FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE? NOTES ON THE PRODUCTION, TRANSMISSION, AND RECEPTION OF THE MAJOR WORKS OF AḤMAD AL-BŪNĪ*

Noah Gardiner

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, ANN ARBOR

This article is a preliminary presentation of findings from an extensive survey of the large manuscript corpus of works attributed to the 7th/13th-century Sufi and putative 'magician' Aḥmad al-Būnī. In addition to addressing the texts themselves, the survey has included attention to patterns over time in the reproduction of works, and to paratexts such as transmission certificates and ownership notices. Through detailed presentation of the latter, the article serves in a part as a methodological demonstration. It presents: 1) new information on al-Būnī's life; 2) a brief overview of the major works of the medieval Būnian corpus, with a proposal that five of these works can be attributed most securely to al-Būnī; 3) a discussion of the spread of Būnian works between the 8th/14th and 10th/16th centuries; and 4) evidence that the work through which al-Būnī is best known, *Shams al-maʿārif al-kubrā*, is in significant ways a product of the early 11th/17th century, and that at least two lines of teachers claimed for al-Būnī in this work were plagiarized from the works of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī. It is argued that the tenor of al-Būnī's teachings and the history of their reception have been broadly misunderstood due to reliance on printed editions and a modern scholarly disinclination to regard the occult sciences as a serious topic of inquiry. It ends with a call for more complete integration of manuscript studies into the broader field of Islamic historical studies.

Introduction

In both popular and scholarly imaginations there exists an image of the book of magic, the 'grimoire,' as a tome of dubious authorship filled with strange glyphs, secret alphabets, and unpronounceable names. It is often given as an artifact possessed of an aura of menace, something dangerous to have from a social, legal, or even soterial standpoint. As the Europeanist medievalist Richard Kieckhefer puts it, '[a] book of magic is also a magical book',[1] and thus a potential 'source of spiritual and

psychological contagion'.[2] In some sense, then, the book of magic is a placeholder for everything that is most dangerous about books: their ability to convey knowledge and powers that, to the minds of many, would best be contained; their ability to deceive and lead astray. For such reasons books of magic are famously flammable as well, as countless literary and historical examples testify. In *Acts*, the magicians of Ephesus burned their scrolls on magic before the apostle Paul as a sign of repentance for their sorcery,[3] and in medieval Florence, the archbishop Antoninus is said to have seized a book of incantations which, when burned, put forth a thick cloud of dark smoke as a result of the multitude of demons residing therein.[4]

In the context of premodern Arabic–Islamic literature, the individual most often associated with books of magic is the seventh/thirteenth-century author Aḥmad al-Būnī, whose modern fame or infamy rests largely on printed editions of a work entitled *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*.[5] Indeed, in his broadly framed survey, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*, the historian Owen Davies refers to al-Būnī as a 'famed magician,' and singles out *Šams al-maᶜārif* as 'the most influential magic book in Arabic popular culture'.[6] Without a doubt both the modern printed editions of *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* and the premodern manuscripts of certain Būnian works would appear to fit the bill of 'grimoires,' replete as they are with complex talismans, secret alphabets, and so on. That al-Būnī's ideas participate in the long Islamicate tradition of the occult science of letters (*ᶜilm al-ḥurūf*), a praxis with roots in early 'extremist' Shīᶜite thought that posits the metaphysical entanglement of the letters of the alphabet and the created world,[7] only adds to the

---

[1] Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, 4.

[2] Ibid., 6.

[3] *Acts* 19:19.

[4] Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, 6–7.

[5] Or some variant thereof, particularly *Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif*, although this should not be confused with the medieval work of that name, regarding which see the second section of this paper. In his recent entry on al-Būnī in *Enclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., Constant Hamès notes that there have been 'scores' of printed editions since around the turn of the twentieth century, mostly emanating from Cairo and Beirut.

[6] Davies, *Grimoires*, 27.

[7] For an excellent examination of the occult science of letters, see Denis Gril's treatment of the subject in Ibn ᶜArabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*: 'The Science of Letters'. Equally important are the several essays on the subject by Pierre Lory, recently gathered in the volume *La Science des lettres en islam*.

potential thaumaturgic charge of Būnian books-as-objects. It is therefore tempting to project onto al-Būnī's works, in their premodern setting, the role of books of forbidden knowledge, imagining the codices and perhaps even their owners as ripe for *autos-da-fé* at the hands of zealous medieval Muslim jurists. Book-burnings were not unheard of in the premodern Islamicate world, and al-Būnī's works seem a likely target for just that when reading the firebrand Ḥanbalī preacher and theologian Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 728/1328) accusation that al-Būnī and others of his ilk were star-worshippers in the thrall of devils,[8] or the historian and judge Ibn Ḥaldūn's (d. 808/1406) stern admonition that, despite its religious trappings, the occult science of letters was in reality a form of sorcery (*siḥr*) and thus a violation of God's law.[9] Such persecutorial imaginings on the part of the modern reader are at least somewhat controverted, however, by the existence of hundreds of as-of-yet-unburned codices of Būnian works in libraries around the world, some of them as old as the seventh/thirteenth century. This remarkable phenomenon was the inspiration for the research the initial results of which are presented in this article – results that demonstrate the need to historicize both the image of 'al-Būnī the magician' and the notion of 'books of magic' in premodern Islamic society.

Despite the wealth of surviving manuscripts of different works attributed to al-Būnī, modern scholars have relied almost exclusively on printed editions of *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* in their discussions of his ideas. Although many have pointed out anachronisms in the text relative to the widely accepted death for al-Būnī of 622/1225—instances ranging from references to slightly later actors such as Ibn Sabᶜīn (d. 669/1269–70) to a mention of *Amrīka*—they nonetheless have utilized it as their main source.[10] Dissatisfied with such compromises, and inspired by recent suggestions that the 'corpus Būnianum' has a richly complex

---

[8] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūᶜ*, 10: 251.

[9] Ibn Ḥaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, 664–8 (transl. Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, 3: 171–82).

[10] For one of the most recent discussions of anachronisms in *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*, see Constant Hamès entry on al-Būnī in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed. For the major statements on al-Būnī, see the works in the bibliography by Abel, Cordero, Dietrich, El-Gawhary, Fahd, Francis, Lory, Pielow, Ullmann, and Witkam. Many of these scholars have discussed the manuscript corpus briefly, but their investigations of it have been rather limited in scope. With the exception of Witkam, the bulk of their assessments have been drawn from *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā.*

history,[11] I resolved to eschew the printed editions of al-Būnī altogether in favor of an examination of the manuscript corpus. While originally I had hoped merely to gain access to texts authentic to al-Būnī, exposure to the finer points of manuscript studies made clear to me that, given a certain mass of data, more could be achieved, including a picture of the spread and development of the corpus in time and space, and some understanding of the actors who produced, transmitted, and read these hundreds of codices. With such goals in mind, I undertook an examination of the manuscript corpus *in extenso*; that is to say, of as many codices as possible of works attributed to al-Būnī, as well as those of some of his interpreters/commentators. At the time of this writing I have examined over 200 codices containing almost 300 works,[12] paying attention not only to the texts contained in the main bodies of the

---

[11] The University of Leiden manuscript studies scholar Jan Just Witkam has recently coined the term 'corpus Būnianum' to describe the chaotic wealth of Būnian material that survives in manuscripts, a reference to similar appellations for large bodies of occult writings considered to be of questionable/multiple authorship, e.g. the corpora Hermeticum and Ǧābirianum. He proposes that the Būnian corpus is 'the product of the work of several generations of practicing magicians, who arranged al-Būnī's work and thought… probably while mixing these with elements of their own works' (Witkam, 'Gazing at the Sun', 183). The Mamlūkist Robert Irwin presents a 'strong' version of a multiple-authorship hypothesis in a recent review article, stating: 'It seems likely that the ascription of writings to [al-Būnī] was intended to suggest the nature of their contents rather than indicate their actual authorship'; that '[a]l-Buni, like Jabir ibn Hayyan, was used as a label for an occult genre'; and that 'the writings of both these semi-legendary figures were almost certainly produced by many anonymous authors' (Irwin, 'Review of *Magic and Divination in Early Islam*', 107).

[12] Research for this project has involved examination of the digital or microfilm surrogates of hundreds of Būnian manuscripts and those of related works, and when useful and possible the codices themselves have been physically inspected. In a minority of cases where direct examination of the surrogates or codices was not possible, information has been drawn from catalogs and articles describing members of the corpus. The bulk of this research was conducted in the summers of 2009 and 2011, entailing visits to the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, the Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, the Schloss Friedenstein Library in Gotha, the Berlin Staatsbibliothek, the British Library in London, the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, the Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi in Istanbul, the Manisa Kütüphanesi, the Konya Bölge Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, and the Dār al-Kutub (Egyptian National Library) in Cairo; digital resources have also been utilized.

manuscripts, but also to the transmission paratexts that populate many of them, and details of the codices' physical construction.

Transmission paratexts—authorial and scribal colophons, 'audition' (*samāʿ*) certificates, patronage statements, ownership notices, and so on—have provided an almost granular level of detail about certain points in the history of the corpus, and even some revelations about the life of al-Būnī himself. Readers unaccustomed to working with these paratexts may find the parts of this paper that deal with them to be something of a trip down the rabbit hole, but I have attempted to explain in detail my work with the most important of them in hopes that the value of paying close attention to such 'marginal' sources will become clear as the article proceeds. At the other end of the scale, the amassing of fairly mundane data such as titles, dates of copying, and the names of copyists and owners has allowed for certain kinds of wide-angle analysis of the corpus, including some measure of the popularity of different works based on the number of surviving copies, an overview of the corpus' trajectory across time and space, and some rudimentary prosopographical analysis of the people involved with it. In this paper these are utilized for evaluating the relative importance of texts during a given century, dating the appearance of certain texts, and assessing some social features of the spread of the corpus. Certain weaknesses are inherent to these wide-angle methods insofar as the number and variety of surviving codices undoubtedly give an incomplete picture of the books that were in circulation and the actors involved, and the conclusions derived from them are liable to alternative interpretations, as well as to revision in the face of further data. I have found them good to think with nonetheless.[13] As discussed briefly at the end of this paper, I am of the opinion that the abundance of Islamicate manuscripts in libraries around the world has far more to offer to scholarship than has typically been asked of it, and it is my hope that other researchers will find approaches similar to the ones employed here useful in their own projects.

The notes that constitute this article are in four somewhat discontinuous parts (followed by a brief conclusion), and are intended to introduce several findings that are, to the best of my knowledge, new to modern scholarship on al-Būnī. The first part concerns what can be known of al-Būnī's life, including some details of his education and how he produced and transmitted his works. The second discusses the eight

---

[13] Some of these methods were inspired by the literary historian Franco Moretti's notion of 'distant readings'; see his *Atlas of the European Novel* and *Graphs, Maps, Trees*.

major works of the medieval Būnian corpus; that is to say, those texts that appear numerous times in medieval codices or are otherwise of obvious importance, and which largely have been kept in the shadows by the scholarly focus on *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*. It argues that five of these works are most reliably attributable to al-Būnī himself, and discusses what may have been the important role of readers' interests in shaping the corpus. The third concerns the spread and reception of the corpus in the eighth/fourteenth through tenth/sixteenth centuries, and includes discussions of means through which works were transmitted, a sketch of some of the elite social networks in which Būnian works flourished during this period (including the neo-*Iḫwān al-ṣafāʾ*), and the legality of codices bearing Būnian works. The fourth concerns *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*, the work on which so much of al-Būnī's modern reputation is based. It addresses the apparent emergence of this work in its best-known form in the eleventh/seventeenth century, and examines the origins of some of the chains of transmission (*asānīd*) that are alleged in the work to be al-Būnī's.

Al-Būnī's life and death
One of the enduring problems in the study of al-Būnī is a lack of reliable biographical information. He is absent from the medieval biographical dictionaries except for a largely unreliable *tarǧama* in Taqī l-Dīn al-Maqrīzī's (d. 845/1442) unfinished biographical work, *al-Muqaffā al-kabīr*.[14] The entry for him in the Egyptian scholar ᶜAbd al-Raʾūf al-Manāwī's (d. 1021/1631) turn-of-the-eleventh/seventeenth-century Sufi *ṭabaqāt* work contains no biographical information.[15] In the vast majority of medieval manuscripts his name is given as Abū l-ᶜAbbās Aḥmad b. ᶜAlī b. Yūsuf al-Qurašī l-Būnī, with his father's name sometimes elaborated as *al-šayḫ al-muqrī* Abū l-Ḥasan ᶜAlī. Various honorifics often precede al-Būnī's name in titlepages and opening formulae, such as *al-šayḫ*, *al-imām*, etc., and frequently also *tāǧ al-dīn* (crown of religion), *šihāb al-dīn* (brand of religion), *muḥyī l-dīn* (reviver

---

[14] This *tarǧama* has only recently been brouǧt to my attention, and, to the best of my knowledge, has not been adduced in previous Western scholarship on al-Būnī. Although I believe the biographical information it contains to be incorrect (starting with an erroneous rendering of al-Būnī's name), it is of great interest nonetheless, and I plan to discuss it in detail in a separate article. For a printed edition see *Kitāb al-Muqaffā al-kabīr*, ed. Yaᶜlāwī, 1: 750–3.

[15] Al-Manāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya*, 2: 38. For a discussion of entries on al-Būnī in the works of modern Maǧribī bio/hagiographers, see Francis, *Islamic Symbols and Sufi Rituals*, 97–9.

of religion), and *quṭb al-ᶜārifīn* (pole of the gnostics). He seems to have
died in Cairo in the seventh/thirteenth century (his death date is
discussed below), and the location of his gravesite is noted in Ibn al-
Zayyāt's early ninth/fifteenth-century visitation guide to the Qarāfa
cemeteries.[16] The lack of substantive information about al-Būnī's life
has invited projections of the image of 'al-Būnī the magician,' but some
of the new information presented here provides a somewhat clearer
picture.

Although the *nisba* al-Būnī suggests that he was from the city of Būna
(Roman Hippo Regius, now ᶜAnnāba) on the coast of present-day
Algeria, some scholars have questioned the accuracy of this, and have
taken to referring to al-Būnī as an Egyptian.[17] However, an important
new piece of information regarding al-Būnī's life and training supports
the notion that he was of Ifrīqiyan origin. This is from the work *ᶜIlm al-
hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidāʾ fī šarḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*—a major text of
al-Būnī's that has been all but entirely ignored by modern scholars—
wherein al-Būnī identifies as his personal *šayḫ* (*šayḫunā*) Abū
Muḥammad ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz b. Abī Bakr al-Qurašī l-Mahdawī (d.
621/1224), the head of a center for Sufi instruction in Tunis. Al-Būnī
recounts two incidents involving al-Mahdawī, the first of which includes
a conversation that occurred 'while I [al-Būnī] was sitting with him [al-
Mahdawī]' (*wa-kuntu ǧālisan ᶜindahu*), confirming a face-to-face
relationship between them.[18] This is highly significant insofar as it is, to
the best of my knowledge, the only place in a major work of the
medieval corpus in which al-Būnī identifies one of his own *šayḫ*s.

Beyond its value as a rare datum in al-Būnī's biography, the fact that
al-Mahdawī also exercised a great deal of influence over the
development of the famous Andalusian mystic Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ᶜArabī
(d. 638/1240) is of great interest as well. Ibn ᶜArabī resided at al-
Mahdawī's school (*dār tadrīsihi*) twice, once in 590/1194 for as much as
six or seven months, and for a somewhat longer stay in 597–8/1201–2.[19]
Al-Būnī unfortunately provides no dates for his time in Tunis that might
indicate if the two ever met. Al-Mahdawī is the *šayḫ* to whom Ibn ᶜArabī
dedicated his great work, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, and Gerald Elmore

---

[16] Ibn al-Zayyāt, *Kawākib al-sayyārah*, 268.
[17] E.g. the full title of Witkam article, 'Gazing at the Sun: Remarks on the
Egyptian Magician al-Būnī, and Carl Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 92.
[18] Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1, fol. 179b. For the second account
involving al-Mahdawī, see fol. 238b.
[19] Elmore, 'Shaykh Abd al-Aziz al-Mahdawi', 593–4.

notes that *al-šayḫ al-akbar* praised al-Mahdawī highly for 'his magisterial discretion in translating the more indigestible esoteric knowledge of the Secrets of Unveiling into a pedagogical pabulum suitable to the capacities of the uninitiated'.[20] That al-Būnī also took instruction from al-Mahdawī places him at least rouġly within the same nexus of Western (i.e. Maghribī and Andalusī) Sufism from which Ibn ᶜArabī emerged, a milieu in which the science of letters (ᶜ*ilm al-ḥurūf*) had played a prominent role since the time of Ibn Masarra al-Ğabalī (d. 319/931).[21] It also grants some credit to the Granadan litterateur Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Ḫaṭīb and his friend Ibn Ḫaldūn's close linkings of al-Būnī and Ibn ᶜArabī as 'extremist' Sufis who were masters of the occult science of letters, a connection that some modern scholars have questioned or dismissed as polemical rhetoric.[22] Elements in al-Būnī's writing that suggest a common source for some of his and Ibn ᶜArabī's metaphysical/cosmological speculations are briefly discussed in the second section of this paper, while the tendency of many later commentators (negative and positive) to closely associate the two men's works is addressed in the third.

That al-Būnī would have traveled from Būna to Tunis for instruction, and that he would have continued on from there to Egypt, is not difficult to imagine. Indeed, he would seem to have been one of a number of Western Sufis who migrated eastwards in the seventh/thirteenth century, perhaps due in part to the controversial nature of their teachings, including Ibn ᶜArabī, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ḥarallī (d. 638/1240), Abū l-Ḥasan al-Šāḏilī (d. 656/1258), and Ibn Sabᶜīn (d. 668–9/1269–71). It is noteworthy that the teachings of all these men were intertwined with, or at least somehow implicated in the science of letters and other occult praxeis.[23] Throughout the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries the generally Mālikī-dominated Islamicate West was home to many controversial Sufis with esotericist tendencies who ran afoul of the reigning political and religious authorities, such as Ibn Barraġān and Ibn

---

[20] Ibid., 595.

[21] According to Gril, '[b]etween Ibn Masarra and Ibn ᶜArabī, al-Andalus was probably never without a master in the science of letters.' Gril, 'The Science of Letters', 140–1.

[22] Morris, 'An Arab Machiavelli?', 256, 271ff., 279; Chodkiewicz, 'Toward Reading the *Futūḥāt Makkiya*', 25.

