

CHAPTER 7

Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī’s Texts and Contexts: Producing a Sufi Environment in the Cairo Sultanate

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Aḥmad b. Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (773–852/1372–1449) was a famous religious scholar and historian, whose reputation in *ḥadīth* studies was unparalleled in Cairo at the time of his death.* He stood and was remembered as a man of knowledge, wealth, and influence, both socially and scholarly. Son of a wealthy merchant family on his maternal side and a famous and ancient Shāfi‘ī *bayt al-‘ilm* on his paternal side, he occupied a position of *mudarris* in various institutions of Cairo and was appointed many times as *qāḍī l-quḍāt* of the Shāfi‘ī school, for a total of 23 years. His life is relatively well known, mainly due to his fame but also the very extensive biography that his student Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497) dedicated to him, *al-Jawāhir wa-l-durar fī tarjamat shaykh al-islām Ibn Ḥajar*. Ibn Ḥajar himself wrote his autobiography and gave the list of his *mashāyikh*, and most of the 9th/15th-century historians of the Cairo Sultanate provided information and biographic notices about him. Modern research also took an interest in this character and at least four academic books have been written in the last decades that deal with Ibn Ḥajar’s life: S. Kawash’s *Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (1372–1449AD)*, *Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī mu‘arrikh* by K. ‘Izz al-Dīn, *The life and works of Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī* by Aftab A. Raḥmānī, mostly an organized compendium of al-Sakhāwī’s *Jawāhir*, and *Ibn Ḥajar* by R. Kevin Jacques. Thus, when it comes to his personal life, his writings, his institutional positions and his travels, we comparatively know a lot about him. It should not come as a surprise, since Ibn Ḥajar was remembered as one of the greatest Islamic scholars of his time, due mainly to his involvement in *ḥadīth* studies and, among many works, his famous commentary on the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, the *Faṭḥ al-bārī*. Nevertheless, many things are still unknown

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about this author, not in the least concerning the position of his historiographical writings. This will be the focus of this chapter. Despite the fact that studies by J. Blecher,¹ Muḥammad Gharaibeh,² and Anne F. Broadbridge³ have recently tackled some issues linked to Ibn Ḥajar's life, career, competitive environment, and historiographical writings, a lot of work remains to be done in this respect.

This paper aims to engage in a discussion about some features of Ibn Ḥajar's writing of history and the way he shaped new narratives in his last historiographical work, the *Inbā' al-ghumr bī abnā' al-'umr*. It draws special attention to how historiographical works should be seen as coherent systems of meanings and understood in their own discursive contextual framework. As part of an ongoing broader study of Ibn Ḥajar's historiographical works, my main focus will be to understand, in particular, how Ibn Ḥajar addresses some part of the Sufi environment of the Cairo Sultanate. It is my goal to engage a discussion about how a specific sociopolitical historiographical space was created in the *Inbā' al-ghumr* against the wider background of the alleged *siyāsa*-orientation of the period's historiographical production.⁴ It will be argued that in this distinct space, Sufism and Sufi characters were presented to inform about the dynamics of power and the social order that were crafted in the *Inbā'* and that were arguably the main underlying theme of this chronicle.

1 General Framework

The *Inbā'* documents, to quote Ibn Ḥajar's own words, "the events of [the author's] life time since [his] birth in the year 773 [1372] and so on, separating for every year the situations of the *duwal* from the obituaries of the *a'yān*." It is introduced as a continuation of Ibn al-Kathīr's *Ta'rikh*⁵ and claims to draw mainly from Ibn Ḥajar's testimony of what he personally witnessed (*shāhadtu-hu*) and heard from trustful people and some previous historians of the period.⁶ Ibn Ḥajar started to work on the *Inbā'* in the year 836/1432, but it was only completed in 850/1446. With the *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, the *Inbā'* may have been the work Ibn Ḥajar spent the most time working on. It covers a period between the years 773/1372 and 850/1446 and is organized as an annalistic chronicle. Each year is

1 Blecher, Ḥadīth 261–87.

2 Gharaibeh, Brokerage 223–66; Narrative 51–76.

3 Broadbridge, Academic 85–107.

4 Khalidi, *Arabic* 181–222.

5 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'* i, 4.

6 *Ibid.* 4–5.

separated in *hawādith* and *wafayāt* sections. The *wafayāt*, the parts of the work that will be most discussed here, document a wide range of people from various backgrounds and positions and do not consider special social, political, or institutional categories, unlike what had been the case with other biographical writings of Ibn Ḥajar, such as his *Lisān al-Mizān*, which was written 40 years before⁷ and focused exclusively on the *muḥaddithīn*.⁸

The historical context in which Ibn Ḥajar wrote the *Inbāʿ* also gradually evolved in the course of its writing. But, as a hypothesis, it would have made sense for the author to be more careful when he completed his work, to suit the audience of the late 840s/1440s better, and when he considered his chronicle achieved. Being the last historiographical piece produced by Ibn Ḥajar, the *Inbāʿ* also illustrates the last efforts of this scholar to engage in a new historiographical production, just a few years after he had completed his history of the *quḍāt* of Egypt in the *Rafʿ al-ʿiṣr ʿan quḍāt Miṣr*.⁹ It is thus most closely intertwined with al-Zāhir Jaqmaq's rule (841–57/1438–53), at a time when the author was still politically engaged and active. In the last years of the redaction of the *Inbāʿ*, Ibn Ḥajar was actually trying to regain his prestigious position as shaykh of the Sufi Khānqāh al-Baybarsiyya in Cairo, a position he had held without interruption for 30 years and lost in 849/1445 after a confrontation with Sultan Jaqmaq.¹⁰

In this respect, the political and cultural dynamics at the end of al-Zāhir Jaqmaq's reign are of crucial concern to better understand the *Inbāʿ*. Although poorly known, it seems this period was marked by a renewal of asceticism and exterior signs of extreme piety.¹¹ Some elements tend to show that the political influence of prominent members of the Sufi community, especially tenants of the monistic doctrine, was dwindling. More generally, mentions of Sufism and the number of Sufi characters decrease strongly during the narratives of the *Inbāʿ* concerning al-Zāhir Jaqmaq's period; no Sufi *zāwiya* is mentioned for this period. Only six characters are explicitly designated as Sufis among the characters of the *wafayāt* in the first years of the sultan's reign, and none after that. This discrepancy does not mean, of course, that no prominent Sufi characters died during Jaqmaq's rule. It either underlines the weakening of Sufi *shuyūkh* in the dynamics of power, their decrease in political influence, or Ibn Ḥajar's disinterest in Sufi scholars between 842/1438 and 848/1451.

7 Ibid., *Lisān* ix, 246.

8 Ibid. i, 2.

9 See M. Tillier, *Vie*.

10 Jacques, *Ibn Ḥajar* 140.

11 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Manhal* iv, 298–9; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo* 259.

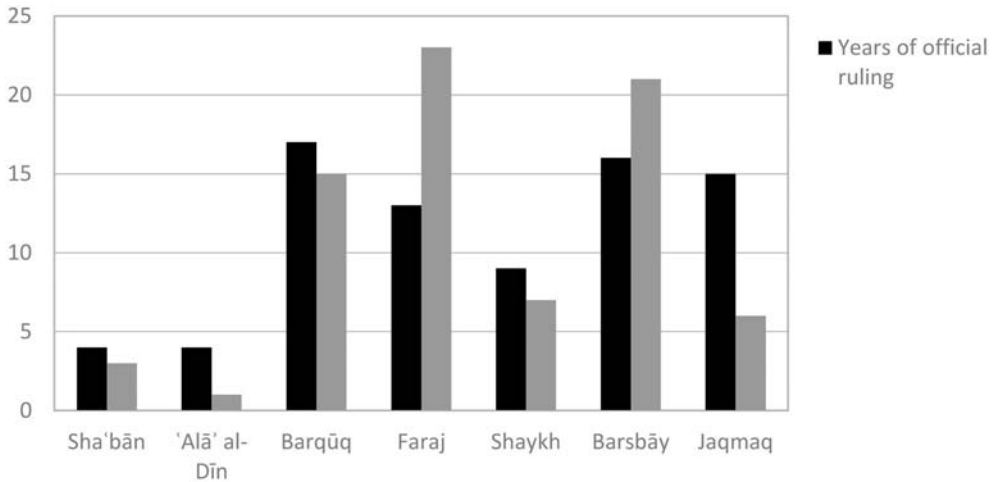


FIGURE 7.1 Number of explicit references to Sufis during each reign covered by the *Inbā'*

