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- 1 The first reference to Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥajarī in any European work appears in Barthélemy d’Herbelot’s *Bibliothèque Orientale*, which was published in Paris in 1697. In a single entry for ‘Ahmed Ben Cassem Al-Andalousi’, d’Herbelot managed to compile in less than two hundred words all that was known to him about al-Ḥajarī, mostly derived from information contained in a single manuscript in the royal library in Paris. Already in the 1690s, it would seem that any memory of the Morisco translator, scholar and envoy that had travelled to France only eighty years earlier on a mission on behalf of the Moroccan ruler Mulay Zidan had disappeared among scholars in Paris. This is very strange indeed. It has taken some three hundred years, and the dedicated work of a vast circle of modern scholars stretching from North Africa to western Europe, to finally resurrect al-Ḥajarī and rescue him from the obscurity he had fallen into among early modern orientalisks. The book under review here represents one of the most recent and finest contributions to the study of the life and writings of al-Ḥajarī, a

testament to the editors' efforts over several decades to understand al-Ḥajarī and the world he left behind.

- 2 In 1997, P.S. Van Koningsveld, Q. Al-Samarrai, and G.A. Wieggers published a study, critical edition and annotated translation of the *Kitāb nāṣir al-dīn 'alā 'l-qawm al-kāfirīn*, which contained an account of al-Ḥajarī's voyage to Europe in the opening decades of the seventeenth century. Al-Ḥajarī had been sent by Mulay Zidan in 1610 to attend to the needs of a group of moriscos who had been dispossessed by French corsairs. Later, in 1613, he also travelled to the Dutch Republic, where he played a role in exploring Dutch overtures for an alliance with Morocco against Spain. The original 1997 study by Koningsveld *et al.* was based on a version of al-Ḥajarī's account of these voyages as preserved in a 1641 manuscript in the Dar al-Kutub. Since then, the field has experienced several important changes, not least the discovery of an earlier version of the work in a manuscript held at Al-Azhar not to mention the publication of several other studies of al-Ḥajarī's correspondence and translations as well as other contemporary documents related to him. The editors of this book have drawn on these recent developments to produce an extremely comprehensive—dare I say, definitive—study of al-Ḥajarī's life, travels and one of his most important works.
- 3 The book opens with a lengthy 'General Introduction', which offers readers a detailed summary of all that is now known about al-Ḥajarī's life and the extant sources about him. The manuscript history of the *Kitāb nāṣir al-dīn* is a somewhat complicated tale. As the editors describe it, upon the request of an Egyptian scholar and friend, al-Ḥajarī began writing an account of his travels to Europe in 1637. No account of this *riḥla* exists today. But fortunately, at his friend's behest, al-Ḥajarī also compiled a shorter extract of the work that focused mainly on the exchanges he had with Christians in Europe: this was the *Kitāb nāṣir al-dīn 'alā 'l-qawm al-kāfirīn*. At least four versions of the work exist today ranging from an early autograph Arabic manuscript preserved at the Al-Azhar ('the primitive version' as the editors call it) to a set of Spanish paraphrases of the work included in a manuscript in Bologna. Remarkably, the editors have brought at least three of these manuscripts together making them available to readers in a single work, viz.: (1) the 1641 manuscript that forms the basis for the critical edition, (2) a facsimile of the Al-Azhar manuscript, which appears to date to a period before 1641, and (3) an edition and translation of the Spanish paraphrases of the *Kitāb nāṣir al-dīn* as found in the Bologna manuscript. The editors spend quite a bit of time trying to persuade readers that the 1641 version presented in the 1997 edition of their book remains, in their words, the 'most final version of the Arabic text'. This is certainly a persuasive argument, one that rightly takes into account the fact that al-Ḥajarī continued to revise and make changes to the work for several years.
- 4 Even so, any manuscript is only as revealing as the questions that are being asked of it. At times and especially on p. 74, one has the slight sense that in insisting on the superiority of the 1641 manuscript, the editors are missing the forest for the trees when it comes to making explicit what is perhaps one of the most important contributions of their work. It is rare for scholars to have such an in-depth perspective into the various stages in the life-cycle of any given literary work. And yet, in their attention to divergences between the various manuscripts, the editors have made it possible to study the nuances and changes introduced into the *Kitāb nāṣir al-dīn* by al-Ḥajarī. Moreover, through the marginal notes and revisions of the manuscripts, it becomes possible also to appreciate how the contributions of others—not least the

Azharite scholar who requested al-Ḥajarī to write the work in the first place—had an influence on the development of al-Ḥajarī's work over time. Taken together, both manuscripts offer evidence of the collaborative processes that lurk beneath literary production in late seventeenth-century Egypt. In bringing these versions of the work together in a single book, the editors have made it possible to engage with a wider set of questions about modes of communication, publication and circulation in this period. This important point goes unnoticed in their single-minded focus on 'primitive' and 'final' versions of the text, and one can only hope that this is a question that they (or others?) will turn their attention to in future research. One thinks, for example, of scholars like Islam Dayeh who have been setting an agenda for a new approach to the history of Arabic philology: beyond al-Ḥajarī's particular experiences, this book has a lot to say about the tools and practices of scholars in the Ottoman Empire in this period. The editors are to be commended, therefore, for bringing these manuscripts together as is the publisher for enabling the editors to combine several manuscripts together in this purposeful way.

- 5 None of this is meant to detract from what is clearly a remarkable piece of scholarship, but rather to show how useful this book is for scholars working across a range of questions in European and Islamic history. One case in point: in recent years, al-Ḥajarī has achieved some minor celebrity among scholars of early modern Europe, not least because of his exchanges with several important orientalist of the time such as Thomas Erpenius and Étienne Hubert d'Orléans. In this context, the work provides a poignant window into the impact such exchanges had on al-Ḥajarī as well as the purpose to which they were put towards for his own audience of readers. More generally, the work remains an important source for a range of themes in early modern history: exchanges between Christianity and Islam, to be sure, but also for studies of everyday religion in the early modern world, the mechanics of confessional identity, and perhaps, most importantly, as a window into the experiences of a man who was responsible for attending to the needs and challenges faced by a diaspora in the making, that is, the moriscos. What is most striking in his writings, however, is the acute emotional and personal perspective of al-Ḥajarī's experiences in Europe. A morisco who had lived through the violent, forced expulsions from Spain in 1609, al-Ḥajarī had first-hand experience of the interplay between religion and violence. For this reason there was much that would have been familiar to him about the confessional conflict of the Reformation that he encountered in Europe. The editors are right to suggest that we should see his account, in a sense, as the expression of a sort of spiritual struggle. But it also seems, to this reviewer at least, that the *Kitāb nāṣir al-dīn* is as much a story of a 'supporter of religion against the infidels' as that of a man struggling towards religious conviction in an age where religion itself appears to have turned his world upside down.

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