

**HISTORIANS AND HISTORICAL THOUGHT IN AN**  
**OTTOMAN WORLD**

*BIOGRAPHICAL WRITING IN 16<sup>TH</sup> AND 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SYRIA/  
BILAD AL-SHAM*

by Tarek Abdul-Rahim Abu Hussein

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I have separated my work into two parts. In the first part, I investigate the nature of biographical writing and historical thinking in Ottoman Syria. My second part addresses the question of identity in Syria during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, with a specific focus of locating the Syrian intellectual elite in an Ottoman world. I made a distinction between two models of historical writing, Aleppo's tradition of local historiography, and Damascus's more universalist approach. I also discussed the development of intellectual networks in both cities, and concluded that Damascus had a unique tradition of historiography during the Ottoman period in all Muslim lands.

In the second part of my study, I examined perceptions of the Ottoman Sultan and state in the biographical literature, arguing that the image of the Sultanate was quickly transformed from its initial representation as a spatially and spiritually restricted entity to one that held universal Muslim appeal. I also investigated the question of ethnic awareness and prejudice in Ottoman Syria, concluding that Damascene scholars had a greater consciousness of being part of an Arabic-speaking world in the cultural and territorial sense. Expressions of ethnic prejudice exist, but they are few and exclusive to Damascus. In the next section, I argue that, although there was considerable intellectual contact between Arabic-speaking and Turkish-speaking scholars in the Ottoman realms, both groups did not always consciously recognize that they were part of the same, unitary Ottoman world. Finally, I suggest a comparative approach to the study of Arab history under Ottoman rule.

## Özet

Çalışmamı iki bölüme ayırdım. İlk bölümde Osmanlı Suriye'sinin biyografik yazımı ve tarihsel düşüncesinin niteliğini araştırdım. İkinci bölümde ise Suriyeli entelektüel elitleri Osmanlı toplumuna yerleştirerek ve özel olarak buna odaklanarak, 16. ve 17. Yüzyılın Suriyesindeki kimlik sorunsalını ele aldım. Çalışmamda, Halep'in yerel tarih yazım geleneği ve Şam'ın daha evrenselci olan yaklaşımı olmak üzere tarih yazımının iki modeli arasında bir ayırım yaptım. Ayrıca iki şehir arasındaki entelektüel bağlantıların gelişimini tartıştım ve Osmanlı zamanında tüm Müslüman toprakları arasında Şam'ın özgün bir tarih yazımı geleneğine sahip olduğu sonucuna vardım.

Çalışmamın ikinci kısmında Sultanlığın başlangıçtaki mekansal ve dinsel olarak sınırlandırılmış varlığının temsilinden, evrensel Müslümanlığın çekim gücünü elinde tutan bir temsile doğru hızlı bir şekilde değişiminin görüntüsünü tartışarak biyografik literatürde Osmanlı Sultanının bakışını ele aldım. Ayrıca Şam'lı alimlerin kültürel ve ülkesel anlamda Arapça konuşan toplumun bir parçası olma bilinci olduğu sonucuna vararak Osmanlı Sureyesindeki etnik farkındalık ve önyargı sorunsalını inceledim. Etnik önyargının ifadesi var olmakla birlikte, az sayıda ve yalnızca Şam'a özgüdür. Bir sonraki bölümde Osmanlı bölgesinde, Arapça konuşan ve Türkçe konuşan alimler arasında önemli bir entelektüel iletişim olmasına rağmen, her iki grubun da her zaman bilinçli olarak kendilerini aynı, biricik Osmanlı toplumunun parçaları olarak kabul etmedikleri iddiasında bulundum. Son olarak ise Osmanlı yönetimi altında Arap tarihi çalışmasına karşılaştırmalı bir yaklaşım öne sürdüm.

To My Father

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## **Part I.**

### **A.**

#### **Introduction**

There are three general lines of inquiry that will be addressed in this examination of the Syrian biographical literature of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. At the most basic historiographical level, I will attempt to demonstrate the value of this extensive literary corpus in the context of studying Ottoman history, as well as pointing to certain salient elements in the distinction between two schools, or traditions, of biographical writing, those of Aleppo and Damascus. The second aim of the study is to reveal the extent of social and intellectual contact between the Turkish-speaking Ottoman elite and the Arabic-speaking elite of Syria by examining the biographers' depictions of individual Ottomans, with a specific emphasis, where possible, on portrayals of the imperial center. I also seek to investigate the question of ethnic prejudice and the extent to which it may be detected in biographies of non-Arab Ottomans. This may allow us to draw general patterns of representation if those can indeed be established. The final purpose of my study, based largely on data acquired while attempting to answer the previous questions, will be investigating identity in Syria during the first two centuries of Ottoman rule. Different levels of identification are bound to have existed at the time, and it is an issue of great importance to determine which of these the intellectual elite of Ottoman Syria chose for themselves. Addressing these issues will give some clues concerning the mentality(s) of a group of Arab-Muslim historians who, by that time, were part of a far-flung Ottoman world. In addition, it will shed some light on the question of localism in Ottoman Syria from 1516-1700. But first, a brief introduction to the historiographical genre itself is in order.

*The Islamic Biographical Dictionary in Modern Scholarship*

The biographical dictionary developed into one of the preeminent forms of historiography in the Muslim realms during the classical period of Islam and continued uninterrupted well into modern times. The genre has accordingly received a great deal of attention in contemporary Western scholarship, which is only natural considering that, in the words of Sir Hamilton Gibb: “without these works... no detailed study of Islamic culture would be possible.”<sup>1</sup> Several studies of varying interest have been conducted in the past half-century or so, highlighting different elements in the emergence and development of the biographical dictionary through successive epochs of Islamic civilization. Precious few among them, however, deal with the biographical literature of the Ottoman period; most concern themselves with classical and medieval Islam.<sup>2</sup> A notable exception is Tarif Khalidi’s fine survey entitled *Islamic Biographical Dictionaries: A Preliminary Assessment*, which includes some remarks on the Damascene biographers Burini (d. 1615), Ghazzi (d. 1651), Muhibbi (d. 1699), and Muradi (d. 1791).<sup>3</sup> But Khalidi effectively stops short of attempting to establish whether certain peculiar developments within the genre took place during the Ottoman period. This is not to suggest that biographical dictionaries have been neglected or under-used as a source for writing Ottoman history; such an assertion would be erroneous to say the least. One cannot do, for instance, without biographical dictionaries in studying the elites of Muslim societies, particularly the learned elite, the ‘*ulama*’, themselves

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<sup>1</sup> Hamilton Gibb; “Islamic Biographical Literature” in Bernard Lewis & P.M Holt (eds.); *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), p. 58

<sup>2</sup> Among other works, see: Hamilton Gibb, “Islamic Biographical Literature” in Bernard Lewis & P.M Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), pp. 54-58; Wadad al-Qadi, “Biographical Dictionaries: Inner Structure and Cultural Significance” in George N. Atiyeh (ed.), *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East* (New York, 1995), pp. 93-121; Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden 1968, 2nd ed.), pp. 93-95 & 100-103; George Makdisi, “*Tabaqat* Biography: Law and Orthodoxy in Classical Islam”, *Islamic Studies* 32, 1 (1993), pp. 371-392; Chase Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 68-75; R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton, 1991), pp. 188-207

<sup>3</sup> Tarif Khalidi, “Islamic Biographical Dictionaries: A Preliminary Assessment”, *Muslim World* 63 (1973), pp. 53-65

invariably the composers of these volumes.<sup>4</sup> As such, they have served as perhaps the principal source for the construction of the history of early modern Ottoman Syria, at least insofar as political developments and the affairs of the elite in *Bilad al-Sham* during that period are concerned.<sup>5</sup> The voluminous collection of Arabic biographical works that is still extant has not, however, been treated as a body of literature in and of itself by specialists in the field.

Nevertheless, the considerable amount of scholarly work that has been devoted to the Islamic biographical dictionary is of both exceptional quality and great use to students of Islamic history, whichever sub-field they choose to enter. The Ottoman period, of course, is no exception, and much of the recent literature on the genre remains valid for any discussion of Syrian and Arab historiography under Ottoman rule, when the biographical dictionary had reached an advanced stage of its development. It would appear that the origins of the genre lay, at least in part, in the attempt to establish the authority of *hadith* (Prophetic Tradition) transmitters, and this is corroborated by the fact that the earliest extant biographical dictionary, that of Ibn Sa‘d, is dedicated to that particular discipline in the Islamic religious sciences. This view was first put forward by Franz Rosenthal, in his seminal work *A History of Muslim Historiography*,<sup>6</sup> and shortly thereafter Hamilton Gibb, in a brief but influential study<sup>7</sup> which seems to have set the tone for further historiographical assessments of the biographical dictionary in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rosenthal indicates that biography had become a “necessary subject for theologians” in the attempt to establish the “individual merits or demerits” of individuals who claimed to be authorities in the transmission of Prophetic Tradition.<sup>8</sup> Gibb also links the conception of the biographical dictionary to *hadith*, as Tradition

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<sup>4</sup> R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton, 1991), p. 187; hereafter Humphreys, *Islamic History*

<sup>5</sup> Among other works: Abdul-Karim Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus, 1723-1783* (Beirut, 1966); M.A Bakhit, *The Ottoman Province of Damascus in the 16th Century* (Beirut, 1982); P.M Holt, *Egypt & The Fertile Crescent, 1516-1922: A Political History* (Cornell, 1966)

<sup>6</sup> Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden 1968, 2nd ed.), pp. 100-106; hereafter Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*

<sup>7</sup> See Hamilton Gibb, “Islamic Biographical Literature” in Bernard Lewis & P.M Holt (eds.); *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), pp. 54-58, hereafter Gibb, “Islamic Biographical Literature”

<sup>8</sup> Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 101

constituted the “earliest organized disciplines in Islam” in the religious and legal spheres.<sup>9</sup> The biography-*hadith* link is, for the most part, also accepted by Tarif Khalidi and Wadad al-Qadi, each of whom produced a highly original and informative study of the genre.<sup>10</sup>

Chase Robinson has, however, recently challenged the view that the rise of the biographical dictionary was principally based on *hadith* transmission. He cites a certain Wasil Ibn ‘Ata’ who, roughly a century before Ibn Sa‘d composed his dictionary, produced a work, now no longer extant, which does not seem to have been concerned with *hadith*.<sup>11</sup> Ibn ‘Ata’ was a rationalist, as distinct from a Traditionist, and so it is assumed that his biographical collection was not devoted to Traditionists.<sup>12</sup> This is probably correct, since biographers of the early period of the genre’s development generally dedicated their works to their own occupational groups.<sup>13</sup> Further evidence, to Robinson’s mind, is the fact that a biographical work on poets (also no longer extant) was written before Ibn Sa‘d produced his volume on Traditionists.<sup>14</sup>

Wadad al-Qadi, in fact, sufficiently explains the emergence of biographical collections dedicated to poets. She notes that there is a similarity between the authors of these works and those of the dictionaries of *hadith* transmitters in that both groups aimed to establish or, otherwise, discredit, the authority of the individuals in their works. For poets, the issue under consideration was whether they had formidable creative and linguistic abilities. Their linguistic abilities in particular were important as far as religion was concerned, since the Arabic language, in which the Qur’an was

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<sup>9</sup> Gibb, “Islamic Biographical Literature”, p. 55

<sup>10</sup> See Wadad al-Qadi, “Biographical Dictionaries: Inner Structure and Cultural Significance” in George N. Atiyeh (ed.), *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East* (New York, 1995), pp. 93-121; Tarif Khalidi, “Islamic Biographical Dictionaries: A Preliminary Assessment”, *Muslim World* 63 (1973), pp. 53-65

<sup>11</sup> Chase Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 30, hereafter Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*

<sup>12</sup> Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 46

<sup>13</sup> Gibb, “Islamic Biographical Literature”, p. 55

<sup>14</sup> Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 46

written, had a special position in the identity and culture of Islam.<sup>15</sup> George Makdisi also points out that poetry and philology helped maintain the “purity of the classical Arabic language”, and thus writing dictionaries on poets and establishing which had the most proficiency was a worthwhile endeavor.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the 13<sup>th</sup> century biographer of litterateurs, Yaqut (d. 1299), stressed that a sound knowledge of Arabic grammar would lead to a better understanding of the Qur’an.<sup>17</sup> The linguistic side to Muslim identity during that early phase must, therefore, not be underestimated, and it is in this sense that volumes discussing poets may be connected to a religiously self-conscious culture. And thus, it is not at all surprising that the biographical collections of poets emerged at about the same time as those of Traditionists.

Regardless of the biographical dictionary’s *exact* origins, it is agreed that *hadith* scholarship received a sizeable chunk of this genre’s early attention, and indeed achieved a dominating position in it, judging by the massive number of biographical dictionaries dedicated to the discipline. Apart from *hadith* and the debate surrounding it, however, other factors behind the emergence of the Islamic biographical dictionary have also been noted. Rosenthal, for instance, notes that there existed the belief that worldly developments were a direct result of human action, and accordingly that the qualities of those men (and women) who were perceived as influential should be measured, and their lives recorded.<sup>18</sup> Gibb similarly indicates that biography was not merely rooted in *hadith*, but owed its emergence in part to a specific understanding of history by the Islamic community: the vision of history as the deeds of certain individuals and their contribution to the development of the “specific culture” of Islam.<sup>19</sup> As such, according to Rosenthal, the writing of history in Islam “became

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<sup>15</sup> Wadad al-Qadi, “Biographical Dictionaries: Inner Structure and Cultural Significance” in George N. Atiyeh (ed.), *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East* (New York, 1995), p. 101, hereafter Al-Qadi, “Biographical Dictionaries”

<sup>16</sup> George Makdisi, “*Tabaqat* Biography: Law and Orthodoxy in Classical Islam”, *Islamic Studies* 32, 1 (1993), pp. 375-76

<sup>17</sup> Tarif Khalidi, “Islamic Biographical Dictionaries: A Preliminary Assessment”, *Muslim World* 63 (1973), p. 55, hereafter Khalidi, “Islamic Biographical Dictionaries”

<sup>18</sup> Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 100

<sup>19</sup> Gibb, “Islamic Biographical Literature”, p. 54

almost synonymous with biography.”<sup>20</sup> Robinson attributes the rise of the biographical dictionary partly to the emergence of “the individual”, as opposed to the attempt at establishing the conditions of the life of a *particular* individual (the Prophet Muhammad). He further explains that this was a result of “sedentarization, urbanization, and assimilation more generally” in the wake of waning tribalism.<sup>21</sup> Finally, Qadi remarks that the biographical dictionary appeared once Islamic civilization had taken the first steps towards developing a clear self-image and when it had just entered a stage of relative maturity.<sup>22</sup>

It must be pointed out that, during its early stages of development and for some time after, the biographical dictionary took on the *tabaqat* (literally layers/classes) form. A *tabaqa* generally denoted a specific period of time selected by the author of a biographical work, and seems to have been the “oldest chronological division which presented itself to Muslim historical thinking.” Different biographers’ definitions of the time-frame that a *tabaqa* constituted varied, but determining the length of a *tabaqa* was invariably connected to the various Prophetic Traditions and Muhammad’s own alleged uses of the term as derived from *hadith* sources.<sup>23</sup> At times a *tabaqa* even represented other types of divisions; one such classification was geographical.<sup>24</sup> *Tabaqat* collections were also produced for other classes within the Muslim realms. We have already discussed the significance of the *tabaqat* of poets in the religious context, but there are also forms of *tabaqat* which seem to have nothing at all to do with religion. A particularly early example is a *tabaqat* of Physicians by Ibn Juljul in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>25</sup> It is noteworthy that the Andalusian Ibn Juljul had studied *hadith* until the age of 15, when he decided to switch his energies to medicine.<sup>26</sup> As such, it is not at all unlikely that his early interest in *hadith*, in addition to a knowledge of how the authority of individual transmitters was established (through some of the earliest *tabaqat* works), had influenced his division of physicians into similar *tabaqat* as those utilized by *hadith* scholars. As time went by, and the biographical dictionary developed and became

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<sup>20</sup> Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 100

<sup>21</sup> Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 46

<sup>22</sup> Al-Qadi, “Biographical Dictionaries”, p. 97

<sup>23</sup> Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 100

<sup>24</sup> Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 95

<sup>25</sup> Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 94

<sup>26</sup> A. Dietrich, “Ibn Djuljdjul” in *EI2* (Brill Online, 2010)

structurally more accessible to the reader, the *tabaqat* division was superseded in most works by the less complex alphabetical division. The *tabaqat* survived, however, alongside other time-frames adopted by biographers, and came to be utilized in conjunction with alphabetical organization.<sup>27</sup> This is still evident in the historiography of *Bilad al-Sham* during the first two centuries of Ottoman rule, as we shall see.

