

MAHMOOD IBRAHIM  
CAL POLY POMONA

## Practice and Reform in Fourteenth-Century Damascene Madrasahs

Prior to the Mamluk period, Damascus suffered a series of political and economic crises which underscored its already diminished status. It had been an object of contention between the Fatimids in Cairo and the Abbasids in Baghdad, each seeing the city as an advance post against the other. The insertion of the Saljuq Turks and the Crusaders into this equation did not make matters any easier for Damascus and its inhabitants. Relative stability and prosperity, however, were slowly regained with the arrival of Nūr al-Dīn Zangī who made Damascus the capital of his realm in 1154. And despite minor setbacks during the following century, when the Ayyubids ruled Egypt and Syria, Damascus continued to grow in importance in the cultural life of the region, especially after the fall of Baghdad (1258), as a center for Sunni (and Sufi) education with its ever expanding number of madrasahs and *khānqāhs*. This role was further enhanced during the Mamluk period as these sultans relied on an Arabic-speaking bureaucracy. During the Mamluk period, Damascus became the capital of the province, and as the most important city in Syria, it played a crucial role in the formulation of post-Abbasid culture.<sup>1</sup>

Although by no means the only venue to transmit knowledge, the madrasah became an important cultural institution whose role went beyond that of a place for higher education. Recent literature suggests different social and political roles and raises further questions that need to be answered in an effort to fully comprehend the role the madrasah played during the medieval period.<sup>2</sup> While preparing an edition of *Tārīkh al-Jazarī* comprised of all available fragments,<sup>3</sup> I came upon,

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<sup>1</sup>This is one of a series of pieces that I will undertake based on *Tārīkh al-Jazarī*. I am grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities and the ARCE for the fellowship that allowed me to do this research during 2004/5. For the importance of the Mamluks to Arabic and Arab culture, see Linda Northrup, "The Bahri Mamluk Sultanate, 1250–1390," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 1, *Islamic Egypt 640–1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge, 1998), 254f.

<sup>2</sup>For a critical assessment of the role of the madrasah in Damascus, see Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge, 1994). See also Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, 1992). A history of the institution may be found in George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh, 1981).

<sup>3</sup>Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādīth al-Zamān wa-Anbā' ihī wa-Wafāyāt al-Akābir wa-al-A'yān min Abnā' ihī*. I am working with five fragments of the manuscript: Gotha



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among other things, continuous reference in the narrative of events and in the obituaries of some noteworthy individuals to madrasahs in Damascus, their teachers, when they were appointed or were transferred, and who replaced whom, among other relevant information that might shed further light on the institution, at least during the years covered by the remaining fragments. At this time, only selected reports will be highlighted that refer to practices related to the madrasah institution and mention attempts to reform some abuses that were associated with it.

### NEW INSTITUTIONS

While Pouzet could count 94 madrasahs in Damascus by 1300,<sup>4</sup> more were built after that. What remains of al-Jazarī's manuscript unfortunately does not cover the first twenty-five years of the fourteenth century but only the years from 1325 to 1338 (725–38 A.H.). Al-Jazarī tells of the dedication of several madrasahs and mausolea. One madrasah was a modest establishment and the others more grand. Inaugurated on 14 Dhū al-Qa'dah 726, the Madrasah Ḥimṣīyah, not to be confused with the venerable Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ḥimṣīyah, was a small one. It was located opposite the Shāmīyah Juwwānīyah and came into being barely four months after the death of the person who endowed it. One teacher, Muḥyī al-Dīn, known as Qādī 'Akkār, began teaching there.<sup>5</sup>

The founder of Dār al-Qur'ān al-Sinjārīyah, the well-to-do merchant 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī al-Sinjārī, died suddenly on Thursday, 13 Jumādā II 735, while in Cairo. He had earlier established the Madrasah Sinjārīyah in Damascus, opposite the Bāb al-Naṭṭāfīn, one of the northern gates of the Umayyad Mosque. The endowment provided for a group of Quran reciters and students as well as for the teaching of hadith.<sup>6</sup>

Another madrasah is Dār al-Qur'ān wa-al-Ḥadīth, established, built, and endowed by (*ansha' ahā wa-'ammarahā wa-waqafahā*) Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Harrānī, known as Ibn al-Ṣabbāb. He was a wealthy traveling merchant (*tājir saffār*). This madrasah was sufficiently endowed to have a hadith

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MSS A1559, A1560; and A1561; Bibliothèque Nationale MS A6739; Köprülü Zadeh MS 1037. There has been a recent edition of the manuscript by 'Umar Tadmurī (*Tārīkh Ḥawādīth al-Zamān wa-Anbā' ihī wa-Wafāyāt al-Akābir wa-al-A'yān min Abnā' ihī al-Ma'rūf bi-Tārīkh Ibn al-Jazarī: Juz' fīhi [min Wafāyāt Sanat 689 ḥattā Ḥawādīth Sanat 699 H]* [Beirut, 1998]), but he does not incorporate the Gotha fragments. However, citations to al-Jazarī in this article will be made to Tadmurī's edition as a more readily available reference.

<sup>4</sup>Louis Pouzet, *Damas au VIIe–XIIIe siècle: vie et structures religieuses d'une métropole islamique* (Beirut, 1988), 426.

