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Living Love: The Mystical Writings of ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūnīyah (d. 922/1516)

The summer of 922/1516 was a difficult time for Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī. The Mamluk sultan was in tense negotiations with Sultan Selim, his Ottoman rival, and fearing war, al-Ghawrī mustered an army at Aleppo. There, in the months of Jumādā II and Rajab/July and August, al-Ghawrī prepared his troops and ordered prayers recited on their behalf day and night. The sultan was reclusive and rarely appeared in public save for urgent military matters.¹ Yet, Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī took time to meet with an elderly woman. Accompanied by al-Badr al-Suyūfī (ca. 850–925/1446–1519), an accomplished religious scholar, his student al-Shams al-Safīrī (877–956/1472–1549), and several others, ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūnīyah was granted an audience with the sultan. Shortly thereafter, ‘Ā’ishah returned home to Damascus, while al-Ghawrī left Aleppo for his fateful day at Marj Dābiq.²

I

‘Ā’ishah’s meeting with the Mamluk sultan was an extraordinary event befitting her exceptional life. She was born in Damascus near the middle of the ninth/fifteenth century into a family of respected religious scholars and litterateurs. Originating in the village of al-Bā‘ūn in southern Syria, the Bā‘ūnī family served the Mamluks for several generations, holding a number of important religious and legal positions throughout the empire.³ ‘Ā’ishah’s grandfather, Aḥmad ibn Nāṣir (751–816/1350–1413), was at various times the Friday preacher at the al-Aqṣā Mosque in Jerusalem, the Friday preacher at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, the Shafī‘i judge of Damascus and, for two months, of Egypt, as well. During the reign of Sultan Barqūq (r. 784–801/1382–99), Aḥmad was granted the eminent rank of *shaykh al-shuyūkh*, but he fell from royal grace for refusing to lend the sultan funds from religious endowments. Aḥmad wrote a commentary on the Quran and a poem on proper religious belief, and was considered an excellent preacher. Likewise, his son Ibrāhīm (ca. 777–870/1375–1464) served as the Friday

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¹Carl F. Petry, *Twilight of Majesty* (Seattle, 1993), 221–28.

²Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab fī Tārīkh A’yān Ḥalab*, ed. Maḥmūd al-Fākhūrī and Yaḥyá ‘Abbārah (Damascus, 1973), 1:2:1061; 1:2:506–22, and 2:2:258–62.

³Concerning al-Bā‘ūn, see Ḥasan Rabābi‘ah, *‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūnīyah: Shā’irah* (Irbid, 1997), 13–31.



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preacher at the Umayyad Mosque, the Friday preacher of the al-Aqṣá Mosque, and supervisor of the Muslim holy places of Jerusalem and Hebron (*nāẓir al-ḥaramayn*). His fine literary abilities won him the title "Master of Literature in the Land of Syria." Aḥmad's second son, Muḥammad (780–871/1378–1466), was also the Friday preacher at the Umayyad Mosque, as well as a minor poet and historian.⁴

Aḥmad's third son Yūsuf (805–80/1402–75) was 'Ā'ishah's father. He received a religious and legal education similar to that of his brothers, and was appointed Shafī'i judge in Ṣafad, Tripoli, Aleppo, and, finally, in Damascus, where he also oversaw the reorganization and expansion of the hospital of Nūr al-Dīn. Yūsuf wrote both prose and poetry, and was regarded as an honest and pious man, and among the best judges to have served in Damascus. Shortly before his death in 880/1475, he completed the pilgrimage to Mecca with his children and other family members, 'Ā'ishah presumably among them.⁵ In addition to his daughter 'Ā'ishah, Yūsuf had at least five sons, the most prominent of whom was probably Muḥammad (857–916/1453–1510), a poet, historian, and legal scholar who served for a time as the Shafī'i judge of Aleppo.⁶

Nevertheless, surpassing them all in talent, erudition, and fame was their sister 'Ā'ishah. Several contemporaries left accounts of her, including the Damascene historian Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn (884–935/1479–1529), and the necrologist of Aleppo, Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī (908–71/1502–63). Drawing extensively from both sources are later notices by Muḥammad al-Ghazzī (977–1061/1570–1651), and 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ibn al-'Imād (1032–89/1623–79).⁷

⁴For information and sources on members of the Bā'ūnī family, see W. A. S. Khalidi, "Al-Bā'ūnī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 1:1109–10; Fāris Aḥmad al-'Alāwī, *'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah al-Dimashqīyah* (Damascus, 1994), 20–31, and Rabābī'ah, *'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: Shā'irah*, 33–42. 'Alāwī should be used with caution; see my review of al-'Alāwī in *Mamlūk Studies Review* 6 (2002): 191–193.

⁵See the sources listed in the preceding note, as well as Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi' li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi'* (Cairo, 1934), 10:298–99; Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Al-Qalā'id al-Jawharīyah fī Tārīkh al-Ṣāliḥīyah*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Duhmān (Damascus, 1980), 1:488–89; Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mut'at al-Adhhān min al-Tamattu' bi-al-Iqrān*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣilī (Beirut, 1999), 2:832–33, and Mūsā ibn Yūsuf al-Anṣārī, *Nuzhat al-Khāṭir wa-Bahjat al-Nāẓir*, ed. 'Adnān Muḥammad Ibrāhīm and 'Adnān Darwīsh (Damascus, 1991), 2:13–40.

⁶Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mut'at al-Adhhān*, 1:416, 464–65, 472, 2:792; Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib al-Sā'irah bi-A'yān al-Mi'ah al-'Ashirah*, ed. Jibrā'il Sulaymān Jabbūr (Beirut, 1945), 1:72–73, 147; and Khalidi, "Al-Bā'ūnī," *EI*², 1:1110.

⁷Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mut'at al-Adhhān*, 2:878–79; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab*, 1:2:1060–69; al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib*, 1:287–92; and 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār Man Dhahab* (Cairo, 1931), 8:111–13.



Unfortunately, none of them mentions when ‘Ā’ishah was born, though Ibn Ṭulūn, who knew her, quoted verses that ‘Ā’ishah recited to her uncle Ibrāhīm, who died in 870/1464. Perhaps ‘Ā’ishah was ten at that time, and so born around 860/1455.⁸ For she was a precocious child, and in one of her writings, ‘Ā’ishah stated that she had memorized the entire Quran by the age of eight.⁹ ‘Ā’ishah went on to study poetry, hadith, and jurisprudence, probably with her father and her uncle Ibrāhīm, among others.¹⁰

‘Ā’ishah also specialized in the study and practice of Islamic mysticism, which was important to the entire family. Her great uncle Ismā‘īl had been a Sufi ascetic; her uncle Muḥammad composed a devotional poem of over a thousand verses on the prophet Muḥammad, while her uncle Ibrāhīm had been the first director of the al-Bāsiṭīyah *khānqāh* in Damascus. Moreover, many members of the Bā‘ūnī family, including ‘Ā’ishah’s father, were buried in a family plot adjacent to the *zāwīyah* of the Sufi master Abū Bakr ibn Dāwūd (d. 806/1403). This strongly suggests their attachment to this Sufi and his descendents, who were affiliated with the Urmawī branch of the Qādirīyah order.¹¹

‘Ā’ishah’s own affection for the Qādirīyah is evident in many of her writings, which include praise for the order’s progenitor ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (470–561/1078–1166).¹² She was also influenced by ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī (396–481/1005–89), composing a verse rendition of his popular Sufi guide, the *Manāzil al-Sā’irīn*.¹³ In addition, ‘Ā’ishah read and made copies of Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Nawawī’s (631–76/1233–77) book on prayer, the *Kitāb al-Adhkār*,¹⁴ and ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī’s (740–816/1339–1413) Sufi lexicon, the *Kitāb al-Ta’rīfāt*.¹⁵ Further, she frequently praised her two spiritual masters, Jamāl al-Dīn Ismā‘īl al-Ḥawwārī (fl. late ninth/fifteenth century), and his *khalīfah*, or successor,

⁸Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mut‘at al-Adhhān*, 2:878, and al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib*, 1:292.

⁹Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab*, 1:2:1060–61, and al-‘Alāwī, ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūnīyah, 18–20.

¹⁰See the sources listed in the preceding note, as well as al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib*, 1:287–98, and Rabābi‘ah, ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūnīyah: *Shā’irah*, 44.