Other developments within the genre are also significant in the context of the Syrian historiography of the Ottoman period. Wadad al-Qadi gives attention to the rise of a sub-genre of biographical writing with which we are particularly interested, the local biographical dictionary. This variety first appears in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and originates in peripheral areas of the Muslim empire, rather than the traditional centers of learning in Islam. According to Qadi, this indicates that the emergence of the sub-genre is strongly related to the erosion of caliphal power and the semi-independence of certain Muslim *emirs*, to whom some of these works were dedicated, at various peripheries.<sup>28</sup> As she notes towards the end of her piece, local biographical dictionaries may also be expressions of cultural pride and devotion to particular urban centers, not merely manifestations of semi-autonomous political status or demonstrations of localism in peripheral regions.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to local and restricted examples of biographical writing, we find a more universalist approach to their composition. The term universalist here denotes a biographer's inclusion of individuals from different geographical regions, as well as different social and professional groups; the founder of this genre has been unanimously recognized as Ibn Khallikan (d.1282).<sup>30</sup> After Ibn Khallikan there was even a "summoning of the commoners", as Tarif Khalidi called it, into biographical collections and this, of course, was quite apart from merely including kings, caliphs, or members of the state bureaucracy alongside the '*ulama*'. To Khalidi's mind, this was a testament to the power of the Mamluk state and its institutions' ability to "survey, record, and assess

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<sup>27</sup> Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 95

<sup>28</sup> Al-Qadi, "Biographical Dictionaries", p. 107

<sup>29</sup> Al-Qadi, "Biographical Dictionaries", p. 114

<sup>30</sup> Khalidi, "Islamic Biographical Dictionaries", p. 55; Humphreys, *Islamic History*, p. 188, Gibb, "Islamic Biographical Literature", p. 55

the lives of its citizens.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, it is not surprising to find that the universal dictionary was first conceived during the early Mamluk period. Here, finally, was a stable Muslim political power and the first that boasted some sort of centrality for centuries, as well as one which could without doubt consider itself a universal Muslim power owing to its custodianship of the Two Holy Cities, its protection of the ‘Abbasid (shadow) caliph, and its valiant contributions in eliminating the threat represented by Frankish and Mongol “infidels”. It was, therefore, only natural that historiography would take the next step in its evolution as relative stability in the Muslim realms was restored after centuries of struggle with various foreign powers, as well as internal strife in the Muslim-held lands of what later became the Mamluk Sultanate. And it was, predictably, also in the Mamluk period that biography reached its apogee, to the extent that, in Khalidi’s words, it “*was* history in the view of many of its practitioners.”<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, this newly emergent universalism, initially developed in the Mamluk period, should give us no illusions as to the continuing predominance of the ‘*ulama*’ class in the biographical dictionaries. The biographers, as members of the ‘*ulama*’ themselves, were still mostly interested in writing about their own kind, despite the more universal approach that some had now adopted.<sup>33</sup>

Khalidi is keen to stress another element behind the novelty of Ibn Khallikan’s biographical dictionary. In Khalidi’s view, Ibn Khallikan’s significance lies not merely in his being the first to conceive of a universalist approach to biographical writing, but also in his direct connection of biography to history *without* recourse to religion. The introduction to his work is thus entirely “secular”, in that he provides no religious justification to the composition of his biographical dictionary, and Ibn Khallikan is the first to refrain from doing so. Specifically, this pioneering Muslim historian defines his biographical work as a venture in the “science of history” (*ilm al-ta’rikh*).<sup>34</sup> This “science of history” was, after Ibn Khallikan, firmly established as a legitimate scholarly enterprise in the Islamic realms and was no longer in any need of religious

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<sup>31</sup> Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 209-10, hereafter Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*

<sup>32</sup> Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, p. 210

<sup>33</sup> Gibb, “Islamic Biographical Literature”, p. 56

<sup>34</sup> Khalidi’s translation in “Islamic Biographical Dictionaries”, p. 56

justification.<sup>35</sup> Khalidi is, however, careful to make the important point that the distinction between secular and religious enterprises in Islamic civilization, including the composition of historical works, is “often meaningless.”<sup>36</sup>

Khalidi also indicates a significant discrepancy that is very often found in the biographical literature: the stated intention of a biographer, indicated in his introduction to the work, and his actual practice when writing biographical entries. Two inconsistent features are particularly noted: the first is the biographer’s professed purpose of extolling only the virtues of those on whom he chooses to write, and in this respect there exist several examples of inconsistency, to varying degrees, in most biographical dictionaries.<sup>37</sup> The second is the professed selectivity of certain biographers, when in fact they included a sizeable number of commoners.<sup>38</sup> As we shall see, on occasion, a biographer would criticize a predecessor for the latter’s inclusivity, before repeating the same error while initially claiming to adopt an exclusivist approach.

Despite criticisms by certain biographers of their predecessors, or even contemporaries, there is little doubt that this group of historians often drew upon the work of their peers; in biography, this was perhaps more evident than in any other tradition of Muslim historiography.<sup>39</sup> The influence of a biographer’s predecessor or contemporary is at almost all times noticeable when both have written an entry on the same individual, but even the critical method adopted by a biographer, when it comes to selectivity and the judgment of character, is inspired by his peers. After all, the general framework in which biographers operated was initially set by the Traditionists who, of course, attempted to establish the reliability of their peers in the early biographical dictionaries. Positive or negative attributes of the careers and characters of individuals in biographical dictionaries of post-Classical Islam were also understood based on certain pre-defined categories, with minor variations appearing in the works of individual biographers. Judging character in biography, one of the foremost pre-occupations of Traditionists in their endeavor to praise, or alternatively, denigrate their peers, remained a matter of interest to later biographers. In any case, Traditionists still

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<sup>35</sup> Khalidi, “Islamic Biographical Dictionaries”, pp. 55-56

<sup>36</sup> Khalidi, “Islamic Biographical Dictionaries”, p. 53

<sup>37</sup> Khalidi, “Islamic Biographical Dictionaries”, pp. 59-60

<sup>38</sup> Khalidi, “Islamic Biographical Dictionaries”, pp. 60-62

<sup>39</sup> Humphreys, *Islamic History*, p. 189

seem to have constituted the majority of biographers long after biographical writing had created a less restricted, more universalist alternative to its previous “specialization”,<sup>40</sup> and thus it is no surprise that their methods and understanding continued to exert a considerable influence within the genre.

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<sup>40</sup> Khalidi, “Islamic Biographical Dictionaries”, p. 58

## B.

### The Contrasting Natures of Biographical Writing in *Bilad al-Sham*

No less than ten biographical or semi-biographical works, the collective efforts of seven authors from the two leading intellectual centers of *Bilad al-Sham*, Damascus and Aleppo, shall be treated in the historiographical assessment that follows.<sup>41</sup> These sources are varied in scope, emphasis, and the amount of relevant historical detail they provide a student of Ottoman history with. Five of the biographical dictionaries under study are of the local or restricted types (or both) described above, and these are mostly concerned with giving accounts of the lives of certain notable individuals who resided within the city in question for at least part of their lives. Among these, two were written in Aleppo, each belonging to a different century during the period in question. The other three were produced by a single Damascene historian, Ibn Tulun (d. 1546), who was perhaps the most prolific of all Syrian historians of the Ottoman period. The local variety of biographical writing, of course, mostly (or solely) provided entries on those Ottoman officials who inhabited and served in the cities concerned.

The other half of the biographical literature of *Bilad al-Sham* during the two centuries under discussion, however, is of the more general type. This type of biographical writing is an exclusively Damascene phenomenon, and this itself is a point of some significance which will be addressed at a later stage. At any rate, among these Damascene works are two biographical dictionaries of the centennial variety, providing the reader with a wide range of individuals (often even people who could not be considered notable (*a'yan*) by any stretch of the imagination) of various ethnic, vocational, and spiritual backgrounds who lived in different periods of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries AH. There exists also a popular collection of biographies covering the first ten *Hijri* centuries, entailing most of the first century of Ottoman rule in Syria (until the year 1000/1592). The two remaining works deal with individuals who were

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<sup>41</sup> These include only the published biographical dictionaries of *Bilad al-Sham*. We know of several other works, to be mentioned only in passing, which remain either unpublished or are no longer extant.

contemporaries of the biographers, both of which were concerned with the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. As such, the researcher notices from a mere cursory glance at this wide corpus of biographical material that a multiplicity of different methods, approaches and, presumably, also motivations, existed in the production of the dictionaries. These will be further elaborated upon in the following discussion of the biographical source material.

### 1. The Aleppine Localist School of Biographical Writing

The Syrian tradition of local historiography was an already long-established tradition by the time the Ottoman Sultan Selim I triumphantly entered *Bilad al-Sham* in 1516. Indeed, it dates back at least to the 3rd/9<sup>th</sup> century CE, with the Damascene Abu Zur‘a’s (d. 894) biographical dictionary.<sup>42</sup> In Aleppo’s case, the pioneer among local historians appears to have been Ibn al-‘Adim (d. 1262),<sup>43</sup> whose biographical dictionary inspired later Aleppines in their efforts to sustain their town’s historiographical tradition, as we shall see. During the later Mamluk period, Aleppine local historiography was carried on by the likes of the biographers Ibn Khatib (d. 1439) and Ibn Shihna (d. 1485), among others. Significantly, we even find early 20<sup>th</sup> century histories of Aleppo, particularly the comprehensive history of Kamel al-Ghazzi and the biographical dictionary of Muhammad al-Tabbakh.<sup>44</sup> These and several other examples doubtless serve to demonstrate the longevity of a school of local historiography and the pride of its practitioners in ensuring its continued existence. In addition, it is important to mention that most of the Aleppine local historians chose the biographical dictionary as the tool through which to articulate their sense of pride and feeling of belonging to their town.

The only two remaining extant and published examples of biographical writing in Aleppo during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries are, as mentioned earlier, also of the local variety. The first, entitled *Durr al Habab fi Ta’rikh A’yan Halab* (The Shining Pearls in

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<sup>42</sup> Sami Dahan, “The Origin and Development of the Local Histories of Syria” in Bernard Lewis & P.M Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), p. 109, hereafter Dahan, “Local Histories...”

<sup>43</sup> Dahan, “Local Histories...”, p. 112

<sup>44</sup> Dahan, “Local Histories...”, p. 113

the History of the Notables of Aleppo), was written by Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim Radiyy al-Din Ibn al-Hanbali (d. 1563), who shall henceforth be referred to simply as Ibn al-Hanbali. In spite of his name, Ibn al-Hanbali was in fact a Hanafi religious scholar, as well as a member of the Qadiri *tariqa*, who seems to have produced at least sixty works in various fields of learning.<sup>45</sup> It appears that Ibn al-Hanbali's grandfather had served as the head Hanbali judge in Aleppo during Mamluk times; hence the man's surname.<sup>46</sup> Several facets of Ibn al-Hanbali's own career, however, remain obscure; we do not know, for instance, whether he switched to the Hanafi rite after the Ottoman conquest, as many Syrian '*ulama*' did in the early period. It is also unclear where his expertise lay within the Islamic religious sciences, and the nature of the institution(s) he may have served during his lifetime. The Damascene biographer Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi (d. 1651), whose entry on Ibn al-Hanbali remains the only extant contemporary or near-contemporary account of the man's life, does indicate that Ibn al-Hanbali was a *mudarris*, but supplies no further information concerning the field of learning or income the Aleppine '*alim* received.<sup>47</sup> The Aleppine biographer Abu al-Wafa' al-'Urdu later reveals in the introduction to his own work that Ibn al-Hanbali had taught his father 'Umar (d. 1024/1615), the latter later on occupying the post of Shafi'i *mufti* of Aleppo.<sup>48</sup> It may be that Ibn al-Hanbali's major specialization was in *hadith*; he is known to have written two works on the Traditions.<sup>49</sup> This is quite conceivable since, as has been earlier indicated, the majority of biographers were still Traditionists even at this stage in Islamic history. Nevertheless, any conclusions concerning Ibn al-Hanbali's exact discipline within the religious sciences remain speculative due to the lack of

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<sup>45</sup> These are listed in the editors' introduction to: Radiyy al-Din Ibn al-Hanbali; Mahmud Al-Fakhuri & Yahya Abbara (eds.); *Durr al-Habab fi Tarikh A'yan Halab* (Damascus 1974), pp. 10-17

<sup>46</sup> Editors' Introduction to: Radiyy al-Din Ibn al-Hanbali; Mahmud Al-Fakhuri & Yahya Abbara (eds.); *Durr al-Habab fi Tarikh A'yan Halab* (Damascus 1974), Vol. 1, p. 7

<sup>47</sup> Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi, *Al-Kawakib al-Sa'ira bi A'yan al-Mi'a al-'Ashira* (Beirut, 1979, 2nd ed.), Jibrail Jabbour (ed.), , Vol. 3, p. 42, hereafter Ghazzi, *Kawakib*

<sup>48</sup> Abu al-Wafa' al-'Urdu, *Ma'adin al-Dhahab fi al-A'yan al-Musharrafah bihim Halab* (Aleppo, 1987), Muhammad Altunji (ed.), , p. 36, hereafter 'Urdu, *Ma'adin al-Dhahab*

<sup>49</sup> These are indicated in the editor's introduction to: Radiyy al-Din Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab fi Tarikh A'yan Halab* (Damascus 1974), Mahmud Al-Fakhuri & Yahya Abbara (eds.), , Vol. 1, p. 7

adequate first-hand information about the man himself. What may be established beyond a reasonable doubt about Ibn al-Hanbali's life is that he was not as well-travelled as other members of the religious establishment; only a single journey to Damascus is noted by Ghazzi.<sup>50</sup> Otherwise, he does not appear to have left Aleppo on a single occasion for further education or training, or the establishment of professional and intellectual contacts. The last is an important point which shall be addressed further when discussing other biographers as well.

