

MÎZÂN

Studien zur Literatur in der islamischen Welt

Herausgegeben von
Stephan Guth, Roxane Haag-Higuchi
und Mark Kirchner

Band 17

Essays in Arabic Literary Biography

General Editor: Roger Allen

Teil 2

2009

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Essays
in Arabic Literary Biography
1350–1850

Edited by
Joseph E. Lowry and Devin J. Stewart

2009

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

The signet on the cover was designed by Anwārī al Ḥusaynī and symbolizes a scale.

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Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet
über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the internet
at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

For further information about our publishing program consult our
website <http://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de>

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Printed on permanent/durable paper.

Printing and binding: Hubert & co., Göttingen

Printed in Germany

ISSN 0938-9024

ISBN 978-3-447-05933-6

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Muḥammad Amīn ibn Faḍl Allāh al-MUḤIBBĪ

(1651 – 1699)

RALF ELGER

University of Halle

WORKS

Jany al-jannatayn fī tamyīz naw‘ay al-muthannayayn (Fruit Picked from the Two Gardens, on the Distinction between the Two Types of Duals, completed 6 November 1698).

Works of Unknown Date

al-A‘lām (Notables);

al-Amālī (Dictations);

Barāḥat al-arwāḥ jālibat al-surūr wa‘l-afrāḥ (Uplifting Spirits, Bringing Joy and Happiness);

Dīwān (Collected Poems);

al-Durr al-mawṣūf fī ‘l-ṣifāh wa‘l-mawṣūf (Acclaimed Pearls, on the Attribute and the Modified Noun);

Hiṣṣah ‘alā Dīwān al-Mutanabbī (A Lesson on the Collected Poems of al-Mutanabbī);

Khulāṣat al-athar fī a‘yān al-qarn al-ḥādī ‘ashar (The Abridged Report, on the Notables of the Eleventh Century);

Mā yu‘awwal ‘alayhi fī ‘l-muḍāf wa‘l-muḍāf ilayhi (That on Which One May Depend, on the Two Nouns in Genitive Construct);

Nafḥat al-rayḥānah wa-rashḥat ṭilā‘ al-ḥānah (The Wafting Fragrance of Aromatic Herbs and the Dew of the Wine-Glass in the Tavern);

Dhayl al-Nafḥah (Sequel to the “Wafting Fragrance”);

al-Nāmūs ḥāshiyah ‘alā ‘l-qāmūs (The Confdant, a Gloss on the “Dictionary”);

Qaṣd al-sabīl fimā fī ‘l-lughah al-‘arabiyyah min al-dakhīl (Following the Middle Path, on the Foreign Words in the Arabic Language).

Editions and Manuscripts

al-A‘lām, MS Leipzig, Vollers catalog, no. 683;

Barāḥat al-arwāḥ jālibat al-surūr wa‘l-afrāḥ, MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ahlwardt catalog, no. 8162;

Dhayl al-nafḥah, ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥulw (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā‘ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, 1971);

Dīwān, MS Dār al-Kutub, Cairo, Shi‘r Taymūr, no. 404 (autograph); MS Berlin, Ahlwardt catalog, no. 8007;

Jany al-jannatayn fī tamyīz naw‘ay al-muthannayayn (Damascus: Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1348 AH);

Khulāṣat al-athar fī a‘yān al-qarn al-ḥādī ‘ashar, ed. Muṣṭafā Wahbah (Cairo 1867, repr. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.);

Mā yu‘awwal ‘alayhi fī ‘l-muḍāf wa‘l-muḍāf ilayhi, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Azīz, Ḥasan al-Shāfi‘ī (Cairo: Majma‘ al-Lughah al-‘Arabiyyah, 2003);

Nafḥat al-rayḥānah wa-rashḥat ṭilā‘ al-ḥānah, critical ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥulw (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā‘ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, 1967-70);

Qaṣd al-sabīl fimā fī ‘l-lughah al-‘arabiyyah min al-dakhīl, ed. with commentary ‘Uthmān Maḥmūd al-Ṣīnī (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Tawbah, 1994).

Al-Muḥibbī was one of the most productive writers of seventeenth-century Damascus. Especially famous for his two biographical collections *Khulāṣat al-athar* and *Nafḥat al-rayḥānah*, he also wrote poetry and works devoted to lexicography. Al-Muḥibbī describes his life, spent mostly surrounded by poets and literati in Damascus, as being exclusively devoted to *adab*, meaning the linguistic and literary arts as well as

