

## “Special Features of the Prophet” (*Khaṣā’iṣ nabawiyya*)

*From Jurisprudence to Devotion*

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The figure of Muḥammad has received unparalleled attention from Muslim scholars, who have scrutinised every aspect of his life, public and private, in order to reconstruct a viable *uswa ḥasana*, a “good model” for believers.<sup>1</sup> Major collections of *ḥadīth* can be considered to be fragmented accounts of the Prophet’s life, narrated and classified according to the various points of view of the transmitters. In *sīra* texts (a notion often translated as “biography”), which deal with the Prophet’s life and actions, the variability of perspectives is limited by the author, and the chronological arrangement of events shifts the focus of such texts away from the potential legal relevance of Muḥammad’s actions to their exemplary and exceptional character.

A narrower approach to the figure of Muḥammad can be found in *Shamā’il* literature, which centres on the physical appearance of the Prophet and on the perfection of his character. One of the fundamental texts of this genre, written by Tirmidhī,<sup>2</sup> covers every aspect of the physical existence of Muḥammad, from his birth to his death, including a final section on the *ru’yat al-Nabī*, the Messenger’s vision, which took place during a dream. His acts and decisions are seen through the lens of description, because he is an *exemplum* for the believers. Strictly legal aspects are not discussed, and the description is designed to offer the reader a lively image of the absent Prophet.

*Maghāzī* literature<sup>3</sup> could be said to stand on the opposite side of the spectrum of literature about the Prophet from works of *Shamā’il*. It is focused on the actions, military expeditions and raids of the newly established Muslim community. Here, description is functional, serving a chronological narration of the military events that occurred during Muḥammad’s life.

1 Translation of this expression does not express its full lexical complexity, that alludes not only to the exclusive aspect of some legal dispositions, but also to the *khāṣṣa* as an élite, and to the exceptional character of the one marked by a *khaṣā’iṣa* (pl. *khaṣā’iṣ*).

2 Tirmidhī, *Shamā’il*.

3 Jones, “Maghāzī Literature”.

His function as God's Messenger, and related proofs, are discussed by *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa* texts, "Proofs of Prophecy", in which miraculous deeds and episodes are seen as signs confirming the genuine nature of Muḥammad's mission.<sup>4</sup> This genre started as a form of apologetics, defending developing Islamic (*sunnī*) doctrine from the challenges of Isma'īlīs and Christians.<sup>5</sup> The structure of these works is fairly consistent: following the path of the Prophet's life, they enumerate miracles and their varying contexts and circumstances. Among these, miracles linked to the Qur'ān and its inimitability occupy a prominent place. The apologetic attitude is clear in the frequent comparisons between Muḥammad and other messengers, where their miracles are considered as more tenuous versions of those granted by God to His beloved. In this sense, the *Dalā'il* can be seen as a development of the *sīra*, focusing on specific aspects of Muḥammad's life.

In this study I propose to analyse the development of the literature dealing with a slightly different set of exceptional aspects of *sīra*, called *khaṣā'is nabawiya*. I will try to show how this genre evolved from niche works of jurisprudence into spiritual and devotional poetry. Starting from early juridical texts, the attention of *fuqahā'* has been on the identification of reliable traditions and methods of interpretation that would allow judges and rulers to govern a society that was becoming more complex and stratified. Establishing guidelines for the interpretation of primary sources was an intellectual task performed by a restricted *élite* of specialists in Prophetic tradition. The consequences of these interpretations, on the other hand, involved a far larger public, ideally the entire Muslim community. In this perspective there is a distance between the approach to traditions within *dalā'il* (where the discussion relates only to miracles performed by Muḥammad and other prophets) and that of jurists, which would primarily refer to traditions valid for the whole *umma*, with the aim of deriving general rule of conduct and laws.

In any case, there is a small number of normative *ḥadīth* in the latter domain that define rules that are valid only for the Prophet, and not suitable for or applicable to any other member of his community. These few traditions have no practical relevance to believers, applying as they do only to the Prophet, but they are still discussed in earlier sources as *khaṣā'is*, "exclusivities of the Prophet".<sup>6</sup> The interaction between the status of these traditions and the

4 Koertner, "Dalā'il al-Nubuwwa Literature"; Tottoli, "Segni della Profezia"; Stroumsa, "Signs of Prophecy".

5 Reynolds, *Muslim Theologian*, 8of.; Tottoli, "Segni della Profezia".

6 Translation of this expression does not express its full lexical complexity, that alludes not only to the exclusive aspect of some legal dispositions, but also to the *khāṣṣa* as an *élite* and to the exceptional character of the one marked by a *khaṣīṣa* (pl. *khaṣā'is*).

*dalā'il al-nubuwwa* texts is the starting point of this study. Here I will try first to show how *khaṣā'is* literature developed, starting from pure juristic discussion and ending with a specific genre focused on the figure of Muḥammad, and on his community, as exceptional in religious world history. In the late Mamlūk period, this genre saw the unprecedented development of new collections of traditions, and of commentaries on and re-writings of these works. The nature of this second step deserves specific attention, as it is characterised by a shift from a legalistic approach to a more devotional one. The figure of Muḥammad becomes the focus of the attention of Sufi practices; the prayer on the Prophet played a central role in the rituals of Sufi brotherhoods (*ṭuruq*, sing. *ṭarīqa*). In the background of this shift lies the progressive involvement of 'ulamā' with Sufism, which has deeply influenced the way authors represented Muḥammad. In this analysis I will try to show how *khaṣā'is* literature can serve as a platform for scrutinising the increasing influence of Sufism on the construction of thematic collections of *ḥadīth* and *akhbār*.

The sources used for this study cover almost ten centuries of Islamic history and therefore cannot be considered exhaustive. I have given preference to earlier sources that have been quoted by later authors as main references. For Mamlūk-period sources, I gave precedence to those from which other texts derived, but also consider less prominent ones as evidence of the diffusion in the genre in that period.

## 1 The Origins of the Discourse in *Khaṣā'is*

The legal discourse in *khaṣā'is* has its roots in Shāfi'ī's *Kitāb al-umm* (d. 204/820) and Muzanī's (d. 264/878) commentary thereon. The latter gives, at the beginning of the *Kitāb al-nikāḥ*, a short summary of what Shāfi'ī considered to be an exclusive prerogative of the Prophet, solely concerning marriage. Muzanī introduces the *khaṣā'is*, saying:

When God the most high chose Muḥammad for His revelation (*waḥy*) and made clear which were the duties of His creatures, i.e. to obey Him, [He] made incumbent [on the Prophet to perform] some actions that were not compulsory for His [other] creatures; [He decreed this] to draw Prophet near to Him, and [He] made lawful to him things that He prohibited to His creatures ...<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Muzanī, *Mukhtaṣar*, 218f.

This can be considered the first discourse about *khaṣāʾiṣ* in Islamic literature, and it already mentions the main criterion of classification that will be the basis of later literature on the same topic: rules specific to Muḥammad alone, due to his peculiar status as last of the Prophets. In this passage, Muzanī identifies two sub-categories: obligations and prohibitions. Another element that will become central in later discussions is the merit ascribed to these acts, seen as a favour God has bestowed specifically on his beloved.

Māwārdī (d. 1058) in his *Kitāb al-ḥāwī al-kabīr fī fiqh madhhab al-imām al-Shāfiʿī*,<sup>8</sup> which is a commentary on al-Muzanī's *Mukhtaṣar*, goes a bit further in the organisation of the *khaṣāʾiṣ*. Discussing some of Shāfiʿī's assertions about the wives of the Prophet, he associates some of their characteristics with miracles (*karāmāt*) performed by Muḥammad. One example is Māwārdī's commentary on Shāfiʿī's affirmation that the wives of the Prophet were called "mothers of the believers" (*ummahāt al-mu'minīn*) and that, because of this, for anyone else to marry them after the Prophet's death would imply committing incest. For this reason, it was prohibited for believers to marry the Prophet's widows. In *al-Ḥāwī*, Māwārdī says that this counts among the Prophet's miracles, because the women are Muḥammad's wives, and so associated with him. The merits of being *ummahāt al-mu'minīn* come to them only through having married Muḥammad, and their daughters were given in marriage to other Muslims, despite (arguably) being their "sisters". The theme of *nikāḥ* (marriage) and specifically of the number of wives, is of paramount importance in the earlier discussions of the *khaṣāʾiṣ*. Indeed, the fact that Muḥammad could marry more than four women constitutes one of the clearest exceptions to the Islamic norms that were valid for the rest of the *umma*. Almost all later authors followed Māwārdī and tried to find further traditions related to the special status of the *ummahāt al-mu'minīn*.

Bahyaqī (d. 458/1066), for instance, in his *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*,<sup>9</sup> devotes an entire chapter to this topic. The focus remains on the *nikāḥ*, and he gives accounts of several details not analysed in previous literature, such as the fact that the Prophet did not need witnesses for his marriages. This list of *khaṣāʾiṣ* is also the first to include Prophetic prerogatives not connected to marriage, such as the possibility, for him, of entering Mecca without being in state of *ihram*,<sup>10</sup> or the right to kill someone who offended him; what's more, it mentions only things that are exclusively permitted to the Prophet, omitting any exclusive prohibitions and miracles. An interesting example, which already

8 Māwārdī, *al-Ḥāwī*, IX, 18–20.

9 Bahyaqī, *Sunan*, VII, 86–120.

10 *Ihram*, the state of purity that believers must respect when entering the sacred site.

demonstrates the broadening of the scope of *khaṣā'īs*, is that the Prophet is permitted to omit ablutions after sleep.<sup>11</sup> The tradition quoted as a proof of this exception is the well-known saying, ‘My eyes sleep, but my heart doesn’t.’<sup>12</sup> The theme of *wuḍū'* (ritual purification) is part of the basic discussion of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and, as purity is a compulsory condition to perform prayer, it involves all believers. It is also related to specific physical and spiritual features of the Prophet that recur in the literature of *Shamā'il*.<sup>13</sup> This intersection between two different genres is not uncommon and can be considered a consequence of the fact that all collections of traditions related to the Prophet and his function draw from a common set of primary sources. The same Prophetic tradition can be read from different angles: as simply describing Muḥammad's conduct, or as considering specific examples of that conduct to be exceptions to common practice based on Islamic law. In this way, literature about *khaṣā'īs* introduces different readings of traditions that were already used in other contexts.