¹¹Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daw’*, 2:232, 308, 7:114; Ibn Ṭulūn, *Al-Qalā’id*, 1: 274–78, 299–301, 489, 2:593; ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Nu‘aymī, *Al-Dāris fī Tārīkh al-Madāris*, ed. Ja‘far al-Ḥasanī (reprint, Cairo, 1988), 2:196, 202–3; and Eric Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Egypte et en Syrie* (Damascus, 1995), 225–28.

¹²See W. Braune, “‘Abd al-Qādir al-Djīlānī,” *EI*², 1:69–70, and D. S. Margoliouth, “Qādiriyya,” *EI*², 4:380–83.

¹³See S. De Beaucueil, “Al-Anṣārī al-Ḥarawī,” *EI*², 1:515–16.

¹⁴C. Brockelmann, “‘Ā’ishah Bint Yūsuf,” *Encyclopaedia of Islām*, 1st ed., 1:217, and W. Heffening, “Al-Nawawī,” *EI*², 7:1041.

¹⁵Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab*, 1:2:1062, and al-‘Alāwī, ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūnīyah, 35. Also see A. S. Tritton, “Al-Djurdjānī,” *EI*², 2:602–3, and Geoffroy, *Soufisme*, 90–91.



Muḥyī al-Dīn Yaḥyá al-Urmawī (fl. ninth-tenth/fifteenth-sixteenth centuries). ‘Ā’ishah states:

My education and development, my spiritual effacement and purification, occurred by the helping hand of the sultan of the saints of his time, the crown of the pure friends of his age, the beauty of truth and religion, the venerable master, father of the spiritual axes, the axis of existence, Ismā‘īl al-Ḥawwārī—may God sanctify his heart’s secret and be satisfied with him—and, then, by the helping hand of his successor in spiritual states and stations, and in spiritual proximity and union, Muḥyī al-Dīn Yaḥyá al-Urmawī—may God continue to spread his ever-growing spiritual blessings throughout his lifetime, and join us every moment to his blessings and succor.¹⁶

The relationship between ‘Ā’ishah and Ismā‘īl al-Ḥawwārī appears to have been particularly close, for in several of her works ‘Ā’ishah described herself as “related to Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Bā’ūnī on earth, and in truth to the axis, the unique and universal helper, Jamāl al-Dīn Ismā‘īl al-Ḥawwārī.”¹⁷

As a Qādirī Sufī and a woman, ‘Ā’ishah was expected to marry and have children. The Bā’ūnīs were a prominent family of the al-Ṣāliḥīyah district of Damascus, and several Bā’ūnī daughters, including ‘Ā’ishah, married members of another distinguished family from the area. Known as Ibn Naqīb al-Ashrāf, they were descendants of the prophet Muḥammad through his grandson al-Ḥusayn. ‘Ā’ishah married Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Naqīb al-Ashrāf (d. 909/1503), about whom we know little, while his more famous brother, the religious scholar and teacher ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī (852–910/1448–1504), married one of ‘Ā’ishah’s

¹⁶Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab*, 1:2:1063–64; also see Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mut‘at al-Adhhān*, 2:878; al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib*, 1:287–92; al-‘Alāwī, ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah, 18–19, 124–25; and Rabābī‘ah, ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah: *Shā’irah*, 162–67.

¹⁷‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah, “Dīwān ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah (=Fayḍ al-Faḍl),” Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, Cairo, microfilm 29322 of MS 431 (Shi‘r Taymūr), 4; her “Durar al-Ghā’iṣ fī Baḥr al-Mu’jizāt wa-al-Khaṣā’iṣ,” Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, Cairo, microfilm 34329 of MS 558 (ḥadīth), fol. 2a; and her “Al-Mawrid al-Ahná,” ed. al-‘Alāwī, ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah, 124–25. Sources differ over Jamāl al-Dīn Ismā‘īl’s place of origin. Ibn Ṭūlūn called him “al-Ḥawrānī” from a village in the districts of Damascus, while Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, al-Ghazzī, and Ibn al-‘Imād called him “al-Khwārazmī;” Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mut‘at al-Adhhān*, 2:878; Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab*, 1:2:1063; al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib*, 1:288, and Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt*, 8:111. However, surviving manuscripts of ‘Ā’ishah’s works clearly state that Jamāl al-Dīn Ismā‘īl was “from Ḥawwār,” a village near Aleppo. Also see Mājid al-Dhahabī and Ṣalāḥ al-Khiyamī, “Dīwān ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah,” *Turāth al-‘Arabī* (Damascus) 4 (1981): 110–21, esp. 112, and Yāqūt ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān* (Beirut, 1979), 2:315, 317.



older nieces.¹⁸ ‘Ā’ishah had at least two children, including a daughter, Barakah (b. 899/1491), and a son, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (b. 897/1489).¹⁹

Together with ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, ‘Ā’ishah set out for Cairo in 919/1513. By this time ‘Ā’ishah’s husband and brothers were dead, and so she apparently took it upon herself to travel to Cairo in order to secure a job for her son in the Mamluk administration.²⁰ Unfortunately, during their journey they were robbed near the Egyptian city of Bilbīs, and ‘Ā’ishah lost all of her writings. When they finally arrived in Cairo, ‘Ā’ishah requested the assistance of Maḥmūd ibn Muḥammad ibn Ajā (854–925/1450–1519), the confidential secretary and foreign minister of the sultan al-Ghawrī. Ibn Ajā treated ‘Ā’ishah like an old friend to the extent of lodging her in his own harem and eventually employing her son in the chancery.²¹ Why Ibn Ajā was so generous to ‘Ā’ishah and her son is open to speculation, though Ibn Ajā had previous close relations with at least one member of the Ibn Naqīb al-Ashrāf family. In addition, Ibn Ajā, who was originally from Aleppo, may have known ‘Ā’ishah’s brother Muḥammad, who had been a Shafī’i judge there, or her Sufi shaykh, Jamāl al-Dīn Ismā’īl, who was also from the region. It may be, too, that ‘Ā’ishah’s poetic reputation had preceded her to Cairo, attracting the attention of Ibn Ajā, to whom she would dedicate several glowing panegyrics.²²

Whatever the case, Ibn Ajā gave ‘Ā’ishah an apartment next to his wife, Sitt al-Ḥalab (d. 933/1526). Sitt al-Ḥalab was the daughter of an important Mamluk amir and official of Aleppo, and after her father’s death, she became the overseer of the substantial religious endowments that he had created during his lifetime.²³ Sitt al-Ḥalab then appears to have conspired with Ibn Ajā to divorce her first

¹⁸Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mut’at al-Adhhān*, 1:157, 483–84, 518; 2:716–17, 878.

¹⁹In comments at the end of one of her works, ‘Ā’ishah names her husband, her two children, the dates of her children’s births, and makes a few comments on the difficulty of receiving the stipend owed to her son as a descendent of the Prophet Muḥammad; see her “Al-Mawrid al-Ahnā fī al-Mawlid al-Asnā,” *Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah*, Cairo, MS 639 (Shi’r Taymūr), 355–56, quoted in Rabābi’ah, *‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūniyah: Shā’irah*, 46–47; and also see ‘Abd Allāh Mukhlis, “‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūniyah,” *Majallat al-Majma’ al-‘Ilmī* (Damascus) 16 no. 2 (1941): 66–72, esp. 69. Ibn al-‘Imād (*Shadharāt*, 8:132) following al-Ghazzī (*Al-Kawākib*, 1:257) referred to ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s mother as “Zaynab bint al-Bā’ūni.” But I believe, as does Rabābi’ah, that ‘Ā’ishah is meant, due to the time and circumstances of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s stay in Cairo as discussed below.

²⁰‘Ā’ishah may also have been attempting to secure her son’s stipend; see n. 19; Rabābi’ah, *‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūniyah: Shā’irah*, 47–52, and ‘Umar Farrūkh, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-‘Arabī*, 5th ed. (Beirut, 1984), 3:926–27.

²¹Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mut’at al-Adhhān*, 1:483; 2:878; al-Dhahabī and al-Khiyamī, “Dīwān ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūniyah,” 112; and Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab*, 1:2:1064.

