



Fruit of Knowledge, Wheel of Learning
Essays in Honour of Carole Hillenbrand

Edited by Ali Ansari





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Al-Suyuti's *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*: A History of Politics or Piety?

THE LATE MAMLUK SCHOLAR Jalal al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman al-Suyuti (d. 911/1505) was far from conventional, composing a plethora of works in a wide variety of fields from Qur'anic exegesis and Hadith Studies to mysticism and erotic literature. He did also dabble in history, although he did not write a significant quantity of works in the field.¹ One of his most famous historical works is his *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'* (History of the Caliphs).² In many instances throughout the work al-Suyuti refers to historical events, but these are relatively few and far between. For the modern historian, the *Ta'rikh* offers little in the way of any 'useful' historical data, and certainly none that could not be found easily elsewhere. The *Ta'rikh* incorporates excerpts from a number of earlier historical works, such as those of al-Muwaffaq 'Abd al-Latif (d. 629/1231), Ibn al-Athir (d. 630/1233), Ibn al-Najjar (d. 643/1246), and al-Dhahabi (d. 748/1348).

Given the lack of historical data within the work, why did al-Suyuti write the *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*? What and who is it for? This chapter explores these questions through a brief survey of the work, focusing on six caliphs: 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (r. 35–40/656–661), al-Ma'mun (r. 196–218/812–833), al-Nasir li-Dini'llah (r. 575–622/1180–1225), al-Mu'tadid bi'llah (r. 815–845/1414–1441), al-Mustakfi II bi'llah (r. 845–855/1441–1451), and al-Qa'im bi-Amri'llah (r. 855–859/1451–1455). This selection covers both prominent and lesser known figures, the powerful and the weak, the pious and the impious, and the long-reigned and the short-lived from throughout the work. Although only a brief survey is possible here, and the data included may

not be fully indicative of the work as a whole, these case studies will highlight some of the main themes of al-Suyuti's *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*. This chapter argues that the work may be seen as relevant to the author's wider theological output and reformist agenda and that taking this factor into account may facilitate a more nuanced reading of the work.

The Power of Piety

In his introduction to the *Ta'rikh*, al-Suyuti includes only a few hints that can help to establish what function or purpose he intended for the work. The introduction is uncharacteristically long for al-Suyuti and includes a significant polemical passage attacking the Isma'ilis and the Fatimid caliphate. The majority of the introduction comprises a series of passages that outline issues regarding the nature of the caliphs and the caliphate,³ such as a discussion about why Muhammad left no clear mechanism for establishing a successor, all of which al-Suyuti acknowledges he has taken from al-Dhahabi's *Ta'rikh*.⁴ However, at the beginning of the introduction, al-Suyuti makes it clear that the *Ta'rikh* is part of a series of *ṭabaqāt* works compiled on the subject of prophets, the Companions of the Prophet, the commentators of the Qur'an, hadith transmitters and many other groups of people within Muslim society.⁵ He explains how he made a conscious decision to separate these *ṭabaqāt* works, rather than including a voluminous work incorporating all in the same place, commenting, 'I wanted to separate all the groups [of people] into separate books, making it advantageous for whoever wanted to know something about a specific group [of people] and easier to study.'⁶

In his *Islamic Historiography*, Chase Robinson briefly categorises the *Ta'rikh* as part of the *chronological* genre of Arab historical writing,⁷ yet it would seem more appropriate to place it in the *ṭabaqāt*/prosopographical genre. In his own discussion of the differences between biography and prosopography, Robinson comments that '[b]iographies accentuate the individual; prosopographies make individuals members'.⁸ Throughout the *Ta'rikh* there is a sense that the work is describing a collection of individuals that are part of a greater whole: the work is not interested in the careers of each individual, but in the lessons that can be learnt from them. Donald Little's reflections on Mamluk *ṭabaqāt* literature also seems to suggest that the *Ta'rikh* should be regarded as prosopography rather than a form of chronological history. Little writes:

Other than to name a few virtues and defects, the Mamluk biographer shows little interest in character at all, less in the development of character, since deeds and accomplishments constituted a person's contribution to the *umma*. Even deviations from this purpose, arising from fascination with striking and unusual detail, militate against the portrayal of an integrated

personality, since such interest leads to the narration of anecdotes focused not so much on the person as the detail.⁹

This is certainly true of the *Ta'rikh*, where there is very little in the way of character development, and also very little in the way of historical, annalistic information.

