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**Between Mamluks and Ottomans:
The Worldview of Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn**

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Between Mamluks and Ottomans: The Worldview of Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn¹

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Abstract

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn (1475-1546) was born in Damascus to a family of merchants and *'ulamā'*. His life straddled two periods, the Mamluk and the Ottoman, so that his historical writings provide us with a uniquely rich first-hand account of the last years of the Mamluk rule and the first years of the Ottomans. As a Muslim of the Ḥanafī School of law, Ibn Ṭūlūn quickly adapted to some of the changes made under the Ottomans. In addition, his pleasant and unique character can be seen in his interactions with colleagues and students, as well as enabling him to avoid friction with the Mamluk and Ottoman elites.²

Ibn Ṭūlūn was familiar with many fields of knowledge. While most of his writing was on religious matters, he owes his fame to his historical writings. Chronologically, Ibn Ṭūlūn ranges in his writings from the dawn of Islam to the last years of his own life, in the mid-sixteenth century. In many of his books, Ibn Ṭūlūn dealt with a very wide range of subjects including religious and rational topics: history, law, biography, grammar, Sufism etc. Ibn Ṭūlūn's biographical dictionaries and biographies (like those of Sufi shaykhs), may also contribute greatly to the understanding of historical events and the reconstruction of social and religious life in Damascus in the late Mamluk and early Ottoman periods. This paper paves the way for further studies that will shed light upon the late Mamluk and early Ottoman periods in a variety of topics, such as the attitude to Sufi groups, to the Shi'a, the controversy on drinking coffee, and many others.

Keywords:

¹ This article is based largely on a chapter of my dissertation, "The Historiography of Syria at the end of the Mamluk and beginning of the Ottoman periods: The historical works of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn (1475-1546)," unpublished Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2012. The chapter discusses Ibn Ṭūlūn's worldview, while this article also discusses historiographical aspects. I am greatly indebted to my doctoral supervisors, Prof. Reuven Amitai (The Hebrew University) and Prof. Michael Winter (Tel Aviv University). I thank the Research Authority of the Open University of Israel for awarding a research grant (no. 502592).

² William M. Brinner, "Ibn Ṭūlūn", *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, New Edition (EI2), Supplement (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 957-958; Stephan Conermann, "Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 955/1548): Life and Works", *MSR* 8/1 (2004), 115-139.

Ibn Ṭūlūn as Witness to the Events of his Time

"The [Ottoman] soldiers swarmed over the neighborhoods of Damascus in search of a roof over their heads. Many people were thrown out of their houses and their things discarded. Pregnant women miscarried. The people of Damascus and its neighborhoods found themselves in straits they had never before experienced. Whoever was able to do so traveled, and some lived with their wives in mosques and religious colleges (*madrasas*). I was expelled from my house and my books were thrown away. They respected no person, great or mean, neither the people of the Qur'ān nor the people of *'ilm* [religious knowledge], neither the Sufis nor any others (Ramaḍān 922/September 1516)".¹

"The soldiers overran the Ṣāliḥiyya quarter, all the neighborhoods outside [the walls of] Damascus and all the villages, broke down the doors of the houses and robbed the people. Only those to whom Allah blinded [the Ottomans] so that they did not see them were saved. They stripped women as well as men of their clothes, and respected neither Sufis nor men of the religious law, great and small ... This event in Damascus was like the coming of Timurlane or like the end of the world."²

The two passages above are taken from an important chronicle by Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān* ('Consorting with companions about the events of the time'), which will be described later in this paper. This chronicle provides a unique reflection, more than any other source, of events in Damascus immediately before and after the Ottoman conquest (September 1516). In an article on Arabic historiography during the Ottoman period, Michael Winter states that despite the deep shock that the Ottoman conquest caused Ibn Ṭūlūn, his judgment was more balanced than that of his Egyptian contemporary Ibn Iyās.³ Winter also mentions Ibn Ṭūlūn's literary style, and that although most of his writing was on religious subjects, he owes his fame rather to his historical works, of which the most prominent is the

¹ See: Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā (Cairo, 1964), 2: 239.

² See: Aḥmad Aybāsh, *Tārīkh al-Shām fī maṭla' al-'ahd al-'uthmānī* (Abu Dhabi: Dār al-Kutub al-Waṭaniyya, 2010), 86, 125.

³ Ibn Iyās was a member of the fourth generation of a Mamluk military family of the beginning of the fourteenth century, his father being one of *awlād al-nās* (a descendant of a Mamluk). Ibn Iyās was born in 1447 and went on pilgrimage to Mecca in 1477. He devoted his time to study and writing, and as far as is known held no official position. Ibn Iyās lived off *iqṭā'* incomes, enjoyed by members of the Mamluk military elite. He died after 1522 (the precise date is unknown). Among his teachers it is worth mentioning Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), who also influenced Ibn Ṭūlūn greatly (see below). His historical work *Badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waqā'i' al-duḥūr* is a valuable source for the last decades of the Mamluk sultanate and the first years of Ottoman rule in Cairo. Ibn Iyās provides a first-hand eyewitness account of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517. For further details, see Michael Winter's survey: www.ottomanhistorians.com/database.pdf/ibniyas_en.pdf; see also Ḥusayn 'Āṣī, *Ibn Iyās: mu'arrikh al-faṭḥ al-'uthmānī li-Miṣr* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1993).

abovementioned chronicle. The chronicle originally covered some seventy years, half under the Mamluk rule and half under the Ottomans. Winter notes that Ibn Ṭūlūn's reports are exact and reliable, and that his world and worldview are those of an *'ālim*.¹

On Ibn Ṭūlūn and his Writings

Ibn Ṭūlūn was born in the Ṣāliḥiyya quarter of Damascus in July 1475, to a family of merchants and *'ulamā'*, and died in July 1546. His mother, who was of Turkish origin, died of plague when he was an infant. As he states in an autobiographical work, he was raised by his father, a merchant, and his paternal uncle, who was a mufti and a judge. His life as an adult was tragic. He married the daughter of one of his teachers, and they had three children (two daughters and a son). His children died for various reasons and his wife also predeceased him, by about ten years.

Born and educated at the end of the Mamluk period, in his outlook and spirit Ibn Ṭūlūn was a man of his times. The change of rulers made no difference to his Sufi-tinged orthodox worldview.² As a Muslim of the Ḥanafī School of law, the change from Mamluk to Ottoman rule was smoother for him than for members of the other legal schools, as the Ottomans only gradually changed things to do with religion. Ibn Ṭūlūn quickly made peace with some of the changes, while other ones were more difficult for him. His intellectual world and process of obtaining religious knowledge may be reconstructed both from the large corpus of books that he studied and learned by heart in his youth, and from careful scrutiny of his historical and other works. The corpus appears in its entirety in his autobiographical work *al-Fulk al-mashḥūn fī aḥwāl Ibn Ṭūlūn*,³ and sporadically in other works. The immense literary corpus that Ibn Ṭūlūn read, learned by heart, wrote, copied or summarized tells us how wide his intellectual horizons were: he can be described as a polymath, familiar with many fields of knowledge. While most of his writing was on religious matters, he owes his fame to his historical writing, most prominently the abovementioned chronicle, *Mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān*.

In order to demonstrate the statement that Ibn Ṭūlūn was mainly interested in religious matters, I will discuss the biography that he devoted to al-

¹ Michael Winter, "Historiography in Arabic during the Ottoman Period," in Roger Allen and D.S. Richards (eds.), *Arabic Literature in the Post Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 179-180.

