

Again on Maslama Ibn Qāsim al-Qurṭubī, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' and Ibn Khaldūn: New Evidence from Two Manuscripts of *Rutbat al-ḥakīm**

De nuevo sobre Maslama Ibn Qāsim al-Qurṭubī,
los Ijwān al-Ṣafā' e Ibn Jaldūn: Nuevos datos de
dos manuscritos de la *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*

Godefroid de Callataÿ
Université catholique de Louvain

Sébastien Moureau
The Warburg Institute, University of London

As a continuation of previous studies about the reception of *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* in al-Andalus, this paper argues that it was common among Andalusī scholars of the Middle Ages to credit the astronomer Maslama al-Majrīṭī (d. 395/1004 or shortly thereafter) not only with the authorship of *Rutbat al-ḥakīm* and *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* – now both correctly ascribed to Maslama Ibn Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 353/964) – but also with the entire encyclopaedic corpus of the *Rasā'il*. The first part of this article seeks to explain the series of

Como continuación a estudios anteriores sobre la recepción de las *Rasā'il Ijwān al-Ṣafā'* en al-Andalus, en este artículo se sostiene que entre los estudiosos andalusíes de la Edad Media era una creencia generalizada considerar al astrónomo Maslama al-Mayrīṭī (m. 395/1004 o poco después) como el autor no solo de la *Rutbat al-ḥakīm* y la *Gāyat al-ḥakīm* – hoy ambas correctamente atribuidas a Maslama Ibn Qasīm al-Qurṭubī (m. 353/964) – sino también de todo el corpus enciclopédico de las *Rasā'il*. La primera parte del ar-

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successive confusions by which these three works came to be identified as forming three steps of a philosophical ladder and how this trilogy then came to be attributed to the scientist al-Majrīṭī. The second part focuses on two biographical notes found on the title pages of two manuscripts of the as-yet-unedited *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*. In addition to providing supplementary evidence for the spread of this misconception among medieval scholars, these documents also offer valuable and sometimes unique information about the two Maslamas, their respective writings and entourages, as well as the widespread circulation of the *Rasā'il* across the Peninsula. The edition, translation and commentary of these two biographical notes are here provided for the first time.

Key words: Alchemy; Magic; Manuscripts; Maslama Ibn Qāsim al-Qurṭubī; Maslama al-Majrīṭī; Ibn Khaldūn; Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'; *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*; *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*; *Picatrix*.

título trata de explicar a través de qué serie de sucesivas confusiones estas tres obras llegaron a ser identificadas como los tres escalones de una escalera filosófica y cómo esta trilogía acabó siendo después asignada al científico Maslama al-Maḡrīṭī. La otra parte se centra en dos anotaciones de carácter biográfico que aparecen en las portadas de dos manuscritos de la *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*, aún inédita. Además de proporcionarnos evidencias adicionales sobre la difusión de esta concepción entre los eruditos medievales, esos documentos también nos ofrecen información interesante y a veces sin igual sobre los dos Maslamas, sus respectivos escritos y seguidores, así como sobre la amplia circulación de las *Rasā'il* por toda la Península. La edición, traducción y comentario de estas dos anotaciones biográficas son ofrecidas aquí por primera vez.

Palabras clave: alquimia; magia; manuscritos; Maslama Ibn Qāsim al-Qurṭubī; Maslama al-Maḡrīṭī; Ibn Jaldūn; Ijwān al-Ṣafā'; *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*; *Gāyat al-ḥakīm*; *Picatrix*.

To credit the famous Andalusī mathematician and astronomer Maslama al-Majrīṭī (d. 395/1004 or shortly thereafter) with works he did not write is an error with a long history. It is well known that Ibn Khaldūn considered Maslama al-Majrīṭī to be the author of two treatises about the occult sciences: namely, *Rutbat al-ḥakīm* ("The Scale of the Sage") and *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* ("The Aim of the Sage"). Although Ibn Khaldūn was not the first to make this misattribution, the authority of the *Muqaddima* seems to have done much to spread it amongst later generations of scholars so that it appears even in recent modern scholarship.

From Maslama al-Majrīṭī to Pseudo-Maslama to Maslama al-Qurṭubī

That Maslama al-Majrīṭī could not have been the author of these two esoteric treatises was demonstrated long ago.¹ Yet for reasons discussed in detail elsewhere,² modern scholarship replaced this error with

¹ Dozy and de Goeje, "Nouveaux documents", pp. 285-289.

² de Callataÿ, "Magia en al-Andalus", pp. 310-311.

another in ascribing the *Rutba* and the *Ghāya* to an otherwise unidentified “Pseudo-Majrīṭī” supposed to have been active around the middle of the 5th/11th century. It is under this appellation and with this chronology in mind that the texts of the *Ghāya* and those of its Latin and Spanish adaptations have repeatedly been edited, translated and discussed up to the end of the 20th century.³ Challenging a long and prestigious tradition of ‘Warburgian’ scholars, all of whom had taken these suppositions for granted, Maribel Fierro demonstrated in a study published in 1996 that the genuine author of the two treatises was in fact another “Maslama al-Andalusī”, who had been active not fifty years after al-Majrīṭī’s time but rather fifty years before him.⁴

This Abū l-Qāsim Maslama Ibn Qāsim al-Qurṭubī was a traditionist with *bāṭinī* aspirations whose life and activities from the time of his extended *riḥla* through the Middle East in the early 930s to his death in 353/964 are relatively well documented in Andalusī historiography.⁵ A number of indications found in the manuscripts themselves as well as in later sources allow us to confirm that the confusion of names must have occurred at an early stage. It was facilitated by the fact that the respective names of these two scholars share all of the following components: the *kunya* Abū l-Qāsim, the *ism* Maslama and the two *nisbas* al-Qurṭubī and al-Andalusī.⁶ This similarity of name is evidently one of the main causes of the general and enduring misattribution of both *Rutbat al-ḥakīm* and *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* to the scientist Maslama al-Majrīṭī.

³ Pseudo-Majrīṭī, *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*; translated as Pseudo-Majrīṭī, “*Picatrix*”. See also: Pingree, “Between the *Ghāya* and *Picatrix*, I”; Burnett and Pingree, “Between the *Ghāya* and the *Picatrix*, II.”

⁴ Fierro, “Bāṭinism in al-Andalus”. See also Rius, “al-Maṣrīṭī, Maslama”, where Fierro’s proposal is endorsed.

⁵ In addition to Fierro, “Bāṭinism in al-Andalus” and other more recent studies by Maribel Fierro, see Rius, “Ibn al-Qāsim, Maslama”, where in accordance with Fierro’s proposal of identification, the *Ghāya* and the *Rutba* are both included in the list of this scholar’s works. Note that Fierro’s conjecture has also been endorsed by Julio Samsó and Miquel Forcada in the revised version of Samsó, *Las Ciencias de los Antiguos en al-Andalus*, published in 2011. See also Callataÿ and Moureau, “A Milestone in the History of Andalusī Bāṭinism”.

⁶ See de Callataÿ, “Magia en al-Andalus”, pp. 313-315. See also Kacimi, “Nuevos datos”, pp. 243-244, where some examination is made of the way the amalgamation of names also circulated in later periods, as for example with Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974/1567) in his *al-Fatāwā al-ḥadīthīya* and up to the time of modern Arab biographers, such as Muḥibbī, Ziriklī and Kaḥḥāla.

In addition to the *Rutba* and the *Ghāya*, al-Majrīṭī was also credited at times with other esoteric writings. This is notoriously the case, for instance, with *Risālat al-Jāmi'a* ("The Comprehensive Epistle"), which purports to be the summary of *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* and which presents itself as the "crown" (*tāj*) of this important and very influential corpus of epistles. In his *Kashf al-zunūn*, under the heading "*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*", the 11th/17th century encyclopaedist Ḥājjī Khalīfa (Katip Çelebi) unambiguously credits "the sage al-Majrīṭī al-Qurtubī, who died in 395 [1005]," with the authorship of the *Jāmi'a* by reproducing there the *incipit* of that compendium.⁷ Much has been made of the fact that the same attribution is also found in some of the manuscripts of the *Jāmi'a*, which prompted Jamīl Ṣalībā to edit the work as "The Comprehensive Epistle ascribed to the Sage al-Majrīṭī" (*al-Risāla al-Jāmi'a al-manṣūba li-l-ḥakīm al-Majrīṭī*). It must be recalled here that Ṣalībā's edition was based on merely five manuscripts, only two of which feature indications that the compendium was al-Majrīṭī's work, and that Ṣalībā himself ruled out the attribution to Maslama al-Majrīṭī in the introduction to his edition.⁸ In fact, more recent investigation tends to minimise considerably the significance of these indications. Morad Kacimi, who is currently preparing a new edition of the *Jāmi'a* for a doctoral dissertation at the University of Alicante, kindly informed us that out of the numerous manuscripts he has consulted for his edition only these two include the reference to Maslama al-Majrīṭī. Furthermore, it would appear that in both cases the reference to al-Majrīṭī was made by an annotation in a later hand and that in at least one of the two manuscripts the author of the annotation derives his information from Ḥājjī Khalīfa's *Kashf al-zunūn*.

On the other hand, there is evidence to support the assumption that not only *Risālat al-Jāmi'a* but the entire corpus of *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* was believed by some to be the work of al-Majrīṭī. This is what can be inferred, for instance, from two manuscripts of the *Rasā'il* kept in the library of El Escorial.⁹ Not surprisingly, the manuscripts featur-

⁷ Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, vol. 3, p. 460, n° 6439.

⁸ Ṣalībā (ed.), *al-Risāla al-Jāmi'a*, p. 13.

⁹ Cf. Derenbourg and Renaud, *Les manuscrits arabes*, pp. 117-118 (= MS Derenbourg 900) and vol. 2, fasc. 3, p. 37 (= MS Derenbourg 928). MS Derenbourg 900 (= Casiri 895), dated 942/1535-36, contains the text of Epistle 22, here given as "On the Coming-to-be of Animals" (*fī takwīn al-ḥayawān*), and is ascribed to "the most learned al-Majrīṭī" (*li-l-'al-*

ing a connection with Maslama al-Majrīṭī appear to have circulated mainly in the western part of the Islamic world.

No doubt Maslama al-Majrīṭī's unequalled celebrity as a scientist in al-Andalus did much to earn him the reputation of a prolific author who was capable of writing various works about the occult sciences as well as astronomical treatises in the footsteps of Ptolemy and al-Khwārizmī. In the case of the *Jāmi'a* and the *Rasā'il*, one must consider the misattribution as yet another outcome of the above-mentioned confusion between Maslama al-Majrīṭī al-Qurṭubī and his homonymous predecessor, Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī. The date of the misattribution of these two additional works, *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* and the *Jāmi'a*, to "Maslama" cannot be ascertained with precision. Contrary to the prevailing impression in modern scholarship, it is now becoming increasingly clear that only the attribution of the *Rasā'il* to "Maslama" can be dated with certainty to medieval times.

How is it then that al-Qurṭubī's name became associated with that of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' in the first place? And more generally, how can we explain how a work whose oriental provenance appears to us so evident could have been believed by some to have been composed on the soil of al-Andalus? The answer to these questions lies in al-Qurṭubī's own works.

Although it does not make explicit reference either to the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' or to the *Rasā'il*, *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* is greatly indebted to the encyclopaedic corpus of the Ikhwān. In the footnotes to their translation of the *Ghāya* into German, Hellmut Ritter and Martin Plessner pointed out about 60 passages more or less closely related to the *Rasā'il*, some of them appearing to be taken literally from them and extending over several pages. It has recently been asserted that the corpus of the *Rasā'il*

lāma al-Majrīṭī). The Derenbourg 928 (= Casiri 923), dated to 862/1458, includes the first 22 epistles of the corpus and is ascribed by a later hand to *Maslama ibn amīr al-'arab min ḥukamā' al-islām, kāna bi-Qurṭuba fī zaman Khālid ibn al-Yazīd* [sic] *ibn Mu'āwīya*. Carusi, "Alchimia Islamica e Religione", pp. 494-495, observes that in addition to the two manuscripts from El Escorial one also finds indications of the same kind in MSS 904 and 989 in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Carusi also points out a similar indication in the manuscript Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, 3231. This manuscript, dated 907/1501-1502, described by Ullmann, *Katalog*, pp. 4-34, here pp. 13-14, includes, on fol. 110r, an extract from another alchemical treatise ascribed to al-Majrīṭī entitled *Rawḍat al-ḥadā'iq* (on this, see also n. 132). The excerpt begins with the words: *qāla l-ḥakīm Maslama ibn Waḍḍāḥ al-Qurṭubī al-Majrīṭī wa-huwa muṣannif kitāb Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa-khullān al-wafā' fī kitāb Rawḍat al-ḥadā'iq wa-riyāḍ al-khalā'iq*.

was one of the three major sources of the *Ghāya*, together with the Jābirian corpus and the *Nabatean Agriculture*.¹⁰ However, the most interesting evidence is found in the as-yet-unedited *Rutba*, where the collection of “51 epistles” – or “50 epistles”, depending on the manuscript – is mentioned in several places, and reference is also made to individual epistles as well. The prologue of the *Rutba* also includes a crucial passage in which the “philosophical epistles” are considered to embody a sort of ideal introduction to philosophy. What is more, Maslama al-Qurṭubī explains in this passage that his own work is nothing but a summary of these epistles, and that his aim in writing his alchemical treatise has been to bring together what had been treated separately there.