It must be noted that in these earlier works (and in many of the later ones) there is no definition of *khaṣīṣa*, whether formal or simply delimiting the domain of these exclusivities. This relates to the objection among some *'ulamā'* that expending much effort in examining questions that have no practical advantage for the *umma* is rather pointless. Only later authors, such as Ibn al-Mulaqqin (d. 804/1401) in his *Ghāyat al-sūl fī khaṣā'īs al-rasūl*,<sup>14</sup> report the opinions of predecessors who tried to justify discussing these topics.<sup>15</sup>

Ibn al-Mulaqqin reports that Ibn Khayrān (d. 431/1040) prohibited (*mana'a*) the discussion of traditions related to *khaṣā'īs* about marriage and imamate (*nikāḥ wa-imāma*). The same opinion was shared by Māwardī (d. 449/1058)<sup>16</sup> and his master Ṣaymarī (d. 386/996): the latter maintains that these legal dispositions do not affect the community, as the Prophet is not alive anymore, and that therefore there is no point in discussing them. Ibn al-Mulaqqin also reports another opinion from Ghazālī and Juwaynī. The latter says, in his *Nihāyat al-maṭlab fī dirāyat al-madhhab*: ‘It is not permissible to establish the exclusive dispositions and characteristics of the Prophet – peace be upon him – based on comparisons that are used to derive general legal dispositions.’<sup>17</sup> In this perspective, further research in the direction of adding new *khaṣā'īs* is

11 Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, VII, 99.

12 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3376.

13 al-Tirmidhī, *Shamā'il*, 164.

14 Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ghāyat al-sūl*, 68f.

15 See, for example, Ibn Kathīr, *Fuṣūl*, 279ff.

16 Who, as we have seen, discussed them anyway, in *al-Ḥāwī*.

17 Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ghāyat al-sūl*, 69.

then discouraged. Later authors, such as Ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī (d. 643/1245), considered the study of such exclusivities permissible only for the general public, but not for specialists who were actively occupied in deriving legal dispositions to be used in actual juridical practice.<sup>18</sup> Nawawī (d. 675/1277) seems to have allowed the discussion of *khaṣā'is* with no restrictions. According to Ibn al-Mulaqqin, Nawawī even considered it almost compulsory to analyse them, giving as his reason that establishing what was permitted or prohibited only to Muḥammad was necessary in order to avoid allowing anyone else to act according to those rulings.

From a more general point of view, it is noteworthy that Ibn al-Mulaqqin is the first to report any information about previous authors' attitudes towards the genre and its permissibility. Later authors rely mainly on his *Ghāyat al-sūl* and pay little or no attention to this topic, either considering it licit in itself, or framing it in the context of *faḍā'il* or *tafḍīl al-nabī*, as Kharkūshī did in *Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā*<sup>19</sup> or 'Izz al-Dīn b. 'Abd al-Salām in *Bidāyat al-sūl*.<sup>20</sup>

As is evident from the texts mentioned so far, the discourse on *khaṣā'is* seems to have started in the circles of *Shāfi'ī* schools and, as we shall see, it remained mostly in this domain. It is not clear, at this early stage of research, if there is a specific penchant in the *Shāfi'ī* approach to jurisprudence that led them also to focus on legal dispositions specific to the Prophet. It seems more likely that discussion of the topic only in sources belonging to a single juridical school means that this concern was confined to adherents of that school. This may have been caused by other factors, such as the limited practical utility of the *khaṣā'is*, and doubts concerning their legitimacy.

## 2 Kharkūshī and Qāḍī 'Iyād

Literature on the figure of Muḥammad evolved significantly during the tenth and eleventh centuries, in parallel with the progressive adherence of '*ulamā'*' to Sufism, which brought about the incorporation of some Sufi spiritual doctrines into general Islamic religious science; this process culminated with Ghazālī (d. 504/1111). Also in this line of development, we find Abū Sa'd al-Kharkūshī (or al-Khargūshī, d. 407/1016). He was a *Shāfi'ī* jurist from Nishapur, known

18 Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ghāyat al-sūl*, 69. It must be noted that this opinion contrasts with those of the many who denied the usefulness of writing about *khaṣā'is*, and opens up the possibility, for the more general public, of looking at the Prophet from a different angle, more focused on the miraculous and exceptional features of his personality.

19 Kharkūshī, *Sharaf al-muṣṭafā*.

20 'Izz al-Dīn b. 'Abd al-Salām, *Bidāyat al-sūl*.

as a *wā'iz* (preacher) and as the author of a collection of early Sufi sayings, *Tahdhīb al-asrār*.<sup>21</sup> He also composed a lengthy work on the Prophet, *Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā*,<sup>22</sup> gathering every kind of information about Muḥammad, his figure and his functions. This text combines *sīra*, *maghāzī*, *dalā'il* and *faḍā'il* and aims to be comprehensive, but without placing too much emphasis on *isnāds* (chains of transmission of Prophetic traditions), which places it outside the bounds of proper scholarly literature. Nevertheless, this is one of the earliest examples of literature that looks at Muḥammad from more than one angle (not merely biography, description of his physical appearance, or examination of the legal relevance of his sayings and deeds). Collections of *ḥadīth* report traditions about all these topics, alongside chains of transmission and variants. In the *Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā* these are left to one side, making room for a more complex construction of discourse about Muḥammad, where the intervention of the author in organising and defining topics is both more relevant and more evident.

*Khaṣā'is* are first discussed, sparingly, in two chapters called *Jāmi' abwāb Sharaf al-Nabī [...]* *fī l-Qur'ān al-karīm* and *Jāmi' abwāb faḍl al-Nabī*.<sup>23</sup> In the former, al-Kharkūshī lists several verses of the Qur'ān that explicitly or implicitly grant Muḥammad a special position within humankind. Some are obvious, such as God's forgiveness of all his sins past and future. Others include the comparisons with other prophets, as in the case of Qur'ān 33:7, where, al-Kharkūshī comments, “Muḥammad was the last to be called to prophecy, but [in this verse] he is mentioned before the others”.<sup>24</sup> The rest of the chapter proceeds in the same way, using Qur'ānic quotations to prove Muḥammad's excellence.

The sections devoted to the *khaṣā'is*<sup>25</sup> are of interest because they do not deal with *fiqh*-related topics. In fact, they appear only as a reiteration of arguments already presented, without stressing comparisons with other prophets. One element that appears here for the first time, and that will become a *topos* of later *khaṣā'is* literature, is the separation between the characteristics that make Muḥammad exceptional in this world and those that relate to the after-life (*ākhirā*).<sup>26</sup>

21 Melchert, “Khargūshī”.

22 'Abd al-Raḥmān, “Critical Edition”; Kharkūshī, *Manāhil al-shifā'*.

23 Kharkūshī, *Manāhil al-shifā'* IV, 191.

24 Kharkūshī, *Manāhil al-shifā'* IV, 95–6.

25 Kharkūshī, *Manāhil al-shifā'* IV, 208–34.

26 Kharkūshī distinguishes only the ones related to the *ākhirā*: Kharkūshī, *Manāhil al-shifā'* IV, 213.

The general aim of al-Kharkūshī is to show how God had favoured (*faḍḍala*) Muḥammad over other prophets. The argument is clear in a chapter whose complete title is *Bāb jāmi‘ fi faḍl al-Nabī ṣalla llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam wa-mā warada [sic] min al-ḍalāla ‘alā tafḍīlihi ‘alā sā’ir al-anbiyā’ wa-l-mursalīn* (Chapter on the merit of the Prophet and the reported proofs of his excellence over the other prophets and messengers).<sup>27</sup> The proofs proposed are the same as those used in the *dalā’il* section. Among them is the classical *u’ṭitu khamṣa* narrative,<sup>28</sup> in which Muḥammad affirms that he has been given five (or seven, or more) things that were given to no other prophet.

At the beginning of this section, al-Kharkūshī says: *Qāla ba‘ḍuhum khaṣā’iṣ al-Nabī ‘alayhi al-ṣalāt wa-l-salām ghayr muḥṣāt* (‘Some say that the *khaṣā’iṣ* of the Messenger cannot be counted’).<sup>29</sup> This can be interpreted as a reference to earlier literature on the topic, seen from a perspective that is not merely legalistic, because that would imply a limit to the number of *khaṣā’iṣ*. Thus, Kharkūshī’s work appears as part of a pre-existing trend, of texts that consider *khaṣā’iṣ* as a topic separate from jurisprudence, and as part of a discourse about the Prophet himself. Here, the countless prerogatives of Muḥammad become a reason for increased love and admiration for him, regardless of their legal relevance.

Another text that marks a similar turning point, and has known more success than the *Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā*: Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ’s (d. 543/1149) *Kitāb al-Shifā’ bi-ta’rīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā*.<sup>30</sup> The two works and their authors differ in several respects: Kharkūshī lived in the east of the Islamic world, while Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ was active in the Maghreb. The former belonged to the Shāfi‘ī Islamic school, the latter was a Mālikī. Al-Kharkūshī was a preacher, and was acquainted with Sufism (or he was himself a Sufi), while Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ was a judge and was even related in some sources to have approved the burning of Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’ ulūm al-dīn*.<sup>31</sup>

27 Kharkūshī, *Manāhil al-shifā’* IV, 191.

28 Kharkūshī, *Manāhil al-shifā’* IV, 193–97; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, ḥadīth* no. 335 reports one of the many different lists of these five (or more) gifts from God to Muḥammad: ‘The Prophet said, “I have been given five things which were not given to anyone else before me. Allah made me victorious by awe (by frightening my enemies) for a distance of one month’s journey. The earth has been made for me (and for my followers) a place for praying and a thing to perform *tayammum*, therefore anyone of my followers can pray wherever the time of a prayer is due. Booty has been made lawful for me, yet it was not lawful for anyone else before me. I have been given the right of intercession (on the Day of Resurrection). Every Prophet used to be sent to his nation only, but I have been sent to all mankind.”

