

# POETIC MEMORIES OF THE PROPHET'S FAMILY: IBN ḤAJAR AL-ʿASQALĀNĪ'S PANEGYRICS FOR THE ʿABBASID SULTAN- CALIPH OF CAIRO AL-MUSTAʿĪN

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The mosque of Ibn Ḥajar lies nestled mid-way along the street of Bayn al-Sayārij inside the old city walls of Cairo (Figure 1). Local residents, beholding this modern structure standing on the street that was once known for its sesame oil refineries or *sayārij* (sing., *sirja*), like to think that perhaps the original mosque was sponsored by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (773–852/1372–1449) long ago—centuries before it was rebuilt in 1398/1978. After all, his student, the famous historian Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī (830–902/1427–97), lived nearby in this dense urban core that constituted Egypt's seat of power during the late Mamluk era. Recalling Ibn Ḥajar's own historical contributions as a renowned traditionist, residents of Bayn al-Sayārij fondly call the mosque Gāmiʿ Abū Ḥajar, according to local idiom and pronunciation.<sup>1</sup> Yet the memories of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī and other late Mamluk-era scholars resonate far beyond the old city streets of Cairo, drenched in history. Ibn Ḥajar is primarily known for his seminal scholarship in the field of prophetic traditions or *ḥadīth* studies. However, he was also an accomplished poet. In fact, as this article reveals, one of the poems that Ibn Ḥajar included in his carefully crafted collection from the ninth/fifteenth century struck a deep chord of Muslim memories surrounding a restored Islamic caliphate. Far from the image of complete apathy to the Cairene ʿAbbasids that has long been conventional wisdom about Mamluk Egypt and Syria, Ibn Ḥajar's panegyric for al-Mustaʿīn (r. 808–16/1406–14) lauded the caliph's assumption of the sultanate as a restoration of legitimate rule to the blessed family of the Prophet. And although al-Mustaʿīn's combined reign as sultan and caliph was short-lived, Ibn Ḥajar's commemoration of it became a famous piece of

<sup>1</sup> Fieldwork, July 2016.



Figure 1: ‘Shāri‘ Bayn al-Sayārij’. Cairo, Egypt. Photographs © Mona Hassan.

cultural lore down through the last years of the Mamluk Sultanate and past the Ottoman conquest of Egypt.

## IBN ḤAJAR, THE POET

On 22 Sha‘bān 773 / 29 February 1372, Ibn Ḥajar was born in the oldest parts of Cairo that predated the Fatimids, otherwise known as *Miṣr al-‘atiqa*,

as al-Sakhāwī refers to it in his biography of his teacher. Ibn Ḥajar, who was called by his first name Aḥmad during his childhood, was raised there as an orphan, after his father Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī passed away in his late fifties on 13 Rajab 777/ 8 December 1375. Young Aḥmad had not yet reached his fourth birthday, and he had already lost his mother Nijār bint Fakhr al-Dīn Abī Bakr al-Ziftāwī beforehand. Later on, the little he was able personally to remember of his father was him saying: ‘The *kunyā* of my son Aḥmad is Abū l-Faḍl.’ Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī had been a minor judge who had studied both law and literature and composed excellent poetry of his own. He was the author of multiple *diwāns* and even hosted the famous poet Ibn Nubāta (d. 768/1366) in one of his nearby houses for a spell. Ibn Nubāta, moreover, noted down and appreciated his poetry. Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī had also given his son Aḥmad the *kunyā* Abū l-Faḍl in emulation of the Judge of Makka during the time that they visited the holy city together. Aḥmad had been born following the death of another, older son who had been studying Islamic jurisprudence, and Shaykh Yahyā al-Ṣanāfirī (d. 772/1371) had consoled the bereaved Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī that God would bless him with another boy who would grow up to be a scholar. Accordingly, before his own death, Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī selected guardians, one a wealthy merchant and the other a jurist, who would ensure a good literary and scholarly education for his offspring.<sup>2</sup>

Ibn Ḥajar began his schooling at a *kuttāb* around the age of five and completed his memorization of the Qur’ān by the age of nine; he also memorized introductory educational texts and listened in on the lessons of scholars. His sister, Sitt al-Rakb (770–98/1369–96), who had been seven when their father died, doted on him like a mother, even though