The remarkable aspect of al-Qurṭubī’s references to the *Rasā’il* in the *Rutba* is that in these passages he uses a somewhat ambiguous form of expression which could be read as suggesting that he was also the author of the *Epistles* themselves. Thus the prologue includes the following statement:

As regards to works about the propaedeutic sciences and the philosophical secrets, we have presented 51 epistles in which we have treated these sciences in a systematical way – something which nobody in our time had done before us.¹¹

Subsequently, in the concluding lines of the same prologue, al-Qurṭubī explains:

This book of ours, which we have entitled the ‘Rank of the Sage’, we have conceived as a summary of those numerous epistles [...]. We have thoroughly discussed in it what we had treated separately there. To each one of the philosophical disciplines we had, indeed, dedicated one individual epistle.¹²

¹⁰ See Bakhouché et al., *Picatrix*, p. 32.

¹¹ MS Beşir Ağa 505 (= ب), fol. 2v, ll. 11-13, MS Ragıp Paşa 965 (= ر), fols. 49r, l. 2 ab imo-49v, l. 1: رسالة (ب) ٥١: وقد قدمنا في التواليف في العلوم الرياضية والاسرار الفلسفية ٥١ رسالة (ب) ٥١: رسالة (ر: رسائل) استوعبنا فيها هذه العلوم استيعابا لم يتقدمنا فيه احد من اهل عصرنا اليه. The orthography of Arabic quotations taken from manuscripts has been normalised throughout the present contribution. The Beşir Ağa manuscript, dated to 756/1355, is one of the oldest extant manuscripts of the *Rutba*. On MS Ragıp Paşa 965, cf. below. For an updated list of the manuscripts at our disposal for the edition of the work, see de CallataÏ and Moureau, “Towards a Critical Edition”.

¹² MS Beşir Ağa 505, fols. 3r, l. 16-3v, l. 1, MS Ragıp Paşa 965, fol. 50v, ll. 7-12: وكتابتنا هذا الذي سميناه رتبة الحكيم اقتبضناه من تلك الرسائل الكثيرة [...] استوعبنا فيه (سقط من ر) جميع ما فرقناه هناك (ر: هنا لك) لانا افردنا في كل فن من فنون الفلسفة رسالة قائمة بنفسها.

Similarly one reads in section 3 of the third *maqāla*:

I have already dealt with minerals and their division, something which no philosopher has ventured to do. Out of the collection of philosophical epistles, I have presented the epistle on minerals, since I have written this book in lieu of the 50 epistles, I mean, of those epistles. You shall see that, in order to deal with minerals, I have not failed to have recourse to the way I have dealt with them there, since – I repeat – I have written this book in lieu of all these epistles.¹³

How are these statements to be interpreted? There is, to be sure, a certain level of ambiguity in these lines. Judging from al-Qurṭubī's habitual use of enigmatic expressions in both the *Rutba* and the *Ghāya*, we may reasonably suspect that this ambiguity was intentional. Whatever the case, it would be a serious mistake to assume that al-Qurṭubī is claiming here to be the 'author' of the *Rasā'il* in the modern sense of the word, for this is in obvious contradiction to what he writes about the 'genuine author' of the corpus in the very same work. Referring in the prologue to otherwise unidentified readers of bygone days, he explains:

They did not know who had compiled them [the *Rasā'il*] nor from where they had been compiled. However, when they scrutinised them in order to appreciate the value of their formulation, the intelligent people presumed that they were part of a work pertaining to the same epoch as that in which they were living, although they did not know who had compiled them.¹⁴

As observed by Ḥusain al-Hamdānī, what is meant by these assertions seems to be that al-Qurṭubī was the first scholar ever to make the *Epistles* known to the people of al-Andalus, and the most probable explanation is that he achieved this by copying an exemplar of the encyclopaedia on the occasion of the long journey he made across the Middle East in the early 930s.¹⁵ This is a far cry from claiming that he

¹³ MS Beşir Ağa 505, fols. 13v, l. 24-14r, l. 3, MS Ragıp Paşa 965, fol. 67v, ll. 6 ab imo-2 ab imo: وقد كتبت (ب: وقد كتبت؛ ر: وأنا اكتب) لك من خبر (ر: توليد) المعادن وافتراقها ما لم يتجاسر عليه احد من الفلاسفة وقد قدمت في جملة الرسائل الفلسفية رسالة في المعادن ولما اقمتم هذا الكتاب مقام خمسين رسالة اعني تلك الرسائل (ب: رسالة اعني تلك الرسائل؛ ر: كتابا) رأيت الا اخليه من ذكر المعادن على نحو ما ذكرت هناك فاني اقمتم هذا الكتاب مقام تلك الرسائل باجمعيها.

¹⁴ MS Beşir Ağa 505, fol. 2v, ll. 14-16, MS Ragıp Paşa 965, fol. 49v, ll. 2-4: ولم يعلموا (ر: يعلم) من الفها ولا من (سقط من ر) ابن الفت (ر: الف) غير ان الحذاق (زيادة في ر: منهم) لما دأبوا على مطالعتها لاستحسانهم اياها واستعذابهم لالفاظها علموا انها من تأليف عصرهم الذي هم فيه ولم يعلموا (ب: ولم يعلموا؛ ر: ولا يعلمون) من الفها.

¹⁵ al-Hamdānī, "Rasā'il Ikhwān aş-Şafā", p. 282.

is himself the author of the work. At the same time, what al-Qurṭubī says in the prologue of the *Rutba* allows us to deduce the reason some later writers credited him – identifying him, of course, as Maslama al-Majrīṭī – with the authorship of the *Rasā'il* as well as the *Rutba* and the *Ghāya*. In all likelihood the attribution of the *Risālat al-Jāmi'a* to “the sage Maslama al-Majrīṭī al-Qurṭubī” was prompted by the same circumstances, although in this latter case the reason for the confusion is perhaps even easier to grasp. As recorded above, the *Jāmi'a* was meant to be the summary of the *Rasā'il*, and this is exactly what al-Qurṭubī also says about his *Rutba*.

In short, the confusing situation faced by modern scholars regarding the authorship of the *Rutba*, the *Ghāya*, the *Rasā'il* and the *Jāmi'a* is a result of successive misattributions of works and confusions of names, in a sequence which we may tentatively put forward as follows: 1) Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī introduces *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* to al-Andalus on his return from the East shortly after 325/936 and writes *Rutbat al-ḥakīm* between 339-342/950-953 and *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* between 343-348/954-959. 2) Facilitated by the resemblance of names, the famous scientist Maslama al-Majrīṭī al-Qurṭubī (d. after 395/1004) is soon credited with the works of Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī in addition to his own works on astronomy and other theoretical sciences. 3) At about the same time, ambiguous statements in the *Rutba* itself prompt readers to credit its author with the *Rasā'il*. 4) It becomes usual among medieval Andalusī scholars to consider ‘Maslama’ the author of a trilogy of works: the *Rutba*, the *Ghāya* and the *Rasā'il*. 5) At a much later stage (and plausibly in post-medieval times), the *Jāmi'a* is also ascribed to ‘Maslama’, again on the basis of the ambiguity of certain passages from the *Rutba*.

Back to the *Muqaddima*

As has just been remarked, the *Rutba*, the *Ghāya* and the *Rasā'il* must all three have been considered the work of a single writer by the vast majority of the intellectuals from the western part of the Islamic world. One such example is the Andalusī mystic Ibn Sab'īn (d. c. 668/1269), the author of the *Sicilian Questions* and of the *Budd al-ārīf*. While describing in his *Faṭḥ al-mushtarak* what he presents as the five

different sorts of “letter magic” (*sīmiyā*’), Ibn Sabʿīn reports that “the first one is specious: it is the one which was mentioned by Maslama al-Majrīṭī, the author of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*.”¹⁶ Ibn Sabʿīn does not mention either the *Rutba* or the *Ghāya*, but we may reasonably surmise that he shared the common view that they were also by al-Majrīṭī.

The tendency to credit a single author with these three works is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than by Ibn Khaldūn in the *Muqaddima*. Browsing through his exceptionally detailed report on magic and related sciences,¹⁷ we observe that “Maslama b. Aḥmad al-Majrīṭī” is regularly depicted principally as a sort of Andalusī counterpart to Jābir b. Ḥayyān and, in more general terms, as the successor in al-Andalus of a long tradition of magic and alchemy inherited from the East. Ibn Khaldūn defines Maslama as “the imam of Andalusī scholars in the propedeutical and magical sciences” (*imām ahl al-Andalus fī taʾālīm wa-sihrīyāt*).¹⁸ In the same section he regards the *Ghāya* as the best and most complete treatise about magic, observing that “nobody has written on this science ever since” (*wa-lam yaktub aḥad fī hādhā l-ʾilm baʿdahu*).¹⁹ As for the *Rutba*, the “alchemical companion” of the *Ghāya* in Ibn Khaldūn’s own words, it is described as a work in which hard-to-decipher expressions abound for the uninitiated. In obvious reference to the longer forms of the titles of the *Rutba* and the *Ghāya* – namely, *Rutbat al-ḥakīm wa-madkhal al-taʾlīm* and *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm wa-aḥaqq al-naṭījatayn* – Ibn Khaldūn also notes that Maslama regarded magic and alchemy as “the two conclusions of philosophy” (*naṭījatān li-l-ḥikma*) and “the two fruits of sciences” (*wa-thamaratān li-l-ʾulūm*).²⁰ He also mentions Maslama’s opinion that “whoever does not take interest in them entirely misses the fruit of science and philosophy” (*wa-man lam yaqif ʿalayhimā fa-huwa fāqīd thamarat al-ʾilm wa-l-ḥikma ajmaʾ*).²¹

There is no explicit reference to the *Ikhwān* or to their writings in the *Muqaddima*, nor in any other work by Ibn Khaldūn. However it is

¹⁶ Ibn Sabʿīn, *al-Faṭḥ al-mushtarak*, in Ibn Sabʿīn, *Rasāʾil*, p. 253.

¹⁷ Chapter 6, sections 27-29 (Ibn Khaldūn, *Prolégomènes*, vol. 3, pp. 124-209; Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 3, pp. 156-246). For a thorough survey of Ibn Khaldūn’s view of the occult sciences, see Asatrian, “Ibn Khaldūn on Magic”; Lakhsassi, “Magie”.

¹⁸ Ibn Khaldūn, *Prolégomènes*, vol. 3, p. 125.

¹⁹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Prolégomènes*, vol. 3, p. 125.

²⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *Prolégomènes*, vol. 3, pp. 192-193.

²¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Prolégomènes*, vol. 3, p. 193.

most unlikely that the corpus of *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* was unknown to the historian; on the contrary, he must have been very familiar with it, as has been repeatedly noted since the re-discovery of Ibn Khaldūn by modern European scholarship. To take but one example,²² it is commonly acknowledged today that Ibn Khaldūn was inspired by the Ikhwān's doctrine when, in a chapter of the *Muqaddima* devoted to "the sciences of the prophets", he speaks of the "uninterrupted continuum" (*ittiṣāl lā yankharim*) meant to exist between each stage of the world and the one immediately adjacent to it in a highly hierarchic conception of the universe.²³ This passage, which further highlights the preparedness (*isti'dād*) for transformation between the highest representatives of one stage (such as palms and vines in plants) and the lowest representatives of the one above it (such as shellfish and snails in animals) and which on this occasion also deals with what could be defined as a qualitative step "from ape to man" (*al-qirda [...] ma'a l-insān*), has been viewed by many as anticipating Darwin's theory of evolution. It is generally agreed that this reading vastly over-interprets Ibn Khaldūn's text, and Rosenthal was thus certainly right to observe that this passage "at one time provoked an overenthusiastic comparison with Darwinism".²⁴

The modern over-interpretation of this passage should not detract from the fact that Ibn Khaldūn most probably borrowed the basis of his argumentation from *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*.²⁵ As specified by Ibn Khaldūn himself, the above-cited passage about the "uninterrupted continuum" is the reformulation, in very much the same terms, of ideas already expressed in a previous chapter of the *Muqaddima* also dedicated

²² Various other examples could also be given, although caution is certainly advised in this field. It has recently been suggested with much naivety and a regrettable bias towards oversimplified explanations that Ibn Khaldūn derived from the *Rasā'il* the greatest part of his ideas on history, geography, economics ethics, etc.; see Ismā'īl, *Nihāya*, pp. 59-162.

²³ Ibn Khaldūn, *Prolégomènes*, vol. 2, p. 373. See also Rosenthal's translation in Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 2, pp. 422-423: "the whole of existence in (all) its simple and composite worlds is arranged in a natural order of ascent and descent, so that everything constitutes an uninterrupted continuum."

²⁴ Rosenthal in Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 2, p. 423, n. 27a.

