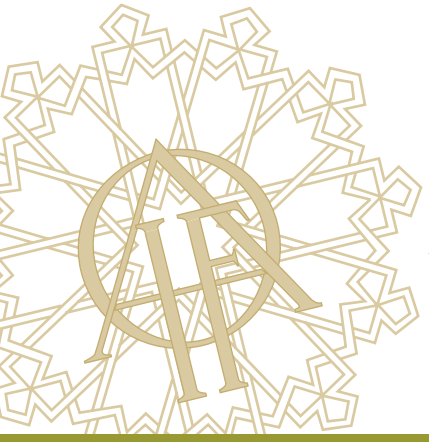
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Yossef Rapoport

Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī, His Wife, Her Slave-Girl: Romantic Triangles and Polygamy in 15th Century Cairo

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YOSSEF RAPOPORT*

Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī, His Wife, Her Slave-Girl

Romantic Triangles and Polygamy in 15th Century Cairo

RÉSUMÉ

La très riche biographie du fameux savant cairote Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī (773-852/1372-1449), telle que la composa son élève al-Saḫāwī, offre un intéressant cas d'étude de l'esclavage domestique dans la société islamique de la fin du Moyen Âge. D'après son biographe, Ibn Ḥaǧar racheta secrètement une esclave qui avait appartenu à sa femme, et eut avec elle un enfant sans en informer son épouse. En s'appuyant sur cette histoire, ainsi que sur un poème d'amour qu'Ibn Ḥaǧar composa pour sa femme, ce cas d'étude souligne l'impact écrasant de l'esclavage féminin sur l'institution du mariage, et ce même à une époque où se renforçaient les attentes monogames et l'intimité conjugale.

Mots-clés : esclavage, mariage, *umm walad*, Le Caire, Mamelouks, poésie, amour, Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī

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✦ **ABSTRACT**

The detailed biography of the famed Cairene scholar Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī (773-852/1372-1449) by his student al-Saḫāwī is used here as a case-study of domestic slavery in late medieval Muslim society. According to the biography, Ibn Ḥaǧar clandestinely acquired a slave-girl that had previously belonged to his wife, and had a child with her without his wife's knowledge. Using this account, as well as a love poem Ibn Ḥaǧar composed to his wife, this case-study demonstrates the overwhelming impact of female slavery on the institution of marriage, even at a period in which monogamous expectations and conjugal intimacy were on the rise.

Keywords: slavery – marriage – *umm walad* – Cairo – Mamluk – poetry – love – Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī

* * *

Introduction

Over the past decade, the history of slavery in Muslim societies has finally received the attention it deserves. While previously the study of slavery in Islam was limited to the military slaves at the top ranks of the political hierarchy, or to the study of the legal aspects of slavery, recent scholarship has shifted the gaze to the majority of slaves who were not members of the elites. One major theme of this recent work is the rejection of the apologetic tone that characterized discourses on Islam and slavery: Clarence-Smith, Toledano and Zilfi all emphasize that slavery in Muslim societies was not necessarily more humane than elsewhere.[1] Islamic slavery, at least in the urban centres of the Middle East, was a service system whereby a slave provided some concrete service for a household. It was also by and large a non-racial and a transitory system, where slaves had reasonable hope of eventually gaining their freedom. It was a different kind of slavery compared to that of the New World, but it was slavery all the same, involving forced capture, and the selling and buying of human beings.

Moreover, this type of service slavery had crucial implications for gender relations. Under most circumstances, male masters had the right not only to labour services of their female slaves, but also to their sexual services. This general right was only curtailed if the female slave was married to someone else, such as another slave; in addition, the prostitution of female slaves was explicitly banned in the Qur'ān. In contrast to the sexual rights of male masters over their female slaves, a female mistress could not enjoy the sexual services of her male slave—an asymmetry

1. Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*; Toledano, *As if Silent and Absent*; Zilfi, *Women and Slavery*. See also Hanna, "Sources for the Study of Slave Women."

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that attracted the attention of jurists since the formative days of Islamic law.[2] The slavery of sexual services therefore worked to reinforce relations of gender, for the free and the unfree. The experience of slavery for females included a legally sanctioned exploitation of their bodies in a manner that was different from the experience of male slaves. Moreover, the sexual rights of male masters over their female slaves affected their wives, and other free women, in fundamental ways. As Zilfi rightly points out, "The traffic in females and the place of women in marriage, or in society generally, cannot be understood without reference to each other".[3]

Most of the recent work on slavery has been based on the rich Ottoman archives, mainly the surviving court records.[4] Far less is known on domestic slavery in the pre-Ottoman period. Given that very few pre-Ottoman court records survive, historians of medieval society are by and large dependent on literary and normative sources, which often tell us little about the actual lives of slaves.[5] However, during the later Middle Ages, more or less corresponding with Mamluk rule in Egypt and Syria (1260-1517), a new genre of semi-autobiographical writing opens for us a unique window to the lives of upper-class urban households and their slaves. Because authors increasingly blur the line between history and autobiography, we have unprecedented access to the domestic. This is most striking in some 15th century works. The example of al-Saḫāwī's extraordinary comprehensive collection of the biographies of contemporary women is well-known.[6] Historians like Ibn Iyās (d. 930/1524) or Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 953/1546) composed chronicles that are also semi-memoirs. Finally, the so-called chronicles of some late 15th century authors, like al-Biqāʿī (885/1480) or Ibn Ṭawq (d. 915/1509), are, for all practices and purposes, diaries.[7] As Li Guo has shown in his study of al-Biqāʿī's autobiography, the new openness about one's own household, including its free and slave women, offers glimpses into the interactions and tensions within a polygamous upper-class family, where free and slave women vied for the attention of the head of the household.[8]

15th century authors' unusual lack of timidity about women and sexuality offers us another striking case-study of an upper-class household, that of the Cairene traditionist, judge and historian Aḥmad b. ʿAlī Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī (773-852/1372-1449). Ibn Ḥaǧar, known to this day for his influential commentary on the canonical Hadith collection of al-Buḫārī, has been aptly described by Franz Rosenthal as "One of the greatest, and at the same time, most

2. See Ali, *Marriage and Slavery in Early Islam*.
3. Zilfi, "Thoughts on Women and Slavery," p. 134.
4. See a recent example in Sobers-Khan, "Slaves Without Shackles."
5. Marmon, "Domestic Slavery." For a fresh view on domestic slavery in Mamluk society, see now Sobers-Khan, "Slaves, Wealth and Fear." See also the case studies by Donald Little, based on the Haram legal documents from the court of 14th century Jerusalem: "Six Fourteenth Century;" *id.*, "Two Fourteenth-Century."
6. Al-Saḫāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmiʿ*; *id.*, *Waǧīz al-kalām*. Secondary sources on al-Saḫāwī's collection of women's biographies include, Lutfi, "Al-Saḫāwī's *Kitāb al-Nisā'*;" Musallam, "The Ordering of Muslim Societies;" Roded, *Women in the Islamic Biographical Dictionaries*.
7. Guo, "Al-Biqāʿī's Chronicle;" Ibn Ṭawq, *al-Taʿlīq*. See also Wollina, "Ibn Ṭawq's Taʿlīq".
8. Guo, "Tales of Medieval Cairene Harem."

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typical representatives of Muslim religious scholarship".[9] He is revered to this day, especially in Egypt, as one of the eminent Muslim scholars of all times. A recent three-part television show dramatized his life to Egyptian audiences, focusing on his supposedly poor background, piety, and courage in the face of political power.[10] In a 2012 internet video, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Ali Gomaa, describes Ibn Ḥaǧar as a scholar of unrivalled memory in the field of Hadith, "second to none" throughout the generations, a man of virtue and piety.[11]

For our purpose here, however, Ibn Ḥaǧar is of interest as a focus of a case-study on domestic slavery in late medieval Muslim society, not as a renowned jurist and traditionist. Like other 15th century authors, Ibn Ḥaǧar incorporated many autobiographical details in his rich historical writings. Moreover, his student al-Saḫāwī used this autobiographical material, as well as his long personal acquaintance with Ibn Ḥaǧar and his family, to compose a full-fledged biography that deals with every aspect of the life of his shaykh.[12] This is not an autobiography, so our access to Ibn Ḥaǧar's mind-set and emotions is less direct and has to be inferred from his actions. On the other hand, al-Saḫāwī's account has the benefit of taking into account the perspective of other individuals, in particular that of Uns, Ibn Ḥaǧar's long-standing first wife, and does not have the self-indulgent tone of al-Biqāʿī's narrative. Moreover, Ibn Ḥaǧar himself has left us a unique love poem he composed to his wife, a poem which has been exquisitely studied by Thomas Bauer.[13] This poem allows us a very rare window into the private passions and contradictions of a medieval Muslim scholar. Most importantly, this case-study as a whole allows us to reflect on the overwhelming impact of female slaves, and the institution of female slavery, on the men and women of medieval Cairo, even at a period in which monogamous expectations and conjugal intimacy were on the rise.

Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī, his Wife and her Slave-Girl

Ibn Ḥaǧar was born in 773/1372 into the Egyptian mercantile class. His paternal grandfather was a cloth manufacturer in Alexandria and his mother had family links to the Kārimī merchants who monopolized the Red Sea trade to the Yemen and beyond.[14] Both his parents

9. Rosenthal, "Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsḳalānī;" For other modern biographies of Ibn Ḥaǧar, see ʿIzz al-Dīn, *Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī Mu'arriḫ*^{an}; ʿAbd al-Munʿim, *Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī*. All three biographies preserve the order of al-Saḫāwī's work, going by topics rather than chronologically.

10. *Ḥayāt al-imām Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī*. The content of this mini-series has been validated by al-Azhar University. For a short extract from the first part of the series, see "La vie de Ibn Hajar al ʿAsqalani," published on 11 Aug 2012 by IslamDocu, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubK_b7hjkRk [accessed 07/11/2012].

11. *Imām Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī*, published on 2 Sept 2012 by Sheikh Ali Gomaa on Youtube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IfUXrMXqLDA [accessed 08/11/2012].

12. Al-Saḫāwī, *al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar*.

13. Bauer, "Ibn Ḥajar and the Arabic Ghazal".

14. It is reported that Ibn Ḥaǧar's father briefly served as deputy *qāḍī*. His mother was a sister of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Ziftāwī, a Kārimī merchant who owned a *qāʿah* in Miṣr (Saḫāwī, *al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 1, p. 107-108, 116; Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'* 2, p. 184; Ibn Ḥaǧar, *al-Durar al-kāmina* 3, p. 117). See also ʿAbd al-Munʿim, *Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī*, p. 62.

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died when he was a young boy, and Ibn Ḥaǧar was then entrusted to the care of Zakī al-Dīn al-Ḫarrūbī, another merchant with the Red Sea trade, who took him on the pilgrimage to Mecca when Ibn Ḥaǧar was only eleven. Ibn Ḥaǧar minutely recorded his education path in his own works, listing all his teachers and the books which he read with them. He recalls that when he was around 17 he decided to specialize in Hadith, while also taking an interest in history, influenced by his teacher and guardian Ibn al-Qaṭṭān. In his late teens he also started composing poetry; in his own short autobiographical note, he mentions writing poetry when he is about 20, including a *madīḥ*, ode to the Prophet and epigrams (*maqāṭiʿ*).[15]

Then, in Šaʿbān 798/May 1396, when Ibn Ḥaǧar was 24, he married Uns, one of five daughters born to ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Aḥmad.[16] ʿAbd al-Karīm served as head of the *Dīwān al-ǧayš*, effectively Financial Comptroller of the realm, for three years during the 790s/1390s. He died a decade later, in 807/1404, leaving behind only 600 dirhams and a few clothes. The property of Uns' mother, Sārah, was more secure. She was a descendant of a 13th century amir by the name of Mankūtimur, and as such was entitled to live in the house (*qāʿah*) adjacent to the madrasa he established in 698/1298. Uns was born there, at her mother's house, around 780/1378, and was about 18 when she married Ibn Ḥaǧar.[17] Following the marriage, Ibn Ḥaǧar moved into his wife's house, even though he had his own property in Fustat.[18] Uns' parents lived with them, and at least one of her sisters had also a share in the house.[19]

Over the next decade, Ibn Ḥaǧar set out on a number of journeys to the Hijaz, the Yemen, and Syria, journeys which combined commerce and learning, each lasting at least a year.[20] The last trip to the Red Sea, in 807/1404, was disastrous. His ship sank en route, and most of his belongings, including 7,000 gold coins deposited with him by a partner, were lost.[21] Although

15. ʿAbd al-Munʿim, *Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī*, p. 60.

16. Saḫāwī, *Al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 3, p. 1208; Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ* 1, p. 394, 513. The matchmaker was Šams al-Dīn Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, one of the executors of the estate of Ibn Ḥaǧar's father (Saḫāwī, *al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 1, p. 117). Like Ibn Ḥaǧar's father, he also was a client of the Banū Ḫarrūbī. Ibn Ḥaǧar, writing many years later, criticized Ibn al-Qaṭṭān for the way he handled the estate of his father (see *Inbāʾ* 2, p. 480; Saḫāwī, *Ḍawʾ* 9, p. 10; Saḫāwī, *al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 1, p. 117, 121).

17. On Uns' parents, see Saḫāwī, *al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 3, p. 1207, 1213; Ibn Ḥaǧar, *Inbāʾ* (ed. Ḥabašī) 2, p. 307; Ibn Ḥaǧar, *Ḍayl al-durar al-kāminah*, ed. ʿAdnān Darwīš, p. 157-158; al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍawʾ* 4, p. 307-308. For details about other relatives of Uns, see ʿIzz al-Dīn, *Ibn Ḥaǧar*, p. 80. On Mankūtimur and his madrasa, see al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-l-iʿtibār* 4, p. 238-240.

18. The house remained in his possession until his death, and then was sold (Saḫāwī, *al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 1, p. 104).

19. On the move to Uns' house, see *ibid*. In his will Ibn Ḥaǧar acknowledged that he owed Faraḥ Ḫātūn, sister of Uns, 100 dinars as unpaid rent on her share in the *qāʿah*, meaning Qāʿat Mankūtimur (*ibid*., p. 1205). About this sister, see al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍawʾ* 7, p. 207.

20. *Al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 1, p. 146-151. Unlike the pilgrims who made their way to Mecca, Ibn Ḥaǧar went straight to the Yemen. He had some good recommendations, for he was able to meet al-Malik al-Ašraf Ismāʿīl and the local governor of Aden. After he came back to Cairo, he made a long trip to Syria and Palestine.

21. *Al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 1, p. 151-152. In fact, many of his goods, books and even some of the cash surfaced on the shores of one of the Red Sea islands. But Ibn Ḥaǧar still had to pay an exorbitant sum as what al-Saḫāwī terms 'the customary fee' for salvaged goods.

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Ibn Ḥaǧar continued to invest large sums in the pepper trade until his death[22], the scholarly vocation now took precedence. The introduction to the *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, his famous commentary on Buḫārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, was composed during these years. His great biographical dictionaries of the Prophet's companions and of Hadith transmitters—the *Iṣāba*, *Taḏḏīb*, and *Lisān al-Mīzān*—are also said to have been conceived at that time.

He then received his first teaching position in the Shayḫūniyya madrasa in Shawwāl 808/March 1406. His next step up was appointment to the Sultan's judicial council, the Dār al-ʿAdl, in 811/1408-1409. In 812/1409 he was appointed to a position in the madrasa administered by Uns' family, the Mankūtimuriyya. His social and academic position was fully established when he was installed as professor and administrator of the well-endowed al-Ḫānqāh al-Baybarsiyya in July 1410, a position he would keep for four decades.

During these journeys, as far as we know—and we know quite a lot about Ibn Ḥaǧar—he did not marry another woman, nor did he have children from slave-girls. Uns gave birth to their first daughter, Zayn Ḫātūn, in 802/1399, after three years of marriage. She then continued to give birth to girls: Farḥa was born in 804/1402, Ġāliya in 807/1405, and Rābiʿa in 811/1408. She is said to have had several miscarriage of male fetuses. It is at that time, around 814/1411, that Ibn Ḥaǧar decided to take a slave concubine. Al-Saḫāwī devotes a section to this slave-girl in his biography of Ibn Ḥaǧar. The text is one of the most dramatic glimpses we have of the interactions of free wives and female slaves in medieval Islam:

> "As Ibn Ḥaǧar saw that his wife gave birth to many daughters, he wished to have a son. He could not marry another woman, however, out of deference to his wife (*murāʿāt*^{an} *li-ḫāṭirihā*), and therefore he chose to take a concubine (*al-tasarrī*). His wife had a beautiful slave-girl (*ǧāriya*), apparently of Mongol origins, by the name of Ḫāṣṣ Turk.[23] He has become inclined towards her (*fa-waqaʿa fī ḫāṭirhi al-mayl ilayhā*). His noble mind (*ra'yuhu al-šarīf*) devised to express anger with her for some failing in a household service, and he swore that she would no longer reside in his house. Following his [Ibn Ḥaǧar's] instructions, Uns told the broker to sell the slave-girl as soon as possible and at any price. He [Ibn Ḥaǧar] said: any loss you will incur, I will compensate you for it.
>
> Then he sent Šams al-Dīn Ibn al-Ḍiyā' al-Ḥanbalī to buy the slave-girl on his behalf. Ibn Ḥaǧar put her up somewhere until she had completed her waiting period (*istabra'ahā*), and then had intercourse with her. She gave birth to his son, the *qāḍī* Badr al-Dīn Abū al-Maʿālī Muḥammad, on 18th of Ṣafar 815 (29 May 1412). On the seventh day, Ibn Ḥaǧar invited his students to his wife's house and slaughtered a lamb for them. Uns was not aware that they were celebrating the *ʿaqīqa* in her own house.
>
> The child lived with his mother, and Ibn Ḥaǧar used to visit them. But, before the child was weaned, the wife learned about the matter. She—or perhaps her mother[24]—rode there immediately and brought the two [mother and child] to the house, leaving them up in one of the side rooms. When Ibn Ḥaǧar

22. In his will, Ibn Ḥaǧar ordered that the money for his testamentary gifts should come from the sale of 20 loads of pepper in Alexandria and 35 loads in Miṣr (*al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 3, p. 1206-1207). About his investments in the production of sugar and in textiles, see *al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 3, p. 984.

