

“BLURBS” (*TAQRÎZ*) FROM FOURTEENTH-CENTURY EGYPT

by

Franz Rosenthal

Hamden, Conn.

“Blurb” belongs to the artificial word coinages that have found acceptance and may possibly live on in speech. The word is said to have been invented by the writer Frank Gelett Burgess (1866-1951) early in the twentieth century. In his *Burgess Unabridged, A new dictionary of words you have always needed*, 7 (New York 1914), he listed

Blurb n. 1. A flamboyant advertisement; an inspired testimonial. 2. Fulsome praise: a sound like a publisher. Blurb v. 1. To flatter from interested motives; to compliment oneself.

The verb did not catch on; the noun did. Perhaps, Gelett Burgess thought of blather or blooper and burble and the sound effect that their conflation would produce. Anyway, “blurb” now refers to a short statement of praise intended to promote the sale of a new book and usually attached to it(s cover). For the greatest effect, a well-known name is often connected with the statement as that of its author. Together with advertising and instant reviewing, the blurb is today one of the mainstays of the book business. For obvious reasons, none of these promotional devices could have flourished in medieval times. The circle of literary friends, the industrious bookseller, the social ambiance of the wealthy or powerful sponsor, and the scholar traveling far and wide in the caravan trade served to promote a new work of literature or scholarship. Any of these approaches had the potential of being effective, especially when a given author already enjoyed some reputation. The system such as it was probably helped to prevent mediocre products from achieving a wider currency than they deserved. On the other hand, in times past as well as nowadays, many works of merit may have failed to become known merely because they did not obtain the necessary modicum of publicity.

A kind of substitute for critical scholarly reviews developed in the form of commentaries or polemical pamphlets composed right after the publication of a work. Such works were not very frequently written. Some of them,

however, became quite important in their own right. Whether positive or negative in outlook, they provided publicity for the original work.

Then there was the brief statement praising a literary product, called *taqrīz* in Arabic. The merit of having recognized, in modern times, the *taqrīz* as a special literary genre belongs, it seems, to W. Ahlwardt. His catalogue of the Arabic manuscripts in Berlin devotes to the *taqrīz* a special section at the beginning (nos. 31 ff.) headed *Kritiken (Lobschriften)*. Whether or not Ahlwardt was the first to accord the *taqrīz* a position of its own,¹ his implied challenge to deal with it in detail has not yet been taken up, as far as I know. It deserves to be, and this article is meant to be a step in this direction.

Arabic lexicographers tried to restrict *qarraza* to "praise of the living". There was no real basis for this restriction, and it was not generally accepted. Nor was there any consensus as to whether the roots *qarraza* and *qarraḍa* were to be kept apart. To the Semitist, no original distinction seems to exist between *qrṣ*, *qrd*, and *qrz*. For the meaning of "praise" developed in Arabic, it is tempting to see some parallel development and, perhaps, remote connection with Akkadian *karṣū* "slander", well known also as an Aramaic loan word. Akkadian even appears to have developed a verb in the doubled conjugation, *kurrusu*, meaning "to slander", listed, with little documentation, in the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*. Be this as it may, *taqrīzes* were written long after a work had appeared or its author had died, but the majority of them was presumably composed almost simultaneously with the publication of a work and clearly intended to create a favorable atmosphere for its reception. Such *taqrīzes* were rarely, if ever, spontaneous. They were solicited by the author from obliging friends of recognized stature; this is still done today, although it is now principally the publisher who solicits the blurbs if he does not write them. As compared to their modern counterparts, such *taqrīzes* were not very brief. This had its reason partly in Arabic literary style and partly in the fact that there existed no likely way to attach a short statement to a book without its getting lost or being disregarded. But, even if it must be admitted that "blurb" may not be an exact rendering of *taqrīz*, it is as close to it as any other term, and more so than "review" would be. A *taqrīz* is a comparatively brief statement of praise solicited for the promotion of a newly published work and, incidentally, its author.

If a number of *taqrīzes* composed for a specific work were collected by its eager author (or a friend or bookseller), they constituted at the same time something corresponding to our dossiers of letters of recommendation, to be used when pride or necessity called for their use to accomplish some purpose or other. We have a statement from the first half of the fourteenth

century, telling us that letters of recommendation should be honest and factual :

A student asked his professor (*ustâdh*, here probably his master craftsman) to write for him a letter of recommendation (*an yamdaḥahû fî ruq'atin*) and to recommend him more highly than his accomplishments warranted. The professor replied : "If I did that, the recipient of the letter would either consider me a man of little intelligence for giving you more credit than you actually deserve, or suspect my veracity as a source of information. Whichever it might be, it would be harmful to you, for I am your witness, and if the witness is impugned, the individual in whose behalf he has testified will lose his case". (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Badâ'i' al-fawâ'id*, III, 178 [Cairo, n.y.]).

Littérateurs were possibly not as much concerned with scrupulous honesty as were Ḥanbalite jurists, or they were indeed convinced that the books whose praises they sang in extravagant language were actually deserving of all they said. Presumably they felt that they were doing a good deed for a colleague and for the cause of literature, and only unstinting praise would serve the purpose.

A collection of *taqrîzes* for a work that was published in Egypt in the year 795/1393 has fortunately been preserved. Their writers were all men of the highest repute in their time, but it so happened that among them were also Ibn Khaldûn, celebrated today in East and West, and Ibn Ḥajar, a scholar still familiar to all Islamists because of his encyclopaedic reference works. In 505/1111-2, aṭ-Ṭughrâ'î (ca. 453-515/1061-1121) wrote in Baghdâd his *Lâmîyat al-'ajam*, a poem of astonishing beauty and depth. It became famous immediately. Its significance was stressed by commentaries written shortly after its appearance. Incidentally, its great fame had the result that it became the earliest major belletristic work in Arabic to be transmitted to the West. J. Golius published it in Leiden in 1629 (*Shadhratu l-adabi min kalâmi l-'Arabi Hoc est Proverbia Quaedam Alis, Imperatoris Muslimici, et Carmen Togra'i, Poëtae doctiss. Nec non Dissertatio quaedam Aben Sinae*, published without the editor's name and with the Arabic title, here transcribed, printed in Arabic characters, see also F. Krenkow, in *EI*¹). It was much studied in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (cf. C. F. Schnurrer, *Bibliotheca arabica*, 185-91 [Halle 1811]). But then, probably because it had been known for so long, it was unjustly neglected in more recent times.

The *Lâmîyat al-'ajam* was commented upon by Ṣalâḥ-ad-dîn aṣ-Ṣafadî (ca. 696-764/1296-1363) in *al-Ghayth al-musajjam* (*al-Ghayth alladhî nsajam*, or *Ghayth al-adab...*), an important *adab* encyclopaedia full of interesting

¹ I have not made a thorough check of earlier catalogues of Arabic manuscripts to see whether Ahlwardt had any predecessors in this respect. It would seem rather unlikely.

