Ibn Dāwūd présente des variantes telles qu'on peut considérer qu'il s'agit d'un vers différent de celui présent dans le *Wāḍiḥ*. Bien que Muḡultāy déclare au début de sa notice qu'il tire son *ḥabar* du *Kitāb al-Zahra*, il n'a en réalité pris de son illustre prédécesseur que la partie en prose de la notice, la citation poétique étant empruntée ailleurs. Le choix de l'auteur du *Wāḍiḥ* n'est pas anodin. En citant comme source de sa notice le *Kitāb al-Zahra*, Muḡultāy renvoie son lecteur à ce livre. En introduisant une variante, cependant, l'auteur 'signe' sa propre version d'une histoire déjà connue. Cela lui permet également d'appliquer la technique du *ḡidd* et du *ḥazl*, qui consiste à intercaler parmi des *aḥbār* 'pédagogiques' et sérieux des propos plus légers, dans le but d'enseigner en amusant et d'éviter l'ennui – procédé littéraire que Muḡultāy affirme explicitement suivre dès son introduction.

⁷⁴ Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā, *al-Faḥrī*, 227–228.

⁷⁵ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, 10 : 77–8.

⁷⁶ Al-Ṣafādī, *al-Wāfī bi-l-wāfayāt*, 5 : 147.

⁷⁷ Al-ʿĀmilī, *al-Kaškūl*, 2 : 155.

C. *Les traités d'amour postérieurs au Wāḍiḥ*

En légitimant la citation de sources écrites, en commentant son utilisation et en montrant l'usage littéraire qu'il était possible d'en faire, Muḡulṭāy ouvrit la voie à ses successeurs, qui tirèrent profit de son exemple et mentionnèrent de plus en plus de livres. Une fois la référence à des sources écrites devenue acceptable, de nouveaux procédés furent mis en œuvre. Les auteurs les plus innovateurs dans ce domaine sont l'auteur anonyme du *Kitāb As^cār al-aswāq fī as^cār al-ašwāq* et Dāwūd al-Anṭākī, auteur du *Tazyīn al-aswāq fī aḥbār al-^cuššāq*.

1) *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn wa-nuzhat al-muštāqīn d'Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyya (m. 751/1350)*

Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyya est le plus célèbre disciple d'Ibn Taymiyya (m. 728/1328).⁷⁸ La *Rawḍa* constitue la présentation la plus aboutie de la pensée ḥanbalite sur l'amour.⁷⁹ L'auteur de la *Rawḍa* mentionne parmi ses sources trente-cinq ouvrages écrits,⁸⁰ ce qui représente moins de la moitié de ceux cités par le *Wāḍiḥ* pour un nombre équivalent de pages. Ses sources ne sont pas aussi variées que dans le *Wāḍiḥ* : bien qu'il cite quelques ouvrages historiques ou d'*adab*, la plupart des livres mentionnés dans la *Rawḍa* sont des recueils de *ḥadīṭ* ou des ouvrages touchant aux sciences religieuses et à la morale islamique. Les *Ṣaḥīḥayn*

⁷⁸ Pour une biographie détaillée de ce personnage, voir L. Holtzman, 'Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah', 202–23.

⁷⁹ J. N. Bell, *Love Theory*, 92.

⁸⁰ Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyya, *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn : al-Ṣiḥāḥ* (35, 46, 54 (2 fois) et 55) ; *al-Mu^cḡam al-awṣaṭ* (al-Ṭabarānī) (86, 242, 244 (2 fois), 247 (2 fois) ; *Ta^rrīḥ Nīsābūr* (87) ; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (99, 203, 242, 246, 247, 259–60 et 288) ; *al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (204, 242 et 288) ; *Ṣaḥīḥ Buḥārī* (243, 278 et 289) ; *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (2 fois) (289, 290, 311, 312, 342, 347, 363 (2 fois), 393, 394, 396, 397, 404, 405, 407 (2 fois), 408 et 422) ; *Musnad Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Sarrāġ* (99) ; *Manāqib al-Šāfi^cī* (116, 2 fois, 118 et 130) ; *al-Kāmil* (al-Mubarrad) et *Kitāb rawāhu Mālik* (117) ; *Kitāb Rustāq al-Ittiḥāq* (119) ; *Šarḥ al-Kāmil* (121) ; *Ta^rrīḥ Baġdād* (122) ; *Kitāb Imtizāġ al-arwāḥ* (145 et 367) ; *Miḥnat al-zirāf* (147) ; *Baḡḡat al-maġālis* (173) ; *Kitāb al-Zuhd* (202) ; *al-Musnad* (Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal) (243 (2 fois), 291, 308, 313, 346, 387 et 410) ; *Sunan Ibn Māġah* (245) ; *Musnad Abī Ya^clā l-Mawṣilī* (246) ; *Ġāmi^c al-Tirmiḏī* (247, 387, 396 et 430) ; *Aḥbār al-^cuššāq* (263) ; *al-Sunna* (Sa^cīd b. Maṣṣūr) (292) ; *Tafsīr Ibn Abī Naġīḥ* (353) ; *Tafsīr Abī Šāliḥ* (354) ; *Tafsīr al-^cAwfā* (355) ; *Tafsīr Ibn Abī Dāwūd* (356) ; *al-Musnad* (Abū Muslim al-Layṭī) (356) ; *Taḥrīm al-liwāṭ* (359) ; *Masā'il Šāliḥ b. Aḥmad* (362) ; *Rabī^c al-abrār* (374) ; *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (396 et 397) ; *al-Ṣaḥīḥ wa-l-Sunan wa-l-Masānid* (407) ; *Musnad al-Ḥārīṭ b. Abī Usāma* (408) ; *al-Musnad* (Ya^cqūb b. Sufyān) (412) ; *al-Musnad* (al-Šāfi^cī) (414).

et le *Musnad* d'Ibn Ḥanbal sont fréquemment cités (respectivement 28 et 8 fois). Malgré le caractère 'moralisant' de l'ouvrage, qui le rapproche du *Maṣāri'*^c et du *Damm al-hawā*, et l'appartenance au courant ḥanbalite qu'Ibn Qayyim partage avec Ibn al-Sarrāğ et Ibn al-Ġawzī, Ibn Qayyim se détache de ses prédécesseurs en omettant volontiers les *isnāds*. On retrouve à plusieurs reprises dans son ouvrage les expressions *qīla* ou *yuqāl* (on dit).⁸¹

2) *Dīwān al-ṣabāba d'Ibn Abī Ḥağala* (m. 776/1375)

Le *Dīwān al-ṣabāba* d'Ibn Abī Ḥağala fut probablement rédigé peu de temps après le *Wāḍiḥ* et peut donc être considéré comme presque contemporain. Son auteur, après avoir étudié l'*adab* à Damas, devint le directeur d'un couvent soufi. Il aurait pourtant été plus intéressé par la littérature que par la pratique du soufisme.⁸² Le *Dīwān al-ṣabāba*, son livre le plus célèbre, contient un grand nombre de citations du Coran et du *ḥadīṭ*, mais compte aussi des anecdotes parfois audacieuses et une grande abondance de vers, ce qui en fait, selon la définition de Beatrice Gruendler, un ouvrage d'*adab* pieux, semblable à l'*I'tilāl al-qulūb*.⁸³

Le *Dīwān al-ṣabāba* compte très peu de chaînes de transmission traditionnelles, qu'Ibn Abī Ḥağala n'utilise même pas pour citer le *ḥadīṭ*. Les titres d'ouvrages mentionnés sont en revanche relativement nombreux (30 pour 250 pages environ⁸⁴ – une longueur qui correspond à un peu plus de la moitié du *Wāḍiḥ*). Les livres les plus cités sont des traités d'amour et des anthologies d'*adab*. Quelques ouvrages de langue sont également mentionnés.

⁸¹ Cf. par exemple, '*fa-ammā l-maḥabba fa-qīla*' (33) '*wa-qīla*' (36, 37 etc.), '*yuqāl*' (39).

⁸² J. Robson et U. Rizzitano, 'Ibn Abī Ḥağala', *ET*, iii, 707–8.

⁸³ B. Gruendler, 'Ibn Abī Ḥağala', 121.

⁸⁴ Ibn Abī Ḥağala, *Dīwān al-ṣabāba* : *Manāzil al-aḥbāb* (5 et 223) ; *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt* (11) ; *Dīwān al-ʿāṣiqīn wa-l-ʿaṣīq* (20) ; *al-Ṣiḥāḥ* (20 et 22) ; *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (22 et 92) ; *al-Sahl al-mawātī fī faḍā'il Ibn Mamātī* (30) ; *Tuḥfat al-zirāf* (32) ; *Imtizāğ al-arwāḥ* (33 et 173) ; *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn* (36, 89, 92 et 244) ; *Naql al-kirām fī madḥ al-maqām* (53) ; *al-Wāḍiḥ al-mubīn* (64 et 147) ; *Fiqh al-luğa* (65) ; *Ta'rīḥ al-Islām* (74) ; *Durrat al-ğawwās* (82 et 144) ; *al-Maṭal al-sā'ir* (90 et 94) ; *Mirā'at al-ʿuqūl* (98) ; *Tafsīr* (al-Ṣayḥ Aḫr al-Dīn Abū Ḥayyān) (98) ; *al-Ḥamāsa* (108) ; *Sulūk al-sunan fī waṣf al-sakan* (113 et 115) ; *Ta'rīḥ* (Ibn al-Sā'ātī) (148) ; *al-Ṭārī' ʿalā l-sakradān* (153) ; *Kitāb Ṣiḥāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd* (153–154) ; *al-Ağānī* (178) ; *Ta'rīḥ* (al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Buḥārī) et *Ġuniyat al-labīb ʿinda ġaybat al-ṭabīb* (180) ; *Kitāb al-Aḍkiyā'* (207) ; *al-Kāmil* (al-Mubarrad) (229) ; *Maṣāri' al-ʿuṣṣāq* (257) ; *Ta'rīḥ* (Yāqūt) (262) ; *Rawḍat al-qulūb wa-nuzhat al-muḥibb wa-l-maḥbūb* (266).

3) *Kitāb As^cār al-aswāq fī aš^cār al-ašwāq* (anonyme, IX^e/XV^e siècle)

Ce livre fut très probablement écrit à la même époque que le *Tazyīn* par un auteur originaire du Maghreb. Selon L. A. Giffen, il s'inspire largement du *Aswāq al-ašwāq* d'al-Biqā^cī (m. 885/1480).⁸⁵ Dans le premier tiers de l'ouvrage, 49 titres de livres sont mentionnés.⁸⁶ L'ouvrage le plus cité est *Aswāq al-ašwāq* (42 fois).⁸⁷ Bien que l'*isnād*

⁸⁵ L.A. Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love*, 45. Nous n'avons pas pu vérifier cette information.

⁸⁶ *As^cār al-aswāq* : *Rawḍat al-qulūb wa-nuzhat al-muḥibb wa-l-maḥbūb* (f. 4v. l. 21–2, 38r l. 23 et 41r l. 4–5) ; *Dīwān al-ṣabāba* (f. 5v l. 6, 6r l. 4 et l. 11 (2 fois), 6v. l. 5, 7r l. 5, 8v. l. 6 et l. 8–9 (2 fois) ; 9v. l. 13 et l. 19 (2 fois), 10v. l. 21–2, 13v. l. 15, 22v l. 9, 25r l. 21, 43v l. 11, 60v l. 6–7, 62v, l. 23, 65r l. 13 et 76r l. 3) ; *al-Qāmūs* (7r l. 1 et l. 19 (2 fois), 8r l. 3), 8v. l. 6, l. 10 et l. 13 (3 fois), 9v. l. 13, l. 16–17 et l. 19, 10v. l. 21–2 et 55v l. 22) ; *al-Ġāmi^c li-l-Farrā^o* (f. 7r l. 9) ; *al-Šihāḥ* (f. 7r l. 1 ; 9v. l. 16–17) ; *A^cyānī fī 'ilāğ al-ḥubb ba^cd tamakkunihi an idrākahu* (f. 7v l. 21) ; *Salwat al-muštāq* (f. 7v l. 21–2) ; *Fiqh al-luğa wa-l-ṣuwar al-ğarība* (f. 12v. l. 13 et f. 15v. l. 9) ; *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn* (f. 14v. l. 13) ; *Ġunyāt al-labīb 'inda ġaybat al-ṭabīb* (f. 15r l. 4–5) ; *Rawḍat al-azhār* (f. 15v, l. 20–1, 19v l. 21, 59r, l. 22–3) ; *Šarḥ al-Maqāmāt* (f. 19v l. 9, 30r l. 8, 59r, l. 18, 68v, l. 15–16, 70r, l. 11–12 et 71r, l. 17) ; *Šaḥīḥ* (Muslim) (f. 21r l. 21–2 et 23r l. 10–11) ; *Šaḥīḥ* (al-Buḥārī) (f. 21v. l. 3 et 23r l. 10–11) ; *al-Adab al-mufrad* (f. 21v l. 4) ; *Kitāb al-Amāl* (f. 21v l. 5 et l. 8 (2 fois) ; *al-Awṣat* (al-Tabarānī) (f. 21v l. 11) ; *Manāzil al-aḥbāb* (f. 22r l. 4–5, 22v l. 4–5, 41v l. 23, 42r l. 8, 69v l. 5, 72r l. 9–10) ; *al-Mağālis* (f. 22r l. 11) ; *Musnad* li-l-Firdaws (f. 22r l. 13–14) ; *Musnad* Abī Ya^clā al-Mawṣilī (f. 22r l. 13–14) ; *Tatimmat ḡayl al-Amālī* (23r l. 10–11) ; *al-Ġāmi^c* (Naṣīr al-Kātib) (23v l. 10–11) ; *Kitāb al-Zahra* (f. 24r l. 22–3, 25r l. 14 et 72v l. 6) ; *al-Manṭūr wa-l-manzūm* (f. 24v l. 17) ; *al-Maṣūn* (f. 24v l. 21) ; *Rawḍat al-^cuššāq* (f. 25v l. 20 et 70r, l. 22–3) ; *Tahrīr al-tahfīr* (f. 27r l. 5) ; *al-Risāla* (f. 29v l. 19–20) ; *Harā^oiq al-ḥaqā^oiq* (f. 31r, l. 16) ; *Mušāriq anwār al-qulūb* (f. 32 l. 19) ; *al-Ḥamāsa* (f. 39r l. 14) ; *al-Waššāḥ* (f. 39v, l. 14) ; *Amālī* (al-Zağğāğī) (f. 44v, l. 16) ; *al-Ağānī* (f. 47v l. 1) ; *Kitāb al-Ansāb li-l-Balāḡurī* (f. 49r l. 12–13) ; *Kitāb Muğulṭāy* (f. 50r l. 15) ; *Murūğ al-ḡahab* (f. 52v l. 11) ; *Kitāb Imtizāğ al-nuḥūs* (f. 53r l. 20–1 ; 53v l. 1–2) ; *Ḥadiqat al-bādiya* (f. 61r l. 21–2) ; *Kitāb al-Kāmil* (f. 62v. l. 11–12) ; *al-Ḍaḥīra wa-Taḍkira al-ḥuffāz* (f. 62v, l. 12–13) ; *Ta^orīḥ Nīsābūr* (f. 62v, l. 14) ; *al-Tabāqāt al-kubrā* (Tāğ al-dīn al-Subkī) (f. 64r l. 7–8) ; *Kitāb Rustāq al-ittifāq fī milḥ šu^carā^o al-afāq* (f. 64v, l. 4) ; *al-Iṣāba* (f. 68v, l. 9–11) et *Maṣāri^c al-^cuššāq* (l. 12) ; *Tahrīr* (al-Ḍahabī) (f. 68v, l. 13).

⁸⁷ *As^cār al-aswāq* : f. 2r. l. 19 ; 4 r. l. 6 ; 15r l. 1 ; 16r l. 15–16 ; 16v. l. 23 ; 17r l. 13 ; 20r l. 20 ; 21r l. 10–11 + l. 14. + l. 21–22 (3 fois) ; 22r l. 4–5 ; 22v l. 1 ; 26r l. 11–12 ; 27v. l. 17–18 ; 30v l. 10 + l. 23 (2 fois) ; 31r l. 5 ; 32 l. 17 ; 32v l. 9 + l. 15–16 (2 fois) ; 33v l. 13 ; 38r l. 23 ; 39v, l. 1. ; 40r l. 10–11 ; 43r l. 2 ; 44r l. 7 ; 44v, l. 4 ; 45r., l. 4 + l. 14 (2 fois) ; 49v l. 8–9 ; 56r l. 8 ; 56v l. 15 ; 57r l. 13 ; 59v

traditionnel n'y soit pas complètement abandonné, la 'citation livresque' est très présente dans le *Kitāb As^cār al-aswāq fī aš^cār al-ašwāq*. L'auteur y cumule les références, notamment lorsqu'il s'agit d'apporter les définitions linguistiques et sémantiques des termes les plus communs du vocabulaire amoureux. Par exemple, dans un souci d'exhaustivité, l'auteur définit le mot *išq* et ses dérivés, comme *āšiq*, en citant quatre ouvrages⁸⁸ qui traitent la question de points de vue différents : un traité d'amour, deux ouvrages de langue et un livre de *ḥadīṭ*. La mention de *ḥadīṭs* s'accompagne également souvent de références à des ouvrages écrits. C'est notamment le cas du célèbre *ḥadīṭ* : 'Les esprits sont comme des soldats. Ceux qui se reconnaissent mutuellement s'allient et ceux qui s'ignorent s'opposent',⁸⁹ qui apparaît de manière récurrente dans les traités d'amour. L'auteur du *Kitāb As^cār al-aswāq* affirme tout d'abord l'avoir tiré du *Aswāq al-ašwāq*, qui l'aurait lui-même mentionné sous l'autorité du *Ṣaḥīḥ* de Muslim. Il mentionne ensuite qu'al-Buḥārī commente ce dire prophétique dans son *Ṣaḥīḥ* ; le *ḥadīṭ* fut par la suite transmis dans le *Kitāb al-Adab al-mufrad*, dans le *Kitāb al-Amthāl* d'Abū al-Faṭḥ ainsi que dans *al-Awṣat* d'al-Ṭabarānī, dans la biographie de Muḥammad b. Faḍl.⁹⁰ Cet exemple montre que l'auteur anonyme du *Kitāb As^cār al-aswāq* a accompli une recherche poussée afin de retrouver les ouvrages dans lesquels ce *ḥadīṭ* était mentionné ou commenté. Le résultat de cette recherche apparaît dans un '*isnād* livresque' qui remplace en quelque sorte la chaîne de transmetteurs nominale traditionnelle.

Le *Kitāb As^cār al-aswāq* se distingue également par la précision de ses 'références bibliographiques'. Dans nombre de cas, l'auteur ne donne pas seulement le titre de l'ouvrage dont est tirée sa citation, mais mentionne également le chapitre⁹¹ (ou la *maqāma*,⁹² ou encore la biographie⁹³)

l. 12 ; 65v l. 11 ; 69r, l. 7–8 ; 70r, l. 12–13 ; 71r, l. 6 ; 71v l. 7 ; 73r l. 17 ; 74v l. 15 ; 78r l. 13.

⁸⁸ *As^cār al-aswāq*, f. 7r. Les ouvrages cités sont : *al-Qāmūs*, l. 1, *Dīwān al-ṣabāba*, l. 5, *al-Ġāmi^c* d'al-Farrā³, l. 9 et *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, l. 9.

⁸⁹ *As^cār al-aswāq*, f. 21r l. 22–3 : *al-arwāḥ ḡunūd muḡannada man ta^cārafa minhā ʿtalafa wa-man tanākara minhā ḥtalafa*.

⁹⁰ *As^cār al-aswāq*, f. 21r l. 22–21r l. 11.