29 Kharkūshī, *Manāhil al-shifā’* IV, 208.

30 Gomez-Rivas, “Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ”.

31 Gomez-Rivas “Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ” 329. For the complex history of the introduction of the *Iḥyā’* in al-Andalus, see Safran, “Politics of book-burning”; Ruano, “Why Did the Scholars of al-Andalus Distrust al-Ghazālī?”.

As for the aims of the two works, their introductions contain particularly important differences. Al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ says, in the introduction of the *Shifā’*:

You have repeatedly asked me to write something that gathers together all that is necessary to acquaint the reader with the true stature of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, with the esteem and respect that is due to him, and with the verdict regarding anyone who does not fulfil what his stature demands, or who attempts to denigrate his supreme status, even by as much as a nail-paring. I have been asked to compile what our forebears and Imams have said on this subject, and I will amplify it with *āyas* from the Qur’ān and other examples.<sup>32</sup>

Here the reasons adduced by Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ are mainly legal: he wants to define the boundaries of what it is permissible to say about the Prophet, giving a complete account of the sources exalting his status and function. On the other hand, in the introduction of the *Sharaf Kharkūshī* states: “What urged me to compose the *Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā* is love for Muḥammad the Messenger and affection in speaking of him, because a person who loves something speaks of it quite often”.<sup>33</sup>

The difference between the two is quite patent: in the case of Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ, the necessity for such a composition is presented as coming from outside himself; for Kharkūshī it is his inner spiritual state that urges him to write a book about the Prophet. This, however, is not reflected in the actual success and readership of the two works. The *Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā* has circulated mainly among learned men of *ḥadīth*, and we find it mentioned by later authors, such as al-Suyūṭī; very few manuscript copies are extant. Compare this with the enormous success encountered by the *Shifā’*, which enjoyed a steady diffusion and was credited with miraculous properties, such as it protecting ships carrying it from sinking, or it healing the sick.<sup>34</sup> Its transformation from a legal text into one of the most copied and sold works on the Prophet Muḥammad was an unsought and – possibly – unexpected consequence for Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ.

The section of the *Shifā’* about *khaṣā’iṣ* is not structured on the basis of juridical categories, revolving instead around miracles. After a list of traditions about the Prophet’s principal miracles, and an analysis of the use of the term *mu’jiza*, al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ devotes an entire section to the *i’jāz al-Qur’ān* (inimitability of the Qur’ān),<sup>35</sup> followed by an analysis of the *inshiqāq al-qamar* (splitting of the

32 ‘Iyāḍ, *Shifā’*, vi.

33 Kharkūshī, *Manāhil al-shifā’*.

34 See Gomez-Rivas, “Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ”.

35 ‘Iyāḍ, *Shifā’*, 358–96.

moon),<sup>36</sup> of the water flowing from Muḥammad's fingers,<sup>37</sup> and other miracles. Then the discussion moves to cover the *ʿiṣma* (immunity from error and sin) of Muḥammad, and to other "explicit" (*bāhira*) miracles. To indicate miracles Qāḍī ʿIyād uses *muʿjiza* in most cases, along with *karāma* and *dalīl*, without any distinction in meaning, while the terms denote different phenomena. This lack of proper functional distinction implies that the author's aim is to discuss the exceptional character of certain events as part of a more general description of the Prophet. The analysis of legal or doctrinal subtleties is avoided in most cases, as it is any contextualisation of the episodes narrated. For example, there is no discussion at all, in the section devoted to the *khaṣāʾiṣ*, of questions regarding the wives of the Prophet.<sup>38</sup> Little of Qāḍī ʿIyād's *Shifāʾ*, then, can be counted alongside books of *khaṣāʾiṣ nabawīyya*, except for the discussion of the miraculous events that characterised the life of the Prophet. The author also avoids any form of comparison with other prophets, focusing only on Muḥammad as the main character of his work.

Neither the *Shifāʾ* nor the *Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā* belongs to the genre of *khaṣāʾiṣ*. Nonetheless, these texts played a fundamental role in defining a different approach to literature about Muḥammad, one that exceeded the boundaries of collections of *ḥadīth* or *sīra*. Here, different genres are included, and transcended, in a multi-faceted description of the Prophet, including many (if not all) aspects of his personality and functions. This shift in writing about Muḥammad would inspire later authors of *khaṣāʾiṣ* works, giving legitimacy to an expansion of the set of sources on which they drew, and of the number of characteristics examined.

### 3 *Khaṣāʾiṣ* Literature at the Dawn of the Mamlūk Period: Ibn Dihya and ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Salām

As far as our information can allow us to reconstruct the diffusion of *khaṣāʾiṣ* texts, it seems that the Mamlūk period witnessed an extraordinary flowering of this genre. Its development appears to have started just before the formal beginning of Mamlūk rule in Egypt and Syria (648/1250). These texts seem to continue the tradition started in *Shāfiʿī* circles, as all their authors – with one significant exception – belong to this *madhhab*.

36 ʿIyād, *Shifāʾ*, 396–401.

37 ʿIyād, *Shifāʾ*, 402–10.

38 ʿIyād, *Shifāʾ*, 511–15.

The first text we know of is Ibn Diḥya al-Kalbī's (d. 633/1235) *Nihāyat al-sūl*.<sup>39</sup> Its author was born in al-Andalus, lived part of his life there, and was a pupil of Ibn Bashkuwāl (d. 578/1183).<sup>40</sup> He travelled to the east and became head of the Ayyūbid *Dār al-ḥadīth* in Cairo. We have no information about his affiliation to any specific *madhhab*. His Andalusian origins and sojourn in the Maghreb suggest that he may have belonged to the *Mālikī* school, but it's also possible that he adhered to local *Zāhiri* circles. During his travels he probably met *Shāfiʿī* scholars and read books from this school, becoming acquainted with their legal approach to *khaṣāʾiṣ* issues. He is also the author of the text considered to be the very first *mawlid*, the *Tanwīr fī mawlid al-sirāj al-munīr*,<sup>41</sup> together with other works, about the *miʾrāj* and the Names of the Prophet.<sup>42</sup> His *Nihāyat al-sūl fī khaṣāʾiṣ al-Rasūl* is not conceived as a work of devotion, as the others, mentioned above, have often been considered. In his introduction, Ibn Diḥya states that the book is about 'the exclusive aspects of the Messenger of God',<sup>43</sup> clearly defining the thematic boundaries of his discourse. As he came from al-Andalus, he was probably acquainted with the *Shifāʾ*, and we have no information as to whether he knew, and drew inspiration from, the *Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā*. The only possible reference in Ibn Diḥya's text to the context in which Kharkūshī lived and wrote is the mention of Khorasan and Baghdad at the end of his introduction,<sup>44</sup> suggesting that Ibn Diḥya's text could have been written during or after his eastern trips.<sup>45</sup>

The text itself starts with some *khaṣāʾiṣ* about Muḥammad's wives, and continues by listing *khaṣāʾiṣ* touching on different points: from God swearing by the Prophet's life<sup>46</sup> to more technical ones, such as the possibility (for Muḥammad) of judging without referring to the Qurʾān itself. Almost every *khaṣāʾiṣ* is followed by a long discussion based on Qurʾānic and *ḥadīth* quotations. For example, the section about Muḥammad having been assigned the

39 On him see *EI*<sup>2</sup>, III, 747.

40 This connection is particularly intriguing, as Ibn Bashkuwāl is the author of a fundamental work on the prayer of the Prophet, *Kitāb al-qurba ilā Rabb al-ʿālamīn*; see Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Qurba*.

41 Schimmel, *And Muhammad Is His Messenger*, 152.

42 The text is not extant. See Katz, *Birth of the Prophet Muhammad*, 51.

43 Ibn Diḥya, *Nihāyat al-sūl*, 34. This edition of the text presents several inconsistencies and allows only for a more general discourse, as details of the text (such as its subdivision into chapters, and the order of the topics) seem to have been re-elaborated by the editor.

44 Ibn Diḥya, *Nihāyat al-sūl*, 37.

45 It should be noted that this period precedes Ibn Diḥya's trip to Erbil in 1207, when he was present at a *mawlid* festival and wrote his *Tanwīr*. See *EI*<sup>2</sup>, III, 747.

46 Ibn Diḥya, *Nihāyat al-sūl*, 39–42.

Kawthar river in paradise<sup>47</sup> appears to be a lengthy commentary on *sūra* 108, giving etymologies and cases of previous uses for words, and precise definitions of the nature of the river. Legal decisions (*aḥkām*) are considered from two points of view: those that apply only to the Prophet and those that apply only to the *umma* (with the exception of other communities in the past).<sup>48</sup>

The section on miracles<sup>49</sup> is separate from the rest of the discourse, but it nevertheless maintains the same attitude as the rest of the text. Here, Ibn Diḥya analyses the nature of miracles, comparing those of Muḥammad to miracles performed by other prophets. The approach differs from that of al-Kharkūshī; here the *tafḍīl* argument stays in the background of the discourse, and the author uses the similarity between miracles as proof that they are genuine. For example, the fact that water flowed from a stone that Moses struck with his staff confirms the truth of the episode of water flowing from Muḥammad's fingers.<sup>50</sup>

In this section, as in many others, Ibn Diḥya digresses several times, sometimes on subjects only remotely connected to the main topic. Concluding his work, he discusses the merits of making supplications to God (*du'ā'*), including a tradition about *dhikr* circles.<sup>51</sup> This in itself does not suffice to support a postulation that he was involved with Sufism and Sufi practices, but it at least shows that for Ibn Diḥya they could be included in the discourse about *khaṣā'is*.