In any case, their disappearance from the *Inbā'* is testimony of the different environment in which the last annals of Ibn Ḥajar's chronicle were written. A few years before, Ibn Ḥajar's authorial choices may have been very different under al-Ashraf Barsbāy, a strong supporter of the Sufi environment and a man personally engaged in the patronage and company of Sufis.¹²

It will be argued here that the *Inbā'* must be contextualized and understood in these specific frameworks of both Ibn Ḥajar's personal situation and the broader context of the 840s/1440s. These informed the agency and intentionality of its author¹³ and left a deep impression on how he wrote his chronicle. For that reason, it also seems very useful to draw comparative examples from the *Durar al-kāmina* and the *Dhayl al-durar*, two of Ibn Ḥajar's biographical dictionaries written before Sultan al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq's rule. The *Durar al-Kāmina* focused on 8th/14th-century characters and was completed in 837/1427, while the *Dhayl al-durar al-kāmina* was completed in 832/1429 and covered the years 801–32/1398–1429.¹⁴ The contents of the *Inbā'* thus overlap with each of these works for almost three decades, which allows us to study the attentive rethinking and rewriting of the same events and characters' lives by the same author within an evolving historical context from the early 830s/1430s to the late 840s/1440s. Here, I will argue that the precise recontextualization of each of these works is indispensable to understanding Ibn Ḥajar's historiographical

12 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'* iii, 72; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo*, 253.

13 See Hirshler, *Medieval* 1–16.

14 'Izz al-Dīn, *Ibn Ḥajar* 273, 282.

accounts and that Ibn Ḥajar's historical stance, on any subject, should only be understood as a temporary and contextually embedded position. For, as remarked recently by Muḥammad Gharaibeh about the *Lisān al-mizān* and the *Durar al-kāmina*, Ibn Ḥajar was creating with the *Inbā'* new historical narratives, rather than merely reorganizing them.¹⁵ Although, as biographical dictionaries, the *Dhayl al-durar* and the *Durar* certainly did not entirely serve the same ideological and historiographical purposes, they shared a lot of biographical data. The careful modification in the *Inbā'* of many previous accounts, therefore, reflects new discursive strategies serving new purposes.

All in all, it seems that the depiction of Sufi characters in the *Inbā'* reflects three main layers of discursive construction regarding Sufis and their place in history, each of which will be discussed in more detail below. First, their presentation gives an account of Ibn Ḥajar's personal stance on various matters linked to Sufism. Second, Ibn Ḥajar represented Sufi characters in the more general changing political context of the 830s–40s/1430s–40s, taking gradual notice of the new environment in which the ruling elites were producing and reproducing themselves,¹⁶ not because Sufism as a whole was withdrawing from the political sphere but because new groups emerged from the constant and changing struggles of power, influence, and ideology in which Sufis were also taking part. Finally, Ibn Ḥajar was shaping the moral, political, and social boundaries in which Sufi characters were deemed to have a positive role in the Cairo Sultanate. In other words, social order, produced through Ibn Ḥajar's discursive agency, seems to have been the recurrent and main pattern of the *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, in which the dynamics surrounding the *dawla*—the specific configuration of the sultanate's power elites and practices—and its main related protagonists played a central role.¹⁷ Sufi characters obviously had their part in this social and narrative order, like all actors in his chronicle. Ibn Ḥajar engaged in delimiting this role and fixing boundaries in the framework of the social, cultural, and political environment of the 9th/14th century Cairo Sultanate.

As will be demonstrated below, the place of Sufis and Sufi institutions were integrated in narrative strategies that were part of the broader historiographical construction Ibn Ḥajar was erecting. A better understanding of that particular place allows, therefore, one to better grasp that historiographical architecture.

15 Gharaibeh, *Narrative*, 72.

16 Van Steenberghe, *Mamlukisation* 35–7.

17 Van Steenberghe, *Mamlukisation* 20–1; *Appearance* 74.

2 Ibn Ḥajar's Narrative Display of Sufism

As far as Ibn Ḥajar's historiographical works are concerned, their Sufi environment has never attracted much interest among scholars and academics. This makes perfect sense, since Ibn Ḥajar trained as a Shāfi'ī scholar and a *muḥaddith* and was renowned for his work on *ḥadīth* science. At no moment in time was he ever considered a Sufi shaykh, nor did he show a strong or specific interest for Sufi-related cultural production in his many writings.

Thus, Sufism seems to have been marginal in Ibn Ḥajar's career, and this marginality is reflected in the *Inbā' al-ghumr*, a political chronicle mainly interested in the dynamics of power in the Cairo Sultanate and the competitive sociopolitical environment in which the author grew up and struggled. Yet, like most scholars of his time, Ibn Ḥajar was certainly aware of Sufi practices and teachings. It even looks very likely that he was much more informed about it than most of his contemporary scholars, who engaged primarily in traditionalist knowledge. Even without taking into consideration later claims that he had received a Sufi *khirqā*,¹⁸ he had still trained as a young scholar with prestigious Sufi masters of his time and spent more than a year in Zabīd. At this time, Ibn 'Arabī's widespread and contested doctrines of monistic Sufism (*al-ittihād*) were triumphant in the Tihāmi metropolis.¹⁹ For more than 30 years, he was also at the head of the Khānqāh al-Baybarsiyya al-Jashnakīriyya in Cairo, one of the largest Sufi institutions of the Cairo Sultanate, which provided him with important means to build his clientele and career, including from among the Cairo Sufi community.

But, whatever the personal involvement of Ibn Ḥajar in his Sufi environment was, and despite the comparatively peripheral feature of Sufism in the *Inbā'*, he did dedicate a number of his chronicle's *wafayāt* to Sufi characters. As such, this work does participate in informing and shaping a discursive perception of Sufi communities during the first half of the 9th/15th century. It deserves all the more attention as Ibn Ḥajar's chronicle is taken as one of the historiographical frames of reference in the field of 9th/15th-medieval Islamic history.

To underline the evolution of specific narratives concerning Sufism in changing contexts and to emphasize the carefully built discourses embedded in the personal, political, cultural, and social life of the 9th/15th century as represented in Ibn Ḥajar's historical writings, we have mainly used prosopographical data, tracing all characters referred to as Sufis, either explicitly or impli-

18 Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 364.

19 Knysh, *Ibn Arabī* 227; Mochtari de Pierrepont, *Espaces* i, 208, 214.

citly (shaykhs of *zāwiya*, people having followed the *ṭarīqa* of Sufi masters, those linked to a *tāʾifa*, etc.). These references are widespread in the *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, as they are in most historical chronicles of the time. They illustrate the implementation of a historiographical frame that was consciously chosen by the author. This type of data survey obviously has its limits, since it does not take into account all characters that were engaged in Sufi practices nor can it entirely appreciate the various vocabularies implicitly referring to Sufism. Yet, these references, considered within the whole historiographical framework of the *Inbāʾ*, underline how some specific narrative choices were made by Ibn Ḥajar concerning various topics and figures. The regular absence of these explicit references also stresses narrative gaps, suggesting that, in many cases, the author consciously chose not to refer to the Sufi affiliation of some ‘*ulamāʾ*’, thus shaping them into a distinct historical memory.

By using a precise wording for qualifying individuals, Ibn Ḥajar allows the reader to connect specific individuals to the Sufi path; that is, individuals who “claimed, contested, embraced ... the traditions associated with *taṣawwuf* (Sufism)” and were identified as doing so.²⁰ This precision should be relevant to us since it was relevant for the author. Thus, on the one side, Muḥammad al-Kāzrūnī, nicknamed al-Ṣūfī (d. 776/1375),²¹ or Muḥammad al-Dimashqī (d. 809/1407), described as a “Sufi of the *khānqāh* Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ,”²² to give but two examples, are presented in a way that shed light on their affiliation with Sufism. Even though the author often did not expand on the nature of their affiliation and degree of involvement, both in a personal mystical path and a shared collective experience, the latter was a cornerstone in the historiographical display of Sufism, as already emphasized by Nathan Hofer.²³ Such presentations seem equivocal and intersect with various meanings of an individual’s commitment to the Sufi path. It is not particularly original, and we find the same kind of designations in many other sources throughout the period. But it is of interest to consider this as part of Ibn Ḥajar’s own historiographical choices because it informs us of his narrative construction and influences.