⁹¹ Cf. *Kitāb As^cār al-aswāq* : '*qāla fī Aswāq al-^cuššāq fī l-bāb al-ḥāmis*', f. 26r, l. 11–12 et 45r. l. 14 ; '*ḍakara Abū ʿUbayd Muḡammad al-Tamūmī fī Kitāb Imtizāḡ al-nufūs [...]. Wa-ḍukira aydan fī āḡir al-bāb al-sābi^c*', f. 53r l. 20–1 - 53v l. 1–2 ; '*wa-ḍukira ḍālika fī Aswāq al-ašwāq fī l-bāb al-^cāšir*', f. 56v l. 15 ; '*ḥakā fī Ḥadīqat al-bādiya fī al-bāb al-tāmin*', f. 61r l. 21–2 ; '*ḥukiya fī al-bāb al-sābi^c wa-l-^cišrīn*', f. 62r, l. 7–8 ; '*ḍakara al-šayḡ ḥāfiṣ ʿašrihi Abū al-Faḍl*

dans lequel se trouve le passage en question. Tout se passe comme s'il invitait le lecteur à se reporter lui-même aux pages évoquées.

Notre anonyme offre également au lecteur des indications sur sa méthode de collecte des notices. Lorsqu'il raconte l'histoire d'une jeune femme prête à commettre l'illicite, mais qui, grâce à l'exemple de l'être aimé, devint dévote et conduisit une vie d'ascète jusqu'à en mourir, l'auteur déclare avoir réuni le récit de Muğulṭāy et la version donnée par al-Sarrāğ.⁹⁴ Il signale ensuite à partir de quel endroit de l'histoire il s'appuie sur la version de Muğulṭāy.⁹⁵ L'auteur anonyme du *Kitāb As^cār al-aswāq* rend ainsi explicite par ses déclarations le travail de 'montage' qu'il a accompli et revendique la 'paternité' du *ḥabar* tel qu'il le présente.

4) *Tazyīn al-aswāq fī aḥbār al-^cuṣṣāq de Dāwūd al-Anṭākī (m. 1008/1599)*
Dāwūd al-Anṭākī enseigna la philosophie et la médecine en Égypte et écrivit un grand nombre de livres, pour la plupart des traités de médecine.⁹⁶ Le *Tazyīn* mentionne un grand nombre de sources écrites. L'on y compte 66 titres de livres sur un total de 550 pages (150 de plus que le *Wāḍiḥ*). La *Nuzhat al-^cuṣṣāq* ou *Nuzhat al-muṣṭāq* est citée 41 fois.⁹⁷ Comme pour le *Wāḍiḥ*, les ouvrages mentionnés dans le *Tazyīn* appartiennent à des genres littéraires variés.

Qāḍī l-quḍāt Šihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ḥağar [...] fī l-qism al-awwal min kitābihi al-Iṣāba fī qasm asmā³ al-ṣahāba, f. 68v, l. 9–11 ; *ḍukira fī Aswāq al-aswāq fī awwal al-bāb al-ṭānī*, f. 70r l. 12–13, etc.

⁹² Cf. *As^cār al-aswāq* : *qāla al-Šarīṣī fī l-Maqāma al-ḥāmisa wa-arba^cin*, f. 30r l. 8 ; *wa-qāla al-Šarīṣī fī l-Maqāma al-sābi^ca wa-l-^ciṣrīn*, f. 59r, l. 18 ; *qāla al-Šarīṣī fī l-Maqāma al-ṭāniya wa-l-arba^cin*, f. 68v l. 15–16, f. 70r l. 11–12, 71r l. 17, etc.

⁹³ Cf. *As^cār al-aswāq*, *fa-rawāhu al-Ṭabarānī fī l-Awṣat fī tarğamat Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl*, f. 21v l. 11, etc.

⁹⁴ *As^cār al-aswāq*, f. 73v l. 15–16.

⁹⁵ *Wa-fī mā ḥakāhu Muğulṭāy...*, *As^cār al-aswāq*, f. 74r l. 1.

⁹⁶ L'attribution du *Tazyīn* à Dāwūd al-Anṭākī a été remise en cause par Julia Bray ('Dāwūd ibn ʿUmar al-Anṭākī', 53–4), qui affirme que les données textuelles en notre possession ne permettent pas de se prononcer définitivement sur la question.

⁹⁷ Dāwūd al-Anṭākī, *Tazyīn al-aswāq fī aḥbār al-^cuṣṣāq* : *Maṣāri^c al-^cuṣṣāq* (9 et 56) ; *Dīwān al-ṣabāba* (10, 31, 356, 408, 418, 442) ; *Ruṣṭāq al-ittifāq fī milḥ ṣu^carā³ al-āfāq* (15) ; *Luzūm mā lā yalzam* (18) ; *Manāzil al-aḥbāb* (19, 62, 78, 90, 93, 203, 208, 249, 417 et 527) ; *Naqala Ibn Ḥallikān fī tarğamat al-^cAllāf* (24), *Ḍayl al-Amālī* (25) ; *Sīrat al-Iskandar* (29) ; *Kitāb imtizāğ al-nufūs* d'al-Tamīmī (29 et 372) ; *al-Manṭūr wa-l-manzūm* et *al-^cĀlī fī Šarḥ al-āmālī* (30) ; *al-*

Dans l'introduction du *Tazyīn al-aswāq fī aḥbār al-ʿuṣṣāq*, al-Anṭākī déclare que l'*isnād* traditionnel n'a pas sa place dans un ouvrage d'*adab*.⁹⁸ Ses sources sont écrites : il déclare avoir tiré l'essentiel de ses notices du *Maṣāriʿ al-ʿuṣṣāq*⁹⁹ et du livre (qu'il ne nomme pas¹⁰⁰) d'al-Biqāʿī (m. 885/1480).¹⁰¹ Il ajoute qu'il a abrégé l'ouvrage d'al-Biqāʿī, omettant notamment les *isnāds* qu'il ne considère nécessaires que pour le *ḥadīṭ* prophétique et pour étayer des règles religieuses (*tawṭīq al-aḥkām al-dīniyya*).¹⁰² À la place de la chaîne de transmission traditionnelle,

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Ḥiliya (41 et 52) ; *Amālī* (Ibn ʿAsākir) (50, 58 (2 fois), 104) ; *Kitāb al-Ḥāʾifn* ou *Kitāb al-Ḥawf* (50 et 51) ; *Šarḥ al-Šawāhid* (58, 84, 183 et 321 (2 fois)) ; *Šarḥ al-Duraydiyya* (60) ; *Taʾrīḥi al-kabīr* (Ibn ʿAsākir) (60) ; *al-Aḡānī* (69, 99, 103, p. 172 et 262) ; *Ġamharat al-nasab* (74) ; *Rawdat al-dawlatayn* (76) ; *Taʾrīḥ* (Šams al-Dīn b. Ḥallikān) (79) ; *al-Nuzha* (99, 104, 106, 111, 114 2 fois, 117, 120, 132, 140, 141, 142, 145, 151 2 fois, 152, 153, 157, 161, 174, 180, 182, 183, 184, 185 (2 fois), 188, 190, 191, 194, 196, 206, 222, 225, 240, 280, 288, 307, 309, 312 et 316) ; *Tasrīḥ al-Nāzīr* (104 et 114) ; *al-Kitāb* (114) ; *Taʾrīḥ* (al-Ḍahabī) (134) ; *Kitāb maḡhūl al-tāʾlīf* (134) ; *Kitāb al-ansāb* (140) ; *Bulḡat al-iṣfāq fī dīkr ayyām al-ʿuṣṣāq* (140) ; *Laṭāʾif al-fawāʾid wa-ẓarāʾif al-šawārid* (152) ; *Ẓarāʾif al-aḥbār* (153) ; *Nadīm al-musāmara* (155, 203, 274 et 282) ; *Aḥbār al-Sūdān* (158) ; *Kitāb Ibn al-Ġawharī* (159) ; *Rawdat al-qulūb* (162, 181, 308, 356 et 373) ; *Šarḥ al-ʿAbdūniyya* (163) ; *Qūt al-qulūb fī aḥbār al-muḥibb wa-l-maḥbūb* (167 et 168 (2 fois)) ; *Nihāyat al-arab* (172) ; *Uqalā l-maḡānīn* (174 et 221) ; *Tasrīḥ al-nawāzīr* (177) ; *al-Ṭabaqāt* (182) ; *Muḥṭṣar al-Ṭabaqāt* (183) ; *al-Rawḍ al-naḍīr* (189) ; *Tahḍīb al-Iṣlāḥ* (191) ; *ʿAḡīb al-infāq fī taṭābuq aḥwāl al-qāma* (196) ; *al-Wāḍiḥ* (203) ; *ʿAḡīb al-ittifāq*, (205) ; *al-Šāmil* (209) ; *al-Ḍuhūl wa-l-nuḥūl* (215) ; *ʿAmālī* (al-Zaḡḡāḡī) (219) ; *Tanwīr al-ʿayṣ* (243) ; *Taʾrīḥ* (al-Šafādī) (252) ; *Maḡāsin al-buldān wa-nuzhat al-zamān* (294) ; *Tafsīr* (Abū Ḥayyān) (295) ; *al-Šahnāma* (296) ; *Durar al-afkār fī l-taḥrīd ʿalā tazwīḡ al-abkār* (297) ; *Iqtidāḥ zinād al-ʿaṣwāq wa-istirḡāʿ šawarid al-ʿuṣṣāq* (305 et 310) ; *Šarḥ Badʿiyya* (358) ; *Rawdat al-ādāb* et *al-Šahīḥayn* (361) ; *al-Iṣāba* (372) ; *Ḥazāʾin al-asrār fī ʿilm al-ḥurūf wa-l-aṣfār* (382) ; *Laṭāʾif al-asrār wa-kayfiyyat ḡarayān al-aqdār* (383 et 389 (4 fois)) ; *Tamarāt al-awrāq* (417) ; *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (432) ; *Qiṣṣat Ramla* (535).

⁹⁸ L.A. Giffen, *Theory of Profane Love*, 43.

⁹⁹ *Waqaʿa iḥtiyārī ʿalā ḥtiṣār al-aṣwāq al-maʾḥūḍ min Maṣāriʿ al-ʿuṣṣāq al-mansūb ilā Abī Bakr Muḥammad b. Ġaʿfar al-Baḡdādī* (Dāwūd al-Anṭākī, *Tazyīn al-aswāq*, 9).

¹⁰⁰ Il s'agit sans doute du *Aswāq al-aṣwāq fī Maṣāriʿ al-ʿuṣṣāq*.

¹⁰¹ Dāwūd al-Anṭākī, *Tazyīn al-aswāq*, 9.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 10.

Dāwūd al-Anṭākī recourt à la citation livresque. Même un poème peut se voir introduit par une référence à un ouvrage.¹⁰³

Souvent, l'auteur du *Tazyīn* ne se contente pas de citer une seule source. Dans certains passages, il en indique deux ou plus pour une même information ou pour une même histoire, comme pour renseigner le lecteur sur les multiples endroits où il peut la trouver.¹⁰⁴ Il signale aussi la présence, chez d'autres auteurs, d'histoires semblables – bien que pas tout à fait identiques – à celle qu'il vient de raconter.¹⁰⁵

Le cumul de références peut également avoir pour fonction d'apporter le plus de précisions possible sur l'identité d'un personnage ou sur une histoire. Dāwūd al-Anṭākī mentionne qu'on amena un jour un jeune homme émacié à Ibn °Abbās. Le jeune homme lui récita des vers où il évoquait la souffrance que lui causait sa passion amoureuse.¹⁰⁶ La notice n'est introduite par aucune référence bibliographique, mais après avoir raconté son histoire, al-Anṭākī précise que, selon les *Amālī* d'Ibn °Asākīr, le jeune homme était °udrite. Il ajoute par la suite que, selon le *Šarḥ al-Šawāhid* d'al-Suyūṭī, il s'appelait °Urwa b. Qays. Concluant l'histoire de °Urwa b. Hizām, l'auteur du *Tazyīn* affirme que, selon le *Ta'riḥ* d'al-Dahabī, °Urwa mourut sous le califat de °Uṭmān en l'an 30 de l'hégire, alors qu'un autre ouvrage anonyme indique qu'il mourut au mois de *šawwāl* de l'an 28.¹⁰⁷

Un des *aḥbār* qui composent l'histoire de Maġnūn¹⁰⁸, tiré du *Tasrīḥ al-nāzīr* (dont l'auteur n'est pas mentionné), relate qu'on emmena Maġnūn se promener dans des campements, où on lui montra des

¹⁰³ Cf. *ibid.*, 15 où les vers sont précédés de cette mention 'wa-*fī* Rustāq al-ittifāq *fī* milḥ šu'arā' al-āfāq *li-Ibn Mubārak al-imām*'. À la p. 18 l'on trouve : 'wa-*min* Luzūm mā lā yalzam', suivit des vers, etc.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Dāwūd al-Anṭākī, *Tazyīn al-aswāq*, 30 : 'qāla al-Sukkarī wa-Ibn Abī Ṭāhir *fī* l-Manṭūr wa-al-manzūm wa-Abū °Ubayd al-Bakrī *fī* kitābihi al-La'ālī *fī* šarḥ al-Amālī', 50 : 'wa *fī* riwāyat al-Hāfiẓ Muġulṭāy °an Abī l-Qāsim *fī* al-Amālī wa-Ibn Abī al-Dunyā *fī* Kitāb al-Ḥā'ifn', 60 : 'wa-qad sāqa al-qišša Ibn Hišām *fī* Šarḥ al-Duraydiyya wa-ḍakarāhā Ibn °Asākīr *fī* Ta'riḥihi al-kabīr', 60.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Dāwūd al-Anṭākī, *Tazyīn al-aswāq*, 203 : 'wa-hāḍihi al-ḥikāya aḥraġahā *fī* Nadīm al-musāmara wa-l-Šihāb *fī* Manāzil al-aḥbāb. Wa-l-Hāfiẓ Muġulṭāy *fī* l-Wāḍiḥ. [...] Wa-naẓīruhu ḥakāhu al-Šayzarī °an °Utba'. La dernière phrase mentionnée n'est pas une référence explicite à un ouvrage écrit, mais nous pouvons formuler l'hypothèse que le nom de l'auteur dissimule en réalité une référence à son ouvrage, le traité d'amour intitulé *Rawḍat al-qulūb*.

¹⁰⁶ Dāwūd al-Anṭākī, *Tazyīn al-aswāq*, 57–8.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.

femmes plus belles les unes que les autres, afin qu'il oublie Laylā. Maġnūn échappa à ses compagnons qui le retrouvèrent en larmes, une gazelle dans les bras, en train d'épousseter son pelage. Al-Anṭākī précise que tel est le récit du *Tasrīh al-nāzīr*, mais que la version de la *Nuḡhat al-muštāq* ajoute qu'il aurait aussi récité un vers dans lequel il disait à la gazelle – qui ressemblait à Laylā – de ne rien craindre, car il était aujourd'hui son ami.¹⁰⁹

Après avoir comparé différentes sources, al-Anṭākī indique parfois laquelle est, selon lui, la plus 'juste' (*ṣahīḥ*). Au sujet de l'amour d'al-Ṣimma pour son amie d'enfance Rayyā, il dénonce une version erronée affirmant qu'al-Ṣimma mourut parce qu'un devin lui prédit, lorsqu'il était en Iraq, que jamais il n'épouserait Rayyā. La 'véritable' histoire – affirme al-Anṭākī – est celle du *Qūt al-qulūb*, selon laquelle Rayyā fut fiancée à un autre homme de Muḏḥiġ qui l'emmena avec lui dans son pays. Quand al-Ṣimma fut informé de son départ, il en fut rempli de chagrin au point qu'il s'alita et mourut.¹¹⁰

Même pour les livres qui n'ont pas été écrits en arabe, Dāwūd al-Anṭākī n'accepte pas de références de 'seconde' main. Dans un passage du *Tazyīn*, il mentionne avoir lu l'histoire d'Abrawīz directement dans le *Šahnāma*, rédigé en persan, et l'avoir traduite.¹¹¹

5) Kitāb Ġawānī l-ašwāq fī ma'ānī l-^cuššāq d'Ibn al-Bakkā³ al-Balḥī (*m.* 1040/1630)

L'auteur du *Kitāb Ġawānī l-ašwāq* est peu connu. Son traité d'amour se différencie des autres par une approche plus large du thème de l'amour. Il inclut en effet une partie sur l'amitié, ce qui n'est pas le cas pour les précédents ouvrages du même genre.¹¹²

L'*isnād* nominal traditionnel est omis. Les vers et les *aḥbār* sont souvent introduits par la mention d'un seul nom.¹¹³ On y compte également 26 ouvrages¹¹⁴ mentionnés explicitement sur un total de 150

¹⁰⁹ 'A yā šibha Laylā lā taḥāfīna innanī // laki al-yawma min waḥšīyyatin la-ṣadīqun', ibid. D'autres exemples du même procédé se trouvent à p. 114, 152, 183.

¹¹⁰ Dāwūd al-Anṭākī, *Tazyīn al-aswāq*, 167–8.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 296.

¹¹² G. J. van Gelder, [Review of] 'Ġhawānī l-ashwāq', 72.

¹¹³ Cf. par exemple 'ḥaddaṭa Abū Faḍl al-Šaybānī', 23.

¹¹⁴ Ibn al-Bakkā³ al-Balḥī, *Ġawānī l-ašwāq fī ma'ānī l-^cuššāq* : *Bustān al-abrār wa-baḥġat al-aḥyār* (11 et 45) ; *al-Muġam al-awṣat* (al-Ṭabarānī) (12 et 48) ; *Šarḥ Lāmiyyat al-^cAġam* (13 et 22–23) ; *al-Aġānī* (22) ; *Wafayāt al-a^cyān* (33 et 114) ; *Baḥġat al-nufūs* (36) ; *Kašf al-asrār* (37–38 et 82) ; *Dīwān al-šabāba* (39, 66 et 96) ; *Tafsīr* (al-Bayḍāwī) (43) ; *Mir'āt al-zamān* (47) ; *al-Rayḥān wa-l-*

pages environ (moins de la moitié du *Wāḍiḥ* et du *Tazyīn*). L'auteur ne semble pas avoir privilégié une source en particulier aux dépens des autres. Il cite les traités d'amour de ses prédécesseurs et des anthologies littéraires.

Conclusion

Dans le genre littéraire des traités d'amour, deux tendances se profilent très tôt dans la manière de mentionner les sources. L'*isnād* traditionnel jouit de son prestige auprès des ḥanbalites al-Ḥarā'īfī, Ibn al-Sarrāğ et Ibn al-Ġawzī. Le *Maṣāri' al-uššāq* d'Ibn Sarrāğ, en particulier, se distingue par de longs *isnāds*, qui portent souvent la date et le lieu de la transmission orale. Dans d'autres traités antérieurs au VIII^e/XIV^e siècle, comme le *Tawq al-ḥamāma* et la *Rawḍat al-qulūb*, les notices sont généralement introduites par de vagues indications (un seul nom ou des verbes au passif : *qīla*, *yuqāl* et *ḥukiya*) qui ne fournissent aucun renseignement sur l'origine de la notice. La mention de sources livresques demeure rare.

À partir de Muğultāy cette tendance est inversée. Le *Wāḍiḥ* privilégie en effet la référence à de titres des livres, ce qui ouvre à l'auteur des perspectives plus vastes. Il mentionne en effet une source écrite pour plus de la moitié de ses notices (95 sur un total de 164). Bien qu'il coexiste avec le système d'*isnāds* nominal, le livre devient avec Muğultāy non seulement une source avouée et avouable de transmission du savoir, mais acquiert également un prestige comparable à celui dont jouissait auparavant la chaîne de garants traditionnelle. Le contexte historique dans lequel il vécut, Le Caire de l'époque mamelouke, a probablement joué un rôle dans le choix de Muğultāy de privilégier les sources 'livresques', si, comme observe J. Berkey : 'Written texts played an important role in education. Schools and mosques in Mamluk Cairo frequently housed large collections of books available for use'.¹¹⁵ Le sujet 'léger' de son ouvrage peut aussi avoir orienté son choix, l'auteur se sentant probablement moins lié par les obligations de 'l'oralité' que dans des ouvrages touchant aux disciplines religieuses. Sa démarche reste

ray'ān (53) ; *Risāla ft l-išq* (55) ; *Ta'rīḥ al-Quds* (56) ; *Miḥnat al-zirāf* (65) ; *Imtizāğ al-arwāḥ* (65) ; *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn* (76) ; *Muruğ al-ḡahab* (80) ; *al-Ḥukm* (91) ; *Bisāṭ al-anwār* (93) ; *Tanbīh al-Ġāfilīn* (96) ; *al-Mustağād* (121, 130, 141 et 155) ; *al-Iqd al-farīd* (123) ; *Maṣāri' al-uššāq* (125, 138 et 153) ; *Ḍamm al-hawā* (126) ; *Manāzil al-aḥbāb wa-manāzih al-albāb* (141) ; *al-Farağ ba'd al-šidda*, 156.