‘Izz al-Dīn b. ‘Abd al-Salām (d. 660/1262) was the last author of texts about *khaṣā'is* to have been active before the advent of Mamlūk power in Egypt and Syria. He was a *Shāfi‘ī* jurist and an *Ash‘arī* theologian, considered the *mujtahid muṭlaq* of his age.<sup>52</sup> He was acquainted with Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardi (d. 632/1234) and the circles of the Egyptian Shādhiliyya, whom he joined in *samā‘* sessions.<sup>53</sup> Sources are unclear regarding his formal affiliation to a *ṭarīqa*, but his approval of *ṣūfi* practices is undoubtable.

His *Bidāyat al-sūl fī tafḍīl al-Rasūl* is a short collection of traditions that consider the *faḍā’il* (merits) as a specific form of *khaṣā'is*. At the beginning of the work, commenting on the fact that Adam will be under Muḥammad's

47 Ibn Diḥya, *Nihāyat al-sūl*, 144–69.

48 Ibn Diḥya, *Nihāyat al-sūl*, 280, 353.

49 Ibn Diḥya, *Nihāyat al-sūl*, 169.

50 Ibn Diḥya, *Nihāyat al-sūl*, 182.

51 Ibn Diḥya, *Nihāyat al-sūl*, 483.

52 *ET*<sup>2</sup>, IX, 812–13. For the notion of *mujtahid* and *ijtihād*, see Hallaq, “On the Origins”. The *mujtahid muṭlaq* is the jurist who is able to derive the positive doctrines of Islamic jurisprudence directly from primary sources.

53 He often visited both the founder of the *ṭarīqa*, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258), and his successor, Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī (d. 685/1287).

banner on the Day of Resurrection, ‘Izz al-Dīn b. ‘Abd al-Salām says that “Those *khaṣā’iṣ* point to the height of [Muḥammad’s] degree over Adam and the other [Prophets], considering that *tafdīl* (preference) means being characterised (*takhṣīṣ*) by miraculous deeds (*manāqib*) and degrees (*marātib*)”.<sup>54</sup> This idea clearly deviates from the legal character of other works on the same topic, and marks the passage of the *khaṣā’iṣ* from a jurisprudential to a more devotional outlook by discussing the spiritual stature of Muḥammad. In the analysis of the last of the forty traditions<sup>55</sup> regarding the status of *jawāmi’ al-kalīm*,<sup>56</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām states that no one knows the nobility of the Prophet unless they are favoured by Muḥammad himself, echoing a typical Sufi attitude.<sup>57</sup> Here the believer is put into a direct relationship with the Prophet, who is granting specific knowledge of purely spiritual issues.

From this point on, in part because of the fame of ‘Izz al-Dīn b. ‘Abd al-Salām, we see a flowering of texts about *khaṣā’iṣ nabawiyya*; these texts share with the *Bidāya* an attention to the spiritual aspects of the figure of Muḥammad. These works also often make use of the *tafdīl* argument as part of the discussion of *khaṣā’iṣ*, reflecting the assumptions made by ‘Izz al-Dīn b. ‘Abd al-Salām.

#### 4 Suyūṭī and *Khaṣā’iṣ* Literature in Mamlūk Egypt

The adoption of a more spiritually aware attitude towards the Prophet does not automatically imply that *khaṣā’iṣ* were considered only to be manifestations of the unique metaphysical status of Muḥammad. This genre would always remain rooted in the domain of jurisprudence and *ḥadīth*. For instance, attention to variants of the same tradition, and discussion of the *isnād*, would not disappear during the Mamlūk period. What we observe is the shifting of primary focus, from the determination of legal dispositions valid only for Muḥammad to the depiction of his exceptional status among other prophets and the rest of humankind.

To improve our understanding of this shift in works on the *khaṣā’iṣ*, from a legalistic to a spiritual approach, it is necessary to consider the social conditions under which ‘ulamā’ produced their scholarly works at that time. As has

54 ‘Izz al-Dīn b. ‘Abd al-Salām, *Bidāyat al-sūl*, 8.

55 ‘Izz al-Dīn b. ‘Abd al-Salām, *Bidāyat al-sūl*, 23ff.

56 This expression refers to the fact that the Qur’ān is considered to epitomise and contain all previous revelations.

57 The doctrine of the so-called *ṭarīqa muḥammadiyya* appeared quite late in the Islamic world. On the other hand, the mediating role of the Prophet was recognised from the time of the early development of *taṣawwuf*; see Addas, *Maison muhammadienne*.

been clearly described by Yaacov Lev,<sup>58</sup> relationships between Muslim scholars and Mamlūk *amūrs* were symbiotic. On the one hand, political power needed religious legitimisation that could only be provided by the class of scholars who preserved and elaborated the Muḥammadan tradition. On the other, *‘ulamā’* needed public jobs in order to support their lives and studies. This symbiosis found its most obvious expression in the institution of the *waqf*, which allowed Mamlūks – who were formally slaves, and thus not allowed to inherit according to Islamic law – to preserve the goods that they obtained in return for their services to the state, and pass them on to their progeny. The profits of their fiefs could be allotted to the benefit of a mosque, a *madrasa*, or other pious institution. Their family members and descendants were appointed as supervisors of their *waqf*, with significant remuneration. *‘Ulamā’* could then aspire to play a role in the growing system of *awqāf* (pl. of *waqf*) and, more generally, in the expanding apparatus of the Mamlūk state.

The competition for these positions was fierce. The ability to establish relations with key figures among the Mamlūks was essential. Also, fame and public favour played an important role in establishing the pre-eminence of one *‘ālim* over his colleagues. This part of the battle was fought through public debates, polemics such as the one that arose around Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s verses,<sup>59</sup> and the publication of books that demonstrated the vastness of one’s knowledge in one of the many fields of Islamic science.

From this point of view, the *khaṣā’iṣ* constituted a perfect battlefield, as they had virtually no doctrinal or juridical implications (not in an almost totally *sunnī* environment, at least) and were thus open to the addition of new traditions, as well as some traditions of relatively dubious authenticity. This does not imply that the bulk of *khaṣā’iṣ* works produced during the Mamlūk period must be considered as merely the result of academic competition, because if that were the case, the whole corpus of Islamic literature of this period would have to be considered in the same way. The tendency to amass more traditions has to be considered alongside the growing importance of Sufism among *‘ulamā’*.<sup>60</sup>

Polemic pamphlets against Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poems and doctrines<sup>61</sup> addressed theological issues that were also relevant to discussion of *khaṣā’iṣ*. On the other side of the polemic, al-Suyūṭī and others continued to publish works in

58 Lev, “Symbiotic Relations”.

59 Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint*.

60 Geoffroy, *Le soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie*, 89–101; 149–50; 452–74.

61 Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabī*, 210–224.

defence of the orthodoxy of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s verses.<sup>62</sup> The initiation of polemics was one of the strategies commonly used by Mamlūk *‘ulamā’* to discredit adversaries and gain credibility with the general public and the *amīrs*. Such a strategy could be hazardous, turning against the person who set the polemic in motion. *Khaṣā’iṣ* were a more neutral field than Sufi poetry, and battles in this field were fought over the increasing number of traditions that showed facets of Muḥammad’s figure that had until then remained unexplored. This matched the growing importance that the figure of the Prophet had gained in Mamlūk Sufism. The expansion of the doctrine of the “Muḥammadan way” (*al-Ṭarīqa al-muḥammadiyya*)<sup>63</sup> as the core of the Sufism of the *ṭuruq* is already reflected, though often vaguely, in the work of Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām. His reference to the mediation of the Prophet in his own acquisition of knowledge of his degree of nearness to God was clearly inspired by the Sufi doctrine of spiritual stations (*maqāmāt*) and shows how the idea of *tawassul* (intercession) started to be considered a necessary means of obtaining metaphysical knowledge.

Judging from the list reported by Ḥājjī Khalīfa, it seems that the *Bidāya* was the starting point for the expansion of the *khaṣā’iṣ* genre. This coincidence of timing does not imply a cause-and-effect relationship. It seems more plausible that the work of Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām responded to the exigencies of the *‘ulamā’*, who wanted to have a new and fertile battlefield in which to compete, one that also had a certain social resonance in Sufi milieus. The *Kashf al-ḥunūn*, in the passage devoted to Suyūṭī’s *al-Khaṣā’iṣ al-kubrā*,<sup>64</sup> lists a number of similar works by other authors of the Mamlūk period. Some of these seem to be lost, such as those of Yūsūf b. Mūsā al-Masādī (d. 663/1265), Jalāl al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī (d. 824/1421), and Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Shāmī (d. 874/1470). Ḥājjī Khalīfa also mentions a work attributed to Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 853/1449), *al-Anwār [bi-khaṣā’iṣ al-mukhtār]*, that is attested elsewhere in the *Kashf al-ḥunūn*.<sup>65</sup> To these works, all lost, should be added others that are still extant and could help to trace a possible path for the development of the *khaṣā’iṣ* genre in the Mamlūk period.

While it is not a work devoted solely to our topic, it is nevertheless worth mentioning the shorter version of the *Sīra*, written by Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), called, in its printed edition, *al-Fuṣūl fī sīrat al-Rasūl*.<sup>66</sup> A section of this biographical work on Muḥammad, written by one of Ibn Taymiyya’s most

62 Suyūṭī, *al-Barq al-wāmiḍ*.

63 Geoffroy *Le soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie*, 101–105; Addas, *Maison muhammadienne*, 104–108.

64 Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf*, 706.

65 Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf*, 195.