Differences in status, standing, and involvement in *taṣawwuf* were actually expressed through the formal construction of each *tarjama* in the *wafāyāt*, and they meant something specific to their audiences of readers. The formal structure of a *tarjama* often gives by itself a hierarchy of information concerning the involvement of the subject in *taṣawwuf* and hints at how to understand

20 N. Hofer, *Popularisation* 4.

21 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ* i, 49.

22 Ibid. ii, 335.

23 N. Hofer, *Popularisation* 5.

the role and moral pretension of each *tarjama* in the broader text's intertextuality. It indeed leaves little doubt that Ibrāhīm al-Mulaqqin (d. 799/1397), a very popular Sufi master and famous preacher (*wā'iz*) of Damascus,²⁴ may not have been seen as connected to *taṣawwuf* in the same way as Muḥammad al-ʿAjāmī (d. 815/1412), a former soldier who took the wool (*al-ṣūf*).²⁵ The retirement as a Sufi of Muḥammad al-ʿAjāmī was mentioned at the end of his notice and preceded his death's mention, while the status of Ibrāhīm al-Mulaqqin as Sufi was stated in the introductory part of his notice. The same could be said for most great Sufi masters mentioned in the *Inbā'*: The skilful Sufi elites versed in the teaching and practices of *taṣawwuf*, with a number of followers and their own private *majlis*, are often identified in the *tarjama*'s introduction, with the main body of their notice dedicated to their activities as Sufis.

The questions that we now wish to turn to are the following: What was the role of those explicitly identified as Sufis in the larger narrative and metatextuality that Ibn Ḥajar was slowly carving out? What did his choices to identify them as Sufis imply for the discursive efficiency and goals of the *Inbā'*, mostly concerned with shaping the social and political narrative of the Cairo Sultanate? Not only will I argue that these choices underline the very careful selection of wording and narratives by which Ibn Ḥajar constructed the *Inbā'*, they also identify the moral and social boundaries that he set in his discursive constructions and that give life to a Sufi environment that was only crafted as such in the *Inbā'* itself.

3 The Sufi Environment in the *Inbā'* *al-Ghumr*

Characters explicitly designed as or strongly linked to Sufism in the *Inbā'* form a small group: 131 figures are either said to be Sufis, to be learned in *taṣawwuf*, to follow a Sufi *ṭarīqa*, to be a member of a *zāwiya*, or to wear a Sufi *nisba*.²⁶ The Shādhiliyya is by far the most represented *ṭarīqa* of the *Inbā'* (12).²⁷ Most of the other *ṭuruq* only have between one and five members who are introduced in the chronicle.²⁸ Only one reference is made to the great shaykh Aḥmad al-Badawī

24 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'* i, 530.

25 Ibid. ii, 533.

26 These numbers come from a census of the terms *ṣūf* *sufi*, *taṣawwuf*, *zāwiya*, and *zawāyā*. We have also looked for the most common *ṭuruq* in the Cairo Sultanate and their *nisbas*: al-Shādhiliyya, al-Wafā'iyya, al-Aḥmadiyya, al-Qādiriyya, and al-Suhrawardiyya.

27 Not counting the members of the Wafā'iyya.

28 Five for the Mawṣiliyya, three for the Rifā'iyya, five for the Suhrawardiyya, especially via

(d. 675/1276)²⁹ and one mention of the Aḥmadiyya path,³⁰ which may emphasize the decrease of this *ṭarīqa*’s influence among the political elite from the last quarter of the 8th/14th century onward. It seems then that the *Inbā’* corroborates C. Petry’s claim that “references to Ṣūfis in general greatly outnumbered specific citation in either order.”³¹ These numbers in the *Inbā’* do not claim comprehensiveness, especially since some protagonists of the *Inbā’* are presented without being explicitly referred to as members of a Sufi *ṭarīqa*, like the famous Suhrawardī shaykh Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Ghamrī (d. 849/1446).³² Yet, they attest to Ibn Ḥajar’s specific representation and presentation of the main Sufi paths in his environment and the political dynamics of the sultanate. In this narrative representation, important Sufi masters of the Suhrawardiyya, like Aḥmad al-Zāhid (d. 819/1416) or Madyan (d. 861/1458), do not appear in the *Inbā’*, nor does Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ḥanafī (847/1443) appear as a Sufi master.³³ Yet, he was a prominent Shādhilī shaykh and a personal acquaintance and comrade of the author.³⁴ His spiritual successor, Aḥmad al-Sarasī, had also studied with Ibn Ḥajar.³⁵ These characters, because they were not referred to as Sufis, were not included in our data.

Most of the Sufi characters in the dataset thus identified in Ibn Ḥajar’s *Inbā’ al-ghumr* come from the Syro-Egyptian territory, mainly Damascus, Jerusalem, and Cairo, although other regions are also mentioned. Yemeni Sufis (seven) also occupy some substantial narrative space, which may be due to Ibn Ḥajar’s past *riḥlas* in the Rasūlid Sultanate. Mecca, the Ḥijāz, and the Upper-Egyptian Ṣa‘īd region seem in this regard very distant. This actually appears to be a general feature of the *Inbā’*’s inclusion of scholars and does not specifically concern Sufi characters. Sufis in the chronicle do not only represent the Sufi elites in terms of social position and power, although the Sufi elites are well introduced, with a number of *zāwiya* and *ribāt shaykhs* (28), holders of a *mashyakha* in a *khānqāh* (5), and shaykhs of a *ṭarīqa* (4). Four of them are engaged on the Sufi path after retiring from the court or the army. Most are ‘*ulamā’* and represent

the shaykh Yūsuf al-Kūrānī al-‘Ajāmī (d. 768/1368), two for the Qādiriyya, one for the Ṣamādiyya (Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’* iii, 287), stemming from the Qādiriyya. No characters belonging to the Aḥmadiyya are mentioned, although its *fuqarā’* are linked to an amir (ibid. ii, 35). We have not included the members of the Ḥurūfiyya (ibid. iv, 100).

29 Ibid. iii, 103. On this figure, see Mayeur-Jaouen, *Sayyid*.

30 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’* ii, 35.

31 Ibid. iv, 243.

32 Petry, *Civilian* 270.

33 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’* iii, 268. On this Sufi master, see Sha‘rānī, *Ṭabaqāt* ii, 135–62.

34 Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 23.

35 Sakhāwī, *Jawāhir* iii, 1176.

the common type of *al-‘ālim al-ṣūfī* distinguished by É. Geoffroy:³⁶ “scholars with a strong formation in exoteric religious sciences, either one who came on the mystical path during his youth,” while learning *sharī‘a*, or one who later “converted” when of “mature years, after becoming a religious notable holding various *manṣab*-s.”³⁷ As established scholars, these characters often had extensive relationships with the *ahl al-dawla*, but only some of them were part of the sultanate’s institutions of administration and justice (with four *quḍāt*). Some, then, engaged in a scholarly and administrative career in which Sufism appeared as one religious skill and practice among others. Yet, they were still a minority, which underlines that Ibn Ḥajar was not particularly concerned to emphasize the involvement of Sufis in the sultanate’s apparatus of power.

A little more than a quarter of these figures (34) were linked at some moment in their life to a *zāwiya*. The term *zāwiya* appears 48 times in the chronicle, and these institutions are mostly located outside Cairo. If we add to that mentions of *khānqāhs* (98),³⁸ Sufi institutions seem to have been a true concern for the author, although most frequencies concerning *khānqāhs* are linked to holders of the *mashyakhas*, with only some of them identified in the text with a personal practice of *taṣawwuf*. While it would be quite difficult to define any systematic characteristic of Sufis in the *Inbā’ al-ghumr*, being a member of a *zāwiya*, having built a *zāwiya*, or having established oneself as a shaykh of a *zāwiya* is one of the inevitably features mentioned in Ibn Hajar’s work regarding Sufi characters.