¹¹⁵ J. Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge*, 24.

néanmoins originale et audacieuse, car la connaissance acquise par les livres demeurait, encore à cette époque, ambivalente.¹¹⁶

Bien que les auteurs précédant Muğultāy aient très probablement déjà travaillé à partir d'écrits, l'*isnād* traditionnel ne constituant que formellement une référence à la transmission orale, c'est à partir du *Wāḍih* que la citation livresque commence à renvoyer le lecteur à la consultation d'un ouvrage antérieur, comme pour l'inviter à comparer les versions d'une même histoire. Cette méthode s'affine par la suite dans le *Kitāb As'ār al-aswāq*, où la citation de livres se fait de plus en plus détaillée. La partie (voire le chapitre où la *maqāma*) du livre dont est tiré un passage y est précisée. L'auteur anonyme de ce traité, tout en restant en partie attaché à la méthode de transmission ancienne, remplace parfois les noms des transmetteurs par des titres d'ouvrages, aboutissant à la formation d'*isnāds* d'un nouveau genre, que nous pouvons définir comme des '*isnāds* livresques'. Enfin, chez Dāwūd al-Anṭākī, la méthode traditionnelle de l'*isnād* est complètement abandonnée. Cet auteur omet systématiquement toute chaîne de transmission, qu'il remplace par des titres de livres. Dans son ouvrage, le prestige dont jouissait auparavant la chaîne de transmission nominale est définitivement transféré vers le livre.

Dans les ouvrages plus tardifs, qui privilégient les sources livresques, les procédés de comparaison et de choix des sources citées sont clairement exposés au lecteur. La citation livresque devient ainsi le moyen, pour un auteur, de revendiquer son individualité et l'originalité de son écriture.

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¹¹⁶ J. Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge*, 26.

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NOTES ON A PRIVATE LIBRARY IN FOURTH/TENTH-CENTURY BAGHDAD

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Studies on medieval Arabic bibliophilia have mainly focussed on public and semi-public institutions, for some of which we have detailed information. Less is known about private libraries and their physical arrangement. This paper looks at the library of Abū Bakr al-Šūlī (d. 335/947), which is described by the sources in unique terms, contextualising it with al-Šūlī's own words on collecting and organizing books.

The importance of bibliophilia and its by-product—the library—for medieval Arabic culture is well documented in the sources and has been studied by scholars since the 1800s.¹ Information has come down to us not only on public and semi-public libraries such as al-Ma'mūn's *ḥizānat al-ḥikma* and institutions connected to *madrasas*, but also on collections held by private individuals. However, while for the former we do have information on the physical spaces containing the books and on their arrangement, descriptions of early private libraries mainly restrict themselves to the amount of books they contained, their value, and the subjects they covered. The fourth/tenth-century bookseller and bibliophile Ibn al-Nadīm, for instance, mentions that the historian al-Wāqidi (d. 207/823) had left at his death six hundred cases full of books, each of which could only be carried by two men.² Accounts such as this are frequent, and modern scholars have been able to collect detailed information on the libraries of specific individuals who lived in late and post-^cAbbāsīd times.³ However, the library as a physical space, and the organization and arrangement of books within it are rarely mentioned.

Ibn al-Nadīm cites eleven individuals as book-collectors (*ḡammā' a li-l-kutub*).⁴ He also mentions actual libraries (*ḥizāna*), two of which belonged to caliphs, saying of one private library, which he had

¹ An early example is É. Quatremère, *Mémoire*. More recent studies are cited below.

² Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990), *Fihrist*, 1, part 2: 308.

³ For instance, U. Haarmann, 'Library'; and E. Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar*. For a sociological profile of the book-collector across centuries and cultures, see H. Touati, *Armoire*, 30–9.

⁴ *Fihrist*, indexes, 2, part 2: 932 and 933 respectively.

personally visited, that it was the largest he had ever seen.⁵ Its owner, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Abī Ba^crah, kept antique and precious books in a case there, which he took out to show to Ibn al-Nadīm. The case (*qimaṭr*) weighed 300 *raṭl* and contained writings on different materials, heavily annotated by successive owners. Unfortunately, after the owner's death, Ibn al-Nadīm lost track of the case and its contents.⁶

Ibn al-Nadīm does not give any physical details for the other libraries he mentions in the *Fihrist*. However, he says that he had seen a notebook (*daftar*) coming from the library of another individual whom he identifies as a collector: the courtier, litterateur and chess-player Abū Bakr al-Ṣūlī (d. 335/947). This notebook is the proof that al-Ṣūlī was a plagiarist:

[...] *A Biography and Selected Poetry* of Sudayf [d. 147/764]. For the composition of this book he relied on the book of al-Marṭadī [d. 286/899], *Poetry and Poets*, or rather he copied it word by word and plagiarized it. I have seen the notebook in the handwriting of the man himself; it came from the library of al-Ṣūlī, so it all became clear.⁷

A more unusual description of the library of al-Ṣūlī is recorded by al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baḡdādī:

[...] I saw that al-Ṣūlī had an enormous apartment full of books which were arranged into rows. Their bindings were of different colours, each row of books in a colour: one row was red, another green, another yellow, etc. [...] al-Ṣūlī] would say: 'All these books are notes from lectures I have attended'.⁸

Al-Ṣūlī's claim in the last sentence deserves investigation. He says '*ḥaḍīhi l-kutub kulluhā samā^cī*.' Sellheim ties *samā^c* to the establishment of *madrasas* in the late fifth/eleventh century. In that context, it indicates a written attestation that an individual has attended lectures on a certain book.⁹ That the term is used in reference to al-Ṣūlī may indicate that a similar procedure was in practice earlier than the period proposed by Sellheim; this is in fact what Toorawa's translation of this passage

⁵ Al-Mu^ctaḍid (*Fihrist*, 1, part 1: 177) and al-Ma^cmūn (1, part 1: 13 and 15); see footnote 2 on p. 13 for this library and al-Ma^cmūn's *bayt al-ḥikma*).

⁶ *Fihrist*, 1, part 1: 106–8.

⁷ *Fihrist*, 1, part 1: 465. For a physical description of a *daftar* see J. M. Bloom, *Paper before Print*, 140–1.

⁸ Al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baḡdādī (d. 463/1071), *Ta^rrīḥ Baḡdād*, 5: 202.

⁹ R. Sellheim, 'samā^c'.

implies.¹⁰ However, al-Ṣūlī may intend with *samāʿ* not a written document but simply the act of auditing the lectures and taking notes. Therefore, it is possible to interpret the statement as saying not that his books are his lectures, but that he has attended lectures on the contents of all of them. Many of al-Ṣūlī's books would indeed have been *dafātīr*, notebooks from lectures which he then might use to compose his own works.¹¹ However, if Ibn al-Nadīm's testimony above is to be believed, not all of these were his own work.

Al-Ṣūlī's claim is important because it introduces the next two accounts in his biography: when asked a scholarly question, we are told, al-Ṣūlī would not answer immediately from his memory, but would call a servant and have a book brought to him. 'Al-Ṣūlī is indeed a scholar', says a short satire, 'but only to the extent that he can look things up in a book'.¹² Once again, as in the *Fihrist*, the implications of being a book collector are not wholly positive.

Let us return to the material details: al-Ṣūlī's books were not, or not all, stored in a *qimaṭr*, a case made of woven reeds, but filled a large apartment (*bayt*), where they were arranged in rows (*maṣfūfa*), each of which had leather bindings (*ḡulūd*) of a different colour. The first part of the statement appears to be illustrated precisely by a miniature on a Baghdadi manuscript copied in 634/1237: books would be stacked in little piles on shelves divided into sections.¹³ On the other hand, the

¹⁰ S.M. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr*, 23: 'all these books are my certificates of audition.'

¹¹ See also the first two chapters of G. Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written*, 28–86; *idem* and S. M. Toorawa, *The Genesis of Literature*, 128. According to Schoeler's definition, these would be *hypomnema*. More information and further bibliography on this topic can be found in Konrad Hirschler's contribution to this volume.

¹² *Ibid.* Later sources merge these three successive accounts. However, in al-Ḥaṭīb's biography, which is the earliest, these are juxtaposed but distinct. The question is discussed in more detailed in my 'Tailors of Stories'.

¹³ BnF Arabe 5847, 5v. The entire manuscript is available for download from the website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>. The miniature is described by Pinto, 'The Libraries of the Arabs', 229. A black and white image of it was first published by E. Blochet, *Les Enluminures des manuscrits orientaux*, table X. Versions in colour can be found in J. Bloom, *Paper before Print*, 119; and in H. Touati, *Armoire*, fig. 23b. Although the miniature was painted much later than al-Ṣūlī's lifetime, it seems to be the earliest extant representation of a library. See also Quatremère, *Mémoire*, especially 27–30, where the sale of a Fāṭimid library is described: in order to disguise the price of the books and being able to buy them for a very low price,

arrangement in different colours is, as far as I could ascertain, unique. While the description does not necessarily imply that the books were colour-coded, it does suggest that their arrangement followed a precise criterion. If the books were already bound when al-Ṣūlī acquired them, this criterion might have been exclusively aesthetic. If, however, he had them bound himself – and this must have been the case at least for his own notebooks – a different rationale may be considered.¹⁴ Another biographer, Yāqūt (d. 626/1229), comments on the arrangement of al-Ṣūlī's books:

Abū Bakr al-Ṣūlī had a library which he had devoted to the different books he had collected. He had arranged them in it in the best of orders.¹⁵

Yāqūt does not specify which order might be the best. It seems well-established that in public libraries books were placed on shelves in the same order in which they appeared in the catalogue, which in turn was arranged by subject.¹⁶ However, within this broad principle there is still much room for manoeuvre and for doubt. For instance: how to organise single books within the same subjects? Should lecture notes be separate from copied manuscripts? In the *Fihrist* Ibn al-Nadīm employs different criteria (alphabetical, chronological, etc.), not always explicitly, within each of the ten subjects in which he organises his catalogue.¹⁷ In his

the courtiers in charge of the sale took them out of their cases and mixed up their arrangement by subject (this story is retold by Touati, *Armoire*, 294). A brief overview is also found in W. Heffening [J.D. Pearson], 'Maktaba.' All these studies deal mainly with public or semi-public libraries.

¹⁴ Ibn al-Nadīm lists the names of nine famous book binders (*muğallid*), the first of whom worked for al-Ma'mūn's *bayt al-ḥikma*; he also briefly discusses the quality of leather used for bindings (*Fihrist*, 1, part 1: 24 and 48–9 respectively). Different binding techniques are illustrated by R. Selleim, 'Kitāb.' J. Bloom, *Paper before Print*, 111–13 provides a drawing detailing different part elements of the book. Pedersen, *The Arabic Book*, 101–12, devotes a chapter to bookbinding.

¹⁵ Yāqūt b. °Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Muġam al-udabā*, 2677 (biography no. 1134).

¹⁶ Y. Eche, *Bibliothèques*, 338. Eche does not mention differences in colour and indeed mentions bindings only tangentially. See also H. Touati, *Armoire*, 291–317 and note 13 above on the Fāṭimid library. These studies also discuss the subjects making up library collections.

¹⁷ The most thorough investigation of this topic, referring also to earlier studies, is S.M. Toorawa, 'Proximity'. A late sample of the practical problems faced by a cataloguer is illustrated in Konrad Hirschler's contribution to this volume.

Muʿjam al-udabāʾ, where al-Ṣūlī's biography is found, Yāqūt arranges his entries in strict alphabetical order, one of the earliest compilers to do so consistently. Whether this is 'the best of orders' to which he refers, it is impossible to know.

In fact, this attention to the physical arrangement of books mirrors a skill displayed by al-Ṣūlī in his own writings: according to his student al-Marzubānī (d. 384/994), he had 'ability in composing books and collocating their elements in the proper place'.¹⁸ This is a skill al-Ṣūlī has in common with an earlier and more famous fellow-book collector, al-Ġāhiz (d. 255/868–9); it is the skill of the author who writes for a readership.¹⁹

Al-Ṣūlī's love for books transpires in his own work, and especially in his chronicles of the caliphate, where he often gives information about himself, such as the *Aḥbār al-Muqtadir* and *Aḥbār al-Rāḍī bi-llāh wa-l-Muttaqī li-llāh*. For instance, he is proud to have transmitted his passion to younger generations. In 312/924–925 he relates that he was appointed tutor of the princes Abū l-ʿAbbās and Abū ʿAbd Allāh, sons of the caliph al-Muqtadir (r. 295/908–320/932). Al-Ṣūlī taught them to use notebooks and had them learn traditions. The two boys were so enthusiastic that 'the price of notebooks went as high as it had ever been in a long time,' and 'paper and book merchants [*warrāqīn*] became rich'.²⁰ In addition, the princes also became collectors.²¹

I instilled in them the love of knowledge and bought them a good deal of books on jurisprudence, poetry, lexicography and chronicles. They competed, each putting together his own library.

What is interesting in this passage is that the boys take acquisitions in their own hands at such a young age. This can be compared with the education of their father, the caliph al-Muqtadir, for whom *dafātir* and other educational tools were selected by his father al-Muʿtaḍid (r. 279/892–289/902) with the help of Sinān b. Tābit (d. 331/943), the court

¹⁸ Al-Marzubānī, *Kitāb muʿġam fī asmāʾ al-shuʿarāʾ*, 431. See also al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī, *Taʾrīḥ Baġdād*, 5: 198: 'wa-waḍaʿa l-ašyāʾ minhā mawāḍiʿahā.' For an evaluation of al-Ṣūlī as an historian see also Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/956), *Les Prairies d'or - Murūġ al-ḍaḥab*, 1: 15 (§11).

¹⁹ Ibid., 5: 104 (§ 3146): '[...] *naẓẓamahā aḥsan naẓm wa-raṣṣafahā aḥsan raṣf*.' See Schoeler and Toorawa, *The Genesis of Literature*, 59, 68–84, 111–21.

²⁰ Al-Ṣūlī, *Mā lam yunšar min awrāq al-Ṣūlī*, 144.

²¹ Al-Ṣūlī, *Aḥbār al-Rāḍī bi-llāh*, 25.

physician. This material came from ‘the old caliphal repositories’ (*al-ḥazāʾin al-qadīma li-l-sultān*).²²

Later, after Abū l-ʿAbbās has become the caliph al-Rādī, al-Ṣūlī discusses with his former pupil the contents of the library which he had ‘put together like the previous caliphs.’ Al-Ṣūlī is surprised that it should not contain the *dīwān* of a certain poet and advises the caliph as follows:

Begin by arranging the works of poetry (*ʿamal al-ašʿār*), starting with the Muḍar tribe, than Rabīʿa, then Yaman. What is not there, your servants will bring to you from their own stock. Whatever they only have as lecture notes (*mā kāna samāʿan li-ʿabīdika*), and whatever they cannot replace, the copyists you appoint will copy it and the binders of the library will bind it.²³

Al-Ṣūlī continues to say that, although his own library may be diminished by this, he cannot stand for the caliph to have something that is not perfect. After this discussion, al-Rādī decides to donate his library to his sons: day after day, he has books brought to him and proceeds, with the help of his courtiers, to divide them up between the two princes, keeping some for himself and leaving the least valuable to the courtiers, who sell them by weight.

This episode corroborates two hypotheses advanced above: first, al-Ṣūlī advises the caliph to arrange his books by subject, and within the subject he suggests a subordinate criterion – for classical poetry it is an arrangement by tribe, but one may imagine different rationales for other subjects. Second, the caliph will have his copyists reproduce those works which the courtiers only have as *samāʿ*, which here it seems uncontroversial to understand as lecture notes.

We hear again, tangentially, of al-Ṣūlī’s library in 329/941, when al-Ṣūlī’s home is ransacked. Amongst other precious objects, ‘they found a portion of my notebooks, which they pillaged’.²⁴ He is now poor, he says, and survives on the revenue of a garden he owns and on his notebooks.²⁵ While the expression ‘the price of my notebooks’ (*aṭmān dafātirī*) may imply an actual sale, it seems unlikely that he would sell the tools necessary for obtaining an income: the expression might also

²² F. Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 48, quoting Ibn al-ʿAdīm’s *Buġya*; the Arabic text is on pages 541–2. See also A.S. Tritton, *Materials*, 168.

²³ Al-Ṣūlī, *Aḥbār al-Rādī bi-llāh*, 39–40.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 210.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 211.

mean that al-Šūlī used these notebooks for teaching, or that he rented them out to other scholars.²⁶

In fact, at this time al-Šūlī is in Baṣra, and one of his student is a young al-Tanūhī (d. 384/994), who will go on to become a judge and *adab* author. In *al-Faraġ ba^cda l-šidda* al-Tanūkhī recalls that when he was a boy his father had been appointed testator for al-Šūlī, who had not named any heirs in his testament. However, when the scholar died in Baṣra in 335/947, three poor brothers went to al-Tanūhī's father, claiming that their mother had been related to al-Šūlī. At length, they produced the necessary testimony and were awarded a portion of the inheritance, which the judge had converted into money in the meantime. Unfortunately, al-Tanūhī does not specify the amounts of money involved, nor does he say whether the possessions left by al-Šūlī included books.²⁷ As mentioned above, at least one *daftar* survived into the late fourth/tenth century and was seen by Ibn al-Nadīm.

Information on al-Šūlī's library is too scarce to allow a precise picture to emerge, and leaves us with more questions than answers, beginning with the obvious ones: which titles did it contain? Were these all lecture notes, as the scholar claimed? How many of these were personal, and how many had been acquired? How much did he spend to keep expanding the collection? How were the books organised exactly? Were they only for his personal use? Despite this uncertainty, what seems to be implicit in all the snippets of description found in the sources and discussed above is that al-Šūlī's library was remarkable, and not only in the eyes of its owner, for its physical appearance as well as for its contents.

Reflecting on this material has also highlighted practical differences between a public library and a private one: for instance, al-Šūlī's servants must have been conversant with the arrangement of the library if they were able to find a book when ordered to do so. However, it is not clear whether any of these servants were employed exclusively to look after them as librarian, cataloguer, copyist or binder. Moreover,

²⁶ Pedersen, *Arabic Book*, 34, mentions cases where scholars borrowed books from senior colleagues for copying (quoting Yāqūt, *Mu^cġam*, 2722), although it is not clear whether this implied a money transaction. I am grateful to Antonella Ghersetti for this reference as well as for many helpful comments and suggestions on the first draft of this paper. I should also like to thank the anonymous reviewers.

²⁷ Al-Tanūhī, *al-Faraġ ba^cd al-šidda*, 3: 262–7 (story no. 328). The eldest brother, Abū ^cAlī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ġa^cfar, later adopted al-Šūlī as his *šuhra*. He has a short entry in al-Ḥaṭīb's *Ta^rrīḥ Baġdād*, 4: 407.

maintaining a library was an investment: it could contribute to its owner's income, help him get into the good graces of a patron, or be part of his inheritance. Finally, al-Šūlī's ambiguous reputation as a scholar – knowledgeable, but only in writing; a good poetry editor, but a plagiarist – reflects a well-known conflictual relationship between the oral and the written in medieval Arabic culture.