his own poetic production. He was born in 1651 to a Damascene scholarly family, presumably of considerable wealth since his grandfather Muḥibb Allāh ibn Muḥammad Muḥibb al-Dīn (d. 1638) is described as having collected a fortune while serving in the legal administration of the city. Nevertheless, al-Muḥibbī's father Faḍl Allāh (d. 1671) and his paternal uncle Ṣun' Allāh (d. 1685) both expended great efforts to gain scholarly posts; neither seems to have led a life of leisure. Al-Muḥibbī's younger brother died young. In his youth al-Muḥibbī followed the normal curriculum, studying the Qur'an, law, Hadith, and language under the guidance of the prominent teachers of the day. Somewhat less common were his studies in geometry and medicine, but he did not publish anything in either of these disciplines. Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-'Abbāsī (d. 1665), *shaykh* of the branch of the Khalwatiyyah Sufi order that stemmed from Aḥmad al-'Usālī (d. 1639)—the foremost branch in Syria at the time—initiated al-Muḥibbī into Sufism, yet it is improbable that he was an active Sufi for he did not write any works devoted to mysticism or on mystical themes. The initiative to become a Sufi adept probably came from his relative Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Khalwaṭī (d. 1661), who also belonged to the 'Usālī branch of the Khalwatiyyah. The other members of his family do not seem to have had any Sufi connections.

Al-Muḥibbī grew up in the house of his father, who left the boy in the custody of other relatives while he traveled to Istanbul and stayed there for four years, from 1662 to 1666. Afterwards, al-Muḥibbī followed his father to Beirut, where the latter served as judge. They later returned to Damascus, where the father died. Al-Muḥibbī's father was probably his foremost teacher of artistic composition (*inshā'*) and the one responsible for inspiring in him an interest in poetry and history, all of these disciplines being prominent in al-Muḥibbī's later works. In the house of his father he met several important literati, including the famous poet Manjak ibn Muḥammad al-Manjakī (d. 1669).

Several accounts are related regarding al-Muḥibbī's first poem. Al-Su'ālātī and, following him, al-Murādī report that he wrote it when a friend of his in the *maktab* abandoned him. In

the poem al-Muḥibbī complains that the worst thing that happens in time (*dahr*) is the parting of friends. Friendship remained one of the dominant themes in al-Muḥibbī's later writings and in his thinking as well. Many poems and prose pieces on the subject, some very enthusiastic, are included in *Nafhat al-Rayḥānah* especially. Whether al-Muḥibbī's many friendships were all exclusively of a scientific or literary kind is improbable. Quite often he praises the outward appearance of his friends, a fact which may indicate that he also had some erotic interest. Though no clear statements indicate that he was a homosexual, there are some hints in this direction. He does not seem to have married, and his contemporary Ibn Kannān praises his handsome appearance at length. Admittedly, these are weak arguments, but his biographical works describe many homosexual relationships of prominent intellectuals, some of them al-Muḥibbī's friends.

To return to the question of his poetical beginnings, in *Khulāṣat al-athar* al-Muḥibbī says that he sent his first poem to his father, then residing in Istanbul, expressing longing for his absent parent. In his answer Faḍl Allāh warns the son not to pursue the way of the poets, because it brings no gain, but instead to strive for high esteem among the learned. Al-Muḥibbī does not say whether he followed this admonition, but in any case he did not stop producing poems. In the introduction to his *Dīwān* he praises the poets with the words "Praise be to a god who made poets the commanders of speech." Al-Muḥibbī also wrote a commentary on the *Dīwān* of al-Mutanabbī, but this text is not extant. Since al-Muḥibbī's father also was a poet, it is not improbable that his warning was grounded in his own experience. His problems in his career as a functionary may have been due, at least in part, to his interest in poetry. In Egypt, while in the service of the Ottoman judge Muṣṭafā ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm al-Burūsawī (d. 1687), he met Aḥmad al-Khafājī (d. 1659), the poet and author of the *Rayḥānah*, the model for al-Muḥibbī's later work, *Nafhat al-Rayḥānah*. Because al-Burūsawī hated al-Khafājī, a conflict arose between him and Faḍl Allāh which obviously ended their relationship.

When skillfully used to entertain and praise

patrons, poetry could further the career of Ottoman functionaries. In al-Muḥibbī's case, however, love of poetry was obviously combined with disinclination toward service in the administration. This is evident in the way he describes his visit to Istanbul (Rūm). He went there in the year 1676 at the age of twenty-five together with his uncle Ṣun' Allāh, who was then obviously in the service of the above mentioned judge al-Burūsawī. They stayed at first in Bursa, then proceeded to Edirne, where the sultan's court was located at the time. When the court moved to Istanbul in 1676, they followed it. Al-Muḥibbī's motives for the journey are not entirely clear. The loss of some literati companions may have been one cause, as he says in *Nafḥat al-rayḥānah*. In the portraits of Damascene experts of *adab* contained in this work, six persons are mentioned who died in the 1670s. Among these is Muḥammad ibn Kamāl al-Dīn (d. 1675), to whom al-Muḥibbī devotes an extensive and enthusiastic passage. Yet neither in this nor in any other of these notices does he mention that the death of the biographee drove him out of Damascus. Another reason for the journey may have been that al-Muḥibbī felt pressed to seek a post as judge, following the example of many Syrians before him. Generally this endeavor involved entering the service (*mulāzamah*) of a high-ranking Ottoman scholar who might procure a post for his client. The attainment of posts, dismissal therefrom, and the recuperation of lost posts absorbed the attention of many of the intellectuals in al-Muḥibbī's milieu. His father wrote a prose piece for a friend who had been dismissed and assures him that his value as a person is not affected by this unfortunate event. In yet another piece Faḍl Allāh deplures his own unemployed status and explains—obviously to a patron—that it is the duty of those who enjoy high rank to help those who do not.