<sup>5</sup>Al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādīth al-Zamān*, 2:122. Al-Nu'aymī has it opposite the Shāmīyah Barrānīyah (*Al-Dāris fī Tārīkh al-Madāris*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn [Beirut, 1990], 1:174).

<sup>6</sup>Al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādīth al-Zamān*, 3:804.



scholar and students (*shaykh li-samā' al-ḥadīth wa-mustami'ūn*). The five prayers as well as the special *tarāwīḥ* prayers were to be performed there. It was located opposite the Madrasah 'Ādilīyah al-Kabīrah and its inauguration was on Tuesday, 1 Ramaḍān 738.<sup>7</sup>

The mausoleum (*turbah*) had developed, as an institution supported by *waqf*, during the Mamluk period and referred to a complex structure that housed the tomb and included a mosque and facilities for the staff. Some included a Sufi convent. Often, a *turbah* could also include a madrasah. The size and facilities attached to the *turbah* depended on the station of the benefactor and the size and purpose of the endowment. Thus, a *turbah*, in its manifold manifestations, was among the various types of institutions where knowledge was exchanged. The following reports found in al-Jazarī illustrate the construction of some mausolea in Damascus.

A mausoleum was built by the merchant Amīn al-Dīn 'Uthmān ibn 'Umar, known also as al-Buṣṣ, who died on 7 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 731. The mausoleum was outside the Jābiyah Gate on the site of an older mosque that was knocked down and rebuilt with a minaret and a burial room next to it. Attached to the walls of the mosque, he built upper chambers and shops (*'alālī wa-ḥawānīt*) and made their income *waqf* for the mosque. He also endowed a chair for the teaching of hadith. Amīn al-Dīn 'Uthmān also built a *khān* (or inn) in al-Muzayrib (a village in the Ḥawrān, south of Damascus) with a mosque and a minaret. A prayer leader and a caretaker, among others, were to take care of the place and the travelers who stayed there for the night. They were to light ten candles for each boarder. The total cost of Amīn al-Dīn's endowment was about 250,000 dirhams.<sup>8</sup>

Another mausoleum was built for the Mamluk amir Sayf al-Dīn Balabān, also known as Ṭurnā. He died on 21 Rabī' I 734 and left a great deal of money, of which 30,000 dirhams were set aside for the building of the *turbah* and the attached mosque and to buy whatever was needed for them. The imam of the mosque was to receive 30 dirhams, the muezzin 30 dirhams, and the caretaker 30 dirhams. The mausoleum and the mosque each had windows made of iron that opened to the street and were inside the city walls, near the Umayyad Mosque. They were adjacent to his former residence.<sup>9</sup>

A friend and a neighbor of al-Jazarī when he lived near Bāb al-Khawwāshīn, Najm al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Raḥbī was a very wealthy merchant. He died on Wednesday, 27 Jumādā II 735. He built a mausoleum and a mosque in the area of Mazzah, where his endowment supported a group of residents and caretakers. One

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 1027.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 2:508.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 3:698.



third of his wealth (50,000 dirhams) went to buy property whose income was designated for charity.<sup>10</sup>

#### MEDICINE AND THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES

It is thought that the madrasah institution was specifically established for the teaching of religious sciences, and especially *fiqh* (law). While that might be true of some institutions, in others subjects such as medicine were taught alongside the religious sciences, often by the same individuals. Also, just as in the teaching of religious sciences, the approach to the teaching of physical sciences was similarly varied to include the formal and the informal types of education practiced at the time. Al-Jazarī provides the following reports which illustrate this complexity. ‘Imād al-Dīn Abū Bakr ‘Uthmān al-Ḥanafī, known as ‘Imād al-Ḥayawān, was a physician at the Bīmāristān al-Ṣāliḥīyah as well as the Bīmāristān al-Nūrī. He also taught Hanafī law in the Hanafī schools.<sup>11</sup> ‘Izz al-Dīn Abū ‘Alī ibn Zufar, from Irbil, was a physician by training and experience who studied and worked in Baghdad, Tabriz, and other cities in the east. He came to Damascus in 692 and became a Sufī. He must have passed certain requirements for he was recommended to the authorities and he was finally given permission to practice medicine (*thumma innahu zukkiya wa-udhina lahu fī mubasharat al-ṭibb*). He, however, was in a quandary and could not take off his Sufī garb and decided to forsake his profession.<sup>12</sup> Najm al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ibn al-Raḥmān, known as Ibn al-Shaḥḥām, passed away in the Madrasah Jārūkhīyah<sup>13</sup> on Tuesday, Rabī‘ II 730. This Shafī‘ī scholar, originally from Mosul, left his home town as a youth and traveled around before he settled in Baghdad in pursuit of knowledge (*wa-aqāma bi-Baghdād yashtaghīlu bi-al-‘ilm*). He then “stayed awhile” in the Sarāy Madrasah of Uzbek Khan. Najm al-Dīn came to Damascus in 724. He must have been well known by then for he was immediately given the *tadrīs* (teaching assignment) in the Madrasah Zāhirīyah, which is outside the city wall. The *mashyakhah* of the Palace Khānqāh and the *tadrīs* in the Madrasah Jārūkhīyah were added later to his duties.<sup>14</sup> Najm al-Dīn’s obituary indicates that he was an expert in law and medicine, in keeping with the traditions of the school. This madrasah was built for Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn al-Mubārak, known as al-Mujīr al-Wāsiṭī al-Baghdādī, who studied *fiqh* at the Nizāmīyah of Baghdad with Abū Maṣṣūr ibn al-Razzāz. He was also the *mu‘id* (teaching assistant) for al-Imām Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī. Where or with whom

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 805.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 2:347–48.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 146.

