

Title	Wealthy merchants in Ottoman Cairo around the turn of the 17th century : the Khawājās described by Ibn al-'Ajamī
Sub Title	
Author	長谷部, 史彦(Hasebe, Fumihiko)
Publisher	Department of Asian History, Faculty of Letters, Keio University
Publication year	2025
Jtitle	Al-Madaniyya : Keio bulletin of Middle Eastern and Asian urban history No.4 (2025.) ,p.[63]- 83
JaLC DOI	
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Notes	Articles
Genre	Journal Article
URL	https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AA12949557-0000004-0063

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Wealthy Merchants in Ottoman Cairo around the Turn of the 17th Century : The *Khawājās* Described by Ibn al-‘Ajāmī

Fumihiko Hasebe

Keio University
manzala@keio.jp

Abstract

This paper focuses on thirteen merchants who bore the title of *khawājā*, as recorded by Ibn al-‘Ajāmī, a unique civil historian who made his living as a weigher. Thus, it attempts to clarify the historical realities and characteristics of wealthy merchants based in Ottoman Cairo around the turn of the 17th century. These merchants were diverse in family origin, and their merchandises included Egyptian agricultural products and agro-processed goods, as well as coffee, spices, and textiles. Delving fully into the inner workings of their commercial operations or details of the commercial partnerships they formed is difficult, because of the nature of narrative history. However, the cases discussed in this paper shed new light on various aspects of *khawājā* merchants in the largest trading city in the Ottoman Arab world, such as their charitable activities, their relationships with other influential urban people, the confiscation of their estates, their movements and expulsions, and the incidents caused by the domestic slaves they owned.

Keywords

Ottoman Cairo, *khawājā*, Muslim merchants, urban notables, long-distance trade

I. Introduction

The Arabic word *khawājā* is derived from the Persian *khwāja*, like *hoca* in Turkish, and it refers to a gentleman, nobleperson, religious leader, or other man worthy of social respect. In Ottoman Egypt, people appear to have customarily referred to a wealthy merchant who engaged in distant trade or large-scale transactions as *khawājā*. Tsugitaka Sato, in his research on sugar in the medieval Islamic world, confirms that this title was conferred not only to international merchants engaged in the trade of slaves and goods outside of Mamluk territory, but also to al-Kārimī merchants based

in Cairo, the capital of the Mamluk Sultanate, clearly indicating that *khawājā* was not a title limited to foreign merchants in that period.¹ On the other hand, Nelly Hanna, who has made significant progress in the study of merchants in Ottoman Egypt especially by focusing Abū Tāqiyya, a Cairo-based *khawājā* merchant who was active in international trade, distinguishes *khawājā* from *khawājakī* which was a title for merchants engaged in large-scale long-distance trade, although no specific historical information is explicitly provided as a basis for such a classification.² Meanwhile, in one of his early articles, André Raymond describes *khawājā* as a grand merchant who engaged in the trade of coffee and spices between Egypt and Hijaz,³ but as his own and subsequent studies since then have shown,⁴ *khawājā* merchants also dealt various other commodities in Ottoman Egypt.

Regardless, it is unclear what kind of merchants contemporary people living in Ottoman Egypt called *khawājās* and in what cases they simply used the term “*tājir*” (trader, wholesale merchant). Currently, what we still need now at this point is to collect more cases of *khawājā* merchants and to clarify and compare the historical realities of individual cases. Leading the way for us are the studies of merchants by Raymond and Hanna,⁵ the monograph by Ḥusām ‘Abd al-Mu‘ī on Maghribi merchant families,⁶ Sulaymān Ḥassānayn’s study of the merchants of Cairo in the 16th and 17th centuries that deals with the great merchants.⁷ Those studies rely primarily on the Islamic court registers (*sijillāt*) of Cairo and other major Egyptian cities.

This paper focuses on the 13 *khawājās* who appear in the obituaries, incident descriptions, and accounts of the author’s acquaintances in Ibn ‘Ajāmī’s *Mabāhij al-*

¹ Tsugitaka Sato, *Sugar in the Social Life in Medieval Islam*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, p. 85.

² Nelly Hanna, *Making Big Money in 1600: The Life and Times of Isma‘il Abu Taqiyya, Egyptian Merchant*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1998, pp. 18–19, 192.

³ André Raymond, “Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Salām: Un Šāh bandar des tuggār au Caire à la fin du XVIIIe siècle,” *Annales Islamologiques*, 7 (1967), p. 92.

⁴ Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle*, 2 tomes, Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1973–1974, p. 411, note 5.

⁵ Raymond, “Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Salām”; id., *Artisans et commerçants au Caire*, tome 2, pp. 411–415, 424, 662, 692–693, 724, 728, 786–787; Hanna, *Making Big Money in 1600*.

⁶ Ḥusām Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Mu‘ī, *al-‘Ā’ila wa al-tharwa: al-Buyūt al-tijāriyya al-Maghribiyya fi Miṣr al-‘Uthmāniyya*, Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li’l-Kitāb, 2008, especially pp. 137–192; id., “The Fez Merchants in Eighteenth-Century Cairo,” in Nelly Hanna and Raouf Abbas (ed.), *Society and Economy in Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean, 1600–1900*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2005, pp. 115–139.

⁷ Sulaymān Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥassānayn, *Tujjār al-Qāhira fi al-qarnayn al-sādis ‘ashar wa al-sābi‘ ‘ashar*, Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li’l-Kitāb, 2003, especially pp. 49–91.

ikhwān and its sequel,⁸ which convey a wealth of information about Cairo around the turn of 17th century. The paper then analyzes and discusses the descriptions of these merchants. Although Islamic court registers are the most effective historical records on the subject and Arabic narrative sources have played a subsidiary role, Ibn ‘Ajamī’s almost chronicle-like history of Ottoman Cairo is unique in that it contains no small amount of information about individual *khawājā* merchants of that period.⁹ The descriptions left by the historian who lived in the largest city on the banks of the Nile, weighed commodities for a living at wholesale facilities, and had no small amount of empirical knowledge of the trade,¹⁰ contain interesting information not found in Islamic court registers, such as details about the personalities and social reputations of the Cairene *khawājās*.

In the following sections, we shall attempt to consider these big traders by dividing their strongholds into four areas: (1) Būlāq, the major river port of Cairo, (2) Khān al-Khalīlī, which was developing as a commercial center for non-Arab merchants during the Ottoman period, (3) Ibn Ṭūlūn area in southern Cairo, where Maghribis and sub-Saharan Africans were particularly concentrated, and (4) other or unspecified districts of Cairo.

⁸ Ibn al-‘Ajamī, *Mabāhij al-ikhwān wa manāhij al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-duhūr wa al-azmān*, Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Ms. orient. A1631; id. *Ta’rīkh āl ‘Uthmān*, Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Ms. orient. A1632. I have been researching these two manuscripts since 2018 and have published some Japanese articles based mainly on them. I learned very recently and inadvertently that Muḥammad Jamāl Ḥāmid al-Shūrbajī had edited quite well and published them in 2 volumes (3 books) in 2022. In the following, both this newly published edition, Ibn al-‘Ajamī, *Mabāhij al-ikhwān wa manāhij al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-duhūr wa al-azmān*, 2 vols., Cairo: Al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li’l-Kitāb, 2022 (hereinafter abbreviated as *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo)) and the two autograph manuscripts (abbreviated as *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms) and *Ta’rīkh āl ‘Uthmān* (Gotha Ms), respectively) are cited as sources.