P. Freimark, *Das Vorwort als literarische Form in der arabischen Literatur* (diss. Münster 1967), contains interesting formal parallels to the *taqrîz*.

information of all kinds. The latest date mentioned by aṣ-Ṣafadī in the *Ghayth* (I, 18 [Cairo 1305/1888]) is 741/1340-41. The work, it may be noted was also used by seventeenth-century scholars such as T. Hyde, *De ludis orientalibus*, I, 39 f., II, 52 f. (Oxford 1689-94). About half a century after the appearance of the *Ghayth*, Badr-ad-dīn Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Qurashī al-Makhzūmī al-Iskandarī al-Mālikī, known by his family name as Ibn ad-Damāmīnī (763-827/1361/2-1424),² wrote *Nuzūl al-Ghayth*, a rather sharp critique of certain passages in the *Ghayth* dealing with literary criticism which he considered wrong. It was a slim booklet, called *ḥāshiyah* "gloss" by some (as-Suyūṭī, *Bughyah*, 27 [Cairo 1326]). It had, however, considerable success. Whether skilful advertising by means of *taqrīzes* was responsible for its success, we cannot say. It no doubt helped. Eleven of these *taqrīzes*—there may, of course, have been more, but if there were others, they probably did not please Ibn ad-Damāmīnī enough for him to keep them—have been preserved attached to the *Nuzūl* or transmitted separately.³

² He is sometimes referred to without the "Ibn", but as-Sakhāwī, *Daw'*, VII, 184-7 (Cairo 1353-5), indicates that "Ibn" is part of the correct form of the family name, even though it is occasionally omitted in the *Daw'* itself. For Ibn ad-Damāmīnī, cf. C. Brockelmann, *GAL*, *Suppl.*, II, 21. Excerpts from a work on prosody by Bader Aladīn Damamianus appear in P. Guadagnoli, *Breves Arabicae Linguae Institutiones*, 301 ff. (Rome 1642). They are from Ibn ad-Damāmīnī's commentary on *al-Qaṣīdah al-Khazrajīyah*, entitled *al-'Uyūn al-ghāmīzah*. The commentary was composed in 817/1414, cf. *GAL*, I, 312, *Suppl.*, I, 545. *Al-'Uyūn al-ghāmīzah*, to my knowledge, is the only work of Ibn ad-Damāmīnī published so far. The most recent edition known to me is by al-Ḥassānī Ḥasan 'Abdallāh (Cairo 1973).

It is not surprising that E. Pocock used aṣ-Ṣafadī's *Ghayth* in his commentary on the *Lāmīyat al-'Ajam* entitled *Lamiato'l Ajam*, *Carmen Tograi, Poetae Arabis Doctissimi; unā cum versione Latina, & notis...* Accessit Tractatus de Prosodia Arabica (by Samuel Clericus) (Oxford 1661), but it is unexpected to find him referring to Ibn ad-Damāmīnī's *Nuzūl* and, on p. 214, quoting a passage from it (cf. Ms. Yale Landberg 64a, fol. 50b; Ms. Princeton Yahuda 4164 [Catalogue Mach 4085], fol. 79b).

³ I had at my disposal two manuscripts, Ms. Yale Landberg 64a (Catalogue Nemoy 276), fols. 55b-69b, and Ms. Berlin We. II, 1473 (Catalogue Ahlwardt 39), fols. 25b-39b. I wish to thank the Beinecke Library of Yale University and Dr. Dieter George, of the Orientabteilung of the Staatsbibliothek, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, for generously providing me with photostats of the manuscripts in their care.

In Ms. Yale, the *taqrīzes* follow upon the text of the *Nuzūl*; in Ms. Berlin, they are by themselves and not attached to the *Nuzūl*. Ms. Berlin shows considerable omissions and, in general, has a slightly poorer text than Ms. Yale. It is, however, not infrequently better in details.

As stated in Fehmi E. Karatay's catalogue, No. 8479, Vol. IV, 300 (Istanbul 1962-9), Ms. Topkapısarayı Ahmet III, 2422, includes the *taqrīzes*. It was written in 848/1444. It would probably have been of great value for this article which perforce had to be based upon insufficient manuscript material. I have no information about the putative Mosul Ms. (see n. 5). No doubt there are other manuscripts that contain the *taqrīzes*. However, many manuscripts of the *Nuzūl* apparently do not. This applies to Ms. Yale Landberg 487 (Nemoy 277) and the Mss. Princeton Yahuda 4164 and 1376 (Mach 4085). As far as I was able to check the catalogues of manuscripts listed in *GAL*, none appears to have the *taqrīzes*. No reference is made to them also in connection with Ms. Damascus Zāhir. 5433 (cf. 'Izzat Ḥasan, *Fihris*

We have some indication as to how and by whom these *taqrîzes* were collected. In his great biography of Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Jawâhir wa-d-durar*, Istanbul Ms. Topkapısarayı Ahmet III 2991, fol. 190a, as-Sakhâwî says:

I copied (the text of Ibn Ḥajar's *taqrîz*) from his autograph from a copy in the handwriting of its author (*wa-qad naqaltuhû min khaṭṭihî min-a-n-nuskhati llatî bi-khaṭṭi muṣammiḥihî*), in the possession of our colleague, the *imâm* Jamâl-ad-dîn Ibn as-Sâbiq (811-77/1409-73).⁴

"Its author" is evidently meant to refer to Ibn ad-Damâminî. Thus Ibn as-Sâbiq was in the possession of a holograph copy of the *Nuzûl* to which the *taqrîzes*, all of them and not only that of Ibn Ḥajar, were attached as they had been written and sent to Ibn ad-Damâminî. The one dated *taqrîz* is that of Ibn Makânîs; it has at the end the date, written in numerals, of 12 Ramaḍân 795/22 July 1393 (only in Ms. Yale). As-Sakhâwî also tells us that Ibn Ḥajar's *taqrîz* dates from Ramaḍân 795 (and he may have meant to say that all the *taqrîzes* were thus dated). One of writers died before the year 1393 was over. There can be no doubt that all the *taqrîzes* should be dated in that year.⁵

The Berlin Ms. contains the information that its *Vorlage* was copied from the collection of the *taqrîzes* made by "our *shaykh*, the learned authority, Muḥyî-d-dîn ash-Shâfi'î, from the autographs of their authors (*min khaṭṭi munshi' <î>hâ*"). Regrettably, I do not know the identity of this individual. It should, however, be noted that in some cases such as those of Ibn Khaldûn and Ibn Ḥajar,⁶ the Berlin Ms. indicates by the use of the appropriate formulas that those men were by then deceased. This would place Muḥyî-d-dîn's activity, if it was he who introduced those formulas, not before the middle of the fifteenth century.

makhṭûṭât Dâr al-Kutub az-Zâhiriyyah: ash-Shi'r, 406 f. [Damascus 1384/1964]) and Ms. Tunis Aḥmadiyyah 4774 (cf. 'Abd-al-Ḥafîz Maṣṣûr, *Fihris makhṭûṭât al-Maktabah al-Aḥmadiyyah bi-Tûnus*, 124 [Beirut 1388/1969]). This, however, may be deceptive. The cataloguers may have paid no attention to the *taqrîzes* and failed to mention their existence.

⁴ For Ibn as-Sâbiq, cf. the references in F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd ed., 444, n. 1 (Leiden 1968). Another owner's note by Ibn as-Sâbiq is mentioned in J. A. Wakin, *The Function of Documents in Islamic Law*, 71 (Albany, N.Y., 1972).