The career of al-Muḥibbī's uncle Ṣun' Allāh provides a good example of the practice of *mulāzamah*. He was client of the judge al-Burūsawī in Istanbul and after some time was appointed judge in a town in northern Syria. Al-Muḥibbī joined the judge Muḥammad ibn Luṭf Allāh ibn Zakariyyā Muḥammad al-'Arabī (d. 1681), who had already been the patron of his father during the latter's stay in Istanbul in

1662-6. Some points in the relationship between al-Muḥibbī and the judge are remarkable. Al-Muḥibbī says that when he was three years old, Muḥammad ibn Luṭf Allāh, then serving in Damascus, promised his father a position for his son. On the occasion of a mission to the town of Yeni Şehir in the service of Sultan Mehmed IV (r. 1648-87), al-Muḥibbī says, the judge "sent me [an appointment to a post as a teacher, *mu-darris*, at] the Lāmi'ī Madrasah in Bursa with a stipend of twenty-five 'uthmānīs. Then Muḥammad ibn Luṭf Allāh became *qādī* 'askar of Rumelia and sent me [an appointment to a post at] the Hoca Khayr al-Dīn Madrasah with a stipend of thirty 'uthmānīs." Since al-Muḥibbī obviously did not work in either of these posts, the appointments only were meant to put him on the Ottoman *cursus honorum*, which would eventually lead him to a fifty-'uthmānī post in Damascus. In Istanbul al-Muḥibbī pursued a close relationship with his patron, but tried, he says, to avoid being appointed to a judgeship and urged Muḥammad ibn Luṭf Allāh to obtain for him a post as professor at a *madrasah* in Anatolia. This request had not been answered by the time Muḥammad died, and al-Muḥibbī, now thirty years old, returned to Damascus the next day, 15 Shawwāl 1092/28 October 1681.

This story indicates that al-Muḥibbī was not very eager for a post which might distance him from the sphere of learning and which would prevent him from following his interests in the literary arts and biographical writing. Back in Damascus and in a state of seclusion, he continued these pursuits. Seclusion appears often in al-Muḥibbī's biographical notices of contemporary scholars and was thus obviously not a rare practice. His father had already chosen to seclude himself in his home for a while. The most famous example from seventeenth-century Damascus is that of 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1730), who spent seven years in seclusion beginning in 1680, just one year before al-Muḥibbī's return to Damascus. Al-Nābulusī also wrote a treatise on this theme, *Takmil an-nu'ūt fī luzūm al-buyūt* (Consummate Descriptions of Staying at Home). Since al-Muḥibbī esteemed al-Nābulusī very highly, this great master may have been a model for his own behavior, but there is no such explicit indication in his writ-

ings. Instances of seclusion often followed dismissal from a post or failure to obtain one. This may also be true in al-Muḥibbī's case, since his patron had died so suddenly, yet his seclusion was not merely an act of frustration. He used it, probably deliberately chose it, in order to write the *Nafḥat al-rayḥānah* and *Khulāṣat al-athar*, presumably organizing and editing biographical material he had been collecting for years prior to this.

Al-Muḥibbī's two biographical collections were produced roughly during the same period, yet while *Nafḥat al-rayḥānah* is mentioned in *Khulāṣat al-athar*, the converse is not true, so it is appropriate to start with the *Nafḥah*. Early on in his education al-Muḥibbī came to know al-Khafājī's famous collection of portraits of poets, *Rayḥānat al-alibbā wa-zahrat al-ḥayāh al-dunyā*, and al-Muḥibbī's work was meant to be a *dhayl* (sequel or supplement) to it. Al-Khafājī's *Rayḥānah* represents a type of biographical collection that concentrates exclusively on scholars active in the field of *adab*. The portraits in both works are arranged by region of residence. Like al-Khafājī, al-Muḥibbī devotes the first chapter to literati from Damascus, then Aleppo and other cities of Syria. Al-Khafājī devotes his second chapter to North Africans, Meccans, Egyptians, and Rūmīs. This structure is due to the fact that al-Khafājī uses the collection as a means of self-presentation. He gives one section of his first chapter the rubric "Those Whom I Met in Damascus When I Returned from Anatolia." Then his journey to Aleppo is mentioned in a passage which acts as a frame for the portraits of the city's literati and poets. As a whole, the book's structure reflects the life of the author or at least a significant part of it. He traveled to Istanbul in order to obtain a post and returned to Egypt via Syria. He traveled again to Istanbul, where he was dismissed from his position, in a way the culminating point of his life. In the *Rayḥānah*, after the closing the section on Anatolia, al-Khafājī gives an account of his life which is largely centered upon his bad experiences during his last visit to Istanbul. This is followed by his autobiographical *Maqāmah rūmiyyah*, which criticizes Istanbul's cultural and moral environment in harsh terms.