⁹ Regarding Ibn al-‘Ajamī and his two works combined into one, *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* and its sequel, see Fumihiko Hasebe, “Weighing Merchandise and Writing History in Ottoman Cairo: Notes on Ibn al-‘Ajamī (Part I),” *Al-Madaniyya: Keio Bulletin of Middle Eastern and Asian Urban History*, vol. 2 (2023), pp. 27–68; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, pp. 9–26. One of al-Shūrbajī’s outstanding points is that he has newly narrowed down the date of Ibn al-‘Ajamī’s death to after 1636, based on another manuscript *al-Anwār al-muḍiyya fī dhikr al-dawla al-‘Uthmāniyya wa man ḥukkima bi-Miṣr min al-bashawāt bi’l-diyār al-Miṣriyya*, now held in Süleymaniye Library (Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ms. Reisülküttab, 01184, fols. 70r–88v.) It is a short Ottoman history also written by the weigher/historian. See *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, pp. 23–24, 26.

¹⁰ For Ibn al-‘Ajamī’s personal interactions with wealthy merchants at his workplace, see, for example, Hasebe, “Weighing Merchandise and Writing History,” pp. 55–56.

II. Three *Khawājās* Based in the Būlāq Port

The development of Būlāq as a port on the Nile advanced during the third reign of Mamluk Sultan Nāṣir Muḥammad (1310–1341). The development of the satellite city of al-Qāhira entered full swing in the 15th century with the decisive decline of the desert route between Qūṣ and ‘Aydhāb in the Red Sea/Indian Ocean international trade and the rise of the route traversing al-Ṭūr in the Sinai Peninsula and the consequent revitalization of the Nile Delta economy. Thus, the urban growth of this port’s wharfs and road network progressed from the reign of Sultan Jaqmaq (1438–1453), and development was further accelerated under Ottoman rule. Starting with Hadım Süleyman Paşa/Sulaymān Bāshā (tenure 1525–1535, 1537–1538), the Ottoman governors of Egypt built a series of urban facilities, including *wikālas*, remote trading centers and wholesale facilities, which ensured the prosperity of the port. Eventually, by the end of the 18th century, there were 65 *wikālas*, 25 mosques, 7 hammams, and 12 public fountains in the port city, which would have looked triangular from a bird’s eye view.¹¹

Research on the *khawājā* merchants of this large river port during the Ottoman period has been somewhat scant so far, except for Hanna’s pioneering focus on the al-‘Āṣī family. The family’s commercial activities can be traced back to the 1570s, and it flourished for at least three generations, from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān through ‘Abd al-Qawī and ‘Abd al-Qādir to ‘Abd al-Qawī’s son ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf. Hanna points out that the al-‘Āṣī family was one of the first prominent merchant families of the Ottoman period to be identified and that their activities recall the Kārimī merchants of the Mamluk period.¹² In Ottoman Būlāq, Ḥārat al-‘Āṣī was the quarter around the family’s residence. Hanna does not provide its exact location but confirms the family’s

¹¹ Nelly Hanna, *An Urban History of Būlāq in the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods*, Cairo: IFAO, 1983, pp. 2–7, 16–17, 27–29, 35–38, 65–83; Jean-Claude Garcin, “La ‘méditerranéisation’ de l’empire mamlouk sous les sultans bahrides,” *Rivista degli studi orientali*, vol. 48 (1973–1974), pp. 109–116.

¹² Hanna, *An Urban History of Būlāq*, p. 39. Hanna renders the family name as “al-‘Āṣī”, while Ibn ‘Ajamī renders it as “al-‘Āṣī” with a long sound. In this paper, we use the letter “al-‘Āṣī” in unison. It has lately been confirmed by Ḥusām ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī that Kārimī merchants remained and were still active in the Ottoman period, and there were merchants known as, for example, “a prominent figure among the distinguished Kārimī merchants of that port (‘*ayn a’yān al-tujjār al-Kārimīyya bi’l-thaghr*)” or “a prominent figure among the distinguished Kārimī *khawājā* merchants of that port (‘*ayn a’yān al-khawājakiyya al-Kārimīyya bi’l-thaghr*)” in Alexandria from the 1540s to the early 17th century, who formed notable families. ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī annotates *khawājakiyya* as the plural form of *khawājā*, and *khawājakī* as an emphatic expression of *khawājā*. For more information, see Ḥusām Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī, “al-Iskandariyya fī al-‘aṣr al-‘Uthmānī: 923–1213h/1517–1798,” in Fumihiko Hasebe (ed.), *The Environments and Civilizations of the Nile Delta II*, Tokyo: Organization for Islamic Area Studies, Waseda University, 2013, pp. 1–47.

two *wikālas* in the northern part of the port city.¹³ Their residence may have been located near them.

Despite this valuable attention on the al-‘Āṣī family, it is appropriate to state that research on *khawājās* of Būlāq is still in its initial stages. Meanwhile, we can select the following notable *khawājās* from *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* and its sequel:¹⁴

No. 1 al-Khawājā Muḥammad al-Burullusī (known as Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh) (d. 1606)

An account of this merchant is included in the explanation of the “great military strife (*fitna ‘azīma*)” that occurred during the term of Emir Mehmed Paşa/Muḥammad Bāshā al-Sharīf (1596–1598). In the strife, a part of the regular forces of Ottoman Egypt attacked and killed Amir Muḥammad al-Dālī, and his residence in Khutt Qanāṭir al-Sibā‘, one of the southern districts of Cairo, was looted. He was a parvenu who had once been a poor soldier (*jundī faqīr*). Emir Mehmed Paşa had appointed him to the important post of the sultan’s granary superintendent (*imānat al-shuwan al-sultāniyya*), and he had capitalized on the position to amass great wealth.¹⁵

Ibn al-‘Ajāmī, who casts a critical eye on Muḥammad al-Dālī, exposes as “his reprehensible conduct (*sīrat-hu dhamīna*)” his abuse of his authority to obtain not only building materials for his home renovations without paying, but also wheat, barley, butter oil, honey, sugar, alfa (*ḥalfā*), and other things from their owners and merchants unjustly.¹⁶ In this regard, the following reference is made:

He (i.e., Muḥammad al-Dālī) did likewise with al-Khawājā Muḥammad ibn Dubb al-Hīsh, because he (i.e., Muḥammad ibn Dubb al-Hīsh) had been devoted to the trade of rice and sugar cane molasses (*al-tijāra fī al-aruzz wa ‘asal al-qaṣab*).¹⁷

The description indicates that in the 1590s, this *khawājā* merchant with the quaint family name of “Son of bear of the thicket (Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh)” traded in rice, likely

¹³ Hanna, *An Urban History of Būlāq*, pp. 41, 66–67 (nos. 9 and 21).

¹⁴ The 13 *khawājā* merchants are numbered here for convenience. Regarding Būlāq as Ibn al-‘Ajāmī’s hometown, see Hasebe, “Weighing Merchandise and Writing History,” pp. 49–57.

¹⁵ For more information on this strife, including the details obtained by Ibn al-‘Ajāmī from a witness to Muḥammad al-Dālī’s murder, see *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fols. 18v–21r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, pp. 92–96. Regarding Ibn al-‘Ajāmī’s familiarity with Khutt Qanāṭir al-Sibā‘ as a workplace, see Hasebe, “Weighing Merchandise and Writing History,” pp. 58–60.

¹⁶ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 20v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 95.

¹⁷ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fols. 20v–21r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 95.

produced in the northern Nile Delta, and molasses from Upper Egyptian sugar cane. In addition, the merchant of Būlāq had relations with the imperial granary superintendent, who was a pawn of the governor of the Egyptian province.

