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Kimberly Katz

URBAN IDENTITY IN COLONIAL TUNISIA: THE *MAQĀMĀT* OF SALIH SUWAYSI AL-QAYRAWANI

Abstract
This article presents a microhistory of an early 20th-century Tunisian intellectual, Salih Suwaysi, within the context of cross-regional (Maghrib–Mashriq) literary and intellectual trends. Analyzing Suwaysi's use of the conventional literary genre of *maqāmāt* illustrates his deep understanding of the problems caused by France's occupation of Tunisia and highlights the significance of historical and contemporary urban space for the author. Revitalized during the *nahḍa* period, *maqāmāt* were employed by writers to address issues and problems facing contemporary society, in contrast to some of the earlier *maqāmāt* that focused on language and language structure more than on narrative content. Suwaysi followed his eastern Mediterranean, especially Egyptian, contemporaries in turning to this genre to convey his critical commentaries on social, religious, and political life under the French Protectorate in Tunisia.

The *maqāmāt* of Tunisian writer Salih Suwaysi al-Qayrawani (1871–1941; hereafter, Suwaysi) explore tensions between modernity and tradition by articulating both the resonances and discontinuities among urban, religious, protonational, and anticolonial identities under the French Protectorate in Tunisia (1881–1956).[1] They idealize Suwaysi's hometown of Qayrawan as a glorious Arab-Islamic city that during his lifetime had been disturbed by French colonialism and new forms of state power. Even before the 1881 imposition of the French Protectorate, the Husaynid Dynasty (1705–1956) had instituted far-reaching administrative, legal, and military reforms. That process began within the framework of complex relations between Tunisia and an expanding European presence in the Mediterranean. While Suwaysi implicitly criticized the Husaynids and Tunisian elites for their complicity in the disruptions wrought by modernity, he also regarded them as the country's rightful rulers.

Literally defined as assemblies or sessions, the term *maqāmāt* (sing. *maqāma*) also describes a literary genre constructed in "elaborate rhymed and rhythmic prose" in which the author pens "brief episodic or anecdotal texts" that usually trace the encounters and experiences of a narrator on a journey.[2] Revived in the 19th century, the genre of *maqāmāt* was employed by some authors, including Salih Suwaysi and the well-known Egyptian writer Muhammad al-Muwaylihi, to critique both modernity

Kimberly Katz is an Associate Professor in the Department of History, Towson University, Towson, Md.; e-mail: kkatz@towson.edu

and imperialism.[3] *Maqāmāt*, according to al-Muwaylihi, represent "fact in the garb of fiction."[4] For al-Muwaylihi, such writing allowed colonized subjects to give voice to critiques of European rule in ways that were more difficult in nonfictional genres because of British (or French) censorship. The writings that emerged from this revitalized literary genre may be regarded as nontraditional sources by historians, who do not frequently rely on fiction to write history. Typically the domain of literature specialists, studying *maqāmāt* serves a different purpose in this article: they are mined for contextual details related to Suwaysi's life and experiences in Tunisia's cities and its desert under French colonial rule.[5] In these writings, the trope of the desert and its romantic purity contrasts sharply with the corruption of the city, in ways that parallel the portrayal of Islam as the corrective to everything that has gone wrong. Analyzing Suwaysi's *maqāmāt*, an atypical source for historical research, requires contextualization through textual analysis as well as a historical understanding of the genre and its cross-regional usage in the modern period.

Suwaysi's *maqāmāt* can augment historians' understanding of how he, and likely other Tunisians, experienced and interpreted foreign rule and of how people related to each other in the changing environment of his time. Frequent references to "enemies" appear in the episodic journeys of the protagonists through five Tunisian cities and the desert, though the texts never explicitly mention the French. The vagueness of such references would presumably have helped the six *maqāmāt* evaluated in this article to avoid the axe of the censor or other trouble with the French authorities, but in fact only one of them was published in his lifetime (and during the whole colonial period): the desert *maqāma*, which appeared in 1905.

Recurrent themes such as reliance on God, remembrance of *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* or *al-salafiyya* (the pious ancestors), the desire for freedom, and opposition to injustice and tyranny link Salih Suwaysi to Islamic modernists or reformers of the *nahḍa* period, especially his Tunisian mentor Shaykh Muhammad al-Nakhli. The Egyptian reformer Muhammad ʿAbduh and his influential mentor Jamal al-Din al-Afghani were also significant intellectual forces in Suwaysi's life; much of his writings reflect ʿAbduh's conception of a "'middle' path of Islam: the path that conciliates the basic tenets of Islamic faith and jurisprudence with the fundamental principles of modernity—reason, science, and civilizational progress."[6] A similar reconciliation can be found in Suwaysi's critiques of war ships and, to a lesser extent, commercial ships and his acceptance of modern forms of transportation, such as trains and automobiles, in Tunisia.

Throughout the *maqāmāt*, Suwaysi's characters insist on the purity and authenticity of Islam as establishing the correct way to live one's life and as the means through which justice could prevail in an unjust world dominated by Europe. The characters' insistence on religion as the foundation for a good life emerges in response to their travels and experiences in the (primarily) urban areas they visit. Their (and Suwaysi's) patriotism is expressed though terms such as *balad* and especially *waṭan*, which are used almost interchangeably to mean city. At times the texts are sharply critical of Tunisians' adaptation to foreign rule and the consequent neglect of Islam as the basis of social order and political rule among the people, whom the author variously calls *qawm*, *ahl*, *ins*, and *nās* (kinsfolk/nation, native population, mankind, and people, respectively, the last two sharing the same root in Arabic), among other words. The variety of terms used to refer to people and places (different cities and the desert) reflects both the literary conventions

of the *maqāmāt* genre—which draws on the richness of the Arabic language—and the realities of colonial Tunisia, where the relationships between people and places were in great flux.

In addition to demonstrating the significance of Suwaysi's *maqāmāt* for understanding Tunisia's colonial past, this article contextualizes his life and writings within the intellectual orbit of his contemporaries in the eastern Mediterranean.[7] The onset of French colonial rule in Algeria (1830) and Tunisia (1881) and of British rule in Egypt (1882) created the political canvas upon which many 19th-century Arab writers wrote, albeit with tonal and experiential differences. Suwaysi's writings reflect his engagement with the literary and discursive trends of the *nahḍa* (literary revival) of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. *Nahḍa* writers, according to Elizabeth Kassab's classification, focused on five primary issues: the rise and fall of civilizations; political justice; science; religion; and gender. A spectrum of writings—from diaries, such as those by the Egyptian al-Tahtawi, to political treatises such as by the Tunisian Khayr al-Din al-Tunsi, to texts exploring the compatibility of religion and science (e.g., by al-Afghani and ʿAbduh)— emerged in the second half of the 19th century to address these five areas of thought that challenged Muslims during the rise of European colonialism.

Nahḍa littérateurs honed their craft through both familiar and new literary genres. Among the former were poetry and *maqāmāt*; the latter included novels and short stories adapted from European literature. The *maqāma* form was familiar to Muslims and Arabs and was put to use by *nahḍa* authors to express their social and political critiques and to demonstrate their facility with a genre similar to the European short story. Some authors followed conventional patterns in writing *maqāmāt*, while others experimented with form; both were revitalizing a genre that dates back to the 10th century with the writings of Badiʿ al-Zaman al-Hamadhani. Salih Suwaysi's *maqāmāt* place the author firmly within the *nahḍa* movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and demonstrate his deep concern with the role of Islam in a colonized society.

SALIH SUWAYSI'S BACKGROUND

The edition of Suwaysi's *maqāmāt* published in 1978 (in a collection that also contained the first publication of his novel in book form) includes a narrative sketch ("Tarjamat al-Muʾallif bi-Qalamihi") he wrote of his life (including his limited formal education), which helps elucidate the autobiographical nature of the *maqāmāt*.[8] He was born in Qayrawan in 1871 and lived in the city for five years before his father moved the family to Tunis, where the young Salih completed his reading of the Qurʾan in a *kuttāb* (Muslim primary school). He lived in the capital from 1876 to 1886, at which time he returned with his sick mother to Qayrawan; his father returned and died within that year. Though intellectually gifted, Suwaysi did not pursue advanced studies at either of the prominent institutions of higher learning in the capital city. The Zaytuna mosque–university, which was founded in the early centuries of Islam, historically offered studies in the Islamic sciences and added secular disciplines under the modernizing reforms of the precolonial 19th century. The Sadiqi College, established in 1875, taught Islamic topics along with mathematics, science, and modern languages, inspired by French curricula. Despite not having attended either of these institutions, Suwaysi identified himself, as would

his students and later scholars, as a Muslim intellectual and an Islamic reformer who schooled himself in the writings of leading thinkers from the east, especially Egypt.