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‘CATCHING THE EEL’ – DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE FOR CONCEPTS OF THE ARABIC BOOK IN THE MIDDLE PERIOD

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This article reflects on the concept of the ‘book’ in the Middle Period (fifth/eleventh to early tenth/sixteenth centuries). On the basis of a seventh/thirteenth-century library catalogue from Damascus it discusses how contemporaries faced the challenge of defining what a book actually was. Focusing on the catalogue’s section on composite manuscripts (*mağāmi‘*) it suggests that this document’s writer employed two—ultimately irreconcilable—definitions of a book: the book as a discrete textual item (taking the title as the main criterion) and the book as defined by its physical shape. This writer’s cataloguing practices illustrate the fluid nature of the ‘book’ well beyond the Formative Period between the first/seventh and the fourth/tenth century.

At a time when the book as a physical object with a stable text is losing ground to digital files with more fluid textual formats, it seems pertinent to reflect on what a ‘book’ was understood to be in a pre-print, manuscript culture.¹ For contemporaries in the Middle Period coming up with a single definition of the book was as elusive as any attempt to catch Luther’s proverbial eel.² The present discussion takes a specific documentary example from the Middle Period in order to problematise the concept of the Arabic book. The choice of the Middle Period is informed by the chronological profile of modern scholarship on cultural history that has – as in so many other fields – put the two traditional foci of Middle Eastern historical studies on the main stage: the Formative Period of Islam until the fourth/tenth century and the Modern Period from the nineteenth century onwards. The Middle Period, however, has been neglected in most discussions of the Arabic book’s development between these ‘classical’ and ‘modern’ eras. Consequently, the most authoritative recent overview of the history of the book in the Muslim lands has little to say about the period between the fifth/eleventh and tenth/sixteenth

¹ I thank Antonella Ghersetti for inviting me to contribute to this volume as well as the reviewers for their insightful comments.

² Referring to Luther’s description of the elusive Erasmus as ‘the eel whom only Christ could catch’ and who could be all things to all men (*Luther’s Works*, vol. 54, 19; cf. N. Housley, *Contesting the Crusades*).

centuries.³ Discussions that have touched upon the Middle Period, such as Pedersen's *The Arabic Book* and Rosenthal's 'Of Making Books There Is No End', are often grounded in the Formative Period and confidently apply a single concept of the book to a period stretching from the second/eighth to the ninth/fifteenth centuries.⁴

Studies such as those by Günther, Toorawa and Touati, to name but the most recent, have discussed in detail the gradual development of a 'writerly culture', to borrow Toorawa's term, in the first Islamic centuries, especially its interplay with oral and aural practices.⁵ Schoeler's work is particularly relevant for the present discussion as he has shown the inherent fluidity of textual formats during the Formative Period. Of particular importance is his differentiation between *hypomnema*, that is to say draft notes, notebooks and written records that were not independent manuscript-books and actual manuscript-books (*syngramma*) that writers intended for wider circulation.⁶ This discussion of the fluid format of the written text during the early Islamic period finds its counterpart in scholarship on the gradual introduction of printing in the Arabic-speaking lands from the eighteenth century onwards. Here, the transformation of the book's physical shape has again led to reflections on what a manuscript-book actually was.⁷

At first glance the question of what contemporaries during the Middle Period understood to be a book might seem unproblematic as this period's authors widely employed the term *kitāb* whenever they referred to the written word. However, if we turn to the period's narrative sources we see that a variety of concepts existed for textual units that do not sit easily with a commonsense understanding of a book. For instance, authors who referred to the number of books in collections could do so by employing either *kitāb*, *ḡuz*⁸ or *muḡallad*. The latter two terms not only described a volume or quire belonging to a longer book, but could also refer to one separate (sometimes bound) quire or one of several unrelated quires that were bound together.⁸ This differentiation, especially in a culture with inherently fluid textual formats, raises a number of questions

³ G. Roper: 'The History of the Book'.

⁴ J. Pedersen, *The Arabic Book*; F. Rosenthal, "'Of Making Books There Is No End'".

⁵ S. Günther, 'Praise to the Book!'; Sh. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr*; H. Touati, *L'Armoire à sagesse*.

⁶ G. Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam*.

⁷ For instance B. Messick, *The Calligraphic State* and M. Kunt 'Reading Elite, Elite Reading'.

⁸ *ḡuz*/*muḡallad*: E. Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar*, 79.

with regard to a manuscript's status as book, quire or volume. What exactly was the borderline between a short *kitāb* and a *ǧuzʿ*? How did contemporaries deal with composite manuscripts that could contain anything from brief extracts to complete 'books'? To what extent did contemporaries consider multi-volume works with one title to be a single book?

In order to take up these questions, the following discussion turns to documentary evidence of book collections as they offer unique insights into contemporary attitudes to, and understandings of, what a book was. The recently discovered catalogue of a local endowed library in Damascus, the oldest known complete catalogue for an Arabic library, is an appropriate point of entry.⁹ This catalogue documents the holdings of a minor library in the Ašrafiyya Mausoleum, which was situated close to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's resting-place in the city's 'Mausoleum Lane', north of the Umayyad Mosque.¹⁰ A ruler, the Ayyubid al-Malik al-Ašraf (d. 635/1237), endowed this mausoleum-*madrassa*, but a member of the civilian elite endowed its library.¹¹ The inventory of this library is not dated, but internal evidence, particularly the absence of later authors, indicates that it was produced shortly after the library was set up in the mid-seventh/thirteenth century. The document is fascinating precisely because it does not refer to one of the large-scale prestigious libraries set up by a member of the ruling elite. Rather, it gives an insight into a relatively small library in a somewhat modest institution, dozens of which existed in cities such as Damascus. As this was just an ordinary library, only one contemporary writer mentioned this library in a narrative source.¹² In contrast to al-Šūlī's library discussed in this volume by Letizia Osti, for which we have only narrative, but no documentary evidence, the source basis for this book collection is thus exactly inverted.

⁹ For the concept of the local endowed library, see my *The Written Word*, 124–63.

¹⁰ *Fihrist kutub hizānat al-Ašrafiyya*, Fatih 5433, Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, fols. 246v–270r. The catalogue was briefly mentioned by Ṣ. al-Munaǧǧid, *Qawā'id fahrasat al-maḥtūṭāt al-'arabiyya*, 20/21 (also referred to in A. Gacek, 'Some Remarks', 173) and R. Şeşen, *Salahaddin'den Baybars'a*, 336. I am currently working on an edition of this document with translation and commentary.

¹¹ The library was endowed by al-Ašraf Aḥmad b. al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil. On him and further sources cf. al-Ḍahabī: *Ta'rīḥ al-islām*, 47 (years 641–50): 149–51.

¹² Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, I, 214.

The catalogue's writer unequivocally set out the document's function to list 'books' in its heading: 'Catalogue of the Books of the Ašrafiyya Library'.¹³ This document employs a very orderly method to organise the entries that run through its folios – or at least it appears to do so. The first level of this organisational method is the alphabetical order of the titles and lists all entries according to the letters of the alphabet starting with *alif* and finishing with *yā'*. Under each of the letters a second level of organisation subdivides all entries by size, either as a normal or small (*ṣiġār*) format. This differentiation was introduced because it presumably reflected the physical set-up of the shelving. Contemporary illustrations of libraries clearly show that shelves were organised according to the size of the manuscripts.¹⁴ Each of the resulting fifty-six categories (twenty-eight letters each with two sections for size) is further subdivided by a third organisational level of subject-matter. For this third level the writer of the catalogue introduced fifteen thematic categories; for instance, category three is Islamic law, category five is history, and category ten is pharmacology and medicine. Thus each entry would potentially have a three-figure class mark in the form of letter/size/subject, such as A/s/3 for a book with a title starting with the letter *alif*, in small format, on Islamic law.

This organisation of the catalogue shows a rather uncomplicated understanding of what a book is: each title has an entry and although many of these titles surely consisted of several volumes this was not of concern for the classification of the library's books. In the early parts of the catalogue we find a numerical system with numbers after many entries that referred to volumes, but this system is silently abandoned after the early folios. The implicit definition underlying this scheme was thus that a book was the entirety of a text belonging to one title, irrespective of whether it came in one or several volumes. Accordingly, the catalogue's writer set out to give each title its own entry. For early entries he also listed each additional copy of the same title as a separate entry. For example, under the letter *alif* he enumerated: '*al-Adkiyā'* by Ibn al-Ġawzī / second copy / *al-Amtāl wa-l-ḥikam* by al-Māwardī / second copy / third copy'.¹⁵ After some folios he was to abandon this system because multiple copies, especially in the case of poetic works which could number well beyond fifteen, made his approach too

¹³ *Fihrist al-Ašrafiyya*, fol. 246v: *Fihrist kutub ḥizānat al-Ašrafiyya*.

¹⁴ Cf. for instance al-Ḥarīrī, *al-Maqāmāt*, Paris, BnF, MS arabe 5847, fol. 5v.

¹⁵ *Fihrist al-Ašrafiyya*, fol. 247a.

cumbersome. Rather, he reverted to state briefly: ‘Poetry of Salāma b. Ġandal, fifteen copies’.¹⁶

However, this one-text-one-title system of cataloguing posed more fundamental challenges than it seems to imply. There are two instances in this document where its orderly organisation almost falls apart entirely as the writer had to accommodate textual units that could not be fully integrated into this text-based definition of the book. The first instance is in the letter *mīm* when the writer came to composite volumes (*mağāmī^c*) and the second is in the catalogue’s final part where we find what the writer described as ‘defective manuscripts’ (*maḥārīm*). In both cases the function of these sections was more complicated than just drawing together manuscripts that were either composite or incomplete. We also find *mağāmī^c* and *maḥārīm*-manuscripts in those parts of the catalogue that are structured by the three-tiered method. The writer placed, for example, a collection of sermons (*ḥuṭab*) under the letter *ḥā^ʿ* and a number of composite volumes of poetry (*ši^cr*) under the letter *šīn* – although in the latter case he grouped them at the very end of the letter’s section indicating again his uncertainty of where to list them.¹⁷

Furthermore some composite manuscripts are listed under the letter *mīm*, but outside the dedicated *mağāmī^c*-section. An anonymous ‘Collection of Legal Problems’, for instance, is appropriately placed under the letter’s normal-sized volumes, subject category 3 (Islamic Law).¹⁸ Another item containing, amongst others, writings by Galen on phlebotomy is placed under the letter’s normal-sized volumes, subject category 10 (pharmacology/medicine).¹⁹ The *mağāmī^c* and *maḥārīm*-sections were thus not simply formal categories where any manuscript described as composite or defective was to be placed. Rather, they contained works that somehow eluded the three-figure classification of the catalogue. In quantitative terms these sections for composite volumes and defective manuscripts occupy a substantial part of the catalogue. The former runs to more than ten of the catalogue’s forty-eight pages and the latter takes up another six pages. In other words a third of the overall collection eluded the catalogue’s organisational approach and its implicit text-based definition of the book.²⁰

¹⁶ *Fihrist al-Ašrafiyya*, fol. 254r.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. 251r: *Ḥuṭab Mağmū^ca*; fol. 256r: several entries starting with *Mağmū^c ši^cr*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, fol. 258r: *Mağmū^c masā^ʿil fiqhiyya*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. 259r.

²⁰ *Mağāmī^c*: *ibid.*, fols. 260v–265v, *maḥārīm*: fols. 266v–269v.

My contention is that the writer's initial certainty with regard to his project of producing a catalogue of this library's 'books' faltered when he faced the collection. The sections for composite volumes and defective manuscripts were desperate attempts to tame the unwieldy material into an orderly list underpinned by a single definition of the book. In order to elaborate on this point I will focus on the section referring to composite volumes, which has a total of 172 entries with well over 500 titles. The first characteristic of this section is that it was not explicitly flagged as one – in contrast to all other sections of the catalogue. The writer had already started to include an increasing number of composite manuscripts on the preceding folios, but at one point, the point which I take to be the beginning of the section, he suddenly began to list composite manuscripts only, without explicitly marking this in any way.²¹ The end of this 'section' is only differentiated by the fact that a new letter starts, *nūn*, which follows the standard orderly method. Remarkably, the break with the catalogue's system in this part is also reflected in the manuscript's style and ductus: The earlier parts of the catalogue were written in an extremely neat and easily legible hand with clear headings for new categories and ample spaces separating the entries – the writer obviously took great care to represent this splendid collection in an appropriate textual form. Here, however, his script turned hasty, headings were virtually absent and the ample spacing disappeared in an increasingly dense organisation of the text with words running into each other. With the start of the letter *nūn*, however, the writing and the textual organisation resumed its former clarity, probably expressing the writer's relief to have returned to safer shores.

That this composite section contained manuscripts which defied the catalogue's logic of the book as a self-contained textual unit with a more or less stable title, is also evident from the breakdown of the thematic level of organisation. After the writer had, as usual, run through the fifteen categories of the normal-sized manuscripts of the letter *mīm*, he turned, as with all other letters, to the small-sized holdings of the library. However, under this letter the system of orderly sections gradually started to unravel as composite books increasingly dominated. In category three, generally preserved for Islamic Law, we now find titles pertaining to the field of poetry that have no relevance to this category such as *Questions Asked to al-Mutanabbī Concerning his Poetry*, selections from Ibn al-

²¹ I take the *mağāmī*^c-section to start on *Fihrist al-Ašrafīyya*, fol. 260v, l. 9: *Mağmū*^c *awwaluhu fiqh 'alā maḏhab Abī Ḥanīfa* [...] as it is from this point onwards that only *mağāmī*^c-works are listed.

Mu^ctazz's *Generations of the Poets* and poetry from the early Islamic poet Ǫū l-Rumma.²² Category five, to cite a second example, normally contains works of history, but under this letter it starts to also include material such as an anonymous *Maǧmū^c of Poetry and Reports*.²³ The writer attempted to secure at least some connection to the History category by including panegyrics on various Ayyubid rulers. After these attempts to keep his system up, he abandoned his efforts and on the following ten pages that make up the composite-volume section he introduced only three further category-headings (seven, eight and nine). This is in sharp contrast to the standard sections of the catalogue where a single page can easily contain up to twenty category-headings or more.

The writer was clearly uncertain of the best strategy to handle these composite manuscripts. He did not introduce a clear section outside his alphabetical organisation to ascribe a particular status to them, nor was he able to fit them convincingly into the existing cataloguing system. Rather, he opted to keep up his scheme, which at this point was no more than fictitious, thus circumventing the challenge posed by the heterogeneous items. The three category headings that he has in this section bear little relation to the actual content of the manuscripts listed under them. This is again in striking contrast to the rest of the catalogue where the link between subject-matter and category heading is generally reasonably close. Furthermore, in this section the writer abandoned his system of differentiating the manuscripts according to size – it is at least very unlikely that all of the items listed on these pages were indeed small-sized, as the catalogue implies.

The challenges posed by these items in comparison to the normal one-text-one-title books were indeed considerable. For instance, within category nine, where we would normally expect writings on astronomy/astrology and oneiromancy, one composite manuscript includes, amongst others, the following works: (1) Ibn Durayd's (d. 321/933) poem on words ending in *alif* (2) a treatise on rhymes, arguably by Ibn Ğinnī (d. 392/1002) (3) a *ḥadīṭ*-treatise by Ibn Šāhīn (d. 385/995) (4) a treatise on the prayers of supplication during Ramadan (5) a treatise on metrics (6) Ibn Fāris's (d. 395/1004?) collection of juridical riddles based on a rare meaning of a word (7) a selection of passages from the same work (8) historical reports (9) al-Zaǧǧāǧ's (d. 311/923) work of philology and lexicography detailing the Arabic terms for human

²² *Fihrist al-Ašrafīyya*, fol. 260r: *Masā'il su'ila 'anhā al-Mutanabbī min šī'rihi, Muḥṭār min ṭabaqāt al-šū'arā', Muḍahhaba Ǫī l-Rumma*.

²³ *Ibid.*, fol. 261r/v: *Maǧmū^c aš'ār wa-aḥbār muǧallad*.

anatomy (10) al-Rummānī's (d. 384/994) treatise on the uniqueness and inimitability of the Qurʾān, and (11) five *ḥadīth*-dictations by Abū Ṭāhir al-Salafī (d. 576/1180).²⁴ While the categories that the writer had drawn up covered the subject matter of the items within this entry, the composite item as a whole completely defied them.

The overall range of the material that the writer brought together in this section becomes more evident when we draw from a number of composite works: in addition to pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry as well as philological texts (both great favourites of the founder of the Ašrafīyya Library in all sections), we find for instance the testaments of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib to his son al-Ḥusayn and of the Sassanian ruler Ardašīr to his descendants/his son Šāpūr; al-Ḥwārizmī's fourth/tenth-century treatise on the classification of sciences; a treatise on geomancy; Greek medical treatises on the symptoms of imminent death; a collection on amulets and talismans; a treatise on the excellence of horses; selected items on jurisprudence, followed by a poem on the number of Quranic verses and sermons, poetry in Persian; fourth/tenth-century pharmacological treatises by al-Rāzī; the bacchanalian poetry of Abū Nuwās and Ibn al-Muqaffa's mirror for princes.²⁵

The cataloguer's problem was that he had started out with the confident statement that this was the 'Catalogue of the Books of the Ašrafīyya Library'. His organisation was based on the understanding that a book was simply a textual unit that could be catalogued under one specific title – and at first, this strategy had been entirely adequate. As seen, it was not a main concern for him whether this text was contained in a single volume or spread over several volumes. His abandonment of the numerical system for volumes after the initial folios was not a major change which undermined either the catalogue's basic structure or the underlying definition of the book. The physical appearance of the

²⁴ *Fihrist al-Ašrafīyya*, fol. 265r: *Mağmūʿ Qaṣīd Ibn Durayd fī l-maqṣūr wa-l-mamdūd wa-Muḥtaṣar qawāfī wa-Mā qaruba isnāduhu li-Ibn Šāhīn [...] wa-Šalāt al-rağāʾib wa-ʿArūd wa-Futyā faqīh al-ʿarab wa-Muḥtār al-futyā wa-Aḥbār wa-Ḥalq al-insān li-l-Zağğāğ [...] wa-Nukat al-Rummānī [...] wa-Hamsa min amālī al-Salafī.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 260v: *waṣīyat ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib li-waladihi al-Ḥusayn raḍīya Allāh ʿanhumā*, 261r: *ʿAhd Ardašīr*, 261r: *Maḡātīh al-ʿulūm*, 261v: *Sirr al-šināʿa fī l-raml*, fol. 262r: *ʿAlāmāt al-mawt*, fol. 262r: *Mağmūʿ ʿuwaḍ wa-ḥurūz*, fol. 262r: *Mağmūʿ fīhi al-ḥayl wa-faḍluhā*, fol. 263r: *Mağmūʿ baʿḍ muḥtār fiqh wa-qaṣīd fī ʿadad āy al-Qurʾān wa-mawāʿiz*, fol. 263r/264r: *Ašʿār bi-l-ʿağamī*, fol. 263r: *Mağmūʿ li-l-Rāzī Abdāl al-adwiya [...]*, fol. 163v: *Hamriyyāt Abī Nuwās*, fol. 264r: *Ādāb al-wuzarāʾ*.

manuscripts was of concern only when it came to their size, the second level of the catalogue's organisation. For the catalogue's organisation though, as far as the present discussion is concerned, the size of the manuscripts was irrelevant.

Yet, the simple assumption of a text-based definition of the book hit the wall midway through the catalogue and proved impossible for around a third of the collection. The alphabetical organisation became useless at this point as it did not allow the catalogue's users to identify specific texts, the thematic categories were impossible to impose on this material and even the normal/small-size differentiation fell by the wayside. The writer adopted for this material a new definition of 'book', which was based on its physical shape, in other words he devoted an entry to each collection of folios that was bound together, irrespective of title, theme or size. This shift to a physical definition is also evident in the writer's exasperation when he repeatedly cut short the description of a volume's content with a brief 'and other [texts] than this'.²⁶ Clearly, it was the physical shape of the book that had become his main concern in this section, and he could thus circumvent the daunting task of thematically classifying the content – an approach that would have been untenable in the catalogue's other sections.