<sup>2</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Raf’ al-iṣr ‘an quḍāt Miṣr* (ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Umar; Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1998), 62; id., *Inbā’ al-ghumr fī abnā’ al-umr bi-l-tārīkh* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, repr. 1986 [Hyderabad, 1967–76]), i. 174–5; id., *al-Durar al-kāmina fī a’yān al-mī’a al-thāmina* (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, repr. 1978 [1931]) iii. 117, iv. 431–2; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sakhāwī, *al-Jawābir wa-l-durar fī tarjamat Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Ḥajar* (ed. Ibrāhīm ‘Abd al-Majīd; Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1999), i. 101–22; id., *al-Daw’ al-lāmi’ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsi’* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, repr. 1966 [Cairo 1934–6]), ii. 36. Ibn Ḥajar’s maternal uncle Ṣalāh al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Ziftāwī was an affluent Kārimī merchant, while Ibn Ḥajar also studied in 793 AH with another Ziftāwī by the name of Ṣalāh al-Dīn Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad b. Muḥammad (d. 794 AH); see al-Sakhāwī, *al-Jawābir wa-l-durar*, i. 116, 125. In their 1986 edition, Ḥāmid Abd al-Majīd and Ṭāhā al-Zaynī affirm the name of Ibn Ḥajar’s mother as Nijār (and neither Tijār nor Tujjār) based on the manuscripts and meaning; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Jawābir wa-l-durar fī tarjamat Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Ḥajar* (eds. Ḥāmid ‘Abd al-Majīd and Ṭāhā al-Zaynī; Cairo: Wizārat al-Awqāf, 1986), i. 59–60.

she was only a few years older. She too received a good education at the hands of their guardians as well as multiple *ijāzas* procured by her father; Ibn Ḥajar himself later commended her intellect, character, and abilities highly.<sup>3</sup> She married among the prosperous Kharrūbī mercantile elite—apparently a relative of their guardian, Zakī al-Dīn Abū Bakr b. Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī al-Kharrūbī, who was the head of a prominent family of Kārimī merchants in the profitable Red Sea trade. When Ibn Ḥajar was twelve, it was Zakī al-Dīn al-Kharrūbī who took the boy to Makka and (belatedly by Mamluk standards) arranged for him to lead the *tarāwīḥ* prayers in the holy sanctuary as a young memorizer of the Qur’ān. After al-Kharrūbī’s death in 787/1385, Ibn Ḥajar continued his education and adhered to his other scholarly guardian Shaykh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Ibn al-Qaṭṭān (737–813/1337–1411), learning from him jurisprudence, Arabic, and mathematics, among other subjects. He became interested in history and the backgrounds of narrators of the prophetic tradition, and in 792/1390 Ibn Ḥajar pursued the literary arts and began composing poetry of his own, especially in praise of the Prophet. Then, in Ramaḍān 796/July 1394, Ibn Ḥajar met the preeminent traditionist al-Ḥāfiẓ Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī (725–806/1325–1403), who kindled the twenty-three-year old’s abiding interest in *ḥadīth* studies and afforded him a decade-long tutelage.<sup>4</sup>

Toward the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century, Ibn Ḥajar married well (with the involvement of his guardian Ibn al-Qaṭṭān) in Sha‘bān 798/May 1396 and moved at the age of twenty-five from his father’s house along the Nile in Old Cairo to the former residence of a Mamluk deputy-sultan along the Cairene lane of Bahā’ al-Dīn.<sup>5</sup> Ibn Ḥajar’s new abode used to belong to the deputy-sultan Sayf al-Dīn Mengu-Timūr al-Ḥusāmī, whose fortunes had risen dramatically with those of his Mamluk superior and eventual ruler al-Malik al-Manṣūr Husām al-Dīn Lājīn in the seventh/thirteenth century. Mengu-Timūr also built next to his home a college, known as al-Madrasa al-Mankūtīmūriyya that was completed in Ṣafar 698/November 1298. Within a month, however, Mengu-Timūr was assassinated in a coup, shortly after the death of the

<sup>3</sup> al-Sakhāwī, *al-Jawābir wa-l-durar*, i. 114–16.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Raf’ al-iṣr*, 62–4; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Jawābir wa-l-durar*, i. 121–8; id., *al-Daw’ al-lāmī*, ii. 36–7, viii. 217, ix. 9 10; Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-‘uqūd al-farīda* (ed. Maḥmūd al-Jalīlī; Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2002), i. 194; Muḥammad Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Laḥz al-alḥāz bi-dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-ḥuffāz* (Damascus: Maṭba‘at al-Tawfiq, 1347 [1928]), 326–9.