At any rate, it is quite clear that Ibn al-Hanbali was at least quite a prolific writer, having composed several works in various fields of learning, religious or otherwise (at least insofar as such works are *indirectly* not religious). Apart from his biographical dictionary of Aleppine notables, he was noted for his scholarship in the fields of Arabic grammar and linguistics, having written several treatises on various grammatical and philological subjects. Ibn al-Hanbali was also a noted poet, although his biographer Ghazzi did not seem to be impressed with his Aleppine counterpart's poetry. Ghazzi criticizes Ibn al-Hanbali's poetry, claiming that the "most tasteless individual" would recognize its poor quality.<sup>51</sup> Among Ibn al-Hanbali's historical works is a *mukhtasar* (abridgement) of a second, non-biographical work by the original master of Aleppine history Ibn al-'Adim, another (chronological) history of the town; Ibn al-Hanbali adds events up to the year 951/1545 CE.<sup>52</sup> It is also interesting that Ibn al-Hanbali has written a second biographical dictionary, a historical account of the age-old Arab tribe of the Banu Rabi'a, from which he himself claims to have descended.<sup>53</sup>

His *Durr al-Habab* dictionary, however, is certainly his most significant as far as acquiring knowledge of the history of early Ottoman Aleppo is concerned. It is the first and only remaining testimony of an Aleppine 'alim to a period of historical change in *Bilad al-Sham*, with the onset of the centuries-long era of Ottoman rule. Ibn al-Hanbali had doubtless been an eyewitness (albeit a young one, having been born in 908/1502-

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<sup>50</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 3, p. 43

<sup>51</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 3, p. 43

<sup>52</sup> Editors' Introduction to: Radiyy al-Din Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab fi Tarikh A'yan Halab* (Damascus 1974), Mahmud Al-Fakhuri & Yahya Abbara (eds.), Vol. 1, p. 14

<sup>53</sup> See Radiyy al-Din Ibn al-Hanbali, *Al-Athar al-Rafi'a fi Ma'athir Bani Rabi'a* (Kuwait 1985), Abdul-Aziz Al-Hallabi (ed.)

03) to the Ottoman conquest of Syria in 1516, and is therefore among the earliest exponents of Syrian historical writing under Ottoman rule. Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of Ibn al-Hanbali's work (including over 600 biographies) consists of biographies of individuals who were either Aleppine by origin or had resided in or at least passed through the city, he does on the rare occasion provide the reader with entries on people who had little or nothing to do with the city's history.<sup>54</sup>

Ibn al-Hanbali explicitly gives two purposes in his introduction to the biographical dictionary for writing *Durr al-Habab*. Firstly, he expresses his belief that Aleppo has “embraced individuals whose experiences, events, and impact are worth recording.”<sup>55</sup> More importantly, he noticed that the last man to compose such a history as the one he endeavored to create was Abu Dharr (d. 884/1479-80) in the late Mamluk period, and felt that he had to take it upon himself to create a “*dhayl*” (supplement or continuation) for it.<sup>56</sup> This point is crucial in understanding Ibn al-Hanbali's, and more generally, the Aleppine historian's mentality and approach to writing the history of the town. Aleppine historians, and more specifically the biographers among them, had since the work of Ibn al-‘Adim always been conscious emulators of whichever predecessor(s) wrote the town's history before them. It would appear that two practices in particular, (1) adding supplements (*dhuyool*; sing. *dhayl*) and (2) the abridgement (*mukhtasar*) of previous local histories, were quite common among Aleppine historians in the centuries after Ibn al-‘Adim composed his pioneering history of the city in the 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century. Evidence for this is the fact that most biographers of Aleppo after Ibn al-‘Adim all classified their works either as direct or extended *dhuyool*, or alternatively *mukhtasarat*, of Ibn al-‘Adim's biographical dictionary. Ibn Khatib, for instance, completed his biographical dictionary in the 9<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century, and still regarded his work as a supplement for Ibn al-‘Adim's original.<sup>57</sup> It has also already been indicated that Ibn al-

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<sup>54</sup> Most notable among such examples are the four Sultans, both Mamluk and Ottoman, who ruled Aleppo during Ibn al-Hanbali's lifetime.

<sup>55</sup> Radiyy al-Din Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab fi Tarikh A'yan Halab* (Damascus 1974), Mahmud Al-Fakhuri & Yahya Abbara (eds.), p. 9, hereafter Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab*

<sup>56</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab*, Vol. 1, p. 17

<sup>57</sup> Editor's introduction to: Abu al-Wafa' al-‘Urdu, *Ma'adin al-Dhahab fi al-A'yan al-Musharrafah bihim Halab* (Aleppo, 1987), Muhammad Altunji (ed.), p. 8

Hanbali himself made an abridgement of a briefer, less significant work by Ibn al-‘Adim.

In his own biographical dictionary, Ibn al-Hanbali makes a deliberate point to mention Ibn al-‘Adim as “one of those who were among the first to write (Aleppo’s) history.”<sup>58</sup> After that, he launches into a survey of biographical dictionaries that were composed in Aleppo after Ibn al-‘Adim had laid the initial groundwork for the town’s local historiography. By making a mention of earlier works on Aleppo (including all those mentioned above) and stressing each as a supplement for its predecessor, while referring to his own biographical dictionary in the same breath,<sup>59</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali is effectively confirming a belief that his work is an extension of a long-established tradition of local historiography. And historiography is precisely the practice that Ibn al-Hanbali consciously believes that he is engaged in; after all, he does affirm that there is a “majesty and honor to writing history”. The Aleppine biographer asserts that he is “honored by the mere virtue of possessing a knowledge of the events surrounding those who are good (*akhyar*) and others who are evil (*ashrar*).”<sup>60</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali’s self-presentation as a historian, or at least as an individual who was “honored” in composing a historical work, is further testimony to the validity of Khalidi’s earlier-stated thesis that, with Ibn Khallikan, showering praise on history for its own sake had become legitimate.

Ibn al-Hanbali’s above statement contains another important implication: his intention is not merely to discuss the virtuous notables, but also those whose actions and general influence in Aleppo were not considered positive by the author. Thus, Ibn al-Hanbali did not commit the same “error” as other biographers, whose stated intentions were often at odds with their actual practice. Ibn al-Hanbali is also not rigorously selective in his choice of individuals; nor does he claim to be. Rather, he clearly states that among the individuals included in his work are writers and poets, among other groups usually not regarded as notables.<sup>61</sup> His definition of *a‘yan* (notables) is, therefore, explicitly not as exclusive as other historians’ conception of notability. Ibn al-

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<sup>58</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab*, Vol. 1, p. 9

<sup>59</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab*, Vol. 1, pp. 9-16

<sup>60</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab*, Vol. 1, p. 7

<sup>61</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab*, Vol. 1, p. 9

Hanbali's condition for inclusion in his biographical dictionary (apart from the obvious geographical restriction that is naturally pre-defined in any local history) is that the individual in question must be a contemporary of the author, or a contemporary of a contemporary. As was the norm when a biographer chose to include women in his biographical collection, Ibn al-Hanbali adds a brief section on the notable women of Aleppo at the end of each letter of his alphabetically organized dictionary.

The final matter concerning Ibn al-Hanbali's biographical dictionary is the question of sources: specifically where he obtained information for writing on his select group of notable men and women of Aleppo. Having written on his own contemporaries and near-contemporaries within a limited geographical space, Ibn al-Hanbali nowhere indicates that he had consulted other written sources (such as biographical dictionaries of predecessors) to construct his portraits of the natives and residents of Aleppo. At any rate, it would have been futile on Ibn al-Hanbali's part to utilize any written sources for the simple reason that he was, according to his own claims, the first to give the notables (*a'yan*) of Aleppo any attention since Abu Dharr in the previous century. The 16<sup>th</sup> century Aleppine biographer does reveal his sources, however, as "the events and conditions that I have seen, the sayings that I have heard, and what has been said to me by some men whom I trust."<sup>62</sup>

One last important point will be made with regard to Ibn al-Hanbali, in particular relating to an aspect of his self-identification. We have already seen how strongly this Aleppine historian identifies with his town's centuries-old historiographical tradition and its leading figures. In another biographical dictionary on the Banu Rabi'a tribe, Ibn al-Hanbali reveals another side of his self-perception, when declaring his pride at being "purely Arab" (*min samim al-'Arab*). Undoubtedly, the term "Arab (*'arab*)" in this context is synonymous with "Bedouin Arab", and indeed Ibn al-Hanbali declares the Prophet Muhammad to be the "master of the Bedouin people" (*sayyid ahl al-Baduw*) in the same statement.<sup>63</sup> It is perhaps unusual that Ibn al-Hanbali went to such lengths to express his pride in belonging to a Bedouin tribe, even if that tribe was in fact the fabled Banu Rabi'a. Recent scholarship has made it clear that urban Arabic-speaking

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<sup>62</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab*, Vol. 1, p. 19

<sup>63</sup> See Radiyy al-Din Ibn al-Hanbali, *Al-Athar al-Rafi'a fi Ma'athir Bani Rabi'a* (Kuwait, 1985), Abdul-Aziz Al-Hallabi (ed.), p. 1

populations did not identify with, but rather looked down upon, neighboring Bedouins; for that reason, the term “Arab (*‘arab*)” denoted the latter group without usually applying to the former.<sup>64</sup> The fact that Ibn al-Hanbali associated himself passionately with Bedouins Arabs, however striking, is unimportant here. The critical point is the obvious difference in this author’s self-presentation in each of his two biographical dictionaries. In *Durr al-Habab*, he is a staunch representative and successor to distinguished members of Aleppo’s proud intellectual heritage, whereas in his book on the Banu Rabi‘a he appears keen to demonstrate his devotion to a different but no less essential element of his background. This demonstrates that dissimilar, and sometimes even contradictory, levels of identification could be embraced by the same individual. As such, it is essential to consider that such levels are not at all mutually exclusive, and that an individual may have wished to identify himself with several such groups. It is, however, important to indicate, where possible, whether one level of identification predominates over others that an individual biographer may hold.

The second of the Aleppine biographers, Abu al-Wafa’ al-‘Urdi (d. 1660), was at one point in his career the Shafi’i *mufti* of Aleppo in succession to his father ‘Umar al-‘Urdi. The sole extant and contemporary biography of the man is that written by the Damascene biographer Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi (d. 1699), who indicates that ‘Urdi was a Sufi, without specifying the *tariqa* to which he belonged. It is possible that Abu al-Wafa’ al-‘Urdi had embraced the Qadiri *tariqa*, since ‘Umar al-‘Urdi, the father and teacher of our biographer according to Muhibbi,<sup>65</sup> belonged to that order and so too did Ibn al-Hanbali, who in turn was ‘Umar’s teacher, and thus may have influenced the latter’s decision to adopt Qadirism. Muhibbi also claims that Abu al-Wafa’ al-‘Urdi was the author of several works in various fields of learning, and that the Aleppine was skilled at both poetry and prose.<sup>66</sup> ‘Urdi’s biographical dictionary, entitled *Ma’adin al-dhahab fi al-A‘yan al-Musharaffa Bihim Halab* (The Gold Mines with Regard to the

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<sup>64</sup> Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1989), p. 19. We shall see a couple of exceptions to this “rule”, where Arabic-speaking townspeople are in fact referred to as *‘arab*. The term “Arab” thus did not apply exclusively to nomadic elements, but sometimes included settled populations as well.

<sup>65</sup> Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar fi A‘yan al-Qarn al-Hadi ‘Ashar* (Beirut 197), Volume 3, p. 216, hereafter Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*

<sup>66</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 149

Honorable Notables of Aleppo), consists of a total of 76 biographical entries, entailing only the first five letters of the Arabic alphabet. The work does not seem to have been completed; Muhibbi reports that he had seen a section of ‘Urđi’s biographical dictionary and used it for a few of his own biographies.<sup>67</sup> As we now only have entries on the first five letters of the alphabet, it is possible that this “section” that Muhibbi spoke of was in fact ‘Urđi’s finished, though far from complete, product.

Nevertheless, as Aleppo’s highest-ranking religious official of the *Shafi’i* school, ‘Urđi must have enjoyed being acquainted with some of the most esteemed members, both spiritual and temporal, of his society. It is somewhat surprising that he, as *mufti*, also had close personal relations with a heterodox Muslim community in the city, the Twelver Shi’ites.<sup>68</sup> More significantly, ‘Urđi offers some valuable insight into the complex political and military struggles that had been devastating his city at the time, having been born at about the turn of the previous century (1585). These included a protracted state of conflict between the Damascene janissaries attempting to seize effective political control of Aleppo,<sup>69</sup> as well as the more famous Canbulad takeover and subsequent Ottoman punitive expedition only a few years later.<sup>70</sup> Unsurprisingly, ‘Urđi offers the greater part of his attention to the religious classes of his town, and thus his biographical collection is another useful, albeit limited (due to its size), specimen for the study of the Muslim intellectual elite in a specific geography.

Like his predecessor Ibn al-Hanbali, ‘Urđi stresses the importance of writing history for its own sake, declaring that it is an “undeniably honorable” practice, before condemning those who do not acknowledge the value of history.<sup>71</sup> ‘Urđi also claims to have had an old desire to compose such a historical work, since no other scholar of his generation had produced a history of the town during the period in which he lived. This

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<sup>67</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 149

<sup>68</sup> A.R Abu Husayn, “The Shi’ites in Lebanon and the Ottomans in the 16th and 17th Centuries”, *Convegno Sul Tema La Shi’a Nell’Impero Ottomano* (Rome 1993), p. 119

<sup>69</sup> For an account of these events, see M.A Bakhit, “Aleppo and the Ottoman Military in the 16th Century”, *Al-Abhath* 27 (Beirut 1978-9), pp. 27-34, hereafter Bakhit, “Aleppo and the Ottoman Military”

<sup>70</sup> For an account of Canbulad Pasha’s political career, see William Griswold, *The Great Anatolian Rebellion* (Berlin 1983), pp. 113-132

<sup>71</sup> ‘Urđi, *Ma’adin al-Dhahab*, p. 34

assertion is of particular importance, as it reveals that, like Ibn al-Hanbali before him, ‘Urđi was also anxious to sustain Aleppo’s local tradition of historiography by offering portraits of its notable individuals. ‘Urđi points out that he had refrained from writing the history of his town at an earlier stage since he did not have sufficient or suitable time to do so.<sup>72</sup> Presumably, his position as Shafi’i *mufti* of Aleppo, among other things, may not have given him the capacity or occasion to fulfill this old desire of his, until he eventually undertook the writing of *Ma‘adin al-Dhahab*.

