The Library of the Sufi Brotherhood al-Nāṣiriyya in Tamgrūt, Morocco

The Formation, Organization, and Profile of an Early Modern Library

Natalie Kraneiß | ORCID: 0000-0003-3584-285X
University of Münster, Münster, Germany
n.kraneiss@uni-muenster.de

Abstract

Research into the history of libraries as institutions in the Islamicate world, rather than as reservoirs of the oldest and rarest manuscripts, has been gaining momentum in recent years. However, libraries in the western part of the Islamicate world have not yet received sufficient attention. The library of the Sufi brotherhood al-Nāṣiriyya in Tamgrūt is an outstanding example that was founded in the mid-seventeenth century on the edge of the Sahara in southern Morocco. There, Maḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī (d. 1085/1674) and his son Aḥmad b. Nāṣir "al-Khalīfa" al-Darʿī (d. 1129/1717) established a centre of knowledge that quickly became well-known, far beyond Morocco's borders, for its imposing library, which still houses an impressive collection of 4,777 manuscripts today. This paper traces the history of the library from its founding to its closure during French colonial rule and its reopening after Moroccan independence. It considers the library as a physical structure and an organization, as well as how it functioned as a fundamental part of higher education in the Sufi lodge. Then, I present the results of a statistical analysis of Ḥamīd Laḥmar's six-volume catalogue published in 2013. Through this analysis, which focuses on 873 manuscripts from the collection that were dated and copied by identified copyists before 1720, I construct a profile of the library that highlights how research into such institutions can help correct long-held assumptions about the intellectual history of the Islamicate world in the early modern period.

Keywords

Nāsiriyya – Tamgrūt – Morocco – Sufism – libraries – manuscripts – seventeenth century – eighteenth century

1 Introduction

In the mid-seventeenth century, Maḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī (d. 1085/1674) founded the Nāṣiriyya, one of the most widespread and influential Sufi brotherhoods in North and West Africa during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Following the tradition of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258),[1] the founder's teachings not only included a "reverent love" for God,[2] but also the transmission of authentic knowledge, especially Islamic law (*fiqh*) and Ḥadīth studies, which were supposed to bring people closer to God. In a period marked by drought and famine on top of struggles for the succession of the last Saʿdī sultan Aḥmad al-Manṣūr (d. 1011/1603), Maḥammad b. Nāṣir and his son Aḥmad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī (d. 1129/1717) created a knowledge centre in southern Morocco that became well-known far beyond the country's borders. During the seventeenth century, their Sufi lodge (*zāwiya*) in Tamgrūt, about 300 km west of Sijilmāsa in the Wādī Darʿa, became one of the most important centres for the transmission of knowledge and a safe retreat for scholars of the region. By the end of the seventeenth century, the Nāṣiriyya had established several branches throughout Morocco[3] and the reputation of its founder, Maḥammad b. Nāṣir, had become widespread.[4] In addition, Maḥammad b. Nāṣir built an extraordinary library (*khizāna*) within the Zāwiya, amassing an impressive collection that, today, includes well over 4,700 manuscripts from a wide range of disciplines. As yet, however, the brotherhood and its library have received little attention in Western research.[5]

---

1 Maḥammad b. Nāṣir's teaching was influenced by Aḥmad al-Zarrūq (d. 899/1494) and Abū l-Qāsim al-Ghāzī (d. 982/1574) both followers of the path of al-Shādhilī.

2 They referred to themselves as *ahl al-maḥabba* (engl. 'community of loving affection'). See Schumann, Matthew Conaway, "A Path of Reverent Love: The Nāṣiriyya Brotherhood across Muslim Africa (11th–12th/17th–18th centuries)," (PhD, Princeton, NJ, 2020), ch. 3.

3 Ibid., 104–105; ʿAmālik, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, *Jawānib min tārīkh al-zāwiya al-nāṣiriyya: Min al-nashʾa ilā wafāt al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī*, 3 vols. (Rabat, 2006), 3: ch. 6.

4 al-Muḥibbi, Muḥammad Amīn, *Khulāṣat al-athar fī aʿyān al-qarn al-ḥādī ʿashar*, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1868), 4: 238.

5 In 2001, David Gutelius presented his dissertation, the first thorough study of the Nāṣiriyya, in which he focused primarily on the economic role of the Sufi brotherhood in the region and its

This study focuses on the institutionalization of a manuscript collection from the far south of Morocco that evolved into a library in its own right in the second half of the seventeenth century amidst the rapid expansion of a Sufi brotherhood. In the following, I begin with a brief overview of research on Moroccan libraries followed by a history and analysis of the Nāṣirī library.

Research on the history of libraries in Islamicate societies has only advanced in recent years. Konrad Hirschler,[6] Boris Liebrenz,[7] and Doris Behrens-Abouseif[8] have focused on Egypt and Syria in particular. In addition, Paul Love has undertaken extensive research on the Ibāḍī manuscript tradition in North Africa[9] and Francois Déroche has published on the manuscript collections of the western parts of the Islamicate world, such as those of the Saʿdī sultans.[10]

---

involvement in local and translocal trade networks. More recently, Matthew C. Schumann's dissertation examined the previously unexplored Sufi teachings of the Nāṣiriyya and their dissemination in sub-Saharan Africa, in which he also mentions the library in passing. See Gutelius, David P.V., "Between God and Men: The Nasiriyya and Economic Life in Morocco, 1640–1830," (PhD, John Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, 2001); Gutelius, David P.V., "Sufi Networks and the Social Contexts for Scholarship in Morocco and the Northern Sahara, 1660–1830," in *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa*, ed. Scott Reese (Leiden, 2004), 15–38; Gutelius, David P.V., "The Path is Easy and the Benefits Large: The Nāṣiriyya, Social Networks and Economic Change in Morocco, 1640–1830," *The Journal of African History* 43 (2002): 27–49; Schumann, "Reverent Love."

6   Hirschler, Konrad, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh, 2013); Hirschler, Konrad, *Medieval Damascus: Plurality and Diversity in an Arabic Library: The Ashrafīya Library Catalogue* (Edinburgh, 2016); Hirschler, Konrad, *A Monument to Medieval Syrian Book Culture: The Library of Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī* (Edinburgh, 2020).

7   Liebrenz, Boris, *Die Rifāʿīya aus Damaskus: Eine Privatbibliothek im osmanischen Syrien und ihr kulturelles Umfeld* (Leiden and Boston, 2016).

8   Behrens-Abouseif, Doris, *The Book in Mamluk Egypt and Syria (1250–1517): Scribes, Libraries and Market* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2018).

9   Love, Paul M., "The Sālim Bin Yaʿqūb Ibāḍī Manuscript Library in Jerba, Tunisia," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 8 (2017): 257–280; Love, Paul M., *Ibadi Muslims of North Africa: Manuscripts, Mobilization, and the Making of a Written Tradition*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018); Love, Paul M., "Ibadis on (and in) the Margins: Manuscript Notes from the Buffalo Agency in Early-Modern Cairo," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 9 (2018): 225–241; Love, Paul M., "Provenance in the Aggregate: The Social Life of an Unremarkable Arabic Manuscript Collection," *Manuscript Studies* 3 (2019): 5–31.

10   Déroche, François, "Autour de l'inventaire médiéval de la bibliothèque de la mosquée de Kairouan: livres et mosquées au Maghreb," in *Lieux de cultes: aires votives, temples, églises, mosquées. IXe Colloque international sur l'histoire et l'archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord antique et médiévale*, ed. Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Paris, 2008), 247–255; Déroche, François, Martínez de Castilla Muñoz, Nuria, and Tahālī, al-Bashīr al-,

The library in Tamgrūt was first described in 1927 by the Moroccan scholar ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī (d. 1962) in his history of libraries in the Islamicate world.[11] Following his overview of the history, al-Kattānī, who was himself in possession of an extensive private collection,[12] identified several Moroccan libraries and provided some preliminary information on the origins and contents of the Nāṣiriyya library in Tamgrūt. In the 1940s, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Hādī al-Manūnī (d. 1999) published his work *Dūr al-kutub fī māḍī l-Maghrib*, which presented a survey of 128 Moroccan libraries, including the library of the Nāṣiriyya.[13] In the 1970s, the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs tasked al-Manūnī with thoroughly cataloguing the Tamgrūt collection[14] and, shortly after, he published the first printed catalogue of the library in which he documented 4,134 manuscripts and presented an important introduction to the library and the intellectual life of the Wādī Darʿa.[15] Since then, Ḥamīd Laḥmar has published a thoroughly revised catalogue that now lists 4,777 manuscripts.[16] In 1990, Latifa Benjelloun-Laroui published *Les bibliothèques au Maroc*, in which she traced the contents and history of several famous libraries in Morocco.[17] In the chapter on libraries managed by Sufi communities, she provided a brief overview of the library's history and holdings and then identified some rare and precious manuscripts that were transferred to the National Library in Rabat after Moroccan independence.[18] Then, in 1992, Aḥmad Shawqī Binbīn, Director of the Royal Library in Rabat, gave a historical

---

Les livres du sultan: Matériaux pour une histoire du livre et de la vie intellectuelle du Maroc saadien (*XVIe siècle*), Mémoires de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2022).

11   al-Kattānī, ʿAbd al-Ḥayy b. ʿAbd al-Kabīr, Binbīn, Aḥmad Shawqī, ed., and al-Saʿūd, ʿAbd al-Qādir, ed., *Tārīkh al-maktabāt al-islāmiyya wa-man allafa fī l-kutub* (Rabat, 2013).

12   Amharar, Ilyass, "La bibliothèque de ʿAbd al-Ḥayy Kattānī," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* (2021): 109–124.

13   al-Manūnī, Muḥammad, *Dūr al-kutub fī māḍī l-Maghrib* (Marrakesh, 2005).

14   The process took twenty-nine days and was carried out in 1973 in two phases: Rabīʿ al-awwal 21 to 29, 1393 / 25.4.–3.5.1973 and Rabīʿ al-thānī 14 to Jumāda al-ūlā 3, 1393 / 17.5.–5.6.1973. See al-Manūnī, Muḥammad, *Dalīl makhṭūṭāt dār al-kutub al-nāṣiriyya bi-Tamgrūt* (1985), 29.

15   Ibid.

16   Laḥmar, Ḥamīd Muḥammad, *al-Fihris al-waṣfī li-makhṭūṭāt Khizānat al-zāwiya al-nāṣiriyya, Tamgrūt bi-iqlīm Zāgūra*, 6 vols. (Rabat, 2013).