<sup>5</sup> al-Sakhāwī, *al-Jawābir wa-l-durar*, i. 104, iii. 1207–8.

sultan Lājīn.<sup>6</sup> But his grand dwelling stayed in the family, and when Ibn Ḥajar married the great-great-granddaughter of Mengu-Tīmūr, Uns Khātūn (*ca.* 780–867/*ca.* 1378–1462), it became their marital home.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, Ibn Ḥajar assumed responsibility for al-Madrasa al-Mankūtimūriyya next door and began giving lectures there in Jumādā al-Thānī 812/October 1409. Among the multiple anecdotes discussing Ibn Ḥajar’s activities inside the college, we know that one scribe by the name of ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Qayyim read back a manuscript copy of Ibn Ḥajar’s own compilation of poetry to him for approval there in the year 838/1434–5.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Ibn Ḥajar dictated his important work *Lisān al-mizān* inside al-Madrasa al-Mankūtimūriyya in the mid-to-late 840s/1440s.<sup>9</sup> And as Ibn Ḥajar’s fame and eminence grew substantially, the college was no longer attributed to Mengu-Tīmūr. It eventually became known as Madrasat Ibn Ḥajar—as Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī al-Sakhāwī attests in 889/1484, a few decades after Ibn Ḥajar’s death.<sup>10</sup> With even greater passage of time, the remains became known as Gāmi‘ Abū Ḥajar. The residents of Bayn al-Sayārij Street were right; Ibn Ḥajar had been intimately associated with their mosque during his lifetime—only in his

<sup>6</sup> Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā‘iẓ wa-l-ītibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār* (ed. Ayman Fu’ād Sayyid; London: al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2003), iv. 552–6; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Mawrid al-laṭāfa fī man waliya al-salṭana wa-l-khilāfa* (ed. Nabīl Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Aḥmad; Cairo: Maṭba‘at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1997), ii. 52–4. Lājīn and Mengu-Tīmūr were assassinated in Rabī‘ al-Awwal 698 / December 1298.

<sup>7</sup> al-Sakhāwī, *al-Jawābir wa-l-durar*, i. 104, iii. 1207–8. Ibn Ḥajar’s guardian Ibn Qaṭṭān helped arrange this advantageous marriage to the daughter of the Army Inspector (*nāzir al-jaysh*) al-Qāḍī Karīm al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Aḥmad al-Lakhmī (d. 807 AH) and Mengu-Tīmūr’s great-granddaughter Sārah bint Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Uns bint Mengu-Tīmūr (d. 821 AH). For more on their living arrangements and marriage, see Yossef Rapoport, ‘Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, His Wife, Her Slave-Girl: Romantic Triangles and Polygamy in 15th Century Cairo’, *Annales Islamologiques*, 47 (2013): 331–6, at 342–4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Dīwān* (ed. Firdaws Nūr ‘Alī Ḥusayn; Cairo: al-Faḍiā, 2000), 78.

<sup>9</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Lisān al-mizān* (ed. ‘Abd al-Faṭṭāḥ Abū Ghudda; Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islamiyya, 2002), i. 128.

<sup>10</sup> Abū l-Ḥasan Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Aḥmad b. ‘Umar al-Sakhāwī, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb wa-bughyat al-tullāb fī-l-khiṭaṭ wa-l-mazārāt wa-l-tarājīm wa-l-biqā‘ al-mubārakāt* (eds. Maḥmūd Rabī‘ and Ḥasan Qāsim; Cairo: Maktabat al-‘Ulūm wa-l-Ādāb, 1937), 74–5; Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām: Qāmūs Tarājīm li-ashbar al-rijāl wa-l-nisā’ min al-‘arab wa-l-mustāribīn wa-l-mustashriqīn* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li-l-Malāyin, 7th edn., 1986), iv. 258.



Figure 2: ‘Masjid Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī’. Cairo, Egypt. Photographs © Mona Hassan.

day it was part of a series of buildings encompassing a college, a mosque, and his residence<sup>11</sup> (Figure 2).

<sup>11</sup> al-Sakhāwī also mentions the adjacent *masjid* in his *al-Ḍaw’ al-lāmi’*, vii. 31.