<sup>13</sup>Al-Nu‘aymī, *Tārīkh al-Madāris*, 2:169.

<sup>14</sup>Al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith al-Zamān*, 2:414.



he studied medicine, al-Jazarī does not say, but after Abū al-Qāsim came to Damascus and took over the Jārūkhīyah, he seems to have taught medicine in the school (*wa-nashara bihā al-ṭibb*). Medicine, in addition, was also taught at the Madrasah Dunaysirīyah, right next to the Bīmāristān al-Nūrī (the main Damascene hospital), at the Labbūdīyah Nijmīyah, and at the Madrasah Dakhwārīyah whose founder was the teacher of such medical experts as Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah and Ibn al-Nafīs.<sup>15</sup>

The teaching of hard sciences or professional training related to medical practice was not always done in a madrasah. It was done also by apprenticeship. Badr al-Dīn Abū ‘Alī al-Kaḥḥāl came from a family of oculists. His father and grandfather were both oculists (*kaḥḥāl*). Badr al-Dīn, who passed away on Friday, 3 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 726, also had knowledge of surgery. Naturally enough, when Badr al-Dīn grew old (he lived to be a hundred) and his hand became unsteady, his son Muḥammad began to practice the profession under the supervision of his father (*fa-kāna waladuhu Muḥammad yukahḥil wa-yudāwī al-jarḥā wa-al-marḍā bi-ḥudūrihi wa-ishāratihī*). It would be natural to assume that Muḥammad also read medical books with his father. Other students, al-Jazarī says, “read and apprenticed” with Badr al-Dīn, among them (*mimman qara’a ‘alayhi wa-ishtaghala ‘indahu*) Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad, the head oculist and surgeon (*ra’īs al-kaḥḥālīn wa-al-jarā’ ihīyah*). His son, Jamāl al-Dīn, was then the chief of physicians (*ra’īs al-aṭṭibbā’*) in Damascus.<sup>16</sup>

Another near-contemporary oculist passed away four years later on Saturday, 15 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 730. Zayn al-Dīn Ayyūb ibn Ni‘mah al-Nābulī resided, presumably as a student, in the Madrasah Shāmīyah that was outside the city walls (*al-Barrānīyah*), where he “memorized *Kitāb al-Luṭṭah fī al-Tanbih*” and audited (*sami’a*) *Kitāb al-Adab* of al-Bayhaqī. But when he saw his neighbor, Ismā‘īl ibn al-‘Abbādī al-Kaḥḥāl, practicing his profession, Zayn al-Dīn liked what he saw and decided to become a *kaḥḥāl* himself. So he studied with yet another oculist, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ṭāhir al-Kaḥḥāl, among others, for a “short period” before he started his own practice. He seems to have done well and grew rich as a result. But when Ghāzān Khān attacked Damascus in 700, he fled, with many others including al-Jazarī himself, to Cairo, where he stayed for twenty-two years. His fame and fortune increased there due to the demand for his profession (*wa-nafaqa sūquhu wa-ḥaṣala lahu ḥazz fī šinā’ atihī*). He served the sultan and accompanied him on the hunt. When he returned to Damascus his reputation had already been enhanced and the students flocked to study with him (*wa-qaṣadahu al-ṭalabah*

<sup>15</sup>Al-Nu‘aymī, *Tārīkh al-Madāris*, 2:100–8.

<sup>16</sup>Al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith al-Zamān*, 2:167–68.



*wa-akhadhū ‘anhu*).<sup>17</sup>

Al-Jazarī provides the following reports regarding the teaching of other sciences. ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn ‘Uthmān, known as al-Ṭuyūrī al-Ḥāsib, was a professional witness specializing in assessing property values (*yashhadu fī qiyam al-amlāk*) who started out teaching in a *maktab* but eventually had a study circle (*ḥalqah*) in the Umayyad Mosque. A group of students benefited from ‘Alā’ al-Dīn’s extensive knowledge (*al-yad al-tūlā*) in calculus, algebra, *muqābalaḥ* (collating, equations), and geometry (*wa-ishtaghala ‘alayhi jamā’ah fī al-ḥisāb wa-al-jabr wa-al-muqābalaḥ wa-al-handasah, wa-kāna lahu maktab fī awwal amrihi wa-ba‘du šāra lahu ḥalqah bi-jāmi’ Dimashq*).<sup>18</sup> Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī, the muezzin and *muwaqqit* (time-keeper) in Karīm mosque in the Qubaybāt, was an expert astrologer, astronomer, and maker of astrolabes. He studied astronomy with Zayn al-Dīn ibn al-Muraḥḥil (a deputy Shafī’i judge, see below). In turn, Quṭb al-Dīn taught many students these same subjects.<sup>19</sup>

#### MOVEMENT

It is not unusual to read in the obituaries that someone died while a resident in a madrasah. Al-Nuwayrī (d. 732), author of *Nihāyat al-Arab*, for example, reports that his father was born in one madrasah and died in another. He passed away while in the Maliki lecture hall of the Najmīyah Madrasah in Cairo. But although some positions seem to be assigned for life, there was also a considerable movement of scholars from one madrasah to another. And it is worthwhile to notice that the authorities responsible for these appointments took special care not to leave a post vacant in case of death or transfer. Al-Jazarī usually says *wa-a’tū* (they gave, or they assigned), yet he does not make clear who “they” refers to. (However, the authorities in this instance would usually consist of officials who administer the endowments, each of the chief judges or their deputies, and other relevant government officials.) Some of these appointments could be considered lateral moves, others seem to be promotions.