After his father died, Suwaysi sought an intellectual mentor, which he found in the person of Shaykh Muhammad al-Nakhli, a recognized member of the Tunis-based 'ulama' and mentor to other important Islamic reformers of the period.[9] Like Suwaysi, al-Nakhli had begun his education at a Qayrawan *kuttāb*, but unlike his future student he then went to Tunis to continue his higher education in religious studies, which he completed in 1889, the same year that Suwaysi returned to Qayrawan from the capital city. Al-Nakhli began teaching in 1890 and continued almost until his death in 1924. He was greatly influenced by reformers (*rijāl al-iṣlāḥ*) in the Mashriq and the Maghrib, including Mahmud Qabadu, Khayr al-Din, al-Afghani, and 'Abduh. Their calls for reform and for the "liberation of Islamic thought from tradition [*taqlīd*]" embraced science and the reasonable emulation of the advances made by European nations as means for improving the affairs and lives of Muslims in the modern era.[10] Suwaysi had none of al-Nakhli's educational advantages, but he benefited from the shaykh's teachings when the latter spent time in Qayrawan. Like Suwaysi, al-Nakhli was quite attached to the city, as is evident in his memoir.[11]

Inspired by reformers such as al-Afghani and 'Abduh, who called on Muslim writers to alert their countrymen to the dangers of European encroachment, Suwaysi wrote as a means of resisting French colonialism and promoting Islam while addressing other societal ills, such as the precarious status of orphans. He contributed first to the Tunisian newspaper *al-Zahra*, then other periodicals, before delving into a variety of literary genres: poetry, a *khiṭaṭ*-style guidebook, short stories, *maqāmāt*, and a novel. Indeed, Suwaysi is known as the first novelist in modern Tunisian history. While the *maqāmāt* convey Suwaysi's interpretation of the role of Islam in his society, his novel offers a more sustained exploration of problems related to the "loss of religion."

None of the early Tunisian intellectuals who studied Suwaysi's writings, including his own students, refers to his *maqāmāt*. A work by Ahmad bin 'Abdallah published in 2000 seems to be the first study by a Tunisian scholar to mention the *maqāmāt*, though even it gives them scant treatment. Bin 'Abdallah makes no reference to possible dates of authorship of the *maqāmāt* but notes that both they and the novel were found after Suwaysi's death in 1941 in a notebook belonging to the author. Suwaysi's novel, however, had been serialized in newspapers in the 1910s and again in the 1920s. It explores the issue of Islamic reform through the story of a young boy orphaned by his father whose mother sends him to Cairo to study with a great shaykh, no doubt meant to represent Muhammad 'Abduh. The second serialization of the novel in the 1920s was altered to make al-Nakhli the great shaykh figure of the narrative.[12]

Suwaysi's extensive writing likely led to his political activity, which ultimately caused him difficulties with the French authorities. His mentor experienced similar troubles; Shaykh al-Nakhli was accused of "disgracing the French language, which the government sought to spread" widely and of being an "insurmountable obstacle in the path of the French authorities."[13] A secret (almost certainly French colonial) document, referred to in an annotation in al-Nakhli's memoir, implicates Suwaysi as well. The editor of al-Nakhli's autobiography states that Suwaysi's name appears in the secret file as having "participated in organizing politics in Qayrawan."[14] Suwaysi recounted that in 1895 he was accused of sedition against the government; the charge may have been based

on his reformist ideas, which by then had been published in Tunisian and Egyptian newspapers.[15] He was tried in the Mahkamat al-Kitaba al-ʿAmma (the state court), part of the Tunisian central administration (and firmly under the control of French officials); he defended himself successfully and was released.[16]

Suwaysi's legal troubles resurfaced in 1897 and may have ended up fueling his later political engagement. According to his account, he was slandered by people who "sold their religion for worldly things" (*bāʿū dīnahum bi-dunyāhim*) and charged with conspiracy. On these charges Suwaysi was sentenced to a three-month exile in Tozeur, near Tunisia's southwestern border with Algeria.[17] Suwaysi participated in local politics in Qayrawan, joining the Dustur Party when a branch was established in the city in 1921. By the following year, he was serving as assistant deputy secretary of the branch, and the city's French police chief had named him one of the party's most important leaders.[18] His political participation during the period around 1911, the likely year for the composition of the *maqāmāt*, is less well documented.

The characters in the *maqāmāt* represent Suwaysi's sense of place and his love for his home city and often tackle the question of Islam's role in Tunisian social reform. They do not appear as directly political actors; rather, they face the weight of the political and legal system as it is transformed by the French colonial powers. The *maqāmāt* excel in describing Tunisia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as it underwent reforms in administration, state finances, and the justice system; changes in education and landownership; the introduction of new modes of travel and transportation; and the development of port cities.[19] They also demonstrate the author's romanticized, nostalgic view of Qayrawan and of the authenticity of the desert, however endangered these might be by the onslaught of modernity.[20] Indeed, the historical dignity of these two locations is only highlighted by their disgrace in the present.

The significance of Qayrawan to Suwaysi inspired his 1911 publication of *Dalil Qayrawan* (Guide to Qayrawan). It was not a travel guide for tourists but rather aimed to educate Tunisians about their history, their religion, and the historical figures that illuminate Qayrawan's importance to early Islamic history.[21] Though scholars of Tunisia have largely overlooked Suwaysi's interest in urban space, 21st-century Tunisian policymakers saw fit to capitalize on it by republishing his *Dalil* for the Tunisian tourism industry in 2006.[22]

QAYRAWAN

The city's early history helps explain its significance for Tunisians. Moving swiftly across a large swath of territory, Muslim armies reached North Africa by the mid-7th century and conquered it by the century's end. Qayrawan, meaning camp, served as a garrison town for the Muslim conquerors. Away from the center of Islamic government, Muslims settling across North Africa needed institutions and places of worship. They began to build great monuments in the territories that came under their control. Qayrawan bears the distinction of housing the first mosque built in North Africa.[23] As the town of Qayrawan changed and expanded, so did the mosque. In the city that Suwaysi calls "holy" in his *maqāmāt*, rulers restored and added to the mosque over the centuries, both when Muslims ruled Ifriqiyya (modern-day Tunisia) from Qayrawan and when Tunisian dynasties began ruling from Tunis in the 13th century.[24] Maintaining the mosque was

a continuous concern of Tunisian rulers, including the Zirids in the 11th century, the Hafsids from the 13th to 15th centuries, the Muradids in the 17th century, and the Husaynid beys in the 19th century.

In his *maqāmāt*, Suwaysi's images of Qayrawan emerge forcefully and hark back to the early Islamic period, when the city boasted a thriving intellectual life and witnessed the building of spectacular monuments. The author's protonationalistic territorial sentiments about Qayrawan weave together his longing for an imagined past, when Islam dominated public life and people's behavior, with his disdain for the venality in Tunisian cities during his time. In the *maqāmāt*, Qayrawan is the original Arab-Islamic city as it is imagined to have existed before it was corrupted, "denuded of the clothes of the *salafiyyīn*," as the character Abu al-'Ibar laments in the Tunis *maqāma*.[25] Throughout Suwaysi's *maqāmāt*, the *salafiyyīn* represent Muslims who lived during a period when Islam was pure and uncorrupted.[26] The author's use of this term, and the related *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*, does not necessarily link him to "Salafism" in any of the various ways it is currently understood. Although some writers, including Rashid Rida, used the word *al-salafiyya* to refer to aspects of the 20th-century Islamic reform movement, it does not appear in Suwaysi's writing as connected to a movement.[27] Instead, the pious ancestors are invoked as models for correct behavior. The term is not disconnected from the various trends of Islamic modernism at the time, such as those of 'Abduh, and Suwaysi does recognize an Islamic movement that represents the Islamic values he holds—this he refers to not by the term Salafism but rather by the name of the society al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa (The Indissoluble Bond), which used the same name for its leading journal.[28]

During Suwaysi's lifetime, some of Tunisia's cities were undergoing reconstruction— as new cities were built alongside them to suit French (and other European) settlers— and in some cases destruction, such as occurred to the walls of the *madīna* (old city) of Tunis. Major boulevards sprang up along with municipal halls, theaters, and the administrative offices of the Protectorate. For Suwaysi, as the country's other cities became less authentic, Qayrawan, its past, and the early Muslims who settled there became more so. The characters in his *maqāmāt* speak of Qayrawan's values, which are synonymous with Islamic values and which other Tunisian cities were losing or had lost under the influence of France. The only environment that rivals the authenticity of Qayrawan in Suwaysi's writings is the desert.