Moreover, the street itself, where Ibn Ḥajar lived from his mid-twenties until his death in his late seventies, reflects a microhistory of Egypt. In the Fatimid era, it was named after the military contingents stationed there, originally outside Bāb al-Futūḥ: al-Rayḥāniyya and al-Wazīriyya.<sup>12</sup> With the end of the Fatimid caliphate and beginning of the Ayyubid dynasty under Saladin, the caliph's former chamberlain al-Amīr Bahā' al-Dīn Qarāqūsh b. 'Abdillāh al-Asadī moved there and lent the avenue his name. This *amīr* is the same figure who built the citadel for Saladin and extended the city walls of Cairo in the sixth/twelfth century—and who has been on the receiving end of popular Egyptian jokes and uncomplimentary metaphors ever since the Ayyubid era.<sup>13</sup> Thankfully, the lane came to be known as Bahā' al-Dīn after the respectful honorific of its high-ranking resident—and not *arā'ūsh* in apocryphal disparagement of his judgment. In the early Mamluk Sultanate, this prestigious Bahā' al-Dīn Lane boasted the residence and madrasa of the deputy sultan Mengu-Tīmūr.<sup>14</sup> And by the late Mamluk era, it vaunted buildings associated with the eminent jurist Sirāj al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī (724–805/1324–1403) and his scholastic family (including their madrasa and mausoleum) as well as Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (namely his home, adjacent mosque, and madrasa), along with other important sites.<sup>15</sup> But by the late nineteenth century, Egypt's political and intellectual elites had moved off the street to more economically prosperous neighborhoods outside the historic city walls, and the madrasa was crumbling.<sup>16</sup> The street's grand sheen had worn off, and it had become populated with local refineries producing oil from sesame seeds. By the 1940s, only one small-scale refinery remained, now also shuttered, although the street continues to retain its nominal affiliation with the production of sesame oil.<sup>17</sup>

Around the time Ibn Ḥajar moved to Bahā' al-Dīn Lane, now known as Bayn al-Sayārij Street, he was still occupied with composing poetry. In fact, most of the poems that Ibn Ḥajar deemed as the best among his

<sup>12</sup> al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-l-ʿitibar*, iii. 3–6.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid; also see, for example, the discussion in M. Soberhnhheim, 'Qarāqūsh' in *EP*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-l-ʿitibar*, iv. 552–6

<sup>15</sup> al-Sakhāwī, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*, 71–5.

<sup>16</sup> 'Alī Mubārak, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-tawfīqiyya al-jadīda li-Miṣr al-Qāhira wa-mudunihā wa-bilādihā al-qadīma wa-l-shahīra* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kubrā al-ʿĀmiriyya, 1886–88), vi. 15–16.

<sup>17</sup> Fieldwork, July 2016.

corpus were written before the turn of the century,<sup>18</sup> even as he continued to generate new compositions. In writing the biography of his teacher, al-Sakhāwī notes how Ibn Ḥajar used to recite his poetry from the pulpits and at special occasions to the immense literary appreciation of his contemporaries.<sup>19</sup> Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī (766–845 /1365–1442), for one, extols Ibn Ḥajar’s poetry as sweeter than pure water and more amazing than magic yet still licit, and Ibn Fahd al-Makkī (787–871/1385–1466) describes Ibn Ḥajar’s poetry as more elegant than a spring breeze.<sup>20</sup> Among the generation that followed, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī (849–911/1445–1505) referred to Ibn Ḥajar as one of the era’s seven shooting stars (*shuhub*) who excelled in poetry—itsself a literary pun on their shared honorific ‘Shihāb al-Dīn’.<sup>21</sup> By his early forties, Ibn Ḥajar set about to craft a *dīwān* of his most eloquent poetry divided by genre, sometimes referred to by variations on the title ‘al-Sab’ al-Sayyāra al-Nayyirāt’.<sup>22</sup> In each of seven categories—about the Prophet, rulers, members of the military and civil elite, love, various subjects (including elegies), strophic poetry (*muwashshahāt*), and epigrams—Ibn Ḥajar included seven choice poetic specimens, or more precisely in the case of the last category, seventy epigrams as the equivalent of seven full-length poems.<sup>23</sup> His seventh and final selection for the section on rulers, or *mulūkiyyāt*, was the panegyric he composed to mark the ‘Abbasid caliph al-Musta’in’s assumption of the sultanate in Cairo.