Some distinct Sufi groups seem to appear in the *Inbā’*, although the number of Sufi characters is far too low, by itself, to be representative of any specific network beyond the small primary circle of a shaykh and his main disciples. Yet, because of the generally small degree of information about Sufi characters in the *Inbā’*, the presence of some contemporary masters strikes the eye. This is the case of Yūsuf al-‘Ajamī (d. 768/1367)³⁹ and Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī (d. 797/1394), two *ṭarīqa shaykhs* of the 8th/14th century whose influence was still felt in the first half of the 9th/15th century. They are linked to 15 members of the Sufi community, and 30 textual references are somehow related to them, framing them among the main protagonists of the Sufi environment introduced in the *Inbā’*.

36 Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 126–34.

37 Ibid. 126.

38 The number of mentions was collected using Lexico 3, a software for lexicometric analysis, looking for the most common forms of reference in the *Inbā’*: *al-zāwiya*, *bi-zāwiya*, *zāwiya*, and *zawāyā*. The same pattern was applied for the *khānqāhs*.

39 See Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar* iv, 286 (n. 5247); Maqrīzī, *Sulūk* iv, 310.

These general and broad features underline that some part of the narrative framework of the *Inbā’*, regarding its Sufi environment, was shaped differently from Ibn Ḥajar’s previous works. This follows from the fact that Sufi characters presented in the *Inbā’* are not necessarily the same ones that feature in the previous historiographical works of Ibn Ḥajar. Some Sufi figures mentioned in the *Durar al-kāmina* and the *Dhayl* are thus not introduced in the *Inbā’*. This is, for example, the case of Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Qalānīsī (d. 773/1372) and Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Iskandar al-Ḥusaynī (d. 777/1375).⁴⁰ In the same way, some Sufi characters of the *Inbā’*, like ‘Alī b. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Marāghī, Muḥammad al-Kurdī (d. 788/1386), or Khalīl al-Janadī (d. 813/1410), are not found either in the *Durar* or the *Dhayl al-durar*.⁴¹

In this regard, the *Inbā’* cannot be considered as simply adding some new information after having extracted previous entries from Ibn Ḥajar’s own works. The author relieved his chronicle of characters he deemed now useless or irrelevant in the more general framework of the *Inbā’*. This implies different discursive goals for these works. It also implies the shaping of new narratives better fitting the chronicle’s purpose. At an interpretive level, it means it is not possible to correlate the narrative of a character in Ibn Ḥajar’s historiographical works without referring to the precise context of the writing of such a reference. One must then adopt a diachronic perspective corresponding to different moments of Ibn Ḥajar’s life, social and political environment, and authorial personality, in which particular historiographies were shaped.

The *Inbā’* was also particularly interested in the relations between prominent figures of the *dawla* and members of the Cairo Sultanate’s different communities. The Sufis are no exception, and many Sufis presented in the chronicle were indeed linked to the ruling elites. It underlines that, in some ways, Ibn Ḥajar was mostly concerned with the elites of the scholarly environment. Yet, the interaction between Sufis and the *dawla*, by itself, was not a preoccupation of the author. As mentioned, only a minority of the Sufis presented in the chronicle were indeed holders of sultanic offices. Moreover, Ibn Ḥajar does not seem particularly preoccupied with Sufis of *khānqāhs*, the most clearly endowed religious institutions linked to the sultanic office.⁴² While addressing the *khānqāhs*, it is almost only the holders of *mashyakhas* in which Ibn Ḥajar is interested, many of whom did not have a Sufi background. It is then mainly in relation to the careers and success of Sufis, the competitive environment in

40 Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar* i, 118 (n. 284); v, 245 (n. 1337).

41 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’* i, 325; ii, 129, 470.

42 See on this question Hofer, *Popularisation* 35–80.

which they were evolving, and their place and role in the politics of the sultanate that Ibn Ḥajar mentioned the links between the Sufi religious elites and the political ones. Such mentions were social and symbolic markers attached to scholars. They were part of delimiting and contextualizing a normative expression of scholarly behaviors and patterns inside the framework and boundaries of the society Ibn Ḥajar was shaping. This implied, from the author, a change in narratives in relation to new contexts.

4 Narrative Changes and Discursive Transformations: Crafting New Meanings

Narrative changes can be particularly emphasized comparing some of Ibn Ḥajar's notices in various works. Recently, M. Gharaibeh presented a case study that also reflected this idea, addressing specific patterns Ibn Ḥajar used to shape different images of the *muḥaddith* Mughulṭāy and considering various narrative strategies developed for the same character both in the *Durar al-kāmina* and the *Lisān al-Mizān*.⁴³ Although M. Gharaibeh did not elaborate on the two very different temporal contexts—almost 30 years separate these two works, corresponding to two very different moments in Ibn Ḥajar's career and the sociopolitical environment of the Cairo Sultanate—he clearly underlined the author's specific discursive strategies that shaped Mughulṭāy's figure in a way that fit Ibn Ḥajar's narrative and scholarly goals.⁴⁴ Indeed, changes in the *Inbā'* narratives, compared to previous works of Ibn Ḥajar, are a striking feature of this work, too. All this highlights the importance of contextualization, in which the author set himself to rewriting some previous narratives.⁴⁵ A good illustration can be found in how Ibn Ḥajar refers to Ibn 'Arabī's Sufi teachings, since it was a point of intellectual and social contention in Cairo in his times.

4.1 *Aḥmad b. al-Raddād and Ibn 'Arabī: Two Adjusted Narratives*

Ibn Ḥajar's position vis-à-vis Ibn 'Arabī has already been approached in Alexander Knysh's brilliant work *Ibn 'Arabī in the later Islamic tradition*.⁴⁶ He pointed out that Ibn Ḥajar conserved through his works an indecisive standing regarding the shaykh himself, "avoiding a clear-cut judgement of heresy or unbelief"

43 Gharaibeh, Narrative 59–65.

44 Ibid. 72.

45 An aspect that does not only concern Sufi figures, but that we will only illustrate here with Sufi characters due to the specific goals of this paper.

46 Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabī* 128–30.

but being “much more mistrustful of Ibn ‘Arabī’s followers.”⁴⁷ While conserving an “elusive”⁴⁸ position regarding the *shaykh al-akbar*, a few references in the *Inbā’* point to an apparent disagreement with his followers’ teachings and practices, criticisms he had already stated softly long before in the *Lisān al-Mizān*.⁴⁹ In the *Inbā’*, Ibn Ḥajar makes a stronger claim, a position particularly noticeable in the *tarjama* of Aḥmad b. al-Raddād (d. 821/1419).

Aḥmad b. al-Raddād al-Qurashī (d. 821/1419) was one of the prominent Sufi shaykhs of Rasūlid Yemen at the beginning of the 9th/15th century, and his biographical notice in the *Inbā’* is all the more relevant since he was a scholar the author had personally met during his Yemeni *riḥla*.⁵⁰ But he was not only an important scholar close to the Rasūlid sultans al-Ashraf Ismā‘īl (r. 778–803/1377–1401) and al-Nāṣir Aḥmad (778–803/1377–1424), he was also a friend and associate of the *qāḍī l-quḍāt* of Yemen, Majd al-Dīn al-Fīrūzābādī, Ibn Ḥajar’s own master of linguistics and grammar, in whose teachings Ibn Ḥajar always took great pride.⁵¹ If we are to believe Ibn Ḥajar, al-Fīrūzābādī’s advice led the Rasūlid sultan al-Nāṣir Aḥmad to name Ibn al-Raddād *qāḍī l-quḍāt* after the death of the latter.⁵² Al-Nāṣir Aḥmad also married a woman from Ibn al-Raddād’s house,⁵³ consequently reinforcing his alliance with the powerful Tihāmi tribe of the Qurashiyyūn, among whom Ibn al-Raddād ranked highly.⁵⁴ Thus, although Ibn al-Raddād was mainly presented by Ibn Ḥajar through the prism of Sufism, Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrines, and his companionship with al-Nāṣir, he was, in fact, one of the most powerful Yemeni figures at the beginning of the 9th/15th century. In the *Inbā’*, Ibn Ḥajar’s obituary of this character states:

Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad b. al-Raddād, al-Makkī, al-Zabīdī *al-ṣūfī*, the *qāḍī* Shihāb al-Dīn al-Shāfi‘ī, was born in 740 [1340], and entered Yemen, where he joined the company of the sultan al-Ashraf b. al-Afḍal and he remained with him. He became a boon companion [of the sultan]

47 Ibid. 128–9.

48 Ibid. 128.

49 Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān* vii, 392, 396 (n. 7229). Also quoted in Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabi* 129.