Echoing Ibn al-Hanbali, ‘Urđi states that his purpose is to write of his contemporaries in Aleppo, and his contemporaries’ contemporaries as well. He indicates that a minor purpose of his work is to correct certain mistakes and inaccuracies in Ibn al-Hanbali’s history; these errors apparently include omissions of certain individuals and errors of fact concerning others whom Ibn al-Hanbali did include.<sup>73</sup> It is rather unusual that, in his introduction, ‘Urđi makes no mention of the biographical dictionary written by his father ‘Umar, whose work was certainly more recent than that of Ibn al-Hanbali, the former having passed away more than fifty years after his teacher’s death. It is therefore also strange that Abu al-Wafa’ al-‘Urđi’s express purpose is to make corrections to the much older biographical dictionary of Ibn al-Hanbali, rather than his father’s later work. It is from the Damascenes Ghazzi and Muhibbi, not ‘Urđi, that we learn about ‘Umar al-‘Urđi’s historical work,<sup>74</sup> now sadly no longer extant.<sup>75</sup> Ghazzi, in fact, suggests that in his biographical dictionary, ‘Umar al-‘Urđi “essentially supplemented” (*dhayyala*) Ibn al-Hanbali’s work, indicating that it

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<sup>72</sup> ‘Urđi, *Ma‘adin al-Dhahab*, p. 36

<sup>73</sup> ‘Urđi, *Ma‘adin al-Dhahab*, pp. 38-39

<sup>74</sup> Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar wa Qatf al-Thamar min Tarajim A‘yan al-Tabaqa al-Ula min al-Qarn al-Hadi ‘Ashar* (Damascus 1981), Mahmoud al-Shaykh (ed.), Vol. 2, p. 589 & Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 3, p. 217

<sup>75</sup> Another lost work from the same period is the biographical dictionary of Muhammad Ibn al-Mulla (d.1010/1601-2), which is significant in that it records the history of the town’s governors from the Muslim conquest to the author’s own day (when Ibrahim Pasha was governor). It is among the few examples of Aleppine historiography during the Ottoman period which takes up a long view of history, where the historian is not merely concerned with recording events or biographies relevant to his own lifetime.

is another Aleppine local history.<sup>76</sup> It is safe to assume, in light of the available evidence, that as ‘Umar al-‘Urđi’s biographical dictionary was a supplement for that of Ibn al-Hanbali, Abu al-Wafa’ al-‘Urđi’s collection was equally a continuation of both works, since the younger ‘Urđi also expressed the necessity of perpetuating the Aleppine local tradition of biographical writing.

There is another parallel that the reader can establish between the approach of Abu al-Wafa’ al-‘Urđi and Ibn al-Hanbali, based on each author’s stated intention in their introductory remarks. Similar to Ibn al-Hanbali, ‘Urđi reveals in his introduction that he will not shy away from revealing negative characteristics and deeds, if these apply to certain individuals.<sup>77</sup> In ‘Urđi’s case, this last statement is rather curious since it appears to openly contradict the title of his biographical dictionary, which suggests that the entries in the work are devoted exclusively to “honorable” men. ‘Urđi is equally anxious to stress the fairness and accuracy of his treatment of individuals, without citing any particular sources (whether oral, written, or products of first-hand experience) that he had used in his biographical collection.<sup>78</sup> A final similarity that may be drawn between the two Aleppine biographers is the fact that there is no indication that they were well-travelled individuals, unlike many scholars of *Bilad al-Sham*. Ibn al-Hanbali, as earlier indicated, had at least visited Damascus once in his lifetime; ‘Urđi, on the other hand, does not seem to have ever left his hometown of Aleppo, or at least Muhibbi does not indicate that he did. Both Ghazzi and Muhibbi wrote entries on ‘Urđi’s father ‘Umar, who likewise appears not to have left Aleppo on a single occasion.

As such, it becomes clear that many of the essential elements of ‘Urđi’s life and work are similar to those of Ibn al-Hanbali. Although it is still unclear how high Ibn al-Hanbali rose in the religious hierarchy, he was a member of a notable family of Aleppo, as evidenced by his grandfather’s previous status as Hanbali judge of the town. His prestige as a *mudarris* is confirmed by virtue of his instruction of some important figures: his pupil ‘Umar al-‘Urđi went on to serve as a *mufti* in Aleppo, and Ibn al-Hanbali’s influence on ‘Umar al-‘Urđi is noted by the latter’s son Abu al-Wafa’. Abu

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<sup>76</sup> Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar wa Qatf al-Thamar min Tarajim A‘yan al-Tabaqa al-Ula min al-Qarn al-Hadi ‘Ashar* (Damascus 1981), Mahmoud al-Shaykh (ed.), Vol. 2, p. 589, hereafter Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*

<sup>77</sup> ‘Urđi, *Ma‘adin al-Dhahab*, p. 38

<sup>78</sup> ‘Urđi, *Ma‘adin al-Dhahab*, p. 38

al-Wafa' al-'Urdu's status as a member of a notable family is even more obvious: he was the son of a *mufti* and later a *mufti* himself. Despite their exalted position in Aleppine society, or perhaps because of it, Ibn al-Hanbali and 'Urdu, as well as the latter's father, seem to have made little effort to leave the town in pursuit of educational or material ambitions. Most important of all is the fact that they were part of the same intellectual lineage: Ibn al-Hanbali was 'Umar al-'Urdu's *shaykh*, and may have even been influential in his student's acceptance of the Qadiri *tariqa*. 'Umar, in turn, instructed his son Abu al-Wafa' and must have doubtless exerted considerable influence on his intellectual makeup. This inter-connectedness is indisputably a major factor behind the similarity between Ibn al-Hanbali's and Urdu's historical scholarship.

The parallels between the two historians' approaches to writing history are also quite obvious. They are both manifestly proud to have the chance to compose a historical work, and shower much praise on the discipline. The two Aleppines are also strongly dedicated to the objective of prolonging and perpetuating their town's historiographical tradition, itself a telling factor and a definite indicator of the identity and self-representation of a class of Syrian elites in a particular urban setting. This pride in the local historiography of Aleppo, as reflected in the genre of biographical writing, is another part of an intellectual root, alongside the common scholarly lineage, that our historians share. There is, lastly, the smaller matter of their selectivity and attitude in writing biographical entries. In this respect, their approaches are practically identical; they are interested in writing only of their contemporaries and near-contemporaries. The restrictedness of their methodology is, therefore, based in time as well as geography. Ibn al-Hanbali and 'Urdu are also alike in the sense that they both did not claim to exclude commoners in their biographical dictionaries. In Ibn al-Hanbali's case, there is an explicit statement to the effect that some of the less famous strata of society are included. 'Urdu is quiet on the subject of inclusion, and thus also does not suggest that only members of the upper echelons of Aleppine society will be represented in his work. These methodological similarities can no doubt be owed, at least in part, to the similar background and shared intellectual lineage described above. As such, the essential motifs of the Aleppine biographical dictionary in the first two centuries of Ottoman rule become quite clear. The far more complex, varied, and rich Damascene

school of biographical writing is the subject with which we are concerned in the two sections that follow.

## 2. *Ibn Tulun and the Cultivation of Local and Restricted Historiography in Damascus*

As we have seen in the previous section, Aleppine historians developed the biographical dictionary as a form of local historiography that was sustained during the Ottoman period and well into modern times. Local historiography in Damascus emerged centuries before Ibn al-‘Adim’s history of Aleppo, with the historical work of Abu Zur‘a (d. 894), now lost. One of the greatest exponents of the Damascene local tradition is the historian Ibn ‘Asakir (d. 1175), who in fact used Abu Zur‘a as a source for his history of the city,<sup>79</sup> which includes biographies of Damascene notables.<sup>80</sup> As such, Ibn ‘Asakir is understandably viewed, alongside the likes of al-Khatib of Baghdad, as a pioneer among local biographers not only in *Bilad al-Sham*, but in the broader Muslim world as well. The Damascene school of local historiography proceeded unabated in Mamluk times, even with the rise of a new form of biographical writing, with a more universalist approach, in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The best-known Syrian historian of the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries is undoubtedly Shams al-Din Ibn Tulun (d. 953/1546), a Hanafi scholar who witnessed and wrote on the Ottoman takeover of his hometown Damascus and the ensuing final destruction of the Mamluk state. Among the biographers treated in this study, Ibn Tulun alone is known to have written an autobiography, and in it he lists every work he had composed in the various fields of scholarship that captured his interest. His output is, in total, a staggering 750 works, among which around 60 deal with historical topics of one kind or the other; the vast majority of Ibn Tulun’s books and treatises is now lost, whereas others that are preserved remain unpublished. In his autobiography, where Ibn Tulun divulges little personal information but much about his intellectual growth through the years, the man at least gives the reader some insight into his ethnic

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<sup>79</sup> S. Judd, “Abu Zur’a” in *EI2* (Brill Online)

<sup>80</sup> Dahan, “Local Histories...”, p. 114

background. Ibn Tulun reveals that he was of Mamluk ancestry, and that his mother was a *rumiyya*. Her name, Özden, suggests that she was most likely of Anatolian-Turkish extraction. By at least the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, Ibn Tulun's family had become firmly ingrained in Damascene intellectual and administrative life, his paternal uncle having served as *qadi* in the city in succession to other members of the family who were also notable '*ulama*' in the city.<sup>81</sup>

Based on the extensive literary corpus that Ibn Tulun produced, one realizes the great deal of attention the man devoted to writing and scholarship, almost to the exclusion of other considerations. Such was indeed the case, as Ibn Tulun is not known to have occupied any of the higher posts in the religious hierarchy of Damascus, and seems also to have avoided involvement in the politics of the city during both Mamluk and early Ottoman times.<sup>82</sup> Ibn Tulun similarly appears to have had no interest in joining any of the Sufi orders operating in his hometown at the time. The Damascene biographer Ghazzi informs us, however, that Ibn Tulun was a noted authority on both *hadith* and *fiqh* (jurisprudence) during his lifetime. Among the Traditionists who taught Ibn Tulun was the famous Egyptian biographer Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 1505), and it was eventually the latter who gave the Damascene scholar his first *ijaza* (license) via written correspondence, indicating that Ibn Tulun did not leave Damascus to meet his master.<sup>83</sup> On the whole, there is no evidence whatsoever that Ibn Tulun ever left his hometown.

As a leading Damascene *mudarris*, Ibn Tulun's reputation and fame among the city's religious community is attested by his instruction of some '*ulama*' who went on to fill rather distinguished roles in the religious hierarchy. According to Ghazzi, Ibn Tulun trained no less than four prospective *muftis* of different denominations (two Shafi'is, a Hanbali and a Hanafi) in Damascus, one of whom went on to teach Ghazzi himself.<sup>84</sup> Despite Ibn Tulun's lack of interest in the more prestigious and lucrative positions of the Damascene religious community, his esteemed status in the circles of

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<sup>81</sup> W.M Brinner, "Ibn Tulun, Shams al-Din Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Ahmad, al-Salihi, al-Dimashki, al-Hanafi" in *EI2* (Brill Online), hereafter Brinner, "Ibn Tulun" in *EI2*

<sup>82</sup> Brinner, "Ibn Tulun" in *EI2*

<sup>83</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 2, p. 52

<sup>84</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 2, p. 53

the learned elite is demonstrably clear through his instruction of successive generations of high-ranking scholars, as well as his truly remarkable collection of writings, which as Ghazzi notes dealt with a wide variety of interests across several different fields.<sup>85</sup>

Ibn Tulun's apparent obsession with the production of religious, literary, and historical texts among other fields of scholarship has misled contemporary scholars into making erroneous conclusions about the circumstances of the Damascene historian's life. In his entry on Ibn Tulun in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, W.M. Brinner writes that Ibn Tulun died "a bachelor without issue",<sup>86</sup> yet the evidence suggests otherwise. It is now known that Ibn Tulun had at least three children; we learn this from his biographical dictionary *Al-Tamattu' bi'l Iqran bayna Tarajim al-Shuyookh wa'l Aqran* (The Joy of Making Connections through the Biographies of Masters and Peers), where he writes of a son and two daughters. Naturally, his daughters are included in the section on notable women at the very end of the work. None of Ibn Tulun's children appear to have outlived their father, however, as they all passed away at a rather young age (none exceeding the age of 17).<sup>87</sup>

But now we move on to discuss a more important matter, and that is the vast reservoir of historical material that the illustrious Damascene scholar has left us with, and some other works (and parts of works) that are now no longer extant. Ibn Tulun's most famous work on history is a chronicle entitled *Mufakahat al-Khillan fi Hawadith al-Zaman* (The Enjoyment, Together with Friends, of the Events of the Time), which in its present state covers events in Egypt and, in more detailed fashion, Syria, during its author's life until 1520. Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi, who uses *Mufakahat al-Khillan* in a later historical work, informs his readers that Ibn Tulun's chronicle includes events up to the end of the year 951/1545,<sup>88</sup> which suggests that the part from 1520 to 1545 is now lost. Nonetheless, the chronicle remains a hugely significant source for the study of Syria during the late Mamluk period and the subsequent transition to Ottoman rule. It is

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<sup>85</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 2, p. 53

<sup>86</sup> Brinner, "Ibn Tulun" in *EI2*

<sup>87</sup> See Shams al-Din Ibn Tulun & Ahmad Ibn al-Mulla al-Huskufi al-Halabi, *Mut'at al-Adhan min al-Tammattu' bi'l Iqran bayna Tarajim al-Shuyookh wa'l Aqran* (Beirut, 1999), Salah al-Din Khalil al-Shibani al-Musili (ed.), Vol. 2, p. 876, p. 870, & p. 492, hereafter Ibn Tulun, *Mut'at al-Adhan*

<sup>88</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 1, p. 5

doubly important in that it gives a contrasting image of the Ottoman conquerors to that offered by the contemporary Egyptian chronicler Ibn Iyas, who is manifestly hostile to the new rulers and appears to lament the passing of the Mamluk era.<sup>89</sup>

Ibn Tulun was noticeably more prolific when it came to the composition of local histories, although his contributions in this field have not received as much scholarly attention as *Mufakahat al-Khillan*. His fondness and attachment to his hometown, and specifically its Salihyya suburb in which he was born and of which he was a resident, is displayed in his comprehensive history of that particular region of Damascus.<sup>90</sup> More importantly, he wrote two chronological, semi-biographical works on the *nuwwab* (governors) and *qudat* (judges) of Damascus. The first, entitled *I'lam al-Wara biman Wulliya Na'iban min al-Atrak bi-Dimashq al-Sham al-Kubra* (Acquainting the People with Those Turks Who Were Governors of Greater Damascus), is as the title implies concerned with the “Turks” (*Atrak*) who had served as governors of the province of Damascus. Effectively, Ibn Tulun meant by “Turks” the Mamluk and Ottoman provincial administrators whom he listed in *I'lam al-Wara*. Ibn Tulun began the work with a very brief introduction, in which he stated his main purpose: correcting an earlier work, apparently of the Mamluk period, by a certain Shams al-Din al-Zumulkani, in the belief that it contained “several delusions.” Ibn Tulun regarded *I'lam al-Wara* as an exercise in both the abridgement and supplementation or extension of Zumulkani’s original, as he himself writes in reference to the earlier history: “Here I am abridging (*ulakhis*) it while making some corrections to its obvious delusions, and simultaneously composing the supplement (*dhayl*) to it, from his (i.e. the previous author’s) own time to our era, based on his own satisfactory method.”<sup>91</sup> By “satisfactory method,” Ibn Tulun no doubt meant Zumulkani’s straightforward chronological treatment of his subject. The Damascene scholar extends the history of the governors of Damascus to the end of the year 941/1535, thereby covering the first two decades of Ottoman rule.

