

SUFISM IN FATIMID EGYPT AND THE PROBLEM OF HISTORIOGRAPHICAL INERTIA

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I. SUFISM IN FATIMID EGYPT?

There is a rather large and unsightly hole in the historiographical fabric of early Sufism. But this hole, which sits squarely in the middle of the history of early Sufism in Egypt, has become such an unremarkable feature of the historical landscape that most historians do not seem to notice or comment upon it, let alone attempt to repair it. Note, for example, the following passage from a widely read history of the subject, which offers a representative example of this endemic issue:

The first to sow the seeds of Sufism in Egypt was Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī ... Other Sufis participated in that sowing with him ... Abū Bakr al-Daqqāq ... Abū l-Ḥasan b. Bunān al-Ḥammāl ... Abū 'Alī al-Rūdhabārī ... Abū l-Khayr al-Aqṭa' ... and Abū l-Qāsim al-Ṣāmit. ... But practical Sufism in its collective form would not develop in Egypt until the second half of the sixth century AH ... [when] the first *khānqāh* was founded during the time of Saladin.¹

The narrative arc delineated in this excerpt constitutes the *status quo* concerning the history of Egyptian Sufism: Dhū l-Nūn (d. 245/859) planted the seeds of Sufism in Egypt, where they found fertile ground in the ninth century CE. The tenth century saw Sufism grow under the care

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¹ 'Āmir al-Najjār, *al-Ṭuruq al-ṣūfiyya fī Miṣr: nash' atuhā wa-nuzumuhā wa-rawwāduhā: al-Rifā'i, al-Jīlānī, al-Badawī, al-Shādhilī, al-Dasūqī* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1983), 62, citing the work of Abū l-Wafā' al-Taftazānī and Tawfīq al-Ṭawīl.

of al-Ḥammāl, al-Rūḍhabārī, and several others. Sufism then blossomed spectacularly under Saladin's careful tending at the end of the twelfth century, after which point it grew vigorously across Egypt. Note, however, that with the exception of Abū l-Qāsim al-Ṣāmit (who was probably not a Sufi) all the aforementioned figures died before the mid-tenth century.² So, if Sufism has deep historical roots in Egypt, what happened to those roots during the 200 years of Ismā'īlī Shi'ī rule under the Fatimid Caliphs (358–567/969–1171)? A perusal of the relevant historiography suggests that with the Fatimid conquest of Egypt, local Sufis vanished from the historical record, not to reappear until Saladin's establishment of a Sunni polity in Egypt in the late twelfth century. The Sufi scene in Egypt apparently burned brightly but briefly and fizzled out abruptly, only to be rekindled 200 years later. But where did all those Sufis go? Did they die out? Did they leave for more hospitable political climes? Were they absorbed by the Ismā'īlī *dā'wa*? Unfortunately, the Sufi sources, both early and late, are virtually silent on this vexing question. Even more vexing is that present-day historians of Egyptian Sufism typically gloss over this problem without a word. They tend to emphasize post-Ayyubid developments and dispatch this murky early period in a few short sentences.

But the question of Sufism in Fatimid Egypt is not obscure historical trivia. How historians conceptualize and reconstruct this early period has serious implications for the way we understand the emergence, development, and popularization of Sufism more broadly. There were several anti-establishment groups across the Muslim world prior to the ninth century known as *ṣūfīs* because of their penchant for wearing wool (*ṣūf*).³ However, these early groups were not necessarily or directly

² I return to these individuals below. Abū l-Qāsim al-Ṣāmit appears only in al-Suyūṭī's history of Egypt, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍara fī ta'rīkh Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira* (ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm; Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, 2 vols., 1967–68), i. 515. Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), relying on the history of Ibn Muyassar (d. 677/1278), records al-Ṣāmit's date of death as 437/1046, but that portion of Ibn Muyassar's chronicle is no longer extant and there is nothing in al-Suyūṭī to indicate that al-Ṣāmit was a Sufi.

³ Christopher Melchert, 'Baṣran Origins of Classical Sufism', *Der Islam*, 82 (2005): 221–40, at 232–3, discusses a number of these early groups of wool-wearing agitators. See also Sarah Sviri, 'The Early Mystical Schools of Baghdad and Nishāpūr: In Search of Ibn Munāzil', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 30 (2005): 451–82; and id., 'Sufism: Reconsidering Terms, Definitions and Processes in the Formative Period of Islamic Mysticism' in Geneviève Gobillot and Jean-Jacques Thibon (eds.), *Les maîtres soufis et leurs disciples, IIIe—Ve siècles de l'hégire (IXe—Xie S.): enseignement, formation et transmission* (Beirut: Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 2012): 17–34.

related to the tradition of Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf*) forged in Baghdad by Abū l-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 297/910 or 298/911) and his disciples. That is to say that the form of Sufism that would become so popular across the Muslim world after the twelfth century was a movement that coalesced in Baghdad and whose members were actively engaged in the construction and contestation of the doctrinal and devotional boundaries of the movement.⁴ The project of sharpening and maintaining that boundary discursively was then taken up vigorously by a number of Sufi authors in the tenth and eleventh centuries: Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988), Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), and Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), to name only a few. By this point, to self-identify or be known as a Sufi entailed more than being pious, abstemious, miraculous, or simply wearing wool; it involved the fundamental principle of being linked to a chain of authoritative masters ultimately connected to al-Junayd’s circle and being recognized as such by (at least some) other Sufis. The historiography of early Sufism in Egypt must be carefully attentive to the historical contours of the development of Sufism as an identifiable tradition and social movement. Indeed, Fatimid rule in Egypt coincided precisely with the period during which Sufis in the East, primarily Khurāsān, produced the handbooks and prosopographies that systematized and constructed Sufism as a tradition with a coherent present tied to a normative past.⁵ Therefore, given the widespread claim that Sufis have been in Egypt since the early ninth century we should expect to find at least a few Egyptian Sufis from the Fatimid period playing a role in that discursive project—as subjects, authors, or both. In fact, they did not. And while I am certainly not the first to notice this gap in the historiography, as far as I am aware nobody has investigated it systematically. While several historians have highlighted the Fatimid question and others have speculated on it obliquely, none offer much in the way of historical evidence.

In general, modern historians propose the same basic hypothesis, that the Ismā‘īlīs replaced (or absorbed) the Sufis during the Fatimid period and that the Sufis then replaced (or absorbed) the Ismā‘īlīs after Saladin’s coup in 1171. Muḥammad al-Ḥajjājī, for example, claims that Fatimid propagandists exploited the similarities between Shi‘ism and Sufism in order first to convert Sufis, and then the general populace, to the Ismā‘īlī creed. ‘From here we can say that Sufism and Shi‘ism walked

⁴ On the beginnings of this popularization in the twelfth century, see Erik Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition: ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

⁵ Ahmet Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 83–7.

side-by-side during the Fatimid period. The Sufi at that time was the propagandist who spread the doctrines of the Shi'ī school, inviting [others] to it'.⁶ 'Alī Ṣāfi Ḥusayn, also pointing to doctrinal similarities between Shi'ism and Sufism, argues that the Ismā'īlis disseminated these ideas in Egypt, which the Sufis then adopted after the Fatimid period. This notion leads him to suppose that Mamluk-era Sufis like Aḥmad al-Badawī and Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī were actually crypto-Shi'is (*mutashayyi'in*).⁷ Spencer Trimingham speculates that the growth of Sufism in post-Saladin Egypt was due, among other factors, to the absorption of Shi'ī ideas and practices popularized by the Fatimids.⁸ More broadly, Éric Geoffroy notes that '[e]verywhere that Shi'ism became politically established, Sufism ended up by being either suppressed or pursued. This was the case in Fatimid Egypt, and even more so in Safavid Iran'.⁹ Kāmil Muṣṭafā al-Shaybī goes so far as to argue that the Ismā'īli bureaucracy 'was the basis for later Sufi offices like the Chief Sufi of the Orders (*mashyakhat mashāyikh al-turuq*), which corresponds to the position of the Chief Propagandist (*dā'ī al-du'āt*) in Ismā'īlism'.¹⁰ This linkage is demonstrably incorrect.¹¹ Ṣāliḥ al-Wardānī claims that with the advent of Ayyubid rule many Egyptian Shi'is were absorbed by the Sufi orders. He proclaims that because the Ayyubids and Mamluks were 'unable to eliminate Shi'ism in Egypt by means of the four schools [of Sunni jurisprudence], they were compelled to embrace and support the Sufis'

⁶ Muḥammad 'Abduh al-Ḥajjājī, *al-Ārif bi-llāh tā'ālā Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Uqṣarī Yūsuf b. 'Abd al-Raḥīm b. Ghazī al-mutawaffā sana 642H/1244M* (Cairo: Dār al-Taḍāmun li-l-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr, 1968), 30. Similarly, some scholars argue that Ismā'īlis in Sunni-majority contexts adopted Sufism as protective cover (*taqiyya*: dissimulation) in order to avoid detection. Shafiqe Virani finds no evidence for this claim until the later Mamluk period in Syria. Virani, *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, a Search for Salvation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 104, see also 142–8.

⁷ 'Alī Ṣāfi Ḥusayn, *al-Adab al-ṣūfī fī Miṣr fī l-qarn al-sābi' al-hijrī* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1964), 36.

⁸ Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders of Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971 [New York, 1998]), 14 and 25.

⁹ Éric Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam* (transl. Roger Gaetani; Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2010), 26. Unfortunately, Geoffroy does not address the subject of Sufism in Fatimid Egypt in his much more detailed *Le soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie sous les derniers Mamelouks et les premiers Ottomans* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1995).

¹⁰ Kāmil Muṣṭafā al-Shaybī, *al-Ṣila bayna l-taṣawwuf wa-l-tashayyū'* (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 3rd rev. and enl. edn., 2 vols., 1982), i. 229.

¹¹ Nathan Hofer, 'The Origins and Development of the Office of the "Chief Sufi" in Egypt, 1173–1325', *Journal of Sufi Studies*, 3 (2014): 1–37.

due to their ability to draw in and neutralize Shi'is.¹² Likewise, Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāh 'Āshūr suggests that a strictly individualistic form of Sufism flourished in Fatimid Egypt, but that 'it appears that just as the Fatimids exploited Sufism to spread their Shi'i doctrine, so did Saladin exploit the same phenomenon to fight the Shi'i doctrine by encouraging 'Sunni Sufism'.¹³

It should be clear at this point that the entire question of Fatimid Sufism is a tangle of speculation, conjecture, and magical thinking.¹⁴ That is to say that these historians offer very little evidence to support their claims, but rather advance historical arguments on comparative and phenomenological grounds. Their conclusions are based upon certain doctrinal and phenomenological similarities between Sufism and Shi'ism, including the valorization of *bāṭin* over *ẓāhir*, the oral transmission of an esoteric corpus, the centrality of the master–disciple relationship in that transmission, and the existence of a saintly hierarchy, among others.¹⁵

¹² Ṣāliḥ al-Wardānī, *al-Shī'a fī Miṣr min al-Imām 'Alī ḥattā l-Imām Khumaynī* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbulī al-Ṣaghīr, 1993), 69–72, quotation on 71.

¹³ Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāh 'Āshūr, *al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Badawī: shaykh wa-ṭarīqa* (Cairo: Dār al-Miṣriyya, 1966), 33–4. These remarks build on his brief review of the similarities and connections between Sufism and Shi'ism on 25–6. 'Āshūr reworks much of this material and presents it in more detail and in historical context, but with the same conclusions, in his *al-Mujtama' al-Miṣrī fī 'aṣr salāṭīn al-Mamālīk* (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍa al-'Arabiyya, new edn., 1992), 169–81. 'Āshūr's notion of a quietist, individualistic Sufism in Egypt prior to Saladin is based on the widely cited study by Tawfīq al-Ṭawīl, *al-Taṣawwuf fī Miṣr ibbān al-'aṣr al-'Uthmānī* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-'Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 1988), 37.

¹⁴ J. Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion from Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), ch. 2, 'In Comparison a Magic Dwells', 19–35.

¹⁵ The most detailed survey of this material is al-Shaybī's aforementioned *al-Ṣīla*, the historical scope of which extends far beyond Fatimid Egypt. The primary statement of this kind in English is Seyyed Hossein Nasr's 'Shi'ism and Sufism: Their Relationship in Essence and in History', *Religious Studies*, 6 (1970): 229–42, which is a phenomenological-cum-comparative approach in the vein of Gerardus van der Leeuw, in which Shi'ism and Sufism are both manifestations of 'an aspect of the same reality' (ibid, 230). For a more historically attuned discussion, see James W. Morris (ed. and transl.), *The Master and the Disciple: An Early Islamic Spiritual Dialogue: Arabic edition and English translation of Ja'far b. Maṣṣūr al-Yaman's Kitāb al-'Ālim wa-l-ghulām* (London: I.B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001), 9–12; and id., 'Revisiting Religious Shi'ism and early Sufism: The Fourth/Tenth-Century Dialogue of the Sage and the Young Disciple' in Todd Lawson (ed.), *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 102–16.

The fundamental assumption here is that these two systems are so similar that they are in fact incompatible, or perhaps *too* compatible, and thus cannot exist side-by-side.¹⁶ To a large extent medieval Sufi historiography appears to support this assumption. Following the death of Abū ‘Alī al-Rūḍhabārī and his companions in the early tenth century there were no Sufis of note in Egypt until the very end of Fatimid rule. At that point Sufis begin to appear quite frequently and prominently in the Sufi historiography again: Najm al-Dīn al-Khabūshānī (d. 587/1191) in Cairo;¹⁷ ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Jazūlī (d. 592/1196) in Alexandria;¹⁸ and ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā’ī (d. 592/1196) in Upper Egypt.¹⁹ In fact, Mamluk sources credit al-Qinā’ī’s disciples with eliminating the Shi‘ites who had fled to Upper Egypt after Saladin’s coup.²⁰ Now, it is certainly true that Mamluk-era Sufi authors could be quite hostile to Shi‘ism, that there are striking similarities between Sufi and Shi‘i thought, and that Fatimid rule left a distinct mark on Egyptian society.²¹ However, we must exercise some restraint here. These issues do not in any way mitigate the fact that there is absolutely no compelling evidence that Egyptian Sufis and Shi‘is jockeyed with each other in a game of historical see-saw. This analytical ambivalence vis-à-vis the (in)compatibility of

¹⁶ Éric Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism*, 25, for example, writes that ‘There has generally been an incompatibility between these two forms of esoterism [i.e. Sufism and Shi‘ism], precisely because they are so close to each other’. Compare this with Marshall Hodgson’s judgment that in ‘some ways, but not all, the Ṣūfīs represented in a Jamā‘i-Sunnī milieu what Bāṭinī piety represented in a Shi‘ī milieu’. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 3 vols., 1974), i. 393.