²⁵ See Rosenthal in Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 2, p. 423, n. 27a. On the issue of evolutionism and the Ikhwān, see Dieterici, *Der Darwinismus*, pp. 29-33; Vernet, "Las obras biológicas", p. 190. For a more critical approach, see Nasr, *An Introduction*, pp. 72-74. For a lucid warning against the dangers of over-interpreting a medieval author by projecting modern theories back in time, see also: Kruk, "Ibn Tufayl."

to prophecy and to “the various types of human beings who have supernatural perception” (chapter 1, *muqaddima* 6).²⁶ The section opens with the following lines:

We shall now give an explanation of the real meaning of prophecy as interpreted by many thorough scholars (‘*alā mā sharaḥahu kathīr min al-muḥaqqiqīn*).²⁷ We shall then mention the real meaning of soothsaying, dream vision, divination, and other supernatural ways of perception. We say: It should be known that we – May God guide you and us (*fa-naqūlu i‘lam arshadanā Llāh wa-īyāka*) – notice that this world with all the created things in it has a certain order and a solid construction. It shows nexuses between causes and things caused, combinations of some parts of creation with others, and transformations of some existent things into others, in a pattern that is both remarkable and endless.²⁸

It is quite revealing that the formula “Know – May God guide you and us” (*i‘lam arshadanā Llāh wa-īyāka*) is used here, since this formula – or a close variant of it – is undoubtedly the most characteristic expression of the Ikhwān’s style, as it appears in innumerable paragraphs of the *Rasā’il* and may therefore truly qualify as a shibboleth. In a recent publication devoted to the ways of referring to the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ as found in the literature of al-Andalus, we have already shown that the use of these typically Ikhwānian formulae became a common practice among authors from the Peninsula as a means of subtly alluding to the corpus of the Brethren, and moreover they are generally found in strategic places in the text.²⁹ The presence of the words “we say” (*fa-naqūlu*) immediately before the shibboleth reinforces the assumption that we are dealing here with an Ikhwānian shibboleth in its own right, and also that this method of referencing was intentional on Ibn Khaldūn’s part. In a footnote on this passage Rosenthal commented: “For the use of such formulas to introduce the communication of esoteric knowledge, cf. n. 925 to Ch. VI.”³⁰ The reference is to another example of the same formula where the encyclopaedic corpus of the Brethren is duly conjectured by Rosenthal, as shall subsequently be seen.

²⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, pp. 184-245.

²⁷ In our view, the present context suggests that one should translate *muḥaqqiqīn* instead as “those who have achieved true knowledge”.

²⁸ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, p. 194; for the Arabic, see Ibn Khaldūn, *Prolegomènes*, vol. 1, p. 173.

²⁹ See de Callataÿ, “From Ibn Masarra to Ibn ‘Arabī”.

³⁰ Rosenthal in Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 1, p. 194.

Significantly, the only other place in the *Muqaddima* where the same kind of formula is to be found is in Chapter VI; specifically, section 28 (on the *sīmiyā*’, namely the secret “science of letters”), where it appears on three occasions. The first is found at the very beginning of the subsection entitled “On learning hidden secrets from letter connections” and reads: *i’lam arshadanā Llāh wa-īyāka*, which is precisely the same formulation as above.³¹ The variant *wa-Llāh yurshidunā wa-īyāka* (“God guide us and you”) appears a few pages later and is closely followed by *i’lam ayyadanā Llāh wa-īyāka bi-rūḥ minhu* (“Know – God strengthen us and you with a spirit coming from Him”).³² In view of what has just been discussed above, the presence of these three variants of the shibboleth in the peculiar context of letter magic could hardly be coincidental, and this is clearly what prompted Rosenthal to write in a footnote to the first of these references: “This formula, and even more so the one used below, is characteristic of esoteric literature. Cf., for instance, the *Rasā’il Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā’* and Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Futūḥāt*. Cf. also 1:194, above [with reference to the passage in Chapter I. 6 already discussed].”³³ The formula which Rosenthal sees as “even more characteristic of esoteric literature” is yet another occurrence of the shibboleth in the same section. It follows shortly after the previous two examples in a passage which deserves quoting at some length:

A competent (practitioner of letter magic) said (*qāla ba’d al-muḥaqqiqīn*):³⁴ Let it be known to you – God strengthen us and you with a spirit coming from Him – (*i’lam ayyadanā Llāh wa-īyāka bi-rūḥ minhu*) that the science of letters is an important science. The scholar who knows it comes to know things that he would not be able to know with the help of any other science in the world. The practice of the science of (letter magic) requires certain conditions. With its help, the scholar may discover the secrets of creation and the inner works of nature (*asrār al-khalīqa wa-sarā’ir al-ṭabī’a*). Thus, he learns the two results of philosophy, which are letter magic and its sister (alchemy) (*natījatay al-falsafa a’nī al-sīmiyā’ wa-ukhtahā*). The veil of the unknown is lifted for him. He thus learns the

³¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Prolégomènes*, vol. 3, p. 179; Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 3, p. 214.

³² Ibn Khaldūn, *Prolégomènes*, vol. 3, pp. 182-183; Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 3, p. 218.

³³ Rosenthal in Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 3, p. 214, n. 925.

³⁴ See note 28 above.

contents of the secret recesses of the heart (*yurfa' u lahu hijāb al-majhūlāt wa-yuṭalli' u bi-dhālika 'alā maknūn khafāyā l-qulūb*).³⁵

One may assert that the variant under which the shibboleth is given here is even more characteristic of the Ikhwān than the others, for it includes the Qur'ānic *bi-rūḥ minhu* ("with a spirit coming from Him", Q 58:22), which the Brethren associate with one variant or another of their beloved formula more than 200 times. At the same time, what gives weight to the comparison with the passage from Chapter I. 6 discussed above, and which also includes the shibboleth *i 'lam ayyadanā Llāh wa-īyāka*, is that the two passages are introduced by almost identical expressions. They both include the reference to the *muḥaqqiqīn* (literally, "those who have achieved true knowledge") as above, and they read: *fa-min ṭarā'iqihim fī stikhrāj al-ajwiba mā yanquluhu qāla ba 'd al-muḥaqqiqīn minhum* ("as to what we have reported about their methods to find answers, some of those having achieved true knowledge have said") in the first case, and *wa-min ṭarīqihim aydan fī stikhrāj al-jawāb qāla ba 'd al-muḥaqqiqīn* ("regarding another of their methods to find answers, some of those having achieved true knowledge have said").³⁶

Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' include at least one extensive section on letter speculation. It is found at the beginning of Epistle 40 ("On causes and effects").³⁷ What the Brethren have to say there about the *sīmiyā'* (or *'ilm al-ḥurūf*) is not especially original, but the fame of the *Rasā'il* in whatever appertains to the occult may perhaps explain why Ibn Khaldūn decided to allude subtly to that work in this particular place of his *Muqaddima*, as was suggested by Rosenthal. For our discussion, however, the most remarkable element lies elsewhere in the passage, where the *Rutba* and the *Ghāya* are clearly referred to as to "the two conclusions (*natījatān*) of philosophy, which are letter magic and its sister (alchemy)". It was common among medieval Muslim scholars to link together *sīmiyā'* ("letter magic", later simply "magic") and

³⁵ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 3, p. 218; for the Arabic, see Ibn Khaldūn, *Prologomènes*, vol. 3, p. 183.

³⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, *Prologomènes*, vol. 3, pp. 179 and 183; Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 3, pp. 214 and 218.

³⁷ Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il*, vol. 3, pp. 377-383. For an Italian translation of the relevant section, see Baffioni, *Appunti*, pp. 203-210.

kīmiyā’ (“alchemy”) – two words distinguished from one another by only one letter –, as for instance in the famous corpus of alchemical texts attributed to Jābir b. Ḥayyān.³⁸ The distinction between the two sister-sciences is made by al-Qurṭubī himself, who in the prologue of the *Rutba* gives the following explanation:

They are two conclusions. The Ancients called one of them *kīmiyā*’ and they called the other one *sīmiyā*’. These are the two sciences of the ancients from which one can profit. Whoever has not achieved them is no sage until he masters them, and he who masters [only] one of them is [only] half a sage. Both share [the quality of] being subtle. For *kīmiyā*’ is the knowledge of earthly spirits and the advantageous extraction of their subtleties. The other is called *sīmiyā*’, and is the *tarjīh* (literally, “the fact of giving the preponderance to something”), the [art of] talismans and of syllogisms, and this is the science of the superior spirits and of how to call down their powers advantageously.³⁹

Returning to Ibn Khaldūn’s statement as noted above, the combination of the Ikhwānīan shibboleth with this allusion to two famous esoteric works of the past suggests that, in the view of Ibn Khaldūn, the *Rasā’il*, the *Rutba* and the *Ghāya* were all three the works of a single author, and it is most probably for this reason that the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ are never explicitly mentioned in his writings. In attributing these three texts to one author, the great historian appears to have done nothing more than adopt the same position as Ibn Sab’īn one century and a half before him, a view which was presumably shared by the vast majority of Andalusī thinkers during the Middle Ages.

³⁸ Cf. Kraus, *Jābir*, vol. 2, pp. 187-303; Lory, *La science*, pp. 37-41. See also Moureau, “Alchemy and Medicine”.

³⁹ MS Beṣir Ağa 505, fols. 4r, l. 25-4v, l. 4 and MS Ragıp Paşa 965, fols. 52r, l. 6 ab imo-52v, l. 1: وهي نتیجتان احدهما سمتها الاوائل كيمياء والثانية سمتها (سقط من ب) سيمياء وهما علما 1: وهو المنتفع بهما ومن لم يصل اليهما فليس بحكيم حتى يحكمهما فان احكم واحدة منهما فهو نصف حكيم وهما يشتركان في اللطافة لان الكيمياء هي معرفة الارواح الارضية واخراج لطائفها للانتفاع بها والثانية تسمى سيمياء وهي الترجيح (ر: الترجيح) والطلسمه والسلموس (ر: والسجلسموس) وهي (ر: وهم) علم الارواح العلوية. واستنزل قواها الانتفاع بها. In the Prologue of the *Ghāya* a very similar text is given, but there reference is made to the Ancient Greeks and to their ways of naming the various disciplines involved. See Pseudo-Majrīṭī, *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, p. 10, ll. 5-6, which could be translated as follows: “The Ancient Greeks used to designate the *nīranjāt* and the transformation of things (*qalb al-‘ayn*) by the name *tarjīh* and the talisman (*tillasm*) by the name ‘syllogism’ (*siljīmūs*), and this is the calling down of the superior powers, but they gave the whole [science] the name ‘magic’ (*sihr*).” The similarity of this passage with that from the *Rutba* was noticed by the German translators of the work, see Ritter and Plessner in Pseudo-Majrīṭī, *Picatrix*, p. 10, n. 4.

Complementary evidence from two manuscripts of the *Rutba*

The rest of the present article is devoted to providing supporting evidence for this discussion from two biographical notes found on the title pages of two of the earliest known manuscripts of *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*. They are MSS Ragıp Paşa 965 and 963, both kept in the Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi in Istanbul. Together with a brief presentation, we provide here the edition of each note, along with a translation and an extensive commentary. The spelling of hamzas has been normalised, and missing dots have been restituted. The vocalisation is that of the manuscripts.

MS Ragıp Paşa 965, title page (fol. 47r)

1 Presentation

Dated by Sezgin to the 8th/14th century,⁴⁰ MS Ragıp Paşa 965 is considered the older of these two paper manuscripts. The text of the *Rutba* is found on fols. 47r-150v and includes the usual misattribution to Maslama al-Majrīṭī. The body of the text is carefully written in *naskh* and vocalised throughout. On the title page (fol. 47r), the copyist gives the title of the work as *Kitāb Rutbat al-ḥakīm wa-madkhal al-ta'lim ta'lif al-shaykh al-imām al-fāḍil al-faylasūf Abī Muḥammad Maslama al-Qurṭubī al-Majrīṭī raḥimahu Llāh wa-huwa muṣannif Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' qaddasa Llāh rūḥahu wa-nūr ḍarīḥihī* (“Book of the Rank of the Sage and of the Introduction to Learning, written by the Shaykh, the Virtuous Imam, the Philosopher Abū Muḥammad Maslama al-Qurṭubī al-Majrīṭī – May God have mercy on him! He is also the author the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* – may God sanctify his spirit and the light of his mausoleum”). There is no doubt that this information is given in the same hand as the rest of the work (and evidently also the other works included in this manuscript).

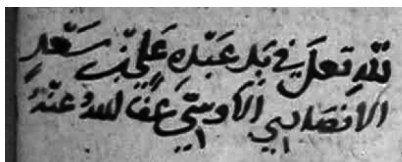
The rest of the title page consists of a lengthy biographical note, written 90° counter-clockwise from the title by another hand. This other

⁴⁰ Sezgin, *Geschichte*, p. 297. See also the description in Plessner, “Beiträge”, pp. 550-551.

hand may be from a later period, but the possibility that it is roughly contemporary cannot be ruled out, nor can the possibility that it is the same as the one who copied the main text. This second hand is less polished than the first, though reasonably elegant for a note of this genre. The text is vocalised only in part, and diacritical points are frequently omitted, which at times makes the reading difficult. The greatest part of this note is taken almost literally from Ṣā'id's *Ṭabaqāt al-umam*, as is acknowledged by the copyist himself. Yet the last five lines of the note appear to be an original addition by the author of the note, who reports various theories about the way the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* came to be associated with 'Maslama'.