17   Benjelloun-Laroui, Latifa, *Les Bibliothèques au Maroc* (Paris, 1990).

18   Ibid., 283–284. In 2003, Benjelloun-Laroui republished this as a short article on libraries in southern Morocco, see Benjelloun-Laroui, Latifa, "Les Bibliothèques de l'extreme-sud marocain," in *Les bibliothèques du désert: Recherches et études sur un millénaire d'écrits; actes des colloques du CIRSS (1995–2000)*, ed. Attilio Gaudio (Paris, 2003), 229–236.

overview of Moroccan libraries from the seventh to the twentieth century in his *Histoire des Bibliothèques au Maroc*.[19] Binbīn briefly discussed the library of the Nāṣiriyya in the section on libraries connected to Sufi lodges and madrasas.[20] Sumayya Ahmed also attempted to attract interest to the library in Tamgrūt with a short article in 2014. However, the article relied on the previously mentioned sources and was not intended to be a thorough examination of the library.[21] Thus, there is currently no comprehensive study of the library of the Nāṣiriyya available, although its particular value is generally acknowledged among scholars. The few pages that have been devoted to the library in this literature contain little more than a brief overview of the Nāṣiriyya's history, listings of some of the more important manuscripts, and references to the Nāṣirī shaykhs' enthusiasm for books. Therefore, the most important study available is the *Jawānib min tārīkh al-zāwiya al-nāṣiriyya*, published in three volumes in 2006. In it, Aḥmad ʿAmālik discussed the history of the Nāṣiriyya from its founding in the seventeenth century until the death of Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī (d. 1325/1907) and devoted considerable attention to the Zāwiya as a place of knowledge transmission.[22]

Given that the Tamgrūt library has not been studied in depth despite being so well known, the first section of this article investigates the origins of the Nāṣiriyya library: How and when did it come into being? Were there any precursors? What did the library look like, that is, how was it organized? In the second section, I address the later development of the library and its "rediscovery" in the mid-twentieth century, before presenting a profile of the library including its most common works and authors, and the role it played as a teaching and learning centre.

This study is based, in part, on the complete corpus of 4,777 manuscripts now in the Tamgrūt Library as identified in Ḥamīd Laḥmar's catalogue published in 2013. Further investigation was undertaken into a selection of manuscripts that were copied before 1720, that is, shortly after the death of Aḥmad b. Nāṣir. This restriction facilitates a focus on the founding phase of the library. The selection was further narrowed down to those manuscripts that bear the name of their copyist. The final selection included 873 manuscripts for which

---

19   Binbīn, Aḥmad Shawqī, ed., *Histoire des Bibliothèques au Maroc* (Casablanca, 1992).

20   Ibid., 98–103.

21   Ahmed, Sumayya, "Desert Scholarship: The Zāwiya library of the Nāṣiriyya Sufi Order," in *Libraries at the Heart of Dialogue of Cultures and Religions: History, Present, Future*, ed. Thierry-Marie Courau and Fabien Vandermarcq (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2016), 103–107.

22   ʿAmālik, *Jawānib*.

the date of production and the copyist's name are known.[23] Finally, five to eight manuscripts from the most frequently represented disciplines—Islamic law (*fiqh*), Sufism, Arabic language and literature, Ḥadīth literature, and Fundamentals of Belief (*uṣūl al-dīn*)—were examined on site in September and October 2021. These manuscripts were selected because they were either copied during the author's lifetime, some by the authors themselves, or shortly after the author's death, or because they were produced by copyists who feature prominently in the library's collection or who are known to have been associated with the Nāṣiriyya.

2   The Early Beginnings of Manuscript Culture in the Wādī Darʿa and the Foundation of the Library in Tamgrūt

The large number of copies made by scholars from the Darʿa region in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries demonstrates that a vibrant manuscript culture prevailed in the Darʿa region long before Maḥammad b. Nāṣir became head of the Sufi lodge. There is also evidence of many earlier personal manuscript collections amassed by scholars in the Darʿa region. Thus, the Tamgrūt collection contains various manuscripts copied by local scholars in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. For example, the library's collection contains five copies made between 961/1554 and 973/1566 by ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Masʿūd al-Tafjarūtī (d. 980/1572), an influential sixteenth-century scholar from the Darʿa region.[24] These include the famous commentary on rhetoric, *Talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ* by al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338),[25] the *Talkhīṣ aʿmāl al-ḥisāb* on arithmetical operations by Ibn al-Bannāʾ (d. 721/1321),[26] and the abridged version of a commentary on Ibn al-Bannāʾs text by Ibn Qunfudh (d. 810/1407) entitled *al-Talkhīṣ fī sharḥ al-talkhīṣ*.[27] It also includes a commentary by Ibn Ghāzī al-Miknāsī (d. 919/1513) on Ibn al-Bannāʾs *Urjūzat munyat*

---

23   The goal of the larger research project, of which only a small part is presented here, was to approach the provenance of the collection's manuscripts through their copyists. See Kraneiß, Natalie, "Wissen im Netzwerk: Die Bibliothek der Sufibruderschaft an-Nāṣiriyya in Tamgrūt, Marokko," (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Münster, 2022).

24   al-Makkī, Muḥammad b. Mūsā b. Muḥammad al-Kabīr and Nūḥī, Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb, ed., *al-Durar al-muraṣṣaʿa bi-akhbār aʿyān Darʿa*, 2 vols. (2014), 1: 361.

25   Tamgrūt, MS 3690/2668.

26   Tamgrūt, MS 1880/1753.

27   Tamgrūt, MS 1882/1753.

al-ḥussāb[28] and Ibn al-ʿArabī's (d. 638/1240) *al-Imām al-mubīn alladhī lā yadkhuluhū rayb wa-lā takhmīn*.[29]

Other scholars from the region who copied manuscripts include Maḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī (d. 1052/1642), Muḥammad al-Dādisī al-Ṣanhājī (d. 1029/1620), and a senior disciple of Maḥammad Nāṣir, Manṣūr b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Tīrsūtī (d. c. seventeenth century). Muḥammad al-Dādisī copied at least ten works dated between 973/1566 and 985/1577, which are still in Tamgrūt today. These include several texts by al-Sanūsī,[30] a commentary on the *Alfiyya* by Ibn Mālik (d. 672/1273),[31] and a commentary on Ibn Ghāzī's (d. 919/1513) *Naẓm naẓāʾir Risālat al-Qayrawānī* by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaṭṭāb al-Ruʿaynī (d. 954/1547).[32] Manṣūr b. Aḥmad al-Tirsūtī prepared seven copies dated and signed between 1032/1623 and 1038/1629, including a copy of the *Alfiyya*,[33] *al-ʿUlūm al-fākhira fī n-naẓar fī umūr al-ākhira* by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Thaʿlabī (d. 873/1468),[34] and *Ghāyat al-bayān li-ḥall shariba mā lā yaghību al-ʿaql min al-dukhān* by al-Ujhūrī (d. 1066/1656).[35] Maḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī, Maḥammad b. Nāṣir's father, made copies of two manuscripts dated 1005/1597 and 1006/1598, which are still in Tamgrūt today.[36] The two works he copied, *Shifāʾ al-ghalīl fī ḥall muqaffal Khalīl* by Ibn Ghāzī al-Miknāsī[37] and *Sharḥ Naẓm muqaddimat Ibn Rushd*, likely by Shams al-Dīn al-Tatāʾī (d. 942/1535), are bound in a composite volume.[38]

Considering such a wealth of manuscripts, it can be confidently assumed that a collection of manuscripts, possibly even a library, existed in Tamgrūt before Maḥammad b. Nāṣir arrived. Maḥammad b. Nāṣir came from one of the several Sufi lodges located in and around Tamgrūt at least from the sixteenth century on.[39] Specifically, he came to Tamgrūt from a lodge in the small vil-

---

28 Tamgrūt, MS 1881/1753.

29 Also known as *Kitāb al-Tadbīrāt al-ilāhiyya fī islāḥ al-mamlaka al-insāniyya*. See Tamgrūt, MS 3448/2595.

30 Tamgrūt, MSS 2580/2088, 2584/2088, 2585/2088, and 2579/2088.

31 *Awḍaḥ al-masālik ilā Alfiyyat Ibn Mālik* by Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd Allāh b. Yūsuf b. Aḥmad, known as Ibn Hishām al-Anṣārī; see Tamgrūt MS 1767/1689.

32 Tamgrūt, MS 2093/1877.

33 Tamgrūt, MS 3759/2719.

34 Tamgrūt, MS 462/803.

35 Tamgrūt, MS 4248/3003.

36 His full name is Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn b. Nāṣir b. ʿAmr b. ʿUthmān (d. 1052/1642), see al-Makkī and Nūḥī, ed., *al-Durar*, 2: 506–511.

37 Tamgrūt, MS 3602/2642.

38 Tamgrūt, MS 3601/2642. Another copy of the same work was made by Muḥammad b. Mūsā b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jarārī in 1010/1601. See Tamgrūt, MS 1574/1627.

39 Long before the seventeenth century, near Tamgrūt, the Zāwiya Sayyid al-Nās (Sīdī al-Nās)

lage of Aghlān, northwest of Tamgrūt, as a young adult seeking to further his education. At that time, he had already been well trained in northern Wādī Darʿa and had a position as a religious leader in his home village.[40] The Zāwiya in Tamgrūt, then headed by Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥusayn al-Raqqī al-Qabbāb (d. 1045/1635) and Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī (d. 1052/1642), was recommended to Maḥammad b. Nāṣir as a place where he might find the more profound knowledge and spiritual guidance he desired, or so his biographer Muḥammad al-Makkī (d. 1170/1756) tells us.[41] David Gutelius mentions—regrettably without citing a source—that the lodge in Tamgrūt had been known for its library before Maḥammad b. Nāṣir arrived in 1041/1632.[42] Unfortunately, I could not find any further references to confirm this report. However, it is known that the well-known scholar Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī (d. 1036/1627) visited Tamgrūt before Maḥammad b. Nāṣir's arrival and this provides alternative evidence for the Zāwiya's reputation. Aḥmad Bābā was captured by Sultan Aḥmad al-Manṣūr during the conquest of the Songhay kingdom and spent several years in captivity in Marrakesh.[43] When he was allowed to return to his homeland after Aḥmad al-Manṣūr died, al-Tinbuktī visited Tamgrūt in 1016/1607 leaving behind a Fatwa on smoking and several other texts that are still held in the Tamgrūt collection.[44]

While Maḥammad b. Nāṣir was clearly raised and educated in an environment characterized by a vibrant manuscript culture, the origin of the Nāṣirī library must be attributed to him personally. He was a known bibliophile and had his own manuscript collection from early on. Thus, it was reported that when his disciple, Manṣūr b. Aḥmad al-Tirsūtī, gifted him a mat, the shaykh used it to keep his books safe and protected instead of sleeping or sitting on it.[45] This story also suggests that Maḥammad b. Nāṣir's collection was

---

existed until Abū Ḥafs al-Anṣārī, a descendant of the zāwiya's founder, moved to Tamgrūt where he built the Zāwiya that later became the Nāṣiriyya, see al-Makkī and Nūḥī, ed., *al-Durar*, 1: 250. Other examples include the Zāwiya in Aghlān, which was headed by Maḥammad b. Nāṣir's father, and the Ṣāliḥiyya lodge, see Stearns, Justin, "Medicine, God, and the Unseen in Eleventh/Seventeenth-Century Morocco," *Early Science and Medicine* 26 (2021): 459–479.

40   al-Makkī and Nūḥī, ed., *al-Durar*, 2: 513–514.

41   Ibid., 2: 515–517.

42   Gutelius, "Sufi Networks," 17.

43   Moraes Farias, Paulo Fernando de, "Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī," in *EI THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 2011–2013.

44   The Fatwa on smoking is available in Tamgrūt under the call number MS 4205/2999. The other texts by Aḥmad Bābā are available as autographs: MSS 3330/2538, 3326/2538, 3327/2538, 3328/2538, 3329/2538.

45   al-Makkī and Nūḥī, ed., *al-Durar*, 2: 519.