²²Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab*, 1:1:1064; 2:2:456–60; also see Muḥammad Ibn Tūlūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān fī Ḥawādith al-Zamān*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā (Cairo, 1962), 1:315; al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib*, 1:101; and Rabābi’ah, *‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūniyah: Shā’irah*, 50–52, 250–51.

²³Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab*, 1:2:575–78, 884–85, and al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw’*, 5:125.



husband, after which she married Ibn Ajā. No doubt aided by Sitt al-Ḥalab's vast wealth, Ibn Ajā became the Hanafi judge of Aleppo in 890/1485 and continued his rise to power until Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī appointed him confidential secretary and foreign minister in 906/1500.²⁴ Though frequently in poor health, Ibn Ajā held these important positions until the end of the Mamluk dynasty, as he enjoyed the high esteem and friendship of al-Ghawrī. Ibn Ajā threw lavish banquets for his sultan, who reciprocated with expensive gifts, and Sitt al-Ḥalab, too, had elaborate meals prepared for al-Ghawrī and his entourage when the sultan came to Ibn Ajā's residence to visit his ailing minister. Not surprisingly, Sitt al-Ḥalab was on friendly terms with al-Ghawrī's wife, the Circassian princess Jān-i Sukkar, whom she met at monthly soirees.²⁵

Perhaps 'Ā'ishah attended some of these sessions and met the princess, for she certainly circulated among Cairo's elite. 'Ā'ishah studied and shared views with a number of the finest scholars of the time, who authorized her to teach, and give legal opinions of her own. Ibn Ajā also introduced her to the noted litterateur and religious scholar 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-'Abbāsī (867–963/1463–1557), with whom she exchanged a number of friendly and witty poems.²⁶ 'Ā'ishah stayed in Cairo for several years enjoying Ibn Ajā's patronage, and she may not have left Cairo until 922/1516, when her son 'Abd al-Wahhāb, then an assistant secretary, accompanied Ibn Ajā to Aleppo, where 'Ā'ishah met the sultan.²⁷ Perhaps Ibn Ajā suggested the royal audience to al-Ghawrī, whose love of poetry is well known.²⁸ But the sultan may have met with 'Ā'ishah to seek her blessings, as well. For in this time of crisis, al-Ghawrī was also gathering his spiritual forces for the days and battle ahead, and it is quite apparent from biographies of 'Ā'ishah and from her own comments in her writings that she was highly regarded as a pious woman and Sufi master.²⁹

²⁴Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab*, 2:2:452–54, and Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ī' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'ī' al-Duhūr*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, 3rd ed. (Cairo, 1984), 3:219, 258, 318, 426, 474.

²⁵Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ī' al-Zuhūr*, 4:276, 394, 473–74, Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab*, 1:2:575–78.

²⁶Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab*, 1:2:1064–65; Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mut'at al-Adhhān*, 2:878; al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib*, 1:288–90; al-'Alāwī, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, 37–42; and Rabābī'ah, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: *Shā'irah*, 167–72.

²⁷Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mut'at al-Adhhān*, 1:483.

²⁸Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ī' al-Zuhūr*, 5:89, and see Petry, *Twilight*, 119–22.

²⁹'Ā'ishah's biographers refer to her variously as "the intelligent, knowledgeable, and pious shaykhah, poet, litterateur and Sufi, one of the unique people of all time, and a rarity of the ages." Also see Rabābī'ah, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: *Shā'irah*, 220–22; Th. Emil Homerin, "Saving Muslim Souls: The *Khānqāh* and the Sufi Duty in Mamluk Lands," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 59–83, esp. 62–63; and Petry, *Twilight*, 224–25, who describes al-Ghawrī's invocations for divine aid on the battlefield of Marj Dābiq.



II

Indeed, by any standard, ‘Ā’ishah’s religious writings were extensive, but for a premodern woman, they were simply extraordinary. While a number of women were respected scholars and teachers in Mamluk domains, they rarely composed works of their own.³⁰ ‘Ā’ishah, however, was a prolific author of both religious prose and poetry, and she probably wrote more Arabic works than any other woman prior to the twentieth century. In addition to copying earlier religious works, including al-Nawawī’s *Kitāb al-Adhkār*, and al-Jurjānī’s *Kitāb al-Ta’rīfāt*, ‘Ā’ishah composed verse abridgements of Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī’s (d. 902/1497) *Al-Qawl al-Badī’ fī Ṣalāt ‘alā al-Ḥabīb al-Shafī’*,³¹ and *Al-Mu’jizāt wa-al-Khaṣā’iṣ al-Nabawīyah* by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505).³² Both were devotional works in praise of the prophet Muḥammad, and she also composed a panegyric on Muḥammad entitled *Fayḍ al-Wafā’ fī Asmā’ al-Muṣṭafá*, and several similar works combining prose and poetry, including the *Madad al-Wudūd fī Mawlid al-Maḥmūd*, *Al-Faḥ al-Qarīb fī Mi’rāj al-Ḥabīb*, and *Al-Mawrid al-Ahná fī al-Mawlid al-Asná*.³³ ‘Ā’ishah also wrote a number of works on Sufism, including her verse abridgement of al-Anṣārī’s *Manāzil al-Sā’irīn*,³⁴ a spiritual guide entitled *Al-Muntakhab fī Uṣūl al-Rutab*,³⁵ a work entitled *Malāmiḥ al-Sharīfah min Āthār al-Laṭīfah*, an ode on mystical recitation and prayer called *Tashrīf al-Fikr fī Naẓm Fawā’id al-Dhikr*, and two volumes of mystical and devotional poetry, *Al-Faḥ al-Ḥaqqī min Fayḥ al-Talaqqī*, and her *Fayḍ al-Faḍl wa-Jam’ al-Shaml*.³⁶

Among ‘Ā’ishah’s favorite poets was Muḥammad al-Buṣīrī (d. 694/1295), and she incorporated his famous panegyric to Muḥammad, *Al-Burdah*, into a *takhmīs*, which was among the dozen works stolen from her in 919/1513 on the road to

³⁰See al-‘Alāwī, *‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah*, 36–37; Huda Lutfī, “Al-Sakhāwī’s *Kitāb al-Nisā’* as a Source For the Social and Economic History of Muslim Women During the Fifteenth Century A.D.,” *Muslim World* 71 (1981): 104–24, esp. 121; and Jonathan P. Berkey, “Women and Islamic Education in the Mamluk Period,” *Women in Middle Eastern History*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven, 1991), 143–57.

³¹Kātib Çelebi, *Kashf al-Zunūn* (Istanbul, 1941–43), 2:1081, 1362.

³²‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah, “Durar al-Ghā’iṣ fī Baḥr al-Mu’jizāt wa-al-Khaṣā’iṣ”; she completed this work in 902/1497 (fol. 1b.).

³³For a list of ‘Ā’ishah’s writings prior to 919/1513, see her “Fayḍ al-Faḍl,” 218–20; also see Rabābī’ah, *‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah: Shā’irah*, 59–65 and the partial list in al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib*, 1:288. For her *Al-Mawrid al-Ahná*, completed in 901/1495, see the recent edition in al-‘Alāwī, *‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah*, 44–47, 103–79.

³⁴‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah, “Fayḍ al-Faḍl,” 219, and Kātib Çelebi, *Kashf al-Zunūn*, 1:96.

³⁵Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, Cairo, microfilm 13123 of MS 318 (Taṣawwuf Taymūr), 1074/1663.

³⁶‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah, “Fayḍ al-Faḍl,” 219, 297, and Kātib Çelebi, *Kashf al-Zunūn*, 2:1232, 1813.