Al-Muḥibbī, for his part, does not mention

his journeys in chapter titles, but in the *Nafḥah* his life-story also is mirrored in a way. His first longer journey led him to Rūm, which appears in the second chapter of the *Nafḥah*. A second journey took him to the Hijaz, a third to Egypt (chs. 3 and 5). The passages on Iraq, Bahrain and Yemen are inserted between these two chapters. The last and shortest section of the work is dedicated to literati of North Africa. In the introduction to the *Nafḥah*, al-Muḥibbī gives an autobiographical account, like that of al-Khafājī but without a *maqāmah*. In addition, he inserts many pieces of information about himself into his portraits of other literary scholars. It should be remarked that the portraits in his work and that of al-Khafājī's work are not factual biographical accounts. They do not give the dates of birth, death, or other salient events in the subjects' lives. They do not list teachers or works authored, and they omit other pieces of information typically found in standard biographical collections like al-Muḥibbī's own *Khulāṣah*, where most of the figures treated in the *Nafḥah* appear again. Instead, highly rhetorical portraits are drawn highlighting the literary capacities of the authors described. Many of their poems and selections from their prose are quoted and sometimes commented upon. Also, al-Muḥibbī quotes his own pieces which he addressed to these figures.

Some of al-Muḥibbī's text derives from al-Khafājī's work, though he was eager not to copy the model but to provide new information instead. This he does especially while describing those persons he knew personally, in Damascus and other places. Even for figures who appear in al-Khafājī's book, he adds new details and quotations of poetry. Neither author explains what exactly qualifies someone for inclusion in these works. In al-Muḥibbī's case it seems that only those intellectuals who produced poetry and *inshā'* appear in the *Nafḥah*. Comparison with the *Khulāṣah* shows that many scholars who actually wrote poetry do not figure in the *Nafḥah*. This suggests that it is the kind of poetry they composed that matters. It is not the production of religious poetry, for example, that qualifies one as an *adīb*, but rather the composition of love poetry (*ghazal*) and verses in praise of wine (*khamriyyāt*).

The reasons behind al-Muḥibbī's remarkable method of structuring the section of the *Nafḥah* devoted to Damascus merit examination. He begins with the "Excellences of Syria" (*maḥāsin al-Shām*), four poets who lived in the first half of the seventeenth century and whom he did not know personally. He seems to regard them as the best poets the city had produced over the last one hundred years. The next chapter, titled "Mention of Persons, Four of Whom Appeared in al-Khafājī's Text," includes thirty-five portraits. A rough chronology is discernible: the first subject died in 1632, the last sixty-two years later. He clearly did not intend an arrangement according to the quality of their production. The next chapter is devoted to ten people who were friends of al-Muḥibbī. Then comes a group of eleven prominent scholars who were also poets, in rough chronological order as well. The second section in the chapter devoted to Damascus comprises members of prominent Damascene families. It begins with the Ḥamzah family, proceeds to the Nābulusīs and others, and ends up with the Muḥibbī family. The first member of the latter family to be presented is Muḥibb al-Dīn (d. 1608), a scholar from Hama who settled in Damascus. The last is al-Muḥibbī's father, Faḍl Allāh. This arrangement on the basis of family ties, which is missing in al-Khafājī's work, may attest to al-Muḥibbī's affection towards his family. Probably he also wanted to highlight the poetic qualities of the Muḥibbīs which in a way he had inherited from his father, thus demonstrating his own superior status in his hometown. The section on Damascus closes with a poem on the city by al-Muḥibbī himself.

Further examination of the Damascus chapter of *Nafḥat al-rayḥānah* provides additional insights. It is noteworthy that the first four figures in the chapter, whom al-Muḥibbī regards as leading poets, are also somewhat "immoral." For example, Abū Bakr ibn Maṣṣūr al-'Umarī (d. 1638) is described in *Khulāṣat al-athar* as distant from the way of the 'ulamā', and one of his conflicts with a prominent scholar is mentioned. He also was enamored of young boys. About Ibrāhīm al-Akramī (d. 1639), al-Muḥibbī remarks that his wine-poems would make even an ascetic (*zāhid*) rebel. Al-Muḥibbī's friends also

appear to have been quite libertine. Thus, if one wants to pin down the specific milieu to which al-Muḥibbī regarded himself as belonging, it was not a milieu of pious ascetics or severe scripturalist scholars, but a circle of people who combined intellectual ambitions with love of poetry and hedonistic tendencies.