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<sup>89</sup> P.M Holt, “Ta’rikh” in *EI2* (Brill Online)

<sup>90</sup> Salah al-Din al-Munajjid, *Al-Mu’arrikhun al-Dimashkiyyun fi al-‘Ahd al-Uthmani wa Atharuhum al-Makhtoota* (Beirut, 1964), p. 82, hereafter Munajjid, *Al-Mu’arrikhun al-Dimashkiyyun fi al-‘Ahd al-Uthmani*

<sup>91</sup> Shams al-Din Ibn Tulun, *I'lam al-Wara biman Wulliya Na'iban min al-Atrak bi Dimashq al-Sham al-Kubra* (Damascus, 1964), Muhammad Ahmad Duhman (ed.), p. 2, hereafter Ibn Tulun, *I'lam al-Wara*

It is important to mention at this point that *I'lam al-Wara* cannot be considered a standard biographical dictionary, simply because it did not consist of biographies in the conventional sense. It rarely includes the dates of birth and, if necessary, death of the governors whom Ibn Tulun had written on. And although its entries were dedicated to the individual men who governed the province, it often discusses events in the province during a concerned governor's tenure in much greater length than the actions, accomplishments, dealings, character, and measures taken by the governor himself. As such, it assumes the character of a local chronicle with unevenly scattered biographical elements, and in fact adds little to *Mufakahat al-Khillan* for the years 1473-1520, as far as events in the Mamluk and Ottoman province of Damascus are concerned. For these reasons, its content will be treated only sparingly in the chapters that follow, as it cannot be regarded in the same light as the other more classically organized biographical dictionaries.

Ibn Tulun's history of Damascene judges, entitled *al-Thaghr al-Bassam fi Dhikr man Wulliya Qada' al-Sham* (The Smiling Mouth with Regard to Those Who Were Assigned to the Jurisdiction in Damascus), is considerably wider in scope than *I'lam al-Wara*, as it tackles the development of the legal establishment in the city from its inception after the Muslim conquest of Syria until the year 946/1540. Like *I'lam al-Wara*, however, it does not consist of biographies, but rather chronologically-organized entries based on the terms in office of Damascene judges. More than *I'lam al-Wara*, though, it sheds light on the professional conduct of some judges, and often gives reference to their educational background, a crucial component of any evaluation of a Muslim judge's competence. Ibn Tulun's interest in the individuals mentioned in *al-Thaghr* is nonetheless only relevant insofar as they were judges, in particular *qadis* of Damascus; we generally learn very little or nothing at all about a *qadi's* later career, after he is assigned in a judicial post outside Damascus or is simply dismissed from the vocation altogether. Therefore, *al-Thaghr* will receive limited attention in following chapters. But of course, the relevance of both *I'lam al-Wara* and *al-Thaghr* lies in that both were semi-biographical, local histories of Damascus.

Of far greater importance is Ibn Tulun's alphabetically organized biographical dictionary: *Al-Tamattu' bi'l Iqran bayna Tarajim al-Shuyookh wa'l Aqran*. In its original form, this biographical dictionary is now lost. It is thanks to the efforts of the

Aleppine Ahmad Ibn al-Mulla (d. 1003/1595)<sup>92</sup>, who made an abridgement (*mukhtasar*), with very few additions of his own to the work, that it has been preserved. Ibn al-Mulla added the phrase *Mut‘at al-Adhhan* (The Pleasure of the Minds) to the original title, and so the full title of the biographical dictionary, in published form, is now *Mut‘at al-Adhhan fi al-Tamattu‘ bi’l Iqran bayna Tarajim al-Shuyookh wa’l Aqran* (The Pleasure of the Minds in “The Joy of Making Connections Through the Biographies of Masters and Peers”). For purposes of simplicity, it shall henceforth be referred to as *Mut‘at al-Adhhan*, although that was not the author’s original title.

Strictly speaking, this biographical dictionary belongs to the *mashyakha* sub-genre, where a biographer dedicates his volume to his teachers and, often, also peers, friends in the profession, and occasionally some of his apprentices as well. Naturally, this genre belongs to the restricted, though not necessarily local, approach to biographical writing, through its declared emphasis on ‘*ulama*’ and more particularly, teachers, colleagues, and sometimes students. In the case of Ibn Tulun, it is also a locally-oriented dictionary, as the man himself had never left his hometown, and was therefore taught by men of religion within the confines of Damascus, apart from the likes of the Egyptian Suyuti with whom he had corresponded in writing. But it is important to bear in mind that its conception had not been directly intended as local; the circumstances of Ibn Tulun’s life made it so.

Ibn Tulun’s introduction to the work is, unfortunately, not included in Ibn al-Mulla’s abridgement. Because it is an abridgement in the truest sense, entries in *Mut‘at al-Adhhan* are relatively brief in comparison with most of the other dictionaries treated in this study. Ibn al-Mulla’s additions to the original biographical entries of Ibn Tulun are, for the most part, given only where the individuals in the biographical entries of Ibn Tulun outlived the man himself. As such, we can safely assume that the bulk of the information provided in *Mut‘at al-Adhhan* is that which was originally provided by the Damascene, rather than the Aleppine, author, although some essential elements, including the introduction of the original biographer, no longer exist. It is a great pity, however, that the remarkably prolific Ibn Tulun’s only published biographical dictionary survives only as an abridgement by a later scholar. This means that many, in

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<sup>92</sup> He was the brother of Muhammad Ibn al-Mulla, mentioned above in the context of Aleppine local historiography.

fact most, of the entries consist of no more than a few lines, with little information of use to the researcher. There are, though, certain exceptions and, in any case, the fact that *Mut‘at al-Adhhan* was composed by a ‘*alim* who lived during a period of transformation in *Bilad al-Sham* makes Ibn Tulun’s biographical dictionary especially significant. A supplement to Ibn Tulun’s original, entitled *Dhakha’ir al-Qasr fi Tarajim Nubala’ al-‘Asr* (The Treasures of the Palace with Regard to the Biographies of the Noble Men of the Age) and composed by the Damascene biographer himself, remains in manuscript form.<sup>93</sup> The fact that *Dhakha’ir al-Qasr* was intended as a supplement by its author suggests that it is entirely dedicated to the Damascene ‘*ulama*’ of the Ottoman period. There is one more biographical collection by Ibn Tulun that is worthy of note, but it is terribly unfortunate that it has not come down to us; it is a chronologically-organized volume dealing exclusively with the lives of Ottoman Sultans.<sup>94</sup> A certain Muhammad al-Muradi, (d. 1169/1756) the granduncle of the 12<sup>th</sup> *hijri* century’s centennial biographer Khalil al-Muradi, continues this rare tradition with his own biographical work on Ottoman Sultans, but his work, while extant, remains unpublished.<sup>95</sup>

It is interesting to find that Ibn al-Mulla, an Aleppine, chose for himself the task of abridging a biographical dictionary by Ibn Tulun. We have already seen how dominant local historiography had been in Aleppo, particularly when it came to the composition of biographical collections. But undertaking the abridgement of what was effectively a history of another city and its ‘*ulama*’ was surely an entirely different matter. One quickly jumps to the conclusion that, since Ibn Tulun’s dictionary is an example of the *mashyakha* genre, Ibn al-Mulla may have been a student of his who held a keen interest in the work, but there is no evidence to support this assumption. Unfortunately, Ibn al-Mulla himself does not reveal why he chose to abridge Ibn Tulun’s original, and thus the entire affair is shrouded in almost complete darkness. There is one possible explanation, however, and that is to be sought in Ibn al-Mulla’s own life experiences, as gathered by later Damascene biographers. The Aleppine scholar is known to have been to Damascus and resided there for an extended period of

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<sup>93</sup> Munajjid, *Al-Mu‘arrikhun al-Dimashkiyyun fi al-‘Ahd al-‘Uthmani*, p. 82

<sup>94</sup> Munajjid, *Al-Mu‘arrikhun al-Dimashkiyyun fi al-‘Ahd al-‘Uthmani*, p. 282

<sup>95</sup> Salah al-Din Munajjid, *Mu‘jam al-Mu‘arrikhin al-Dimashkiyyin wa Atharuhum al-Makhtuta wa’l Matbu‘a* (Beirut 1978), p. 356, hereafter Munajjid, *Mu‘jam al-Mu‘arrikhin al-Dimashkiyyin*

time in his youth, where his father, “known as al-Mulla, was one of the notables (*a‘yan*) among the people.”<sup>96</sup> But since Ibn al-Mulla spent a not insignificant part of his life in Damascus, and may well have been instructed by some of the same *‘ulama’* who were peers and/or students of Ibn Tulun (though he did not state whether this was the case), perhaps he saw his *mukhtasar* as a fitting tribute to the intellectual life of a city that he dearly loved through the abridgement of a work of its greatest 10<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century scholar. Also interestingly, Ibn al-Mulla, upon completing his studies in his native Aleppo, made a trip to Istanbul, although the purpose of his trip is not disclosed by his biographers.<sup>97</sup> Other works by the Aleppine include a travelogue of his trip to the Ottoman capital, now no longer extant, and another abridgement (*mukhtasar*) of an earlier local biographical dictionary of Aleppo by Ibn Khatib.<sup>98</sup> But now we turn our attention to an entirely different approach to biographical writing and a contrasting vision of history, that articulated by the universalist biographers of Damascus.

### 3. *A Cosmopolitan Conception of History in Damascene Biographical Literature*

In contrast to local and restricted biographical writing, Damascus possesses a large group of universalist biographers who are at once also cosmopolitan in their attitude and approach to historiography. This may be termed a “relative cosmopolitanism” in the Damascene vision of history; it is relative, as distinct from absolute, cosmopolitanism because of a few important facts: first, despite this universalist outlook of Damascene biographers, histories of the localist and restricted variety(s) were still being composed in the city, with Ibn Tulun being the notable local biographer of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Secondly, it is important to point out that, even considering the inclusion of a great number of non-Damascenes in the universally-oriented biographical dictionaries, individuals from the city in which the authors resided were still invariably the best represented among the diversity of individuals from various geographical locations within the Muslim realms. This last point is, of course,

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<sup>96</sup> Al-Hasan al-Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan min Abna’ al-Zaman* (Damascus, 1959), Salad al-Din al-Munajjid (ed.), Vol. 1, p. 180, hereafter Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*

<sup>97</sup> See Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 180 and Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, pp. 278-280

<sup>98</sup> Editor’s Introduction to Ibn Tulun, *Mut‘at al-Adhhan*, Vol. 1, p. 32

not at all surprising. After all, it is only expected that residents of a specific town, city, or region should have a better knowledge of events taking place in their locales and of the lives of notable men (and women) within their particular surroundings. Last and certainly very far from least, the cosmopolitanism of Damascus, in contrast to the localism of Aleppo, was a distinctly Muslim cosmopolitanism; the universality of the town's biographical writing naturally extends only to the lands of Islam, as the composition of biographical dictionaries had at all times been an exclusive practice of the learned Muslim elite. Furthermore, as a prominent Levantine trading metropolis, Aleppo could boast greater cosmopolitanism than Damascus in its foreign connexions and the greater frequency of its commercial contact with a world both within and beyond the realms of Islam. The greater universalism in Damascene historiography is thus a matter which requires some clarification, and an explanation of this phenomenon will be attempted after the necessary discussion of the city's universalist biographers.

The first universalist among all biographers in the Islamic realms was, as mentioned earlier, Ibn Khallikan in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. The pioneering Ibn Khallikan himself can be considered at least partly Damascene, as he rotated between Cairo and Damascus throughout his career while serving as a *qadi* of the Mamluk administration, though he completed his biographical dictionary, *Wafayat al-A'yan* (The Obituaries of Notables), in Egypt, where he eventually died.<sup>99</sup> In Damascus itself, Ibn Khallikan's work was promptly followed up with an abridgement, as well as a supplement, for the master's original dictionary, and these were composed by the historian al-Suka'i (d. 726/1326).<sup>100</sup> Soon thereafter, Kutubi (d. 764/1363) and Safadi (d. 764/1363) composed a total of three biographical dictionaries of the universalist variety between them. One of Safadi's collections in particular was similar to Ibn Khallikan's in scope, as it also dealt with the history of the Muslim community from the days of the prophet until the author's own time.<sup>101</sup> The list of Damascene universalists goes on with Ibn Qadi-Shuhba (d. 851/1447) in the 15<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>102</sup> and near the close of the Mamluk period with 'Abdul-Qader al-Nu'aymi (d. 927/1521), a leading scholar who exerted considerable influence on Ibn Tulun. Nu'aymi wrote two universally-oriented

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<sup>99</sup> J.W Fück, "Ibn Khallikan" in *EI2* (Brill Online)

<sup>100</sup> Munajjid, *Mu'jam al-Mu'arrikhin al-Dimashkiyyin*, p. 135

<sup>101</sup> Munajjid, *Mu'jam al-Mu'arrikhin al-Dimashkiyyin*, pp. 183-188

<sup>102</sup> Munajjid, *Mu'jam al-Mu'arrikhin al-Dimashkiyyin*, pp. 237-238

biographical works, including a supplement for the history of Ibn Qadi Shuhba, but they are no longer extant.<sup>103</sup> Finally, Ibn Muflih (d. 1011/1603), himself a student of Ibn Tulun, compiled a comprehensive dictionary of his contemporaries, which is also one of many historical works by Damascene scholars that is not preserved.<sup>104</sup>

Our first universalist historian of the Ottoman period is al-Hasan al-Burini (d. 1615), originally a native of the village of Burin in Palestine, who early in his youth moved to Damascus with his father, where he began his training in the religious sciences, specifically *fiqh*, and became a prominent Shafi‘i scholar in the city. Burini’s father was a man of modest means, an upholsterer-turned-perfumer who did not descend from a notable family and had never accumulated considerable wealth.<sup>105</sup> In this sense, Burini is quite an exceptional case among the biographers of *Bilad al-Sham* during the first two centuries of Ottoman rule as an individual who was not a member of a well-established scholarly family. And yet he successfully managed to carve out for himself a career of remarkable success in terms of both wealth and repute, thanks to the connections he established with notable ‘*ulama*’ of Damascus at quite an early stage. The father of the Damascene biographer Ghazzi, a Shafi‘i *mufti* of Damascus, was among Burini’s earliest influences, and once in his old age welcomed the latter to his home with the following verse:

“Reaching 80 years of age is a terrible affliction

Which prevents me rising to greet those for whom I feel affection”<sup>106</sup>

Ghazzi’s older brother was also one of Burini’s earliest instructors in the religious sciences. This, of course, indicates Burini’s closeness to one prominent notable family of the city, among many others.<sup>107</sup> The 11<sup>th</sup> *hijri* century’s centennial biographer

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<sup>103</sup> Munajjid, *Mu‘jam al-Mu‘arrikhin al-Dimashkiyyin*, p. 281

<sup>104</sup> Munajjid, *Mu‘jam al-Mu‘arrikhin al-Dimashkiyyin*, p. 307

<sup>105</sup> Khaled El-Rouayheb, “Hasan b. Muhammad al-Burini (1556-1615)” in Cemal Kafadar, Hasan Karateke & Cornell Fleischer (eds.), *Historians of the Ottoman Empire* (online database: <http://www.ottomanhistorians.com>), p. 1, hereafter Rouayheb, “Burini”

<sup>106</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 356

<sup>107</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 356

Muhibbi adds that his grandfather had taught Burini as well.<sup>108</sup> But Burini's dearest teacher, and the one who perhaps had the most influence on him personally, intellectually and professionally, was a certain Ahmad al-'Ithawi (d. 1025/1616), another Shafi'i *mufti* of Damascus, and it was he who gave Burini his first *ijaza* in the year 1000/1592. On a more personal level, 'Ithawi encouraged Burini to marry his sister-in-law, and consequently the two men, in effect, became brothers in kin as well as in spirit.<sup>109</sup> 'Ithawi had by then managed to secure several teaching posts in Damascus for his former apprentice.<sup>110</sup>

The biographer Ghazzi himself was well-acquainted with Burini, and revealed that they had several correspondences, in which they often wrote poetry to each other, as was the norm. Such exchanges, according to Ghazzi, were often of a personal nature, but unsurprisingly also involved discussions of religious significance.<sup>111</sup> But despite the closeness of their relationship, Ghazzi did not shy away from disclosing certain peculiar facets of Burini's character. For instance Burini, according to Ghazzi, was said to be addicted to alcohol, and although the latter carefully avoided confirming this, he indicated that it may have been the case since Burini had established close relations with the temporal authorities in his hometown, and thus joined them in such immoral activities.<sup>112</sup> Without dwelling too greatly on the issue, Ghazzi quickly escaped the matter and pointed to Burini's skills as a poet.<sup>113</sup>

Indeed, Burini's intimate relationship with the Ottoman authorities in Damascus could not be concealed, even if it was perceived as morally corrupting at times. But it undoubtedly made him better-informed about some of the most important issues surrounding the province of Damascus as well as the Ottoman Empire at large. Having cultivated the acquaintance and, at times, friendship of certain Ottoman officials in the province of Damascus, Burini had access to ideal sources of information on such

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<sup>108</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 2, p. 52

<sup>109</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A'yan*, Vol. 1, p. 144

<sup>110</sup> Rouayheb, "Burini", p. 1

<sup>111</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, pp. 370-75

<sup>112</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 378

<sup>113</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 379

pressing developments as the Canbulad rebellion,<sup>114</sup> which was an affair of Syrian, Ottoman, and European interest. According to Ghazzi, Burini's closeness to the authorities also allowed him to become the *qadi* of the pilgrimage caravan, despite the fact that he was a Shafi'i, when standard Ottoman practice prescribed offering the post to a Hanafi.<sup>115</sup> Burini, like Ibn Tulun before him, did not establish Sufi affiliations with any of the various orders that operated in Damascus at the time.

