



# On Generosity

The  
*Ḥilyat al-kuramā'*  
of Ibn Abī al-ʿĪd

Introduced, edited, and translated by  
Antonella Ghersetti

Resources in Arabic and Islamic Studies

# ON GENEROSITY

# RESOURCES IN ARABIC AND ISLAMIC STUDIES

*series editors*

Joseph E. Lowry  
Devin J. Stewart  
Shawkat M. Toorawa

*international advisory board*

Maaïke van Berkel  
Monique Bernards  
Kristen Brustad  
Antonella Ghersetti  
Emi Goto  
Ruba Kana'an  
Wen-chin Ouyang  
Tahera Qutbuddin  
Nora K. Schmid

Number 13

On Generosity: The *Ḥilyat al-kuramā'* of Ibn Abī al-ʿĪd

ON GENEROSITY  
THE *ḤILYAT AL-KURAMĀ'* OF IBN ABĪ AL-ʿĪD

*Introduced, edited, and translated by*  
ANTONELLA GHERSETTI

‡ LOCKWOOD PRESS

Columbus, Georgia

2025

# ON GENEROSITY: THE *ḤILYAT AL-KURAMĀ'* OF IBN ABĪ AL-ʿĪD

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by means of any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act or in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to Lockwood Press, P.O. Box 1080, Columbus, GA 31902, USA.

© 2025, Lockwood Press

ISBN 978-1-948488-69-3

Cover design by Susanne Wilhelm.

Cover image: Drawing of a meal in the Maqâmât of Aboû Moḥammad al-Qâsim ibn ʿAlî al-Ḥarîrî. Jpbrigand2, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

## Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ibn Abî al-ʿĪd al-Mālikî, active 15th century, author. | Ghersetti, Antonella, editor, translator. | Ibn Abî al-ʿĪd al-Mālikî, active 15th century. *Ḥilyat al-kuramā' wa-bahjat al-nudamā'*. | Ibn Abî al-ʿĪd al-Mālikî, active 15th century. *Ḥilyat al-kuramā' wa-bahjat al-nudamā'*. English

Title: On generosity : the *Ḥilyat al-Kuramā'* of Ibn Abî al-ʿĪd / introduced, edited, and translated by Antonella Ghersetti.

Description: Columbus, Georgia : Lockwood Press, [2025] | Series: Resources in Arabic and Islamic studies ; Number 13 | Translation of: *Ḥilyat al-kuramā' wa-bahjat al-nudamā'*. | Includes bibliographical references and indexes. | Text in English. Translation from Arabic. | Summary: "In Arabic-Islamic culture, generosity is held in the very highest regard and descriptions of charity, hospitality, and largesse are consequently an important component of Arabic literature. The Egyptian judge and man of letters, Ibn Abi al-ʿId al-Sakhawi al-Maliki, who lived in Cairo and Medina in the ninth/fifteenth century and who practiced charity his whole life, compiled a work titled the *Hilyat al-Kurama'*, literally "The Ornament of the Magnanimous." The *Hilyat al-Kurama'* includes aphorisms, poems, and anecdotes about benevolent individuals whose generosity is exemplified by the gifts and money they lavished on others and by the many ways they provided aid to the needy. *On Generosity* comprises an introductory study on the work and its author, the first reliable and critical edition of the Arabic text, an annotated English translation, and glossaries designed to make the text more accessible to nonspecialists"— Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2024058232 (print) | LCCN 2024058233 (ebook) | ISBN 9781948488693 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781948488709 (adobe pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Generosity—Literary collections. | LCGFT: Sayings. | Poetry. | Anecdotes.

Classification: LCC PJ7760.I1316 H5513 2025 (print) | LCC PJ7760.I1316 (ebook) | DDC 892.7/14—dc23/eng/20250101

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024058232>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024058233>

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

# Contents

Series Editors' Preface	vii
Acknowledgments	ix
Sigla	x
Introduction	1
Arabic Text	
Prologue	35
Chapter One	41
Chapter Two	61
Chapter Three	70
Chapter Four	83
Chapter Five	107
“In Praise of the Variant”	109
English Translation	
Prologue	115
Chapter One	123
Chapter Two	153
Chapter Three	167
Chapter Four	185
Chapter Five	211
Bibliography	215
Index of Quranic <i>Sūras</i>	225
Index of Personal Names	225
Index of Group Names	227
Index of Place Names	228



## Series Editors' Preface

In over a hundred twenty-five articles, monographs, edited collections, editions, and translations, in Italian, French, and English, in her countless presentations at universities and conferences the world over, and through her forward-looking editorship of *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, Professor Antonella Ghersetti has been at the forefront of the study of medieval Arabic literature. Her consideration of physiognomy (*fīrāsa*) when thinking about *adab* in all its significations is but one example of her pioneering scholarship. Indeed, she has broadened and deepened our understanding of *adab*, both as a concept and as a corpus. She explored the concept of *adab* with great finesse in her study, *La letteratura d'adab* (Rome, Istituto per l'Oriente C. A. Nallino, 2021), and, together with Mirella Cassarino, Letizia Osti, and Samuela Pagani, displayed the richness of the *adab* corpus, in the magisterial and magnificently curated collection of translated selections, *Antologia della letteratura araba. Dalle origini al XVIII secolo* (Rome: Carocci, 2024).