Later, in 1010 AH/1601–1602, Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh was captured and exiled by the Ottoman governor of Egypt. Ibn al-‘Ajamī describes the reasons and circumstances at length. The following is a summary of the historian’s account of the hardships experienced by this affluent food merchant.

According to *Mabāhij al-ikhwān*, Muḥammad al-Burullusī, known as Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh, one of the *khawājās* of Cairo, had a dispute with a man named ‘Abd al-Barr ibn Muḥammad Subay‘ī al-Burullusī.¹⁸ It is noteworthy that both men bore the same *nisba* (last name denoting the origin) of the custom port of al-Burullus, which faced the brackish al-Burullus Lake in the northernmost part of the Nile Delta. It may have been a dispute between leading figures who shared the same local place of origin and lived in the provincial capital of Egypt. Furthermore, the family of the historian who tells this story also originated from al-Burullus,¹⁹ so it is conceivable that he had a special source of information because of geographical ties. ‘Abd al-Barr went to the Cairo Citadel and submitted a slanderous report against Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh to Yavuz Ali Paşa/‘Alī Bāshā al-Silaḥdār, the Ottoman governor of Egypt. While asserting his rights, ‘Abd al-Barr additionally stated that a portion of the proceeds from the grains (*ghilāl*) the provincial governorate (*dīwān*) had forced the merchants (*tujjār*) to purchase was still in Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh’s possession.²⁰ The details of this forced purchase (*tarḥ*) are obscure, but it would suggest that Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh played some mediating role in the grain policy of the governorate of the Egyptian province.

Upon receiving such an appeal, Yavuz Ali Paşa sent a detachment of men to Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh’s residence, confiscated all the property, furnishings, and goods there, and had them brought out on camels, mules, and asses to be sold at Sūq Khān al-Khalīlī. The merchant was in the rice milling business, and in addition to his rice holdings, all the oil and molasses in his warehouse inside the *wikāla* of Süleyman Paşa were confiscated by the governor. Moreover, his ships (*marākib*) were also confiscated and sold, and the date palms he owned in al-Burullus, which were of various types, were uprooted and sold. After all his property was thus forfeited and put up for sale, Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh was exiled to the Ottoman province of Algiers. Ibn al-‘Ajamī notes, “He descended from the citadel in a terrible state of iron fetters, and a group of his haters were staring at him.”²¹

¹⁸ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 82v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 227.

¹⁹ Hasebe, “Weighing Merchandise and Writing History,” pp. 54, 60–61.

²⁰ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fols. 82v–83r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 227.

²¹ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 83r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 227.

Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh remained in exile for a long time, eventually explaining his tribulations to the Ottoman governor of Algiers and gaining his full understanding. The governor honored him with two mamluks as attendants and treated him generously by dressing him in elegant broadcloths. Thus freed, Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh went to Istanbul, where he gained an audience with a certain wazir and complained about the incidents with Yavuz Ali Paşa in Egypt. As a result, an imperial edict (*amr khankārī*) was drawn up ordering the restitution of all his confiscated property from the Imperial Treasury (*māl al-khazīna al-‘āmira*) of the Egyptian province. To facilitate the implementation of this edict, a court gatekeeper (*qābjī min al-abwāb al-khankāriyya*) was sent to accompany him to Cairo. However, the governor of the Egyptian province at the time postponed the implementation of the edict. Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh ascended the citadel and repeated his demands many times, but he died shortly after, without having them met.²² His sudden death occurred on the 19th night of al-Muḥarram, 1015 AH/May 27, 1606.²³ The reason for the delay is left unclear, since the governor of Egypt at the time was Yemenli Hasan Paşa/Ḥasan Bāshā, whom Ibn al-‘Ajāmī had praised for his justice (*‘adl*) and fairness (*inṣāf*) when he had been the governor of Yemen.²⁴

Since Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh’s activities after his exile probably required considerable funds, we should assume he retained no small amount of property in some way, even though he had suffered the confiscation of most his property in Cairo. Apparently, the commercial network he had maintained prior to his exile was helpful in this regard.

According to Ibn al-‘Ajāmī’s additional notes, Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh had an unnamed successor, a scholar who studied at the Azhar Mosque. This successor was initially a Shafi’i, but he switched to the Hanafi school and moved to the al-Rūm region to seek the position of a qadi. Following a prolonged stay there, he became qadi of a city in the province of Yemen, and after his dismissal, he fulfilled the Hajj pilgrimage and died in Mecca. The historian tells of the family’s demise in Cairo, writing, “And their houses were ruined and their dwellings sold.”²⁵

In summary, there were two reasons such a detailed description was written by the historian about the *khawājā* merchant. First, Ibn al-‘Ajāmī grew up and worked as a merchandise weigher in Būlāq, the location of Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh’s commercial base. Second, the family origin of both the merchant and historian was al-Burullus,

²² *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 83rv; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 228. Ibn al-‘Ajāmī adds that Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh privately paid a certain amount of money to the court gatekeeper.

²³ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 181v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/2, p. 105.

²⁴ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 26r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 105.

²⁵ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fols. 83v–84r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 228.

one of the Mediterranean custom ports of the Nile Delta.

No. 2 al-Khawājā ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Burullusī (known as Ibn al-‘Āsī)

No. 3 al-Khawājā ‘Abd al-Qawī al-Burullusī (d. 1601)

Mabāhij al-ikhwān sheds additional light on the al-‘Āsī family’s great merchants. In his account of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Burullusī, the first imam of the Sinan Paşa Mosque, which became a landmark of Būlāq in the early Ottoman period, Ibn al-‘Ajāmī states that the sheikh obtained the position because of the intercession made by al-Khawājā ‘Abd al-Raḥmān to Sinan Paşa. Shaykh al-Burullusī was also a teacher (*mu’addib al-atfāl*) at the Qur’an school (*maktab*) established by al-Khawājā ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, but when his nephew (*ibn akhī-hi*), al-Khawājā ‘Abd al-Qawī, succeeded to the position of the superintendent of waqf of the school after al-Khawājā ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s death, a dispute soon arose between Shaykh al-Burullusī and ‘Abd al-Qawī, and the sheikh eventually lost both his jobs.²⁶ It should be noted here that the *khawājā* merchant of the main river port had the power to intercede with the Ottoman governor of Egypt for the appointment of the key position in the governor’s new, large mosque.

According to *Mabāhij al-ikhwān*, one night in 989 AH/1581–1582, thieves broke into ‘Abd al-Qawī’s residence. ‘Abd al-Qawī complained to then the governor of Egypt that police officer (*ṣāḥib al-darak*) al-Muqaddam Ḥasan had joined the thieves, and Ḥasan was eventually beheaded at the gate of the larger Wikālat al-Wazīr Sinān Bāshā in Būlāq. Ibn al-‘Ajāmī sympathetically points out that Ḥasan was a helpful police officer who would let a drunken person lying in the street be carried to his residence, and that he was less harmful to the residents of the port, and notes that ‘Abd al-Qawī was subsequently murdered.²⁷

The murder is described in the chronicle portion of *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* as follows:

On Sha‘bān 8 of the same year (1009 AH/February 2, 1601), al-Khawājā ‘Abd al-Qawī al-Burullusī, one of the *khawājāt* of Būlāq al-Qāhira, was murdered. He was the son of the brother of al-Khawājā ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-‘Āsī, the originator of the famous buildings in Būlāq al-Qāhira. He was killed in the late night in Ḥārat al-Ḥuṣur, between Būlāq and al-Qāhira. The aforementioned al-Khawājā Muḥammad ibn Dubb al-Hīsh was under suspicion for his murder,

²⁶ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 9v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 76. According to Ibn al-‘Ajāmī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s tomb was in the northern cemetery of Būlāq, called al-Būṣa (*Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 52r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 160.) Regarding al-Būṣa, see Hanna, *An Urban History of Būlāq*, p. 73, fig. 11.