Cairo. Though devastated by this loss, ‘Ā’ishah set to work composing a second *takhmīs* on *Al-Burdah*, and she collected it in a volume together with five additional odes in praise of the Prophet which she completed during her stay in Cairo.³⁷ This collection includes her most famous poem, the *Faṭḥ al-Mubīn fī Madḥ al-Amīn* (The clear inspiration in praise of the trusted prophet), which consists of 130 verses, each containing an elegant example of a rhetorical device (*badī’*; e.g., paronomasia, antithesis, etc.), while lauding an attribute or action of Muḥammad. This work and ‘Ā’ishah’s commentary on it reveal her refined poetic skills and extensive knowledge of Arabic language and literature, and she referred to many of her literary predecessors including al-Buḥṭarī (d. 284/897), al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965), al-Ma’arrī (d. 449/1057), and Ibn Abī Iṣba’ (d. 654/1256). Further, ‘Ā’ishah consciously patterned her *Faṭḥ al-Mubīn* on earlier *badī’iyah* poems praising the Prophet by Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 749/1349) and Abū Bakr Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī (d. 838/1434); the poetic influences of al-Buṣīrī and his literary forefather, ‘Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), are evident as well.³⁸

But ‘Ā’ishah’s praise of the prophet Muḥammad was more than a rhetorical undertaking, as she noted in her introduction to her second *takhmīs* on *Al-Burdah*, entitled *Al-Qawl al-Ṣaḥīḥ fī Takhmīs Burdat al-Madīḥ*:

Praising the noble Prophet is a distinguishing feature of the pious and a sign of those who are successful. Those who desire the best, desire to praise him, while the pure of heart praise him without end, for this is among the best ways to achieve success and a means for doubling rewards!³⁹

Further, in many poems, ‘Ā’ishah extolled the spiritual and physical benefits of such pious praise:

Praise of God’s Prophet moves the soul;
it drives away doubt, worries, and grief.

³⁷‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah, “Fayḍ al-Faḍl,” 219, and al-Dhahabī and al-Khiyamī, “Dīwān ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah,” 112–13, which also contains a description of this collection. A *takhmīs* is the expansion of an earlier poem by adding three stanzas in elaboration and/or commentary to each verse (two stanzas) of the original poem (= 5 stanzas = *takhmīs*); see W. P. Heinrichs, “Allusion and Intertextuality,” in Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* (London, 1998), 1:82–83, and Rabābi’ah, ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah: *Shā’irah*, 123–38.

³⁸Al-Dhahabī and al-Khiyamī, “Dīwān ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah,” 113–15; al-‘Alāwī, ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah, 44–47, 185–91; and Rabābi’ah, ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah: *Shā’irah*, 56, who notes that ‘Ā’ishah cites at least fifty authors and poets in her commentary. Also see in this issue, G. van Gelder, “Poetry for Easy Listening: *Insijām* and Related Concepts in Ibn Ḥijjah’s *Khizānat al-Adab*.”

³⁹Al-Dhahabī and al-Khiyamī, “Dīwān ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah,” 112, and al-‘Alāwī, ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah, 44–47.



Spirits find rest, eyes cry in delight,
and bodies dance—you can't hold them back!⁴⁰

In fact, 'Ā'ishah's own devotion to the Prophet was probably strengthened by her vision of him during her stay in Mecca. Though she does not relate the date of the event, it probably occurred around 880/1475 when 'Ā'ishah went on pilgrimage with her father.

God, may He be praised, granted me a vision of the Messenger when I was residing in holy Mecca. An anxiety had overcome me by the will of God most high, and so I wanted to go to the holy sanctuary. It was Friday night, and I reclined on a couch on an enclosed veranda overlooking the holy Ka'bah and the sacred precinct. It so happened that one of the men there was reading a *mawlid* of God's Messenger, and voices arose with blessings upon the Prophet. Then, I could not believe my eyes, for it was as if I was standing among a group of women. Someone said: "Kiss the Prophet!" and a dread came over me that made me swoon until the Prophet passed before me. Then I sought his intercession and, with a stammering tongue, I said to God's Messenger, "O my master, I ask you for intercession!" Then I heard him say calmly and deliberately, "I am the intercessor on the Judgment Day!"⁴¹

For 'Ā'ishah, then, praising the Prophet was akin to a religious vocation, and her devotion to this task is seen clearly in her popular prose work *Al-Mawrid al-Ahná fī al-Mawlid al-Asná* (The most wholesome source on the birth of the most brilliant prophet). In this reverential account of Muḥammad's birth and call to prophecy, 'Ā'ishah's mystical tendencies are clear from the outset as she begins with a discussion of *al-Nūr al-Muḥammadī*, or Muhammadan Light, a type of Muslim logos principle. God was a hidden treasure who loved to be known, and so the Light came forth from His knowledge as the first emanation. With the Light, God produced the Pen and Tablet as instruments to bring about creation, and He then made the Light shine in Adam and the other prophets, culminating in Muḥammad, the most beloved of God and humanity's intercessor on the Judgment Day.⁴² After

⁴⁰'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Fayḍ al-Faḍl," 26.

⁴¹'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Al-Mawrid al-Ahná," 104–5, and quoted in Rabābi'ah, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: *Shā'irah*, 53.

⁴²'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Al-Mawrid al-Ahná," ed. al-'Alāwī, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, 117–37; also see Rabābi'ah, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: *Shā'irah*, 141–57. Concerning *al-Nūr al-Muḥammadī*, or the Muhammadan Light, see Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1985), 123–43.



this introduction, 'Ā'ishah recounts the noble lineage of the earthly Muḥammad from his ancestor Muḍar, the miracles surrounding his birth and early childhood, his travels and extraordinary encounters in Syria, and his marriage to the faithful Khadījah. 'Ā'ishah then celebrates more of the Prophet's miracles, praises his fine moral and physical attributes, and concludes with a brief account of his death.⁴³ *Al-Mawrid al-Ahná* closely follows the Arabic *mawlid* genre in that 'Ā'ishah selected and summarized events detailed in the *sīrah*, or hagiographical literature on Muḥammad. Further, her condensed references to many events, hadith, and Quranic verses suggest that her audience was quite familiar with the material. Obviously, 'Ā'ishah did not intend her *al-Mawrid al-Ahná* to be a study of Muḥammad's life. Rather, it is a joyous hymn of praise for God's greatest Prophet to be recited publicly on the anniversary of his birth, and this performative aspect is underscored by 'Ā'ishah's many poems placed within the rhymed prose of the text.⁴⁴

Pray for him,
 blessed and saved by God,
 his creator in pre-eternity!
 Bless this cosmic splendor,
 more praised than heaven,
 named before Tablet and Pen.
 Pray for him,
 and God will bless you ten times more
 and hold you in favor and grace!
 Pray, for God's blessings
 are His mercy from which
 all benefits flow.
 Bless him, for one who prays for him
 wins a share of favor
 and safety from misfortune.
 Pray for my master, bless my support,
 pray for my intercessor
 who grants my desire!
 Pray for the lord from Muḍar's line,
 bless the chosen one,

⁴³'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Al-Mawrid al-Ahná," 137–79; also see al-'Alāwī, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, 103–11.

⁴⁴In terms of Christian literature, this and similar works are comparable to Christmas hymns, more akin to Handel's *Messiah* than to the Gospels. For more of 'Ā'ishah's poetry on Muḥammad see Rabābi'ah, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: *Shā'irah*, 141–62; for the Prophet's *mawlid* in general see Schimmel, *Muhammad*, 144–58.



messenger to nations!
 Pray for him
 praising and praised from eternity;
 bless the best to walk the earth!
 God bless him always and forever,
 and his family and companions,
 knowing and wise,
 As long as the hawk's call at noon
 moves the riders with joy
 toward the House and Sacred Precinct,
 As long as the breeze blows at night
 from Kāzimah, lightning flashing
 on the slopes of Dhū Salam.⁴⁵

In the final verse, 'Ā'ishah recalls Kāzimah and Dhū Salam, two sites on the pilgrim routes to Mecca. Here, she pays homage to *Al-Burdah*, which begins by invoking both places, and, perhaps, to a poem by Ibn al-Fāriḍ that served as the model for al-Buṣīrī's famous ode.⁴⁶ The strong influence of both poets is evident throughout 'Ā'ishah's verse, whether in poems praising the prophet Muḥammad, or in her many poems on mystical themes. Though much of 'Ā'ishah's Sufi verse is lost, several manuscripts of her *Fayḍ al-Faḍl wa-Jam' al-Shaml* (The emanation of grace and the gathering of union) have survived.⁴⁷ This collection contains over three hundred "inspired poems on divine, intimate conversations, mystical meanings and states of grace, spiritual efforts, matters of desire, and passionate ways."⁴⁸ The poems in the volume appear to span much of 'Ā'ishah's life, from her "days as a novice and student to her mastery of the branches of mystical annihilation and the arts of effacement."⁴⁹

⁴⁵'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Al-Mawrid al-Ahná," 176.