<sup>18</sup> One manuscript scribe comments in the marginal notes of the best selections: *ghālib mā nuzzīma hāhunā mim mā nuzzīma qabl al-qarn*; see Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Dīwān* (ed. Firdaws Nūr ‘Alī Ḥusayn), 89. Al-Sakhāwī himself notes that most of Ibn Ḥajar’s poetry was written before 816 AH; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Jawābir wa-l-durar*, i. 126.

<sup>19</sup> al-Sakhāwī, *al-Jawābir wa-l-durar*, i. 126; id., *al-Daw’ al-lāmi’*, iii. 38.

<sup>20</sup> al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-‘uqūd al-farīda*, i. 199; Ibn Fahd al-Makkī, *Labz al-alhāz*, 327.

<sup>21</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūfī, *Nazm al-‘iqyān fī a’yān al-a’yān* (As-Suyuti’s Who’s Who in the Fifteenth Century) (ed. Philip Hitti; New York: Syrian–American Press, 1927), entries 20, 34, 37, 39, 42, 43, 50, cited in Thomas Bauer, ‘Ibn Ḥajar and the Arabic Ghazal of the Mamluk Age’ in Thomas Bauer and Angelika Neuwirth (eds.), *Ghazal as World Literature. Volume 1: Transformations of a Literary Genre* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2005), 35.

<sup>22</sup> The scribes of at least two manuscripts place the completion of Ibn Ḥajar’s selective compilation around 816 AH, and a third specifies the date of Jumādā al-ākhir 815/January 1412; see Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Dīwān* (ed. Firdaws Nūr ‘Alī Ḥusayn), 79, 83, 89.

<sup>23</sup> For further details in English on this recension’s structure, see Bauer, ‘Ibn Ḥajar and the Arabic Ghazal’, 36–40.



## THE CAIRENE ‘ABBASID AL-MUSTA‘ĪN

Ibn Ḥajar was 34 when the ‘Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil’s son, al-‘Abbās, assumed the caliphate in Cairo at the beginning of Sha‘bān a few days after the death of his father on 27 Rajab 808/ 18 January 1406. The new caliph had been personally named after his ancestor al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who was the Prophet’s uncle and namesake of the ‘Abbasid dynasty. He was the only one of the caliphs to bear al-‘Abbās’ given name—and he likewise shared his *kunyā* Abū l-Faḍl. Following dynastic protocols for caliphs in Cairo, al-‘Abbās also adopted the regnal name al-Musta‘īn Billāh, indicating his reliance on God and his ancestral heritage. This regnal title harkened back to the twelfth ‘Abbasid caliph of Baghdad, al-Musta‘īn who reigned from 248/862 to 252/866, and it was first bestowed upon al-‘Abbās when he was designated his father’s caliphal successor around the year 800/1398. The renowned Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī (756–821/1355–1418) wrote out the lengthy document of designation (*ahd*) on al-Mutawakkil’s behalf, utilizing an earlier chancery document designating al-Mustakfi’s successor in the eighth/fourteenth century as a model. Both sets of official documents frame the designation of a caliphal successor through the praise of God, following what had become Egyptian chancery practice under the Mamluk Sultanate.<sup>24</sup>

Yet al-Qalqashandī expands beyond the earlier Cairene ‘Abbasid chancery model to elaborate upon the virtuous merits of the ‘Abbasids in general, and of al-Mutawakkil and al-Musta‘īn in particular, and ensure the prospect of a smooth caliphal transition from father to son. The specific points of gratitude to God have multiplied from one to several. To recapitulate them in truncated form: firstly, praise is due to God for preserving the Islamic system of governance, elevating the household of the caliphate, and arranging for the appointment of a leader (*‘aqd al-imāma al-mu‘azzama*). Secondly, praise is due to God for placing leadership of the Muslim community among its most highly regarded and sagacious representatives. Thirdly, praise is due to God for comforting the Commander of the Faithful al-Mutawakkil with the best of heirs in his son al-Musta‘īn. Fourthly, praise is due to God for creating consensus around al-Mutawakkil’s choice of a successor and filling people’s hearts with love for al-Musta‘īn. Fifthly, praise is due to God for renewing the blessing upon the proverbial flock of believers by establishing leadership in the descendants of the chosen Prophet’s uncle