Al-Muḥibbī planned to write an appendix to the *Nafḥat al-rayḥānah* but died before he could finish it. The material was subsequently arranged by his disciple Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Su'ālātī (d. 1736) in 1700, five months after al-Muḥibbī's death (see for him Ibn Kannān, *al-Ḥawādith*, 453). Al-Su'ālātī also includes a biographical notice on al-Muḥibbī at the end of *Dhayl al-Nafḥah*, including many selections of elegiac poetry (*rithā'*) for his master (400-44).

Khulāṣat al-athar, al-Muḥibbī's major biographical work, includes 1289 biographies of figures who died in the eleventh Islamic century (1592-1688) arranged alphabetically by given name. His work follows a tradition of biographical collections devoted to centuries, including Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī's (d. 1449), *al-Durar al-kāminah fī a'yān al-mī'ah al-thāminah*, devoted to the eighth Islamic century, al-Sakhāwī's (d. 1497) *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi' fī a'yān al-qarn al-tāsi'*, devoted to the ninth Islamic century, and Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī's (d. 1650) *al-Kawākib al-sā'irah*, devoted to the tenth century. Among the works that al-Muḥibbī used as sources are al-Ghazzī's *Luṭf al-samar*, the *Tarājim al-a'yān* by Ḥasan al-Būrīnī (d. 1615) and the now lost continuation of al-Būrīnī's work by al-Muḥibbī's father Faḍl Allāh. In order to describe the specific character of *Khulāṣat al-athar* it is appropriate to compare it with al-Ghazzī's work, its direct forerunner in the genre. The geographical range covered by al-Muḥibbī is broader, including Morocco, India, Anatolia, and many other regions ignored by al-Ghazzī. It is difficult to judge whether he wanted to articulate some sense of "international" Muslim cohesion, as has been suggested by al-Ṣabbāgh, or whether he just collected all the information he could get.

Al-Muḥibbī criticizes al-Ghazzī's work explicitly, providing some insight into his own objectives and preferences. He considers al-Ghazzī's notices in the *Kawākib* too short and terse. This is not unjustified, since al-Ghazzī

often provides a limited number of dates and facts in each notice, only rarely quoting the subject's poetry or relating anecdotes about what occurred to them. In contrast, al-Muḥibbī regularly includes both poetic selections and relevant anecdotes in his individual notices. His portraits often stretch over more than ten pages, much longer than al-Ghazzī's. In this respect al-Muḥibbī is closer to al-Būrīnī, whom he follows also in his tendency to insert autobiographical information into the portraits.

A major difference between the two works is evident from their introductions. In the introduction to *al-Kawākib al-sā'irah*, al-Ghazzī praises the 'ulamā', the "heirs of the Prophet," and states that he is devoting his book to them in order, he stresses, to provide the readers with some moral guidance. Al-Muḥibbī's introduction, in contrast, attests to his somewhat "pluralistic" outlook. He begins with the sentence, "Praise to God, Who divided mankind into different classes." One understands from this sentence and the following elaboration that he wants each individual to follow his own path and is not eager to place one group above any other. He states explicitly that his work is devoted to "sultans, leaders, imāms and *udabā'*," and thus he does not single out the 'ulamā' for exclusive attention. In addition, he distances himself somewhat from moralistic scholars such as Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī himself, who is portrayed in the *Khulāṣah* in a peculiar way. The notice on al-Ghazzī begins with rather neutral statements. Al-Muḥibbī says little of al-Ghazzī's intellectual qualities despite the fact that he was one of the most prominent writers in seventeenth-century Damascus. Then he quotes a self-portrait by al-Ghazzī in which he describes himself as a serious, pious person who disdains worldly pleasures. Al-Muḥibbī then adds several anecdotes which portray al-Ghazzī in a less-than-favorable light and even seem to ridicule him. A very different portrayal is accorded to Ḥasan al-Būrīnī, who is highlighted by al-Muḥibbī as a great scholar, *adīb* and poet. He describes at length al-Būrīnī's love of wine and drugs, his homosexual relationships, and his many conflicts with Damascene religious scholars who "disliked his open speech," as al-Muḥibbī puts it. The reader of the two notices

comes to the conclusion that al-Muḥibbī preferred al-Būrīnī over al-Ghazzī by far. One may add that, in the *Khulāṣah* as a whole, al-Muḥibbī shows his preference for the Būrīnī-type intellectual over the Ghazzī-type, both of which are represented in a number of other biographical notices in the text. One cannot say that al-Muḥibbī disapproved of the 'ulamā' in general, but he more than once attacks the "moral fanatics" (*muta'aṣṣibūn*) among them. In one case he quotes, apparently with approval, the above-mentioned poet Abū Bakr ibn Mansūr al-Umarī, singled out by al-Muḥibbī as highly praiseworthy, mocking one of these fanatics.