This shift in definition allowed the writer to keep up the appearance of a catalogue that progressed neatly entry by entry. Fundamentally, this combination of a text-based and a volume-based definition of the book was untenable – and arguably the changing styles of writing and presenting the material indicated that the writer himself felt uneasy with his solution. However, it was a useful solution to resolve this writer's struggle to find order in a collection of 'books' that would not match one single definition. The writer was not able to 'catch the eel', but he was at least able to use the elusiveness of the definition to his own advantage as he preserved the illusion of a single scheme for the heterogeneous material that he found on the shelves. The main legacy of this seventh/thirteenth-century writer and his cataloguing practices for our purposes is to remind us that the term 'book' is far from a commonsense term, not only for the Formative Period, but also in subsequent centuries. Though the term *kitāb* could not mean all things to all men, it could at least mean quite different things to those dealing with the written word in this phase of Arabic manuscript culture.

²⁶ For instance, *Fihrist al-Ašrafiyya*, fol. 261v, l. 2, l. 14; 262r, l. 1, l. 3, l. 8/9, l. 16; fol. 262v, l. 14, l. 18/19; fol. 263r, l. 16; fol. 163v, l. 5.

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LIBRI E ARTIGIANI DEL LIBRO:
LE RACCOMANDAZIONI DEI GIURISTI MUSULMANI
(XIV SECOLO)*

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The paper deals with the comments 14th-century jurists, Ibn Ǧamā'a, Ibn al-Ḥāǧǧ and al-Subkī made about books and bookmaking, which highlight their ambivalent attitude towards the craftsmanship of those involved in the production of books. While extolling the merits of papermakers, scribes and bookbinders in connection with the production of religious books, the jurists urged these craftsmen to proceed in strict compliance with the Islamic code. Copying and binding certain kinds of books, such as folk romances, was severely censured or even prohibited. Some suggestions aiming at the prevention of fraud and illicit behaviour were also included in sections of legal treatises dealing with the crafts of book-production.

È ben noto il prestigio del libro nel mondo islamico: il 'Libro' per eccellenza è lo stesso Corano. In un importante saggio sulle biblioteche abbasidi, Olga Pinto scrive che 'presso pochi popoli il culto del libro e della tradizione letteraria ed erudita ha avuto tanta importanza in tutta quanta la vita spirituale e culturale quanta ne ha avuta presso gli Arabi'.¹ Tre erano state, secondo lo storico al-Qalqašandī (m. 821/1418) le principali biblioteche: quella abbaside a Baghdad, quella fatimide al Cairo e quella omayyade a Cordova.² Particolarmente dense sono le pagine dedicate dallo storico Ibn Ḥaldūn (m. 808/1406) alla trasmissione del sapere tramite la scrittura e la produzione di libri, la cui perfezione o decadenza sono in stretta correlazione con l'analoga condizione della società urbana.³ I testi ci lasciano intravedere un'intensa attività di

* Questo saggio riprende una serie di studi sulle professioni legate al libro arabo e intende presentare una riflessione sintetica sulla posizione dei giuristi in un periodo chiave per la produzione di libri: l'epoca mamelucca.

¹ Cfr. Pinto, 'Le Biblioteche degli Arabi', 140.

² Cfr. J. Pedersen, *The Arabic Book*, 113. Si veda inoltre A. Grohmann, 'Bibliotheken und Bibliophilen im islamischen Orient', in *Festschrift der Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, 431-42; L. Capezzone, *La trasmissione del sapere nell'Islam medievale*, cap. vi.

³ Cfr. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Muqaddima*, 2: 889 (*The Muqaddimah*, 2: 392).

copisti, rilegatori, decoratori, mercanti di libri, bibliofili sia nell'Oriente che nell'Occidente islamico.⁴

Nella Baghdad del X secolo, all'epoca di al-Ya[°]qūbī, operavano più di cento librai e già esisteva quello che noi definiremmo il mercato antiquario.⁵ Il commercio librario si svolgeva in genere nelle parti più nobili del mercato, presso la principale moschea cattedrale delle grandi città.⁶ Nella pagina dedicata al *sūq al-kutubiyyīn* del Cairo, al-Maqrīzī (m. 845/1441) sottolinea come questo costituisse un luogo privilegiato di incontro tra i dotti, l'unico degno di essere frequentato assieme a quello del mercato delle armi. Assieme a *kutubī*, 'libraio', si trova nei testi forse ancora più frequentemente il vocabolo *warrāq*, con il molteplice significato di fabbricante di carta in senso stretto, cartolaio, venditore di libri, ma anche rilegatore, copista o scriba.⁷ Analoghe considerazioni sono possibili per *wirāqa*, 'l'industria del libro'. Famoso *warrāq* fu Ibn al-Nadīm (m. 388/998), l'autore del *Fihrist*, il grande repertorio suddiviso per materia di tutti i libri in arabo noti al suo tempo.

L'VIII secolo dell'egira (XIV sec.) sembra essere il periodo in cui giuristi e ulema più hanno scritto e più si sono occupati delle attività concernenti la produzione di libri. Questo è probabilmente dovuto al fatto che l'epoca mamelucca aveva visto fiorire pratiche di lavoro, comportamenti, letterature, espressioni artistiche che mal si conciliavano con le accorate raccomandazioni degli uomini di religione, custodi della

⁴ Sul manoscritto arabo-islamico si veda A. Gacek, *The Arabic Manuscript Tradition*; Id., *Supplement*; Id., *Arabic Manuscripts. A Vademecum for Readers*; e inoltre J. Pedersen, *The Arabic Book*; A.F. Sayyid, *al-Kitāb al-[°]arabī al-maḥtūt wa-[°]ilm al-maḥtūtāt*; F. Déroche e F. Richard (eds), *Scribes et manuscrits du Moyen Orient*; F. Déroche, *Manuel de codicologie des manuscrits en écriture arabe*; Id., *Le livre manuscrit arabe*; S.S. Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*.

⁵ A. von Kremer, *Kulturgeschichte des Orients unter den Chalifen*, 2: 310. L'autore dedica pagine interessanti all'industria della carta, al libro e alla sua decorazione, al commercio librario, alla bibliofilia, all'arte dello scriba (304–15).

⁶ Sull'organizzazione della città araba medievale e sulle attività artigianali e mercantili, si veda, tra l'altro: G.E. von Grunebaum, 'The Structure of the Muslim Town, in *Islam. Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition*, 141–58; L. Massignon, 'Les corps de métiers et la cité islamique', in *Opera minora*, 1: 369–84; I.M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*; A.H. Hourani - S.M. Stern (eds.), *The Islamic City. A Colloquium*; E. Ashtor, *Storia sociale ed economica del Vicino Oriente nel Medioevo*, trad. it.; B. Scarcia Amoretti, *Un altro Medioevo. Il quotidiano nell'Islam*, cap. iii.

⁷ Cfr. Ḥasan al-Bāšā, *al-Funūn al-islāmiyya*, 3: 1321; A. Gacek, *The Arabic Manuscript Tradition*, 150.

stretta ortodossia. Queste pratiche si configuravano come innovazioni biasimevoli (*bida*^c, sing. *bid*^c*a*).⁸ Le varie scuole giuridiche concordano su questo atteggiamento. Spiccano i nomi del malikita Muḥammad b. al-Ḥāḡḡ al-Fāsī al-^cAbdarī (m. 737/1336) e degli shafi^citi Tāḡ al-Dīn al-Subkī (m. 771/1370) e Ibn Ġamā^ca (m. 733/1333).⁹ Essi fondano le loro argomentazioni sui concetti di *miṭal* ‘modelli di comportamento’, *adab* ‘corretto modo di agire’, *niyya* ‘buon proposito’.

In quanto segue presento le parti più significative dei tre trattati, precedute da alcune informazioni biografiche utili per inquadrare i loro autori. L’insieme delle ‘raccomandazioni’, spesso molto minuziose in relazione all’opera dello scriba, si può riassumere in due concetti fondamentali: 1) l’artigiano del libro deve comportarsi in tutte le sue azioni seguendo una stretta etica islamica; 2) deve operare possedendo la necessaria perizia tecnica e con un alto livello di professionalità.

1) *Taqī al-Dīn e Tāḡ al-Dīn al-Subkī*

Taqī l-Dīn al-Subkī (m. 756/1355), gran *qāḏī* di Damasco e predicatore nella moschea degli Omayyadi, si occupò di libri e di biblioteche, trasmettendoci il documento *waqf* della al-Ašrafiyya. Le informazioni riportate nella sua raccolta di *fatwā* costituiscono un’importante attestazione per la conoscenza dell’organizzazione e del funzionamento della biblioteca:

Si versino mensilmente al bibliotecario 18 *dirham*. Egli avrà cura del restauro [delle legature] dei libri e ne renderà conto al soprintendente (*nāzīr*) o al suo sostituto, al fine di stanziare le somme necessarie dalle rendite della fondazione. Agirà nello stesso modo, qualora se ne presenti la necessità, per correggere il libro o collazionarlo... Interverrà per la fornitura di carta, degli strumenti di scrittura quali penne, calamai, supporti di libri (*karārīs*) etc., che metterà al servizio di coloro che operano nel grande *ṭwān* o nella sala di fronte, copiando [opere] di *hadīṭ* e di scienze ausiliarie, passi del Corano e commentari. Interverrà per le necessità di quelli che trascrivono nelle sedute di dettatura (*imlā*⁷) e di coloro che scrivono libri o raccolte di certificati (*istiḡāza*). Egli accorderà tuttavia il suo favore solo a quelli che copiano per i propri studi e non per ricavarne un guadagno e un profitto pecuniario. Il soprintendente può fare copiare o acquistare, per

⁸ Sui *kutub al-bida*^c si veda in particolare Fierro, ‘The Treatises against Innovations’, e bibliografia citata.

⁹ Un paio di secoli dopo, ^cAbd al-Bāsiṭ al-^cAlmawī (m. 981/1573), šafi^cita, riprende il testo di Ibn Ġamā^ca apportando integrazioni e chiarimenti. Un fondamentale studio su questo autore è stato pubblicato da F. Rosenthal, *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship*, 7–18.

conto della fondazione, i libri e i fascicoli necessari, che egli costituirà in *waqf* a somiglianza dei fondi già esistenti.¹⁰

Chiara testimonianza delle preoccupazioni dei dottori dell'Islam si trova nei capitoli sugli artigiani del libro in un'opera del figlio di Taqī l-Dīn al-Subkī, Tāğ al-Dīn (m. 771/1370),¹¹ l'autore delle *Ṭabaqāt al-šāfi'iyya*, ('Classi degli Shafi'iti'). Tra i suoi numerosi scritti figura un trattato di etica del lavoro, il *Kitāb Mu'īd al-ni'am wa-mubīd al-niqam*, ('Il restauratore dei favori e l'estirpatore dei castighi').¹² Secondo l'autore, la comunità musulmana deve distogliersi dagli interessi terreni, rendendo grazie a Dio nel proprio lavoro quotidiano. L'opera è strutturata in centotredici *miṭāl*, 'modelli di comportamento' cui devono attenersi i vari componenti della società, dal califfo, al sultano e ai dignitari, via via fino ai lavoratori più umili.¹³

Tāğ al-Dīn al-Subkī assume un atteggiamento censorio nei confronti degli artigiani del libro, dal copista fino al rilegatore e al decoratore. Nella sua requisitoria egli opera una netta distinzione tra gli scritti profani e le opere religiose: non solo condanna i libri 'eretici' o licenziosi, ma anche le popolari biografie leggendarie degli antichi eroi arabi, quali 'Antara b. Šaddād, con la inquietante motivazione che 'Dio non ne trae vantaggio'. Anche se è lecito chiedersi quale sia stata l'efficacia di simili anatemi, al-Subkī manifesta una preoccupazione condivisa tra gli *'ulamā'*.¹⁴

Il rapporto tra autore o committente e copista non sempre è privo di diffidenza e di contrasti, tanto da richiedere talora un responso giuridico. Anche i rilegatori dovrebbero limitare la propria opera a libri di carattere strettamente religioso; solo il Corano dovrebbe essere oggetto di doratura.

¹⁰ La citazione è tratta da Eche, *Les Bibliothèques arabes*, 214–15. Sulla famiglia al-Subkī, si veda la voce curata da J. Schacht-[C.E. Bosworth], in *EP*, 9: 776–8.

¹¹ Per notizie sulla vita e sulle opere di Tāğ al-Dīn al-Subkī si veda *GAL* 2: 89–90.

¹² Ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Nağğār, Abū Zayd Šalabī e Muḥammad Abū l-'Uyūn, 1948, che corregge l'edizione D.W. Myhrman del 1908.

¹³ Si vedano le osservazioni di M. Shatzmiller, *Labour in the Medieval Islamic World*, 77–8, 387 sgg.

¹⁴ Forse al-Subkī riteneva che il pathos che caratterizza queste narrazioni riflettesse più lo spirito della Ġāhiliyya che quello dell'Islam; o forse temeva la popolarità del cantastorie, che aveva presa sul pubblico più del predicatore (ricordiamo che egli stesso era stato *ḥaṭīb* alla Moschea degli Omayyadi di Damasco). I riferimenti all'epica araba sono stati da me esaminati, assieme a quelli di altri autori, nel saggio 'Critical Attitudes Toward Arabic Folk Epics' (2005).

L'accurato appello di Tāğ al-Dīn al-Subkī sembra però aver avuto, fortunatamente, un'influenza limitata sull'evoluzione dell'arte del libro islamico.

Dal *Kitāb Mu'īd al-ni'ān wa-mubīd al-niqām*:¹⁵

lxxix. Lo scriba/copista (*al-nāsīḥ*)

È suo dovere non copiare nulla in fatto di libri fuorvianti, come quelli degli eretici e dei settari, e astenersi dal copiare libri di cui Dio non trae vantaggio, come la *Sīra* di ʿAntara e altre simili di fantasia, che costituiscono solo una perdita di tempo e dei quali la religione non ha alcun bisogno. Lo stesso vale per i libri dei libertini e per ciò che essi scrivono sulle modalità del coito, sulle qualità delle bevande inebrianti e su ogni altra cosa che istighi [a compiere] azioni proibite. Mettiamo in guardia i copisti da tutto ciò: la vita terrena li trae in errore. Spesso colui che commissiona di scrivere queste cose offre un compenso maggiore di quello che chiede libri di scienza. È tuttavia opportuno che il copista ‘non svenda la sua religione per i beni del mondo’.

Ci sono copisti che non provano timor di Dio e scrivono affrettatamente, omettendo passi del libro per fretta di finirlo, malgrado il compenso sia stato pattuito per la copiatura integrale. Queste persone sono dei traditori nei confronti di Dio, dell'autore e di chi li ricompensa per il loro lavoro.

I giuristi hanno detto: se [al copista] viene commissionato di scrivere un testo e commette degli errori, o di scriverlo in arabo e invece lo fa in lingua diversa (*ʿağamiyya*), o il contrario, egli è responsabile della perdita della carta e non gli spetta alcun compenso. Al-Nawawī [m. 676/1277] diede il seguente responso—e quanto ha ricordato al-Ġazzālī [m. 505/1111] nelle sue *fatwā* è molto simile—[a proposito di un copista] al quale viene commissionata la copiatura di un libro ed egli cambia la sequenza dei capitoli: se è possibile rimettere in ordine le varie parti del testo, ad esempio se il libro si compone di dieci capitoli e il copista ha scritto il primo [ponendolo] separato alla fine, ha diritto all'ammontare dell'importo pattuito; altrimenti non ha diritto a nulla. (...).

lxxx. Il fabbricante di carta (*al-warrāq*)

Si tratta di uno dei più eccellenti lavori, perché su di esso si basa la scrittura dei Corani, dei libri di scienza, dei documenti e dei contratti della gente. Che colui che svolge questa attività, per grazia di Dio, favorisca la ricerca della scienza e delle altre [discipline]; dia la preferenza a chi egli sa che acquista la carta per scrivere libri di scienza, ma si rifiuti di venderla a chi sa che scriverà ciò che non si conviene: scritti eretici ed eterodossi, testimonianze e atti giudiziari falsi e simili.

¹⁵ Ed. Cairo, Maktabat al-Ḥānğī, 1996³.

lxxx. The bookbinder (*al-muğallid*)¹⁶

È suo dovere comportarsi come il copista e il fabbricatore di carta.

lxxxii. Il decoratore-doratore (*al-muḍahhib*)

È suo dovere dorare solamente copie del Corano. Sono note le divergenze tra i dotti sulla decorazione del Corano con oro. Al-Rāfiʿī e al-Nawawī sostengono che c'è differenza se esso appartenga a una donna, e in tal caso è ammessa, oppure a un uomo, e allora è vietata. Secondo noi è preferibile ammetterne la liceità senza restrizioni. Per quanto riguarda libri diversi dal Corano, i giuristi concordano nel non considerare lecita la decorazione con oro.

lvii. Il conservatore di libri (*ḥāzin al-kutub*)

È suo dovere conservare i libri, riassetarli (*tarmīmuḥā*) quando sono scompaginati, rilegarli (*ḥabkuḥā*) qualora se ne presenti la necessità. Egli deve essere accorto nel darli a coloro che non li rispettano, ma prodigo nei confronti di quelli che ne abbisognano; è inoltre opportuno che favorisca nel prestito i poveri, i quali hanno difficoltà nel procacciarsi libri, piuttosto che i ricchi. Frequentemente la persona che li ha dati in lascito (*wāqif*) pone la condizione che il libro sia consegnato solo dietro il versamento di una cauzione di valore corrispondente. Si tratta di una condizione giusta e da tenere in considerazione: il conservatore non deve concedere prestiti se non dietro cauzione. (...)

civ. I sensali/commissionari (*al-dallālūn*)

Fra questi vi è il commissionario di libri. Egli deve astenersi dal vendere libri religiosi a persone che, come risaputo, li rovinerebbero o li leggerebbero [solo] per criticarli e recare loro discredito. E neppure devono vendere opere di eretici e settari, né libri di astrologi e storie inventate come la *Sīra* di ʿAntara e altri. Non gli è lecito vendere a un miscredente né il Corano né libri di Tradizioni [del Profeta] e neppure di diritto.

2) Ibn Ğamāʿa

Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Saʿd Allāh Ibn Ğamāʿa al-Kinānī al-Ḥamawī al-Šāfiʿī (m. 733/1333), membro di un'importante famiglia di giuristi siriani, raggiunse un'alta posizione nell'impero mamelucco. A Gerusalemme fu predicatore e imam nella moschea al-Aqṣā, e successivamente *qāḍī* della città. Alla morte del gran *qāḍī* d'Egitto (690/1291), il sultano al-Ašraf Ḥalīl lo nominò al suo posto, assegnandogli anche la carica di *šayḥ al-šuyūḥ*, capo delle confraternite. In seguito alle vicissitudini dei sultani che si succedettero nel regno, fu dimesso dal suo incarico al Cairo, operò per un periodo come gran *qāḍī* a

¹⁶ Ḥasan al-Bāšā, *al-Funūn al-islāmiyya*, 3: 1023–5, riporta i nomi di molti artigiani che hanno rese illustri l'arte della legatura e della decorazione dei libri islamici nelle varie epoche, in particolare quella mamelucca.

Damasco; successivamente fece ritorno in Egitto dove riprese la sua attività.¹⁷

Tra le sue opere figurano un trattato sui diritti e doveri del sultano (*Tahrīr al-ahkām fī tadbīr ahl al-islām*), vari libri sulle tradizioni del Profeta e altre opere minori.¹⁸ La *Taḍkirat al-sāmi^c wa-l-mutakallim fī adab al-^cālim wa-l-muta^callim* ('Memoria per chi ascolta e chi parla in merito alle buone maniere del dotto e del discente') è un trattato sulla trasmissione del sapere religioso e sull'educazione nella *madrasa*. L'autore insiste sul concetto di *ādāb*, 'corretto comportamento, buone maniere',¹⁹ quella 'bontà di comportamento (*ḥusn al-adab*) che con i suoi meriti è testimonianza di retta via e intelligenza'.²⁰ L'opera è articolata in cinque ampie sezioni, i cui titoli ben evidenziano il contenuto: i. 'Sul merito della scienza e dei dotti, del suo insegnamento e del suo apprendimento'; ii. 'Sulle buone maniere del dotto verso se stesso e nel rispetto del suo studente e dello studio'; iii. 'Sulle buone maniere del discente'; iv. 'Sulle buone maniere con i libri'; v. 'Sulle buone maniere di coloro che frequentano le scuole'.