<sup>24</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī, *Ma’āthir al-ināfa fī ma‘ālim al-khilāfa* (ed. ‘Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj; Kuwait: Wizārat al-Irshād wa-l-Inbā’, 1964), ii. 337–9.

and engendering reverence in people's hearts for them. Sixthly, praise is due to God who has let creation rejoice with the existence of al-ʿAbbās and elevated him through the act of caliphal designation. And lastly, praise is due to God for commanding obedience to those entrusted with authority (*ūlūl-amr*) among the imams and obligated people to pledge their allegiance to an *imām* and follow him.<sup>25</sup> The entire passage is couched in the language of religious obligation, precedent, and reverence.

Likewise, speaking on al-Mutawakkil's behalf throughout the rest of the document, al-Qalqashandī interweaves references to the undeniably venerable status of the ʿAbbasids and asserts the wisdom of al-Mustaʿīn's designation as future caliph. For one, the ʿAbbasids have inherited the caliphate one after another. Moreover, the Prophet Muḥammad pronounced his uncle's nobility and reportedly assured al-ʿAbbās of his progeny's leadership. Turning to the task at hand, al-Qalqashandī elaborates how al-Mutawakkil, in his wisdom and foresight, follows the precedent of Abū Bakr in selecting a successor. And who better to assume that responsibility than his son al-ʿAbbās who fulfills all the stipulations and admirable traits of a caliph? Implicit in the document's carefully chosen phrasing, al-Mutawakkil is comparable to the Prophet Zachariah in praying for a worthy heir, thereby also rendering al-Mustaʿīn comparable to the Prophet John (cf. Q. 19: 5–7). Furthermore, in crafting an overwhelming aura of approbation, the document explains how al-Mutawakkil's appointment of al-Mustaʿīn stems from his kindly concern for the Muslim community—and it specifies that he undertook this course of action *after* consulting judges, scholars, amīrs, viziers, relatives, sons, notables, and lay people who affirmed the soundness of this designation. Furthermore, al-Qalqashandī asserts, al-Mutawakkil prayed for God to help him form the best of decisions before finally proceeding with the designation of al-Mustaʿīn as his caliphal successor. Al-Qalqashandī also records that al-Mustaʿīn accepted this designation in the presence of the leading judges and scholars of his day.<sup>26</sup>

The remaining portion of this official document, consisting of fatherly advice to the presumptive heir, also reveals how contemporaries like al-Qalqashandī among the scholarly and bureaucratic elite conceived of al-Mustaʿīn's personal responsibilities as caliph. Here, too, the analogy is made to prophetic precedents—al-Mutawakkil issues his advice to elicit God's blessings the way that the prophets Abraham and Jacob advised their sons who also assumed divinely sanctioned missions from God (Q. 2: 132). The overwhelming emphasis is on personal piety that ultimately benefits al-Mustaʿīn as well as those under his pastoral care.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, ii. 340–2.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, ii. 343–9.

Therefore, al-Mustaʿīn should be mindful of God in all his actions to be saved and prompt divine assistance, while he should also seek refuge in the truth in order to assure his success. He should hold fast to the Book of God and follow sound, upright methodology, along the straight path, through emulating God's prophet, Muḥammad. He should attend to the affairs of the country and his proverbial flock to the best of his abilities as well as select his associates wisely. Additionally, al-Mustaʿīn should extend the rights of familial relations to the direct descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad; all acts of nobility and generosity toward them are a reflection of one's regard for their forebear. And he should closely adhere to the way of his righteous predecessors among the caliphs, specifically the first few Rightly Guided Caliphs, in aiming to achieve the greater good. Thus, al-Mustaʿīn should strive to establish justice in his reign as caliph and seek to earn the commendation and protection of God on the Day of Judgment. In short, al-Mustaʿīn should conduct all matters with pure sincerity toward God combined with awareness of his accountability. As the future *imām*, al-Mustaʿīn will bear greater responsibility for his individual actions—his potential rewards will be multiplied for the good that he achieves or, alternatively, his potential punishments will be multiplied for the evil precedents he may establish. Humility and obedience to God, as the document avers, should guide al-Mustaʿīn's actions and attitude as caliph.<sup>27</sup>

