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Waqf and madrasas in late medieval Syria

Hatim Mahamid

The Open University and Sakhnin College, Syria.

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The *madrasa* began to spread in Syria (*Bilad al-Sham*) as a higher institution for religious education since the Zangid rule (521H./1127 to 569H./ 1173). During the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, main cities of Syria were characterized by many *madrasas*, especially the major cities that served the political rule like, Damascus, Aleppo, Jerusalem and others. By the late Mamluk period, various factors had a direct effect on the fall of the madrasa function in Syria. Although a number of attempts were made to renovate and redevelop the *waqf* of *madrasas*, the adverse circumstances had such a strong impact that the eventual result was extensive disintegration of the *waqf* and madrasas in Syria. This paper discussed the motives of endowing *madrasas* in Syria during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, despite the difficulty in separating one motive to another. During the Zangid and Ayyubid periods, it is noticeable that religious motives were stronger, while the political factor was underscored during the Mamluk era.

Key words: Medieval Syria, waqf, madrasa.

INTRODUCTION

The construction of the *al-Nizamiyya* madrasa based on endowments (*waqf* properties) in Baghdad, by the Seljukid vizier Nizam al-Mulk in the second half of the 5th/11th century was a turning point. Rapidly followed by the establishment of other madrasas in the East, the model was imitated by many similar institutions, which began to flourish in Syria and then in Egypt. Syria served as the conduit, transmitting the institution of the madrasa to Egypt and the Muslim West. From the time of the Zangid era, particularly during the reign of Sultan Nur al-Din Zangi (d. 569/1173), the madrasa and other educational institutions based on endowments (*waqf*) were established in the main cities of Syria, and then, during the Ayyubid and the Mamluk periods, were disseminated widely in both Syria and Egypt. Of course, the rate of such institutions' spread varied from place to place, even throughout the regions of Syria, affected as they were by political, religious, economic and local developments.

The Zangid rulers in Syria, and especially Sultan Nur al-Din, continued and even extended the use of the method introduced by Nizam al-Mulk, of funding

educational and religious institutions through *waqf* endowments. They thus spread the model of the madrasa in areas under their rule. Political and religious circumstances in Syria motivated the Zangid and later the Ayyubid rulers to allocate endowments for charity as well as for educational purposes, in order to strengthen the orthodox religious principles, so as to revive the Sunna.

On a journey he made to the East in the second half of the 12th century, Ibn Jubayr notes that Damascus had twenty madrasas and Aleppo six (Ibn Jubayr, 1984). By the end of the Mamluk era, the historian al-Nu'aymi listed more than two hundred educational institutions of various types in Damascus (Al-Nu'aymi, 1981, 1988). This flourishing of educational institutions in Damascus during the period under discussion reflects the comprehensive development of educational establishment in the principal cities of Syria, which served primarily as the seats of central government.

The first madrasas in Syria had begun to be founded primarily during the Zangid period, particularly during the reign of Sultan Nur al-Din Mahmud ibn Zangi (Table 1). Throughout the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, the major

Table 1. Developments in the number of educational institutions in the three principal cities of Syria: Damascus, Aleppo and Jerusalem, until the end of the Mamluk period.

City	Before 569/1173	570-658/ 1174-1260	659-803/ 1261-1400	803-922/ 1400-1516	Years unavailable	Total
Damascus	27	94	58	20	13	212
Aleppo	19	51	18	10	11	109
Jerusalem	-	11	47	10	6	74
Total	46	156	123	40	30	395

cities of Syria were characterised by their many educational institutions, although a decrease in their number occurred during the fifteenth century. This study aims to trace the different factors affected on both: the rise and spread of the madrasa institutions from one hand and the causes of their decline and fall during the late Mamluk period in Syria.

Developments of the madrasa in Syria

An examination of the motives for dedicating *waqf* and *madrasas* in medieval Syria shows a blurring between primary and secondary factors, making it difficult to distinguish between them. The dominant motive can usually be linked to the period during which the educational and religious institutions were founded, but it is often difficult to distinguish between the various other motives. During the Zangid period, the dominant motive was the religious drive to revive the Sunna. During the Ayyubid period, this factor was still active, along with another religious impetus – to wage holy war against Crusaders. At the same time, political considerations should not be viewed as separate motives for establishing educational and religious institutions during this period. The Mamluk period saw a decline in the power of the Shi'a and Crusaders in the various regions of Syria, thus emphasising the importance of political factors; the construction of educational institutions was utilised by the reigning Mamluks as a means to reinforce their status in the area (Berkey, 1992).

A state of relative political stability prevailed with the advent of the Mamluk rule in Syria, after they had triumphed over the Mongolians in 658/1260 and expelled the Crusaders from the Syrian territories in 689/1290. This period brought about massive development of educational and religious institutions in all Syrian cities as well, including Jerusalem and the southern cities of Syria (Palestine) and in cities along the Syrian coast (Table 1).

The educational institutions included in this table are those wherein higher education took place. These included: *madrasa*, *khanqah*, *ribat*, *zawiya* and *turba*. The historical sources of the period mention many educational and religious institutions, in which no actual educational activity took place, such as many of the mosques, *zawiyas* or *turbas*. The data on the educational

institutions in these three cities are based primarily on the articles of Al-Nu'aymi (1981, 1988), Ibn Shaddad (1991), Ibn Tulun (1979, 1981), Ibn al-Shihna (1984), Al-'Urdu (1992), Al-Tabbakh (1989), Al-'Ulami (1973) and Ibn Kannan (1992).

Most of the Syrian educational institutions were located in three main cities: Damascus, Aleppo and Jerusalem, with the Damascene institutions far outnumbering those in the other two cities. This fact reinforces the contention that the *madrasa* is an urban phenomenon, one which developed in the major cities. As a city gained political and administrative prominence, the number of educational and religious institutions in it increased as well (Berkey, 1992; Chamberlain, 1994).

It is noticeable from the table above that most of the educational institutions in Damascus and Aleppo were established during the Ayyubid period. Before that, Damascus had 27 educational institutions and Aleppo, 19. The Ayyubid period between 570/1174 and 658/1260 saw a tremendous development of educational institutions in Syria. In Damascus alone, 94 institutions were established, with 51 founded in Aleppo. The large number of educational institutions founded in Syria during this period reflects the high status of the Ayyubid governors, who reigned over Syria almost independently, and whose status was equal to that of the Ayyubid sultans in Cairo.