²⁷ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 30v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 114.

but he was not guilty.²⁸

Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh may have been suspected because of the commercial rivalry between him and ‘Abd al-Qawī at the time, as both were outstanding traders at the river port.

Ibn al-‘Ajamī then describes the person who commissioned the murder and what happened to him. Specifically, a person named ‘Alī ibn al-Ghatwīr had urged a group from al-Sa‘ādina tribe to kill the trader for money. However, ‘Alī ibn al-Ghatwīr did not pay them the money he had promised, and shortly after, he was stabbed to death with a knife near the Zayn al-Dīn Ustādār Mosque. The root of these two killings was quarrels (*mushāhanāt wa mushājara*) between al-Khawājā ‘Abd al-Qawī and ‘Alī ibn al-Ghatwīr.²⁹

Ibn al-‘Ajamī relays hearsay information that his father saw ‘Alī ibn al-Ghatwīr carrying a sack (*tallis*) on his shoulder, walking along with a group of sack makers.³⁰ ‘Alī ibn al-Ghatwīr was born to a poor family in the town of Bisāt in al-Gharbiyya. He could recite the Qur’an from his youth. He then abandoned his sack manufacturing business and served as an official (*mubāshir*) of a certain *kāshif* of Fayyūm, where he succeeded in rising to the post of accountant of the Sultan’s granary (*istifā’ al-shuwan al-sulṭāniyya*). After resigning from the position, he established a residence and buildings in Būlāq. Ibn al-‘Ajamī criticizes this man of success for being crude and coarse and without humility, although he was blessed with wealth and offspring.³¹ Unfortunately, not a single detail is provided about the troubles that occurred between these two men who lived in the same port town: the upstart with ties to the Sultan’s granary and the wealthy merchant from the al-‘Āṣī family.

To add a bit more, Ibn al-‘Ajamī briefly mentions al-Khawājā ‘Abd al-Raḥmān in his description of al-Mu‘allim Aḥmad ibn al-Mu‘allim Yūsuf al-Farrārjī, the wealthy master craftsman of Būlāq who died on Rajab 4, 1016 AH/October 25, 1607, on the Hajj pilgrimage, as follows:

He (i.e., al-Mu‘allim Aḥmad) was one of the companions (*aqrān*) of al-Khawājā ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, known as Ibn al-‘Āṣī al-Burullusī, originator of khans (*wakā’il*) and appartements (*rubū’*) in Būlāq al-Qāhira.

²⁸ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 84r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 229.

²⁹ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 84rv; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, pp. 229–230.

³⁰ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 84v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 230. Regarding Ibn al-‘Ajamī’s cheesemaking father and his tragic death, see Hasebe, “Weighing Merchandise and Writing History,” pp. 47–49.

³¹ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 84v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 230.

Aḥmad, the master, whom Ibn al-‘Ajamī knew personally, was once a peddler of chickens, which he carried in a basket on his head, but he later amassed great wealth as a linseed and sesame seed oil presser (*mudawlib bi-ma‘āṣir*).³² We can glimpse here the connections of the prominent citizens of the growing port town, centering on Khawājā ‘Abd al-Raḥmān of the influential al-‘Āṣī family.

III. Two Khān al-Khalīlī-based *Khawājās* without Names Specified

Khān al-Khalīlī began as a commercial facility built by Mamluk Amir Jahārkas al-Khalīlī on the central-east part of al-Qāhira at the end of the 14th century. It was transformed as one of the sultan’s large-scale endowment properties through complete demolition and new construction by al-Ashraf Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī in 1511 during the late Mamluk period.³³ In the 17th and 18th centuries, it was also known as Khān al-Fisqiyya or Khān al-‘Ajam, and from the late 17th to the 19th century, as Khān al-Nuḥās.³⁴ It should be noted that the Khān al-Khalīlī mentioned in historical sources may refer to Khuṭṭ Khān al-Khalīlī, that is, Khān al-Khalīlī district which included this commercial building. According to Raymond’s research, at the end of the 17th century, the district ranked first among the five major commercial districts of al-Qāhira (Khān al-Khalīlī, al-Ghawriyya/Khān al-Ḥamzāwī, al-Azhar, al-Jamāliyya, and al-Ṣāgha) in terms of the total amount of the estate of the active merchants there.³⁵ Many Turkish merchants as well as a certain number of Iranian merchants were based there during the Mamluk period, while during the Ottoman period, the district deepened its character as a place of activity and residence for Turkish merchants and artisans; quite a few Iranian merchants worked there as well.³⁶ To cite one example, Ibn al-‘Ajamī, in his chronicle account of al-Muḥarram 1018 AH/April 1604, notes that the Turkish merchants (*tujjār al-arwām*) of Khān al-Khalīlī were ordered to offer their camels for the delivery of spices and henna when building materials were being

³² *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 272rv; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/2, p. 264. Ibn al-‘Ajamī also briefly explains the process of producing linseed oil in these pages.

³³ ‘Awaḍ al-Imām, “Awqāf al-Sultān al-Ghawrī”, in Sylvie Denoix, Jean-Charles Depaule, and Michel Tuchscherer (ed.), *Le Khan al-Khalili et ses environs: Un centre commercial et artisanal au Caire du XVIII^e au XX^e siècle*, 2 tomes, Le Caire: IFAO, 1999, tome 1, p. 32 (in Arabic); tome 2, Pl. 9, n. 42, Pl. 11.

³⁴ Denoix et al. (ed.), *Le Khan al-Khalili et ses environs*, tome 2, pp. 36–38.

³⁵ Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire*, tome 1, pp. 369–370. According to this estimate, the district fell to the third place in the second half of the 18th century, after al-Ghawriyya/ Khān al-Ḥamzāwī and al-Jamāliyya.

³⁶ Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire*, tome 2, pp. 468–469, 482.

transported for the ships involved in the Awqāf al-Dashā'ish and other imperial affairs.³⁷ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* has interesting descriptions of two *khawājā* merchants who operated in the district:

No. 4 A Supposed Indian *Khawājā* with a Warehouse in Khān al-Khalīlī (d. 1608)

Although Ibn al-‘Ajamī does not mention the name of this merchant, a specific description of him is provided. People said he was originally Indian (*Hindī al-aṣl*), but some believed he originated elsewhere. The huge inheritance of this *khawājā*, who kept a warehouse (*hāṣil*) in Khān al-Khalīlī, consisted of large quantities of spices and Indian fabrics (*al-aqmisha al-Hindiyya*), as well as spices and fabrics worth approximately 16,000 dinars, which arrived by ship after him for the collection of the tithe (*‘ushūr*), and cash amounting to 200,000 dinars. Although the historian’s description of the months around this period is insufficient, we can infer from the preceding and following accounts that he died between Dhu al-Ḥijja 1016 AH and Ṣafar 1017 AH/March–June 1608.³⁸ Such reference to late arrivals of his merchandises suggests he died not long after returning to Cairo from his business trip to the Red Sea. Regarding his warehouse, the first possibility is that it was a warehouse in Khān al-Khalīlī/Khān al-Fisqiyya, but it is not impossible that it could refer to a warehouse within the other khans that existed in the Khān al-Khalīlī district, such as Khān al-Ḥinnā, Khān al-Buṣuṭ, Khān al-Qahwa, and Khān al-Sabīl.³⁹ If he was an Indian merchant, he might have been able to speak Persian and facilitate business in the district, where no small number of Iranian merchants operated.