50 Sakhāwī, *Jawāhir* iii, 1074.

51 Ibn Ḥajar, *Raf‘* 63; *Dhayl* 176–7 (n. 437).

52 Ibid. *Inbā’* iii, 178. Also quoted in Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabi* 249. This claim by Ibn Ḥajar is highly dubious: No Yemeni sources seem to mention it, and Ibn al-Raddād’s influence at the court had been very strong long before al-Fīrūzābādī’s death. Ibn Ḥajar may have made this claim to amplify both the influence of his master al-Fīrūzābādī and Ibn al-Raddād’s later supposed theological errors.

53 Burayhī, *Ṭabaqāt* 299.

54 Mochtari de Pierrepont, *Espaces* i, 214, 216.

before getting very close to him. He had many merits as a poet and a clever prose writer, although he had too much fondness for the temporal love and tendencies toward philosophical Sufism ... and he composed much poetry and prose in which he propagated [the] manifest delusion [of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings] until he completely corrupted the faith of the inhabitants of Zabīd, except those God deemed not to.⁵⁵

The position of Ibn Ḥajar regarding Ibn 'Arabī's followers seems to be pretty clear: Ibn al-Raddād overstepped the boundaries of decency and orthodoxy. References to "corruption" (*fasād*) and those spared by the Divine might also be a direct hint at the chaos that followed in Zabīd in the years following Ibn al-Raddād's death and, particularly, that of his companion and son-in-law, the Rasūlid sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Aḥmad (r. 803–27/1401–24). Yet, almost 20 years before the *Inbā'* was completed, Ibn al-Raddād's biographical notice in the *Dhayl al-durar al-kāmina* presented this character in quite a different light:

Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad b. al-Raddād, al-Makkī, Shihāb al-Dīn, Abū l-'Abbās *al-ṣūfī*. He entered Zabīd and he engaged in *taṣawwuf*. He became a companion of Ismā'īl al-Jabartī,⁵⁶ propagator of Ibn 'Arabī's [teachings], and he specialized in it. He versified them in long poems. He became a boon companion to [the sultan] al-Malik al-Ashraf and then [al-Malik] al-Nāṣir [Aḥmad]. He was [a man of] merits, worshiping and intelligent. He received the [office of chief judge] at the end of his life. I heard of his compositions and good deeds. He died in Dhū al-Qa'da [of the year 821].⁵⁷

This previous account of Ibn al-Raddād is clearly more positive. Ibn al-Raddād was presented stripped of misgivings. His penchant toward Ibn 'Arabī's thesis was not linked to some kind of corruption that hit Zabīd's inhabitants. Of course, in 832/1428–9, when Ibn Ḥajar wrote the *Dhayl al-durar*, the plague, war, and looting had not yet struck the Tihāmi metropolis⁵⁸ nor did the Rasūlid dynasty stand on the verge of collapsing. Yet, Ibn Ḥajar did not elaborate on the *Inbā'*'s account focusing on the Yemeni turmoil of the 840s/1440s, but on Ibn

55 The last sentence is quoted in Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi* 248, 378. See Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'* iii, 178.

56 The *shaykh al-shuyūkh* of Zabīd's Sufis and a close companion of the Rasūlid sultan al-Ashraf Ismā'īl.

57 Ibn Ḥajar, *Dhayl* 200 (n. 500).

58 Ibn al-Dayba', *Qurrat* 403; *Bughyat* 112; Vallet, *L'Arabie* 679–80; Mochtari de Pierrepont, *Espaces* i, 66.

'Arabī's followers' dangerous stance that supposedly led the Zabīdī community to its doom. This narrative choice underlines that he addressed this notice for the Cairo Sultanate's audience. Indeed, since the 840s/1440s, the struggle of Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine had winded down in Yemen, following the political decline of Ibn 'Arabī's followers.⁵⁹ Yemeni accounts of Ibn al-Raddād also do not only focus on this character's stance concerning Ibn 'Arabī, being equally interested in the social and political environment of the master.⁶⁰ It seems Ibn Ḥajar's own social and political environment had changed between the composition of the *Dhayl* and the *Inbā'*, or his personal opinion had evolved. In any event, Ibn Ḥajar's statement in the *Inbā'* could not be used to justify by itself Ibn Ḥajar's general position about Ibn 'Arabī's followers or Ibn al-Raddād. Therefore, it seems that Ibn Ḥajar's position and narration of this particular topic depends on the work referring to it and the context in which it would have been shaped. Thus, Ibn al-Raddād's notice can only be inscribed in the specific framework in which the *Inbā'* or the *Dhayl* were written, reflecting two different discursive constructions at two moments of Ibn Ḥajar's historiographical strategies.

Because, taken on its own, Ibn al-Raddād's notice in the *Inbā'* brings only scant information on the character himself, this *tarjama* may also be more interesting, considering the broader context of the work in regard to conflicts linked to Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine. This is why it may also be included in a group of narratives that addressed this question and framed Ibn Ḥajar's position regarding Ibn 'Arabī's followers in the *Inbā'*, as illustrated in *tarājim* like those of Ibn al-Raddād's master, Ismā'īl al-Jabartī (d. 806/1404),⁶¹ Aḥmad al-Shabakī (830/1427),⁶² or strong antimonicist characters like the *qāḍī* of Zabīd Aḥmad al-Nāshirī (d. 815/1412).⁶³ Ibn Ḥajar stated in the *Inbā'* his admiration for al-Nāshirī, thus implicitly implying his agreement with Aḥmad al-Nāshirī's vigorous condemnation of the *fasād* that ensued the excessive beliefs in Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine.⁶⁴ He also claimed having studied with this scholar, a rather dubious assertion underlining, again, the careful shaping of a new narrative in the *Inbā'*, even about the author himself. In fact, while Ibn Ḥajar says having

59 Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabī* 263–9.

60 On Ibn al-Raddād's account in the 9th/15th-century Yemeni historiographical corpus, see Ahdal, *Tuhfat* ii, 336–7; Burayhī, *Ṭabaqāt* 299–302; Sharjī, *Ṭabaqāt* 88–91.

61 See his notice in Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'* ii, 272–3; on Ismā'īl al-Jabartī's position on Ibn 'Arabī, see Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabī* 241–52; on the "Jabartī circle" in Yemen, see Mochtari de Pierrepont, *Espaces* i, 207–18.

62 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā'* iv, 25.

63 Ibid. ii, 525.

64 Ibid. 525. See also Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabī* 254–5.

“gathered” with him (*ijtima‘tu bi-hi*) in the *Inbā*, implying a close group of students following the course of the teacher, in the *Dhayl* many years before he only claimed to have “seen” him (*ra‘aytu-hu*),⁶⁵ referring to a far more distant relationship. He also did not mention him among his Yemeni masters in his own *mashyakha*, included in the *Raf‘ al-‘iṣr*.⁶⁶ Yet, it may have made sense for the author to bring himself closer to Aḥmad al-Nāshirī in the *Inbā*, since the zeal, the consistency, and the ordeals this scholar went through—being banned from Zabīd and losing his position as *qāḍī* due to his opposition to Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrines⁶⁷—made him a paradigmatic illustration of the struggle against Ibn ‘Arabī’s followers in the first half of the 9th/15th century.

Thus, during al-Zāhir Jaqmaq’s rule, when pietism and more exoteric forms of religious piety seem to have gained momentum among the ruling elites, Ibn Ḥajar, by association, could appear in a positive light for those who rose up against the monistic doctrine. Yet, the fact that one of his greatest masters, al-Firūzābādī, had been a defendant of Ibn ‘Arabī,⁶⁸ a fact never explicitly pointed out by Ibn Ḥajar in the *Inbā*,⁶⁹ was certainly not lost to many ‘ulamā’ close to the doctrines of the unity of being, since al-Firūzābādī’s sympathy for Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrines was well known at this time.⁷⁰

The manner in which Ibn Ḥajar chose to change some previous narratives written in past historiographical works can arguably be seen as a marker of the gradual need Ibn Ḥajar may have felt to engage or reengage in the framework of a new historiographical work designed to shape and document the political history and changes of his time. In the *Inbā*, Ibn al-Raddād’s example seems to fit in these new narratives, and it is likely that the Sufi master’s notice may have partly served as a means to an end in regard to laying down Ibn Ḥajar’s position toward Ibn ‘Arabī’s followers. In doing so, Ibn Ḥajar was still maintaining a balance, even at a personal level, never directly engaging with the *shaykh al-akbar* himself. The prominence of Ibn al-Raddād’s influence in Yemen and his personal and well-known connections to the Yemeni sultans may also have been an appealing topic. After all, Ibn Ḥajar had met him, and personal testimonies

65 Ibn Ḥajar, *Dhayl al-durar* 158–9.

66 Ibn Ḥajar, *Raf‘ al-‘iṣr* 63.

67 His critiques of and confrontation with the defendants of Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrines led to his demise as *qāḍī* of Zabīd and his exile from Yemen. Ahdal, *Tuḥfat* ii, 69–70.