66 Ibn Kathīr, *Fuṣūl*.

influential disciples, is devoted to *Shamā'il* and *khaṣā'is*.<sup>67</sup> The latter are divided into two main groups: those distinguishing Muḥammad from the other prophets, and those defining his difference from his *umma*. The latter grouping is, in its turn, divided into books on different topics (*kitāb al-īmān*, *kitāb al-ṭahāra*), organised according to the usual order of *fiqh* treatises. The book on marriage includes three sections about what is permitted, prohibited and compulsory for the Prophet in this respect. This organisation by topic is discussed in the introduction of the section: Ibn Kathīr defends the legitimacy of writing about *khaṣā'is*, reporting that this is the opinion of *jumhūr al-aṣḥāb*, the majority of the followers of Shāfi'.<sup>68</sup>

Ibn Kathīr<sup>69</sup> follows previous authors of jurisprudence books by putting the discussion of *khaṣā'is* in the chapter devoted to marriage. Other authors pay less attention to *nikāḥ* and related issues, focusing more on miracles. In this regard it is noteworthy that Ibn Kathīr does not use the word *mu'jiza* (miracle) at all in this section, preferring the more neutral *faḍā'il* (merits), used in the sense of God's favours, and not in the context of the *tafḍīl* argument. Considering Ibn Kathīr's tepid attitude towards Sufism, and towards devotional practices in general, which he probably derived from his master, Ibn Taymiyya, this is anything but surprising.

The first work of the Mamlūk period devoted exclusively to *khaṣā'is* was Ibn al-Mulaqqin's *Ghāyat al-sūl fī khaṣā'is al-Rasūl*. The assonance of the title with the those of works by Ibn Dīḥya and Ibn 'Abd al-Salām clearly expresses the author's desire to inscribe his text in the line of an established tradition. Ibn al-Mulaqqin also benefited from Ibn Kathīr's notes on the organisation of the topics. In the *Ghāya* he extends the distinction, dividing every section into two parts: one reporting characteristics related to marriage and one to those that are not so related. His interest in Sufism<sup>70</sup> is not reflected in specific attention to miracles, but can be seen in his discussion of the possibility of seeing the Prophet in dreams. Starting from the famous tradition saying that the devil cannot take Muḥammad's form,<sup>71</sup> Ibn al-Mulaqqin continues by describing different types of visions that were said to have occurred under various conditions. Ibn al-Mulaqqin is not the first writer to deal with this topic; Ibn

67 Ibn Kathīr, *Fuṣūl*, 278–332.

68 Ibn Kathīr, *Fuṣūl*, 280.

69 Ibn Kathīr, *Fuṣūl*, 278–79.

70 He composed a work on the generations of Sufis, Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-Awliyā'*. In biographical sources there is no mention of his affiliation to any Sufi order, while Hofer reports that he was buried in the Sufi cemetery outside Bāb al-Naṣr, in Cairo; see Hofer, "Ibn al-Mulaqqin".

71 Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ghāyat al-sūl*, 290.

Dihya<sup>72</sup> had already briefly discussed a similar tradition. The difference lies in the approach, because Ibn Dihya did not consider visions to be part of the discourse on *karāmāt*. This is certainly not a definitive argument for a clear influence of Sufi doctrines and debates on *khaṣāʾiṣ* literature. However, the inclusion of spiritual experiences in the domain of jurisprudence and *ḥadīth* criticism is a phenomenon that is clearly visible in the development of works of *khaṣāʾiṣ*.

Ḥayḍarī's (d. 888/1483) *al-Lafẓ al-mukarram fī khaṣāʾiṣ al-Nabī*<sup>73</sup> is part of this trend, despite the fact that its author was not himself a Sufi.<sup>74</sup> He was a prominent, though controversial, judge and *muḥaddith*, of Damascene origin, who developed his career in Cairo under the guidance of his master, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1448). The *Lafẓ*<sup>75</sup> is subdivided into different *anwāʿ* (types of *khaṣāʾiṣ*). Every section is divided into two parts, according to the usual subdivision: one devoted to traditions regarding marriage, and one to other traditions.<sup>76</sup> The whole is preceded by a long introduction in which the author follows Ibn al-Mulaqqin in justifying having written about *khaṣāʾiṣ*. The first section, about *wājibāt*, opens with a discussion of the famous *ḥadīth al-nawāfil* used by al-Ḥayḍarī to justify the large number of acts made compulsory for the Prophet in the light of the higher reward granted for *farāʾiḍ* (religious legal obligations).<sup>77</sup> The fact that this tradition is commonly used by Sufis to urge *murīds* (disciples) to consider the importance of obligatory *ʿibādāt* (acts of

72 Ibn Dihya, *Nihāyat al-sūl*, 344.

73 Ḥayḍarī, *al-Lafẓ al-mukarram*.

74 But apparently he wrote a work about the prayer on the Prophet, *al-Liwāʾ al-muʿallam bi-mawāṭin al-ṣalāt ʿalā l-Nabī ʿalayhi al-ṣalāt wa-l-salām*, mentioned in Khayḍarī, *al-Lafẓ al-mukarram*, 38.

75 Brockelmann and Lameer, *History of the Arabic Written Tradition*, Suppl. II, 120; GAL II, 98, S II, 116; Reynolds, *A Muslim Theologian*, 271.

76 It seems that Ibn al-Mulaqqin used *karāma* instead of *muʿjiza* without sensing the distinction made between the miracles of the saints (*karāmāt*) and those of the Prophet (*muʿjizāt*). This would prove that, for Ibn al-Mulaqqin, the discourse about sanctity was not related to the one about prophecy.

77 The text of the *ḥadīth* is as follows: “Allah has said: Whoever treats a friend (*walī*) of mine with enmity, I declare war on him. There is nothing by which my servant draws close to me that is dearer to me than that which I have imposed (*iftarāḍtu*) upon him; and my servant does not cease to draw close to me by supererogatory works (*nawāfil*) until I love him, and when I love him, I become his hearing (*samʿ*) by which he hears, his sight (*baṣar*) by which he sees, his hand by which he forcibly seizes, and his leg by which he walks. If he asks me, I give him, and if he seeks my refuge, I grant it to him. There is no action of mine in which I waver more than [taking] the soul of a believer: he hates dying, and I hate doing him wrong”. For a discussion of the importance of this tradition in Sufi milieu, see Ebstein, “Organs of God”.

worship) shows how this point of view played a certain role in a text that is primarily a work of *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* criticism. For instance, the discourse on miracles related to marriage,<sup>78</sup> discussing in detail all the merits of Muḥammad's wives, is purely legalistic, avoiding any reference to their spiritual stature or their roles as intermediaries for the community of believers.

All the works discussed up to this point appear to have maintained a focus on jurisprudence, and they seem to have considered *khaṣā'is* as a sub-topic of *fiqh*, one that was worthy of discussion among specialists. The appearance of some relatively unimportant references to Sufi themes does not imply a full shift of *khaṣā'is* from legalistic to devotional literature. In any case, the broadening of the scope of jurisprudence is evident in these texts through the shift from the presentation of the Prophet as a model for Muslim society to the presentation of Muḥammad's life as the occasion on which God's favour manifested itself in its fullest and most perfect form. It is this broadening that allowed *khaṣā'is* to become a preferred genre for authors for whom spiritual awareness was important.

For an assessment of the increasing influence of Sufi discourse on *khaṣā'is* we can refer to Suyūṭī's (d. 911/1505) works. Suyūṭī is a crucial figure in the development of the Islamic literary and intellectual tradition.<sup>79</sup> His involvement in *taṣawwuf* was not publicly advertised, but it is clear from many of his works; for example, *Ta'yīd al-ḥaqīqat al-'aliyya fī tashyīd al-ṭarīqa al-Shādhilīyya*,<sup>80</sup> or his *fatāwā* on Sufi doctrinal points, such as the existence of the hierarchy of saints.<sup>81</sup> Suyūṭī wrote three works on *khaṣā'is*, the most famous being the *Kifāyat al-ṭālib al-labīb fī khaṣā'is al-Ḥabīb*,<sup>82</sup> better known as *al-Khaṣā'is al-kubrā*. The work was abridged by its author in the *Unmūdhaj al-labīb fī khaṣā'is al-ḥabīb*.<sup>83</sup> A third work, textually independent from the other two while maintaining the same approach, is the *Ṭarḥ al-saqat fī naẓm al-luqaṭ*.<sup>84</sup>

The simple fact that he devoted three of his many works to the same topic is quite significant in itself. Each of the texts has a different structure, responding to different exigencies. The major one aims at being an all-encompassing

78 The last chapter, about miracles, seems to be incomplete in the printed edition, as two sections are announced (one about miracles related to marriage, and one about the others), but only one is present.

79 See Sartain, *Jalal al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*; Ghersetti, *Al-Suyūṭī*; Skreslet Hernandez, *Legal Thought*.

80 Geoffroy, *Le soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie*, 150–52; 337–39; 391–96; 516; Suyūṭī, *Ta'yīd al-ḥaqīqa*.

81 Suyūṭī, *al-Khabar al-dāll*.

82 Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣā'is al-kubrā*.