[23] On controversies regarding al-Ḥarallī, see Knysh, *Ibn ᶜArabī*, 65. On the esoteric nature of al-Šāḏilī's teachings, see Lory's entry on him in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. On Ibn Sabᶜīn see al-Taftazani and Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 346–9.

al-ᶜArīf, two prominent *šayḫ*s who may have been assassinated by the Almoravids in 536/1141, perhaps due to their growing political influence;[24] and Ibn Qasī, a Sufi *šayḫ* who took the extraordinary step of declaring himself '*Imām*' and entering into open rebellion against the Almoravids in the Algarve, an adventure that ended with his assassination in 546/1151. [25] The precise impact of the Almohad revolution on Western Sufism requires further study, but suffice it to say that a prudent esotericist Sufi might have thought it best to decamp eastward. Of course, Cairo's appeal as a major economic and intellectual capital whose foreign military elites were generous with their patronage and protection of exotic Sufi masters may have been sufficient incentive in itself for migration.[26]

Most other details of al-Būnī's life remain obscure, and even the date of his death is open to question. For the latter, the date of 622/1225 is given at several places in Ḥāǧǧī Ḫalīfa's *Kašf al-ẓunūn*, although 630/1232–33 is given in one entry.[27] No earlier source corroborating either date has yet been discovered. Modern scholarship has generally accepted the earlier date, although many scholars have expressed serious reservations on account of dates and people mentioned in certain Būnian texts which would suggest a later date (discussed below). However, on the basis of some of the transmission paratexts surveyed for this article it now at least can be established that al-Būnī 'flourished' in Cairo in 622/1225 as a revered Sufi *šayḫ*.

The primary cluster of evidence to this effect is a series of paratexts not previously adduced in scholarship on al-Būnī. The first of these is an authorial colophon for the work *ᶜIlm al-hudā* reproduced identically in three eighth/fourteenth-century codices: Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1 (copied in Damascus in 772/1370), Beyazid MS 1377 (copied in 773/1371), and Süleymaniye MS Kılıç Ali Paşa 588 (copied in 792/1390). In this authorial colophon al-Būnī states that he began *ᶜIlm al-hudā* in the first part of Ḏū l-Qaᶜda of 621, finishing it some weeks later on 27 Ḏū l-Ḥiǧǧa in the same year, and that this occurred on the

---

[24] For a review of scholarship on these events, see Addas, *Andalusī Mysticism*, 919–29.

[25] Ibid.; also Dreher, 'Das Imamat', passim.

[26] On Cairene foreign military elites' enthusiasm for exotic Sufis, see Knysh, *Ibn ᶜArabī*, 49–58. For a discussion of Western Sufis who took refuge in Damascus, see Pouzet, *Maġrébins à Damas*, passim.

[27] For the 622 date, see, for example, the entry on *Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif*, 062; see 161 for the 630 date.

outskirts of Cairo (*bi-ẓāhir Miṣr*),[28] by which is probably meant the Qarāfa cemeteries, as is evident from other statements discussed below.

That authorial colophon is supported by a collection of paratexts in a two-part copy of the same work, Süleymaniye MSS Reşid efendi 590.1 and 590.2, copied in Cairo in 798/1396. In a multipart paratext on the final folio of the second part the copyist states that he collated his copy of *ʿIlm al-hudā* against one copied in 738/1337 at the al-Muḥassaniyya *ḫānqāh* in Alexandria, and that that copy had itself been collated against a copy bearing an 'audition' certificate (*samāʿ*) with the signature (*ḫaṭṭ*) of the *muṣannif* (author or copyist).[29] As discussed below, this most likely indicates that al-Būnī himself presided over this session and signed the statement, although the original audition certificate is not reproduced in full. This audition process—a reference is made to *maǧālis*, i.e. multiple sessions—is said to have ended on the twenty-third of Rabīʿ al-awwal, 622/1225, with the exemplar that bore the audition certificate having been completed in the Qarāfa al-Kabīra cemetery *bi-ẓāhir Miṣr* on the twenty-seventh of Ḏū l-Ḥiǧǧa, 621, having been begun in the first part of Ḏū l-Qaʿda of the same year; i.e. the same dates and place of composition as those in the authorial colophon reproduced in the three aforementioned manuscripts.[30]

Finally, the occurrence of the audition sessions referred to in MS Reşid efendi 590.2 is supported by an audition certificate reproduced in full in BnF MS arabe 2658, a codex of the work *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ʿulwiyyāt* copied in Cairo at al-Azhar Mosque in 809/1406. This reproduced certificate, which the copyist states was found at the back of the exemplar in a hand other than that of the copyist of the main text, states that the exemplar was auditioned in the Qarāfa al-Kabīra cemetery in the first part of Rabīʿ al-awwal, 622/1225.[31] This is earlier in the same month that the prime exemplar referenced in MS Reşid efendi 590.2 was auditioned, which suggests that *ʿIlm al-hudā* and *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt* were auditioned back-to-back during the course of these *maǧālis*. What is more, a reference within the text of *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt* to events in Mecca in 621, combined with the above statement, provides us with *termini post* and *ante quem* for the composition of that work as well, i.e. sometime between 621 and Rabīʿ al-awwal of 622.

---

[28] Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1, fol. 239b.

[29] Süleymaniye MS Reşid efendi 590.2, fol. 130b. The date of copying for the set is in the colophon of 590.1, on fol. 64b.

[30] Süleymaniye MS Reşid efendi 590.2, fol. 130b.

[31] BnF MS arabe 2658, fol. 90a.

This cluster of paratexts reveals at least two important points. The first is that al-Būnī was indeed alive and composing two of his major works in 621 and early 622. The second is that both of these works were auditioned in sessions at the Qarāfa cemetary on the outskirts of Cairo over the course of Rabīᶜ al-awwal of 622. Book-audition (*samāᶜ*) sessions—which are not to be confused with the meditative scripture and/or poetry recitation practices of the same name also common among some Sufis—were gatherings at which a work was read aloud before the author, or someone in a line of transmission from the author, thereby inducting the auditors into the line of transmission for that work.[32] Neither of these references to audition sessions states explicitly that al-Būnī presided over them, but there are strong reasons to conclude that this was the case. The typical formula for an audition certificate is: *samiᶜa hāḏā l-kitāb ᶜalā al-šayḫ fulan^in fulān^un wa-fulān^un*, with the presiding *šayḫ* (the grammatical object of *samiᶜa ᶜalā*) ideally being the author of the work being 'heard' or someone in a direct line of transmission from the author, and the other named individuals (the grammatical subjects) being the auditors who are gaining admittance to the line of transmission of the work through the audition, and who are thereby granted the authority to teach and further transmit the work.[33] The statement copied in BnF MS arabe 2658, however, gives the names only of two of the auditors (*al-qāḍī l-aᶜdal al-ṣāliḥ al-zāhid qāḍī l-fuqarāʾ wa-ᶜumdat al-ṣulaḥāʾ* ᶜUmar b. Ibrāhīm and his son Ibrāhīm) while omitting the name of the presiding *šayḫ*. Meanwhile, as mentioned above, the statement in Süleymaniye MS Reşid efendi 590.2 states of the prime exemplar only that *ᶜalayhā samāᶜ al-muṣannif wa-ḫaṭṭuhu*, i.e. that it bore an audition certificate (*samāᶜ*) from the *muṣannif* (author or copyist) and his signature (*ḫaṭṭuhu*). The omissions in these statements of the precise identity of the presiding *šayḫ* leave room for varying interpretations, but the most likely one, in my estimation, given the proximity of the dates and place of composition to those of the audition sessions, is that al-Būnī himself presided over these sessions.

---

[32] On the importance of audition practices in knowledge and book transmission, see Rosenthal, *Technique and Approach*, 20–1; Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 140–146; Berkey, *Transmission of Knowledge*, 21–35; Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, 133–51. See also footnotes 33, 34, and 36 below.

[33] On audition certificates, see Gacek, *Vademecum*, 52–3; Déroche, *Islamic Codicology*, 332–4; and (for examples thereof) Vajda, *Album de paléographie*, plt. 20 *bis.*

The fact that some of al-Būnī's works were being auditioned in Cairo at this time is valuable in assessing his standing among Egyptian Sufis, and the image of an audition session among a group of Sufis gathered in the Qarāfa cemetary is compelling. In his study of medieval tomb visitation practices, Christopher Taylor characterizes the Qarāfa, as 'a place of ancient sanctity' that 'played an extraordinary role in the social and moral economy of medieval Cairene urban space,' a liminal zone of social mixing and collective religious practice that was 'enticingly beyond the reach of the ᶜulamāʾ.'[34] If al-Būnī's teachings were indeed 'fringe' according to many ᶜulamāʾ of the time, then this choice of location may have been a reflection of that situation. Although the majority of the scholarship on book-audition practices has focused on their use in transmitting *ḥadīṯ* collections, book-audition was employed across a variety of scientific (ᶜ*ilm*) traditions, religious and natural-philosophical. It functioned as a means not only of transmitting works accurately, but also of ritually passing on the authority to teach and utilize their contents. As pietistic events, book-audition sessions grew during the Ayyūbid period to have a great deal of appeal even among non-scholars,[35] and Erik Ohlander recently has argued that they were also a key aspect of Abū Ḥafs ᶜUmar al-Suhrawardī's (d. 632/1234) strategies for legitimizing *ṭarīqa* Sufism in sixth/twelfth and early seventh/thirteenth-century Baghdad.[36] While al-Būnī was certainly no Abū Ḥafs, the fact that he was able to command an audience for an audition of his freshly composed works strongly suggests that he was a respected Sufi *šayḫ* at the height of his powers in 622/1225. That he was even regarded as a 'saint' by some residents of the city, at least eventually, is shown by the mention of the location of his tomb in Ibn al-Zayyāt's *Kawākib al-sayyāra*, which indicates that it was a site of veneration in the centuries after his death. Furthermore, as Hamès has recently noted, a note in Latin from 1872 on a flyleaf of BnF MS arabe 2647 (*Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif*) suggests that al-Būnī's tomb was still a ceremonial site in the latter half of the nineteenth

---

[34] Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous*, 56–8.

[35] On non-scholarly participation in audition sessions, see Dickinson, 'Ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī' *passim*. On the closely related topic of ritual and even 'magical' uses of *ḥadīṯ* works, see Brown, *The Canonization of al-Buḫari and Muslim*, 335–48.

[36] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 53–5. Cf. Osman Yahia's notation of the chains of transmission for Ibn ᶜArabī's works, *Histoire et classification*, 539–44.

century. It states: 'This man is said to be famous among Muslims not only for his teaching, but also for his piety, and his tomb is visited for the sake of religion. Commonly, they call him Sheikh Albouni'.[37]

In my estimation, the date of al-Būnī's death must remain an open question for now. The paratextual statements adduced above demonstrate that he had a Cairene following in 622/1225, which would suggest that he was at something of an advanced age at that point. As discussed in the following section, there are elements within the medieval text of *Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif* which raise the possibility that al-Būnī may have lived somewhat beyond 622/1225, although none is probative due to likely instances of interpolation in that work by later actors. Given that Ḥāǧǧī Ḫalīfa worked from many of the same manuscript collections now held in the libraries of the Republic of Turkey that were surveyed for this project, it is quite possible that he inferred the dates in *Kašf al-ẓunūn* through consulting some of the same manuscripts and paratexts as those adduced above, and that he arrived at the 622/1225 date due to a lack of later notations regarding al-Būnī. This is, of course, conjecture; it fails to explain the instance in which 630/1232–33 is given, and it must be considered that Ḥāǧǧī Ḫalīfa undoubtedly had access to codices and other sources that I have overlooked or that are now lost.[38]

Few other details of al-Būnī's life are revealed in paratextual statements such as the ones above, although that his ambit extended at least to Alexandria is attested in another statement at the end of Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1, a gloss that the copyist notes was found in the margin of the exemplar from which he worked (*ḥāšiyya ᶜalā ḥāmiš al-aṣl al-manqūl minhu*). The author of the original gloss, writing sometime between 622/1225 and 772/1370 (i.e. between the dates of the composition of *ᶜIlm al-hudā* and of the copying of MS Hamidiye 260.1), states that he obtained the book and read it under the supervision of his master, Abū l-Faḍl al-Ġumārī,[39] and that al-Ġumārī had encountered al-Būnī (*laqiya al-muʾallif*) in Alexandria, where al-Būnī had 'bestowed upon him the meanings of the path and the secrets of certainty' (*wa-*

---

[37] BnF MS arabe 2647, upper flyleaf: *Hic vir apud Mohamedanos non solum doctrina sed etiam pietate insignis perhibetur, eiusque sepulchrum religionis causa visitatur. Vulgo Sheikh Albouni illum appellant*. See Constant Hamès, 'al-Būnī', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed.

[38] On the use of paratexts as sources by premodern bio/bibliographical writers, see Rosenthal, *Technique and Approach*, 20–1.

[39] I assume this is a locative *nisba*. Yāqūt lists a handful of place names from which 'al-Ġumārī' could be derived (*Muᶜǧam al-buldān*, 211–13), although an argument could be made for 'al-Ġimārī' as well.

afādahu fī maʿānī al-sulūk wa-l-asrār al-yaqīniyya), teachings which al-Ġumārī had later passed on to his pupil, the glossator of the intermediary copy whose name is unfortunately lost.[40] In reference to the quality of al-Būnī's teachings, another gloss on the same folio of MS Hamidiye 260.1 records a statement attributed to one of al-Būnī's students: 'I swear by God that his utterances are like pearls or Egyptian gold. They are treasures the mystery of which is a blessed talisman for one who has deciphered [them] and who understands' (*li-baʿḍ talāmīḏihi: uqsimu bi-llāh la-alfāẓuhu ka-al-durar aw ka-al-ḏahab al-miṣrī, fa-hiyya kunūz sirruhā ṭilsam ṭubā li-man ḥalla wa-man yadrī*).[41] Praise such as this, as well as the records of audition sessions and the anecdotes of al-Ġumārī taking personal instruction from al-Būnī, suggest that during his lifetime the transmission of his teachings and the production of books therefrom were conducted well within the contours of traditional modes of Islamic instruction, which valorized 'personalist' modes of teaching and textual transmission.[42] Thus, regardless of what some doubtless regarded as the heterodoxy of al-Būnī's teachings, they seem to initially have been delivered and received through highly conventional means.

Major works of the medieval Būnian corpus
Any suggestion that al-Būnī may have been 'just another' Sufi *šayḫ* will strike as strange readers familiar with him only through *Šams al-maʿārif al-kubrā*, a veritable encyclopedia of the occult sciences that seems an entirely different animal from most late medieval Sufi texts. Indeed, such an impression would be misleading insofar as al-Būnī's setting down in writing of techniques of the applied science of letters appears to have been groundbreaking; as Denis Gril notes: 'Al-Buni was undoubtedly acting deliberately when he published what others either had kept under greater cover or had limited to oral transmission'.[43] However, the impression given by *Šams al-maʿārif al-kubrā* that al-Būnī's writings were almost entirely concerned with practical implementations of the occult sciences is also misleading, as this overview of the major works of the medieval Būnian corpus endeavors to demonstrate.

---

[40] Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1, op. cit.

[41] Ibid.

[42] As Makdisi observes: 'The numerous certificates of audition written and signed by the authors of books, or by persons duly authorized in succession, attest to the perennial personalism of the Islamic system of education' (*Rise of Colleges*, 145–6).

[43] Gril, 'The Science of Letters', 143.

Carl Brockelmann listed almost forty works attributed to al-Būnī,[44] while Jaime Cordero's recent survey of Būnian works as they appear in various bibliographical works and the catalogs of major libraries found seventy titles.[45] Both lists are of great value, although several items within each can be shown to be either single works under variant titles[46] or works by other authors misattributed to al-Būnī.[47] Nonetheless, a large array of distinct works remains to be accounted for, and there are well-founded questions surrounding how many and which of the numerous works attributed to al-Būnī were actually composed by him.[48] What follows does not claim to resolve all of these issues, or even to address the majority of the titles in question. It is rather a brief overview of the eight *major* works of the medieval corpus, by which is meant those works that appear in pre-tenth/sixteenth century codices with sufficient consistency and frequency to be accounted as having been in regular circulation. Works of which only one or two copies survive, or the earliest surviving copies of which postdate the ninth/fifteenth century, are not included in this discussion, although two texts that appear only rarely, *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn wa-nihāyat al-wāṣilīn* and *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt fī asrār al-riyāḍāt*, are included because they are cited in a number of better-represented early works. The numerous works attributed to al-Būnī that seem to have survived only in one or two copies are certainly worthy of attention, although they fall outside the scope of this article. That such 'minor' works began to proliferate somewhat early in the career of the corpus is attested by a bibliographical paratext from a codex copied in

---

[44] Brockelmann, *GAL*, 1: 497.

[45] Cordero, El Kitāb Šams al-Maᶜārif al-Kubrà, ix–xviii.

[46] For example, Brockelmann lists *al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya* and also notes a *Risāla fī l-ism al-aᶜẓam*, a common alternate title for *al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya*. Cordero lists *Tartīb al-daᶜawāt fī taḥṣīṣ al-awqāt* and *Kitāb manāfiᶜ al-Qurᵓān* as separate works, when they in fact are alternate titles for the same work, and does the same with *ᶜIlm al-hudā*, counting it again under one of its common alternate titles, *Mūḍīḥ al-ṭarīq wa-qusṭās al-taḥqīq*.

[47] Both Brockelmann and Cordero count *al-Durr al-munaẓẓam fī l-sirr al-aᶜẓam* as among works attributed to al-Būnī, when it is properly assigned to Ibn Ṭalḥa (regarding whom, see the discussion of *Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāᵓif al-ᶜawārif* in this section). Cordero also attributes to al-Būnī a work called *al-Durr al-faḥira*, which was written by ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī (regarding whom see the third section of this paper). None of these instances are particularly blameworthy, as the misattribution/miscataloging of occult works is quite common, in large part because so little scholarship has been done on them.

[48] See footnote 11, above.

772/1370 that names a number of works of which almost no trace has survived.[49]

Of the eight major medieval works, there are five that, in my estimation, can be most directly attributed to al-Būnī, and that can be considered to constitute the 'core' of the corpus as conceived by al-Būnī: *Šams al-maʿārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ʿawārif* (not to be confused with *Šams al-maʿārif al-kubrā*, see below and section four of this paper); *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn wa-nihāyat al-wāṣilīn*; *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt fī asrār al-riyāḍāt*, *ʿIlm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidāʾ fī šarḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, and *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ʿulwiyyāt*. The three major medieval works that I consider to fall outside this 'core' category, *al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya fī awrād al-rabbāniyya*; *Tartīb al-daʿawāt fī taḥṣīṣ al-awqāt ʿalā ḫtilāf al-irādāt*, and *Qabs al-iqtidāʾ ilā wafq al-saʿāda wa-naǧm al-ihtidāʾ*, are hardly less important. They may well also have been composed by al-Būnī himself, or by his immediate students/amanuenses; alternatively, some may be forgeries that were convincing enough to have entered the 'canon' of Būnian works early on, such that they survive in numerous pre-tenth/sixteenth-century codices as well as in later ones. Whatever the facts of their authorship, they must be considered important in terms of the medieval reception of al-Būnī's thought, even if there is a chance they may not be the direct products of his compositional efforts. *Al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya*, for example, is certainly one of the most important Būnian works due to its enduring popularity into the twelfth/eighteenth century, while two of the five 'core' works seem hardly to have made an impression.