68 Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabī* 252–4; Strotman, *Majd al-Dīn al-Firūzābādī* 123, 143–55.

69 While, during Barsbāy’s reign, Ibn Ḥajar clearly refers to his master’s position in the *Dhayl al-durar*; 240 (n. 437).

70 Al-Ahdal, *Tuḥfat* ii, 336; Aziz, *Religion and mysticism* 205; Strotman, *Majd al-Dīn al-Firūzābādī* 146, 148–9.

played a relevant role to fit in the historiographical writing norms of his times.⁷¹ Moreover, such a figure allowed him to draw an implicit parallel between Ibn ‘Arabī’s followers’ abuses and the decline and long fall of the Rasūlid Sultanate, during which the *Inbā’* was written. A moral boundary, designed to prepare and train the reader to a higher form of understanding and elevation of the self (*murū’a*), was also put forth in this short notice, echoing the roles of the literary genres of *adab* and *ta’rikh*.⁷²

5 Ibn Ḥajar’s Narrative Ambivalence and Discursive Layers

Other examples of Ibn Ḥajar’s ambivalent position toward Ibn ‘Arabī’s doctrine can be emphasized with the biographic notice of Sirāj al-Dīn al-Hindī (d. 773/1372), *qāḍī* of the Ḥanafī *madhhab* in Cairo.⁷³ Ibn Ḥajar noted that al-Hindī composed a commentary of *al-Tā’iyya al-kubrā* (or *Naẓm al-sulūk*), a famous poem of the renowned Sufi ‘Umar b. al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235),⁷⁴ celebrating mystical union⁷⁵ and later closely associated with Ibn ‘Arabī’s monistic thought. Al-Hindī, in Ibn Ḥajar’s words, was “strongly associated with the monistic Sufis (*yata’aṣṣabu li-l-ṣūfiyya al-ittiḥādīyya*),” and his commentary was rejected (*‘azara li-kalāmi-hi*) by Ibn Abī Ḥajala (d. 776/1374),⁷⁶ a prominent scholar of the Ḥanafī school.⁷⁷ It is the only direct reference to Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poem in the chronicle. This close association in the narrative sequence between the subject of the notice, al-Hindī, the poem, monistic Sufis, and Ibn Abī Ḥajala’s censorship,⁷⁸ concluding immediately with a mention of al-Hindī’s death, seems to orient Ibn Ḥajar’s own position, as with Ibn al-Raddād’s notice, toward a public opposition to Ibn ‘Arabī’s monistic theories. But ambiguity remains in the *Inbā’*, since Ibn Abī Ḥajala, the poem’s censor, was also presented in the chronicle as an addictive drunk (*mudmin al-khamr*),⁷⁹ thus casting doubt about his testimony and actions. Like with Ibn al-Raddād’s notice, this anecdotic event must also be put in perspective with Ibn Ḥajar’s personal life

71 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’* 1–2.

72 Abbès, *L’adab*; Khalidi, *Arabic* 83.

73 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’* i, 27.

74 On this character, see Homerin, *Arab*.

75 Boullata, Verbal 152–69.

76 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’* i, 29.

77 Ibid. 80–2.

78 Ibn Abī Ḥajala’s position seems as a whole to have been much more qualified than in Ibn Ḥajar’s account. See Homerin, *Arab* 58.

79 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’* i, 81.

as he, too, like al-Hindī before him, was said to have written a partial and laudatory commentary of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *al-Tāʿyya*.⁸⁰ He himself claimed in the *Lisān* to have recited some of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verses to Sirāj al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī, arguably to obtain his master's opinion on the poet, who strongly condemned it.⁸¹ This leaves no doubt about Ibn Ḥajar's familiarity with the text. Ibn Ḥajar's personal opinion seems to have softened on this matter over the course of his life, which may also have been linked to the growing popularity of the poet as a saintly figure in Cairo.

Al-Hindī and his censor were both judged negatively, and Ibn al-Raddād's figure was presented in different shapes in the *Dhayl al-durar* and the *Inbāʿ*, underlining a qualitative modification during al-Zāhir Jaqmaq's rule to adjust the author's position on a polemical subject. These narratives illustrate Ibn Ḥajar's contextual ambiguity, considered both through the *Inbāʿ*'s own intertextuality and the situation in which this work featured in Ibn Ḥajar's broader career. Thus, although the *Inbāʿ* seems to adopt an apparently stronger stance toward Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine and especially his late followers, ambivalence remains in Ibn Ḥajar's cautious position.

5.1 *Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī: Shaping Boundaries and New Historiographical Narratives*

However, beyond expressions of the author's stance about Ibn ʿArabī's followers in the *Inbāʿ*, other Sufi characters were also used to build different narratives and outline other social, political, and cultural boundaries and determine limits to Sufis' political involvement.

On this matter, it seems that asceticism, charisma, and spiritual guidance were particularly honored by Ibn Ḥajar, although, again, he clearly set the boundaries in which the influence of charismatic masters had to be contained. One of the most striking illustrations of this discursive construction found in the *Inbāʿ* is the notice of Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī, one of the longest *tarjamas* of a Sufi character in the chronicle. Abū Bakr b. ʿAbdallāh al-Mawṣilī (d. 797/1394), born in Mosul, was said to be a spiritual disciple of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī. He was also a Shāfiʿī scholar well trained in *ḥadīth* studies and a passionate defender of the *ahl al-sunna*,⁸² praised by many ʿulamāʾ who came to his *majlis*. He settled in al-Quds during the reign of al-Zāhir Barqūq (784–801/1382–99) and became a prominent Sufi shaykh of the city, at the head of the *ṭarīqa*

80 Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 23.

81 Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān* iv, 317–9; Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 354, see note 188; Homerin, *Arab* 58–9.

82 Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 86, see note 102.

al-Mawṣiliyya (or al-Shaybaniyya), that comprised two *zāwiyas*—one in Jerusalem and the other in Damascus.⁸³ The following is a part of Abū Bakr’s notice in the *Inbā’*:

Abū Bakr b. ‘Abdallāh al-Mawṣilī, al-Dimashqī, settled in Damascus, worked with *fiqh* and the science of *ḥadīth* and engaged in Sufi *kalām*. He died in al-Quds in Shawwāl [797/July 1395] at the age of 60 ... Moreover, he used to mix with Sufis. He dug deeply in the science of *ḥadīth* and drew out a lot [from it]. His fame spread and disciples came to him, his mention rose [steadily] and his echo resonated far. The greatest [characters] came to see him. He went on pilgrimage many times. The Sultan heard of him and praised him highly. He came to visit him in his house in al-Quds, and climbed up to him on the heights (*ṣa‘ada ilay-hi ilā al-‘aliyya*). [The sultan] ordered money to be given to him, and wrote him intercessions [for him to be granted positions] (*shafā‘āt al-ḥasana*), but he [always] refused.⁸⁴

Most of this information, as is often the case in the *Inbā’* when the territory of al-Shām is concerned, comes from Ibn Ḥijjī’s *Ta’rikh*,⁸⁵ even though Ibn Ḥajar’s notice presents this material in a different order and wording. It also did not include a small part on Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī’s tomb, directly related to the *karā-māt* and the *baraka* attributed by Ibn Ḥijjī to the shaykh. Such a move seems to be a recurrent feature of the *Inbā’*, the *Dhayl*, and the *Durar*, and Ibn Ḥajar is generally very careful when it comes to accounts of pious visits and wondrous deeds, mostly using the formula “it is said on him that (*yuhkā ‘an-hu*)” or “it has been mentioned about him (*dhukira ‘an-hu*),” and rarely involving himself personally.

