From Ethiopian Slave to Egyptian Ṣūfī Master? Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī in Mamluk and Ottoman Sources

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ABSTRACT

Shaykh *Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī (d. 732 ah/1332 ce) is a saintly figure from Mamluk times that is still highly revered in present-day Egypt. He is traditionally described as an Ethiopian slave who became a Ṣūfī master of the* ṭarīqa Shādhiliyya *in Alexandria. However, both his life and teachings are difficult to reconstruct, as he did not leave any written work and source information on him is fragmentary and inconsistent. This paper tries to shed light, if not on the* shaykh's *biography, at least on the making of his hagiographic image, by means of comparative analysis of different biohagiographic traditions on him in Mamluk and Ottoman sources. This will hopefully help to better understand the formation of historical self-representations in the early* Shādhiliyya, *as well as to gain some fresh insights into social representations of slavery and phenotypic diversity in medieval Egypt.*

Introduction

This article focuses on a saintly figure from the early Mamluk times who is still highly regarded in Egyptian Ṣūfī circles nowadays, especially in Alexandria:

Shaykh Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī (d. 732 AH/1332 CE). He is traditionally described as an "Ethiopian slave" (*ʿabd ḥabashī*) who entered the *ṭarīqa Shādhiliyya* under the guidance of *Shaykh* Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Mursī (d. 686 AH/1287 CE) and became a revered Ṣūfī master in his own right. Nevertheless, both his life and teachings are difficult to reconstruct. Unlike the great Ṣūfī writer *Shaykh* Ibn ʿAṭaʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709 AH/1309 CE), who was Yāqūt's fellow disciple of al-Mursī and probably his competitor for spiritual authority on the *Shādhilī* network after al-Mursī's death, Yāqūt did not leave any written work. Moreover, information on Yāqūt that can be gleaned from available sources is fragmentary, inconsistent, and often embellished for hagiographic purposes. All this conspires to keep Yāqūt largely unexplored to such an extent that he has not been the object of any scholarly monographs until now.

The present article will provide a comparative analysis of different bio-hagiographic traditions on Yāqūt in Mamluk and Ottoman Egyptian sources. In doing this, far from attempting to write the "true story" of Yāqūt, we shall focus more on deconstructing representations rather than reconstructing facts in order to cast some light on the process of the making of the *shaykh*'s image as a Ṣūfī saint and the formation of historical self-representations in the early *Shādhiliyya*. We will also try to gain fresh insights into social representations of slavery and phenotypic diversity in medieval Egypt.[1]

Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī as a Ṣūfī Saint: The Current Hagiographic Image and Its Complex Origin

Shaykh Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī, also called al-ʿArshī (d. 732 AH/1332 CE)[2] was one of the most revered figures of the *ṭarīqa Shādhiliyya* in his time. His "memory" is still revered in present-day Alexandria. *Shaykh* Yāqūt's shrine stands alongside that of his famous master, *Shaykh* Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Mursī (d. 686 AH/1287 CE)—the first successor (*khalīfa*) of the *ṭarīqa*'s eponymous master Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656 AH/1258 CE)—in the monumental area Maydān al-Masājid (Place of the Mosques), which is still the heart of *Shādhilī* Sufism in Alexandria.

Current hagiographic narratives on Yāqūt reflect the *shaykh*'s image as it crystallized in Ottoman Egypt, in the wake of great Ṣūfī authors ʿAbd

al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (m. 973 AH/1565 CE)[3] and ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Munāwī (m. 1030 AH/1622 CE).[4] In such framework, *Shaykh* Yāqūt is usually represented as a most powerful saint, maybe even "The pole of his time" (*quṭb al-zamān*)—i.e., the supreme head of the hidden hierarchy of saints governing the world[5]—who joined deep knowledge of divine things and profound kindness towards all created beings. While Yāqūt's heart was continually absorbed in the realm of God's Throne (*al-ʿarsh*, hence his sobriquet *al-ʿArshī*), his body was always acting in the visible world, be it for the spiritual direction of his disciples, moral correction of his contemporaries, or intercession in favor of those who called on him (including animals, see below). In such narratives, *Shaykh* Yāqūt advocates for priority of ethical distinctions over ethnic and social ones, his motto being that "The Ṣūfī (*al-faqīr*; lit. the poor [in God]) must honor people according to their compliance with religious duties, not according to their clothes."[6] On these grounds he rebukes those who think that he enjoys too much honor for being a black slave (*ʿabd aswad*).[7]

Also, Yāqūt is often presented as the favorite disciple of *Shaykh* al-Mursī, to the extent that the latter wanted him to marry his daughter[8] and to be his successor at the head of the *ṭarīqa Shādhiliyya*.[9] In this capacity, Yāqūt would have become the spiritual master of the great *Shaykh* Ibn ʿĀṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī after al-Mursī's death.[10]

However, all this is far from being unanimously attested to in the sources. Indeed, most of the elements of Yāqūt's portrait that are to be found in Ottoman sources—and that have become part and parcel of the hagiographic *vulgata* on the *shaykh*—are surprisingly absent, as far as we have been able to judge, from earlier written sources. More precisely, one would say that at some point in Ottoman times a full-fledged bio-hagiographical narrative on Yāqūt, mostly based on the works of al-Shaʿrānī and al-Munāwī, was superimposed on the fragmentary and inconsistent traditions scattered through earlier sources. In other words, in the stratification of Yāqūt's hagiography, the Ottoman layer seemingly covered the gaps and contradictions of the earliest layers, like wallpaper applied to an old wall to cover its cracks and fissures.

This major problem has not been analyzed in depth until now, nor has the very figure of Yāqūt aroused any special interest among scholars until recent times. Indeed, little attention was paid to him in the classical works

on the early *Shādhiliyya,* such as Taftāzānī and Nwyia. In particular, Taftāzānī briefly evokes Yāqūt as one of the greatest Ṣūfī masters in Alexandria at the time, but he attributes Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī with virtually exclusive influence on the making of the *Shādhiliyya*, to such an extent that he does not even mention any competition for the *Shādhilī* heritage.[11] In principle, Taftāzānī admits that "all the *Shādhilī* ways which are in Egypt nowadays trace their origins back either to our *Shaykh* al-Sakandarī (= Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh) or to *Shaykh* Yāqūt al-ʿArshī, a disciple of al-Mursī,"[12] but he adds that most of the spiritual lineages connected to Yāqūt actually go back to Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh. In particular, according to Taftazānī, Yāqūt's well-known disciple Shihāb Ibn al-Maylaq had been also Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's disciple, "hence it would be possible to say that [ultimately] all the ways of the *Shādhilīyya* trace their origins back to our *Shaykh* al-Sakandarī (Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh)."[13]

On the other hand, Jean-Claude Garcin, in a well-known study on al-Suyūṭī's *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍara,* describes Yāqūt as being al-Mursī's (favorite) disciple and provides two *Shadhilī silsila*s stemming from Yāqūt (one through Ibn Habar and one through Ibn Maylaq).[14] Thus, in line with his sources (al-Suyūṭī himself and al-Shaʿranī) Garcin seemingly gives Yāqūt the most prominent role in the nascent *Shādhiliyya*. However, he too does not make any explicit mention of possible rivalry between Yāqūt and Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh.

It is only in much more recent times that possible competition between the two *shaykh*s for al-Shādhilī's spiritual heritage after al-Mursī's death has been taken into account. Following some groundbreaking indications by Vincent Cornell,[15] this issue has been briefly dealt with by other prominent scholars, such as Éric Geoffroy[16] and Richard McGregor,[17] and it has become a focal point in Nathan Hofer's current researches on the social construction of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt.[18]

However, traditional nonconflictual narratives on the origins of the *Shādhiliyya* are still influential in contemporary scholarship. This seems to be the case, in particular, with a recent work by Ahmet Murat Ozel, who provides a detailed survey of the main sources on Yāqūt but does not discuss their contradictions.[19]

For all of the aforementioned reasons, the present study will be based first on an analysis of the differing information provided by several sources, from Yāqūt's contemporaries up to al-Shaʿrānī and al-Munāwī, in order to

appreciate the continuity and discontinuity in the historical making of the *shaykh*'s image.

The "Mamluk Layer": Fragments from Competing Narratives

Yāqūt in the Eyes of His Companions: Conflicting Narratives and the Struggle for al-*Shādhilī*'s Heritage

Mentions of Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī in early hagiographical and mystical literature produced in the *Shadhilī* milieu are rare and they do not provide any detail about the *shaykh*'s biography. Nevertheless, such mentions do carry valuable, though mostly implicit, information about the formative period of the *Shadhiliyya* and the role that *Shaykh* Yāqūt probably played in it.

In particular, it is worth noting that Yāqūt is evoked in quite different terms in the two most ancient biographies of the eponymous master Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādilī, namely the *Kitāb Laṭā'if al-minan* by Ibn 'Atā' Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709 AH/1309 CE) and the *Durrat al-Asrār* by Muḥammad Ibn Abī l-Qāsim al-Ḥimyārī, better known as Ibn al-Ṣabbagh (d. 724 AH/1324 CE or 733 AH/1333 CE).

Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh explicitly mentions Yāqūt only once and in a rather unfavorable light, in the framework of an anecdote meant to warn readers against the traps of one's ego (*nafs*) on the Ṣūfī path. On the one hand, he qualifies Yāqūt as a "knower of God" (*'ārif bi-llāh*)—thus acknowledging the high spiritual rank the latter reached in his adulthood. On the other hand, the anecdote itself concerns the time of Yāqūt's spiritual apprenticeship, and presents him as an arrogant young disciple, so confident in his own inner inspiration that *Shaykh* al-Mursī bitterly reprimands him for acting like "an ignorant novice" (*min jahalat al-murīdīn*).[20]

On the other hand, Ibn al-Ṣabbagh consistently refers to Yāqūt with such respectful expressions as "our master" (*shaykhu-nā*) and "our lord the righteous master" (*sayydunā al-shaykh al-ṣāliḥ*),[21] and portrays him as *Shaykh* al-Mursī's closest disciple.[22] Also, according to Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, *Shaykh* al-Mursī had a close relationships with Yāqūt's Tunisian masters, the brothers Muḥammad (d. after 701 AH/1301 CE) and Māḍī Ibn Sultān

(d. 718 AH/1318 CE) al-Masrūqī,[23] who were among the greatest disciples of al-Shādhilī in Ifriqiyyā.[24]

Such a difference in the authors' attitudes towards Yāqūt is probably explained by some competition for the Shāḏilī spiritual heritage after the death of *Shaykh* al-Mursī (d. 686 AH/1287 CE).[25] This competition seems to have led to the formation of two collateral lines of spiritual authority in Egypt, one of them evolving around Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh (in Cairo and southern Egypt) and the other one evolving around Yāqūt al-Ḥabašī (in Alexandria), while a third line developed in Tunis under the authority of the Masrūqī brothers.[26]

In this framework, Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh's biographies of al-Shādhilī might be seen as conflicting versions on the origins of the *Shādhiliyya*. On the one hand, Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, by means of several allusions skillfully scattered in his book, presents himself as the true heir to al-Mursī and al-Shādhilī. In doing this, he implicitly claims spiritual authority on the *Shādhilī* network and for the sublime rank of pole of his time (*quṭb al-zamān*).[27] Such a claim is all the more interesting to historians, inasmuch as Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, in the *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, theorizes that saints ("friends of God," *awliyāʾ Allāh*) are the only true knowers (*ʿulamāʾ*); therefore, according to a well-known *hadīth*, they are the only true "heirs of the Prophets" and are thus entitled to guide the entire Muslim community by ensuring proper understanding of the inward and outward dimensions of divine Law.[28]

On the other hand, the North African Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, probably writing his *Durrat al-asrār* soon after the year 718 AH/1318 CE [29]—meaning a few years after Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's death (709 AH/309 CE)—draws a completely different picture of the *Shādhiliyya*.[30] In particular, he emphasizes the high spiritual rank of the Tunisian line of al-Shādhilī's disciples and describes intense contacts between this group and the Egyptian masters al-Mursī and Yāqūt, whereas he mentions Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh only once. Thus, Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh presents a multipolar view of the nascent *Shādhilī* community as a network whose two main hubs, Tunis and Alexandria, enjoy equal spiritual authority. Such picture is totally opposed to Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's Egypto-centric view of the *Shādhiliyya* as a group organized around the spiritual lineage al-Shādhilī > al-Mursī > Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh himself.[31]

For his part, Yāqūt did not leave any written work: in line with the

example of both al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī, he relied on oral and living trans-
mission of his teachings. As a consequence, Yāqūt was gradually written out
of the competition for discursive control of the nascent *Shādhilī* community.
Such competition ended, probably in a few decades, in favor of Ibn ʿAṭāʾ
Allāh's line, whose narrative seemingly overcame the Tunisian one and
thus turned into what may be seen as a *Shādhilī* official historiography.[32]
Nonetheless, some echoes of alternative historical memories concerning
Yāqūt might have made themselves heard well into the Ottoman times, as
is suggested by several elements found in al-Shaʿrānī's works (see below).

Moreover, the existence of early *conflit de mémoires* among different
Shādhilī circles on the relationships between Yāqūt and Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh is
also proved by a recently discovered text emanating from Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's
immediate entourage: the *Zīnat al-nawāẓir wa-tuḥfat al-khawāṭir[33]* by Rāfiʿ b.
Muḥammad Ibn Shāfiʿ (fl. 710s AH/1310s CE). The author presents his work as
a collection of notes from the "Ṣūfī lectures" held by Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh in Cairo
during the last year of his life, 709 AH/1309 CE. In his introduction, Rāfiʿ goes
as far as to say that Ibn ʿĀṭā Allāh was recognized as the "pole/axis (*quṭb*) of
his time," even by *Shaykh* Yaqūt. That sounds like a controversial statement,
in the light of the aforementioned competition between Yāqūt and Ibn ʿAṭāʾ
Allāh for spiritual authority over the *Shādhiliyya*. Indeed, endorsing Ibn ʿAṭāʾ
Allāh as the pole of the time was tantamount to recognizing him as al-Mursī's
and al-Shādhilī's heir (both these masters being unanimously described, in
the *Shādhilī* traditions, as the poles of their respective times). Therefore,
Rāfiʿ's statement might be seen as an early attempt to eliminate traces of the
aforementioned competition, thus paving the way for unanimous recogni-
tion of Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's spiritual lineage as *the only* chain of transmission of
the *Shādhilī* heritage.