¹⁷ For a wealth of information on al-Khabūshānī, see Yaacov Lev, ‘Piety and Political Activism in Twelfth Century Egypt’, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 31 (2006): 289–324.

¹⁸ See the brief biography and bibliographical information in Denis Gril, *La Risāla de Ṣafī al-Dīn ibn Abī l-Manṣūr Ibn Zāfir: Biographies des maîtres spirituels connus par un cheikh égyptien du viie/xiiiè siècle* (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1986), 208.

¹⁹ The sources on al-Qinā’ī are quite extensive, see Appendix A, #23.

²⁰ al-Udfuwī, *al-Ṭālī‘ al-sā‘id al-jāmī‘ asmā’ nujabā’ al-ṣā‘id* (ed. Sa‘d Muḥammad Ḥasan; Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 2001), 424; al-Isnawī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya*, (ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2nd edn., 2 vols., 1987), ii. 168–9.

²¹ The Fatimid legacy in Cairo is not limited to the fact of the city’s existence and its architectural landscape. Devin Stewart, for example, has shown that the Fatimids left a linguistic legacy in the Cairene dialect that exists to this day. ‘Popular Shiism in Medieval Egypt: Vestiges of Islamic Sectarian Polemics in Egyptian Arabic’, *Studia Islamica*, 84 (1996): 35–66.

Sufism and Shi'ism owes much to the mostly unacknowledged influences of al-Ghazālī's polemical framework in his *al-Munqidh* and *al-Mustazhiri*, as well as Ibn Khaldūn's historical framework developed in the *Muqaddima*, where he blames the Ismā'īlīs (among others) for the Sufis' deplorable innovations.²² Present-day scholars have taken up these frameworks and amplified their phenomenological assumptions in lieu of careful argumentation and burdens of evidence. This is not to say that these historians are necessarily incorrect or misguided, but rather that their claims cannot be supported by the comparative and phenomenological evidence alone. The only truly measured statement on this subject is Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn's conclusion that while there must have been Sufis in Fatimid Egypt, we simply do not know anything about them.²³

A complete reexamination of the Fatimid question is thus long overdue. My objective here is therefore two-fold. First, as to the straightforward historical question—Were there Sufis in Fatimid Egypt?—I offer compelling evidence that there were. And while some of these Sufis enjoyed Fatimid patronage there is insufficient evidence to adjudicate the claims outlined above. At the very least the historical record suggests that we discard the paradigmatic 'Sufism–Shi'ism–Sufism' narrative trajectory so common in modern scholarship. But the data raise a much more interesting and consequential question. If there were Sufis in Fatimid Egypt, why do none of the Sufi sources mention them? Moreover, why have modern historians continued to ignore them? Thus, my second objective here is to address this double historiographical lapse itself. To anticipate my conclusion, the medieval Sufi historiography is silent on this subject because the early systematizers of Sufism were partisan Sunnis writing at the apex of Fatimid power and influence. Quite simply, these authors ignored or obscured what was happening in Egypt as part of their ideological project to construct discursively the normative doctrines, practices, and boundaries of Sufism. The existence

²² al-Ghazālī, *Faḍā'ih al-bāṭiniyya* (ed. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Badawī; Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmiyya, 1964); id., *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* (ed. Maḥmūd Bījū; Damascus: Dār al-Taqwā, 1990), 56–63. See also Farouk Mitha, *al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis: A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris and The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001). Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima* (ed. 'Abd al-Salām al-Shaddādī; Casablanca: Khizānat Ibn Khaldūn, Bayt al-Funūn wa-l-'Ulūm wa-l-Ādāb, 5 vols., 2005), v. 221–3. Of the authors I cited above, only 'Āshūr (*al-Mujtama' al-miṣrī*, 180) and Nasr ('Shi'ism and Sufism', 230) cite Ibn Khaldūn explicitly in this respect.

²³ Muḥammad Kāmil Ḥusayn, 'Bayna l-tashayyū' wa-adab al-ṣūfiyya fī Miṣr fī 'aṣr al-Ayyūbiyyīn wa-l-Mamālīk', *Majallat Kulliyāt al-Ādāb, Jāmi'at al-Qāhira*, 16 (1954): 45–72, esp. 50–1.

of the Fatimid state was anathema to their ideological project so they omitted it from that construction. This omission was taken up nearly whole cloth by subsequent Sufi authors through the Ottoman period and then, in turn, by modern historians. I would thus characterize the problem as one of intense historiographical inertia in which some of the same ideological biases and blindspots have been reproduced over and over, from the tenth century to the present. However, in order to make this historiographical argument I will first need to demonstrate that there were significant numbers of Sufis in Fatimid Egypt. This will be no easy task if the early Sufi historians have done their jobs well. And in fact it is difficult to say much on this subject with any certainty. Nevertheless, there are hints and muted echoes of Sufi activity in Fatimid Egypt that provide us with enough historical data with which to make the larger historiographical argument.

II. SUFIS IN FATIMID EGYPT

The historical record on this issue is sparse but not completely barren, particularly if we utilize non-Sufi and late-Sufi sources. Prosopographers like al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. ca. 463/1071), Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 571/1176), and al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) meticulously recorded the geographical origins, travels, and networks of scholars and ḥadīth experts, whose ranks included many Sufis connected to Fatimid Egypt. While this is fortunate, it also means we know very little about these Sufis beyond the bare outlines of their scholarly biography. While one might hope that the trove of extant Ismā‘īlī literature would be of some help, this is not the case. I have found no references to Sufis in the theological-doctrinal texts of the Fatimid Ismā‘īlīs.²⁴ Nor does the Ismā‘īlī traveller and diarist

²⁴ These include Ja‘far b. Maṣūf al-Yamanī, *Master and Disciple*; Ḥāmid al-Dīn Kirmānī, *Master of the Age: An Islamic Treatise on the Necessity of the Imamate: A critical edition of the Arabic text and English translation of Ḥamīd al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Kirmānī’s al-Maṣābiḥ fī ithbāt al-imāma* (ed. and transl. Paul Walker; London: I.B. Tauris, in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2007); Paul Walker (ed. and transl.), *Orations of the Fatimid Caliphs: Festival Sermons of the Ismaili Imams* (London: I.B. Tauris, in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2009); Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Naysābūrī, *Degrees of Excellence: A Fatimid Treatise on Leadership in Islam: A new Arabic edition and English translation of Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Naysābūrī’s Kitāb Ithbāt al-imāma* (ed. and transl. Arzina R. Lalani; London: I.B. Tauris, in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010); Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Naysābūrī, *A Code of Conduct: A Treatise on the Etiquette of the Fatimid Ismaili*

Nāṣir-i Khusraw (d. 481/1088) mention any Sufis in his description of Cairo.²⁵ There are a few scattered references to Sufis in the extant Fatimid-era historiography as well as within the Mamluk historiography that includes snippets of otherwise lost sources.²⁶ While Mamluk historians preserved some invaluable material, those texts pose two significant methodological problems. The first is the fact that the earlier material is embedded within ambiguous or anachronistic linguistic and conceptual frameworks. For example, al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442) records that after the last Fatimid Caliph died in 567/1171, a crowd turned out to witness the unfolding political drama. This crowd included ‘a large group from the *zāwiyas*, the Sufi folk (*ahl al-taṣawwuf*), and others who were interested in the food they could get at the mourning ceremony’.²⁷ If there were people living in *zāwiyas* and Sufi folk hanging about, it

Mission: A critical edition of the Arabic text and English translation of Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Naysābūrī’s Risāla al-Mūjaza al-kāfiya fī ādāb al-du’āt (ed. and transl. Verena Klemm and Paul Walker; London: I.B. Tauris, in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2011). There is an opaque reference to Sufis in al-Mu’ayyad fī l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī’s *dūwān*, but it refers to Sufi opponents of al-Mu’ayyad fī l-Dīn in Shīrāz before he came to Egypt: al-Shīrāzī, *Mount of Knowledge, Sword of Eloquence: Collected Poems of an Ismaili Muslim Scholar in Fatimid Egypt* (transl. Mohamad Adra; London: I.B. Taurus, in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2011), 109. On the Sufis’ antagonism toward al-Mu’ayyad fī l-Dīn in Shīrāz, see Verena Klemm, *Memoirs of a Mission: The Ismaili Scholar, Statesman and Poet al-Mu’ayyad fī l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 4–5 and 36.

²⁵ Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Nasir-i Khusraw’s Book of Travels: Saḡarnāmah* (ed., transl., introd. and notes Thackston Wheeler; Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2001), 48–76. By contrast, when Ibn Jubayr (d. 614/1217) visited Ayyubid Egypt only a century later he mentions Sufis several times: *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr* (ed. William Wright; revised by M. J. de Goeje; Leiden: Brill, 1907).

²⁶ On the extant sources for Fatimid history, see Ayman Fu’ād Sayyid, ‘Lumières nouvelles sur quelques sources de l’histoire fatimide en Égypte’, *Annales Islamologiques*, 13 (1977): 1–41; Abbas Hamdani, ‘Fatimid History and Historians’ in M. J. L. Young, J. D. Latham, and R. B. Serjeant (eds.), *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Religion, Learning and Science in the ‘Abbasid Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 234–47; Paul Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and Its Sources* (London: I.B. Tauris, in association with the Institute for Ismaili Studies, 2002); Farhad Daftary, *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliography of Sources and Studies* (London: I.B. Tauris, in association with the Institute for Ismaili Studies, 2004).

²⁷ al-Maqrīzī, *Ittī’āz al-Ḥunafā’ bi-akhbār al-a’imma al-Fāṭimiyyīn al-khulafā’* (ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl and Muḡammad Ḥilmī Muḡammad Aḡmad; Cairo: Lajnat Iḡyā’ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 3 vols., 1967–1973), iii. 328.

stands to reason there were substantial numbers of Sufis in Fatimid Egypt. But this assumption highlights our methodological problem in crystal clear relief. Are *ahl al-taṣawwuf* and *zāwiya* the language of al-Maqrīzī's source or his own gloss on the original? Al-Maqrīzī was usually meticulously transparent in his use of Fatimid sources.²⁸ But he was writing 300 years after the fact, when the meaning and social referents of words like *zāwiya* and *ahl al-taṣawwuf* had shifted semantically.²⁹ Two other Mamluk biographers, Ibn Abī Uṣāybi'a (d. 668/1270) and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363), utilize a similarly anachronistic gloss when they relate the story of a physician and a Sufi travelling to Cairo together in the early twelfth century. The two men became friends and the Sufi asks the physician where he might stay in Cairo so he can easily visit him. The physician invites him to a local tavern to drink and hang out, but the Sufi 'rejected this idea and went to the *khānqāh*' instead.³⁰ It is obviously anachronistic to place a *khānqāh* in Egypt during the Fatimid period, since the first *khānqāh* did not appear in Egypt until 569/1173, a fact widely attested in the contemporary sources.³¹ Our biographers have glossed or embellished the source text with a term that made sense in a Mamluk context.

This issue of anachronism is related to the second methodological problem. Medieval Arabic historiography is full of individuals who appear Sufi-like, but were not actually Sufis. Indeed, there are many ascetic, pious, or esoterically inclined individuals from Fatimid Egypt in

²⁸ See, for example, Paul Walker, 'al-Maqrīzī and the Fatimids', *Mamlūk Studies Review*, 7 (2003): 83–97; Frédéric Bauden, 'Maqriziana XII. Evaluating the Sources for the Fatimid Period: Ibn al-Ma'mūn al-Baṭā'ihī's *History* and Its Use by al-Maqrīzī (with a Critical Edition of His *Résumé* for the Years 501–515 AH)' in Bruce Craig (ed.), *Ismaili and Fatimid Studies in Honor of Paul E. Walker* (Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, The University of Chicago, 2010): 33–85.

²⁹ In another example, al-Maqrīzī (*Itti'āz al-Ḥunafā'*, ii. 78) refers to a group of *awliyā'* in a crowd in Fatimid Cairo. It is unclear who these 'saints' might be, as both Sufis and Shī'is use this terminology.

³⁰ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a's *Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'* (ed. Nizār Riḍā; Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1965), 499; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt* (ed. Aḥmad al-Arna'ūt and Turkī Muṣṭafā; Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 29 vols., 2000), xxix. 40–1.

³¹ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān* (ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās; Beirut: Dār Sādir, 8 vols., 1968–1972), ii. 206; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'iz wa-l-ītibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār* (ed. Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid; London: al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 5 vols., 2002–4), iv. 728; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fī ṣimā'at al-inshā'* (ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Rasūl Ibrāhīm; Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Khidīwiyya, 14 vols., 1913–1920 [1964]), iii. 368–9.

these late sources. It is tempting to count them among the Sufis of Egypt, as did some later Sufi authors like al-Munāwī (d. 1031/1621).³² But supererogatory prayers, devotions, and mortifications alone do not a Sufi make.³³ As I noted above, Sufism is a practical and discursive tradition fundamentally rooted in and shaped by the institution of the master–disciple relationship (*al-ṣuḥba*) and legitimized through the purportedly unbroken links to the early Sufi masters, and ultimately to the Prophet himself. Sufi prosopographers often incorporated as many persons as possible into these linked chains as a legitimization tactic—even when such categorizations were patently impossible.³⁴ We must exercise caution in assuming that all those who appear in Sufi prosopographies, especially for this early period, were in fact engaged with the traditions of Sufism. We are thus faced not only with the problem of terminological anachronism, but with the medieval and contemporary tendency to categorize a variety of individuals as Sufis, regardless of their position in the historical field. In this specific case, wherein the task is to determine as accurately as possible the nature and contour of the Sufi movement in Egypt, sloppy terminological elision will prove disastrous. Without very careful attention to the language of the sources, checked whenever possible against other sources, one runs the risk of ballooning the

³² A significant number of the early Egyptian biographies in al-Munāwī's *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tarājim al-sādat al-ṣūfiyya* (ed. Muḥammad Aḏīb al-Jādir; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 5 vols. in 6, 1999), are culled from the pilgrimage guide of Ibn al-Zayyāt (d. ninth/fifteenth c.). Most of these individuals appear there as pious renunciants or miracle workers, but Ibn al-Zayyāt does not describe them as Sufis. Once transplanted into al-Munāwī's generations, however, they are placed explicitly into the prosopographical history of Sufism and thus appear as Sufis. The same thing occurs in al-Maqrīzī's *al-Muqaffā al-kabīr* (ed. Muḥammad al-Ya'lawī; Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 8 vols., 1991). It seems to me quite likely that the late Mamluk/early Ottoman period saw a significant semantic broadening of the word Sufī. Biographers from that era—both Sufi and non—use the word *ṣūfī* to gloss a number of terms earlier biographers used quite deliberately: *faqīr*, *zāhid*, *ṣāliḥ*, *warī*, etc.