FIGURE 1   *al-Munṣif min al-kalām ʿalā Mughnī Ibn Hishām* by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Shumunnī al-Qusanṭīnī, copied by Maḥammad b. Maḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Nāṣir (Tamgrūt, MS 350/637)

already of some size and confirms that, at this time, he had no separate, central place to store it. He was also more than just a collector: the Tamgrūt collection contains manuscripts that Maḥammad b. Nāṣir himself copied when he came to Tamgrūt as a student, well before he took charge of the lodge in 1053/1643. In 1048/1638, he copied the work al-*Munṣif min al-kalām ʿalā mughnī Ibn Hishām* by Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Shumunnī al-Qusanṭīnī (d. 872/1468).[46] He also copied, among others, *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* by al-Fayrūzabādī, the commentary on Ibn Mālik's *al-Tashīl* by al-Murādī (d. 749/1348), part of the *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* of Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih (d. 328/940), and the *Kitāb al-Amālī* of Abū ʿAlī al-Qālī (d. 356/967).[47]

Given these events, it is very likely that the study of written texts was already part of teaching under the leadership of Maḥammad b. Nāṣir's two predecessors and a larger number of manuscripts were available in Tamgrūt before the

---

46   Tamgrūt, MS 350/637.

47   al-Manūnī, *Dalīl*, 24; ʿAmālik, *Jawānib*, 2: 330.

library was constructed. However, there is no evidence as to whether these manuscripts were available to the public. Given that Maḥammad b. Nāṣir undoubtedly possessed his own collection of manuscripts, some of which he had copied himself, it also seems likely that the origins of the library of the Nāṣiriyya lie in both Maḥammad b. Nāṣir's personal collection and the stockpile of manuscripts that were already available on-site.

3 Towards Institutionalization: A Building for the Manuscript Collection

Teaching in the Nāṣirī Zāwiya was based on basic texts for beginners and in-depth lessons incorporating commentaries (*sharḥ*, pl. *shurūḥ*) for advanced students. Thus, manuscript texts were commissioned, ordered, or purchased for teaching purposes by the two shaykhs Maḥammad b. Nāṣir and his son. However, it was not until decades after his father's death (d. 1085/1674) that Aḥmad b. Nāṣir had a building constructed to house the manuscripts. This seems to have been a trend within the Ottoman Empire at the time, as the late Yavuz Sezer demonstrated that the construction of library buildings increased exponentially from the early eighteenth century onwards.[48] Previously, manuscript collections—as far as we know—had been kept in separate rooms within mosques, madrasas, and private houses—and not in standalone libraries.[49] However, Sezer also notes that the trend toward building "purpose-built libraries" in the eighteenth century manifested itself almost exclusively in Istanbul and suggests that this was due to the size of the city and the "complexity of its metropolitan society."[50] Yet, as far as we know, the two Nāṣirī shaykhs themselves never visited Istanbul, nor, as far as I am aware, are any of their students known to have visited the city. Nevertheless, in 1123/1711—shortly after returning from his fourth and last pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina—Maḥammad b. Nāṣir's son Aḥmad b. Nāṣir had a building erected in Tamgrūt to house the Zāwiya's manuscript collection.[51] It is likely that the manuscripts had previously been stored in the lodge's classrooms or the shaykhs' private rooms, for Ibn Nāṣir, as we have seen, had begun to expand his personal collection much

---

48   I thank Konrad Hirschler for bringing Yavuz Sezer's dissertation to my attention and making it available to me.

49   Liebrenz, *Rifāʿīya*, 240–252.

50   Sezer, Yavuz, "The Architecture of Bibliophilia: Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Libraries," (PhD, MIT, Cambridge, MA, 2016), 262.

51   al-Makkī and Nūḥī, ed., *al-Durar*, 2: 682; ʿAmālik, *Jawānib*, 2: 332.

earlier on. We do not know whether Aḥmad b. Nāṣir was inspired by a particular library he visited during his trip[52] or heard reports about the newly constructed library buildings in Istanbul, but this is a striking parallel development in two vastly distant regions of the Islamicate world.

The construction of the library building was one of a series of capital projects undertaken by Aḥmad b. Nāṣir in light of the brotherhood's increasing importance and prosperity. His disciple Ḥusayn b. Shurḥabīl al-Būsaʿīdī (d. 1142/1729) describes these projects in his work *Hidāyat mālik al-amr ilā mawārid sayf al-naṣr*, the longest of three commentaries he wrote on *Sayf al-naṣr* (also: *al-Duʿāʾ al-nāṣirī*), a poem by Maḥammad b. Nāṣir.[53] There, he states:

> He [Aḥmad b. Nāṣir] built a minaret (*ṣawmaʿa*) of solid structure and a school and renewed the Masjid al-Khalwa in a beautiful and innovative way. And beside it, he built a memorable assembly room (*dast*) for study. He built a mosque in front of the Sijilmāsa gate of his lodge and dug a well near the graves of the martyrs of the plagues and epidemics. He built a house for them to wash the dead in and built a Friday mosque in which he delivered the Friday sermon in the Zāwiyat al-Faḍl, and another Friday mosque in which he delivered the sermon in the Zāwiyat al-Baraka. He also built another mosque with five rows in his new lodge in Amzrū. Each mosque had good ablution facilities, stores, and a well. He built a bathhouse in the Masjid al-Khalwa and had someone heat water there day and night so that whoever wanted to purify himself would find hot water if he liked and wanted it. He built another mosque with ablution facilities and a well for the women inside his lodge, **and he built a beautiful library for books and marked every kind of discipline in the treasury (*khizāna*) with a sign that distinguished it from the others.** Moreover, he increased the lands and the properties of the Zāwiya and always cared about the benefits and the affairs of the Zāwiya.[54]

---

52   We do know, that Aḥmad b. Nāṣir visited the private libraries of scholars during his travels, such as the library of the scholar and Naqīb al-Ashrāf in Cairo, Ḥasan Efendī (d. 1121/1709), and that of the Medinense Ḥadīth scholar ʿAbd Allāh b. Sālim al-Baṣrī (d. 1134/1722). Cf. al-Darʿī, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Nāṣir and al-Mallukī, ʿAbd al-Ḥafīẓ, ed., *al-Riḥla al-nāṣiriyya, 1709–1710* (Abu Dhabi, 2011), 284, 366–367.

53   al-Makkī and Nūḥī, ed., *al-Durar*, 1: 120, n4.

54   Ibid., 1: 169–170.

The library was built next to the Shaykh's living quarters and probably initially consisted of two parts: the large library and the small library, supplemented by a small, elevated storage room.[55] Mūsā b. Muḥammad al-Kabīr (d. 1143/1730), the grandson of Maḥammad b. Nāṣir and Maryam Taḥnīnt (d. 1086/1675), and the third Shaykh of the Nāṣiriyya, composed a thirty-three-line poem about the library, in which he praises its novelty:[56]

<div dir="rtl">

علم المحاسـن قـد أنـاخ بـروضـة   ذات السـنـاء، مـقـر ديـن محمد

</div>

The knowledge of the merits has settled in the Garden of Sublimity, the abode of Muḥammad's faith.

<div dir="rtl">

راقت فأبرق نورهـا أفـق الـعـلا   متبلج الإصباح أسـنـى مـقـصـد

</div>

It surpasses everything in excellence and its light shines to the highest point in the sky, illuminating the dawn, the most sublime destination.

<div dir="rtl">

بيت حوى كل المحاسن فازدهى   عجباً، وفاق عـلـى كـل مشهـد

</div>

A house that gathers all the virtues, amazes, and surpasses every sanctuary.

<div dir="rtl">

بهـر الـعـيـون بـهـاؤه وسـنـاؤه   وسبا العقول بحـسـنـه المتـجـدد

</div>

Its elegance and grandeur dazzle the eye and it captivates the mind with its novel beauty.

<div dir="rtl">

إن قلت فيه إنـه شـمس الضحى   أو قبـة مـن لـؤلـؤ لـم تـفـنـد

</div>

If you say that it is like the morning sun or a pearl's dome, no one will dispute it.

<div dir="rtl">

هبت معالي السعد في عـرصـاتـه   والزهر لاح على أعاليهـا النـدي

</div>

The heights of happiness blow through its courtyards—and the flowers, the morning dew settles on their tips.

---

55   al-Manūnī, *Dalīl*, 28.
56   al-Makkī and Nūḥī, ed., *al-Durar*, 2: 682–683.

<div dir="rtl">

لم يبق بيت للـمـعـالي مـهـذب   إلا تأخـر عن مـعـالي الـسـؤدد

</div>

No well-educated noble house remains, except that it is inferior to these heights of happiness.

<div dir="rtl">

بيت حوى من كل عـلـم زهـرة   وأعـز كـل مـاجـد وممـجـد

</div>

It is a house that picks a flower from every discipline of knowledge and honours everyone both the praising and the praised.

Muḥammad al-Makkī (d. 1170/1756)—the author of *al-Durar al-muraṣṣaʿa*, a biographical work on important figures in the Darʿa region—writes that the most extraordinary craftsmanship was used in the construction of the library. For example, he notes that artisans from Fez had inserted multi-coloured glass in the windows so that the sunlight would create different colours as it shined into the library.[57] At an unknown point in time, a group of manuscripts from the fields of to Tafsīr, Ḥadīth studies, linguistics, and Sufism were brought to the Zāwiya's tomb room (*mashhad*), where they were stored in a separate walled-off section called the *khizānat al-rawḍa*.[58] Furthermore, it is said that Aḥmad al-Hashtūkī (d. 1128/1716), a disciple of Maḥammad b. Nāṣir, established a sub-branch of the library[59] at a subsidiary of the Nāṣiriyya that Aḥmad b. Nāṣir, built a few kilometres south of Tamgrūt, which was administered by his wife Zaynab bt. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Tinirdiyya.[60] Ultimately, in the 1980s, the manuscripts from all branch libraries were moved to the old *madrasa* and then the new building, with its glazed wooden shelves,[61] where they remain today, albeit now housed in specially constructed archival cabinets.

4   Structure and Organization of the Library

In Tamgrūt, the books were arranged according to the major subject areas and numbered and stored on wooden shelves.[62] This organizational system followed the classic, hierarchical order beginning with the Qur'an, followed by the

---

57   Ibid., 2: 682.
58   al-Manūnī, *Dalīl*, 28.
59   Schumann, "Reverent Love," 102.
60   al-Makkī and Nūḥī, ed., *al-Durar*, 1: 170.
61   al-Manūnī, *Dalīl*, 28.
62   Ibid.

FIGURE 2   Copy of the *Kitāb al-Jawāhir wa-l-durar* by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (Tamgrūt, MS 534/898)

Ḥadīth collections, Islamic law (*fiqh*), literature, grammar, and, finally, works on history, astronomy, medicine, and other disciplines.[63] One of Maḥammad b. Nāṣir's disciples, al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī (d. 1040/1691), proposed in his *Qānūn* an organization system based on the *al-Fatāwā al-ḥadīthiyya* by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974/1566). According to this system, the Qur'an would have been first on the shelves, followed by works on Ḥadīth, Islamic law, the fundamentals of faith (*uṣūl al-dīn*), principles of Islamic law (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, and, finally, on rational theology (*al-kalām*).[64] Presumably, the manuscripts in Tamgrūt were arranged in this or a similar order. The books were stored on the shelves lying down (Figure 2) rather than standing up, hence the titles are written on the books' edges, although it is no longer possible to trace when the titles were inscribed.