Nevertheless, as we shall see, a completely different version on the
relationships between the two masters is provided by al-Shaʿrānī in the
tenth century AH/sixteenth century CE. In his greatest collection of Ṣūfī
hagiographies, usually known as *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā,* al-Shaʿrānī portrays
Yāqūt, implicitly but transparently, as the pole of the time, and states that
Yāqūt was Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's master after *Shaykh* al-Mursī's death. Unfortu-
nately, our research has not been able to find a possible written source for
al-Shaʿrānī's representation of the relationships between Yāqūt and Ibn ʿAṭāʾ

Allāh. However, it seems plausible that al-Shaʿrānī was drawing information from older traditions (be they written or oral) rather than "inventing" it from scratch. Therefore, one may argue that a *conflit de mémoires* on Yāqūt's and Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's respective roles was still going on in early Ottoman Egypt, at least in some *Shādhilī* circles, although the pro-Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh narratives had long become mainstream.

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa on *Shaykh* Yāqūt's Sanctity

Beyond early *Shādhilī* literature, a main source of information on *Shaykh* Yāqūt is the *Riḥla* by Ibn Baṭṭūta.[34] The great traveler, who was deeply interested in Sufism,[35] mentions Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī as one of the righteous men (*al-ṣāliḥin*) he met with in Alexandria in 726 AH/1326 CE.[36] This is per se a most relevant piece of information, because it discards al-Shaʿrānī's chronological indication on Yāqūt's death, 707 AH/1307 CE, thus corroborating the indication provided by most of the other sources, that is 732 AH/1332 CE. Also, Ibn Baṭṭūṭā's laudatory description of Yāqūt speaks volumes about the spiritual rank the latter was ascribed by his contemporaries:

> [Yāqūt was] one of the most distinguished men [of God] (*min afrād al-rijāl*).[37] He was the disciple (*tilmīdh*) of Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Mursī, who was, in his turn, the disciple (*tilmīdh*) of the great saint (*walī Allāh*, lit. friend of God) . . . Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, who was endowed with the [most] glorious favors/miracles (*karāmāt*) and reached the [most] elevated spiritual stations.[38]

In addition, Ibn Baṭṭūṭā credits Yāqūt with the transmission, via al-Mursī, of two important anecdotes on al-Shādhilī's miracles, one of them concerning al-Shādhilī's most famous prayer: the "Litany of the Sea" (*Ḥizb al-Baḥr*), which the traveler quotes in its entirety from Yāqūt.[39] In such context, the word *tilmīdh* (pupil), which Ibn Baṭṭūta uses to describe Yāqūt's relation to al-Mursī, probably should be understood in the specific sense of successor (*khalīfa*) rather than simply as disciple, also because the author uses the same

word to describe al-Mursī's relation to al-Shādhiilī. The sequence al-Shādhilī > al-Mursī > Yāqūt might thus be read as a chain of transmission of the *Shādhilī* spiritual heritage. Be that as it may, Ibn Baṭṭūta clearly depicts Yāqūt as the most eminent *Shādhilī* master in Alexandria. This might be seen as an indication that Yāqūt's line was prevailing on Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh's one, at least in the city of Alexandria, in the first phases of the competition for spiritual leadership in the *Shadhiliyya*.[40]

The First Mention of Yāqūt in Biographical Dictionaries and in Chronicles

The earliest mention of Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī in a biographical dictionary is probably the brief obituary found in the first Appendix (*dhayl*) of *Kitāb al-ʿIbar* by al-Dhahabī (d. 348 AH/1347 CE), under the year 732 AH/1332 CE: "The ascetic [*zāhid*] of Alexandria, *Shaykh* al-Ḥabashī al-Shādhilī, companion [*ṣāḥib*] of Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Mursī, died in his eighties."[41] A few years later, Yāqūt is given a longer and more laudatory notice in the *Mirʾāt al-jinān* (The Mirror of the Gardens [i.e., of Paradise]) by Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh al-Yāfiʿī (d. 767 AH/1368 CE), "a chronicle of Muslim history from the coming of Islam to al-Yāfiʿī's own day."[42] The author was a Yemeni scholar who entered the *Shādhilīyya* under the guidance of *Shaykh* Najm al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī,[43] one of the most renowned disciples of al-Mursī, and who eventually acted as a major link between the Sunnī Ṣūfī network of the *Shādhiliyya* and the *Shīʿī* Ṣūfī network of the *Niʿmatullāhiyya*.[44] In his historical work, probably completed in Mecca around 750 AH/1350 CE,[45] al-Yāfiʿī calls Yāqūt a "great saint (lit. God's friend; *walī Allāh kabīr*)" and "a knower of God (*ʿārif bi-llāh*)." He credits Yāqūt with "numerous miracles" (*al-karāmāt al-ʿadīda*) and "sublime spiritual stations and inspirations," as well as with "[mystical] states compliant with the Sunna" (*al-aḥwāl al-sunniyya*).[46] Such witness is all the more interesting if one takes into account that, as a highly respected member of the *Shādhilī* network, al-Yāfiʿī was probably well-acquainted with a wide range of historiographic traditions circulating within the *ṭarīqa* at the time.

Yāqūt as a Controversial Master? Some Problematic Witnesses

■ **Yāqūt as an object of "idolatry?" A puzzling court case in Mamluk Cairo (The *affaire* Ibn al-Labbān according to Mūsā al-Yūsufī)**

Concerning Yāqūt's spiritual following, a most interesting piece of information is found in a source hitherto neglected by researchers on the *shaykh*, the *Nuzhat al-nāẓir fī sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir* by Mūsā al-Yūsūfī (d. 759 AH/1358 CE). This is an annalistic chronicle of the life of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn (1285–1341 CE). Although the only extant fragment of this work starts from the events of the year 733 AH, thus covering a lapse of time subsequent to the probable date of Yāqūt's death (732 AH/1332 CE), the *shaykh* is, however, evoked in connection to a theological-juridical misadventure involving his disciple Shams al-Dīn Ibn al-Labbān (d. 737 AH/1337 CE or 749 AH/1349 CE). An influential Ṣūfī master on his own right, holding much attended sermons and sessions of Qur'anic commentaries in mosques in Fusṭāṭ (*Miṣr*), Ibn al-Labbān allegedly went too far (*yataghālā*) in his praise of his master Yāqūt. And in 733 AH/1333 CE a lawsuit was filed against Ibn Labbān before the *qāḍī al-quḍāt* on charges of extolling (*yuʿẓim*) *Shaykh* Yāqūt even above one of Muḥammad's Companions and of stating that "prostration before an idol" (*al-sujūd li-l-ṣanam*) was not a reprehensible act (*laysa bi-makrūh*). The court found that Ibn al-Labbān and some other Ṣūfī *shaykh*s, allegedly sharing his ideas, were "speaking without knowledge," and the issue was reported to the sultan. Finally, the defendants were enjoined to repent and prevented from public preaching.[47] This anecdote is interesting for more than one reason. First, the very fact that Yāqūt is mentioned only as an object of the controversy and is not given any active role in it, not even as a witness or a mediator in favor of his disciple, seems to confirm that the *shaykh* had died at the time. This provides further, though indirect, evidence for the plausibility of 732 AH/1332 CE as Yāqūt's death date. Second, this is the earliest known mention of Ibn al-Labbān as a disciple of Yāqūt, an indication that is confirmed by later biographical sources on Ibn al-Labbān. Even more interesting, however, are questions about the gist of this judiciary controversy. What was the real object of the charges against Ibn al-Labbān? What were the plaintiffs referring to with "prostration before an idol?" Were such alleged deviations somehow connected to actual Yāqūt's teachings? At

the present state of our research, it is impossible to answer such questions. However, we must remark on one point. Mūsā al-Yūsufi clearly attributes an "ecstatic" rather than a "rational" approach to sanctity on the part of Ibn al-Labbān. Should this approach reflect Yāqūt's teachings, this would perhaps allow for reading the Yāqūt versus Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh competition for the *Shādhilī* heritage in terms of a confrontation between two ideal types of sanctity. In fact, one would be tempted to see Yāqūt as the champion of an idea of sanctity relying almost exclusively on mystical illumination, whereas Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh advocates for a deep connection between such esoteric, illuminative knowledge (which remains the real basis for sanctity in his view) and the exoteric sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-ẓāhira*) acquired through rational learning.

■ Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī as a rejected master? The case of ʿImād al-Dīn al-Wāsiṭī

Ibn Labbān's trial might even shed new light on the complex relationship between *Shaykh* Yāqūt and his former disciple ʿImād al-Dīn al-Wāsiṭī (d. 711 AH/1311 CE). This restless religious thinker was initiated into the *Shādhiliyya* by Yāqūt and followed him for a while, but he soon rejected some elements characterizing Sufism as practiced in brotherhoods (*ṭuruq ṣūfiyya*) of the time.[48] So, al-Wāsiṭī left the *Shādhiliyya* and became a disciple of the Ḥanbalī jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728 AH/1328 CE). The latter was a fierce adversary of the "reproachable innovations" that, in his view, *ṭuruq* had introduced into Muslim piety, whereas he professed great admiration for early Ṣūfī masters, such as al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 285 AH/910 CE), whose Sufism he saw as purely ethical and totally exempt from philosophical and theosophical contaminations allegedly affecting later Sufism.[49]

In this framework, al-Wāsiṭī (who Ibn Taymiyya exalted as "the Junayd of his time"[50]) fiercely criticized the master-centered model of the *ṭarīqa ṣūfiyya*, which saw one's submission to a living *shaykh* as a key condition for seeking spiritual refinement. To this, al-Wāsiṭī opposed the ideal of a "Muhammadian Way" (*al-ṭarīqa al-muḥammadiyya*), meaning one's personal "way" of spiritual refinement only based in direct imitation of Prophet Muḥammad.[51] In this framework, Ibn al-Labbān's alleged veneration for *Shaykh* Yāqūt, if actually grounded on the latter's teachings, might provide us with some indications on possible immediate reasons for al-Wāsiṭī's divorce

from *Shaykh* Yāqūt. All this might contribute to a better understanding of polemical interactions between the *Shādhiliyya* and the current of Ibn Taymiyya, beyond the well-known disputation between Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh and Ibn Taymiyya himself which took place in 707 AH/1308 CE.[52]

◼ Shaykh Yāqūt from a Taymiyyan perspective: The affaire Ibn al-Labbān according to Ibn Kathīr

The relevance of the *affaire* Ibn al-Labbān for the image of Yāqūt in Taymiyyan milieus is confirmed by the fact that the historian Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 AH/1373 CE) makes this episode the focus of Yāqūt's biographical notice in his *Kitāb al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya*, which is worth quoting at length: "*Shaykh* Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī, a Shādhilī [Ṣūfī], who lived in Alexandria (*Iskandarānī*). He reached the age of eighty years, and had followers and companions (*atibbāʿ wa-aṣḥāb*), among them the *Shāfiʿī* jurist (*faqīh*) Shams al-dīn Ibn al-Labbān. The latter was magnifying him [Yāqūt] and lavishly praising him (*kāna yuʿẓimu-hu wa-yuṭrī-hi*), and he was even attributed (*yunsab*) some exaggerations (*mubālaghāt*). God knows best whether such allegations were true or false."[53]

Though suspending his judgement on the issue by the pious formula "Allāh knows best," Ibn Kathīr is somehow connecting Yāqūt's image to possibly unorthodox views and practices. In particular, the charges of "exaggerations" (*mubālaġāt*) referred to in the text might imply that Ibn al-Labbān gave Yāqūt (or that Yāqūt himself claimed for) a degree of sanctity that sounded unacceptable to righteous believers. All this comes as no surprise: though belonging to the *Shāfiʿī madhhab* (the same as Ibn al-Labbān's), Ibn Kathīr was in fact a great admirer of Ibn Taymiyya and he probably shared most of the latter's criticism against the *ṭuruq ṣūfiyya*.

Ibn al-Mulaqqin's Biography of Yāqūt: The Emersion of the Slavery Dimension

If Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī's spiritual authority within the *Shādhilī* network is clearly witnessed by the sources we have discussed up to this point (with the partial

exception of his probable competitor Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh), none of those authors mentioned Yāqūt's condition of enslavement, which later on became a major dimension of the saint's image. In fact, the first reference to this dimension is found in a collection of Ṣūfī hagiographies composed in the last part of the eighth century and beginning of the ninth century AH, the *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyāʾ* by Ibn al-Mulaqqin (d. 804 AH/1401 CE). The notice consecrated to Yāqūt in this work is worth quoting at length:

> *Shaykh* Yāqūt b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥabashī al-Shādhilī, disciple (*tilmīdh*) of *Shaykh* Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Mursī. He died in year 732 [AH]. Many people (*khalq kathīr*) benefitted from him [meaning that they were spiritually educated by him], among them *Shaykh* Shams al-dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-Labbān. [Yāqūt] reached the age of eighty years approximately. Abū l-ʿAbbās [al-Mursī] used to say [about him]: "He is the pigeon-blood ruby!" (*hādhā huwa al-yāqūt al-bahramānī*).
>
> [Yāqūt was a slave and] he was freed by a woman known as "the wife of al-Sharīfī" (*iʿtaqat-hu imraʾa tuʿraf bi-zawjat al-Sharīfī*). [Then] he asked Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī for permission to follow him. After some reflection, the *shaykh* replied: "I have found your name [written] among the companions of my companion Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Mursī, in the second generation (*ṭabaqa*) [of my followers]." And when al-Mursī made the pilgrimage and came [where Yāqūt was], Yāqūt joined him (*fa-lammā ḥajja wa-qadima ṣaḥiba-hu*). And (*Shaykh*) al-Makīn al-Asmar said [about Yāqūt]: "I saw the light of sanctity (*nūr al-walāya*) on him."[54]

Several elements in this narration call for attention:

1. Ibn al-Mulaqqin is seemingly the first author to provide a *nasab* for *Shaykh* Yāqūt: he calls him "Ibn ʿAbd Allāh," an appellation that was eventually repeated by some later sources. However, this was most probably a fictional genealogy, as we shall discuss below;
2. Ibn al-Mulaqqin's indication that Yāqūt was emancipated by "a woman known as the wife of al-Sharīfī" is apparently the earliest explicit reference to *Shaykh* Yāqūt's experience of enslavement.