² On the character of the connection between the *'ulamā'* and Sufism in the late Mamluk and early Ottoman period, see Michael Winter, "Social and religious reform in late Sufism," *Ha-mizrah he-ḥadash* 31 (1986), pp. 35-47 [in Hebrew].

³ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Fulk al-mashḥūn fī aḥwāl Muḥammad 'bn Ṭūlūn: sīra dhātīyya lil-mu'allif wa-bayān mu'allafaātihi al-bāligha 753 kitāban*, ed. Muḥammad Khayr Ramaḍān Yusūf (Beirut: n.p., 1996).

Zamakhsharī,¹ one of the role models of Ibn Ṭūlūn's spiritual world. At a young age Ibn Ṭūlūn already learned al-Zamakhsharī's commentary on Sūrat al-Fātiḥa by heart,² and this early experience is probably why Ibn Ṭūlūn viewed al-Zamakhsharī as a Qur'ān commentator and a philologist. Ibn Ṭūlūn, who knew the entire Qur'ān by heart by the age of seven,³ composed a number of Qur'ān commentaries.⁴ Another field in which Ibn Ṭūlūn was very active in was grammar. He read sixteen works on grammar to his teachers, and in the list of his own works we can find thirty-one items on the subject.⁵ Ibn Ṭūlūn taught many pupils, and was considered an important grammarian by his successors. His works include a biography of Ibn Mālik, i.e. Shaykh Jamāl Ibn Mālik,⁶ whose work on grammar Ibn Ṭūlūn learned by heart,⁷ even writing a commentary on it.⁸

As a person Ibn Ṭūlūn seems to have been shy and retiring. His pleasant character can be seen in his interactions with colleagues and students, and enabled him to avoid friction with the Mamluk and Ottoman elites. He was an educated man in the fullest sense, combining study with teaching and writing. His preoccupation with writing may even be considered obsessive. Ibn Ṭūlūn's historical writing, which was often tinged with autobiography,⁹ was only a

¹ A philologist and Ḥanafī theologian, born and died in Khwārazm (1075-1144). Influenced by the Mu'tazila and denounced Sufism. See Kifayat Ullah, "al-Zamakhsharī," in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

² Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Fulk*, p. 46.

³ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākaha*, 1:216.

⁴ Among his works in this field, Ibn Ṭūlūn listed his commentaries to the Throne Verse (Q 2: 255), al-A'rāf (Q 7): 56, Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ (Q 112), Sūrat al-Nās (Q 114), Āl 'Imrān (Q 3): 81, Sūrat al-Kawthar (Q 108), Ṭa Ha (Q 20): 5, al-Baqara (Q 2): 260, al-Faṭḥ (Q 48): 1, al-Nisā' (Q 4): 54, al-Naḥl (Q 16): 20, Maryam (Q 19): 21. The only one of these to be published so far is *Risāla fī tafsīr qawlihi ta'ālā inna Ibrāhīm kān umma*, ed. Muḥammad Khayr Ramaḍān Yusūf (Beirut: n.p., 1997). The name of the treatise refers to Q 16:120, and the book is a collection of *ḥadīths* connected to Abraham. The editor estimates the book to be one of Ibn Ṭūlūn's latest, since its name does not appear in *al-Fulk al-mashḥūn*. See *ibid.*, pp. 5-9.

⁵ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Masā'il al-mulaqqabāt fī 'ilm al-naḥw*, ed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Salīm (Cairo, 2002), 7, 9-11.

⁶ Ibn Mālik was born in al-Andalus in 600/1203, served as an imam in madrasas in Aleppo and Damascus, and died in Damascus in 1274. See: 'Abd al-Qādir al-Nu'aymī al-Dimashqī, *al-Dāris fī tārikh al-madāris*, ed. Ja'far al-Ḥasanī (Damascus: n.p., 1988), 2:89; Yusūf b. 'Abd al-Hādī al-Dimashqī al-Ṣāliḥī al-Ḥanbalī, known as Ibn al-Mibrad, *Maḥd al-ṣawāb fī faḍā'il amīr al-mu'minīn 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Farīḥ (Riyadh: n.p., 2000), 1:71; Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib al-sā'ira bi-a'yān al-mi'a al-'āshira*, ed. Jibrā'il Sulaymān Jabbūr (Beirut: n.p., 1945), 3: 315 (index); Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad, called Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Hawādith al-zamān wa-wafayāt al-shuyūkh wal-aqrān*, ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmūrī (Beirut: n.p., 1999), 3:32; Sharaf al-Dīn Mūsā b. Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, *Nuzhat al-khāṭir wa-bahjat al-nāzir*, ed. 'Adnān Muḥammad Ibrāhīm (Damascus: n.p., 1999), 2:26.

⁷ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Fulk*, p. 29.

⁸ This treatise, which does not appear in the list of Ibn Ṭūlūn's works, was published as *Sharḥ Ibn Ṭūlūn 'alā Alfīyyat Ibn Mālik*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Jāsīm Muḥammad al-Fayyāḍ al-Kubaysī (Beirut: n.p., 2002).

⁹ This style of writing creates a unique and interesting mixture of historical and autobiographical works, to the extent that the chronicle can be considered an ego document: "texts in which the author writes about his or her deeds, thoughts and feelings," i.e.

small part of his entire literary output. Its importance derives from the fact that his life straddled two periods, the Mamluk and the Ottoman. His historical writings provide us with a uniquely rich first-hand account of the last forty years of Mamluk rule and the first thirty years of the Ottomans.

Ibn Ṭūlūn was involved in day-to-day life and was in constant contact with his colleagues and pupils. His world was the world of Islamic religious law. While he studied a wide range of treatises with teachers from all four schools of law, in his own writing he concentrated on the Ḥanafī School, discussing a wide range of problems from both a historical and contemporary points of view. He made a living drawing up marriage contracts according to the Ḥanafī School,¹ and participated in social events that he described, often in the first person, both in his autobiography and in other writings. He sometimes reported marriages and divorces among the Damascus elite,² and sometimes reported unusual events.³ In an article on leisure in eighteenth-century Damascus, Muḥammad Aḥmad Mubayyidīn notes the contribution of Ibn Ṭawq and Ibn Ṭūlūn to the reconstruction of social activity in sixteenth-century Damascus.⁴ Both authors describe betrothals and weddings in Damascus and its surroundings.⁵ Mubayyidīn also summarizes the controversy among the 'ulamā' on the question of listening to singing and musical instruments.⁶

In many of his books, Ibn Ṭūlūn dealt with a very wide range of subjects: *ḥadīth*, grammar (*naḥw*), poetical meter and rhyme (*al-'arūḍ wal-qawāfī*), the laws of division of inheritances (*al-farā'id*), theology (*al-ilāhī*), medicine (*al-ṭibb*), folk medicine (*al-rūḥānī*), mathematics (*al-ḥisāb*), astronomy (*al-mīqāt*), astrology (*al-nujūm, al-zā'irja*), geometry (*al-handasa*), ethics (*al-akhlāq*) etc. The list of his works also includes two treatises on logic (*al-mantiq*), although in other places he emphasizes the prohibition of studying logic.⁷ Possibly he followed the footsteps of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī on this matter.

autobiographies, memoirs, diaries and letters. Ego documents may have a literary or even fictional aspect, in which the writer may distort the truth. See: Rudolf Dekker (ed.), *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical Writing in its Social Context since the Middle Ages* (Hilversum: n.p., 2002); Ralf Elger and Yavuz Kose (eds.), *Many Ways of Speaking About the Self: Middle Eastern Ego-Documents in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish (14th-20th Century)* (Wiesbaden: n.p., 2010); Torsten Wollina, "Ibn Ṭawq's Ta'liq. An Ego-Document for Mamluk Studies," in Stephan Conermann (ed.), *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus?: Mamluk Studies – State of the Art* (Bonn: V&R Unipress, 2013), pp. 337-362.