The list of five works most directly attributable to al-Būnī is derived from references to other Būnian works made within the texts of *ʿIlm al-hudā* and *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt*, these being the two works which can be most firmly associated with al-Būnī due to the authorial colophon and audition certificates discussed in the previous section. Within these two works, references are made, in many cases repeatedly, to the three others in the group: *Šams al-maʿārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ʿawārif*; *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn wa-*

---

[49] Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260, fol. 239b. The works in question are *Kitāb Mawāqīt al-baṣāʾir wa-laṭāʾif al-sarāʾir*; *Kitāb Taysīr al-ʿawārif fī talḫīṣ Šams al-maʿārif*; *Kitāb Asrār al-adwār wa-taškīl al-anwār*; *Kitāb Yāʾ al-taṣrīf wa-hullat(?) al-taʿrīf*; *Risālat Yāʾ al-waw wa-qāf al-yāʾ wa-l-ʿayn wa-l-nūn*, and *Kitāb al-Laṭāʾif al-ʿašara*. The first, third, and last of these receive one-line mentions in *Kašf al-ẓunūn*, although to the best of my knowledge no manuscript copies of them have been located.

nihāyat al-wāṣilīn, and *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt fī asrār al-riyāḍāt*. What is more, these three works make repeated references to one another, as well as to *ᶜIlm al-hudā* and *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt* (the apparent paradox of the latter point is discussed immediately below). As shown in the chart at the end of this paper, the five works comprise a closed inter-referential circuit, i.e. they make references only to one another, and not to any of the other Būnian works. The majority of these references occur immediately after a somewhat gnomic statement on one esoteric topic or another, stating that the matter is explained in another of the five works. The whole effect can be taken as an example of the esotericist writing strategy—best known from the Ǧābirian corpus—of *tabdīd al-ᶜilm*, 'the scattering of knowledge throughout the corpus with elaborate cross-references, to make access to the 'art' difficult for the unworthy.'[50]

In several cases, pairs of works within the group contain references to one another, indicating the ongoing insertion of references into the works over time – unless one would embrace the unlikely possibility of all five having been written simultaneously. Such insertions are not necessarily indicative of interpolations by actors other than al-Būnī, as they are the sort of thing that the *šayḫ* might have added during an audition of a work, even years after it was originally composed. Indeed, they are typically phrased in the first person, e.g. *wa-qad šaraḥnāhu fī kitābinā Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾifal-ᶜawārif*.[51] Certain references seem more likely to have been added late in the process, such as the single reference to *ᶜIlm al-hudā* in *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt*, which occurs in the very last sentence of the work prior to the closing benedictions, and thus could easily have been inserted there at a later date.[52] Others, such as the multiple ones throughout *ᶜIlm al-hudā* and *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt*, seem rather more integral to the texts in which they appear. Indeed, the wealth of references in these two works suggests that they were the last two to be composed, with *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt* most likely being the final addition to the group due to its multiple references to *ᶜIlm al-hudā*. Similarly, as *Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif* is the only work cited in all four of the others, one could speculate that some version of *Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif* preceded the other four works – although see below for arguments regarding the multiple difficulties involved in dating the medieval text of that work.

These five works are closely related as regards much of their content

---

[50] Heinrichs, 'Ramz' (part 2a), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 8: 426.
[51] Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1, fol. 130b.
[52] Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2160.2, fol. 80a.

and technical vocabulary, although each has its particular foci. The science of letters permeates all of them to varying degrees, but instructions for making and using talismans are included in only two: *Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif* and *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ᶜulwiyyāt*, while the other three works deal to a greater extent with matters more traditionally found in Sufi literature and other pietistic genres. *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn wa-nihāyat al-wāṣilīn* and *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt fī asrār al-riyāḍāt* are both relatively short works (typically 30 to 40 folia depending on the number of lines per page) that primarily discuss topics immediately identifiable as Sufi theory and practice. *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn* establishes various stages of spiritual accomplishment, with a ranking of aspirants into three basic groups, *sālikūn* (seekers), *murīdūn* (adherents), and *ᶜārifūn* (gnostics). *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt fī asrār al-riyāḍāt* deals mainly with practices such as ritual seclusion (*ḫalwa*), but also touches upon matters taken up at length in the many of the other 'core' works, such as prophetology, metaphysics/cosmology, the invisible hierarchy of the saints, and the natures of such virtual actors as angels, devils, and *ǧinn*. Many of those topics are discussed at greater length in *ᶜIlm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidāʾ fī šarḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, a large work (250 folia on average) structured as a discussion of the names of God, with each section devoted to a single divine name and each name marking a distinct station (*maqāma*) in a Sufi's progress.

The statements and stories of a host of 'sober' Sufi and quasi-Sufi authorities posthumously well-regarded in al-Būnī's lifetime are cited in these works, such as those of Ibrāhīm b. Adam (d. 161/777–78), Maᶜrūf al-Karḫī (d. 200/815–16), Bišr al-Ḥāfī (d. 226/840 or 227/841–42), Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907), al-Ǧunayd al-Baġdādī (d. 298/910), Abū ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), Abū ᶜAlī al-Daqqāq (d. 405/1015), and al-Daqqāq's best-known student, ᶜAbd al-Karīm al-Qušayrī (d. 465/1072). A number of somewhat more risqué figures associated with speculative mysticism and/or 'drunken' Sufism are referenced frequently as well, including Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (261/874 or 264/877-8), Ḏū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 246/861), and Abū Bakr al-Šiblī (d. 334/945). Some statements and stretches of poetry attributed to the famously controversial al-Manṣūr al-Ḥallāǧ (d. 309/922) are discussed near the end of *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn*, while al-Ḥallāǧ's great interpreter and redactor Ibn Ḫafīf al-Širāzī (d. 371/982) and Ibn Ḫafīf's disciple Abū l-Ḥasan ᶜAlī b. Muḥammad al-Daylamī[53] (d. ca. 392/1001) are both

---

[53] Regarding al-Daylamī, see Meisami (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, 1: 185–6.

referenced in *ʿIlm al-hudā*. Ideas and statements attributed to Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), the great Sufi theorist cited extensively—though perhaps spuriously—in Ibn Masarra's *Kitāb Ḫawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf*,[54] appear regularly throughout the corpus. Thorough analyses of *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn*, *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt*, and *ʿIlm al-hudā* will be required to determine the extent to which al-Būnī's discussions of topics widely discussed in Sufi literature were derivative or innovative in regard to those of his predecessors. *ʿIlm al-hudā* certainly participates in a lengthy tradition of studies on the names of God, a field most famously represented by Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ġazālī's (d. 505/1111) *Al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī šarḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*. Ḥāǧǧī Ḫalīfa, in his list of numerous works from this genre, compares al-Būnī's work to that of the Magribī Sufi Ibn Barraǧān.[55] While this comparison seems based on the considerable lengths of both works (*wa-huwa šarḥ kabīr ka-šarḥ Ibn Barraǧān*),[56] Elmore's note that Ibn ʿArabī studied at least one of Ibn Barraǧān's works under al-Mahdawī suggests the possibility that al-Būnī may have been similarly exposed to Ibn Barraǧān's writings.[57]

To the limited extent that the number of surviving copies is a reliable guide, neither *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn* nor *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt* seem to have been widely copied; the survey for this project has found only three copies of *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn* and nine of *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt*, a few of the latter being abridgements or fragments.[58] *ʿIlm al-hudā* appears to have been copied most widely in the eighth/fourteenth century and far less so in ensuing centuries. Of the eleven colophonically dated copies surveyed for this project (out of seventeen total), eight were produced between 739/1339 and 798/1396. Many of these early copies are high-quality codices in elegant Syro-Egyptian hands, with the text fully vocalized. The finest is Süleymaniye MS Bağdatlı Vehbi 966, an oversized and

---

[54] On the possibly spurious nature of Ibn Masarra's citations of al-Tustarī, see Michael Ebstein and Sara Sviri's recent article 'The So-Called *Risālat al-ḥurūf*', 221–4 and *passim*.

[55] See the bibliography for Purificación de la Torre's edition of Ibn Barraǧān's work.

[56] Ḥāǧǧī Ḫalīfa, *Kašf*, 1033.

[57] Elmore, 'Šayḫ Abd al-Aziz al-Mahdawi', 611.

[58] The copies of *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn* and *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt* consulted for constructing the chart of intertextual references above are bound together as the first two works of the compilatory codex Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2160. All the works in the codex are in a single hand, and a *terminus ante quem* for the date of its production can be set at the year 914/1508–9 due to a dated ownership notice on fol. 1a, but it is probably considerably older.

austerely beautiful codex with only fifteen lines of text per page. Probably of Egyptian origin, it is undated but almost certainly comes from the eighth/fourteenth century too. The high production values of many of these undoubtedly expensive codices of *ʿIlm al-hudā* bespeak a work that, at least in certain circles, was quite highly regarded, which makes its apparent decline in popularity all the more striking. For no other work in the corpus are there such disproportionate numbers of early copies over later ones. Indeed, as shown in the table at the end of this article, the surviving codices of other medieval Būnian works suggest that they were copied far more frequently in the ninth/fifteenth century than in the preceding ones. It is possible that this decline reflects shifting tastes among readers and producers of Būnian works, and I would suggest that it may have been due to the relative lack of practically oriented occult-scientific material in *ʿIlm al-hudā*, a factor that also may account for the relative paucity of copies of *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn* and *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt*. The works of the medieval corpus that remain to be discussed contain a good deal more material that can be characterized as occult-scientific with a practical bent, and also boast a greater numbers of surviving copies.

Of the five core works, the two with the greatest abundance of practical occult-scientific material are *Šams al-maʿārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ʿawārif* and *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ʿulwiyyāt*. As the table shows, the number of surviving copies suggests that they were more widely copied than the other three core works, and *Šams al-maʿārif* far more so than *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt*. It is a point of interest that the two were sometimes conflated. BnF MS arabe 6556, a copy of *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt* copied in 781/1380, has a titlepage (probably original to the codex) bearing the name *Šams al-maʿārif al-ṣuġrā wa-laṭāʾif al-ʿawārif*, while Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2799, a copy of *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt* copied in 861/1457, is simply titled *Šams al-maʿārif*. Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2802, an undated but most likely ninth/fifteenth-century copy of *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt*, is declared on its opening leaf to be 'the book *Šams al-maʿārif* of which no [other] copy exists,' with a further claim that 'this copy is not the one found among the people, and in it are bonuses and additions to make it complete' (*Kitāb Šams al-maʿārif allati laysa li-nusḫatihā wuǧūd wa-hāḏihi al-nusḫa laysa* [sic!] *hiyya al-nusḫa allatī mawǧūda bayna al-nās wa-fīhā fawāʾid wa-zawāʾid ʿalā al-tamām*).[59] One suspects this note was penned by a bookseller with enough experience in peddling Būnian

---

[59] Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2802, fol. 1a.

works to recognize in the codex an opportunity to promote a 'secret' version of *Šams al-maᶜārif.*

Šams al-maᶜārif presents some of the greatest difficulties in the study of the Būnian corpus, and the notion that al-Būnī produced short, medium, and long redactions of it (*al-ṣuġrā, al-wusṭā,* and *al-kubrā*) is at the heart of much of the confusion and speculation surrounding this work.[60] However, the surviving medieval corpus fails to bear out that there actually were different redactions circulating under those three names in that period, at least not in any consistent sense. This is to say that, among medieval codices, the title *Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif* appears in almost every case without any extra size-appellation, and, aside from obvious instances of mis-titling,[61] almost all of these codices contain a single fairly consistent and readily identifiable text.[62] Such textual consistency is lacking entirely in the small handful of medieval codices entitled *Šams al-maᶜārif al-ṣuġrā,*[63] and I cannot confirm the existence of any medieval codices bearing the title *Šams al-*

---

[60] This notion appears to have originated fairly early in the career of the corpus, as evidenced by the title *Šams al-maᶜārif al-ṣuġrā wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif* having been assigned to BnF MS arabe 6556 in the eighth/fourteenth century. To the best of my knowledge, the first bibliographical notice mentioning three redactions of *Šams al-maᶜārif* is al-Manāwī's entry on al-Būnī in *al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tarāǧim al-sārat al-ṣūfiyya,* a work completed in 1011/1602–3, although al-Manāwī mentions only that short, medium, and long versions exist, without giving incipits or other clues as to their contents (2: 38). Ḥāǧǧī Ḫalīfa, writing a few decades after al-Manāwī, does not list three versions of *Šams al-maᶜārif* in *Kašf al-ẓunūn,* although he does include a very brief entry for a work called *Fuṣūl Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā,* which he says 'is perhaps *Šams al-maᶜārif* (*laᶜallahu Šams al-maᶜārif*)' (1270), and he makes a passing reference to *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* in the entry for Ibn Ṭalḥa's *al-Durr al-munaẓẓam fī sirr al-aᶜẓam* (734). The notion of three redactions has since been taken up by many modern scholars, beginning with a 1930 essay by Hans Winkler (see bibliography).

[61] Such as Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2799, discussed in the previous paragraph.

[62] This is the text that averages around 120 folia in length and begins with the incipit (following the *basmala*): *al-ḥamd li-llāh allaḏī aṭlaᶜa šams al-maᶜrif min ġayb al-ġayb,* or some close variation thereof.

[63] Thus, BnF MS arabe 6556 is actually *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt,* while Harvard MS Arab 332 and Dār al-Kutub MS Ḥurūf M 75 each appear to be entirely disparate works, neither of which has surfaced elsewhere. I have not seen Tunis MS 6711, and cannot comment on its date or contents.

maᶜārif al-wusṭā. [64] Finally, in at least one case, a turn-of-the-tenth/sixteenth-century codex marked as *al-kubrā* contains the same text found in copies with no size-appellation, i.e. the usual medieval text. What is more, the *al-kubrā* designation appears to have been added to the titlepage at a later date.[65] On the basis of all this, I would argue that:

1) there is only one widely copied, fairly consistent medieval text that can be called *Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾifal-ᶜawārif*;

2) the notion of three redactions of *Šams al-maᶜārif* was a sort of a self-fulfilling rumor that gained momentum with time, such that the appellation *al-ṣuġrā* was applied to various shorter Būnian or pseudo-Būnian texts while others were subsequently labeled *al-wusṭā* and *al-kubrā*, and

3) this rumor was later exploited by the actor or actors who produced the eleventh/seventeenth-century work known as *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*.

Even if these hypotheses could be tested conclusively, however, it would not solve all the problems of *Šams al-maᶜārif*, as even the fairly stable medieval text presents at least two serious conundrums with regard to dating. One is a mention of *al-Durr al-munaẓẓam fī l-sirr al-aᶜẓam*, a work by the Damascene scholar, *ḫaṭīb*, occasional diplomat, and author of apocalyptic literature, Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Ibn Ṭalḥa (d. 652/1254).[66] Mohammad Masad, who devotes a chapter to Ibn Ṭalḥa

---

[64] I know of three codices bearing the title *Šams al-maᶜārif al-wusṭā*. Two of these are probably of eleventh/seventeenth century origin, and of these two one is a fragment and the other contains the same text found in the numerous medieval copies with no size-appellation. I have no basis upon which to comment on the third, Tunis MS 7401.

[65] This is BnF MS arabe 2649 (copied in Cairo in 913/1508). That the *al-kubrā* may have been added to the titlepage at a later date (perhaps by a bookseller?) is indicated by the fact that it is written in smaller letters, tucked in above the leftmost end of the rest of the title.

[66] The story begins with a holy man in Aleppo who has a vision of a mysterious tablet, and, in a subsequent vision, is instructed by ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib to have the tablet explained by Ibn Ṭalḥa; we are then informed that Ibn Ṭalḥa recorded his interpretation of the tablet in his work *al-Durr al-munaẓẓam fī l-sirr al-aᶜẓam*. This is a work of apocalyptic literature of which numerous copies survive, although some of these appear to have been wrongly attributed to al-Būnī (Cordero, *El Kitāb Šams al-Maᶜārif al-Kubrà*, x). To further confuse matters, a version of *al-Durr al-munaẓẓam* is entirely incorporated into *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*, along with an additional frame story that implies al-Būnī's personal involvement in these events. Given the importance of Ibn Ṭalḥa's work in apocalyptic traditions of the late medieval and early modern periods,

in his dissertation on the medieval Islamic apocalyptic tradition, argues that *al-Durr al-munaẓẓam* was probably completed in the first half of 644/1246,[67] and the dating conundrum arises from the fact that *Šams al-maʿārif* is cited extensively in *ʿIlm al-hudā* and *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt*, both of which were auditioned in 622/1225. If Masad's date is correct then this portion of the *Šams*, or at least this mention of the title of Ibn Ṭalḥa's book, must be a post-622/1225 interpolation. This does not necessarily indicate an instance of pseudepigraphical interpolation however, insofar as, if the date for al-Būnī's death given in *Kašf al-ẓunūn* can be set aside, it is conceivable that al-Būnī lived long enough to make this addition himself. The other, more glaring anachronism is the citation of a statement made in the year 670 (the date is given in the text) by *al-imām al-ʿārif al-ʿalāma* Faḫr al-Dīn al-Ḫawārazmī.[68] Al-Ḫawārazmī's name is followed by a standard benediction for the dead, *qaddasa Allāh rūḥahu*, indicating that this section of the text postdates 670/1271–2. That this interpolation was made somewhat early in the life of the corpus is shown by the fact that the statement and date appear in the earliest copy of *Šams al-maʿārif* surveyed for this project, BnF MS arabe 2647. The codex lacks a dated colophon, but the Baron de Slane estimated that it is from the late seventh/thirteenth century,[69] and it certainly is no more recent than the eighth/fourteenth century. All of the colophonically dated copies of *Šams al-maʿārif* were produced in the ninth/fifteenth century or later, and this stretch of text is a standard feature of those copies as well. Although it may be conceivable that al-Būnī could have lived to such an advanced age as to have made the interpolation himself, it is far more likely that it was done by someone other than al-Būnī, possibly one of his students.

The extant medieval text of *Šams al-maʿārif* is decidedly dedicated to occult–scientific matters, as made clear in a declaration in the introduction that it contains 'secrets of the wielding of occult powers and the knowledge of hidden forces' (*fī ḍimnihi min laṭāʾif al-taṣrīfāt wa-ʿawārif al-taʾṯīrāt*), with the accompanying injunction: 'Shame unto anyone who has this book of mine in hand and reveals it to a stranger, divulging it to one who is not worthy of it' (*fa-ḥarām ʿalā man waqaʿa*

---

especially in the influential writings of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī (about whom see the third section of this paper), the entire matter is worthy of closer scrutiny.

[67] Masad, *The Medieval Islamic Apocalyptic Tradition*, 71–3.
[68] BnF MS arabe 2647, fol. 46a.
[69] Slane, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabe*, entry no. 2647.

kitābī hāḏā bi-yadihi anna yubdīhi li-ġayr ahlihi wa yubūḥu bi-hi li-ġayr mustaḥiqqihi). Following the opening and introduction, the work commences with the presentation of a system associating the letters of the alphabet with various metaphysical/cosmological entities, e.g. the divine throne (*ʿarš*), the planetary spheres, and the four elements. Other chapters contains such things as discussions of the names of the *ǧinn* imprisoned by the prophet Sulaymān; comments on the nature of angels, and instructions on the construction and use of certain *awfāq* (cryptograms),[70] although all of this is leavened with elements of Sufi theory and devotional practices (*ilhām, ḏikr, ḫalwa*, etc.). Strikingly, one section is a discussion of alchemy in which Ǧābir b. Ḥayyān is cited, although the above-mentioned instances of interpolation might be grounds to question whether this was part of the original composition. If the 'Abū l-Qāsim' cited in this section is Abū l-Qāsim al-ʿIrāqī (fl. 660s/1260s) then this is all the more likely. There is still hope that an early seventh/thirteenth-century copy of *Šams al-maʿārif* might be located,[71] but a thorough textual comparison of known medieval copies

---

[70] A *wafq* (pl. *awfāq*), lit. 'conjunction,' is a written grid of letters and numbers used as a talisman. In some cases these are of the type known within mathematics as 'magic squares,' i.e. grids containing all the numbers from 1-*n* where the rows and columns all add to the same total. More often within the Būnian texts, however, these grids have no obvious mathematical properties, and the term 'cryptogram' is perhaps best suited to avoiding confusion on this point.