The *Ta'rikh* does share approaches to historical writing in common with al-Suyuti's history of Egypt, *Husn al-Muhadara*, which is his other main historical work. Franz Rosenthal maintains that the *Husn* was 'a handbook full of information, a useful reference work, which, however, can no longer be called a history'.¹⁰ The *Ta'rikh* can likewise be considered a 'handbook full of information', which moves the work into the realm of anecdotes and curiosities, hence allowing it, like many of his other works, to be easily categorised as *adab* literature. Similar to other *adab* literature, here the author firmly controls what is and is not included. In an analysis of Fedwa Malti-Douglas's work on medieval biography, Julia Bray maintains that 'medieval Arabic biographers are argumentative: they select data and themes according to their attitude towards the biographical subject or what he or she is believed to represent, and according to their agreement or disagreement with previous biographers'.¹¹ Likewise, the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that the *Ta'rikh* is highly selective in the information it includes, containing little annalistic material and often little in the way of characterisation such that after reading each notice the reader will often struggle to gain a real sense of the individual.

Mustafa Banister has compared al-Suyuti's view of the caliph with other historians of the classical period, concluding that 'whereas other ulama historians recognized the demoted status of the caliphate for what it was, al-Suyuti insisted on the continuity between the current line of Abbasids at Cairo and the great caliphs of history who wielded incomparable power'.¹² Banister argues that al-Suyuti's position regards the caliphs as embodying spiritual power and authority, whereas the caliphate included many that failed to live up to the piety of the *rāshidūn*. Al-Suyuti's spiritual, pietistic and idealistic view of the caliphate is deeply contrasted with the holders of the office itself; indeed, much of the work deals with political failures and moral laxity.

It is important to note that the vast majority of the work concerns an age when the caliph was no longer the sole political and spiritual authority within the Muslim community; therefore, al-Suyuti's view of the religious and political superiority of the office of the caliph is continually juxtaposed with the caliphal weakness that was the historical reality. So how should readers interpret the *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*? As will be seen, the main function of the *Ta'rikh* seems to consist of offering a didactic discussion of piety, using the caliphs as real case-study examples rather than as a means to idealise and romanticise the glories of past days. Apart from the *rāshidūn*, the caliphs are not viewed or portrayed as exemplars, since the work seems to acknowledge that although some caliphs were

pious, a great number had dubious moral character;¹³ and yet, the life of each person, good or bad, can offer something that can be used in illustrating moral conduct for readers.

Historical Detail or the Lack Thereof

One of the most striking facts about al-Suyuti's *Ta'rikh* is its lack of historical detail. Even if the *History of the Caliphs* is read as a series of biographies, that is, as a work that blurs the boundaries between *tabaqāt* and *ta'rikh*, the paucity of information remains shocking.¹⁴ The entry for 'Ali, for example, mentions nothing about his actual rule as a caliph at all; and this scarcity of information is a general trend throughout the entire work. The entry for al-Nasir, the caliph ruling during part of the Muslim counter-crusade, is sparse in detail, given the importance of the period. Al-Nasir had ambitions to re-establish the primacy of the role of the caliph, which, although not realised, constituted an important moment in the history of the Abbasid Caliphate.¹⁵

Even when al-Suyuti does provide historical details, there is a tendency to mention events only in passing without giving any specific data. For example, in the entry for al-Nasir, there is a passing reference to the conquests of Salah al-Din. Al-Suyuti writes:

During [the year] there were many victories. Sultan Salah al-Din took many of the Syrian towns that had been in Frankish control, the most important of which was Jerusalem, which had been in Frankish control for ninety-one years.¹⁶

Al-Suyuti does not provide any information about the towns which were taken, when they were taken, or any specific details about the conquests themselves. Although other historians provide significant details about these events,¹⁷ al-Suyuti does not consider this kind of specific information to be important. The passage continues:

The Sultan removed what monuments the Franks had established [in the city], he pulled down the churches that had spread [throughout the city], and he established a Shafi'i madrasa on the site of one of the churches. May God reward Islam well! However, he did not destroy the Church of the Resurrection,¹⁸ following 'Umar—may God be pleased with him!—who did not destroy it when he conquered Jerusalem.¹⁹