83 Suyūṭī, *Unmūdhaj*.

84 Suyūṭī, *Thalāth rasā'il*.

text about the Prophet, using the *khaṣāʾiṣ* as a theme to guide the reader from a section devoted to *sīra* and military campaigns<sup>85</sup> to a list of Muḥammad’s miracles, signs (*ayāt*) and invocations (*adʿīya*).<sup>86</sup> Only after this point does Suyūṭī start the discussion of *khaṣāʾiṣ*. The change of paradigm from previous works is evident in the different subdivisions of the topic, extending the *tafḍīl* argument to the whole domain of the specific characteristics of the Prophet. Suyūṭī starts by listing the *khaṣāʾiṣ* that make Muḥammad different from other prophets,<sup>87</sup> and also from his community, because of the duties only he has to fulfil (*wājibāt*).<sup>88</sup> A further distinction is made between the Muslim *umma* and the communities of all the other prophets.<sup>89</sup> This subdivision excludes other juridical categories, such as permissions and prohibitions (or does not explicitly include them); these are merely interspersed among the other *khaṣāʾiṣ*, following the example of the *sīra*, and the book ends with the fact that Muḥammad is living in his tomb, and with the signs connected with his death.<sup>90</sup>

The scheme used in the *Khaṣāʾiṣ al-kubrā* is essentially preserved in the *Unmūdhaj*.<sup>91</sup> The *sīra*-related part, which constitutes the bulk of the *Kifāya*, is completely absent in this abridgement.<sup>92</sup> The work focuses on the *khaṣāʾiṣ*, organised in two main chapters: one on the character traits that distinguish Muḥammad from other prophets, and one that relates the differences between him and his community. The first<sup>93</sup> is divided into four sections on the essence of the Prophet and his community, in this world and the hereafter. The second chapter deals with the Muslim community only,<sup>94</sup> including sections on duties, prohibitions, permissible acts and miracles.

The third text is the shortest. Internal evidence clearly shows that it was written after the other two,<sup>95</sup> and it focuses on clarifying issues connected with the tradition that the Prophet was sent with both the law (*sharʿa*) and the spiritual reality (*ḥaqīqa*). The *Ṭarḥ al-saqāṭ* begins with some *khaṣāʾiṣ* distinguishing Muḥammad from the other prophets, such as the fact that the

85 Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣāʾiṣ al-kubrā*, I, 5 – II, 213.

86 Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣāʾiṣ al-kubrā*, II, 214 – III, 102.

87 Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣāʾiṣ al-kubrā*, III, 125.

88 Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣāʾiṣ al-kubrā*, III, 251.

89 Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣāʾiṣ al-kubrā*, III, 338.

90 Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣāʾiṣ al-kubrā*, III, 403.

91 Suyūṭī, *Unmūdhaj al-labīb*.

92 The printed edition is one hundred and twenty pages long, much shorter than the one thousand two hundred pages of the *Kifāya*.

93 Suyūṭī, *Unmūdhaj al-labīb*, 11–52.

94 Suyūṭī does acknowledge some overlap with the previous chapter: *Suyūṭī, Unmūdhaj al-labīb*, 53.

95 The work makes explicit reference to the *Unmūdhaj* (Suyūṭī, *Thalāth rasāʾil*, 71; 86).

Qur'ān encompasses all previous revelations.<sup>96</sup> The discussion is organised as a dialogue with a fictitious<sup>97</sup> opponent, who denies that the unity of *sharī'a* and *ḥaqīqa* is a proper *khaṣā'is*. The opponent's question is based on the argument that saints also have knowledge of both law and spiritual reality, so this knowledge is not exclusive to Muḥammad. This characteristic of the Prophet is absent in all works written before Suyūṭī, and in the *Ṭarḥ al-saqāṭ* we see clearly how the *khaṣā'is* themselves, and the issues they raised, were part of an environment in which Sufism and the spiritual facets of Muḥammad's figure played an essential role. Suyūṭī, quoting Ibn Dihya's *Nihāya*,<sup>98</sup> mentions the fact that the Prophet could, without clear proof, kill anyone who committed adultery, while this was prohibited to anyone else. He then reports that a saint killed his parents' servant because it was revealed to him (*kushifa*) that the latter might become an unbeliever. The reference to the episode about al-Khiḍr, narrated in the Qur'ān, is quite clear,<sup>99</sup> and this constitutes the final argument allowing Suyūṭī to distinguish between Muḥammad, the other prophets, and Muslim saints. Acknowledging this, Suyūṭī also accepts knowledge acquired through *kashf* as a hermeneutic category in the field of jurisprudence.

Towards the end of this brief text Suyūṭī clarifies his position regarding the meaning of *ḥaqīqa*. He says that he refers to the notion elaborated by Sufis, with one major difference: quoting Ibn 'Aṭā'Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 708/1309), he states that prophets have knowledge of the inner reality of matters (*ḥaqā'iq al-umūr*), while saints only look at their imaginal aspects (*mithāl*).<sup>100</sup> This affirmation has specific doctrinal implications that are beyond the remit of the present chapter, but in any case, its existence confirms the shift of *khaṣā'is* literature, from a purely legal domain to one that is spiritual and metaphysical.

These three works by Suyūṭī reflect three different stages in the evolution of the genre. In the *Kifāya* he re-links the *khaṣā'is* to the domain of the *sīra*, broadening the scope of inquiry: here the context of the *khaṣā'is* is no longer the exceptional character of some legal dispositions regarding marriage,<sup>101</sup> but the figure of Muḥammad in its entirety. In the *Unmūdhaj*, with its alteration of the usual structure of legal argumentations, the emphasis is on the relationship

96 Suyūṭī, *Thalāth rasā'il*, 70. It is interesting to note that this *khaṣā'is* is quoted directly from the *Unmūdhaj*.

97 Considering Suyūṭī's numerous opponents, it is possible that the whole work is a response to an objection coming from one of his contemporaries.

98 Suyūṭī, *Thalāth rasā'il*, 74.

99 Suyūṭī, some lines below, considers him among the prophets who have been sent to rule according only to the *ḥaqīqa*, while Moses could rule according only to the *sharī'a*.

100 Suyūṭī, *Thalāth rasā'il*, 87.

101 In fact, *nikāḥ*-related issues are scattered throughout the text.

between the Prophet, the other *anbiyā'*, and the Muslim community. Marriage issues, and events relating to Muḥammad's birth and death, are almost all in the *karāmāt* section at the end of the work,<sup>102</sup> which changes the model for such discussions: the central theme of *khaṣā'is* is now the Prophet as a unique event in the history of creation. In the third text, the *Ṭarḥ al-laqaṭ*, we see how a specific issue, such as the possibility, for Muḥammad, of judging according to his own knowledge of the hidden reality of things, already mentioned in earlier works, is now the point of departure for a discussion of the different degrees of knowledge possessed by Muslim saints and other prophets. This centrality of Muḥammad is not new in Islamic literature and it is possible to see a similar attitude in such works as Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's *Shifā'*. What's interesting here is the evolution of a genre that has moved from a strictly legal framework to a discussion of the spiritual status of Muḥammad. From this point of view, such texts may be considered a form of devotion expressed through legal argumentation and *ḥadīth* criticism. These texts are not lyrical or inspiring, like the poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, or the prayers of the Shādhiliyya and the Aḥmadiyya, but are rather the expression of a diffused tendency to consider the Prophet as the centre of an Islamic religious experience. Suyūṭī defended the practice of *mawlid*,<sup>103</sup> but did not write any devotional works as such, always maintaining the scholarly attitude that he considered fitting in his own role as the *mujaddid*,<sup>104</sup> the reviver of Islamic tradition. Thus, we can consider these works as the expression of Suyūṭī's own attitude towards Muḥammad, a way for him to help establish once and for all the exalted stature of the Prophet of Islam. This attitude was shared by his contemporaries, and by '*ulamā'*' of subsequent generations, to the point that almost all other works on *khaṣā'is* in the Ottoman period were re-elaborations of Suyūṭī's.

## 5 *Khaṣā'is* after Suyūṭī

The *Ummūdḥaj* and the *Kifāya* were particularly influential texts, despite the polemics that surrounded them and their author. Suyūṭī accused Qaṣṭallānī's (d. 923/1517) *Mawāhib al-laduniyya bi-l-minaḥi al-muḥammadiyya* of containing plagiarism of some of his (Suyūṭī's) works on *khaṣā'is*.<sup>105</sup> The structure of

102 Suyūṭī, *Ummūdḥaj al-labīb*, 77–89.

103 Suyūṭī, *Huṣn al-maqṣid*, 1985b.

104 Sartain, *Jalal al-Din al-Suyūṭī*, 24; 70–1.

105 Qaṣṭallānī, *Mawāhib*. Suyūṭī discussed this plagiarism in his maqāma called *al-Fāriq bayna al-muṣannif wa-l-sāriq*, Suyūṭī, *al-Fāriq*. Qaṣṭallānī does mention his sources for the *khaṣā'is*, including al-Ḥayḍarī but not Suyūṭī; see Qaṣṭallānī, *Mawāhib*.

Qaṣṭallānī's text is clearly inspired by al-Suyūṭī's *Kifāya*: it starts with *sīra* and then moves on to more specific topics. However, the section about *khaṣā'īṣ* is quite incidental in the general plan of the work.<sup>106</sup> In the *Mawāhib*, for example, the different names of the Prophet are listed and commented on,<sup>107</sup> and there is also a chapter devoted specifically to the *mi'rāj*.<sup>108</sup>

Qaṣṭallānī's *Khaṣā'īṣ* chapter opens with a discussion of miracles, followed by a discussion of *wājibāt* that, as in the *Kifāya*, includes a number of other issues. The final section is devoted to the *umma*, which is distinguished from other religious communities by virtue of its Prophet. Neither the structure nor the content of this section has any novel characteristics in comparison with the *Kifāya*. Qaṣṭallānī's overall attitude can be grasped from the presence of chapters about the compulsory nature of love for the Prophet (*wujūb maḥabbatihī*),<sup>109</sup> which include a substantial section about the prayer on the Prophet.<sup>110</sup> In this section we find lists of different ways of practising the *taṣliya* and of the best moments for performing it (at the end of ritual prayer, during the visit to Medina, when one has forgotten something, or even during sexual intercourse). Prayer on the Prophet had been a subject for *khaṣā'īṣ* since Ibn Diḥya,<sup>111</sup> but not in the context of love for Muḥammad. The practice was simply considered commendable in earlier times, but its importance grew to the extent that Qaṣṭallānī, despite his aversion to *taṣawwuf*, devoted an entire chapter to the *taṣliya*. It should be noted that, like Ibn Diḥya, he considered only prayers that were attested in more or less sound prophetic traditions, avoiding those used in Sufi rituals, such as were established by Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī al-Shūnī (d. tenth/ sixteenth century).<sup>112</sup>

The work ends with a number of chapters<sup>113</sup> on the *fiqh al-'ibādāt* (legal regulation of acts of worship), based on the *exemplum* of Muḥammad; this work aims to be an all-encompassing treatise on Muḥammad. What matters for our purposes is that the *Mawāhib* also includes references to devotional

106 Qaṣṭallānī, *Mawāhib*, II, 490–735.

107 Qaṣṭallānī, *Mawāhib*, II, 9–72. It should be noted that Suyūṭī, too, wrote about the Names of the Prophet.

108 Qaṣṭallānī, *Mawāhib*, III, 7–118.

109 Qaṣṭallānī, *Mawāhib*, 267–392.

110 Qaṣṭallānī, *Mawāhib*, 319–56.

111 Ibn Diḥya, *Nihāyat al-sūl*, 205–10.

112 He was one of the masters of 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī, and he established the practice of reciting a large number of prayers on the Prophet on Friday night, in the mosque of al-Azhar; see Winter, *Egyptian Society*, p. 157; Geoffroy, *Le soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie*, 101–4.