Despite these large assets, his clothes during his lifetime comprised white outer garments (*mallūṭa bayḍā’*) and thick underwear, and he lived a frugal lifestyle, with only three *nisfs* of daily personal consumption other than bread. According to information obtained by Ibn al-‘Ajamī from a person who knew the merchant when he was a sanctuary sojourner (*mujāwir*) in Mecca, he owned one male slave (*‘abd*), took a female slave (*jāriya*) purchased for 28 dinars as his wife, and “did not pay the prescribed alms (*zakāt*) that Allah had imposed on him, nor did he give voluntary alms

³⁷ *Ta’rīkh al-‘Uthmān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 39v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 2, p. 82. Regarding the Lesser and Greater Dashīsha Waqf, see Suraiya Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans: The Hajj under the Ottomans, 1517–1683*, London: Tauris, 1994, pp. 80–82; Ḥusām Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī, *al-‘Alāqāt al-Miṣriyya al-Ḥijāziyya fī al-qarn al-tāmin ‘ashar*, Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li’l-Kitāb, 1999, pp. 275–282.

³⁸ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 291r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/2, p. 294.

³⁹ For the location of these four *khans*, see Denoix et al. (ed.), *Le Khan al-Khalili et ses environs*, tome 2, Pl. 9, n. 43, n. 45, n. 38, n. 37.

(*ṣadaqat al-taṭawwuʿ*).”⁴⁰ This supposed Indian merchant, who had succeeded in amassing a fortune through long-distance trade between Cairo and the Indian Ocean world via the Red Sea, had a reputation in Cairo as a stingy person who never gave of his great wealth to charity. The lack of such Islamically significant religious activities may be the reason Ibn al-ʿAjamī, who was a Cairene civil historian of his time, did not find out his name.

The merchant left behind a young son born to the above-mentioned female slave, but the Ottoman governor of Egypt, in the name of Bayt al-Māl (*ʿalā ism bayt al-māl*), that is, the Department of Estate Administration of the Egyptian province, seized his inheritance and left nothing to the orphan.⁴¹ After the Islamic year 994/1585–1586, the portion of Bayt al-Māl revenues coming from those who died naturally without heirs was turned over to the governor.⁴² It is unclear whether he had completed recognition of the female slave’s child, but the concluding prayer sentence by Ibn al-ʿAjamī appears to suggest it was an unjust deprivation.⁴³

No. 5 An Iranian *Khawājā* with a Store in Khān al-Khalīlī

In late Ṣafar 1019 AH/May 1610, a store (*dukkān*) belonging to “an Iranian *khawāja* (*shakḥ khawājā Aʿjamī*)” in Sūq Khān al-Khalīlī was robbed. He claimed to have lost 4,000 gold dinars. The chief of police (*ṣāhib al-shurṭa*) therefore investigated the store, arrested the four gatekeepers working in Khān al-Khalīlī and the *wikālas* located there, and flogged and fined them, but ultimately could not trace the stolen gold coins.⁴⁴ It is remarkable that the investigative method of capturing gatekeepers in the case of theft was already practiced in Cairo during the early modern period. Incidentally, during the same month, thieves also broke into two warehouses of Wikālat Süleyman Paşa in Būlāq, killing Salīm ibn Zullīq al-Burullusī, owner of one of the warehouses, and his slave, who were there, as well as a gatekeeper, so Ibn al-ʿAjamī laments the inadequacy of the police.⁴⁵

These two *khawājā* merchants embodied the “Eastern character” with which *Khutt* Khān al-Khalīlī was imbued. The fact that their names are unknown would also

⁴⁰ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 291rv; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/2, pp. 294–295.

⁴¹ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 291v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/2, p. 295.

⁴² Stanford J. Shaw, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt 1517–1798*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962, pp. 177–178.

⁴³ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 291v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/2, p. 295.

⁴⁴ *Taʾriḫ al-ʿUthmān* (Gotha Ms), fols. 80v–81r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 2, p. 159. A candidate for this Iranian merchant who fits the time frame is al-Khawājā ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn Murād al-ʿAjamī, who was the “leading merchant of the merchants (*ʿayn aʿyān al-tujjār*)” of Khān al-Khalīlī. See Sulaymān Ḥassānayn, *Tujjār al-Qāhira*, p. 89.

⁴⁵ *Taʾriḫ al-ʿUthmān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 80v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 2, pp. 158–159.

appear to indicate that Ibn al-‘Ajāmī was unfamiliar with this highly foreign commercial space within Ottoman Cairo.

IV. A Maghribi *Khawājā* Based in Ibn Ṭūlūn District

The Ibn Ṭūlūn district had been home to people from the Maghrib since the Mamluk period, mainly because of the pilgrimage to the Hijaz, and the market there played a leading role in their commercial activities in Ottoman Cairo, serving as a place to trade in Maghrib products. The merchants of the district formed a single and strong guild (*tā’ifat al-tujjār bi-Sūq Ṭūlūn*) that monopolized the sale of woolen fabrics called *ahrima* in Cairo, and the heads (*shuyūkh*) and agents (*wukalā’*) of the guild continued to be influential throughout the Ottoman period.⁴⁶ Every large commercial building in the district was built by Maghribi merchants.⁴⁷ The *Maghāriba* communities in the district, predominantly those with origins in Ottoman Tunisia (about 45%), including Tunis, Sfax, and Djerba Island, and those with origins in Ottoman Tripolitania (about 20%), played important roles in the olive trade.⁴⁸ The number of Maghribis from Morocco, especially Fez, flowing into and settling in Cairo increased from around 1712, and a number of prominent Fez merchant families, like the al-Sharā’ibī family, emerged successively. They established bases in al-Ghawriyya and al-Faḥḥāmīn in the center of al-Qāhira, which attracted Tunisian merchants from the Ibn Ṭūlūn district to move there.⁴⁹ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* has unique hearsay information written down about the following *khawājā* who was based in the district:

⁴⁶ ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *al-Maghāriba fī Miṣr fī al-‘aṣr al-‘Uthmānī (1517–1798): Dirāsa fī ta’thīr al-jāliya al-Maghribiyya min khilāl wathā’iq al-mahākīm al-shar’iyya al-Miṣriyya*, Tunis: Idārat al-Majalla al-Ta’rīkhiyya al-Maghribiyya, 1982, p. 65; Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire*, tome 2, p. 507; ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī, *al-‘Ā’ila wa al-tharwa*, pp. 265–266, 320–321.

⁴⁷ ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī, *al-‘Ā’ila wa al-tharwa*, pp. 359, 370. See also Paul M. Love, Jr., *Ottoman Ibadis in Cairo: A History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024, which is a groundbreaking study of Wikālat al-Jāmūs in the district, an important center of the Ibadī networks that extended from the Maghrib to the Arabian Peninsula. Meanwhile, Maghribi people also contributed significantly to the economic development of the Ṣalība district, which is adjacent to the Ibn Ṭūlūn district. See ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī, *al-‘Ā’ila wa al-tharwa*, p. 369.

⁴⁸ ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī, *al-‘Ā’ila wa al-tharwa*, pp. 31–32, 46–47, 56–57.