23. I follow the reading of her name proposed by Ibrāhīm Bāǧis ʿAbd al-Maǧīd, the editor of *al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar*. ʿAbd al-Munʿim is uncertain about the reading (*Ibn Ḥaǧar*, p. 67). In another place, al-Saḫāwī describes her as a Turkish slave-girl (*Ḍaw'* 7, p. 20).

24. Variant reading: 'and her mother.'

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> came home unsuspectingly, she [the wife] questioned him. Ibn Ḥaǧar did not admit or deny, but his response implied denial. Seeing this, Uns took out the child and his mother. At a loss, Ibn Ḥaǧar rushed to grab the baby. He took the child, and put him up with a trustworthy woman in Fustat. His mother then followed. She remained there until he married her off to Zayn [al-Dīn] ʿAbd al-Ṣamad, son of Šams al-Dīn al-Zarkašī, who has heard Hadith from us. She stayed married to him until she died[25]".[26]

The dramatic final scene, in which the husband and wife confront each other, has another version in al-Saḫāwī's biography of Ibn Ḥaǧar. In a section devoted to the wife, Uns, she punishes him by placing a curse on his son's head:

> Our shaykh, God's mercy on him, held her in great regard and respect, especially as she had much desire for him (*ʿaẓīmat al-raġba fīhi*). When he took a concubine, his mother, the Lady Sāra was in rage, but she [Uns] was less so than her mother. I am told that at the time she reprimanded him. He excused himself by his desire for sons. She then prayed to God that his son will not grow up to be a scholar. He [Ibn Ḥaǧar] was hurt by her words, and feared her invocation of God. He said to her: "You have broken my heart (*aḥraqtī qalbī*)", or something similar. This is what her maternal grandson told me. He also said: she was one of those whose prayers were heard.[27]

Before setting this remarkable story in the context of family life in 15th century Cairo, we need to take account of the literary elements in this account. The text is written by al-Saḫāwī, one of the younger students of Ibn Ḥaǧar, who could not have been a witness to the events. Al-Saḫāwī was, however, a very close acquaintance of the family. He says that he had several Hadith sessions with Uns, Ibn Ḥaǧar's wife, and even composed an anthology of Hadith in her honor. His immediate source for this account was Uns and Ibn Ḥaǧar's grandson Yūsuf, son of their eldest daughter Zayn Ḫātūn. Yūsuf himself was also born after the event, and must have heard the account from his grandmother. The final piece of dialogue, in which the new-born baby is cursed, has an element of prophesying—the son really did not become a scholar—and may be embellished as part of a rivalry between Ibn Ḥaǧar's descendants. But, despite some dramatization, there seems little doubt about the main events: Ibn Ḥaǧar did father a child by his wife's slave-girl, and did so stealthily, behind her back. Al-Saḫāwī must have included this story because these facts—the events leading to the birth of Ibn Ḥaǧar's only surviving son—were well-known to his contemporaries. Even though the work is a very laudatory biography, almost a hagiography, of his illustrious teacher, the event must have been too well-known to be omitted. Rather, al-Saḫāwī chose to report it in a way that would reflect kindly on the shaykh.[28]

25. Variant reading: 'until he died.'

26. *Al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 3, p. 1218-1219.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 1211-1212.

28. Our understanding of the emotional relationship between al-Saḫāwī and his teacher is bound to increase as a result of René de Grandlaunay's study of al-Saḫāwī's unpublished autobiography. Part of Grandlaunay's study is included in this volume of *Annales islamologiques* ("Le milieu familial de Šams al-Dīn al-Saḫāwī. Quelques aspects d'une lecture autobiographique"). A striking feature, as noted by Grandlaunay, is that the structure of al-Saḫāwī's own autobiography mirrors exactly the structure of *al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar*, the biography he wrote about his shaykh. There seems no doubt that this was a relationship of reverence on

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According to al-Saḫāwī's version, Ibn Ḥaǧar decided to take a concubine because his wife bore him only daughters, and he wanted male sons. This is a common theme in Ottoman biographies and memoirs, where polygyny is often narrated in connection with barrenness or lack of male children; the anecdote is reminiscent of the biblical cycle of the barren Sārah and the slave-girl Hāǧar.[29] Obviously, in this case, matters must have been more complex. Were Ibn Ḥaǧar's desire was for a male son, he could have bought himself a slave-girl in the market; and if his desire was not to offend his wife, it is hard to see why he chose her own slave-girl as a concubine, and why he did so behind her back. He may well have excused himself to his wife by his expressing desire for male children, but he must have been attracted to that particular slave-girl for him to go through the elaborate scheme of feigning anger with a household chore and deceitfully causing the slave's dismissal. As al-Saḫāwī himself cryptically notes, Ibn Ḥaǧar was attracted to the slave: "he has become inclined towards her (*fa-waqaʿa fī ḫāṭirhi al-mayl ilayhā*)". Besides, his wife Uns was only 32, and there was still time for her, unlike for the biblical Sarah, to bear male sons.

Al-Saḫāwī's text has Ibn Ḥaǧar following very carefully all the legal requirements before having intercourse with the slave. According to Islamic law, a man has sexual access to the (unmarried) female slave-girl that he owns, but not to the slave-girls of others, including those of his children or his wives. In the text that we have here al-Saḫāwī is at pains to note that Ibn Ḥaǧar followed the letter of the law. He says that the sexual intercourse only came about after she was his property, in his possession; and also after he waited the obligatory three months to ascertain that she was not already pregnant. Such care with the fine details of the law suggests that this was a matter on which al-Saḫāwī felt he needs to defend his shaykh. We do not know this for certain, but it is likely that some in Cairo would have had their suspicions. Would it not be possible that Ibn Ḥaǧar had impregnated the slave-girl in his wife's house, when she was still her slave, not his? Why else would he choose that particular slave-girl? Al-Saḫāwī is very keen to exonerate his shaykh from any suspicion of sinful behaviour.

Al-Saḫāwī's version also purposefully blurs the role of the slave-girl, the Turkish or Mongol Ḫāṣṣ Turk. In the text, she appears to be completely passive, handed over like chattel from wife to husband, through the mediation of market brokers and slave-dealers. This, again, cannot be the entire truth. Ḫāṣṣ Turk must have played some part in the clandestine arrangement, as it would not have been difficult for her to inform her former mistress of what had transpired. She could have easily sent a messenger back to the house after she was set up in Ibn Ḥaǧar's pied-à-terre in the city. Even earlier, one suspects she could have done more—she could insist, for example, that she has not failed in her household chores. And then in the slave market, the scheme depended on Ibn Ḥaǧar's agent buying her before someone else would. Since literary sources suggest that some slaves were able to reject prospective buyers, it is possible once again to sense some complicity on her part.[30]

al-Saḫāwī's part. At the same time, al-Saḫāwī saw himself first and foremost as a professional traditionist and historian, and famously articulated his commitment to accurate reporting of events in his treatise on historiography (Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*).

29. Zilfi, *Women and Slavery*, p. 173.

30. In some cases, slaves may have had some say in the choice of their masters and mistresses. Our sources for this sort of interaction in the marketplace are meager, but the wily slave-girl who navigates the slave market

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Her actions (or inaction) could be explained by a reasonable hope of becoming Ibn Ḥağar's concubine. The legal and social implications were significant. Once impregnated by her master, a slave-girl attained the status of *umm walad*, a 'mother of a child', which meant that her child would be free and would inherit from his father. As for herself, even if the child was still-born, she would be guaranteed her freedom at the death of the master, and could not subsequently be sold or transferred. Ottoman records show that this path was not without risks; a master would often deny paternity, and the manumission of the *umm walad* after the master's death depended also on the debts on the master's estate and goodwill on the part of other heirs.[31] Another risk, as happened here to Ḫāṣṣ Turk, was that the concubine, who was still a slave, would be married off to someone else; in such circumstances, her son would be taken away from her and placed with his father's family.