SUWAYSI'S LITERARY CONTEXT

The 19th-century *nahda* fostered innovation in writing styles and genres (e.g., the introduction of historical and melodramatic novels) while sustaining literary genres popular in earlier periods. The classical *maqāma*, Devin Stewart explains, continued as "a vital genre in the rapidly changing world of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Arabic literature" and arguably played a role in the development of a variety of modern Arabic literary forms.[29] The spectrum of Suwaysi's writings—which include both traditional Arabic-Islamic genres, such as the *khiṭaṭ* (urban topographical works) and the *maqāma*, and European genres such as the short story and the novel—affirms his participation in a geographically diverse group of *nahda* writers. Most of Suwaysi's *maqāmāt* have received far less treatment than his other works, but his use of the genre connects him both to earlier Arabic-Islamic literary styles and to contemporary eastern

Mediterranean intellectual trends during the challenging period of colonial rule. Still, despite being a prolific writer fluent in many literary genres, with writings reflecting a diverse thematic palette—Islamic reform, urban space, orphans in society, and French colonial rule, among other topics—Suwaysi does not appear as a major figure in modern Tunisian history.

By writing an introduction to an 1889 republication of al-Hamadhani's 10th-century *maqāmāt*, Muhammad ʿAbduh played a role in reminding 19th-century Arabic readers of the significance of the genre.[30] Because Suwaysi is not a prominent figure in Tunisian histories, it is difficult to know whether he met ʿAbduh during the latter's second visit to Tunisia (9–24 September 1903), at which time Suwaysi was thirty-two years old; during ʿAbduh's first visit (6 December 1884–4 January 1885) Suwaysi would have been too young.[31] Suwaysi's close association with Shaykh al-Nakhli—who did meet with ʿAbduh during his second visit[32]—might have led Tunisia's "social reformer" (the appellation Najwa al-Kafi gives to Suwaysi) to meet the well-known Egyptian Islamic reformer.[33] Suwaysi was also likely familiar with ʿAbduh's writings on Islamic reform through al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa, a society that pledged to work for the reform of Islam and unity among Muslim peoples. A branch of al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa existed in Tunisia at the time, and the name of the society appears in Suwaysi's Tozeur *maqāma*. ʿAbduh's second visit to Tunis came shortly after the end of the publication of the society's eponymous reformist journal (*al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa*), which ʿAbduh had published in Paris with al-Afghani.

Matti Moosa notes that there were many writers engaged in the revival of the genre during this period; his own work focuses on those in the eastern Mediterranean, particularly Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon.[34] The earliest *maqāmāt* revival appeared in Syria and was written by an author who died in 1811, while the latest described by Moosa was in Egypt in the early 20th century. He traces two distinct aesthetics within the *maqāmāt* revival: a traditional and an experimental form. Lebanese authors of early 19th-century *maqāmāt* worked to revive the genre within its traditional form but made a notable effort to parody it.[35] These Lebanese writings, Moosa notes, bear a realistic quality of reflecting the lives of their authors, as does Suwaysi's *maqāmāt*.[36] North Africans, including Tunisians, acquired reading material from Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East and thus partook in religious and intellectual literary trends circulating abroad.[37] Suwaysi's choice to write *maqāmāt* places him within the group of Arab writers who turned to a revival of the genre during a period of social and political crisis, as local governments and societies struggled with increasing European influence and then outright rule over their countries.

In Moosa's explanation of these two distinct aesthetic approaches, the traditionalist remained faithful to the splendor of language and to imitating the medieval *maqāmāt* while the experimentalist "made a distinct step . . . in the direction of the Western short story."[38] Suwaysi's work reflects both approaches. Most of his *maqāmāt* resemble those of the experimentalists, in whose writings "the plot and settings are contemporary, reflecting the spirit and sentiment of the communities in which [the author] lived and worked," according to Moosa.[39] The literature penned by such writers illuminates the historical moment—for example, as in Suwaysi's frequent references to modern forms of transportation or to his character's legal troubles, which echo those of the author. Suwaysi clarifies in his autobiographical sketch that he "wrote these *maqāmāt* to represent to the

reader the history of my life and my sufferings and hardships."[40] While most of his *maqāmāt* fit into the experimentalists' category, Suwaysi's inclusion of Islamic themes in the desert *maqāma*—the *salafiyyīn*, poetry, courage, nobility—ties it to the works of *maqāmāt* traditionalists, making it difficult to fit Suwaysi's writings neatly into either category. Suwaysi's desert *maqāma* also reflects stylistic conventions of *maqāmāt* traditionalists, who rely on the imitation of earlier authors' works to depict settings that they may never have visited, such as those in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times.[41] The desert episode appeared three times prior to its publication in the 1978 collection of *maqāmāt*: circa 1905 in the Tunisian newspaper *Sawab*; probably shortly thereafter in the Egyptian *al-Nafiʿ*;[42] and in Suwaysi's 1906 literary collection, *Kitab Manjam al-Tibar fi al-Nathr wa-Shiʿr* (Goldmine of Prose and Poetry).[43] Suwaysi's representation of the pristine nature of the desert had the potential to influence many people due to its publication on four separate occasions over nearly three-quarters of a century. In the 1978 publication, however, the desert episode underwent some revisions, which will be discussed below.

Roger Allen's annotated critical edition and study of Muhammad al-Muwaylihi's *maqāmāt*, in *Hadith ʿIsa ibn Hisham*, traces the historical trajectory of al-Muwaylihi's writings. Allen ties the renewed *maqāmāt* genre to larger literary developments in Egypt during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including the spread of journalism and of satire criticizing the Egyptian government. The *maqāmāt* of al-Muwaylihi, who was born thirteen years before Suwaysi, are considered a direct predecessor of the Arabic novel.[44] In his *Salih Suwaysi al-Qayrawani: Hayatuhu wa-Mukhtarat min Kitabatihi*, Ahmad bin ʿAbdallah raises the question of whether Suwaysi's *maqāmāt* might be an imitation of al-Muwaylihi's. Bin ʿAbdallah does not offer a detailed discussion of the possibility and comes to no final conclusion about the prospect.[45] In any case, al-Muwaylihi's political involvement in Egypt, his journalistic activities, and his literary production suggest similar experiences to those of Suwaysi, and both chose the same literary genre to express comparable situations under British and French colonial rule.

SUWAYSI'S *MAQĀMĀT*

Suwaysi's *maqāmāt* share an autobiographical quality with the *maqāmāt* of other writers, although uncertainty around the dates of authorship makes it hard to place them precisely within his life. In his "Tarjama," Suwaysi says that he "wrote these *maqāmāt* to throw light on the history of the life of the earthly servant" (himself). The author adds that he "drew from his imagination two characters for a conversation, and I named one of them al-Shakir ibn al-Radi and the other Abu al-ʿIbar."[46] That leaves one of the three main characters of the *maqāmāt*—the son of Abu al-ʿIbar—unaccounted for by Suwaysi, tempting readers to speculate that he represents the author himself. I argue for a more complex reading in which the three main characters represent Suwaysi at different ages while also signifying important figures in his life. Using this framework of analysis, it is possible to speculate about the date of composition of most of the *maqāmāt* (besides the desert episode, which preceded the others). Abu al-ʿIbar, a Qayrawani man dejected over the corruption and decline of his city, as was the author, is identified as forty years old in the Tunis *maqāma*. He appears only briefly, engaging with Shakir, but his

memory pervades the text. The complex layers of Abu al-ʿIbar's character, which will be expounded on, make it likely that he initially represents Suwaysi, which helps with the dating of the work, and later represents Suwaysi's father. Knowing that Suwaysi turned forty years old in 1911 raises the prospect that he authored most of the *maqāmāt* in that year.