[71] A number of modern scholars, beginning with Toufic Fahd (*La Divination arabe*, 230–231), have expressed the hope that Manisa MS 45 HK 1445 might be the earliest surviving copy of *Šams al-maʿārif*, due to a catalog entry that lists it as a copy of that work and notes that its colophon is dated AH 618. Unfortunately for those who had anticipated that it might be the magic bullet in resolving the issues discussed above, the codex in fact bears the title (in the copyist's hand) *Kitāb Šumūs li-l-ʿārif laṭāʾif al-išārāt* and the text is that of *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt* rather than *Šams al-maʿārif*. Furthermore, while the colophon indeed does appear to say 618, the possibility of this being accurate is obviated by an anecdote from 621 mentioned in the text (on fol. 38a, in this particular codex). The date is written in Hindi–Arabic numerals rather than spelled out in full, as is more common in colophons. Unless this was a particularly clumsy attempt to backdate a codex, it must be assumed to be either a slip of the pen or a peculiar regional letterform for the initial number, which should perhaps be read as an eight or a nine instead of a six. A physical inspection of the codex yields no indication that it is especially old. The text is copied in an Eastern hand, i.e. one with Persianate tendencies, quite unlike the Syro-Egyptian hands that predominate among the great majority of early Būnian codices. The fact

of the work is needed in any eventuality – hopefully, not at the expense of continuing negligence of the rest of the Būnian corpus.

Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ʿulwiyyāt deals with subject matter somewhat similar to that of *Šams al-maʿārif*, although the work is more methodically structured and contains no glaring anachronisms. It opens with a lengthy emanationist account of cosmogenesis/anthropogenesis in which the letters of the Arabic alphabet play a constitutive role in the structure of the worlds and of humans. This is followed by a series of shorter sections, each dedicated to a single letter of the alphabet, explicating their metaphysical and cosmological properties through inspired interpretations of the Qurʾān, various *hadiṯ*, and statements attributed to past Sufi masters. The majority of these latter sections are accompanied by one or more elaborate talismans which, we are told, if gazed upon in conjunction with various programs of supererogatory fasting and prayer, are capable of enabling the practitioner to witness certain mysteries and wonders of God's creation. In addition to this visionary praxis, instructions are given whereby certain of the designs and/or various *awfāq* can be rendered as talismans, the wearing of which will afford the bearer more down-to-earth benefits, such as freedom from fear, provision of sustenance (*rizq*), etc. It is a possible point of interest that the exordium begins with what may be the earliest surviving written rendition of a *hadiṯ* in which Muḥammad berates the Companion Abū Ḏarr that *lām–alif* must be considered the twenty-ninth letter of the Arabic alphabet.[72] This *ḥadīṯ* seems to have played a key role in Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī's (d. 796/1394) ideas about language that helped drive the millenarian Ḥūrūfī sect of eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth-century Iran and Central Asia.[73]

Laṭāʾif al-išārāt contains what may be the most highly developed forms of Būnian concepts and technical vocabulary that are shared across all five of the core works. One important example is a notion of the creation and the sustaining of the cosmos occurring in two overarching

---

that the support is an Oriental laid paper rather than a European one suggests that it quite possibly was produced prior to the end of the ninth/fifteenth century, although it is far from probative. Perhaps the most interesting item to note about Manisa MS 45 HK 1445 is that the full name given to al-Būnī on the titlepage is quite unique, granting him descent from *al-Imām* ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.

[72] BnF MS arabe 2658, fol. 3a–b.

[73] Regarding the role of this *hadīṯ* in Astarābādī's thought see Bashir, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis*, 69 ff. To the best of my knowledge this likely connection to al-Būnī has not been noted by modern scholars of Ḥūrufism.

'worlds' or planes, *ᶜālam al-iḫtirāᶜ* and *ᶜālam al-ibdāᶜ* – terms Pierre Lory renders as 'ideal creation' and 'the creation of forms' in his remarkable article on al-Būnī's thought as salvaged from printed editions of *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*.[74] While these two planes/phases are discussed to varying degrees in all five works, in *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt* they are further subdivided into first and second stages, and each of the resulting four stages is discussed through allusions to numerous discourses. Thus the first and highest stage of God's creative action, *ᶜālam al-iḫtirāᶜ al-awwal*, is identified with 'the Cloud,' *al-ᶜamāʾ*, wherein God formed the clay of Adam, arranging and implanting the letters of the alphabet into Adam in such a way that his intellect would aspire to communion with *al-ḥaḍra al-ᶜamāʾiyya* ('the nubilous presence'), the highest point of union with divinity that the human mind can attain. This phase is further associated with the letter *alif*, the divine Throne (*al-ᶜarš*), and the First Intellect of a Neoplatonized Aristotelian metaphysics.[75] The process of Creation proceeds through three more stages, each of which is associated with further letters of the alphabet, Adamic faculties, Qurʾānic mythologems, and Neoplatonic hypostases. Thus the second plane/presence, *ᶜālam al-iḫtirāᶜ al-thānī*, is that of 'the Dust,' *al-habāʾ*, and is associated with the letter *bāʾ*, the spirit (*rūḥ*), the heavenly Pen (*qalam*), and the Second Intellect. The third, *ᶜālam al-ibdāᶜ al-awwal*, is the atomistic plane, *ṭawr al-ḏarr*, associated with the letter *ǧīm*, the soul (*nafs*), the Footstool (*al-kursī*), and the Universal Soul. The fourth, *ᶜālam al-ibdāᶜ al-thānī*, is the plane of composition, *ṭawr al-tarkīb*, associated with the letter *dāl*, the heart (*qalb*), the heavenly Tablet (*lawḥ*), and the four elements. The whole is a remarkable exposition of a cosmos inextricable from the letters of the alphabet and the divine names. That the accompanying talismans are, in part, intended as aids in gaining supra-rational understandings of the reality of this cosmos gives the lie to any notion that al-Būnī's works, even in their 'practical' aspects, were devoted solely to mundane ends.

The notion of 'the Cloud,' *al-ᶜamāʾ*, as the initial stage of creation and its use as a cosmological term of art are better known from Ibn ᶜArabī's later writings. The term and concept derive from a well-attested *ḥadīṯ* in which, when asked where God was prior to Creation, the Prophet responded: 'He was in a cloud' (*kāna fī ᶜamāʾ*).[76] In both men's writings the Cloud is conceived of as the very first place of manifestation, the

---

[74] Lory, 'Science des lettres et magie', 97.

[75] BnF MS ar. 2658, fol. 5a–b and marginal addition.

[76] For references in the *ḥadīṯ* literature, see Wensinck, *Concordance*, 4: 388.

juncture (*barzaḫ*) between the Creator and his creation from whence the worlds unfold.[77] To the best of my knowledge, Ibn ʿArabī put down in writing his cosmological conception of *al-ʿamāʾ* only in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* and *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, neither of which are thought to have been disseminated widely until after Ibn ʿArabī's death in 638/1240. Thus, given the 622/1225 dating of the audition notice for *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt* cited above, this would *not* appear to be a case of al-Būnī borrowing from Ibn ʿArabī, short of positing an undocumented living relationship between the two. Given that their systems are quite similar on certain points but hardly identical, it well could be an instance in which the influence of al-Mahdawī on both men can be detected.

As mentioned previously, the remaining three major medieval works are distinguished primarily by their omission from the inter-referential circuit that binds together the other five. While this in no way disqualifies them from having been authored by al-Būnī, it does deny them the link to al-Būnī that a reference in *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt* or *ʿIlm al-hudā* would provide. As measured by the number of surviving copies, *al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya fī awrād al-rabbāniyya* is by far the most important of these works, and one of the most important works of the corpus as a whole. The survey for this project found forty copies of the work, not all of them complete. One survives from the seventh/thirteenth century (Chester Beatty MS 3168.5), and the greatest number come from the ninth/fifteenth century. As with many of the other works, certain of these codices are professionally copied and fully vocalized, suggesting that the work was prized by some. It is in four parts:

1) a collection of invocatory prayers keyed to each hour of each day of the week, with brief commentaries on the operative functioning of the names of God that appear in each prayer;

2) a division of the names of God in ten groupings (*anmāṭ*) of names the actions of which in the world are closely related;

3) a further series of invocatory prayers for when various religious holidays, such as the Night of Destiny (*laylat al-qadr*), fall on a given day of the week, and

4) instructions for the composition of *awfāq*. The whole is conceived as a comment on the Greatest Name of God (*al-ism al-aʿẓam*) and is organized according to the proposition that the Greatest Name is situationally relative; that is to say, it could be any of the known divine

---

[77] For references to the topic in Ibn ʿArabī's writings see Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 125–7; Hakīm, *al-Muʿǧam al-ṣūfī*, 820–6; Ebstein and Sviri, 'The So-Called *Risālat al-ḥurūf*', 221–4.

names, varying according to the time and purpose for which it is invoked, the level of spiritual advancement of the practitioner, and so on. Due to this focus on the Greatest Name, the work sometimes appears under the title *Šarḥ al-ism al-aᶜẓam*.

Beyond the large number of surviving copies, the popularity of *al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya* is attested by the numerous references to it in mentions of al-Būnī by authors in the centuries following his death. It is almost certainly the work Ibn Taymiyya intended when he referred to al-Būnī as the author of *al-Šuᶜla al-nūrāniyya* (an essentially synonymous title),[78] and it is the only work mentioned by name in Ibn al-Zayyāt's notice regarding al-Būnī's tomb. In all likelihood it is also the work referred to by Ibn al-Ḫaṭīb as *Kitāb al-anmāṭ*, due to the section in which the divine names are divided into ten groups. In describing this work, Ibn al-Ḫaṭīb mentions the invocatory prayers arranged according the days of the week (*al-daᶜawāt allatī rattabahā ᶜalā al-ayyām*), expressing his concern that an ordinary Muslim might mistake the work for a simple book of prayers, not realizing the occult powers (*al-taṣrīf*) that could be brought into play if the prayers were performed.[79] Ibn Ḫaldūn also mentions *Kitāb al-anmāṭ*, although he is most likely following Ibn al-Ḫaṭīb in this. As discussed in the following section of this paper, *al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya* was also the subject of a lengthy commentary by ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī (regarding whom, see the following section) in the early ninth/fifteenth century, which was no doubt a factor in its enduring popularity.

Tartīb al-daᶜawāt fī taḥṣīṣ al-awqāt ᶜalā ḫtilāf al-irādāt, which often appears under the title *al-Taᶜlīqa fī manāfiᶜ al-Qurᵓān al-ᶜaẓīm*, has been described (on the basis of Leiden MS oriental 1233) by Jan Just Witkam in his article on al-Būnī. Bristling with complex talismanic designs and ending with the key to an exotic-looking Alphabet of Nature (*al-qalam al-ṭabīᶜī*), the work is perhaps the most 'grimoire-ish' of all the members of the medieval corpus. Indeed, one would think it to have been the work most likely to draw the ire of 'conservative' Muslim thinkers, insofar as it is almost exclusively dedicated to the construction and use of talismans toward concrete, worldly ends, including in some cases the slaying of one's enemies. That in many cases these talismans are derived from the Qurᵓān through the 'deconstruction' of the letters of a given *āya* into a complex design to be inscribed on parchment or a given type of metal would be unlikely to assuage suspicions that it is a book of sorcery.

---

[78] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūᶜ*, 10: 251.
[79] Ibn al-Ḫaṭīb, *Rawḍat al-taᶜrīf*, 327.

Nonetheless, the earliest surviving copy found in the survey for this project was copied into the compilatory codex Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260 (copied in 772/1370) alongside *ʿIlm al-hudā*, the most obviously pious-seeming of al-Būnī's works, which suggests that at least some medieval actors perceived no irreconcilable contradiction between them. The text of this work seems particularly unstable across various copies, and that it was often designated as a 'notebook' (*taʿlīqa*) might suggest that it was an unfinished work, or at least that it was regarded as such.

Finally, the short work *Qabs al-iqtidāʾ ilā wafq al-saʿāda wa-naǧm al-ihtidāʾ* is somewhat tame in comparison to *Tartīb al-daʿawāt*, although, as the title implies, it does contain instructions on the devising and use of *awfāq*. The fact that the earliest dated copies of this work are from the ninth/fifteenth century calls its authorship into question more so than the others. It cites the famed Maghribī *šayḫ* Abū Madyan (d. 594/1197), with whom al-Mahdawī was affiliated, as well as Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Qurašī (d. 599/1202), another disciple of Abū Madyan, and al-Qurašī's own student Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Qaṣṭallānī (d. 636/1238).[80] If the work is authentic to al-Būnī then the mentions of these Western Sufis may hint at some further details of his life and training, although he claims no direct connection to them. As discussed in the fourth section of this paper, these *šayḫ*s also appear in some of the *asānīd* alleged to be al-Būnī's in *Šams al-maʿārif al-kubrā*, although it is far more likely that *Qabs al-iqtidāʾ* was the source of these names rather than that the two works can be taken as independently corroborating one another.

In closing this survey of the major works of the medieval corpus, it must be noted that the general observation made here that occult-scientific themes predominate over Sufistic ones in some works (and vice-versa in others) is in no way intended to suggest that clear divisions between these categories are instantiated in al-Būnī's writings, or that there is any indication that some works of the medieval corpus were originally intended for 'Sufis' while others were intended for 'occultists.' To the contrary, the themes typically are integrated seamlessly in medieval Būnian writings, such that a division between them is a matter of second-order analysis rather than something native to the texts. That important interpreters of al-Būnī such as ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī viewed the science of letters 'as a rationally cultivable path to achieve the same knowledge of the divine and of the cosmos that was attainable

---

[80] Süleymaniye MS Laleli 1594.5, fol. 96a–97b.

by mystics through inspiration'[81] should be seen as one possible response to the centuries of debates about whether the science of letters belonged to the 'foreign' or the religious sciences.[82] For al-Būnī, that various forms of divine inspiration were the very essence of the science of letters, distinguishing it from many other sciences, is made clear near the end of *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt*:

> O my brother, know that the secrets of the letters cannot be apprehended by means of analogical reasoning, such as some of the sciences can be, but are realizable only through the mystery of providence, whether through something of the mysteries of inspiration, something of the mysteries of prophetic revelation, something of the mysteries of unveiling, or some [other] type of [divine] communication. Whatever strays from these four categories is but self-deception, in which there is no benefit at all.[83]

Indeed, it is made clear at many points in the medieval corpus that for al-Būnī the science of letters was the 'science of the saints,' and thus a secret teaching at the heart of Sufism rather than a separate or auxiliary body of knowledge.

That there was a process of selection on the part of readers of Būnian works in favor of material with a practical occult–scientific bent is suggested by the predominance of copies of *Šams al-maʿārif*, *al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya*, and (to a lesser extent) *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt* and *Tartīb al-daʿawāt* among surviving ninth/fifteenth-century codices, and by the lesser numbers of copies of *ʿIlm al-hudā*, *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn*, and *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt* in the same period – although it must be admitted that this could be due in whole or in part to accidents of survival and limitations in the data gathered for this project. As discussed in the following sections, certain trends in the reading of al-Būnī alongside other Sufi writers, especially Ibn ʿArabī, bolster the notion of a process of selection along these lines, as does the form taken by *Šams al-maʿārif*

---

[81] Fleischer, Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences, 234. Cf. Gril, Ésotérisme contre hérésie, 186.

[82] For an excellent overview of the contours of this debate, see the section 'Lettrism in classifications of the sciences' in Matthew Melvin-Koushki's forthcoming essay, *Occult Philosophy and the Millenarian Quest*, (19–25 in the draft copy).

[83] *Iʿlam yā aḫī anna asrār al-ḥurūf lā tudraku bi-šayʾ min al-qiyyās kamā tudraku baʿḍ al-ʿulūm wa-lā tudraku illā bi-sirr al-ʿināya ammā bi- šayʾ min asrār al-ilqāʾ aw šayʾ min asrār al-waḥy aw šayʾ min asrār al-kašf aw nawʿ min anwāʿ al-muḫāṭabāt wa-mā ʿadā hāḏihi al-aqsām al-arbaʿa fa-ḥadīṯ nafs lā fāʾidata fīhi.* BnF MS arabe 2658, fol. 89b.

al-kubrā when it appeared around the start of the eleventh/seventeenth century.

The transmission and reception of Būnian works from the eighth/fourteenth to the tenth/sixteenth centuries

An understanding of the social milieux in which the works of the Būnian corpus circulated, and of the ways in which they were taught and reproduced, is crucial to assessing the career of the corpus, as well as to examining the relationship(s) of al-Būnī's teachings to ever-shifting notions of Islamic 'orthodoxy.' What follows addresses the geographical spread of the corpus, some prosopographical observations about actors involved with Būnian works, notes on some transmission practices that were used, and a brief assessment of what all this suggests about the role of Būnian works in certain social and intellectual trends of the eighth/fourteenth through tenth/sixteenth centuries. Finally, there is a brief discussion of the legal status of Būnian codices and the notion that risks may have accompanied the production and/or ownership of them.

Some general comments can be made about the geographical spread of the corpus in the centuries after al-Būnī's death, although these are limited both by the rarity of locative notations in colophons and other paratexts, and by the fact that the data for this article does not include much detailed information on codices in Iranian, northwest African, and southern European libraries. The vast majority of the pre-ninth/fifteenth-century codices examined thus far appear to have originated in Egypt and Syria, judging by paratextual statements, the copyists' hands, and certain physical characteristics such as the papers used and the few surviving original covers. A handful of these earliest codices are definitively located, e.g. Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260, a collection of Būnian works copied in Damascus in 772/1370; Süleymaniye MSS Reşid efendi 590.1 and 590.2, a two-part copy of *ᶜIlm al-hudā* copied in Cairo which also notes that its exemplar was copied near Alexandria; and Süleymaniye MS Reisulkuttab 1162.17, a copy of *al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya* copied in Damietta in 789/1387. The only definitively located outlier among these early codices is BnF MS arabe 2657, a copy of *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt* copied in Mecca in 788/1386; how long it remained there is unknown, but it had found its way to Aleppo by 949/1542, as evidenced by a *duᶜāʾ* inscribed on its titlepage written to protect that city from *al-ṭāᶜūn*, the Black Death.