The development process of educational institutions in Jerusalem was different from that in other areas in Syria, especially the inner and northern regions, which were not affected directly by the Crusader conquest. Most of the educational establishments in Jerusalem were founded during the first Mamluk period. Forty-seven institutions of every type were built from the beginning of the Mamluk rule until the Mongolian conquest of Syria in 803/1400. In the pre-Ayyubid period, Jerusalem was under Crusader occupation, which prevented the establishment of Islamic educational institutions in the city. Therefore, the development of educational institutions began only with the restoration of the city from the Crusaders by Sultan Salah al-Din in 583/1187. Salah al-Din's heirs followed in their father's footsteps and dedicated educational institutions not only in Jerusalem, but in other Syrian cities as well. But, despite the liberation of Jerusalem by the Ayyubids, an atmosphere of threat prevailed in the region, emanating both from the Crusaders and from the

Mongolians, who began launching attacks against Syrian areas until their defeat in 658/1260.

Waqf and dedication of madrasas as religious acts

The religious factor was one of the important motives in the dedication of many institutions in Syria during the Zangid, Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. The revival of the Sunna and the conflict against Crusaders were fueled by a strong religious sentiment, both within the ruling class and among the various religious leaders. Acts of charity on the part of the rulers and citizens were more common during periods of crisis. The fact that the *ulama* and other religious figures were always very strong and held in esteem by the population led many rulers to draw close to them. Religious leaders were consulted not only in matters concerning the administration of the state religion, but the application of other policies as well. The ruling class acted to appoint religious people to educational and religious positions and to secure the necessary educational infrastructure for the *ulama*'s work and financial support. Religious leaders were first and foremost preoccupied with securing religious positions in mosques, in education and in the state administration as officials and functionaries.

The rulers of Syria, the Zangid, Ayyubid and Mamluk rulers maintained religious qualities, although differences existed between them in their religious scholarship or in their acts of charity. They made it their priority to apply policies that adopted orthodox Islamic religious and educational activities, and maintained public images of pious people, acting to reinforce the religion. Although varied motives were behind the dedication of religious institutions or renovation of old ones by these rulers, the religious drive was always made public. Thus, for example, Sultan Nur al-Din ibn Zangi maintained a visibly religious character and he was an adherent of the Hanafite and received a broad religious education; he promulgated religious policies in Syria. He maintained close relationships with religious leaders and held regularly scheduled meetings with them. The Sultan displayed feelings of respect and love to the *ulama*, and consulted with them on matters of state and religion. One of the highlights of Nur al-Din's policy was his emphasis on religious education, which grew stronger during his reign due to the endowment of *waqfs* as well as educational and religious institutions all over Syria (Mahamid, 2010; Abu Shama, 1991).

The Zangid rulers of Syria fought against the Shi'a in various ways, including the use of Islamic education to revive the Sunna, by building educational institutions (Mahamid, 2010). In 541/1146, Sultan Nur al-Din forbade Shi'i customs to be practiced in territories under his control. Simultaneously, he moved to reinforce the two principal Islamic schools in Syria of those times, the

Hanafiyya and the Shafi'iyya, via educational-religious activities in mosques and other institutions. Thus, the madrasa served as an instrument for the revival of the Sunna throughout Syria, in the same way it had done in the East. When *al-Zajjajiyya* madrasa was founded in Aleppo at the beginning of the sixth/twelfth century, the Shi'is tried to destroy the building a number of times, managing to delay construction until it was finally built by the governor of Aleppo, Badr al-Din Sulayman ibn Urtuq as mentioned above, in 517/1123.

Maintaining the direction set by the Zangids, the Ayyubid rulers were also motivated by strong religious sentiments and continued to uphold a policy of dedicating educational and religious institutions. It should be noted that most of the Ayyubid rulers and members of their dynasty had higher religious education, and some of them were teachers of *hadith* and *fiqh*.

The Mamluks who served under the Ayyubid dynasty also contributed to the development of educational and religious institutions. Like their masters, their actions were also driven by strong religious sentiments. The Emir Shibl al-Dawla Kafur al-Husami, who was related to Husam al-Din ibn Lajin, princess Sitt al-Sham's son, was a religious scholar, with a high level of academic education in addition to his important political position. Motivated by his religious devotion, he contributed to building educational institutions in Syria. The madrasas, khanqahs and turbas that he built were known by his name: *al-Shibliyya al-Barraniyya* and *al-Shibliyya al-Juwaniyya*. He was also one of the contributors to the construction of Sitt al-Sham's madrasa, *al-Shamiyya al-Barraniyya*. During the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, rulers continued to reinforce the orthodox Islamic approach by building various types of educational institutions and mosques.

Dedicating educational and religious institutions as acts of charity and religion also continued during the Mamluk period. A large number of Mamluk rulers and their governors in Syria were religious scholars and had religious influence, and this was reflected in their policies of adopting religious education and dedicating educational and religious institutions. The governor of Damascus, Sayf al-Din Tankiz (712/1312 to 740/1339), was noted throughout his reign for his religious qualities and charitable acts. He made substantial endowments, part of which were financed by the state treasury and part from his private property, dedicating them for charitable purposes such as the construction of educational and religious institutions. Due to the importance of this undertaking, he appointed a special official for matters of charity, known by the name *katib al-zakat* (Ibn Sasrá, 1963). Emir Tankiz's wife, Khunda al-Sitt Sutayta, dedicated a building in Damascus for the site of her grave (*turba*) with a mosque inside it, called *al-Turba al-Kukba'iyya*. She also dedicated a *ribat* for women and an educational institution for orphans (*maktab aytam*) (Ibn

Kathir, undated:14; Al-Nu'aymi, 1988:2).