¹ See Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Fulk*, pp. 59-62.

² For example, the case of the divorce, agreed upon (by the fathers), of the daughter of the *naqīb al-ashraf*, Kamāl al-Dīn b. Ḥamza, from the son of the *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Buṣrawī, due to inappropriate behavior by the husband. See Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākaha*, 2: 358.

³ For example, the case of a boy who posed as a Sufi (*tamaṣṣala*), which increased distrust towards the imposters who claimed to be Sufis. This esoteric phenomenon is worthy of a separate study. See Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākaha*, 2: 296-297.

⁴ See Muḥammad Aḥmad Mubayyidīn, "Thaqāfat al-tasliya fī madīnat Dimashq khilāl al-qarn al-thāmin 'ashar al-mīlādī", *al-Majalla al-urduniyya lil-tārīkh wal-āthār* 1.1 (2007), 53-75 [hereafter: Mubayyidīn, "Leisure"].

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁷ Ibn Ṭūlūn even learned by heart a well-known treatise on logic, *al-Shamsiyya fī al-mantiq*.

From a broader perspective, Ibn Ṭūlūn was the last of a group of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century historians, most of whom were students or continuers of the Egyptian judge, historian and ḥadīth scholar Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (1449). This group includes al-Biqā‘ī (1480), al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497), Ibn Iyās (d. 1524) and Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 1546). These historians wrote chronicles studded with bits of autobiographical information. To them we may add *al-Ta‘līq*, the personal diary of Ibn Ṭawq (d. 1509), which is a kind of ego-document. Ibn Ṭawq was originally from the village of Jarūd (today Jayrūd), and moved to Damascus where he was employed as a witness by the law court. His diary served as an important source for Ibn Ṭūlūn. The diary, which covers the years 1480-1502, is written in a simple and authentic colloquial style, and provides a unique glimpse of the goings-on among the religious elite of Damascus. Ibn Ṭawq’s patron was Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Qādī ‘Ajlūn (1437-1520), one of the most important and influential Shāfi‘ī ‘*ulamā*’ in Damascus, worthy of study in his own right. Ibn Ṭawq did not try to hide or excuse the escapades of the Mamluk rulers, as other chroniclers, who depended on the rulers for their livelihood, did. Ibn Ṭūlūn quotes Ibn Ṭawq’s diary very cautiously, usually without mentioning him by name.

In addition to the major chronicle *Mufākahat al-khillān*, I have studied historical works, biographical dictionaries and biographies (like those of Sufī shaykhs or personal role models) from Ibn Ṭūlūn’s pen, such as the important biographical dictionary *Mut‘at al-adhhān min al-tamattu‘ bil-aqrān bayna tarājim al-shuyūkh wal-aqrān*.¹ This biographical dictionary was edited by an ‘*ālim*’ living in the second half of the sixteenth century, who was one of Ibn Ṭūlūn’s pupils (al-Ḥaṣkafī, d. 1595). The dictionary combines biographies by Ibn Ṭūlūn and his teacher Yūsuf b. ‘Abd al-Ḥādī (‘Ibn al-Mibrad’) and is a goldmine of information for scholars of the period. In my research, intensive use was made of this dictionary in order to identify people from this period and to reconstruct the ‘*ulamā*’s educational corpus. The dictionary may also contribute greatly to the understanding of historical events and the reconstruction of social and religious life in Damascus in the late Mamluk period. Within the framework of my historiographical analysis, I also paid attention to Ibn Ṭūlūn’s geo-historical treatises, the most prominent of which are those on the Ṣālihiyya quarter and the village of al-Mizza. Modern scholars interested in local history have made us aware of these works.

As an appendix to my study, I prepared an annotated bibliography of 753 works by Ibn Ṭūlūn. The list is taken from his autobiographical work *al-Fulk al-mashhūn fī ahwāl Ibn Ṭūlūn*, and I added various relevant details: subject matter (history, law, biography, grammar, Sufism etc.), original author (if the work is a copy or summary of a previous one), identification of persons mentioned in the work, publication details (if the work has been published), archival location (if known), linguistic notes and more. This work was the

¹ Muḥammad Shams al-Dīn Ibn Ṭūlūn and Yūsuf b. Ḥasan b. ‘Abd al-Ḥādī al-Jamāl Ibn Mibrad al-Ḥanbalī, *Mut‘at al-adhhān min al-tamattu‘ bil-aqrān bayn tarājim al-shuyūkh wal-aqrān, intiḳā‘ Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Mullak al-Ḥaṣkafī al-Ḥanbalī al-Shāfi‘ī*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣilī (Beirut: n.p., 1999) [hereafter: *Mut‘at al-adhhān*].

starting point for reconstructing the course of Ibn Ṭūlūn's intellectual life, as a youth and as an adult.

Some of the titles in the list are available and wait for an editor to redeem them from archives all over the world. Others are not necessarily by Ibn Ṭūlūn. Copying, abridging or summarizing books written by others, not necessarily mentioning the original author, was not unusual in the Middle Ages. Ibn Ṭūlūn's output, both original and not, is unusually large. A 'work' by him might be a few folios or hundreds of pages long. His books range through a wide variety of topics, and quote so many authors that the reader is astounded by the number of sources at his disposal. This amazement is compounded in light of the many events, such as natural disasters and wars, which caused the loss of original works by contemporary authors. Chronologically, Ibn Ṭūlūn ranges in his writings from the dawn of Islam to the last years of his own life, in the mid-sixteenth century.

As to the motives of his autobiographical writing, we understand from Ibn Ṭūlūn's evidence that this choice was not random. Already at the beginning of his biography, he emphasized that he was influenced by his teachers al-Nu'aymī and Ibn al-Mibrad, and casually mentions autobiographical works by previous 'ulamā'. The motive for writing this work is connected to the *ḥadīth*. 'It is not fitting that a man of *'ilm* should lead himself into the depths of oblivion.' In this context, it is worth noting that autobiographies and adding autobiographical elements to chronicles was relatively rare in the Middle Ages, and Ibn Ṭūlūn was clearly influenced in this by his predecessors. From his words, he obviously wished to immortalize himself and his family. He reported the names of the books he studied and the teachers who certified him with an *ijāza*.¹ From the last part, it is clear that his autobiography was written in the autumn of his life, when he was offered positions that he rejected. A large part of the autobiography is devoted to listing the books that he wrote over the course of his life, sometimes adding that a particular book was lost in such and such circumstances, like those that were lost during the rebellion (*fitna*) of the Mamluk officer Jānbardī al-Ghazzālī (the rebellion was suppressed by the Ottoman administration in January 1521). Identifying the names and concepts that appear in the autobiography makes it possible to reconstruct, to a large extent, the author's intellectual development and his interests as a mature man, which in turn made it easier to analyse his historical writings.