The Nāṣiriyya library was established as a lending library.[65] We know this because, towards the end of the eighteenth century, Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām al-Nāṣirī (d. 1238/1823), a descendant of Maḥammad b. Nāṣir, described the library's administration system noting that the Zāwiya's students could borrow books

---

63   Binbīn, ed., *Histoire*, 96.

64   Ibid., 96–97.

65   The possibility of borrowing and lending books from libraries has been the subject of controversy among legal scholars, see Giladi, Avner, "Three Fatāwā on 'Lending Libraries' in North Africa and Spain," *Arabica* 44 (1997): 140–143; Behrens-Abouseif, *Book in Mamluk Egypt and Syria*, 43–46. Boris Liebrenz points out that a wide variety of formal rules were implemented depending on the library's administrators or custodians, see Liebrenz, *Rifāʿīya*, 198–207. Hirschler notes that even when attempts were made to restrict lending, the circulation of books continued unabated, cf. Hirschler, Konrad, "Libraries (up to 1500)," in Fleet, Krämer, Matringe, Nawas, and Rowson, *EI THREE*.

for a year. At the end of the year, in the month of Ramadan, the books had to be returned or the loan period extended. Although a catalogue probably did not exist at this time, the library administrators were informed about which books were in the library and all loans were recorded in a ledger.[66] According to al-Manūnī, the first catalogue of the library's collection was compiled in 1336/1918 by Shaykh Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Nāṣirī (d. 1337/1919).[67]

Matthew Schumann suggests that the lending practice may have been inspired by Aḥmad b. Nāṣir's journey to Medina.[68] However, in his book on the history of Moroccan libraries, Binbīn points out that it was fairly common for private libraries in Morocco to give scholars largely free access to the collections and generously lend out their manuscripts.[69] The Qarawiyyīn library in Fez— a library attached to a mosque rather than a private library—is known to have been loaning out books as early as the fourteenth century, although borrowing was later restricted or only possible in exchange for a deposit.[70] In Tamgrūt, the collection was not open access, that is, students did not have direct access to the books themselves; rather, they had to request specific titles from the library manager who then retrieved them for them.[71] This system was already common in Fez by the fifteenth century where scholars and students did not have direct access to the books in public libraries.[72]

5   After Moroccan Independence: The Transfer of Manuscripts to the National Library in Rabat

The library of the Nāṣiriyya in Tamgrūt is thought to have been walled in during the French Protectorate (1912–1956).[73] However, we do not yet know much

---

66   al-Nāṣirī, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd as-Salām b. ʿAbd Allāh and Khayālī, ʿAbd al-Majīd, ed., *al-Mazāyā fī-mā uḥditha min al-bidaʿ bi-umm al-zawāyā* (*al-zāwiya al-nāṣiriyya*) (Beirut, 2003), 144–145.

67   This catalogue is preserved in two manuscripts: one in the Moroccan National Library (no. 975 jīm, 74 pages) and one in the royal library (no. 5657, 82 pages). The catalogue lists, according to al-Manūnī's estimate, approximately 2,000 complete volumes. However, composite manuscripts do not appear to have been included. See al-Manūnī, *Dalīl*, 27.

68   Schumann, "Reverent Love," 171.

69   Binbīn, ed., *Histoire*, 86–87.

70   Ibid., 97.

71   al-Nāṣirī and Khayālī, ed., *al-Mazāyā*, 145.

72   Binbīn, ed., *Histoire*, 95.

73   Benjelloun-Laroui, *Bibliothèques au Maroc*, 282. Whether the Tamgrūt collection was closed in response to increasing French influence, due to a lack of personnel or financial

about what happened to the library before the nineteenth century, only that it seems to have been maintained less during the eighteenth century.[74] What we certainly do know is that, after Moroccan independence, the library's collection was placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs by royal decree of 9 Shawwāl, 1378 (18 April 1959).[75] In the decree, the Minister of Endowments, Aḥmad Barkāsh, was charged with transferring any particularly valuable manuscripts to the National Library in Rabat.[76] Ibrāhīm al-Kattānī, then director of the Arabic Manuscripts Department of the Moroccan National Library in Rabat, played a leading role in this project. He had visited Tamgrūt and promised the lodge's administrators financial support for and assistance with the renovation of the library in exchange for the transfer of what he considered to be the most valuable manuscripts.[77] al-Kattānī mentioned some of the manuscripts he considered particularly valuable in an interview with writer and journalist ʿAbd Allāh Shaqrūn (d. 2017). They included *al-Iksīr fī fikāk al-asīr* by the Moroccan ambassador to Spain, Ibn ʿUthmān (d. 1213/1799), *al-Bayān al-mughrib* by Ibn ʿIdhārī (d. ca. 712/1313), two volumes of *Taʾrīkh al-duwal wa-l-mulūk* by Ibn al-Furāt (d. 807/1405), *Ḥawādith al-zamān wa-anbāʾuhū* by Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Jazarī (d. 739/1338), and *al-Musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ al-ḥasan* by Ibn Marzūq (d. 780/1379).[78] In addition, al-Kattānī emphasized that the collection contained many volumes containing works from the tenth to twelfth centuries, including a ninth-century copy of *Hadhf Nasab Quraysh* by al-Sadūsī (d. 195/810),[79] which he believed was the

---

resources, or because of declining interest in the manuscripts could not be determined based on the sources examined for this study.

74   In his work *Mazāyā fī-mā uḥditha min al-bidaʿ bi-umm al-zawāyā*, written in 1230/1815, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Salām al-Nāṣirī (d. 1238/1823) describes the condition of the library and the Zāwiya under his cousin ʿAlī b. Yūsuf b. Muḥammad al-Kabīr (d. 1235/1819). In the section "The loss of the books of the library" (*taḍyīʿ khizānat al-kutub bihā*), he laments that the "old system," introduced by his ancestors, was no longer being maintained and that those in charge no longer knew which books were in the library. See al-Nāṣirī and Khayālī, ed., *al-Mazāyā*, 40, 43, 144–146.

75   al-Murābiṭī, Saʿīd, *Fihris al-makhṭūṭāt al-ʿarabiyya al-maḥfūẓa fī l-khizāna al-ʿāmma bi-l-Ribāṭ: al-mujallad al-sābiʿ*, Khizānat al-awqāf (ḥarf al-qāf)—1 (Casablanca, 2002), 9.

76   Ibid.

77   Shaqrūn, ʿAbd Allāh, "Iktishāf makhṭūṭāt ʿarabiyya nādira fī l-Maghrib aqdam makhṭūṭ ʿarabī ʿalā wajh al-arḍ yantaqilu min zāwiyat Tamgrūt ilā l-Ribāṭ: Mudhākira maʿa al-ustādh Ibrāhīm al-Kattānī raʾīs qism al-makhṭūṭāt al-ʿarabiyya bi-l-khizāna al-ʿāmma," in *al-ʿAllāma al-mujāhid Muḥammad Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Kattānī: Qiṣṣat taʾsīs al-ḥaraka al-waṭaniyya wa-l-ḥaraka l-salafiyya bi-l-Maghrib wa-nubdha ʿan tārīkh ʿilm al-maktabāt wa-l-makhṭūṭāt*, ed. ʿAlī b. al-Muntaṣir al-Kattānī (2007), 251–258, 256–257.

78   Ibid., 255.

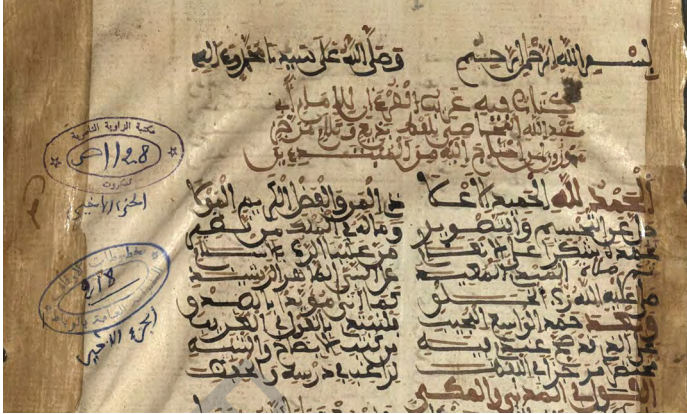79   Bibliothèque Nationale du Royaume du Maroc, MS Qāf 99.

FIGURE 3   Copy of *Gharīb al-Qurʾān* by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad
             al-Majāṣī with the old library's stamp of Tamgrūt and the
             National Library's stamp (BRNM, MS Q218)

oldest surviving Arabic manuscript ever. He seemed to have had little interest
in the newer works, such as the numerous commentaries that have only more
recently come to the attention of researchers,[80] for these remained in Tamgrūt.
Some of the manuscripts al-Kattānī mentioned are known to have been among
those that were transferred to Rabat.[81]

It is not exactly clear how many volumes were removed from the Tamgrūt
collection as a result of this decree. According to the National Library's cata-
logue from 2001/2002, which lists some of the manuscripts transferred to Rabat
from Waqf libraries, 1,103 manuscripts were brought to Rabat as part of this
transfer.[82] However, Latifa Benjelloun-Laroui claims that 2,000 manuscripts
were removed from the Nāṣiriyya library at that time.[83] Complicating matters
further, the National Library's catalogue does not specify which of the manu-
scripts in this list were from Tamgrūt. To determine whether a volume was once
in the Tamgrūt collection, it is necessary to open the scan of the specific manu-

---

80   See, for example, El Shamsy, Ahmed, "The Ḥāshiya in Islamic Law: A Sketch of the
     Shāfiʿī Literature," *Oriens* 41 (2013): 289–315; the articles in MIDÉO, Issue 32, 2017; Ingalls,
     Matthew B., *The Anonymity of a Commentator: Zakariyyā Al-Anṣārī and the Rhetoric of
     Muslim Commentaries* (Albany, NY, State University of New York Press, 2021).

81   Latifa Benjelloun-Laroui cites several examples, including the *Kitāb al-Musnad* of Ibn
     Marzūq, the thirtieth part of *al-Bayān al-mughrib* by Ibn ʿIdhārī, and *al-Iksīr fī fikāk al-asīr*
     by Ibn ʿUthmān, as well as the *Kitāb al-Adwiya al-mufrada* by al-Ghāfiqī (d. c. 560/1165).
     See Benjelloun-Laroui, *Bibliothèques au Maroc*, 283–284.

82   al-Murābiṭī, *Fihris*, 10.

83   Benjelloun-Laroui, *Bibliothèques au Maroc*, 282, n34 and n35.

script at one of the workstations at the National Library and manually check for the Tamgrūt library stamp, since the catalogue does not include all the manuscripts that were brought to Rabat in the 1960s. It lists only 412 manuscripts, including manuscripts from other Waqf libraries. Given at least 1,100, and probably up to 2,000, manuscripts were transferred to Rabat, this means that the fate of many of the manuscripts is yet to be determined.