During the Mamluk period, unwanted Mamluks were banished from the centre of government by the rulers in Cairo and sent to Syria. Jerusalem served as the principal destination for these banished expatriates, who endowed many educational institutions in the city. These institutions fulfilled two main functions for the mamluks: first, after those who had dedicated the waqf were buried in the turba, religious lessons were provided and the Qur'an read, so as to elevate the souls of the deceased; second, to guarantee the incomes of those who dedicated the waqf and maintain the property for their descendants and securing it from expropriation by the government. Examples of this can be seen in the establishment of *al-Tashtumariyya*, *al-Taziyya*, *al-Jaliqiyya*, *al-Arguniyya* and *al-Manjakiyya* madrasas in Jerusalem.

The conflict with the Crusaders in the areas of Syria helped, directly or indirectly, in the development of educational and religious institutions, from the time of the Zangids on (Mahamid, 2007). The holy war (*jihad*) fought by the two sultans, Nur al-Din ibn Zangi and the Ayyubid Salah al-Din, contributed to the reinforcement of religious fervour in the Syrian populace and increased educational activity, which worked to unite everyone against the Crusader conquest of the region. The policy of converting Syrian churches into Islamic religious and educational institutions during this period was also a means of demonstrating the power and prestige of the Muslims over the Crusaders. For instance, in their raid on Aleppo in 518/1124, the Crusaders brought tremendous death and destruction on the city, plundering property and decimating it. As revenge, after consulting with the military leaders and getting their approval, Ibn al-Khashshab, the judge of Aleppo, ruled that all the Christian churches in the city should be turned into mosques, some of which later became madrasas, such as *al-Sarrajn*, *al-Halawiyya*, *al-Haddadin* and *al-Muqaddamiyya*. Nevertheless, Ibn al-Khashshab left two churches untouched, for use by the Christian residents of Aleppo.

On Mount Qasyun near Damascus, the Hanbali Banu Qudama had developed and built many educational and religious institutions for their use after their migration from the Jerusalem region to Damascus in 551/1155, as result of Crusaders' persecution. The main madrasas they dedicated there were *al-Umariyya* (the madrasa of Abu 'Umar), and many other madrasas, in addition to the mosque of 'Izz al-Din, *Dayr al-Hanabila*, al-Muzaffari mosque, *Jami' al-Hanabila* or *Jami' al-Jabal* (Ibn Kathir, undated:13; Al-Nu'aymi, 1988:2; Ibn Tulun, 1981:1).

With the conquest of Jerusalem from Crusader in 583/1187, Sultan Salah al-Din repaired and renewed the operation of the mosques that had been damaged during the Crusader period. He dedicated new institutions for the Islamic community in the formerly Christian institutions in

and around Jerusalem. Salah al-Din acted to restore the Islamic character to the Aqsá and al-Sakhra mosques, and operate them as orthodox Islamic institutions for prayer, education and teaching. Sultan Salah al-Din was considered the pioneer among the founders of the orthodox educational system in Jerusalem, especially that of the Shafi'iyya, after a long period of rule by the Shi'i Fatimids and then the Christian Crusaders. After consulting with the *ulama*, Salah al-Din decided to dedicate three institutions in the city: a madrasa for the Shafi'is, a khanqah for the Sufis and a hospital (*maristan*). These institutions were dedicated primarily in place of Christian religious institutions (Al-'Ulaymi, 1973).

The Mamluk rulers followed the Ayyubid lead, and continued to use abandoned churches as educational and religious institutions, or re-used the building stones of abandoned and ruined churches in the construction of new madrasas or mosques. After the Crusaders were expelled from Syria in 690/1291 by the Mamluk Sultan al-Ashraf Khalil ibn Qalawun, he made changes in the Christian religious institutions so that they could be used as Islamic educational and religious institutions. Many Islamic educational and religious institutions in Jerusalem were built on the remains of churches, among them: the madrasa *al-Maymuniyya*, *al-Jaharkasiyya*, *al-Darkah*, *al-Qalandariyya*, *al-Yunisiyya*, the Zawiya of Sheikh Khadr, and the Zawiya of Sheikh Ya'qub (Al-'Ulaymi, 1973; Al-'Asali, 1981).

The effect of the *Nizamiyya* model on Syrian madrasas

During the Zangid reign in Syria, political and educational connections between Syria and Iraq grew stronger. The Zangid sultan, Nur al-Din, established a policy that was firmly against the Shi'i influences in Syria. On one hand, he acted to revive the Sunna, and on the other hand he adopted Islamic education at every level: early childhood (*kuttab*), orphan children, higher religious and Sufi education (Mahamid, 2010).

Teachers and students who came from Iraq to Syria, and who taught or acquired their higher education at the *Nizamiyya* madrasa made great contributions to transferring the model of the madrasa to Syria. The *ulama* who were invited by the Syrian rulers to come from the East exerted their influence on the Syrian rulers, persuading them to adopt the Eastern form of Islamic education. It is not strange to notice that the first madrasa built in Syria was *al-Zajjajiyya* in Aleppo on the model of the *Nizamiyya* madrasa of Baghdad. Sharaf al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman bin al-Hasan al-'Ajami (d. 561/1165), who completed his education at the *Nizamiyya* in Baghdad, advised the governor of Aleppo, Badr al-Din (Badr al-Dawla) Sulayman, to build the *al-Zajjajiyya* madrasa in 517/1123, based on the model of the famous madrasa in

Baghdad. It was also known by the name of *al-Sharafiyya* (Ibn al-Shihna, 1984; Al-Tabbakh, 1989).

Al-Zajjajiyya/ al-Sharafiyya itself became a model for imitation, replicated in various sites in Syria, thus further spreading the *Nizamiyya* model. One example is the madrasa built by Emir 'Izz al-Din 'Abd al-Malik ibn al-Muqaddam in 545/1150 in Aleppo, *al-Muqaddamiyya*. His instructions were that his madrasa be built to the plan of *al-Zajjajiyya/ al-Sharafiyya* madrasa.

Sultan Nur al-Din was considered to be the founder of the educational infrastructure in Syria, which relied on the waqf and the madrasa, the most prominent type of educational institution which included *madrasa*, *khanqah*, *ribat* and *zawiya*, in addition to the *halaqa*-s [study groups or circles] devoted to religious learning that were endowed in the principal mosques. Nur al-Din worked to spread Islamic education to all major Syrian cities over which he reigned, as well as to adjacent areas. These included: Sinjar, Harran, al-Ruha, al-Raqqah, Manbij, Sheizar, Hamat, Homs, Ba'albek, Sarkhad, Tadmur, Aleppo and Damascus (Ibn Shaddad, 1991; Ibn Kathir, undated:12; Ibn al-Shihna, 1984; Al-Nu'aymi, 1981).