This gives us some indication of what details al-Suyuti regards as being important or unimportant: the number of the churches that are destroyed are not mentioned or even guessed,²⁰ nor is there any mention of Salah al-Din placing

the *minbar* in the Dome of the Rock,²¹ nor his re-establishing of Muslim places of worship within the city. Other sources abound in details, such as the fact that the church that was turned into the *Madrassa al-Salahiyya* was the Church of St. Anne.²² In contrast al-Suyuti goes to some lengths to emphasise the link between Salah al-Din and the *rāshidūn* Caliph 'Umar, who created a *sunna* in the so-called 'Pact of 'Umar' for Muslim dealings with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and other places of Christian (and Jewish) worship.²³ For al-Suyuti the general action of destroying the Christian monuments, and establishing new Muslim ones is all that needs to be conveyed; specific detail is unimportant.

Such selective manner of relating some details but not others can also be observed in the entry for the late Mamluk caliph al-Qa'im bi-Amri'llah, who ruled immediately before al-Suyuti wrote the *Ta'rikh*. Al-Qa'im had a dispute with the Mamluk sultan, Inal al-Ashraf, to which the caliph responded by raising troops against the sultan; an enterprise that quickly led to failure. The dispute concerned a request for camels to be used in a campaign in the Nile Delta, which was blocked by Inal al-Ashraf. The *Ta'rikh* simply states:

Then discord arose between the caliph and al-Ashraf because of the rising of an army against him. He [Inal al-Ashraf] removed him from the caliphate in the month of Jumada 859 and sent him to Alexandria. He imprisoned him there until his death in 863 and he was buried with his brother, al-Musta'in.²⁴

There is no detail given about any of the events themselves, the nature of the dispute, or even what actually happened. Instead the focus is on the fact that a conflict emerged between the caliph and the sultan which resulted in the caliph being deposed.

That is not to say, however, that the *Ta'rikh* does not include any useful historical information. The majority of the entries for al-Mustakfi comprises a copy of the covenant of al-Mu'tadid, the previous caliph, nominating him as his successor.²⁵ The covenant was, according to al-Suyuti, drafted by his own father, which adds some personal colour to the *Ta'rikh*.²⁶ In a similar vein, the entry for al-Ma'mun includes his letter to Ishaq ibn Ibrahim that inaugurated the *miḥna* (the 'trial' or 'inquisition' concerning the createdness of the Qur'an),²⁷ reported also in a number of other sources.²⁸ Correspondence between al-Nasir and Tughril Beg is likewise included in the *Ta'rikh*.²⁹ Regarding military campaigns al-Suyuti does, on occasion, give some detail, but the choice of information included seems almost random and it is difficult to ascertain why some events are reported and others are only mentioned in passing, or not at all. For example, in his entry for al-Nasir, al-Suyuti does refer to the Frankish conquest of Constantinople, the Frankish raids on Rosetta in 600/1261 and the Frankish capture, loss and re-capture of Damietta in the 660s;³⁰ but not to any other key events.

Elsewhere, the details that al-Suyuti provides are unusual, surprising and, on the face of it, historically less relevant. In the entry for al-Nasir, he includes the following information: in 581/1185–86, a child was born with a forehead a span and four fingers long, with only one ear;³¹ in 582/1186, six planets were in conjunction with Libra;³² in 583/1187, the first day of the year was the first day of the week and the first day of the solar year and the sun and the moon were in the first sign of the zodiac;³³ in 592/1195–96, a red sandstorm fell over the Arabian Peninsula and the *rukn al-yamānī* (Yemeni corner) of the Ka'ba fell down;³⁴ in 593/1196, a meteor fell to earth;³⁵ in 596/1199 there was a significant drought and the Nile did not flood, which led to widespread famine and cases of cannibalism;³⁶ in 597/1200 there was a significant earthquake in Cairo;³⁷ and, in 600/1203, a woman gave birth to a child with two heads, two arms and four legs.³⁸ This list mostly describes events which were seen as ill omens. Mamluk society sought to avoid physical contact with those with birth defects and abnormalities. Natural disasters were perceived as a form of divine punishment, wrath and displeasure; although wonders such as meteors, and the alignments of 'firsts' were often propitious omens.

