

YUHANNA IBN [ABI ZAKARIYYA](#) IBN SABBA' (13th-14th c.)

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A Liturgical encyclopedist. Yuhanna ibn [Abi Zakariyya](#) ibn Sabba' was the author of an encyclopedic compilation in 113 chapters with the rhymed title *al-Jawhara al-nafisa fi 'ulum al-kanisa* (The Precious Jewel in the [Ecclesiastical](#) Sciences). After a **theological**, biblical, and apologetic introduction (chapters 1-26), the work concentrates on ecclesial and [ritual](#) matters, frequently giving them typological and spiritual interpretations.

For example, in chapter 113 we learn that the *naqus* is to be beaten to gather the faithful to prayer; this imitates Noah, who beat the *naqus* in order to gather the humans and animals who would be saved from God's wrath into the ark—which is a type of church. *The Precious Jewel* has been published a number of times, notably by the [Franciscans](#) in Cairo in 1966. It remains an important witness to the liturgical and spiritual life of the medieval Coptic [Orthodox](#) Church.

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