Despite these hazards, it seems highly likely that a slave-girl in an elite household would see access to the master of the house as her chance to better her position in life. The autobiography of another Cairene scholar, al-Biqāʿī, demonstrates how much the status of slave-girls depended on their bearing a child. In 853/1449, al-Biqāʿī purchased an African slave-girl, called Ḥasbiyat Allāh, who claimed to have been a daughter of an African prince. A month later, she stopped menstruating, but did not become pregnant. She developed cravings, chronic fatigue and stomach aches, and was diagnosed with having a false pregnancy, a condition recognized by some of the medical authorities of the time. She gave birth only ten years later, in 863/1459. Remarkably, she was adamant that she was pregnant throughout this period, and reported dreams that confirmed her claim. This false, ten-year pregnancy, which al-Biqāʿī accepted as a medical possibility, must have given her security which she would not have had otherwise. As said above, once pregnant with the master's son, she was not to be sold or transferred. It also allowed her to compete for al-Biqāʿī's attention with other slave-girls and with his divorcée; judging by the number of pages al-Biqāʿī devoted to recording the minutiae of her menstrual cycle, Ḥasbiyat Allāh's long pregnancy meant she was never away from his thoughts.[32]

Yet, the family drama at Ibn Ḥağar's household does not fit with the image of a polygamous harem, where women compete over, and submit to, the authority of the master adult male. It is striking, and perhaps surprising, to see how much Ibn Ḥağar was affected by the monogamous expectations of his wife. While the letter of the law allowed him to have sex with any slave-girl he owned, his wife's disapproval had to be taken into account. Keeping his affair with the slave-girl secret was his way to cope with his wife inevitable objection. And even when his secret was exposed, as Uns confronted him with the irrefutable evidence of the child himself, Ibn Ḥağar hesitated, until at last he is left with no choice but to admit.

is a literary motif that runs through the Arabian Nights story of "the Slave-Girl Anis al-Jalis and Nur al-Din Ali ibn Khaqan." See the version dating to the Mamluk period in *The Arabian Nights: Based on the Text of the Fourteenth-Century Syrian Manuscript Edited by Muhsin Mahdi*, translated by Husain Haddawy, p. 357-360.

31. Zilfi, *Women and Slavery*, p. 110-114, 162-163, 183.

32. Guo, "Tales of a Medieval Cairene Harem," p. 109-113.

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The narrative of the story suggests that both Ibn Ḥağar and Uns understood his actions as a betrayal of trust; the picture that emerges is of a man in awe of his wife, and for whom the marriage means far more than the sexual relationship with the slave-girl.

Monogamy and Slavery in 15th Century Cairo

Ibn Ḥağar's awe of his wife could partly be explained by the specific circumstances of their marriage. Financially, we should recall, his wife was a woman of considerable means. Ibn Ḥağar lived at her house for the last twenty years, and was teaching in her family's madrasa. From a legal point of view, she could have asked Ibn Ḥağar for rent, or throw him out of the house. She could have also demanded from Ibn Ḥağar the delivery of support payments; this would have been a significant sum, since in his will he acknowledged owing her 300 gold dinars for undelivered clothing (*kasāwī*).[33] This is a particularly large sum, reflecting the very high status of the couple. But in 15th century Cairo it was not atypical for husbands to owe money to their wives, and annual or daily cash allowances are routinely mentioned in legal literature, chronicles and European travelers' accounts. It was also common for husbands to live in their wives' houses. This arrangement has become so common that one 15th century jurist, Ğalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, devoted a treatise to the question of husbands paying rent to their wives.[34]

The monogamous expectations of Uns were not merely a by-product of her wealth. Rather, their relationship reflects wider trends in late medieval Cairo. Ibn Ḥağar and Uns were living in a society in which monogamy was increasingly seen as the norm. In contrast with the polygamous structure of elite households during the 13th and 14th centuries, 15th century elite households in Cairo, including even the royal household of the sultans, tended to be monogamous. The number of slave concubines appears to have been in decline, and even those men who did take concubines saw this often as an emotional relationship, and sometimes as an exclusive, monogamous one.[35]

The objection of a wife to a second wife or a concubine was of course not a new phenomenon. Male authors had no illusions about the way women react to a second wife. When a woman watches her husband take a concubine or another wife, says Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawziyya (d. 751/1350), she naturally becomes jealous. Her envy is different and less profound than the virtuous jealousy (*ġayra*) felt by a husband who finds someone in his wife's bed. But it is nonetheless a strong feeling, a result of her unwillingness to share the man with other women, or a sign of her love and affection towards him.[36] Ibn Taymiyya attributed the adulterous affairs of women to their jealousy. Husbands who commit adultery, or are frequent clients of prostitutes, cause their

33. *Al-Ğawāhir wa-l-durar* 3, p. 1204; cited in my *Marriage, Money and Divorce*, p. 62.
34. Rapoport, *Marriage, Money and Divorce*, p. 63; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Ḥāwī* 1, p. 299-309.
35. This argument is developed in my "Women and Gender", p. 28-32.
36. Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawziyya, *Aḫbār al-nisā'*, p. 68. Ibn al-Qayyim is trying to make the point that husbands are more jealous than wives—or at least should be. To illustrate this, he brings examples from India, where widows are burned to preserve their loyalty to their late husbands, and from the animal kingdom, where males fight each other for the favours of females.

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wives to retaliate by having affairs of their own.[37] The jealousy of wives was an accepted fact of life, and part of popular lore. According to the narrative sources adopted by late medieval chroniclers, the famous Šağar al-Durr murdered her husband, Sultan ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybak, after learning about his intention to marry another wife.[38]

It is not surprising, therefore, that restrictions on men's ability to contract new marriages or to purchase concubines were common. Clauses against polygamy and concubinage had been inserted in marriage contracts since the early Islamic period. Even the first Abbasid caliphs agreed to the insertion of these clauses in their marriage contracts.[39] Clauses against polygamy and concubinage, as well as other clauses favoring wives, are found in several 8th and 9th century marriage contracts from Egyptian provincial towns.[40] Stipulations against polygamy and concubinage were a standard feature of marriage contracts among the Jewish community of Cairo from the beginning of the 12th century. As in the earlier Muslim contracts, other stipulations were often included.[41] In the later medieval period some brides asked for the delegation of power (*wikāla*), in which the husband allowed his wife to divorce herself should he marry a second wife or purchase a concubine. This method was considered easier, because the wife did not need to ask the *qāḍī* for a judicial divorce.[42] According to another method, the husband took an oath on pain of divorce not to take another wife or a concubine. Were he to violate his oath, divorce followed automatically, not requiring any legal action on the part of the wife. We have several 15th century examples of this form of oath-taking.[43]

While stipulations against polygamy date back to the early Islamic centuries, 15th century Cairo presents a novelty in that wives commonly took for granted a right to a monogamous marriage, and assumed that their husband would need their approval before taking another

37. Ibn Taymiyya, *Maǧmūʿ fatāwā* 32, p. 117-121.

38. Since the death of Šağar al-Durr and her husband made possible the rise of the Mamluk Sultans, the story is something of an origins myth. G. Schregle demonstrated that this romantic version was a later embellishment by 14th and 15th century chroniclers (*Die Sultanin von Ägypten*, p. 84-95). Mernissi, on the other hand, has Šağar al-Durr as a hopelessly romantic Medea, who acted out of all-consuming love (*The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, p. 97). Her avowedly feminist version is surely not historically accurate, yet preserves the gist of the later chronicles' narrative.

39. The famous cases are of Umm Mūsā, wife of the Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr, and Umm Salāma, wife of al-ʿAbbās (see Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, p. 77; Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, p. 15, and the sources cited there).

40. Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri* 1: nos. 38, 39, 41; *id.*, "Arabische Papyri," no. 8.

41. Friedman, *Ribūy Nashīm be-Yisrael*, p. 34-41; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society* 3, p. 147-150; Amir Ashur, "Protecting the Wife's Rights," p. 381-389.

42. It was also possible to allow the wife to divorce any second wife the husband might marry in the future. Since a husband could always divorce his wife at will, there was no practical difference between these two methods of *tawkīl* (Ibn Taymiyya, *Maǧmūʿ fatāwā* 33, p. 119, 164; Ibn Qayyim, *Iʿlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn* 3, p. 343, 384).

43. In the 15th century, the Egyptian notary al-Asyuṭī provides a model document for an oath on pain of divorce taken by the husband. In the model, the husband takes it upon himself not to marry a second wife, not to take a concubine, and not to desert his wife (*Ǧawāhir al-ʿuqūd* 2, p. 148). In a case put before the late 15th century jurist al-Anṣārī, a husband pledged to divorce any woman he should marry in addition to his wife. Later, the husband asked a Šāfiʿī *qāḍī* to invalidate his oath (*al-Iʿlām*, p. 244). For the use of a divorce oath against polygamy in the 14th century, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Maǧmūʿ fatāwā* 33, p. 236.

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sexual partner. There are several examples of this, but we can introduce this change with an intriguing case brought before the royal court in 876/1471. A Cairene woman appeared before no lesser an authority than Sultan Qā'itbāy himself in order to complain that her husband had taken a second wife (or, according to another version, a slave concubine). This happened at a time when Qā'itbāy was holding sessions for the petitions of commoners, as part of an experiment with direct royal justice. Ibn Iyās tells us that this particular petition convinced the sultan that the experiment was a waste of time.[44] In any case, the fact that a common woman had the nerve to approach the sultan on the issue of polygamy is surprising: she, at least, must have believed that she had a right to prevent her husband from taking another sexual partner. Another anecdotal evidence concerns the father of the scholar Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad Ibn al-Aṭʿānī (d. 912/1506-1507). The wife of Ḥusayn's father was barren, and gave her husband permission (*aḍanat*) to take a concubine. Ḥusayn, the son of that concubine, carried the family name of his father's wife as a reward for her generosity.[45] The impression is that the husband required the permission of the first wife before taking a concubine.