Why was it al-Muḥibbī, of all contemporary scholars, who continued the tradition of biographical dictionaries covering a whole century compiled by such famous predecessors as Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī and al-Ghazzī? Since the genre is one of the most representative of the cultural landscape of the time, the point has enhanced relevance. Such biographical works define who was important, who was a legitimate actor in Muslim intellectual culture of the period. Why did not another, more respectable scholar than al-Muḥibbī also undertake this task? Perhaps there were other attempts, but certainly none rivaled al-Muḥibbī's magnum opus.

Some time after the year 1689, al-Muḥibbī traveled to the Hijaz, both to perform the pilgrimage and to collect information about Hijazi and Yemeni poets to be included in his biographical works. Al-Murādī mentions that al-Muḥibbī also accepted a post as judge in Mecca, but he himself does not confirm this. Perhaps he wanted to downplay this as a motive for the journey in accordance with his general aversion to such posts. The text of *Nafḥat al-rayḥānah* demonstrates that he came into contact with many literati. Noteworthy is his friendship with Muḥammad ibn Ḥaydar ibn 'Alī, whose physical attractiveness al-Muḥibbī praises. The portrait also includes many pieces articulating their friendship in poetry and artistic prose.

It is not clear exactly when al-Muḥibbī returned to Damascus, where he again went into seclusion. Eventually the Cairene Zayn al-ʿAbidīn al-Bakrī (d. 1695) visited Damascus and invited al-Muḥibbī to Egypt. Al-Bakrī had literary propensities and established relationships with

some of al-Muḥibbī's friends in the Hijaz and Damascus. For example, he hosted al-Nābulusī during his stay in Cairo and is mentioned several times in al-Nābulusī's *al-Ḥaḳīqah wa'l-majāz*. The nature of his relationship with al-Muḥibbī is not entirely clear. Al-Muḥibbī certainly admired his handsome appearance, which impressed other Damascenes as well: "He delighted them with his smile, before he delighted them with his speech." Al-Muḥibbī accepted the invitation, but his first visit to Cairo failed for an unknown reason; perhaps he was not offered a position there at this time. Only a second attempt was successful. 'Abd al-Bāqī ibn Muḥammad 'Ārif, an Ottoman functionary he knew from his sojourn in Anatolia, passed through Damascus on his way to assume the position of judge in Cairo and took al-Muḥibbī along with him. He likely appointed al-Muḥibbī to serve as his deputy judge, something mentioned by al-Murādī, whereas al-Muḥibbī himself is silent on the subject. He explains that in Cairo he finished the *Nafḥah*. He did not stay in seclusion there, but participated in the salon (*majlis*) of Zayn al-'Ābidīn, where he met the famous Damascene scholar 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī as is mentioned by the latter in his travel account *al-Ḥaḳīqah wa'l-majāz*. In another travel account, al-Nābulusī hints at al-Muḥibbī's strong leanings towards *adab*. Contact between the two is also mentioned, without further details, in Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazzī's (d. 1799) *al-Wird al-unsī* (fol. 70b).

Al-Muḥibbī describes one of these literary salons attended by his friend the literary scholar Shāhīn ibn Fath Allāh, at which the subject of *tashīf*—the alteration of dots on the letters of a phrase in order to give it a new, distinct meaning—was discussed. Al-Muḥibbī renders as one example his words, addressed to Shāhīn, *ataynā natabāhā bi-kalāmika*, which means, "We came, taking pride in your speech." In the *tashīf*-version it says *anta yā Shāhīn kullu amal* ("You, oh Shāhīn, are every hope"). In other cases mentioned by the author "harmless" words are similarly twisted in order to allude to friendship or a love affair.

Exactly when al-Muḥibbī returned to Damascus is not known. In 1694 and 1695, he was involved in lawsuits in that city, but he may

have been absent for the first, as he was represented by an agent. In 1694 he claimed a salary of fifty 'uthmānīs daily, whereas only twenty 'uthmānīs were indicated in the endowment deed—and he won the case. Another record mentions al-Muḥibbī as Qur'an reciter paid by the endowment of Küçük Aḥmad Pasha, a function he filled until his death. In 1695 he sought to prove that his post teaching Ḥanafī law at the Darwīshiyah Madrasah was mentioned in the endowment deed and thus legitimate, something an Ottoman official had denied (Damascus court records: Maḥākīm shar'iyah, Dimashq, register 8 mushawwish, page 42/no. 105, 5th Rajab 1106/1695). In another record (register 56/216/562, 9 Jumāda II 1142 /1729) it is stated that al-Muḥibbī held the post until his death 1699. (All information from court records is provided by Astrid Meier, University of Zürich.) Since in the first case al-Muḥibbī was represented in the court by an agent, it is possible that he was not in Damascus at the time. He probably left Cairo only after Zayn al-'Ābidīn's death in 1695. In the last phase of his life he seems to have stayed in Damascus, continuing to hold several posts and at the same time engaged in writing, especially on lexicography.