Nella traduzione che segue, del iv capitolo,²¹ vengono ripresi i sottotitoli aggiunti per maggiore chiarezza dall'editore al-Nadwī.²²

Dalla *Taḍkirat al-sāmi^c*. Libri e corretto comportamento:

Cap. iv: Sul corretto comportamento concernente i libri, che costituiscono lo strumento [per trasmettere] la scienza, e ciò che vi si riferisce in merito alla loro edizione, vocalizzazione, trasferimento, collocazione, e inoltre acquisto, prestito, copia etc. Il capitolo comprende dieci sezioni:

¹⁷ Si veda al-Ṣafadī, *Das biographische Lexicon*, ed. S. Dederling, 2: 18–20, n° 268; al-Subkī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-šāfi^ciyya al-kubrā*, 5: 230–3; K.S. Salibi, *The Banū Jamā^ca: a Dynasty of Shāfi^cite Jurists*, 97–109, in particolare 99–100; Id., *Ibn Djamā^ca*, in *IE²*, 3 : 771–2.

¹⁸ *GAL*, 2: 74–5, *GAL-S*, 2: 80–1; al-Ziriklī, *al-A^clām*, 6: 188–9.

¹⁹ L'evoluzione del termine *adab*, pl. *ādāb*, dal significato antico di 'abitudine, norma di condotta, costume', a quello successivo di 'buona qualità dell'anima, buona educazione, urbanità, cortesia', e infine a quello di 'letteratura', '*belles lettres*', è stata analizzata in particolare da K. Vollers e C.A. Nallino. Si veda la sintesi di F. Gabrieli, *Adab*, in *IE²*, 1: 180–1 e il saggio di M. Cassarino, 'Ancora sulla definizione di *adab*'.

²⁰ *Taḍkirat al-sāmi^c*, 13.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 151–72.

²² L'edizione è stata effettuata sulla base del codice migliore (Gotha, ms. ar. 162, del 682/1275), con l'aggiunta di copiose note; l'opera è stata riproposta dalla Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmīyya di Beirut una prima volta in edizione anastatica (1974) e successivamente in una nuova veste tipografica (2005).

Sezione i: [Sollecitudine degli studenti nel procurarsi i libri]²³

È opportuno che ‘colui che cerca la scienza’ (*tālib al-‘ilm*, lo studente/lo studioso) sia sollecito nel procurarsi i libri di cui necessita, per quanto gli è possibile acquistandoli, altrimenti dietro compenso o in prestito, poiché costituiscono lo strumento per giungere alla scienza. Tuttavia averne in gran numero non significa necessariamente possederla né comprenderla, come ritengono molti che si atteggiavano a esperti di giurisprudenza e *ḥadīṭ*. Sono giuste le parole di chi ha detto:

Se non tieni a mente [= non studi] con consapevolezza
il tuo accumular libri non ti giova.

Se [lo studente / lo studioso] è in grado di acquistare i libri, non si impegni nella loro copiatura. Quest’ultima non è auspicabile per il tempo che richiede, a meno che egli non possa farlo, non essendo in grado di pagare il loro prezzo né il compenso per farseli copiare. Non si preoccupi eccessivamente di una bella scrittura, ma piuttosto della correttezza di quanto scrive. Non chieda in prestito un libro se ha la possibilità di acquistarlo o averlo dietro compenso.

Sezione ii: [Preso in prestito dei libri in caso di necessità]²⁴

È auspicabile il prestito di libri a condizione che non subisca un danno chi li presta o chi li prende a prestito. Ad alcuni ripugna dare a prestito, ma il primo comportamento [cioè il prestare libri] è migliore, poiché in ciò vi è aiuto alla scienza e in sé è un’azione meritoria degna di ricompensa. (...) È opportuno che colui che chiede in prestito un libro ringrazi il prestatore e lo ricompensi con una buona azione. Non si prolunghi il possesso [del libro] senza necessità, anzi sia restituito quando è terminata [la lettura o copiatura]. Non si trattenga ulteriormente quando non ce n’è più bisogno o il suo proprietario lo richieda. Non è lecito introdurre correzioni senza permesso del proprietario.

Non si appongano note o scritte nello spazio vuoto delle pagine iniziali (*fawātih*) o finali (*ḥawātim*), a meno che il proprietario del libro non sia d’accordo. Allo stesso modo deve comportarsi chi trascrive *ḥadīṭ* quando riporta la parte che ha udito o trascritto. Non ne faccia una brutta copia, non lo presti a terze persone né lo dia senza necessità anche se è lecito, e neppure lo copi senza permesso del proprietario.

Se il libro fa parte di una donazione pia (*waqf*), lasciato in uso a chi ne può trarre utilità, senza che ci siano particolari condizioni, non c’è nulla di male nel copiarlo, con la riserva che può introdurre eventuali correzioni solo chi ne ha la competenza; è in ogni caso bene che venga chiesto

²³ Cfr. al-‘Almawī, *al-Mu‘īd fī adab al-mufīd*, 251; Rosenthal, *The Technique*, 8–9.

²⁴ Cfr. al-‘Almawī, *al-Mu‘īd fī adab al-mufīd*, 251–3; Rosenthal, *The Technique*, 9–10.

preventivamente il permesso al supervisore. Se, ottenuto questo permesso, lo copia, non scriva su di esso o su una pagina aggiunta o posta sopra lo scritto. Non ponga il calamaio sopra il libro, né faccia passare il calamo intriso di inchiostro sopra la pagina scritta [con il pericolo di macchiarla]. Un poeta ha detto:

O tu che prendi a prestito un libro da me
fammi contento [trattando bene il mio libro]
come vorresti esserlo tu [se fossi tu a prestarmelo].

Sezione iii [Come disporre i libri durante al consultazione]²⁵

Quando si copia o si sta consultando un libro, questo non deve venire posto dispiegato sul pavimento, ma tra due libri o altri due oggetti, o [preferibilmente] posato sul leggio (*kursī al-kutub*),²⁶ al fine di non affrettare la rottura del filo di cucitura. Se si ripone il libro in una pila, ciò non deve avvenire sul supporto menzionato né su un palchetto di legno (*taht ḥaṣab*) o simili. La cosa migliore è mantenere il libro sollevato dal suolo, affinché non si bagni o assorbi umidità.

Se il libro viene posto su un supporto di legno o simili, è opportuno inserire sopra e sotto qualcosa che impedisca danni alla pelle della coperta; allo stesso modo, i libri devono venire protetti dal contatto con un muro o altro appoggio. Il retto comportamento (*adab*) nel riporre i libri tiene in considerazione le scienze (*‘ulūm*) [che vi sono trattate], la loro importanza, il loro autore, la loro eccellenza.

Il libro più ‘nobile’ deve venir collocato più in alto rispetto a tutti gli altri, tenendo in conto la suddivisione in classi (*tadrīḡ*). Se c’è un Corano (*muṣḥaf*) deve stare sopra tutti; meglio se inserito in un contenitore con un appiglio da appendere a un chiodo o un picchetto su una parete pulita, in mezzo alla stanza dove ha luogo la riunione. Successivamente vengono, nell’ordine, i libri di tradizioni genuine del Profeta, come *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* di Muslim, quindi il commentario del Corano, il commentario del *ḥadīṯ*, i fondamenti della religione (*uṣūl al-dīn*) e della giurisprudenza (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), opere di grammatica e sintassi, infine le ‘poesie degli arabi’ (*aṣ‘ār al-‘arab*) e i trattati di metrica (*‘arūḍ*). Se ci sono due libri dello stesso soggetto, viene posto in alto quello che contiene maggiormente parti del Corano o di *ḥadīṯ*; se in ciò non vi è differenza, è da tenere in considerazione l’importanza dell’autore e, in secondo luogo, la scrittura più antica o il maggior utilizzo da parte di dotti e persone pie, quindi il testo più corretto.

²⁵ Cfr. al-‘Almawī, *al-Mu‘īd fī adab al-muḥīd*, 253–4; Rosenthal, *The Technique*, 10–11.

²⁶ Il tradizionale leggio di legno a forma di X. Si veda Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts. A Vademecum*, 295, fig. 215.

Il titolo del libro deve venire scritto sul bordo inferiore delle pagine.²⁷ La scritta con l'elenco dei capitoli (*tarğama*)²⁸ sia riportata nel giusto senso all'interno della coperta, sul lato dove si trova la *basmala*.²⁹ L'utilità del titolo consiste nel permettere l'identificazione del libro e favorirne l'estrazione quando si trova collocato tra altre opere. Se il libro è posto a terra o su un supporto, la coperta dal lato della *basmala* e l'inizio dell'opera deve stare verso l'alto. Non si ecceda nell'inserire la ribalta all'interno del corpo del libro [come segnalibro], per non accelerarne la rottura, né si mettano libri di grande formato sopra altri più piccoli, con il rischio di farli cadere.

Non si riduca il libro a contenitore di fascicoli sciolti (*karārīs*),³⁰ o altro, né sia usato per cuscino, ventaglio, peso, appoggio, sostegno, e neppure per uccidere cimici o altri insetti [!]; non [si traccino] segni sulle pagine, sarebbe cosa grave! I margini o gli angoli dei fogli non devono venire piegati. Se serve un segnalibro, si faccia di carta e non di legno o materiali rigidi. Bisogna fare attenzione a non lasciare sulle pagine segni di unghia.

Sezione iv: [Come acquistare libri] ³¹

Quando si prende in prestito un libro o si restituisce, è opportuno esaminarlo.³² Procedendo all'acquisto, si controlli con attenzione l'inizio, la fine, l'interno, l'ordine dei capitoli e dei fascicoli, si sfoglino le pagine, si valuti se c'è l'indicazione che il libro è stato oggetto di correzione. Se il tempo è limitato, prevalga il criterio della correttezza rispetto all'esame minuzioso; come disse al-Šāfi'ī, Dio sia soddisfatto di lui: 'Se vedo aggiunte e correzioni in un libro, sono sicuro della sua correttezza'. Un tale ha detto: 'Il libro non riluce se non è annerito', intendendo con ciò le correzioni (*iṣlāh*) che vi sono state apportate.

²⁷ Cioè sul taglio di piede del libro.

²⁸ Sembra che l'autore intenda con *tarğama* l'elenco dei capitoli, tuttavia nella frase che segue il significato non può che far riferimento al titolo. Il vocabolo ha infatti vari significati, tra i quali 'titolo di un libro, elenco dettagliato del contenuto, lista dei capitoli'. Si veda Gacek, *The Arabic Manuscript Tradition*, 17–18; Id., *Arabic Manuscripts*, 57–8. Nel trattato di al-'Almawī, che segue lo schema di Ibn Ġamā'a, viene precisato che '[l'elenco] dei titoli dei capitoli va posto all'interno della coperta opposta alla ribalta, affinché la scritta non venga a rovescio' (*al-Mu'īd fī adab al-muḥīd*, 254).

²⁹ In modo che, aprendo il libro, si trovi all'inizio.

³⁰ Cfr. Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 210–13 (*Quires*).

³¹ Cfr. al-'Almawī, *al-Mu'īd fī adab al-muḥīd*, 254; Rosenthal, *The Technique*, 12.

³² Al-'Almawī aggiunge: 'al fine di verificare che non siano state dimenticate al suo interno delle note utili o altro' (*al-Mu'īd fī adab al-muḥīd*, 254).

Sezione v: [Come copiare i libri]³³

Quando si copia da libri di scienze shari'itiche, è necessario che lo scriba si trovi in stato di purità rituale, sia rivolto verso la qibla, puro di corpo e di abiti, e scriva con inchiostro puro.³⁴ Ogni scritto deve iniziare con la formula *bismi llāhi l-rahmāni l-rahīm* ('nel nome di Dio il Clemente il Misericordioso'). Se il libro inizia con una *ḥuṭba* ('prefazione') che comprende l'espressione 'Lode a Dio l'Altissimo e preghiera al Suo profeta', si ponga appena dopo la *basmala*, a meno che già non si trovi in questa posizione.³⁵

[Dopo la *basmala* e l'eventuale *ḥuṭba*] si copia il contenuto del libro. Alla conclusione di ciascuna parte (*ḡuz*'), ad esempio dopo la prima o la seconda, si scriva 'segue questo e quello', qualora la scrittura sia ancora incompleta. Quando invece è terminato, si scriva *tamma l-kitāb*... ('è finito il libro... [segue il titolo]'). In ciò c'è molta utilità.

Ogni volta che si scrive il nome di Dio, si facciano seguire eulogie che lo glorificano, quali *ta'ālā* ('l'Altissimo'), *subḥānahu* ('Dio sia esaltato'), oppure *'azza wa-ḡalla* ('è potente ed eccelso'), *taqaddasa* ('sia santificato') o simili. Quando si scrive il nome del Profeta, si aggiunga *al-ṣalāt 'alayhi wa-l-salām 'alayhi* ('su di lui la preghiera e il saluto [di Dio]'), pronunciando al tempo stesso l'invocazione.

È consuetudine degli antichi e della generazione passata scrivere *ṣallā llāhu 'alayhi wa sallama* ('Dio preghi su di lui [il Profeta] e gli dia il saluto/la salute [eterna]'), questo forse in accordo con il versetto del nobile Corano 'Pregate anche voi su di lui e salutatelo di saluto di pace'.³⁶ Ci sono numerosi studi in proposito.

Anche se [la menzione del Profeta] ricorre ripetutamente, non si abbrevi la formula come fanno alcuni redattori disattenti, che scrivono *ṣl'*, oppure *ṣlm* o *ṣl'm*. Tutto ciò non si addice al Profeta, Dio preghi su di lui e gli dia il saluto. Numerose tradizioni attestano che la scrittura deve essere completa, evitando le abbreviazioni.

Se ricorre la menzione di un compagno [del Profeta], in particolare i più importanti, si aggiunga *raḍiya llāhu 'anhu* ('che Dio sia soddisfatto di lui'), ma non si scriva *al-ṣalāt wa-l-salām* ('la preghiera e il saluto') per nessuno eccetto i profeti, e immediatamente dopo [il loro nome]. Ogni volta che ricorre la menzione di un pio antenato (*salaf*) ci si comporti allo stesso modo o si scriva *raḥimahu llāh* ('che Dio lo abbia in misericordia'), in particolare per i celebri imam e per le guide spirituali dell'Islam.

³³ Cfr. al-^cAlmawī, *op.cit.*, 254–6; Rosenthal, *The Technique*, 12–13.

³⁴ Cfr. Gacek, *Arabic manuscripts*. 235–6 (*Scribal etiquette*).

³⁵ Cfr. Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 200–3 (*Prefaces of compositions*).

³⁶ Cor. 33:56.

Sezione vi: [Sulla scrittura minuta]³⁷

È opportuno evitare la scrittura minuta nella copiatura, poiché la calligrafia (*ḥaṭṭ*) è segno: la più chiara è la migliore. Un nostro antenato quando vide una calligrafia minuta disse: ‘Questa è la calligrafia di chi non è certo che Dio l’Altissimo gli darà una discendenza’. Un altro disse: ‘Scrivi ciò che ti è utile per quando ne hai bisogno, e non quello che non ti sarà di nessuna utilità’. Alludeva al tempo della vecchiaia e alla vista indebolita. Talvolta dei viaggiatori si propongono di ridurre con una scrittura minuta il disagio nel trasportare [manoscritti pesanti]; il proposito è lecito, tuttavia l’utilità in ultima analisi è passeggera.

Usare inchiostro *ḥibr* è meglio che usare inchiostro *midād*, poiché assicura maggiore costanza nel tempo.³⁸ Si ritiene che il calamo³⁹ non debba essere troppo rigido, tanto da impedire la scioltezza del movimento, ma neppure troppo morbido per non logorarsi in fretta. Un tale ha detto: ‘Se vuoi migliorare la tua calligrafia lascia il pennino [cioè la punta del calamo] allungato, largo e con un taglio obliquo verso destra’. Il coltello per fare la punta al calamo e raschiare la carta deve essere molto affilato: non si usi se non a questo scopo. [La tavoletta] dove viene tagliata la punta al calamo deve essere molto solida. [Gli scribi] lodano in proposito la canna *fārsī* secca e l’ebano levigato.

Sezione vii: [Retto comportamento nella correzione del libro]⁴⁰

Quando il libro è oggetto di revisione collazionandolo con l’originale corretto o [ricorrendo all’aiuto di] uno shaykh, è necessario introdurre la vocalizzazione e i punti diacritici, chiarendo i passi oscuri e verificando la correzione. Qualora sia necessario controllare ciò che si trova nel testo (*matn*) del libro nei confronti con ciò che è posto a margine, ed esplicitarlo, ci si scriva sopra un’annotazione. Lo stesso principio si estende alla nota a margine, con un’indicazione di preferenza; ad esempio se c’è nel testo il nome حَرِير si riportano a margine le [singole] lettere, cioè *ḥ*, seguita da *r*, quindi da *y* e *z*; oppure [secondo una diversa lettura] con *ḡ* seguito da *y*

³⁷ Cfr. al-^cAlmawī, *al-Mu^cīd*, 256–7; Rosenthal, *The Technique*, 13.

³⁸ *Hibr* è l’inchiostro composto da un elemento tanninico (noci di galla) e un sale metallico; *midād* da nerofumo e un legante. Si veda Gacek, *The Arabic Manuscript Tradition*, 27–8; Id., *Arabic Manuscripts*, 132–5 (*Ink*); Déroche, *Manuel de codicologie*, 120–4.

³⁹ Sul calamo e gli altri strumenti di scrittura si veda Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 40–2 (*Calamus*), 294–6 (*Writing implements and accessories*); A. Grohmann, *Arabische Paläographie*, 1: 117–27 (*Die Schreibgeräte*); J. Sadan, *Nouveaux documents sur scribes et copistes*, 62–4 sull’epistola di Ibn Qutayba, *al-Ḥaṭṭ wa-l-qalam*.

⁴⁰ Cfr. al-^cAlmawī, *al-Mu^cīd fī adab al-mu^cīd*, 258–61, Rosenthal, *The Technique*, 14–15.

posta tra due *r*.⁴¹ È consuetudine indicare nella scrittura le lettere *mu^cġama* con i punti diacritici; per quelle *muhmala* ('sprovviste')⁴² c'è chi lascia come segno (*alāma*) la loro omissione, e chi pone dei simboli, dei punti rovesciati o simili, o una piccola mezzaluna e altre indicazioni.

Dopo aver revisionato un testo, è opportuno segnalare con una piccola *h* i luoghi che restano dubbi nel corso della consultazione e presentano possibilità [di interpretazione diverse], annotando sul testo o sulla copia: *wa-huwa ḥata'*... ('è un errore', = errata) in caratteri piccoli e riportando a margine: *ṣawābuhu*... ('giusto è...', = corrige),⁴³ se si è ben certi di ciò.

[In caso di incertezza] si aggiunga una *dabba* ('chiavistello'), che ha la forma della testa di una *ṣ* (ص), da scriversi sopra la parola ma non unita ad essa. Se in una successiva revisione risulta che la parola è esatta, si aggiunga alla *ṣ* una *h*, che così diventa صح (*ṣahḥa*, 'è giusto'), altrimenti si scriva la parola corretta a margine così come detto in precedenza.⁴⁴

Se ricorre una parola spuria nel manoscritto, qualora si tratti di una singola parola ci si scrive sopra *lā* ('no') o si espunge; se sono più parole, una riga o più righe, volendo si può scrivere sopra la prima: *min* ('da [qui]...') oppure *lā* ('no'), e alla fine *ilā* ('fino a...'). Questo significa 'ometti da qui fino a lì'. Se è il caso, si espunga il tutto scrivendoci sopra con scrittura minuta, al fine di ottenere quanto ci si propone senza imbrattare la carta. Qualcuno pone al posto della scritta una fila di punti.