³³ Megan Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

³⁴ For example, Sufi authors claimed both al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and Bishr al-Ḥāfi (d. 227/842) as key figures in the early Sufi movement. But as Michael Cooperson (*Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Ma'mūn* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 154–87) and Suleiman Mourad (*Early Islam between Myth and History: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and the Formation of His Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship* [Leiden: Brill, 2006], 59–120) have shown in detail, these characterizations are legitimization tactics and not reflections of historical identity.

numbers of Sufis in Fatimid Egypt and mischaracterizing the scope of the movement.

These issues became clear as I began working on this project. Digging through the relevant sources I have come up with a relatively modest list of individuals whom I can describe with some confidence as Sufis who lived in Fatimid Egypt. I could substantially expand that list by including those whom Muslim historians and biographers call *zuhhād* (renunciants), *ṣulahāʾ* (pious), or similar terms that are sometimes taken to be synonymous with Sufis. But I have avoided doing so for the reasons outlined here. This is, in fact, the precise point that Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) makes in his biting critique of Abū Nuʿaym's overly inclusive approach to Sufi history in the *Hilyat al-awliyāʾ*.³⁵ Given these reservations, then, I have compiled a provisional list of 39 Sufis linked to Fatimid Egypt. I divide these individuals into two groups: those who lived in Egypt and those who visited Egypt as part of their travel and study. This list, including basic bibliographical information for each Sufi, can be found in the Appendices (numerical references in this article refer to these Appendices). Rather than exploring that list in any detail here I will simply summarize my preliminary conclusions. I have not exhausted the historical record by any stretch, so these conclusions are tentative and subject to revision. Much work remains to be done and further exploration in the sources will surely reveal more information.

To begin, a complete revision of the early history of Sufism in Egypt is in order. The disciples of Abū l-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 297/910 or 298/911) brought Sufism to Egypt in the early tenth century, not Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī. While Sufi authors retroactively claimed Dhū l-Nūn as one of their own, the earliest sources portray him as a renunciant, ḥadīth transmitter, alchemist, and squishy opponent of the ʿAbbasid *miḥna*, not a Sufi.³⁶ The only other reference to Sufis in Egypt prior to the tenth century is in al-Kindī's history of Egypt. Al-Kindī (d. 350/961) records that in 200/816 a man called Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Šūfī led a group of *ṣūfiyya* to join

³⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa* (ed. Maḥmūd Fākhūrī; Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 4th rev. enl. edn., 4 vols., 1986), i. 25. Ibn al-Jawzī goes into much more detail on this point in his *Talbīs Iblīs* (ed. Muḥammad Baʿyūn; Beirut: Dār Ibn Zaydūn), 236, 241–3. See also Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, 146–7.

³⁶ See Christopher Melchert's comment on this in 'Origins and Early Sufism' in Lloyd Ridgeon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 3–23, at 14. There is finally a substantial and exhaustive study devoted to Dhū l-Nūn and his heterogeneous literary legacy by Michael Ebstein, 'Dū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī and Early Islamic Mysticism', *Arabica*, 61 (2014): 559–612, although Ebstein does not weigh in on whether he considers Dhū l-Nūn a Sufi.

forces with the Andalusians in Alexandria in a campaign ‘to command the good as they understood it and to oppose the sultan’s authority’.³⁷ Their uprising failed and we know nothing more about these particular *ṣūfiyya*. Given the early date and the aforementioned fact that several anti-establishment groups from this period called themselves *ṣūfiyya*, these rebels could not have been a part of the Sufi movement that grew from Baghdad.³⁸ After Dhū l-Nūn, the formative Sufi historiography names only a few Sufis who lived in Egypt, most of whom were from Iraq: Bunān al-Ḥammāl (d. 316/928);³⁹ Abū ‘Alī al-Rūḍhabārī (d. 322 or 323/933–935) and his wife Fāṭima;⁴⁰ Abū l-Ḥasan al-Dīnawarī (d. 330/

³⁷ Muḥammad al-Kindī, *The Governors and Judges of Egypt: Kitāb el umarā’ (el uulāh) wa Kitāb el quḍāh of el Kindī* (ed. Rhuvon Guest; Leiden: Brill, 1912), 161–4, quotation on 162. Al-Kindī also records (*Kitāb al-Wulāt*, 213–14) that in 255–6/869–70 a militant ‘Alid known as Ibn al-Ṣūfī led a series of violent attacks throughout Upper Egypt against representatives of the Ṭulūnid regime. Again, he was not associated with the Baghdad school.

³⁸ While it is certainly possible that these rebel *ṣūfiyya* groups ultimately contributed to or fed into the Baghdad movement, it is quite telling that none of the early Sufi historians include them in their accounts of Sufism.

³⁹ al-Ḥammāl was from Wāsiṭ and a companion of al-Junayd who left Iraq to settle in Egypt. Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya* (ed. Nūr al-Dīn Shurayba; Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānījī, 2nd edn., 1969), 291–4; Abū Nu‘aym, *Hilyat al-awliyā’ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā’* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 10 vols., 1996 [reprint of 1932 Cairo edition]), x. 324–5; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya* (ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd; Damascus and Beirut: Dār al-Khayr, 2003), 94–5; Alexander Knysh (transl.) *al-Qushayri’s Epistle on Sufism: al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī ‘ilm al-taṣawwuf* (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 2007), 57; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*, ii. 448–50; Ibn Khamīs, *Manāqib al-abrār wa-maḥāsīn al-akhyār* (ed. Muḥammad Adīb al-Jādir; al-‘Ayn, UAE: Markaz Zāyid li-l-Turāth wa-l-Ta’rīkh, 2 vols., 2006), ii. 566–71. It is worth noting that al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī has a lengthy entry for Bunān. He does not label him a Sufi but rather calls him a renunciant (*al-zāhid*). Al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh madīnat al-salām* (ed. Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf; Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 17 vols., 2001), vii. 591–4.

⁴⁰ al-Rūḍhabārī was another member of al-Junayd’s circle in Baghdad who followed Bunān al-Ḥammāl to Egypt. Al-Kalābādhi, *al-Ta’arruf li-abl madhhab al-taṣawwuf* (ed. Yuḥannā al-Jayb Ṣādir; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2006), 16, 18, and 70; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 354–60; Abū Nu‘aym, *Hilyat al-awliyā’*, x. 356–7; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 103–4; Knysh, *al-Qushayri’s Epistle*, 62–3; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*, ii. 454–5; Ibn Khamīs, *Manāqib al-abrār*, ii. 676–87. Al-Baghdādī’s entry in *Ta’rīkh madīnat al-salām*, ii. 180–4, contains a wealth of information not found in the Sufi sources. On al-Rūḍhabārī’s wife Fāṭima, see al-Sulamī, *Early Sufi Women: Dikbr an-niswa al-muta’abbidāt aṣ-ṣūfiyyāt* (ed. and transl. Rkia Elaroui Cornell; Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1999), 186–9; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*, iv. 331–2. On the vocalization al-Rūḍhabārī (and not

942);⁴¹ Abū ‘Alī b. al-Kātib (d. ca. 340/951–2);⁴² Abū l-Husayn b. Bunān al-Ḥammāl (no death date);⁴³ and a few others.⁴⁴ This short list corroborates what we know of how Sufism spread from Baghdad: through an aggressive programme of proselytizing activism.

The Sufis of Baghdad brought their ideas and practices to environs far afield, particularly into the Persian-speaking East.⁴⁵ The most famous of these activists was Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī (d. ca. 320/932) and his mission to Khurāsān.⁴⁶ Several historians have highlighted this outreach to the East, but as far as I know nobody has made a systematic case for a similar programme in Egypt.⁴⁷ So while we lack much detail, it was al-Junayd’s

Rūdhbārī), see Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 5 vols., 1977), iii. 77.

⁴¹ al-Dīnawarī was another easterner who settled in Egypt: al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 212–15; Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’*, x. 353; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 97–98; Knysh, *al-Qushayrī’s Epistle*, 59; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*, iv. 78–9; Ibn Khamīs, *Manāqib al-abrār*, ii. 606–8.

⁴² Abū ‘Alī was an Egyptian companion of al-Rūdhbārī: al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 386–8; Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’*, x. 360; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 109; Knysh, *al-Qushayrī’s Epistle*, 65; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*, iv. 323; Ibn Khamīs, *Manāqib al-abrār*, ii. 736–8.

⁴³ Abū l-Husayn was a student of Abū Sa‘īd al-Kharrāz (d. ca. 286/899); the two most likely met when the latter was in Egypt: al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 389–90; Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’*, x. 362; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 111; Knysh, *al-Qushayrī’s Epistle*, 66; Ibn Khamīs, *Manāqib al-abrār*, ii. 739–40. See also Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rīkh madīnat Dimashq* (ed. ‘Umar b. Gharāma al-‘Amrawī; Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 80 vols., 1995–2000), lxvi. 147–9, who corroborates that Abū l-Husayn and al-Kharrāz met in Egypt.

⁴⁴ We might add Muḥammad b. Jābār (d. 361 or 362/971–3), although it is unclear whether he was actually keyed in to the early Sufi movement in Egypt. He does not appear in the early Sufi prosopography but does turn up in later compilations: Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a‘yān*, iv. 103–4; Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Kawākib al-sayyāra fī tartīb al-ziyāra fī l-qarāfatayn al-kubrā wa-l-ṣughrā* (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘a al-‘Āmiriyya bi-Miṣr, 1907), 127–9; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, v. 473–6. We might also add Ibn al-Jawzī’s list of individuals from Egypt—both male and female—at the end of *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*, iv. 309–35. However, except for the names already listed here, these are either not Sufis or are anonymous devotees.

⁴⁵ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 101; Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, 56–82.

⁴⁶ Laury Silvers, *A Soaring Minaret: Abu Bakr al-Wasiti and the Rise of Baghdadi Sufism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010).

⁴⁷ The only reference to this idea I have found is Knysh (*Islamic Mysticism*, 66), who writes that Sufi émigrés from Baghdad ‘were instrumental in carrying [the Baghdad school’s] teachings to Egypt, Arabia, Persia and Transoxania,

companions who planted the seeds of Sufism in Egypt, not Dhū l-Nūn. Their proselytizing was by all appearances a success; by the mid-tenth century there was a small but growing community of Sufis located at Fustat.⁴⁸ If events had followed a similar course to those in the East, we would expect to see this nascent community continue to grow and produce literary treatments of Sufism tailored to the local cultural milieu, precisely as those in Khurāsān and Transoxiana did.⁴⁹ In fact, Abū 'Alī al-Rūdhabārī did apparently compose several 'excellent treatises on Sufism'.⁵⁰ While these treatises have not survived, al-Rūdhabārī was clearly the key figure in establishing Sufism in Egypt. His small community persisted into the Fatimid period; most of the Sufis who lived in early Fatimid Egypt were connected to al-Rūdhabārī in some way. Al-Rūdhabārī's role and reputation on this score earned him the

where they laid the groundwork for the eventual triumph of al-Junayd's version of Sufism'. We might juxtapose this history in Egypt with that of Sufism in the far West. In that case, local Maghribis and Andalusians travelled east (particularly to Makka) and brought the doctrines and practices of the Sufis back with them. For a detailed overview of both regions, see Muḥammad Barakāt al-Baylī, *al-Zuhhād wa-l-mutaṣawwifa fī bilād al-Maghrib wa-l-Andalus ḥattā al-qarn al-khāmis al-hijrī* (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍa al-'Arabiyya, 1993). Al-Baylī shows that nearly all the early Sufis in the Maghrib and al-Andalus were locals who had travelled to the East, although he does note a few isolated examples of Sufis from the East who moved to the West (*al-Zuhhād*, 97). See also Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 71–4; Manuela Marín, 'Abū Sa'īd Ibn al-A'rābī et le développement du soufisme en al-Andalus', *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 63–4 (1992): 28–38; and especially the first two chapters of Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998). Compare also the early history of Sufism in Yemen in Muhammad Ali Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam: Theology and Sufism in Yemen* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 35–50. However, Aziz's account here is hamstrung by his insistence on using the categories of 'asceticism' and 'mysticism' (the former 'an early stage of self-preparation' leading to the latter) to construct an over-determined historical narrative that traces the rise, decline, and revival of Sufism through many figures who were not actually Sufis.

⁴⁸ In fact, Ibn al-Jawzī includes two sections for Egypt in his *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*, one for Fustat (*Miṣr*, iv. 309–33) and one for Alexandria (iv. 333–5). As for those in Alexandria, Ibn al-Jawzī only mentions three people, two of whom are anonymous devotees while the third is not a Sufi.

⁴⁹ This is certainly the case with the earliest extant treatises on Sufism: al-Kalābādhi's *al-Ta'arruf* and al-Sarrāj's *al-Luma' fī l-taṣawwuf*, on which see Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 67–71.

⁵⁰ al-Baghdādī, *Ta'riḫ madīnat al-salām*, ii. 180. See also 'Umar Kaḥḥāla, *Mu'jam al-mu'allifīn: tarājim muṣannifī al-kutub al-'arabiyya* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 15 vols. in 8, 1957), viii. 308–9.

informal title ‘master of the Sufis’ (*shaykh al-ṣūfiyya*) in Egypt.⁵¹ I believe this informal role and title persisted through at least the eleventh century, when we find Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Ghazzī (d. 448/1056, #14) described as the *shaykh al-ṣūfiyya* in Fatimid Egypt. Al-Ghazzī hailed from Ramla, where he was the leader of the Sufis in Syria before moving to Egypt.⁵² Indeed, relations between Egyptian and Syrian Sufis during this period were quite close, a situation embodied by Abū l-Ḥasan al-ʿAnsī (d. 436/1045, #10). Al-ʿAnsī had studied with Aḥmad al-Rūdhābārī (d. 369/980), the most important Sufi of Syria in his day and the maternal cousin of Abū ʿAlī al-Rūdhābārī.⁵³

This Sufi community remained relatively small through the Fatimid period. The movement in Iraq and Khurasan was much more robust and widespread than it was in Egypt. While there were certainly more Sufis living in Fatimid Egypt than those I have identified, the socio-political conditions necessary for widespread popularization did not yet obtain. It was only in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries that we begin to see such conditions in Egypt.⁵⁴ We get some indication of the small size of this early movement from Ibn al-Ṭaḥḥān (d. 416/1025). In his short necrology of Sunni scholars in Egypt he includes only two men with the epithet *ṣūfi*.⁵⁵ He provides us with no information about these men except that he knew and heard ḥadīth from one personally, and that the other related ḥadīth to al-Ḥasan Ibn Rashīq (d. 370/980), more on whom below. Ibn al-Ṭaḥḥān also mentions quite a number of individuals who knew and transmitted ḥadīth on the authority of Dhū l-Nūn, whom he categorized as a renunciant. He does not consider any of Dhū l-Nūn’s

⁵¹ By informal title I mean that this was not a bureaucratic position nor a stipendiary post (*manṣīb*), like the later *shaykh al-shuyūkh* in Cairo, but rather an honorific bestowed by his followers.