Al-Muḥibbī wrote several works on lexicography, including the now lost *al-Nāmūs ḥāshiyah 'alā 'l-Qāmūs*, presumably a commentary on al-Fīrūzābādī's famous dictionary, *al-Qāmūs*. Al-Su'ālātī reports that al-Muḥibbī never completed it. Another text in this field is *Qaṣd al-sabīl fīmā fī 'l-lughah al-'arabiyyah min al-dakhīl*, on foreign vocabulary in Arabic. Al-Muḥibbī organized this book alphabetically, but for some reason stopped after reaching the word *al-maqdūniyyah* (Macedonia). In it, he draws extensively on three earlier works mentioned in the introduction, al-Jawālīqī's (d. 1144) *al-Mu'arrab*, al-Khafājī's *Mu'jam al-alfāz*, and al-Qāḍī al-Anṭākī's (d. 1688) *Naqd al-lisān*, but also adds new items. In addition, he treats here the much debated question whether the Qur'an contains foreign vocabulary, arguing, following earlier authorities, that it does. His introductory chapter shows his strong reliance upon al-Khafājī's work, as it includes practically all of the latter's reflections and merely adds supplemental examples of the points raised there.

Al-Muḥibbī also wrote several lexicographical works devoted to two-term constructions. One of these, *al-Durr al-mawṣūf fī 'l-ṣifāh wa'l-mawṣūf*, on noun-adjective pairs, is lost, but is mentioned by al-Su'ālātī in his sequel to the *Nafḥah*. Another text, *Mā yu'awwalu 'alayhi fī 'l-mudāf wa-'l-mudāf ilayhi*, about genitive constructions, is largely based on Abū Maṣū' al-Tha'ālibī's (d. 1038) *Kitāb thimār al-qulūb fī 'l-mudāf wa-'l-mansūb*. Al-Muḥibbī says that he found this book in need of commentary and additions, which he proceeded to provide. The arrangement of material in his work differs from that of his model significantly. While al-Tha'ālibī applies a systematic arrangement, beginning with a chapter on genitive constructions in which "Allāh" is the second term, al-Muḥibbī instead arranges the material alphabetically, beginning with the term *abdā al-ṣafḥah* and ending with *yawm al-yamānah*. It is difficult to propose an overall analysis of the collection as a whole at this point, since that would require close study of his criteria for inclusion, his method of commentary, and so on, something that has yet to be undertaken. Nevertheless, al-Muḥibbī's short introduction stands out in that it differs substantially from al-Tha'ālibī's. Whereas the latter simply explains how he came to write the book, al-Muḥibbī engages in plays on the phrase *al-mudāf wa-'l-mudāf ilayhi* in various ways. Thus he relates that he was urged to write the work by a friend whose relationship with him was as close as that between the two terms in a genitive construct or that between a noun and its modifier (*al-ṣifāh wa'l-mawṣūf*), the subject of his earlier work. Here grammatical terms are used to refer to a relationship of friendship or love, a common topos in al-Muḥibbī's work. In the *khutbah* or opening prayer of the work, another playful usage of *al-mudāf wa-'l-mudāf ilayhi* occurs in a passage which seems to engage in irreverent, though veiled, mockery of religion. The opening phrase, *ḥamdu 'llāhi nafṣahū ajallu mā yu'awwalu 'alayhi* may mean "God's praise of Himself is the greatest thing on which one may rely"—the "straight" meaning—but can also be interpreted as, "God's praise of Himself is the greatest thing over which one might wail." The second phrase, *al-ḥamdu lahu ikhbārūn bimā huwa ṣādirun 'anhu wa-mudāfūn*