3. The allusion to "a woman known as the wife of al-Sharīfī" may provide valuable insight into some Ṣūfī networks that seem to have paid special attention to the conversion and spiritual education of slaves in Egypt at the time. On the one hand, the expression "the wife of al-Sharīfī" does not allow for a clear identification either of the lady or her husband. On the other hand, the husband's *nisba* al-Sharīfī might be linked to a *ṣaʿīdī* (Upper Egyptian) Ṣūfī milieu that is evoked in Ṣafī al-Dīn's *Risāla* within the impressive narrative on *Shaykh* Mufarrij (d. 648 AH/1250 CE);[55] The latter was an Ethiopian slave (*ʿabd ḥabashī,* whatever the adjective may actually mean)[56] who was suddenly turned into a Muslim saint by God's attraction (*jadhb*)[57] and whose saintly status was first acknowledged by the Upper Egyptian *shaykh* Ḥasan Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh of Qūṣ (d. 612 AH/1215–16 CE).[58] A *shaykh* called Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Sharīfī[59] is mentioned in this story among the followers of *Shaykh* Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Tanjī (d. 612 AH/1215–16 CE),[60] who was connected in turn with the spiritual master of *Shaykh* Ḥasan Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, the most-revered Upper Egyptian saint ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qināʾī (d. 592 AH/1196 CE).[61] So, *Shaykh* al-Sharīfī was somehow in contact with the network of *Shaykh* Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh of Qūṣ. For chronological reasons, the "wife of al-Sharīfī" mentioned by Ibn al-Mulaqqin was probably not the wife of *this* al-Sharīfī. Nevertheless, the lady might have been married to a younger member of the Sharīfī family, and thus might have been part of the same Ṣūfī environment. In addition, it is worth noting that al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī frequently visited Qūṣ, especially when travelling on the *ḥajj*, and that a *Shādhilī* network soon developed in the region, as is suggested by, among other things, the presence of the Persian *shaykh* Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (m. 688 AH/1290 CE), who probably was a disciple of al-Mursī.[62] All this might have allowed for contacts between the disciples of Abū l-Ḥasan al Shādhilī and those of Abū l-Ḥasan Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh.

4. The allusion to a meeting between Yāqūt and *Shaykh* al-Shādhilī sounds puzzling, because the latter died in 656 AH/1258 CE when Yāqūt was probably not more than six or seven years old (given that he is described as being an octogenarian in 732 AH/1332 CE, Yāqūt

would have been born around 650 AH/1252 CE). On the one hand, child enslavement being a common practice at the time, one may not exclude the possibility that Yāqūt was brought to Egypt when still a child. On the other hand, the solution to this puzzle is probably to be found in the domain of hagiography rather than that of "fact history." Hagiographically speaking, at least two explanations could be given for this chronological difficulty: either Yāqūt was attributed with an early spiritual vocation (a common element in hagiographical literature) thus meeting al-Shādhilī (by physical or purely spiritual means) when he was still a child, or Yāqūt's meeting with *Shaykh* al-Shādhilī was supposed to have occurred beyond the veil of the latter's physical death. This second option would be plausible, hagiographically speaking, because interaction between the living and the dead (especially saints) is a *topos* in Ṣūfī literature. In this case, such preternatural dialogue between the living would-be-disciple (Yāqūt) and the deceased *shaykh* (al-Shādhilī) might easily be imagined as taking place at the latter's tomb in Ḥumaytharā. In Ṣūfī traditions, a saint's tomb is in fact a favorite place for meeting its "owner," as is also shown also by later narratives on Yāqūt's dialogue with *Shaykh* al-Badawī at the latter's tomb in Ṭanṭā (see below).

5. Although Ibn al-Mulaqqin does not say where Yāqūt's emancipation took place, several elements in this account suggest that this anecdote was located in Upper Egypt. In addition to the elements discussed above (see point 3, above), it is worth noting that Yāqūt's request of association with *Shaykh* al-Mursī is related to the context of pilgrimage (*ḥajj*), which both he and al-Shādhilī used to perform via the Red Sea route, going from Cairo south to the Upper Egyptian port of Aydhab (close to Ḥumaytharā, where al-Shādhilī died and was buried). By the way, this was also the main route for slave imports from Ethiopia into Egypt at the time.[63] In such a framework, it would make sense to imagine an Upper Egyptian location for the first period that Yāqūt spent in Egypt.

6. Although this reconstruction is largely based on speculation, this may at least stimulate further studies on the *Shādhiliyya* presence in Upper Egypt, as well as the possible existence of an (Upper) Egyptian

Ṣūfī network that was particularly sensitive to the spiritual destiny of slaves.

7. Al-Mursī's alleged description of his disciple as "the pigeon-blood ruby" (*al-yāqūt al-bahramānī*) was an important element in the making of Yāqūt's saintly status. In medieval Arabic sources, the mineral *yāqūt* was ascribed exceptional medical properties (such as repelling pestilence vapors or preventing epilepsy) and great talismanic powers. In particular, it would "attract divine favors" on the wearer and gain him "reverence among people and high regard by kings."[64] All these characteristics being quite appropriate for a saint, the meaning of al-Mursī's metaphor is transparent. Moreover, by comparing his disciple to the specific variety *yāqūt bahrāmanī* (i.e., the finest variety of this precious mineral), al-Mursī was placing him in the highest rank among saints, thus endorsing him as the future pole of the time (*quṭb al-zamān*).

8. However, Ibn al-Mulaqqin's most important contribution to the process of Yāqūt's sanctity building is probably the sentence attributed to *Shaykh* Makīn al-Dīn al-Asmar: "I saw the light of sanctity (*nūr al-walāya*) on him." Although the exact interpretation of the notion of *nūr al-walāya* is outside the scope of this article, it is worth noting that Makīn al-Dīn al-Asmar was a well-renowned *Shādhili* Ṣūfī master and *Mālikī* jurist (*faqīh*). In particular, he is described in many sources as one of the closest companions of both al-Shādhilī and al-Mursī, and was highly appreciated by Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh himself (see below). Thus, attributing full recognition of Yāqūt's saintly status to such a revered figure was a crucial operation in the building of a *Shādhilī* collective memory. In particular, in the light of the respectful attitude that Ibn al-Mulaqqin also shows to Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, the reference to al-Makīn's endorsement of Yāqūt seems to express a "conciliatory" tendency on the issue of the *Shādhilī* spiritual heritage.

9. Ibn al-Mulaqqin's report on *Shaykh* Makīn al-Dīn al-Asmar acknowledging Yāqūt's sanctity is also interesting from a sociological viewpoint. *Shaykh* Makīn al-Dīn was in fact a dark-skinned person, as is suggested by his sobriquet *al-asmar* (lit. "the brown") and confirmed by a meaningful passage of Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's *Laṭāʾif*

al-minan, where *Shaykh* Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī is reported as saying: "His [Makīn al-Dīn's] color (*lawn*) is brown (*asmar*), his heart (*qalb*) is white (*abyaḍ*)."[65] In the medieval Egyptian context, the term *asmar*, indicating a lighter shade of darkness than *aswad* (black), was commonly applied to those populations (e.g., the Nubians) who were perceived as lighter-complexioned subgroups of *Sūdān* ("blacks"; see below). The category *Sūdān* also included Ethiopians, and all of these populations were the main "reservoir" of (mostly nonmilitary) slaves in medieval Egypt. In this framework, the fact that an *asmar shaykh* is reported as endorsing a *ḥabashī* slave as a saint might be of some significance in terms of social representations on ethnicity, slavery, and phenotypic diversity.[66]

Shaykh Yāqūt in Ninth Century AH/Fifteenth Century CE Sources

During the ninth century AH/fifteenth century CE *Shaykh* Yāqūt was the object of some laudatory comments in several historical works and biographical collections. In general, these notices are short and do not provide any substantial contribution to the development of the *shaykh*'s hagiographic image. However, some elements are worth mentioning:

1. Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī (d. 845 AH/1442 CE) provides a favorable albeit brief and stereotyped obituary of Yāqūt in his *Kitāb al-sulūk*.[67] In this same work, he also mentions *Shaykh* Yāqūt in the obituary of his disciple Ibn al-Labbān. There, al-Maqrīzī briefly reports the latter's judicial misadventure (see above) and provides one of the earliest mentions of Yāqūt's sobriquet *al-ʿArshī*.[68]
2. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852 AH/1449 CE) quotes a witness according to whom Yāqūt used to present himself as "the one, among all created beings, who knew best [the meaning of] 'There is no god but God' (*lā ilāh illā Allāh*)."[69] However, the author does not provide any commentary on the statement, so it is not clear whether he intended to confirm Yāqūt's high spiritual rank or reproach him for haughtiness.

3. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH/1505 CE) draws a short but quite laudatory portrait of Yāqūt as a saint, and states that "people used to address him for prayers and blessings (*wa-kāna yuqṣad lil-duʿāʾ wa-l-tabarruk*).[70]"

4. Ibn Iyās (d. 930 AH/1523 CE) credits Yāqūt with several "miracles breaking the usual course of things (*karāmāt khāriqa*)." He also states that Yāqūt was "an Ethiopian slave (*ʿabd ḥabashī*)."[71] This is one of the few mentions of the *shaykh*'s enslavement in sources earlier than al-Munāwī.

What Mamluk Sources Do Not Tell Us about Yāqūt

Yāqūt "Before *Shaykh* Yāqūt": A Neglected Dimension

Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī's status as one of al-Mursī's disciples (even, perhaps, his favorite one) and a most influential *Shādhilī shaykh* in his own right is clearly attested to by the earliest sources analyzed for this article. But, none of those sources provide any information about Yāqūt's life before his becoming a Ṣūfī. In particular, Yāqūt's enslavement is not mentioned by any author prior to Ibn al-Mulaqqin (d. 804 AH/1401 CE). In the same vein, the early sources do not show any interest in Yāqūt's geographic and ethnic origin. Strictly speaking, nobody before Ibn Iyās (d. 930 AH/1523 CE) provides the explicit qualification of Yāqūt as an Ethiopian slave (*ʿabd ḥabashī*). In the light of the great importance these elements of the *shaykh*'s biography are given in the works of al-Shaʿrānī and al-Munāwī and the ensuing hagiographic narratives from Ottoman times till today, such silence seems puzzling.

However, this does not necessarily call into question the now traditional image of Yāqūt as a former slave of Ethiopian origin. In particular, the silence of the earliest sources on such relevant issues may be explained by more than one reason. First, most of these early authors were part of the *Shādhilī* network and were therefore more interested in defining Yāqūt's position and spiritual authority within the network rather than in reconstructing his material biography. As for other sources, such as Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, a major reason

for not providing information on the *shaykh*'s origin and his enslavement might have been that such information could be easily inferred from the *shaykh*'s name "Yāqūt" and his *nisba* "al-Ḥabashī," as we shall endeavor to show in the following paragraph.

"Yāqūt" as a Slave Name

The word *yāqūt*, designating the precious mineral corundum in all its varieties (from red, that is ruby, to yellow, blue, and green),[72] seemed to have been employed as a typical name for slaves in the Islamic world of the Middle Ages. In general, enslaved persons were usually renamed by their masters, in order to mark the process of deracination and depersonalization implied by enslavement. Such practice being observed "almost universally,"[73] slave names tended to follow recurrent patterns according to different cultural and religious contexts.[74] If the "slave onomasticon" in the Islamic world is still a largely unexplored field of research, the use of "Yāqūt" as a slave name is well-documented for Mamluk Egypt, as David Ayalon pointed out in his now classic study on "The Eunuchs in the Mamluk Sultanate," where he also analyzed the most common name patterns applied to eunuchs, often designating luxury items or physical or moral qualities.[75] Far beyond eunuchs, however, similar name patterns applied to virtually all sorts of slaves at the time, as is suggested in a recent study by Craig Perry, based on slave documents from the Cairo Genizah:

> Slave names reveal patterns that fit into a tripartite typology. In the first category are slaves with names that conveyed socio-economic status and well-being. As a case in point, the most frequently attested slave name in the Genizah corpus is Success (*Tawfīq*). . . . A second category of slave names encompasses myriad variations on the themes of luxury and sensuality. . . . While these names are most commonly given to female slaves, male slaves also bear names of luxury items such as Pearl (*Durrī*) and Turquoise (*Fayrūz*). A third category of slave names is distinguished by its emphasis on personal qualities that had cultural resonance and prestige.[76]

The name "Yāqūt," though not explicitly mentioned by Perry, fits perfectly into the category of luxury item names.

Also, evidence for the use of "Yāqūt" as a slave name in the medieval Islamic world outside Mamluk Egypt is provided by such historical figures as the calligrapher Yāqūt al-Mustaʿṣimī (ca. 618–98 AH/1221–98 CE) and the geographer Yāqūt al-Rūmī (d. 626 AH/1229 CE), the author of *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, both of them slaves. The former was, more precisely, a eunuch of the last ʿAbbasid Caliph al-Mustaʿṣim bi-llāh (hence his *nisba* al-Mustaʿṣimī).[77] As for Yāqūt al-Rūmī (also known as al-Ḥamawī), he was enslaved when a child and brought from the Byzantine territories to Baghdād, where he was in the service of a merchant, al-ʿAskar al-Ḥamawī (hence his additional *nisba*).[78] Another namesake that is worth mentioning is al-Maqrīzī's slave Abū l-Durr Yāqūt,[79] whose name evokes two luxury items at once, pearl (*durr*) and corundum (*yāqūt*).

The Erasure of Genealogy

Further evidence for *Shaykh* Yāqūt's former servile status is provided by the lack of genealogical markers (such as patronymics) in the earliest sources.[80] As for the *nasab* Ibn ʿAbd Allāh (lit. "son of ʿAbd Allāh"), which Yāqūt is given in some comparatively late sources (from Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī onwards), this would hardly be considered a real indication of the *shaykh*'s genealogy. Rather, it has to be seen as the usual formula adopted in the fictional genealogies of freed slaves, based in the notion that every human being is ultimately a "servant of God" (*ʿabd Allāh*) and thus "a son of a servant of God" (*ibn ʿabd Allāh*).[81] Such practice usually marked the freed slave's social re-emersion as a "person" in a context where genealogy continued to be important across the centuries.[82] As W. J. Sersen points out in his survey of slave proverbs in medieval Arabic sources, genealogical considerations often shaped presumptions on one's morality and respectability.[83] The lack of known and honorable "genealogies" was one of the main reasons behind stereotypes of slaves' alleged inclination toward immorality. In many a proverb, slaves are depicted as greedy, base, and untrustworthy, and they are said to be haughty if given the chance. Accordingly, masters were recommended to treat them

with contempt or disdain: "Dear to a slave is the one who overworks him," says the sixth-century AH/twelfth-century CE century writer al-Maydānī.[84] In particular, masters were recommended not to educate slaves, because this would be either impossible or counterproductive: "The worst [use of] money is the education of slaves."[85]

As Sersen points out, these views are at odds with most of the *ḥadīth*s concerning slavery, such as those stating that "slaves are the brothers of the Muslims" and "that they must be treated well."[86] Such a discrepancy is only one of the many expressions of the underlying tension between "ethnic" and "ethical" understandings of the religious message that may be observed in Arabic and Islamic literature throughout the Middle Ages. This tension is especially exemplified by the century-long debate on the reasons and implications of phenotypic diversity among human beings (this is briefly outlined below).

Yāqūt as al-Ḥabashī: (Really) Ethiopian or (Simply) Dark-Complexioned?