⁵ *GAL*², II, 33, refers to an autograph of the *Nuzûl* dated in 795, said to exist in Mosul. I have no information on that manuscript. If it does exist, it could very well be the manuscript once in the possession of Ibn as-Sâbiq and be of inestimable value. If it is dated in 795, the *Nuzûl*, as we would expect, was presumably completed in that year, and not in 794, as stated in *GAL*, *loc. cit.* The date of 794 may go back to Ibn ad-Damâminî's statement in the beginning of the *Nuzûl* that he wrote the *Nuzûl* when he came from Alexandria to Cairo in 794 to counteract the praise of the *Ghayth* he had heard in Alexandria (cf. also Ḥâjjî Khalîfah, *Kashf*, ed. Yalṭkaya, 1538), meaning apparently that he started writing it in that year. But even if he did complete it in 794, the *taqrîzes* can be assumed to have been ready only in the following year.

⁶ Ms. Yale calls Ibn Ḥajar *shaykh al-Islâm*, which, of course, he was not yet when he wrote his *taqrîz*.

The scribe of the Yale Ms. always indicates that he, or possibly his *Vorlage*, copied the text from a copy made by someone from the original in the handwriting of the author of the *taqrîz* in question: *wa-mim-mâ nuqila [kutiba] min khaṭṭihî naqaltu*, or *min khaṭṭin nuqila min khaṭṭihî*, or *wa-naqaltu mim-mâ (min šûrati mâ) nuqila min khaṭṭihî*. At the beginning of each piece, we find, correspondingly, a superscription that reads uniformly in Ms. Yale: *šûrat mâ katabahû*. Ms. Berlin has *kitâbat...*, or *nuskhat kitâb...*, or, in the last four *taqrîzes*, *šûrat mâ katabahû*. Exceptional are the concluding formulas in al-Bashtakî, where the text at the end contains some additional material, and in az-Zarkashî, whose *taqrîz* is unusually long and the last in the collection.

The *taqrîzes* were obviously solicited by Ibn ad-Damâmîni, with the possible exception of that of Ibn Ḥajar, as discussed below. All of them were written by men with whom he had established some personal relationship at some time during his life, and their general tone appears to indicate personal involvement. A rather clear confirmation comes from al-Bashtakî's contribution. In spite of his feeling, he says, that in literary matters he was greatly inferior to the other contributors, he agreed to write a *taqrîz* because

I was commanded and, thus, obeyed. The precedent of the scholars shone (*lâhat sunan...*), and I followed. I was called (Ms. Berlin *du'itu*, Ms. Yale *w'yt*), and responded.

Words like these are a customary *captatio benevolentiae*. They are meant here primarily to indicate some sort of inner compulsion which made it necessary for al-Bashtakî to avoid setting himself apart from his respected colleagues. However, they also contain more than a hint that his *taqrîz* was written in response to a request, certainly one by Ibn ad-Damâmîni himself. They indicate further, and so do related similar statements, that the authors of the *taqrîzes* knew that they were being asked as a group. None was left under the illusion that he alone was honored with the request to write one. Although it is not stated expressly, we can assume that Ibn ad-Damâmîni had a number of copies made of the *Nuzûl* and presented them to the prospective *muqarrizûn* (again, with the possible exception of Ibn Ḥajar) as a kind of advance review copy.

In the order in which they appear in the manuscripts, these are the men whose *taqrîzes* are preserved:

- (1) Ibn Khaldûn (732-808/1332-1406).
- (2) Nâsir-ad-dîn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad at-Tanasî (740-801/1339/40-1399) (cf. as-Sakhâwî, *Daw'*, II, 192f.).⁷

⁷ For the sake of brevity, I have dispensed with detailed biographical references.

- (3) Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Jazarī (751-833/1350-1429).⁸
- (4) Muḥammad (b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd) Ibn ash-Shiḥnah (749-815/1348/9-1412).⁹
- (5) Majd-ad-dīn Ismāʿil (b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad) al-Ḥanafī (729-802/1329-99) (cf. *Dawʿ*, II, 286-8).
- (6) Shams-ad-dīn Muḥammad al-Ghumārī (720-802/1320-1400) (cf. *Dawʿ*, IX, 149f.).
- (7) Majd-ad-dīn Faḍlallāh b. ʿAbd-ar-Raḥmān b. Makānis (769-822/1368-1419) (cf. *Dawʿ*, VI, 172 f.; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, anno 822).
- (8) Badr-ad-dīn (Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm) al-Bashtakī (748-830/1347-1427) (cf. F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd ed., 425, 445).
- (9) Ibn Ḥajar (773-852/1372-1449).
- (10) Zayn-ad-dīn Abū Bakr b. ʿUthmān b. al-ʿAjamī (b. before the 720s/1320s, d. 16 Dhū l-Ḥijjah 795/23 October 1393).¹⁰
- (11) Shams-ad-dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad (b. Muḥammad) b. Abī Bakr az-Zarkashī (d. 813/1411; the date of his birth is not indicated, but he wrote a poem on the Syrian famine and inflation of 777/1375-6 [*Dawʿ*, IX, 208f.], thus was probably born not later than 750/1349).

In age, the writers ranged from men in their twenties to men in their seventies. In 795/1393, two were in their twenties (Ibn Makānis and Ibn Ḥajar), four in their forties (Ibn al-Jazarī, Ibn ash-Shiḥnah, al-Bashtakī, and, presumably, az-Zarkashī), one in his fifties (at-Tanaṣī), two in their sixties (Ibn Khaldūn and Judge Ismāʿil al-Ḥanafī), and two in their seventies (al-Ghumārī and Ibn al-ʿAjamī). The oldest of them died still in the same year in which he wrote his *taqrīḏ* (Ibn al-ʿAjamī). It may not be a coincidence that no individual in his thirties (Ibn ad-Damāmīnī’s own age group) appears in the list. Men at that stage of their lives rarely had the reputation and authority coming from age and experience that would make them natural

⁸ *GAL*, *Suppl.*, II, 274-8. Ms. Yale calls him M. b. M. b. M. b. M. This would seem to indicate his son, who, however, was born only in 777 (and he died before his father in 817), cf. *Dawʿ*, IX, 287f., and his father’s *Ghāyat an-nihāyah*, ed. G. Bergsträsser, II, 251f. (Cairo 1932-5). The heading in Ms. Yale also has the curious statement that he was the author of *al-Mathal as-sāʿir*, which I cannot explain. The title would clearly refer to the work by Ḍiyāʿ-ad-dīn Ibn al-Athīr al-Jazarī. Perhaps, the *nisbah* Jazarī common to both men caused the error or, rather, the negation “not” (*ghayr*) was omitted by the copyist. At any rate, there is no good reason to doubt the identification of this Ibn al-Jazarī with the famous Qurʾān scholar.

⁹ *GAL*, *Suppl.*, II, 176f. Ms. Berlin calls him Jalāl-ad-dīn, while both the historian and his son were known as Muḥibb-ad-dīn. This seems to be a scribal error, and the identification appears to be certain.

¹⁰ Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, I, 448 (Hyderabad 1348-50). The month and day of his death are mentioned in al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. M. M. Ziyādah and S. ʿA. ʿĀshūr, III, 2, 792 (Cairo 1934-73); Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, anno 795 (ed. W. Popper, V, 617, trans., XIII, 187f.); and ʿAlī b. Dāwūd al-Jawharī (Ibn) aṣ-Ṣayrafī, *Nuḥat an-nufūs*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī, I, 368 (Cairo 1970-71).

and desirable choices. On the other hand, it is surprising to encounter two young men who were, respectively, twenty-five (Ibn Makânis) and twenty-one (Ibn Ḥajar) years old and had no outstanding achievements to their credit. It is not difficult to guess why Ibn Makânis figures among the *muqarriẓûn*. He was the son of a very well-known poet, 'Abd-ar-Raḥmân b. 'Abd-ar-Razzâq Ibn Makânis, whose *Dîwân* he was to collect. The elder Ibn Makânis died on 12 Dhû l-Hijjah 794/30 October 1392. It seems likely that he had been asked to write a *taqriẓ* and had promised to do so. After his sudden death, his son felt obligated to fulfil the promise his father had made. It seems less likely that the younger Ibn Makânis was approached because his father whose name and high position would have made him an effective *muqarriẓ* was no longer alive.