ilayh, may mean either, "To praise God is to state what springs from Him and what is ascribed to Him" or "To praise God is to state what springs from Him and what must be added to Him." These alternate interpretations, both highly heretical, cannot have escaped al-Muḥibbī's notice and must have been intended as humorous, irreverent double-entendres. That these readings are intended is corroborated by the fact that he applies a similar literary strategy in yet another lexicographical treatise, *Jany al-jannatayn fī tamyiz naw'ay al-muthannayn*, which he completed in 1698. In the introduction to this work, al-Muḥibbī writes, "When I finished the *Mudāf* it came to my mind to supplement it with another remarkable book on the two sorts of the dual, the dual on the basis of *ḥaqīqah* and the dual on the basis of *taghlīb*." The first term signifies a pair of things, or two individuals or things belonging to one category (*jins*). The second links together two things associated by connection or opposition, while the dual is formed from the singular of one of the two, like *abawān*, literally "two fathers" for "parents." Al-Muḥibbī provides an alphabetically arranged list devoted to each type of dual construction. An appendix treats dual forms of the annexed noun (*al-mudāf*) in genitive constructs, and a second appendix treats dual forms of determining nouns (*al-mudāf ilayhi*) in these same constructs. In the introduction to the first part, on the "true" dual, al-Muḥibbī displays his propensity to use ambiguous wording for the sake of irreverent humor. In describing the various types of duals he gives many examples from the sphere of the body and sexuality, and it is certainly not by accident that he discusses the dual form of the word *qur'* (i.e., *qur'ān*), which means a period of menstruation and the absence of menstruation at the same time. This happens to be spelled the same as Qur'an (*Qur'ān*), Islam's sacred text, and suggests that al-Muḥibbī is again flirting with blasphemous statements. This is one among many examples that characterize al-Muḥibbī's writings in general. He loved to come up with suggestive remarks, toying with the feelings of his pious contemporaries. Another characteristic point is that his work is, on the surface, rather derivative. *Nafḥat al-rayḥānah* closely follows the model of al-

Khafājī's *Rayḥānat al-alibbā*, and *Khulāṣat al-athar* also follows famous earlier models, as do his books on language. However, this aspect should not prevent the reader from noticing the distinctive features of al-Muḥibbī's *œuvre*.

Research on al-Muḥibbī is still in its early stages so an assessment of his legacy in Arabic letters remains provisional. His best-known and most valuable contributions are his biographical dictionaries, *Nafḥat al-rayḥānah* and *Khulāṣat al-athar*, both of which reveal a fascination with poetry and the literary arts that renders them crucial sources for the literary history of the seventeenth century, over and above their value as a general record of the period. Somewhat less notable, but nevertheless significant, are his lexicographical works, particularly his truncated dictionary of foreign vocabulary, *Qaṣd al-sabīl*. The modern Syrian scholar Laylā al-Ṣabbāgh claims that al-Muḥibbī wanted to strengthen the basis of the Arabic language and defend it against decay and the intrusion of other languages, especially Turkish and Persian. Though he was not an innovator in linguistics and was rather unoriginal, in her view he was working for an Arab "national reawakening." Despite such claims, it is difficult to view al-Muḥibbī as a proto-nationalist. He does not display any political or politico-cultural ambitions, and followed his literary and personal interests instead. Systematic study of his poetic production has been hindered by the fact that his *Dīwān*, or collected poems, has not been edited to date. Whether his work represents a renaissance of sorts in Arabic culture of the time, as several modern scholars have suggested, remains unclear because the literary history of the period has not been mapped out sufficiently. His works attest not only to his deep knowledge and systematic scholarly efforts but also to his personal longings. He admired the wine-bibbers in his milieu, even if he was not himself an avid drinker. He cultivated many friendships, and may have been homosexual. He was critical, ironic, irreverent, and averse to excessive gravity, and as such is representative of at least one trend in Arabic literary culture in the seventeenth century.

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al-NAFZĀWĪ

(fl. ca. 1380 – 1440)

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WORKS

Tanwīr al-wiqā‘ fī asrār al-jimā‘ (Shedding Light on Coition: The Secrets of Sexual Intercourse);
al-Rawḍ al-‘āṭir fī nuzhat al-khāṭir (The Perfumed Garden of Sensual Delight [literally: The Perfumed Garden in the Pleasure Grounds of Desire]).

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Editions

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Translations

The Perfumed Garden of the Cheikh Nefzaoui: A Manual of Arabian Erotology (XVI Century),

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Shaykh al-Nafzāwī is known to the world only through his book, *al-Rawḍ al-‘āṭir fī nuzhat al-khāṭir* (The Perfumed Garden of Sensual Delight, or, following the metaphors through both halves of the title, The Perfumed Garden within the Pleasure Grounds of Desire), a work of practical instruction on the successful conduct of sexual relations in marriage and concubinage. He directs his message to the needs and tastes of the ordinary married man. Working in the *adab* tradition of Arabic belles-lettres but at a popular level, al-Nafzāwī amplified his message—as readers of this kind of book would have expected—with verses of erotic poetry, witty anecdotes, and tales of trickery or romantic adventure involving sexual exploits intended to titillate the imagination and arouse.

Al-Nafzāwī stresses the God-given nature of the sexual pleasure of a man and woman together, described as the most complete and intense kind a human can experience and one vital to lasting marital concord and procreation. Prior to writing the *Perfumed Garden*, he had pro-