Momentous events took place in neighboring Libya in 1911, especially the Italian invasion that shocked many in Tunisia. Italy's brutal colonization of the country likely propelled Suwaysi to write literary works from a critical standpoint in order to grapple with his historical reality. As a voracious reader, he certainly knew about what was happening in Libya; as an author, he published his *dalīl* in 1911 as a kind of warning to his fellow Qayrawanis. Thus, we might consider that he wrote other works, including many of the *maqāmāt*, in that year. The local political context also provides clues. The Dustur Party had mobilized to collect money and supplies for the Libyan resistance; by 1920 (and possibly earlier) Suwaysi was politically active, joining the Dustur in Qayrawan, and his path through the legal system confirms that he opposed colonialism. All of these historical details, combined with an analysis of his writings, suggest that the events of Suwaysi's day served his literary contributions.[47] The *maqāmāt* would not be published in a complete collection for almost seven decades after being written (assuming a composition date of 1911), and they may have undergone revision over the years. The timing of their publication suggests that they may have had a more significant influence on Tunisian anticolonial nationalist literature in the postindependence period than they did during Suwaysi's day.

The published *maqāmāt* are titled by the name of the cities and the desert the narrator visits and appear in this narrative sequence: Tunis ("al-Maqama al-Tunisiyya"), Qayrawan ("al-Maqama al-Qayrawaniyya"), the desert ("al-Maqama al-Badawiyya"), Sousse, Tozeur, and Sfax ("al-Maqama al-Susiyya," "al-Maqama al-Tuzuriyya," and "al-Maqama al-Safaqasiyya"). The desert is a polyvalent symbol in Arabic literature; in Suwaysi's case, the praise for the desert's simplicity in the *maqāma* contrasts with the critique of urban space in the other episodes. The desert serves as the locus of early Islam and the *salafiyyīn* and thus is endowed in the *maqāma* with a pristine character and with people who likewise possess a kind of purity less known among city folk.[48] The desert *maqāma* differs from the others not only because of its setting but also because it is the only *maqāma* in which the character Shakir has no encounter with the son of Abu al-ʿIbar. It originally appeared in a Tunisian newspaper in 1905 and was later revised, in both form and content, to suit the full series of *maqāmāt* and to fit within the protagonist's journeys across the country. Each *maqāma* in the 1978 collection ends with a reference to the next destination. The original 1905 desert *maqāma* does not include a successive location. For its inclusion in the 1978 version, it was edited to mention the traveler's next stop as Sousse, a coastal city of stark contrasts to the desert and whose residents Shakir finds most contemptible.[49] Overall, the *maqāmāt* reinforce the view of Qayrawan as an ideal city, far less corrupted by the French than other cities. The tour through the desert and five cities allows the reader to glean the significance of each environment to the author and to discern his strong social critique of Tunisian society as it grappled with changes in administration, education, and the justice system, among other spheres, brought on by the French occupation and becoming more entrenched as the Protectorate took shape.

During their journeys, the three fictional characters in the *maqāmāt* alternately identify the purity of some of the landscapes and cities and the impurity of others. Al-Shakir ibn al-Radi (hereafter Shakir) appears first in the episodes as the traveling narrator. He seems at home in the more traditional or authentic environments—the desert, Qayrawan, and Tozeur, all geographically far from French colonial projects, namely, the building of railroads and a settler economy that focused on agriculture and coastal cities. The second character, Shakir's friend Abu al-ʿIbar, dies early on yet remains a constant influence, as his memory is frequently invoked by the two other characters. The third is the son of Abu al-ʿIbar and is initially unnamed in the *maqāmāt*. He frequently imagines an authentic, traditional Arab-Islamic city, implying Qayrawan, and is incensed by what he experiences in other cities, where strangers are unwelcome, people no longer offer an "Islamic greeting" wishing others a long life, and enemies, envy, and hostility abound.[50] The son of Abu al-ʿIbar does not appear at all in the desert *maqāma*.

The characters' names are instrumental to understanding how Suwaysi saw himself and possibly his relationship with his father and his mentor. Al-Shakir ibn al-Radi is "the grateful one, son of the content one"; both names carry religious connotations that reflect an individual who patiently suffers. Abu al-ʿIbar, "the father of advice," may be connected to a 9th-century historical figure who wrote a parody of hadith scholars in Baghdad; he offers lessons, through Shakir's memory of him, to his son as he matures into a man.[51] The name of Abu al-ʿIbar's son is revealed only in the fifth of six *maqāmāt* as Salih, the one who is upright or virtuous; it is also the name of the author. Shakir (the grateful one) and Salih (the virtuous one) represent the voices in Tunisian society that desire an authentic, indigenous Tunisian way of life, one intimately tied to Islam and its pious ancestors, whose tombs and monuments dot the Qayrawan cityscape and whose culture of purity mirrors the culture of the desert's Bedouin. Abu al-ʿIbar is more difficult to capture as a distinct cultural voice due to his limited speech in the *maqāmāt*; the role he plays is that of a father figure who gives advice and helps others navigate the monumental transformations occurring in Tunisian society during the colonial period. These included the reorganization of central and regional governments; the emergence of separate systems of judicial administration, one for Tunisians and one for Frenchmen and other Europeans; increasing land purchases by foreigners whose privileges were legalized by the Protectorate; and the construction of European cities next to existing cities.

The *maqāmāt* follow the progression of Shakir as he engages with the other two characters, all representing Suwaysi at different periods of his life. The traveler seems to represent the Suwaysi who traveled around Tunisia and wrote to express his thoughts, his feelings, and his discontent. In his "Tarjama," Suwaysi writes that his "only goal [in writing] is to awaken the people of my nation [*banī waṭanī*] in particular, and Muslims in general, to the way of the pious ancestors [*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*] and to the manners and behaviors that originated on the path of reason."[52] He does not explain what other cities (besides Qayrawan) mean to him, but his travels themselves suggest that he had a deep interest in what was happening not only in his birth city but also throughout the country.[53] Occasional references in the autobiographical *maqāmāt* give further clues to Suwaysi's thoughts on the significance of his city and his country. For example, in the "al-Maqama al-Qayrawaniyya," seeking to learn more about his father, the son of Abu al-ʿIbar asks Shakir what the latter knew about him. Shakir responds with a lesson in the

form of a poem: "read the newspaper and learn what is happening in your *balad* [country or city]; maintain a zeal for your *balad* and a love for its past."[54] He adds: "listen to good advice." The poetic verses in the *maqāma* read: "take reason as a guide, and submit to God."[55] God remains at the heart of Suwaysi's consciousness, but his country and his home city also take pride of place in his life, lessons he might have learned from his own father.