At the time that al-Qalqashandī crafted this official document of succession, he had no way of predicting that, in roughly fifteen years, al-Mustaʿīn, as ʿAbbasid caliph, would also assume the position of sultan. As it happened, al-Mustaʿīn was unwillingly swept up in a rebellion against the Mamluk sultan al-Nāṣir Faraj (791–815/1389–1412) in 815/1412. Unable to achieve victory on their own or to convince the caliph to join their cause, the rebellion's two Mamluk leaders Shaykh al-Mahmūdī (d. 824/1421) and Nawrūz al-Ḥāfīzī (d. 817/1414) resorted to a ruse. They had the caliph's half-brother publicly declare al-Mustaʿīn's support for the revolt—thereby presenting the reluctant caliph with a *fait accompli*. As he joined their side of the dispute, al-Mustaʿīn was elevated as a contender for the sultanate to avert competition between the two Mamluk leaders as well as to raise morale and garner broader support. Upon their ultimate victory, al-Mustaʿīn assumed the office of sultan in Damascus on Monday, 27 Muḥarram 815/ 9 May 1412 and after reaching Cairo on Tuesday, 2 Rabīʿ al-Ākhir 815/ 12 July 1412 took up his royal residence in Saladin's Citadel. For the first time since the bygone era of the early ʿAbbasids, al-Mustaʿīn served as both caliph and sultan—combining the legitimizing authority and executive

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, ii. 350–2.





















legal tradition acknowledging the actual head of state's duties and responsibilities in lieu of the 'Abbasid caliph.<sup>49</sup>

## ARABIC POEM

بالمستعين العادل العباس	الملك أصبح ثابت الأساس	١
لمحلها من بعد طول تناس	رجعت مكانة آل عم المصطفى	٢
يوم الثلاثاء حفّ بالأعراس	ثاني ربيع الآخر الميمون في	٣
مأمون عيب طاهر الأنفاس	بقدم مهدي الأنام أمينهم	٤
من قاصد متردد في الياس	ذو البيت طاف به الرجاء فهل ترى	٥
زاكي المنايب طيب الأعراس	فرع نما من هاشم في روضة	٦
للحمد والحالي به والكاسي	بالمترضى والمجتبي والمشتري	٧
مما بغيرهم من الأنداس	من أسرة أسروا الخطوب وظهروا	٨
كانوا بمجلسهم ظباء كناس	أشدّ إذا حضروا الوعى وإذا خلوا	٩
كاليد أشرق في دجى الأغلاس	مثل الكواكب نوره ما بينهم	١٠
قلم يضيئ إضاءة المقياس	ويكفه عند العلامة آية	١١
يدعى وللإجلال بالعباس	فليشره للوافدين بباسم	١٢
من بعد ما قد كان في إبلاس	فالحمد لله المعز لدينه	١٣
من بين مدرك ثاره و مواسي	بالتسادة الأمراء أركان العلا	١٤
في منصب العليا الأشم الراسي	نهضوا بأعباء المناقب وارتقوا	١٥
فا لله يحرسهم من الوسواس	تركوا العدى صرعى بمعترك الردى	١٦
تقديم بسم الله في القرطاس	وإمامهم بجلاله متقدّم	١٧
لم يستقم في الملك حال الناس	لولا نظام الملك في تدبيره	١٨
و بجهده رجعت بالإفلاس	كم من أمير قبله خطب العلا	١٩
خضعت له من بعد فرط شماس	حتى إذا جاء المعالي كفوها	٢٠
من نيل مصر أصابع المقياس	طاعت له أيدي الملوك وأذعنت	٢١
من سائر الأنواع والأجناس	وأزال ظلماً عم كل معتم	٢٢
دهر به لولاه كل الباس	فهو الذي قد ردّ عنا البؤس في	٢٣

<sup>49</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, viii. 213; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Jawāhir wa-l-durar*, ii. 600; Mubārak, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, vi. 38. Ibn Ḥajar assumed the official position of mufti at Dār al-ʿAdl in 811/1408 and held it until his death; for additional context, see Aftab Ahmad Rahmani, *The Life and Works of Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani* (Dhaka: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, 2000), 87–8, and Anne Broadbridge, 'Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt: al-ʿAynī, al-Maqrizī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī', *Mamlūk Studies Review*, 3 (1999), 85–107, at 90–1. On al-Juwaynī's seminal legal precedent regarding the head of state as *imām*, see Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate*, 101–11, 118, 120.