According to Ibn Ḥajar’s notice, Abū Bakr is a character very well considered. As a shaykh of a *ṭarīqa*, a very popular master, and a scholar trained in religious sciences, he seems to reconcile both the exoteric and esoteric nature of religious knowledge, the mastery of *fiqh*, and the spiritual accomplishment of Sufism. This figure seems to have been a rather important Sufi character in the *Inbā’*: five characters are mentioned as his disciples and companions, which is among the highest number of connections attached to a shaykh of a *ṭarīqa*. Ibn Ḥajar viewed him as a positive character or at the very least had a good opinion of this pious scholar. Ibn Ḥajar’s presentation of Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī is also significant as to the involvement of Sufi masters in defending the *Sunna* since

83 Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 181.

84 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’* i, 497–8.

85 Ibn Ḥijjī, *Ta’rikh* 131.

Abū Bakr was “a champion of the Sunna,”⁸⁶ who was said to have asked his disciples to stick a paper on their foreheads bearing the inscription “*Sufism and the good customs of the Prophet (al-taṣawwuf wa-l-khuluq al-ḥanīf al-nabawī)*.”⁸⁷ However, this notice simultaneously underlines four specific aspects developed by Ibn Ḥajar: his influence upon members of the *dawla*; his refusal to benefit from material wealth and political and social influence using his reputation with the sultan; his mastery of exoteric sciences; and his personal qualities. It thus seems to fit in the chronicle as an elaborate way to discuss the role of charismatic leaders such as Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī, their involvement in the dynamics of power, their means of influence, their balanced commitment in the *‘ulūm al-dīn*, and their personal deeds and moral integrity, aspects of which were illustrated by Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī’s presentation in the *Inbā’*.

Later on in the chronicle, Ibn Ḥajar also mentions Abū Bakr’s son Ibrāhīm (d. 814/1411): “Ibrāhīm b. Abī Bakr, al-Māḥūzī, al-Dimashqī. He learned a bit of *fiqh* and followed the Sufi path with a strong religion. He had a lot of wealth and was not accepting anything from anyone. He was advising his companions against accepting any goods from anyone. In that he was following in his father’s footsteps, the *shaykh* Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī’s path (*ṭarīqa*). People had for him an excess of belief and no *amīr* denied his requests.”⁸⁸

Here, Ibrāhīm is presented in a more ambivalent manner than his father. Just as with Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī, Ibn Ḥajar insists particularly on his refusal to earn material wealth thanks to his reputation and social standing. Yet, unlike his father, Ibrāhīm is said to have used his influence upon members of the *dawla*, while at the same time the notion of “excess” (*za‘īd*) is attached to the people’s consideration of him. The three main elements of Abū Bakr’s notice are thus presented in reverse: a poor mastery of exoteric religious science, a more negative religious and social influence, and the use of intercessions (*shafā‘āt*) from members of the *dawla*. This presentation emphasizes this character as a less brilliant man and scholar and underlines a generational decrease in the standing of the *ṭarīqa*, despite the moral quality recognized in Ibrāhīm. The previous mention of his father in the *Inbā’* must be taken as a focal point to introduce Ibrāhīm and compare him with his father. This comparison implies the slow decline of the family path and their *zāwīya*, embodied in the chronicle by Abū Bakr, Ibrāhīm, and the other Sufis linked to Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī.⁸⁹ As such, the father and son, as Sufi masters, are used to present the positive outcome of

86 Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 181.

87 Ibid. 86; quoting ‘Alī al-Buṣrawī, *Ta’rīkh* 59.

88 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’* ii, 495.

89 Ibid. 402, 432, 457, 526.

Sufism in society and the boundaries that Sufi *shuyūkh* should respect in regard to their involvement with the *dawla*. One would think Ibn Ḥajar, when it comes to Ibrāhīm, would have also been quoting Ibn Ḥijjī’s *Ta’rīkh*, thus simply echoing this previous work. But Ibrāhīm’s notice in the *Inbā’* was not taken from the very nice account Ibn Ḥijjī’s *Tarīkh* gives of Ibrāhīm, except for a very few elements.⁹⁰ This emphasizes the fact that whereas Ibn Ḥajar chose to include and in some way reproduce Abū Bakr’s notice, mainly from Ibn Ḥijjī, he also decided not to use it for Ibrāhīm, a choice implying a careful discursive strategy. In fact, these two characters seem to be mentioned in the *Inbā’* to echo each other, since Ibrāhīm’s notice only becomes meaningful for a reader after first having knowledge of his father’s notice.

Both notices also fulfill a specific representation linking the *ṭarīqa* al-Mawṣiliyya, the *dawla*, and paradigmatic examples of Sufi shaykhs’ involvement in the society and politics of the Cairo Sultanate during the end of the 8th/14th and the beginning of the 9th/15th centuries. This is what seems to appear from the comparison with Ibn Ḥajar’s previous works, stressing the selection Ibn Ḥajar made when considering the characters of his chronicle. Indeed, the discursive space accorded to Abū Bakr and his son is unmatched in his other works.

Thus, in the *Durar al-kāmina*, Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī is only presented as follows: “Abū Bakr b. ‘Abdallāh al-Mawṣilī, settled in Damascus and died in al-Quds in 797, aged 60.”⁹¹

As for his son, he is not mentioned in either the *Durar al-kāmina* or the *Dhayl al-durar*, even though Ibn Ḥajar, when writing these two works, was already using Ibn Ḥijjī’s *Ta’rīkh*.⁹² Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī’s notice in the *Durar* and Ibrāhīm’s absence from Ibn Ḥajar’s previous historiographical works show that, in the 830s/1430s, these characters were almost meaningless as to the historiographical representation the author was then shaping. Yet, Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī was quite famous in Damascus, and it is doubtful that Ibn Ḥajar had no information about him.⁹³ He had been dead for more than 40 years, but his name was still renowned in the 830s/1430s, and his *ṭarīqa* was still relevant in the social environment of Damascus and al-Quds.⁹⁴ The fact that the *Inbā’*

90 The 19 times he accomplished the *ḥajjī* (20 times in Ibn Ḥajar’s *Inbā’*). See Ibn Ḥijjī, *Ta’rīkh* 970.

91 Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar* i, 261 (n. 1187).

92 Ibn Ḥajar does quote Ibn Ḥijjī’s *Ta’rīkh* in the *Durar*, whose writing may have started in 830, two years before the *Dhayl*. ‘Izz al-Dīn, *Ibn Ḥajar* 273.

93 Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Ta’rīkh* 559–60.

94 Sakhāwī, *al-Daw’* i, 36; *Dhayl* 473.

awarded this new place to Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī and his son illustrates a new representation Ibn Ḥajar wanted to introduce in his chronicle.

Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī's example illustrates how using one historiographical work of Ibn Ḥajar to document a Sufi character mentioned in the *Dhayl al-durar*, the *Durar*, or the *Inbā'* would be meaningless without recontextualizing these works, for they would mainly refer to a precise and contextualized moment of Ibn Ḥajar's mindset and shaping of history. This representation may also be why he chose to remain silent regarding the very strong influence Abū Bakr was said to have had on Sultan al-Ẓāhir Barqūq,⁹⁵ such relationships not being in service of the paradigmatic example he was emphasizing with Abū Bakr's representation and behavior to produce a meaning going beyond the character's narrative.

6 Ibn Ḥajar's Chronicle and the Production of a Contextualized Social Order

Following these examples, it appears that it is not the doctrines and ideas that the author focused on when presenting his characters in the *Inbā'*, it is rather a set of public behaviors that he described and to which he attributed personal, legal, and moral opinions. As such, it seems it is the irruption in the public space of practices, ideas, and behaviors deemed unorthodox or morally reprehensible and the subsequent disruption of the public order that seem to be Ibn Ḥajar's main concern in displaying these narratives, echoing his personal position as *faqīh* and chief *qāḍī*. Since the social context in which the author was living and his personal situation changed, he also integrated new narratives into his previous historiographical works, and he transformed previously written ones. But beyond that, the relation between the author and the normative cultural and social framework he was shaping allows us to question the implicit meaning produced by Ibn Ḥajar concerning references to Sufi characters. Indeed, his concern for public order may be why he redefined his position vis-à-vis the Yemeni Sufi shaykh Ibn al-Raddād and his followers and why he may have negatively exposed Ibn 'Arabī's followers for their excesses but not the *shaykh al-akbar* himself. Other cases hint to similar dynamics. Following the growing success of the Suhrawardī Sufi master Muḥammad al-Ghamrī (d. 849/1446)⁹⁶ and his construction of a *jāmi'* in the market of Amīr Juyūsh in Cairo, Ibn Ḥajar

95 Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 86, see note 102.