When al-Jazarī died on Friday, 7 Jumādā II 729, in his residence at the Madrasah Badrā’īyah, he was replaced by Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-‘Abbās Ibn Jahbal, who inaugurated his own lectures there a week later on Monday, 15 Jumādā II. Ibn Jahbal, a scion of a family of learning, vacated his post at the Madrasah Zāhirīyah. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Dhahabī took his place there and inaugurated his own lectures two days later, on Wednesday, 17 Jumādā II. This lecture was attended by the chief Shafī’i judge of Damascus, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Qūnawī,

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 444–45.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 156.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 370.



and a group of hadith and law scholars. Shams al-Dīn ibn al-Dhahabī (a Shafī‘i himself) had been a preacher (*khaṭīb*) in the mosque of Kafar Baṭnā for nearly twenty-six years, having been appointed there in Ṣafar 703. To take over his duties in Kafar Baṭnā, Jamāl al-Dīn ibn al-Masallātī, a Maliki, was appointed. He assumed his duties on Friday, 19 Jumādā II, in the presence of a group of judges and other notables who attended his inaugural sermon. A division of duties was agreed upon in this instance where the sons of Ibn al-Dhahabī occupied the post of leading the prayer (*imāmah*) while Ibn al-Masallātī assumed the duty of preaching only.<sup>20</sup> Ibn al-Masallātī was soon after appointed shaykh of the Khānqāh al-Shihābīyah when the previous shaykh died and the post became vacant.

The chief Shafī‘i judge al-Qūnawī passed away on 14 Dhū al-Qa‘dah 729. One of his posts, that of *mashyakhat al-shuyūkh*, was assigned to Sharaf al-Dīn al-Hamdanī, who assumed his post at the Khānqāh al-Sumaysaṭīyah. However, the new chief judge, ‘Alam al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ikhnā’ī, was transferred from Alexandria. He journeyed to Damascus and assumed his new post in less than two months, on Friday, 1 Ṣafar 730. Two days later, al-Ikhnā’ī inaugurated his lectures at two locations, at the Madrasah Ghazālīyah and the Madrasah ‘Ādilīyah. As usual in such cases, deputies or substitutes were appointed. One was Zayn al-Dīn Ibn al-Muraḥḥil, known also as Ibn Wakīl Bayt al-Māl; he had been at the Madrasah ‘Adhrāwīyah ever since 6 Sha‘bān 725, when he came from Cairo to replace the departing Ibn al-Zamalkānī who had been promoted to chief Shafī‘i judge of Aleppo and thus had to leave several posts behind. Another of his posts at the Madrasah Masrūrīyah was filled by Jamāl al-Dīn ibn al-Sharīshī. To take Ibn al-Sharīshī’s place at the Ribāṭ al-Nāṣirī, Ḥusām al-Dīn Ḥasan was transferred from Tripoli.<sup>21</sup>

Another deputy appointed by al-Ikhnā’ī was Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī. He, however, died very soon afterward. Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn Jahbal, nephew of the above-mentioned Shihāb al-Dīn ibn Jahbal, was then appointed deputy and assumed his duties on Wednesday, 29 Jumādā I 730.<sup>22</sup> Chief Judge al-Ikhnā’ī was soon to assume a teaching post at another school. When two of the teachers at the Madrasah Ṣārimīyah, Najm al-Dīn Hāshim al-Tanūkhī al-Ba‘lḥakī and Najm al-Dīn Hāshim al-Ta‘līlī, died, the one in Jumādā II and the other in Rajab, al-Ikhnā’ī took over their duties as a supervisor and a teacher, respectively.<sup>23</sup>

Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Jumlah was appointed chief Shafī‘i judge in Rabī‘ I 733 and

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 325.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 75, 78.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 378 f.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 464, 493.