In both official and non-official capacities, Burini travelled within *Bilad al-Sham*, to Aleppo and Tripoli, and wrote travelogues describing his journeys. While he was still a young man, he left Damascus with his father and went to Jerusalem, apparently due to the spread of famine in the first city.<sup>116</sup> Apart from his rather modest travelling experience in comparison with later Damascene biographers, Burini's universalist outlook must have been shaped by his close relations with the Ottoman administration in the province of Damascus, and notable visitors to the city with whom he interacted such as Hussein al-Tibrizi, who taught him Persian.<sup>117</sup> Ghazzi offered another interesting side to his friend's character: Burini was apparently popular among commoners (*'awam*), since he often mingled with them, listening attentively to their popular form of *zajal* singing, and even helping to improve their techniques.<sup>118</sup> A man of talent, knowledge, and considerable influence, Burini was evidently also a humble individual; it was possibly his own unglamorous background that allowed him to mix unashamedly with the lower strata of Damascene society.

Burini's biographical dictionary also has a rather uncomplicated title: *Tarajim al-A'yan min Abna' al-Zaman* (Biographies of the Notables Among the People of the Age), but a large part of it (from the letter *qaf* onwards) remains unpublished. In his introduction to the work, Burini mentions several biographers whose dictionaries he claims to have read, and declares that he had developed an interest in history many years before finally undertaking the task of writing a historical work. Among the

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<sup>114</sup> Rouayheb, "Burini", p. 3

<sup>115</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 376

<sup>116</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 2, p. 51

<sup>117</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 2, p. 52

<sup>118</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 376

biographers he cites are the universalists Ibn Khallikan and ‘Asqalani,<sup>119</sup> though Burini’s own work did not come close to the comprehensiveness of either of his predecessors’ methods of selection. Despite Burini’s relative universalism, he writes exclusively of individuals who were alive at one point or another during his lifetime, and openly declares that this had been his intention. Nevertheless, he claims to be more comprehensive in terms of class and occupation. In addition to the spiritual and temporal authorities who were conventionally considered as having constituted the notable classes, Burini notes that he includes those who had acquired fame for honing their skills in certain arts.<sup>120</sup> As such, he casts his net wide and does not stick to the traditional conception of notability. It is conceivable that Burini’s recognition of his own rise within the social ranks, and the awareness that he had ascended from a less privileged position in Damascene society, led to his clear statement that lesser castes also deserved a measure of representation in *Tarajim al-A‘yan*.

By his own admission, Burini was encouraged to begin writing *Tarajim al-A‘yan* by a friend of his, the Ottoman *defterdar* of Damascus Mehmed Emin Efendi. The Damascene historian claimed to have been too preoccupied in earlier years to consider undertaking such a venture,<sup>121</sup> and one gets the impression from his introduction that, had it not been for the *defterdar*, Burini may never have gotten around to writing his biographical dictionary. According to the only extant published biography of Mehmed Emin Efendi by Burini’s contemporary Ghazzi, the *defterdar* “enjoyed reading and bought many books,”<sup>122</sup> which explains his encouragement of Burini to compose *Tarajim al-A‘yan*. This is a significant point, because it is quite likely that ‘Ajami’s support and encouragement of Burini helped shape the latter’s approach to composing his work. The friendship of the two men and Burini’s admiration for the Ottoman official, so evident in his introduction, may well have influenced the Damascene’s process of selection in the dictionary. As such, Burini’s *Tarajim al-A‘yan* is at once of a highly personal nature, since the author himself is present in most of the biographical entries, and had enjoyed a personal acquaintance with almost all those of whom he had chosen to write. The biographical dictionary was thus a token of friendship from an

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<sup>119</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 4

<sup>120</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 4

<sup>121</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, pp. 4-5

<sup>122</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 198

Arabic-speaking religious scholar to a Turkish-speaking Ottoman bureaucrat, and Burini fittingly reveals as much about himself and his own experiences as he does with regard to the subjects of his work. Sadly, however, Burini's entry on Muhammad Emin Efendi himself remains unpublished.

A glaring inconsistency in *Tarajim al-A'yan* is its author's stated intention of, for the most part, mentioning only the virtues of those on whom he chose to write. If anything, Burini leveled greater criticism against certain individuals than perhaps any of the other biographers of his time, and this criticism is often colored by some cynical remarks. Burini's denigration of certain individuals does not merely consist of condemning certain conducts in professional life, which was a rather usual form of criticism, but also includes some openly negative assessments of character. This highlights Burini's very personal involvement with some of the characters mentioned in his historical work, as well as his unusually colorful character. Having produced a history dedicated to his contemporaries, a sizeable portion of whom were also his acquaintances, Burini relied almost exclusively on oral sources.<sup>123</sup>

Interestingly, Ghazzi does not make the slightest reference to Burini's historical work in his biography of the man. Later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Muhibbi mentions *Tarajim al-A'yan* both in his introduction and his biography of Burini, but does not choose to comment on its quality. There is a point that is worthy of note, however, and it is the fact that Burini's biographical dictionary was, later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, edited by none other than Fadlallah al-Muhibbi, the father of the more famous biographer from the same family.<sup>124</sup> The younger Muhibbi adds in his introduction to his own biographical collection that Fadlallah had also composed a supplement (*dhayl*) for *Tarajim al-A'yan*,<sup>125</sup> no doubt indicating that his father, like Burini, wrote of his own contemporaries. One final point is necessary: we must be careful not to exaggerate Burini's universalism in *Tarajim al-A'yan*; his biographical dictionary was conceived in the manner of the cosmopolitan school of Damascene historiography, yet its

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<sup>123</sup> Rouayheb, "Burini", p. 1

<sup>124</sup> C. Brockelmann, "Al-Burini, Hasan b. Muhammad al-Dimashki al-Saffuri Badr al-Din" in *EI2* (Brill Online)

<sup>125</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 3

cosmopolitanism pales in comparison to the vast comprehensiveness of his successor Muhibbi, and even his younger contemporary Ghazzi, to whom we now turn.

a. Two Centennial Biographers of Ottoman Damascus

The centennial dictionary is a specific variant of biographical writing which deals with a particular *hijri* century, and lies firmly within the universalist tradition of historiography. It is perhaps unusual that centennial volumes dedicated to specific geographical locales or social and occupational groups have not been composed, but such is indeed the case: centennial biographers had at all times approached their subjects in a universalist, cosmopolitan manner. The first centennial biographical dictionary was written by the Egyptian scholar Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani (d. 852/1449) in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and it was a history of the notables of the 8<sup>th</sup> century AH (roughly corresponding to the 14<sup>th</sup> century). Muhammad al-Sakhawi (d. 902/1497), another Egyptian historian, followed ‘Asqalani with a biographical dictionary of the next *hijri* century,<sup>126</sup> and thus, with its initial center in Egypt, another new tradition in biographical writing emerged. It is interesting, however, that Egyptian scholars of the next century did not choose to prolong this tradition. Rather, it was the Damascene *hadith* expert Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi (d. 1061/1651) who did so, with his collection entitled *al-Kawakib al-Sa’ira bi A’yan al-Mi’a al-‘Ashira* (The Revolving Stars Regarding the Notables of the 10<sup>th</sup> century), and this is a fact of great significance which we shall return to at a later stage.

By the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, when Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi had achieved prominence as a leading scholar of the Ottoman *Bilad al-Sham*, the Ghazzi name had already produced countless celebrated ‘*ulama*’ who served the Damascene intellectual community with distinction. The family, originally from Gaza, as its name indicates, established itself in Damascus in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Its first members immediately immersed themselves in scholarship and, by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Najm al-Din’s father Badr al-Din al-Ghazzi had achieved the rank of Shafi‘i *mufti* in the city, a position which several other Ghazzis would fill in later times. The later importance of the Ghazzi family is evidenced by the 18<sup>th</sup> century Damascene biographer Muradi’s inclusion of no

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<sup>126</sup> Paul Auchterlonie, *Arabic Biographical Dictionaries: A Summary Guide and Bibliography* (Durham, 1987), p. 8

less than fourteen of its members in his historical work.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Ghazzis virtually monopolized the post of Shafi‘i *mufti* in Damascus, and continued to dominate it well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>128</sup> But it wasn’t merely in the religious sciences that the Ghazzi family played a leading role; the Ghazzis also took an interest in history. Radiyy al-Din al-Ghazzi (d. 864/1459), Najm al-Din’s great grandfather,<sup>129</sup> wrote a biographical dictionary of Shafi‘i scholars, indicating his family’s pride in belonging to the *madhhab*.<sup>130</sup> Centuries later, Shams al-Din al-Ghazzi (d. 1167/1754), another Shafi‘i *mufti* and the grandnephew of Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi,<sup>131</sup> wrote a voluminous biographical work of the universalist variety, beginning with a biography of the Prophet. The work is still extant, but only in manuscript form.<sup>132</sup>

Najm al-Din Ghazzi himself was a prominent *hadith* scholar and *mudarris* in his native city, but never attained the position of *mufti* as his father had done before him. Like so many of the ‘*ulama*’ in *Bilad al-Sham*, he was also a Sufi, having joined the Qadiri order in Damascus.<sup>133</sup> A contemporary of Burini, Ghazzi made the acquaintance and friendship of several of the same individuals that his older colleague had also met. Most important among them was surely Ahmad al-‘Ithawi, who helped guide Ghazzi’s career as he had done earlier for Burini. Ghazzi also established a close relationship with his master, who offered his daughter’s hand in marriage to the then young scholar. When she died of the plague soon thereafter, Ghazzi married another of ‘Ithawi’s

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<sup>127</sup> Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, *Families in Politics: Damascene Factions and Estates of the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Stuttgart 1985), p. 169, hereafter Schilcher, *Families in Politics*

<sup>128</sup> Schilcher, *Families in Politics*, p. 121

<sup>129</sup> See Schilcher’s genealogical table of the Ghazzi family in *Families in Politics*, p. 170

<sup>130</sup> Munajjid, *Mu‘jam al-Mu‘arrikhin al-Dimashkiyyin*, p. 245; It appears that members of the Ghazzi family, insofar as they achieved any prominence, had always adhered to the Shafi‘i rite.

<sup>131</sup> See Schilcher’s genealogical table of the Ghazzi family in *Families in Politics*, p. 170

<sup>132</sup> Munajjid, *Mu‘jam al-Mu‘arrikhin al-Dimashkiyyin*, p. 354

<sup>133</sup> Michael Winter, “al-Gazzi, Najmuddin Muhammad b. Muhammad” in Cemal Kafadar, Hasan Karateke & Cornell Fleischer (eds.), *Historians of the Ottoman Empire* (online database: <http://www.ottomanhistorians.com>), p. 1, hereafter Winter, “al-Gazzi”

daughters,<sup>134</sup> a sign of the great respect and paternal devotion that ‘Ithawi held for his pupil, who had lost his father at quite a young age.

‘Ithawi was of immense assistance to Ghazzi in professional as well as personal affairs, securing several teaching posts for the man, many of which he himself gave up in favor of his younger Damascene counterpart.<sup>135</sup> And such teaching posts were, of course, in addition to the Ghazzi family’s already considerable financial resources, another source of great wealth. Ghazzi’s biographer Muhibbi remarks that Ghazzi went to the Hijaz for the *hajj* on several occasions.<sup>136</sup> This is not only indicative of Ghazzi’s religious zeal, but his privileged position as an exceptionally affluent *‘alim* of Damascus, and the member of a long-established and prestigious family in the city. It is unlikely that Ghazzi could have managed several trips to the *hajj* had he not been so wealthy, as even the better off *‘ulama’* of the Ottoman period seem to have found it unreasonably costly to go to the *Hajj* more than once in their lifetimes.<sup>137</sup> On the whole, the Damascene biographer seems to have been an exceptionally well-travelled individual; apart from his journeys within *Bilad al-Sham* and his numerous visits to the Holy Cities, he is known to have been to Istanbul on one occasion. Among his works, in fact, is a travelogue in which he spoke of his journey to the Ottoman capital, now no longer extant.<sup>138</sup> Other writings of Ghazzi that are of less obvious historical value include his contributions to the fields of Arabic literature and poetry, but also several treatises on linguistics.<sup>139</sup> In addition, he dedicated a lengthy biography to his father and composed it as a separate work.

Ghazzi’s most famous historical texts are, however, two biographical dictionaries, the first of which dealt with the 10<sup>th</sup> century of the *hijra*. His *Kawakib* dictionary is unusual in that it adopts a particular *tabaqat* division, in which the individual *tabaqa*,

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<sup>134</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, pp. 313-14

<sup>135</sup> Winter, “al-Gazzi”, p. 2

<sup>136</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 4, p. 198-99

<sup>137</sup> Rafeq, Abdul-Karim, “Qafilat al-Hajj al-Shami wa Ahammiyyatuha fi al-'Ahd al-'Uthmani” in *Buhouth fi al-Tarikh al-Iqtisadi wa al-Ijtima'i fi Bilad al-Sham fi al-'Asr al-Hadith* (Damascus, 1981), p. 204, hereafter Rafeq, *Qafilat al-Hajj al-Shami*

<sup>138</sup> Winter, “al-Gazzi”, p. 5

<sup>139</sup> Editor’s (Mahmoud al-Shaykh) introduction to Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 118

according to Ghazzi's own preference, constitutes 33 years. Within each *tabaqa*, however, entries are alphabetically organized, making for an effortless and easily accessible fusion between the chronological and the alphabetical. There is, though, one exception to the otherwise straightforward alphabetical classification; the biographies of those who are named Muhammad come first in each of the three *tabaqat*, as a clear mark of veneration for the Prophet. The structure of Ghazzi's work is, for these reasons, unique among the biographical dictionaries of *Bilad al-Sham* during the Ottoman period. Ghazzi's inclusion of women at the end of each letter is, on the other hand, not unusual, but nor was it the general practice of Muslim biographers, for not every biographer chose to include members of the other sex.