⁵² Ibn ʿAsākir (*Taʾrīkh Dimashq*, lii. 345–7) begins his entry by calling al-Ghazzī *shaykh ahl al-taṣawwuf bi-l-Shām* (master of the Sufis in Syria). However, he subsequently quotes an earlier source describing al-Ghazzī as *shaykh al-taṣawwuf bi-diyār Miṣr wa-l-Shām fī waqtihi* (the master of Sufism in the lands of Egypt and Syria during his time).

⁵³ On Aḥmad al-Rūdhābārī, whom al-Sulamī describes as *shaykh al-shām fī waqtihi*, see *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 497–500; Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, x. 383–4; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 126–7; Knysh, *al-Qushayrī’s Epistle*, 73–4; see also Tadmuri’s bibliographical notes in al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashābir wa-l-ʿalām* (ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmuri; Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 53 vols., 1987–2000), xxvi. 410–12.

⁵⁴ Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Egypt, 1173–1325* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

⁵⁵ Ibn al-Ṭaḥḥān, *Taʾrīkh ʿulamāʾ ahl Miṣr* (ed. Abū ʿAbd Allāh Maḥmūd al-Ḥaddād; Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀshima, 1988), 53 and 88.

companions to be Sufis either.⁵⁶ In all, out of 538 entries, Ibn al-Ṭaḥḥān has seven pious men (*ṣāliḥ*), two renunciants (*zābid*), and two Sufis. By the next generation, however, in the necrology of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥabbāl (d. 482/1089), we find 18 pious, four renunciants, and six Sufis, out of a total of 411 entries.⁵⁷ Now this method is by no means airtight. Each author had his own idiosyncratic (unenunciated) criteria of inclusion and description, in addition to the fact that Ibn al-Ṭaḥḥān's *Ta'riḫ* is incomplete. But the numbers are suggestive, indicating the increased visibility of Sufis in Egypt by the late eleventh century, at least among the ḥadīth experts.

The transmission of ḥadīth and the pursuit of scholarship more broadly played a critical role in the dissemination of Sufism in Fatimid Egypt.⁵⁸ Many of the early Sufis in Egypt were embedded within the densely interconnected networks of ḥadīth scholarship, particularly around the Sufi Abū Sa'd al-Mālīnī (d. 412/1022, #5).⁵⁹ This historical

⁵⁶ Ibn al-Ṭaḥḥān does not have an entry for Dhū l-Nūn, only mentioning him in connection with his students. In almost every instance he describes Dhū l-Nūn and his students as *zābid*.

⁵⁷ al-Ḥabbāl, *Wafayāt al-miṣriyyīn*, 375–456 H: *juz' fī Wafayāt qawm min al-Miṣriyyīn wa-naṣar siwāhum min sanat khams wa-sab'in wa-thalāthmi'a* (ed. Abū 'Abd Allāh Maḥmūd al-Ḥaddād; Riyadh: Dār al-'Āshīma, 1988).

⁵⁸ For general treatments of the topic of Sufism and ḥadīth, see Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, i. 393–6; Hamid Algar, 'Hadith iv. In Sufism', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Online edition, New York, 1996–); Laury Silvers, 'The Teaching Relationship in Early Sufism: A Reassessment of Fritz Meier's Definition of the *shaykh al-tarbiya* and the *shaykh al-ta'lim*', *The Muslim World*, 93 (2003): 69–97, esp. 72–80; Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 22–3, 87–108; Jean-Jacques Thibon, *L'œuvre d'Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, 325/937–412/1021, et la formation du soufisme* (Damascus: Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 2009), 131–46. For a more pointed discussion of the period prior to the emergence of Sufism as a discrete tradition see Christopher Melchert, 'Early Renunciants as *Ḥadīth* Transmitters', *The Muslim World*, 92 (2002): 407–18; id., 'The Piety of the Hadith Folk', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 34 (2002): 425–39. Daphna Ephrat discusses the ḥadīth–Sufism nexus for Fatimid-era Palestine in *Spiritual Wayfarers, Leaders in Piety: Sufis and the Dissemination of Islam in Medieval Palestine* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 2008), 83–96.

⁵⁹ al-Ṣarīfīnī (d. 641/1243) notes quite specifically al-Mālīnī's reputation in Nishapur for Sufism and, even more important, that he had seen al-Mālīnī's collection of forty ḥadīth, each of which was transmitted by a Sufi master. Al-Ṣarīfīnī, *al-Muntakhab min al-siyāq li-Ta'riḫ Naysābūr* (ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad 'Abd al-'Azīz; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1989), 89. Al-Mālīnī's work is still extant: al-Mālīnī, *Kitāb al-Arbā'in fī shuyūkh al-ṣūfiyya* (ed. 'Amir Hasan Ṣabrī; Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya, 1997).

image is, of course, a reflection of the available sources, which are overwhelmingly focused on ḥadīth scholars. But it is nevertheless evident that the pursuit to hear ḥadīth from as many different teachers as possible drew large numbers of scholars to Egypt, including Sufis. In fact, quite a few Sufis visited Fatimid Egypt specifically to study with non-Sufis like the afore-mentioned Ibn Rashīq, whom al-Dhahabī describes as ‘the *muḥaddith* of the lands of Egypt in his time’.⁶⁰ Delia Cortese has documented how scholars like Ibn Rashīq drew individuals from the East, Sufi and non-Sufi alike, to Egypt during this period.⁶¹ Many of these Sufis likely passed through a Sufi hospice known as the *duwayrat al-fuqarāʾ* in the Palestinian city of Ramla (thus also known as *duwayrat al-Ramla*). This *duwayra* was perhaps the first Sufi hospice in Syria-Egypt, for which there is evidence from as early as the mid-tenth century.⁶² Ramla was then under Fatimid control and served as a critical link between Eastern and Western Sufis from the time of al-Rūḍhabārī.

It is also clear that women played a role in the development of Sufism in Fatimid Egypt. This is not surprising given what we know of other early Sufi women and their participation in Sufi circles.⁶³ In the case of Egypt, the most famous examples are several anonymous women whom Ibn al-Jawzī connects with Dhū l-Nūn.⁶⁴ Less well known, but on surer

⁶⁰ On Ibn Rashīq, see Tadmurī’s references in al-Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, xxvi. 437–8, quotation on 438. Ibn al-Taḥḥān was one of Ibn Rashīq’s students, see the entry in the former’s *Taʾriḫ*, 52.

⁶¹ Delia Cortese, ‘Voices of the Silent Majority: The Transmission of Sunnī Learning in Fāṭimī Egypt’, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 39 (2012): 345–66.

⁶² Thaqaḥ al-Ḥabashī (d. 383/993–4) was the *khādīm* at the *duwayra* for a short time before moving to Makka (al-Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, xxvii. 62). Abū l-Ḥasan al-Hamadḥānī (d. 393/1002), a student of Jaʿfar al-Khuldī, moved into the *duwayra* before travelling to Egypt to study with Abū ʿAlī b. al-Kātib (d. 343/954), one of al-Rūḍhabārī’s students (Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ Dimashq*, liv. 304–5 [citing al-Sulamī’s *Taʾriḫ al-ṣūfiyya*]). Muḥammad al-Asadābādī died at the *duwayra* in 467/1074 (Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ Dimashq*, lii. 330).

⁶³ Laury Silvers, ‘Early Pious, Mystic Sufi Women’ in Lloyd Ridgeon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 24–52. See also Silvers’ methodological comments on this issue (pp. 24–29) as well as those of Maria Dakake, ‘“Guest of the Inmost Heart”: Conceptions of the Divine Beloved among Early Sufi Women’, *Comparative Islamic Studies*, 3 (2007): 72–97, at 72–4. See also Silvers’ critical response to Dakake in ‘“God Loves Me”: The Theological Content and Context of Early Pious and Sufi Women’s Sayings on Love’, *Journal for Islamic Studies*, 30 (2010): 33–59.

⁶⁴ Silvers, ‘Early Pious, Mystic Sufi Women’, 45. I am much more skeptical about these accounts than Silvers. The narrations linking Dhū l-Nūn to

historical footing, is the fact that al-Rūḍhabārī's wife Fāṭima was also a Sufi.⁶⁵ Although it is not possible to say this definitively, I suspect that Fāṭima inaugurated a long tradition and notable community of Sufi women in Fustat. Note, for example, the case of Muḥammad Ibn Shujā' (d. after 430/1038, #8), who lived briefly in Egypt. When he decided it was finally time to get married the locals directed him to an unnamed Sufi woman and her daughter. He married the latter and they settled together in Egypt before separating amicably (see Appendix C for the quite moving account). This anecdote suggests that when Ibn Shujā' sought marriage there was an established group of Sufi women to whom he could turn.⁶⁶ Furthermore, female Sufis also visited Egypt to learn ḥadīth.⁶⁷ Malika bint Dawūd al-Šūfiyya (d. 507/1114, #37) visited Egypt in 452/1060 to learn the *Sunan* of al-Šāfi'ī and later settled at the Sumaysātī *khānqāh* (known as a *duwayra* at the time) in Damascus.⁶⁸ There were surely other Sufi women who visited Egypt at this time.

Delia Cortese has argued that the Fatimids contributed, even if indirectly, to Sunni scholarship in Egypt by fostering favourable economic conditions and keeping the trade routes to Syria and the Hijaz open and safe.⁶⁹ These conditions undoubtedly fostered the growth and development of Sufism in Egypt as well. But while Sufism continued to develop in Egypt locally, these ideal conditions would not last. An examination of Appendix B suggests a rapid drop in the number of visitors to Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem in 1099 and the establishment of the Crusader states. Indeed, al-Maqrīzī writes that during the roughly 200 years of Crusader rule along the Levantine coast, travel through the Sinai was cut off, forcing all trade and pilgrimage to reroute through Upper Egypt.⁷⁰ Incidentally, this diversion would be a major factor in the growth of Sufism in Upper Egypt during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁷¹ Furthermore, these events underscore the

anonymous women seem to me a literary trope designed to depict him as a marginal figure. It is surely not a coincidence that his meetings with them often take place at crossroads or outside urban centres.

⁶⁵ al-Sulamī, *Early Sufi Women*, 186–9; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*, iv. 331–2.

⁶⁶ Dakake, 'Guest of the Inmost Heart', 85–6; Silvers, 'Early Pious, Mystic Sufi Women', 48–51.

⁶⁷ On this topic more broadly, see Asma Sayeed, *Women and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), esp. 126–43.

⁶⁸ On this *khānqāh*, see al-Nu'aymī, *al-Dāris fī ta'rikh al-madāris* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 2 vols., 1990), ii. 118–126.

⁶⁹ Cortese, 'Voices of the Silent Majority', 361–3.

⁷⁰ al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, i. 549–50.

⁷¹ Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism*, 181–201.

significance of the anti-Crusading efforts of Nūr al-Dīn Zengī and Saladin for the subsequent growth and popularization of Sufism in Egypt and Syria. It was the re-establishment of the northern travel routes in combination with Zengid and Ayyubid state sponsorship of Sufism that facilitated the mass ingress of Sufis into their realms.

I should stress that we can say very little about the fine contours of Sufism in Egypt during this early period. We can reconstruct the Sufis' scholarly networks and some of their activity, but these reconstructions reveal very little of their actual ideas or praxis. Nevertheless, by the end of the Fatimid period Sufism was much more diverse and broadly based socially than it was at the beginning of that era. This growth and diversification had much to do with the increasing numbers of immigrants escaping political instability in the Maghrib and al-Andalus as well as the growing sophistication and diversity of the local Sunni community. 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā'ī (d. 592/1196, #23), for example, was a Sufi from the Maghrib who had studied in the same circle as Abū Madyan Shu'ayb (d. 594/1198). But he eventually left his home because of the turmoil of the Almohad revolution, settling in Upper Egypt during the last decades of Fatimid rule.⁷² A number of other Sufis from the West began to appear in Alexandria at precisely this time as well. This fact owes much to the social geography of Alexandria, known as the Gateway to the West (*bāb al-maghrib*), as well as to several Sunni viziers who used Alexandria as a staging ground for the development of Sunni—especially Mālikī—thought and practice.⁷³ Simultaneously, we see the development of an increasingly diverse and local form of Sufism in Cairo-Fustat. This development was closely connected to Sufi currents in the East, particularly the elaboration of distinctly Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī forms of Sufism. Emblematic of this trend in Egypt are three individuals

⁷² Muḥammad al-Ḥajjājī has written a valuable critical study of the life of al-Qinā'ī in which he attempts to sort out the verifiable and the legendary in al-Qinā'ī's biography: *Sayyidī 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā'ī al-muftarā 'alayh: dirāsa naqdiyya li-ba'd al-iftirā'āt wa-l-mazā'im al-latī dassat 'alā ta'rīkhihi* (Cairo: 'Ālam al-Fikr, 1990). On the Sufis of Upper Egypt who can be traced to al-Qinā'ī's influence, see Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism*, 181–249.

⁷³ Munā Aḥmad Abū Zayd, 'al-Taṣawwuf fī l-Iskandariya fī l-qarn al-sābi', *Ibdā'*, 19 (2002): 31–40; Éric Geoffroy, 'Les milieux de la mystique musulmane à Alexandrie aux XIII^e et XIV^e siècles' in Christian Décobert and Jean-Yves Empeur (eds.), *Alexandrie médiévale* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 2002): ii. 169–80; Paul Walker, 'Fāṭimid Alexandria as an Entrepôt in the East-West Exchange of Islamic Scholarship', *al-Masāq*, 26 (2014): 36–48. On the Sunni viziers, see Gary Leiser, 'The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt: Madrasas and Mudarrisūn, 495–647/1101–1249' (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1976), 111–81.

all connected by strange circumstance: Muḥammad Ibn al-Kīzānī (d. 562/1166), ʿUthmān Ibn Marzūq al-Qurashī (d. 564/1168–9, #20), and Najm al-Dīn al-Khabūshānī (d. 587/1191, #22).