In each *maqāma*/city, Shakir interacts with different individuals, but the conversations inevitably focus on his friend Abu al-ʿIbar and then on the latter's young son. Abu al-ʿIbar, an intellectual, bears characteristics of Suwaysi's mentor, Shaykh Muhammad al-Nakhli. He may also represent how the author saw himself within Tunisian intellectual circles: wise and offering advice when it was sought despite his lack of formal education. Finally, Abu al-ʿIbar, who dies early in the *maqāmāt* and leaves an orphaned son, may represent Suwaysi's late father. Information about Suwaysi's father is difficult to discern because Suwaysi mentions him only briefly in his autobiographical sketch. He notes that his father had midlevel wealth and a "great place in the heart of the people of the city" (presumably Qayrawan).[56] The author does not mention what his father did for a living or why he moved the family to Tunis for ten years during Suwaysi's childhood, noting only that a situation came up that required it.[57] In the Tunis *maqāma*, Abu al-ʿIbar states that he left his hometown of Qayrawan years ago because of the deplorable situation that had befallen the religiously and historically significant city. He claims that it had lost its intellectual life, its important men, its honor, and its integrity and notes that the "city with offspring of the righteous was corrupted," a refrain of a poem within the *maqāma* repeated four times in two pages.[58] One of the very few studies addressing colonial Qayrawan is a work by Samir Bakkush; in a more nuanced account than that of Suwaysi, it describes an urban complexity similar to other cities, whether contemporary or historical: rich and poor, elite and subaltern, educated, religious, corrupt, and so on.[59] Abu al-ʿIbar left Qayrawan for Tunis with his wife and son, just as Suwaysi's father did. The fictional twelve-year-old boy, orphaned in the story and whom the traveler first meets in the Qayrawan *maqāma*, echoes the life of the author, orphaned at the age of fifteen.[60]

Struggling with life in the cities of Tunis and Qayrawan, the settings of the first two *maqāmāt,* Shakir heads to the desert, where true culture resides much as it does in the city of Qayrawan. In the desert the Bedouin represent the conveyors of virtuous culture and of the pristine form of Arabic expressed through poetry.[61] Shakir delves into the beauty transmitted through poetry, quoting a line from Ibn al-Hasan: "Beauty appears in two glamorous houses [*baytayn*]: a goat-hair tent [*bayt al-shaʿr*] and a line of poetry [*bayt al-shiʿr*]." During Shakir's desert visit he waxes eloquently on the beauty of the land and its women, contrasting the beautiful vista with the ugliness of civilization.[62] He receives traditional greetings and kindness in the desert and accepts a young Bedouin boy's invitation to his family's goat-hair tent. Shakir speaks of Bedouin honor, courage, and hospitality, noting that, in contrast to the city's inhabitants, the people of the desert are not materialistic or frivolous; they are honorable people.[63]

Shakir's image of the desert is soon crushed by reality. The father of the Bedouin boy confirms for Shakir all of the valiant qualities of the desert and its people—but places them in the past. The father describes the contemporary Bedouin as quite the opposite, having lost their valor, integrity, knowledge, and even religion. The father

both affirms and shatters Shakir's nostalgic view of the desert, which now mimics the corrupted city, referred to as *jahl*, the period of ignorance prior to the rise of Islam.[64] He adds that the idyllic landscape is gone; the purity of the desert, along with the purity of Islam, remains only in the past. People have corrupted the religion, but, he says, "God will have mercy on the community of the Qur'an" (*fa-sa-yurḥamu Allāhu ummat al-Qur'ān*).[65] The Bedouin "have destroyed what their ancestors built, as confusion reigns and evil runs rampant among the desert inhabitants, who have been influenced by the ignorance of the city dwellers."[66] From the desert came the *salafiyyīn*, those who were true and remained fast to their religion. Linking the *salafiyyīn* to the desert and to Islam's greatness, Suwaysi reminds the reader of the Qur'an and its role in lifting the veil of ignorance from humanity.[67] Much of this appears in a long poem that ties religion to the lost values and virtues of the desert, ending with a question from Shakir to his desert host: "Will the glory of Islam return?" and the host's succinct reply: "God will be merciful to the people of the Qur'an."[68] The reliance on Islam as a focal aspect of life remains central in this *maqāma*, as the purity of Islam appears synonymous with the purity of the desert, which cannot exist until the former returns.

Suwaysi's construction in "al-Maqama al-Badawiyya" of the past as something lost, and to long for, raises the question of how the author situated himself within the literary discourse of his time, particularly when he employs the word *salafī* and its variants. Henri Lauzière has posited a number of ways to interpret the changing uses of this term through a framework of "conceptual history."[69] In a critical overview of the scholarship on Salafism, he challenges the notion that the standard interpretation of the term in the modern period emerged from the writings of Islamic modernists, such as al-Afghani and ʿAbduh, that espoused "the rejection of blind imitation, the promotion of rationality and progress, and the emancipation of women."[70] While "both men invoked the pious ancestors, as did many other Muslims before them, [that] does not constitute a sufficient explanation" for the later use of the term.[71] I see Suwaysi's use of *salafiyyīn* as a discursive practice similar to the way in which Samira Haj analyzes Muhammad ʿAbduh's thinking. Haj elaborates on the work of Alasdair MacIntyre and Talal Asad to explore Islam in "the way that Muslims do—namely, as a 'discursive tradition' consisting of historically evolving discourses embodied in the practices and institutions of communities."[72] Reliance on the earliest period of Islam's history can be a way to begin a conversation anew around how communities should refashion themselves during an unsettling or challenging present.[73] Suwaysi evinces just this method in his writings, as he grappled with European colonizers who established legal and political privilege for themselves in Tunisia while the indigenous population experienced economic displacement and social and religious dislocation.

Having left the desert and just arrived in Sousse, Shakir hears a clamor around a speaker who is reciting poetic verse that speaks of love while blaming unnamed people of trickery and the like. Shakir comes closer to the speaker, who turns out to be the son of Abu al-ʿIbar. Shakir wonders why the young man is in such despair and realizes that he is lamenting lost love in his poetry—not of a romantic kind but the love he used to have for his people, who have now turned away from religion. In this passage of the Sousse *maqāma*, the author expresses his disappointment through the young boy, who is heartbroken that people "have sold their religion at a cheap price."[74] The *maqāma* details major themes affecting Tunisian society: corruption, people's

preoccupation with politics, their loss of religion, and other issues that have torn the fabric of their unity.[75] Suwaysi's invocations in these passages of the Prophet and taking refuge in God, and his concern that the fabric of Muslim unity had been rent, like the references in other *maqāmāt* to the pious ancestors, reflect how Islamic reformers of the period spoke about repairing the fractured reality of the umma while promoting the advancement of Muslims in a world that was becoming increasingly dominated by colonialism.[76]

The son of Abu al-'Ibar, now in Sousse, tells Shakir about his political involvement and the trouble it brought upon him when he was accused of being "against the government [*siyāsa*]."[77] The young man takes his leave from his father's friend, traveling by train to Tunis to face charges of sedition while Shakir remains in the city. The departing train's smoke "spells out *al-busīriyya* verses on the pages of the sky," likely a reference to the Sufi imam al-Busiri, who was born in Egypt in 1213 and wrote the *qaṣīdat al-burdah* (Mantle Ode) in praise of the Prophet Muhammad.[78] The strength of Islam in its early period grounds both the young man adrift in the *maqāma* and the author Suwaysi. The Suwaysi family claims descent from the Prophet Muhammad, through his daughter Fatima and son-in-law 'Ali; Shakir reminds himself, when speaking about the young Salih who bears the same noble lineage as the author, that the family of the Prophet is always tested. After a few more days in Sousse, Shakir heads inland, passing the coastal cities of Sfax and Gafsa before arriving in *arḍ al-jarīd*, the land of date palms: Tozeur.[79]

The narrator begins and ends each *maqāma* with a discussion of how he gets to and from the place, highlighting the gamut of possible modes of transportation in early 20th-century Tunisia. The traveler arrives first by boat, heads into the heartland by train, and then travels to the desert on horseback; at other points he rides in a car and a postal coach. Personal travel by modern means does not trouble Shakir or his young companion. The development of the ports in Sousse and Sfax to receive commercial and war ships posed a greater dilemma for the two characters and undoubtedly for the author. In "al-Maqama al-Safaqasiyya" Shakir describes the magnificence of the commercial steamships and the cries of the sailors in a positive light but wonders, "If this splendor is the view of commercial ships, then what can be said about the hugeness of the fleet of warships, which, to the regret of the Muslim community, demonstrate lost glory and might? . . . O, the loss of past greatness . . ."[80] His words decry the extent to which the French had developed infrastructure in the country for commercial and military purposes—the former to ensure that the settler-colonialists working the land could export their products and the latter so that France could project its domination over the country. The description of the journey to Tozeur and the time Shakir spent there elaborate on the subject of development in transportation—or rather the lack of it, because Tozeur remained outside the new network of railroads. Contemporary observers and later historians have documented how the Algerian-based French company Compagnie du Bône-Guelma, less interested in developing the inland areas that did not serve the *colons*, built the railway networks to follow the French settlers and thus facilitate their commercial interests.[81] The company also showed little interest in helping those settlers in sparsely populated areas and in the 1890s put the onus of responsibility on the Tunisian government to absorb all costs of railway extensions to Bizerte, Sousse, Sfax, and Qayrawan.[82]

While few Tunisians benefited from the railroad in ways that the French *colons* did, Suwaysi and his fictional characters took advantage, or were forced to take advantage, of the trains, thereby expanding their interest in and knowledge of the Tunisian countryside and coastal regions. Shakir is so interested in the country that he recalls his regret at not being able to stop in each of the places that he passed during his ride on a postal coach and later a horse, en route to Tozeur. He vows to return to Sfax (there is a *maqāma* on Sfax) and Gafsa (there is no *maqāma* on Gafsa) to learn about the character of each city while continuing on his journey to Tozeur.[83] The details of the Tozeur *maqāma*, with its descriptions of different perspectives and periods of Suwaysi's stay in the city, are so realistic that it reads like a diary.