Another novelty of the 15th century was institutionalization of clandestine marriages (*nikāḥ al-sirr*), a practice well attested in the legal and narrative sources. Al-Asyūṭī provides a model document for this kind of marriage in his manual for notaries. According to the model, a clandestine marriage contract is like any other except that it is never made public. The presence of witnesses is required, but they take it upon themselves to keep the marriage secret (*kitmān al-nikāḥ*). Al-Asyūṭī explains that men have recourse to clandestine marriages when they are taking a second wife.[46] Evidently the secrecy of these marriages was not always well kept, since 15th century chroniclers are able to tell us about them. Abū al-Saʿādāt al-Bulqīnī (d. 890/1485), a chief *qāḍī* in Cairo, was already married to his paternal cousin when he decided to contract a marriage with Saʿādāt bint Badr al-Simirbā'ī, a widow of one of his relatives. Abū al-Saʿādāt married her secretly (*ḫufyat*^{an}), and divorced her before his death.[47]

When the first wife did find out, the man usually had to choose between the two. ʿAzīza bint ʿAlī al-Zayyādī (d. 879/1475), the daughter of a Cairene scholar, married the Meccan scholar ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Īǧī when he visited Cairo. This marriage was kept secret from his first wife and paternal cousin, Ḥabībat Allāh bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, who stayed in Mecca. But when ʿAzīza traveled with her husband to Mecca, Ḥabībat Allāh naturally found out; al-Īǧī had no choice but to divorce the second wife.[48] Al-Biqāʿī's prized marriage to Saʿādāt, the daughter of an important

44. Al-Ṣayrafī, *Inbā'*, p. 391. According to another version, the question was not of a second wife, but of sex with his slave-girl (Ibn Iyās, *Badā'iʿ al-zuhūr* 3, p. 63). Cited in Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians?*, p. 151-155.
45. Al-Ġazzī (d. 1651), *al-Kawākib al-sā'ira* 1, p. 184.
46. He also notes that all schools accept the validity of this marriage, except the Mālikīs (*Ǧawāhir al-ʿuqūd* 2, p. 89).
47. For her biography see al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'* 12, p. 63. Al-Saḫāwī mentions the marriage in Abū al-Saʿādāt's biography, but not its secrecy. Rather, al-Saḫāwī refers to uncertainty regarding the validity of the marriage (*Ḍaw'* 9, p. 99-100).
48. Al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'* 12, p. 82 (no. 505) [second wife]; 12, p. 19 (no. 102) [first wife]. See also Lutfi, "Al-Sakhāwī's *Kitāb al-Nisā'*," p. 114.

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Sufi Shaykh, came to an end when her family found out that he had secretly concluded a short term union during an official visit to Syria. His earnest remonstrations that he could not be expected to abstain from sexual intercourse fell on deaf ears.[49] Sometimes—rarely, it seems—the second wife gained the upper hand. Naǧm al-Dīn Ibn Ḥiǧǧī preferred not to consummate his marriage with his young bride and relative, Fāṭima bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Bārizī (d. 899/1494), because he had married a second and more mature woman. Al-Saḫāwī tells us that his second wife "took hold of his heart," and convinced him to divorce his cousin.[50]

The practice of clandestine marriages demonstrates quite clearly the monogamous expectations of wives. Was it possible at all to keep such a secret? Perhaps in some cases a clandestine marriage was simply a marriage that, out of respect for the first wife, was not celebrated publicly. Under certain circumstances, secrecy was required for political reasons. But sometimes, as in the case of Ibn Ḥaǧar, a clandestine marriage or a second union was really a secret, and the existence of a second wife or a concubine was successfully concealed from the first wife, at least for a while. In many ways, a secret marriage is the functional equivalent of keeping a lover, one of the most typical male practices in monogamous societies.

The 15th century examples of contracting a secret second union also reflect the fact that polygamy, in its wider sense of simultaneous unions with both wives and slaves, had become less widespread. This was in sharp contrast to earlier periods, such as the 13th century and the first half of the 14th, when members of the military and the civilian elites tended to have many sexual partners simultaneously. Sunqur al-Nūrī (d. 736/1335), a governor in several towns in northern Syria, had as many as 60 concubines (*mawṭūʾāt*). When he died he left 21 children.[51] A similar number of concubines were found in Qawsūn's mansion in Cairo in 742/1341.[52] Karāy al-Manṣūrī, a governor of Damascus, had four wives as well as thirty concubines (*sarārī*).[53] In the 14th century, concubines were also available in large numbers to the civilian elites. In Damascus, again, the jurist Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Zarʿī (d. 741/1342), made it his habit on Fridays to alternately frequent the slave market and the book market, thus cultivating the pleasures of both body and mind. His association with Turkish slave-girls was such that he learned to speak their language.[54] ʿAbd al-Laṭīf b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Subkī (d. 788/1386), a nephew of Taqī al-Dīn, was also known to have a weakness for slave-girls. He is said to have had sex with more than one thousand.[55]

49. Guo, "Tales of a Medieval Cairene Harem," p. 105-106.

50. See Saḫāwī, *Ḍawʾ* 12, p. 100 (no. 629), for the second wife, Fāṭima bint Kamāl al-Dīn al-Aḏruʿī; *Ḍawʾ* 12, p. 94 (no. 589) [first wife].

51. Al-Ǧazarī, *Tāʾrīḫ* 3, p. 920.

52. Ibn Qāḍī Šuhba, *Tāʾrīḫ Ibn Qāḍī Šuhba* 2, p. 229.

53. Al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān* 4, p. 154.

54. Al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān* 1, p. 45; Ibn Ḥaǧar, *Durar* 1, p. 16. Literally, al-Ṣafadī says that his friend combined the pleasure of the pearl with that of the stars (*al-durr wa-l-darārī*).

55. Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ġumr* 2, p. 239. In most reports on concubinage among the civilian elite, it is the sexual aspect that is emphasized. To give two more example, Šihāb al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Salām Ibn Abī ʿAṣrūn (d. ca. 631/1234), a Syrian bureaucrat and jurist, had more than twenty concubines. We are told that "his limbs dried up from excessive sexual intercourse" (Sibṭ Ibn al-Ǧawzī, *Mirʾāt al-zamān* 8,

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In contrast, the elite households of the 15th century were very often monogamous, including the royal household itself. Sultans now refrained from taking concubines; the royal household of the second half of the 15th century was centred around monogamous and long-lasting marriages. Zaynab bint Badr al-Dīn Ibn Ḫāṣṣbak bore all of Sultan Īnāl's children, and we are told that he never married any other wife. Al-Saḫāwī says that Ināl's monogamy set him apart from previous rulers.[56] Al-Ẓāhir Ḫušqadam (r. 1461-1467) married Šukurbāy al-Aḥmadiyya, a manumitted slave-girl of a previous Sultan, when he was still a junior officer. He had concubines, but did not marry any other wife until her death in 870/1465. He then married Surbāy, one of his concubines, who was also the mother of his eldest daughter.[57] Qā'itbāy (r. 1468-95) was married to Fāṭima bint ʿAlī Ibn Ḫaṣṣ Bak, the daughter of a wealthy local Cairene family, who was his first and only wife.[58] Qā'itbāy had entertained no concubines since their marriage in 1458, and started taking ones only towards the end of his life.[59]

The royal household merely replicated wider trends prevailing among the military elite. Īnāl, Ḫušqadam and Qā'itbāy carried over their monogamous marriages from their days as junior officers. The number of references to military households with large numbers of slave-girls in general, or concubines in particular, dramatically falls in the 15th century. An amir with a large number of concubines was now a rarity.[60] In a study of Syrian amirs endowment deeds from the late 15th and early 16th centuries, M. Winter found no one who had more than one *umm walad*. Interestingly, some of the amirs' wives were their former slave-girls.[61]

The same was true of the civilian elite. In the 15th century, there are no longer references to civilians possessing an extravagant number of concubines, and it seems that no scholar now divided his time between the slave market and book market. Rather, when concubines are mentioned, it seems that they were kept not to supplement or enlarge a household, but rather as a substitute for a wife. ʿAlī b. Naṣr al-Manūfī (d. 896/1491), for example, a poor tailor and mosque attendant (*farrāš*), had three children from a slave-girl.[62]

p. 692). ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī (d. 743/1342-1343), kept a constant stock of concubines; he had four slave-girls who bore him children and acquired the status of *ummahāt awlād*, as well as six transient concubines, whom he would exchange in the slave market every now and then (al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān* 2, p. 726. See also Ibn Ḥağar, *Durar* 2, p. 294).

56. Al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'* 12, p. 44 (no. 261); Ibn Iyās, *Badā'iʿ* 2, p. 368; 3, p. 156. See also Johnson, "Royal Pilgrims", p. 114-119.

57. Al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'* 12, p. 68 (no. 417); Ibn Iyās, *Badā'iʿ* 2, p. 435. See also Johnson, "Royal Pilgrims," p. 119-121.

58. On Fāṭimam's biography see also Petry, *Twilight*, p. 32; *id.*, "The Estate of al-Khuwand Fāṭima," p. 277-294; Johnson, "Royal Pilgrims," p. 121-123.