Codices from the ninth/fifteenth century were produced as far north as Aleppo (the compilatory codex Süleymaniye MS Laleli 1549, copied in 881/1476), and as far west as Tripoli (the compilatory codex Princeton

MS Garrett 1895Y, copied in 834/1430). On the basis of Ibn al-Ḫaṭīb's knowledge of al-Būnī, however, it must be the case that Būnian works were circulating in the Maghrib and al-Andalus (at least in Granada) during the eighth/fourteenth century, and their continuing presence in the West is attested by Leo Africanus' observation of Būnian works circulating in Fez around 905/1500.[84] As for the northern and eastern stretches of the Muslim world, the first codices that can be tied definitively to Istanbul do not appear until the latter half of the tenth/sixteenth century, as does a single codex that appears to have been copied in Valjevo, Serbia in 963/1556, not long after Ottoman rule was established there (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek MS A.F. 162a). However, several earlier codices copied in distinctly Eastern hands strongly suggest that Būnian works were circulating well north and east of Syria by the end of the ninth/fifteenth century, as does evidence of their circulation in a certain transregional intellectual network discussed below.

Beyond the issue of geographical diffusion are questions of the social milieux in which Būnian works were transmitted and presumably put to use. In other words, what sorts of people were copying and/or purchasing these hundreds of manuscripts containing knowledge that is frequently assumed to have been quite heterodox in relation to dominant expressions of Islam? One method of approaching these questions undertaken for this project has been the compilation of a rudimentary prosopography of the human actors (auditors, copyists, owners, patrons, etc.) involved in the production and transmission of the corpus, the result being a list of just over a hundred individuals. There are serious limitations to this approach, insofar as many codices lack colophons, ownership statements, or other paratexts that would be of use in this regard, and because those actors who did leave traces in the corpus most often recorded only sparse information about themselves. Nonetheless, the compilation of what data exist allows for the deduction of some compelling observations, especially when viewed in relation to literary evidence and other sources.

Almost one-third of the actors involved with the corpus identified themselves as Sufis, most commonly through inclusion of the title *al-faqīr* or some variant thereof prior to their name, and their prevalence among the producers and owners of Būnian works supports the general notion that the spread of the corpus was abetted by the continuing growth in popularity of Sufi modes of piety. The earliest example comes from

---

[84] Hamès, 'al-Būnī', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed.

the string of titles attached to ʿUmar b. Ibrāhīm, one of the auditors of *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt* in Cairo in 622/1225, which include *al-qāḍī,* 'the judge,' *al-zāhid,* 'the ascetic,' and *qāḍī al-fuqarāʾ,* 'judge of the Sufis (the poor ones).' Another thirty-three actors, spread more or less evenly between the eighth/fourteenth and twelfth/eighteenth centuries, each identified themselves as *al-faqīr,* and a number of instances in which the title *al-šayḫ* was claimed are probably indicative of Sufis as well. In only a handful of statements did actors label themselves as adherents of a particular order. One finds, for example, ʿUṯmān b. Abī Bakr *al-Qādirī al-Ḥanafī* as the copyist of a large compilation of Būnian works produced in 893/1488 (Süleymaniye MS Carullah 2083), and *al-faqīr* Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-ʿAwlawī[?] *al-Qādirī murīdan al-Ḥanafī maḏhaban* as the copyist of a codex of *Šams al-maʿārif* produced in 903/1498 (Süleymaniye MS Nuruosmaniye 2835). Beyond these two Qādirīs, the Rifāʿī, Shāḏilī and Mevlevī orders are also represented, each by a single actor. As is apparent from some of these examples, affiliation with a particular *maḏhab* was occasionally recorded as well; eight self-identified Shāfiʿīs and five Ḥanafīs are represented in the data accumulated for this study.

As a number of recent studies have shown, in late medieval Egypt and Syria the spread and growing social influence of Sufism was facilitated to a significant degree by the championing and financial sponsorship of various individual Sufis and Sufi institutions by Turkish military elites (i.e. *mamlūk*s), as well as by the participation of Arab civilian elites who filled bureaucratic, judicial, and teaching positions in the regimes of the former. This manifested in many cases in the construction of *ḫānqāh*s and tombs for Sufi saints by wealthy elites, and sometimes also in their defense of controversial Sufis and their followers from attempts by 'conservative' factions among the *ʿulamāʾ* to curb their perceived doctrinal and praxic excesses. Some of the best-documented cases of the latter stem from the numerous controversies throughout the Mamlūk period surrounding the poet *cum* saint Ibn al-Fāriḍ, as explored by Emil Homerin.[85] In light of the prevalence of such Sufi–*mamlūk* relationships in the late medieval and early modern periods, it is of no small interest that another category of actors intertwined with the Būnian corpus is members of the ruling elite and their households. For example, *al-mamlūk* Ḥasan Qadam *al-Ḥanafī maḏhaban* was the owner of a copy of

---

[85] Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint*, 55–77. For broader studies of the interactions of military elites and Arab scholars, Sufis, and bureaucrats, see the works by Chamberlain and Berkey listed in the bibliography.

ᶜIlm al-hudā, Süleymaniye MS Kılıç Ali Paşa 588 – the codex was copied in 792/1392, with Ḥasan Qadam acquiring it in 840/1436. BnF MS arabe 2649, a handsomely rendered copy of *Šams al-maᶜārif* copied in Cairo in 913/1508, includes on its titlepage a patronage notice linking it to *sayyidī* ᶜAlī, *al-dawādār* of the household of *al-amīr* Ṭūǧān al-Nawrūzī.[86] Similarly, the colophon of a copy of ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī's commentary on *al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya* (Süleymaniye MS Carullah 1560, copied 952/1546) registers it as being from the library (*ḫizāna*) of the *amīr* Pīrī [Mehmed] Pāšā b. Ramaḍān (d. 974/1567), the head of a *beylik* centered in Adana, and notes that it was copied by his *mamlūk* Ibn ᶜAbd Allāh.[87]

Many of the more lavishly produced copies of Būnian works were no doubt made for elite households. One that was certainly a patronage gift, although no recipient is named, is Süleymaniye MS Nuruosmaniye 2822, a copy of *Tartīb al-daᶜawāt* (but bearing the title *Šarḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*). Copied in 814/1411 and penned in an elegant Syro-Egyptian hand, its most outstanding feature is that all of the many complex talismans are exquisitely rendered in gold ink (i.e. chrysographed), with section headings in blue ink – a combination of colors predominant in illuminated codices produced for Mamlūk courts. An interest in the occult sciences at many Muslim courts is well attested,[88] and that this would have intersected with many late medieval and early modern rulers' enthusiasm for Sufism is hardly surprising. Any science that promised the ability to predict future events was of great interest to those in power, and the defensive aspects of Būnian talismanic praxis were no doubt appealing to players in such dangerous arenas as Mamlūk and Ottoman politics. Cornell Fleischer has argued for the general importance of the occult sciences at Ottoman courts,[89] and Hasan Karatas has recently discussed the role of defensive *awfāq* in early tenth/sixteenth-century court intrigue in Istanbul.[90] The elaborately *wafq*-covered talisman shirts of Ottoman sultans of the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth

---

[86] BnF MS Arabe 2649, fol. 1a.

[87] Süleymaniue MS Carullah 1560, fol. 123b. Regarding Pīrī Mehmed Pāšā see Y. Kurt's entry 'Pîrî Mehmed Paşa, Ramazanoğlu' in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, and F. Babinger's entry 'Ramaḍān Oġulları' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

[88] Brentjes, 'Courtly Patronage of the Ancient Sciences in Post-Classical Islamic Societies', 416 ff.

[89] Fleischer, 'Shadow of Shadows', and 'Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences'.

[90] Karatas, 'The Mastery of Occult Sciences as a Deterrent Weapon', passim.

century can be regarded as one outgrowth of the embrace of these occult technologies by preceding rulers.[91]

In addition to *mamlūk*s, certain names in the prosopography are suggestive of individuals of Arab descent working as bureaucrats under military regimes, such as the copyist of Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260, ᶜAlī b. ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜUmar, *kātib al-qawāsīn* (secretary of the archers), or the *qāḍī al-Šām* ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān, who owned what is probably a tenth/sixteenth-century copy of *Šams al-maᶜārif* (Süleymaniye MS Murad Buharı 236). That bureaucrats and others with close ties to military elites were sometimes among the readers of the corpus is also suggested by the mention of al-Būnī's works in al-Qalqašandī's (d. 821/1418) great secretarial manual, *Ṣubḥ al-aᶜšā fī ṣināᶜat al-inšāʾ*, wherein he lists *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt* and *Šams al-maᶜārif* as works in circulation among the learned of his day.[92] In addition to sharing the interests of their rulers in the predictive and defensive aspects of Būnian praxis, that the central role of complex talismans rendered it an inherently scribal praxis may have added to its appeal for 'men of the pen.'

As for the means through which Būnian teachings were transmitted in the centuries after al-Būnī's death, there is evidence that knowledge of the texts at least sometimes was passed through recognized lines of teachers. This comes from the writings of the Antiochene scholar ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī (d. 858/1454), who helped facilitate the continuing popularity and spread of the Būnian corpus with his commentary on *al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya* (entitled *Rašḥ aḏwāq al-ḥikma al-rabbāniyya fī šarḥ awfāq al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya*) and his other works that drew heavily on Būnian writings. In *Rašḥ aḏwāq al-ḥikma*, al-Bisṭāmī notes that while in Cairo in 807/1404–5, he 'read' *al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya* under the instruction of *šayḫ* Abū ᶜAbd Allāh ᶜIzz al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ǧamāᶜa al-Kinānī (*qaraʾtu kitāb al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya ᶜalā al-šayḫ… Muḥammad ibn Ǧamāᶜa*).[93] The *qaraʾa ᶜalā* construction used by al-Bisṭāmī is indicative of a mode of face-to-face textual transmission closely related to audition (*samiᶜa ᶜalā*). While 'reading' a text before a *šayḫ* seems generally to have been regarded as one step lower in the hierarchy of textual transmission practices than 'hearing' one, it was nonetheless regarded as a valid means of passing on the authority to

---

[91] For an excellent photographic catalog of these shirts held in the collection of the Topkapı Palace Museum, see Tezcan's new edition of *Tılsımlı Gömlekler*.

[92] Al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aᶜšā*, 1: 475.

[93] Süleymaniye MS Carullah 1543.1, fol. 5b.

utilize and teach a text, and as far preferable to simply reading a book by oneself.[94] The same grammatical construction was used by the glossator of the exemplar for Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1 to describe his reading of ʿIlm al-hudā under the tutelage of Abū l-Faḍl al-Ġumārī, indicating that this practice was already being employed at one step of remove from al-Būnī himself. Al-Bisṭāmī's mention of having read the book under the supervision of ʿIzz al-Dīn Muḥammad indicates that at least one of al-Būnī's works was still being taught through a living line of authorities at the dawn of the ninth/fifteenth century. That al-Bisṭāmī felt that his having read *al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya* under ʿIzz al-Dīn Muḥammad was something worth mentioning indicates that he regarded that act of transmission as licensing his own commentary on the work, and that his readers would have recognized this as well.

The identity of the *šayḫ* before whom al-Bisṭāmī read *al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya* is also noteworthy. ʿIzz al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ǧamāʿa (d. 819/1416–17) was a scion of the Ibn Ǧamāʿa scholarly 'dynasty, 'and his immediate forbears had served for three generations in some of the highest civilian offices of Mamlūk Cairo and Jerusalem, while also being known for their devotion to Sufism. ʿIzz al-Dīn Muḥammad's great grandfather, Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 733/1333), served as the Šāfiʿī grand *qāḍī* of Cairo and *šayḫ al-šuyūḫ* of the Sufi fraternities on and off between 690/1291 and 727/1327,[95] and his grandfather, ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 767/1366), and paternal uncle, Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm (d. 790/1388), had similarly illustrious careers.[96] Although the family's power in Cairo waned during ʿIzz al-Dīn Muḥammad's lifetime, the Syrian branch of the family maintained a high standing in Damascus and Jerusalem well into the Ottoman period under the *nisba* al-Nābulusī. ʿAbd al-Ġānī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731), one of the great interpreters of both Ibn ʿArabī and Ibn al-Fāriḍ, was a distant relation of ʿIzz al-Dīn Muḥammad.[97] That ʿIzz al-Dīn Muḥammad was regarded (at least by al-Bisṭāmī) as an authorized transmitter of al-Būnī's teachings further bolsters the notion that al-Būnī's works had something of a following among Arab scholarly elites with close ties to the ruling military

---

[94] Regarding the difficult question of the distinction between the practices recorded as *samiʿa ʿalā* and *qaraʾa ʿalā*, see Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 241–3.

[95] Although the fact that Badr al-Dīn called for destruction of copies of some of Ibn ʿArabī's works suggests he most likely would have disapproved of al-Būnī's works. See Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 123–4.

[96] Salibi, 'The Banu Jamaʿa', 97–103.

[97] Sirriyeh, 'Whatever Happened to the Banu Jamaʿa?', 55–64.

households. Indeed, al-Bisṭāmī's exposure to, and continued interest in, al-Būnī's works can be taken as further evidence of this, insofar as al-Bisṭāmī was a sort of professional court intellectual whose career bridged Mamlūk and early Ottoman ruling households in Cairo and Bursa.

Fleischer notes that, while in Cairo, al-Bisṭāmī 'established contact with the 'Rumi' (Rumelian and Anatolian) scholarly circles that had for several decades journeyed to the Mamlūk capital for education and for the lively spiritual life the city offered.'[98] Eventually returning to reside at the Ottoman court in Bursa, al-Bisṭāmī came to be a leading participant in 'an extraordinary network of religious scholars, mystics, and intellectuals' connecting Mamlūk, Timurid, and Ottoman courts of the late eighth/fourteenth through ninth/fifteenth centuries, a network whose ideas were loosely unified by shared interest in the occult sciences (especially the science of letters), millenarian speculation, and—though al-Bisṭāmī and many others identified as Sunnīs—reverence for ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and many of his descendants as recipients of ancient wisdom that had passed down through the prophets since Adam.[99] Al-Bisṭāmī often referred to himself and others in this far-flung intellectual collective as the 'Brethren of Purity and Friends of Fidelity' (*iḫwān al-ṣafāʾ wa-ḫullān al-wafāʾ*),[100] an evocation of those proto-Ismāʿīlī provocateurs of fourth/tenth-century Iraq, whose *Epistles* (*Rasāʾil iḫwān al-ṣafāʾ*) constitute one of the great bodies of 'golden age' Islamic occult-scientific literature. A key early figure in this network seems to have been Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥusayn al-Aḫlāṭī (d. 799/1397), a perhaps-Damascene physician, alchemist, and astrologer who served in the court of the Mamlūk sultan, al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Sayf al-Dīn Barqūq (d. 801/1399).[101] Three of al-Aḫlāṭī's students also have been associated by modern scholars with the neo-*Iḫwān al-ṣafāʾ*: the Timurid thinker Sāʾin al-Dīn Turka Iṣfahānī (d. 835/1432), a theorist in the science of letters whose 'stated goal was to create a universal science that would encompass history and the cosmos and unify all of human knowledge under its aegis,' and who a number of times was forced to defend himself against charges of heresy;[102] Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazīd (d. 858/1454), the Timurid historian (and biographer of Timur himself) who was also known as an expert in the occult sciences and cryptographic poetry

---

[98] Fleischer, 'Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences', 232.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.; cf. Gril, *Ésotérisme contre hérésie*, 186.
[101] Binbaş, Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī, 139 ff.
[102] Melvin-Koushki, Occult Philosophy and the Millenarian Quest, 2.

(*mu^cammā*); Molla Fenārī, (d. 834/1431), the first *šayḫ al-islām* under the Ottomans;[103] and Šayḫ Badr al-Dīn al-Simāwī (d. ca. 821/1418), an erstwhile student of Mubārakšāh al-Manṭiqī (d. 815/1413) who became a 'millenarian activist' under al-Aḫlāṭī's influence, went on to become well known as a judge and as a commentator on Ibn ^cArabī's works, and ended his life as a leader of an ultimately unsuccessful rebellion fuelled by millenarian expectations that 'shook the Ottoman State' in 819/1416.[104]

   The origins, extent, and duration of this neo-*Iḫwān al-ṣafā^ʾ* 'movement' (if indeed it ever achieved a level of coherence worthy of that label), and the precise contours of the political and/or religious convictions its members shared, are the topics of much current research, most of it focused on the ninth/fifteenth century.[105] It is of no small interest then, that in the multipart paratext at the end of Süleymaniye MS Reşid efendi 590.2, the aforementioned copy of *^cIlm al-hudā* completed in Cairo in 798/1396, the collator Ayyūb b. Quṭlū Beg *al-Rūmī al-Ḥanafī* notes the following about the exemplar from which he had worked: 'The copy of the text against which this copy was collated has written at the end of it that it was collated, as well as possible, in the presence of the Brethren of Purity and Friends of Fidelity at the Muḥassaniyya *ḫānqāh…*' (*Wa-l-nusḫa allatī qūbilat hāḏihi ^calayhā maktūb fī āḫirihā wa-qūbilat ḥasab al-imkān bi-ḥaḍrat iḫwān al-ṣafā^ʾ wa-ḫullān al-wafā^ʾ bi-l-ḫānqāh al-muḥassaniyya bi-ṯaġr al-Iskāndariyya…*). It is noted in the colophon to the first part of this set (MS Reşid efendi 590.1) that this exemplar was produced in 738/1337. Thus, if this statement is a direct quote of what was found in the exemplar—which the phrasing certainly suggests—it would appear that the self-designation *iḫwān al-ṣafā^ʾwa-ḫullān al-wafā^ʾ* was in use among some of those involved with the Būnian corpus more than sixty years prior to al-Bisṭāmī's studying of *al-Lum^ca al-nūrāniyya* in Cairo, a date that would push the origins of the movement at least to the time of al-Aḫlāṭī's youth. Alternatively, it could be supposed that Ayyūb b. Quṭlū Beg *al-Rūmī*, himself perhaps a

---

   [103] Binbaş, Sharaf al-Dīn ^cAlī Yazdī, 100.
   [104] Ibid., 144–5.
   [105] See Fleischer, *Ancient Wisdom*; Binbaş, *Sharaf al-Dīn ^cAlī Yazdī*, 99–106; Melvin-Koushki, *Occult Philosophy and the Millenarian Quest*, 11–12 and 25; Fazıoğlu, 'İlk Dönem Osmanlı İlim'; Gril, *Ésoterisme*. Binbaş has made the strongest claims for the group's coherence in arguing that the neo-*Iḫwānī*s were 'a non-hierarchical intellectual collectivity' (106).

member of the Cairene *Rūmī* circles Fleischer describes, retrojected this appellation onto the earlier gathering.