the letter of appointment arrived fifteen days later. On the following Sunday, it was read in the governor's residence in the presence of other judges. Everyone then went to the Madrasah 'Ādilīyah, where the letter of appointment was read again (*qurī'a taqlīduhu thānī marratan*). As part of the duties of the chief Shafi'i judge, Ibn Jumlah taught at the Madrasah 'Ādilīyah and the Madrasah Ghazālīyah. His post as *mu'id* (teaching assistant) at the Madrasah Qaymāriyah (or Qaymāziyah) was taken over by his nephew Maḥmūd. Ibn Jumlah appointed (or confirmed) Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn Jahbal as his deputy (*nā'ib al-ḥukm*) which meant that he taught at the Madrasah Atabakīyah. But within six months Muḥyī al-Dīn was promoted and sent to Tripoli to become its chief Shafi'i judge. Ibn Jumlah took over the teaching duties at the Atabakīyah, presumably until the new deputy, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Kāmil al-Tadmurī, arrived from Hebron where he had had the duties of preaching and leading the prayers.<sup>24</sup> Ibn Jumlah remained in his post for nearly a year and a half when he became embroiled in a bribery scandal, after which he was stripped of his position and imprisoned in the Madrasah 'Adhrāwīyah (Shawwāl 734; more on this incident below). His duties as chief judge and teacher at the 'Ādilīyah, Ghazālīyah, and Atabakīyah were assigned to Shihāb al-Dīn ibn 'Abd Allāh, who retained his own teaching post at the Madrasah Iqbālīyah because it was his place of original residence. Accordingly, the new Shafi'i chief judge had teaching posts at four schools. In the meanwhile, Ibn Jumlah was transferred to the Citadel, where he remained in prison until 13 Šafar 736. When Ibn Jumlah was released, he joined his family, which had been residing all the while at the Madrasah Masrūrīyah.<sup>25</sup>

There are other examples of this movement from one madrasah to another. 'Imād al-Dīn ibn al-Ṭarsūsī began teaching at the Madrasah Muqaddamīyah on Sunday, 23 Rabī' I 738. He vacated his post at the Madrasah Qaymāziyah, which was filled by 'Alā' al-Dīn ibn al-'Izz al-Ḥanafī, who had been the preacher at the Afram Mosque. 'Alā' al-Dīn was also previously a teacher at the Madrasah Qillījīyah, a post which he left to be filled by another 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, a Hanafi, Sufi shaykh (not to be confused with the deceased chief judge). All this movement took place within three days.<sup>26</sup>

Death and transfer were not the only causes of replacement. Quick appointments to the vacant posts were made here also. When the celebrated Hanbali scholar Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymīyah was arrested, his teaching post at the Madrasah Ḥanbalīyah was assigned to Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn Aḥmad, known as Ibn al-Jābī. He is said to have acquitted himself well in his inaugural lecture, which

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 3:592, 600, 602–3.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 591, 674, 855.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 1016, 1017.



was attended by a number of qadis and notables.<sup>27</sup> In another instance, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Miṣrī had been in Aleppo when he was recalled due to his name being associated with a financial scandal. He arrived back on Thursday, 10 Jumādā I 738, and the very next day he was arrested, stripped of his posts at the Madrasah ‘Ādilīyah and the Dawla‘īyah. He was accused of participating in a shady sugar deal that became known after the head of the chancery (*kātib al-sirr*), ‘Alam al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-Quṭb, was arrested on accusations of embezzlement. It was rumored that the sugar could be found in the residence of Fakhr al-Dīn at the Madrasah ‘Ādilīyah. Thereupon, his residence was searched (*wa-kabasū baytahu*) but the sugar did not turn up. Unlike in the case of Ibn Jumlah’s family, the authorities ordered Fakhr al-Dīn’s family out of the residence, sealed it, and sealed all of his other properties. With Ibn al-Quṭb in prison and Fakhr al-Dīn in disgrace, a third individual was sought. Al-Amīn al-Sukkārī admitted that they had bought *qand* for the amount of 12 thousand dirhams and they processed it into sugar (*ishtarayna qand bi-ithnay ‘asharah alf dirham, wa-‘amilnāhu sukkar*). He further stated that one third was to go to him, one third to Ibn al-Quṭb, and one third to Fakhr al-Dīn. At that, Ibn al-Quṭb was beaten and jailed in the Citadel, while Fakhr al-Dīn was imprisoned in the Madrasah ‘Adhrāwīyah, where other “scholars” had been held prisoner at the same time. Fakhr al-Dīn’s post at the ‘Ādilīyah was assigned to Ibn al-Naqīb, while the post at the Dawla‘īyah was assigned to the rehabilitated Ibn Jumlah. Fakhr al-Dīn was finally released after 100 days of confinement and only after an order for his release came from the sultan in Cairo. There is no word that he recovered his posts. We are told, however, that he lived in a house that was loaned to him (*a‘ārahu iyyāhu*) by a teacher at the Madrasah Nāṣirīyah.<sup>28</sup>

The movement from one post to another did not stop here. Ibn Jumlah, who was assigned to the Madrasah Dawla‘īyah after his rehabilitation, was soon transferred to the Madrasah Shāmīyah Barrānīyah (outside the city walls). The imam of Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafīyah, Shams al-Dīn al-Yamanī was appointed in Ibn Jumlah’s place at the Dawla‘īyah. Zayn al-Dīn ibn al-Muraḥḥil, whose death necessitated the transfer of Ibn Jumlah in the first place, left a young son who was presumed to take over the teaching duties at yet another school, the Madrasah ‘Adhrāwīyah. As the boy was too young and unqualified for the post, Nūr al-Dīn al-Ardabīlī was appointed to the post until the boy grew up and acquired the qualifications necessary for teaching (*ilā ḥaythu yakbar wa-yata’ ahhā lil-tadrīs*).<sup>29</sup>

While the son of Ibn al-Muraḥḥil inherited only one of his father’s assigned

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 2:122.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 3:1018, 1020, 1027, 1030.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 1018–20, 1026, 1032.