When Shakir arrives in Tozeur, he immediately feels like a stranger. He rents a hotel room there, "as is the custom of foreigners." His sense of separation from his home is exacerbated when he falls ill.[84] He begins to feel welcome when a young man comes into the hotel, learns the visitor is sick, and takes Shakir to a nice house to be cared for over the next year.[85] After the previous visits in Sousse and the desert, the people's generosity in Tozeur overwhelms Shakir and restores his faith in humanity. While Suwaysi does not refer directly to the French, I argue that he was positing a correlation between the limited French reach into the countryside and the strength of hospitality and generosity among his fellow countrymen. Shakir, the narrator–protagonist and likely representing an older Suwaysi who traveled through the country's cities, stayed for one year in Tozeur. Suwaysi's own exile in the city was for three months but its positive effects, his easy rapport with the city's residents, and his connection with important religious figures there possibly inspired the lengthy stay of his character Shakir in "al-Maqama al-Tuzuriyya."[86]

Suwaysi's preoccupation with Islam returns in the Tozeur *maqāma* when he meets a young man in a mosque who is reciting a poem about the Prophet questioning what people would do without him.[87] Recognizing that this is none other than the son of his friend, Abu al-'Ibar, Shakir calls the young man by his name, Salih, the virtuous one, for the first time; he "praises the opportunity to meet in a city whose people are as generous and gracious as Islam's pious ancestors, *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*."[88] Shakir is nevertheless surprised to find Salih in this remote town and asks how he came to be there. The answer constitutes the strongest critique of the Tunisian government to be found in the *maqāmāt*. Salih replies that the enemies of religion joined forces and charged him as a traitor. He was brought before the head of the government (*amīr al-umarāʾ*) in Tunis, who welcomed him as befits a descendant of the Prophet. Salih sought refuge in *al-ʿurwa al-wuthqa*, "the indissoluble bond" of Islam, a clear reference to ʿAbduh's society of the same name. Despite his faith, Salih was ultimately declared guilty and exiled for three months to Tozeur.[89] The incident mirrors Suwaysi's own exile to Tozeur, based on a charge that may have included involvement with al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa. At the same time, the help and hospitality of the people of Tozeur make the characters Shakir and Salih forget their homes and families for a while. Yet even if they are able to briefly forget, the central message of their love of home, and in particular their devotion to Qayrawan, is intricately woven throughout the *maqāmāt*, which frequently recall the city's glory days in the early period of Islam when praiseworthy Muslims lived in a majestic era that Muslims of the current time needed to reclaim.

CONCLUSION

Salih Suwaysi's use of the *maqāmāt* genre, with its peripatetic structure, allowed him
to express his profound concern for Tunisia's urban environment and the people who
lived there. The genre he chose, whether in its traditional or experimental form, required
movement to drive the narrative, allowing Suwaysi to recount his characters' journeys
through a series of territorial spaces, primarily cities, and to address along the way the
major issues that he and other *nahda* writers were grappling with at the time. His interest
in urban space, his reference to Qayrawan as *watanī* (my city),[90] and his critiques of
the current state of other cities oriented him toward a subject of growing interest at the
time: territorial nationalism. It may be anachronistic to call him a nationalist during
this period, but it is clear he had strong ties to his home city of Qayrawan, whose
past greatness as a city—connected to the early Muslim warriors and to a period of
Islam's intellectual and architectural greatness—left a distinct marker for territorial and
anticolonial nationalists within the context of the Arab *nahda*. Suwaysi's disdain for the
French colonial project, evident in his critiques of the behavior of his Arab and Muslim
brethren in cities across the country, leads him toward a larger conceptual project that he
delineates only once: *al-qutr al-tūnisī* (the Tunisian country).[91] He does not elaborate
on it, yet it is a subtext throughout the *maqāmāt* as they describe the French colonial
project's historical effects on the increasingly shared experiences of Muslims across the
land. Beyond this framework, the descriptions of the cities and the desert in the *maqāmāt*
highlight the author's unique perception of these two environments, both enhancing our
understanding of change in the urban fabric and demonstrating the author's identification
with territorial space as a way to contest colonial rule.

Suwaysi distinguishes Qayrawan, the city of his birth, above all else. He does not
feel closely tied to Tunis: the capital city, the seat of government, and the center of
higher learning. His characters rail against Tunis throughout the *maqāmāt* as a city of
the colonizers and the anti-religious; other cities, such as Sfax and Sousse, are described
as corrupt and debased in various ways. For Suwaysi, and for his characters Shakir and
Salih, Qayrawan's past, as they imagine it, draws them close to that city. When Shakir
tries to convince Salih not to return home after the end of his exile, fearing what his
enemies will do, Salih replies that Qayrawan is the only place that can restore him and
that truly represents home for him.[92] Despite all of the problems that have emerged
to trouble Qayrawan—the city built by the *salafiyyīn* whose presence remains in their
tombs on the edges of the city—it continues to represent the ideal city for Salih and
for Suwaysi. Thus, when his exile in Tozeur ends, Salih leaves for Qayrawan; Shakir
remains in Tozeur for another two years (staying three years in total) before deciding to
travel to Sfax, the final city of his travels in the *maqāmāt*.

Upon his arrival in Sfax, Shakir describes the city in very cynical terms, immediately
commenting on the steamships and warships in the port. Such sights, which represent
Tunisia's surrender to the military and commercial might of France, cause Shakir to
lament the lost days of Muslim might and glory.[93] The pain of this vision is countered
when he finds Salih there as well, having come from Qayrawan to make a living selling
poetry, only to learn that his enemies in Sfax would prevent him from doing so.[94]
Like Shakir, Salih is shocked by the loss of the past, which is equated with both the

glory of Islam and the value of Arabic literature, and by the onset of militarization, commercialization, and the commodification of knowledge that had led writers into intellectual and financial distress. Salih reflects on the centuries of Arabic poetic writing, noting that panegyric poetry was "the tradition of Arab poets" and that this "custom was well known by the people on the plains of Mecca and the Hijaz."[95] He asserts that poetry is still well known in *al-sharq* (the Arab east) and *al-maghrib al-aqsa* (the far west or present-day Morocco), but "in the country of Tunisia [*al-quṭr al-tūnisī*] the remains of poetry have been obliterated . . ."[96] He is so disheartened over the rejection of poetry and poets by the people of Sfax that it makes him "regret [his] trip," because he realizes his "occupation is passé."[97] Salih asks, "How could the people have found a way to lose their literature and their poetry? How could they be so devoid of ideas that they are now spending their money buying the writings of foreigners?"[98] Shakir advises him to find another path. He adds, "Do not give your poetry to those who have lost their humanity and their charitableness."[99] Salih accepts his advice and decides not to spend one more night in Sfax, hiring an automobile to take him away. The contrast in this *maqāma* between the longing for the days of old, when Islam prevailed in the world and Arabic literature created a civilization, and a present reality, when someone dissatisfied by a changing environment simply leaves by automobile, highlights the tensions between tradition and modernity in Suwaysi's texts.