⁴⁶See Stefan Sperl's recent translation and insightful comments on *Al-Burdah*, "Qasida 50," in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, 2 vols., ed. S. Sperl and C. Shackle (Leiden, 1996), 2:388–411, 470–76. For Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poem see my translation and analysis in Th. Emil Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn al-Fāriḍ, His Verse and His Shrine*, 2nd rev. ed. (Cairo, 2001), 4–9. Also see Farrūkh, *Tārīkh*, 3:927.

⁴⁷Three manuscripts of her "Fayḍ al-Faḍl" may be found in Cairo's Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, and are listed as "Dīwān 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah," MS 431 (Shi'r Taymūr), dated 1031/1622; MS 581 (Shi'r Taymūr), dated 1031/1622; and MS 4384 (Adab), dated 1341/1922. All references in this article are to MS 431, unless otherwise noted. Rabābi'ah ('Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: *Shā'irah*, 60) found a fourth manuscript in Cairo's Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, presumably under its correct title. This is MS 112 (Shi'r Taymūr), also dated 1031/1622 and by the same scribe as MS 431.

⁴⁸'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Fayḍ al-Faḍl," 4.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 218–19.



An odd feature of the *Fayḍ al-Faḍl* is that the collection seems to end at several places:

‘Ā’ishah—related to Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad al-Bā’ūnī on earth, and in truth to the axis, the unique and universal helper, Jamāl al-Dīn Ismā‘īl al-Ḥawwārī, known as the axis of existence, may God bless his heart secret—when she finished with this conclusion—and she never concludes without a new beginning—the Real inspired her with an awesome book which she received from Him, may He be praised, the Real. He entitled it *Al-Fathḥ al-Ḥaqqī min Fayḥ al-Talaqqī*, and it has sublime, inspired verse not contained in this present volume, so be aware of that. God is the protector and my success, and He is the most wonderful companion!⁵⁰

Yet, after this apparent ending, the *Fayḍ al-Faḍl* begins anew with a number of additional poems. One of them names, for the first time, ‘Ā’ishah’s second spiritual master and Ismā‘īl al-Ḥawwārī’s successor, Muḥyī al-Dīn Yaḥyá al-Urmawī, further suggesting that the *Fayḍ al-Faḍl* was an on-going compilation.⁵¹ This may also explain why none of the manuscripts cite a completion date for the original work. Nevertheless, ‘Ā’ishah may not have added poems to this collection after her arrival in Egypt in 919/1513, since the poems that she composed in Cairo are not cited in the *Fayḍ al-Faḍl*, as are her other works.⁵²

Whatever the case, the *Fayḍ al-Faḍl* begins with a series of *munājāt* or intimate monologues with God. This particular literary form had been popularized by the Persian Sufi ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī, whose work ‘Ā’ishah knew well. Each of ‘Ā’ishah’s *munājāt* usually consists of two or three verses, in which she assumes the position of the submissive believer before God. In one such poem from “her days as a novitiate,” ‘Ā’ishah says:⁵³

Whenever the fates make your servant recall
 someone besides you, by God, it does no good.
 For memory of you is hidden deep in the heart,
 and you know what I reveal and conceal.

⁵⁰Ibid., 296–97, and 218–20.

⁵¹Ibid., 314.

⁵²Ibid., 218–20, 296–97.

⁵³Ibid., 5. For the *munājāt* of ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī see *Khawaja Abdullah Ansari: Intimate Conversations*, translated by Wheeler M. Thackston (New York, 1978), 163–233.



In a similar spirit of pious resignation, ‘Ā’ishah wrote:⁵⁴

I am content with what God wants for me;
 I commit my whole affair to Him.
 I turn to Him, seek refuge in Him, cling to Him
 for I can trust no one save Him!

Preceding these verses and most of the other poems in the *Fayḍ al-Faḍl* is the phrase *wa min fathī Allāh ‘alayhā* or, more often, *wa min fathīhi ‘alayhā*: “From God’s/His inspiration upon her,” declaring the deeply spiritual source and character of ‘Ā’ishah’s poetry. Further, in a number of instances, poems are introduced by a few additional words citing their occasion, theme, or ‘Ā’ishah’s mystical state when composing them, as in the following poem inspired when “rapture was intense.”⁵⁵

With noble invocation of the One, Creator,
 refresh a heart melted by longing.
 Singer, lift up His praise and repeat it;
 Saqi, pass round His love’s ancient wine.
 For life has passed in desire to drink it,
 though I never won a taste, no, not a taste.
 See how it revived impassioned souls
 brought to ruin and destruction.
 See how it made them disappear 5
 from all the world since they fell for it.
 See how it drove them love-mad and crazy,
 shattered by rapture and craving.
 See how it melted hearts now flowing down
 from tear ducts of large round eyes.
 See how it brought a dead lover back to life;
 O, how many strong lovers have died!
 It is a wine ever appearing
 to man as the rising sun,
 And when its bouquet spreads forth, 10
 it covers all the world and existence.
 When will I win its quenching draught
 passing me away in that abiding beauty?

⁵⁴ ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūnīyah, “Fayḍ al-Faḍl,” 5.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 5–6



Similar to Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his famous wine ode, *Al-Khamrīyah*, 'Ā'ishah here links the memory and recollection (*dhikr*) of God to His love, which is likened to an ancient, intoxicating wine (vv. 1–3). The quest for it has destroyed many true lovers, yet a taste of this wine could resurrect the dead. Again like Ibn al-Fāriḍ, 'Ā'ishah draws attention syntactically to the wine's miraculous effects, in this case by beginning five consecutive verses with the phrase *wa-lakum bi-hā* ("Consider how it . . ." vv. 4–8). She further suggests the spiritual properties of this splendid, fragrant vintage in her final verses (vv. 9–11). There, in verse 11, 'Ā'ishah plays on the well-known Sufi terms for mystical union, *fanā* ("annihilation," "passing away") and *baqā* ("abiding"), while, at the same time, alluding to the Quranic declaration (55:26–27): "All things on the earth are passing away, while the majestic and beneficent countenance of your Lord abides."⁵⁶

This poem is representative of many others in the *Fayḍ al-Faḍl* with their devotional tone and uncomplicated diction and style. In these poems, 'Ā'ishah explored a full range of Arabic rhymes, meters, and poetic forms, whether to praise the Prophet and seek God's forgiveness, to instruct the Sufi novice, or to speak of longing and mystical union.⁵⁷ Further, inspired by earlier Sufi poets, 'Ā'ishah composed a *takhmīs* on an ode ascribed to 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī proclaiming his high saintly status,⁵⁸ and, in one of her longest poems, she dedicated over 250 verses to a variety of mystical themes, using as her model Ibn al-Fāriḍ's Sufi classic the *Naẓm al-Sulūk* (The poem of the Sufi way), also known as *Al-Tā'īyah al-Kubrā* (Ode in T - major).⁵⁹ Toward the end of her own *tā'īyah*, 'Ā'ishah begins forty-three verses with the phrase *a-lā yā rasūla Allāh* ("O messenger of God"), establishing a reverent rhythm and mood as she prays to and praises the Prophet. Such syntactical and phonemic patterning is common in many of her poems, suggesting that she may have intended them to be recited or chanted in Sufi gatherings and *samā'* sessions. This is particularly the case with 'Ā'ishah's many *muwashshahah*, or strophic poems, which often feature refrains:⁶⁰

⁵⁶For Ibn al-Fāriḍ's wine ode, see my translation and analysis in Th. Emil Homerin, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sufi Verse, Sainly Life* (New York, 2001), 41–51. For other examples of wine and its motifs in 'Ā'ishah's poetry see Rabābi'ah, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: *Shā'irah*, 207–20, 287, 306–14; unfortunately Rabābi'ah nearly always misses her many references to Ibn al-Fāriḍ's verse here and elsewhere.

⁵⁷E.g. 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Fayḍ al-Faḍl," 29–30, 34–35, 84–85, 126–27, 205–8. For a good introduction to 'Ā'ishah's poetry, with examples drawn largely from the "Fayḍ al-Faḍl," see Rabābi'ah, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: *Shā'irah*.

⁵⁸'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Fayḍ al-Faḍl," 290–92, and see Braune, "'Abd al-Qādir al-Djīlānī," 70.