Se una parola viene ripetuta da parte dello scriba inavvertitamente, si espunga la seconda volta che ricorre, poiché la prima è giusta al suo posto. Questo purché essa non si trovi in fine al rigo: in tal caso è meglio cancellarla per un migliore inizio rigo, a meno che non sia annessa in uno stato costruito.

Sezione viii: [Come si pone un'aggiunta allo scritto]

Se si vuole inserire (*tahrīġ*)⁴⁵ qualcosa a margine, [processo] chiamato anche 'aggiunta' (*laḥaq*), se ne contrassegni il luogo con una linea

⁴¹ L'editore riporta nel testo *ḥarīz*, ma è da intendersi, in base a quanto segue, la parola priva dei diacritici, senza i quali può essere interpretata sia come *ḥarīz* ('prezioso') che come *ġarīr* ('briglia'): sarà il contesto a far scegliere quale delle due letture è più sensata. Nella tradizione araba, il copista scrivendo una parola di incerta lettura preferisce non porre i diacritici sulla singola lettera, ma 'descriverla', ad esempio ح *muhmala* (senza punti diacritici) o *mu^cġama* (con punti diacritici).

⁴² Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 144–5 (*Letter-pointing*); 286 (*Unpointed letters*).

⁴³ Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 234–5 (*Scribal errors*).

⁴⁴ Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 170–1 (*Omissions and insertions*); 283–5 (*Transcription marks*).

⁴⁵ Il vocabolo ha significati diversi, talvolta contrastanti, tra i quali 'edizione o redazione che comporta correzioni, selezione o riordinamento dei capitoli; omissione; estratto da un libro, citazione; inserimento' e altri (Cfr. Gacek, *The*

leggermente curva fino all'inserito, meglio se verso destra. Poi si scriva l'aggiunta a partire dall'estremità del segno salendo verso l'alto della pagina, senza scendere in basso per l'eventualità che sia necessaria un'altra aggiunta. L'orientamento delle lettere è con la testa verso la destra [del foglio],⁴⁶ sia che l'aggiunta si trovi sul margine destro che sinistro dello scritto. È opportuno tener conto della lacuna e dello spazio necessario [per integrarla] prima di scrivere. Se sono due righe o più si faccia in modo che la scrittura segua la fine della riga se l'aggiunta è sulla destra; l'inizio della riga [seguinte] se è sulla sinistra. Non si continui a scrivere e tracciare righe a margine della pagina, ma si lasci uno spazio vuoto che renda possibile la cucitura. Inoltre si scriva alla fine dell'aggiunta *ṣahḥa* ('è corretto'); alcuni riprendono anche la parola finale della frase [precedente], quale segno di continuità del discorso.

Sezione ix: [Annotazioni a margine]⁴⁷

Non c'è impedimento nello scrivere glosse, notizie utili e avvertenze importanti ai margini di un libro di possesso. Non si annoti alla fine di quanto aggiunto *ṣahḥa* ('è corretto'), lasciando distinta in questo modo la vera aggiunta al testo. Alcuni precisano nello spazio sovrastante 'nota' o 'notizia utile' (*fā'ida*), altri lo scrivono alla fine. Non si riportino se non informazioni importanti correlate al libro specifico, ad esempio un'avvertenza su questioni dubbie o su riserve, simboli o errori e simili.

Non si imbrattino le pagine aggiungendovi questioni o sezioni estranee, non si abbondi con le note tanto da nuocere [alla lettura] del libro o distrarre lo studente dagli argomenti trattati. Non si deve scrivere tra le righe; talvolta qualcuno lo fa tra righe distanziate con [inchiostro] rosso o altro colore, ma è meglio non farlo.

Sezione x: [Evidenziazione in rosso di capitoli e sezioni]⁴⁸

Non c'è obiezione allo scrivere con inchiostro rosso i nomi di capitoli, rubriche e sezioni: ciò rende più evidente l'articolazione delle parti del discorso.⁴⁹ Allo stesso modo, non c'è obiezione [nello scrivere in rosso] nomi, scuole, detti, metodi, generi, vocaboli, numeri o simili. Quando si opera così si esplicitino i relativi termini nell'introduzione del libro, al fine di farne capire il significato a chi si accinge [alla lettura]. Contrassegnano in rosso molti tradizionalisti, giuristi, studiosi di diritto musulmano, volendo abbreviare. Se non si procede come menzionato in merito all'evidenziazione in rosso di capitoli, sezioni e rubriche, li si distingua con un tratto grosso del calamo e l'estensione della forma della lettera (*mašq*) lungo la riga, o

Arabic Manuscript Tradition, 39).

⁴⁶ Procedendo la scrittura araba da destra a sinistra, si scrive dal basso in alto.

⁴⁷ Cfr. al-^cAlmawī, *al-Mu'īd*, 265–6; Rosenthal, *The Technique*, 17.

⁴⁸ Cfr. al-^cAlmawī, *al-Mu'īd*, 266; Rosenthal, *The Technique*, 18.

⁴⁹ Cfr. Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 227–9 (*Rubrics and rubrication*),

con simili procedimenti di scrittura, questo al fine di facilitare la suddivisione voluta.

È consigliabile separare due argomenti con un cerchio, una rubrica o un tratto di penna grosso, in modo che non ci sia continuità di scrittura [tra quanto precede e quanto segue], poiché la difficoltà di dedurne il contenuto comporta una perdita di tempo. Solo gli ignoranti non procedono in questo modo.

Sezione xi: [La cancellatura]⁵⁰

Cancellare (*darb*, tracciando una riga sopra la parola)⁵¹ è meglio che raschiare (*hakk*), in particolare nei libri di tradizioni del Profeta, poiché altrimenti ciò che era scritto non è più conoscibile o può essere solo oggetto di congettura, e inoltre perché una scrittura conservatasi a lungo ora va perduta. L'atto [di raschiare] è più grave: talvolta provoca la foratura della carta, un danno maggiore, e il suo indebolimento. Dal momento che rimuove punti diacritici e vocalizzazione, la cancellazione è maggiormente consigliabile.

Se il libro viene corretto [con l'aiuto di] uno *šayḥ* o tramite la collazione, si segni il luogo dove [la consultazione] o la collazione giungono nella revisione, o quant'altro risulti utile. Qualora questo avvenga in relazione all'audizione delle tradizioni del Profeta (*samā^c al-ḥadīṭ*), si contrassegni il passo cui si è giunti nel primo, secondo e successivi incontri, fino alla fine. Al-Ḥaṭīb [al-Baḡdādī]⁵² disse che, se si deve emendare qualcosa, si faccia la correzione con una scheggia di tek o di altro legno duro, evitando di immergerlo (*al-šarīb*).⁵³

3) *Ibn al-Ḥāḡḡ*

Nella sua biografia degli uomini illustri dell'VIII secolo dell'egira, Ibn Ḥaḡar al-^cAskalānī (m. 852/1449) riporta una breve nota su Ibn al-Ḥāḡḡ.⁵⁴ Giurista di scuola malikita, egli si recò dal nativo Maghreb in

⁵⁰ Cfr. al-^cAlmawī, *al-Mu^cīd*, 261–2; Rosenthal, *The Technique*, 15–16.

⁵¹ Cfr. Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 48 (*Cancellations/deletions*).

⁵² L'autore (m. 473/1071) è noto, oltre che per la sua storia di Baghdad e importanti opere biografiche e sul *ḥadīṭ*, per il trattato di etica dal titolo *al-Ḡāmi^c li-aḥlāq al-rāwī wa-ādāb al-sāmi^c* (Bayrūt, 1966), accostabile per certi aspetti all'opera di Ibn al-Ḡamā^c.

⁵³ Il passo con cui si conclude il capitolo risulta confuso e slegato dal contesto, anche perché nel ms. figura *al-ṭarīb* ('rimprovero?'), emendato dall'editore in *al-šarīb*. (172, nota 4).

⁵⁴ Ibn Ḥaḡar, *al-Durar al-kāmina*, 4: 355–6, n° 4490 (al-Fārisī è da correggere in al-Fāsī); ripreso da al-Ḥāḡḡī Ḥalīfa, *Kašf al-zunūn*, 5: 474, n° 11.690. Notizie su Ibn al-Ḥāḡḡ sono riportate anche nelle opere di al-Šafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafāyāt*, 1: 237 n° 157 (il suo libro è chiamato *Kitāb al-Bida^c*); Ibn Farḥūn, *al-Dībāḡ al-muḍaḥḥab*, 327–8; al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍara*, 1: 459, n°

Egitto e da qui effettuò il pellegrinaggio alla Mecca. Si legò allo shaykh Abū Muḥammad b. Abī Ġamra e ne raccolse l'insegnamento, distinguendosi per integrità e ascetismo. 'Scrisse *al-Madḥal*—annota Ibn Ḥaḡar—un'opera che contiene molte osservazioni utili, nella quale mette in luce i vizi e le innovazioni nell'operato della gente che agisce con negligenza: la maggior parte di queste azioni è da condannare, ma alcune sono tollerabili'. Morì nel 737/1336.

Tra le opere di Ibn al-Ḥāḡḡ figura *al-Madḥal ilā tatimmat al-ʿamāl bi-taḥsīn al-niyyāt wa-l-tanbīh ʿalā baʿd al-bida*⁵⁵ spesso citato in forma abbreviata *al-Madḥal* (talvolta *al-Mudḥal*), trattato contro le 'innovazioni' di carattere morale, giuridico e religioso.⁵⁶

Esponendo i motivi della redazione dell'opera, Ibn al-Ḥāḡḡ rende omaggio al suo maestro, Ibn Abī Ġamra. Rifacendosi al pensiero di al-Ġazzālī, egli insiste sul principio che l'atto di culto è soddisfatto solo se è preceduto dalla *niyya*, quale espressione del cuore e parte preminente dell'atto stesso.⁵⁷ La preoccupazione maggiore, presente in ogni pagina del *Madḥal*, nasce dal timore che prendano radice in tutte le classi sociali comportamenti contrari alla tradizione.⁵⁸ In merito alle attività artigianali, le direttive di carattere etico-religioso di Ibn al-Ḥāḡḡ⁵⁹ si accostano per numerosi aspetti a quanto prescritto nei manuali di *ḥisba* (ufficio di vigilanza sui mercati e sulla morale pubblica) sui compiti del *muḥtasib*

76; al-Šaʿrānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 1: 273.

⁵⁵ Cfr. *GAL* 2: 95; *S* 2: 95: *Mudḥal al-šarʿ al-šarīf / Mudḥal ilā tanmiyat al-amal*... Mi sono servito della ristampa dell'edizione egiziana del 1929.

⁵⁶ Ms., cfr. *GAL* 1: 482; *S* 1: 883.

⁵⁷ *Al-Madḥal*, 1: 12. Secondo al-Ġazzālī, 'Tutti sono destinati a perire eccetto quelli che conseguono la 'scienza'; anche questi periscono eccetto quelli che operano; anche questi periscono se non agiscono con cuore sincero: l'opera (*ʿamal*) senza *niyya* è mero sforzo fisico, la *niyya* senza sincerità è ipocrisia' (*Ihyāʾ*, 4: 351).

⁵⁸ Non tutte le innovazioni sono proibite. Riprendendo la classificazione giuridica tradizionale, Ibn al-Ḥāḡḡ distingue varie categorie di *bidʿa*, spaziando da quelle lecite a quelle vietate, e porta degli esempi significativi (il primo è in certa misura pertinente agli artigiani del libro): *bidʿa wāḡiba*, 'obbligatoria', es. i libri di scienza (religiosa), anche se non sono opera degli uomini del passato, poiché *l'ilm* era nei loro cuori; o i diacritici nella scrittura del Corano; *mustaḥabba*, 'raccomandabile'; *mubāḥa*, 'lecita'; *makrūha*, 'riprovevole'; *muḥarrama*, 'vietata' (*al-Madḥal*, 2: 257). Sull'evoluzione del concetto di *bidʿa*, si veda in particolare Rispler, 'Toward a New Understanding', e fonti citate.

⁵⁹ Anche Ritter ha sottolineato che opere quali il *Madḥal* si inseriscono nella letteratura di carattere etico-religioso più che giuridico-istituzionale ('Ein arabisches Handbuch', 25).

incaricato di verificare pesi, misure, qualità e prezzi delle merci, e inoltre ‘ordinare il bene e vietare il male’.⁶⁰ Nei manuali esaminati non ho trovato tuttavia cenno ai copisti, ai librai e ai rilegatori, verosimilmente perché il loro non è ritenuto un ‘mestiere’ assimilabile alle comuni attività di mercato, legato com’è a valori morali e religiosi, e il prodotto del loro lavoro è ben diverso da una comune merce.⁶¹

L’ultima parte del trattato di Ibn al-Ḥāḡḡ è riservata all’etica del lavoro. Tra le categorie di persone destinatarie dei suoi ammonimenti figurano chi produce e chi vende la carta, il copista, il legatore, il decoratore di libri.

Ibn al-Ḥāḡḡ non manca di sottolineare il legame tra i mestieri di cartai, copista e rilegatore con la religione.⁶² Il Corano—osserva l’autore—come pure gli altri libri religiosi sono scritti su carta,⁶³ il che nobilita tale supporto e chi lo produce. Il copista ha un compito ancora più nobile, poiché con la sua opera diffonde la parola di Dio, associando scrittura, recitazione e riflessione. Nel copiare il Corano deve seguire la vulgata di °Uṭmān, anche in quei punti che suscitano perplessità per una grafia inconsueta. Della massima importanza è la scansione delle lettere, poiché ‘la calligrafia migliore è quella più leggibile’. Il copista non deve prestarsi a scrivere parole in lingua non araba, di cui non conosce il significato. L’artigiano che rilega i libri deve padroneggiare l’arte del mestiere, non sbagliando l’ordine dei fascicoli, non confondendo volumi

⁶⁰ Cfr. Cook, *Commanding Right*. Sulle opere di *ḥisba* si veda Shatzmiller, *Labour*, 71–sqq., e inoltre Ghabin, *Ḥisba*; Buckley, ‘The Muḥtasib’; Vercellin, ‘Hisba’; Raymond e Wiet, *Les Marchés*, 36–sqq. (considerazioni di Ibn al-Ḥāḡḡ 39, 72, 78–80); la *Nihāyat al-rutba* di al-Ṣayzarī; i *Ma’ālim al-qurba*, di Ibn al-Uḥuwwa, autore egiziano contemporaneo di Ibn al-Ḥāḡḡ. La figura e i compiti del *muḥtasib* e del suo agente (°*arīf*) sono analizzati negli studi sulla vita sociale nella città islamica medievale; si veda sopra, nota 6.

⁶¹ Mi sembra significativo che il recente dettagliato studio di A. Ghabin citi a questo proposito solo Ibn al-Ḥāḡḡ, non trovando negli altri trattati alcun riferimento alle arti del libro (*Ḥisba*, 147).

⁶² Le sue accorate raccomandazioni fanno pensare che i reali comportamenti degli artigiani fossero alquanto diversificati. In base alle fonti esaminate da al-Ḥazīmī, nell’VIII secolo dell’egira furono distrutte le opere dell’ebreo convertito Faḍl Allāh b. Ubayy; una copia del *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* di Ibn °Arabī; i libri di Muḥammad b. al-Ḥaṭīb; da parte sua, Ibn Taymiyya acquistò i trattati alchemici di Ibn al-Ḡābī al-Ḥaṭīb e li ‘lavò’ per cancellarne lo scritto (al-Ḥazīmī, *Haraq al-kutub*, 60–4).

⁶³ Evidentemente l’uso della pergamena era ormai molto limitato al tempo di Ibn al-Ḥāḡḡ.

e rispettivi proprietari, onorando i tempi di consegna. Nella decorazione della coperta non è lecito usare oro o argento. È opportuno che il rilegatore rifiuti di operare su libri quali la Torah, il Vangelo, i Salmi, contenenti scritture celesti contraffatte. Da parte sua, il committente è tenuto ad accordarsi preventivamente con il rilegatore su materiali e costi.

Anche il nostro autore, come altri giuristi del tempo, non manca di condannare cartai, copisti e rilegatori che con la loro opera favorivano la diffusione delle ‘falsità’ (*kiḏb*) contenute nei popolari romanzi di cavalleria (*siyar*), oggetto di recitazione pubblica da parte dei cantastorie, come la storia di al-Baṭṭāl e quella di °Antara, che distoglievano i fedeli dai sermoni dei pii predicatori.⁶⁴

Dal *Kitāb al-Madḥal*:⁶⁵

I. Proposito del cartai (*warrāq*)⁶⁶

Sappi—che Dio ci assista—che questo [la carta] è uno dei mezzi più importanti per accostarci al Signore, qualora il proposito sia buono. Infatti il nobile Corano è scritto su carta, così il suo commentario (*tafsīr*), ‘l’abrogante e l’abrogato’ e le scienze correlate. Lo stesso vale per il *ḥadīṭ* del Profeta, il suo commento (*ṣarḥ*) e ciò che contiene di massime, significati, utili insegnamenti, di numero incalcolabile; e ancora per i libri di giurisprudenza e delle diverse scienze shari’itiche, per gli scritti sull’elemosina, sui contratti di vendita, di affitto, di procura, e molto altro di cui l’uomo necessita. Tutto questo riveste molta importanza per la religione (...).

A ciò si aggiunge il proposito della fede e della ricompensa [divina]; talvolta però si opera al contrario, ad esempio vendendo carta a chi si può presumere ne farà usi illeciti o sconvenienti. Non sono leciti [libri che descrivono] fatti iniqui e simili, e neppure menzogne come la storia (*qiṣṣa*) di al-Baṭṭāl o di °Antara; ma l’elenco sarebbe lungo. Quanto a quelli sconvenienti, sono le storielle scherzose di cui la gente si diletta. Bisogna guardarsi da tutto ciò per non rientrare nelle parole dell’Altissimo: ‘O voi

⁶⁴ Rimando in proposito al saggio ‘Critical Attitudes’.

⁶⁵ Su cartai, copisti e rilegatori si vedano i rispettivi capitoli nel *Manuel de codicologie arabe* di Déroche; per la comprensione dei termini tecnici è stato molto utile il glossario di Gacek, *The Arabic Manuscript Tradition and Supplement*; sulla produzione di carta nel mondo islamico, si veda Bloom, *Paper before Print*.

⁶⁶ *Al-Madḥal*, 4: 79–83. Dato lo scopo prevalentemente tecnico della traduzione, vengono omessi alcuni passi in cui l’autore si dilunga in considerazioni di ordine morale, biasimando venditori e artigiani poco coscienti e poco rispettosi della *ṣarīʿa*, in un ‘tempo caratterizzato da molte discordie e sedizioni’.

che credete! Perché dite ciò che non fate? È grandemente ripugnante presso Dio che voi diciate quello che non fate' (Cor. 61:2-3). Questo perché se [il cartai] vende carta a chi poi vi scrive le cose menzionate, compie un'azione che non ha manifestato con le labbra né si è proposto con il cuore. Se il venditore afferma, come avviene nella maggior parte dei casi, di non conoscere la condizione del compratore, gli si può ribadire che è suo dovere condurre i musulmani sulla via della purezza e dell'integrità. È comunque raro di questi tempi non avere conoscenza dello stato degli acquirenti: nella maggior parte predomina l'ignoranza (...).