Given the general lack of any historical information in the work as a whole, the presence of these curiosities is interesting, notwithstanding their number. There was, however, a general interest in the extraordinary and the supernatural—the *ajā'ib* and the *gharā'ib*—in Classical Islam and in Islamic historiography; for example, al-Mas'udi engages with aspects of the supernatural in his *Muruj al-Dhahab*,³⁹ as was common in Muslim histories during the Ottoman period.⁴⁰ In the *Ta'rikh* there is a correlation between strange omens with defeats at the hands of the Franks and good omens with victories. For example, the conjunction (*qiran*) of the first day of the year with other 'firsts' is immediately followed by the passage seen earlier about Salah al-Din's victories in the Levant, with the simple statement, 'during [the year] there were many victories'.⁴¹ Conjunctions of constellations such as these were highly valued in the late medieval period, with people who were born under conjunctions, including Muhammad himself, often being called a 'Lord of Conjunction'.⁴²

Alongside certain supernatural events that are interpreted as signs of God's approval and disapproval and the theological beliefs associated with natural disasters such as earthquakes⁴³ and plagues,⁴⁴ al-Suyuti's *Ta'rikh* moves into a territory that is more pietistic than much contemporary historiography and even quite different in focus to localised *faḍā'il* literature. This suggests a highly spiritualised view of history; although, it is one that rejects astrology, since after the sighting of the six planets in Libra, al-Suyuti writes:

The astrologers predicted general devastation from a torrent of wind in all the provinces. So the people went into trenches dug out at the edges [of the city] and barricaded themselves against the wind. They carried water and provisions to their dugouts. They waited there for the night that they had been warned

of other admirable personal qualities. Al-Suyuti includes Ibn al-Najjar's comments on the caliph:

He was of good character, handsome, witty, articulate and eloquent. He was accustomed to do what was right and to say helpful things. His days were a beauty spot on the face of the age and a pearl in the crown of honour.⁵⁵

On the other hand, al-Suyuti includes the following comment by Ibn Wasil (d. 697/1298): 'He did behave contrarily and he became a Shi'i and favoured the Imami School, in contrast to his fathers.'⁵⁶ And a statement by Ibn al-Athir:

Al-Nasir led an evil life. During his days, Iraq was devastated by the taxes he raised and he took their goods and property. He used to do one thing, as well as its opposite. He would throw hazelnuts to the ground and was fond of bathing.⁵⁷

Al-Suyuti's work is not hagiographical in the sense that it sees only good in all the caliphs; rather, it seeks to display a range of human behaviour and characteristics such as piety among all those who have held the highest spiritual and political office.

The very bad, such as al-Walid ibn Yazid, are given short shrift. Al-Suyuti writes that he 'was profligate, a drinker of wine, a violator of the holy things of God. He wanted to perform the pilgrimage so that he could drink [wine] on top of the Ka'ba'.⁵⁸ Yet al-Suyuti is also quick to dismiss al-Walid's alleged atheism, quoting al-Dhahabi who says that 'it is not true that al-Walid was an unbeliever and a heretic. Although it is well-known that he drank and was a homosexual'⁵⁹ and also an anecdote attributed to the later caliph al-Mahdi, who said that 'the caliphate is a job too glorious to be taken by a heretic'.⁶⁰ Al-Suyuti clearly sees the caliphate as a sacred office and, like many others, cannot entertain the idea that it would enter the hands of a *kāfir*.

This focus on piety and impiety is at the heart of the *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*. The whole *Ta'rikh* is a series of vignettes about each caliph, with a strong focus on highlighting their merits and failings and often the consequences that follow overstepping the mark or behaving unacceptably.

Al-Suyuti's Reformist Agenda

A great many of al-Suyuti's works can be seen as containing an underlying didactic message about virtue, often rooted in an advocacy for a return to a more Qur'anic and hadith-centred approach to knowledge and spirituality. In many respects this casts al-Suyuti in the mould of a reformer: his works call for a return

to 'orthodoxy', advocate the development of personal piety amongst all people and, perhaps most importantly, reassert the authority of the ulama within the spiritual and social world of late-Mamluk Cairo. This can be seen in a number of his *fatāwa*,⁶¹ in his numerous hadith compilations⁶² and in his exegetical works,⁶³ but comes across most strongly in his attacks on the *quṣṣāṣ* ('storytellers'). Al-Suyuti sees the *quṣṣāṣ* as causing the masses to deviate from true knowledge or interpretation, from threatening the integrity, authority and value of the ulama and from prohibiting growth in piety through misleading or providing ignorant knowledge.⁶⁴ The two trends of encouraging a move towards the Qur'an and hadith, and a stress on personal virtue, appear to be highly influenced by his Shadhilism,⁶⁵ giving an impression that al-Suyuti was orchestrating a subtle Shadhili Reformation.