The case of Ibn Ḥajar is not quite as easily explained. In his biography of Ibn Ḥajar, as-Sakhâwî assures us that the *taqriẓ* of the *Nuzûl* was his first published work. Ibn Ḥajar had no reputation of his own to contribute. He was no doubt already known as a very bright youth and promising scholar, but he was still a student, and he had not yet begun to specialize in the study of the science of *ḥadîth*, which was soon to bring him fame. Ibn Ḥajar's family connections meant wealth and influence; this, however, was almost certainly no factor in this case. It is possible but cannot be documented that some family connections existed between the Ibn ad-Damâmînîs and the Ibn Ḥajars, going back to the days of Ibn Ḥajar's grandfather in Alexandria.¹¹ Ibn Ḥajar tells us about frequent contacts with Ibn ad-Damâmînî, to whom he also addressed a poem in his *Dîwân* (ed. as-Sayyid Abû l-Faḍl, 78-80 [Hyderabad 1281/1962]), but these contacts can be assumed to have been subsequent to 795, even though Ibn Ḥajar, who studied the Arabic language with al-Ghumârî and prosody and literature with al-Bashtakî, certainly had met Ibn ad-Damâmînî as a much older fellow student. We may venture the suggestion that Ibn Ḥajar saw Ibn ad-Damâmînî's *Nuzûl* when it was about to come out and wrote his *taqriẓ* without having been asked; he then showed his work to some of the established scholars of his acquaintance, or perhaps to Ibn ad-Damâmînî himself, and they considered it worthy of publication. Another quite plausible explanation would take its cue from a custom common in our own times, namely that of an older scholar recommending a student of his as a suitable reviewer for a new book, so that he could make his first public appearance in the world of learning. Or some of the established scholars who had been requested to write *taqriẓes* might have called attention to the bright young

¹¹ A somewhat ambiguous remark in *Daw'*, VII, 186, ll. 4f., refers to Ibn ad-Damâmînî as a cousin not of Ibn Ḥajar but, it seems, of al-Maqriẓî.

man and suggested that he be allowed to show his mettle. At any rate, Ibn Ḥajar is unlikely to have been asked by Ibn ad-Damâminî on the latter's initiative. Had Ibn ad-Damâminî done so, he would have offended some of the famous scholars who might then have refused to cooperate.

The choice of Ibn Khaldûn to head the list was hardly fortuitous. Ibn ad-Damâminî was a Mâlikite. He had been a substitute in court (*nâb fî l-ḥukm*) for at-Tanasî. That was in Alexandria where at-Tanasî had held the judgeship since 781/1379 (cf. *Daw'*, II, 192). When at-Tanasî received the appointment as Mâlikî chief judge in Cairo in 794/1392, Ibn ad-Damâminî went there with him. This was the reason for his move and the occasion for his writing the *Nuzûl* there. Ibn Khaldûn, then a professor with excellent connections, was famous as an historian and legal scholar as well as a former chief judge. Ibn ad-Damâminî had established contact with Ibn Khaldûn as a student right after he arrived in Cairo. He even quoted him in the *Nuzûl* (cf. F. Rosenthal, *Gambling in Islam*, 116 [Leiden 1975]). Years later, when at-Tanasî died and the judgeship fell vacant, another Ibn ad-Damâminî, Sharaf-ad-dîn Muḥammad, apparently a very remote cousin of our Ibn ad-Damâminî, had hopes of obtaining it, but the choice then fell upon Ibn Khaldûn.¹² Ibn Khaldûn's attitude toward Ibn ad-Damâminî may always have been a guarded one. We can be almost certain that in 794, Ibn Khaldûn would have liked to get the judgeship to which at-Tanasî was appointed possibly because Ibn Khaldûn was then still somewhat under a cloud at the Mamlûk court. He may always have considered both at-Tanasî and his substitute Ibn ad-Damâminî as rivals. It may even have been suggested to Ibn ad-Damâminî that he ask Ibn Khaldûn for a *taqrîz* for the sake of establishing or keeping up good feeling among the Mâlikite powers in Cairo. One cannot help noticing that everything considered, Ibn Khaldûn's *taqrîz* is rather reserved and noncommittal. His natural reticence and realistic view of life, rather than the suspicion of Ibn ad-Damâminî's position and intentions, may have been responsible. It is, of course, also possible quite simply that he did not want to spend too much time on the chore. In his short piece, *kamâl* "perfection" is used no less than five times. Perhaps, some attempt at irony is concealed here. Anyway, not much loving care can be detected in Ibn Khaldûn's contribution, noticeably less so than in those by the others. In view of the situation described, it was a matter of course that at-Tanasî was asked to write a *taqrîz*.

¹² Cf. the footnote referring to al-Maqrîzî's *Sulûk* in Ibn Tâwîṭ at-Tanjî's edition of Ibn Khaldûn's *Riḥlah*, 347, n. 2 (Cairo 1370/1951). On Sharaf-ad-dîn, who died in 803/1400, cf. *Daw'*, IX, 63f.

A link can be shown to have existed between Ibn ad-Damâminî's family and Ibn al-Jazarî. Although Ibn al-Jazarî does not mention the fact in his autobiography, he studied in Alexandria with Bahâ'-ad-dîn Ibn ad-Damâminî, a brother of 'Umar b. Abî Bakr, the grandfather of our Ibn ad-Damâminî,¹³ who also taught the latter. This may have been the beginning of a friendship between the two men separated in age by about a dozen years. The future development of this connection still escapes our scrutiny.

Ibn ash-Shihnah, the historian, a Ḥanafite judge, happened to be in Cairo between 793 and 796, which were difficult years in his life (cf. *Ḍaw'*, X, 3). It may have been this fortuitous circumstance that brought him together with at-Tanasî¹⁴ and Ibn ad-Damâminî, but again, further details are not at hand at this moment. Judge Ismâ'îl was at the time at the height of his influence with Barqûq. He possessed all the reputation needed to make him a desirable *muqarriz*. It is also possible that he constituted the link between Ibn ash-Shihnah and Ibn ad-Damâminî.

It is easy to see why an endorsement by al-Ghumârî, the second oldest man in the group, was of particular value. At the time, he was Egypt's great authority on the Arabic language and grammar, subjects that were in a way part of the fundamental concern of the *Nuzûl*. Ibn ad-Damâminî must have paid him his respects upon his arrival in Cairo, and had the good luck of finding him receptive to writing a *taqrîz*. It may be noted that Taqî-ad-dîn al-Fâsî mentions al-Ghumârî's *taqrîz* in his *Dhayl* of Ibn Nuqţah's *Taqyîd*, as *Ḍaw'*, IX, 149, tells us. Al-Fâsî was also a student of Ibn Khaldûn, though it is not clear where and when. And Ibn al-Jazarî included al-Ghumârî in his *Ghâyat an-Nihâyah*, II, 244, and tells us that he was a teacher of his two sons. This certainly constitutes a nexus between him and Ibn ad-Damâminî.