The full study upon which this paper is based paves the way for further studies that will shed light upon the late Mamluk and early Ottoman periods. The information available in chronicles, biographical dictionaries, autobiographical writings and other books by Ibn Ṭūlūn and his contemporaries may enable prosopographical studies of distinct groups within the 'ulamā'. So also may the lives of important historical figures of the time, who left few writings or whose writings are now lost, but yet were influential in Damascus in their day, be reconstructed.

¹ An *ijāza* is a hand-written certification by the teacher that study of a particular work has been completed, and a license to teach that knowledge to others. Ibn Ṭūlūn's *ijāzāt* have been published as *Nawādir al-ijāzāt wal-samā'āt*, ed. Muṭī' al-Ḥāfiẓ (Damascus, 1998).

Ibn Ṭulūn as a Pupil of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī

The influence of the Shāfi'ī Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505, Egypt) on Ibn Ṭulūn was great, and the latter mentioned the former several times in his chronicle. Ibn Ṭulūn noted that al-Suyūṭī reached the level of surpassing excellence in religious law (*mujtahid*) and attributes 600 books to him.¹ An interesting point of similarity between the two men is the fact that both wrote autobiographies. Al-Suyūṭī's autobiographical work, *Kitāb al-taḥadduth fi-ni'mat allāh*, is a kind of ego-document. In this work, al-Suyūṭī talks about his family, the books he learned by heart, and provides a list of books he wrote, divided according to the subject. He also reaches the conclusion, that he is one of the greatest men of his generation, the 'renewer' (*mujaddid*) who appears among the Muslims once every hundred years,² thus he merited reaching, so he wrote, the degree of *ijtihād*.³ We also learn from the autobiography that many of al-Suyūṭī's works were copied by his pupils and disciples, and spread throughout the Islamic world. Some of them probably reached Ibn Ṭulūn, and he copied them and attributed them to himself. Al-Suyūṭī also reports on controversies that broke out between him and his rivals.⁴ It is clear that Ibn Ṭulūn's library included several works by al-Suyūṭī, which he copied and/or summarized. It is possible that he decided to write an autobiography under al-Suyūṭī's influence.

Another point of similarity between al-Suyūṭī and Ibn Ṭulūn was their attitude to the controversial figure of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī. While some '*ulamā*' in the late Mamluk period denigrated Ibn 'Arabī and accused him of heresy,⁵ others worked to clear him of this charge. Al-Suyūṭī was one of the latter groups,⁶ as were Taqī al-Dīn b. Qāḍī 'Ajlūn and his pupil Ibn Ṭulūn,⁷

¹ Ibn Ṭulūn reported al-Suyūṭī's death in the following words: "Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī died on Thursday, 9 Jumādā I 911/7 October 1505. He excelled in *ḥadīth* and other branches of knowledge, and the number of his books reached 600. He was a *mujtahid* in knowledge and action ..." See Ibn Ṭulūn, *Mufākaha*, 2: 301-302.

² Ibn Ṭulūn composed a summary of al-Suyūṭī's treatise on the *mujaddid* who appears at the beginning of every *hijrī* century. See Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī, *al-Taḥadduth bi-ni'mat allāh* (Beirut, 2003), 34-35.

³ Ibid., 149-161. For a discussion of *ijtihād* and the *mujaddid*, which includes a detailed discussion of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī and his desire to be a *mujaddid*, see Wael B. Hallaq, "Was the Gate of Ijtihād Closed?," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16 (1984): 3-41.

⁴ al-Suyūṭī, *al-Taḥadduth*, pp. 128-148. The controversy between him and his contemporary al-Sakhāwī is particularly well-known.

⁵ Thus, for example, does Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Buqā'ī in his book *Tanbīh al-ghabī ilā takfīr Ibn 'Arabī wa-takhdhīr al-'ibbād min ahl al-'inād*, published as *Maṣra' al-taṣawwuf*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Wakīl (Bilbays: Dār al-Taqwa, 1989).

⁶ In his treatise *Tanbīh al-ghabī bi-tabrī'at Ibn 'Arabī*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Salīm (Cairo: Dār al-'Ilm wal-thaqāfa, 1995).

⁷ See *Tārīkh al-Shām*, 145: In the biography of Taqī al-Dīn b. Qāḍī 'Ajlūn, Ibn Ṭulūn reports that Ibn Qāḍī 'Ajlūn reproached the Sufi shaykh Shams al-Dīn al-'Umarī again and again for studying the books of Ibn 'Arabī. The Sufi shaykh complained to the sultan Qāytbāy about this, and Taqī al-Dīn b. Qāḍī 'Ajlūn was summoned to Cairo. Ibn Ṭulūn adds: "Even though Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn used to be silent on the subject of Ibn 'Arabī and not to denigrate him." In his own biographical dictionary Ibn Ṭulūn also mentioned disciples of Ibn 'Arabī. One of these was

who in one of his treatises tried to provide an explanation for a controversial utterance by Ibn ‘Arabī.¹ Ibn Ṭūlūn also devoted a biography to Ibn ‘Arabī. It is possible that he was influenced in this by the changing *Zeitgeist*, as the Ottomans revered the memory of Ibn ‘Arabī, over whose grave Sultan Salīm established a *madrasa* and a mosque. When that building in the Ṣālihiyya quarter was dedicated in Muḥarram 924/January 1518, Ibn Ṭūlūn became its first imam. The complex became an important pilgrimage site, and the Ottomans would visit it whenever they set out on a journey.² During the rebellion of Jānbardī al-Ghazzālī, the mosque, which was one of the symbols of the Ottoman rule, was closed³ and prayer there stopped. After the suppression of the rebellion, the Ottomans returned to the *status quo ante*.⁴ The Ottomans’ attitude to Ibn ‘Arabī can be seen from the fact that a mufti was dismissed during the reign of Sultan Sulaymān (1541) for speaking ill of him.⁵

It appears that Ibn Ṭūlūn admired al-Suyūṭī deeply. As mentioned above, he referred to him in his chronicle and wrote a detailed biography of him,⁶ in which he calls him a chronicler (*mu’arrikh*), yet attributes to him particular excellence and prominence rather in the fields of grammar and *fiqh*.⁷ The biography also mentions that al-Suyūṭī had 300 teachers (Ibn Ṭūlūn lists the most prominent ones). Ibn Ṭūlūn notes in his autobiography that he learned al-Suyūṭī’s treatise *al-Shamārīkh fī ‘ilm al-ta’rīkh* by heart.⁸

The Religio-legal Controversy over Drinking Coffee

Another issue that absorbed Ibn Ṭūlūn’s attention was the controversy over the prohibition to drink coffee.⁹ The controversy arose throughout the Mamluk

Shaykh Aḥmad b. ‘Irāqiyya al-Dimashqī al-Suhrawardī al-Sūfī al-Shāfi‘ī, who "read in the books of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī and used to say: There is no escape from the coming of the sultan, the son of ‘Uthmān, to our land. He will kill the Circassians [= Mamluks] and build a *takiyya* over the grave of Ibn ‘Arabī. This possibility seemed unlikely, until it came to pass many years after his [= Ibn ‘Irāqiyya’s] death." See *Muṭ‘at al-adhhān*, 1: 103, 117, 174-176 (biography of Ibn ‘Irāqiyya).