113 These occupy the entire fourth volume of the printed edition we consulted.

practices, such as the prayer on the Prophet, that are clearly separate from the *khaṣā'īs*; these thus gain their own independent status.

Although the *Mawāhib* deals only partly with *khaṣā'īs*, Suyūṭī's works also inspired other authors to write about this topic. Chronologically, the first of these was the famous historian Shams al-Dīn Ibn Ṭulūn (d. 943/1546).<sup>114</sup> In his *Murshid al-muḥtār fī khaṣā'īs al-Mukhtār*<sup>115</sup> he clearly stated his debt to his teacher, saying that the work is a *talkhīṣ* (lit. a *précis*) of the *Unmūdḥaj*.<sup>116</sup> Ibn Ṭulūn repeats the justifications of *khaṣā'īs* from earlier works such as Ibn al-Mulaqqin's *Ghāya*, and subdivides the work strictly, following Suyūṭī. Even the discussions of some specific topics are taken verbatim from the *Unmūdḥaj* or the *Ṭarḥ al-laqaṭ*. He clearly consulted the latter text when discussing the issue of ruling according to the *sharī'a* and the *ḥaqīqa*, as both he and Suyūṭī quote the same tradition from Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1310).<sup>117</sup> Ibn Ṭulūn elaborates on the topic, expanding the discussion presented in the *Ṭarḥ al-laqaṭ* with quotations from al-Ṭabarī (used as a counter-argument) and other earlier sources such as Abū 'Umar al-Dimashqī,<sup>118</sup> who acknowledged the parallel between the prophets' miracles and the *karāmāt* of the saints.

A confirmation of the interest inspired by Suyūṭī comes from a work that may be the most interesting elaboration of *khaṣā'īs* derived from his works, the *Durar al-ghā'īs fī baḥr al-mu'jizāt*, by 'Āi'sha al-Bā'uniyya (d. 922/1517).<sup>119</sup> The author's father Yūsuf was a *Shāfi'ī* jurist and chief judge in Damascus, where she was born. Despite being a woman, she was admitted to study the traditional curriculum for the sons of prominent families, studying Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, and poetry. Her family was also linked to the Urmawī Qādirī Sufi order, and she wrote a large number of works in different branches of the spiritual sciences, both in poetry and prose.<sup>120</sup> Her commitment to Sufism is evident from the

114 *ET*<sup>2</sup>, III, 957f.

115 Ibn Ṭulūn, *Murshid al-muḥtār*.

116 Ibn Ṭulūn, *Murshid al-muḥtār*, 11.

117 Ibn Ṭulūn, *Murshid al-muḥtār*, 234.

118 Possibly to be identified with Taqī al-Dīn ibn Qāḍī al-Shuhbī al-Asadī al-Dimashqī al-Shāfi'ī (d. 852/1448).

119 I want to thank prof. Emil Th. Homerin for drawing my attention to this manuscript and for sharing a digital copy of it with me.

120 For a complete biography of 'Āi'sha Bā'uniyya, see Homerin, *Aisha al-Ba'uniyya*. Homerin also translated a selection of her poetic works, Homerin, *Emanations of Grace*, and her Sufi manual, Homerin, *Principles of Sufism*. The manuscript is Dār al-Kutub 558 *ḥadīth*, 70

folios, acephalous. It is not dated and the colophon reads: *نجز المنظوم المفتوح به على يد على من افاضه عليها وفتح عليه به العاشيه بالله عايشه المنسوبه الى يوسف بن احمد الباعوني في الخلق والى القطب الكبير اسماعيل الخوارى في الحق زاد الله من تواصل مدده ادام*

opening of the *Durar*, where, after the ritual praises to God and the Prophet, she invokes blessings on her master in *taṣawwuf*; she defines al-Urmawī as: *tājī wa-minhājī wa-shaykhī wa-quḍwatī / wa-nūrī wa-mi'rājī li-ḥaḍrati man barā* “my crown, my pattern, my master, my model, my light and my ladder of ascent to the presence of the Creator”.<sup>121</sup> She describes her work as being based on Suyūṭī's book,<sup>122</sup> which she chose to put into verse after falling in love (*shugh-iftu*) with the *Unmūdhaj* while reading it (*tāla'tuhu*). In this poem, 'Ā'isha aims to present the contents of the *Unmūdhaj* in a more succinct way (*lafẓ wajīz*), so that readers might understand it more easily. The *Durar* are part of a long tradition of versification of scholarly works<sup>123</sup> with the specific aim of creating a tool for study and memorisation. In the text, Bā'ūniyya defines her work as *naẓman yustaladhdu samā'uhu / wa-yaghdū li-ḥifẓi l-nāsi saḥlan muyassarā*, “a poem that will be a delight to hear, becoming easy and simple for people to memorise”.<sup>124</sup> The text continues with 'Ā'isha al-Bā'ūniyya invoking the *madad* (spiritual support) of the Prophet and of her Sufi master,<sup>125</sup> relying, for the rest, on Suyūṭī's words and on his selection of *khaṣā'is*, without adding any new *khaṣā'is* or specifications of her own.

What makes 'Ā'ishā al-Bā'ūniyya's work special is not its content, but the framework in which she placed the theme of *khaṣā'is*: the switch from *fiqh* to *taṣawwuf* and devotion is complete here. This can be demonstrated by quoting a verse that closes the introduction and opens the versification: *bi-jāhi lladhī anshā l-wujūda li-ajlihī / wa-awjadahū li-l-faḍli wa-l-jūdi maẓharā*, “By the rank of the one for whom He made existence begin and brought him to existence as a manifestation of (His) favour and generosity”.<sup>126</sup> Here, the accent is more *akbarian*, connected to a vision in which the *ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya* is the first

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ريحان شراب محبته على يده فعل ذلك لوالده عبد... في ذريته... على محمد ولرب انه ارحم  
الراحمين (f. 70r): “the spiritually illuminated poem has been completed by the hand of the one who has been invested by spiritual flood and enlightenment by these verses, living ('ā'isha) by God 'Ā'isha, descendant of Yūsuf b. Aḥmad al-Ba'ūnī in creation, friend (*walī*) of the great pole Ismā'īl al-Ḥawwārī in Reality, may God increase the uninterrupted flux of his spiritual support and make eternal the perfume of the drink of love for him, from his hand; make that to his father ... and his descendants and ... on Muḥammad and for his Lord, the Most compassionate of the Merciful”. This may imply that the copy is an autograph of 'Ā'isha al-Bā'ūniyya, but as we lack other elements to confirm this it is more prudent to wait for additional evidence before accepting this as fact.

121 Dār al-Kutub 558 *ḥadīth*, f. 3r. Foliation is based on the microfilm.

122 Dār al-Kutub 558 *ḥadīth*, f. 3v.

123 See Sanni, *Arabic theory of prosification*.

124 Dār al-Kutub 558 *ḥadīth*, f. 3v.

125 Dār al-Kutub 558 *ḥadīth*, ff. 4r–4v.

126 Dār al-Kutub 558 *ḥadīth*, f. 4v.

thing brought into existence by God. At the end of the poem the theme of love appears. In the final supplication for blessings on the Prophet and his family, she asks God to grant that her love for him should continue throughout eternity (*sarā l-ḥubbu muṭharā | madā al-dahri*).<sup>127</sup> This accent is completely absent in previous works on *khaṣāʾiṣ*. Unfortunately, it seems that the literary and spiritual heritage of ʿĀʾisha al-Bāʿūniyya did not find the echo it deserved, and the genre of *khaṣāʾiṣ* subsequently followed a more scholastic evolution.

## 6 Later Developments of the Genre

In the seventeenth century other works were inspired by the *Kifāya*, both in their structure and in their approach to the figure of Muḥammad as a whole. The well-known traditionist ʿAbd al-Raʿūf al-Munawī (d. 1031/1621)<sup>128</sup> devoted a commentary to the *Unmūdḥaj*, called *Faṭḥ al-raʿūf al-mujīb fī sharḥ unmūdḥaj al-labīb*,<sup>129</sup> and later, aiming to clarify his previous attempt, wrote a super-commentary called *Tawḍīḥ faṭḥ al-raʿūf al-mujīb*.<sup>130</sup> Both works are of limited originality, being word-by-word explications of lexicon and grammar. Nonetheless, the fact that al-Munawī says that his first commentary was not well-received, and was considered to be narrow and shallow, could imply that *khaṣāʾiṣ* were still popular in early Ottoman Cairo.<sup>131</sup>

To this commentary should be added at least the *al-Khaṣāʾiṣ al-kubrā* attributed to Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Raḥmānī al-Ḥanafī (fl. 1039/1630).<sup>132</sup> We know very little about this author, but the fact that he is classified as *Ḥanafī* implies that the *khaṣāʾiṣ* genre had exceeded the boundaries of the *Shāfiʿī*s

127 Dār al-Kutub 558 *ḥadīth*, f. 67r.

128 For more on him, see Hamdan, “La vie et l’œuvre”.

129 I have knowledge of this work only from its commentary by al-Munawī.

130 Still unpublished. I have consulted three manuscripts: Michigan 954, dated 1074/1664; Dār al-Kutub *ḥadīth* 206 *muḥāfaẓa*, dated 1272/1856; Dār al-Kutub *ḥadīth* 852, accephalous, ends *ex abrupto*, n.d.