Qayrawan remains a beacon of light throughout the episodes and is the logical endpoint for the characters in the *maqāmāt*. After Salih flees from Sfax back to his home city, Shakir remains for two months before traveling to Qayrawan in a "gas car" via Sousse.[100] The two meet for the final time in Qayrawan, recounting their observations of Sfax and discussing how Salih had moved on in his writing. Salih says that in a period that "opposes freedom," he had taken to "writing complaints to the lawful ruler" (*kitābat al-shakāyāt ilā al-ḥākim al-qānūnī*).[101] The two finally part, relying on God "to save them from oppression on earth and grant them happiness and a good ending" (*bi-l-saʿāda wa-ḥasan al-khātima*).[102]

Much like the character who shares his name in the *maqāmāt*, Suwaysi returned to Qayrawan after his own travels and exile, which seems to reinforce the autobiographical quality of the *maqāmāt*. His use of this genre enabled him to both express the pull that Qayrawan exerted on him and warn of the challenges faced by Tunisian cities and their inhabitants under French colonial rule. His literary skills give expression to his thoughts, as his *maqāmāt*, and the poetry embedded within them, reflect the author's views of the way that people should live, namely, according to Islamic principles of the past while rejecting the materialism of the present and the discord it was fostering among Muslims. The subtext throughout is that opposition to the French occupation was necessary, though technological advances from Europe were not necessarily harmful if they could help Muslims compete in such challenging times.

NOTES

[1]The collection used in this study is Salih Suwaysi al-Qayrawani, *al-Hayfaʾ wa-Siraj al-Layl maʿa Maqamat wa-Qisas Ukhra* (Tunis: al-Dar al-Tunisiyya li-l-Nashr, 1978). This volume, whose editor is not named, is the most complete publication of his *maqāmāt*; it also includes his novel, *al-Hayfaʾ wa-Siraj al-Layl*, and short stories.

[2]Devin Stewart, "The *Maqāma*," in *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*, ed. Roger Allen and D. S. Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 145.

[3]Egyptian Bayram al-Tunsi also wrote *maqāmāt* that criticized the modernizing Egyptian society under the British. His most significant contribution was in the style of *zajal* (colloquial Arabic poetry in strophic form), a genre that appeared in the 12th century but was popularized in the 20th century by the Egyptian press. See Marilyn Booth, *Bayram al-Tunisi's Egypt: Social Criticism and Narrative Strategies* (Exeter: Ithaca Press, 1990); and Joel Beinin, "Writing Class: Workers and Modern Egyptian Colloquial Poetry (*Zajal*)," in "Cultural Processes in Muslim and Arab Societies: Modern Period II," *Poetics Today* 15 (1994): 191–215. See also Mahmud Bayram al-Tunisi, *Maqamat Bayram*, ed. Tahir Abu Fasha (Cairo: Maktabat Madbuli, 1985).

[4]From al-Muwaylihi's introduction to *Hadith ʿIsa ibn Hisham*, quoted in Roger Allen, *A Period of Time: A Study of Muhammad al-Muwaylihi's Hadith ʿIsa ibn Hisham*, St. Antony's Middle East Monographs (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1992), 31, n. 41.

[5]Historian Joel Beinin examines the sociopolitical context and content of *zajal* in Beinin, "Writing Class."

[6]Elizabeth Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 27. For his major works, see Muhammad ʿAbduh, *al-Islam wa-l-Nasraniyya bayna al-ʿIlm wa-l-Madaniyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Hadatha, 1983) and *Risalat al-Tawhid* (Cairo: Matbaʿat al-Manal, 1908). See also Samira Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition: Reform, Rationality, and Modernity* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009).

[7]Examples of other recent work exploring transregional dimensions of Arab and Islamic reform movements during this period are Amal N. Ghazal, "The Other Frontiers of Arab Nationalism: Ibadis, Berbers, and the Arabist-Salafi Press in the Interwar Period," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42 (2010): 105–22; and Scott S. Reese, "Salafi Transformations: Aden and the Changing Voices of Religious Reform in the Interwar Indian Ocean," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44 (2012): 71–92.

[8]"Tarjamat al-Muʾallif bi-Qalamihi," in Suwaysi, *al-Hayfaʾ wa-Siraj al-Layl*.

[9]Ghazal, "The Other Frontiers of Arab Nationalism," 109, 116.

[10]Shaykh Muhammad al-Nakhli al-Qayrawani (hereafter al-Nakhli), "Tarjamat Muhammad al-Nakhli," in *Athar al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Nakhli, 1869–1924: Sira Dhatiyya wa-Afkar Islahiyya*, collated and intro. ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Nakhli, ed. Hammadi al-Sahili (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1995), 20–27, quote on 26.

[11]Ibid., 59.

[12]Ahmad bin ʿAbdallah, *Salih Suwaysi al-Qayrawani: Hayatuhu wa-Mukhtarat min Kitabatihi*, Silsilat Dhakira wa-Ibda (Tunis: Tunisian Ministry of Culture, 2000), 25. Studies that focus on the novel include Muhammad al-Hulayli, *Fi al-Adab al-Tunisi* (Tunis: al-Dar al-Tunisiyya li-l-Nashr, 1969); and al-Shaykh Muhammad Fadil ibn ʿAshur, *Arkan al-Nahda al-Adabiyya bi-Tunis* (Tunis: Maktabat al-Najah, 1961). Mustafa al-Habib Bahri, whose study was published within a year of Suwaysi's *maqāmāt* collection, does not mention them. Mustafa al-Habib Bahri, "Salih Suwaysi al-Qayrawani," *al-Fikr* 25 (1979): 72–85. I have not come across any studies by non-Tunisian scholars that examine Suwaysi's writings.

[13]Al-Nakhli, "Tarjamat Muhammad al-Nakhli," 53.

[14]Ibid., 53, n. 2. This dates back to 1890, when Suwaysi was not quite twenty years old. The annotation notes that the information was found in a secret file in a folder titled "al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Nakhli," kept in a *khazīnat al-hukūma*, a government archive. Based on the context, I believe that this reference is to a French colonial document stored in the Tunisian government archive after independence.

[15]Suwaysi, "Tarjamat al-Muʾallif bi-Qalamihi," in *al-Hayfaʾ*, 7–8.

[16]Ibid. For more on the legal system see Richard A. Macken, "The Indigenous Reaction to the French Protectorate in Tunisia, 1881–1900" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1972), 196ff; and Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 45–47.

[17]Suwaysi, "Tarjamat al-Mu'allif bi-Qalamihi," 8; Ahmad Twili, *Salih Suwaysi al-Qayrawani: Ra'id al-Islah al-Qayrawani* (Tunis: al-Sharika al-Tunisiyya li-l-Nashr wa-Tanmiyyat Funun al-Rasm, 2005), 8.

[18]Samir Bakkush, *al-Qayrawan, 1881–1939* (Tunis: Dar Sahar li-l-Nashr, 2006), 111–14.

[19]Macken, "The Indigenous Reaction to the French Protectorate."

[20]References to Qayrawan appear throughout all of the *maqāmāt* discussed here, but see especially "al-Maqama al-Qayrawaniyya" and "al-Maqama al-Badawiyya," in *al-Hayfa'*, 101–109. All *maqāmāt* come from this volume. Remaining citations will refer to a specific *maqāma* only by its title.

[21]In his *maqāmāt* Egyptian Muhammad al-Muwaylihi mocks tourists in Egypt and Egyptians who seek them out.

[22]Salih Suwaysi al-Qayrawani, *Dalil Qayrawan*, intro. Ja'far Majid (Tunis: Rihab al-Ma'rif, 2006). For an analysis of the 2006 reprint of the *dalīl*, see Kimberly Katz, "The City of Qayrawan in the Works of Salih Suwaysi: A Place of Memory," *Journal of North African Studies* 17 (2011): 257–73.

[23]Paul Sebag, *The Great Mosque of Kairouan*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Macmillan Company, 1965), 16.

[24]Suwaysi refers to Qayrawan as *al-madīna al-muqaddasa* (the holy city) in "al-Maqama al-Tunisiyya," 99.

[25]"Al-Maqama al-Tunisiyya," 98.

[26]"Al-Maqama al-Badawiyya," 107.