Those madrasas were established for *ulama*, whom Sultan Nur al-Din Zangi had encouraged to come from the East, in order to promote orthodox Islamic education in Syria. Some of the madrasas were known by the sultan's name, *al-Nuriyya*, while others were named on the *ulama*'s names, such as *al-'Asruniyya*, for Ibn Abi 'Asrun (d. 585/1189). *Al-Halawiyya* madrasa in Aleppo was founded for Burhan al-Din al-Balkhi (d. 548/1153), and *al-Nafariyya* madrasa, also known as *Bab al-'Iraq*, was founded in Aleppo for Qutb al-Din al-Naysaburi. After his death, Nur al-Din's Ayyubid and Mamluk heirs worked to put orthodox Islam into practice in Syria and Egypt, by increasing the construction of various types of institutions.

Makdisi (1961) claims that while *al-Nizamiyya* madrasa in Iraq was suffering from decline, the madrasas of Nur al-Din and his heirs in Syria were on the ascent. Al-'Ajami's sons continued to play an important role in the educational life of Aleppo. It was thanks to them that many educational institutions flourished in that city. They continued to serve in high positions and as teachers in various madrasas, in addition to several educational institutions they had dedicated themselves. The al-'Ajamis were educated and highly respected family in Aleppo. They dedicated many institutions, one example being *al-Shamsiyya* khanqah, dedicated by Shams al-Din ibn al-'Ajami (d. 681/1233). Al-'Ajami also built a madrasa for the Hanafis, the Shafi'is and the Malikis in al-Jubayl. Sheikh Sharaf al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman ibn al-'Ajami (d 658/1260) built a madrasa in Aleppo that was named for him, *al-Sharafiyya*. The madrasa had three stories, and some of its rooms served as student dormitories. From the time it was founded in 610/1213 by the Ayyubid sultan, al-Zahir Ghazi, Sharaf al-Din ibn al-'Ajami served as the co-director of *al-Zajjajiyya/al-Sharafiyya* madrasa

in Aleppo, along with the judge Baha' al-Din ibn Shaddad (Al-Tabbakh, 1989).

The *Nizamiyya* madrasa in Baghdad, wherein the most illustrious *ulama* and teachers taught, served not only as an organizational and pedagogical model for other madrasas, but gave its name to them as well. Madrasas in Syria which, like the *Nizamiyya* attracted the best teachers, followed the famous madrasa's lead in their methods of appointing teachers, registering students, relying on *waqf* funding sources, organizing studies and curricula. For instance, because of the importance and status of *al-Taqawiyya* madrasa in Damascus, it was nicknamed Syria's *Nizamiyya (Nizamiyyat al-Sham)* (Al-'Ulaymi, 1973; Ibn al-Furat, 1936). Damascus had several high-status madrasas named *al-madaris al-kibar* (Grand Madrasas), among them: *al-'Aziziyya*, *al-Taqawiyya*, *al-Falakiyya*, *al-'Adiliyya*, *al-Mujahidiyya*, and *al-Kallasa*, which employed Syria's best *ulama* and teachers.

Madrasas and the effect of competitions amongst the Muslim *Madhahib*

As had occurred following the construction of the *Nizamiyya* madrasa in Baghdad, which was built to serve Shafi'i adherents, other madrasas started to appear for followers of other schools, especially for Hanafis and Hanbalis. Following the Seljuk victory over the Fatimids in Syria in the second half of the eleventh century, the Zangid rulers moved to revive the Sunna, encouraging and fostering the orthodox schools in the region, with the goal of assisting the Sunni doctrine. The result was an increase in competition among the various Sunni streams, reflected in the establishment of educational institutions for their followers. This in turn greatly contributed to the growth of the madrasa institution in the various regions of Syria (Mahamid, 2010).

The first Shafi'i madrasa in Damascus was founded in 514/1120 as a result of the conflict between followers of the two schools, the Shafi'i and the Hanafi. The conflict erupted when the Hanafi judge appointed a Hanafi adherent to the position of *imam* in the Umayyad mosque. To demonstrate their opposition to the appointment, the Shafi'is refused to follow him in prayer, and instead prayed outside the southern wall of the mosque, in a place called Dar al-Khayl. This place was later used as a madrasa *al-Aminiyya* dedicated for the Shafi'is, which was founded by the Seljuk commander in Damascus, Amin al-Dawla Kamushtakin (Al-Nu'aymi, 1981).

The Syrian rulers were not all adherents of the same Sunni orthodox schools. While the Zangids were followers of the Hanafi school, the Ayyubids were adherents of the Shafi'i, with the exception of al-Mu'azzam 'Isa', who was a Hanafi adherent. Most of the

Mamluk rulers were also followers of the Hanafi School, which brought about the development of many madrasas for the Hanafiyya in Syria and Egypt. As a result, it can be seen that the two most widespread rites in Syria were the Shafi'i and the Hanafi. Since the majority of the Syrian rulers were followers of these two schools, most of the madrasas built in the service of the Hanafiyya and Shafi'iyya were founded principally by the rulers. In contrast, the madrasas of the Hanbalis and the Malikis were established primarily by citizens, such as *ulama*, merchants and other functionaries. It should be noted that the Zangid, Ayyubid and Mamluk rulers of Syria were tolerant towards the other Sunni schools. Some of them were careful to dedicate institutions with the various positions divided amongst the different schools, or to set up lessons for other schools in their madrasas.

A review of the madrasas in the two principal cities of Syria, Damascus and Aleppo, shows that in Aleppo, Hanafi madrasas predominated, while in Damascus, Shafi'i madrasas were preponderate. Most of the madrasas in both cities were founded during the Ayyubid period. The number of Shafi'i madrasas in Damascus until the end of the Mamluk period was 53, as opposed to 47 Hanafi madrasas. Al-Nu'aymi, in his book *al-Daris fi Tarikh al-Madaris*, surveyed 63 madrasas of the Shafi'is in Damascus compared to 52 of the Hanafis. Classifying these institutions reveals that al-Nu'aymi made some mistakes by including some madrasas in different groups, such as *al-Baha'iyya*, *al-Sabbabiyya*, *al-Shumaniyya* and *al-Tayyibiyya* (Al-Nu'aymi, 1981, 1988).