Ibn al-Kīzānī was a Shāfiʿī renunciant, pious devotee, and poet, with a large following in Egypt; he was not a Sufi as far as I can tell.⁷⁴ Ibn Marzūq was a Ḥanbalī scholar who came to Egypt in the early twelfth century. He was a Sufi who belonged to that school of Ḥanbalī Sufism exemplified by his contemporary ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166), from whom he supposedly took the *khirqā*.⁷⁵ According to Ibn Rajab he was famous for discoursing on Sufi knowledge and realities (*al-maʿārif wa-l-ḥaqāʾiq*) and was in charge of ‘training novices in Egypt’ (*intahat ilayhi tarbiyat al-murīdīn bi-Miṣr*).⁷⁶ What is of interest here, besides the presence of a Ḥanbalī Sufi in late Fatimid Cairo, is the controversy that erupted between these two men. Nearly all the biographies of Ibn al-Kīzānī report that he held the unusual theological position that the actions of pious devotees are eternal (*afʿāl al-ʿubbād qadīma*), that is, uncreated.⁷⁷ However, Ibn Rajab, citing eyewitness testimony, claims that it was actually Ibn Marzūq who held this position and that Ibn al-Kīzānī held the opposite, that pious devotions are created. Ibn Rajab is incredulous that a good Ḥanbalī would believe such a thing, although he allows that Ibn Marzūq may have been forced into avowing it because of his similar position that the pronunciation of the Qurʾān is eternal (*al-lafẓ bi-l-qurʾān ghayr makhlūq*). At any rate, a nasty public controversy

⁷⁴ On his life and poetry, see ʿAlī Šāfi Ḥusayn, *Ibn al-Kīzānī al-shāʿir al-šūfī al-Miṣrī: ḥayātuhu wa-dūwānuhu* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1966). See also Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt al-zamān* AH 495–654 (facsimile of MS 136 [Yale], introd. by J. R. Jewett), 157–8 (560 AH); Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, iv. 461–2; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, xxxix: 134–5; id., *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā* (ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnaʿūt, et al.; Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 25 vols. and supplements, 1981), xx. 454–5; Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā* (ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāhī and ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥulw; Cairo: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 10 vols., 1964–1976), vi. 90; al-Šafadī, *al-Wāfi*, i. 257–9; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, v. 81–2; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira* (ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shams al-Dīn; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 16 vols., 1992), v. 368; Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Kawākib al-sayyāra*, 303–4. Al-Maqrīzī calls Ibn al-Kīzānī a Sufi, but none of the earlier biographers do.

⁷⁵ On Ḥanbalism in Egypt during this period see Gary Leiser, ‘Hanbalism in Egypt before the Mamlūks’, *Studia Islamica*, 54 (1981): 155–81, esp. 164–6 where he discusses Ibn Marzūq.

⁷⁶ Ibn Rajab, *al-Dhayl ʿalā ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Sulaymān ʿUthaymīn; Riyadh: Maktabat al-ʿUbaykān, 5 vols., 2005), ii. 222.

⁷⁷ This attribution begins with Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Mirʾāt al-zamān*, which is then cited by all later biographical literature.

(*fitna*) erupted between the followers of Ibn al-Kīzānī and Ibn Marzūq over this issue. As an indication of just how arcane the dispute was, the community in Egypt had to write to scholars in Baghdad for help. But their answer was so confusing that Ibn Marzūq's son Sa'd had to travel to Baghdad himself and seek counsel. Unfortunately, Ibn Marzūq died before the question was settled and his son remained in Baghdad permanently, living at the *ribāt* of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī.⁷⁸ But the story does not end there.

Both Ibn Marzūq and Ibn al-Kīzānī were buried near al-Shāfi'ī's tomb in the Qarāfa. Enter al-Khabūshānī, a Shāfi'ī Sufi from the East who arrived in Egypt in 565/1170 and began agitating aggressively for the elimination of the Fatimid regime.⁷⁹ Al-Khabūshānī's wish was soon realized and he held several important posts in Saladin's new polity, including teaching *fiqh* at the Shāfi'ī mausoleum. But the close proximity of Ibn al-Kīzānī's grave was too much for al-Khabūshānī to bear; he demanded that Saladin exhume the body and destroy it.⁸⁰ Accounts of the body's fate differ, but it was eventually exhumed and most likely re-interred at the base of the Muqattam Hills. The entire episode is an odd and macabre one, but is critical for understanding the history of Sufism in Egypt. The enmity between Ibn al-Kīzānī and Ibn Marzūq was less about the ontological status of devotions than about their attempts to speak for and wield authority on behalf of the Sunni community in Egypt. That the dispute and its aftermath involved at least two Sufis (three if we count Ibn al-Kīzānī) indicates the growing prominence and authority of Sufis in Egypt by the end of Fatimid rule. At that point Sufism in Egypt was much more diverse, including persons from all over the Muslim world representing all four Sunni legal schools, and their influence more broadly based socially. Ibn Marzūq indexes this increasing popularity across the socio-economic spectrum. Ibn Rajab describes him as finding 'wide acceptance among both the elites and the masses'.⁸¹ This broad appeal to large and multiple segments of society will increase during the Ayyubid period and become a hallmark of Sufism during the Mamluk era.

Finally, there is evidence that Fatimid rulers cultivated patronage ties with some Sufis. There was no official Fatimid position on Sufism or in their dealings with Sufis. Rather, the Fatimids were nearly always pragmatic and developed patronage ties across the ideological spectrum

⁷⁸ Ibn Rajab, *al-Dhayl*, ii. 417–21, detail about the *ribāt* on 419.

⁷⁹ Leiser, 'The Restoration of Sunnism', 233–41, narrates this aspect of al-Khabūshānī's life in great detail.

⁸⁰ al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya*, vi. 90.

⁸¹ Ibn Rajab, *al-Dhayl*, ii. 223.

and with all the religious communities under their rule.⁸² One of the more interesting and enigmatic accounts on this front occurred during the reign of al-Ḥākim (r. 386–411/996–1021). Al-Ḥākim is famous for his alleged mental problems and capricious politics; his reign was marked by a series of unusual anti-*dhimmī* and anti-Sunni acts and decrees.⁸³ The Maghribī anthologist Ibn Saʿīd (d. 685/1286) records a series of remarkable anecdotes concerning al-Ḥākim’s behaviour in his political history of Cairo, one of which sheds direct light on this issue. ‘Al-Ḥākim used to ride a donkey named Moon, upon which he would travel among the people. He had Sufis who would dance before him and for which they were given a regular stipend (*jārr mustamirr*).’⁸⁴ This account is corroborated by the eleventh-century *Rasāʾil al-ḥikma* (Epistles of Wisdom), a collection of letters and treatises explicating Druze theology and history. The *Rasāʾil* describe al-Ḥākim as the incarnation of divinity and his actions the object of esoteric speculation. The author of the eleventh *Risāla*, Ḥamza b. al-Labbād, d. 412/1021–2, argues that al-Ḥākim’s odd and often licentious behaviour signifies his transcendence of the exoteric law and embodied performance of the

⁸² On the development of Fatimid ideology on this subject, see Shainool Jiwa, ‘Governance and Pluralsim under the Fatimids (909–996 CE)’ in Farhad Daftary, Aryn B. Sajoo, and Shainool Jiwa (eds.), *The Shīʿi World: Pathways in Tradition and Modernity* (London: I.B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2015), 111–30. See also Delia Cortese’s comments on Fatimid patronage of Sunni scholarship in ‘Voices of the Silent Majority’, 353–60.

⁸³ See Paul Walker’s very measured analysis of al-Ḥākim’s behaviour in *Caliph of Cairo: al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, 996–1021* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2009). Jennifer Pruitt argues that (at least some of) al-Ḥākim’s unusual edicts constitute responses to a series of changing sectarian conditions and his attempt to extend his legitimacy through ideological, rather than military, means. See her ‘Method in Madness: Recontextualizing the Destruction of Churches in the Fatimid Era’, *Muqarnas*, 30 (2013): 119–39. See also Cortese, ‘Voices of the Silent Majority’, 357–8. On this ideological shift in the Fatimid polity more broadly, see Paula Sanders remarks in ‘The Fāṭimid State, 969–1171’ in Carl Petry (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt. Volume One: Islamic Egypt, 640–1517* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 151–74, esp. 171–4.

⁸⁴ Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī ḥulā ḥaḍrat al-Qāhira: qism al-khāṣṣ bi-l-Qāhira min kitāb al-Mughrib fī ḥūla al-Maghrib* (ed. Ḥusayn Naṣṣār; Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub, 1970), 59. Al-Maqrīzī also relates this anecdote on Ibn Saʿīd’s authority in *Ittīʾāz al-Ḥunafāʾ*, ii. 121. It is unclear from the context whether these Sufis accompanied him on his rides or if the performances occurred elsewhere.

esoteric law.⁸⁵ ‘And as for what they relate about [al-Ḥākīm] stopping to listen to the Sufis’ songs and to watch them dance, this is an indication (*dalīl*) concerning [his] practice of the Shari‘a, which involves ornamentation, amusement, and play (*al-zukhruf wa-l-lahw wa-l-la‘b*).’⁸⁶ While I am not qualified to wade into the nuances of Druze theology, the witnesses of Ibn Sa‘īd and Ibn al-Labbād offer compelling evidence not only of Sufi activity in Fatimid Cairo, but of royal patronage as well. While we can say nothing about the identity or character of these Sufis, they were clearly known for their performance of *samā‘*. We get a better sense of this phenomenon from another report.

In al-Maqrīzī’s topography of Egypt he devotes several pages to a structure in the Qarāfa cemetery known as the *qaṣr al-qarāfa*, the Qarāfa Palace (also known as the Andalusian Palace [*qaṣr al-Andalus*]).⁸⁷ Taghrīd, the mother of the Fatimid Caliph al-‘Azīz (r. 365–386/975–996), commissioned its construction in 366/976. The Caliph al-‘Āmir (r. 495–524/1101–1130) then renovated it in 520/1126. He whitewashed the walls and attached a *maṣṭaba*—here meaning some kind of assembly area or lodging place—on the east side of the door.⁸⁸ Al-Maqrīzī relates that al-‘Āmir had this *maṣṭaba* built specifically for Sufis so he could watch them dance when he visited the palace:

[al-‘Āmir] would sit above the parapet at the highest point while the Sufi folk of the path (*abl al-ṭariqa min al-ṣūfiyya*) would dance while carrying poles attached to lanterns in which many candles would shine. And they would spread out mats beneath them, upon which were carpets, and a meal cloth would be spread out

⁸⁵ See Daniel De Smet’s introduction to this *Risāla* in his critical edition and translation, *Les épîtres sacrées des Druzes: Rasā’il al-Ḥikma Volumes 1 et 2* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 224. He notes that while the canonical version of the letter does not have a date, one of the manuscripts has a note that the work was completed in 410/1019–1020. On Ḥamza b. al-Labbān, see al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, iii. 659–62, and De Smet, *Les épîtres sacrées des Druzes*, 17–37.

⁸⁶ De Smet, *Les épîtres sacrées des Druzes*, 547 (Arabic) and 238 (French).

⁸⁷ A description of this palace occurs twice in al-Maqrīzī’s topography: *al-Khiṭaṭ*, ii. 580–1, and again at iv. 876–7.

⁸⁸ It is difficult to tell from the context what the word means exactly. It originally meant an anvil (*miṣṭab*), a bench attached to a building, or a raised area for sleeping. Thus it came to mean ‘a meeting place for people, resembling a bench upon which one sits’. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1981), iv. 2443 (*s-t-b*, but see also *s-t-b* for more). A late but useful witness, Buṭrus al-Bustānī (d. 1883), describes it as ‘a lodging place for foreigners and it is said “it is a place in which the *fuqarā’* and *sā’ilūn* gather”, al-Ḥarīrī used it this way in a *maqāma’*: al-Bustānī, *Muḥiṭ al-muḥiṭ qāmūs muṭawwal li-l-luḡha al-‘arabiyya* (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1987), 409 (*s-t-b*).

for them upon which was every kind of delicious and desirable type of food and sweets—all spread out across the entire cloth.⁸⁹

Al-Maqrīzī continues with a remarkable description of one of these ceremonies:

It happened once that *shaykh* Abū ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Jawharī the preacher was overtaken with ecstasy (*tawājada*). He ripped up his cloak (*muraqqā’a*) and the pieces were distributed according to the custom. The *shaykh* Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm, known as the wounding Qur’ān reciter (*al-qāriḥ al-muqri’*),⁹⁰ asked him for a piece (*kbirqa*) of it, which he then placed upon his head. When [Ibn al-Jawharī] was through tearing it up, the Caliph al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh called out from the parapet, ‘*shaykh* Abū Ishāq!’ He replied, ‘Here I am master!’ (*labbayka mawlānā*). [Al-Āmir] asked, ‘Where is my *kbirqa*?’ and [Abū Ishāq] replied, ‘Here it is on my head, Commander of the Faithful!’ Al-Āmir was pleased by this and the whole scene delighted him. So he immediately ordered that 1000 *niṣfiyya* be brought from the treasury of cloth, and it was brought right away. [The cloth] was divided up for those present and for the renunciants of the Qarāfa. The overseer of the treasury then showered them from the arch with 1000 dinars and those present snatched them up. The sievers (*al-mughbarbalūn*) who were there scoured the ground for days for the [coins] that the dust had covered.⁹¹

I believe I can identify both of the individuals named here. Elsewhere al-Maqrīzī notes that the leader (*muqaddam*) of these Sufis was the same Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm.⁹² This is very likely Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Qurashī (#15), about whom there is very little in the sources. Al-Munāwī has him dying in 486/1093, which is much too early for him to have been present here. However, al-Munāwī’s sources do not provide a date of death for al-Qurashī and it is likely that al-Munāwī’s date is incorrect. The other named participant, the ecstatic dancer al-Ḥusayn Ibn al-Jawharī (d. 528/1134, #16), was from an influential family of preachers whose burial plot

⁸⁹ al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, ii. 580–1. Al-Maqrīzī includes this same basic description in his account of the fiscal excesses of al-Āmir’s reign in *Ittī’āz al-Ḥunafā’*, iii. 131, adding that they also burned a great deal of incense at these ceremonies.

⁹⁰ This odd locution may be a reference to his ability to recite the Qur’ān to devastating effect. Or there may be a problem with the text, for in a separate entry, al-Maqrīzī (*al-Khiṭaṭ*, iv. 876–7) describes him simply (and more clearly) as *al-mādih*, the panegyrist.

⁹¹ al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, ii. 580. Again, a shorter version can be found in id., *Ittī’āz al-Ḥunafā’*, iii. 131, where he says that those present ‘fought to grab [the coins] from each other’.

⁹² al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, iv. 876–7.

occupied a large footprint in the Qarāfa cemetery.⁹³ None of the early sources describe the family as Sufis, although their reputation for piety and preaching was legendary.⁹⁴ Al-Munāwī does describe the family as Sufis, a characterization I would normally be inclined to discount, but for the ecstatic dancing at the palace and that Ibn al-Jawharī's father, Abū l-Faḍl Ibn al-Jawharī (d. 480/1087–8), turns up in Ibn al-Zayyāt al-Tādilī's prosopography of Maghribī Sufis.⁹⁵ This would suggest, at the very least, that the family were well known by and associated with Sufis more broadly. And here is Ibn al-Jawharī at the Andalusian Palace dancing with them, ripping up his cloak in ecstasy, and distributing it to the crowd.