In addition to this biographical note, the page also includes two ownership marks. The first in red ink is located in the upper right corner of the page. It is clearly by the same hand as that of the note and reads: *li-Llāh ta'ālā fī yad 'abdihi 'Alī ibn Sa'd al-Anṣārī al-Awsī 'afā Llāh 'anhu* ("To God Most High, in the hand of His servant 'Alī b. Sa'd al-Anṣārī al-Awsī – May God excuse him").

Illustration nr. 1



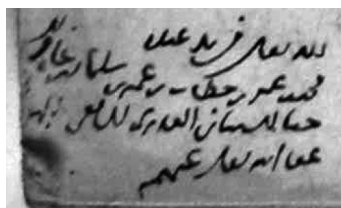
First ownership mark

This indication is valuable since the same owner's name also appears on MS 19/219 of the Budeiri Library in East Jerusalem, a manuscript which is dated to the 9th/15th century.⁴¹ In the description of this manuscript, the date "3 Ṣaffar 822" [= 1 March 1419] is mentioned, but it is unclear whether it refers to 'Alī b. Sa'd al-Anṣārī al-Awsī or to another owner. If it could be proven that this indication concerns 'Alī b. Sa'd al-Anṣārī al-Awsī, this would be an excellent confirmation that our note was written early in the 9th/15th century.

⁴¹ Judging from the description available on e-corpus (http://www.e-corpus.org/ref/117435/19__219/, consulted on 25/03/2015).

The other ownership mark is found in the upper left corner of the page. It is written in black ink and is in another hand which is much less easy to decipher in places. We tentatively propose that it reads: *li-Llāh ta'ālā fī yad 'abdihi Muḥammad ibn 'Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb ibn 'Umar ibn Sulaymān ibn al-Simnānī (?) al- 'Āmirī (?) al-Shāfi'ī 'afā Llāh ta'ālā 'anhum*. The identity of this owner cannot be determined with greater precision, and we are unable to date this second mark.

Illustration nr. 2



Second ownership mark

Illustration nr. 3



Ragıp Paşa 965, fol. 47r

2 Text

The major part of this biographical note is taken from Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī's *Ṭabaqāt al-umam* (hereafter *S*). In the present edition and translation, quotations from the *Ṭabaqāt* are indicated by {}. The variants from the *Ṭabaqāt al-umam* are indicated in the apparatus with *S^a* for Cheikho's edition (1935),⁴² *S^b* for Bū ʿAlwān's edition (1985)⁴³ and *S^c* for the Tehran edition (1997).⁴⁴ This section of Ṣāʿid's *Ṭabaqāt* is reproduced in part in the *Ikhbār al-ʿulamāʾ bi-akhbār al-ḥukamāʾ* (= *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*) by Ibn al-Qifṭī (d. 646/1248)⁴⁵ and is also taken up verbatim by Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa (d. 668/1270) in Chapter 13 (*Ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ alladhīn ṣaharū fī bilād al-Maghrib wa-aqāmū bihā*) of his *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*.⁴⁶ The variants of these two texts have been inserted in the apparatus only for proper names as well as for a few other words. They are respectively marked with Q and U.

الحمد لله مؤلف هذا الكتاب هو الشيخ الرئيس المعلم الجليل أبو القسم⁴⁷ 48 مسلمة بن
 أحمد المعروف بالمرحيطي⁴⁹ كان إمام الرياضيين في وقته بالاندلس⁵⁰ وأعلم <من>⁵¹
 كان قبله بها⁵² بعلم الأفلاك وحركات النجوم⁵³ وكانت له عناية بارصاد الكواكب وشغف⁵⁴

⁴² Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī, *Kitāb*, pp. 69-71 of the Arabic text.

⁴³ Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī, *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 168-173.

⁴⁴ Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī, *al-Taʾrīf*, pp. 246-250.

⁴⁵ Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Ikhbār*, p. 214 (Maslama b. Aḥmad [= al-Majrīṭī]); p. 162 (ʿAmr b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [= al-Kirmānī]).

⁴⁶ Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ*, Riḍā (ed.), pp. 482-483 (al-Majrīṭī), pp. 483-484 (Ibn al-Samḥ), p. 484 (Ibn al-Ṣaffār and al-Zahrāwī), pp. 484-485 (al-Kirmānī), p. 485 (Ibn Khaldūn). In Müller's edition: vol. 2, pp. 39-41.

⁴⁷ أنو ms.

⁴⁸ S^b S^c القاسم

⁴⁹ S^a بالمرحيط ; S^b بالمرحيط ; S^c بالمرحيطي ; Q بالمجريطي ; U بالمرحيطي. The name of al-Majrīṭī is written "al-Marḥīṭī" here, whereas "al-Marḥīṭ" is given in Cheikho's edition of the *Ṭabaqāt al-umam*. In both editions of the *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ* we also find the form "al-Marḥīṭī". As for the *Taʾrīkh al-ḥukamāʾ*, it provides the more correct "al-Majrīṭī", but this may be a correction from the editor. It should be observed that the form "al-Marḥīṭī" also appears in Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmila*, pp. 246-247.

⁵⁰ S^a S^b S^c في الاندلس في وقته [في وقته بالاندلس]

⁵¹ S^a ممن S^b S^c ms. من

⁵² omission S^c

⁵³ omitted in S^a وحركات النجوم

⁵⁴ S^b وشغف ms.; وشغف

بِتَفْهَمُ كِتَابِ بَطْلَمْيُوس⁵⁵ الْمَعْرُوفِ بِالْمَجْسُطِي وَالْف كِتَابًا حَسَنًا⁵⁶ فِي تَمَامِ⁵⁷ الْعَدَدِ⁵⁸ وَهُوَ
 الْمَعْنَى الْمَعْرُوفِ عِنْدَنَا بِالْمُعَامَلَاتِ وَلَهُ⁵⁹ كِتَابٌ اخْتَصَرَ فِيهِ تَعْدِيلَ الْكَوَاكِبِ مِنْ زِيَجِ⁶⁰
 الْبَتَانِيِّ⁶¹ وَعَنِي بَزِيَجِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ مُوسَى الْخُوَارَزْمِيِّ⁶² وَصَرَفَ تَارِيخَهُ الْفَارِسِي إِلَى التَّارِيخِ
 الْعَرَبِيِّ وَوَضَعَ أَوْسَاطَ الْكَوَاكِبِ فِيهِ لِأَوَّلِ تَارِيخِ الْهَجْرَةِ وَزَادَ فِيهِ جَدَاوِلَ حَسَنَةً
 قَالَ الْقَاضِي صَاعِدٌ {عَلَى أَنَّهُ اتَّبَعَهُ عَلَى خَطَائِهِ⁶³ فِيهِ وَلَمْ يَنْبِئْ⁶⁴ عَلَى مَوْضِعِ الْغَلَطِ
 فِيهِ⁶⁶ وَقَدْ نَبِهْتُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ فِي كِتَابِي⁶⁷ الْمَوْلَفِ فِي⁶⁸ إِصْلَاحِ حَرَكَاتِ الْكَوَاكِبِ وَالتَّعْرِيفِ
 بِخَطَإِ⁶⁹ الرَّاصِدِينَ وَتُوفِي⁷⁰ أَبُو الْقَاسِمِ⁷¹ مُسْلِمَةُ بْنُ أَحْمَدَ⁷² قُبَيْلَ⁷³ مَبْعُثَ⁷⁴ الْفَتْنَةِ فِي سَنَةِ
 ثَمَانٍ وَتِسْعِينَ وَثَلَاثُمِائَةٍ⁷⁵ وَقَدْ انْجَبَ تَلَامِيذُ جَلَّةٍ لَمْ⁷⁶ يَنْجِبِ⁷⁷ عَالَمٌ بِالْإِنْدَلَسِ مِثْلُهُمْ فَمَنْ
 أَشْهَرُهُمْ ابْنُ السَّمْحِ⁷⁸ وَابْنُ الصَّفَّارِ وَالزُّهْرَاوِيُّ وَالْكَرْمَانِيُّ وَابْنُ خَلْدُونِ
 فَأَمَّا ابْنُ السَّمْحِ⁷⁹ فَهُوَ⁸⁰ أَبُو الْقَاسِمِ أَصْبَغُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ بْنُ السَّمْحِ الْمَهْرِيِّ⁸¹ {وَأَمَّا
 الزُّهْرَاوِيُّ فَهُوَ أَبُو الْحَسَنِ عَلِيُّ بْنُ سُلَيْمَانَ} {وَأَمَّا الْكَرْمَانِيُّ فَهُوَ أَبُو الْحَكَمِ عَمْرُو بْنُ عَبْدِ
 الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ الْكَرْمَانِيُّ مِنْ أَهْلِ قَرْطَبَةَ}

⁵⁵ S^b S^c بطليموس

⁵⁶ S^a S^b S^c وله كتاب حسن [والف كتابًا حسنًا

⁵⁷ S^b S^c ثمار

⁵⁸ S^a S^b S^c علم العدد

⁵⁹ S^a S^b S^c و

⁶⁰ ms. زيح

⁶¹ ms. البتاني

⁶² ms. الخوارزمي

⁶³ ms.; حكايته S^a, but Cheikho notes that the original reading was very likely S^b S^c خطئه; خطئه

⁶⁴ ms. نبئ

⁶⁵ S^a S^b S^c مواضع

⁶⁶ S^a S^b S^c منه

⁶⁷ S^a كتاب ms.; كتابي

⁶⁸ S^b S^c ms.; ب

⁶⁹ S^a S^b S^c بخطأ ms.; بخطأ

⁷⁰ S^b S^c فتوفي ms.; وتوفي

⁷¹ S^a S^b S^c القاسم

⁷² S^a, but Cheikho corrects the reading to محمد

⁷³ S^b S^c قبيل ms.; قبيل

⁷⁴ S^a, but Cheikho adds a note explaining that the correct reading is مبعث

⁷⁵ ms. وثلثمائة

⁷⁶ S^a ولم

⁷⁷ ms. نحب

⁷⁸ S^a, but Cheikho adds a note explaining that the correct reading is السمع

⁷⁹ S^a, but Cheikho adds a note explaining that the correct reading is السمع

⁸⁰ S^b S^c وهو

⁸¹ S^a, but Cheikho (on the basis of an edition of U different from the one we have used) adds a note explaining a variant; S^b S^c أبو القاسم أصبغ بن محمد بن السمع المهري; U; not quoted in Q

قال القاضي صاعد بن احمد بن صاعد {رحل الى الشرق⁸² واستوطن حران⁸³ واعتنى
ثم بطلب⁸⁴ الهندسة والطب ثم رجع الى الاندلس⁸⁵ واستوطن سرقسطة⁸⁶ من ثغرها⁸⁷
وجلب⁸⁸ معه الرسائل المعروفة برسائل اخوان الصفاء { ولا تعلم بالاندلس من غير جهته
على هذا اصفق اهل الجزيرة {وتوفي⁸⁹ <ب>سرقسطة⁹⁰ سنة ثمان وخمسين واربع⁹¹ مائة {
وبقي قول من ينسبها الى الرئيس مسلمة ويرجح انه ذكر في بعض مؤلفاته انها من تأليفه
بقوله في رتبة الحكيم او في غيرها من كتب الصناعة وقد ذكرت هذا في كتابي كيت وكيت
وقال بعضهم انه ارسلها معه ثم ادخلها الاندلس بعد ذلك قال بعضهم بالرسيل بها الى
البصرة قديما ثم اشتهرت من البصرة في ارض الشرق ويلقاها⁹² الكرمانى من تلك البلاد
ولما ولي سي (المجريطي؟) .. عزوها لاستاذة جملها⁹³ وقيل الكتب كلها ليست له وانما
قيلت على لسانه وقيل غير ذلك والله تعالى اعلم

3 Translation

Praised be God! The author of this book is the shaykh, the master, the venerable teacher {Abū l-Qasim [sic] Maslama Ibn Aḥmad, referred to as al-Marḥīṭī [sic]. He was the imam of the mathematicians of his time in al-Andalus, and he knew more than anyone before him of the science of the spheres and of the movements of the stars. He was concerned with the observations of planets, and he was eager to understand the book by Ptolemy known as the *Almagest*. He wrote a good book on commercial arithmetic, a discipline known to us as *mu'āmalāt*. He was also the author of a book on the calculation of the true position of the planets, which is a summary of al-Battānī's *Zīj*. He also studied the *Zīj* of Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Khwārizmī and replaced the Persian era

⁸² S^a S^b S^c Q U ديار المشرق

⁸³ S^a S^b S^c Q U وانتهى منها الى حران من بلاد الجزيرة

⁸⁴ Q U وعني هناك بطلب ; S^b S^c وعني هناك بعلم {واعتنى ثم بطلب

⁸⁵ S^a بلاد الاندلس ; ms. الاندلس

⁸⁶ S^a S^b S^c مدينة سرقسطة ; ms. سرقسطة

⁸⁷ S^a تغربها Cheikho's edition has the bizarre 'من تغربه', translated by Blachère as "dans l'Ouest de la Péninsule", in patent contradiction with the location of Zaragoza with respect to the Iberian Peninsula. The manuscript has 'من ثغرها' (from its border), which makes much better sense. This reading is further confirmed by Ibn al-Qifṭī's *Ikhbār* as well as by both editions of Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a's *Uyūn al-anbā'*.