In Aleppo, too, most of the madrasas were founded during the Ayyubid period, although there were fewer Shafi'i madrasas than Hanafi. Until the end of the Mamluk period, there were 21 Shafi'i madrasas compared to 27 Hanafi madrasas. This situation reflects the strength of the Hanafiyya in Aleppo and in the Northern regions of Syria. The historian Ibn al-Shihna is convinced that most of the residents of Aleppo adhered to the Hanafi school until the Zangid period, but after that, some were Shi'i and Shafi'i. He adds that the number of Hanafi madrasas was greater before the Mongolian conquest of the city in 803/1400. He maintains that the number of madrasas reached forty, but that many of them were destroyed as a result of the wars and the Mongolian conquest. After that, a few madrasas were built in the fifteenth century, both for the Hanafis and the Shafi'is (Ibn al-Shihna, 1984).

The madrasas of the Hanbalis in Syria were founded primarily in Damascus, outside the city walls. Until the end of the Mamluk period, the Hanbalis had 12 separate madrasas, concentrated in *al-Salihyya* on Mount Qasyun. The principal reason for the concentration of the Hanbali madrasas in this one place was the competition between the various schools and the competition for positions serving the Hanbalis. Conflicts erupted among the Hanbalis themselves, particularly between the senior al-Hanbali families of Damascus, and the new Hanbali

immigrants of Banu Qudama who had come from Jerusalem and its environs.

Most madrasas and mosques established for the anbalis in Syria were erected in places with a large concentration of Hanbali followers, among them Damascus, Ba'albek, Nablus and Jerusalem. In Aleppo, no separate madrasas were built for the Hanbalis and Malikis, since education for these schools took place within mixed institutions that integrated various schools, like *al-Zajjajiyya*, *al-Sayfiyya al-Juwvaniyya* and *al-Salahiyya* madrasas. It should be noted that Aleppo had eight combined madrasas as a complex. Two – *al-Salahiyya* and *al-Zajjajiyya* – offered education to four schools. *Al-Nafisiyya* madrasa combined three Sunni schools, excluding the Hanbaliyya. Three madrasas combined Shafi'i and Hanafi education: *al-Suyufiyya/al-Sayfiyya al-Barraniyya*, *al-Zahiriyya al-Juwvaniyya/al-Sultaniyya* and *al-Mawazini/Taghribardi*. One madrasa, *al-Sayfiyya al-Juwvaniyya*, offered studies to the Maliki and the Hanbali adherents.

In contrast, Damascus had four separate madrasas for the Malikis: two that were founded during the Ayyubid period, *al-Malikiyya* and *al-Salahiyya*, and two others that were founded during the first Mamluk period, *al-Samsamiyya* (717/1317) and *al-Sharabishiyya* (734/1333). Besides the integrated madrasas in Damascus, Maliki education also took place in the Umayyad mosque. The Maliki educational system in Damascus developed and flourished; this is due to Sheikh Jamal al-Din Ahmad al-Zawawi (d. 717/1317), during the period in which he served as the Maliki judge in the city (Ibn Kathir, undated: 14; Ibn Hajar, 1993; Al-Nu'aymi, 1988).

Damascus had nine mixed madrasas, eight of which combined the Shafi'i with the Hanafi schools: *al-Asadiyya*, *al-Farrukhshahiyya*, *al-'Adhrawiyya*, *al-Jarkasiyya*, *al-Dimaghiyya*, *al-Amjadiyya*, *al-Zahiriyya al-Juwvaniyya/al-Baybarsiyya*, and *al-Sabuniyya*. The only madrasa that offered studies to adherents from all four schools was *al-Fakhriyya*, which was founded in the first half of the 9th/15th century.

Syria excelled in religious educational institutions focused on one discipline, like the *hadith* and the Qur'an; the names of these madrasas reflected the subjects included in their curricula, for example, *dar al-hadith* and *dar al-Qur'an*. Other institutions that taught both disciplines were called *dar al-hadith wal-Qur'an*. Two examples are *al-Tankiziyya* and *al-Sabbabiyya* in Damascus. These institutions were dedicated in the large cities of Syria, like Damascus and Aleppo, and were separate from the rest of the institutions.

Despite that Sultan Nur al-Din ibn Zangi was the first to build a *dar al-hadith* in Syria (Damascus), which was named for him, *Dar al-Hadith al-Nuriyya*, it is noticeable that most of the *dar al-hadith* institutions were founded during the Ayyubid and first Mamluk periods. In Damascus, eight such institutions were founded during

the Ayyubid period and seven during the first Mamluk period. Twelve *dar al-hadith* institutions were founded in Aleppo during the same period, of which seven were established during the first Mamluk period and the rest in previous periods.

Qur'anic studies also received a great deal of interest in Syria, leading to the establishment of separate institutions, called *dar al-Qur'an*. Although the first *dar al-Qur'an* institution, *al-Rasha'iyya*, emerged in an earlier period (around 400/1009) in Damascus, most institutions of this type were established during the Mamluk period, in the principal cities of Syria. By the end of the Mamluk period there were eight *dar al-Qur'an* institutions in Damascus. Three of them were established during the first Mamluk period, and the remaining four during the second period. No information exists about the establishment of such institutions in Aleppo, although we know that one mixed institution for the study of *Qur'an* and *hadith* did exist in the city.

Jerusalem, too, had *dar al-hadith* and *dar al-Qur'an* institutions, primarily during the Mamluk period. Although few in number, it can be determined that these institutions were primarily founded during the first Mamluk period, and they continued to function during the last Mamluk period as well, such as *al-Hakkariyya* (built 666/1267). *Al-Tankiziyya* madrasa, dedicated in Jerusalem by the governor of Damascus, Sayf al-Din Tankiz in 729/1328, also included a separate division for the study of *hadith*, named *Dar al-Hadith al-Tankiziyya/al-Sayfiyya*. Historical sources indicate that *dar al-Qur'an* institutions were established in Jerusalem as well, with some of them designated as educational institutions for orphans, in which they studied the *Qur'an* (Al-'Ulaymi, 1973; Kurd 'Ali, 1928; Al-'Asali, 1981; Abd al-Mahdi, 1981).