The extent to which Shadhili spirituality lies behind a great number of al-Suyuti works, which has also been noted as a theme in this study of his *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, suggests a concerted attempt by al-Suyuti to change the world around him. In this sense, al-Suyuti is a reformer or, at the very least, someone actively advocating and preaching for renewal of the Muslim community. This renewal comes through a return to the Qur'an and the hadith, to the observance of personal piety, but also a return to 'orthodox' social order, in which the caliph and the ulama were the respected conduits of good governance, propriety and prosperity. The social hierarchy envisioned in the *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'* also invests the ulama with a powerful role within the community. However, unlike figures such as Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Hazm and Ibn al-Hajj,⁶⁶ al-Suyuti is not advocating an adversarial form of reformation countering popular religion, but one which quietly, but continually, calls for a return to piety and tradition, with the role of scholars as the arbiters of what is acceptable.⁶⁷

The links between Sufism and movements seeking to reform, renew or revive Islam are well-known in Islamic history, particularly in later periods as the Muslim community sought to understand its fall from dominance. In their study of North African Sufi reformism in the eighteenth century, Nehemiah Levtzion and Gideon Weigert note that '[e]mphasis on the study of hadith was one of the characteristics of eighteenth-century revivalism in the *ḥaramayn* and in Egypt'.⁶⁸ Levtzion and Weigert see these trends rooted in the Khalwatiyya order in Egypt,⁶⁹ an order that emerged in the late Mamluk period and began to flourish in the eighteenth century.⁷⁰ Both the Shadhilis and the Khalwatiyya advocated a Qur'anic and hadith-based spirituality, which sought a renewal and reform of Muslim society. It is interesting to note the parallel with many Sufi reformists of the eighteenth century, who advocated a similar view of popular piety with a focus on hadith-based spirituality. Sufi reformers often clashed with the Wahhabis in the Hijaz who approached Sufism and popular religion in a similarly antagonistic vein to Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Hajj.⁷¹ Al-Suyuti's vision of the world is one in which popular virtue is an important part of the way in which people are able to engage with the divine.

Whether al-Suyuti's reformist tendencies can be described as a fully-fledged Shadhili Reformation may be debatable, but a constant reformist and renewalist approach, which is deeply entwined with Shadhili thought, can be seen throughout al-Suyuti's *oeuvre*. This is often particularly strongly conveyed in works that were directed to the wider public: for example, the portions of the *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'* that were 'republished' separately, namely those concerning the *rāshidūn* caliphs, focused almost entirely on matters of spirituality and piety. Al-Suyuti's quietly reformist zeal may have floundered where other orders flourished, because it was not an orchestrated movement, but instead the isolated call of an individual scholar. Furthermore, the Shadhiliyya were not a well organised brotherhood, which would have limited any broader impact that an individual, even of the stature of al-Suyuti, could make.⁷² This was not the case for the later Sufi movements that emerged, about which Levtzion and Weigert comment how '[c]ompared to the loosely organised Shadhiliyya, the new orders that developed in the eighteenth century were cohesive, centralised and authoritative.'⁷³

This article sought to answer the question of whether perceiving al-Suyuti's works as advocating both virtue and tradition affects our understanding of the *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*. These two ideas are indeed strongly present throughout the work and they have a broader relevance. The way in which the *Ta'rikh* makes an association between good caliphal behaviour leading to peace, victories and bounty and bad caliphal behaviour leading to chaos and defeat, is one that can be extrapolated to the reader—whether a caliph or not. In this sense the writing is highly didactic and al-Suyuti is using his *Ta'rikh* to advocate a return to personal piety and traditional Islam within the personal rather than political sphere, using the lives of the caliphs as examples of how to, or how not to, behave. This factor makes the *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'* a much more interesting work: while it may reveal little about the history of caliphs, it reveals much about al-Suyuti's view of the world and Mamluk society in the late ninth/fifteenth century. As such, it can be viewed as an important document of the social history of the period and the ways in which scholars engaged with issues of virtue and popular religion. Its usefulness as a work does not lie in its accounts of past history, but in its being a witness to the closing days of the Mamluk world and al-Suyuti's attempts to return Mamluk society and culture to the ways of piety and tradition.