59. Ibn Taġrī Birdī and Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, both writing in the 1470s, report that Qā'itbāy had no other wives or concubines (Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Ḥawādith al-Duhūr* 8, P. 630, 705; Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *Inbā'*, p. 60). He changed this policy later in his reign. His heir, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, was born to a concubine in 887/1482-1483. Another concubine bore him a daughter around 885/1480 (Petry, *Twilight*, p. 105; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'iʿ* 3, p. 197, 288).

60. Taġrī Birdī (d. 815/1412), the historian's father, left children from nine different mothers, most of them concubines, during a career that stretched back well into the 14th century. See Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfī* 4, p. 41-42; 5, p. 368; ʿĀšūr, "Makānat Ibn Taġrī Birdī," p. 422.

61. Winter, "Mamluks and their households," p. 297-316.

62. Al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'* 6, p. 48 (no. 131).

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ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ḥasanī (d. 870/1465), a scholar of modest income, never married but took a slave-girl as a concubine.[63] The historian al-Maqrīzī went to buy a concubine when he was single. He ended up purchasing a fifteen-year old slave girl who had been brought up in the royal household. Al-Maqrīzī taught the girl, whom he named Sūl, to read, write and even to compose poetry. There is no indication that she bore him any children. He later manumitted her, and she travelled to Mecca where she died at the age of forty.[64]

A most moving example of the change in attitude towards concubines is the biography of Bulbul (Nightingale), a slave-girl of the Damascene scholar Yūsuf Ibn al-Mibrad. Her biography is known to us from a short work Ibn al-Mibrad composed in her memory, entitled *Laqaṭ al-Sunbul fī Aḫbār al-Bulbul* (Gleanings from the life of the Nightingale).[65] Ibn al-Mibrad depicts Bulbul as a virtuous, modest and learned woman. Even when Ibn al-Mibrad's brother personally invited her to his wedding, she refused to go, claiming that she swore never to leave the house. She refused to wear an expensive *sinǧāb* fur that Ibn al-Mibrad bought her as a gift, citing her master's own legal opinions against the use of this material.[66] We know that Ibn al-Mibrad often read for her, as is mentioned in his surviving autograph manuscripts.[67] Her last act of charity was to leave a bequest for the poor, the money coming from the profits she gained as a spinner. She died in 883/1479, after spending ten years with Ibn al-Mibrad and bearing him a boy and a girl. Bulbul's biography projects her as an exemplary Muslim woman. Her relationship with Ibn al-Mibrad seems to resemble that of a wife; if he also had a free wife at the time, she is not mentioned. It would be easy to forget the difference in legal status, except that Ibn al-Mibrad reminds us that Bulbul was not the name given to her at birth, but that he himself had given her this name when he brought her to his house.

The changes in the attitude to concubines may have been correlated to declining supply of slaves and a rise in prices. The evidence for sale prices of slave-girls is too scanty to allow definitive conclusions, with prices ranging from 15 to 80 gold coins in the 15th century.[68] There are occasional references to the dearth of white concubines in the later 15th century: when

63. *Ibid.*, 5, p. 243.

64. *Ibid.*, 12, p. 66 (no. 404).

65. The manuscript of the work is preserved in the Taymūriyya library in Damascus. Māhir Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir published part of the work in his introduction to Ibn al-Mibrad, *Aḫbār al-nisāʾ*, 17ff.

66. Towards the end of the 15th century, Syrian and Egyptian jurists debated the legality of using this squirrel fur. Naǧm al-Dīn Ibn Qāḍī ʿAǧlūn (d. 876/1472) composed a treatise against the use of this material, while the Cairene al-Suyūṭī allowed it [Sartain, *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī* 1, p. 202 (n. 11); Saḫāwī, *Ḍawʾ* 8, p. 97 (no. 197).].

67. See the remarks by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Sulaymān al-ʿUṭaymīn in his introduction to Ibn al-Mibrad, *al-Ǧawhar*, p. 37.

68. E. Ashtor asserts that there was no increase in the price of male and female slaves, apart from military slaves, during the 15th century. But the basis for this assertion is a single reference from the records of a Venetian consul in Alexandria. In 1419, the consul paid 27 ducats for a Nubian female slave, and part of the amount went towards the transport expenses (Ashtor, *A Social and Economic History*, p. 361). Von Harff, as late as 1497, states that male and female Christian slaves are sold for 15 to 30 ducats (von Harff, *The Pilgrimage*, p. 79). Around the same time, a price of almost 40 dinars is mentioned in a question put to a jurist (al-Anṣārī, *al-Iʿlām*, p. 124). In the dream diary of the Moroccan visitor to Cairo al-Zawawī, a price of 85 dinars is mentioned in the 1450s as the price for top of the market Turkish slave-girl (Katz, *Dreams*, p. 119.)

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Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Abī Šarīf, a native of Jerusalem, came to Damascus in 904/1498-1499, he looked for a concubine but had to make do with a black slave-girl (*samrā'*).[69] In view of the prices paid for slaves in 15 century Italian and Anatolian cities, it is likely that prices in Egypt and Syria had gone up.[70] But, ultimately, the change in the structure of elite households was not about money or availability of slave-girls. Sultans could afford to pay for as many slave-girls as they liked, and—returning to our case-study—Ibn Ḥaǧar could also afford quite a few. What had changed was something more fundamental about marital relations, with men placing more importance on the conjugal bond.

The "Red Sea Ghazal"

Ibn Ḥaǧar himself chose to express his emotional attachment to his wife by doing something very unusual: he wrote her a love poem. In the rich tradition of the ghazal, the Arabic love poem, addressing one's own wife was a real rarity. Since the emergence of the genre in Abbasid courtly circles, ghazal love poetry was often homoerotic, or otherwise addressed to beloveds who could not be obtained, expressing an ideal of unfulfilled and unconsummated love. Even when the beloved was obtainable, it could not be one's own wife.[71] During the Mamluk period, however, poets chose to somewhat modify the conventions, primarily by showing a growing interest in matters of private life. Because poetry came to be such a common method of communication, scholars—not only professional poets—could talk about their personal circumstances and assume that their peers would be interested. Thus we find elegiac poems on the death of one's own son, daughter or mother, and Ibn Ḥaǧar's love poem to his wife should be seen in that literary context.[72] This is not the first poem addressed to one's wife in Arabic literature, as we have, for example, the 13th century scholar Abū Šāma composing a few stanzas in praise of his pious, modest and hard-working wife.[73] But Ibn Ḥaǧar's poem to his wife is a full-scale *ghazal*, much more complex in its form and content.

Because of its innovative approach and unusual subject matter, the "Red Sea Ghazal" by Ibn Ḥaǧar attracted the attention of Thomas Bauer, who has devoted to it a full-scale study.[74] As noted above, Ibn Ḥaǧar started to compose poetry in his late teens, and continued to do so all his life. Partly because he is so well known as a Hadith scholar, his Diwan received more attention than other works of Mamluk poets, and it has been now edited and published several times.[75] Ibn Ḥaǧar's work was distinctive for his frequent and sophisticated use of

69. Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-ḫillān* 1, p. 212.

70. See Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade*, p. 39-45, 147-149; Inalcik, *An Economic and Social History* 1, p. 284; Ashtor, *A Social and Economic History*, p. 498-504.

71. Bauer, *Liebe und Liebesdichtung*.

72. See Bauer, "Mamluk Literature," p. 105-132; see also *id.*, "Communication and Emotion," p. 63-64.

73. Rapoport, *Marriage, Money and Divorce*, p. 31; see also Lowry, "Time, Form and Self."

74. Bauer, "Ibn Ḥajar and the Arabic Ghazal."

75. I have used *Dīwān šayḫ al-islām Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī*, ed. Firdaws Nūr ʿAlī Ḥusayn. The annotated edition by Šihāb al-Dīn Abū ʿAmr, *Uns al-ḫuǧar*, is the one recommended by Bauer.

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tawriyya, or double entendre. His Diwan contains the poems he himself selected, divided thematically into seven chapters. Each chapter is devoted to one type of poetry, such as odes for the Prophet Muḥammad, two-line epigrams and *ghazal*, including the "Red Sea Ghazal" addressed to Ibn Ḥaǧar's wife.

The poem derives its title from the central unifying topic, which is the poet's travelling on a ship that carried him from his home in Cairo to the Hijaz. During this journey, he expresses love and yearning to all that he left behind, including his city Cairo, his home and his wife. The longings of the poet are of course the defining theme of the ghazal genre, but the objects of love here are new, and the modes of expression imaginative. In the first part, the beloved is his home city of Cairo (or, possibly, Egypt as a whole). The lines here are replete with erotic references, and with mention of wine. Then, the second part of the poem contrasts the ship in which he travels and his home, and this leads him to expressions of longing and sincere love to his beloved, which are remarkable and moving: "Ever since I have lost/left you, I don't have anybody in my mind apart from you" (line 28); and asking the wind's breezes to say to her "that I will immovably stick to my love for her (*ʿahd ḥubbihā*), even if I had not come to an end with the hardships of my travels" (line 36).