⁴⁹ ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī, *al-‘Ā’ila wa al-tharwa*, pp. 32–33, 85, 321. Regarding the al-Sharā’ibī family, the most prominent *khawāja* family in Cairo during the late 17th and early 18th centuries, see ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī, *al-‘Ā’ila wa al-tharwa*, pp. 91–99.

No. 6 al-Khawājā Sa‘īd al-Maghribī (d. 1607)

Ibn al-‘Ajamī writes the following of this merchant: “he was the wealthiest man in Cairo, and there was no one among the Maghribis (*fī jins al-Maghārība*) who had more than he did,” and the historian further details that people said his inheritance was about 100,000 or 200,000 dinars of gold, apart from spices and commodities. However, his lifestyle is described as extremely frugal, and his dress was so thrifty that “no one who saw him would recognize him as one of the *khawājās*.” Sa‘īd al-Maghribī died on al-Muḥarram 18, 1016 AH/May 15, 1607.⁵⁰ He had warehouses (*ḥawāṣil*) in Khān al-Khalīlī and Khān al-Ḥamzāwī in al-Qāhira, and even in Wikālat Süleyman Paşa, also known as al-Wikāla al-Sukkāriyya in Būlāq, for storing spices and cloths imported from Yemen, India, and other countries.⁵¹

After Sa‘īd al-Maghribī’s death, a tax farmer (*multazim*) for Bayt al-Māl seized his estate and prevented his brother and wife from inheriting it, which caused problems. Although the name of the tax farmer is not mentioned by the historian, his brother complained to Shaykh al-Islām ‘Abd al-Jabbār Efendi, chief judge of Egypt (*qāḍī al-‘askar bi-Miṣr*) regarding the matter at hand. However, the chief judge did not handle the matter himself but instead sought the ruling of the Ottoman governor of the province, Yemenli Hasan Paşa. The governor would not take up the case, and Sa‘īd al-Maghribī’s brother petitioned the chief judge again and again. In the end, through the chief judge’s intercession to the tax farmer, the brother and wife could obtain their inheritance. Ibn al-‘Ajamī laments that such deprivations against merchants (*tujjār*) who have left large fortunes “in the manner of the sherif rulers of Mecca (*‘alā ṭarīqat al-ashrāf ḥukkām Makka*)” have come to occur in Egypt as well.⁵²

As in the case of No. 4 (a supposed Indian *khawājā* of Khān al-Khalīlī), in this instance as well, Bayt al-Māl was involved in the confiscation of the estate of a leading merchant. If the Ottoman governor of Egypt at the time routinely confiscated property through Bayt al-Māl or its tax farmers without regard to the heirs, as was pointed out in the case of No. 4, then the chief judge’s decision to settle the case through “intercession” to the tax farmer rather than officially ruling the case as illegal would be understandable in the context of the judge’s conciliatory and non-confrontational attitude toward the provincial governor. Although the brother’s persistence in not accepting deprivation and continuing his appeal was successful, the responses of the chief judge and the tax farmer in this case were, rather, ones of reluctance. Ibn al-‘Ajamī’s critical account of the case is valuable in that it highlights

⁵⁰ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fols. 229v–230r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/2, p. 192.

⁵¹ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 230rv; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/2, p. 193.

⁵² *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 230r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/2, p. 193.

one of the significant problems of the period: the rampant political injustice of the illegal seizure of wealthy merchants' estates or the difficulty of inheritance by their surviving family members.

We do not find anyone who exactly fits the description of this Sa'īd al-Maghribī in 'Abd al-Mu'ī's extremely detailed study of the prominent Maghribi merchant families of Ottoman Egypt. The timing of their activities, the size of their assets, and the fact that they were based in the Ibn Ṭūlūn district, for example, draw our attention to the Amghārs, who originated in the Iberian Peninsula and emigrated to Cairo via Djerba, Sfax, Alexandria, and Rosetta. However, Sa'īd of the same family died in 1588, so he was not this merchant.⁵³

Ibn al-'Ajamī also notes an interesting account of Sa'īd al-Maghribī's successor (*khalaḥ*) elsewhere in his chronicle. It is the following description of Öküz Mehmed Paşa, the renowned governor of Egypt who fell ill, in al-Muḥarram 1019/ May–June 1610:

In the same month, Mehmed Paşa sent a messenger to ask a successor of al-Khawājā Sa'īd al-Maghribī, who was one of the merchants (*tujjār*) of Sūq al-Jāmi' al-Ṭūlūnī, to examine him for his illness. This was because the governor believed that he knew about psychic art (*'ilm al-rūḥānī*). So, the man went up to the governor, examined his condition and told him that he was suffering from witchcraft and that it could be removed from him. This is a baseless lie, and his illness was from Allāh, the Exalted.⁵⁴

We can see that the merchant's scion was known at the time as a psychic, but what is also important here is that the description confirms that al-Khawājā Sa'īd al-Maghribī was a merchant based in the market of the Ibn Ṭūlūn district.

V. Seven Other *Khawājās*

In addition to the above, Ibn al-'Ajamī notes the following seven *khawājās* based in Cairo:

⁵³ 'Abd al-Mu'ī, *al-'Ā'ila wa al-tharwa*, pp. 64–66, 144–145. It is also somewhat concerning that there was a member of the Amghār family named "Sa'īd" before him, and apparently, it was one of the preferred names of the family. On the other hand, the Sa'īd al-Maghribī described by Ibn al-'Ajamī might be the same person as Sa'īd ibn Muḥammad al-Maghribī, one of the great merchants whom Ḥassānayn briefly mentions, relying on the court registers of Bāb al-'Ālī. See Ḥassānayn, *Tujjār al-Qāhira*, p. 88.

⁵⁴ *Ta'rīkh āl 'Uthmān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 84r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 2, p. 166.

No. 7 al-Khawājā Ismā‘īl al-Ḥimṣī (known as Abū Ṭāqīyya)

Hanna’s in-depth monograph of this famous figure from a large merchant family that moved from Homs to Cairo reveals his career, commercial operations, trading networks, personal connections and partnership, extended family and household structure, relations with the provincial ruling powers, and contributions to district formation in Cairo.⁵⁵ Although it is a very significant research achievement that demonstrates the usefulness of Ottoman court registers in the studies of merchants, Ibn al-‘Ajamī’s narrative, based on contemporaneous hearsay information, also provides some new detail about the great *khawājā*.

According to Ibn al-‘Ajamī, Ismā‘īl Abū Ṭāqīyya began construction of the “two elegant *wikālas*” in 1018 AH/1609–1610. Both *wikālas* contained warehouses (*ḥawāṣīl*), floors (*ṭibāq*), two apartments (*rab ‘ayn*), and shops (*ḥawānīt*). He also built a new structure there, with a cistern (*ṣīhrīj*) on the first floor and a school (*maktab*) for orphans (*aytām*) on the second, and a teacher (*mu ‘addib*) and an assistant (*‘arīf*) were employed at the school and paid a monthly salary. The historian also mentions that “this place became a famous market (*sūq mashhūr*).”⁵⁶ Spices and various types of fabrics were brought to both *wikālas*, and one of the shops in the market was prepared for the weigher of these items. These fabrics included one type called “*qaysiyyāt*,” which was brought from Nāhiyat Imbāba in Giza and other places, fabric from Rūm region (*qumāsh Rūmī*), and linen fabric sold in the market.⁵⁷ Ibn al-‘Ajamī mentions that in 1010 A.H./ 1601–1602, a group of fabric merchants (*jamā‘a al-bazzāzīn*) had already moved their base to the building (*‘imāra*) of Abū Ṭāqīyya.⁵⁸ In addition, those construction sites had long been dusty, dilapidated properties, but when the two above-mentioned *wikālas*, which were the waqf properties of the al-Mansūrī Hospital, were newly built, the neighborhood became a safe place, and many Jews began to reside in the area.⁵⁹ This point is important in the history of the formation of Jewish settlements in the central-western part of al-Qāhira.