⁸⁸ ms. وحلب

⁸⁹ S^b S^c ابو الحكم رحمه الله ; addition ابو الحكم ونوفى

⁹⁰ S^a S^b S^c بسر قسطة ; ms. سرقسطة

⁹¹ S^b ورابع

⁹² ms. ولفاها

⁹³ ms. حملها

[as found there] with the Arab era; he determined the mean position of the planets as counted from the beginning of the *hijra*, and he supplied good tables.} The qadi Ṣā'id said: {He has nevertheless reproduced his mistakes and has not indicated the passages which were erroneous. I have pointed this out in the book which I have written on the correction of the movements of the planets, revealing the errors made by the specialists of observation. Abū l-Qasim Maslama b. Aḥmad died shortly before the beginning of the *fitna* in the year 398 [1007]. He educated excellent students, unsurpassed in al-Andalus for their science. Among the most famous are Ibn al-Samḥ, Ibn al-Ṣaffār, al-Zahrāwī, al-Kirmānī and Ibn Khaldūn.

Ibn al-Samḥ is Abū l-Qasim [sic] Aṣbagh b. Muḥammad b. al-Samḥ al-Mahrī.}

{Al-Zahrāwī is Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Sulaymān.}

{Al-Kirmānī is Abū l-Ḥakam 'Amr b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Kirmānī, from Cordoba.}

The qadi Ṣā'id b. Aḥmad b. Ṣā'id said: {He [= al-Kirmānī] travelled to the East, settled in Ḥarrān, and he devoted his attention to the study of geometry and medicine, then he went back to al-Andalus and settled in Zaragoza, [reaching it] from its border. He brought with him the *epistles* known as the "Epistles of the Brethren of Purity". There is no learning in al-Andalus without reference to it, [something] on which the people of the Peninsula agree. {He died in Zaragoza in the year 458 [= 1066].}

And there remains the statement of those who link them [the epistles] with the master Maslama. It is very likely that he [= Maslama] has mentioned in some of his writings that they are his [own] composition, [as for instance] when he says in *Rutbat al-ḥakīm* or in other books about the 'art': "I have already mentioned this in my book 'so and so'". Some have said that he took them with him and that he then introduced them into al-Andalus. Some have said that they were originally dispatched in Baṣra, and that they then became famous, [spreading] from Baṣra over the land of the East, and [that] al-Kirmānī became acquainted with them from these countries, but since he was a follower of al-Majrīṭī (?) ... they have ascribed them all to his teacher. And it is said that all the books are not by him [= Maslama], and that they are only said [to be so] from his own mouth, and other things of this kind are said, but God knows best.

4 Commentary

Leaving aside the part taken from Ṣāʿid in this commentary and turning immediately to the last lines of the text, we note that the first original addition to the *Ṭabaqāt al-umam* is to be found just before the phrase “He died in Zaragoza in the year 458”, with which Ṣāʿid concludes his report about al-Kirmānī. The insertion is worth noting; by commenting that “there is no learning in al-Andalus without reference to it”, the author of the note provides new and particularly striking evidence of the success enjoyed by the Ikhwānīan corpus in the western part of the Islamic world. Not only does the copyist remark that the corpus has acquired the status of a key work in the transmission of scientific knowledge through al-Andalus, he also insists that this fact is unanimously agreed upon in the Peninsula.

Having briefly returned to Ṣāʿid’s account in order to mention al-Kirmānī’s year of death, the copyist recounts several theories about the attribution of the Ikhwānīan corpus to Maslama al-Majrītī. This is clearly the most interesting part of the note. The introductory phrase (*wa-baqiya qawl man yansibuhā ilā l-raʿīs Maslama*) suggests that the copyist is no longer quoting from anyone here but is instead providing an updated synthesis of the issue in his own words, just as he did previously in commenting on the diffusion of the *Rasāʾil*. He starts by pointing out the origin of the problem: namely, certain affirmations found in *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*. This naturally calls attention to the ambiguous attitude of the *Rutba*’s author as discussed above. When the copyist refers to phrases such as “I have already mentioned this in my book so and so”, what else could this be except a reference to the multiple passages in which the author uses expressions such as *qad qaddamtū* or *qad qaddamnā* (“I/We have already presented”) in reference to the *Rasāʾil*? In emphasising how evident these self-ascriptions are, the copyist is implicitly acknowledging the position of those who take this for granted, thereby affirming that Maslama is the genuine author of the encyclopaedia.

The copyist then moves on to alternative theories as put forward by some of his predecessors whom he does not mention by name. The first theory which “some have put forward” is that Maslama al-Majrītī brought the *Rasāʾil* back to al-Andalus himself. This represents the position of those who, although they do not believe in Maslama’s authorship, nevertheless admit that he played an important role in the transmission of the Ikhwānīan corpus to al-Andalus.

This argument has simplicity in its favour, and it is understandable that this theory may have appealed to some scholars, ancient and modern alike, but it also raises a major difficulty; it has become habitual for modern biographers to stress that Maslama al-Majrīṭī's life is poorly documented, but the deafening silence of medieval sources about the possibility of such a sojourn in the East makes it rather doubtful that Maslama ever set foot on Oriental soil. In fact, the only references found in literature to such a trip are precisely those which connect al-Majrīṭī with the story of the introduction of the *Rasā'il* into al-Andalus. But if we take a closer look at this material we soon arrive at the conclusion that this connection is merely a modern legend.

The origin of the myth is a note made by the nineteenth-century Spanish scholar Pascual de Gayangos in his English translation of the *Nafḥ al-ṭīb* by al-Maqqarī (d. 1041/1632). Addressing the passage in which al-Maqqarī narrates the story about al-Kirmānī and *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* – evidently following Ṣā'id or one of his numerous followers –, de Gayangos asserts: "I believe the author to be wrong in his statement that this individual was the first who introduced into Spain the collection of philosophical treatises known by the title of *Rasā'yil arbābi-s-safā'* [sic]."⁹⁴ To justify his own position, de Gayangos appeals to a passage from Ibn Khayr's *Fahrassa*, which he had apparently found in the manuscript Ar. 1667 from El Escorial Library and which claims that "Abū-l-kāsim Moslemah Ibn Ahmad Al-majeritī [sic] was the first who brought them [the *Rasā'il*] to Spain from the East."⁹⁵ That de Gayangos, who nowhere gives a precise reference to this passage, may have been "the victim of some error"⁹⁶ is suspected by Samuel Stern in his article "New Information about the Authors of the 'Epistles of the Sincere Brethren'". Stern rightly notes that no information of this kind can be found in the edition of the *Fahrassa* by Codera and Ribera and that the names of Maslama al-Majrīṭī and *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* do not even appear in the index of the edition.⁹⁷ In addition to Stern's argument one may also observe that de Gayangos commits another serious error just a few notes before, and that this other inaccuracy may also have been instrumental in the propagation

⁹⁴ de Gayangos, *The History*, vol. 1, p. 429, n. 47.

⁹⁵ de Gayangos, *The History*, vol. 1, p. 429, n. 47.

⁹⁶ Stern, "New Information", p. 427, n. 42.

⁹⁷ Stern, "New Information", pp. 427-428.

of our legend in modern scholarship. Thus while commenting on the passage about “Abū ‘Obeydah Moslem Ibn Ahmed”, better known as the “master of the Qibla” (*al-ma‘rūf bi-ṣāhib al-qibla*)⁹⁸ – in fact the Cordoban mathematician and astronomer Abū ‘Ubayda Muslim b. Aḥmad al-Laythī (d. 295/908)⁹⁹ –, de Gayangos believes he can identify this scholar with “a certain Moslem or Moslemah Ibn Ahmed Al-majerrittī (from Madrid)”¹⁰⁰ as mentioned by Casiri in his description of the manuscripts of El Escorial. De Gayangos himself seems aware that his proposition has its share of weakness,¹⁰¹ but since Maqqarī’s text in that place indicates that this scholar made a journey in the Orient, with stays in Mecca and Cairo, this must have been perceived as confirmation of the theory that Maslama al-Majrīṭī accomplished a *riḥla* to the East and took advantage of his sojourn there to acquire a copy of the *Rasā’il* and bring it back to al-Andalus.¹⁰² More than fifty years after the publication of Stern’s article, it remains curious that so many later scholars took this most improbable story for granted and never sought to check the sources.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ De Gayangos, *The History*, vol. 1, p. 149.

⁹⁹ See Rius, “Al-Laythī, Abū ‘Ubayda”.

¹⁰⁰ De Gayangos, *The History*, vol. 1, p. 427, n. 37.

¹⁰¹ De Gayangos, *The History*, vol. 1, p. 427, n. 37: “His surname was Abū-l-kāsim, not ‘Obeydah. However, as the Arabs not infrequently denominate themselves after one or more of their sons, he may have had both appellatives, Abū-l-kāsim and Abū ‘Obeydah, and therefore be the individual here intended, especially as the account of his life given by Casiri (vol. i. p. 378, c. 2), as translated from the *Arabica Philosophorum Bibliotheca*, agrees with the present.” In fact, the notice in that place (Casiri, *Bibliotheca*, vol. 1, p. 378) concerns a copy of the *Ghāya* and is for Casiri the occasion of providing a biographical account of “Moslemae Magritensis, sive Matritensis Vita et Scripta ex Arabia Philosophorum Bibliotheca, fol. 365”. This proves to be a mere summary of Ṣā’id’s account on Maslama al-Majrīṭī (where, of course, no connection with the *Rasā’il* is established and no journey to the East is mentioned), the only supplementary information being a reference to “Ebn Pasqual” and to “Ebn Alfharadi” for the alternative date of al-Majrīṭī’s death. Contrary to what de Gayangos writes, there is nothing in this account which agrees with Maqqarī’s statement about the “Master of the Qibla”.

¹⁰² For the edition of this passage, see Maqqarī, *Kitāb Naḥḥ al-ṭīb*, vol. 2, p. 255.

¹⁰³ See for instance, among recent statements: Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, vol. 1, pp. 668-669, s. v. “Maslama Ibn Aḥmad”, here p. 668: “He may have introduced into Spain the writings of the Brethren of Purity, or else this was done later, by one of his disciples, al-Kirmānī”: Sarton writes in a note: “Arabic sources contradict one another on this point”; Vernet, *La cultura hispanoárabe en Oriente y Occidente*, p. 32: “Buena parte de esos conocimientos quedaron recogidos en *Las epístolas de los hermanos de la pureza* o *Rasā’il al-ijwān al-ṣafā’*”, compuestas en Oriente a fines del siglo X e introducidas en España por Maslama de Madrid. Su discípulo, al-Qarmānī (*sic*) (m. 458/1065),

Yet it also seems important to raise the following point: if one ascribes the *Rutba* and the *Ghāya* to Maslama al-Majrītī, and if, on the other hand, one takes into account what the author of the *Rutba* says about the *Rasā'il*, then it becomes perfectly conceivable to consider that al-Majrītī played a role in the introduction of the corpus into al-Andalus. The most obvious supposition in that case is that al-Majrītī himself travelled to the East to obtain a copy, even if his *riḥla* across the Orient is not documented in the sources. The author of the bibliographical note of the MS Ragıp Paşa 965 must have been following similar reasoning when he wrote: “Some have said that he [= Maslama al-Majrītī] took them with him and that he then introduced them into al-Andalus”. It is worth stressing this point since this is, to the best of our knowledge, the first time that one encounters this assumption in pre-modern literature. In the absence of any comparable affirmation in medieval sources, it is not possible to determine from where the copyist derived this information, so that various options remain open for consideration. In view of the fact that an extended sojourn in the East is well documented for Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī, as we have seen above, it could be suggested that our phrase is another consequence of the confusion between the two Maslamas. However this eventuality seems unlikely, because the rest of the note is entirely dedicated to Maslama al-Majrītī, and one might question whether its author was even aware of al-Qurṭubī's existence. What can be definitively ruled out is the supposition that this text formed the basis for the modern legend regarding Maslama al-Majrītī as the importer of the *Rasā'il* since that legend seems to originate in a confusion made in the 19th century.

The copyist next addresses what has apparently become the standard interpretation over the centuries. Once again he only alludes to unidentified informants, but in this case his allusions are precise and transparent. The first part, in which the original dispatching of the *Rasā'il* in Baṣra is followed by its broader diffusion in the East, clearly echoes the tradition proceeding from al-Tawḥīdī's famous statement in

las dio a conocer en Zaragoza.” Vernet, “Al-Majrītī”, here p. 1109: “In 369/979 he carried out some astronomical observation, and it must have been at this time that he adapted the tables of al-Khwārazmī to the Cordova meridian. Some time later, he apparently brought the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* to public attention in al-Andalus. (...) His disciples included: al-Kirmānī (d. 458/1066), who introduced the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* to Saragossa and the frontier regions of the North.” Similarly: Fahd, “Sciences naturelles et magie”, p. 11; Poonawala, “Why We Need an Arabic Critical Edition”, p. 34.

the *Imtā'*.¹⁰⁴ The second part, in which al-Kirmānī is mentioned as the scholar who brought the corpus into al-Andalus, is merely a recapitulation of what the copyist has just quoted from Ṣā'id's *Ṭabaqāt*. What succeeds this is more noteworthy; in spite of one or two words which cannot be clearly read, the meaning of the remark is unambiguous: since al-Kirmānī was a follower of Maslama al-Majrītī, it is to al-Kirmānī's master that the whole corpus of the *Rasā'il* was ascribed.