Bauer concludes that the object of love here must be the wife. He knows this from a line in which the beloved is described as "my spirit that dwells in my home," (line 33) and from that the poet does not want the beloved to learn of his pain, showing that he has no need to show her his love—unusual theme in ghazal poetry. Bauer overlooks here the direct proof that the poem is addressed to Ibn Ḥaǧar's wife, buried in one of the many double entendres of the poem: "I departed without heart, without sociability (*anas*) and without the sweetness of sleep, since she is my intimacy / my Uns (*unsī*) and towards her are dedicated all my thoughts" (line 37). This is unmistakably a poem for Uns, Ibn Ḥaǧar's wife. As Bauer insightfully says, we have here a scene of marital bliss, "an expression of the mutual love of a married couple."[76] What may seem unexceptional to us in a largely monogamous society, was, in the context of medieval Islamic family life, truly remarkable. As the wife becomes an object of idealized, romantic love, the poem conveys a sense of exclusivity—"I don't have anybody in my mind apart from you."

This poem was almost certainly written prior to Ibn Ḥaǧar's secret affair with Uns' slave-girl, which occurred around 814/1411. As far as we know from al-Saḫāwī's biography of Ibn Ḥaǧar, he traveled to the Hijaz several times in the years following his marriage to Uns, between 1396 and 1404. He did go on the pilgrimage later on, in 815/1413, but he did so together with Uns; it could not be the occasion of a poem of longing. Al-Saḫāwī and Ibn Ḥaǧar himself also tell us that he composed most of his poetry when he was a young man; at the time of his affair with Ḫāṣṣ Turk he was already about forty. Finally, it is hard—for us at least—to imagine such promises of enduring love to come after, not before, Ibn Ḥaǧar's infidelity.

Given what we know about Ibn Ḥaǧar's affair with his wife's slave-girl, the poem also seems to reflect the tension between a monogamous ideal of marriage and the opportunities for polygamous relationships available to men; a slave-girl and her sexuality are always at

76. Bauer, "Ibn Ḥajar and the Arabic Ghazal," p. 45.

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the background. In the middle of the poem, when Ibn Ḥağar contrasts his home with the ship on which he travels, he compares the ship to a slave-girl, using another one of his double-entendres: "A slave girl/ship (*ğāriya*) is she, but whosoever penetrates her/enters her belly (*tabaṭṭana fīhā*) becomes her slave, whether he a slave or a free person!" (line 18). Bauer, who is unaware of the romantic drama that will come later in Ibn Ḥağar's life, comments that the ship, in the figure of the slave-girl, represents untamed and dangerous sexuality, a counter-image of the beloved, the poet's wife. Bauer is also startled by the final two difficult lines of the poem, which suddenly express a sense that the union has never fulfilled its promise, lines of such "despair and hopelessness of which we can only hope that his wife never read them."[77]

Can we use the "Red Sea Ghazal" as a window to Ibn Ḥağar's mind and soul? Unlike modern poetry, medieval poetry did not aim to be an expression of individuality, and other poems by Ibn Ḥağar cannot be taken at face value. His Diwan includes a homoerotic ghazal, describing a nocturnal union with a beautiful young man, whose "cheeks are like apple, his eyes the narcissus."[78] He is not the only celebrated Mamluk scholar who composed works with this theme.[79] Nor should we take him seriously when he composes an epigram on his attraction to a *waqqād*, the lamp-lighter in the mosque.[80] Such epigrams on young men whose names or professions are used for the *tawriya*, or double entendres, were a particular fashion of the time.[81]

And yet, we cannot dismiss the emotions in the "Red Sea Ghazal" as conventional and formulaic, in the same way we cannot dismiss the veneration to the Prophet just because the odes in praise of the Prophet have become so conventional. In the '"Red Sea Ghazal", Ibn Ḥağar made the unusual choice of his wife as the object of love, and by giving out her name—Uns—in the poem, and by setting out a realistic and contemporary frame of a journey to the Hijaz, he does individualize his beloved and his love for her in a way that goes beyond convention. It appears that he meant what he said; that he later betrayed that love by taking a concubine does not diminish the effect of that poem. Thanks to the unique literary and narrative sources of the 15th century, like the autobiography of al-Biqāʿī or the love poem of Ibn Ḥağar, we suddenly get insights into the real emotions and insoluble contradictions that characterized the lives of medieval men.[82]

Epilogue

Uns and Ibn Ḥağar continued to be married for the rest of their lives. Unlike other 15th century wives who found out that their husband had secretly taken another wife, Uns did not ask for a divorce, nor did she throw him out of the house—her house. In Ḏū al-Ḥiğğa 815/March-April 1413,

77. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
78. *Dīwān* (ed. Ḥusayn), p. 174-176.
79. Rowson, "Two Homoerotic Narratives," p. 158-191.
80. *Dīwān* (ed. Ḥusayn), p. 266. I thank Thomas Bauer for identifying the *waqqād* as the lamp-lighter rather than the alternative meaning, a bath-attendant.
81. Bauer, "Ibn Ḥajar and the Arabic Ghazal," p. 39.
82. See the comments by Guo, "Tales of a Medieval Cairene Harem," p. 120.

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only eight months after the birth of Ḫāṣṣ Turk's child, Ibn Ḥaǧar took Uns with him, for the first time, on the pilgrimage to Mecca. Was he trying to make amends?[83] In 817/1414 Uns gave birth to yet another daughter, Fāṭima, her last child. The baby Fāṭima and the twelve-year-old Ġāliya died in 819/1416. Uns and Ibn Ḥaǧar married off the three remaining daughters. Farḥa married a bureaucrat by the name of Ibn al-Ašqar, but died in 828/1425. Ibn al-Ašqar then married the youngest daughter, Rābiʿa, but four years later she was dead too. The remaining daughter, the first-born Zayn Ḫātūn, married a military official by the name of Šāhīn al-ʿAlāʾī.[84] She died not long after her sisters, in the plague of 833/1430.[85] Now aged 53, Uns' only surviving progeny was Zayn Ḫātūn's five-year-old son Yūsuf. She secured custody over Yūsuf, and took the child with her on the pilgrimage of 834/1431, which she made without her husband. After the pilgrimage rites were over, she stayed in the Hijaz as a religious sojourner.[86]

Ibn Ḥaǧar had by now a meteoric career, culminating in his appointment as chief Šāfiʿī *qāḍī* in 827/1423. After Uns traveled to the Hijaz, the sixty-year-old Ibn Ḥaǧar married another woman, a freed slave-girl of a fellow scholar. He put her up in the al-Baybarsiyya, and she bore him a daughter in Rajab 835/April 1432. It seems, however, that Ibn Ḥaǧar did not develop any great emotional attachment in this relationship. He took an oath to divorce her were the daughter to die, and this happened a year later, while Ibn Ḥaǧar was traveling with the sultan on a campaign in northern Syria.[87] During this trip he met Laylā bint Maḥmūd b. Ṭūġān, a woman of about forty and a mother of two. They married in her hometown of Aleppo, and Ibn Ḥaǧar divorced her when he left the city. Later, however, he invited her to come to live with him in Cairo. Laylā was installed in the al-Ḫānqāh al-Baybarsiyya with great ceremony. Poetry reveals again the emotions of the elderly Ibn Ḥaǧar, who writes, with his usual double entendre, "I occupy with *ḥadīṯ* to cure myself during the day, but by my nights

83. *Al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 3, p. 1211. This was the first time Ibn Ḥaǧar had gone on pilgrimage since his last trip to Yemen in 807/1404.

84. According to an anecdote told by al-Saḫāwī, Šāhīn warned Ibn al-Ašqar in jest not to marry his wife and the only remaining daughter, Zayn Ḫātūn, and kill her too. Al-Saḫāwī concludes the anecdote by saying "and everybody laughed" (*wa-ḍaḥika al-ǧamāʿah*), so those present evidently found the joke amusing (al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'* 3, p. 296). The attitude of al-Saḫāwī to child mortality is complex. Al-Saḫāwī composed several treatises for bereaved parents, in which he specifically calls on parents to mourn their sons and daughters equally. See Giladi, "The child was small," p. 367-86; *id.*, *Children of Islam*, p. 92.

85. For the biographies of the daughters, see *al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 3, p. 1208-1211; al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'* 12, p. 51 (no. 301) [Zayn Ḫātūn]; 12, p. 34 (no. 199) [Rābiʿa]; 12, p. 115 (no. 697) [Farḥa]; 12, p. 85 (no. 521) [Ġāliya]; 12, p. 88 (no. 542) [Fāṭima]. For Ibn Ḥaǧar's reaction to the death of Zayn Ḫātūn, see *Inbāʾ al-ġumr* (ed. Ḥabašī) 3, p. 445. For Ibn al-Ašqar, see al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'* 8, p. 143.

86. *Al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 3, p. 1211. For the biography of Yūsuf, see al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'* 10, p. 313.