In all of the sources analyzed for this article (including the Ottoman ones), *Shaykh* Yāqūt is consistently called "al-Ḥabashī," an adjective whose basic meaning was connected "to the land and people of Ethiopia, and at times to the adjoining areas of the Horn of Africa."[87] However, one might wonder whether the term *al-Ḥabashī,* in this case, was used with this specific meaning or with a more general one. Several terms connected to "Africa," in fact, were affected by wide semantic fluctuations in medieval Arabic sources.

In general, inhabitants of Sub-Saharan Africa were usually divided into four main ethnic groups, each of them associated to specific regions (*bilād*). Namely, the Zanj, on the eastern coast of Africa from south of Zaylaʿ or Mogadishu to Sofala (*Ṣufālat al-Zanj*); the Nūba, in the Nile Valley from the first cataract to the merging point of Blue and White Niles; the *Sūdān*, from west of Dunqula towards the Atlantic coast and the unknown southernmost Africa; the Ḥabasha, whose country was usually "located" on the Ethiopian plateau and the coastal area on the Red Sea.

In spite of this basic division, however, the relevant terms were often

given broader meanings. In particular, the word *Sūdān* (lit. "Blacks") was commonly used as a comprehensive label for all African populations. Also, in connection with the Biblical genealogies of the descendants of Noah, which were commonly accepted in Islamic medieval culture, the word *Sūdān* even applied to the whole category of the "sons of Ḥām (b. Nūḥ)," thus including Ḥabasha, Copts, Berbers, Nabateans, and even some Indian populations.[88] In a similar vein, the term *Ḥabasha* "applied to a vast area of uncertain limits, sometimes supposed to extend all the way between East and West Africa."[89] Moreover, the regions referred to as *Bilād al-Sūdān* and/or *Bilād al-Ḥabasha* being the main reservoirs of slaves for medieval Islamic world, the terms *Sūdānī* and *Ḥabashī* could apply, without distinction, to any (African) slave disregarding his/her geographical or ethnic origin (a trace of this situation is found in the use of the word *Ḥabashī* as a general term for slave in premodern India).[90]

According to some scholars, this tendency to semantic fluctuation would have been so widespread that the concerned terms would have lost any precise ethnic or geographical meaning. In particular, Emeri Van Donzel, relying on Gernot Rotter's pioneering studies on the position of "blacks" in medieval Arab-Muslim societies, argued that "*Ḥabash* only very rarely indicates a real Ethiopian" and that "it does not seem useful to distinguish between *Ḥabash* and *Sūdān*" in medieval Arabic sources.[91]

However, considerations on the semantic instability of such terms as *Ḥabashī* and *Bilād al-Ḥabasha* would not justify any radical skepticism about traditional indications of Yāqūt's ethnic and geographic origin. In fact, the generic meaning of the word *Ḥabash(a)* never replaced the original meaning connected to the Ethiopian region. As far as writers contemporary with *Shaykh* Yāqūt are concerned, both generic and specific uses of these terms are attested. On the one hand, Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī (d. 749 AH/1349 CE) refers *Ḥabasha* and related words to a wide range of Muslim, Christian, and Animist populations stretching from historic Ethiopia to the southern borders of Egypt.[92] On the other hand, Shams al-Dīn al-Ṣūfī al-Dimashqī (d. 727 AH/1327 CE) applies these terms only to non-Muslim populations of the Ethiopian regions (including both Christian and "pagan" states).[93]

Thus, it seems that the aforementioned tendency to semantic fluctuation notwithstanding, the basic meaning of *Ḥabasha* and related words remained

anchored to the "original" region, especially for writers who lived in areas and times characterized by constant commercial and political exchange with Ethiopia.

Indeed, this seems to have been the case with Mamluk and Ottoman Egypt. If the difference between such terms as *aswad* (black) and *asmar* (brown) clearly refers to phenotypic distinctions, some geo-ethnic expressions such as *Nūbī* and *Ḥabashī* are clearly used as distinct terms in some relevant sources, for instance in the slave documents from the Cairo Genizah studied by Perry.[94] On the other hand, it is only in much later sources, such as the nineteenth-century slave documents from Cairo Islamic courts (*maḥākim sharʿiyya*) studied by Terence Walz, that the term *ḥabashī* is used with a merely phenotypic connotation, as opposed to *aswad* and *asmar* in a triadic system of adjectives indicating slaves' outward appearances.[95] For these reasons, one may argue that at the time of Yāqūt the word *Ḥabashī* was still indicating, at least in most cases, an actual Ethiopian origin.

Hypothesis on Yāqūt's Original Religious Identity

All the sources we were able to access are silent on Yāqūt's life "before he *became* Yāqūt," i.e., before his enslavement and probable renaming. As a consequence, there is no information on Yāqūt's religious identity before his conversion to Islam. However, the most probable assumption is that he was an animist, in Islamic terms a *majūs*. In fact, due to limitations imposed by Islamic law on the enslavement of *dhimmī*s living in Muslim Ethiopian principalities (except in case of war prisoners), as well as Muslim merchants' evident interest in maintaining good relations with the rulers of the Christian Ethiopian kingdom, it was mostly "animist" Ethiopians who were imported as slaves into the Islamic world. As Taddesse Tamrat shows in his famous study on church and state in medieval Ethiopia, Christian political (and, at times, religious) authorities were ready to collaborate with Muslim slave traders (on the condition that the "selling goods" be not Christian) even during periods of harsh political and even military confrontation with neighboring Muslim states.[96] Regarding *Shaykh* Yāqūt's lifetime, it is worth noting that, despite the intense process of Christian *reconquista* led by the Solomonid

Ethiopian king ʿAmda Ṣeyon (r. 1314–44 CE), "Muslim merchants carried on their relationships with Egypt, Yemen and Iraq," included in slave trade, "in the name" of this Christian king "and to his profit."[97] On the other hand, trade in Christian slaves is attested to in both Ethiopian and Arabic medieval sources, be it with local ("illegal") cooperation or as a consequence of the capture of war prisoners.[98] For these reasons, no conclusive statement can be made on Yāqūt's original religion, although the "Animistic hypothesis" remains the most plausible one.

The Ottoman Layer: The Final Making of Shaykh Yāqūt's Image

ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī and the Foundations of Yāqūt's Hagiographic Vulgata

In the first decades of the Ottoman domination in Egypt, the Egyptian Ṣūfī writer ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973 AH/1565 CE) provided a full-fledged bio-hagiographic narrative on Yāqūt that deeply influenced the "making" of Yāqūt's historical and hagiographic image in the following centuries. In his *Ṭabaqāt kubrā*, in particular, al-Shaʿrānī presents "Sīdī Yāqūt al-ʿArshī" as "an *imām* in knowledge of divine things (*al-maʿārif*), God-worshipping and ascetic (*ʿābid zāhid*)" and "one of the loftiest (*ajall*) men among those who were initiated by *Shaykh* Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Mursī." Furthermore, he provides some biographic and hagiographical details that are meant to show that Yāqūt was predestined to become a great saint under the guidance of *Shaykh* al-Mursī. On the very day that Yāqūt was born in "the country of the Abyssinians/Ethiopians (*bilād al-Ḥabasha*), *Shaykh* al-Mursī, while in Alexandria, foretold of Yāqūt's eventual association with the *Shādhiliyya*: "[On that day], Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Mursī made an *ʿaṣīda* [a thick sweet paste with butter or honey] for him [Yāqūt], although it was summer in Alexandria. So, he was told [by his disciples]: "Indeed, the *ʿaṣīda* is only for winter!," but he replied: "This is the *ʿaṣīda* for your brother Yāqūt, who was born in the country of the Abyssinians [today], and will come to you [one day]. And things went [exactly] as he [*Shaykh* al-Mursī] had foretold."[99] *Shaykh* Yāqūt's divine

election is confirmed by his charismatic power of intercession, as shown by two anecdotes that have since become integral parts of Yāqūt's hagiography.

In the first anecdote, the *shaykh* intercedes (*shafaʿa*) in favor of his disciple Ibn al-Labbān before the (deceased) *Shaykh* Aḥmad al-Badawī:

> [*Shaykh* Yāqūt] was the one who interceded (*shafaʿa*) in favor of *Shaykh* Shams al-dīn Ibn al-Labbān, when the latter had made unfavorable statements (*ankara*) on Sīdī Aḥmad al-Badawī . . . and [al-Badawī] had deprived him [Ibn al-Labbān] of his science (*ʿilm*) and his spiritual state (*ḥāl*). This happened after Ibn al-Labbān had asked for mediation (*tawassala*) from all the saints of his time (*jamīʿ awliyāʾ ʿaṣri-hi*) but Sīdī Aḥmad al-Badawī had not accepted their intercession (*shifāʿa*) for Ibn al-Labbān. Then [*Shaykh* Yāqūt] went from Alexandria to Sīdī Aḥmad [meaning, to his shrine, which is in Ṭantā], and asked him to change his feelings towards Ibn al-Labbān [from bad] into good and to return his spiritual state back to him. [Sīdī Aḥmad] answered Yāqūt and returned Ibn al-Labbān his state.[100]

The second anecdote is meant to show that *Shaykh* Yāqūt "used to intercede (*kāna yashfaʿu*) even in favor of animals (*fī l-ḥayawānāt*)":

> Once, a dove (*yamāma*) came to him and perched on his shoulder, while he was sitting in the circle of the "poors (in God)" (*fuqarāʾ*, i.e., the Ṣūfīs). She whispered something into his ear, and he told her: "In God's name, we (*plurale maiestatis*) will send one of the poor in God with you." But she objected: "No one except you would suffice to me." Then, he [immediately] mounted on his female-mule (*baghla*) and rode from Alexandria to Old Cairo (*Miṣr al-ʿatīqa*) without stopping until he reached the mosque of ʿAmr (Ibn al-ʿĀṣ). [Then], he told [those who were there]: "Let me meet with muezzin So-and-So (*Fulān al-muʾadhdhin*)." They sent the muezzin [to him]. The *shaykh* . . . told him: "This dove informed me in Alexandria that you kill (*tudhabbiḥ*) her young birds (*firākh*) every time she hatches in the minaret." The *muezzin* replied: "She told the truth. I killed them more than once." And the *shaykh* said:

"Don't do it anymore." The muezzin replied: "I repented to God the Most High." Then the *shaykh* . . . went back to Alexandria.[101]

Both anecdotes are instrumental to depict Yāqūt (implicitly but transparently, for a Ṣūfī-oriented readership) as the spiritual "pole" of his time (*quṭb al-zamān*). In particular, al-Shaʿrānī stresses the exclusive power of intercession that Yāqūt is given by God. The dove does not want anyone to intercede for her but the *shaykh*, because she knows that nobody else's intervention would be effective ("No one except you would suffice to me"). In a similar vein, the deceased *Shaykh* Aḥmad al-Badawī accepts Yāqūt's intercession in favor of Ibn al-Labbān after rejecting all other living saints of the time.[102] All this suggests that Yāqūt was acting as the "universal reliever" (*al-ghawth al-kullī*), i.e., that he was in condition to protect (and to intercede for) every created being. In most Ṣūfī traditions, of which the *Shādhiliyya* is one, this was one of the main prerogatives of the "pole of the time" (*quṭb al-zamān*). Al-Shaʿrānī's explanations for Yāqūt's sobriquet *al-ʿArshī* (roughly "the Man of the Throne") are part of the same hagiographic strategy, as they imply Yāqūt's direct experience of the realm of God's throne (*al-ʿarsh*), that is another prerogative of the *quṭb al-zamān* in Ṣūfī (and especially *Shādhilī*) literature: "He was called *al-ʿArshī* because his heart (*qalb*) was constantly beneath (*taḥta*) God's throne (*al-ʿarsh*), whereas his body (*jasad*) only was on Earth. It is also said that (he was given that nickname) because he was listening to the call for prayer (*adhān*) of the Angels Bearing the Throne of God (*ḥamalat al-ʿarsh*)."[103] In this light, al-Shaʿrānī's indication that Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's was Yāqūt's disciple (*tilmīdh*) after al-Mursī's death seems to confirm that the author considered Yāqūt the true "heir" of al-Mursī.[104]

For these reasons, al-Shaʿrānī's narrative marked a turning-point in the process of the Yāqūt's "sanctity-building" by laying the foundations of a full-fledged hagiographic picture of the *shaykh*. Because most elements of al-Shaʿrānī's narrative are not found in any of the earlier sources we could access, one may wonder where he could have taken them from. Needless to say, answering such a question is impossible at the present state of our research. Nevertheless, one may easily argue that al-Shāʿrānī, who associated himself with various Ṣūfī groups,[105] might have had access to some earlier traditions that were still circulating, in oral or written form, in some *Shādhilī*

circles at his time. In particular, it is possible that al-Shaʿrānī's "personal contacts with the *shaykh*s of the Wafāʾiyya order and family"[106] might have provided him some Wafāʾī traditions enhancing Yāqūt's rank above that of Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh. In fact, some spiritual lineages of the Wafāʾiyya did connect the *ṭarīqa*'s eponymous master, *Shaykh* Muḥammad Wafāʾ (d. 765 AH/1363 CE), to *Shaykh* Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī (instead of *Shaykh* Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh) via *Shaykh* Dāwūd Ibn Bākhilā (or Mākhilā; d. 733 AH/1333 CE).[107]

In this framework, even al-Shaʿrānī's flagrant "mistake" in dating Yāqūt's death to 707 AH/1307 CE might be regarded as an indication that he was probably relying on sources different from those known to us. Be that as it may, al-Shaʿrānī's narrative on Yāqūt did pave the way for the emersion (or the re-emersion) of a "pro-Yāqūt" narrative on the origins of the *Shādhiliyya* concurrent to the dominating pro-Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh narrative.

ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Munāwī and the "Social Turn" in Yāqūt's Hagiography

A few decades after al-Shaʿrānī, it was another Egyptian Ṣūfī writer, ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Munāwī (d. 1031 AH/1622 CE),[108] who provided a major contribution to the development of the hagiographic *vulgata* on *Shaykh* Yāqūt.[109] In his collection of Ṣūfī biographies, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya,* al-Munāwī relies on al-Shaʿrānī's account but he enriches it with several other anecdotes, most of which are not found in any of the earlier sources. In doing this, al-Munāwī draws on the two main traditions along which Yāqūt's portrait eventually evolved:

First, Al-Munāwī insists upon Yāqūt's divine election, even more explicitly than al-Shaʿrānī had done. He presents Yāqūt as the "loftiest disciple (*ajall talāmīdh*)" of al-Mursī, and he directly attributes Yāqūt's nickname *al-ʿArshī* to *Shaykh* al-Mursī's initiative.[110]

Also, al-Munāwī repeats al-Shaʿrānī's narrative on al-Mursī's miraculous information on Yāqūt's birth almost verbatim, but he introduces a slight but meaningful change. In al-Munāwī's version, *Shaykh* al-Mursī, when speaking to his disciples about their future fellow Yāqūt, refers to him as "my son" (*waladī*), instead of "your brother" (*akhī-kum*) as it was in al-Shaʿrānī's

account: "This is the *ʿaṣīda* of my son (*waladī*) Yāqūt."[111] Such a shift seems meant to position Yāqūt as al-Mursī's favorite disciple and his spiritual heir. This is confirmed by the information on Yāqūt acting as Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's spiritual master that al-Mursī also repeats from al-Shaʿrānī.[112]

In addition to all this, al-Munāwī provides a most interesting piece of information, which I have not found in al-Shaʿrānī or earlier sources, and that became an intrinsic part of Yāqūt's hagiography: "Yāqūt got married to *Shaykh* al-Mursī's daughter, at the latter's request (*wa-tazawwaja ibnat shaykhi-hi al-Mursī bi-suʾāli-hi*)."[113] Al-Munāwī describes the marital relationship as a purely spiritual one, based on Yāqūt's extreme respect for his master: "She lived with him for eighteen years, and he never [sexually] approached her, out of deference (*ḥayāʾ*) towards her father. He separated from her only because of death, and she was still virgin (*bikr*) [when she died]."[114] Such a respectful attitude was confirmed by an anecdote in which Yāqūt gives precedence to his wife over a socially prominent guest, in line with Ṣūfī perceptions of proper relationships between spiritual and sociopolitical authorities: "Once one of the 'greats' [*al-akābir*] entered Yāqūt's place while he was talking to his wife and he did not want to interrupt her. Then he said [to his visitor]: '[She is] my *shaykh*s' daughter [*bint shaykhī*], excuse me!"[115]

Second, Al-Munāwī focuses his narrative on Yāqūt's condition as a former slave, thus turning this into a key element in the evolution of Yāqūt's hagiographical portrait. First, al-Munāwī reports a version on Yāqūt's association to al-Mursī that is completely different from Ibn al-Mulaqqin's. This new narrative directly links Yāqūt's enslavement to his predestination to become the *shaykh*'s spiritual heir:

A merchant (*tājir*) had purchased him [Yāqūt] with some [other] slaves [in Ethiopia]. While approaching Alexandria, the sea began to be rough and the ship was on the verge of sinking. So, his [Yāqūt's] owner vowed (*nadhara*) that, if he escaped [this danger], he would donate Yāqūt to al-Mursī. After entering the city of Alexandria, however, the owner found that Yāqūt had a skin infection (*ḥikka*). So he brought the *shaykh* [al-Mursī] another slave, but [the *shaykh*] rejected him, and said: "The slave whom I had chosen (*ʿayyantu-hu*) for [us] the poors in God (*al-fuqarāʾ*) is not this one." So, the owner brought Yāqūt before him, saying: "I had

avoided to bring him for no other reason than what you are seeing! [i.e., Yāqūt's infection]." [al-Mursī] replied: "This is the one whom [God's] Power (*al-qudra*) has promised to us! (*hādhā alladhī waʿadat-nā ʿalay-hi al-qudra*)."[116]

Such an anecdote even absorbs Yāqūt's enslavement into the sphere of a "miracle." Needless to say, this narrative pattern appears to be a trope. It may have been inspired by some general models such as the Qur'anic stories concerning Jonah (Yūnus), but also, and more important, by the figure of the eponymous master of the *Shādhiliyya*. In fact, one of the earliest and most famous miracles attributed to *Shaykh* Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī was his intervention to calm a tempest that was about to wreck his boat when he was traveling for the pilgrimage. According to pious traditions attested both in Ibn ʿAṭā' Allāh[117] and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (the latter, as we said above, quoting *Shaykh* Yāqūt),[118] it was on that occasion that the famous *Ḥizb al-Baḥr* ("Litany of the Sea" or "Litany of the Nile river," the word *baḥr* designating any large water mass) had been recited for the first time. So, followers of the *Shādhiliyya* attributed the Litany with a talismanic power from very early on and would recite it when boarding a ship. Therefore, such a narrative situation would sound particularly appropriate for supporting the idea that the concerned figure was "predestined" to become a *Shādhilī* Ṣūfi saint.

Moreover, al-Munāwī tells some anecdotes that appear to be directly connected to social representations of slaves and the relative value of ethics and genealogy. On two occasions, Yāqūt, the slave-turned-saint, is confronted by a *sharīf* (a descendant of the Prophet) who had gone astray from his forefathers' values. In the first episode, a *sharīf* wearing shabby clothes (*thiyāb raththa*) burns with indignation at seeing Yāqūt clothed in fine and expensive garments (*thiyāb ʿāliyya ghāliyya*). The Prophet's descendant harshly attacks the *shaykh* for what he feels as an intolerable inversion of "proper" social order based on ethnic and genealogical standards. Yāqūt, however, turns the *sharīf*'s arguments against him, by presenting one's ethics as the touchstone for one's real "genealogical belonging": "[Yāqūt] said: 'Maybe you have followed the way (*minhaj*) of my forefathers (*abā'iyyā*), so they considered you as one of them and transmitted you their [low] rank. And I [on the contrary] followed the way of your forefathers (*minhaj abā'i-ka*), so they considered me

as one of them and transmitted me their [high] rank."[119] In listening to such words, the *sharīf* "broke into tears (*bakā*) and asked for Yāqūt's pardon."[120] Also in the second anecdote, Yāqūt leads an arrogant *sharīf* to recognize the priority of ethics versus genealogy:

> A *sharīf* went to visit Yāqūt and saw that people were kissing the *shaykh*'s feet whereas they did not even pay attention to him [albeit he was a descendant of the Prophet]. So, he was upset in his soul for this. But Yāqūt told him: Verily, my trotters (*kawāriʿ*),[121] if they were cut off, would not be worth two *dirhams* on the market. But I have followed the pure way of your ancestors (*ṭarīq salafi-ka al-ṭāhir*), so I acquired their honor (*sharaf*). You, on the contrary, contradicted your ancestors' morals (*khālafta salafa-ka fī akhlāqi-him*) and indulged into vices (*radhā'il*), so you became despicable (*uhinta*). Then (at such words), the *sharīf* became silent, as he did not find anything to answer.[122]

Even more impressive, however, is Yāqūt's alleged confrontation with a Mamluk sultan called Ḥasan:[123]

> Sulṭan Ḥasan came from Fusṭāṭ (*Miṣr*) to visit (*ziyāra*) him [Yāqūt], but when he saw him, he thought to himself (*khaṭara ʿinda-hu*): "A Black slave (*ʿabd aswad*), has been given so much (honor)!?" Then, when [the Sultan] approached [the *shaykh*], the latter hit him seven times on his head, and told him: O, Ḥasan! *Verily, he is but a slave on whom We bestowed favors* (*Inna huwa illā ʿabd anʿamnā ʿalay-hi[124]*). And [after this episode] the Sultan lived [only] seven months.[125]

In this anecdote, Yāqūt is able to read the sultan's thoughts by means of mystical disclosure, a faculty with which Ṣūfī masters are often ascribed. Therefore, he chooses a Qur'anic quotation in order to remind the sultan that every human being is ultimately only a "slave" of God and that whatever one enjoys in one's life, including life itself, is nothing else than a favor from God. (Moreover, because this anecdote concerns a Mamluk sultan, one might even infer that such quotation would imply a specific allusion to the Sultan's condition as a former slave).

Once again, then, al-Munāwī presents Yāqūt as placing religious ethics in opposition to social stereotypes, which would have been in line with the general principle he ascribes to the *shaykh*: "Yāqūt used to say: 'The Ṣūfī (*al-faqīr*, lit. the poors [in God]) must honor people according to their religion (*dīn*), not according to their clothes.'[126] Sociological and hagiographical motifs are then interwoven in al-Munāwī's narrative on *Shaykh* Yāqūt al-Ḥabashi. By turning Yāqūt's enslavement into the first step of the latter's path to spiritual mastership, al-Munāwī clearly fits his narrative into a well-established literary *topos* that finds its first model in the Biblical and Qur'anic stories of Joseph.[127] This literary motif may be called "the happy enslavement *topos*"[128] and it informs several Islamic narratives in which one's enslavement is presented as the way God chooses to lead him/her to embrace the "religion of truth." Thus, al-Munāwī also engages in a dialogue with social representations of slavery and blackness circulating in Egyptian society at that time. In this framework, some texts concerning Ethiopians are worth evoking in order to draw a proper background for better understanding the sociological dimension of al-Munāwī's narrative on Yāqūt.

On Color and Slavery in Medieval Islam: The Hamitic versus Climatic Hypothesis

As William Sersen pointed out in his study on slave proverbs (see above), in spite of the potentially universal nature of the Islamic message, ethnic and social cleavages actually played an important role in shaping ideological representations and social practices in the Islamic world across the centuries. In addition, the religious divide itself produced new social and geopolitical cleavages and related sets of stereotyped representations, which were meant to provide justifications for dissymmetric power relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.

In this framework, it is worth mentioning that a debate went on among Islamic scholars for centuries, concerning the origins of ethnic differences and their possible religious, moral, and even intellectual implications, including the allegedly natural "enslavibility" of dark-complexioned people. In spite of the wide variety of positions that can be gleaned in different authors, two

fundamental attitudes may be outlined: 1) the so-called "Hamitic hypothesis" related blackness to Noah's curse on his son Ḥām and the latter's progeny; 2) the "climatic hypothesis," on the contrary, considered human complexions as dependent on climatic conditions, and saw blackness as the result of the extremely hot weather that characterizes the regions inhabited by the *Sūdān*.

The Hamitic hypothesis, which seems to have been mainstream in medieval Islamic culture, was grounded on some peculiar interpretations of a famous episode in the Bible (*Bereshit* 9:18–27) concerning Noah's curse on his son Ham and the latter's son Canaan:

> And the sons of Noah, that went forth from the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth; and Ham is the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah, and of these was the whole earth overspread. And Noah the husbandman began, and planted a vineyard. And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his youngest son had done unto him. And he said: Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be their servant. God enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be their servant.[129]

Although Noah's curse in the Bible concerns only Canaan (without any mention of the other sons of Ḥām's) and does not imply any kind of physical change either in Ḥām or his son(s), some late Jewish and early Christian interpretations, which were eventually largely accepted in Islamic culture, extended that curse to the whole of Ḥām's progeny, including Cush and his alleged descendants: the *Sūdān*.[130] In this framework, Noah's curse was often seen in Medieval Islamic culture as the explanation for both the *Sūdān*'s dark complexions and their allegedly natural, or better said, divinely ordered, enslavability. A very early expression of the Hamitic hypothesis was found,

according to third-century AH/ninth-century CE Baghdad intellectual Ibn Qutayba (d. 276 AH/889 CE), in first-century Arab writer Wahb b. Munabbih (d. before 110 AH/728 CE): "Ḥām, son of Noah (Nūḥ) was a white man, handsome in his face and his complexion. God changed Ḥām's color following the curse (on him) by his father Noah. Ḥām left (his father), followed by his sons. . . . They gave origin to the *Sūdān*. . . . Ḥām had generated Kūsh, Kanʿān, and Fūṭ. The latter . . . settled in Hind and Sind, that his posterity populated. As for Kush and Kanʿan, the following races of *Sūdān* descended from them: Nūba, Zandj, Fuzān (ou Ḳarān), Zaghāwa, Ḥabasha, Ḳibt [Copts] and Barbar."[131] In third century AH/ninth century CE, the Hamitic hypothesis was overtly rejected by the great writer al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 AH/869 CE). In his *Fahkr al-Sūdān ʿalā al-Baydān* (The Boasts of the Dark-Skinned Ones over the Light-Skinned Ones), al-Jāḥiẓ provides a full-fledged naturalistic explanation of differences in skin color and physical complexion among populations, which he attributes to the peculiarities of locality, such as water, soil, and the proximity and intensity of the sun.[132]

In the following centuries, however, the Hamitic hypothesis apparently remained in the mainstream, although the climatic one was supported by some important intellectuals, such as the Ḥanbalī theologian Ibn al-Jawzī (d. ca. 597 AH/1200 CE), who also emphasized that differences among Muslims depend on their morals and not on their outward appearances,[133] and the "proto-sociologist," Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808 AH/1406 CE), who worked out a more complex climatic theory than al-Jāḥiẓ.[134]

The Ethiopian Exception

Complex Views on Ethiopians in Late Mamluk and Ottoman Times

As far as non-Muslim Ethiopians (*Ḥabasha*) were concerned, various ethnic, social, and religious factors interplayed in producing different and sometimes conflicting representations in Muslim "collective imagery." On the one hand, the image of the *Ḥabasha* benefitted from well-known traditions of mostly favorable attitudes that their ancient countrymen would have shown to Prophet Muḥammad and his Companions, both in Mecca and

Medina (conversion of Bilāl and some other Ethiopian slaves) and in *Bilād al-Ḥabasha* itself, especially for stories about the Negus's friendly welcome and protection of Muslim "refugees" in 614–15 CE and his alleged conversion to Islam.[135] On the other hand, the *Ḥabasha* were also considered to be a subgrouping of blacks (*Sūdān*) and therefore their image was affected by derogatory stereotypes concerning this broader category. In case of *Ḥabasha* slaves, moreover, their social image was also deeply influenced by such negative presumptions as those expressed in the slave proverbs examined above. In some writers, such tension between positive and negative representations resulted in what may be called an "exceptionalist" attitude, meaning that Ethiopians were credited with an exceptional standing among dark-skinned people, but in the framework of a general preference for light-skinned people over all other human groups. This was the case, in particular, with some authors from the ninth century AH/fourteenth century CE and the tenth AH/sixteenth century CE, such as Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, Ibn ʿAbd al-Bāqī, and ʿAlī Ibn Muṣṭafā. Their works do provide us with valuable indications for better contextualizing al-Munāwī's narrative on Yāqūt as an Ethiopian slave.

Al-Suyūṭī and the Extolling of the Ethiopians: An Exceptionalist Attitude?