Notes

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1. See Marlis J. Saleh, 'Al-Suyuti and His Works: Their Place in Islamic Scholarship from Mamluk Times to the Present', *Mamluk Studies Review* 5, 2001, 73–89; and Antonella Ghersetti, ed., *Al-Suyuti, a Polymath of the Mamluk Period*. Proceedings of the themed day of the Frist Conference of the School of Mamluk Studies, Ca' Foscari University, Venice, June 23, 2014, Leiden 2017.
2. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, ed. Muhammad Muhyi al-Din 'Abd al-Hamid, Cairo 1371/1952; see also H.S. Jarret, trans., *History of the Caliphs*, Calcutta 1881, reprinted Amsterdam 1970; Abdassamad Clarke, trans., *The History of the Khalifas Who Took the Right Way: Being a Translation of the Chapters on al-Khulafa' al-Rashidun from Ta'rikh al-Khulafa' of Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti*, London 1995. However, translations included in this chapter are my own.
3. See al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 7–26.
4. See al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 6. Al-Suyuti even adds a disclaimer that 'the responsibility for the work is his' (*al-'uhda fi-amrihi 'alayhi*).
5. See al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 3–4. Al-Suyuti leaves these works unnamed, possibly because they had not yet been written at the time he wrote the *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*. He compiled a series of *ṭabaqāt* works, including *Ṭabaqat al-Mufasssirin*, Cairo 1976; *Ṭabaqat al-Huffaz*, Beirut 1904; *Bughyat al-Wu'at fi Ṭabaqat al-Lughawiyyin wa'l-Nuhat*, Cairo 1964.
6. See al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 3.
7. Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, Cambridge 2003, 75.
8. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 66.
9. Donald Presgrave Little, *An Introduction to Mamluk Historiography: An Analysis of the Annalistic and Biographical Sources for the Reign of al-Malik an-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qala'un*, Wiesbaden 1970, 113.
10. Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, Leiden 1968, 156.
11. Julia Bray, 'Literary approaches to Medieval and Early Modern Biography', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 20, 2010, 237–8.
12. Mustafa Banister, 'Casting the Caliph in a Cosmic Role: Examining al-Suyuti's Historical Vision', *Al-Suyuti, a Polymath of the Mamluk Period*, ed. Antonella Ghersetti, Leiden 2016, 108.
13. See Christian Mauder, 'Al-Suyuti's Stance Toward Worldly Power: A Re-Examination Based on Unpublished and Understudied Sources', *Al-Suyuti, a Polymath of the Mamluk Period*, ed. Antonella Ghersetti, Leiden 2016, 94.
14. For a discussion of the difference between *ta'rikh* and *ṭabaqāt*, see Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, Oxford 2003, 61.
15. See Angelika Hartmann, *An-Nasir li-Din Allah (1180–1225): Politik, Religion, Kultur in der späten Abbasidenzeit*, Berlin 1975; Angelika Hartmann, 'La conception gouvernementale du calife an-Nasir', *Orientalia Suecana* 22, 1973, 52–61; R. Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, Albany 1977, 138–40.
16. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 453.
17. For example, Ibn al-Athir, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh*, trans. D.S. Richards, vol. 3, Aldershot 2007, 324–5.
18. Given here as *al-Qumama* ([the church of the] rubbish heap), a pun on *al-Qiyama* and a common derogatory name for the Church of the Resurrection.
19. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 453.
20. Faris Glubb, 'Jerusalem: The Central Point in Saladin's Life', *Journal of Islamic Jerusalem Studies* 2, 1999, 49–73.
21. For a discussion of the importance of the *minbar*, see Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, Edinburgh 1991, 151–60.
22. Yehoshua Frenkel, 'Political and Social Aspects of Islamic Religious Endowments ('*awqāf*')': Saladin in Cairo (1169–73) and Jerusalem (1187–93)', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 62, 1999, 5.
23. See Mark R. Cohen, 'What was the Pact of 'Umar? A Literary-Historical Study', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 23, 1999, 100–57; and Ashinida Aladdin, 'Attitudes of Salah Al-Din Towards Non-Muslims and Their Holy Places During and After the Second Re-conquest of Jerusalem', *International Journal of West Asian Studies* 8.1, 2016, 18–27.
24. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 513.
25. Peter M. Holt, 'Some observations on the Abbasid Caliphate of Cairo', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 47, 1984, 501–7.
26. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 511–12.
27. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 308–10.
28. See John A. Nawas, 'The *Mihna* of 218 A.H./833 A.D. Revisited: An Empirical Study', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116, 1996, 698–708.
29. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 452. For more on the relationship between al-Nasir and Tughril Beg, see Deborah G. Tor, 'A Tale of Two Murders: Power Relations between Caliph and Sultan in the Saljuq Era', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 159, 2009, 279–97.
30. For a discussion on the importance of memory of the loss and recapture of Damietta to Muslims during the crusading period, see Megan Cassidy-Welch, "'O Damietta": War memory and Crusade in Thirteenth-Century Egypt', *Journal of Medieval History* 40, 2014, 346–60.
31. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 452. See Kristina L. Richardson, *Difference and Disability in Medieval Islam: Blighted Bodies*, Edinburgh 2012. However, there are some sensitive treatments of those with disabilities, such as a story recounted in al-Tanukhi's *Al-Faraj ba'da Shidda* concerning conjoined twins, see Julia Bray, 'The physical World and the Writer's Eye: al-Tanukhi and Medicine', *Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam: Muslim Horizons*, ed. Julia Bray, London 2006, 221–3.
32. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 453. The event occurred on 29 Jumada II 582/16 September 1186; see Dorothea Weltecke, 'Die Konjunktion der Planeten im September 1186', *Saeculum* 53/54, 2003, 179–212. The conjunction (*qirān*) of planets was seen as a significant ill omen.
33. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 453.
34. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 453. The Yemeni corner is spiritually significant, see S.R. Burge, *Angels in Islam: Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti's al-Haba'ik fi Akhbar al-Mala'ik*, London 2012, 41, 83–5, 197.
35. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 455. See David Cook, 'A Survey of