87. *Al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 3, p. 1225. She was a manumitted slave-girl of Niẓām al-Dīn Yaḥyā al-Sayramī, shaykh of the al-Ẓāhiriyya. She later married al-Šarīf al-Ǧarawānī (on him, al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'* 7, p. 74). For a short biography of the baby girl, called Āmina, see al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'* 12, p. 3 (no. 10). Al-Saḫāwī mentions that Ibn Ḥaǧar also married the widow of Zayn al-Dīn Abū Bakr al-Amšāṭī, whom I have not been able to identify. Al-Saḫāwī did not know her name, devotes only a line to her, and does not mention any children (*al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 3, p. 1225). Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ʿIzz al-Dīn concludes that the two women are in fact one and the same (*Ibn Ḥaǧar*, p. 82).

AnIsl 47 (2014), p. 327-352 Yossef Rapoport
Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī, His Wife, Her Slave-Girl: Romantic Triangles and Polygamy in 15th Century Cairo
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(*layālī*) I long for Laylā."[88] Al-Saḫāwī says that Uns, by then back in Cairo, was angry and jealous.[89] An uncomfortable modus vivendi emerged. Ibn Ḥaǧar continued to live in Uns' house. He would visit Laylā only on Tuesday and Friday afternoons, and they never had children. When he died, in 852/1449, Laylā inherited a share equal to that of Uns.[90]

Uns did not remarry after the death of her husband. She secured all her property to her grandchild Yūsuf and to the children of her sisters, and died in 867/1462.[91] Laylā died in 881/1476, after remarrying several times.[92] We know next to nothing about Ḫāṣṣ Turk, the Turkish or Mongol slave-girl at the center of this household melodrama. As noted above, she was married off—apparently, still a slave—to a colleague of Ibn Ḥaǧar, and it seems that the son she bore to Ibn Ḥaǧar, Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad, grew up with his father's family. Badr al-Dīn, the child cursed by Uns as a baby, never achieved the scholarly pedigree of his father. Ibn Taġrī Birdī said that he was ignorant and rude. He was accused, and acquitted, of embezzling the money of the Tulunid Mosque in Cairo. He died in 869/1465.[93]

Conclusion

The triangular relationship between husband, wife and her slave-girl is not unique to 15th century Cairo. The biblical-qur'ānic Abraham bears Ishmael with Hagar, Sara's handmaiden.[94] Wives complained about their husbands' attraction to their own female slaves in other medieval Islamic societies, as the Andalusi poetess Wallāda (d. 1091) rebukes her beloved: "If you were faithful to our love, you wouldn't have lost your head over my maid".[95] And in her memoirs of her childhood during the waning days of the Ottoman Empire, Leyla Saz accused the young Circassian slave-girls, who were supposed to be servants and companions to the lady of the Harem, of doing everything to win the master's affection, and making the mistress jealous. Her beloved father's pre-occupation with the young slave-girls was, she says,

88. Al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'* 12, p. 123

89. Arabic: *tuqaddu ġubnan*. The exact sense of this idiom escapes me, but al-Saḫāwī uses it often to describe emotions of jealousy and anger (*Ḍaw'* 6, p. 260, l. 2; 8, p. 206, l. 5; 9, p. 134, l. 10).

90. *Al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 3, p. 1225-1227. Al-Saḫāwī cites the letter of invitation sent by Ibn Ḥaǧar to Laylā. In the letter he praises Laylā for her beauty, intelligence and manners; he promises her that if she comes to Cairo she will be the dearest to his heart. He will put her up in the best of houses, so that she will need nothing. For, as Ibn Ḥaǧar wrote to her, "the desire of your slave is strong outwardly and inwardly" (*ẓāhir*^{an} *wa-bāṭin*^{an}). For the love poetry addressed by Ibn Ḥaǧar to Laylā, see *al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 1, p. 198; *Dīwān*, ed. Ḥusayn. For Ibn Ḥaǧar's weekly schedule, see also *al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 3, p. 1052, 1187.

91. *Al-Ǧawāhir wa-l-durar* 3, p. 1211-1212. After Ibn Ḥaǧar's death, several suitors asked for her hand, including Ibn Ḥaǧar's great rival, ʿAlam al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī.

92. For her biography, see al-Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'* 12, p. 123 (no. 750).

93. Rosenthal, "Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsḳalānī;" ʿAbd al-Munʿim, *Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī*, p. 23, 70-73; Saḫāwī, *Ḍaw'* 7, p. 20; Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Nuǧūm* 15, p. 533.

94. Firestone, "Abraham."

95. Al-Udhari, *Classical Poems*, p. 188.

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"the one venal sin which men permit themselves while still honestly believing that they can do that sort of thing without ceasing to be virtuous."[96]

Did Ibn Ḥaǧar also believe that he could do "this sort of thing"—having an affair with his wife's slave-girl—while still being virtuous? It would seem that he was not certain about the morality of his actions. Yes, he excused himself to his wife, and perhaps also to himself, by his desire for sons. But by setting his eyes on his wife's slave-girl, the sexual nature of his motivations became apparent to his wife and his contemporaries; it becomes apparent to us too, if we read the story closely enough. Although he was legally entitled to take as many concubines as he wishes, he concluded the second union in secret, fearing his wife's reaction. Other elite households in 15th century Cairo, including those of the sultans, were more monogamous than in previous centuries. They also show evidence of closer emotional attachment between husbands and wives. Ibn Ḥaǧar himself, earlier in life, expressed this new form of conjugal intimacy by composing a love poem to Uns, a rarity in medieval Arabic literature. Our intimate access to the internal workings of married couples in elite households is in itself novel, and it demonstrates the new sensibilities of the age.

Ibn Ḥaǧar appears to be a man torn between monogamous expectations and the legal and cultural framework that allowed men to seek alternative sexual partners. The monogamous expectations placed on Ibn Ḥaǧar were a result of his wife's superior financial and social standing, and of patterns of intimacy between husbands and wives that are apparent in late medieval Cairo. On the other hand, the law—Islamic law—gave men the right to marry a second wife, and to have sexual relations with "those [women] your right hand possesses" [Q 4:3]. Wives could put restrictions on the exercise of these rights, for example by inserting conditions in the marriage contract, but they could not challenge the underlying sexual prerogative of men, grounded in a law articulated by male scholars. Ibn Ḥaǧar, pulled by conflicting moral and cultural impulses, does not resolve the dilemma, but rather goes behind his wife's back and attempts to lead a double life.

We are inclined to believe that the slave, Ḫāṣṣ Turk, acted in her best interests when hiding her relationship with Ibn Ḥaǧar from his wife—her mistress. We may even speculate that she had actively sought the sexual attention of the master of the household. Islamic law on slavery, unlike its precedents in the Roman and Greek worlds, granted significant rights to the slave sexual partners of free men. In particular, the offspring of a sexual union between a free man and a slave woman was free and legitimate; the unfolding of the affair between Ibn Ḥaǧar and Ḫāṣṣ Turk ostensibly revolves around his desire for a male heir. In Roman society too the sexuality of slaves could drive a wedge between husbands and wives, but the offspring would normally be unfree.[97] In Classical Athens, the famous case brought against the slave Neaira clarifies the line that separated the free wives and the un-free sexual consorts: "We have courtesans for pleasure, and concubines for the daily service of our bodies, but wives

96. Zilfi, *Women and Slavery*, p. 169, 198; citing Hanimefendi, *The Imperial Harem*, p. 65, 85.
97. Edmondson, "Slavery and the Roman Family," p. 352-353.

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for the production of legitimate offspring."[98] In the Islamic context, however, the stakes were higher. Ḫāṣṣ Turk was not only vying for Ibn Ḥaǧar's attention, but also for his patrimony.

It is perhaps most difficult to decipher the experience of Uns, the betrayed wife, even though she is almost certainly the ultimate source for al-Saḫāwī's narrative. She was sufficiently wealthy and sufficiently mature to hold her ground against her husband. Her reactions are far from meek. She does not hesitate to confront her husband, and there is no hint that she is somehow ashamed of not bearing him male sons. She could have opted for a divorce, quite common at the time. Yet she does not, and stays in the marriage. Al-Saḫāwī suggests that it was her desire for Ibn Ḥaǧar that shaped her experience. We can imagine an emotional attachment after 15 years of marriage and the bringing up of four daughters, and the memory of beautiful love poetry written during the long periods of absence. Maybe she considered the fate of the girls, or felt that she had no other options at her age. We should also not dismiss her eventual revenge: placing a curse on the child's head was evidently as painful to Ibn Ḥaǧar as any material loss.

We happen to know more about Ibn Ḥaǧar, his wife and her slave-girl than we know about any other romantic triangle in pre-modern Muslim societies. As a case study, it reflects the wider Gordian Knot between female slavery and sexuality, and the centrality of slavery to the history of gender in Islamic culture. But this case also stands out for its particular circumstances of class, age, and individual character, as well as for the sheer intimacy with which we observe our protagonists. The three-part Egyptian television series on the life of Ibn Ḥaǧar completely avoids all reference to this affair. The wife, here called Anas, makes only a cameo appearance in the last scene of the series, dutifully comforting her mother-in-law.[99] The producers of the show missed an opportunity to examine the impact of slavery on gender relations in Islamic society; their audience also missed out on a really good story.

98. Carey, *Trials from Classical Athens*, p. 209.
99. *Ḥayāt al-imām Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī*.

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