Al-Bashtakî, an interesting personality according to all we know of his biography, was at the time at the peak of his powers as a littérateur and

¹³ Cf. *Ḍaw'*, IX, 256, quoted by Ibn al-'Imâd, *Shadharât*, VII, 205 (Cairo 1350-51), for Ibn al-Jazarî's stay in Alexandria. Bahâ'-ad-dîn was born in 705/1305-6. When the events under discussion here began to take shape, he had just died as a very old man in Rabî' II, 794: February-March 1392, cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, II, 251. From the reference to him in the beginning of the biography of Ibn ad-Damâminî in *Ḍaw'*, VII, 185, it is clear that he was considered one of the most distinguished members of his immediate family. The others were a brother of Bahâ'-ad-dîn, who died in 760/1359 (Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, III, 408), and Nâşir-ad-dîn Ibn al-Munayyir, described as Ibn ad-Damâminî's maternal grandfather. Ibn al-Munayyir is placed by *Ḍaw'* in the eighth century, but he must be the well-known scholar who lived from 620 to 683, cf. *GAL*, *Suppl.*, I, 738. He could, of course, not have been Ibn ad-Damâminî's grandfather. Perhaps he was his great-grandfather, but it is puzzling that as-Sakhâwî should have made such a mistake.

¹⁴ *Ḍaw'*, X, 5, mentions that an Ibn at-Tanasî studied with him. At-Tanasî himself is certainly not meant here, and his four sons were too young at the time (*Ḍaw'*, VII, 90 ff.).

indefatigable copyist. He was mentioned in the *Diwân* of the elder Ibn Makânis, and he appears to have already in 795 been connected with Ibn Ḥajar. His opinion of Ibn ad-Damâminî was not uniformly friendly. In a verse, he described him as a *qâdî* whose judgments were always unfavorable to poetry and prose. Although as-Sakhâwî (*Daw'*, VI, 278) described the verse as serious *hijâ'*, it could have been the not uncommon playful teasing among friends.

Ibn al-'Ajamî, the oldest of the *muqarriẓûn*, who died shortly after having contributed his *taqrîẓ*, knew aṣ-Ṣafadî personally. Aṣ-Ṣafadî inserted a poetical exchange between himself and Ibn al-'Ajamî in his *Alḥân as-sawâjî'* (Princeton Mss. 28B, fols. 74b-76a, and 55H, fols. 78a-79b, cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, I, 448). This may have been the reason why he was approached by Ibn ad-Damâminî and why he consented to contribute a *taqrîẓ*. About the author placed last in the collection, az-Zarkashî, a poet and Qur'ân scholar, not much more can be said than that he moved in the same circles as the other men. His poem on prosody pleased Judge Ismâ'îl al-Ḥanafî so greatly that he had it taught to his children (*Daw'*, IX, 208; for az-Zarkashî's son, cf. *Daw'*, IV, 210f.).

A few remarks are indicated as to the style and contents of the *taqrîẓes*. Considerable uniformity can be expected to prevail in them. As a literary genre in its own right, the *taqrîẓ* had developed certain rules which, of course, left much leeway in the use of detail. The invocation can be a simple "Praised be God", as in the case of Ibn Khaldûn, or a rather lengthy *khuṭbah*, as in that of Ibn Makânis. It seems to have been normal procedure to dispense with an elaborate *khuṭbah* (as in six cases). Where it does occur, it follows the customary format of alluding in various ways to the work to be introduced. Judge Ismâ'îl, though, has no such reference, and it is very indirect in the case of Ibn al-'Ajamî.

The standard opening statement is *waqaftu 'alâ*, to be translated approximately as "I have read". It occurs in seven cases. Its purpose is to indicate that the writer is acquainted with the work sufficiently to express an informed judgment but may not always have studied it carefully and in detail. The corresponding concluding formula, with which each writer signs off, states that he has composed and written the preceding *taqrîẓ* (*qâlahû*, or *qâla dhâlîka, wa-katabahû*), and he then indicates his name. Al-Ghumârî was a little more expansive: *Kataba shahâdatan bi-sâ'âdatihî wa-tadhkiratan bi-ṣâlihî ad'iyatihî*). Az-Zarkashî exclaims that "he composed all of it, except the quoted verses which are to be credited to their respective authors".

The use of rhymed prose is obligatory throughout. The standard metaphors are copiously employed, with those subtle variations the presence of which marks an author's originality. The Qur'ân is, of course, quoted or alluded

to. Poetical insertions make their customary appearance everywhere, as does an occasional proverb. The metaphoric imagery contains no real surprises. We hear about things in nature such as moon, sun, heaven, stars; clouds, rain, ocean; pearls and jewels; gardens, fruits, plants. Manmade events constantly referred to are horse races, hippodromes, and archery contests. Frequent similes are the kindling of fire; magic (*sihr*); emotion (caused by music and the like). Pigeons and fine garments occur sporadically, and so do many other familiar figures of speech.

It is not unexpected that one finds exaggerated expressions of modesty and claims of unworthiness. A writer would admit that he is not really up to his task or that he feels inadequate in view of the illustrious company in which he finds himself. Personal inclination and individual circumstances naturally conditioned the use and character of such statements. Young Ibn Ḥajar had every reason to express the idea with considerable sincerity. After all, in writing his *taqrīz*, he associated himself with the established scholars (*mashā'ikh*) of his time, as as-Sakhāwī put it in introducing his quotation of it.¹⁵ Judge Ismā'īl, on the other hand, hinted rather perfunctorily at his own lesser competence in the field of literature as compared to that possessed by the other *muqarrizūn*.¹⁶ When he saw the enthusiastic reception that was given to Ibn ad-Damāminī's work by Egypt's outstanding scholars (obviously his fellow *muqarrizūn*, as the work could hardly have reached as yet wider circles), he desired to "let down my bucket with theirs and tie my rope to theirs" and to participate in their archery competition, even if his arrow was not likely to hit the goal as surely as theirs. He probably was not convinced of his professed inferiority, nor was his expression of relative modesty meant to be taken very seriously. Al-Bashtakī declaims at the outset: "I say, even if I am not a rider in this hippodrome who obtains the rod of victory on racing days...". Like az-Zarkashī, he seems to imply that he was more or less forced to participate by a kind of noblesse oblige and would otherwise not have dared to share the stage with those great men who had been asked to write on the same subject.

More or less veiled references to the author of the work reviewed and to the title of his work were an almost obligatory feature of *taqrīz* composition. If, as in this case, the title referred to "the descent of rain" and the author was known by the honorific "full moon of the religion", such references were come by easily. The problem was how to avoid triviality, and in this respect

¹⁵ Ibn Ḥajar used a similar but much briefer statement in another *taqrīz* which he wrote five years later, cf. as-Sakhāwī, *Jawāhir*, fol. 191b. He also used the customary formula *waqafitu 'alā...* here as well as in another *taqrīz* quoted on fol. 193b.