- Muslim Material on Comets and Meteors', *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 30, 1999, 131–60.
36. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 455. See Anna Akasoy, 'Islamic Attitudes to Natural Disasters in the Middle Ages: A Comparison of Earthquakes and Plagues', *The Medieval History Journal* 10, 2006, 387–410.
 37. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 455.
 38. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 456.
 39. For more on this see, Tarif Khalidi, *Islamic Historiography: The Histories of al-Mas'udi*, Albany 1975, 42–9.
 40. See Marinos Sariyanis, 'Aja'ib ve ghara'ib: Ottoman Collections of Mirabilia and Perceptions of the Supernatural', *Der Islam* 92, 2015, 442–67. See also A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*, New York, 2012.
 41. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 453.
 42. Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 26–31.
 43. See William Tucker, 'Natural Disasters and the Peasantry of Mamluk Egypt', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 28, 1985, 1–19.
 44. Plague was particularly prevalent in late Mamluk Cairo, as seen in Dols's history of plague in the region, Michael W. Dols, 'The Second Plague Pandemic and its Recurrences in the Middle East: 1347–1894', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 22, 1979, 162–89. The ulama responded to the high death rates with a number of 'consolation treatises' which have been studied by Avner Gil'adi in his 'Islamic Consolation Treatises for Bereaved Parents: Some Bibliographical Notes', *Studia Islamica* 81, 1995, 197–202.
 45. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 453.
 46. See Georges Saliba, 'The Role of Astrology in Medieval Islamic Society', *Bulletin d'études orientales* 44, 1992, 45–67. See also Yahya J. Michot, 'Ibn Taymiyya on Astrology: Annotated Translation of Three Fatwas', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 11, 2000, 147–208; and Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 44–5.
 47. See Anton M. Heinen, ed. and trans., *Islamic Cosmology: A Study of as-Suyuti's al-Hay'a as-Saniya fi l-Hay'a as-Sunniya*, Beirut 1982, 10.
 48. See Jonathan P. Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East*, Seattle 2001, 88–96.
 49. Asma Asfarrudin, 'In Praise of the Caliphs: Re-Creating History from the Manāqib Literature', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31, 1999, 329–50.
 50. The works on the four *rāshidūn* caliphs have been edited by Amir Ahmad Haydar: *al-Rawd al-Aniq fi Fadl al-Siddiq*, Beirut 1990; K. al-Ghurar *fi Fada'il 'Umar*, Beirut 1991; *Tuhfat al-'Ajlan fi Fada'il 'Uthman*, Beirut 1991; and *Al-Qawl al-Jaliyy fi Fada'il 'Ali*, Beirut 1990. The *faḍā'il* work on Fatima has been published in Beirut but with no editor's name: *Musnad Fatima al-Zahra wa-ma Warada fi Fadliha*, Beirut 1993.
 51. See the treatment of the reign of al-Mu'tadid in different historical genres, Fedwa Malti-Douglas, 'Texts and Tortures: The Reign of al-Mu'tadid and the Construction of Historical Meaning', *Arabica* 46, 1999, 313–6.
 52. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 512.
 53. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 512.
 54. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 513.
 55. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 450–1.
 56. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 451.