[27]Henri Lauzière, "The Construction of *Salafiyya*: Reconsidering Salafism from the Perspective of Conceptual History," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42 (2010): 369–89.

[28]"Al-Maqama al-Tuzuriyya," 123–24.

[29]Stewart, "*The Maqāma*," 145–46.

[30]Badi' al-Zaman al-Hamadhani, *Maqamat*, ed. Muhammad 'Abduh, 6th ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1986).

[31]The best source for 'Abduh's journeys is the history written by his disciple Rashid Rida, *Tarikh al-Ustadh al-Imam al-Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Manar, 1906). See also al-Munsif al-Shanufi, "Masadir Rihlatay al-Ustadh al-Imam al-Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh ila Tunis," *Dawliyat al-Jami'a al-Tunisiyya* 3 (1966): 71–102.

[32]Al-Nakhli honored Muhammad 'Abduh during his visit to Tunisia with a speech praising the latter's *Risalat al-Tawhid*. "Muntakhabat min Atharihi," in *Athar al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Nakhli*," 117ff.

[33]Al-Kafi refers to him by this description in her introduction to his collection of poetry. There is no indication that she is the editor of the collection. Najwa al-Kafi, "Salih Suwaysi: Adib wa-Muslih 'Ijtima'i," in *Diwan Salih Suwaysi al-Qayrawani* (Tunis: al-Dar al-Tunisiyya li-l-Nashr, 1977), 5–9.

[34]Matti Moosa, *The Origins of Arabic Fiction* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1997); esp. chap. 6, "The Revival of the Maqama." A list of those who participated in the revival of the genre can be found on p. 95.

[35]Allen, *A Period of Time*, 19–20.

[36]Moosa, *The Origins of Arabic Fiction*, 98ff.

[37]Choueiri notes that nearly all of the books printed in Egypt from 1840 onward circulated in Tunisia. Reformers Ahmad Bey (1837–55) and Khayr al-Din encouraged the importation of books as part of the general reformist tendency of the period. Youssef M. Choueiri, *Modern Arab Historiography: Historical Discourse and the Nation-State*, rev. ed. (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 18–19.

[38]Moosa, *The Origins of Arabic Fiction*, 97.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Suwaysi, "Tarjamat al-Mu'allif bi-Qalamihi," 10.

[41]"Al-Maqama al-Tunisiyya," 96–97.

[42]This appeared in issue 19, but the year is unknown; it was likely not long after its publication in *Sawab*.

[43]Salih Suwaysi, *Kitab Manjam al-Tibr fi al-Nathr wa-Shi'r* (Tunis: al-Maktaba al-'Ilmiyya, 1906), 8–11.

[44]Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 28–32.

[45]Bin 'Abdallah names several influences on Suwaysi, including the Lebanese writers Salim al-Bustani, Jurji Zaydan, Farah Antun, and Niqula Haddad; undoubtedly, there are others. Bin 'Abdallah, *Salih Suwaysi al-Qayrawani*, 59.

[46]Both quotes are found in Suwaysi, "Tarjamat al-Mu'allif bi-Qalamihi," 11.

[47]Katz, "The City of Qayrawan," 258–59.

[48] The desert may also represent the harshness of life, as, for example, in Ghassan Kanafani, *Ma Tabbaqa li-Kum*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Abhat al-'Arabiyya, 1983).

[49] No evidence exists for the date of the addition of a successive location. There are two other *maqāmāt* published with this collection, but they are not set in or focused on cities.

[50] The last three charges come from "al-Maqama al-Safaqasiyya," 129, and the first two from "al-Maqama al-Susiyya," 111.

[51] J. E. Bencheikh, "Abu 'l-'Ibar," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v., http://0-referenceworks.brillonline.com.library.lausys.georgetown.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/abu-l-ibar-SIM_8255 (accessed 18 June 2012).

[52] Suwaysi, "Tarjamat al-Mu'allif bi-Qalamihi," 6.

[53] Suwaysi also visited and wrote about the cities Nabeul, Baja, and Zaghwan, but these works seem to be lost. Suwaysi mentions them in "Tarjamat al-Mu'allif bi-Qalamihi," 9. The works are titled *al-Surur al-Qabil fi Ziyarat Tunis wa-Nabul* (1893), which addresses two cities in the north/northeast of Tunisia, and *Qira'at al-Zaman fi Ziyarat Baja wa-Zaghwan* (1899), focusing on cities in the central and central west parts of the country. No place of publication or publisher appears with Suwaysi's mention of these books.

[54] "Al-Maqama al-Qayrawaniyya," 104.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Suwaysi, "Tarjamat al-Mu'allif bi-Qalamihi," 6.

[57] Ibid.

[58] The Arabic is *balad bi-hi khalaf al-ṣalāḥ qad fasad.* "Al-Maqama al-Tunisiyya," 97–100. The line of poetry appears on 97–98.

[59] Bakkush, *al-Qayrawan*, 13–31.

[60] "Al-Maqama al-Qayrawaniyya," 101–104.

[61] "Al-Maqama al-Badawiyya," 105–109.

[62] Ibid., 105–106. By "civilization" or *ḥaḍāra*, Suwaysi is referring to the city.

[63] Ibid., 106.

[64] Ibid., 106–107.

[65] Ibid., 109.

[66] Ibid., 108.

[67] Ibid., 108.

[68] Ibid., 109.

[69] Lauzière, "The Construction of *Salafiyya*."

[70] Ibid., 374.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 4ff.

[73] Ibid.

[74] "Al-Maqama al-Susiyya," 114.

[75] Ibid., 115–16.

[76] See Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition* and Lauzière, "The Construction of Salafiyya."

[77] "Al-Maqama al-Susiyya," 115.

[78] Ibid., 118. Sharaf al-Din Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad ibn Sa'id al-Busiri, *Diwan al- Busiri,* ed. Muhammad Sayyid Kilani, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi), 1972. See also Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muhammad* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2010), esp. chap. 2.

[79] "Al-Maqama al-Susiyya," 118.

[80] "Al-Maqama al-Safaqasiyya," 128–29.

[81] For a view on development in Tunisia from the middle of the French Protectorate period, see W. Basil Worsfold, *France in Tunis and Algeria: Studies of Colonial Administration* (New York: Brentano's, 1930).

[82] Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 57–60.

[83] "Al-Maqama al-Tuzuriyya," 119.

[84] Ibid., 120. In her recent work on migrations between Europe and Tunisia, Julia A. Clancy-Smith notes that hotels in the interior had little of which to boast. See her *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800–1900* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2011), 152.

[85] "Al-Maqama al-Tuzuriyya," 119–21.

[86] Suwaysi, "Tarjamat al-Mu'allif bi-Qalamihi," 10; Twili, *Salih Suwaysi al-Qayrawani*, 82.

[87]"Al-Maqama al-Tuzuriyya," 123–25.

[88]Ibid., 123.

[89]Ibid., 123–24.

[90]In the 20th century, *waṭaniyya* would become the Arabic term for nationalism. Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 85.

[91]"Al-Maqama al-Safaqasiyya," 130.

[92]Ibid., 126.

[93]Ibid., 128–29.

[94]Hafiz Ibrahim's *Layali Satih* includes a character who also criticizes the lack of a market for poetry in Egypt. See Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction*, 111.

[95]"Al-Maqama al-Safaqasiyya," 129.

[96]Ibid., 130.

[97]Ibid.

[98]"Al-Maqama al-Safaqasiyya," 129–30. Jabra I. Jabra addresses the issue of translating foreign literature, which brought new ideas, and recognizes that Arabic poetry did not bring the Arabs the technological sophistication to compete with the West. See his "Modern Arabic Literature and the West," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 2 (1971): 76–91. Albert Hourani provides a historical overview of the introduction of foreign languages and translated works, particularly in Egypt and Lebanon, in *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), esp. chap. 4.

[99]"Al-Maqama al-Safaqasiyya," 131.

[100]Why Suwaysi refers in one case to an automobile car (*ʿarabat al-atmūbīl*) and in another to a gas car (*ʿarabat al-ghāz*) is unclear, just as it is unclear if there was a difference in these two types of cars, though that seems unlikely.

[101]"Al-Maqama al-Safaqasiyya," 132.

[102]Ibid., 135.