È opportuno che si guardi dalla truffa, tentando di vendere per quattro dirham una risma (*dast*) di carta che ne vale tre. Il prezzo della carta è diverso a seconda della qualità: può essere di bianchezza (*bayād*) e levigatezza (*ṣiqāl*) superiore; può essere fabbricata in estate o, tendendo al bruno (*samra*) e mancando di levigatezza o bianchezza, essere prodotta in inverno. Se è così, [il cartai] deve indicarlo con chiarezza per evitare l'inganno; qualora non lo facesse, rientra per la sua dissimulazione in quanto disse il Profeta: 'Colui che ci imbroglia non è dei nostri'.⁶⁷ La vendita all'acquirente non deve aver luogo priva di contrattazione (*musāwama*) o a premio fisso (*murābaḥa*). Se avviene per contrattazione, questo è il modo migliore e più sicuro; se invece è a premio fisso, deve essere soddisfatta la condizione menzionata a proposito del mercante di stoffe. Tutto ciò che è stato ricordato in merito al mancato esame da parte dell'acquirente, quando egli si reca al mercato o si ferma presso qualche venditore, vale per tutti gli operatori.

È opportuno fare attenzione, nell'acquistare carta, che non sia il momento in cui i lavoratori che la producono hanno scoperte le parti intime, poiché essi in genere si pongono ai lombi una stoffa succinta che si inzuppa di acqua lasciando le cosce scoperte. Se [l'acquirente] entra [nella cartiera] e si trova in questa situazione, compie un atto che invalida l'essenza stessa della sua *niyya*.

[Il cartai] deve aver cura nel non mescolare carta leggera a carta di buona qualità adatta alla copiatura, poiché questo è un imbroglio nei confronti del compratore, dal momento che la carta leggera non sopporta la raschiatura (*kašt*) per il suo spessore ridotto. Se egli sa che l'acquirente è un copista, deve dargli ciò che gli conviene; se sa che è uno che scrive lettere e simili, è lecito vendergli carta leggera, ma solo dopo averlo informato in merito.

Non si faccia alcun uso di carta che presenta una scritta se non dopo averne conosciuto il contenuto: ci possono essere versetti coranici o *ḥadīṭ* del Profeta, o uno dei nomi dell'Altissimo, oppure il nome di un profeta o di un angelo. Tutto ciò è vietato per rispetto della legge, poiché alcuni potrebbero calpestare queste scritte, o compiere simili atti, il che sarebbe il peggiore degli abomini. Dio ce ne guardi! [Il cartai] non deve permettere

⁶⁷ Cfr. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Īmān, 164 etc.

a nessuno degli operai comportarsi in modo disonorevole; se qualcuno agisce così, sia allontanato dal lavoro e un altro prenda il suo posto, purché rispetti le condizioni menzionate, compiendo la preghiera nei tempi stabiliti. (...)

II. Proposito del copista (*nāsiḥ*)⁶⁸

Sappi che il copista merita maggiore compenso e remunerazione [celeste] del cartai, poiché opera con grande devozione se copia di continuo il Libro di Dio, oppure il *ḥadīṭ* del Profeta, opere di giurisprudenza o di altre scienze shari'itiche. Per quanto riguarda il Corano, il copista mette così assieme recitazione (*tilāwa*)—la pietà più autentica—e scrittura, specialmente se scrive con metodo e nel contempo riflette sui significati delle parole. Se scrive *ḥadīṭ* del Profeta è a lui vicino nella remunerazione; tra i meriti che ne derivano, viene ricordato che 'gli angeli continuano a pregare per colui che scrive l'eulogia per il Profeta per tutto il tempo che essa perdura in quello scritto'. Il copista deve guardarsi dal copiare cose diverse dalle scienze shari'itiche, poiché se facesse ciò verrebbe meno il suo proposito, sul quale si era impegnato. (...)

[Il copista] deve inoltre guardarsi dal copiare quanto ricordato di opere menzognere, come la storia di al-Baṭṭāl e di 'Antara e simili—questo è vietato, come pure storielle scherzose—il che non è desiderabile. Egualmente non copi per l'iniquo o per chi propende per l'ingiustizia o consegue guadagni sospetti, per non ricadere nelle parole dell'Altissimo: 'O voi che credete! Perché dite ciò che non fate...?' (Cor. 61:2-3).

Il copista è tenuto a ben distinguere le lettere nel suo scritto, senza introdurre legamenti [inconsueti] nella sua calligrafia, tanto che questa possa essere compresa solo da chi ne ha profonda conoscenza: le lettere devono essere chiare e ben distinte. Non deve inoltre omettere nessun punto [diacritico] nelle lettere che ne necessitano, poiché ب è diversa da ت و ث , e la loro diversità risulta solo grazie a questi punti; lo stesso per ح ج و خ etc. Riponga ogni cura in ciò, poiché così facendo ne trae utilità gran numero di musulmani. Al contrario agiscono ai giorni nostri molti compilatori di documenti, dal momento che inseriscono abbreviazioni che solo loro sono in grado di comprendere; qualcuno addirittura non sa leggere quanto scritto da altri scrivani, poiché ciascuno ha i propri metodi ed è difficile che un altro capisca. Tutto ciò è contrario alla Sunna. Si racconta che il Profeta disse a Mu'āwiya: 'Mettili [cotone] nel calamaio, taglia obliquamente la punta del calamo. [Quando scrivi la *basmala*], traccia diritta la ب , separa [i dentini] della س , non accecare [l'occhio del] م , scrivi bene الله , estendi الرحمن , da' bella forma a الرحيم . Poni il calamo dietro l'orecchio, ti farà ricordare chi detta'.⁶⁹ Nell'eventualità che lo scrivano muoia, o sia difficoltoso rintracciarlo, vanno persi i diritti dei musulmani e i loro

⁶⁸ *Al-Madḥal*, 4: 83-7.

⁶⁹ Cfr. Rosenthal, *The Technique*, 13, da al-^cAlmawī.

contratti di matrimonio scritti nella forma menzionata, dal momento che nessun altro è più in grado di leggere quei documenti.

[Il copista] non deve scrivere con un inchiostro (*hibr*) che corrode la carta: in ciò vi è perdita di beni e di scienza, in modo particolare se si tratta della copia di un libro perduto o prezioso; lo stesso se si usa inchiostro che si cancella rapidamente dal foglio. Quanto allo scrivere con un inchiostro (*midād*)⁷⁰ che annerisce la carta tanto che le lettere rimangono confuse—fenomeno ben comune—deve senza alcun dubbio venire vietato, a meno che lo scriba non verghi una lettera [copiandola] da un documento a un altro e simili operazioni; purché non vi si trattino sentenze giuridiche, com'è il caso del libro del Qādī [°Iyād], dovendo allora sottostare alle condizioni menzionate a proposito di *fiqh*, procure e simili. Si dice che 'la calligrafia migliore è quella più leggibile'. Conviene che lo scriba, quando si accinge alla sua opera, abbia compiuto le abluzioni rituali, almeno all'inizio della seduta. Se però sta copiando il Libro di Dio, le abluzioni sono necessarie ogni qualvolta sopravvenga uno stato di impurità (*ḥadaṭ*).

Che [il copista] si astenga dal tirare per le lunghe il lavoro, ma rispetti la parola data, poiché questo rientra in una genuina pratica devota. Non la macchi con il venir meno a quanto stabilito, dicendo 'domani o dopodomani', senza poi eseguire il lavoro. Si guardi dal perdere la fiducia [dei suoi committenti]. Non deve inoltre agire come alcuni fanno, cioè assumere da varie persone l'incarico di copiare e poi farlo solo per questo e per quello, senza che [gli altri] ne siano a conoscenza. Ciò incrina la loro fiducia, poiché [tale atteggiamento è indice di] altezzosità e cupidigia combinate assieme.

È doveroso che lo scriba non svolga la sua opera nella moschea, anche se vi si trova per atto di culto: ciò potrebbe, per una causa o un'altra, contaminarla. Se sente l'appello alla preghiera, egli deve lasciare il lavoro che sta effettuando, porgere attenzione alle parole del *mu'adḍin* e prepararsi per non mancare alla *ṣalāt* con gli altri fedeli nel tempo stabilito. O Dio, che l'*adān* non avvenga mentre lo scriba è [concentrato] nello scrivere sul foglio, [teme] di alterare il suo tratto se si interrompe e così indugia fino al completamento dello scritto... Lo stesso se sta tracciando righe sulla carta e non vuole sollevare la mano prima di averle finite. Ciò non è tuttavia da biasimarsi, poiché rientra nella buona pratica di lavoro ed è di esortazione ai suoi fratelli musulmani. Ma Dio ne sa di più.

Lo scriba non deve tener conto di quanto alcuni gli dicono ai giorni nostri, e cioè di scrivere una copia completa del Corano (*ḥatma*)⁷¹ basandosi su una scrittura che diverge dal *muṣḥaf* su cui concorda la *Umma*, in base a quanto essa ha ricevuto per mano di °Uṭmān b. °Affān⁷² – Dio lo

⁷⁰ Si veda nota 38.

⁷¹ Cfr. Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, s.v.

⁷² Le principali peculiarità ortografiche del cosiddetto Corano di °Uṭmān sono analizzate da Bergsträsser e Pretzl in *GdQ* 3: 26–53.

abbia in misericordia. Disse Mālik che il Corano è scritto nel Libro Primo [l'archetipo celeste]. Nulla è lecito diverso da questo, né l'inclinare verso la pretesa di chi se ne discosta, sostenendo che tanto il volgo non conosce lo scritto (*marsūm*) coranico, facendo errare la gente nella recitazione. (...) Quelli del volgo che non conoscono la scrittura coranica non devono leggere se non dopo il suo apprendimento, altrimenti introdurranno errori nel testo condiviso dalla *Umma*. (...)

Lo scriba deve guardarsi dallo scrivere la *ḥatma* nella lingua degli °Aḡam,⁷³ poiché Dio l'Altissimo ha fatto scendere il Corano in 'lingua araba chiara'⁷⁴ e non nella loro lingua. Mālik—che Dio lo abbia in misericordia—biasimava la scrittura del Corano in parti disgiunte, osservando che Dio ha detto 'a noi sta raccogliarlo';⁷⁵ ma alcuni, nonostante ciò, lo suddividono. Se egli detestava la suddivisione in *aḡzā'*, figuriamoci come avrebbe giudicato chi altera la lingua araba chiara! Questo purtroppo avviene nel nostro tempo, tanto che alcuni adattano la lettura/recitazione del Corano alla °*aḡamiyya* e così scrivono il testo. Si giunge a mettere assieme in un unico scritto parti in arabo e parti in °*aḡamī*, scrivendo due-tre versetti in arabo per poi riportarli in °*aḡamī*. Tutto ciò contrasta con quanto condiviso unanimemente dalla prima generazione musulmana, dai pii antenati e dagli ulema, Dio li abbia in misericordia.

III. Proposito dell'artigiano che rilega Corani e altri libri⁷⁶

Sappi che questo è uno dei più importanti lavori per la religione perché permette di proteggere i Corani, i libri di *ḥadīṭ* e di scienze shari'itiche. È necessario in tutto ciò il proposito precedentemente menzionato in relazione al copista, poiché [l'opera del rilegatore] è di ausilio alla salvaguardia del frutto della sua fatica, oltre alla bellezza che dà al libro stesso e la dignità che gli conferisce. Quando l'artigiano esce di casa, assume quanto gli compete dei propositi del dotto e dell'istruito, quindi esprime l'intenzione di aiutare i suoi fratelli musulmani con il suo mestiere, dedicandosi alla cura dei loro Corani e dei loro libri; infine manifesta la *niyya* della fede e della ricompensa [celeste]. Se qualcuno dice che a questo – o altri artigiani – non si addice la *niyya* del dotto poiché quest'ultimo si reca alla moschea ad apprendere e insegnare in ottemperanza al proprio proposito, mentre per lui non può essere così poiché è immerso nella propria attività, la risposta è che non esiste differenza tra il dotto e l'artigiano, dal momento che sia lui che tutti coloro che svolgono simili lavori devono conoscere quattro 'scienze': 1. l'arte del mestiere (°*ilm al-ṣinā'a*); 2. il lessico tecnico ad esso riferito; 3. la coscienza di se stessi, che

⁷³ *bi-lisān al-°aḡam*, 'nella lingua dei Persiani'. Lascio tuttavia il termine in trascrizione, poiché verosimilmente l'A. intende qualsiasi lingua non araba.

⁷⁴ Cfr. Cor. 16:103 'Ma la lingua di quello cui pensano è barbara (°*aḡamī*), mentre questo è arabo chiaro'; 26:165.

⁷⁵ Cor. 75:17.

⁷⁶ *Al-Madḥal*, 4: 87–92

ognuno dovrebbe avere, per ciò che concerne le azioni di culto, i doveri etc.; 4. la prudenza necessaria da parte di colui che riceve un incarico nei confronti del committente. (...)

È auspicabile che, quando [l'artigiano] si reca alla sua bottega, si comporti in conformità con la Sunna, come già ricordato in merito all'entrare e uscire da casa: faccia precedere la destra alla sinistra pronunciando la *tasmiya*⁷⁷ e quanto riferito dalla tradizione. Effettui due *rak'at*, poiché la preghiera è un legame tra l'uomo e il Signore, quindi si metta all'opera. Se nella bottega non c'è un luogo adatto alla preghiera, la sostituisca con la menzione di Dio. (...) Si astenga dagli imbrogli che lo adombrano nel suo mestiere, poiché, come ha detto il Profeta, 'la fede è comportamento leale'.⁷⁸ (...)

[Il committente] si guardi dal comportamento di alcuni: deve consegnare il libro al rilegatore a condizioni chiare e non generiche. Così evita che [il rilegatore] faccia tutt'uno di pelle, fogli di sguardia (*biṭāna*), seta e suo compenso. [Sono da tenere in considerazione tre possibilità:] 1. [Il committente] fornisca da parte sua al rilegatore pelle, sguardie e seta e gli chieda di lavorare con questo materiale; 2. [oppure] il rilegatore indichi con precisione tutto ciò che occorre e il suo costo; 3. [il committente] lo incarichi di acquistare i materiali necessari, se già non li possiede, quindi si stabilisca il compenso per il lavoro. Questi tre punti sono di facile applicazione ed evitano noie. (...) Il proprietario del libro si sentirà responsabile del valore di pelle, sguardie e seta [fornite] e del giusto compenso al rilegatore; quest'ultimo si sentirà responsabile di ciò che riceve dal proprietario. C'è da stupirsi come alcuni rilegatori ricevano [ordini di] lavoro su libri di scienza e si comportino in modo non lecito.

[Il rilegatore] deve fare bene attenzione alla carta che usa per le sguardie. Prevale presso alcuni artigiani del nostro tempo l'uso di carta senza curarsi di cosa vi sia [scritto]: ciò non è lecito. Vi può figurare il nobile Corano o un *ḥadīṭ* del Profeta o nomi di angeli o di profeti – su di loro il saluto. Se è così non è lecito impiegare questa carta né abusarne per il rispetto che merita e il suo valore. Se invece vi sono nomi di ulema e di pii antenati—Dio sia soddisfatto di loro—o passi di scienze shari'itiche, l'uso è sconsigliabile, anche se non si giunge al grado di divieto come nel caso sopra menzionato. Colui che cerca la scienza a maggior ragione si astenga dal compiere azioni riprovevoli. Se l'artigiano sa o pensa di fare qualcosa che rientra in tutto ciò, non lo faccia! Lavori solo dopo che gli è stata chiarita la relativa prescrizione e ne abbia preso atto.

Non c'è inconveniente nel ricoprire internamente la pelle [della coperta] con carte contenenti cifre; non è biasimevole, ma il rilegatore deve essere prudente e accertarsi che non facciano parte di un quaderno (*daftar*) perduto

⁷⁷ La formula *bismī llāhi*.

⁷⁸ Cfr. Buḥārī, *al-Ġāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, Īmān, 42: 'La fede è comportamento leale verso Dio, il Profeta, il Suo Libro, gli imām dei musulmani e la loro comunità'.

da qualcuno, di cui abbisogna per non subire perdite di denaro. Se agisce in questo modo, l'artigiano contribuisce a salvaguardare i beni della gente. Deve inoltre fare attenzione al numero dei fascicoli del libro e dei suoi fogli, senza anticiparne o posticiparne la giusta posizione. Ciò rientra tra le raccomandazioni che mirano a tenere lontano l'imbroglio. L'artigiano ha bisogno di conoscere i richiami [a fondo pagina, *istiḥrāğ*] per unire coerentemente il testo con ciò che segue [nel foglio successivo], oppure deve essere reso partecipe [dallo scriba o dal proprietario del libro] nel conoscere [il giusto ordine dei fogli]. Oltre a tutto ciò, deve essere prudente nell'affidare il lavoro ad altri artigiani o garzoni incompetenti, affinché non si confonda libro e suo proprietario, cosa che spesso si verifica nel nostro tempo. [Il rilegatore] pena nel suo lavoro, ma talvolta con la fatica consegue guadagni illeciti se pretende dal proprietario [del libro più del dovuto]. Se questo avviene, l'artigiano deve restituire [il maltolto], anche se in più momenti, per rimettersi sulla buona strada, tenendo per sé solo il compenso inizialmente [pattuito] (...).

L'artigiano non deve rilegare nessun libro appartenente a gente che professa religioni false, poiché così facendo favorisce la loro miscredenza: chi aiuta qualcuno in un'azione ne condivide [la responsabilità]. Un secondo aspetto simile o a questo vicino, è che queste persone sono gratificate nella loro religione, poiché se vedono un musulmano che le aiuta si convincono di essere nel giusto. Qualora [il rilegatore] sappia che il libro datogli è tra quelli rivelati—come la Torah, il Vangelo, i Salmi—deve tenere conto della prescrizione che vieta [la sua opera]; questo perché è certo che essi [ebrei e cristiani] vi hanno apportato cambiamenti e contraffazioni. Non noscondone i luoghi [dove ciò è avvenuto], meglio tralasciare tutti questi libri. Se gli viene data un'opera scritta in siriano o in ebraico, e simili, non rileghi nulla di tutto ciò! Mālik—Dio ne abbia misericordia—disse a proposito delle formule magiche (*ruqā*) in lingua non araba: 'Come fai a sapere [cosa significano]? Forse è miscredenza'. Bisogna stare attenti ad evitare tutto ciò che di simile viene escogitato nel cuore dell'uomo.

È opportuno che colui che cerca la scienza o altri che ricorrono all'opera del rilegatore si cautelino nei confronti degli artigiani che agiscono in questo modo e se ne astengano dopo averli istruiti sul retto comportamento: forse si pentiranno o si ravvederanno. Questo se era impossibile [al committente] affidare il lavoro a chi ne ha i requisiti, come menzionato a proposito della disapprovazione dell'azione riprovevole. (...) Cosa pensare dell'artigiano che rilega [libri agli iniqui] e attraverso la sua opera permette loro di conservare ciò che è proibito dalla nobile legge?

Che [il rilegatore] non decori una coperta servendosi di un calamaio che contiene oro o argento, poiché non è lecito usarli, come pure non è lecito servirsi di queste sostanze nel processo di rilegatura. Inoltre non deve rilegare per gli iniqui. Ciò per due motivi: 1. chi aiuta qualcuno diventa corresponsabile, come abbiamo ricordato; 2. la maggior parte della loro

ricchezza è illecita, e va a finire che l'artigiano si sforza nel suo lavoro per ricavarne un guadagno lecito ma invece lo consegue illecitamente. Si guardi da tutto ciò! Prevale tuttavia il fatto, tra artigiani e non, che guadagno lecito e illecito siano considerati equivalenti e non ci si fermi davanti a nulla. Questo a causa di una falsa ignoranza di ciò che è stato ordinato all'uomo e predisposto per lui di bontà d'animo nel conseguire profitti aspirando a migliorare la propria vita terrena. Apparteniamo a Dio e a Lui faremo ritorno... L'artigiano [rilegatore] rifletta, non rimandi il lavoro all'indomani, non spergiuri, ma dia ascolto all'appello alla preghiera e la compia assieme agli altri nel tempo prefissato; faccia tutto ciò con zelo, poiché i Corani, i libri di *ḥadīṭ* e di scienze shari'itiche che rilega lo ordinano e vietano il contrario.

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