¹⁶ Cf. Ibn Khaldūn's explanation of his refusal to use *saj'* in a reply he wrote to Ibn al-Khaṭīb, cf. *Rihlah*, 123.

taqrîz writers were not always successful. Ibn Khaldûn (but cf. n. 17, below), Judge Ismâ'îl, and al-Ghumârî disdained to join the game and omitted, as far as I can see, any definite reference to either author or title, while Ibn al-'Ajamî has no clear allusion to the title. The fact that Ibn ad-Damâmî came from Alexandria is repeatedly mentioned (Ibn al-Jazarî, Ibn ash-Shihnah, al-Bashtakî, and az-Zarkashî). It seems to have appeared meaningful and worth mentioning because he was a recent arrival from Alexandria on the Cairine scene. Az-Zarkashî also refers to Ibn ad-Damâmî's descent from the Makhzûm and Quraysh as well as to the names of his father and his son, clearly more than was his ordinary duty, but his *taqrîz* is anyhow the longest and most atypical composition in the collection. The customary comparison with great literary figures of the past was made by Ibn al-Jazarî, al-Ghumârî, al-Bashtakî, and Ibn Hajar. Again, az-Zarkashî extended it to extraordinary lengths. He went through a substantial inventory of famous poets, making a pun on each name, a not uncommon literary pastime but rather out of place under the circumstances.

Taqrîzes naturally called for comparison of the works they praised with earlier literary achievements. This was regrettable in this case because unjustified denigration could hardly be avoided. Our *muqarriẓûn* felt obliged to comment on the relationship of the *Nuzûl* to the *Ghayth* of aṣ-Ṣafadî criticized in it. Only Ibn Khaldûn, at-Tanasî, Ibn ash-Shihnah, and al-Ghumârî refrained from making any remarks along these lines. The other writers considered it necessary to state more or less explicitly that the new publication showed up the incompetence of aṣ-Ṣafadî and marked great progress over his work—hardly an attitude to please a less involved observer. One cannot quite avoid the suspicion that those who said these things merely followed convention and probably were not really convinced themselves of the correctness and justice of their remarks.

If the style and content of the *taqrîzes* have little appeal for the modern reader, the reason lies mainly in ourselves, that is, in our inability to savor directly the mastery of language and literature displayed in them openly and their recondite allusions to a shared literary heritage. They are certainly no more objectionable than modern blurbs and similar fringe products of modern literary life. On the whole, they would seem to be more literate and sophisticated than their modern counterparts. The genre deserves further study principally for two reasons. It tells us something about literary habits and modes of thought, and it has the potential to add to our knowledge of the organization of past intellectual life and the relationships among intellectuals and their role in society. The medieval Arabic "blurb" sheds some light on the social motivations behind literary activity and the development of ways to propagate literary products.

Appendix

An attempt to translate two of the *taqrîzes* in the collection is appended here. If the ones by Ibn Khaldûn and Ibn Ḥajar were chosen, it was for no other reason than the lasting fame of their authors. Literary compositions of this type are truly untranslatable, as their literary form which is after all their sole claim to distinction is totally dependent on the genius of the Arabic language and its literary conventions. Better manuscript material might have helped me to avoid some of the mistakes the translation is sure to contain but certainly not all of them. Others I hope will be able to correct them. Variant readings of the manuscripts have only infrequently been noted, and explanatory notes have been held down to a minimum.

I. *Ibn Khaldûn*

Praise be to God!

I have read this book, a meadow for frequent visitors (*rawḍat al-muntâb*), a pleasure park for people to traverse (*nuzhat al-mujtâb*), a cure for ignorant doubters, and a guarantor for those liable for useful information of (*gharîm al-fawâ'id bi-*) satisfaction and contentment. It is an ocean with billowing waves, pure pruning (*at-tanqîḥ aṣ-ṣariḥ*) bringing out the essence, pride for the scholarly community (*li-l-fi'ah al-'ilmîyah*) for obvious reasons, a shady garden of manifold information of renewed youthful vigor (*qad istajadd shabâbuh*), and the equivalent of perfection for human thought and linguistic science with its gate wide open.

He who trails such a wide garment and is the winner on such a race course cannot help being considered as deservedly proud and holding high the head like (*yashmakh bi-anf*) the Banû 'Abd-al-Madân.¹⁷ Thus, he penetrates far into the sky of perfection on his swift (flight, steed, *bi-maṭâriḥ*, or *maṭṭâriḥ*), activates the market of learning with his pure gold, and lays open the sanctuary of intellectual and traditional knowledge with the penetration

¹⁷ For the pride and nobility of the Banû 'Abd-al-Madân, cf. al-A'shâ, in *Kitâb al-Aghânî*, X, 142 ff. (Bûlâq 1285); Umayyah b. Abî ṣ-Ṣalt, ed. F. Schulthess, in *Beiträge zur Assyriologie*, VIII, 3 (1911), 23; Ḥassân b. Thâbit, *Dîwân*, ed. W.N. 'Arafat, I, 219-33 (London 1971, *E.J.W. Gibb Mem. Ser., New Series*, 25); further, Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih, *'Iqd*, ed. A. Amîn, A. az-Zayn, and I. al-Ibyârî, V, 328 (reprint Cairo 1386/1965); *Lisân al-'Arab*, XVII, 30 (Bûlâq 1300-8); Abû Hilâl al-'Askarî, *Jamharat al-amthâl*, ed. M. Abû l-Faḍl Ibrâhîm and 'Abd-al-Majîd Qaṭâmîsh, II, 193 (Cairo 1384/1964); ash-Sharîshî, *Sharḥ al-Maqâmât al-Ḥarîriyah*, II, 319f. (Cairo 1306/1889), and so on. Possibly, there was some alleged connection of Ibn ad-Damâminî with the 'Abd-al-Madân which I am not aware of. They were, however, quite generally referred to for their prowess, as in al-'Abbâsî, *Ma'âhid at-tanṣîṣ* I, 3 (Cairo 1326): *fa-lâ yudânîhi mudâni wa-law kâna min Bani 'Abdî-l-Madâni*. Incidentally, the pride (*tîh*) of the Makhzûm was proverbial, cf. ath-Tha'âlibî, *Thimâr*, 90f. (Cairo 1326/1908).

of his glances. The winning horses have been scattered by his noble steeds, and the stallions of good style (*bayân*) have been subdued by his Quss and his Ziyâd.¹⁸ He has stood up on the pulpit of eloquence (*balâghah*), and its planks shook. He has taken all knowledge from its horizons, and it permitted itself meekly to be led by him. "This is but magic handed down (Qur'ân 74:24)", and an ocean whose pearls, when spread out, are well arranged on the breasts (Ms. Berlin *labbât*, Ms. Yale *liyân*?) of perfection. They are indeed the treasures of castles (*quṣūr*) and the store (*khabî'ah*) of perfection within the ages (*fi tayy al-'uṣūr* [Ms. Yale *al-quṣūr*]).

May God adorn the existence of its author who is an adornment for existence. May He preserve his learning that has traveled in the lowlands and the highlands (*at-tahâ'im wa-n-nujûd*). May He make abundant his share of blessings from bowing for prostration (*barakat ar-rak' li-s-sujûd*), and may He place upon him the garments of nobility and generosity with His kindness and nobility.

Said and written by his friend who is well aware of his perfection,¹⁹ 'Abd-ar-Rahmân b. Muḥammad b. Khaldûn al-Ḥaḍramî al-Mâlikî, may God give him success and help him to find fairness and recognition with His kindness and generosity—Amen!²⁰

(My copy is made from a copy of his autograph).

II. *Ibn Ḥajar*²¹

After giving praise to God alone, and His prayer and peace upon our Lord, Muḥammad, His servant and messenger—How noble is our Lord and His servant!