6 The Library's Profile: Islamic Law, Ḥadīth Studies, and Arabic Language

Today, more than 4,700 manuscripts remain in Tamgrūt, including shorter texts that have been combined into composite manuscripts and multiple copies of many titles. It can be assumed that there were once been between 10,000 and 20,000 manuscripts in the library,[84] however, other estimates vary widely. Ibrāhīm al-Kattānī states that when he visited Tamgrūt in the late 1950s, he was told that there had once been 60,000 volumes in the library, others spoke of 24,000 volumes, and still others of 16,000 volumes.[85] al-Kattānī himself estimated the number at 4,000 to 5,000 volumes at the time of his visit,[86] but he probably did not take into account the many shorter texts that were grouped together in composite manuscripts. At that time, there must have been well over 6,000 manuscripts in the library as about 2,000 were brought to Rabat in the 1950s and al-Manūnī documented 4,134 still on site in Tamgrūt in the 1970s.[87]

The fate of the remaining manuscripts is largely unclear. Some have been rediscovered in other libraries[88] and more will most likely come to light in the coming years thanks to the numerous digitization projects being undertaken throughout Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. While notes, such as *li-l-zāwiya al-nāṣiriyya* (Figure 4) or the stamp of the Nāṣiriyya (Figure 5), can facilitate identification in some cases, it must also be assumed that attempts

---

84   Schumann, "Reverent Love," 173–174.

85   Shaqrūn, "Iktishāf," 253.

86   Ibid., 253.

87   The number of manuscripts held in a library varies depending on whether texts or volumes are counted. Both al-Manūnī (1985) and Laḥmar (2013) listed individual texts in their catalogues, while Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Nāṣirī seems to have counted only individual volumes in his first extant (handwritten) catalogue from 1918, but not composite manuscripts. See footnote 67.
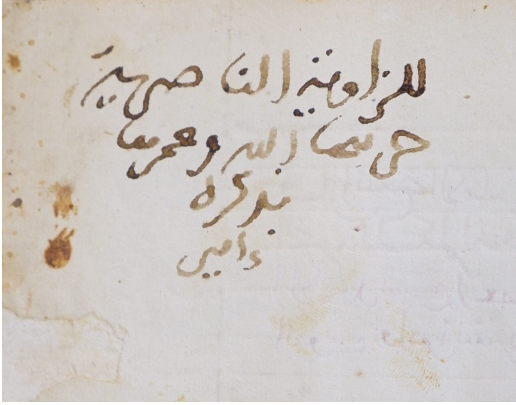
88   Shaqrūn, "Iktishāf," 253.

FIGURE 4
An endowment note (Tamgrūt, MS 1300/1538)

FIGURE 5
The original library stamp of the Nāṣiriyya
(Tamgrūt, MS 236/471)

were made to remove such ownership or endowment notes in others.[89] The French officer and explorer René de Segonzac (1867–1962) pointed this out when, after his visit in 1904, he reported being presented with manuscripts offered for sale in which references to their previous owners had been erased or scratched out.[90] Since 1388/1969, the Moroccan government has attempted to remedy this situation by holding an annual competition—*Jāʾizat al-Ḥāsan al-Thānī li-l-makhṭūṭāt*—which calls on the public to submit previously unknown manuscripts and documents.[91] In 2011, one of the promotional award winners was Sufyān al-Nāṣirī, who submitted several manuscripts and documents from the Zāwiya in Tamgrūt, including a copy of the certificate of appointment (*tawliyya*) of the aforementioned Shaykh of the Zāwiya, Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Nāṣirī (d. 1337/1919), dated 1304/1887.[92] Thus, the Moroccan government has

---

89   Many of the manuscripts examined bear the simple inscription "li-l-zāwiya al-nāṣiriyya" or "ḥabs li-l-zāwiya al-nāṣiriyya", which I interpret as notes that document both the endowment and the affiliation with of the Nāṣiriyya. Matthew Schuhmann also cites an example of a richly illuminated endowment note from a much later period, see Schumann, "Reverent Love," 174. I have not encountered any elaborate endowment notes, such as those identified by Liebrenz for the Rifāʿiyya library. Liebrenz, *Rifāʿīya*, 133–142.

90   Segonzac, René, *Au Coeur de l'Atlas: Mission au Maroc*, 1904–1905 (Paris, 1910), 101. For more information on this competition, see Ahmed, Sumayya, "*To the Nation*, Belong the Archives: The Search for Manuscripts and Archival Documents in Postcolonial Morocco," in International Journal of Middle East Studies 55 (2023): 421–443.

91   I thank Abdelaziz Essaouri for this information.

92   al-Mamlaka al-maghribiyya, *Dalīl Jāʾizat al-Ḥasan al-Thānī li-l-Makhṭūṭāt: al-Dawra 36* (2011), 16, 405.

also shown an interest in making lost manuscripts available to both the public and researchers for decades. To date, however, few manuscripts from the Nāṣiriyya seem to have been found in this way—possibly because of fear that questions could then be raised about the disappearance of the manuscripts.

The exact inventory of the library at any particular point in time cannot be fully reconstructed today, as the library's holdings were always changing. Despite having some historical sources for the collection, such as a letter written by Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām al-Nāṣirī in 1182/1768 to his teacher Abū l-ʿAlāʾ Idrīs al-ʿIrāqī (d. 1184/1771), which is the earliest authenticated written source we have for the library's manuscript holdings,[93] the reasonableness of attempting to reconstruct the library's holding is questionable, for not every addition to or loss from a library's collection is the result of an intentional, documented decision. While the library's collection was certainly built up through many purposeful decisions, a large number of manuscripts also arrived in Tamgrūt as gifts from students and followers of the Nāṣirī shaykhs,[94] or through the endowment of entire libraries and personal collections.[95] Similarly, if we accept the conservative estimate Segonzac's travelling companion ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Zannāqī (1877–1932) provided in 1904, and the library contained approximately 10,000 manuscripts at that time, many manuscripts were translocated, probably well over 3,000 texts in the course of the late nineteenth century alone.[96] When Ibrāhīm al-Kattānī visited Tamgrūt in the 1950s, he reported that the officials there even gave names of people they assumed were in possession of unreturned books from the Zāwiya. He also claimed that manuscripts bearing endowment notes from the Nāṣiriyya had indeed been found in other collections but, unfortunately, he does not give any specific examples.[97]

---

93   al-Kattānī, Binbīn, ed., and al-Saʿūd, ed., *Tārīkh al-maktabāt*, 316–323.

94   For example, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suwaydī al-Miknāsī gifted Shaykh Maḥammad b. Nāṣir an ancient copy of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in eighteen parts in the Riwāya of Abū Dharr al-Harawī (d. 435/1044). See ʿAmālik, *Jawānib*, 2: 331. Other persons who gave manuscripts to Maḥammad b. Nāṣir included his students and friends al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī (d. 1102/1691), Abū Marwān ʿAbd al-Mālik at-Tājmūʿtī (d. 1118/1707), Abū Sālim al-ʿAyyāshī (d. 1090/1679), and Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Marrākushī (d. 1090/1679). Cf. ʿAmālik, *Jawānib*, 2: 334.

95   Some students—or their descendants—donated their entire private collections to the Zāwiya Nāṣiriyya, such as the library of Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Sibāʿī, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Hashtūkī (d. 1128/1716), and Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Dimnātī (d. 1305/1888). See al-Manūnī, *Dalīl*, 26.

96   Segonzac, *Au Coeur*, 101.

97   Shaqrūn, "Iktishāf," 253.

6.1   *Routes to Tamgrūt*

Nevertheless, we can identify some of the manuscripts that were acquired for the library by Maḥammad b. Nāṣir, his son Aḥmad, and their disciples. Primary sources containing information about the purchase, copying, or commissioning of manuscripts provide reliable evidence about whether particular manuscripts were in Tamgrūt at a particular point in time. Similarly, the ownership and purchase notes on the manuscripts themselves also provide information about the acquisition of specific texts. Thus, we can state with confidence that Maḥammad and Aḥmad b. Nāṣir purchased large quantities of books in Morocco and during their travels to the Arab East. For example, Maḥammad b. Nāṣir purchased a copy of the *Kitāb al-Shifāʾ* of Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ (d. 544/1149) for four *qurūsh* in Egypt.[98] While, in Cairo, Aḥmad b. Nāṣir bought a copy of Ibn ʿAbbās's (d. 68/687) commentary on the Qurʾan for 5 *riyāls*[99] and an edition of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in the Riwāya Yūnīniyya for 80 gold *dīnār*s.[100] In Mecca, Aḥmad b. Nāṣir bought another copy of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* for 73 *mithqāl*s of gold,[101] while al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* is another valuable volume that Maḥammad b. Nāṣir is said to have purchased for 800 *mithqāl*s of gold.[102] On the basis of the library catalogue of Laḥmar, Schumann has identified even more of the manuscripts presumably purchased by Maḥammad and Aḥmad b. Nāṣir in the Arab East. These include other parts of the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* by al-Ghazālī, the *Nasīm al-riyāḍ* by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Khafājī (d. 1069/1659), a commentary by al-Shabrāmallisī (d. 1087/1676) on Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's commentary on the *Shāmāʾil* of al-Tirmidhī, the *Jamʿ al-wasāʾil fī sharḥ al-wasāʾil* of ʿAlī al-Qārī (d. 1014/1605) and al-Damīrī's commentary on the *Mukhtaṣar Khalīl*.[103]

Another way that manuscripts came to Tamgrūt was through personal copying or the commissioning of copies. As mentioned above, Maḥammad b. Nāṣir copied several works himself. However, both he and his son, Aḥmad b. Nāṣir, also had students make copies in situ or commissioned copies of specific works from other scholars. For example, Aḥmad b. Nāṣir commissioned a certain Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Yaḥyāwī to make a copy of the commentary on *al-Urjūza al-wansharīsiyya* by ʿAlī al-Tāzī; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Qādir al-Suwaydī al-Miknāsī copied numerous books during his stay in Tamgrūt, including *Ghāyat al-amānī fī sharḥ risālat Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī*; and, Ibrāhīm b.

---

98   Schumann, "Reverent Love," 244.

99   Ibid., 246–247.

100   Ibid., 179.

101   al-Manūnī, *Dūr al-kutub*, 74.

102   ʿAmālik, *Jawānib*, 2: 330.

103   Schumann, "Reverent Love," 169.

ʿUmar al-Hashtūkī copied *al-Musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ al-ḥasan fī maʾāthir Abī al-Ḥasan* by Ibn Marzūq (d. 781/1380) in Tamgrūt in 1124/1712.[104] Maḥammad b. Nāṣir also commissioned a copy of *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyāʾ* by Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahāni (d. 430/1038). This was copied by Muḥammad al-Mahdī b. Aḥmad al-Fihrī al-Fāsī (d. 1109/1698), who received 80 *mithqāl*s of gold for his work.[105] In addition, during his journey to Mecca and Medina in 1121/1709, Aḥmad b. Nāṣir commissioned ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Rāshidī in Figīg (Figuig) to make copies of a commentary on *Dalāʾil al-khayrāt* by Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Ṣakūnī al-Figīgī (d. late seventeenth century) and the *Tanbīh al-anām* by Muḥammad b. Abī al-Qāsim b. Naṣr al-Thawrī al-Figīgī, a judge he had met there.[106]

6.2   *The Most Popular Disciplines and Works*

The majority of the collection's manuscripts relate to Islamic law, Ḥadīth studies, Arabic language and literature, Sufism, and Uṣūl al-Dīn. This applies both to the collection as a whole and to the selection of 873 manuscripts that were written before 1720 and bear the name of their copyist. Today, Tamgrūt houses more than 4,700 manuscripts of varying lengths, which are fully recorded in Ḥamīd Laḥmar's library catalogue. Islamic law accounts for the bulk of all entries, both dated and undated, and with and without an identifiable copyist (Figure 6). More than a quarter of all entries—1,124 manuscripts—relate to this subject (Islamic law) according to Laḥmar and his team,[107] followed by works on Ḥadīth studies (670 entries), Arabic language and literature (646 entries), Taṣawwuf (542 entries), and Uṣūl al-Dīn (451 entries). Limiting the analysis to those copies made before 1720 and labelled with the copyist's name returns similar proportions. Of a total of 873 entries, the majority of manuscripts fall into the discipline of Islamic law (259 entries, Figure 6). While the other categories are represented almost equally: with 108 entries on Sufism, 107 entries on Arabic language and literature, 106 entries on Ḥadīth studies, followed by 94 entries on Uṣūl al-Dīn.