posts, sometimes several posts, as well as the governmental appointments that originated the entitlement, were kept in the family. Just as the position of chief Shafi'i judge entitled the position holder to teach at the Madrasah 'Ādilīyah and the Madrasah Ghazālīyah, it seems that other positions had their associated posts as well. Jamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad, scion of the Damascene Ibn al-Qalānisī family, came from a long line of Shafi'i notables. He studied hadith, together with our author al-Jazarī, under Ibn al-Bukhārī, among other scholars of the day. He also studied *fiqh* with Tāj al-Dīn al-Farkah and grammar with his own brother Sharaf al-Dīn. He was employed in the chancery for a time. Later, he was appointed treasurer (*wakīl bayt al-māl*) of Damascus as well as *qāḍī askar*, a dual post usually held simultaneously by a Shafi'i and a Hanafi scholar. Jamāl al-Dīn ibn al-Qalānisī taught at the Madrasah Asadīyah, the Madrasah Zāhirīyah, the Madrasah Amīnīyah, and the Madrasah 'Asrūnīyah.<sup>30</sup> Jamāl al-Dīn passed away on Monday, 28 Dhū al-Qa'dah 731. Within a month, a *marsūm* (an official letter of appointment) arrived with the post on Tuesday, 26 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 731, appointing 'Alā' al-Dīn ibn al-Qalānisī, brother of the deceased, to all of his vacated official as well as teaching posts (*jamī' manāsib akhīhi Jamāl al-Dīn . . . wikālat bayt al-māl, wa-qaḍā' al-'asākīr al-manṣūrah, wa-tadrīs al-madrasah al-Amīnīyah, wa-al-Zāhirīyah wa-al-madrasah al-'Asrūnīyah, wa-ghayrihā*). This same 'Alā' al-Dīn ibn al-Qalānisī had been appointed to several positions a few months earlier, such as the supervision of the Bīmāristān al-Nūrī. Thus, by the end of the year 'Alā' al-Dīn came to hold several sensitive official and associated teaching posts. The continuity of the Ibn al-Qalānisī line in government and madrasah positions is secured not only by having a family *waqf*, but also by incorporating younger members of the family into this structure. As an example, 'Alā' al-Dīn declined at least two posts in favor of his nephew: teaching at the Madrasah 'Asrūnīyah and the management of the wealth of the sons al-Zāhir Baybars (*nazala li-ibn akhīhi al-ṣadr Amīn al-Dīn ibn Jamāl al-Dīn 'an tadrīs al-madrasah al-'Asrūnīyah wa-'an nazar tirkat awlād al-Sulṭān al-Mālik al-Zāhir*). Amīn al-Dīn inaugurated his own lectures (*dhakara al-dars*) at the Madrasah 'Asrūnīyah on Wednesday, 6 Muḥarram 732.<sup>31</sup>

### REFORM INITIATIVES

By the eighth/fourteenth century, the institution of the madrasah had seen over three hundred years of growth and development. An enormous amount of energy and resources were dedicated to its maintenance and also to insure that the benefits continued to reach society. As we have seen, by the middle of the fourteenth

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 507, 508.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 2:457, 472, 507, 515.



century there were nearly a hundred madrasahs in Damascus, large and small. Al-Nu‘aymī (d. 978/1570) lists 152 madrasahs in Damascus, other than the 500 or so mosques and the numerous *ribāṭs* and *khānqāhs*, where instruction, usually of a Sufi orientation, also took place. The greater majority of these institutions were founded in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. That the institution had become so ubiquitous in the Islamic world is indicated by al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), who lists 73 madrasahs on the Cairo street known as Bayn al-Qaṣrayn, the site of the old Fatimid palace.<sup>32</sup> Abuses were bound to crop up due to the large number of institutions, personnel, and amount of money dedicated to this institution. We have seen how the position could be abused as in the cases of Ibn Jumlah and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Miṣrī. George Makdisi reports on several practices such as divisibility of posts and multiplicity of posts. Makdisi refers to Ibn Taymīyah who criticized these practices in the form of *fatwās*. Makdisi also sites Abū Shāmāh (d. 665/1268), who wrote a long poem denouncing some of the abuses that had become prevalent even earlier in his day.<sup>33</sup> The following cases related by al-Jazarī shed further light on this issue and explain some of the steps taken to correct these abuses.