In view of this hotchpotch of theories, which even the copyist seems to have recorded with a certain degree of scepticism, it can be surmised that the note's concluding words express its author's conviction that "all the books" alleged to be by Maslama "are not his", but that people have been misled by what the scholar affirms in his own writings. It is not entirely clear which works the copyist alludes to with "all the books", but there can be no doubt that the *Rasā'il* are chief among them.

Ragıp Paşa 963, title page (fol. 90r)

1 Presentation

According to Sezgin, MS Ragıp Paşa 963 is from the 9th/15th century.¹⁰⁵ The text of the *Rutba* is found on fols. 90r-115v. The text is fully vocalised, albeit somewhat erratically, and it is written in an extremely careful and elegant *naskh* script. On fol. 90r the title of the work is given in the same hand as:

Kitāb Rutbat al-ḥakīm wa-madkhal al-ta'līm ta'līf al-imām al-ʿālim al-faylasūf Abī Muḥammad Maslama ibn Aḥmad al-mulaqqab bi-l-Majrītī al-Andalusī raḥimahu Llāh wa-huwa arba' maqālāt al-maqāla al-ūlā lā faṣl fihā wa-l-maqāla al-thāniya fih arba' [sic] fuṣūl wa-l-maqāla al-thālitha fihā thalāthata 'ashara faṣlā wa-l-maqāla al-rābi'a fihā arba' ata 'ashara faṣl al-jumla aḥad [sic] wa-thalāthīn faṣl

Book of the Rank of the Sage and of the Introduction to Learning, written by the Imam, the Learned, the Philosopher Abū Muḥammad

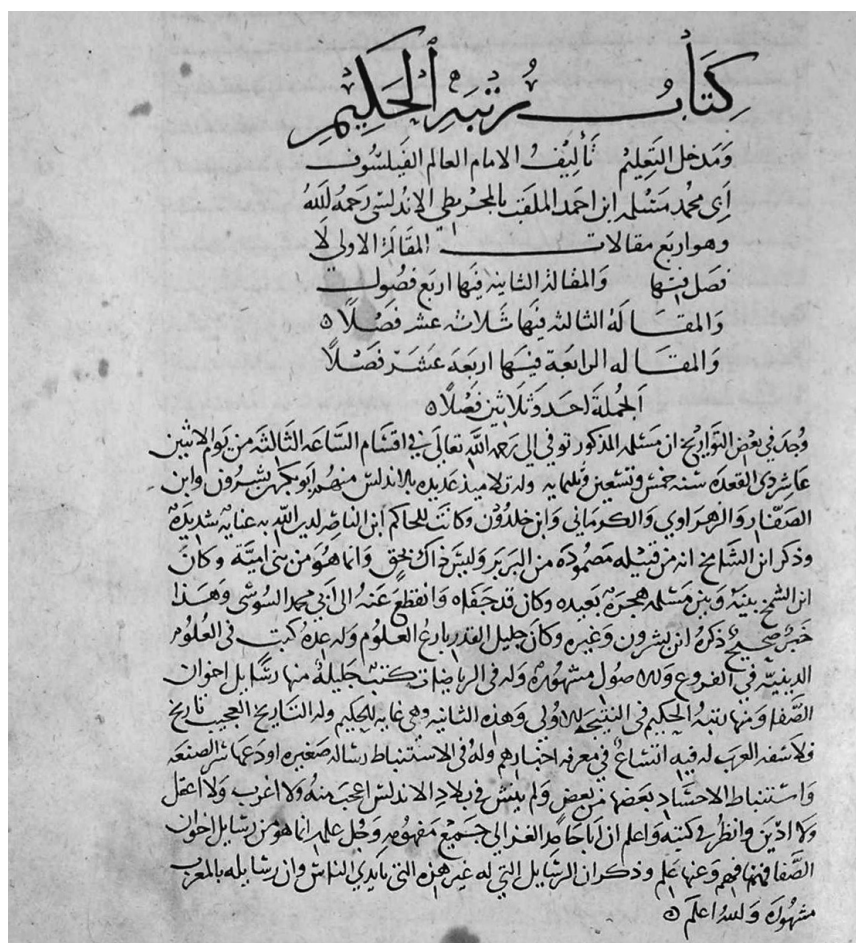
¹⁰⁴ al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-Imta'*, vol. 2, pp. 3-6. On this passage and the tradition it has inspired, see, for instance, Stern, "New Information"; Kraemer, *Humanism*, pp. 165-178. See also El-Bizri, "Prologue", p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ Sezgin, *Geschichte*, p. 297. See also the description in Plessner, "Beiträge", pp. 547-550. The manuscript also includes a short section of the *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* on fol. 39r.

Maslama ibn Aḥmad surnamed al-Majrīṭī al-Andalusī – May God have mercy on him! It consists of four chapters. Chapter One has no sections. Chapter Two has four sections, Chapter Three has 13 and Chapter Four has 14. In all, it contains 31 sections.

The rest of the page consists entirely of a biographical note in the same hand. As opposed to the note of MS Ragıp Paşa 965, this one appears to be a compilation of several distinct sources. There are no ownership marks on this manuscript.

Illustration nr. 4



Ragıp Paşa 963, fol. 90r

2 Text

The readings quoted in the notes are the readings of the manuscript.

وُجِدَ فِي بَعْضِ التَّوَارِيخِ أَنَّ مَسْلَمَةَ الْمَذْكُورِ تَوَفَّى إِلَى رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى فِي أَقْسَامِ السَّاعَةِ الثَّلَاثَةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْاِثْنَيْنِ عَاشِرِ ذِي الْقَعْدَةِ سَنَةِ خَمْسٍ وَتِسْعِينَ وَثَلَاثِمِائَةٍ¹⁰⁶ وَلَهُ تَلَامِيذٌ عَدِيدَةٌ بِالْأَنْدَلُسِ مِنْهُمْ أَبُو بَكْرٍ بْنُ بَشْرُونَ وَابْنُ الصَّفَّارِ وَالزَّهْرَاوِيُّ وَالْكَرْمَانِيُّ وَابْنُ خَلْدُونُ وَكَانَتْ لِلْحَاكِمِ ابْنِ النَّاصِرِ لَدَيْنَ اللَّهِ بِهِ عَنَاءٌ شَدِيدٌ

وَذَكَرَ ابْنُ الشَّامَخِ أَنَّهُ مِنْ قَبِيلَةِ مَصْمُودَةَ مِنَ الْبَرْبَرِ وَلَيْسَ ذَلِكَ بِحَقٍّ وَإِنَّمَا هُوَ مِنْ بَنِي أُمَيَّةٍ وَكَانَ ابْنُ الشَّمَخِ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ مَسْلَمَةَ هَجْرَةٌ بَعِيدَةٌ وَكَانَ قَدْ جَفَّاهُ وَانْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ إِلَى أَبِي مُحَمَّدٍ السُّوسِيِّ وَهَذَا خَبَرٌ صَحِيحٌ ذَكَرَهُ ابْنُ بَشْرُونَ وَغَيْرُهُ

وَكَانَ جَلِيلَ الْقَدْرِ بَارِعُ الْعُلُومِ وَلَهُ عِدَّةُ كُتُبٍ فِي الْعُلُومِ الدِّينِيَّةِ فِي الْفُرُوعِ وَالْأَصُولِ مَشْهُورَةٌ وَلَهُ فِي الرِّيَاضِيَّاتِ كُتُبٌ جَلِيلَةٌ مِنْهَا رِسَالَتُ أَخْوَانِ الصِّفَاءِ وَمِنْهَا رَتَبَةُ الْحَكِيمِ فِي النَّتِيجَةِ الْأُولَى وَهَذِهِ الثَّانِيَةُ وَهِيَ غَايَةُ الْحَكِيمِ وَلَهُ التَّارِيخُ الْعَجِيبُ تَارِيخُ فَلَاسِفَةِ الْعَرَبِ لَهُ فِيهِ اتِّسَاعٌ فِي مَعْرِفَةِ أَخْبَارِهِمْ وَلَهُ فِي الْاِسْتِنْبَاطِ رِسَالَةٌ صَغِيرَةٌ أَوْدَعَهَا سِرَّ الصَّنْعَةِ وَاسْتِنْبَاطِ الْأَجْسَادِ بَعْضُهَا مِنْ بَعْضٍ وَلَمْ يَنْشَأْ¹⁰⁷ فِي بِلَادِ الْأَنْدَلُسِ اعْجَبَ مِنْهُ وَلَا اغْرَبَ وَلَا اعْقَلَ وَلَا اَدِينُ

وَانْظُرْ فِي كُتُبِهِ وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ أَبَا حَامِدَ الْغَزَالِيَّ جَمِيعَ مَفْهُومِهِ وَجُلَّ عِلْمُهُ إِنَّمَا هُوَ مِنْ رِسَالَتِ أَخْوَانِ الصِّفَاءِ فَمِنْهَا فَهْمٌ وَغَنَاءٌ عِلْمٌ وَذَكَرَ أَنَّ الرِّسَالَاتِ الَّتِي لَهُ غَيْرَ هَذِهِ الَّتِي بِأَيْدِي النَّاسِ وَأَنَّ رِسَالَتَهُ بِالْمَغْرِبِ مَشْهُورَةٌ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ

3 Translation

It is found in some history books that the aforementioned Maslama died with God's mercy within the divisions of the third hour¹⁰⁸ of the 12th of Dhū al-Qa'da of the year 395 [20 August 1005], that he had numerous disciples in al-Andalus, among them Abū Bakr Ibn Bishrūn, Ibn al-Ṣaffār, al-Zahrāwī, al-Kirmānī and Ibn Khaldūn, and that 'the Sage,' the son of al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh, had much concern for him.

Ibn al-Shāmikh [sic] mentioned that he was from the Berber Mas-muda tribe, but this is not true since he came from the Banū Umayya.

¹⁰⁶ وتلاميذه

¹⁰⁷ ينشأ

¹⁰⁸ The exact meaning of the expression *fī aqsām min al-sā'a al-thālitha* is not clear. We have chosen to render it as literally as possible.

There has been between Ibn al-Shamkh [sic] and Maslama a profound dissension, because this one had treated him roughly, and he [= Ibn al-Samḥ] had left him for Abū Muḥammad al-Sūsī. This is reliable information as it was reported by Ibn Bishrūn and others.

Maslama had an outstanding rank and distinguished himself in the sciences. He is the author of various famous books on the religious sciences dealing with the [legal] derivatives and principles. He is also the author of excellent books in the mathematical sciences, among them *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, *Rutbat al-ḥakīm* about the first conclusion, and also this second [conclusion] which is *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*. His is also the wonderful history *Ta'rīkh al-falāsīfat al-'arab*, in which he has elaborated on what is known about them. His is also a small epistle on derivation in which he has established the secret of the 'art' and of the derivation of bodies from one another. Nobody more marvellous, more astonishing, more intelligent and more pious than him has appeared in the country of al-Andalus.

Consider his books and know that Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī owes to the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* the whole of his understanding and most of his science, and that it is from these that he has obtained his understanding and his science.

It is said that the *Epistles* which are his [= Maslama's] are different from those which are in the people's hands, and that his *Epistles* are famous in the Maghrib. But God knows best!

4 Commentary

Sources disagree about Maslama al-Majrīṭī's time of death. Ṣā'id al-Andalusī, who provides the most detailed account of Maslama's biography, reports that he died "shortly before the beginning of the *fitna*, in the year 398 [1007]". This date is also given by both Ibn al-Qiftī and Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a. On the other hand, Ibn Bashkuwāl (d. 578/1183) mentions "Dhū al-Qa'da of 395" and affirms, on the account of his predecessor Ibn Ḥayyān (d. 469/1076), that Maslama was "ninety-seven years old when the *fitna* broke out."¹⁰⁹ Subsequent authors tend

¹⁰⁹ Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Kitāb al-Ṣila*, n° 1257.

to follow either of these traditions, with preference given to Ibn Bashkuwāl's dating, which agrees with our manuscript. The horoscope-like precision of the present writer is most unusual and does not seem to have an equivalent in the other sources.

The writer next turns to Maslama's disciples; five students are mentioned: Abū Bakr Ibn Bishrūn, Ibn al-Ṣaffār, al-Zahrāwī, al-Kirmānī and Ibn Khaldūn. The last four are precisely the same four names and in the same order as those listed in *Ṭabaqāt al-umam*. The two lists are at variance about the first name. Whereas Ṣā'id mentions the famous geometer and astronomer Abū l-Qāsim Aṣḡagh ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Samḥ al-Gharnāfī (d. 426/1035),¹¹⁰ the copyist of the present manuscript mentions Abū Bakr Ibn Bishrūn, whose name is nowhere to be found in *Ṭabaqāt al-umam*.