The paradigm that has long prevailed among both Western scholars of Islam and Arab intellectuals is that the Islamicate world fell into a kind of intellectual slumber—after a supposed "Golden Age"—sometime between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries from which it only awoke in the nineteenth cen-

---

104   al-Manūnī, Muḥammad, *Tārīkh al-wirāqa al-maghribiyya: Ṣināʿat al-makhṭūṭ al-maghribī min al-ʿaṣr al-wasīṭ ilā l-fatra al-muʿāṣira* (Rabat, 1991), 131–132.

105   ʿAmālik, *Jawānib*, 2: 330.

106   He picked up the last text on his return journey but the first two had not yet been completed. See al-Darʿī and al-Mallukī, ed., *al-Riḥla*, 126, 730.

107   In the present work, I have adopted Laḥmar's classification for the works.

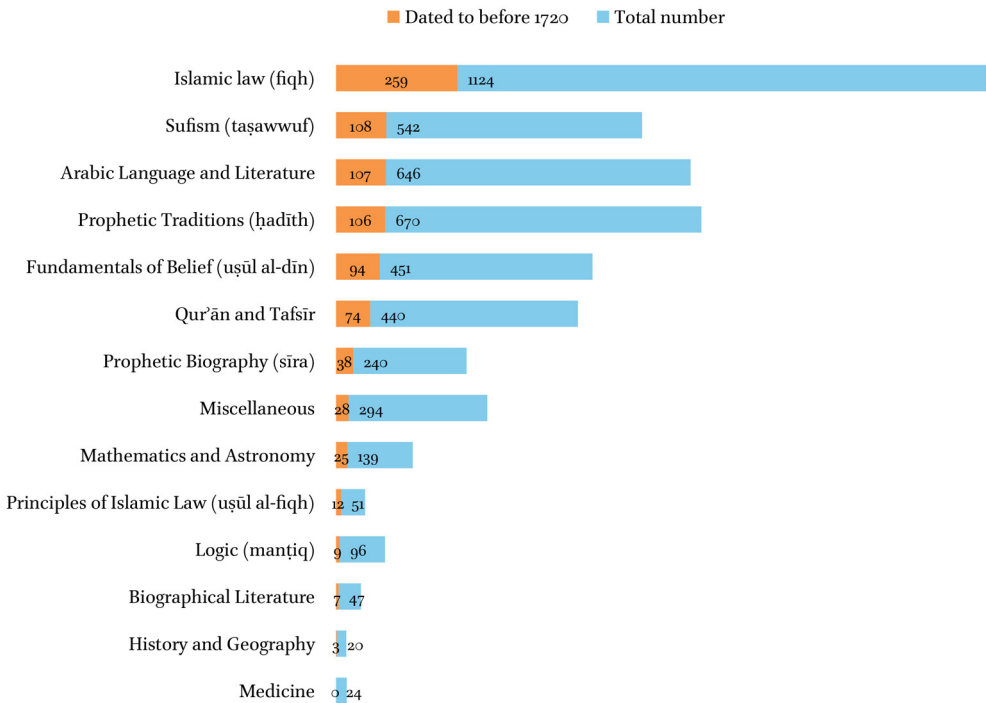■ Dated to before 1720   ■ Total number

FIGURE 6   The number of manuscripts listed in the library catalog 2013 by discipline

tury thanks to the innovations of modernity introduced by Europeans. This assumption was justified by, among other things, the extremely popular genre of commentary literature, which was interpreted as an expression of a lack of intellectual creativity and which has come under increasing criticism in the last twenty years.[108] Does the study of library collections, such as the library of the Nāṣiriyya, also call for a re-evaluation of this narrative?

First, the majority of authors in the manuscripts studied herein, those which are both dated and signed by their copyists, lived between 1400 and 1700.[109]

---

108   See, for example, El-Rouayheb, Khaled, "Opening the Gate of Verification: The Forgotten Arab-Islamic Florescence of the 17th Century," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38 (2006): 263–281; Hees, Syrinx von, ed., *Inḥiṭāṭ—the Decline Paradigm: Its Influence and Persistence in the Writing of Arab Cultural History* (Würzburg, Beirut, Ergon Verlag, 2017); Warscheid, Ismail, "The Persisting Spectre of Cultural Decline," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 60 (2017): 142–173; Özkan, Hakan and Papoutsakis, Nefeli, *Doing Justice to a Wronged Literature: Essays on Arabic Literature and Rhetoric* (Leiden, Brill, 2022).

109   By way of qualification, it must be noted that not all authors of the 873 manuscripts could be identified. In 184 cases, the author remained unknown or uncertain. In addition, the
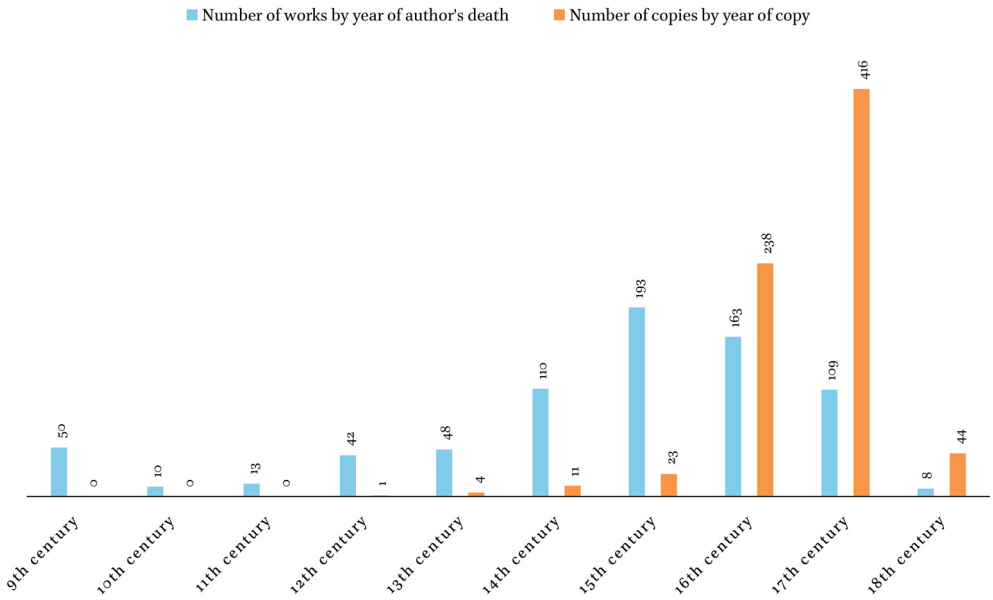
■ Number of works by year of author's death   ■ Number of copies by year of copy

FIGURE 7   The distribution of dated manuscripts in Tamgrūt between 800 and 1720
Note: This chart is based on 747 of the manuscripts dated and signed by their copyist for which the author was also known. Authors could not be determined for 184 works in the corpus of 873 such manuscripts.

There are 110 such manuscripts by authors from the fourteenth century, 193 manuscripts by authors from the fifteenth century, 162 manuscripts by authors from the sixteenth century, and 108 manuscripts by authors from the seventeenth century in the Tamgrūt collection (Figure 7).[110]

From the fifteenth century, in which a particularly high number of authors are represented, Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (d. 895/1490) stands out, with well over thirty copies of his works in the collection, as do Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), Khālid b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Azharī (d. 905/1499), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Thaʿālibī (d. 873/1468), and Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 899/1494). Yet, few of these copies were actually made in the fifteenth century. From the sixteenth century, Shams al-Dīn al-Tatāʾī (d. 942/1535), ʿAlī al-Manūfī (d. 939/1532), ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-

---

considerable number of the manuscripts that were taken to Rabat in the 1950s could not be included in this analysis.

110   Some of the authors from the earlier centuries who were particularly well represented in Tamgrūt's collection were al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, al-Qāsim b. Fīruh al-Shāṭibī al-Ruʿaynī (d. 590/1194), Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Mālik al-Jayyānī (d. 672/1274), and Ibn Abī Jumra al-Azdī (d. 675/1277).

Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565), and Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī (d. 1036/1627) were among the most common authors represented in the collection. However, from the seventeenth century, when the vast majority of the manuscripts studied were produced, the number of authors represented in the collection decreases. The most frequently represented authors from this period are Muḥammad May-yāra (d. 1071/1662), ʿAbd al-Bāqī al-Zurqānī (d. 1099/1688), and Muḥammad al-Kharashī (d. 1101/1690). This shows that in the Zāwiya Nāṣiriyya—based on the evaluation of the dated manuscripts—authors from the supposed "Golden Age" were of less interest but that the works of authors who lived from the fifteenth century onwards were still being acquired and copied and, thus, presumably also intensively studied.

Second, 420, i.e. the majority of the 873 dated manuscripts (copied before 1720 by identified copyists) were copied in the seventeenth century, followed by 238 manuscripts copied in the sixteenth century (Figure 7). Thus, the majority of copies were made during the lifetime of Maḥammad b. Nāṣir or his ancestors. This may indeed be due to the fact that more copies were made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—purposefully and at the behest of Maḥammad and Aḥmad b. Nāṣir.[111] However, we cannot know the extent to which older copies were simply more prone to destruction.[112] Moreover, it is possible that the older manuscripts tend to be among the copies that are undated and unsigned—and are, therefore, not included in the statistical analysis on which this article is based. Regardless, if we consider the large number of copies made in the later centuries in relation to their authors' lifetimes, it becomes clear that any talk of intellectual stagnation and decline in this period should be questioned, especially during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Moreover, many of the texts written during this period have not yet been edited or studied in detail, and the authors are often almost unknown. One of the most striking examples of this is the works of Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥattāb al-Ruʿaynī (d. 954/1547). He was extremely popular and his works, especially his *Mawāhib al-jalīl sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Khalīl*, were a crucial teaching resource in Tamgrūt[113]

---

111   The high number of copies of individual *fiqh* texts not only points to the exceptional position of Islamic law in Tamgrūt, but it also proves the Zāwiya's capacity to produce copies on site. Qurʾan commentaries and other less frequently copied works could also have been copied or commissioned in large numbers, but the focus was apparently on copying other texts.

112   It must be pointed out that it was precisely the older manuscripts that were of particular interest to the National Library team and were eventually brought to Rabat—as the aforementioned interview with Ibrāhīm al-Kattānī shows.

113   There are nine dated and signed copies of this work in Tamgrūt and several other undated copies. See, for example, Tamgrūt, MSS 184/392, 236/471, 238/471, 378/689, 444/781, 841/1135, 852/1141, 853/1141, and 898/1202.

and elsewhere.[114] However, I was only able to identify one study on him or his commentaries, an unpublished Bachelor's thesis undertaken in Sudan.[115] Thus, we do not yet know whether or to what extent these commentaries refined the older texts, such as the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl b. Isḥāq al-Jundī (d. 776/1374), discussing them or possibly even adapting their underlying ideas to the circumstances of their own time. Ultimately, an examination of the holdings of early modern libraries can help us to identify the central texts that were studied and commented upon in the Islamicate world in the long-neglected centuries from 1300 onward and the library of the Nāṣiriyya—itself long understudied—will be a valuable source in this endeavour.