This latter point is especially suggestive. Ripping and distributing the cloak during sessions of *samāʿ* is a well known Sufi practice.⁹⁶ Al-Maqrīzī's brief description chimes perfectly with the practice as Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī and Abū l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī describe it. For example, during a communal session the leader of the group decides what to do with the ripped *khirqā*, not the one doing the ripping.⁹⁷ Thus al-Āmir asks Abū Ishāq for a piece and not Ibn al-Jawharī. Al-

⁹³ Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Kawākib al-sayyāra*, 134–9.

⁹⁴ Obituaries for many members of the family are scattered across al-Maqrīzī's history of the Fatimids, *Ittīʾāz al-Ḥunafāʾ*.

⁹⁵ On Abū l-Faḍl, see Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *al-Ghunya* (ed. Māhir Zuhayr Jarrār; Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1982), 190; Ibn Muyassar, *Annales d'Égypte (les khalifes Fātimides), texte arabe* (ed. Henri Massé; Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1919), 28; Ibn al-Zayyāt al-Tādilī, *al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf wa-akhbār Abī l-ʿAbbās al-Sabtī* (ed. Aḥmad al-Tawfiq; Rabat: Manshūrāt Kullīyyat al-Ādāb wa-l-ʿUlūm al-Insāniyya, 1997), 101; Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Kawākib al-sayyāra*, 134–9; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, xxxii. 291; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar al-ʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, xviii. 495; al-Maqrīzī, *Ittīʾāz al-Ḥunafāʾ*, ii. 325; al-Sakhāwī, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb wa-bughyat al-tullāb fī l-khīṭaʾ wa-l-mazārāt wa-l-tarājim wa-l-biqāʿ al-mubārakāt* (eds. Maḥmūd Rabīʿ and Ḥasan Qāsim; Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-ʿUlūm wa-l-Ādāb, 1937), 261–2; al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durrīyya*, ii. 183 (al-Munāwī has the incorrect name here, but the details match those from other sources).

⁹⁶ al-Qushayrī, *Waṣīyya li-l-murīdīn* in *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, 587; Knysh, *al-Qushayrī's Epistle*, 413; al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Ṣūfism* (transl. R. A. Nicholson; Leiden: Brill, 1911), 417; Abū l-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, *Kitāb Ādāb al-murīdīn* (ed. Menahem Milson; Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1977), 67–8; and Abū Ḥafṣ al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-māʾārif* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, [?1973] 2004), (ch. 25) 185–9. See also Richard Grumlich (transl.), *Die Gaben der Erkenntnisse des ʿUmar as-Suhrawardī: (ʿAwārif al-māʾārif)* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1978), 187–92.

⁹⁷ al-Qushayrī, *Waṣīyya*, 587; Knysh, *al-Qushayrī's Epistle*, 413; al-Suhrawardī, *K. Ādāb al-murīdīn*, 68.

Suharawardī also counsels that if a non-Sufi admirer (*muḥibb*) is in attendance, he may ‘redeem’ the *khirqā* with an appropriate sum, although it should not be sold outright.⁹⁸ This whole scenario—ransoming the *khirqā* and the construction of the *maṣṭaba*—suggests that at least some Sufis enjoyed the Fatimids’ largesse. In this connection it is worth noting that al-Maqrīzī also says that Saladin destroyed the Qarāfa palace in 1171. This destruction was almost certainly part of Saladin’s project to recast the Fatimid cityscape into an overtly Ayyubid (Sunni) space. It was less than two years later that Saladin founded and endowed his own Sufi hospice, the *khānqāh* Saʿīd al-Suʿadāʾ, at a former Fatimid palace in Cairo.⁹⁹ While Fatimid support of Sufis was nowhere near as focused, institutionalized, or widespread as Ayyubid and Mamluk support would be, it does appear that some Fatimid rulers sought to subsidize the local Sufi population through gifts and payments. There is even evidence of this kind of financial support prior to the Fatimids. The Ikhshidid governor of Egypt, Kāfūr (r. 355–357/966–968), apparently patronized members of the early Sufi community in Fustat.¹⁰⁰

I should stress here that I am not arguing there was a massive, hidden movement of Sufis in Fatimid Egypt. Again, the mass popularization of Sufism in Egypt did not occur until Ayyubid and Mamluk rule. But I am confident that during the Fatimid years there were significant numbers of Sufis in Egypt, some of whom enjoyed state patronage. This may explain why Saladin explicitly stipulated that the Sufis who lived at his *khānqāh* in Cairo must be foreigners and not Egyptians.¹⁰¹ He wanted to bring in ideologically sympathetic (Ashʿarī–Shāfiʿī) Sufis not associated with the Fatimid regime. Furthermore, this evidence makes sense in light of what we know of Fatimid rule in this period, wherein Fatimid rulers made a concerted effort to curry the favour and support of influential Sunnis.¹⁰² Another example of this effort dates to this same era. In his history of

⁹⁸ Ibid, 67. Abū l-Najīb’s nephew Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar (*ʿAwārif al-māʿārif*, 187) likewise allows for the ransom of the *khirqā*. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, by contrast, did not approve of throwing off the *khirqā* during *samāʿ* and especially not the practice of ransoming the *khirqā*. Ṣalāḥ b. Muḥammad b. ʿUwayḍa (ed.), *al-Ghunya li-ṭālibī ṭarīq al-ḥaqq* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2 vols., 1997) ii. 304.

⁹⁹ al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, iv. 727–9.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-ʿayān*, iv. 103–5. However, compare this account with that of Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī taʾrīkh al-mulūk wa-l-umam* (ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā and Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 19 vols., 1992), xiv. 246. They relate the same story, but the beneficiary of Kāfūr’s patronage is different in each version.

¹⁰¹ al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, iv. 727.

¹⁰² Paula Sanders, ‘The Fāṭimid State, 969–1171’, 171–4.

Egypt, Ibn al-Ma'mūn (d. 588/1192) records that in 512/1118 al-Āmir's vizier al-Afdal (d. 515/1121) convened a special *majlis al-ʿaṭāyā* (Convocation of Gifts), which normally involved a large feast and public display of generosity to certain ranks of notables during ʿĀshūrā.¹⁰³ But in this particular year al-Afdal convened the *majlis* in Rajab and extended his generosity to 'the jurists of Egypt, the *ribāṭs* in the Qarāfa, and their *fuqarā'*'.¹⁰⁴ While the referents of these terms are by no means certain, the passage does indicate that there were already multiple Sufi hospices in the Qarāfa during the late Fatimid period and that the Sufis who lived there accepted gifts from Fatimid officials.

III. THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SUFISM IN FATIMID EGYPT

If there were significant numbers of Sufis in Fatimid Egypt, and I hope to have shown that there were, why do they not appear in the medieval Sufi historiography? And why do they continue to be conspicuously absent in the contemporary historiography? A brief survey of several Sufi prosopographies will help to answer these questions. The relevant universal Sufi prosopographies came in two waves: those produced during Fatimid rule and those produced during the Mamluk and early Ottoman period. By 'universal Sufi prosopography' I mean those texts that comprise multiple biographies that treat the Sufis as a distinct and coherent social group (*tā'ifa*) with a shared history linking them to the earliest generations of Muslims. We must distinguish between the function of universal prosopography and that of more narrowly construed regional and eponymous Sufi prosopographies. The difference is not temporal but generic. Both al-Sulamī's early *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya* and al-Sha'rānī's sixteenth-century *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* are universal prosopographies in that they present a more or less comprehensive vision of Sufi history. By contrast, two fourteenth-century works, Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī's (d. 708/1309) *al-Wahīd fī sulūk ahl al-tawḥīd* and Taqī l-Dīn al-Wāsiṭī's *Tiryāq al-muḥibbīn*, are narrowly focused on the history of one particular group of Sufis among others, Upper Egyptians and the

¹⁰³ Ibn al-Ma'mūn al-Baṭā'ihī, *Nuṣūṣ min akhbār Miṣr* (ed. Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid; Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1983), 15 and 101. For more on the *majlis* and its location at the Dār al-Mulk, see al-Maqrizī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, ii. 419–20 and 573–6.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn al-Ma'mūn, *Nuṣūṣ min akhbār Miṣr*, 102. See also al-Maqrizī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, ii. 575.

Rifā'iyya, respectively.¹⁰⁵ Regional and eponymous Sufi prosopographies present idiosyncratic histories of particular social formations linked to earlier Sufi masters and are almost wholly a product of post-thirteenth-century Sufism; these collections are of little help to the enquiry here.

A fascinating consensus emerges from a schematic survey of the universal prosopographies. Al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021) organized his *Ṭabaqāt* into five generations, the fifth reaching into the late tenth century. He includes one Egyptian Sufi in the first generation, one in the second, two in the third, four in the fourth, but none in the fifth. The *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, attributed to Abū Nu'aym (d. 430/1038), includes only nine Sufis associated with Egypt, all of whom died before the Fatimid conquest of Egypt in 969.¹⁰⁶ However, it includes Sufis from the East who died as late as 414/1023.¹⁰⁷ Al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) did not organize the biographical section of his *Risāla* into generations, but his presentation follows the plan of al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt* quite closely.¹⁰⁸ Al-Qushayrī completed the *Risāla* in 438/1046 and he includes a total of ten Egyptian Sufis, all of whom died before 969. But he does include six non-Egyptians who all died well into Fatimid rule. Al-Hujwīrī (d. ca. 465/1072–3) and al-Anṣārī al-Harawī (d. 481/1089) are unique cases given that they wrote in Persian. The *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya* attributed to al-Anṣārī expands on and adds a sixth generation to al-Sulamī's five; the sixth generation includes no Egyptians.¹⁰⁹ The only Egyptian to appear in al-Hujwīrī's *Kashf al-maḥjūb* is Dhū l-Nūn. More promisingly, al-Hujwīrī includes a short section devoted to his eleventh-century contemporaries organized by region, but he does not include an entry

¹⁰⁵ Ibn Nūḥ's *al-Waḥīd* is devoted to the Sufis of Upper Egypt. It exists in several manuscripts but remains unpublished; see Denis Gril, 'Une source inédite pour l'histoire du *taṣawwuf* en Égypte au vii/xiii siècle' in Jean Vercouttes (ed.), *Livre du centenaire, 1880–1980* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1980): 441–508. Al-Wāsiṭī's *Tiryāq* is an early prosopography of the Rifā'i lineage in the form of a transmission history of the *khirqā*. It has been published as *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt khirqāt al-ṣūfiyya: Tiryāq al-muḥibbīn fī ṭabaqāt khirqāt al-mashāyikh al-ʿarifīn* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Bahiyya al-Miṣriyya, 1887).

¹⁰⁶ I only counted the tenth volume of the *Ḥilya*. My total thus does not include those Egyptians of earlier generations who were obviously not Sufis.

¹⁰⁷ Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, x. 408. He is Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Māshādhā; for more see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, xvii. 297–9.

¹⁰⁸ Jawid Mojaddedi, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism: The Ṭabaqāt Genre from al-Sulamī to Jāmī* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001), 99–124. See also id., 'Legitimizing Sufism in al-Qushayrī's "*Risāla*"', *Studia Islamica*, 90 (2000): 37–50.

¹⁰⁹ al-Anṣārī al-Harawī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya* (ed. Muḥammad Sarvar Mawlā'ī; Tehran: Intishārāt-i Tūs, 1983).

for Egypt (or anywhere west of Egypt).¹¹⁰ A clear and suspiciously uniform picture thus emerges from all these texts: a small but growing community of Sufis in Egypt who disappear precisely at the point of Fatimid rule, while those from other regions persist well beyond it.¹¹¹ One might explain this disappearance by these authors' lack of concern for, or knowledge about, Egypt. After all, they were writing from and for the East (indeed, most show little interest in the Maghrib and al-Andalus). Regional chauvinism is a plausible explanation and certainly played a role in the selection and arrangement of biographies. But it is not entirely satisfactory, for if that were the case, why include the pre-Fatimid Egyptians at all? Furthermore, post-Fatimid Sufi historiography from Egypt depicts this same basic image despite a marked Egypt-centric bias.

Ibn al-Mulaqqin (d. 804/1401), who wrote his *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā* in Mamluk Egypt, includes ten Sufis who lived in Egypt before the Fatimids, four who lived in Egypt during Fatimid rule, and 47 who lived there afterwards.¹¹² The *Husn al-muḥāḍara* of al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) is an interesting case. While he was affiliated with the Shādhilī order, even writing a treatise in defense of al-Shādhilī, his prosopography is not a work of Sufism, but contains a subsection devoted to 'the pious, renunciants, and Sufis' who lived in Egypt from the conquest up to his own time.¹¹³ In that section al-Suyūṭī includes 91 individuals: 19 predate the Fatimids, five lived during the Fatimid period, and 67 postdate the Fatimids. Many of these individuals were not Sufis, but the glaring dearth of Fatimid-era individuals is nevertheless telling.¹¹⁴ Equally instructive is Shihāb al-Dīn Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umārī's monumental encyclopedia, *Masālik al-abṣār*, an entire volume of which is devoted to a biographical survey of Sufi history. As one might expect of a bureaucratic

¹¹⁰ al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb*, 172–5.

¹¹¹ I could include several other early works, but the result is the same. The one exception to this uniformity is that al-Qushayrī (*al-Risāla*, 128; Knysh did not translate this paragraph) includes a list of his contemporaries whom he had not met and did not include in the biographical section because of space. In that list he includes Abū Sa'īd al-Mālīnī (d. 412/1022, #5).

¹¹² Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'* (ed. Nūr al-Dīn Shurayba; Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānījī, 2006).

¹¹³ al-Suyūṭī, *Husn al-muḥāḍara*, i, 511–30. His treatise on al-Shādhilī is *Ta'yīd al-ḥaqīqa al-'aliyya wa-tasbyīd al-ṭarīqa al-shādhiliyya* (ed. 'Abd Allāh al-Ghamārī al-Hasanī; Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Islāmiyya, 1934).

¹¹⁴ Jean-Claude Garcin has written a fascinating study of al-Suyūṭī's ideological project in the *Husn al-muḥāḍara*, 'Histoire, opposition politique et piétisme traditionaliste dans le Husn al-Muḥāḍarat de Suyūṭī', *Annales Islamologiques*, 7 (1967): 33–90.

treatment of Sufism, al-ʿUmarī's survey looks quite odd in comparison with the others; he organizes it by region: the East, the West, and Egypt.¹¹⁵ Al-ʿUmarī's account includes 81 Sufis from the East, 20 from the West, and 10 from Egypt, beginning with Dhū l-Nūn and ending with Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258).¹¹⁶ Of these ten, not a single individual appears from the Fatimid period; there are four Sufis prior to it and six after it.