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī was a prolific writer in different religious sciences. Although his short biography of Yāqūt does not contain any reference to slaves and/or blacks, al-Suyūṭī's ideas on such issues are expressed in several works, some of which specifically deal with dark-skinned people.[136] Needless to say, proper appreciation of these ideas would require an in-depth analysis of al-Suyūṭī's wide and varied literary production.[137] However, some elements in his works seem to show what may be called an "exceptionalist" attitude towards Ethiopians. In his *Rafʿ shaʾn al-ḥubshān* (The Extolling of Ethiopians), in particular, al-Suyūṭī's praises the merits that God bestowed on *Ḥabasha* and enhances some outstanding Ethiopian figures in Muslim history, but this does not imply any idea of equality among different ethnic groups. On the contrary, al-Suyūṭī opens his book stating that differences among populations depend on God's preference for some of them ("Praise

be to Allah Who preferred some people to others"[138]) and he explicitly supports the Hamitic hypothesis: "As for what Ibn al-Jawzī denied [meaning that Noah's curse on Ham caused his descendants to become "black"], Ibn Jarīr [al-Ṭabarī] published it in his History . . . on the authority of Ibn Isḥāq."[139]

Ibn ʿAbd al-Bāqī : Population Disparity as God's Eternal Decree

Roughly a century after al-Suyūṭī, a clear-cut exceptionalist attitude is expressed in the work "on the Good Qualities of the Ethiopians," written in 991 AH/1583–84 CE by the jurist Ibn ʿAbd al-Bāqī al-Bukhārī al-Makkī. This treatise, "providing evidence of the merits of the melancholy and the cheerful Ethiopians, the slave-girls . . . and the male servants, who themselves are the eminent amongst the servants" is dedicated to the *sharīf* (governor) of Makka, Abū al-Naṣr Ḥusayn Ibn Barakāt, because "most of his slaves (*ʿabīd*), eunuchs (*khadam*) and attendants (*mulāzimūn*) are honorable Ethiopians." The first lines of the book are worth quoting:

> Praise be to Allāh who created man from a clay of moulded mud and preferred some of them to others. The disparity between them was like the distance between the sky and the earth. Each group [however] praises and pleases [Allāh]. . . . He made them servants and masters, rulers and ruled. Allāh distinguished some of the descendants of Noah . . . with prophethood and mastership (*khilāfa*) and He predestined (*kataba*) servitude (*ʿubūdiyya*) and slavery (*istirqāq*) for some of them until the Day of Resurrection. So there is no amendment nor recension to His decree. But He blessed some of the servants (*mawālī*) with distinction by which they became masters (*mawālī*). He distinguished a group of Ethiopians with grace (*saʿāda*), leadership (*siyāda*) and faith—like Luqmān the Sage, Bilāl, Shuqrān, al-Najāshī, Mihjaʿ[140] and others who believed [in Him] and adhered [to Islam].[141]

Within such a theoretical framework, the author's praise of some exceptional individuals or groups distinguished by God with special graces from the vast

mass of the populations predestined to servitude and slavery, is nothing but a confirmation of such divinely ordered social organization.

ʿAlī Ibn Muṣṭafā: Exceptionalism and Social Mobility

Such exceptionalist representations as those mentioned above played a complex social function. On the one hand, they provided servants with ideological justifications for the discrimination they suffered, thus making them more ready to accept their purported destiny in the context of an allegedly divinely ordered unbalance of powers among different human groups. On the other hand, those representations also stimulated servants to actively participate in the unequal social fabric by providing them with some models of acceptable social mobility inside the established order. In this framework, narratives on exceptional individuals from among the predestined servants worked as success stories in which one's (material and/or spiritual) emancipation was achieved by way of full compliance with the established social and religious rules. At times, a success story of this kind could even concern to the dedicatee of the book: at the end of tenth century AH/sixteenth century CE, for instance, ʿAlī Ibn Muṣṭafā dedicated his *Mirʾat al-Ḥubush fī l-uṣūl* (Mirroring of the Ethiopians in the [Religious] Sources) to the "the most generous of them [the Ethiopians] in the service of Constantinople" meaning "His Eminence Muṣṭafā Aghā b. ʿAbd al-Manār[142] who is honored with service to the greatest of the Ottomans: . . . the Sultan of Sultans . . . Aḥmad Khān."[143]

Al-Munāwī's Attitude toward Ethiopians: Between Exceptionalism and Moral Equality?

As we saw before, al-Munāwī's narrative on Yāqūt may certainly be classified as a slave success story, especially because of the intimate connection al-Munāwī established between Yāqūt's enslavement and his predestination to become *Shaykh* al-Mursī's disciple and a Ṣūfī master in his own right. Nevertheless, some elements of this narrative, such as the attitudes

attributed to Yāqūt in his confrontations with the *sharīfs* and the sulṭan, lead us to further elaborate on al-Munāwī's ideas on blackness and slavery. Indeed, such elements suggest that al-Munāwī was contesting widespread derogatory representations of blacks and advocating for the priority of ethics over ethnic, genealogical, and social distinctions. In this framework, al-Munāwī seems to consider the slave–master relationship an essentially pedagogical one, focused on the slave's spiritual and religious education. In fact, he stresses al-Mursī's engagement in educating Yāqūt since the beginning of their relationship: "The *shaykh* educated (*rabbā*) him (Yāqūt) and initiated him on the Way (*sallaka-hu*), then he authorized him (*adhana-hu*) to provide spiritual education to others (*tarbiyya*)."[144] With such a description, al-Munāwī not only shows how the master–slave relationship between al-Mursī and Yāqūt gradually evolved into one of a *shaykh* and a disciple, but he also implicitly criticizes widespread assumptions against slave education (such as those mentioned by Sersen; see above).

In this light, even al-Munāwī's account on Yāqūt's marriage with al-Mursī's daughter might carry a sociological meaning. In fact, emancipated slaves were not infrequently married daughters of their former owners[145] in order to mark their affiliation to the family. Therefore, in attributing to *Shaykh* al-Mursī the decision to marry his daughter to Yāqūt, the author not only reinforces the latter's legitimacy as al-Mursī's spiritual heir, but he also implicitly depicts al-Mursī's relationship to Yāqūt as an ideal master–slave relationship.

Indeed, the two dimensions of al-Mursī's mastership over Yāqūt (social and spiritual) tend to overlap in al-Munāwī's narrative. In other words, by focusing on Yāqūt's enslavement, al-Munāwī was not merely valorizing a hitherto neglected dimension of the *shaykh*'s biography. Rather, he was both providing his contemporaries with a successful enslavement story (working as a model for proper pedagogical master–slave relationships) and stating his own view on the relative value of genealogy and morals in making the true honorable person.

Changes in Yāqūt's Images in Mamluk and Ottoman Sources: Some (Non)Conclusive Remarks

This survey of Mamluk and early Ottoman Egyptian sources on *Shaykh* Yāqūt al-Ḥabashī, ranging from Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allah (d. 709 AH/1309 CE) and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh (fl. 720 AH/1320 CE) to al-Munāwī (d. 1031 AH/1622 CE), shows that the process of Yāqūt's sanctity building was far from being uncontested, due to both internal competition for spiritual leadership within the *Shādhilī* network and external criticism from anti-Ṣūfī or at least anti-*Shādhilī* circles. Such tensions resulted in different and competing narratives about Yāqūt's spiritual rank and maybe even about his religio-juridical orthodoxy. Of course, only part of these conflicting narratives can be reconstructed given the documents available, and this should make us all the more cautious in evaluating the possible the historical meanings of such differences. For instance, what may appear, at first glance, as mere innovation by a certain author with regard to earlier narratives known to us might actually reflect older traditions no longer available (or still unknown) to us.

With these epistemological precautions in mind, it seems possible to divide the sources analyzed in this article into three main groups, according to their attitudes towards Yāqūt: (1) properly "hagiographic" descriptions: Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, Ibn Baṭṭūta, al-Yāfiʿ, Ibn al-Mulaqqin, al-Suyūṭī, Ibn Iyās, al-Shaʿrānī, and al-Munāwī; (2) problematic and/or unfavorable attitudes: the witnesses presented by Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allah and his immediate entourage, as well as the reports on the "affaire Ibn al-Labbān" provided by Mūsā al-Yūsufī and by Ibn Kathīr; and (3) so-called neutral sources, providing biographical rather than hagiographic information on Yāqūt, such as al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī.

Beyond this division, a major cleavage is to be observed in the source stratigraphy between the fragmentary information scattered in texts pertaining to the Mamluk layer and the full-fledged bio-hagiographic narratives provided in the Ottoman layer. Namely, in al-Shaʿrānī's and al-Munāwī's accounts, which have shaped the mainstream hagiographic image of *Shaykh* Yāqūt until now.

In this framework, al-Munāwī's focus on Yāqūt's condition as a "(black) Ethiopian slave," which became part and parcel of the hagiographic *vulgata*

on the *shaykh*, also provides us with some interesting insights into social representations of slavery and phenotypic diversity circulating in medieval Egypt.

NOTES

1. In the present article, only representations concerning nonmilitary slavery are discussed. As is well-known, studies on military slaves (*mamlūk*s) in medieval Islam, and especially on the military servile aristocracy of the Mamluks, who ruled Egypt from 1250 to 1517 CE, are countless, and it would be impossible to provide even a general bibliography here. For a comprehensive critical approach to this issue, see Julien Loiseau. *Les Mamelouks Xiiie–Xvie siècle. Une expérience du pouvoir dans l'Islam médiéval* (Paris: Seuil, 2014).

2. According to almost all the available sources, Yāqūt died in 732 AH/1332 CE. Only two sources (al-Shaʻrānī and Muḥī al-Dīn al-Ṭuʻmī) provide different dates: 707 AH/1307 CE and 785 AH/1385 CE, respectively. However, both these datations are to be discarded, because they would be incompatible with all other known biographical information concerning Yāqūt. On the date proposed by al-Shaʻrānī, in particular, see below; on that proposed by al-Ṭuʻmī, see Ahmet Murat Ozel, "Kölelikten Şeyhliğe: Şazeliyye Tarikatının Kurucu İsimlerinden Etiyopyalı Yakut el-Arşî,"[From slave to *shaykh*: The Ethiopian Yāqūt al-ʻArshi, one of the founders of the *ṭarīqa Shādhiliyya*] TTK Uluslararası Afrika'da Türkler Sempozyumu, [The TTK International Turkish African Symposium] 14-15 Kasım 2014, Cibuti [November, 14–15, 2014, Djibouti], 6–7, http://www.academia.edu/19606555/ (accessed on April 2, 2019).

3. ʻAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʻrānī. *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā, al-musammā Lawāqiḥ al-anwār al-qudsiyya fī manāqib al-ʻulamā' wa-l-ṣūfiyya*, ed. Aḥmad ʻAbd al-Raḥīn al-Sāyiḥ and Tawfīq ʻAlī Wahba (Cairo, Egypt: Maktabat al-Thaqāfat al-Dīniyya, 2005), 40–41.

4. ʻAbd al-Ra'ūf al-Munāwī. *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tarājim al-sādat al-ṣūfiyya aw Ṭabaqāt al-Munāwī al-kubrā*, ed. ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd Ṣāliḥ Ḥamdān (Cairo, Egypt: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāth, n.d. [1994]), 71–73.

5. As an example, see the biographical notice on Yāqūt in Māzīdī, (or the online biography of the *shaykh* in a website consecrated to Ṣūfī biographies: http://sofya.arab.st/t17-topic (accessed December 17, 2017). Both texts rely heavily on

al-Shaʿrānī's and al-Munāwī's narratives. Al-Shaykh Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī, *Quṭb al-Mashriq wa-l-Maghrib Sīdī Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2017), 251.

6. ". . .ʿalā al-faqīr an yuʿaẓẓima al-nās bi-ḥasab dīni-him, lā bi-ḥasab thiyābi-him," Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tarājim*, 71; repeated verbatim in http://sofya. arab.st/t17-topic.

7. Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tarājim*, 72.

8. Ibid., 73.

9. Ibid.

10. See Shaʿrānī, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 40–41; Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tarājim*, 72–73; http://sofya.arab.st/t17-topic

11. Abū l-Wafā al-Taftāzāni (1930–1994), probably the most important Arabic scholar on the early *Shādhiliyya*, only briefly mentioned Yāqūt in a monograph on Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh: see Abū l-Wafā al-Taftāzāni. *Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Sakandarī wa-taṣawwufuhu,* 2nd ed. (Cairo, Egypt: al-Maktaba al-Anglū al-Miṣriyya, 1969), 60–63. Moreover, no attention is paid to Yāqūt in Paul Nwyia, *Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh* (*m. 709/1309*) *et la naissance de la confrérie šādilite* (Beirut: Dar al-Machreq, 1972).

12. *Jamīʿ al-ṭuruq al-Shādhiliyya al-mawjūda al-ān bi-Miṣr tarjiʿ bi-l-nasab immā ilā shaykhi-nā al-Sakandarī aw ilā al-shaykh Yāqūt al-ʿArshī tilmīdh al-Mursī.* al-Taftāzāni, *Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Sakandarī wa-taṣawwufuhu*, 60.

13. *Wa-min hunā yumkin al-qawl bi-anna jamīʿ ṭuruq al-Shādhiliyya tarjiʿ bi-l-sanad ilā shaykhi-nā* (*Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allah*) *al-Sakandarī.* al-Taftāzāni. *Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Sakandarī wa-taṣawwufuhu*, 61.

14. See Jean-Claude Garcin, "Histoire, opposition politique et piétisme traditionaliste dans le Ḥusn al-Muḥādarat de Suyûti," *Annales Islamologiques* 7 (1967), 82 n. 2.

15. See Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 150–54.

16. See Éric Geoffroy, "Les milieux de la mystique musulmane à Alexandrie aux XIII[E] et XIV[E] siècles," in *Alexandrie médiévale 2*, ed. Christian Décobert (Cairo, Egypt: IFAO, 2002), 173, 178.

17. See Richard McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt: The Wafaʾ Ṣūfī Order and the Legacy of Ibn ʿArabi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 29–33, 172 n. 8, 175 n. 36.

18. See Nathan Hofer, "Mythical Identity Construction in Medieval Egypt: Ibn

ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī and Avraham Maimonides," in *Les mystiques juives, chrétiennes et musulmanes dans l'Égypte médiévale. Interculturalités et contextes historiques*, ed. G. Cecere, M. Loubet, and S. Pagani (Cairo, Egypt: IFAO, 2013), esp. 398–99; Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173–1325* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), esp. chs. 4, 5. I'm gratefully indebted to the author for allowing me to read a substantial part of this work when it was still in preparation.

19. See Ozel, "Kölelikten Şeyhliğe."

20. Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Sakandarī (= al-Iskandarī), *Laṭāʾif al-minan,* 2nd ed., ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1999), 100.

21. Muḥammad Ibn Abī l-Qāsim al-Ḥimyārī Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, *Durrat al-asrār wa-tuḥfat al-abrār* (Tunis, Tunisia: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Tūnisiyya al-Rasmiyya, 1887), 3.

22. Ibid., 147–48.

23. Ibid., 150, 172.

24. On the Masrūqi brothers, see Cornell, *Realm of the Saint,* 152–53. On the Ifriqiyyan line of the *Shādhiliyya*, see Nelly Amri, *Un "manuel" ifrîqiyen d'adab soufi. Paroles de sagesse de ʿAbd al-Wahhâb al-Mzûghî* (*m. 675/1276*) *compagnon de Shâdhilî* (Tunis, Tunisia: Contraste Éditions, 2013), esp. 15–19.