Sayf al-Dīn Tankiz al-Nāṣirī, the governor of Damascus (*nā’ib al-sultān*), was visiting the Madrasah Qillījīyah, which was next to his residence, during the early days of Rabī‘ I 729 when he saw iron locks on several rooms (*buyūt*, lit. houses). He asked the supervisors of the madrasah if such rooms belonged to the teachers of law (*fuqahā’*) at the school itself. One replied that the rooms belonged to Fakhr al-Dīn ibn Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ḥanafī. He continued by saying that they stored in them cloth (*qimāsh*) and other wares (*ḥawā’ij*). Fakhr al-Dīn was summoned and was criticized for his actions as they were taking away rooms from the *fuqahā’* of the school, given that he owned other places around the city for storage (*wa-ankara ‘alayhi li-kawn lahum qā’ah wa-mawāḍi’*). It turned out that Fakhr al-Dīn was not alone. The governor then issued an order to the inspector of endowments (*mushidd al-awqāf*) to demand rent from everyone who had a (store) room in a madrasah in which he was not a *faqīh*. Rent was to be assessed from the day each room was occupied. Honorable and highly-regarded assessors (*‘udūl al-qīmah*) were assembled to estimate the value and on Wednesday, 26 Rabī‘ I 729 it was decreed (*rasamū*) that the following should pay what the assessors had determined: Shams al-Dīn ibn Ḥumayd, who was the colleague of Fakhr al-Dīn in the Dīwān al-Jaysh, 600 dirhams; Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn al-Muhadhhib, 630 dirhams; the sons of ‘Afīf al-Dīn al-Ḥanafī, 400 dirhams; Nāṣir al-Dīn ibn al-Qaṣṣā’, 400 dirhams; al-Khallāṭī, 400 dirhams. All of these individuals were found in the Madrasah

<sup>32</sup>Al-Nu‘aymī, *Tārīkh al-Madāris*, index.

<sup>33</sup>Makdisi, *Rise of Colleges*, 161–71. On Abū Shāmāh and his poem, see *ibid.*, 171.



‘Azīyah. Unfortunately, al-Jazarī does not mention what happened to Fakhr al-Dīn and his colleagues at the Qillīyah. However, he says that some rooms and adjacent structures were knocked down to create a long covered and carpeted walkway (*dihlīz*) from the madrasah to the Umayyad Mosque. It is not clear how this would help prevent the abuse from recurring, except maybe in creating a large and continuous space instead of compartments: students could come and go unhindered. The authorities followed up with others in similar circumstances (*tatabba‘ū bāqī al-nās alladhīna hum sukkān al-madāris*). Although the effort seemed extensive, al-Jazarī mentions one more name in particular, Muḥammad al-Khashshāb, known also as al-Bahlawān, who had to pay 100 dirhams.<sup>34</sup>

Another reform came in response to an order from the sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad himself. A *marsūm* arrived in Damascus in early Dhū al-Ḥijjah 727. Shortly thereafter, on Friday, 6 Dhū al-Ḥijjah, the governor assembled the four chief judges, other teachers, and Sufis, and had the sultan’s letter read to the gathering. The letter asked that the deed document (*waqfiyah*) of each madrasah, inside and outside of the Damascus city walls, must be examined to make sure that the madrasah functioned exactly as stipulated in the document. Anyone who did not meet the qualifications (*shurūt*) stipulated by the benefactor must be dismissed. Only those who met the stipulations, including those who held non-teaching positions, could be retained. A “committee” made up of the four chief judges, the treasurer (*wakīl bayt al-māl*), the supervisor and the inspector of the endowments (*nāzir al-awqāf wa-mushidduhā*), the accounts controller (*mustawfī*), and a group of *fuqahā’* and teachers began a systematic reading of all the *waqfiyahs*, an activity that took place everyday between the noon prayer and the afternoon prayer until the month of Ṣafar the following year (nearly the two months of Dhū al-Ḥijjah and Muḥarram).

The first madrasah that was examined was al-‘Ādilīyah and then al-Ghazālīyah (the madrasahs of the Shafi‘i chief judge), but nothing untoward was found there. The deed document of the Madrasah Shāmīyah Juwānīyah stipulated that the law professor must board in the school (*sharṭuhā al-mabīt*) and the condition was made that all the teachers must sleep in the school if they were to remain employed. The deed document of the Shāmīyah Juwānīyah stipulated the employment of 20 professors, in addition to other teaching posts, such as teaching assistants, and non-teaching functions such as prayer leader and the one who calls to prayer. The committee found 190 *faqīhs* and thus had to dismiss a total of 130. Leaving 60 behind did not comply with the conditions of the *waqfiyah*, but it must have been a difficult compromise because there was a great deal of commotion and unhappiness as a result of this action.

<sup>34</sup>Al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith al-Zamān*, 2:320–21.



Three of the Hanafi schools that were examined also stipulated boarding. These were the Madrasah Khātūnīyah Barrānīyah, the Madrasah Muqadamīyah inside the Farādīs Gate, and the Madrasah Khātūnīyah which is inside the city walls. In addition to boarding, the deeds stipulated that additional prayers must be performed on top of the five ordinary prayers. Al-Jazarī says that as a result of this examination many teachers were dismissed. Only 30 professors remained in these madrasahs where once they had 200, or 150, etc.<sup>35</sup>