¹ *Al-rabb ḥaqq wal-‘abd ḥaqq* – God is truth and the slave is truth.

² Samīr al-Durūbī, "Ibn Ṭūlūn al-Ṣāliḥī al-Dimashqī wa-fann al-maqāmāt: ṣūrat min ṣumūd al-thaqāfa al-‘arabiyya bi-dimashq fī maṭla‘ al-‘ahd al-‘uthmānī" (unpublished Ph.D. diss., al-Mu’ta University (Jordan), 2005), 34.

³ Jānbardī al-Ghazzālī was a Mamluk amīr who was appointed governor of Damascus by Sultan Salīm after the Ottoman conquest. In 1520 he rebelled in order to restore Mamluk rule, but the rebellion was put down harshly by the Ottoman army.

⁴ *Tārīkh al-Shām*, pp. 106, 125; "Maqāmāt," 34.

⁵ "Maqāmāt," 34.

⁶ *Muṭ‘at al-adhhān*, 1: 394-396.

⁷ See *ibid.*, 1: 394.

⁸ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Fulk*, 51. Ibn Ṭūlūn’s great admiration for al-Suyūṭī is evident both from the list of Ibn Ṭūlūn’s works in *al-Fulk al-mashḥūn* and from what he wrote about al-Suyūṭī in other works, such as *Mufākahat al-khillān* and *Muṭ‘at al-adhhān*.

⁹ I intend to devote a separate article to this topic.

sultanate before the Ottoman conquest,¹ and increased in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. Some sixteenth-century *'ulamā'* permitted drinking coffee,² while others forbade it.³ Both groups relied on religio-legal reasoning to back up their stance.⁴ Ibn Ṭūlūn's writings can teach us about the early development of this controversy and its severity. In the second part of the chronicle, after an extensive survey of the positions of either side, Ibn Ṭūlūn brings a protocol of the chief qadi of Mecca, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn b. Ṣahīra, from 1511. The protocol comprises the religio-legal reasons for the prohibition of coffee (*taḥrīm al-qahwa*) during the reign of the Mamluk sultan Qanṣūh al-Ghawrī.⁵ The events described in the document took place on June 9, 1511, and are connected to the Prophet's Birthday (*mawlid*). The *muḥtasib* of Mecca, Khāyir Bey, discovered that coffee-drinking was taking place in secret, similarly to wine-drinking, from a cup that was passed from hand to hand. He also found out that coffee-drinking had become widespread in Mecca at that time, accompanied by men and women mixing to the sounds of flutes and drums. In places where coffee was sold, chess and cards were played,⁶ together with other activities forbidden by Islamic law. At Khāyir Bey's order, judges, *'ulamā'* and Sufis from all four schools of law gathered, including those who permitted coffee drinking.⁷ Khāyir Bey ran this special gathering, hearing those those who supported and those who forbade coffee-drinking, finally asking the opinion of the senior physicians of Mecca. The physicians declared that coffee harms the body, but there were those physicians who objected to it on medical grounds, too. Khāyir Bey eventually decided, at the conclusion of the discussion, that drinking coffee was to be forbidden, and anyone transgressing this prohibition was to be punished.⁸ It seems, then, that the Meccan *'ulamā'*'s decision against drinking coffee was not necessarily due to the physical

¹ Al-Ghazzī attributes the invention of coffee to a Sufi shaykh called Abū Bakr al-Shādhilī al-'Aydārūsī, who lived in Cairo at the beginning of the sixteenth century (d. before 910/1504) – *wa-huwa mubtakir al-qahwa al-muttakhidha min al-bunn min al-yaman* ("He is the inventor of coffee which is made from beans from Yemen"). See al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib*, 1:8.

² For example, Shaykh Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Tunīsī al-Mālikī; see *Mut'at al-adhhān*, 2: 858 (biography no. 999 of Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Sulṭān al-Ḥanafī).

³ The fatwa of the qadi Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Sulṭān al-Ḥanafī on the topic of the prohibition of drinking coffee from 950/1543, when he served as chief Ḥanafī qadi, is particularly important. This *'ālim* also opposed the use of opium. Ibn Ṭūlūn reported his fatwa on this topic in its entirety. See *Mut'at al-adhhān*, 2: 749-750 (biography no. 857); Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn al-Ṣāliḥī, *Hawādīth Dimashq al-yawmiyya ghadāt al-ghazw al-'uthmānī lil-Shām: ṣafaḥāt maḥqūda tunshar lil-marra al-ūlā min kitāb mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādīth al-zamān*, ed. Aḥmad Aybāsh (Damascus, 2002), 357-359 [hereafter: *Hawādīth Dimashq*]. Shaykh Yūnus al-'Aythāwī al-Shāfi'ī, the *khaṭīb* of the New Mosque and the Shāfi'ī teacher at Madrasat Banī 'Umar in al-Ṣāliḥiyya, also held that drinking coffee was forbidden. Ibn Ṭūlūn reports this twice, in the shaykh's biography (*Mut'at al-adhhān*, 2: 858) and in the events of 950/1543-4 (*Hawādīth Dimashq*, 357).

⁴ Mubayyidīn, "Leisure," 64-65.

⁵ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, 359-362.

⁶ *Manqala* and *kanfaja* in the original.

⁷ Ibn Ṭūlūn notes their names.

⁸ See also Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 59.

damage it caused, but rather because the custom was too similar to drinking wine and was accompanied by deeds considered inappropriate by the Islamic law.¹

The custom of drinking coffee, which began in Sufi meetings and *dhikr* ceremonies gradually spread to the displeasure of some of the *'ulamā'*, until in 1540 drinking coffee in public began.² In 1543-4, the Ottoman qadi of Damascus forbade drinking coffee in coffeehouses (*dakākīn al-qahwa*) in groups, with singing and music.³ It seems that the qadi was not disturbed by the the religio-legal prohibition of drinking coffee, but rather by the ceremonies surrounding it, i.e. the combination of drinking coffee with music and song. In 1546 the qadi of Damascus, Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Awwal al-Ḥusaynī, who had previously been the qadi of Aleppo, forbade coffee drinking in Damascus (as he had previously done in Aleppo). The qadi was not satisfied with this, and asked the sultan Sulaymān for a decree on the matter – which decree arrived in due course, in Shawwāl 953/November-December 1546.⁴ Even though Ibn Ṭūlūn provided a great deal of information of the coffee-drinking controversy, he was very careful not to express any view explicitly, despite giving his opinion on similar subjects.⁵ In one place, Ibn Ṭūlūn notes that his uncle Jamāl al-Dīn declared that coffee was prohibited.⁶ Possibly the absence of an essay on this subject in the list of his works indicates his preference not to take a side on this loaded and controversial topic.

Ibn Ṭūlūn's Humaneness

Ibn Ṭūlūn is often revealed to be humane, both in his treatment of people and in his attitude to animals. In his writings on animals, he decried their ill-treatment, especially harm to beasts of burden and birds. In one work, as its name indicates, he objected to striking beasts of burden; in another, he declares that one should not remain seated for a long time on the back of a standing animal; in a third – that one should not harm birds in their nests;⁷ and in a fourth, he apparently writes extensively about a wide range of animals (wild beasts, birds, pack animals, insects and more). Only one of these works has

¹ The dictionary definition of *qahwa* up to this time was "wine" (e.g. in *Lisān al-'Arab*), and indeed there were those who called the coffeehouse a *khammāra* (tavern). At the beginning of the sixteenth century the new beverage produced from coffee beans began to be called *qahwat al-bunn*, and over time this was shortened to *qahwa*. From the sixteenth century onwards, the term *qahwa* refers solely to coffee. See al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib*, 2:13.

