

On Generosity

The *ʿIlyat al-kuramāʾ* of Ibn Abī al-ʿAṣṣ

by Antonella Ghersetti

DESCRIPTION:

In Arabic-Islamic culture, generosity is held in the very highest regard and descriptions of charity, hospitality and largesse are consequently an important component of Arabic literature. The Egyptian judge and man of letters, Ibn Abī al-ʿAṣṣ al-Sakhāwī al-Mālikī, who lived in Cairo and Medina in the ninth/fifteenth century and who practiced charity his whole life, compiled a work titled the *ʿIlyat al-kuramāʾ*, literally "The Ornament of the Magnanimous." A significant example of a flourishing genre devoted to generosity and a testament to the intense cultural and literary activity of the author's time, the *ʿIlyat al-kuramāʾ* includes aphorisms, poems, and anecdotes about benevolent individuals whose generosity is exemplified by the gifts and money they lavished on others and by the many ways they provided aid to the needy. The lively examples of the liberality exhibited by everyone, from rulers to ordinary people, are intended to urge others to similar acts of generosity, charity, and assistance. *On Generosity* comprises an introductory study on the work and its author, the first reliable and critical edition of the Arabic text, an annotated English translation, and glossaries designed to make the text more accessible to nonspecialists.

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