Further in *Mabāhij al-ikhwān*, it is mentioned that in Ṣafar 1016 AH/May–June 1607, Ṭu‘ayma ibn Ḥammād al-Burullusī, chief (*ra‘īs*) of the five-member grain and agricultural product trading group (*jamā‘a*) in Cairo known by the name of “al-

⁵⁵ Hanna, *Making Big Money in 1600*. See also Nillī Ḥannā, *Tujjār al-Qāhira fī al-‘aṣr al-‘Uthmānī: Sīrat Abī Ṭāqīyya shāhbandar al-tujjār*, Cairo: Dār al-Miṣriyya al-Lubnāniyya, 1997, the Arabic translation of the book by Ra‘ūf ‘Abbās Ḥamid.

⁵⁶ *Ta’rīkh āl ‘Uthmān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 59v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 2, p. 120. See also *Ta’rīkh āl ‘Uthmān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 45r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 2, p. 92 for information on the location of this urban structure.

⁵⁷ *Ta’rīkh āl ‘Uthmān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 59v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 2, p. 120.

⁵⁸ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fols. 104v–105r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, pp. 270–271.

⁵⁹ *Ta’rīkh āl ‘Uthmān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 59v–60r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 2, p. 120.

Huzābah,” was imprisoned for a long time because he failed to repay a debt from Ismā‘īl Abū Ṭāqīyya, and was later released.⁶⁰ This example gives us a glimpse of Abū Ṭāqīyya’s financing business, which is also information unique to this historical source.

No. 8 al-Khawājā Ibn al-Uḥaymar

Although reconstructing the life history of this merchant is impossible, Ibn al-‘Ajamī briefly notes an incident at his house. In Sha‘bān 1018 AH/October–November 1609, a male domestic slave (*‘abd*) murdered his mistress (*sayyida*) in the house. As a background of the incident, the historian points out that many murders and misdeeds occurred in Cairo during those days.⁶¹ The murderer was captured, dragged around the city on a camel, and executed at al-Sab‘ Qā‘āt in Ramaḍān of the Islamic year/November–December 1609.⁶² The murder appears to have resulted from a domestic dispute within his household, but unfortunately, the details of the incident are unclear, as the location of his house in Cairo.

No. 9 al-Khawājā Ibn Abī Ṣibgh

According to Ibn al-‘Ajamī’s account, on Dhu al-Qa‘da 12, 1018 AH/February 6, 1610, a slave (*‘abd*) of this merchant trespassed into al-Ṣāgha, the gold and silver trade district, for the purpose of theft and stabbed the gatekeeper (*bawwāb*) to death with a knife when the latter noticed what had happened. The police officer (*ṣāhib al-darak*) caught the criminal slave, and after questioning by the police director (*ṣāhib al-shurṭa*), they also arrested his master, al-Khawājā Ibn Abī Ṣibgh. Ibn Abī Ṣibgh (“Son of the father of dyeing”) was immediately released after paying a fine of 200 or 300 dinars, but the next day, the slave was executed by hanging at the gate of al-Ṣāgha.⁶³ Although the merchant would have been held accountable for his management as the household head, this was also a case where it could be inferred that there was a problem with the treatment of domestic slaves in the household.

Thus, the above two cases provide glimpses into the dark side of the living conditions of the slaves who were members, albeit of the lowest level, of the rich households of the *khawājā* merchants in those days.

⁶⁰ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fols. 235v–236v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/2, pp. 203–204. It should be noted that the *nisba* of the chief was again “al-Burullūsī.”

⁶¹ *Ta’rīkh āl ‘Uthmān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 61r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 2, p. 123.

⁶² *Ta’rīkh āl ‘Uthmān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 63v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 2, p. 127. al-Sab‘ Qā‘āt appears to have been located on the western side of al-Ṣāgha in al-Qāhira.

⁶³ *Ta’rīkh āl ‘Uthmān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 66r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 2, p. 131. Al-Shūrbajī, the editor, deciphers the merchant’s name as “ابن ابي صبع,” but we ought to read it as “ابن ابي صبع.”

No. 10 al-Khawājā ‘Abd al-Mun‘im al-Bisāṭī

In Rabī‘ I 1019 AH/May–June 1610, according to information obtained by Ibn al-‘Ajamī, al-Khawājā ‘Abd al-Mun‘im al-Bisāṭī, the head of the merchants in Cairo (*shāh bandar al-tujjār bi’l-Qāhira*) had an employee in the Alexandria port who was indebted to him, so he went there to claim his rights. However, he was denied, and both men sued the chief qadi of the Islamic court of the port (*afandī al-thaghr*). The employee stated that ‘Abd al-Mun‘im was spreading rumors of the death of Öküz Mehmed Paşa, Ottoman governor of Egypt at the time. Such contents were written in a deed (*hujja*) and report (*maḥḍar*) and sent to Cairo. Upon receiving information about the lawsuit, Öküz Mehmed Paşa summoned ‘Abd al-Mun‘im, who had returned to Cairo, and ordered him expelled from Cairo. Ibn al-‘Ajamī notes that he did not know where ‘Abd al-Mun‘im was expelled to.⁶⁴ Thus, the leader of Cairo’s distant trades was exiled after a court battle over the existence of debts at the international Mediterranean port, which appears to have been one of his commercial bases. It can be assumed that the great merchant who travelled all the way to Alexandria had reason to demand repayment of his debts. Regardless, this case was an example of the administrative collaboration between the qadi of the local main court and the governor of Egypt and of how even a particularly prominent *khawājā* could be easily banished because of an accusation concerning the obituary of the current governor who was still alive.

Sulaymān Ḥassānayn only briefly mentions this *khawājā* merchant who bore the highest honorary title of *shāh bandar* and seems to have originated from Bisāṭ (Busāt) in al-Daqahliyya region of the Nile Delta⁶⁵ and there has been no detailed study about him. Comprehensive research of this notable merchant, utilizing the various Islamic court registers of Ottoman Cairo, would be well possible and much needed.

No. 11 al-Khawājā Aḥmad (known as Ibn Kayta)

In Rabī‘ II, 1017 AH/July–August 1608, news reached Cairo from Bandar al-Suways (the Suez port) that two flat-bottomed vessels (*jalbatayn*) bound for Mecca with many passengers had sunk. One of them was Ibn Kayta’s vessel, which sank with his children (*awlād-hu*), members of his household (*‘iyāl-hu*), and the goods he intended to sell in Mecca. Ibn al-‘Ajamī notes that he did not come from a family of wealthy

⁶⁴ *Ta’rīkh al-‘Uthmān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 84rv; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 2, p. 166.

⁶⁵ Ḥassānayn, *Tujjār al-Qāhira*, p. 88.

merchants, and he initially sold sycamores (*jummayz*) on the streets of Cairo.⁶⁶ This *khawājā* merchant, who had risen from the bottom in one generation, owned a *jalba* ship specifically for the Red Sea, used it to engage in trade between Egypt and the Hijaz, and lost his precious family members and merchandise all at once in a maritime accident in the treacherous waters.