Madrasa and political considerations

Madrasas were used by the governing class as a means to influence the *ulama* and the population that depended on them. This influence was manifested both through the *waqf* and through appointments made to positions in the educational and religious institutions. Owners of *waqfs* dedicated to educational institutions relied on those holding positions in the institutions to be their agents in maintaining the *waqf*, in addition to contributing to Islamic education. The madrasa served as the foundation for ensuring social activities and as a means for reinforcing the government's political strategies among the populace, particularly among the educated class who derived tremendous benefits from the dedication of these institutions (Mahamid, 2003; Chamberlain, 1994; Lapidus, 1967).

With the madrasas fulfilling such an important role in reinforcing the status of the rulers, many of them saw to

the founding of madrasas in the major cities of Syria, which had served as provincial capitals, whether during the Ayyubid or Mamluk periods. A review of studies on the history of education in Egypt during this period, and particularly the works of Jonathan Berkey and Leonor Fernandes (Berkey, 1992; Fernandes, 1987), reveals a similar phenomenon. Indeed, local rulers were also keenly interested in constructing madrasas and other educational institutions in the major cities of Egypt. Rulers competed amongst themselves in erecting madrasas and dedicating *waqfs* in order to glorify themselves and strengthen their political standing with the local populace. Various historians believe that the madrasa is an urban phenomenon, which led rulers to choose the large, major cities as locations for their institutions. The cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Jerusalem, Homs, Hamat, Tripoli, Gaza, Safed, Hebron, and others in Syria became preferred locales for the construction of educational and religious madrasas by both rulers and citizens (Table 2).

From a more general perspective, one may conclude that a large percentage of the educational institutions in Syria were dedicated by the ruling class, especially during the Ayyubid period. According to the data presented in Table 2, the ruling class's share in the construction of educational institutions was greater than 50% in Damascus, more than 69% in Aleppo and more than 67% in Jerusalem.

A large percentage of the educational institutions were founded by the ruling class, that is, various sultans or mamluks and their wives, the princesses. As can be seen in Table 2, sultans or *maliks* (*al-malik* – king, as the Ayyubids named their rulers in Syria), founded 28 madrasas in Damascus, 12 in Aleppo and 11 in Jerusalem. It should be noted that the majority of these madrasas were founded by Ayyubid rulers, who ruled with almost total autonomy in the regions of Syria. By contrast, the governors in Syria of the Mamluk period were subordinate to the Central Government in Cairo. Another obvious finding is that the Mamluk sultans' share in the construction of educational institutions in Syria was minimal compared to their role in founding such institutions in Egypt. In Damascus, for example, only the madrasa named *al-Zahiriyya al-Juwaniyya/al-Baybarsiyya* was founded by Sultan al-Zahir Baybars in 676/1277 (Leiser, 1984; al-Himsi, 1967). Most of the other madrasas in this city that were founded by the ruling class date to the Ayyubid period, and some to the Zangid period, like: *al-Nuriyya*, *al-'Asruniyya*, *al-Taqawiyya*, *al-Salahiyya/al-Nasiriyya*, *al-'Aziziyya*, *al-Zahiriyya al-Barraniyya*, *al-'Adiliyya*, *al-Mu'azzamiyya*, *al-Ashrafiyya*, *al-Nasiriyya al-Barraniyya* and others.

Aleppo had only one madrasa endowed by the Mamluk sultans. Al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun had dedicated one in 727/1326, which was named for him, *al-Nasiriyya*, and had formerly served as a church. The rest of the

Table 2. Distribution of educational institutions in the three principal cities of Syria: Damascus, Aleppo and Jerusalem, by the position of the waqf owner.

Position of founder	Damascus	Aleppo	Jerusalem (Quds)
Sultan/ <i>malik</i>	28	12	11
Emirs and Army Officers	65	57	35
Citizens	82	21	20
Women	19	8	4
No Information	18	11	4
Total	212	109	74

madrasas that were established by sultans or kings were from the Ayyubid or Zangid periods, including, among others: *al-Halawiyya*, *al-Nafariyya/al-Nuriyya*, *al-'Asruniyya*, *al-Shu'aybiyya/al-Ghada'iri*, *al-Zahiriyya al-Barraniyya*, *al-Zahiriyya al-Juwaniyya/al-Sultaniyya*.

In Jerusalem, only two Mamluk sultans built educational institutions. Sultan al-Mansur Qalawun dedicated a *ribat* in 681/1282, named for him: *al-Mansuri*, and Sultan al-Ashraf Qaytbay dedicated his famous madrasa, *al-Ashrafiyya*, at the end of the fifteenth century (Mahamid, 2009). Ibn Iyas contends that the Sultan Qaytbay had built institutions in Damascus, in addition to the institutions that he dedicated in various cities of the Mamluk state (Ibn Iyas, 1984). However, in contrast to that, Ibn al-Shihna argues that Qaytbay only carried out renovations on the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus (Ibn al-Shihna, 1984).

The emirs and Mamluks of lower status in fact dedicated more educational institutions in Syria than did the sultans themselves (Table 2). Numbered among these were governors, various army commanders, and princes, members of the Ayyubid dynasty or descendants of Mamluks. Princesses and other women also played important roles in establishing educational institutions in Syria, especially princesses from the Ayyubid dynasty. Of 19 madrasas that were founded by women in Damascus, 18 were erected during the Ayyubid period; only one madrasa, *al-Shumaniyya*, was founded during the Mamluk period by a princess. Significantly, in Aleppo, too, the phenomenon repeated itself, and the majority of the educational institutions dedicated by women in the city were built during the Ayyubid period, by Ayyubid princesses. By contrast, in Jerusalem, all of the madrasas that were dedicated by women were founded during the Mamluk period. The endowers were mainly princesses or foreigners, like the owner of *al-Khatuniyya* madrasa and *ribat al-Mardini*. The principal conclusion that can be drawn from the participation of women in the construction of educational institutions in Syria is that members of the Ayyubid dynasty took a considerable role in this enterprise, while there was almost no involvement in the construction of madrasas by the princesses of the Mamluk rulers.