7 The Library as a Resource for Teaching and Studying

The books in the library were primarily used in the context of teaching and learning by students and interested scholars.[116] This is indicated by the large number of works available in multiple copies and by the copious amounts of marginalia on the manuscripts, which included comments, corrections, and reading or listening notes. Undoubtedly, the Zāwiya in Tamgrūt was an important intellectual centre for the Western Maghreb in the seventeenth century and about 1,400 students once studied there.[117] The subjects included, first and foremost, Islamic law (*fiqh*), Arabic language and literature, rational theology, Qur'anic commentary, Ḥadīth studies, and Sufism[118]—fields of interest that

---

114 Hall, Bruce S. and Stewart, Charles C., "The Historic 'Core Curriculum' and The Book Market In Islamic West Africa," in *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade: Manuscript Culture, Arabic Literacy, and Intellectual History in Muslim Africa*, ed. Graziano Krätli and Ghislaine Lydon (Leiden and Boston, MA, Brill, 2011), 109–174, 131, 165.

115 The one exception is Muḥammad Ḥāmid Idrīs's Bachelor's thesis, see Idrīs, Muḥammad Ḥāmid, "al-Aḥādīth wa-l-āthār wa-l-wārida fī 'Kitāb al-Iqrār ḥatā ākhir al-kitāb' min Kitāb Mawāhib al-jalīl fī Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Khalīl: Jamʿan wa-takhrījan wa-dirāsatan," (Bachelor's thesis, Jāmiʿat al-jazīra, Wad Madanī, Sudan, 2017).

116 For the teaching, subjects, teachers, and teaching method in Tamgrūt, see ʿAmālik, *Jawānib*, 2: 263–356.

117 Ibid., 2: 321.

118 Maḥammad b. Nāṣir's disciple al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī lists the contents of the disciplines taught in the Zāwiya in precisely this order. See al-Manūnī, *Dalīl*, 20. ʿAmālik compiled the most important works taught in his study of the Nāṣiriyya, see ʿAmālik, *Jawānib*, 282–319. Fatima Harrak has attempted to trace the typical curriculum in Moroccan educational institutions of the eighteenth century. See Harrak, Fatima, "State and Religion in Eighteenth-Century Morocco: The Religious Policy of Sidi Muhammad b. Abd Allah, 1757–1790," (PhD, London University, London, 1989). However, Harrak's work should be revised to take into account new sources that have come to light since her study was completed.

1. *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ* (before 1720: 37; ca. 300)
2. *al-Sharḥ al-ṣaghīr ʿalā iḍāfa Mukhtaṣar (al-Shaykh) Khalīl* (before 1720: 21; total: 68)
3. *Irshād al-sārī bi-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (before 1720: 5; total: 51)
4. *Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-sanūsiyya al-ṣughrā* (before 1720: 7; total: 45)
5. *Ṣaḥīḥ Imām Muslim* (before 1720: 5; total: 43)
6. *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Shaykh Khalīl* (before 1720: 10; total: 42)
7. *Matn al-Mukhtaṣar al-khalīlī* (before 1720: 11; total: 41)
8. *Sharḥ al-Alfiyya li-Ibn Mālik* (before 1720: 7; total: 41)
9. *Natāʾij al-fikr fī kashf asrār al-Mukhtaṣar* (before 1720: 5; total: 38)
10. *al-Sharḥ al-kabīr ʿalā Mukhtaṣar Khalīl* (before 1720: 4; total: 37)

FIGURE 8   The most predominant works in the Tamgrūt collection (more than 30 copies in total)

are also reflected in the collection, as is demonstrated in the third section of this article. The most common works in these most represented disciplines, in terms of the number of copies held, are the *Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī, the short commentaries on the *Mukhtaṣar al-Khalīl* by al-Damīrī (d. 815/1412 or 856/1452) and al-Kharashī (d. 1101/1690), and the *Irshād al-sārī bi-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* of al-Qasṭallānī (d. 923/1517) (Figure 8). Regarding the field of Islamic law, it is striking that this discipline is not only strongly represented but that many of the relevant texts and their numerous commentaries are available in a large number of copies (often more than ten copies of a single text). This does not apply, however, to the field of Sufism, a discipline which, on the whole, is also represented in the collection by a high number of volumes. However, in this discipline, we find a significantly larger number of individual titles, of which only a few copies were available. This could be due to the fact that Sufi knowledge was not usually taught in large groups, but rather in small groups or private master–disciple settings.

The many marginal notes on the manuscripts, often made by the shaykhs of the Zāwiya, were noted by the library's visitors very early on. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Hashtūkī (d. 1128/1716), known as Aḥuzzī, writes that he saw lengthy marginal notes in many of the manuscripts.[119] He associated the marginalia with the method of collation (*muqābala*),[120] a classical method of textual scholarship described, for example, by Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī (d. 984/1577) in his

---

119   al-Manūnī, *Dūr al-kutub*, 73.
120   al-Hashtūkī, Aḥmad Aḥuzzī b. Muḥammad b. Dāwūd, *Inārat al-baṣāʾir fī dhikr manāqib Ibn Nāṣir*; quoted after al-Manūnī, *Dūr al-kutub*, 73.

work *al-Durr al-naḍīd*.[121] In an interview in the 1950s, Ibrāhīm al-Kattānī—then director of the Arabic Manuscripts Department of the Moroccan National Library in Rabat—states that he, too, had seen many autograph manuscripts during his visit to Tamgrūt, especially for the period from the fourteenth century onward, which had listening and ownership notes or teaching licences (*ijāza*) written on them.[122]

In the Nāsirī lodge, particular attention was paid to the correction (*taṣḥīḥ*) of the two Ṣaḥīḥ works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.[123] The thorough study of texts (*muṭālaʿa*) was among the shaykhs' priorities, as has been frequently emphasized in the primary sources.[124] Ibn Nāṣir's disciple al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī (d. 1102/1691) also asserts that the purpose of reading was to get as close as possible to the original version of a text (*taṣḥīḥ al-matn*) and, based on that, to solve problems (*ḥall al-mushkil*).[125] From an examination of the manuscripts still in Tamgrūt today, it appears that Maḥammad b. Nāṣir and his son Aḥmad not only used the method of collation (*taṣḥīḥ al-matn*) to approximate the original version of a text as closely as possible, they specifically purchased manuscripts written or authorized by their authors or prepared during their author's lifetime. These included, among many others, a copy of the *Manẓūma* (also: *Urjūza*) *fī l-alghāz al-naḥwiyya*, made in 748/1374 by Faraj b. Qāsim b. Aḥmad Ibn Lubb al-Thaʿlabī al-Gharnāṭī (d. 776/1374),[126] and a copy of the work *al-Shifā fī-taʿrīf al-ḥuqūq al-muṣṭafā* by Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ (d. 544/1149), which remains in Tamgrūt today and is said to have been made in 624/1227 by Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿUmar al-Ghassānī (d. 636/1238).[127] Another example is the *ʿUmdat ahl al-tawfīq wa-l-tasdīd fī sharḥ ʿaqīdat al-tawḥīd* of Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (d. 895/1490)—a copy he apparently had made himself in 875/1470.[128]

In addition, the collection contains numerous manuscripts by renowned contemporary scholars, who may be credited with copying texts with great

121 al-Ghazzī, Badr al-Dīn, *al-Durr al-naḍīd fī adab al-mufīd wa-l-mustafīd* (Giza: Maktabat al-tawʿiyya al-islāmiyya, 2009).

122 Shaqrūn, "Iktishāf," 255.

123 Kraneiß, Natalie. "Al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī (d. 1102/1691) on Books, Knowledge Acquisition, and Manuscript Correction in the Seventeenth-Century Maghrib", *Philological Encounters* 9, 3–4 (2024): 301–345.

124 al-Makkī and Nūḥī, ed., *al-Durar*, 2: 519.

125 al-Nāṣirī, Aḥmad b. Khālid and Afā, ʿUmar, ed., *Ṭalʿat al-mushtarī fī l-nasab al-jaʿfarī* (Rabat, 2018), 237.

126 Tamgrūt, MS 1827/1722.

127 Tamgrūt, MS 18/138. For a brief description and photographs of the manuscript, see Kraneiß, *al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī*.

128 Tamgrūt, MS 1360/1554.

care and making reliable copies due to their own professional interest, education, and understanding of the text. These include, for example, a copy of the *Asās al-balāgha* by al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) made by ʿAlī b. Abī Bakr al-Qarāfī—teacher to ʿAlī al-Ujhūrī (d. 1066/1656)—in 1018/1609,[129] and a copy of the *al-Jawāhir wa-l-durar* of al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1566) made in 1063/1653 by the renowned Māliki scholar Nāṣir al-Dīn b. Ḥasan al-Laqqānī (d. 1078/1668).[130]

8   Conclusion

This article has shed light on the history of the Nāṣiriyya's manuscript collection and its institutionalization into a library with its own purpose-built building and provided an overview of the library's current holdings. As we have seen, the library of the Nāṣiriyya in Tamgrūt, like the Nāṣiriyya itself, grew out of a pre-existing institution—the Sufi lodge, to which Maḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī moved as a young man. A known bibliophile, he built up his own collection of manuscripts, which soon grew into a well-known collection that students and scholars could access and borrow books from. Under his son, Aḥmad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī, an imposing building was erected to house the manuscripts in the early eighteenth century, when the Zāwiya reached the peak of its prosperity. Once the collection had been moved into the newly constructed library building, if not before, the collection was arranged by discipline and managed by a library manager appointed for this purpose.

Based on the analysis of the manuscripts, it is clear that the two shaykhs aimed to bring the best possible, most reliable copies of many texts, especially texts written in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, to Tamgrūt so they would be available for their own study and that of their students—sometimes at a very high cost. As we have seen, the disciplines most represented in the collection are Islamic law, Ḥadīth studies, Arabic language and literature, Sufism, and Uṣūl al-Dīn. Furthermore, the manuscripts still bear the marks of the intensive study of the texts, which is further evidence of the fact that scholars and students from all over Morocco and beyond travelled to Tamgrūt to study in the Zāwiya and access its high-quality manuscript collection.

Even though the library's splendour seems to have slowly faded by the end of the eighteenth century, as a descendant of Maḥammad b. Nāṣir laments, a considerable part of the collection survived French colonial rule largely undamaged and is available to visitors and researchers today. Although a recon-

---

129   Tamgrūt, MS 47/237.
130   Tamgrūt, MS 534/898.

struction of the former inventory no longer seems possible, the 4,777 manuscripts remaining in the Zāwiya are a rich treasure trove containing, first, rich marginal notes that facilitated the study of which research and learning methods Moroccan scholars employed in the seventeenth century; second, a collection demonstrating which texts and commentaries were central to study; and third, a means of tracing the extent to which scholars in seemingly remote southern Morocco were connected to discourses in the rest of the country and the Arab East. Although the whereabouts of a considerable number of manuscripts that used to be in Tamgrūt are unknown, the collection of the library of the Nāṣiriyya, which was clearly centred around the two founders Maḥammad b. Nāṣir and Aḥmad b. Nāṣir al-Khalīfa, promises to be a particularly valuable resource that may challenge the current understanding of early modern Islamicate scholarship.

Acknowledgments

Works Cited

Ahmed, Sumayya, "Desert Scholarship: The Zāwiya library of the Nāṣiriyya Sufi Order," in *Libraries at the Heart of Dialogue of Cultures and Religions: History, Present, Future*, ed. Thierry-Marie Courau and Fabien Vandermarcq (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2016), 103–107.