131 Michigan 954, ff. 1v–2r; Dār al-Kutub 206, ff. 2v–3r; Dār al-Kutub 852, ff.

132 The only extant manuscript, up to now, is al-Azhar, 907 *ḥadīth*. The colophon (f. 266v) states that the copy was made on the 7 Muḥarram 1039/27 August 1629 (*al-farāgh min tabyīd ḥādhihi al-nuskha li-muʿallifihā*). What was originally written in red ink is completely unreadable in the microfilm. Frequently entire pages are blurred, and hence impossible to read. The manuscript presents frequent writing mistakes, such as the exchanging of *ṣin* with *ṣād*, that may possibly mean that it was dictated to an ill-educated copyist. The text, too, seems to be the result of an interpolation, as at f. 26r the work seems to end with a final formula of *istighfār*, unless it reprises with the discussion of *faḍāʾil*. About the author and the attribution to him of the work see Kaḥḥāla, *Muḥjam*, III, 28.

by the seventeenth century. The work survives in a single manuscript,<sup>133</sup> and probably did not become well-known in its time. He structured his text on the model of the *sīra*, leaving more space for his personal views on the topic, and using the expression *aqūlu* (lit. “I say”). After the introduction,<sup>134</sup> Raḥmānī discusses *faḍā'il*, such as God swearing by the name of Muḥammad,<sup>135</sup> or the fact that Muḥammad was recognised as (a) Prophet by Jewish '*ulamā'*.<sup>136</sup> While the parts of the introduction that are still legible do not say this, al-Suyūṭī's *Kifāya* provides the background of the text; for example when, in a discussion of the Prophet's intercession, it says, after listing many references to his work: *qāla al-Jalāl [al-Suyūṭī] wa-hādhdhā fī ghāyat al-ḥusn fīhi*, 'As al-Jalāl [al-Suyūṭī], said, this is extremely good.<sup>137</sup>

An interesting feature of the *al-Khaṣā'is al-kubrā*, part of the more evident presence of its author in the text, is the frequent insertion of poetry, mainly by Raḥmānī himself. He even mentions the title of one of his *dīwāns*, *al-Madīḥ fī l-Nabī al-malīḥ*, and the titles of two poems, *Madḥ al-muḥkam 'alā ḥurūf al-mu'jam* and *Qaṣīdat al-isrā'*.<sup>138</sup> The internal organisation of the text is event-oriented rather than being formally structured, and is not based on the usual division of *khaṣā'is*. It is possible to identify only four main sections. The first (up to f. 111v) roughly follows the biography of Muḥammad. The second is focused on miracles, and the third on the death of the Prophet; in this section, interestingly, Raḥmānī defends the permissibility of visiting the tombs of saints,<sup>139</sup> a typical Sufi theme. The final section deals with the Companions, considering also their *khaṣā'is*, and the obligation for believers to love them.<sup>140</sup> Here al-Raḥmānī's sources are mainly early Sufis such as al-Qushāyri, Junayd, or even al-Muḥāsibī.

As a product of later literature on the Prophet, written in a period when Sufi orders and practices were fully acknowledged as part of the Muslim tradition and shared way of life, al-Raḥmānī's *Khaṣā'is* represent the ideal accomplishment of the scholarly tradition of the genre. Some later authors, such as Ahdal (d. 1241/1825),<sup>141</sup> were still to devote their efforts to delineating the sources of

133 See previous note.

134 F. 8. Previous folios are almost unreadable.

135 Al-Azhar, 907 *ḥadīth*, f. 8r.

136 Al-Azhar, 907 *ḥadīth*, f. 10v.

137 Al-Azhar, 907 *ḥadīth*, f. 16v.

138 Al-Azhar, 907 *ḥadīth*, f. 24r.

139 Al-Azhar, 907 *ḥadīth*, ff. 187r–216v.

140 Al-Azhar, 907 *ḥadīth*, f. 242v–256r.

141 Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Bāri' al-Ahdal, a member of a prominent family of Yemen. He was better known as a commentator of the *Ājurrūmiyya*. For more on him,

al-Suyūṭī’s *Kifāya*, confirming the fact that this work, with its abridgements, had become a watershed in the evolution of the genre.

## 7 Instead of a Conclusion, a Different Evolution

We have shown how the *khaṣā’iṣ nabawiya* passed from being a matter of legal discussion, considered to be of dubious utility, to a promising field of literary competition for ‘*ulamā*’ with a strong attachment to Sufism. In the Mamlūk period these texts acquired a more spiritual character, and the figure of the Prophet moved to the centre of a search for new topics that would be suitable to help increase the believer’s love for him. As far as this aspect of such texts is concerned, ‘Ā’isha al-Bā’ūniyya’s versification of the *Unmūdhaj* represents the acme of this process. She expressed her spiritual aspirations clearly, and she found in Suyūṭī’s words the best means to represent the exceptional aspects of her spiritual lover.

But there is a final twist in the development of the genre, that shows how the *khaṣā’iṣ* became the form ‘*ulamā*’ used to express devotion to Muḥammad. The *Tanbīh al-anām fī bayān ‘uluww maqām sayyidīnā Muḥammad*<sup>142</sup> is a collection of some five thousand prayers on the Prophet, in the form of reiterations of *Allāhumma ṣalli wa-sallim ‘alā sayyidīna wa-mawlānā Muḥammad wa-‘alā āl sayyidīna wa-mawlāna Muḥammad*,<sup>143</sup> to which phrases referring to an episode or a characteristic of the Prophet is added. The work was composed in the first half of the sixteenth century by the Tunisian ‘*ālim*, Ibn ‘Azzūm al-Qayrawānī (d. 959/1552). He belonged to a well-known family of local *qāḍīs*, and in the scanty biographical data we have there is no mention of his being affiliated with any Sufi order.<sup>144</sup> This work is novel in the landscape of literature about the Prophet, combining *sīra*, *mawlid*, *shamā’īl* and *khaṣā’iṣ* in a compendium that, according to the author, had to be recited and memorised.<sup>145</sup> Prayers are not in *ṣaj’*, but tend to follow a certain rhythm. Starting from the chapter on

see GAL II, 652, and the introduction of the edition of his work on *khaṣā’iṣ*, al-Ahdal, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Bārī 1406, 5–13; Loimeier 2009, 190.

142 This work has been published and edited several times, starting with the 1912 edition from Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya and the 1927 edition from the Maktaba wa-Matba‘at Muḥammad ‘Alī Ṣubayḥ wa-Awlādihi, both in Cairo. Presumably still in the 1920s (the date is based on a guess, as the book itself is not dated) the Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya printed another version of the *Tanbīh*, followed by al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyya. All these editions report the same text exactly, with slight variations in print and typeface.

143 “Oh God pray and give peace to our master and lord Muḥammad and his family”.

144 Kaḥḥāla calls him a Sufi, see Kaḥḥāla, *Muḥjam*, II, 49; Kīnānī, *Takmil al-ṣūlahā*, 23–25.

145 Ibn ‘Azzūm, *Tanbīh al-anām*, 8.

*khaṣā'īs* and *aḥwāl*, the text focuses on topics that are clearly taken from such works as Suyūṭī's *Kifāya*. The flow of arguments seems to be dictated by Ibn 'Azzūm's inspiration, as the *khaṣā'īs* begin with a description of Muḥammad being informed that his mosque would be burned, and continue with an enumeration of the diverse merits of the Prophet and his community.<sup>146</sup>

The similarities to books of *khaṣā'īs* are limited, as Ibn 'Azzūm does not organise the prayers in his text according to the usual subdivision. What matters here is that all the legalistic aspects have completely disappeared, giving way to a lengthy section about Muḥammad's birth and his pre-existence before the creation of Adam. The only relationship to the genre is the fact that miracles are placed in the chapter directly after the *khaṣā'īs*. For the rest, here we see the three genres of *mawlid*, *ṣalāt 'alā al-Nabī* and *khaṣā'īs* converge. The latter has at last become part of the bulk of literature written solely to express a form of devotion to the Prophet, completing its process of transformation. Finally, it is remarkable that, in the two cases in which this transformation is most evident (the *Durar* by 'Ā'isha al-Bā'ūniyya, and the *Tanbīh*), the authors both had a background in Islamic jurisprudence and, in the case of Ibn 'Azzūm, there was not even a clear affiliation to any Sufi order.

The *Khaṣā'īs*, then, show how devotional attitudes towards the Prophet have progressively found their way into the domain of *fiqh* literature, gradually changing the shape of the genre. In addition to this development, which can be regarded as internal to the genre itself, there is also a change in the intended readership of the works, which moved from learned *fuqahā'* (finding its final, sterile, version in al-Munāwī's works) to pious men who wanted to express their love for Muḥammad and know more about his exceptional nature. Finally, the merging with the prayer on the Prophet did not occur by chance, as that genre had followed a similar path, developing from discussions on the merits of *taṣliya* to such complex works as the *Tanbīh*. Further studies in this direction will probably shed more light on this part of Islamic religious literature, one that has too often been relegated to the popular (and consequently not fully literary) domain.

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<sup>146</sup> Ibn 'Azzūm, *Tanbīh al-anām*, 159.

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