It is clear that, in his *Kawakib*, Ghazzi uses earlier biographical works extensively, particularly for entries on the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century. Among the dictionaries he explicitly mentions as sources for his own collection in the introduction to *Kawakib*, there is the famous history of the Ottoman historian Taşköprüzade, written in Arabic. Ghazzi also mentions Ibn al-Hanbali's *Durr al-Habab*, but in the process unleashes a scathing critique on the Aleppine biographer's methodology and the overall quality of his work. He claims that Ibn al-Hanbali was not a capable historian, and the foundation given for Ghazzi's assertion is his predecessor's lack of selectiveness in his approach to biographical writing. Ghazzi alleges that Ibn al-Hanbali must have included certain individuals in his dictionary so that "perhaps... the letter (in question) is not devoid of entries." Individuals of certain classes and occupations, such as artisans, merchants, and singers are for this purpose alone included in Ibn al-Hanbali's biographical dictionary, according to Ghazzi.<sup>140</sup> The obvious suggestion here is that Ghazzi, in writing *Kawakib*, professes a greater selectivity than Ibn al-Hanbali, and indeed learns from the errors of his supposedly less judicious predecessor.

Ghazzi's claim is, however, far from consistent or congruent with several of the selections in his centennial history, and the Damascene biographer in fact writes some lengthy entries on many members of the professional groups he had initially criticized Ibn al-Hanbali for including in his own work. Ghazzi's final entry in *Kawakib*, for instance, is dedicated to a certain Yunus "the garbage man" (*al-zabbal*), who

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<sup>140</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 1, p. 6

purportedly became one of the notable men of Damascus, although the information provided by his biographer gives little evidence that he had grown to be anything more than a minor scholar.<sup>141</sup> Ghazzi was doubtless touched and inspired by Yunus's rise from obscurity to the minor ranks of the learned community in his city, but this alone hardly qualifies the latter for inclusion among the notables of Damascus, much less those of the Muslim *umma*. Moreover, with his final entry in what is a voluminous centennial dictionary, it is impossible to claim that Ghazzi went out on a high note.

It is a significant statement, however, that Ghazzi makes in criticism of Ibn al-Hanbali, regardless of the Damascene biographer's own consistency in practice. The Aleppine Abu al-Wafa al-'Urdu, writing after Ghazzi, also took exception with certain aspects of Ibn al-Hanbali's work, though in contrast to Ghazzi's critique, 'Urdu thought that his Aleppine forerunner had wrongly *excluded* certain individuals. The criticism leveled at Ibn al-Hanbali by later biographers is in itself rather important, since it confirms that, not only did the "science of history" become legitimate as a domain of scholarship among the intellectual elite, but intra-scholarly debate concerning the proper methodology and skill in writing history had also come to the fore. Other historical works, such as the now lost biographical dictionary of Ibn Tulun's teacher Nu'aymi, are also cited as sources by Ghazzi. More importantly, Ibn Tulun's *Mut'at al-Adhhan* dictionary, as well as his chronicle, are mentioned and utilized extensively in Ghazzi's composition of biographical entries for the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> *hijri* century.

Ghazzi's attitude towards those of whom he writes biographical entries is varied. The Damascene biographer's stated intention is, naturally, to sing the praises of those who have deserved a measure of esteem and admiration. He is careful, however, to distance himself from certain negative commentary afforded to some individuals in his biographical dictionary. In his introduction, Ghazzi indicates that such criticism, where it is to be found, is invariably based on some external source. This information is gathered from "some informants (or transmitters of information)" (*ba'd al-naqilin*),<sup>142</sup> which must surely include individuals with whom Ghazzi conversed. Ghazzi, though, does not specify the identity or nature of these "informants", and thus one may conclude that these also include the authors of historical works which Ghazzi consulted before

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<sup>141</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 3, p. 223

<sup>142</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 1, p. 7

writing *Kawakib*. In any event, despite his clear suggestion that some negative observations are made with regard to a select group of people, Ghazzi is unsuccessful in entirely distancing himself from the criticism of certain individuals. Thus, a second aspect of inconsistency exists in his biographical dictionary.

But possibly the most important element of Ghazzi's introduction to his biographical dictionary is the statement where he identifies his interest in composing the work. Ghazzi clearly indicates that his eagerness to write of the notable individuals of the 10<sup>th</sup> century AH was the result of a simple reality: no other scholar had yet undertaken that task.<sup>143</sup> This is a crucial point, and is reminiscent of an earlier statement by Ibn al-Hanbali, where the Aleppine biographer suggests that he wrote biographies of his contemporaries in order to carry through his city's historiographical tradition. In the case of Ghazzi, a particular sub-genre, the centennial dictionary, is the historiographical tradition which, in the mind of its practitioner, must be sustained. And the centennial dictionary is, of course, itself a variant of the broader universalist school of biographical writing. In this sense, Ghazzi is consciously perpetuating a particular type of universalist biography, as Aleppine 'ulama' had perpetuated localist biography in their works. It is strange, however, that Ghazzi does not mention the earlier centennial biographers, the Egyptians 'Asqalani and Sakhawi, although he was clearly their successor as far as the art of historical writing was concerned.

In succession to *Kawakib*, Ghazzi also compiled a second biographical work, entitled *Lutf al-Samar wa Qatf al-Thamar min Tarajim A'yan al-Tabaqa al-Ula min al-Qarn al-Hadi 'Ashar* (The Pleasure of Evening Conversations and the Gathering of Fruit from the Biographies of Notables of the First Layer of the 11<sup>th</sup> century), which he dedicated to individuals of the first *tabaqa* (33 years) of the 11<sup>th</sup> *hijri* century. The introduction to *Lutf al-Samar* is quite brief, indicating that there is no change in Ghazzi's approach, methodology, or general outlook. Indeed, it is stressed as a supplement (*dhayl*) by its author,<sup>144</sup> and is thus not regarded as distinct or separate from *Kawakib*. Structurally, it retains the qualities of the biographical collection that came before it, with the individuals named Muhammad taking precedence, followed by an alphabetical arrangement of the rest of the entries.

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<sup>143</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 1, p. 5

<sup>144</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 3

There are certain differences between the two works, however, and these must be pointed out. The most important has to do with Ghazzi's sources of information. In *Kawakib*, he had had access to several historical works, biographical and otherwise, and many of these were mentioned in his introduction. The first *tabaqa* of the 11<sup>th</sup> century AH, however, comprised people who were Ghazzi's contemporaries and, in many cases, acquaintances. This would, accordingly, reflect on Ghazzi's method of accumulating information for *Lutf al-Samar*. In the first place, the amount of literature which the Damascene biographer had at his disposal was certainly far less for *Lutf al-Samar* than it had been for *Kawakib*, not least since the latter work dealt with a longer period of time. As such, Ghazzi could only have hoped to find historical works that had been composed earlier, but within the same 33-year (*hijri*) span, and these were few. A notable exception, of course, was Burini's *Tarajim al-A'yan*, and Burini's biographical dictionary included many of the same individuals whom Ghazzi later incorporated in *Lutf al-Samar*.

The more important source for Ghazzi in his second dictionary was, however, surely his discussions with various individuals who supplied him with information for his biographical entries. Predictably, they themselves were included as subjects of discussion in *Lutf al-Samar*. The title of Ghazzi's second work (The Pleasure of Evening Conversations and the Gathering of Fruit...) is, in fact, indicative of the nature of sources that made its composition possible; it points to the dominance of the oral source above all else. The "gathering of fruit," in this case, is meant to denote the collection of information, an objective that was achieved after several enjoyable "evening conversations". Ghazzi's biographer and successor as centennial historian Muhibbi lavishes praise on both of his predecessor's historical works, acknowledging that they are positive contributions to the field of *ta'rikh*. Nevertheless, he offers a single, and in the circumstances, entirely justified, criticism: that is Ghazzi's inclusion of a number of the same individuals in both of his works.<sup>145</sup> Muhibbi is correct to point this out, and in fact the same applies to Burini's *Tarajim al-A'yan*, in which there are duplicates of certain entries, though Muhibbi does not point this out. Muhibbi's judgment of Ghazzi's qualities as a historian is in itself of huge relevance, because the latter had effectively been Muhibbi's forerunner in that he composed, for the first time,

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<sup>145</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 4, p. 197

a centennial dictionary *from Bilad al-Sham*, which Muhibbi diligently followed up with a centennial history of his own.

Like the Ghazzis, many members of the Muhibbi family had already been distinguished figures of the Damascene intellectual elite long before Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi (d. 1111/1699) wrote his biographical dictionary of 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century notables. In fact, the two families were linked through the vast scholarly network that had existed in Damascus for centuries; the first evidence we have of a Ghazzi-Muhibbi connection is the biographer Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi's father Fadlallah's apprenticeship at the hands of the biographer Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi.<sup>146</sup> Later in the same century, Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi returned the favor to a member of the Ghazzi family. Shams al-Din al-Ghazzi, who has already been mentioned above as a universalist biographer whose work is unpublished, was Muhammad Amin's pupil and, as the 18<sup>th</sup> century historian Muradi indicates in his biography of Muhibbi, Ghazzi was greatly enlightened during his years of intimacy with his master.<sup>147</sup> It is interesting that all four individuals mentioned here composed a biographical dictionary (or, in the case of Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi, two such volumes) of the universalist variety, yet only Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi's and Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi's collections have been published.

Equally important as their connections within their hometown, the Muhibbis had at least a century before Muhammad Amin's birth (ca. 1651) established contacts with high-ranking members of the religious authorities in the Ottoman center. Our biographer's great grandfather, a man who took up judicial posts in different towns in *Bilad al-Sham*, made two trips to Istanbul in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, entering in the process the service of the *mufti* of Istanbul, who became his friend. Upon his return to his hometown, he was assigned as *qadi* of the pilgrimage caravan to the Holy Cities of Islam. Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi's father, Fadlallah, made two trips to Istanbul during his lifetime. Through the efforts of a *Rumi 'alim* by the name of Mehmed Izzeti, he managed to secure two teaching posts for himself, the first in a 25 *akçe* *madrassa* in

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<sup>146</sup> C. Brockelmann, "al-Muhibbi" in *EI2* (Brill Online), hereafter Brockelmann, "al-Muhibbi"

<sup>147</sup> Muhammad Khalil al-Muradi, *Silk al-Durar fi A'yan al-Qarn al-Thani 'Ashar* (Cairo, 1883), Vol. 4, p. 86, hereafter Muradi, *Silk al-Durar*

Bursa and, later, at a 40 *akçe madrasa* in the imperial capital. The travelogue he produced on one of his journeys to Istanbul has sadly not been preserved.<sup>148</sup>

It was fortunate for Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi that he was born into such a well-connected family, possessing considerable wealth and an empire-wide acclaim in the fields of Muslim scholarship. It certainly allowed him the opportunity of receiving top-quality training by the most prominent religious instructors of Damascus during the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. His family's age-old connections to members of certain families of the Ottoman center's learned elite also gave him the opportunity to, whenever he wished, set forth for other illustrious centers of learning in the Empire. Muhibbi, a Hanafi scholar whose expertise lay in the Islamic science of jurisprudence, came in contact with the Khalwati (Halveti) *tariqa* and joined that Sufi order shortly after his father's visit to *Bilad al-Rum* (land of the Turks).<sup>149</sup> In the 1670's Muhibbi, with his father now deceased and his readiness for the rigors of travel complete, began his own Anatolian journey.

Muhibbi, in fact, is one of the few biographers of *Bilad al-Sham* in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries who is known to have taken up a teaching post in the lands of the Ottoman center, specifically in Bursa, where he assumed the same position, earlier vacated by his father, in a 25 *akçe madrasa*. The man who managed to secure Muhibbi's employment was the same Mehmed Izzeti who had previously offered the position to his father.<sup>150</sup> It is also interesting that the Damascene biographer was accompanied on his trip not only by his uncle Sun'ullah, but more importantly a dear friend of the family, Mehmed b. Abdülhalim of Bursa, who later went on to become the *mufti* of Istanbul.<sup>151</sup> Mehmed Izzeti's brother Mustafa, then newly-appointed as *kadiasker* of Anadolu, then received Muhibbi and his uncle in Edirne, where the young Damascene scholar continued his education and made some new acquaintances.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Brockelmann, "al-Muhibbi"

<sup>149</sup> Layla al-Sabbagh, *Min A'lam al-Fikr al-'Arabi fi al-'Asr al-'Uthmani al-Awwal: Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi wa Kitabuhu Khulasat al-Athar fi A'yan al-Qarn al-Hadi 'Ashar* (Damascus, 1986), p. 73, hereafter Sabbagh, *Min A'lam al-Fikr al-'Arabi*

<sup>150</sup> Sabbagh, *Min A'lam al-Fikr al-'Arabi*, p. 95

<sup>151</sup> See Abdülhalim Efendi's biography in Muhibbi's *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 3, p. 482-87

<sup>152</sup> Sabbagh, *Min A'lam al-Fikr al-'Arabi*, p. 96

Finally, after Edirne, came Istanbul, where the two Muhibbis spent five years, and yet it is unclear if Muhammad Amin managed to secure any teaching posts, or for that matter, add to his already well-grounded religious education in an Istanbul *madrassa* during his time in the capital city. Nevertheless, it is a significant fact that he, alongside his uncle, quickly decided to leave the imperial capital just a day after their close associate Mehmed Izzeti passed away,<sup>153</sup> indicating perhaps that the Muhibbis were completely dependent on their patron for his ability to acquire positions for them both.