Al-Būnī's works were certainly in circulation among some 'members' of the neo-*Iḫwān al-safāʾ* by the late eighth/fourteenth and early ninth/fifteenth centuries, and likely were an ingredient of al-Aḫlāṭī's teachings. Elements of Būnian praxis, typically in combination with interpretations of Ibn ʿArabī's thought, feature prominently in many of al-Bisṭāmī's other works beyond his commentary on *al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya*, especially in his *Šams al-āfāq fī ʿilm al-ḥurūf wa-l-awfāq*. Ṣāʾin al-Dīn Turka acknowledged the efficacy and legitimacy of Būnian praxis, although he too drew heavily on Ibn ʿArabī and positioned his own interest in the science of letters as serving philosophical rather than practical ends.[106] Indeed, it seems as if a dynamic may have emerged in this period whereby the works of al-Būnī were understood to convey the practical application of the science of letters while those of Ibn ʿArabī were credited with propounding its philosophical/theoretical dimensions. Certainly their works seem often to have been read together, as indicated by the numerous compilatory codices of the ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth centuries (and beyond) in which both men's writings are bound, or in which Būnian works appear alongside those of Ibn ʿArabī's famous interpreters, such as Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qunāwī (d. 673/1274). Such pairings are all the more striking in light of al-Būnī and Ibn ʿArabī both having been students of al-Mahdawī, and the apparent popularity of *ʿIlm al-hudā* in the eighth/fourteenth century suggests that many readers would have been aware of this shared background. Of course, parallels between al-Būnī and Ibn ʿArabī's ideas, such as the aforementioned notion of 'the Cloud' as the first stage of creation, were no doubt apparent to readers of the period as well, and the emphasis on the practical value of al-Būnī's writings and the preference for Ibn ʿArabī as a theorist may have been factors in readers' selections of which Būnian works were worthy of reproduction.

The understanding of al-Būnī and Ibn ʿArabī as two sides of the same coin is also seen in the writings of some of their critics. Both Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Ḫaṭīb and Ibn Ḫaldūn closely associated al-Būnī with Ibn ʿArabī, grouping them with other Sufis whose teachings they considered radical, such as Ibn Barraǧān, Ibn Qasī, Ibn Sabʿīn, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *et al.* Ibn al-Ḫaṭīb, in his *Rawḍat al-taʿrīf bi-l-ḥubb al-šarīf*, referred to this grouping under the rather dubious heading of the 'accomplished [mystics] who consider themselves to be perfect' (*min al-mutammimīn*

---

[106] Melvin-Koushki, Occult Philosophy and the Millenarian Quest, 17.

bi-zaᶜmihim al-mukammalīn),[107] while the more critical Ibn Ḫaldūn referred to them as 'extremist Sufis' (*al-ġulāt min al-mutaṣawwifa)*.[108] Ibn al-Ḫaṭīb's explanation of the cosmological presuppositions of the science of letters allegedly shared by these Sufis is in fact closely adapted from the section of *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt* wherein al-Būnī's four-fold scheme of creation is initially presented, though Ibn al-Ḫaṭīb does not identify al-Būnī as his source.[109] Ibn Ḫaldūn's presentation of the same topic in *Šifāʾ al-sāʾil li-tahḏīb al-masāʾil* in turn appears to be greatly indebted to Ibn al-Ḫaṭīb's text.[110]

Ibn Ḫaldūn's critique of the 'extremist' Sufis was multi-faceted, and included charges that their obscure terminology and speculative theosophy distracted from the true duty of Muslims to obey God's law, accusations that they were crypto-agents of millenarian Ismāᶜīlī theories of the *mahdī* (with the Shīᶜite *mahdī replaced* by the Sufi 'pole [*quṭb*] of the age'), and of course his indictment of the science of letters as a form of sorcery in Sufi garb. Alexander Knysh has argued that Ibn Ḫaldūn's misgivings were motivated by 'sociopolitical rather than theological considerations,' and that they 'should be seen against the background of the turbulent Maghribi history that was punctuated by popular uprisings led by self-appointed *mahdī*s who supported their claims through magic, thaumaturgy, and occult prognostication'.[111] Taking a somewhat different tack, James Morris has recently argued that Ibn Ḫaldūn's accusations were not theological or social critiques so much as strategic elements in a rhetorical offensive aimed at the elimination of 'any suspicion of an intellectually and philosophically serious alternative to Ibn Ḫaldūn's own understanding of the proper forms and interrelations of Islamic philosophy and religious belief'.[112] Without quite contradicting either of these analyses, I would put forward the proposition that, at least with respect to his attack in *al-Muqaddima* on al-Būnī and Ibn ᶜArabī as promulgators of the science of letters, Ibn Ḫaldūn may have been responding to the more tangible and immediate threat of millenarian and occult-scientific ideas circulating at the Cairene court and in elite circles

---

[107] Knysh, *Ibn ᶜArabī*, 179.

[108] Ibn Ḫaldūn, *Muqaddima*, 664 (transl. Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, 171).

[109] Ibn al-Ḫaṭīb, *Rawḍat al-taᶜrīf*, 324–6.

[110] Ibn Ḫaldūn, *Šifāʾ al-sāʾil*, 212–15. Regarding Ibn Ḫaldūn's likely borrowings from Ibn al-Ḫaṭīb in regard to Ibn ᶜArabī, see Knysh, *Ibn ᶜArabī,* 195.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Morris, 'An Arab Machiavelli? ', 256.

orbiting it. Gril observes that this section of *al-Muqaddima* does not appear in the version of the work that Ibn Ḫaldūn drafted while still in the Maghrib,[113] which suggests that he added it sometime after his arrival in Cairo in 784/1382 – the same year that al-Aḫlāṭī's patron Barqūq first attained the sultanate. Given that al-Būnī and Ibn ᶜArabī's writings seem to have played a prominent role of in the thought of the neo-*Iḫwān al-ṣafāʾ*, the pro-ᶜAlid mythology and occult and millenarian preoccupations the group cultivated, and the fact that they seem to have been active in Egyptian elite circles as least as early as al-Aḫlāṭī's tenure at Barqūq's court, but possibly decades earlier, I think the possibility must be entertained that this section of *al-Muqaddima* was aimed at the intellectual foundations of the neo-*Iḫwān al-safāʾ*, or some germinal form of the group.

That Ibn Ḫaldūn was not averse to attempts to enforce his views on these matters is clear from the *fatwā* he issued while in Egypt calling for the destruction by fire or water of books by Ibn ᶜArabī, Ibn Sabᶜīn, Ibn Barraǧān, and their followers, on the grounds that they were 'filled with pure unbelief and vile innovations, as well as corresponding interpretations of the outward forms [of scripture and practice] in the most bizarre, unfounded, and reprehensible ways'.[114] Although al-Būnī's works are not specified in the *fatwā*, that they would be included in this general category seems clear from Ibn Ḫaldūn's earlier writings. Of course, that a *fatwā* was issued hardly guarantees that it was carried out, and I am aware of no evidence that action was taken on Ibn Ḫaldūn's injunction. This raises the fascinating question of whether or not codices containing Būnian works were ever the targets of organized destruction, or otherwise suffered the status of legally hazardous objects that books of magic have often borne in other cultural milieux.

The Damascene *mudarris* and *ḫaṭīb* Tāǧ al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) dictated in his *Muᶜīd al-niᶜam* that booksellers were forbidden from peddling works by heretics or astrologers.[115] The subject is not touched upon in Ibn al-Uḫuwwa's (d. 729/1329) acclaimed guide to supervision of the public markets, *Maᶜālim al-qurba fī aḥkām al-ḥisba*, and neither is anything else pertaining to the supervision of booksellers by city authorities, suggesting that enforcement of such dictates via the *muḥtasib*

---

[113] Gril, 'The Science of Letters', 143.
[114] Morris' translation (An Arab Machiavelli?', 249).
[115] Shatzmiller, 'Tidjāra', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

was uncommon in this period.[116] To the best of my knowledge there is no record in the literary sources of organized destruction of Būnian works having occurred. What is more, the numerous surviving Būnian codices that are finely wrought objects with signed colophons, ownership notices, patronage statements, etc. hardly suggest works that were regularly subject to legal interdiction. As for how they were obtained, some were certainly copied by those who wanted to own them, but certain data suggest that copies of Būnian works also could be purchased in the same ways as those of other sorts of works. Süleymaniye MS Hafid efendi 198 is a copy of *Šams al-maʿārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ʿawārif* rendered in a highly readable Syro-Egyptian *nasḫ* in 855/1451 by one Muḥammad b. Ḥaǧǧī al-Ḫayrī al-Šāfiʿī. As this name is rather distinctive, it is almost certain (and slightly ironic) that this is the same Muḥammad b. Ḥaǧǧī al-Ḫayrī al-Šāfiʿī who in 870/1465–66 produced a copy of Ǧalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī's commentary on al-Subkī's own *Ǧamʿ al-ǧawāmiʿ fī uṣūl al-fiqh* (Chester Beatty MS 3200). While it is possible that al-Ḫayrī copied both al-Būnī's work and this volume on *fiqh* for his own use, it is at least as likely that he worked as a professional copyist, producing both codices under commission. Another example, albeit a very late one, is two complete copies (i.e. not the two halves of a set) of *Šams al-maʿārif al-kubrā* produced in Jerusalem, Süleymaniye MSS Hekimoğlu 534, copied in 1118/1707, and Hekimoğlu 537, copied in 1119/1708, both of which were copied by one Muḥammad Nūr Allāh *al-ḥāfiẓ li-kalām Allāh*. This suggests that *Šams al-maʿārif al-kubrā* was part of Muḥammad Nūr Allāh's standard repetoire, and, especially given the technical difficulties involved in the rendering of complex talismans, it is quite conceivable that some earlier copyists also may have 'specialized' in Būnian works to the extent of including them in their regular offerings. Of course, it is also quite possible that some scribes refused to do such work on religious grounds.

In summary, while it is possible that, as Yahya Michot proposes, Būnian works were popular among street-level astrologers and other 'magical' practitioners serving the general public,[117] there is nothing to indicate that such people were especially responsible for the corpus' spread. Neither is there any indication that codices of Būnian works were marked as particularly illicit objects. Indeed, the books seem frequently

---

[116] Ibn al-Uḫuwwa does deal with astrologers operating in the *sūq*, although his directives regarding them are fairly mild. See Michot and Savage-Smith, *Ibn Taymiyya on Astrology*, 280.

[117] Ibid. 279–80.

to have moved among a rather elite readership, close to the centers of power, as well as through wider Sufi circles, and to have been transmitted and copied in essentially the same ways as works on other topics, including—at least until the turn of the ninth/fifteenth-century—transmission through 'authorized' lines of teachers. However, as discussed in the following section, it seems to be the case that whatever slight protection against undue alteration and/or forgery that such transmission practices may have provided largely had fallen by the wayside by the turn of the eleventh/seventeenth century.

Al-Būnī in the eleventh/seventeenth century: Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā
Al-Būnī's modern reputation as a master of magic rests largely on the lengthy, talisman-laden miscellany on the occult sciences entitled *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* (sometimes called *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif*, or just *Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif*, although it is drastically different from the medieval work by that name), a work that apparently was introduced to the Western scholarly community by Wilhelm Ahlwardt's late nineteenth-century catalog entry detailing the contents of a codex held in Berlin, and which has appeared since around the same time in a number of commercial Middle Eastern printed editions.[118] A scholarly consensus has emerged that large parts of the work probably are interpolations by authors other than al-Būnī.[119] What follows supports this by verifying the late production dates of the numerous surviving manuscript copies of the work, as well as by identifying the origins of some of the *asānīd* near the end of the work

---

[118] Ahlwardt, *Verzeichniss*, entry no. 4125.

[119] *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* is a lengthy and rather uneven work. It is divided into forty chapters (*fuṣūl*) which are largely self-contained texts on a variety of occult-scientific topics. Many scholars have noted multiple problems of coherence and consistency between the various chapters of the work, particularly in various schema of correspondences between the letters of the Arabic alphabet and sundry astrological forces, e.g. Francis, 'Islamic Symbols', 149-58. Pierre Lory offers the most generous and considered defense of *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* in asserting that, while it may not aspire to systematic philosophical coherence, it at least expresses a generally consistent view of a world determined by the metaphysical action of the divine names and hence manipulable thereby (*La science des lettres*, 96). Above and beyond the issue of internal coherence, a number of scholars, beginning in the 1960s with Mohamed el-Gawhary and Toufic Fahd, have noted serious difficulties in reconciling parts of the *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* with the widely accepted death date for al-Būnī of 622/1225.

that are claimed to be al-Būnī's, and which many modern scholars have puzzled over.

The most basic observation regarding *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* to have emerged from the survey conducted for this project is that, of the twenty-six colophonically dated copies of the work (out of fifty-one total), the earliest, Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek MS 2755, is dated 1623 in a handlist of the collection. Of the fourteen undated copies that I have been able to view, none is possessed of any features that suggest an earlier date of production, but rather they are remarkably similar in their *mise-en-page*, hands, and other features to the dated copies. Given the plethora of dated copies of other Būnian works stretching back to the seventh/thirteenth century, there is no compelling reason that, if such a lengthy and important work were composed much earlier than the eleventh/seventeenth century, not even a single earlier dated copy would have survived. The fact that al-Manāwī mentions *ṣuġrā*, *wusṭā*, and *kubrā* versions of *Šams al-maᶜārif* in *al-Kawākib al-durriyya* (completed in 1011/1602-3) could indicate a slightly earlier origin for the work,[120] but, as argued above, the use of this designation could just as well have been the result of owners or booksellers with copies of the medieval *Šams* reacting to the presence of other texts marked as *Šams al-maᶜārif al-ṣuġrā*. Whatever its precise date of origin, the encyclopedic *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* is certainly a product of one or more early modern compilators, and not of al-Būnī or his amanuenses.

A section of *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* that has commanded a great deal of attention from modern scholars is a set of *asānīd* for al-Būnī near the end of the work, which claim to identify al-Būnī's mentors in the science of letters and other areas of knowledge, as well as to identify the lines of teachers preceding al-Būnī's masters through whom this knowledge was passed down. Indeed, some of the oft-noted issues of anachronism in *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* stem from these *asānīd*, insofar as they place people assumed to have been younger than al-Būnī several steps before him in the chain of transmission, such that, for example, he is said to have a received the teachings of Ibn ᶜArabī through five intermediaries, and those of al-Šāḏilī's pupil Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-Mursī (d. 686/1287) through three intermediaries.[121] Several modern researchers have commented on these issues, although Witkam has done the most thorough analyses of the *asānīd* based on the forms they take in printed

---

[120]　Al-Manāwī, *al-Kawākib al-durriyya*, 2: 38.
[121]　Lory, *La science des lettres*, 92; Witkam, 'Gazing at the Sun', 194.

editions of the work, and I have drawn in part on Witkam's work in what follows.[122]

It can now be shown that at least two of the *asānīd* were copied from the writings of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī, where they were originally presented as al-Bisṭāmī's own chains. The first instance is the chain that, in *Šams al-maʿārif al-kubrā*, claims to trace one of the lines through which al-Būnī's knowledge of the science of letters was developed back to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī; this is 'Pedigree C' in Witkam's analysis.[123] Table 1 below shows the *asānīd* as they appear in three sources: the left-hand column is from Süleymaniye MS Bağdatlı Vehbi 930, a codex copied in 836/1433 of a work by al-Bisṭāmī bearing the title *al-ʿUǧāla fī ḥall al-anmāṭ al-muʿarrafa bi-ǧamʿ Abī l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad*.

Table 1: First example of a plagiarized *isnād*

MS Bağdatlı Vehbi 930 fol. 6ᵇ-7ᵃ	MS Beşir Ağa 89 fol. 213ᵇ	Witkam 2007 'Pedigree C'
ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib		
Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī	Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī	Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī
Ḥabīb al-ʿAǧamī	Ḥabīb al-ʿAǧamī	Ḥabīb al-ʿAǧamī
Dāwūd al-Ṭāʾī	Dāwūd al-Ṭāʾī	Dāwūd al-Ǧabalī
Maʿrūf al-Karḫī	Maʿrūf al-Karḫī	Maʿrūf al-Karḫī
Sarī al-Saqaṭī	Sarī al-Saqaṭī	Sarī al-Dīn al-Saqaṭī
Ǧunayd al-Baġdādī	Ǧunayd al-Baġdādī	Ǧunayd al-Baġdādī
Mimšād al-Dīnawarī	Mimšād al-Dīnawarī	Ḥammād al-Dīnawarī
Aḥmad al-Aswad	–	Aḥmad al-Aswad
Aḫī Faraj al-Zinjānī	–	–
Aḥmad al-Ġazālī	Aḥmad al-Ġazālī	Muḥammad al-Ġazālī
Abū l-Naǧīb al-Suhrawardī	Abū l-Naǧīb al-Suhrawardī	Abū l-Naǧīb al-Suhrawardī
Quṭb al-Dīn al-Abhārī	Muḥammad al-Suhrawardī	–
Rukn al-Dīn al-Saǧāsī(?)	–	–
Aṣīl al-Dīn al-Šīrāzī	Aṣīl al-Dīn al-Šīrāzī	Aṣīl al-Dīn al-Šīrāzī
ʿAbd Allāh al-Balyānī	ʿAbd Allāh al-Balyānī	ʿAbd Allāh al-Bayānī
Qāsim al-Šīrāzī	Qāsim al-Šīrǧānī(?)	Qāsim al-Sarǧānī
Qawwām al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Bisṭāmī	Qawwām al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Bisṭāmī	ʿAbd Allāh al-Bisṭāmī
Alāʾ al-Dīn al-Bisṭāmī	Alāʾ al-Dīn al-Bisṭāmī	
Šams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Aṭʿānī	Abū ʿAbd Allāh Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Aṭʿānī	Abū ʿAbd Allāh Šams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī
ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Bisṭāmī	Al-Būnī	Al-Būnī

---

[122] Ibid., 190–7.
[123] Ibid., 193.

Although the work is obviously related to al-Būnī, al-Bisṭāmī is clearly listing his own credentials in supplying this list. The middle column is from Süleymaniye MS Beşir Ağa 89, a copy of *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* produced in 1057/1647, one of the earlier dated copies of the work. When these two are compared side by side, it is quite clear that al-Bisṭāmī's *isnād* has been arrogated to al-Būnī, with a few names having been omitted. Even some of the language al-Bisṭāmī uses to open the presentation of his *asānīd* is reproduced in *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*,[124] and the language used within the *isnād* regarding modes of transmission is also identical. Finally, the right-hand column is from Witkam's article; it reflects the Murad printed edition of *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*. In addition to the swapping out of al-Bisṭāmī's name for al-Būnī's, one can see a cumulative loss of information from one chain to the next as names drop out or become garbled.

A similar process appears to have occurred with regard to al-Būnī's alleged *isnād* for knowledge of *kalimat al-šahāda*, 'Pedigree A' in Witkam's analysis. In the Table 2 (shown overleaf), the source for al-Bisṭāmī's *isnād* is Süleymaniye MS Carullah 1543.1, an abridged copy of *Rašḥ aḏwāq al-ḥikma* that probably was produced in the tenth/sixteenth century, in which the *isnād* is given as al-Bisṭāmī's source for knowledge of *ᶜilm al-ḥurūf wa-l-awfāq*. In this case, where al-Bisṭāmī abbreviated the list by skipping the names of the 'poles' (*aqṭāb*) between al-Šāḏilī and the Prophet Muḥammad, those names have been supplied in *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*, albeit with al-Šāḏilī's name suppressed. A similar degeneration of information as that noted for the previous set of chains occurs here as well.

In Table 2, the proof of plagiarism lies in the names at the top of the list, particularly in that of Abū ᶜAbd Allāh al-Kūmī (al-Tūnisī), a known figure whom Brockelmann identifies as having been writing in 810/1407,[125] and whom al-Bisṭāmī claimed as a personal teacher. That al-Kūmī could have been four steps removed from al-Šāḏilī and also have been al-Bisṭāmī's teacher is perfectly conceivable. The same obviously cannot be said of him and al-Būnī.