No. 12 al-Khawājā Yaḥyā al-Zarqānī

Ibn al-‘Ajāmī reports that this merchant had a great house (*bayt ‘azīm*) in “Kafr al-Azbakiyya” which was urbanized around the turn of the 17th century, and next to it was the residence of a secretary of the provincial governor’s office.⁶⁷ While the area around the Azbakiyya Pond was transformed into a new and comfortable residential district during the Ottoman period,⁶⁸ we cannot find in *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* any description of how this merchant, whose family origin seems to have been in al-Zarqā near Damietta, came to establish his residential base there. However, information on his commercial activities can be found in *Mabāhij al-ikhwān*, albeit a limited amount. In Jumādā II 1010 AH/ November–December 1601, his shop (*ḥānūt*) in Sūq al-Sharb, located in al-Qāhira, which had 1,000 gold dinars in cash besides the fabrics (*aqmisha*), was looted.⁶⁹

No. 13 al-Khawājā ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ṣarrāf

In Jumādā II 1017 AH/September–October 1608, this merchant, who appears to have been a money changer (*ṣarrāf*) and therefore most likely involved in the financial business as well, ordered the rebuilding of a cistern (*ṣihrīj*) facing the al-Daylamī Mosque, located at the bottom of al-Kharrūbī’s tomb in the al-Qarāfa al-Ṣughrā cemetery south-west of the Cairo citadel. The old cistern at this location was dilapidated, but water drawn from the Ḥabash Pond by a scoop wheel (*sāqiya*) and

⁶⁶ *Ta’rīkh āl ‘Uthmān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 15r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 2, p. 36. Regarding *jalba*, see Dionisius A. Agius, *Classic Ships of Islam: From Mesopotamia to the Indian Ocean*, Leiden: Brill, 2008, pp. 316–320.

⁶⁷ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 42v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 142. Regarding the urbanization of “Kafr al-Azbakiyya,” see Fumihiko Hasebe, “Urban Growth in the Western Outskirts of al-Qāhira around the Turn of the 17th Century: Some New Observations Based on Ibn al-‘Ajāmī’s Descriptions,” *Al-Madaniyya: Keio Bulletin of Middle Eastern and Asian Urban History*, vol. 3 (2024), pp. 103–108.

⁶⁸ Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya and Its Environs from Azbak to Isma‘il, 1476–1879*, Cairo: IFAO, 1985, pp. 37–69.

⁶⁹ *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 79v; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 220. Regarding Sūq al-Sharb, which was a textile market located in the central-south part of al-Qāhira, see Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire*, tome 1, pp. 274–275.

guided by a conduit now reached this new cistern. Ibn al-‘Ajamī prays for Allah’s reward for him and notes that during the same year, he had also rebuilt another cistern nearby that had fallen into disrepair.⁷⁰ The case illustrates an aspect of the charitable activities of *khawājā* merchants in the al-Qarāfa cemetery area, which was crowded with numerous sacred mausoleums and tombs.

VI. Concluding Remarks

We have focused on and discussed the *khawājā* merchants of Cairo who are described by Ibn al-‘Ajamī.⁷¹ Although the amount of information about each of the 13 featured merchants differs considerably, and even the names of two *khawājās* are unknown, the following points can be noted as conclusory remarks:

First, except for Abū Ṭāqiyya, the birthplaces and exact family origins of these merchants cannot be determined, since it involves judgment by *nisba*, the name of origin that may indicate the place of origin of a distant ancestor, or there is insufficient information. However, it could be pointed out that there was ample diversity, since they appear to have been originally from Egypt (Nos. 1, 2, 3, 10, and 12), Maghrib (No. 6), Syria (No. 7), India (No. 4), Iran (No. 5), and unknown locations (Nos. 8, 9, 11, and 13). Regarding those who appear to have originated from Egypt, all their family origins were in the Nile Delta. This aspect might be due in part to their selection by Ibn al-‘Ajamī, who had familial ties to al-Burullus and had been based in the port of Būlāq, which had close ties to the Nile Delta.

Regarding the trade goods of the *khawājās*, in addition to coffee and spices from the Red Sea and Indian Ocean world, and Indian and other textiles, we can identify rice, molasses, oil, and grains from Egypt. It is worth noting that al-Khawājā Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh, who was probably also involved in the production of dates, traded in Egyptian

⁷⁰ *Ta’rikh āl ‘Uthmān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 25r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 2, p. 55. The historian frequented al-Qarāfa, and no doubt had intimate knowledge of the cemetery. Regarding Ibn al-‘Ajamī as a member of a diligent pilgrim group to al-Qarāfa, begin with Hasebe, “Weighing Merchandise and Writing History,” pp. 28, 31 note 15.

⁷¹ Other *khawājās* that Ibn al-‘Ajamī mentions briefly, but we have been unable to determine as Cairene merchants because of lack of information, are 1) al-Khawājā Ibn Muṭahhar, who was slandered by an official of Bayt al-Māl, overturned the slander and finally won, 2) al-Khawājā ‘Abd al-Laṭīf, whose son died while returning from the Hajj pilgrimage, and 3) al-Khawājā al-Shujā’ī, whose slave died in the same accident. See *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fols. 174v, 183v–184r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/2, pp. 90, 109. As for the *khawājā* based in another Egyptian city, the historian mentions the endowed lands of al-Khawājā Ibn ‘Ibād Allāh in the villages (‘*izab*) near Rosetta. See *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 27v; *Ta’rikh āl ‘Uthmān* (Gotha Ms), fol. 29r; *Mabāhij al-ikhwān* (Cairo), vol. 1/1, p. 108, vol. 2, p. 63.

agricultural produce and its processed products. The elucidation of his personal and family history, which showed a large geographical expansion in the Ottoman empire, will provide us a *khawājā* merchant typology that is quite different from that of Abū Ṭāqiyya's. A close examination should be made of Ibn Dubb al-Hīsh using Islamic court registers of Būlāq, which was the base of his commercial activities.

Regarding charitable projects, we confirmed the founding and management of Qur'an schools for orphans and children (Nos. 2, 3, and 7) and the reconstruction of water storage facilities in the sacred cemetery area (No. 13). However, there is also an example of a merchant who amassed great wealth but did not practice obligatory and voluntary Islamic charity (No. 4). It seems a bit odd that such a wealthy merchant who was conspicuously stingy retained the title of *khawājā* in the cosmopolitan commercial city.

In terms of interpersonal and political relationships, one *khawājā* formed a cooperative relationship with a wealthy craftsman in Cairo (No. 2), while another had a dispute with an influential citizen, demonstrating a negative turn (No. 1), and some *khawājās* faced hardships resulting from criminal damage (Nos. 3 and 5) and crimes committed by domestic slaves they owned (Nos. 8 and 9). In addition, there was a risk of property confiscation by the provincial regime (No. 1) and, even with an apparent heir, the political power could take the estate through Bayt al-Māl (Nos. 4 and 6). Note that such illegal pursuit of the provincial governor's interest during this period remains an important research topic, which we must explore as much as possible.

In general, the descriptive history written by Ibn al-ʿAjamī does not provide us many details on the inner workings of *khawājās*' commercial operations, but the cases involving financing and collections (Nos. 7, 10, and 13?) deserve particular attention. Guided by the leading considerations of the Maghribi merchants by ʿAbd al-Muʿī, which shed light on such aspects,⁷² a further multifaceted and comprehensive study of *khawājās*' financing activities, using Islamic court registers, is much needed and is essential for considering the distinctive features of merchant capitalism in Ottoman Egypt, and by extension, in the Middle East during the early modern era.

⁷² ʿAbd al-Muʿī, *al-ʿĀʾila wa al-tharwa*, pp. 174–177.