I say—even if I am not in a class with those men who because of the abundance of their arrows in literature hit the goals of speech (*al-maqâl*), and do not belong to those to whom one pays attention and listens because I have no literary ability and property, and, if I were to be given success, I would stop at what I am capable of doing (*waqafu 'ind qadrî*) and not crowd upon the outstanding masters and their smooth statements with my

¹⁸ Ziyâd appears to be Ziyâd b. Abîhi, who enjoyed some reputation also for his rhetorical skill. The reading is well established and cannot be Iyâd, the tribe of Quss b. Šâ'idah. Al-Ghumârî refers to *Quss fi Iyâdih*.

¹⁹ "His friend who..." is the common formula in use at that time, corresponding roughly to our "sincerely". Ibn Khaldûn, *Rihlah*, 115, 122, etc., used, for instance, *muḥibbuh al-mushtâq liyuh*.

²⁰ Only Ms. Yale has *wa-a'ânah 'alâ al-inṣâf wa-l-i'tirâf bi-mannih wa-jûdih âmin*.

²¹ For Ibn Ḥajar's *taqrîz*, the text in as-Sakhâwî, *Jawâhir*, fols. 190a-191a, was available for comparison.

uncouth poetry and prose²²; but I am confident that this master (i.e., Ibn ad-Damâminî) has consideration for (the shortcomings of) scholars in this field, and I know that he is very generous and kind to those of them who do good work—:

I have read this book which attests that its author is an arbiter who does not accept bribes, and which is unique, although it has its fellows in (other) works of his. I have contemplated its chapters (gates) and found joy coming to me from each. I did not know, when it caused me such emotion (*wa-atrabani*), whether it was the descent of rain (*nuzûl al-ghayth*) or the fall of clouds (?? *waq' ar-rabâb*).²³ When it caused me emotion, I commended it, which is unique, to the protection of the “doubles (*al-mathâni*, i.e., the Qur'ân) and “doubled” it (*wa-thanaytuh*) to the heart, even if in reality it has no “double” (*wa-in kâna mâ lahû fi l-ḥaḥiqati thâni*).²⁴ When all this instructive information shone forth from it, the sharp edge of my tongue was too dull to describe (praise) it, and I gathered wrongfully in the face of it (*wa-janaytu 'alayh*) from the large amount of what I plucked from its leaves the fruits of instructive information, committing a crime in both cases (i.e., the inability to give proper praise and the undeserved enjoyment of the information derived from the work).

I kissed him a thousand and a thousand times. Then my desire
Said to me: Add (more kisses) by multiplying a thousand by a thousand
(*wa-qabbaltuhû alfan wa-alfan fa-qâla li—gharâmiya zidhu wa-drib-i-l-alfa fi l-alfi*)

Blessed be He who caused a full moon (*Badr*) to rise as a guide in the heaven of eloquence and saturated him with what he drew from others, and he became pure (? as-Sakhâwî *ṣâfiyan*; Mss. Berlin and Yale *ṣâdiyan* “became thirsty again); who strengthened him till he arranged in this unique necklace the scattered branches of information restored (*al-inâ'ah wa-l-ifâdah*); and who helped him to collect all the good things in it, so that it became a growing collection of the best. Any littérateur who might desire to compete with this outstanding man finds it impossible and restrains himself from impatience and consoles himself, as he sees his (own) originality and perspicacity lost. How could it be otherwise since the dew of excellence from thought and hand²⁵ (has come to them) from him (and) moistened

²² This might suggest that the snippets of verse found later on were of Ibn Ḥajar's own composition. Superficially some seem indeed to be written by him. However, although I have so far been unable to trace most of them to other authors, it seems unlikely that Ibn Ḥajar was their author, for their insertion was considered witty and effective only if they were quotations.

²³ A steady, orderly rain or a cloud burst? Since “emotion” is mentioned, a musical instrument such as *rabâb* “rebec” would make sense, but what would be the meaning of *w-q-*?

²⁴ For *mâ lahû*, Ms. Yale has a meaningless *ḥâluhû*.

²⁵ *Khâṭir-kaff* occurs again later on in a verse. It may indicate intellectual and material generosity, but I cannot cite other passages for this usage. The roots, in a very different meaning, occur together in al-Ash'arî, *Maqâlât*, ed. H. Ritter, 2nd ed., 427 f. (Wiesbaden 1963).

them, and his high style has become unattainable for anyone who has risen in the assembled ranks of *littérateurs* to describe (praise). He has drawn near to the hearts with his instructive information, while the mind of his competitors has been remote and ineffective. He has exercised skill (*mhr*), endowing (*mhr*) thereby virginal ideas with a dowry from the jewels of his statements. How generous and skilful has he been in both cases!

Therefore I have drawn back in fear from describing (praising) him. Nobody can take offense at someone like me for drawing back in fear, even if I were Qudâmah (apparently, the great *littérateur* Qudâmah b. Ja'far, cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 406). And I have struck the flints of thought, in order to saddle the mount of the intellect but found only the lack of eloquence of my tongue the means for bridling. So it is. I have observed in his work a Ka'bah of excellence. Had my (fore)father (as-Sakhâwî *jaddî*, Mss. Yale and Berlin *abî*) before me made the pilgrimage to it,

He would have been so afraid to speak that it would have been said: This (man) is a stone.²⁶

(*Tahayyaba n-nuṭqa hattâ [hîna] qîla dhâ ḥajar*)

I have heard what eloquent men, were they to hear it, would be incapable of describing (praising). Thus, how about one like me!

It is not to be held against them if cows do not understand (al-Buḥturi, *Dîwân*, ed. H. K. aṣ-Ṣayrafî, II, 955 [Cairo 1963-72]).

I have seen remarkable products of his outstanding ability

Which reason would reject, had the eye not observed them.

(*Yarudduhâ l-'aqlu law lam yashhad-l-l-baṣar*)

I said, professing ignorance with respect to his eloquence when, in fact, I was fully aware of it²⁷:

Are these excellent proceedings or Qur'anic sûrahs?

(*A-hâdhihi siyarum fî l-faḍli [l-majdî] am suwar*)

He is the judge of eloquence in whose presence one has acknowledged the right of the jewel of excellence.

It is not remarkable for the ocean to safeguard jewels.

(*Wa-lâ 'ajabun li-l-baḥri ṣawnu l-jawâhiri*)

²⁶ Ibn Ḥajar playfully suggests that his name *ḥajar* "stone" could conceivably be derived from his ancestor's being speechless like a stone in the presence of that (black) stone, the Ka'bah of excellence that is Ibn ad-Damâmîni's work. In spite of this seemingly personal touch, it seems highly doubtful that this is a verse composed by Ibn Ḥajar himself.

In this and the following three verses, the mss. seem to indicate vowellessness at the end, instead of the required -u.

²⁷ The rhetorical figure *tajâhul al-'arîf* is mentioned in Mss. Yale and Berlin. As-Sakhâwî has instead *mutajâhulan ma'a ma'rîfati*.

He is eloquent and generous, telling us pearls and showing kindness.