---

[124] This being the sentence that begins '*ḫātima fī ḏikr sanad šaykinā qaddasa llāh sirrahu…*'

[125] *GAL,* SII: 358.

Table 2: Second example of a plagiarized *isnād*

MS Carullah 1543.1 fol. 5ᵇ–6ᵃ	MS Beşir Ağa 89 fol. 213ᵃ⁻ᵇ	Witkam 2007 'Pedigree A'
Al-Bisṭāmī	Al-Būnī	Al-Būnī
Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kūmī	Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Yaʿqūb al-Kūmī	Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Yaʿqūb al-Fakūnī
Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad al-Duhhān(?)		
Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad al-Ġāfī(?)	Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Ḫāfī	
Abū l-ʿAzāʾim Māḍī b. Sulṭān	Abū l-ʿAzāʾim Māḍī	Māḍī l-ʿAzāʾim
Abū l-Ḥasan al-Šāḏilī	Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ḫawārazm	Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ḥirzhum
Pole after pole to… (*Wa-huwa aḫaḏa ʿan quṭb baʿda quṭb ilā…*)	Abū Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ b. Bayḍāʾ(?) b. ??? al-Dukkānī al-Mālikī	Abū Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAqbān al-Qākilī al-Mālikī
–	Abū Madyan Šuʿayb b. al-Ḥasan al-Andalusī al-Išbīlī	Abū Madyan Šuʿayb b. al-Ḥasan al-Andalusī al-Išbīlī
–	Abū Yiʿzā al-Haškūrī(?)	Abū Šuʿayb Ayyūb b. Saʿīd al-Ṣinhāǧī
–	Šuʿayb Ayyūb b. Saʿīd al-Ṣinhāǧī	Abū Yaʿzā al-Maʿarrī
–	Ibn Muḥammad Tubūr(?)	
–	Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ġalīl b. Maǧlān(?)	Abū Muḥammad b. Manṣūr
–	Abū ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Bišr	Abū l-Faḍl ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Bišr
–	Mūsā al-Kaẓīm	Mūsā al-Kaẓīmī
–	Abū Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq	Abū Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq
–	Ǧaʿfar al-Ṣādiq	
–	Muḥammad al-Bāqir	Muḥammad al-Bāqir
–	Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn	Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn
Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, who took from his grandfather…	Al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib	Al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib
–	ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib	ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib
Muḥammad	Muḥammad	Muḥammad

Although certain of al-Būnī and al-Bisṭāmī's works perhaps could easily be mistaken as a work of the other (several modern catalogers have done so), I find it difficult to conceive of a scenario in which the arrogation of al-Bisṭāmī's *asānīd* to al-Būnī could have occurred other than through a deliberate act of forgery, especially as al-Bisṭāmī refers to himself in the third person in his versions of these chains. These are only two of eleven *asānīd* given for al-Būnī in *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*, and it is possible that some of the others may contain valid information, although these two instances of plagiarism are hardly positive indicators of that. As noted in the second section of this paper, Abū Madyan and two other *šayḫ*s mentioned in *Qabs al-iqtidāʾ* also appear in certain of these chains, although I am of the opinion that *Qabs al-iqtidāʾ* was probably the source upon which these chains were constructed. In short, I think it much more likely that the others chains in *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* also are borrowed from other non-Būnian sources, construed from other Būnian or pseudo-Būnian texts, or simply fabricated from whole cloth.

That al-Bisṭāmī's chains were assigned to al-Būnī provides important clues as to the way *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* as a whole was created. While certain parts of the work clearly were taken from earlier Būnian works,[126] I would propose that al-Bisṭāmī's writings were likely the source of other parts of the text beyond these two chains. Even at a glance, the talismans in *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* (particularly the complex borders around many talismans in which the name Allāh is written repeatedly) are far more similar to the talismans in al-Bisṭāmī's *Šams al-āfāq fī ᶜilm al-ḥurūf wa-l-awfāq* and other of his works than to any of those in the medieval Būnian corpus. Of course, some parts of the *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* may be entirely original to it, and a careful study of both men's writings and similar works will be required to establish the provenance of the text's many parts.

That the arrogation of al-Bisṭāmī's *asānīd* to al-Būnī seems to have gone unnoticed and/or unchallenged suggests that living lines of authorized transmission of Būnian works had died away in this period, and/or that *asānīd* generally had become primarily notional markers of a text's age and good provenance rather than organizing principles for living communities of readers/practitioners. The success of *Šams al-*

---

[126] For example, large parts of the opening of the medieval *Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif* are incorporated into that of *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*, although the latter has a different incipit: *Šahāda azal fa-min nūr hāḏihi šahāda…*

maᶜārif al-kubrā suggests that it met some real demand in the marketplace for a work of this sort, and the text and its numerous codices are incredibly important sources for the study of the occult sciences in the eleventh/seventeenth-century and beyond. They are not, however, reliable sources for the study of al-Būnī's thought as it was originally presented, or the medieval reception thereof. It is hoped that this distinction will take root as studies of al-Būnī and the Islamicate occult sciences move forward.

Conclusion

Al-Būnī and the full range of his works have been excluded too long from serious consideration in the historiography of Islamic thought and society, particularly with regard to what may have been his transformative role in Sufism. In modern times, al-Būnī often has been regarded as an archetypal 'magician,' a development that I think was largely the result of a centuries-long process of selection on the parts of readers and producers of his works in favor of practical occult–scientific aspects of his thought, the more pietistic and philosophical elements having been largely overshadowed by and integrated with the thought of Ibn ᶜArabī by their shared interpreters – one important and late product of this process being *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*. However, the scholarly misapprehension of al-Būnī has also been the result of a major failure of textual scholarship conditioned by a modern academic predisposition to downplay the historical importance of the occult sciences. Many mid-twentieth-century scholars of Islamicate history participated in a tendency, well entrenched in the humanities and social sciences of their time, to regard 'magic' as an ancient but persistent detritus, an irrational and antisocial atavism thriving primarily among the poorly educated and flourishing in moments of cultural decline.[127] That many of these scholars were content to draw on the easily available *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā* as the main representative of al-Būnī's thought is, in my estimation, symptomatic of their presumption of his fundamentally irrelevant and/or deleterious role in Islamic thought. Armand Abel, in his essay on the occult sciences as a sign of the 'decadence' of late-medieval thought and culture, derided the 'confused doctrine' and jumbled

---

[127] For some excellent accounts of the history of 'magic' as an analytical category in the modern social sciences and humanities, see Styers, *Making Magic*, and Hanegraaff, 'The Emergence of the Academic Science of Magic'. Specifically in regard to the Islamicate occult sciences, see Francis, 'Magic and Divination', and Lemay, 'L'Islam historique et les sciences occultes'.

contents of *Šams al-ma ͨārif al-kubrā*.[128] The historian of Islamic science
Manfred Ullmann declared al-Būnī to have been a 'credulous' man and
the work a collection of popular magical recipes with no roots in Arabic
literary traditions.[129] In the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam,*
Dietrich calls *Šams al-ma ͨārif al-kubrā* al-Būnī's 'main work,' and
describes it as 'a collection both muddled and dreary' of popular magical
materials.[130] In short, it seems that for these scholars *Šams al-ma ͨārif al-
kubrā* was convenient evidence of what they assumed to be the intrinsic
incoherence of magical thinking, and thus they saw no need to inquire
further into the textual tradition. More puzzling is the reliance on *Šams
al-ma ͨārif al-kubrā* by scholars not at all hostile to al-Būnī or to magic
and the occult sciences generally, though the modern fame of the work
and ease of access undoubtedly have played important roles. I believe it
to be imperative that, as research proceeds, more attention is paid to the
full range of major medieval Būnian works. Of course a great deal of
work also remains to be done on the numerous works attributed to al-
Būnī which survive in only one or two copies.

Were al-Būnī's works 'books of magic?' It is highly unlikely that
anyone who owned and used them regarded them as books of 'sorcery'
(*siḥr*), insofar as *siḥr* was primarily an accusatory designation for
marking certain activities as intrinsically un-Islamic.[131] A number of
other terms the meanings and moral implications of which were more
fluid are far more pertinent to the discussion of Būnian works, especially
ͨilm al-ḥurūf and *sīmiyā ͐*.[132] To my mind the expressions of piety that
run through out al-Būnī's works absolutely cannot be dismissed as a
mere veneer on 'pre-Islamic' beliefs and practices, especially given their
rootedness in *ͨilm al-ḥurūf,* a tradition that, however controversial, has a
lengthy pedigree in Islamic thought and is thoroughly suffused with
veneration for the Qur ͐ān. It is in fact hard to ascertain that al-Būnī's
works were popular among the unlettered masses so commonly
associated with 'magical' practices in modern scholarship, while the
evidence certainly indicates an audience among the elites. That Ibn
Ḫaldūn and others tried to portray al-Būnī's works as sorcerous is almost

---

[128]   Abel, 'La place des sciences occultes', 302 ff.

[129]   Ullmann, Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften, 390–1.

[130]   Dietrich, 'al-Būnī', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

[131]   For an excellent discussion of Qur ͐ānic notions of *siḥr* and related terms,
see Hamès – Hamès, 'La notion de magie', passim.

[132]   On the latter term, see MacDonald [Fahd], 'Sīmiyā ͐', *Encyclopaedia of
Islam*, 2nd ed.; also Lory, 'Kashifī's *Asrār-i Qāsimī*', 531–5.

certainly evidence that the works were gaining an alarming (to the critics) degree of acceptance among 'people who mattered,' rather than of their having been primarily 'popular' practices widely looked down upon by the educated.

In keeping with Kieckhefer's axiom noted at the outset of this article, it must also be asked if al-Būnī's works were 'magical books?' Whether or not the books themselves were regarded as especially powerful artifacts is one of many questions that require further investigation. That some of them contained talismanic designs does not imply that these designs would have been regarded as 'charged' talismans, insofar as a variety of other practices (supererogatory fasting and prayer, construction at specific times, etc.) were required for them to be effective, and in many cases they were meant to be inscribed on specific metals or other media. On the other hand, it is very common to find numerous *awfāq* scrawled on the flyleaves of Būnian works, often accompanied by the texts of brief invocatory prayers, which suggests that their inscription in a Būnian work rather than in some other book was believed to enhance their efficacy.

I cannot help but add that, in the grand sense that Būnian works may have helped reshape the contours of Sufism and other arenas of Islamic thought, they were magical books indeed. Despite the attempts of many twentieth-century Sufi studies scholars to construct 'Sufism proper' as concerned exclusively with interior spiritual discovery and/or ascetic withdrawal, it has increasingly been recognized of late that Sufism, always polyphonic, was never entirely innocent of claims to occult power in the everyday world.[133] Such claims do seem to have come to the fore in the late medieval period, and, without suggesting any simplistic causality, I would observe that it is likely no mere coincidence that this is roughly the same period in which certain Sufi leaders and groups began unmistakably to flex their sociopolitical muscles and to be incorporated into existing circles of power. Insofar as, at various times and places, al-Būnī's works seem to have been some of the primary vehicles through which 'occult' aspects of Sufism were expressed in elite circles, they were no doubt dangerous and powerful books in the eyes of some.

Finally, as a methodological coda, I would note that al-Būnī's general exclusion from Ṣūfī studies and other wings of Islamic social and intellectual history is to some degree due to a general negligence of

---

[133] On this still-controversial topic, see Lory, 'Sufism et sciences occultes', passim; Morris, 'Situating Islamic "Mysticism"', passim.

important aspects of the manuscript inheritance among Islamicist premodernists. I originally came to engage with manuscript studies due to the absence of reliable scholarly editions of Būnian works,[134] but soon came to realize that these codices offer far more than potential 'corrected texts.' Exposure to the field has made strikingly clear to me that manuscripts commonly are treated as if they were never more than text-containers, the 'material support' for written ideas rendered expendable once a scholarly edition has been produced, and readable like any other book. In reference to the tendency of many edition-makers and readers to ignore the wealth of paratexts and extratextual data found in premodern manuscripts, the Europeanist medievalist John Dagenais noted drily in 1994: 'Medievalism, as it has been practiced over the past two centuries, is the only discipline I can think of that takes as its first move the suppression of its evidence'.[135] I am of the opinion that this critique applies equally well to current Islamicist premodern studies, a field that, with certain important exceptions, seems to have remained largely innocent of the manuscript-centric methodologies of the 'New Philology' that swept through Europeanist medievalism in the past few decades,[136] and of the discourses on the sociology and history of the book that have so influenced many other fields of sociopolitical and intellectual-historical inquiry.[137] A small body of excellent scholarship exists on how books were produced and used in premodern Islamicate contexts, and on

---

[134] An absence now partially filled by Cordero's production of an excellent scholarly edition of the first volume of *Šams al-maʿārif al-kubrā;* see bibliography.

[135] Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading*, xviii. On some of the pitfalls of editing practices in relation to Islamic texts, see Witkam, 'Establishing the Stemma', passim.

[136] For a number of examples of the fruits of this movement, see *Speculum* 65, no. 1 (1990), an issue dedicated to New Philology edited by Stephen Nichols. The issue opens with Nichols' presentation of his since-influential notion of notion of the 'manuscript matrix,' wherein multiple contesting actors (authors, copyists, glossators, illuminators) contributed to the constitutions of a given codex. Dagenais' critique of the New Philology in the preface to *The Ethics of Reading* is highly worthwhile as well.

[137] Key works include McKenzie's 'The Sociology of a Text,' Darnton's 'What is the History of Books?,' Chartier's *The Order of Books*, etc. Some important recent additions to this general area of inquiry are Fraser's *Book History through Postcolonial Eyes*, and Barber's *The Anthropology of Texts.* On the impact of some of these authors on the broader field of intellectual history, see Grafton, 'The History of Ideas', passim.

how the conditions of their production and use impacted the perceived epistemological value of their contents, but all too rarely has this scholarship been integrated with the broader study of premodern texts.[138]I hope that this article can serve as a demonstration, however flawed, of some of what can be achieved through combining attention to transmission paratexts and other aspects of manuscript evidence with more conventional methods of intellectual and sociopolitical historiography. This may be especially relevant to the recovery of a figure such as al-Būnī, who has been obscured and misrepresented in the historical record for a variety of reasons both medieval and modern, but I strongly suspect that a return to the manuscripts of many better known authors – particularly those of the late medieval and early modern periods, from which so many codices survive – would yield a wealth of information about the lived worlds in which their works were read that has not yet been taken into account.

Chart: Inter-referentiality among the five 'core' works.
Numbers indicate the number of references each work makes to its partners, e.g. *ᶜIlm al-hudā* makes seven references to *Šams al-maᶜārif.* N.B: the *Šams al-maᶜārif* referred to here is the medieval *Šams,* not the *Kubrā*!

---
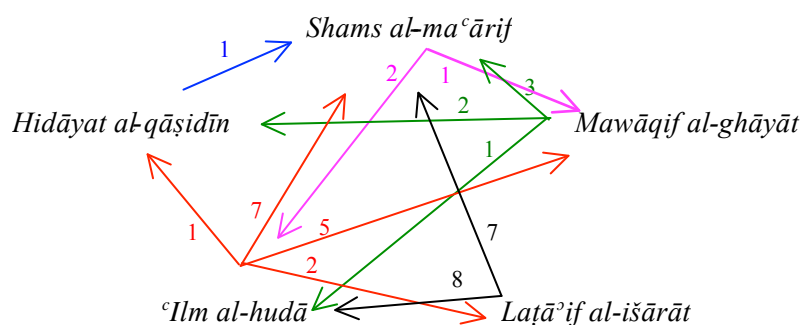
    138   E.g. Pedersen's *The Arabic Book*; Rosenthal's 'Technique and Approach'; several sections of Makdisi's *Rise of Colleges*, and, more recently, Gacek's *Vademecum* and Déroche's *Islamic Codicology*. There are obvious exceptions to the critique leveled here, including the works cited previously by Chamberlain, Berkey, Ohlander, and Dickinson, although these do not draw on specific codices so much as they present innovative general explorations of the use of books. Bauden's series of *Maqriziana* articles must be mentioned as making groundbreaking use of manuscript sources, and I am no doubt missing several other scholars whose names also should be included here.

Copies of major Būnian works.

A number without parentheses indictates the number of colophonically dated copies. A number in parentheses indicates undated codices that can be assigned to a century with a reasonably high degree of confidence on the basis of certain physical characteristics (especially paper), *mise-en-page*, etc. In cases where the number in the total number of copies column does not add up to the columns preceding it, this is a result of some number of undated copies for which I have no basis to estimate a date. Some of the copies of works counted here are abridgements or fragments.

Table 3: Copies of major Būnian works, by century.

Work	7th/13th c.	8th/14th c.	9th/15th c.	10th/16th c.	11th/17th c. or later	Total copies
Šams al-maᶜārif	–	(3)	12 (6)	4 (6)	4 (4)	43
Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn	–	–	(1)	1	–	3
Mawāqif al-ġāyāt		1	2	2	2	9
ᶜIlm al-hudā	–	8 (1)	(1)	2 (1)	2 (1)	17
Laṭāʾif al-išārāt	1?	2 (1)	4 (3)	1 (2)	1 (2)	20
al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya	1	3 (2)	9 (6)	3 (5)	5 (3)	40
Tartīb al-daᶜawāt	–	1	3 (3)	2 (1)	1 (2)	16
Qabs al-iqtidāʾ	–	(1)	4 (2)	(1)	3	12
Ḫawaṣṣ asmāʾ Allāh	–	–	1	1 (3)	–	7
Risāla fī faḍāʾil al-basmala	–	–	–	(1)	3 (6)	10
Al-Uṣūl wa-l-ḍawābiṭ	–	–	–	(1)	5 (2)	8
Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā	–	–	–	–	26 (15)	51

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscripts cited
What follows lists only the codices directly cited within this article, and it reflects a little more than one-tenth of the manuscripts surveyed for this project. Because manuscripts have been referred to by their shelfmarks when discussed in the article, and because of the alternate titles by which many of the works/manuscripts are cataloged by the collections that hold them, this list is alphabetized by shelfmark rather than by title. In each case, if a title is given in the manuscript, then it is noted immediately after the author; a standardized title follows in brackets if it differs from the given title. In cases where no title is given in the manuscript, only the bracketed standardized title is given.

Beyazid MS 1377, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šarḥ asmāʾ al-ḥusnā* [*ᶜIlm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidā fī šarḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*], dated 773/1371, 174 folia.

BnF MS arabe 2647, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif*, undated (late 13th or 14th century), 148 folia.

BnF MS arabe 2649, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif* [*Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif*], dated 913/1508, 110 folia.

BnF MS arabe 2657, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī asrār al-ḥurūf al-ᶜulwiyyāt* [*Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ᶜulwiyyāt*], dated 788/1386, 67 folia.

BnF MS arabe 2658, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī asrār al-ḥurūf al-ᶜulwiyyāt* [*Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ᶜulwiyyāt*], dated 809/1406, 93 folia.

BnF MS arabe 6556, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maᶜārif al-ṣuġrā wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif* [*Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ᶜulwiyyāt*], dated 781/1380, 58 folia.