We are honored, therefore—and delighted—that she has chosen to publish in our series her meticulous edition and translation of Ibn Abī l-ʿĪd's *Ḥilyat al-kuramāʾ*, an anthology devoted to the subject of generosity. Al-Saḥāwī describes his colleague Ibn Abī l-ʿĪd as an accomplished scholar and a person of integrity, modesty, generosity, and warmth; there could be no better description of our own friend and colleague, Antonella Ghersetti.

Joseph E. Lowry  
Devin J. Stewart  
Shawkat M. Toorawa



## Acknowledgments

The project of working on this book started several years ago when I was on research leave in Liège. There, thanks to Frédéric Bauden, who was preparing the handlist of the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish manuscripts in the University Library, I first became acquainted with a work titled *Ḥilyat al-kuramāʾ wa-bahğat al-nudamāʾ*. Though very promising, it was completely unknown to me. The fact that it seemed to represent an interesting specimen of a typical monothematic *adab* anthology, and that it was still unpublished, seemed a good reason for me to embark on further research. The copy preserved in the library of the University Library in Liège, as I discovered later, was not the only extant one, and the authorship of the work presented an ambiguity deserving inquiry. While I was trying to locate all the extant copies of the work and obtain microfilms, I started investigating the issue of authorship. I presented the first results of my research—the identification of the author, whose renown was far from widespread, and a sketch of his biography—at the “16th Colloquium on the History of Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras (10th–15th Centuries),” held at the University of Ghent in 2007. My textual journey with the *Ḥilyat al-kuramāʾ* dates from then and lasted longer than I would have wished. The time necessary to obtain all the copies that I needed as well as the difficulty of dealing in a reasonable way with the large spectrum of textual variants that characterizes the different manuscripts both in terms of content and wording obliged me to slow down the work.

The preparation of this book has greatly benefited from the generous hospitality of two institutions. The first is the Regenstein Library of the University of Chicago where, during the summers of 2013 and 2016, I spent months digging into one of the richest collections of Arabic sources available to scholars. The friendly assistance of Marlis Saleh, responsible for the library collections in Middle Eastern Studies, was instrumental for my research: to her goes all my gratitude. The second is the Annemarie Schimmel Kolleg “History and Society during the Mamluk Era (1250-1517),” Centre for Advanced Studies, University of Bonn, that for the first six months of 2019 offered me an extremely favorable environment to finalize my work, supported by a lively exchange of ideas and discussions. I thank its scientific coordinator, Abdelkader Al Ghouz and all the staff for their friendly support.

A book is often a collective enterprise, in that scholars seldom work alone and in isolation from a wider scholarly context. This book is no exception, and during its preparation, I was able to rely on the support and counsel of colleagues and the help of friends.

I therefore wish to thank the colleagues who gave me advice, offered precious remarks, or shared with me the materials they are working on. I express my deep gratitude to Mr. Ahmed Abbaoui (Paris) who kindly helped me obtain a copy of the two manuscripts in the Adab Taymūr collection at Dār al-Kutub in Cairo. Oriana Capezio's deep knowledge of prosody has been precious when dealing with the meters of poems in some tricky cases, and I cannot thank her enough for her patience. A warm thanks also goes to Paulina Lewicka, who graciously shared with me some folios of *Taḍkirat ulī l-albāb bi-maʿrifat al-ādāb* by al-Munāwī, an author of the early Ottoman period, which contains passages quoted in the *Ḥilyat al-kuramāʾ*. I am also indebted to Daniela Meneghini who helped me in tackling the passages on Persian kings and the narratives of Persian origin. I would also like to express my thankfulness to the editors of the series Resources in Arabic and Islamic Studies, Joseph E. Lowry, Devin J. Stewart, and Shawkat M. Toorawa, for having accepted this book in their collection. I am deeply indebted to Shawkat M. Toorawa, the most accurate and reliable book editor an author could hope for. His help has been invaluable in making the English translation much more readable and elegant, and in pointing out translation errors or alternative readings in the edition of the Arabic text.

I must single out my husband, Frédéric Bauden, not only because he drew my attention to the *Ḥilyat al-kuramāʾ*, but also because he steadily supported me in my project even when it seemed to slow down, or even came to a halt. For this, and for his constant support over time, I cannot thank him enough. Needless to say, the responsibility for any mistakes remains mine alone.

#### SIGLA

I refer to manuscripts consulted or referred to in two ways: the letter of the Latin alphabet refers to the introduction; the letter of the Arabic alphabet refers to the Arabic edition and to the comparative charts in the introduction.

A / ز	Algiers, Bibliothèque nationale d'Algérie, MS 1880
C1 / ت ١	Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, MS Adab Taymūr 927
C2 / ت ٢	Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, MS Adab Taymūr 175
C3 / أ	Cairo, Maktabat al-Azhar, MS Abāza 7034
D	Bibliothèque Dahdah, MS 260
G / غ	Gotha, Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek, MS Möll. 943
L / ل	Liège, Université de Liège, Bibliothèque ALPHA, MS 5300
Pa / ب	Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS ar. 3576
Pr1 / ج	Princeton, University Library, MS Garrett 157 H
Pr2 / ي	Princeton, University Library, MS Yahuda 847
T	Tamegroute, Dār al-Kutub al-Nāṣiriyya, MS 874