25. On this point, see Hofer, "Mythical Identity Construction," esp. 398–99; Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism*; Cornell, *Realm of the Saint,* 150–54; Geoffroy, "Les milieux de la mystique musulmane," 173, 178.

26. "Upon al-Mursī's death in 1286 CE, there was no clear leader of the nascent group. . . . There were at least three "collateral lines," as Jürgen Paul terms them, of groups tracing their authority to al-Shādhilī." (Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism*, 60.) According to Hofer, historical and hagiographic works written by *Shādhilī* authors in subsequent centuries aimed at operating what he calls a "teleological reordering" of these collateral lines, in order to merge all of them into *one* narrative on the origins of the *ṭarīqa*. In his opinion, the final result of such process is best exemplified in a work produced in the twentieth century: the *Jāmiʿ al-karāmāt al-ʿaliyya fī ṭabaqāt al-sādat al-shādhiliyya* by the Moroccan Ṣūfī jurist al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Kūhin al-Fāsī (d. after 1928 CE), who "combines all the Egyptian and North African groups into a coherent work of *Ṭabaqāt* historiography" (60).

27. For an analysis of the "auto-hagiographic" strategies Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh adopts in the writing of his *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, see Giuseppe Cecere, "Le charme discret

de la Shadhiliyya. Ou l'insertion sociale d'Ibn ʿAtâ' Allâh al-Iskandarî," in *Les mystiques juives, chrétiennes et musulmanes dans l'Égypte médiévale. Interculturalités et contextes historiques,* ed. Giuseppe Cecere, M. Loubet, and S. Pagani (Cairo, Egypt: IFAO, 2013), 63–93.

28. See Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, 31–35.

29. On this *terminus post quem*, see Amri, *Un «manuel» ifrîqiyen d'adab soufi*, 14.

30. Nathan Hofer convincingly describes Ibn al-Ṣabbagh's work as "a North African answer to the version of events presented by [Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh] al-Iskandarī." See Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism*, ch. 5.

31. Although Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh does mention the main companions of al-Shādhilī in Tunis (included the Masrūqī brothers and Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Masrūqī's son, ʿAbd al-Dāʾim Ibn Sulṭān), he has no doubt on the preeminence of the "Egyptian" branch over the "Tunisian" one. In his view, al-Shādhilī's spiritual heritage falls only to Shaykh al-Mursī. As a consequence, the few references Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh makes to the Tunisian *Shādhilī* masters are probably meant to confirm the latter's acknowledgement of al-Mursī's authority. See, in particular, Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, 88, 93.

32. As Hofer points out, "By authoring a particular narrative construction about al-Mursī and, by extension, al-Shādhilī, al-Iskandarī positioned himself, in effect if not in fact, as the authoritative center of the nascent textual community. Al-Ḥabashī, despite being al-Mursī's favored student, authored no such narrative and is almost entirely absent from the tradition's subsequent history." Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism*, ch. 5.

33. See Denis Gril, "L'enseignement d'Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī d'après le témoignage de son disciple Rāfiʿ Ibn Shāfiʿī," in *Une voie soufie dans le monde: la Shādhiliyya*, ed. Éric Geoffroy (Paris: Maisonneuve, 2005), ; a critical edition of the *Zīnat al-nawāẓir* may be found in al-Sayyid Yūsuf Aḥmad (ed.), *Zīnat al-nawāẓir wa-tuḥfat al-khawāṭir min kalām al-shaykh al-nāṣiḥ al-ʿalāma Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Sakandarī, jamaʿa-hā al-shaykh Rāfiʿ b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Shāfiʿ* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2013).

34. See Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa al-musammā Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār fī gharāʾib al-amṣār*, ed. Ṭalāl Ḥarb (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1987), 42–43.

35. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's personal interest in Sufism is indicated not only by his many reports of visits to saints and masters, whose miracles and spiritual virtues he

mentions, but also by some passages showing the author's deep familiarity with Ṣūfī practices and technical terminology; see, e.g., his description of the practice called *tazyīq* (a rare technical term) in Ibid. On this point, see Giuseppe Cecere, "*Tarfīq* versus *Tazyīq*: On a Rare Ṣūfī Term in Ibn Baṭṭūṭā and Jewish-Muslim Interactions in Medieval Egypt," *Quaderni di Linguistica e Studi Orientali* (QULSO) 2 (2016): 265–90.

36. Ibn Baṭṭūta arrived at Alexandria on April 5, 1326: "On the first day of the month of Jumādā al-Awwal (of the year 726 AH) we reached the town of Alexandria, may God protect it (*waṣalnā fī awwal jumādā l-ūlā (fī sana 726) ilā madīnat al-Iskandariyya ḥarasa-hā Allāh*)." Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa,* 39.

37. Ibid., 42. The expression *afrād al-rijāl* alludes to a most elevated spiritual degree, no matter whether Ibn Baṭṭūta used the term in a general sense or in the specific meaning it was given by Ibn ʿĀrabī. On the value of *afrād al-rijāl* as a specific category of saints in Ibn ʿArabī's doctrinal system, see Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ʿArabī* (Cambridge : Islamic Texts Society, 1993), esp. 137–38.

38. Ibn Baṭṭūta, *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, 42–43.

39. Ibid., 43ff. The full text of the *Ḥizb al-Baḥr* is also transmitted in Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's *Laṭāʾif al-minan*. See Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, 199–201.

40. It is also worth noting that, Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh having died as early as 709 AH/1309 CE, his alleged successor in Alexandria, Shaykh Dāwūd Ibn Bākhilā (or Mākhilā; d. 729–733 AH/1329–1333 CE), is not mentioned by Ibn Baṭṭūta. According to some traditions, however, Ibn Bākhilā would have been Yāqūt's (and not Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's) direct disciple after al-Mursī's death. On this last point, see McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt*, 33. On Ibn Bākhilā as Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's disciple, see Geoffroy, "Les milieux de la mystique musulmane, 178–79. For Ibn Bākhilā's teachings and personality, see Richard McGregor, "The Concept of Sainthood According to Ibn Bākhilā, a *Shādhilī* Shaykh of the 8yh/14th century," in *Le saint et son milieu, ou comment lire les sources hagiographiques*, ed. Rachida Chih and Denis Gril (Cairo, Egypt: IFAO, 2000), 33–49.

41. al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī, *Kitāb al-ʿibar fī khabar man ghabar*, vol. 4 (*al-juzʾ al-rābiʿ: al-dhuyūl min sana 701 ilā 764; al-ḏayl al-awwal, li-l-Dhahabī, min sana 701 ilā 740*), ed. Abū Hājir Muḥammad al-Saʿīd b. Bassiyūnī Zaghlūl (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1985), 93.

42. R. Michael Feener and Michael F. Laffan, "Ṣūfī Scents Across the Indian Ocean: Yemeni hagiography and the Earliest History of Southeast Asian Islam," *Archipel* 70 (2005): 185-201; here 186.

43. On this Ṣūfī master of Persian origin, who was a disciple of al-Mursī in Egypt and eventually died in Mecca in 721 AH/1321 CE, see Gril, "L'enseignement d'Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī," 94.

44. On this point, see Victor Danner, *Ibn 'Aṭā'illāhi's Ṣūfī Aphorisms* (*Kitāb al-Hikam*). *Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Victor Danner* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1973), 8, n1, quoting Jean Aubin, *Matériaux pour la biographie de Ni'matullah Wali Kermani* (Tehran: Département d'iranologie de l'Institut francoiranien, 1956), 293.

45. Concerning the dating, see R. Michael Feener and Michael F. Laffan, "Ṣūfī Scents Across the Indian Ocean: Yemeni Hagiography and the Earliest History of Southeast Asian Islam." Archipel 70 /1 (2005): 185-208; here 186.

46. See Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh al-Yāfi'ī, *Mir'āt al-jinān wa-'ibrat al-yaqẓān fī ma'rifat mā yu'tabar min ḥawādiṯ al-zamān*, ed. Khalīl al-Manṣūrī (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1997), 4: 213.

47. Mūsā b. Maḥmūd b. Yaḥyā al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir fī sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir*, ed. Aḥmad Khaṭīṭ (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1986), 338–40. Yāqūt's name is mentioned on 339.

48. On Shaykh al-Wāsiṭī, see Éric Geoffroy, "Le traité de soufisme d'un disciple d'Ibn Taymiyya: Ahmad 'Imâd al-dîn al-Wâsitî (m. 711 / 1311)," *Studia Islamica* 82 (1995): 83–101.

49. In the wake of George Makdisi's groundbreaking studies in the 1970s, scholars have almost completely abandoned the idea of stern opposition to Sufism on the part of Ibn Taymiyya and/or the Hanbali school as a whole, and a much better understanding has been reached on this issue in the last few years. For a comprehensive and refined analysis of the "state of the art," see Hikkmet Yaman, "Ḥanbalite Criticism of Sufism: Ibn Taymiyya (m. 795 [*sic*]/1328), a Ḥanbalite Ascetic (*Zāhid*)," *Ekev Akademi Dergisi* 14/43 (2010): 37–56. For Makdisi's positions, see in particular, George Makdisi, "Ibn Taymiyya: A Ṣūfī of the Qādiriyya Order," *American Journal of Arabic Studies* 1 (1973): 118–29; and George Makdisi, "The Ḥanbalī School and Sufism," *Humaniora Islamica* 2 (1974): 61–72.

50. See Surkheel Sharif, Introduction to *Miftāḥ Ṭarīq al-Awliyā'* [Key to the Saintly

Path (by) Shaykh Ahmad Bin Ibrahim al-Wasiti] (London, UK: Jawziyya Institute, 2006), http://www.jawziyyah.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Miftah_1.pdf (accessed December 21, 2018).

51. See Geoffroy, "Le traité de soufisme d'un disciple d'Ibn Taymiyya," 92–93, 95. The broader and much debated issue of the origins and different historical meanings of the notion of *ṭarīqa muḥammadiyya* is outside the scope of the present article. Here we confine ourselves to the meaning that this notion apparently has in al-Wāsiṭī.

52. On the public confrontation between al-Iskandarī and Ibn Taymiyya, see now Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism*, 109–17.

53. Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya*, 2nd ed., ed. Ḥasan Ismaʿīl Marwa (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2010), 16:246.

54. Sirāj al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Miṣrī, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyāʾ*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn Shurayba (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1986), 478–79.

55. A bio-bibliographic note on him is provided in Denis Gril, ed., *La* Risāla *de Ṣafī al-Dīn ibn Abī l-Manṣūr ibn Ẓāfir: Biographies des maîtres spirituels connus par un cheikh égyptien du VIIe/XIIIe siècle* (Cairo, Egypt: IFAO, 1986), 230–31 (French section).

56. On the meaning of this and other ethnic names related to Africa, see below.

57. See Gril, *La* Risāla *de Ṣafī al-Dīn ibn Abī l-Manṣūr ibn Ẓāfir*, 60–62 (Arabic section); 154–57 (French section).

58. See Ibid., 217 (French section).

59. See Ibid., 64 (Arabic section); 159 (French section). Ṣafī al-Dīn says that he befriended *Shaykh* Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Sharīfī in Cairo, and even took care of his family after the latter's death, but unfortunately he does not specify either Sharīfī's birth or death date. Nevertheless, this *shaykh* must have been a contemporary of *Shaykh* Mufarrij, and he should have been old enough to join *Shaykh* al-Ṭanjī by the year 612 AH/1215 CE, which is the latter's death date. It is also worth noting that, according to Ṣafī al-Dīn, Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Sharīfī would have even married *Shaykh* al-Ṭanjī's daughter.

60. See Ibid., 62–64 (Arabic section); 157–58 (French section); bio-bibliographic note, 211 (French section).

61. See Ibid., 207 (French section).

62. On al-Shādhilī's and al-Mursī's visits to Qūṣ, and on their circle of followers in the city, see Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Laṭāʾif al-minan*. *Shaykh* Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī

(m. 688 AH/1290 ED) was a *Shāfiʿī faqīh*, a Ṣūfī master (probably a disciple of al-Mursī) and a philosopher, and he was appointed *qāḍī* in Qūṣ in the third quarter of seventh century AH/thirteenth century CE. For a discussion of him, see Cecere, "Le charme discret de la Shadhiliyya," 80–82. On the importance of the *Shādhiliyya* in Mamluk Qūṣ, see Jean-Claude Garcin, *Un centre musulman de la Haute Égypte médiévale: Qūṣ* (Cairo, Egypt: IFAO, 1976), 314–18.

63. See, for instance, Craig Perry, "The Daily Life of Slaves and the Global Research of Slavery in Medieval Egypt, 969–1250 CE" (PhD diss., Emory University, 2014), 24–36.

64. See Ghada Hijjawi-Qaddumi, "Yāḳūt," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Online, 2016), 11:262–63. https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedie-de-l-islam/yakut-SIM_7971 (accessed December, 21st, 2018).

65. Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, 122.

66. Ṣūfī attitudes on this issue have not yet been systematically studied. Some interesting remarks are provided by Bilal Orfali and Nada Saab in the introduction of their critical edition of al-Sirjānī's *Kitāb al-Bayāḍ wa-l-Sawād.* However, the "white" and "black" referred to in the book's title are not related to skin color or other outward physical appearances of human beings but to metaphorical meanings whose interpretation is still problematic; see Bilal Orfali and Nada Saab, eds., *Sufism, Black and White: A Critical Edition of* Kitāb al-Bayāḍ wa-l-Sawād *by Abū Ḥasan al-Sirjānī* (*d. ca. 470/1077*) (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 11–16.

67. Taqī al-dīn Aḥmad b.ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifa duwal al-mulūk,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyāda (Cairo, Egypt: Maṭbaʿa Lajnat al-taʾlīf wa-l-tarjama wa-l-nashr, 1942), 5:335.

68. Ibid., 408.

69. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī presents this sentence as a quotation from Ibn Qāḍī Ṣafad, but I had not been able to find the relevant passage until now. See Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Al-Durar al-kāmina fi aʿyān al-miʾat al-thāmina* (Ḥaydarabad, 1349 AH/[1930–31 CE]), 3:408.

70. Jalāl al-dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Kitāb ḥusn al-muḥāḍara fi akhbār Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, ed. Muṣṭafā Afandī Fahmī al-Kutubī (Cairo, Egypt: Maṭbaʿat al-Mawsuʿāt, [1321 AH/1904 CE], 250.

71. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr*. Ed. by Muḥammad Muṣṭafā (Wiesbaden, Germany: Steiner Verlag, 1975), 1:1:462.