² Mubayyidīn, "Leisure," 65.

³ *Ḥawāḍith Dimashq*, p. 357; Mubayyidīn, "Leisure," 65.

⁴ Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib*, 2: 39.

⁵ Thus, for example, on the topics of the prohibition of playing chess, taking drugs and playing various musical instruments such as the flute and drum.

⁶ Al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib*, 2: 126.

⁷ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Ta'yīd al-inkār li-ityān al-tuyūr wa-naḥwihā fī al-awkār*, ed. Muḥammad Khayr Ramaḍān Yūsuf (Beirut, 1997). When a fire broke out on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in 1481, birds are reported to have taken part in putting it out. See Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān*, 1: 50-51, 53.

been published, but it is clear from it that Ibn Ṭūlūn's humane attitude derives from the *ḥadīth* literature.¹ In his chronicle, too, Ibn Ṭūlūn occasionally expresses his sorrow at the use of camels and oxen for forced labor and complains about the Mamluks' behavior.²

Ibn Ṭūlūn's Attitude to Sufism

Ibn Ṭūlūn was indeed an *'ālim*, but in his worldview he combined this with the effervescent Sufi world in which he lived. His teachers did not include only *'ulamā'* of different schools, but also well-known Sufi shaykhs, some of them his contemporaries, of whom he composed biographies. Some of the biographies are mentioned by name in the list of his works, while others appear in his biographical dictionaries. It should be remembered that Ibn Ṭūlūn spent most of his life in a Sufi lodge, al-Khānqāh al-Yūnusiyya.³ In the first period he lived there with his father until the latter's death in 1505, when Ibn Ṭūlūn was about twenty years old. After the Ottoman conquest of Damascus in 1516 he was forced from his house and moved to the village of al-Mizza, where he met regularly with his Sufi master, Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Mizzī.⁴ At the end of his

¹ See also Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn al-Ṣāliḥī al-Dimashqī, *Naqd al-tālib li-zughl al-manāṣib*, eds. Muḥammad Aḥmad Dahmān and Khālīd Aḥmad Dahmān (Beirut, 1992), 176 (care of animals), 189 (laws of butchery), 191-192 (rules for treating riding beasts). His treatise on the cat joins the list of works connected to animals. On the current attitude to animals in general in Islam, and to cats in particular, see Housni Shehada, "The attitude to animals in Islam according to internet fatwas," *Animals and Society* 33 (Spring 2007): 63-72 [in Hebrew].

² See Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān*, 2: 239 ("...they behaved badly, that is took beasts of burden and forced them to work"); *ibid.*, 2: 381 ("The people were in distress because goods were not brought to Damascus for fear that the camels would be put to forced labor and suchlike. There was nothing good for the people from this nor an advantage to Islam, but rather damage due to over-taxation, and sins and destruction wherever they reached").

³ On al-Khānqāh al-Yūnusiyya (and al-Khānqāh al-Ṭāwūsiyya), see *Mut'at al-adhhān*, 1: 148, 501; 2: 609, 848.

⁴ Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Mizzī is Shaykh Muḥammad Faṭḥ al-Dīn al-'Awfī al-Iskandarī al-Mizzī al-'Ātikī al-Ṣūfī al-Shāfi'ī (818/1415-906/1500). In other places, too (such as *al-Ma'azza fīmā qīla fī al-Mizza*), Ibn Ṭūlūn calls him *shaykhunā Abū al-Faṭḥ*. He was born in Alexandria and travelled to Mecca, Yemen and India, then returned to Egypt and traveled to Iraq, before settling (after 880/1475-6) in Damascus: first in al-Mizza and then in the neighbourhood of Umm 'Ātika's grave. Among those who gave Abū al-Faṭḥ the *ijāza*, Ibn Ṭūlūn also mentions 'Ā'isha bt. 'Abd al-Hādī. While living in al-Mizza, al-Mizzī wrote his 40-volume (each of 250 pages) work, *Kashf al-bayān 'an ṣifāt al-ḥayawān*, which he dedicated as a *waqf* after his death; however, following the Ottoman conquest, the new government confiscated it and paid 50 dinars. Ibn Ṭūlūn testifies that he heard *ḥadīth* from al-Mizzī, and that he used to visit him in al-Mizza on Tuesdays and Saturdays, and even received the *khirqā*, the Sufi patchwork cloak, from his hands, until he was forced from his home in *fiṭnat al-dawādār* in 901/1494-5. See Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Fulk*, pp. 22, 41; *idem*, *Tārīkh al-Mizza wa-āthārihā wa-fihī al-ma'azza fīmā qīla fī al-Mizza*, ed. Muḥammad 'Umar Ḥammāda (Damascus: n.p., 1983), pp. 61-67; 'Īsā Iskandar al-Ma'lūf, "Dhakhā'ir al-qaṣr fī tarājīm nubalā' al-'aṣr," *al-Majma' al-'ilmī al-'arabī* 3 (1923), 40; *Mut'at al-adhhān*, 2: 770-771 (biography); Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Mufākaha*, 1: 216; *Nawādīr al-ijāzāt wal-samā'āt*, p. 93; al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib*, 1: 14-17 (biography); 'Alī b. Abī Bakr al-Harawī, *al-Ishārāt ilā ma'rifat al-ziyārāt* (Cairo, 2002), 21 (on Maydān al-Ḥaṣā and the grave of Umm 'Ātika).

life, after he lost his children, Ibn Ṭūlūn returned to live in the Sufi lodge of al-Khānqāh al-Yunūsiyya until his death. In both places of residence he was deeply influenced by the Sufi masters and comrades, and spent long hours in their company. Ibn Ṭūlūn even wore a patched garment received from some of his Sufi masters (al-Mizzī and Abū 'Irāqiyya al-Ṣūfī).¹ Wearing this garment, which was an important ritual in the development of the Sufi novice, was common among some of the "*ulamā*" as well. Ibn Ṭūlūn also recited Sufi works he had learned by heart before Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Mizzī, Ibn al-Mibrad and Abū 'Irāqiyya al-Ṣūfī.² In addition to the basic corpus that he learned by heart, the list of his works includes a number of treatises on *taṣawwuf*.

Sufi practices adopted by the "*ulamā*" were not an innovation in the Mamluk period, but became particularly common at its end. Under the Ottomans these trends increased, since the Sufi orders assisted them to strengthen their political control of the newly-conquered Arab lands. Ibn Ṭūlūn's interest in both the practical and spiritual aspects of *taṣawwuf* was, therefore, characteristic of the '*ulamā*' of his day. At the same time, there was a clear distinction between the office-holding '*ulamā*' and the Sufis. As someone who spent most of his life in government-funded positions, such as a teacher at a *madrassa*, Ibn Ṭūlūn did not identify himself as a Sufi. In many of the biographies that he wrote, Sufis bore the title *shaykh*,³ which Ibn Ṭūlūn did not attribute to himself.