The second scholar mentioned is the mathematician and astronomer Abū l-Qāsim Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar al-Ghāfiqī Ibn al-Ṣaffār al-Andalusī, who was born in Cordoba and who died in Denia in 1035.¹¹¹ The third one, al-Zahrāwī, is an arithmetician and geometrician referred to by Ṣā'id as Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Sulaymān.¹¹² The fourth is Abū l-Ḥakam 'Amr b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Kirmānī, who was born in Cordoba and died in 458/1066, and whom Ṣā'id credits with the introduction of the *Rasā'il* to Zaragoza. Ibn Khaldūn is Abū Muslim 'Amr b. Aḥmad Ibn Khaldūn al-Ḥaḍramī, who was born in Seville and died in 449/1057. He is mentioned by Ṣā'id as well as by his namesake, the historian Ibn Khaldūn.¹¹³

Abū Bakr Ibn Bishrūn, the first disciple named in this list, is a scholar whose biography is more obscure. A scientist by the same name is mentioned in the *Muqaddima* as a disciple of "Maslama al-Majrīṭī", or rather as Ibn Khaldūn believed, a disciple of the author of the *Rutba* and of the *Ghāya*. He is there presented as the author of an epistle on alchemy addressed to a certain "Ibn al-Samḥ", the contents of which the historian

¹¹⁰ See Pingree, "Ibn al-Samḥ"; Comes, "Ibn al-Samḥ"; Rius, "Ibn al-Samḥ".

¹¹¹ See Rius, "Ibn al-Ṣaffār".

¹¹² He is not to be confused with the famous physician and surgeon al-Zahrāwī, curiously not mentioned in the *Ṭabaqāt al-umam*, who was born in Madīnat al-Zahrā' and who died in Cordoba after 400/1009. On the latter, see Llaveró Ruiz, "Zahrāwī".

¹¹³ Ibn Khaldūn, *Prolegomenes*, vol. 3, p. 99; Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 3, pp. 126-127.

reproduces in their entirety.¹¹⁴ Ibn Khaldūn and the copyist of the biographical note clearly consider Abū Bakr Ibn Bishrūn to be one of al-Majrīṭī's pupils: an assumption evidently resulting from the fact that the addressee of the epistle is identified with Abū l-Qāsim Aṣbagh b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Samḥ al-Gharnāṭī, the first of Maslama al-Majrīṭī's students in Ṣā'id's list. But this is highly conjectural, if only for the fact that Abū l-Qāsim Aṣbagh Ibn al-Samḥ is nowhere mentioned in connection with alchemy. In her article on the *bāṭinī* traditionist Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī, Maribel Fierro suggests with greater plausibility that the addressee of Ibn Bishrūn's treatise should be identified with another "Ibn al-Samḥ", who was born in 303/915 and whose death must have taken place in Madīnat al-Zahrā' in either 370/980 or 387/997.¹¹⁵ A Shāfi'ī grammarian and ascetic, this other Ibn al-Samḥ (the complete form of his name is Abū Sulaymān 'Abd al-Salām Ibn al-Samḥ b. Nābil b. 'Abd Allāh b. Yaḥyūn b. Ḥārith b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Hawwārī al-Shāfi'ī) travelled widely across the Near East and in particular to Mecca, where he studied with the mystic Abū Sa'īd Ibn al-A'rābī (d. 341/952). This last fact is noteworthy, for Ibn al-A'rābī remains famous for having been the teacher of an impressive number of students from al-Andalus, beginning with Maslama al-Qurṭubī himself.¹¹⁶ If we accept Fierro's proposal, as other scholars have done in recent years,¹¹⁷ then it would mean that Abū Bakr Ibn Bishrūn was a disciple not of Maslama al-Majrīṭī but of Maslama al-Qurṭubī. This

¹¹⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, *Prolégomènes*, vol. 3, pp. 193-208; Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 3, pp. 230-245. According to Brockelmann (*Geschichte*, Suppl. 2, p. 1034, n° 10) and Sezgin (*Geschichte*, p. 298), the text of this epistle is also extant in an Istanbul manuscript under the title *Sirr al-kīmiyā*, which is mentioned in *Kashf al-zunūn* (Ḥājī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, vol. 3, pp. 595-596, n° 7146). Sezgin affirms that Abū Bakr Ibn Bishrūn is also the author of a *Mukhtaṣar li-Rutbat al-ḥakīm*, which is preserved in MS Istanbul, Üniversitesi Arapça Yazmaları 6247 (fols. 126v-191r). According to Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften*, p. 226, Ibn Bishrūn was also responsible for the redaction of another alchemical treatise, the *Kitāb Nūr al-ḥikma*, which is extant in MS Chester Beatty 4501, fols. 104-105.

¹¹⁵ Fierro, "Bāṭinism", p. 101.

¹¹⁶ On this, see Marín, "Abū Sa'īd Ibn al-A'rābī".

¹¹⁷ See Samsó, "Ibn Bishrūn, Abū Bakr", here p. 670: "En mi opinión, la hipótesis de M. I. Fierro resulta mucho más coherente tanto en lo que respecta al autor de la *Rutba* como en la identificación de Ibn al-Samḥ con Abū Sulaymān 'Abd al-Salām b. al-Samḥ al-Shāfi'ī."

would also mean that, in addition to the general confusion between the two Maslamas (and most probably as a direct consequence of that first amalgamation), medieval authors confused their respective entourages as well.

Having mentioned what he regards as five of Majrīṭī's students, the author of the note turns to the scholar's privileged position with respect to the political authority of his time. The "son of al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh" is the caliph al-Ḥakam II (r. 350-366/961-976), son and successor of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III, whose surname was indeed "al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh". He is here referred to as *al-ḥakīm* ("the Sage"). Is this a simple scribal error for "*al-Ḥakam*", or is it a reference to the caliph's peerless reputation as a patron of the arts and sciences?

"Ibn al-Shāmkh", spelled "Ibn al-Shamkh" in the subsequent line, must be Abū l-Qāsim Aṣḥagh b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Samḥ, the famous Andalusī geometrician whose name for some unknown reason had not previously appeared in the copyist's list of al-Majrīṭī's disciples. The "profound dissension" supposed to have taken place between Ibn al-Samḥ and his master al-Majrīṭī is not otherwise recorded in ancient literature, but an echo of Ibn al-Samḥ's separation from his teacher is still perceptible in the *Takmila li-Kitāb al-Ṣila* by Ibn al-'Abbār (d. 658/1260), where the following statement about the disciple appears:

Aṣḥagh b. Muḥamad b. Aṣḥagh Ibn al-Samḥ al-Mahrī from Cordoba, surnamed Abū l-Qāsim. He was famed for his mastery of mathematics and geometry and for his experience in medicine and astronomy. He studied under Maslama b. Aḥmad al-Marḥīṭī [sic], and he was one of his greater disciples. Having adopted the doctrine of Abū Muḥammad al-Sūsī, he followed his trail and left his homeland of Cordoba during the *fitna* to establish himself in Granada under the protection of Ḥabbūs b. Māksan al-Ṣanhājī, the son of Bādīs.¹¹⁸

The author's informant in this case is a certain "Ibn Bishrūn". It cannot be determined who he is, but he could hardly be the same as the above-mentioned "Abū Bakr Ibn Bishrūn", since the latter must have died well before the separation between al-Majrīṭī and his disciple

¹¹⁸ Ibn al-Abbār, *Takmila*, pp. 246-247, § 549. For Abū Muḥammad al-Sūsī, see Kadouri, "al-Susī,". Ibn al-Samḥ's stay in Granada under Ḥabbūs's patronage is also mentioned in the *Ṭabaqāt* (Ṣā'id al-Andalusī, *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-umam*, p. 70), but Ṣā'id does not specify the reason why Ibn al-Samḥ left Cordoba for Granada.

Ibn al-Samḥ.¹¹⁹ Whoever “Ibn Bishrūn the informant” may have been, it is interesting to observe that our biographer considers him a much more reliable source than “Ibn al-Samḥ”, at least with respect to the question of al-Majrīṭī’s tribe. To the best of our knowledge, this controversy regarding Majrīṭī’s origin does not appear in any of the extant medieval sources.

In his enumeration of Maslama’s books, the author of the note first writes of “various famous books” in the religious sciences; he does not mention these by name, but we might perhaps hypothesise that he is alluding to Maslama’s recognised authority in the field of inheritance legislation. Al-Majrīṭī specialised in the laws of descent and distribution, technically known as *‘ilm al-farā’id*, and he owed to this specialisation his *nisba* of “al-Faraḍī.”¹²⁰

The copyist notes Maslama’s production in the “mathematical sciences” (*fī l-riyāḍiyyāt*) – a common designation in Arabic literature for rational thinking. First and foremost, he explicitly expresses his belief that Maslama al-Majrīṭī was not only the author of the *Rutba* and the *Ghāya* but also of the *Rasā’il*. This confirms our view that the attribution of the three works to a single scholar was the rule rather than the exception among Western Arab authors of the Middle Ages. The three works are listed in the correct chronological order of their redaction, and we may reasonably suppose that this is due to internal evidence: the *Ghāya* refers to the *Rutba*, and the *Rutba* refers to the *Rasā’il*. The formulation of the note also suggests that the chronological sequence of the works was understood as reflecting the progression of the “Sage” as he scales the philosophical ladder. In the *Rutba*, the *Rasā’il* are considered the best compendium of philosophy and the ideal prerequisite to alchemy. In turn, alchemy is an absolute prerequisite to magic, which is the ultimate goal of the sage, as affirmed in the *Ghāya*.

¹¹⁹ The identification between “Abū Bakr Ibn Bishrūn” and “Ibn Bishrūn” has been suggested by Rosenthal, who, having been able to consult the manuscript under discussion here, brought the note of its title page in line with Ibn Khaldūn’s report about the letter from “Abū Bakr Ibn Bishrūn” to “Ibn al-Samḥ”. See Rosenthal in Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 3, p. 230, n. 969.

¹²⁰ Rius, “al-Maḡrīṭī, Maslama”, also notes (here p. 535): “Maestro de Maslama al-Maḡrīṭī fue Abū Ayyūb ‘Abd al-Gāfir b. Muḥammad al-Faraḍī, jurista (discípulo de Aḥmad b. Jālid y de su escuela) especializado en *farā’id* (reparto de herencias) y de quien aprendería, precisamente, la ciencia de los repartos sucesorios.”

After this trilogy of works, a book called *al-Ta'rīkh al-'ajīb* ("the wonderful history") is mentioned, immediately followed by *Ta'rīkh falāsifat al-'arab* ("The History of Arab Philosophers"). The assertion that Maslama wrote a "History of Arab Philosophers" unquestionably comes from the *Ghāya* and the *Rutba* themselves. In the second *maqāla* of the *Ghāya*, one of Maslama's books entitled "The History of Arab Philosophers" (*Ta'rīkh falāsifat al-'arab*) is mentioned. Al-Qurtūbī's purpose here is to point out that he had mentioned in that earlier book a treatise on the fabrication of talismans by Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakarīyā' al-Rāzī.¹²¹ In the prologue of the *Rutba*, in response to a virulent diatribe against the pseudo-philosophers and the pseudo-scientists of the author's time, one finds mentioned a work entitled "The Book of the Categories of Arab Philosophers" (*Kitāb Ṭabaqāt falāsifat al-'arab*), which is most probably this treatise.¹²² A book with another variant of this title is also referred to in the last *maqāla* of the *Rutba*. This mention in a passage about Jābir b. Ḥayyān reads: "I provide a report about him [= Jābir], his lineage and the titles of his books in my book known as the 'History of Arab Philosophers and of Those to Whom Wisdom is Ascribed'."¹²³

The same book is then simply referred to as *Ta'rīkh* a few pages further down in a passage where al-Qurtūbī discusses once again Jābir and his works. The passage states: "The mentioned man has written many writings of this kind. They are more numerous than the writings on the (alchemical) work. Among them are the Book of Demonstrative Rarities, [the Book of] Mercy, [the Book of] the Treasured Science, [the Book of] Elements. And we have mentioned the titles of all his books in 'The History'."¹²⁴

¹²¹ Pseudo-Majrīṭī [in reality Maslama ibn Qāsim al-Qurtūbī], *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, p. 144, ll. 12-13. Curiously, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī is there presented as "the philosopher of the Arabs", an appellation traditionally used in Arabic literature for al-Kindī; see n. 126.

¹²² See MS Beşir Ağa 505, fol. 2v, l. 4, MS Ragıp Paşa 965, fol. 49r, l. 11.