Chester Beatty MS 3168.5, Aḥmad al-Būnī, [*al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya fī awrād al-rabbāniyya*], dated 686/1287.

Chester Beatty MS 3200, al-Maḥallī's commentary on al-Subkī's *Ǧamᶜ al-ǧawāmiᶜ*, dated 870/1465–66.

Dār al-Kutub MS Ḥurūf M 75, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maᶜārif al-ṣuġrā* [unknown], undated.

Dār al-Kutub MS Ḥurūf Ṭalᶜa 159, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif al-mawṣilat ilā saᶜādat al-dunyā wa-l-āḫira* [*Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif*], dated 1051/1641, 217 folia.

Harvard MS Arab 332, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams ṣuġrā* [unknown], undated, 67 folia.

Leiden MS oriental 1233, Aḥmad al-Būnī, [*Tartīb al-daᶜawāt fī taḥṣīṣ al-awqāt ᶜalā ḫtilāf al-irādāt*], dated 812/1409, 174 folia.

Manisa MS 45 HK 1445, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šumūs li-l-ᶜārif laṭāʾif al-išārāt* [*Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ᶜulwiyyāt*], see footnote 71 *supra* regarding the dating, 60 folia.

Österreichische Nationalbibliothek MS A.F. 162a, Aḥmad al-Būnī, [*Tartīb al-daᶜawāt fī taḥṣīṣ al-awqāt ᶜalā ḫtilāf al-irādāt*], dated 963/1556, 96 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2160.1, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Hidāyat al-qāṣidīn wa-nihāyat al-wāṣilīn*, copied prior to 914/1508, 40 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2160.2, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Mawāqif al-ġāyāt fī sulūk al-riyāḍāt* [*Mawāqif al-ġāyāt fī asrār al-riyāḍāt*], copied prior to 914/1508, 39 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2799, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maᶜārif* [*Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ᶜulwiyyāt*], undated, 45 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Ayasofya 2802, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maᶜārif* [*Laṭāʾif al-išārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ᶜulwiyyāt*, see n. 59 of this article], undated, 75 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Bağdatlı Vehbi 930, ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī, *al-ᶜUġāla fī ḥall al-anmāṭ al-muᶜarrafa bi-ğamᶜ Abī al-ᶜAbbās Aḥmad*, dated 836/1433, 52 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Bağdatlı Vehbi 966, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *ᶜIlm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidāʾ fī šarḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, undated, 356 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Beşir Ağa 89, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*, dated 1057/1647, 215 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Carullah 1543.1, ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī, *Rašḥ aḏwāq al-ḥikma al-rabbāniyya fī šarḥ awfāq al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya*, undated, 3 folia.

Süleymaniue MS Carullah 1560, ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī, *Rašḥ aḏwāq al-ḥikma al-rabbāniyya fī šarḥ awfāq al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya*, dated 952/1546, 140 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Hafid efendi 198, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif*, dated 855/1451, 60 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.1, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šarḥ asmāʾ al-ḥusnā* [*ᶜIlm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidāʾ fī šarḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*], dated 772/1370, 239 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Hamidiye 260.3, Aḥmad al-Būnī, [*Tartīb al-daᶜawāt fī taḥṣīṣ al-awqāt ᶜalā ḫtilāf al-irādāt*], copied 772/1370, 221 folia.

Süleymaniye MSS Hekimoğlu 534, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*, copied 1118/1707, 514 folia.

Süleymaniye MSS Hekimoğlu 537, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maᶜārif al-kubrā*, copied 1119/1708, 519 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Kılıç Ali Paşa 588, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *ᶜIlm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidā* [*ᶜIlm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidāʾ fī šarḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*], dated 792/1390, 221 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Murad Buharı 236, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maᶜārif* [*Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif*], undated, 119 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Nuruosmaniye 2822, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šarḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā* [*Tartīb al-daᶜawāt fī taḥṣīṣ al-awqāt ᶜalā ḫtilāf al-irādāt*], copied 824/1421, 139 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Nuruosmaniye 2835, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maᶜārif* [*Šams al-maᶜārif wa-laṭāʾif al-ᶜawārif*], dated 903/1498, 99 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Reisulkuttab 1162.17, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya* [*al-Lumᶜa al-nūrāniyya fī awrād al-rabbāniyya*], copied 789/1387. 30 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Reşid efendi 590.1, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Al-Ǧuzʾ al-awwal min ᶜilm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidāʾ* [*ᶜIlm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidāʾ fī šarḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*], copied 798/1396, 65 folia.

Süleymaniye MS Reşid efendi 590.2, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Al-Ǧuzʾ al-ṯānī min ᶜilm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidāʾ* [*ᶜIlm al-hudā wa-asrār al-ihtidāʾ fī šarḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*], copied 798/1396, 65 folia.

Tunis MS 7401, Aḥmad al-Būnī, *Šams al-maᶜārif al-wusṭā*. Listed in Francis, *Islamic Symbols and Sufi Rituals*.

Printed primary sources

Ḥaǧǧī Ḫalīfa (Katip Çelebi), *Kašf al-ẓunūn ᶜan asāmī l-kutub wa-l-funūn*, 2 vols. in 4 (Istanbul: Matbaᶜa Wikālat al-Maᶜārif al-Ǧalīla, 1941–3).

Ibn Barraǧān, *Šarḥ asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, ed. Purificación de la Torre (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2000).

Ibn Ḫaldūn, ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān, *Shifāʾ al-sāʾil li-tahḏīb al-masāʾil*, ed. Abū Yaᶜrub al-Marzūqī (Tunis: Dār al-ᶜArabiyyah li-l-Kitāb, 1991).

———, *Muqaddimat Ibn Ḫaldūn*, ed. Ḫalīl Šaḥāda (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2001).

———, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, transl. Franz Rosenthal, 3 vols. (New York: Pantheon, 1958).

Ibn al-Ḫaṭīb, Lisān al-Dīn, *Rawḍat al-taᶜrīf bi-l-ḥubb al-sharīf*, ed. Muḥammad al-Kattānī (Beirut: Dār al-ṯaqāfa, 1970).

Al-Manāwī, ᶜAbd al-Raᵓūf, *Al-Kawākib al-durriyya fī tarāǧim al-sārat al-ṣūfiyya: Ṭabaqāt al-Manāwī al-kubrā*, ed. ᶜAbd al-Ḥumayd Ṣāliḥ Ḥimdān (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-turāth, n.d.)

Al-Maqrīzī, Taqī al-Dīn, *Kitāb al-Muqaffā l-kabīr*, ed. Muḥammad Yaᶜlāwī, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ġarb al-Islāmī, 1991).

Al-Qalqašandī, Aḥmad b. ᶜAlī, *Ṣubḥ al-aᶜšā fī ṣināᶜat al-inšāᵓ* 14 vols. (repr. Cairo: Wizārat aṯ-ṯaqāfa wa-l-iršād al-qawmī, [1970]).

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad, *Majmūᶜ fatāwā shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*, ed. ᶜAbd al-Raḥman b. Muḥammad b. Qāsim, 37 vols. (repr. n.l.: Maṭbaᶜa al-Muḫtar al-Islāmī, [1979]).

Ibn al-Uḫuwwah, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad, *Kitāb maᶜālim al-qurba fī aḥkām al-ḥisba*, ed. Muḥammad Maḥmūd Šaʿbān (Cairo: al-Hayᵓah al-Miṣriyya al-ᶜĀmma li-l-Kitāb, 1976).

Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Abū ᶜAbd Allāh, *Muᶜǧam al-buldān*, 5 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1955–7).

Ibn al-Zayyāt, Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad, *Kitāb kawākib al-sayyāra fī tartīb al-ziyāra* (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li-l-Turāṯ, 2005).

Secondary studies

Abel, Armand, 'La place des sciences occultes dans la décadence', R. Brunschvig and G.E. von Grunenbaum (eds.) *Classicisme et déclin culturel dans l'histoire de l'islam* (Paris: Editions Besson, 1957), 291–318.

Addas, Claude, 'Andalusi Mysticism and the Rise of Ibn Arabi', Salma K. Jayyusi (ed.), *The Legacy of Muslim Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 1992, 909–33).

Ahlwardt, Wilhelm, *Verzeichniss der arabischen Handschriften der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin*, 10 vols (Berlin: Asher, 1889–99).

Babinger, F., 'Ramaḍān Oghulları', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 8: 418–19.

Barber, Karin, *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons, and Publics: Oral and Written Culture in Africa and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Bashir, Shahzad, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005).

Berkey, Jonathan, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

Binbaş, I. Evrim, *Sharaf al-Dīn ᶜAlī Yazdī (ca. 770s–858/ca. 1370s–1454): Prophecy, Politics, and Historiography in Late Medieval Islamic History* (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Chicago, 2009).

Brentjes, Sonja, 'Courtly Patronage of the Ancient Sciences in Post-Classical Islamic Societies, *Al-Qanṭara: Revista de Estudios Ārabes* 29 (2008), 403–36.

Brockelmann, Carl, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1943–49); 3 Suppl. (Leiden: Brill, 1938–42).

Brown, Jonathan, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunni Hadith Canon* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

Chamberlain, Michael, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Chartier, Roger, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

Chittick, William, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ᶜArab's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

Chodkiewicz, Michel, 'Introduction: Toward Reading *Futūḥāt Makkiya*', Michel Chodkiewicz (ed.), *The Meccan Revelations*, 2 vols. (New York: Pir Press, 2004), 2: 3–55.

Cordero, Jaime, El Kitāb Šams al-Maᶜārif al-Kubrà *(al-yuzʾ al-awwal) de Aḥmad b. ᶜAlī al-Būnī: Sufismo y ciencias ocultas* (Ph.D. dissertation, Universidad de Salamanca, 2009).

Dagenais, John, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the* Libro de Buen Amor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Darnton, Robert, 'What is the History of Books?', *Daedalus* 111 (1982), 65–83.

Davies, Owen, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Déroche, François, et al., *Islamic Codicology: An Introduction to the Study of Manuscripts in Arabic Script* (London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2005).

Dietrich, A., 'al-Būnī', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 12: 156–7.

Dickinson, Eerik, 'Ibn al-Salah al-Sharazuri and the Isnad', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122 (2002), 481–505.

Dreher, Josef, *Das Imamat des islamischen Mystikers Abū l-Qāsim Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusain Ibn Qasī (gest. 1151): Eine Studies zum Selbstverständis des Autors des 'Buchs von Ausziehen der deiden Sandalen' (*Kitāb Ḥalᶜ an-naᶜlain*)* (Ph.D. dissertation, Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität, 1985).

Ebstein, Michael-Sara Sviri, 'The So-Called *Risālat al-ḥurūf* (*Epistle on Letters*) Attributed to Sahl al-Tustarī and Letter Mysticism in al-Andalus', *Journal Asiatique* 299 (2011), 213–70.

El-Gawhary, Mohamed, *Die Gottesnamen im magischen Gebrauch in den Al-Būnī zugeschriebenden Werken* (Ph.D. dissertation, Rheinische Friedrich Wilhelms-Universität, 1968).

Elmore, Gerald, 'Shaykh Abd al-Aziz al-Mahdawi, Ibn al-Arabi's Mentor', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121 (2001), 593–613.

Ernst, Carl, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997).

Fahd, Toufic, *La Divination arabe: Études religeieuses, sociologiques et folkloriques sur le milieu natif de l'islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1966).

———, 'La magie comme «source» de la sagesse, d'après l'œuvre d'al-Būnī', Rika Gyselen (ed.), *Charmes et sortilèges: magie et magiciens* (Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l'étude de la civilisation du moyen-orient, 2002), 61–108.

Fazlıoğlu, İ. 'İlk Dönem Osmanlı İlim ve Kültür Hayatında İhvanu's-Safâ ve Abdurrahman Bıstâmî', *Dîvân İlmî Araştırmalar Dergisi* (1996), 229–40.

Fleischer, Cornell, 'Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences: Prophecies at the Ottoman Court in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries', M. Farhad and S. Bağcı (eds.), *Falnama: The Book of Omens* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2009), 231–44.

———, 'Shadow of Shadows: Prophecy in Politics in 1530s Istanbul', *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 13 (2007), 51–62.

Francis, Edgar, *Islamic Symbols and Sufi Rituals for Protection and Healing: Religion and Magic in the Writings of Ahmad b. Ali al-Buni (d. 622/1225)*, (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2005).

———, 'Magic and Divination in the Medieval Islamic Middle East', *History Compass* 9 (2011), 622–33.

Fraser, Robert, *Book History through Postcolonial Eyes: Rewriting the Script* (London: Routledge, 2008).

Gacek, Adam, *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

Gril, Denis, 'Ésotérisme contre hérésie: ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī, un représentant de la science des lettres à Bursa dans la première moitié du XVe siècle', G. Veinstein (ed.), *Syncrétismes et hérésies dans l'Orient seldjoukide et ottoman (XIVe-XVIIIe siècle). Actes du Colloque du Collège de France, octobre 2001* (Paris: 2005) 183–95.

Gril, Denis, 'The Science of Letters', Michel Chodkiewicz (ed.), *The Meccan Revelations* (New York: Pir Press, 2004), 2: 105–219.

al-Hakīm, Suʿād, *Al-muʿǧam al-Ṣūfī: al-Ḥikma fī ḥudūr al-kalima* (Beirut: Dandara li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-našr, 1981).

Hamès, Constant, 'al-Būnī', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., vol. 2011-1 (2011), 140–3.

———, 'La notion de magie dans le Coran', C. Hamès (ed.), *Coran et talismans: Textes et pratiques magiques en milieu musulman* (Paris: Karthala, 2007), 17–47.

Hanegraaff, Wouter, 'The Emergence of the Academic Science of Magic: The Occult Philosophy in Tylor and Frazer', A. M. a. P. Pels (ed.), *Religion in the Making: The Emergence of the Sciences of Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 253–75.

Heinrichs, W.P., '*Ramz*', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 8: 426–8.

Homerin, Th. Emil, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn al-Farid, His Verse, and His Shrine* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).

Irwin, Robert, 'Review of Magic and Divination in Early Islam', *Journal of Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft* 3 (2008), 104–9.

Karatas, Hasan, The Mastery of Occult Sciences as a Deterrent Weapon: The Representation of *Wafq* in Khalwati Circles at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century' (unpublished paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Middle Eastern Studies Association, San Diego, 2010).

Kieckhefer, Richard, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

Kurt, Yılmaz, 'Pîrî Mehmed Paşa', *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Islam Ansiklopedisi*, Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1988–2010, vol. 34, 281–2.

Knysh, Alexander, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

———, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

Lemay, Richard, 'L'Islam historique et les sciences occultes', *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 44 (1992), 147–59.

Lory, Pierre, 'Kashifī's *Asrār-i Qāsimī* and Timurid Magic', *Iranian Studies* 36 (2003), 531–41.

———, 'Science des lettres et magie', P. Lory (ed.) *La science des lettres en islam* (Paris: Editions Dervy, 2004, 91–144).

———, 'al-Shādhilī', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 9: 170–2.

Lory, Pierre, 'Soufisme et sciences occultes', A. P. G. Veinstein (ed.), *Les Voies d'Allah: les ordres mystiques dans l'islam des origines à aujourd'hui* (Paris: Fayard, 1996, 185–194).

MacDonald, D.B. [T. Fahd], '*Sīmiyāʾ*', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 9: 612–13.

Makdisi, George, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981).

Masad, Mohammad, *The Medieval Islamic Apocalyptic Tradition: Divination, Prophecy and the End of Time in the 13th-Century Eastern Mediterranean* (Ph.D. dissertation, Washington University in St. Louis, 2008).

McKenzie, D.F., 'The Sociology of a Text: Orality, Literacy and Print in Early New Zealand', A. McLeery (ed.), *The Book History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006), 205–31.

Meisami, Julie and Starkey, Paul, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 1998).

Melvin-Koushki, Matthew, *Occult Philosophy and the Millenarian Quest for a Universal Science in Early Timurid Iran: An Examination of the Minor Lettrist Treatises of Ṣāʾin al-Dīn Turka Iṣfahānī*, (forthcoming).

Michot, Yahya, 'Ibn Taymiyya on Astrology: Annotated Translatons of Three Fatwas', E. Savage-Smith (ed.), *Magic and Divination in Early Islam* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 277–340.

Moretti, Franco, *Atlas of the European Novel* (London: Verso, 1998).

———, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary Theory* (London: Verso, 2005).

Morris, James, 'An Arab Machiavelli? Rhetoric, Philosophy, and Politics in Ibn Khaldun's Critique of Sufism, *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 8 (2009), 242–91.

Morris, James, 'Situating Islamic 'Mysticism': Between Written Traditions and Popular Spirituality', R. A. Herrera (ed.), *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typologies* (New York: Lang, 1993), 293–334.

Nichols, Stephen, 'Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture', *Speculum* 65 (1990), 1–10.

Ohlander, Erik, *Sufism in an Age of Transition: ʿUmar al-Suhrawardi and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

Pedersen, Johannes, *The Arabic Book*, transl. Geoffrey French (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

Pielow, Dorothee, *Die Quellen der Weisheit: Die arabische Magie im Spiegel des Uṣūl al-Ḥikma von Aḥmad Ibn ᶜAlī al-Būnī* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1995).

Pouzet, Louis, 'Maghrébins à Damas au VIIᵉ/XIIIᵉ siècle', *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 28 (1975), 167–93.

Al-Taftazani, Abu'l-Wafa, Oliver Leaman, 'Ibn Sabᶜīn', Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1996), 1: 346–9.

Rosenthal, Franz, 'The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship', *Analecta Orientalia* 24 (1947), vii–74 (79 pages).

Salibi, Kamal, 'The Banu Jamāᶜa: A Dynasty of Shafiᶜite Jurists in the Mamluk Period', *Studia Islamica* 9 (1958), 97–109.

Shatzmiller, Maya, 'Tidjāra', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 10: 466–75.

Sirriyeh, Elizabeth, 'Whatever Happened to the Banu Jamāᶜa? The Tail of a Scholarly Family in Ottoman Syria', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 28 (2001), 55–65.

Slane, William MacGuckin, Baron de, *Catalogue de manuscrits arabes*, *Bibliotheque Nationale (France)* (Paris: Imprimierie Nationale, 1883–95).

Styers, Randall, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic, and Science in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Taylor, Christopher, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyāra and the Veneration of Muslim saints in Late Medieval Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

Teczan, Hülya, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler* (Istanbul: Timaş, 2011).

Ullmann, Manfred, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam*, ed. B. Spuler (Leiden: Brill, 1972).

Vajda, Georges, *Album de paléographie arabe* (Paris: A. Maisonneuve, 1958).

Wensinck, A.J., J.P Mensing et al., *Concordances et indices de la tradition musulmane*, 8 in 4 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1962–92).

Winkler, Hans, *Siegel und Charaktere in der muhammedanischen Zauberei* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Co., 1930).

Witkam, Jan Just, 'Establishing the stemma, fact or fiction?', *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 3 (1988), 88–101.

———, 'Gazing at the Sun: Remarks on the Egyptian Magician al-Būnī and his Work', Arnoud Vrolijk and Jan Hogendijk (eds.), *O ye Gentlemen: Arabic Studies on Science and Literary Culture, In Honour of Remke Kruk* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 183–200.