96 On this character, see Garcin, *Histoire* 290–1.

wrote to him to move elsewhere; the ‘*ulamā*’ had reproached al-Ghamrī for this construction and the preaching that ensued in the market (*fa-‘āba ‘alay-hi ahl al-‘ilm*).⁹⁷ Yet, Ibn Ḥajar made no personal statement regarding al-Ghamrī’s beliefs. He only expressed concern for the question of the mosque in the *sūq*, namely, raising an issue related to the occupation and use of urban spaces. The same pattern of subtle distinction emerges in the case of the Ḥurūfiyya. The *ṭarīqa* al-Ḥurūfiyya⁹⁸ was an esoteric order deemed by some contemporaries as going mostly against the usual accepted religious practices and beliefs of the time.⁹⁹ As already pointed out by O. Mir-Kasimov, Ibn Ḥajar explained to his audience the strange ideas of their original founder, the Persian Faḍl Allāh b. Abī Muḥammad al-Astarabādī al-Tabrīzī (d. 796/1394).¹⁰⁰ Yet, he waited to really engage in the chronicle with the followers of the Ḥurūfiyya only when they appeared as disturbing the public order in the Cairo Sultanate in 820/1417. There, he reminded his audience of the burning of the Ḥurūfiyya’s writings, and at this point, he condemned the Ḥurūfī followers harshly.¹⁰¹

The concern for the disruption of the social order may also help to explain the chronicle’s specific discursive production linked to the Sufi *ṭarīqas* and the way they were introduced. As we have mentioned above, *ṭarīqas* were rarely referred to in the *Inbā’*. Yet, some mentions concerning them still touch upon the same concern of maintaining social, religious, and cultural normative stability. The way Ibn Ḥajar mentioned the Wafā’iyya order, an offshoot of the Shādhiliyya, is one of these cases.¹⁰² When he presented the leader of the Wafā’iyya, the Sufi shaykh ‘Alī b. Muḥammad Wafā’, he introduced him in a rather positive light, mentioning that he had met with him. But he was famously shocked by the excessive manner in which the *murīdīn* of the shaykh testified of their respect and belief in their master: the disciples prostrated (*al-sujūd*) themselves in front of him.¹⁰³ The author felt constrained to leave the room in front of such blameworthy behavior. He felt that this public display of excessive reverence was beyond acceptable boundaries.

Following from this careful attention in the *Inbā’* to public and normative behaviors, one may better understand why most members of the Shādhiliyya

97 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’* iv, 243.

98 Also called al-Nasīmiyya or al-Nu‘aymiyya, from the founder Faḍl Allāh Nu‘aymī’s disciple, ‘Imād al-Dīn al-Nasīmī. See Mir-Kasimov, *Takfir and messianism* 193–4, 197. In the *Inbā’*, the Ḥurūfī shaykh of Aleppo is called Nasīm al-Dīn al-Tabrīzī. He was killed in 820/1417. Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’* iii, 136–7.

99 Mir-Kasimov, *Takfir* 195–6.

100 Ibid. 196.

101 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’* iii, 136–7.

102 On this *ṭarīqa*, see McGregor, *Sanctity*.

103 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’* ii, 308; Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 307; McGregor, *Sanctity* 55.

were introduced positively in the *Inbā'*. The Shādhiliyya was a more discreet and private path, mostly confined to dedicated spaces of private religious practice.¹⁰⁴ By far and large—with the exception of the *ṭarīqa*'s branches that went, in some forms, according to Ibn Ḥajar, astray, like the Wafā'iyya—the Shādhiliyya presented no risk of disturbing either the religious and cultural normative framework of the Cairo Sultanate's society or the public order that Ibn Ḥajar, as a *qāḍī*, was bound to uphold.

The *Inbā'* thus displayed various situations in which forms of the practice of *taṣawwuf* were sometimes determined as having a reprehensible footprint on society, power, or religion. As such, one could not claim that the Sufi environment introduced in the *Inbā'* was expressed in a rather negative or positive way, an antagonism far too caricatural. Nor did Sufism form a specific topic in the *Inbā'*. Sufi characters and Sufism—as a body of legitimate and recognized spiritual and religious paths and practices—were part and parcel of the much broader social order presented in the chronicle.

In that regard, recent studies have sometimes dismissed the very contextualized and ideological perspectives set in the medieval narratives of Sufi display, not always taking into account the specific goals and framework of the sources used in their studies. One of the most recent milestones addressing the question of medieval Sufis in the Middle East, Nathan Hofer's *The popularisation of Sufism*, thus uses an impressive array of historiographical narratives to display, in very interesting ways, the role and agency of Sufis in the widespread success of Sufism from the late 6th/12th century to the early 8th/14th century. Yet, using sources ranging from before Ibn Khallikān's (d. 681/1282) masterpiece *Kitāb wafayāt al-a'yān* up until after al-Suyūṭī's (d. 911/1505) short history of Miṣr,¹⁰⁵ going through al-Udfuwī's (d. 799) *Ṭāli'*¹⁰⁶ and its shaping of the Ṣa'īd regional history, the Cairo Shāfi'ī, Ash'arī, 8th/14th-century master al-Subkī (d. 771/1370)¹⁰⁷ or the 9th/15th-century great historian al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442),¹⁰⁸ it does not majorly address the metatextual narrative environment upon which the study's main arguments are grounded. Differences among the sources and the authors, in historical context, cultural and social environment, institutional positions, political and theological differences, and various individual and collective experiences regarding mysticism, create a narrative framework that would have been worth investigating to better grasp the

104 Geoffroy, *Soufisme* 172.

105 Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-mu'ādara fī akhbār mir wa-l- qāhira*.

106 Udfuwī, *al-Ṭāli' al-sa'īd al-jāmi' asmā' nujabā' al-ṣa'īd*.

107 Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'iyya al-kubrā*.

108 Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffā l-kabīr*.

agency of Sufis in the success of various forms of Sufi practices, discourses, and institutions. The position of Sufism and Sufis in their social and cultural environment evolved in various ways at different stages of the Cairo Sultanate history, along with *taṣawwuf*-oriented discourses and discourses on Sufis and their reception. The very insertion of Sufi narratives in the historiographical framework of the Cairo Sultanate was in that respect part of a wider, dynamic, and contextualized exchange set for various literary, scholarly, political, and ideological needs and a changing audience.

The display of Sufis and Sufism in Ibn Ḥajar’s narrative was echoing various strata of meaning that also bear witness to Ibn Ḥajar’s evolving environment and contextual changes. When the disruption of a current social and political order was at play, a moral or legal condemnation was likely to be expressed by Ibn Ḥajar. Such a judgment could echo with much strength because Ibn Ḥajar’s status, as a scholar of considerable reputation and fame, had become an embodiment of the social and legal order he was narratively representing. Most of the time, though, mentions of Sufism were completely integrated into the normative framework of the chronicle’s events and narration, which may have been precisely one of the desired narrative outcomes of the *Inbā’*: to create a historical narrative reference framework, much more likely to be listened to, read, and discussed, that was based on Ibn Ḥajar’s personal shaping of his own times. For that reason, the author’s self-representation and personal agency in the chronicle’s events appear not only as a feature of the *Inbā’* but as a powerful narrative tool. It reinforced both the authenticity of the narratives, upheld the strength of their representation, and boosted Ibn Ḥajar’s own standing. Thus, while the author’s personal testimonies could add strength to the validity of the historical events he was unfolding, the events were also chosen to display the author’s opinions, including on a wide variety of legal, social, religious, and cultural questions, in which matters related to Sufism and Sufi practices were sometimes included.

In that regard, the *Inbā’* was definitely building a new perspective as to Ibn Ḥajar’s own historiographical positions and assertive opinions, and while shaping new memories, it was also consciously erasing or omitting some. His last historiographical work thus crafted a new historical narrative that Ibn Ḥajar felt was best serving both his personal interests at the time and the Cairo Sultanate’s needs for a narrative of the social order, an order in which Ibn Ḥajar may have felt either himself, Jaqmaq’s regime, or his broader audience were ideologically better integrated.

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