Ahmed, Sumayya, "To the Nation, Belong the Archives: The Search for Manuscripts and Archival Documents in Postcolonial Morocco," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 55 (2023): 421–443.

ʿAmālik, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, *Jawānib min tārīkh al-zāwiya al-nāṣiriyya: Min al-nashʾa ilā wafāt al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī*, 3 vols. (Rabat, 2006).

Amharar, Ilyass, "La bibliothèque de ʿAbd al-Ḥayy Kattānī," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* (2021): 109–124.

Behrens-Abouseif, Doris, *The Book in Mamluk Egypt and Syria (1250–1517): Scribes, Libraries and Market* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2018).

Benjelloun-Laroui, Latifa, "Les Bibliothèques de l'extreme-sud marocain," in *Les bibliothèques du désert: Recherches et études sur un millénaire d'écrits; actes des colloques du CIRSS (1995–2000)*, ed. Attilio Gaudio (Paris, 2003), 229–236.

Benjelloun-Laroui, Latifa, *Les Bibliothèques au Maroc* (Paris, 1990).

Binbīn, Aḥmad Shawqī, ed., *Histoire des Bibliothèques au Maroc* (Casablanca, 1992).

Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, ed., *Lieux de cultes: aires votives, temples, églises, mosquées. IXe Colloque international sur l'histoire et l'archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord antique et médiévale* (Paris, 2008).

al-Darʿī, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Nāṣir and al-Mallukī, ʿAbd al-Ḥafīẓ, ed., *al-Riḥla al-nāṣiriyya, 1709–1710* (Abu Dhabi, 2011).

Déroche, François, "Autour de l'inventaire médiéval de la bibliothèque de la mosquée de Kairouan: livres et mosquées au Maghreb," in *Lieux de cultes: aires votives, temples, églises, mosquées. IXe Colloque international sur l'histoire et l'archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord antique et médiévale*, ed. Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Paris, 2008), 247–255.

Déroche, François, Martínez de Castilla Muñoz, Nuria, and Tahālī, al-Bashīr al-, *Les livres du sultan: Matériaux pour une histoire du livre et de la vie intellectuelle du Maroc saadien (XVIe siècle)*, 2 vols., Mémoires de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2022).

al-Ghazzī, Badr al-Dīn, *al-Durr al-naḍīd fī adab al-mufīd wa-l-mustafīd* (Giza: Maktabat al-tawʿiyya al-islāmiyya, 2009)

Giladi, Avner, "Three Fatāwā on 'Lending Libraries' in North Africa and Spain," *Arabica* 44 (1997): 140–143.

Gutelius, David P.V., "Sufi Networks and the Social Contexts for Scholarship in Morocco and the Northern Sahara, 1660–1830," in *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa*, ed. Scott Reese (Leiden, 2004), 15–38.

Gutelius, David P.V., "The Path is Easy and the Benefits Large: The Nāṣiriyya, Social Networks and Economic Change in Morocco, 1640–1830," *The Journal of African History* 43 (2002): 27–49.

Gutelius, David P.V., "Between God and Men: The Nasiriyya and Economic Life in Morocco, 1640–1830," (PhD, John Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, 2001).

Hall, Bruce S. and Stewart, Charles C., "The Historic 'Core Curriculum' and The Book Market In Islamic West Africa," in *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade: Manuscript Culture, Arabic Literacy, and Intellectual History in Muslim Africa*, Graziano Krätli and Ghislaine Lydon, eds. (Leiden and Boston, MA, Brill, 2011), 109–174.

Harrak, Fatima, "State and Religion in Eighteenth-Century Morocco: The Religious Policy of Sidi Muhammad b. Abd Allah, 1757–1790," (PhD, London University, London, 1989).

al-Hashtūkī, Aḥmad Aḥuzzī b. Muḥammad b. Dāwūd, *Inārat al-baṣā'ir fī dhikr manāqib Ibn Nāṣir*.

Hees, Syrinx von, ed., *Inḥiṭāṭ—the Decline Paradigm: Its Influence and Persistence in the Writing of Arab Cultural History* (Würzburg, Beirut: Ergon Verlag, 2017).

Hirschler, Konrad, "Libraries (up to 1500)," in *EI THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson.

Hirschler, Konrad, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh, 2013).

Hirschler, Konrad, *A Monument to Medieval Syrian Book Culture: The Library of Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī* (Edinburgh, 2020).

Hirschler, Konrad, *Medieval Damascus: Plurality and Diversity in an Arabic Library: The Ashrafīya Library Catalogue* (Edinburgh, 2016).

Idrīs, Muḥammad Ḥāmid, "al-Aḥādīth wa-l-āthār wa-l-wārida fī 'Kitāb al-Iqrār ḥattā ākhir al-kitāb' min Kitāb Mawāhib al-jalīl fī Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Khalīl: Jam'an wa-takhrījan wa-dirāsatan," (Bachelor's thesis, Jāmi'at al-jazīra, Wad Madanī, Sudan, 2017).

Ingalls, Matthew B., *The Anonymity of a Commentator: Zakariyyā Al-Anṣārī and the Rhetoric of Muslim Commentaries* (Albany, NY, State University of New York Press, 2021).

al-Kattānī, 'Abd al-Ḥayy b. 'Abd al-Kabīr, Binbīn, Aḥmad Shawqī, ed., and al-Sa'ūd, 'Abd al-Qādir, ed., *Tārīkh al-maktabāt al-islāmiyya wa-man allafa fī l-kutub* (Rabat, 2013).

Kraneiß, Natalie, "Wissen im Netzwerk: Die Bibliothek der Sufibruderschaft an-Nāṣiriyya in Tamgrūt, Marokko," (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Münster, 2022).

Kraneiß, Natalie. "Al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī (d. 1102/1691) on Books, Knowledge Acquisition, and Manuscript Correction in the Seventeenth-Century Maghrib", *Philological Encounters* 9, 3–4 (2024): 301–345.

Krätli, Graziano and Lydon, Ghislaine, eds., *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade: Manuscript Culture, Arabic Literacy, and Intellectual History in Muslim Africa* (Leiden and Boston, MA, Brill, 2011).

Laḥmar, Ḥamīd Muḥammad, *al-Fihris al-waṣfī li-makhṭūṭāt Khizānat al-zāwiya al-nāṣiriyya, Tamgrūt bi-iqlīm Zāgūra*, 6 vols. (Rabat, 2013).

Liebrenz, Boris, *Die Rifā'īya aus Damaskus: Eine Privatbibliothek im osmanischen Syrien und ihr kulturelles Umfeld* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2016).

Love, Paul, "Provenance in the Aggregate: The Social Life of an Unremarkable Arabic Manuscript Collection," *Manuscript Studies* 3 (2019): 5–31.

Love, Paul M., *Ibadi Muslims of North Africa: Manuscripts, Mobilization, and the Making of a Written Tradition*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Love, Paul M., "The Sālim Bin Yaʿqūb Ibāḍī Manuscript Library in Jerba, Tunisia," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 8 (2017): 257–280.

Love, Paul M., "Ibadis on (and in) the Margins: Manuscript Notes from the Buffalo Agency in Early-Modern Cairo," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 9 (2018): 225–241.

al-Makkī, Muḥammad b. Mūsā b. Muḥammad al-Kabīr and Nūḥī, Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb, ed., *al-Durar al-muraṣṣaʿa bi-akhbār aʿyān Darʿa*, 2 vols. (2014).

al-Mamlaka al-maghribiyya, *Dalīl Jāʾizat al-Ḥasan al-Thānī li-l-Makhṭūṭāt: al-Dawra 36* (2011).

al-Manūnī, Muḥammad, *Dūr al-kutub fī māḍī al-Maghrib* (Marrakesh, 2005).

al-Manūnī, Muḥammad, *Dalīl makhṭūṭāt dār al-kutub al-nāṣiriyya bi-Tamgrūt* (1985).

al-Manūnī, Muḥammad, *Tārīkh al-wirāqa al-maghribiyya: Ṣināʿat al-makhṭūṭ al-maghribī min al-ʿaṣr al-wasīṭ ilā l-fatra al-muʿāṣira* (Rabat, 1991).

Moraes Farias, Paulo Fernando de, "Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī," in *EI THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson.

al-Muḥibbi, Muḥammad Amīn, *Khulāṣat al-athar fī aʿyān al-qarn al-ḥādī ʿashar*, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1868).

al-Murābiṭī, Saʿīd, *Fihris al-makhṭūṭāt al-ʿarabiyya al-maḥfūẓa fī l-khizāna al-ʿāmma bi-l-Ribāṭ: al-mujallad al-sābiʿ*, Khizānat al-awqāf (ḥarf al-qāf)—1 (Casablanca, 2002).

al-Nāṣirī, Aḥmad b. Khālid and Afā, ʿUmar, ed., *Ṭalʿat al-mushtarī fī l-nasab al-jaʿfarī* (Rabat, 2018).

al-Nāṣirī, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd as-Salām b. ʿAbd Allāh and Khayālī, ʿAbd al-Majīd, ed., *al-Mazāyā fī-mā uḥditha min al-bidaʿ bi-umm al-zawāyā* (al-zāwiya al-nāṣiriyya) (Beirut, 2003).

Özkan, Hakan and Papoutsakis, Nefeli, *Doing Justice to a Wronged Literature: Essays on Arabic Literature and Rhetoric* (Leiden, Brill, 2022).

Reese, Scott, ed., *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa* (Leiden, 2004).

Rosenthal, Franz, *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship* (Rome, 1947).

El-Rouayheb, Khaled, "Opening the Gate of Verification: The Forgotten Arab-Islamic Florescence of the 17th Century," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38 (2006): 263–281.

Schumann, Matthew Conaway, "A Path of Reverent Love: The Nāṣiriyya Brotherhood across Muslim Africa (11th–12th/17th–18th centuries)," (PhD, Princeton, NJ, 2020).

Segonzac, René, *Au Coeur de l'Atlas: Mission au Maroc*, 1904–1905 (Paris, 1910).

Sezer, Yavuz, "The Architecture of Bibliophilia: Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Libraries," (PhD, MIT, Cambridge, MA, 2016).

El Shamsy, Ahmed, "The Ḥāshiya in Islamic Law: A Sketch of the Shāfiʿī Literature," *Oriens* 41 (2013): 289–315.

Shaqrūn, ʿAbd Allāh, "Iktishāf makhṭūṭāt ʿarabiyya nādira fī l-Maghrib aqdam makhṭūṭ ʿarabī ʿalā wajh al-arḍ yantaqilu min zāwiyat Tamgrūt ilā al-Ribāṭ: Mudhākira maʿa al-ustādh Ibrāhīm al-Kattānī raʾīs qism al-makhṭūṭāt al-ʿarabiyya bi-l-khizāna al-ʿāmma," in *al-ʿAllāma al-mujāhid Muḥammad Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Kattānī: Qiṣṣat taʾsīs al-ḥaraka al-waṭaniyya wa-l-ḥaraka al-salafiyya bi-l-Maghrib wa-nubdha ʿan tārikh ʿilm al-maktabāt wa-l-makhṭūṭāt*, ed. ʿAlī b. al-Muntaṣir al-Kattānī (2007), 251–258.

Stearns, Justin, "Medicine, God, and the Unseen in Eleventh/Seventeenth-Century Morocco," *Early Science and Medicine* 26 (2021): 459–479.

Warscheid, Ismail, "The Persisting Spectre of Cultural Decline," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 60 (2017): 142–173.