The reasons for the differences between Ayyubid and Mamluk princesses can be attributed to the fact that the Ayyubid princesses actively participated in the social and cultural life of their times. They studied the Arabic language and religion, which helped them gain respect and take part in social and educational matters, as students, teachers and contributors to the construction of institutions. The Mamluk princesses, on the other hand, lived within a closed society within the palaces, without religious education or knowledge of the Arabic language. Al-Qalqashandi maintains that Mamluk princesses were especially interested in acquiring ornaments, jewellery and expensive furniture (Al-Qalqashandi, 1987). In contrast to that, Berkey argues that Mamluk princesses took active roles in dedicating or administering endowments in Cairo (Berkey, 1992).

Despite the fact that the dedication of educational institutions by Ayyubid rulers in Syria leaves the impression that they were guided by religious fervour and charitable acts, a few individual cases emphasise the political nature of these acts, and the rulers' love of self-glorification and status, such as Emir Sarim al-Din Qaymaz al-Najmi (d. 596/1199) had acted when he erected the *ribat* of *Khasfin* on the Golan area, the *ribat* of *Nawá* in Huran, and his madrasa, *al-Qaymaziyya*, in Damascus.

During the Mamluk period, political considerations to reinforce the ruler's position by founding institutions became more pronounced. Ibn Jama'a supports this assertion by stating that many such institutions were built during the Mamluk period in order to glorify the names of the founders (Ibn Jama'a, 1994). The Mamluk governors in Syria tried to leave their marks on the regions they ruled by building various institutions, especially in large cities that served as local centres of government. These rulers took advantage of their strong positions and their influence in order to implement their policies, both in the court of the Central Government in Cairo and in the areas of Syria which they controlled.

Despite the fact that Sultan Muhammad ibn Qalawun himself made only a small contribution to constructing educational and religious institutions in Syria, the period of his rule saw tremendous growth in the building of such

institutions, assisted by his governors in the area. The stability and security in the regions over which these governors ruled depended both on their political power and the duration of their rule. Sayf al-Din Tankiz, the Governor of Damascus (ruled 712-740/1312-1339), accumulated tremendous power during his reign in Syria. Tankiz dedicated many institutions in different regions of Syria, which served his economic, political and educational-religious interests. In Damascus, he built a mosque named *Jami' Tankiz*, later used as a madrasa. The historian Ibn Sabat describes Tankiz' mosque as one of the most beautiful in the city. He also dedicated a *turba* and public baths (*hammam*) in the vicinity of the mosque, another *turba* for his wife, and an institution for the study of *hadith* and Qur'an. In Jerusalem, Tankiz dedicated a madrasa/khanqah, a *ribat* and a mosque. In Safed, he dedicated a hospital (*maristan*) and an inn (*khan*) (Ibn Qadi Shuhba, 1994; Ibn Hajar, 1993; Ibn Tulun, 1984; Al-Nu'aymi, 1981; Ibn Sabat, 1993).

Al-Jawuli's case emphasises the political competition among governors due to opposing interests, something that was most obvious in the dedication of economic, social and educational-religious institutions. 'Alam al-Din Sanjar al-Jawuli, the governor of Gaza (d. 745/1344), dedicated many institutions of different functions in his areas, among them educational, religious and economic establishments. Ibn Qadi Shuhba notes that al-Jawuli was the first to give an urban character to Gaza by building various institutions there and making it his centre of government. Al-Jawuli built a palace, a mosque, a madrasa for the Shafi'is, *al-Jawuliyya*, a hospital, a *khan al-Sabil*, public baths, and an army camp (*midan*). He constructed a mosque in Hebron and other institutions in various regions in Palestine, like the khans in Qaqun and in Bisan (Ibn Qadi Shuhba, 1994). He also dedicated a khan and a khanqah in Cairo, and al-Maqrizi maintains that he also dedicated a madrasa next to the *Ibn Tulun* mosque in Cairo (Al-Maqrizi, 1971:2/3). Al-Jawuli's increasingly powerful position in the southern regions of Syria caused tension and competition between him and the principal governor, Tankiz, who grew suspicious of him. This led to al-Jawuli's imprisonment and loss of his position in 720/1320.

This only illustrates the level of importance and influence that dedicating buildings and structures had as a weapon in political conflicts and as means to amass power. The construction of *al-Siba'iyya* madrasa in Damascus during the years 915-921/1509-1515 is an excellent example of the way Mamluk governors and rulers took control of abandoned institutions to serve their own interests. Governor Sibay, who ruled at the end of the Mamluk period in Damascus, took advantage of the poor political and economic conditions and took control of considerable waqf property in the city in order to serve his madrasa, *al-Siba'iyya*. Moreover, to build his madrasa, which included a madrasa, a mosque, a *zawiya*

and a *turba*, he used great quantities of materials and equipment he collected from abandoned institutions. For this reason, *al-Siba'iyya* was known by the nickname *Jam' al-Jawami'* (collection of mosques). His madrasa was known as one of the most magnificent in the city (Al-Nu'aymi, 1981; Ibn Tulun, 1964).

The involvement of political considerations in the construction of educational and religious institutions was a central characteristic in the enterprises of various emirs, who tried to build madrasas for Mamluk sultans. The goals of these Mamluk emirs appear to be twofold: first, they wished to get close to the sultan so as to gain a favoured position at court, and second, they expected the sultan to bestow a rich *waqf* on the madrasa. Thus, on one hand, the construction of the madrasa would be done in the most magnificent way possible, using the income from the *waqf*, and on the other hand the founder would gain in distinction and his position would be strengthened. A good example is the case of Sayf al-Din Manjak, the Governor of Damascus, in his attempt to construct a madrasa in Jerusalem in 762/1360-61, with the aim of honouring the name of Sultan Hasan. When the sultan was killed later that year, the emir named the madrasa after himself – *al-Manjakiyya* (Al-'Ulaymi, 1973).