72. See Hijjawi-Qaddumi, "Yāḳūt," 262–63.

73. "[Changing one's name is] almost universally a symbolic act of stripping a person of his [/her] former identity. . . . The slave's former name died with his [/her] self." Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 54–55. For an anthropological analysis of the name change as a major feature of the ritual of enslavement, and for an overall survey of slave renaming practices in different geo-historical contexts, see 54–58.

74. For a discussion of the persistence of such practices in eighteenth-nineteenth century Egypt, some interesting information is provided by Terence Walz: "Slaves tended to be named after scents, fruits of flowers, jewels, animals or Qurʾanic personalities, or were given names suggesting a happy or pleasing servile disposition or an alluring physical appearance." Terence Walz, "Black Slavery in Egypt during the Nineteenth Century as Reflected in the Mahkama Archives of Cairo," in *Slaves and Slaves in Muslim Africa,* vol. 2, *The Servile Estate*, ed. John Ralph Willis (London: Frank Cass, 1985), 141–42. On typical slave appellations in Ethiopia and their social significance, see Teshale Tibebu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia: 1896–1974* (Lawrencewille, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1995), 61–62.

75. See David Ayalon, "The Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate," in *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, ed. M. Rosen-Ayalon (Jerusalem, Israel: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Institute of Asian and African Studies, 1977), 275–79.

76. Perry, "The Daily Lives of Slaves," 75–77.

77. See Sheila R. Canby, "Yāqūt al-Mustaʿṣimī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 11:263–64.

78. See Claude Gilliot, "Yāqūt al-Rūmī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 11:264–65.

79. See Frédéric Bauden, "Taqī al-Dīn Aḥamd Ibn ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī," in *Medieval Muslim Historians and the Franks in the Levant*, ed. Alex Mattett (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2014), 167.

80. "Slave names conspicuously lack any kind of genealogical patronymic. . . . This lack of information speaks volumes about the predicament of slaves as "natally alienated" beings—persons who have been removed from the natural kin and social networks that had previously ordered their lives." Perry, *The Daily Lives of Slaves,* 77.

81. It is also worth noting that *ibn ʿabd Allāh* was the (real) *nasab* of Prophet Muḥammad—actually the first man who converted to Islam—which was probably a strong additional reason behind the choice of such formula as a favorite fictional genealogy for converted *liberti.* I am gratefully indebted to Professor Julien Loiseau for this remark.

82. On persistence of adoption of fictive genealogies until well into the nineteenth century, see Walz, "Black Slavery in Egypt," 142.

83. William John Sersen. "Stereotypes and Attitudes Towards Slaves in Arabic Proverbs: A Preliminary View," in *Slaves and Slaves in Muslim Africa*, vol. 1, *Islam and the Ideology of Enslavement*, ed. John Ralph Willis (London: Frank Cass, 1985), 92–105.

84. Ibid., 99.

85. Ibid., 100.

86. Ibid., 98, n77, n78.

87. See E. Ullendorff, J. S. Trimingham, C. F. Beckingham, and W. Montgomery Watt, "Ḥabash, Ḥabasha," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* http://referenceworks. brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/habash-habasha-COM_0247 (accessed October 6, 2019)

88. See Abkar Muhammad, "The Image of Africans in Arabic Literature: Some Unpublished Manuscripts," in Willis, *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa,* I:48.

89. See Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias, "Models of the World and Categorial Models: The 'Enslavable Barbarian' as a Mobile Classificatory Label," in Willis, *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa,* I:36.

90. See Ullendorff et al., "Ḥabash, Ḥabasha."

91. See Emeri Van Donzel, "Ibn al-Jawzī on Ethiopians in Baghdad," in *The Islamic World From Classical to Modern Times. Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Princeton, NJ): Darwin Press, 1989), 113–19; Gernot Rotter, *Die Stellung des Negers in der islamisch-arabischen Gesellschaft bis zum XVI Jarhundert* (Bonn, Germany: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 1967).

92. Shihāb al-Dīn Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Faḍl Allāh al-Qurashī al-ʿAwadī al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-Abṣār fī Mamālik al-Amṣār,* MS. BNF 5867, fol. 3 r., quoted in French translation in Joseph Cuoq, *Recueil des sources arabes concernant l'Afrique occidentale du VIIIe au XVIe siècle* (*Bilād al-Sūdān*) (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1975), 257. Al-ʿUmarī wrote this work between 742 AH/1342 CE and 749 AH/1349 CE, meaning a few years after Shaykh Yāqūt's death.

93. Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī Ṭālib al-Anṣārī al-Ṣūfī
    al-Dimashqī, *Nukhbāt al-Dahr fī ʿajāʾib al-barr wa-l-baḥr*, ed. by F. Mehren,
    Cosmographie de Chems ed-din Abou Abdallah el-Dimichqi (S. Petersburg,
    Russia: 1866; translated by Mehren himself as *Manuel de Cosmographie du
    Moyen Âge* (Copenhagen, Denmark: 1874), ch. 9, 267–68; quoted in French
    translation in Cuoq, *Recueil des sources arabes*, 247.

94. See Perry, *The Daily Life of Slaves*, 24, n16.

95. Walz clearly contrasts nineteenth-century customs with "earlier times," thus
    implying that the situation he describes in the following passage does not apply
    to times relevant to our research. See Walz, "Black Slavery in Egypt," 140.

96. The relevant passage from Tamrat is quoted in Van Donzel, "Ibn al-Jawzī on
    Ethiopians in Baghdad," 116–17.

97. Ibid., 116.

98. Ibid., 116–17.

99. Shaʿrānī, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 2:40–41.

100. Ibid., 2:40.

101. Ibid., 2:41.

102. By stating that Shaykh Yāqūt was invoked only after all other saints had been
     rejected by Sīdī Aḥmad, al-Shaʿrānī is actually drawing a parallelism with the
     famous "*ḥadīth* on intercession" (*ḥadīṯ al-shifāʿa*), where Prophet Muḥammad
     is described as interceding for humankind on the Day of Reckoning, after that
     intercession of all other Prophets has been rejected/proven useless. This *ḥadīth*
     apparently enjoyed an important place in the teachings of the *Shādhiliyya*,
     and Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh provided a rich commentary on it in his *Laṭāʾif al-minan*
     (see Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Laṭāʾif al-minan*, 29–30). Therefore, al-Shaʿrānī's supposed
     audience must have found not difficult to grasp the underlying meaning of
     such reference: as Muḥammad's superiority over all other Prophets is proved
     by his being the only accepted intercessor on the Day of Reckoning, so Yāqūt's
     being the only accepted intercessor in this "praeternatural quarrel" proves his
     superiority over "all other saints of his time". This confirms that al-Shaʿrānī
     considered Yāqūt as the *quṭb* of his time.

103. Shaʿrānī, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 2:41.

104. Shaʿrānī provides this information in his (surprisingly short) biography of Ibn
     ʿAṭāʾ Allāh: the latter would have been "a disciple of Shaykh Yāqūt . . . and of
     Shaykh al-Mursī before him (*tilmīdh al-shaykh Yāqūt . . . wa-qabla-hu tilmīdh*

al-shaykh Abī l-'Abbās al-Mursī).” Sha'rānī, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 2:41.

105. See McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt*, 71–72; Jean-Claude Garcin, “L'insertion sociale d'al-Sha'rānī dans le milieu cairote,” in *Colloque Internationale sur l'histoire du Caire, 27 mars–5 avril 1969* (Cairo, Egypt: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1970), 159–68.

106. McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt*, 72.

107. On conflicting traditions describing Ibn Bākhilā as Yāqūt's and/or Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh's disciple, see Ibid., 70–71, 176, n4.

108. Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tarājim*, 71–73.

109. Ibid.

110. Ibid., 72.

111. Ibid., 71.

112. Ibid., 73.

113. Ibid. This information is not found in al-Sha'rānī or earlier sources.

114. Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tarājim*, 73.

115. Ibid.

116. Ibid., 72.

117. See Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh, *Laṭā'if al-minan*, 199–201.

118. See Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, 43ff.

119. Ibid., 72.

120. Ibid., 71.

121. The word *kawāri'* (sing. *kāri'*) may apply both to human and animal feet; in particular, in Egypt it also indicates a traditional street food “prepared of sheep's trotters” (Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic,* ed. Milton J. Cowan [Beirut, Lebanon: Librairie du Liban/London: MacDonald & Evans, 1980], 821), which seems to be the metaphorical reference behind the *shaykh*'s usage of the word in this passage.

122. Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tarājim*, 72.

123. The identification of this figure is not easy. In principle, it cannot be Sultan Ḥasan Ibn al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, because he died in 762 AH/1361 CE, that is, long after Yāqūt's death. Nevertheless, one has to consider that such an anachronistic reference is not impossible in hagiographic texts.

124. Qurān, 43:59.

125. Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tarājim*, 72.

126. *Wa-min kalāmi-hi:'ala al-faqīr an yu'ẓim al-nās bi-ḥasab dīni-him wa-lā bi-ḥasab*

thiyābi-him. Ibid.

127. On this point, see in particular: Ulrich Haarmann, "Joseph's Law: The Careers and Activities of Mamluk Descendants before the Ottoman Conquest of Egypt," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 55–84; Kobi Yosef, "Mamluks and Their Relatives in the Period of the Mamluk Sultanate (1250–1517)," *Mamluk Studies Review* 16 (2012): 55–69; Loiseau, *Les Mamelouks Xiiie-Xvie siècle*, 138.

128. An early example is a story found in *Kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-Hind*, which probably dates from the fourth century AH/tenth century CE. In the story, in the year 310 AH, in "the country of the Zanj who eat [other] human beings" (*bilād al-Zanj alladhīna yaʾkulūna al-nās*), a local king is kidnapped and enslaved by some treacherous Arab merchants who he had kindly welcomed. The enslaved king is sold first in Oman, then in Baghdād. There he converts to Islam and flies to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*). There, he joins a caravan to Egypt, whence he finds his way back to his country by following the Nile. After a series of vicissitudes—which includes being enslaved again, even by some other blacks (*qawm min al-Sūdān*)—the king comes home and recovers his power, then spreads Islam among his population. The same merchants, quite by accident, eventually land at the king's country once again. Contrary to their expectations, the king does not take revenge on them, for he recognizes them as the "means" of God's grace: "And I am now happy and joyful (*faraḥ wa-masrūr*) for what God bestowed (*manna*) upon me and my kingdom (*dawlatī*), meaning islam, [pure] faith, and knowledge of the prayer, the fast and the pilgrimage as well as of the the licit and illicit (*al-ḥalāl wa-l-ḥarām*). Indeed, I got what nobody had got [before me] in the country of Zanj. And thus I pardoned you [the merchants] because you were the means (*al-sabab*) of my coming to pure religion (lit. of purity of my religion "salāḥ dīnī"). *Kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-Hind* in P. A. Van Der Lith and M. Devic, eds., *Kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-hind, barri-hi wa-baḥri-hi wa-jazāʾiri-hi. Taʾlīf Buzurk b. Shahriyār al-nākhūdhā al-rāmhurmuzī / Livre des Merveilles de l'Inde par le capitaine Bozorg fils de Chahriyâr de Râmhormoz*. Texte arabe publié d'après le manuscrit de M. Schefer, collationné sur le manuscrit de Constantinople, ed. P. A. Van Der Lith. French translation by Marcel Devic (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1883–86), 50–60.

129. Genesis 9:18–27.

130. For a comprehensive approach to different theories on the origins and development of such traditions, see David Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

131. Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-maʿārif*, quoted in Cuoq, *Recueil des sources arabes*, 41. On Wahb b. Munabbih, see André Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11e siècle: Géographie et géographie humaine dans la littérature arabe des origines à 1050* (Paris: École Pratique des Hautes Études/ The Hague, The Netherlands: Mouton & Company, 1967), 30, n5.

132. Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Fakhr al-Sūdān*, ed. 1964, 177, quoted and translated in Muhammad, "The Image of Africans in Arabic Literature," 48–49.

133. See Ibid., 52–56.

134. See Cuoq, *Recueil des sources arabes*, 358–60.

135. See Joseph Cuoq, *L'Islam en Ethiopie. Des origines au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1981), 23–35; Muhammad, "The Image of Africans in Arabic Literature," 61; Ullendorff, "Djbart," *Encyclopaedia of Islam.*

136. On this point, see Muhammad, "The Image of Africans in Arabic Literature," 57–58.

137. Interesting research on this issue has been presented by Yoshuaa Van Patel (*Al-Suyūṭī On the Relative Value of Skin Color*) at the 2014 Congress of the School of Mamluk Studies in Venice (http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/ SMS_conference-2014_program.pdf). Unfortunately, that paper has not yet published.

138. See Muhammad, "The Image of Africans in Arabic Literature," 58.

139. Suyūṭī, *Rafʿ shaʾn al-ḥubshān,* quoted in English John O. Hunwick & Eve Troutt Powell, *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2002), 41. In a completely different kind of work, the *Nuzhat al-ʿUmr,* al-Suyūṭī states his preference for light-skinned persons in even harsher terms. However, the nature of this book (a compilation of verses of different poets on praise and satire of women of different complexions) is such that no serious indication may be drawn from it, works of this kind being conceived as pure literary *divertissements* in the cultivated milieus of the time. On this point, see Muhammad, "The Image of Africans in Arabic Literature," 59–60.

140. Luqmān, mentioned in the Qurān, is traditionally described as an Ethiopian

contemporary to Prophet David; some authors mention him as a prophet. Shuqrān and Mihjaʿ were servants/clients (*mawālī*) of the Prophet Muḥammad and ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, respectively, and both fought at the battle of Badr. See Ibid., 61, 72, n69.

141. Ibn ʿAbd al-Bāqī al-Bukhārī al-Makkī, *al-Ṭirāz al-manqūsh fī maḥāsin al-ḥubush*, ms. Baghdad, Khazāʾin Kutub al-Awqāf, No. 3031, fols. 1a–3b, quoted in English translation in Ibid., 60–61.

142. This was al-Hajj Mustafa Agha, the chief eunuch of the Ottoman harem under Sultan Ahmed I. See Jane Hathaway, *The Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Harem: From African Slave to Power-Broker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), ch. 5; and Bakri Tezcan, "Dispelling the Darkness: The Politics of 'Race' in the Early 17th-Century Ottoman Empire in the Light of the Life and Work of Mullah Ali," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 13 (2007): 73–95.

143. ʿAlī Ibn Muṣṭafā, *Mirʾat al-Ḥubush fī l-uṣūl*, Ms. London, British Museum, Department of Oriental Books and Manuscripts, Or. 11226, fols. 1a–4b, quoted in English in Muhammad, "The Image of Africans in Arabic Literature, 63–65. Tezcan focuses on the works by ʿAlī Ibn Muṣṭafā (also known as Mullah Ali) as key sources. Tezcan, "Dispelling the Darkness."

144. Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tarājim*, 72.

145. Ibid.

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