His attitude to antinomian Sufi orders, such as the Ṣimādiyya *ṭarīqa*,⁴ is particularly interesting. As an '*ālim*' and member of the religious establishment, we would have expected Ibn Ṭūlūn to decry antinomian currents. Yet from his treatise on playing the drum (*ṭabl*) and flute (*muzmār*),⁵ practiced by the Ṣimādiyya order, we learned that his approach to this issue, controversial among the '*ulamā*', was liberal. It may be that he was influenced in this matter to a certain extent by the attitude of his teacher Ibn Qāḍī 'Ajlūn,⁶ who permitted the use of drums in the Ṣimādiyya's *dhikr* ceremonies:

¹ Abū 'Irāqiyya al-Ṣūfī dressed Ibn Ṭūlūn in the *ḵhirqa*, the Sufi patchwork cloak.

² Ibn Ṭūlūn wrote a major treatise on *taṣawwuf*, which was lost during the rebellion of Jānbardī al-Ghazzālī.

³ See e.g. *Mut'at al-adhhān*, 1:108, 110, 117, 120, 123, 140, 144, 151, 153, 165, 169, 174, 176 (biographies nos. 55, 63, 64, 68, 72, 81, 84, 92, 94, 108, 112, 113, 118, 119).

⁴ I have chosen to focus here on the Ṣimādiyya *ṭarīqa*, since it is mentioned in a number of extant works by Ibn Ṭūlūn that have been published. In the list of his works there are lost treatises on other antinomian Sufi orders, such as the Bājurbakiyya, an extreme Sufi *ṭarīqa* that seems to have been similar to the Ittihādiyya, which believed in the individual's total union with the divine together with complete obliteration of the self, considered heresy by orthodox Islam.

⁵ Muḥammad b. Ṭūlūn al-Ṣāliḥī, *Tashyīd al-ikhtiyār li-tahrīm al-ṭabl wal-muzmār*, ed. Majdī Faṭḥī al-Sayyid (Ṭantā: n.p., 1993) [hereafter: Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Ṭabl wal-muzmār*].

⁶ Taqī al-Dīn b. 'Ajlūn, Abū Bakr b. Qāḍī 'Ajlūn (1437-1521) was the Shāfi'ī qadī in Damascus. He studied and taught at important madrasas there; one of his teachers was Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī. He was highly esteemed and the rulers treated him with respect. See Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Fulk*, p. 27; *Mut'at al-adhhān*, 1: 226-227 (biography no. 16); Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Ḥawādith*, pp. 142-145; *Tārīkh al-Shām*, pp. 142-145.

"The shaykh Taqī al-Dīn b. Qādī ‘Ajlūn the Shāfi‘ī was asked about the drum that the Simādiyya beat during the *dhikr*: is it permitted (*ḥalāl*) or forbidden (*ḥarām*), and if it is permitted, is there a difference between playing the drum in the mosque and in other places? One of the preachers spoke ill of the Simādiyya in the Friday sermon, because whoever plays the drum transgresses an absolute prohibition (*ḥarām muṭlaq*), and renounces Allah and His Prophet. Whoever follows the Simādiyya is an unbeliever and *dajjāl*, whoever gives them board and lodging injures Allah and His Prophet, and wherever they have been, it must be purified, because it has been polluted. In the same sermon the preacher addressed the governor and said that whoever beats the Simādiyya’s drum is an unbeliever, and asked [him] to find the Simādiyya dervishes (*fuqarā’*), to beat them and to fine them. Is he even worthy of preaching in the Great Mosque of the city, and is it appropriate that a preacher to the Muslims should permit the governor to beat them and take their money? What is his standing if he did so? Is it appropriate to protect these dervishes of the Simādiyya and to respect them? What is Allah’s law in this matter?"

To all this Taqī al-Dīn b. Qādī ‘Ajlūn replied: ‘In the past, when I was in Jerusalem in 908/1502-3, I was asked if the Simādiyya’s use of the drum in the *majlis* of the *dhikr* was permitted or not, and if there was a difference between playing the drum in the mosque and in other places I replied that it was permitted to play the drum and hear it in *majlises*, whether in the mosque or in other places.’ After this Taqī al-Dīn b. Qādī ‘Ajlūn differentiated between the drum (*ṭabl*) and another musical instrument, called the *kubba*, which is indeed forbidden.¹

Thus we learn that in Ibn Ṭūlūn’s view, the question of playing music at *dhikr* ceremonies, whether within a mosque or somewhere else, was a religio-legal question. Like with other such questions, he examined what the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* had to say and quoted earlier ‘*ulamā’* at length. In permitting the use of the drum at *dhikr* ceremonies he based himself on Ibn Qādī ‘Ajlūn’s ruling. Moreover, Ibn Ṭūlūn considered the *Ṣimādiyya* to be blessed (*mubārakīn*), while the *khaṭīb* who suggested punishing them and railed against them in his sermon was he worthy of chastisement, particularly in light of his asking the rulers to interfere. It is apparent that Ibn Ṭūlūn’s attitude emphasized the autonomy he believed the ‘*ulamā’* to have in matters of religious law.

¹ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Ṭabl wal-muzmār*, pp. 40-49. On the use of the drum (called *bāz*) in *dhikr* ceremonies, see al-Nu‘aymī, *al-Dāris*, 2: 219-221; on al-Zāwiya al-Ṣimādiyya, see ‘Abbūd ‘Abdallāh al-‘Askarī, *Tārīkh al-ṭaṣawwuf fī Sūriyā, al-nashāt wal-ṭaṭawwur: al-zamān al-makān al-insān* (Damascus, 2006), 105-106.

Ibn Ṭulūn's Attitude to the Shi'a

As a Sunnī *'ālim* of the Ḥanafī school, it is particularly interesting to see how Ibn Ṭulūn perceives the Shi'a. His attitude can be discovered both from the list of his treatises and from the way he refers, in published works, to Shi'a events, mainly the 'Āshurā'. According to the list of treatises, Ibn Ṭulūn composed a no-longer extant book,¹ dealing, according to its name, with the 'Āshurā' (Muḥarram 10) festival. Another work,² which has been published, included biographies of the twelve imams. A third work is a defense of the Umayyad caliph Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya,³ discussing the question of the caliph's responsibility for the killing of the imam Ḥusayn, son of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and grandson of the Prophet. Ibn Ṭulūn comes to Yazīd's defense, presenting him as a responsible and intelligent ruler, whose father preferred him to his brother as his heir. In his book, Ibn Ṭulūn quotes the writings of many *'ulamā'*, most prominently Ibn al-Jawzī,⁴ al-Ghazzālī and Ibn Taymiyya. The number of sources at his disposal is impressive in and of itself. The editor of the manuscript, Dr. Fāṭima Muṣṭafā 'Āmir, believes that unlike other Sunnī *'ulamā'*, Ibn Ṭulūn was neutral, or even favourable, to Yazīd.⁵ In her opinion, this attitude towards Yazīd may derive from local Damascene solidarity. One way or another, Ibn Ṭulūn believed the *ḥadīths* presenting Yazīd in a negative light were fraudulent (*mawḍū'a*). Yazīd is described in the book as greatly saddened by Imam Ḥusayn's death, and as treating his family with respect after the tragic event of Karbalā'. Moreover, Ibn Ṭulūn understood Yazīd to have acted as a responsible ruler, in charge of defending the state (he mentions in the latter's favor the invasion of Constantinople), whereas Ḥusayn's supporters acted irresponsibly, despite the warnings from Yazīd. Later Ibn Ṭulūn discussed the question whether it is appropriate to curse a Muslim ruler and whether his being a true Muslim may be doubted. On this topic Ibn Ṭulūn followed in al-Ghazzālī's footsteps, who stated that 'Yazīd was undoubtedly a Muslim.'⁶

According to Ibn Ṭulūn, who quotes al-Ghazzālī and agrees with him, Yazīd did not order for Ḥusayn to be killed, was not present at the place of his death, and was not pleased by what had happened. The historian, distant in time and place, should not attempt to rule whether Yazīd was responsible for

¹ *Al-Durr al-muntazam fīmā warada fī 'āshurā' al-muḥarram* – "The arranged pearl on what appears in the sources about what occurred on the Tenth of Muḥarram."