Local self-initiated reform attempts were also reported by al-Jazarī. On Wednesday, 22 Jumādā II 725 the chief Shafi‘i judge, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī, presided over a committee made up of the *nāzir al-awqāf* (Shams al-Dīn al-Harrānī), the *mushidd al-awqāf* (Nāṣir al-Dīn Bakr), and the *mustawfī*. Apparently, there have been several complaints from the unhappy trustees of the madrasahs because the *waqf* income was insufficient, due to low prices and presumably meager profits. Some even expressed their complaints by writing to the sultan in Cairo and to the governor in Damascus. Perhaps to forestall government interference, al-Jazarī says that the Shafi‘is surveyed the schools and inspected them (*arākūhā [rawk] wa-kashafū ‘alayhim*). They found lecturers with thirteen posts, others with twelve, eleven, or ten, and more or less (*wa-qalīl wa-kathīr*). The committee called all the Shafi‘is who had been assigned residence in the various madrasahs (*wa-ḥaḍara fuqahā’ al-shāfi‘īyah al-munazzalūna fī al-madāris*). They gathered nearly 600 individuals. The decision was taken to reduce the number of posts held by an individual to three or four posts and to base the salary on the total of stipends gathered from each (*wa-yakūn bi-al-mablūm alladhī yatanāwalahu fī al-majmū’*). Al-Jazarī says that what was said and discussed at this unhappy occasion was too much to explain (*wa-jāra fuṣūl yaṭūl sharḥuhā*) and no one was happy with the outcome (*wa-infaṣala al-jamī’ wa-kulluhum ghayr rāḍin*).<sup>36</sup>

There were other instances when lecturers were dismissed from their posts based on local initiative as indicated by the following account, although this time it seems that the dismissal was unilateral and the implication is that the action was unjust. Al-Jazarī, furthermore, does not report the circumstances or why the lecturers were dismissed. The chief Shafi‘i judge Jamāl al-Dīn ibn Jumlah was appointed to his post in Ṣafar 733, as we have seen earlier. By the middle of Shawwāl 734, nearly a year and a half later, Ibn Jumlah was dismissed due to complaints that he exceeded the law and that he lied under oath when accusations of bribery against him surfaced. These charges involved him and others, such as Zāhir al-Dīn al-Rūmī, Rukn al-Dīn al-Ṣūfī, and Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Duwaydār. A person by the name of Abū Riyāḥ testified in the presence of the governor Tankiz, with the Maliki chief

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 197–98.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 73–74.



judge presiding over a council made up of the other two chief judges, amongst others, that Ibn Jumlah exceeded the law. The Maliki chief judge then ordered his imprisonment in the Madrasah ‘Adhrāwīyah. Confirmation of the finding and the judgment finally came from Cairo on Saturday, 23 Shawwāl. To replace the disgraced Ibn Jumlah, the sultan sent an order to appoint, as mentioned earlier, Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Majd al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh. The letter was read in the presence of an assembly by none other than ‘Alam al-Dīn al-Birzālī, al-Jazarī’s mentor and teacher and the source of much of the information for the latter parts of the *Tārīkh*. Shihāb al-Dīn, it will be recalled, took over the posts at the two madrasahs of the chief qadi (al-Ghazālīyah and al-‘Ādilīyah) and at the Atabakīyah, in addition to his own post at the Madrasah Iqbālīyah. Most people expressed satisfaction at this turn of events and felt that Ibn Jumlah got what he deserved, especially for stirring up the earlier case against Ibn Taymīyah. But what is important here is that Shihāb al-Dīn immediately took a reverse course from that of his predecessor. He showed a great deal of generosity in distributing charity, giving twenty to thirty dirhams (and no less than ten) to all those in need. In addition, he hired back all the lecturers that had been dismissed during the last year and a half by Ibn Jumlah. These were about fifty, some of whom had become nearly destitute. He also restored the stipends (*jāmikīyah*) to what they had been before Ibn Jumlah had reduced them.<sup>37</sup>

## CONCLUSION

These reports, culled as they were from one source only, in no way provide a full picture of the madrasah institution. But to the extent that they allow us any conclusion, they give us a glimpse at the institution as it functioned in its dual role: as a place of residence and as a center for education. The Madrasah ‘Adhrāwīyah has the added distinction of being some sort of jail, or a half-way house, to punish those who were guilty of serious transgressions. Aḥmad Fikrī, in his study of Cairo’s madrasahs and mosques during the Ayyubid period, says that it was then that the madrasah finally began to perform its main function as a place of residence for the *fuqahā*.<sup>38</sup> This much could be seen in various reports, especially in the cases of the 600 Shafi‘is (and no doubt others like them) who were *munazzalūn* (given residence) in the various madrasahs. But the madrasah was not simply a *manzil* where one resides; it was also an educational institution, although these reports do not specifically describe a formal curriculum. The often-repeated phrase is *wa-dhakara al-dars*. As we have seen also, transfer from one madrasah to another did not necessarily entail relocation of residence, and having posts at

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 3:674–76, 679–81.

<sup>38</sup> Aḥmad Fikrī, *Masājid al-Qāhirah wa-Madārisuhā* (Cairo, 1969), 2:160.



several madrasahs did not entail multiple residences. The urgency to fill the vacancies must be seen in the importance of the function of *dhikr al-dars* (giving the lesson), as the madrasahs became a more pervasive and regulated institution where imparting of knowledge of various fields took place. And in imparting knowledge, in this knowledge industry, the physical sciences were no different from the religious sciences in that they were equally taught formally and informally. "Quality control" could be exercised, on the one hand, by manuals of *ḥisbah* and other professional checks, and on the other by the assignment/reassignment of these *fuqahā'*/*mudarrisūn* who constituted the pool of candidates for promotion to higher posts. Other conclusions could be drawn from these reports, especially when seen in their wider context. Also, it would be interesting to speculate about the relationship of the state to the judiciary when the movement of teachers in one city is charted, and when the transfer of judges (and other related positions) from one city to another is mapped out.



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