With al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565) and his *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* we are back in familiar Sufi territory. For the sake of space, if we begin counting from Dhū l-Nūn, al-Shaʿrānī's *Ṭabaqāt* includes 99 individuals who lived before the Fatimid period. Of these 99, eight lived in Egypt, the rest were primarily from Iraq or Khurāsān. If we move to the Fatimid era, al-Shaʿrānī includes 30 individuals who lived during that time; 28 have no connection to Egypt. If we continue the survey to the end of the first volume (the second consists of Mamluk and early Ottoman figures), we find 21 more individuals who lived during the Ayyubid/early-Mamluk period, 18 of whom lived in Egypt. The second volume is overwhelmingly focused on Egypt. Schematically, then, it is quite clear how post-Fatimid prosopographers from Egypt understood the history of Sufism.¹¹⁷ There were some Sufis in Egypt before the Fatimids, but the centre of gravity was in the East, where it remained until the end of Fatimid rule. At that point the centre of Sufi gravity shifts dramatically and decisively to Egypt. This is the same narrative that al-Munāwī (d. 1031/1621) suggests in his prosopography, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya*. Like al-Shaʿrānī (who was his teacher), al-Munāwī presents a history of Sufism rooted in the East until the end of the Fatimid period. Of the 166 individuals appearing in his fourth, fifth, and sixth generations (corresponding to the fourth–sixth centuries AH), only 24 are from Egypt. But even this number is misleading because almost all of these are either from the pre-Fatimid period or were clearly not Sufis. Beginning with the seventh generation (the seventh century AH), al-Munāwī's focus swings noticeably toward Egypt. While al-Munāwī offers a much more comprehensive image of the history of Sufism than do the others, he is still, like his predecessors, extraordinarily biased when it comes to the Fatimid period.

¹¹⁵ Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār* (ed. Kāmil Salmān al-Jubūrī and Maḥdī al-Najm; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 27 vols., 2010). The volume on Sufism is volume 8.

¹¹⁶ al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār*, viii. 240–71.

¹¹⁷ Again, there are many more we could enumerate, but the results are the same.

Again, what happened to all the Fatimid Sufis? And why have modern historians continued to ignore them? The second question is the easier to answer. As experts in and readers of Sufi history and historiography, contemporary scholars have reproduced the framework, content, and lacunae of their source material. While this is regrettable, it is certainly understandable. As for the Sufi historiography itself, I believe the omission is due primarily to two factors. We can partially attribute the lack of interest in Egypt to the fact that Sufism began in Iraq and grew from there, particularly into the East. We should expect that early Sufi historiography would focus its energies in that direction. Early Sufi authors were writing from and for an Eastern audience; they wrote to their own constituency.¹¹⁸ But that Eastern focus does not explain the missing Sufis. It is only and quite specifically during Fatimid rule that Sufi authors lost interest in Egypt. Note, for example, the *Manāqib al-abrār* of Ibn Khamīs (d. 552/1157), wherein he explicitly criticizes the earlier *ṭabaqāt* for being incomplete.¹¹⁹ He set out to correct this deficit by expanding the standard biographies with additional reports, traditions, and sayings. Furthermore, he concludes his *Manāqib* with a lengthy appendix of certificates (*masmū'āt*) containing 'rare anecdotes concerning those pious individuals whose names I did not include in my book'.¹²⁰ None of these additions connect to Fatimid Egypt in any way. Despite Ibn Khamīs's explicitly expansionist intervention he presents the exact same image of Sufi history.

We must remember that Sufi historiography—like all historiography—is not a transparent reflection of the past but a carefully selected and curated image tailored to address present concerns.¹²¹ Whether it takes the form of chronography, biography, or prosopography, Sufi historiography will reproduce the ideology of the particular social formation that produces it.¹²² Furthermore, as Michael Cooperson has argued, medieval 'Arabic biographers did not see their task as consisting primarily in the

¹¹⁸ Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 67–71.

¹¹⁹ Ibn Khamīs, *Manāqib al-abrār*, i. 4–5.

¹²⁰ Ibid, ii. 885–941, quotation on 885.

¹²¹ R. J. Collingwood's 'Epilegomena' to his *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, rev. edn., 1994, 205–334) is still one of the clearest and most detailed expositions of this idea.

¹²² I include my work here in that statement. I am not so naïve as to suppose I alone have cast the ideological scales from my eyes. Rather, I would stress that the questions, biases, and purposes of medieval Sufi historiography are quite different from mine. My image of the past will thus necessarily look different from theirs (as will future images from mine). The tripartite division of Islamic historiography is from Chase Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 55–79.

commemoration of individual lives. Rather, they used life-stories to document and perpetuate traditions of authority based on knowledge borne and transmitted, or merely claimed, by groups (*ṭawā'if*, sing. *ṭā'ifa*) of specialized practitioners'.¹²³ The most detailed statement on this issue as it impinges on the history of Sufism is Jawid Mojaddedi's work on early Sufi *ṭabaqāt* literature.¹²⁴ Mojaddedi argues forcefully and convincingly against treating these texts as simple repositories of historical fact and transcriptions of Sufis' statements. Rather, these *ṭabaqāt* are carefully and deliberately constructed ideological statements reflecting their authors' concerns, social milieux, and political contexts. As such, they require careful methodological attention to determine what, exactly, a particular compiler wants to convey through the presentation of collective biography.¹²⁵

What, then, did our Sufi compilers wish to convey? The historiographical hole I have attempted to fill here is the result of the specific ideological projects and biases of these Sufi authors. Fatimid Egypt did not fit that project. That is, they were committed to promoting an account of Sufism explicitly grounded in the Qur'an and Sunna of the Prophet as interpreted through an Ash'arī (and mostly Shāfi'ī) lens.¹²⁶ This ideological framework is readily apparent throughout these works. There is in fact evidence in the texts themselves that this ideology lies behind the choice to downplay or erase Fatimid-era Sufis. For example, al-Sulamī quotes 'Alī al-Sīrawānī (d. 396/1005, #25), a companion of Ibrāhīm al-Khawwāṣ (d. 291/903–4), three times in his *Ṭabaqāt* but does not count him among the generations.¹²⁷ One particularly interesting

¹²³ Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, xii.

¹²⁴ Jawid Mojaddedi, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism*.

¹²⁵ This obviously holds true for all Islamic prosopography, on which see M. J. L. Young, 'Arabic Biographical Writing' in *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Religion, Learning and Science in the 'Abbasid Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1983] 1990), 168–87, where he differentiates between 'biography in the strict sense' and prosopography. The former 'seeks to understand the individual and those features of character which make him or her unique; prosopography seeks to record a group of individuals having certain features in common, and these individuals are viewed in relationship to the prevailing characteristics of the group' (Young, 'Arabic Biographical Writing', 170). For an in-depth overview of the sheer variety and scope of Islamic prosopography, see Claude Gilliot, 'Prosopography in Islam: An Essay of Classification', *Medieval Prosopography*, 23 (2002): 19–49.

¹²⁶ Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 96–108.

¹²⁷ al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 51, 259, 343. According to Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, iii. 296–7, Sīrawān is the name of several different villages in Iran. Likewise, al-Sulamī relates a large number of anecdotes on the authority Abū l-

case is al-Hujwīrī's *Kashf al-mahjūb*. For al-Hujwīrī, writing at the height of Fatimid power, there were simply no Sufis in Egypt at all except for Dhū l-Nūn. He does not even connect al-Rūḍhabārī to Egypt!¹²⁸ In fact, for al-Hujwīrī Egypt exists only as the mysterious milieu of Dhū l-Nūn and, in one very telling passage, the home of 'the present day Shi'ites of Egypt, who are the remnant of [the heretical] Magians'.¹²⁹ This remark quite clearly betrays what I suspect was a widespread attitude among early Sufi authors: Egypt, the home of Ismā'īlī Shi'ism, is currently out of play for Sufis. This attitude comes across clearly in treatments of another early Egyptian Sufi, Abū Bakr al-Zaqqāq, a contemporary of al-Rūḍhabārī.¹³⁰ Al-Qushayrī relates an anecdote in the *Risāla* (reproduced by subsequent biographers) that is quite revealing: 'When al-Zaqqāq died, the reason for the *fuqarā'* to go to Egypt was cut off'.¹³¹ This statement underscores the notion that while there had been Sufis in Egypt in the past, Fatimid Egypt had nothing to offer Sufis from the East. We find the same ideological commitments in Mamluk-era historiography. Note the obviously polemical statement Ibn al-Mulaqqin attributes to the fourth/tenth-century Sufi Abū Bakr b. Yazdāniyār: 'The Sufis of Khurāsān are all action and no speech. The Sufis of Baghdad are all speech and no action. The Sufis of Basra are all speech and action. And

'Abbās al-Nasawī (d. 398/1008, #26) but does not count him among the generations of Sufis. Al-Nasawī was a student of the Sufi Ibn Khafif of Shiraz (d. 371/982) as well as a companion of the aforementioned Aḥmad b. 'Aṭā al-Rūḍhabārī (d. 369/979-80), the nephew of our Abū 'Alī al-Rūḍhabārī. Al-Nasawī and al-Mālinī apparently knew each other in Egypt (al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, i. 595). Al-Subkī (*Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya*, iii. 42-3) claims that al-Nasawī wrote a text titled *Ta'rikh al-ṣūfiyya*, which has since been lost.

¹²⁸ al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-mahjūb*, 157.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 404.

¹³⁰ There are two men with the name Abū Bakr al-Zaqqāq, the elder and the younger. The subject here is the elder, Aḥmad b. Naṣr. The two are much confused in the sources, but the following are devoted to Aḥmad: Abū Nu'aym, *Hilyat al-awliyā'*, x. 344; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 81; Knysh, *al-Qushayrī's Epistle*, 49; Ibn Khamīs, *Manāqib al-abrār*, i. 426-31; Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, 81-2; al-'Umarī, *Masālik*, viii. 245-8; al-Suyūṭī, *Husn al-muhādāra*, i. 512; al-Sha'rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā: Lawāqih al-anwār al-qudsiyya fī manāqib al-ulamā' wa-l-ṣūfiyya* (ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Sāyih and Tawfiq 'Alī Wahba; Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 2 vols., 2005), i. 162; al-Nabhānī, *Jāmi' karāmāt al-awliyā'* (ed. Ibrāhīm 'Aṭwa 'Awaḍ; Gujarat, India: Markaz-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat Barakat-e-Raza, 2 vols., 2001 [repr. of Cairo edn., 1962]), i. 482-3.

¹³¹ al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 81.

the Sufis of Egypt have neither speech nor action'.¹³² I think it safe to say that for our Sufi authors, early or late, all ideologically opposed to the Ismā'īlī polity, Sufism in Fatimid Egypt was simply not an option.

Laury Silvers has characterized the work of the early Sufi authors as 'drawing the boundaries of what they understood to be normative Sufism ... The boundaries they drew are quite broad and inclusive, but still serve to expurgate practices and ideas they understood to be outside what is permitted by the Qur'ān and Sunnah'.¹³³ I would add to Silvers' astute description that Sufi authors not only expurgated practices and ideas but also people, specifically, people living in Fatimid Egypt. To be clear, I am not claiming that this was some massive conspiracy on the part of these authors to wipe Egyptian Sufism off the map. Rather, I simply suggest that their constructions of Sufism as a historical tradition were informed and shaped by certain ideological frames, that led them to cordon off the Ismā'īlī state from their historical imagination. Unlike historians of the ḥadīth movement, like al-Baghdādī and Ibn 'Asākir, whose subjects were by definition engaged with the Prophetic Sunna regardless of locale, the early Sufi biographers had to craft their subjects' *bona fides* very carefully. Indeed, we can see how this ideologically inflected image determined to a great extent the contours of post-Fatimid Sufi *ṭabaqāt* compilations, albeit less drastically. By that point Sufism had become a more or less accepted branch of knowledge. Even Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) did not reject Sufi thought and praxis *tout court*. Rather, he counted it among the legitimately licit pursuits, rejecting only what he saw as certain extravagances and innovations incompatible with the Sunna.¹³⁴ Thus, post-Fatimid Sufi prosopographies are concerned less with legitimizing Sufism itself and more with presenting and promoting a particular narrative of Sufi history. These narratives portray Egypt as the home and haven for Sufis after the death of the last Fatimid caliph and the triumph of state-sponsored Sunnism under Saladin. This narrative no longer required the complete expurgation of Fatimid-era Sufis but rather an account of Sufi history in which the total geographical and temporal scope of the movement moves inexorably toward Egypt. Thus we see a few references to Fatimid-era Sufis in these late prosopographies. But in all these cases we are dealing with images, not of an objective historical

¹³² Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, 292. On Ibn Yazdāniyār see also al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 406–9; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, x. 363–4; al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 112–13; Knysh, *al-Qushayrī's Epistle*, 67; al-Sha'rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, i. 206–8.

¹³³ Laury Silvers, 'The Teaching Relationship', 76.

¹³⁴ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Ṣūfiyya wa-l-fuqarā'* (ed. Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā; reprint with new introd. by Muḥammad Jamīl Ghāzī; Jeddah: Dār al-Madānī, n.d. [Cairo, 1348/1928]).

reality, but of an idealized Sufi past that authorizes and gives meaning to various Sufi presents. And ultimately, despite their tenacity and longevity, they are still just that, carefully curated images. In these pages I hope to have offered not only a counter-image to those constructions, but a counterweight to the historiographical inertia that has facilitated the continuous reinscribing of that same ideological image, over and over again, into the present.

APPENDIX A: SUFIS WHO LIVED IN FATIMID EGYPT

1. Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim, Abū Bakr al-Miṣrī (d. 372/982).¹³⁵
2. Muḥammad b. ʿUmar, Abū l-Faraj Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb al-Miṣrī (d. 412/1021).¹³⁶
3. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm, Abū Bakr al-Miṣrī al-Ṣiqillī (d. after 412/1021).¹³⁷
4. ʿAtīq b. Aḥmad, Abū Bakr (d. 412/1022).¹³⁸
5. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, Abū Saʿd al-Mālīnī (d. 412/1022).¹³⁹
6. Abū Aḥmad al-Harawī al-Ṭīnī (d. 419/1028).¹⁴⁰
7. Abū l-Ḥasan al-ʿAbbāsī al-Hāshimī al-ʿUqāb (d. 425/1034).¹⁴¹
8. Muḥammad b. Shujāʿ, Abū ʿAbd Allāh (d. after 430/1038).¹⁴²
9. The Wife of Muḥammad b. Shujāʿ (d. fifth/eleventh century).¹⁴³

¹³⁵ al-Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, xxvi. 529; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, vi. 530.

¹³⁶ al-Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, xxviii. 310; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, vi. 424.

¹³⁷ al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, v. 60.

¹³⁸ al-Ḥabbāl, *Wafayāt al-Miṣriyyin*, 61.