⁵⁹'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Fayḍ al-Faḍl," 139–51; also see Homerin, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sufi Verse, Sainly Life*, 67–291, and Rabābi'ah, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: *Shā'irah*, 287–88.

⁶⁰'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Fayḍ al-Faḍl," 253–54; also see 172–78, 208–10, 294–96, 306–8, 327–28. For a survey and stylistic analysis of 'Ā'ishah's *muwashshahah* and musical elements in her verse,



I see no one but my love
 when I'm here or when I'm gone.
 I see him always with me,
 for he's my destiny.

O my joy and happiness 5
 faithful love has graced me
 With passing away in abiding
 and abiding in passing away,
 For I have met my fate,
 and fate is my reunion. 10

So my heart savor
 union with my love.
 I see him always with me,
 for he's my destiny.

He's my attributes, my essence; 15
 I see him and nothing else;
 He's my effacement, my endurance
 when I pass and then return.
 He's my union and dissolution
 in my aim and way of life; 20

He's my substance and my meaning
 far away or near.
 I see him always with me,
 for he's my destiny.

Here, by God, and in my heart 25
 God made my bliss complete.
 I loved my lover and my lord,
 spring of my soul and being.
 So life was good, I was always near,
 and God made my vision last. 30

So his brilliant flash, no other,
 appeared to me unbroken.
 I see him always with me,
 for he's my destiny.

My life was all delight, my separation sweet 35
 in love with beauty's lord.
 My union came, division left,
 my wide expansion stayed.

see Rabābi'ah, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūniyah: *Shā'irah*, 71–104, 335–400.



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My illusions gone, my truth proved true
and unadorned appeared. 40

A handsome moon beguiled me;
he held all wondrous things.
I see him always with me,
for he's my destiny.

By my life, 45
he is my highest goal!
My art is passing away in him,
passion, my food and drink.
He's my reason, my religion,
my doctrine and devotion. 50

Wherever I turn my face,
I see him alone with no one watching.
I see him always with me,
for he's my destiny!

Ostensibly, this poem tells of a lover's consuming passion for her beloved. Destiny has fated that she love him, and so, faithfully, she gives up all thought or care for herself. Yet this does not cause her ruin but, rather, her happiness and joy, as she finds blissful union with her handsome love. Enhancing this love theme are the underlying devotional and mystical elements of the poem, which contains several possible allusions to the prophet Muḥammad. 'Ā'ishah refers to her beloved as *ḥabīb* (v. 1), a lover who is like the full moon (*badr*, v. 41), and both terms are standard poetic references to Muḥammad, the "beloved of God." Strengthening this reading is the first portion of 'Ā'ishah's refrain: *kayfa lā ashhaduhu* ("How can I not see him," v. 3 ff.), which may also be translated as "How can I not bear witness to him," echoing the Muslim profession of faith: *ashhadu an lā ilāha illā Allāha wa ashhadu anna Muḥammada rasūlu Allāh*, "I bear witness that there is no deity but God and that Muḥammad is the messenger of God."⁶¹ However, this could equally imply that God is 'Ā'ishah's love, a reading supported by her use of the term *rabb* for her beloved, and her direct references to God (vv. 25–30).

In addition, the poem contains over a dozen well-known Sufi technical terms regarding mystical states and stations. Central to this poem is union, and 'Ā'ishah frequently underscores the dialectic relation between passing away and abiding in union (*fanā' -baqā'*, vv. 7–8, 18, 47; *maḥw-thibāt*, v. 17; *jam' -shitāt*, v. 19; *jam' -farq*,

⁶¹Concerning the *shahādah*, or Muslim profession of faith, see Cyril Glasse, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1989), 359–60; also see Homerin, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sufi Verse, Sainly Life*, 57–58, and Schimmel, *Muhammad*, 124, 176–215.



vv. 35, 37). Likewise, she makes distinctions between substance and meaning, and illusion and truth (*ma'ná-'ayn*, v. 21; *wahm-ḥaqq*, vv. 39–40) as spiritual contemplation and vision (*shuhūd*, v. 30) produce an expansive state of exhilaration (*baṣṭ*, v. 38).⁶² Graced with illumination, the lover rests at ease with her beloved, whom she encounters within herself and everywhere she turns:

Wherever I turn my face,
I see him alone with no one watching.
I see him always with me,
for he's my destiny!

'Ā'ishah drew from both Arabic love poetry and the Quran for this final, climactic verse. In the classical poetic tradition, the *raqīb*, or "spy," stands guard to protect the beloved against the lover's advances. However, the spy may be avoided in a secret rendezvous or, of course, in the bridal chamber, where lovers meet alone. The sacred all-embracing nature of this union, as well as the divine identity of the beloved, is further suggested by 'Ā'ishah's phrase *kayfa mā wajahtu wajhī arāhu* ("Wherever I turn my face, I see him"), a clear reference to the Quranic declaration, often quoted by Sufis (2:115): "Wherever you turn, there is the face (*wajh*) of God."⁶³ Here again, 'Ā'ishah, unlike Ibn al-Fāriḍ, is explicit regarding the divine status of the beloved. This may be the result of her overtly devotional aims. Yet, as one of a very few medieval women publicly composing Arabic love poetry, 'Ā'ishah may have wanted to avoid any ambiguity regarding the spiritual character of her love, so as to avoid controversy or scandal.

III

This poem and many others by 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah show clearly that her mystical quest revolved around love for God and his prophet Muḥammad. Her verses are replete with Sufi technical terms, and she often expresses her veneration for 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and her Sufi masters.⁶⁴ Following their Qādirīyah way, 'Ā'ishah strove to keep God's commandments and accept His decrees, while seeking God's forgiveness and the Prophet's intercession on the Day of Judgment. Moreover, her spiritual discipline and mystical practice appear to have illumined her faith with moments of mystical union, ecstasy, and joy. Significantly, she alludes to these

⁶²Regarding many of these Sufi terms see 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt* (Beirut, 1983), 77, 89, 129, 169, 171, 255. For further examples of their frequent use in other poems by 'Ā'ishah, see Rabābi'ah, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: *Shā'irah*, 284–86.

⁶³See Homerin, *Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sufi Verse, Sainly Life*, 19; for Ibn al-Fāriḍ's use of the "spy," 74–75, v. 6.

⁶⁴For further examples, see Rabābi'ah, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: *Shā'irah*, 187–202.



powerful experiences in her comments preceding individual poems, and these autobiographical remarks, together with those found elsewhere in her writings, suggest 'Ā'ishah's sense of confidence and accomplishment in both her life and work.

'Ā'ishah is also exceptional in that she attempted to articulate and clarify some of her mystical beliefs and practices in a separate Sufi compendium, *Al-Muntakhab fī Uṣūl al-Rutab* (Selections on the fundamentals of stations). 'Ā'ishah notes at the outset that the stages of the mystical folk are innumerable, yet all of them are based on four fundamental principles: *tawbah* (repentance), *ikhhlāṣ* (sincerity), *dhikr* (recollection), and *muḥabbah* (love). She then addresses these principles in four separate sections.⁶⁵ 'Ā'ishah begins each section with relevant quotations from the Quran, and she usually cites Arabic synonyms for each term, along with their extrinsic (*ẓāhir*) and intrinsic (*bāṭin*) meanings. 'Ā'ishah quotes relevant traditions of Muḥammad and sayings from the early Muslim forefathers (*ṣalaf*), followed by extensive quotations from Sufi masters. To conclude, she sometimes adds an illustrative story or two, together with a few of her own observations and inspired verses on the subject.