² *Al-shadharāt al-dhahabiyya fī tarājim al-a'imma al-ithna 'ashar 'ind al-imāmiyya* – "The golden nuggets of the biographies of the twelve imams of the Twelver Shi'a" – ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, *al-A'imma al-ithnay 'ashar* (Beirut, 1958).

³ Muḥammad Ibn Ṭulūn, *Qayd al-sharīd min akhbār Yazīd*, ed. Fāṭima Muṣṭafā 'Āmir (Cairo, 1978) [hereafter: *Qayd al-sharīd* 1]; idem, *Qayd al-sharīd min akhbār Yazīd*, ed. Muḥammad Zaynhum Muḥammad 'Azab (Cairo, 1986) [hereafter: *Qayd al-sharīd* 2].

⁴ Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Radd 'alā al-mu'taṣib al-'anīd al-māni' min dhamm Yazīd*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad (Beirut, 2005).

⁵ *Qayd al-sharīd* 1, 24.

⁶ *Qayd al-sharīd* 2, pp. 57-59.

Ḥusayn's death or not, and only Allah knows the truth.¹ It seems that at the end of al-Ghazzālī's words fits Ibn Ṭūlūn's view of the historian's responsibility, since he often – when discussing controversial topics in his books – brings others' opinions in their own words and provides his usual solution ('God knows the truth'). His behaviour as an *'ālim* who accepts the rulers' authority also fits his worldview, as it is expressed in the matter of Yazīd.

Ibn Ṭūlūn's Attitude toward Illegitimate Groups

In general, Ibn Ṭūlūn evinced his zeal for Islam through his writings. To a large extent, he expressed the spirit of contemporary *'ulamā'* and served as a mouthpiece for many of them, since many wrote only sporadic treatises. In many cases, these works did not survive and at best we know their names only. As stated, Ibn Ṭūlūn's attitude to various groups within Islam (Sufīs, the Twelver Shi'a) was moderate, and he was willing to include them. At the same time, he considered other groups to be illegitimate, calling them *ghulāt*, such as the Druze, the 'Alawīs (Nuṣayrīs),² or Sufī groups who believed in *ittiḥād* (union with the Divine) or *ḥulūl* (incarnation).³ In this way Ibn Ṭūlūn expresses the views of the *'ulamā'* of the Mamluk period. The list of his works includes a treatise on al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh.⁴ I was not able to access this, but in another another book, a random collection of historical anecdotes, he composed a biography of al-Ḥākim, whose figure is central to Druze belief. There he expressed his revulsion from that ruler and from the Fatimid dynasty generally. At the end, he refers to the Druze of his own day, whom he calls al-Tayāmina, i.e. residents of Wādī al-Taym in Lebanon:⁵

"In the mountains of al-Shām there are many people who exaggerate in their love for him [= al-Ḥākim], and believe that he is alive and must appear. They swear that al-Ḥākim is in occultation (*ghayba*), and they are the Druze (al-Tayāmina), Allah's curse upon them. His predecessors were heretics (*kuffār, zanādiqa mu'aṭṭilīn*) and infidels to Islam (*lil-islām jāhidīn*), believing in Zoroaster's faith (*li-madḥhab al-majūs yu'taqidūn*). They disrupted order, permitted prostitution and wine (*abāḥū al-furūj wal-khumūr*), spilled blood, cursed the prophets, claimed that they were divine, and this is according to what Ibn al-Jawzī (654/1256) reported in his book *Mir'āt al-zamān*.⁶ "

¹ *Qayd al-sharīd* 1, pp. 25-26.

² Muḥammad Shams al-Dīn Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Lama'āt al-barqiyya fī al-nukat al-tārīkhiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Khayr Ramaḍān Yūsuf (Beirut: n.p., 1994), p. 97.

³ *Takdhīr al-'ibād min al-ḥulūl wal-ittiḥād*.

⁴ *Sal al-ṣārim fī atbā' al-Ḥākim*.

⁵ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākaha*, 1: 200.

⁶ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Lama'āt al-barqiyya*, p. 95.

Ibn Ṭūlūn thus used the writings of his predecessors in order to exclude heterodox groups from Islam. And what was his attitude to rulers? Ibn Ṭūlūn turns out to be a chronicler who does not hesitate to criticize either the Mamluk or the Ottoman rulers, especially when they acted contrary to Islamic law. Ja'far al-Muhājir, the editor of Ibn Ṭawq, called Ibn Ṭūlūn a 'historian in the service of the state.'¹ Yet, in Aḥmad al-Aybash's opinion – and I agree with him – this is something of an exaggeration.² On various occasions, Ibn Ṭūlūn openly scolded both Mamluks³ and Ottomans, for example when he described the behavior of the Ottoman conquerors in Ramaḍān 922/September 1516, and in the second part of the chronicle *Mufākahat al-khillān*, when the Ottomans put down Jānbardī al-Ghazzālī's rebellion in Ṣafar 927/January 1526.⁴

Conclusion

Despite Ibn Ṭūlūn's importance as a historian who lived in Damascus during two historical periods, modern scholars have shown limited interest in him and his writings, even though he was almost the only source for later chroniclers and biographers who lived in Damascus, for a number of centuries. The reason for this might be his unclear handwriting and the difficulty in deciphering it. An exception to this is the modern Syrian scholar, Aḥmad al-Aybash, who has devoted many years of his life to tracking down manuscripts of Ibn Ṭūlūn's works, particularly his important chronicle *Mufākahat al-khillān*. Stephan Conermann, who wrote an article about Ibn Ṭūlūn, described his religious milieu and social circle. This was based mainly on Ibn Ṭūlūn's autobiography and the biography written by Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzālī.⁵

This article examined Ibn Ṭūlūn's worldview as a typical 'ālim of his time. As he wrote a great deal, and not a few of his works have survived, his worldview can be learned from a careful reading of his writings. His worldview is expressed in his treatment of a wide range of topics. Sometimes, he chose to discuss subjects that the 'ulamā' did not write on. However, since he had many works by his predecessors at his disposal, from which he quoted or copied, he dealt with unusual topics, some of them controversial at the time. Such topics were his attitude to Ibn al-'Arabī, to antinomian Sufis groups, to the Shi'a and to current religio-legal controversies like the question of drinking coffee.

¹ In Arabic: *mu'arrikh sulṭawī*. See *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 85.

² Samīr al-Durūbi, on the other hand, agrees with Ja'far al-Muhājir. See *Maqāmāt*, p. 36.

³ See Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākaha*, 2: 239.

⁴ See the two passages quoted at the beginning of this article.

⁵ Stephan Conermann, "Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 955/1548): Life and Works", *Mamluk Studies Review* 8/1 (2004), 115-139.

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