The ocean is just between hand and mind (see n. 25).
(*Fa-mâ l-baḥru illâ bayna kaffin wa-khâtirin*)

He is the scholar of Medina (i.e., a Mâlikite) whose

Blessed luck towers over every head, being the students' best ruler.
(*'Alâ kulli ra'sin tâla ka'bun mubâarakun—lahû wa-hwa li-ṭ-tullâbi afdalu mâliki*)

He is the lord of literary criticism (*al-badî'*) who

Has subjected the eyes (views) when they (the students) had a request fraught with perils.
(*Qad-i-stakhdama l-anzâra idh aṣbaḥat lahum—muṭâlabatun qad ṭûbiqat bi-mahâliki*)

He is the knight of Arabic philology (*al-'Arabîyah*) who

Has become the *qiblah* of people behind which they have prayed,
He leaving them behind in the race without running.²⁸
(*Ghadâ qiblatan li-n-nâsi ṣallaw warâ'ahâ Wa-fâtahumû sabqan fa-laysa bi-jârî*)

He is the scribe who

When they see on the paper the mark of his ink—
That is a race that has stirred up dust,
(*Idhâ abṣarû fi ṭ-ṭirsi uthra midâdihî Fa-dhâlika sabqun qad athâra ghubârâ*)

and its rhymed prose has caused ideas to clamor from afar.

How much sharp-eyed science it contains!²⁹
(*Fa-kam bihi [for bihî] li-l-'ulûmi zarqâ(') Yamâmata?*)

The great³⁰ works of literature are like documents, and this small and subtle work of his is their mark of validation (*'alâmah*). It comprises the entire cycle (*dâ'irah*) of literature, so that we can say: The full moon (*Badr*) has taken up residence in his mansion (*qad sakan dârah*). All³¹ virtues (*ma'âlî*) are adorned (Ms. Yale *tazayyanat*, as-Sakhâwî *tarattabat*) by it and have announced glad tidings; thus let this give from it (the work) to it (the mansion of the full moon or the virtues?) joy and glad tidings in both cases.

²⁸ While it seems unlikely that the two half-verses belonged together originally, it should be noted that in the following quotation, the two half-verses, which also give at first glance the impression of being of different origin, appear to be united by a play on *uthra* and *athâra*. Water that is used metaphorically is called water that is not running in the poetry of as-Sarî ar-Raffâ', *Dîwân*, 136 (Cairo 1355), cf. also al-'Abbâsî, *Ma'âhid*, II, 33.

²⁹ This is the text of as-Sakhâwî, which seems to be metrical. Ms. Yale has *fa-kam min 'ulûmin*, Ms. Berlin *fa-kam li-l-'ulûmi*. For the sharp vision of the blue-eyed maiden called (al)-Yamâmah, or whatever the right explanation of *zarqâ'* (*al*)-*yamâmah* may be, cf. *Lisân al-'Arab*, XVI, 135, or the collections of proverbs.

³⁰ Only as-Sakhâwî has *al-jalîlah* "great" and *daqîq al-ma'ânî* "small and subtle".

³¹ Ms. Berlin omits the text from here to p. 195, l. 17 (O Banû Makhzûm).

If Saḥbân³² were to see it, he would get ready right away in a hurry to go in search of its instructive information, so that he would be asked (the question customarily directed to travelers): Wherefrom and whereto? If al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, the master of prosody, he would drown in the seas of its literary information and present him with the *'ayn* he owns.³³ If Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih, he would acknowledge that he collected (worthless) beads in his *Necklace (al-'Iqd)*. If the eloquent Ibn aṣ-Ṣayrafī, he would not have considered his...³⁴ equal to it in spite of his (its) fine criticism. If Abū l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, this sharp-sighted (blind, *baṣīr*) critic would have recited (to him) the verse:

I am the one whose literary production the blind man looks at.³⁵

If Ibn ar-Rūmī (Ms. Yale 'Alī b. Jurayj), he would have recognized the difference between Arab and non-Arab in stylistic elegance. If any eloquent person were to listen to his eloquence, he would acknowledge himself frustrated in the use of language and call out in the darkness of the lack of eloquence: Behold us taking some of the fire of your stylistic elegance, O Banū Makhzūm (the tribal group from which Ibn ad-Damāmīnī claimed descent)!

The "descending rain" has put the Nile to shame. The one who has lost the patience to bear his inability to compete with it exclaims: Where is the road? A man of taste has no doubt that Khalīl wasted his provisions (*an naqaṣa Khalīlun zādahū*) and this master (Ibn ad-Damāmīnī) has corrected the faults in the discussion of Ṣalāḥ-ad-dīn. Were aṣ-Ṣafadī to return to this world after his death, he would not be found disapproving and negative. And if he desired to give gifts in his (native) town to this master, because he has guided him to what is correct, he would (have to) say: We have nothing for you to ask for in Ṣafad. For this Ṣafadī would often deal with a science such as grammar without any basic knowledge.³⁶ He would be content (*vastaghni*) with his declaring (his views?) reliable or unreliable, sick

³² The legendary prototype of eloquence, Saḥbân Wā'il, is also invoked by al-Ghumārī. Ms. Yale has *'ljb'n*.

³³ The *'ayn* of the famous *Kitāb al-'Ayn* is combined with *'ayn* "gold coins".

³⁴ The word found here (*h-b-h?*) should refer to the title of Ibn aṣ-Ṣayrafī's work, but I have not been able to find out what it could be. The Ibn aṣ-Ṣayrafī most likely to be meant here is 'Alī b. Munjib (463-542/1071-1147), cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 489f.; al-Shayyāl, in *EP*, s.v. He was famous as a rhetorician and littérateur but hardly as well known as the other men mentioned here.

³⁵ The half-verse is from al-Mutanabbī's poem criticizing Sayf-ad-dawlah, cf. *Diwān*, with the commentary of 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān al-Barqūqī, IV, 83 (Cairo, n.y. [1357/1938]). Al-Ma'arrī referred it to himself, cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, ed. I. 'Abbās, I, 114 (Beirut, n.y. [1972]).

³⁶ *Mubtada' ma'rifah*, the subject of a nominal sentence which, as required, is determined. Without it, one would start out wrong. Ms. Berlin *ibtidā'*: Ms. Yale, it seems, *na'rifah (?)*.

or sound, and thus not become rich (*yuthrî*) from fair qualification (*min şifah munşifah*),

And he would be of the opinion that he has insight into this,
While he (walks around) blindly (like a blind man) who has lost his stick (al-Mutanabbî,
Diwân, II, 292).

May our master never cease to be bountiful (*jâ'idan?*) to students with his coin (criticism) and be safe from the days of diminishing moon light (*as-sa'irâr*), and may the bitterness of his being lost never last!³⁷ May he always put to shame the sun and the clouds with his rain (*bi-anwâ'ih*) and lights and remain safe from deficiencies, and thus may that description of him as the full moon (*al-Badr*) not be exempt from real perfection and completeness—Amen!

Said and written by his friend who prays for his long life, Abû l-Faḍl Aḥmad b. 'Alî b. Muḥammad al-'Asqalânî who is known as Ibn Ḥajar, may God pardon him!

(My copy is made from a copy of his autograph).

³⁷ As-Sakhâwî *fa-lâ tadûmu marâratu faqdihi*: Ms. Yale *fa-lâ yqblw bi-faqdihi* (considered doubtful by the scribe); Ms. Berlin *bi-faqdihi*. It all seems to be moon terminology. In the last few days of the month (*as-sa'irâr*), the moon loses its brightness, and at the end of the month, it is completely lost, but the Badr Ibn ad-Damâminî will always remain a resplendent full moon.

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