 57. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 451.
 58. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 250. See also Steven Judd, 'Reinterpreting al-Walid b. al-Yazid', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128, 2008, 439–41.
 59. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 250. Homosexuality was added to the list of al-Walid's sins relatively late, see Judd, 'Reinterpreting al-Walid ibn al-Yazid', 454.
 60. Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'*, 250. On heresy and the caliphate, see Carole Hillenbrand, 'Islamic Orthodoxy or Realpolitik? Al-Ghazali's Views on Government', *Iran* 26, 1988, 81–94.
 61. This is seen particularly strongly in his *fatwa* on the *Mawlid al-Nabi* festival; see N.J.G. Kaptein, *Muhammad's Birthday Festival: Early History in the Central Muslim Lands and Development in the Muslim West until the 10th/16th Century*, Leiden 1993, 44–75. For a discussion of al-Suyuti on law and piety see S. R. Burge, 'Impurity/Danger!', *Islamic Law and Society* 17, 2010, 320–49.
 62. See Burge, *Angels in Islam*, 17–28; Heinen, *Islamic Cosmology*, 1–10.
 63. See S.R. Burge, 'Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, the *Mu'awwidhatan* and the Modes of Exegesis', *Aims, Methods and Contexts of Qur'anic Exegesis (2nd/8th – 9th/15th C.)*, ed. Karen Bauer, London 2013, 277–307.
 64. The work is his *Tahdhir al-Khawass min Akadhib al-Qussas*, Beirut 1972; see also Jonathan P. Berkey, 'Tradition, Innovation and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Near East', *Past and Present* 146, 1995, 58–62. See also Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East*, 22–35.
 65. For a discussion of al-Suyuti's Shadhilism see Eric Geoffroy, 'Al-Suyuti as a Sufi', *Al-Suyuti, a Polymath of the Mamluk Period*, ed. Antonella Ghersetti, Leiden 2016, 8–14. For a discussion of the reasons behind the popularity of Shadhili Sufism in Mamluk Egypt, see Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173–1325*, Edinburgh 2015, 160–77.
 66. Jonathan P. Berkey, 'Tradition, Innovation and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Near East', 56 (and throughout); Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East*, 70–87; and Muhammad Umar Menon, *Ibn Taymiyya's Struggle Against Popular Religion: With an Annotated Translation of his Kitab Iqtida' al-Sirat al-Mustaqim Mukhalafat Ashab al-Jahim*, Leiden 1976, 46–84.
 67. See also Burge, *Angels in Islam*, 20–1.
 68. Nehemiah Levtzion and Gideon Weigert, 'Religious Reform in Eighteenth-Century Morocco', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 19, 1995, 173–97, 179.
 69. Levtzion and Weigert, 'Religious Reform in Eighteenth-Century Morocco', 174–7.
 70. See Rachida Chih, 'Cheminelements et situation actuelle d'un ordre mystique réformateur: La Khalwatiyya en Égypte (fin XV^e siècle à nos jours)', *Studia Islamica* 88, 1998, 181–201.
 71. Levtzion and Weigert, 'Religious Reform in Eighteenth-Century Morocco', 186–9.
 72. Nehemiah Levtzion, 'Eighteenth Century Sufi Brotherhoods: Structural, Organisational and Ritual Changes', *Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society: A Festschrift in Honour of Anthony H. Johns*, eds. Peter G. Riddell and Tony Street, Leiden 1997, 147–60, 148.
 73. Levtzion and Weigert, 'Religious Reform in Eighteenth-Century Morocco', 190.