The establishment of *al-Ashrafiyya* madrasa in Jerusalem reflects political and governmental power, and the splendour of the Mamluk rulers. It also indicates the general tendency of the regime to build institutions, especially during the last Mamluk period. Emir Hasan al-Zahiri built a madrasa in 872/1467 for Sultan al-Zahir Khushqadam, thereby reinforcing the sultan's political status. After Khushqadam's death and the ascension of al-Ashraf Qaytbay, Emir Hasan was removed from his position. However, he continued to work at the sultan's court in Cairo, attempting to gain favour with the new sultan. To do this, he suggested attributing the madrasa he built to Sultan Qaytbay, and subsequently changed the name of the madrasa to *al-Ashrafiyya* or *al-Sultaniyya*. Thus, Emir Hasan succeeded in preserving his political position with the sultan, and even managed to enhance his power. Apparently, however, Sultan Qaytbay saw the construction of the madrasa as inappropriate to his position, which led him to order its destruction and its reconstruction in 885/1480, in a way that more aptly fit his political status as sultan. Al-'Ulaymi adds that the madrasa's new building bestowed on it a beautiful form and image, and compares it to the third pearl of Jerusalem, after *al-Aqsá* and the Dome of the Rock (Al-'Ulaymi, 1973; Mahamid, 2006, 2009).

Signs of decline in Mamluk Madrasas in late medieval Syria

By the end of the 9th H/15th CE century, the historian al-Badrī, in his essay, described the bad situation of the *madrasas* in Damascus (Al-Badrī, 1980). The direct

dependence of educational activities on the state of the *waqf* rendered them susceptible to fluctuations in its financial state. The collapse of *waqfs* in Syria brought about an ensuing decline in the educational domain. Towards the end of their reign, and as a result of the poor economic situation throughout Syria, the Mamluks were forced to liquidate endowments. This policy dealt a direct blow to the *ulama* and student class, whose salaries and stipends depended entirely on *waqf* incomes. The liquidation of endowments had an unfavourable effect on the educational institutions, halting or slowing their development; this had a decisive impact on the entire field of religious studies during this period.

Various factors during the second Mamluk period, particularly during the 9th/15th century and until the last days of the Mamluks, had a direct effect on the fall of the madrasas. These factors were usually interdependent or had a mutual and cumulative effect:

- i) The impact of conflicts and wars on the *waqf* institutions was greater in Syria than in Egypt. Syria was directly harmed by both the Mongol invasion and the internal conflicts among rival Mamluk groups. During the two Mongolian invasions of Syria, of 658/1260 and of 699/1299, many mosques and madrasas were looted; numerous madrasas and markets were set ablaze, many of the latter forming part of the *waqf* properties for religious and educational institutions. Despite that, the first Mamluk rulers moved vigorously to repair the damage caused by the two Mongol attacks. Mongolian conquest of Syria in 1400/803, led by Tamerlane, brought about an almost total collapse of the educational system and the *waqfs* in Syria, particularly in the northern areas between Damascus and Aleppo. The historian Ibn al-Shihna mentions numerous examples of madrasas in the city of Aleppo which suffered from the Mongol invasion (Ibn al-Shihna, 1984). The situation of the *waqfs* in Damascus was similar to that in Aleppo (Ibn Iyas, 1984:1/2; Al-Maqrizi, 1971:3/3).
- ii) The difficult economic situation during the 15th century made it difficult to revive the *waqfs* and its institutions. Even worse than that, some Mamluk sultans adopted a policy of levying taxes on the *waqfs* and madrasas, from the period of Sultan Barquq to the Sultan Qaytbay.
- iii) Corruption in the administration of *waqf* affairs had increased during the last Mamluk period. Apart from the struggles and conflicts between the *ulama* and those controlling the *waqfs*, corruption in the Mamluk governments increased substantially. Instability was apparent after the death of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad bin Qalawun in 741/1340, with the political situation only deteriorating further under his successors. Corruption had spread in different phenomenon; greed for *waqf* money, selling *waqf* property, negligence the regular maintenance of the *waqf* and institutions by *ulama*, supervisors and other officeholders (Al-Safadi, 1988:6; Al-Maqrizi, 1971:2; Al-Maqrizi, 1987:2; Ibn Hajar, 1993:2;

Ibn Taghri Bardi, 1958:10; Ibn Iyas, 1984:1/2; Ibn Qadi Shuhba, 1977:3; Al-Nu'aymi, 1988:2; Ibn Tulun, 1979:2; Amin, 1980).

The poor state of the *waqfs* in Syria continued until the end of the Mamluk period. A substantial number of the *waqfs* ceased to provide funds. Many educational institutions suffered from neglect and did not renew operations, while others were exploited by those in charge of their maintenance – teachers and *waqf* administrators. This phenomenon let the Mamluk sultan Qanswa al-Ghawri issue a decree in 919/1514, in which he prohibited the sale of *waqf* property in Damascus, but it was too late.

SUMMARY

The *waqf* was the primary and almost exclusive source of income covering the expenses of the Syrian madrasas and other religious institutions during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. It served a variety of purposes, among them construction, maintenance, and payment of salaries and stipends to the various staff members. With a grand beginning in the days of the Zangid rulers, the *waqf* gained further strength under the Ayyubid and Mamluk regime. The extensive revenues derived from *waqf* property helped in establishing thriving educational activities in Syria, both by accelerating the pace of construction of religious and educational institutions and by enhancing the educated academic social class. Due to the extensive investment in educational and religious enterprises during the Ayyubid and first Mamluk periods, the major Syrian cities became centres of attraction for scholars and *ulama* from all over the Islamic world.

Disruptions of the proper functioning of the *waqf* emerged during the second Mamluk period. These were the result of the various armed conflicts which plagued the Syrian regions, the gravest of which was the Mongol invasion of 803/1400. The poor economic situation which afflicted the Mamluk state during the 15th century was also responsible, to a great extent, for the collapse of the *waqf* institutions in Syria by the last days of the Mamluks. Numerous cases of disruption and illegal seizure of *waqf* property occurred during the second Mamluk period, taking various forms: neglect, sale or virtual destruction of *waqf* property and corruption. The disruptions, eventually, had a negative impact on the whole Syrian educational system during the 15th century.

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