Thus, *tawbah*, or "repentance," explicitly means turning away from sinful acts toward praiseworthy ones, and away from evil speech toward good words. Inwardly for the Sufis, repentance also signifies turning away from all things save God.⁶⁶ Repentance is effective on three conditions: (1) remorse for past misdeeds, (2) desisting immediately from current offenses, and (3) never returning to sin. 'Ā'ishah further notes that each member of the body has a share in repentance. The heart must resolve to leave sin and be remorseful, while the eyes should be down cast; the hands should cease to grasp; the feet should stop hurrying, and the ears should stop trying to listen in. This is repentance for the common people. The repentance of the elect goes further by opposing the lust of concupiscence (*nafs*), and by averting the gaze of the heart away from pleasure and prosperity, while abstaining from all transient things. Such repentance is required for the love for God, who said (2:222): "Verily, God loves those who turn in repentance. . . ." Higher still is

⁶⁵'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Al-Muntakhab fī Uṣūl al-Rutab," Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, Cairo, microfilm 13123 of MS 318 (Taṣawwuf Taymūr), 1074/1663, 1–5. Rabābi'ah did not consult this work, believing it to be lost, though he had access to a short work entitled "Majmū' fī Kalām 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah fī Taṣawwuf," Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, Cairo, microfilm 4059 of MS 319 (Taṣawwuf Taymūr); 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: *Shā'irah*, 62, 64. Based on Rabābi'ah's citations of this work, I believe this "Majmū'" consists of selections from 'Ā'ishah's "Al-Muntakhab." Unfortunately, because he did not know this, Rabābi'ah ascribes to 'Ā'ishah statements made by earlier Sufis; see Rabābi'ah, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: *Shā'irah*, 211, 257; 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Al-Muntakhab," 151–57; and Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh al-Iskandarī, *Laṭā'if al-Minan* (Cairo, 1979), 52–55.

⁶⁶'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Al-Muntakhab," 5–7.



the repentance of the elect of the elect. They turn away from considering anything but God, including spiritual states and blessings, until God reveals His beauty to them, eradicating everything but Himself.⁶⁷

In her discussion of repentance, ‘Ā’ishah relies heavily on the opinions of the respected Sufi master and scholar Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (465/1072), and this is also the case regarding her second fundamental principle, *ikhhlās*, or “sincerity” in word and deed. ‘Ā’ishah quotes al-Qushayrī to the effect that sincere obedience to God should be motivated only by the desire to draw closer to Him. The believer should have no thought of attaining praise or glory among people, for sincerity requires the utmost humility. Therefore, concupiscence (*nafs*) is to be disciplined, while the heart must be blind to the opinions of others, as the spirit guards against pride.⁶⁸ To underscore the importance of sincerity, ‘Ā’ishah cites numerous prophetic traditions, and stories regarding proper intentions and the grievous sin of hypocrisy. Sincerity, she says, is like water helping the tiny seeds of good works to grow, while hypocrisy is a cyclone that will sweep away the fields of one’s labor.⁶⁹

Essential to both repentance and sincerity is the third principle, *dhikr*, or “recollection” of God. ‘Ā’ishah begins her section on this pivotal topic with God’s promise in the Quran (2:152): “Remember Me, and I will remember you,” and al-Qushayrī’s commentary on it. He notes that, for those who understand the Quran literally, this verse means: “Remember Me at the appropriate times, and I will remember you with acts of grace.” However, those with insight also grasp the mystical import of this divine message: “Remember Me by leaving behind all thought of reward or punishment, and I will remember you by establishing you in My truth after your passing away from yourselves.”⁷⁰ Following al-Qushayrī, ‘Ā’ishah elaborates on this reciprocal relationship of recollection between God and His faithful worshippers in a series of mystical interpretations: “Remember Me with sincerity, and I will remember you among the spiritual elect; remember Me in your striving, and I will remember You with witnessing; . . . remember Me in your passing away, and I will remember you in your abiding; . . . remember Me in your hearts, and I will remember you in nearness to Me; remember Me in your spirits, and I will remember you in moments of enlightenment; remember Me in your heart secrets, and I will remember you in illuminations!”⁷¹

⁶⁷Ibid., 22–25; 45–46.

⁶⁸Ibid., 82–83. Also see Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd Ibn al-Sharīf (Cairo, 1972–74), 1:443–47, and 1:275–88; and H. Halm, “Al-Qushayrī,” *EI*², 5:526.

⁶⁹‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūnīyah, “Al-Muntakhab,” 89–90.

⁷⁰Ibid., 96–97. Also see Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Laṭā’if al-Ishārāt fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, ed. Ibrāhīm Basyūnī (Cairo, 1981), 1:137–38.

⁷¹‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūnīyah, “Al-Muntakhab,” 98–99.



In context of the classical Sufi tradition, 'Ā'ishah regards *dhikr* as both a process and a mystical state. As a process, recollection of God is the means to purify oneself of selfishness and hypocrisy, and to ward off Satan. Though one will never be able to remember God constantly with one's lips, the sincere believer should strive always to recall God within the heart. As with repentance, recollection may differ in its effects depending on the believer's spiritual level; common people are soothed and receive blessings by praising God; religious scholars gain insight into God's names and attributes, while the spiritual elect who recollect God are purified and rest in Him. The ultimate goal of recollection, then, is a paradoxical state of forgetting everything while remembering God.⁷² This results in absorption in Him, and 'Ā'ishah states that the most effective means to achieve this mystical state is to recollect the phrase: "There is no deity but God." Finally, Muḥammad is reported to have said: "One who loves something, remembers it often," and, so, 'Ā'ishah includes recollection among the signs of love.⁷³

This leads naturally to *maḥabbah*, or "love," the subject of the final and longest section of *Al-Muntakhab*. As in the preceding section on *dhikr*, 'Ā'ishah opens with verses from the Quran followed by al-Qushayrī's commentary. God commands Muḥammad (3:31): "Say: 'If you love God, then follow me and God will love you.'" True love of God, al-Qushayrī observes, requires lovers to efface themselves completely as their beloved wears them out. This love relationship is possible because God created human beings in the best of forms and, so, He has a special affection for them. Further, God has said (5:54): "O you who believe, any of you who turns away from his religion, God will replace with a people whom He will love as they love Him." For al-Qushayrī and 'Ā'ishah, this verse declares to believers the wonderful news that if they keep the faith and love God, He most certainly will love them.⁷⁴ 'Ā'ishah then reinforces this point with several divine sayings (*al-ḥadīth al-qudsī*) on love, particularly the famous "Tradition of Willing Devotions," a standard Sufi text in support of mystical union: "God said: 'Whoever treats a friend of mine as an enemy, on him I declare war! My servant draws near to Me by nothing more loved by Me than the religious obligations that I have imposed upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me by acts of willing devotion such that I love him. Then, when I love him, I become his ear, his eye, and his tongue, his heart and reason, his hand and support.'⁷⁵

'Ā'ishah next cites a number of statements on love by Sufi masters, including: "love is the hearts' delight in the beloved's being," and "love is intoxication without

⁷²Ibid., 102–29.

⁷³Ibid., 130–40.

⁷⁴Ibid., 141–44. Also see al-Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if*, 1:235–36, and his *Al-Risālah*, 2:610–25.

⁷⁵'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Al-Muntakhab," 148.



sobriety, an indescribable astonishment in meeting the beloved." Like a spell, God's love overwhelms the hearts of His loving worshippers, and reveals to them the light of His beauty and the sacred power of His majesty. Love's effects, however, will vary depending on the believers' spiritual capacities, and 'Ā'ishah quotes the North African Sufi Ibn al-'Arīf (d. 536/1141) on the levels of love. For the common believer, the seeds of love are planted by reading the Quran and following the custom of Muḥammad, and then nourished by complying with divine law. This love will thwart the temptations of Satan, provide solace in times of adversity, and make service to God delightful. By contrast, love among the spiritual elite strikes like a bolt of lightning, leaving the lovers dumbfounded and confused. This overwhelming love causes the spiritual elite to pass away in God's love for them, which is beyond any description or allusion.⁷⁶

'Ā'ishah then turns to the signs of love, which include intimacy with God and estrangement from the world, awe before God and contentment with His will, performing pious deeds, loving others who love God, and passing away in the beloved from all things.⁷⁷ 'Ā'ishah adds that these are only a few of the many signs, as she moves on to traditions and stories about love. She observes that many people and religious communities have been touched by the irresistible love of God in the past, but that Muslims can bear more of it thanks to the enduring legacy of the most perfect and noble prophet Muḥammad. Still, God's love is all-consuming, as even Hell discovered. The great Sufi al-Junayd (d. 298/911) once said: "Hell fire asked, 'O Lord, if I don't obey You, will You punish me with something stronger than me?' God said, 'Yes, I will inflict on you My greater fire.' Hell asked, 'What fire is more intense and awesome than me?' God answered, 'The fire of My love that I have placed in the hearts of My friends (*awliyā'*)'"⁷⁸

Perhaps on a more personal note, 'Ā'ishah ends her section on love with two stories of pious women whose unwavering devotion and love for God are rewarded by His blessings.⁷⁹ She then concludes *Al-Muntakhab* with her own mystical truths (*ḥaqā'iq ladunīyah*) on love inspired by God. Love is the greatest secret of God; it is an endless sea. Those blessed with God's love are His saintly friends (*awliyā'*) whose existence is eradicated in a state beyond description. They pass away and abide in Him, so that their hearts become a place of vision where the truth of the divine essence (*dhāt*) is revealed. God then assumes His worshippers' senses as attested in the "Tradition of Willing Devotions." Though the worshippers' love draws them ever closer to the divine beloved, God bestows His love as an act of unearned grace. Ultimately, the lovers lose all sense of self (*anānīyah*) when the

⁷⁶Ibid., 148–58. Also see A. Faure, "Ibn al-'Arīf," *EI*², 3:712–13.