¹³⁹ al-Sahmī, *Taʾriḫ Jurjān* (ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Muʿīd Khān; Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1987), 124; al-Baghdādī, *Taʾriḫ madīnat al-salām*, vi. 24–5; al-Ḥabbāl, *Wafayāt al-Miṣriyyin*, 56; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ Dimashq*, v. 192–5; al-Ṣarifīnī, *al-Muntakhab*, 89; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, xxviii. 292–4; id., *Siyar al-ʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, xvii. 301–3; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya*, iv. 59–60; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, i. 701; Cortese, ‘Voices of the Silent Majority’, 349–50.

¹⁴⁰ al-Ḥabbāl, *Wafayāt al-Miṣriyyin*, 64.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 69.

¹⁴² al-Ḥumaydī, *Jadhwat al-muqtabis fī taʾriḫ ʿulamāʾ al-Andalus* (ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf and Muḥammad Bashshār ʿAwwād; Tunis: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2008), 95; Ibn ʿAmīra, *Bughyat al-multamis fī taʾriḫ rijāl abl al-Andalus* (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabī, 1967), 81–2; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, v. 718.

¹⁴³ Same sources as previous note.

10. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, Abū l-Ḥasan al-'Ansī (d. 436/1045).¹⁴⁴
11. 'Abd Allāh b. Maymūn, Abū Muḥammad al-Miṣrī (d. 439/1047–8).¹⁴⁵
12. 'Alī b. 'Ubayd Allāh, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Hamadhānī (d. 445/1053).¹⁴⁶
13. Sahl b. Muḥammad, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Qāyanī (d. 447/1055).¹⁴⁷
14. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn, Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Ghazzī (d. 448/1056).¹⁴⁸
15. Ibrāhīm b. Ismā'il, Abū Ishāq al-Qurashī al-Hāshimī (d. 486/1093?).¹⁴⁹
16. al-Ḥusayn b. Abī l-Faḍl, Abū 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Jawharī (d. 528/1134).¹⁵⁰
17. Abū Bakr al-Juvaynī (517–?1123).¹⁵¹
18. Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl, Abū Sa'īd (530–1135/6).¹⁵²
19. Sālim Abū l-Najā (d. ca. 563/1167–8).¹⁵³
20. 'Uthmān b. Marzūq, Abū 'Amr al-Qurashī (d. 564/1168/9).¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁴ al-Habbāl, *Wafayāt al-Miṣriyyin*, 77; Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, 41:310–311; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, xxix. 432–3.

¹⁴⁵ al-Habbāl, *Wafayāt al-Miṣriyyin*, 78; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, xxix. 473.

¹⁴⁶ Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, xxxiii. 84–6; Ibn Manzūr, *Mukhtaṣar ta'rikh Dimashq* (ed. Rūḥiyya al-Naḥḥās *et al.*; Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 31 vols., 1984–1996), xviii. 134; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, xxx. 115; *id.*, *Siyar al-'ālam al-nubalā'*, xvii. 652–3.

¹⁴⁷ Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, lxxiii. 25–7; Ibn Manzūr, *Mukhtaṣar ta'rikh Dimashq*, x. 225; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, xxx. 154–5; Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Najūm al-zāhira*, v. 55.

¹⁴⁸ Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, lii. 345–7; Ibn Manzūr, *Mukhtaṣar ta'rikh Dimashq*, xxx. 117; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, xxx. 188–9; *id.*, *Siyar al-'ālam*, xviii. 50–1; al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍara*, i. 515.

¹⁴⁹ Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Kawākib al-sayyāra*, 306–7; al-Sakhāwī, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb*, 388; al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya*, ii. 172.

¹⁵⁰ al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, xxxvi. 166; al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz al-Ḥunafā'*, iii. 131 and iii. 151–2; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, ii. 581; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, iii. 516.

¹⁵¹ al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, vii. 107.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, vi. 524.

¹⁵³ Ibn 'Arabī, *Sufis of Andalusia: The Rūḥ al-quḍs and al-Durrat al-fākhira of Ibn 'Arabī* (transl. R. W. J. Austin; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971), 101; Ṣafī l-Dīn, *Risāla*, 23, 29–31 (Arabic), and 221 (French); Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliya'*, 379–80; al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya*, iv. 318.

¹⁵⁴ Ibn Rajab, *al-Dhayl*, ii. 222–31; al-Sha'rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, i. 267–9; al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya*, ii. 266–8.

21. Rūzbihān b. Abī Bakr al-Fārisī al-Miṣrī (d. 578/1183).¹⁵⁵
 22. Muḥammad b. al-Muwaffaq, Najm al-Dīn al-Khabūshānī (d. 587/1191).¹⁵⁶
 23. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm b. Aḥmad al-Qinā’ī (d. 592/1196).¹⁵⁷
 24. Sa’d b. ‘Uthmān, Abū l-Khayr al-Zāhid (d. 592/1196).¹⁵⁸

APPENDIX B: SUFIS WHO VISITED FATIMID EGYPT

25. ‘Alī b. Ja’far, al-Sīrawānī (d. 396/1005).¹⁵⁹
 26. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, Abū l-‘Abbās al-Nasawī (d. 398/1008).¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ Ṣafī l-Dīn, *Risāla*, 233; Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Kawākib al-sayyāra*, 224–5; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk li-ma’rifat duwal al-mulūk* (ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Atā; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 8 vols., 1997), i. 190.

¹⁵⁶ The medieval sources for al-Khabūshānī are vast. Rather than reproduce them all here I would direct the reader to Tadmuri’s editorial notes in al-Dhababī, *Ta’riḫ al-Islām*, xli. 278–9, as well as the lengthy discussions in Leiser, ‘The Restoration of Sunnism in Egypt’, 233–49, and Lev, ‘Piety and Political Activism’, 302–19.

¹⁵⁷ al-Mundhirī, *al-Takmila li-wafayāt al-naqala* (ed. Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma’rūf; Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 4 vols., 3rd edn., 1984), i. 249; Ṣafī l-Dīn, *Risāla*, 207; al-Shaṭṭanūfī, *Bahjat al-asrār wa-mādin al-anwār fi ba’d manāqib al-quṭb al-rabbānī Muḥyi l-Dīn Abī Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī* (ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazyadī; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2002), 357–63; al-Dhababī, *Ta’riḫ al-Islām*, xxxix. 97; al-Udfuwī, *al-Ṭālī’*, 297–303; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi*, xviii. 193–4; Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliya’*, 385–9; al-Fāsī, *al-‘Iqd al-thamīn fi tārikh al-Balad al-Amīn* (ed. Muḥammad Ḥamid al-Fiḳī *et al.*; Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 8 vols. [Cairo, 1956–69] 1986), v. 420–1; al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍara*, i. 515–16; al-Sha’rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, i. 278–9; al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākiba al-durriyya*, ii. 263–5; al-Ḥajjājī, *Shakhṣiyyāt ṣūfiyya fi ṣā’id Miṣr fi l-‘aṣr al-Islāmī* (Cairo: Sharikat al-Tawzī‘ al-Muttaḥida, 1971), 15–58; al-Ḥajjājī, *Sayyidī ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā’ī*; and Denis Gril, ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Qinā’ī in Fleet, F. Krämer, D. Matringe, J. Nawas, and E. Rowson (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE* (Leiden: Brill, 2007–).

¹⁵⁸ Ibn al-Dubaythī, *Dhayl Ta’riḫ madīnat al-salām* (ed. Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma’rūf; Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 5 vols., 2006), iii. 19–320; al-Mundhirī, *al-Takmila*, i. 248; al-Dhababī, *Ta’riḫ al-Islām*, xxxix. 90–1; Ibn Rajab, *al-Dhayl*, ii. 417–21.

¹⁵⁹ al-Ḥabbāl, *Wafayāt al-Miṣriyyin*, 46; al-Dhababī, *Ta’riḫ al-Islām*, xxvii. 334–5.

¹⁶⁰ al-Baghdādī, *Ta’riḫ madīnat al-salām*, 6:140; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiyya*, iii. 42–3; al-Fāsī, *al-‘Iqd al-thamīn*, iii. 137–8; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, i. 644.

27. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Baghdādī al-Ṭarsūsī (d. 407/1017).¹⁶¹
28. Ḥamza b. Muḥammad, Abū Ṭalīb al-Ṭūsī (d. 447–8/1055–6).¹⁶²
29. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan, Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Asadābādī (d. 467/1074).¹⁶³
30. Aḥmad b. Abī Naṣr, Abū Bakr al-Kūfānī al-Harawī (d. 467/1074).¹⁶⁴
31. Saʿd b. ʿAlī, Abū l-Qāsim al-Zanjānī (d. 471/1078).¹⁶⁵
32. Bundār b. Muḥammad, Abū l-Qāsim al-Fārisī (d. after 480/1087).¹⁶⁶
33. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, Abū Naṣr al-Ṭuraythīthī (d. 487/1094).¹⁶⁷
34. Yāsīn b. Sahl, Abū l-Rūḥ al-Qāyanī (d. 491/1098).¹⁶⁸
35. Sahl b. Bishr, Abū l-Faraj al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 491/1098).¹⁶⁹
36. Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir, Abū l-Faḍl al-Maqdisī Ibn al-Qaysarānī (d. 507/1113).¹⁷⁰
37. Malika bt. Dāwūd b. Muḥammad al-Šūfiyya (d. 507/1114).¹⁷¹
38. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 526/1132).¹⁷²

¹⁶¹ Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ Dimashq*, xxxxi. 334–5; Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar taʾriḫ Dimashq*, xvii. 221; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, xxviii. 165–6.

¹⁶² Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ Dimashq*, xv. 237–9; al-Šarīfinī, *al-Muntakhab*, 221; Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar taʾriḫ Dimashq*, vii. 269; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, xxx. 149 and 176 (double entry).

¹⁶³ Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ Dimashq*, lii. 328–30; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, xxxi. 241; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, v. 567.

¹⁶⁴ al-Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, xxxi. 219.

¹⁶⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, xvi. 201; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, xviii. 385–9; id., *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 4 vols., 1998), iii. 1174–1178; al-Fāsi, *al-ʿIqd al-thamīn*, i. 535–6.

¹⁶⁶ Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ Dimashq*, x. 408.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, v. 363–4; Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar taʾriḫ Dimashq*, iii. 263; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, xxxiii. 200; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, i. 646.

¹⁶⁸ Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ Dimashq*, lxiv. 36–7.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, lxxiii. 5–6; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, xxxiv. 93–4; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, xix. 162–3; Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar taʾriḫ Dimashq*, x. 220.

¹⁷⁰ al-Maqdisī Ibn al-Qaysarānī is of course the well known author of *Ṣafwat al-ṭaṣawwuf* (ed. Ghāda al-Muqaddim ʿAdra [Beirut: Dār al-Muntakhab al-ʿArabī li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Naṣr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1995]), a traditionalist defence of Sufism. The sources on al-Maqdisī's life are quite extensive; see those compiled by Tadmūrī in al-Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, xxxv. 168–9.

¹⁷¹ Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ madīnat Dimashq*, lxx. 127–8.

¹⁷² Ibid, xxxxi. 424–5; Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar taʾriḫ Dimashq*, xvii. 258–9; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām*, xxxvi. 147–8 and xxxvi. 194 (both entries refer to the same person).

39. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Qurashī (d. 599/1203).¹⁷³

APPENDIX C: MUḤAMMAD IBN SHUJĀ^c AND HIS WIFE

Muḥammad al-Ḥumaydī (d. 488/1095) met Muḥammad b. Shujā^c in 430/1038–9 when the latter was in the Maghrib. Al-Ḥumaydī relates the following story in the voice of Ibn Shujā^c:¹⁷⁴

I was in Egypt during the days of my wandering when my *nafs* yearned for a woman. I mentioned this to one of my brothers who said to me, ‘There is a Sufi woman here who has a beautiful daughter just like her and who has reached maturity’. So I betrothed her and married her. But when I went to her [to consummate the marriage], I found her facing the *qibla*, praying. I was embarrassed that a young woman of her age would be praying while I was not. So I turned to the *qibla* and prayed as intensely as I could until my eyes got the better of me. She ended up sleeping in her prayer spot and I slept in mine. The exact same thing happened the next day. This continued for some time until I said to her: ‘Hey you! Does our union have any purpose?’ She said to me, ‘I am in the service of my Lord and Master. Any man with a legitimate claim (*ḥaqq*) [against that service], I will not prevent him [from exercising it]’. I was embarrassed by her words so I continued about my business for another month.

However, soon I felt compelled to travel so I said to her, ‘Hey you!’ ‘Here I am! (*labbayka*)’, she said. I told her I wanted to travel and she said, ‘Have a safe trip!’ I got up to leave, but when I reached the door she stood up and said, ‘Sir, there is a vow (*ahd*) between us in this world that has not yet been fulfilled, perhaps in heaven, God willing’. ‘Perhaps’, I said to her. Then she said, ‘I entrust you to God for safekeeping [until then]’. So I bid her farewell and left. Years later I returned to Egypt and asked about her. Someone told me that ‘she is even more virtuous in her devotion and dedication than when you left her’.

¹⁷³ al-Mundhirī, *al-Takmila*, 1:468; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a’yān*, iv. 305–6; al-Dhahabī, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām*, xxxxi. 409–10; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muqaffā*, v. 119–35; al-Maqqarī, *Naḥḥ al-ṭīb min ghuṣn al-Andalus al-raṭīb* (ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 8 vols., 1968), ii. 54–7; Ṣafī l-Dīn, *Risāla*, 232–3; Ibn al-Qaṣṭallānī, *Irtifā’ al-rutba bi-l-libās wa-l-ṣuḥba*, in *Rasā’il min al-turāth al-ṣūfī fī labs al-khirqā* (ed. Iḥsān Dhannūn al-Thāmīrī and Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh Qadhāt; ‘Ammān: Dār al-Rāzī, 2002), 88; al-Shaṭṭanūfī, *Bahjat al-asrār*, 385–98; al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya*, ii. 283–7.

¹⁷⁴ al-Ḥumaydī, *Jadhwat al-muqtabis*, 95.

Abstract

Modern historians typically narrate a seamless history of Sufism in Egypt that begins with Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/859), continues through the Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Ottoman eras, and extends up to the present day. However, that smooth narrative arc obscures a glaring lacuna in the medieval and contemporary historiography: Sufism during the 200 years of Shiʿi Fatimid rule (358–567/969–1171). In this article I address that lacuna from two directions. First, I demonstrate that there were Sufis in Fatimid Egypt and reconstruct the broad historical contours of the movement. Second, I argue that early Sufi historians created the lacuna by ignoring Fatimid Egypt because of their ideological commitment to the construction of a normative Sunni Sufism. This ideological construction was taken up nearly whole cloth by subsequent Sufi authors through the Mamluk and Ottoman periods and then, in turn, by modern historians.