¹²³ MS Beşir Ağa 505, fol. 48v, l. 3-4, MS Ragıp Paşa 965, fol. 116r, ll. 13-14: *وانا اذكر خبره ونسبه وتسمية كتبه في كتابي المعروف بتاريخ فلاسفة العرب ومنتحلي الحكمة.*

¹²⁴ MS Beşir Ağa 505, fol. 51r, l. 15-18, MS Ragıp Paşa 965, fol. 120r, l. 8-10: *ولهذا الرجل المذكور من هذه التواليف تواليف (سقط من ب) كثيرة هي اكثر من التواليف العملية منها كتاب النوادر البرهانية والرحمة والعلم المخزون والاركان وكتبه كلها قد ذكرنا تسميتها في التاريخ.*

The same could be said of yet another reference made by al-Qurṭubī in the same part of the work relating to the history of alchemy: “In the aforementioned book, which I have entitled ‘The History,’ we have already mentioned these people, their situations, their names, their countries and how they received wisdom one after the other.”¹²⁵ For the sake of completeness, it may be added that the same tendency to refer to an unspecified *Ta’rīkh* is also observable in *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*. In the third *maqāla*, for instance, al-Qurṭubī mentions his earlier *Kitāb al-Ta’rīkh* while discussing astrological prognostications and refers to the philosopher al-Kindī and his treatise *Fī Mulk al-‘arab wa-kammīyatihi* (“On the Rule of the Arabs and its Duration”).¹²⁶ It thus seems natural to assume that this “Book of History” is the same work as “The History of Arab Philosophers”. Ritter and Plessner arrive at same conclusion in a note to their translation of that passage.¹²⁷ It is unfortunate that this historical work by al-Qurṭubī is no longer extant.¹²⁸

But how are we to interpret the mention of *al-Ta’rīkh al-‘ajīb* (“the wonderful history”) which immediately precedes this reference in the biographical note of our manuscript? No book by this name has so far

¹²⁵ MS Beşir Ağa 505, fol. 48v, l. 10-11, MS Ragıp Paşa 965, fols. 116r, l. 2 ab imo-116v, l. 2: وقد ذكرنا هؤلاء القوم واحوالهم واخبارهم واسماؤهم (ر : وانسابهم) وبلادهم وكيف اخذوا الحكمة واحد بعد واحد في الكتاب الذي سميته التاريخ المتقدم.

¹²⁶ See Pseudo-Majrīṭī [in reality Maslama ibn Qāsim al-Qurṭubī], *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, p. 175, ll. 15-16: كتابي وهو المسمى بفيلسوف العرب لبراعته وقد ذكرت مكانته من العلوم في كتابي. Note that in this extract, the “*ḥaylasūf al-‘arab*” is al-Kindī (and not Rāzī as above). Al-Kindī’s text is edited in Burnett and Yamamoto, “Appendix III (*Fī mulk al-‘arab wa-kammīyati-hi*)”.

¹²⁷ Ritter and Plessner in: Pseudo-Majrīṭī, *Picatrix*, p. 184, n. 2: “Gemeint ist offenbar das vom Verfasser schon oben S. 151 erwähnte Werk über die Geschichte der arabischen Philosophen.”

¹²⁸ In her recent contribution for the *Biblioteca de al-Andalus* (Rius, “Ibn al-Qāsim”), Mónica Rius lists five works by Maslama other than the *Rutba* and the *Ghāya*; namely: 1) *al-Ḥilya* (“The Ornament”); 2) *Kitāb fī-l-Khaṭṭ fī l-turāb* (“The Book of the Scriptures on the Earth”), apparently concerned with the casting of lots (*ḍarb al-qur’a*); 3) *Kitāb al-Nisā* (“The Book of Women”); 4) *Mā Rawā al-kibār ‘an al-ṣiḡhār* (“What the Great People Transmit from the Small Ones”); 5) *al-Ṣila li-l-ta’rīkh al-kabīr li-l-Bukhārī* (“Continuation to the Great History by al-Bukhārī”). None of them is extant and all are known through indications made by later writers, such as Ibn Khayr (d. 575/1179) or Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449), (see also Fierro, “Bāṭinism”, p. 89). As can be seen, most of these writings must have been primarily concerned with ḥadīth or other forms of religious thinking. It seems to us that the “History of Arab Philosophers” could have been mentioned with equal justification.

been associated either with Maslama al-Majrīṭī or Maslama al-Qurṭubī.¹²⁹ In the absence of any other plausible explanation we are tempted to attribute this latter mention to some confusion in the biographer's mind. "The wonderful history" and "The History of Arab Philosophers" are possibly one and the same book, which for some unknown reason was given here two distinct denominations. This could account for the strange formulation of that part of the note, with no particle of conjunction between the two *ta'riḫs*, and possibly also the fact that the second *ta'riḫ* has been written here in a curiously upward and off-the-line position with respect to the rest of the text.

The last work ascribed to Maslama by the copyist is a short epistle (*risāla ṣaghīra*) on "derivation" (*istinbāṭ*) in which he is claimed to have exposed the secret of the alchemical art (*sirr al-ṣan'a*) and the process by which bodies are derived from one another. Although *istinbāṭ* is a term susceptible of various interpretations,¹³⁰ the present context makes it likely that it is used here in the specific context of alchemy. Apart from *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*, the only alchemical work ascribed to "Maslama al-Majrīṭī" is *Rawḍat al-ḥadā'iq wa-riyāḍ al-khalā'iq*, which Ziriklī regards as a "short epistle" (*risāla ṣaghīra*).¹³¹ The attribution of the *Rawḍa* to "Pseudo-Majrīṭī" is not just a modern speculation as it was also made by Ḥājī Khalīfa in the 11th/17th century. His statement in the *Kashf al-ẓunūn* is worth citing here as it provides further evidence for the attribution of *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* to "al-Majrīṭī": "*Rawḍat al-ḥadā'iq wa-riyāḍ al-khalā'iq*, by the sage Maslama ibn al-Waḍḍāḥ al-Qurṭubī al-Majrīṭī, who is the author of the book of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'".¹³² In the third *maqāla* of the *Rutba* we

¹²⁹ Having discovered in a Cairo manuscript of the *Rutba* some of the passages discussed above about the *Ta'riḫ*, Paul Kraus wondered whether this could not have been a reference to a previous work by "Pseudo-Majrīṭī" on the history of alchemy, but this appears to be a conjecture on his part (Kraus, *Jābir*, vol. 1, p. 135, n. 9). Even if we were to accept Kraus's conjecture, this would hardly allow us to identify that other "History" by al-Qurṭubī with the "wonderful history" found here.

¹³⁰ See, for instance, Sviri, "Understanding". We are grateful to Sarah Stroumsa for providing us with an English summary of this article.

¹³¹ Ziriklī, *Al-A'lām*, vol. 7, p. 224 (s. v. Abū l-Qāsim al-Majrīṭī).

¹³² Ḥājī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn*, vol. 5, p. 500, n° 6643. See also Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften*, p. 107, n. 2 (with reference to MS Chester Beatty 3231, see n. 10) and pp. 122-123. See also Brockelmann, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, p. 432. Sezgin, *Geschichte*, p. 298, n° 3, mentions a *Rawḍa fī ṣ-ṣan'a al-ilāhīya al-karīma al-makhtūma*, which is found in MS Beşir Ağa 505, fols. 60r-85v, and which includes several treatises

find an indication that its author has previously written an “epistle” (*risāla*) entirely devoted to symbols (*rumūz*) and the way they are used in the sciences. The context of the passage suggests that al-Qurṭubī’s objective in writing that epistle had been to explain that every science is necessarily symbolic (*marmūza*), but that alchemy has usually been considered the “symbolic science” (*al-‘ilm al-marmūz*) par excellence as a result of the people’s prejudice and disregard for it (*taḥāmulan ‘alayhi wa-dhamman lahu*).¹³³ Could that epistle be the one alluded to by the copyist of the manuscript? And could it eventually be identified with the *Rawḍa*? Given the present state of knowledge, and pending a close examination of the manuscripts of the *Rawḍa*, it is probably better not to press the case too hard.

The note ends with a polemic against Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. As must have been the case for various champions of Islamic orthodoxy in the Middle Ages, al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) adopted a resolutely hypocritical position towards the Brethren of Purity. Thoroughly dismissing the *Rasā’il* as a weak and shallow work by followers of Pythagoras in his *Munqidh min al-dalāl* (“Deliverance from Error”),¹³⁴ he appears to have been directly inspired by the Ikhwān for certain views expressed in his own writings, albeit without acknowledgment. In the introduction to her translation of the *Risālat al-Ladunīya*, a work in which al-Ghazālī presents a largely Neo-Platonist-inspired system to classify knowledge, Margaret Smith emphasises how indebted to the

and adds that this text could be the same as the *Rawḍat al-ḥadā’iq*. We did not have access to this part of the Beşir Ağa manuscript. It may also be interesting to note that an “epistle” (*risāla*) has also been ascribed to “Maslama b. Waḍāh b. Aḥmad al-Majrīṭī” by Paul Kraus on the basis of an alchemical manuscript kept in the Khanjī Collection; see Kraus, *Jābir*, vol. 1, pp. 181-182.

¹³³ MS Beşir Ağa 505, fol. 26v, ll. 12-18, MS Ragıp Paşa 965, fol. 88v, ll. 9 ab imo-3 ab imo : (ر : فوجب ضرورة ان يكون كل علم من (ب : يكون كل علم من ؛ ر : جميع) العلوم مرموزاً (ر : مرموزة) واذا قد افردنا في هذا رسالة تامة (سقط من ب) موعبة على الكلام في كيف رمزت جميع العلوم وما معنى الرمز وما معنى الفك فلنذكر الان في هذا الباب رموز العلم الذي سموه (ر : سماه) الناس رمزا كله في سائر العلوم تحاملا (ب : خاملا) عليه وذما له ولا بد مع ذلك ان نذكر هاهنا طرفا من رموز غيره (ب : بعين) من العلوم لما في ذلك من الفائدة اذا الكلام والرموز تدل بعضها على بعض ثم نعود الى ذكر العلم المرموز الذي القت (ر : ثبت) الناس (ر : للناس) عليه هذا الاسم ضرورة ونأتي بجميع ما لا غنى (ر : غنا) عنه لاحد في كتابنا هذا (زاد ر : ان شا الله).

¹³⁴ al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-dalāl*, p. 33 (Arabic text). See also Poonawala, “Why We Need”, p. 35.

Rasā'il the author was “for both terminology and conceptions” when he wrote his own *Risāla*.¹³⁵ Later on she adds:

Although Ghazālī refers with great contempt to the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* and its teaching as being ‘flimsy’ and ‘shallow’, yet he seems to have made considerable use of it, for ideas and actual phrases included there are found not only in this *Risāla*, but elsewhere in his writings [...]. The *Rasā'il* includes also a section on Revelation (وحي) and Inspiration (الهام) with which Ghazālī deals so fully in this treatise [...], and it shows how souls can be fitted to receive revealed knowledge, only by purification [...].¹³⁶

Ghazālī's unacknowledged debt to the Ikhwānīan corpus is evidenced by medieval statements as well. Ibn Taymīya (d. 728/1328) – whose ambivalent attitude towards the Brethren has also been demonstrated in recent times¹³⁷ – once mentioned that al-Ghazālī “was addicted (*'ukūf 'alā*) to reading *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*” and that “al-Ghazālī relied on Ibn Sīnā and the authors of *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* for philosophy.” He took this assertion from 'Abd Allāh al-Māzarī (d. 1141), a 6th/12th century Mālikī scholar of Sicilian descent known as *al-imām* and the author of a critical treatise about *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*.¹³⁸ We would be well advised not to give too much weight to these statements, coming as they do from works which are polemical in nature, yet they should not be completely dismissed either; the example of *Risālat al-Ladunīya* invites us to at least consider whether there may have been some active influence.

It is impossible to determine where the copyist of MS Ragıp Paşa 963 found the sources for his statement on al-Ghazālī, but his strident tone suggests that he used one of the refutations which circulated so

¹³⁵ Smith, “Al-Risālat”, p. 179.

¹³⁶ Smith, “Al-Risālat”, p. 185. On Ghazālī's classification of science by comparison with other famous systems, see al-Rabe, *Muslim Philosophers' Classifications*. For the Ikhwān's system and an overview of its impact on later Muslim thinkers, see de Callataï, “The Classification”.

¹³⁷ Michot, “Misled”.

¹³⁸ Ibn Taymīya, *Sharḥ al-'aqīda al-Iṣfahānīya*, p. 186. See also Michot, “Misled”, p. 176. For Ibn Taymīya's quotation, with some variants, of Ghazālī's famous statement about the Ikhwān in the *Munqidh*, see p. 149 of the same study. Through a meticulous survey of Ibn Taymīya's extensive reference to the Ikhwān, Michot provides much valuable information on the popularity that the Ikhwān must have acquired during the Middle Ages. In addition to Ghazālī, the thinkers most often dealt with by the Ḥanbalite theologian in relation with the *Rasā'il* are Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Ṭufayl, Ibn Sab'īn and Ibn 'Arabī.

widely in the Islamic Middle Ages.¹³⁹ This final remark about the notoriety of “Maslama’s *Rasā’il*” in the Maghrib suggests that its author was a Middle-Eastern scholar. As for the *Epistles* “which are in the people’s hands”, there is no doubt that they refer to those which formed the genuine corpus of *Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’*, which by then must have circulated widely all over the Dār al-Islām.

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¹³⁹ It is interesting to observe that, in addition to the text of the *Rutba* (fols. 90r-115v), MS Ragip Paşa 963 also includes, according to Ullmann and Plessner (Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimplwissenschaften*, p. 227, and Plessner, “Beiträge”, p. 548), one of the rare alchemical treatises attributed to al-Ghazālī, namely the *Maqālat al-fawz* (item 3 of the manuscript, fols. 39v-42r).

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