⁷⁷'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Al-Muntakhab," 158–64.

⁷⁸Ibid., 180.

⁷⁹Ibid., 185–90.



truth of oneness (*al-ḥaqīqah al-aḥadīyah*) appears, but their mystical death leads them to eternal life, as 'Ā'ishah declares in verses from her closing poem:⁸⁰

God looked with favor on a folk,
 and they stayed away
 from worldly fortunes.
 In love and devotion, they worshipped Him;
 they surrendered themselves,
 their aim was true.
 In love with Him, they gave themselves up
 and passed away from existence,
 nothing left behind.
 So He took pity
 and revealed to them
 His He-ness,
 And they lived again
 gazing at that living face
 when His eternal life appeared.
 They saw Him alone
 in the garden of union
 and drank from contemplation's cups,
 Filled lovingly with pure wine
 from the vision
 of true oneness.

Throughout *Al-Muntakhab*, 'Ā'ishah consistently cites the Quran and carefully notes the sources of her hadith. Further, she relies on several major Sufi works, which she cites and accurately quotes. These works include Muḥammad al-Kalābādihī's (d. 385/995) *Al-Ta'arruf li-Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*,⁸¹ al-Qushayrī's *Al-Risālah* and his Quranic commentary *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, and writings by Muḥammad al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), author of the *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyah*.⁸² In addition to these classical sources, 'Ā'ishah occasionally draws selections from a few later works, in particular the *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif* by 'Umar

⁸⁰Ibid., 190–211.

⁸¹E.g. 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Al-Muntakhab," 16–18, 124–25, and Muḥammad al-Kalābādihī, *Al-Ta'arruf li-Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf* (Beirut, 1980), 92–93, 103–104. Also see P. Nwiya, "Al-Kalābādihī," *EI*², 4:467.

⁸²E.g., 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Al-Muntakhab," 89, 100, 145, and G. Bowering, "Al-Sulamī," *EI*², 9:811.



al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234),⁸³ and the *Laṭā'if al-Minan* by Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309),⁸⁴ and she quotes a poem by Ibn al-'Arīf, and one by Muḥammad Ibn Abī al-Wafā' (d. 891/1486).⁸⁵ Among these Sufi authorities, however, al-Qushayrī is clearly the most cited and easily the most influential.

As indicated in its title, *Al-Muntakhab fī Uṣūl al-Rutab* is a "selection" 'Ā'ishah made from earlier works on Sufism. As such, it testifies to 'Ā'ishah's extensive reading on the subject, and records some of the mystical writings circulating in Sufi circles of her day. Notable by its absence is any reference to the popular works of Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 637/1240) or those of his students.⁸⁶ Perhaps 'Ā'ishah consciously avoided these controversial authors, as well as difficult matters of mystical theology, which are rarely discussed in *Al-Muntakhab*. Further, 'Ā'ishah does not refer explicitly to her own teachers, nor does she mention the Light of Muḥammad, which figures prominently in her other works. These omissions, however, may reflect her particular focus in *Al-Muntakhab* on classical sources that are not primarily concerned with mystical prophetology. While 'Ā'ishah intended her *Al-Muntakhab* to be useful for fellow travelers on the mystic path,⁸⁷ this work appears to be less of a formal guide-book than a collection of insightful and inspirational passages organized around the four basic principles of repentance, sincerity, recollection, and love.⁸⁸ As in her poetry, 'Ā'ishah's tone throughout the work is consistently positive and often up-lifting. She stresses repeatedly that divine mercy and grace are limited only by human heedlessness and recalcitrance, but that God will love and help all believers who sincerely try to reach Him:

⁸³'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūniyah, "Al-Muntakhab," 164–67, and 'Umar al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif* (Cairo, 1973), 461.

⁸⁴'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūniyah, "Al-Muntakhab," 151–57, and Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh al-Iskandarī, *Laṭā'if al-Minan*, 52–55. Also see G. Makdisi, "Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh," *EI*², 3:722–23.

⁸⁵'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūniyah, "Al-Muntakhab," 181–82, 206. For Muḥammad Ibn Abī al-Wafā' see al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi'*, 7:197, and 'Umar Kaḥḥālah, *Mu'jam al-Mu'allifīn* (Damascus, 1957), 9:117. In her section on "sincerity," 'Ā'ishah also cites (pg. 96) an animal fable from Muḥammad al-Damīrī's (d. 808/1405) famous animal encyclopedia *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān* (Cairo, 1978), 2:10; see L. Kopf, "Al-Damīrī," *EI*², 2:107–8.

⁸⁶Concerning Ibn al-'Arabī and his influence in the Mamluk period, see Homerin, *From Arab Poet*, 26–32, 55–75; Geoffroy, *Soufisme*, 437–503; and especially Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn al-'Arabī in the Later Islamic Tradition* (New York, 1998).

⁸⁷'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūniyah, "Al-Muntakhab," 3–4.

⁸⁸Cf. Abū Najīb al-Suhrawardī, *Kitāb Ādāb al-Murīdīn (A Sufi Rule for Novices)*, edited with an abridged translation by Menahem Milson (Cambridge, MA, 1975).



I see love,
 an ocean without a shore.
 If you are love's chosen ones,
 plunge in!⁸⁹

IV

During the difficult summer of 922/1516, Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī met with 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah. Later, the Mamluk sultan rode out with his army to meet the Ottoman sultan Selim at Marj Dābiq. There, surrounded by his religious officials and spiritual advisors, al-Ghawrī suffered a stroke and died in the heat of battle.⁹⁰ His decimated forces fled the field, and some survivors eventually returned to Cairo, Ibn Ajā among them. Ibn Ajā was then retained as confidential secretary and foreign minister by the new Mamluk sultan Tūmānbāy, who was defeated and killed a few months later when Selim took Cairo. Selim, however, treated the elderly Ibn Ajā with respect and permitted him and his family to return to their native Aleppo, where Ibn Ajā died in 925/1519.⁹¹ Ibn Ajā's widow, Sitt al-Ḥalab (d. 933/1525), mourned her husband for a year and then remarried, taking delight in a considerably younger man.⁹²

After Marj Dābiq, 'Ā'ishah's son, 'Abd al-Wahhāb, did not follow his employer Ibn Ajā to Cairo. Instead, 'Abd al-Wahhāb returned to the al-Ṣālihīyah district of Damascus, where he studied jurisprudence and Sufism until his death, around the age of thirty, in 925/1519.⁹³ As for 'Ā'ishah, she too died in Damascus, on the sixteenth of Dhū al-Qa'dah, 923/December, 1517, the same year that the Mamluk dynasty passed away.⁹⁴ However, her prose and poetry lived on to be admired and copied for centuries, thereby preserving her extraordinary legacy. 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah remains one of the greatest woman poets and writers in Islamic history, and she serves as a fitting testimony to the vibrant literary and religious culture of the Mamluk period.

⁸⁹'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah, "Al-Muntakhab," 198.

⁹⁰Petry, *Twilight of Majesty*, 224–31.

⁹¹Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mut'at al-Adhhān*, 2:799; al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib*, 1:303; and Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab*, 2:2:455–56.

⁹²Ibn al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, *Durr al-Ḥabab*, 1:2:577–78.

⁹³Ibn al-Mullā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mut'at al-Adhhān*, 1:484, and al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib*, 1:257.

⁹⁴Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān*, 2:74. Most other sources list her year of death as 922/1516, however, Ibn Ṭūlūn personally knew 'Ā'ishah and her son; see Rabābi'ah, 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah: *Shā'irah*, 57–59.