Upon his return to Damascus, Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi's newly-acquired knowledge of the Turkish and Persian languages immediately won him many admirers.<sup>154</sup> But his journey to the land of the *Rumis* was not his only expedition beyond his more familiar Damascene setting; Muhibbi's biographer Khalil al-Muradi reveals that the Damascene scholar left for the Hijaz on two occasions, once to fill the post of deputy judge in Mecca and another, of course, as a *hajji* to the Holy Shrines of Islam. In his later years, according to Muradi, Muhibbi devoted his life to writing and teaching in a *madrassa* in his hometown.<sup>155</sup> Similar to most of the other biographers of *Bilad al-Sham* during this period, Muhibbi also had a wide variety of scholarly interests, some of which were beyond the sphere of the *strictly* religious. Muhibbi was a noted linguist, as he produced five books on different Arabic linguistic and grammatical subjects.<sup>156</sup> Muhibbi also wrote volumes on literature and poetry; among his most famous works is a history of poetry in the 11<sup>th</sup> *hijri* century, which included a few biographies of poets who wrote in Arabic, Turkish and Persian, as well as translations into Arabic of some poetry that was written in the two other major languages of Ottoman culture.<sup>157</sup> A significant number of the same poets also found their way into his centennial dictionary. Muradi later remarked that Muhibbi's poetry and prose were equally brilliant and

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<sup>153</sup> Sabbagh, *Min A'lam al-Fikr al-'Arabi*, pp. 98-99

<sup>154</sup> Sabbagh, *Min A'lam al-Fikr al-'Arabi*, p. 107

<sup>155</sup> Muradi, *Silk al-Durar*, Vol. 4, p. 86

<sup>156</sup> Sabbagh, *Min A'lam al-Fikr al-'Arabi*, p. 131

<sup>157</sup> Khaled El-Rouayheb, "Opening the Gate of Verification: The Forgotten Arab-Islamic Florescence of the 17th Century", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38 (Cambridge, 2006), p. 276

inspired, and that the latter had “captivated the minds with his beautiful composition.”<sup>158</sup>

But it is his biographical dictionary, *Khulasat al-Athar fi A‘yan al-Qarn al-Hadi ‘Ashar* (The Purest Marks Concerning the Notables of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century), that is the work with which we are most concerned. Muhibbi claims to have been interested in “history books” (*kutub al-akhbar*) since he was a young boy, and that he began gathering information on events that he had heard, and the people surrounding them, at a similarly early stage. One gets a sense of Muhibbi’s universalism immediately in the opening lines of his introduction to *Khulasat al-Athar*; he instantly reveals the type of classes and individuals he is interested in, and these include not only the political, military, and intellectual elites, all of whom are mentioned, but also lesser individuals such as poets and other literary figures.<sup>159</sup> Thus, Muhibbi’s conception of notability is not as avowedly restricted as that of his predecessor Ghazzi. As a result, his inclusion of some of the lesser classes in his biographical dictionary cannot be considered inconsistent with his initial claims. Muhibbi also reveals that he went to great lengths to gather information on the notable individuals (*a‘yan*) of such faraway lands as Yemen, Bahrain, and the Hijaz, and that, in the final analysis, he was not entirely satisfied with the relatively unequal representation he had given them in the dictionary.<sup>160</sup> Muhibbi is perhaps the most cosmopolitan of all the Damascene universalists, as he even incorporates a number of individuals from India in *Khulasat al-Athar*. Muradi exaggerates or possibly commits an error when referring to Muhibbi’s work, claiming that it included the biographies of “about 6000” individuals,<sup>161</sup> when in fact the total amount of entries is 1289, still a rather large number. In his introduction, Muhibbi makes a mention of some of the sources he utilized, and these of course included Ghazzi’s *Lutf al-Samar* and Burini’s *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, among numerous other Damascene and non-Damascene histories. He also cites oral and written correspondences as major sources for the construction of *Khulasat al-Athar*.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Muradi, *Silk al-Durar*, Vol. 4, p. 86

<sup>159</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 2

<sup>160</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 3

<sup>161</sup> Muradi, *Silk al-Durar*, Vol. 4, p. 86

<sup>162</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 3

Unlike Ghazzi, Muhibbi does not, in his introduction, directly state how he treated the individuals to whom he dedicated the biographical entries. Nonetheless, the decidedly upbeat style with which Muhibbi describes the classes of people he had selected in his opening lines suggests that his attitude towards the individuals in his dictionary was largely positive. This is far from the case, however, and although Muhibbi, like Ghazzi, attempts to avoid a position of open antagonism to the subjects of his history, not all individuals are treated favorably in *Khulasat al-Athar*. Of greater importance is the fact that Muhibbi, like Ghazzi before him, clearly states his intention to prolong the tradition of centennial (and therefore universalist) biographical writing, as he declares that the foundation for his dictionary was his “anxiety for gathering what has not (yet) been gathered” concerning the notable “men” of the 11<sup>th</sup> century AH.<sup>163</sup> With this statement Muhibbi also reveals that his biographical dictionary is dedicated exclusively to men.

It is worth considering, or at least attempting to reflect, on why Muhibbi, and for that matter other biographers, chose not to include women in their histories, whereas some authors, Ghazzi included, did give a share of representation (albeit scant) to those women who were deemed notable members of their respective communities. This is an admittedly difficult, perhaps even impossible, question, to answer in a fully satisfactory manner, yet certain clues do exist which would enable us to form some rudimentary idea of the reason(s) behind biographers’ inclusion or exclusion of women from their historical compendia. In particular, Muhibbi’s *Khulasat al-Athar* offers some evidence relating to his exclusion, and his forerunner Ghazzi’s, inclusion of women in *Khulasat* and *Kawakib* respectively. In his biography of Ghazzi in *Khulasat al-Athar*, Muhibbi quotes a quite telling passage from his Damascene predecessor’s biography of his father. Significantly, it informs the reader that Ghazzi was apparently very much attached to both his parents. His great love and admiration for his father, who passed away while Najm al-Din was still a child, is in any case obvious given that he had dedicated an extended biographical work to the man, rather than merely including him alongside the other prominent figures of the 10<sup>th</sup> century AH in *Kawakib*. More interestingly, Muhibbi’s quoted passage reveals the remarkably strong affection the illustrious scholar felt for his mother as well, particularly his gratitude for her successful

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<sup>163</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 3

nurturing of the Ghazzi young and her concern for their attainment of a well-grounded religious education.<sup>164</sup> Perhaps it is partly due to Ghazzi's love and appreciation of his mother that he took the decision to include women in his biographical collection. Muhibbi, by contrast, does not make the slightest mention of his own mother in *Khulasat al-Athar*, not even in biographies of other members of his family, and seems on the whole to have held most affection for his father and uncle Sun'ullah, who raised Muhammad Amin after the latter's father departed for Istanbul in 1662, and later accompanied him on his long *Rumi* voyage.

b. A Longer View of History: Ibn al-Imad's Millennial Collection of Muslim Notables

Another individual among those who touched and influenced Muhibbi greatly during his lifetime was Abi al-Falah 'Abdul-Hayy Ibn al-Imad al-Hanbali (d. 1089/1679). Comparatively little is known of Ibn al-Imad; only Muhibbi writes of the man in his centennial dictionary, and Ibn al-Imad's biography does not supply the reader with much useful information. For instance, one cannot gather from Muhibbi's account whether Ibn al-'Imad was the member of a notable Damascene family or an individual who, like Burini, managed to scale the heights of the religious hierarchy from a less privileged socio-economic position. However, there is some relevant information; for instance, we find that the Hanbalite Ibn al-'Imad's specialization within the religious sciences was *fiqh*, and that Muhibbi himself was trained by the man at an earlier point of his career. Ibn al-'Imad, like so many other '*ulama*', was an avid poet, who was also fully capable of composing works in other literary styles, according to his pupil Muhibbi.<sup>165</sup> There is no indication that Ibn al-Imad was affiliated with any Sufi orders. Whether this owes to his status as a Hanbali jurist, an adherent of the strictest school of Islamic jurisprudence, is unclear. Several Hanbalis, however, have been known to adopt and even found Sufi orders, despite the school's opposition to Sufism in principle.<sup>166</sup> Ibn al-Imad spent many years in Cairo, according to his biographer Muhibbi, and

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<sup>164</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 4, p. 190-91

<sup>165</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 340

<sup>166</sup> A notable example is the Shaykh 'Abdul-Kadir al-Jilani, the founder of the Qadiri order, to which the biographers Ibn al-Hanbali and Ghazzi belonged, See H. Laoust, "Hanabila" in *EI2* (Brill Online)

eventually passed away in Mecca during the *hajj* in 1089/1679. Muhibbi also made a passing but positive reference to Ibn al-Imad's biographical dictionary.<sup>167</sup>

This historical work, *Shadharat al-Dhahab fi Akhbar man Dhahab* (The Particles of Gold in the Experiences of Those Who Have Passed On) is a chronologically constructed biographical collection beginning, predictably, with a biography of the Prophet and proceeding in a year by year progression, eventually ending in 1000/1592; it is thus a millennial compilation. The title itself implies that the biographical entries in the work are, for the most part, rather short, and merely constitute "particles" of a 1000-year long history of the Islamic community. They are, in fact, obituaries rather than biographies in the narrow technical sense, as individuals are mentioned in the year in which they had passed away. Nevertheless, the information provided by Ibn al-Imad in his entries is not at all different, though usually briefer, than what most of the other biographers offer in terms of structure and focus. As a source for the construction of Ottoman history, provincial or otherwise, Ibn al-Imad's *Shadharat* is not of great significance, since it generally does not contribute original information that cannot be found in other biographical dictionaries or chronicles, though it does reveal certain facts from other historical sources that are, at this time, either unpublished or altogether lost. But Ibn al-Imad is, in fact, the first to acknowledge his work's lack of "originality", as he writes that he had gathered all his information from "the *a'yan* of books and the books of the *a'yan*." He cites the work of Ibn Khallikan, among others, but does not make reference to any of the biographical dictionaries of the Ottoman period.<sup>168</sup> There is no doubt, though, that he used them extensively in his *Shadharat*, and there are recurrent attributions and quotes from Ibn Tulun's work in particular.

In his relatively brief introduction, Ibn al-Imad reveals that his stated purpose for compiling his voluminous history is simply to enable those who read it to derive moral values from the many examples of great men included in its pages. There is one more important feature of Ibn al-Imad's introduction. He acknowledges that what he engaged himself with was a work of history, but is unique among the biographers of *Bilad al-Sham* in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in that he provides religious justification for writing

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<sup>167</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 340

<sup>168</sup> Abi al-Falah 'Abdul-Hayy Ibn al-Imad al-Hanbali, *Shadharat al-Dhahab fi Akhbar man Dhahab* (Beirut, 1980), Vol. 1, p. 8, hereafter Ibn al-Imad, *Shadharat al-Dhahab*

*Shadharat*. In particular, the millennial historian notes that writing history is important for establishing the authority of *hadith* transmitters.<sup>169</sup> Such a statement was no doubt deemed necessary by Ibn al-Imad as he took the longest possible view of Muslim history, having gone back centuries and revisited the history of Islam in its formative stages, before the cultural and religious identity of the community was absolutely established and its intellectual debates settled to a satisfactory degree. Had Ibn al-Imad decided to produce a biographical dictionary dedicated to the notables of a generation or even a century, he would probably not have found it necessary to revert to the age-old religious justifications provided by the biographers of centuries past.

It is also noteworthy that Ibn al-Imad only writes of a handful of Pashas and other individuals serving the Ottoman temporal authorities in his entries on the 16<sup>th</sup> century; the dominance of religious scholars in his work is more noticeable than in any other biographical dictionary of the period. Ibn al-Imad, who was forced by the very nature of his work to adopt a more selective approach than other biographers (due to its massive size and long historical perspective) clearly manifested the common vision of the *'ulama'*: that they themselves were the essence of notability among the peoples of the Muslim *umma*, alongside whom only the most prominent of figures in worldly authority could feature. This, in any case, is confirmed by the overwhelming dominance of the classes of the learned in all biographical collections of the period in question.

c. Understanding Damascene Uniqueness in the World of Islamic Biographical Writing

At any rate, one can plainly recognize the significant degree of interconnectedness that existed in Syrian historical scholarship during the first two centuries of Ottoman rule. In his efforts to discover whether any salient features may be located in the contrast between an “Egyptian school” and a “Syrian school” of historical writing in Mamluk times, Li Guo informs us that the historians of *Bilad al-Sham* constituted an “extended network” of scholarship, which helped form broadly common conceptions of

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<sup>169</sup> Ibn al-Imad, *Shadharat al-Dhahab*, Vol. 1, p. 8

the world and similar styles and methods of historical writing.<sup>170</sup> Evidently, this is true of the Ottoman period as well, but it may be added that within the larger “extended network” of Syrian historians that Li referred to, there were unmistakably also two smaller “networks”, those of Aleppo and Damascus. The scale of the Damascene network of universalist historians was, however, markedly greater than that of the localist biographers of Aleppo. Burini was well-acquainted with members of the Ghazzi family, including the biographer himself; Ghazzi and Burini established a close relationship with Ahmad al-‘Ithawi, whose personal and professional influence on both men cannot be overstated. Ghazzi later instructed Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi’s father Fadlallah in the Traditions, and the latter both composed and edited biographical collections. Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi himself taught another biographer from the Ghazzi family and, finally, Ibn al-‘Imad exerted considerable influence on Muhibbi himself. Though there are some differences in style, methodology, and at times even approach and attitude between the Damascene biographers, there can be little doubt that, in the final analysis, they all belonged to a single tradition of universalist, cosmopolitan historiography, and in fact were the sole representatives of it during the Ottoman period.

This brings us to another question of considerable import: why was it that Damascene biographers were alone in their universalism among the scholars of *Bilad al-Sham* and, for that matter, those of the Ottoman Empire as a whole? The answer is to be sought in the distinct historical experiences of different Muslim urban centers. The differences in the histories of Damascus and Aleppo under the Islamic state are at once obvious and rather striking. The importance of Damascus in the history of Islam need not be elaborated at any great length; the historical prestige of the city lay partly, but far from exclusively, in its earlier status as the capital of the first Muslim dynasty, that of the Umayyad caliphs, and its long-standing importance as the starting point for the pilgrimage caravan to the Holy Cities. Aleppo, in fact, did not assume equal political or religious status with Damascus at any point in its history under the Islamic state, until the Ottoman period, when it at least obtained official administrative equality as an *eyalet* comprising much of northern Syria. And but for the Damascene governor

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<sup>170</sup> Li Guo, “Mamluk Historiographic Studies: The State of the Art”, *Mamluk Studies Review* 1 (1997), p. 26

Janbirdi al-Ghazali's revolt against the then newly-crowned Sultan Süleyman (1520), with the ostensible intention of resurrecting the Mamluk regime, Aleppo may never have acquired any measure of independence from Damascus as an Ottoman province in its own right.<sup>171</sup>

Even when Aleppo was named an *eyalet* of the Ottoman state, however, Damascene influence on the city was still considerable until at least the early part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Although the *Arabistan Defterdarı*, responsible also for the collection of revenue from Damascus, was positioned in Aleppo until 1567 when Damascus received its own *defterdar*, the Damascene janissary corps was still involved in the gathering of taxes from Aleppo itself.<sup>172</sup> On certain occasions during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, these janissaries wreaked significant havoc on Aleppo, having proven their military superiority over the local authorities in the city. Ottoman Pashas in Aleppo were effectively powerless to prevent a number of military takeovers of the city by the Damascene janissaries and their leaders who, upon returning from campaigns against such rebels as Kara Yazıcı in Anatolia, and others against the Safavids along the Eastern frontiers of the Empire, inflicted much moral and material damage on Aleppo and its inhabitants.<sup>173</sup> It was effectively not until the reign of the Kurdish chieftains from the Canbulad family, Hussein and 'Ali respectively, that the Aleppine administration managed to curb Damascene influence and, with 'Ali Canbulad in particular, overturn the previous state of affairs in Aleppo's favor, albeit for a brief period.

Another fundamental factor which indisputably allowed Damascene universalist historiography to flourish was the city's historical role as a leading proponent of religious orthodoxy in the Islamic lands. It is by now well-documented that upon Nur al-Din Zengi's entrance into the city in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Damascus began to project itself as the bastion of Sunni Muslim orthodoxy in the face of Fatimid heresy in Egypt and, equally important, Frankish "unbelief" as symbolized by the Latin Kingdoms established by the Crusaders.<sup>174</sup> During the reign of the Zengids and then the Ayyubids,

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<sup>171</sup> Bruce Masters, "Aleppo: the Ottoman Empire's Caravan City" in Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman & Bruce Masters, *The Ottoman City Between the East and West* (Cambridge, 1999) pp. 20-22, hereafter Masters, "Aleppo"

<sup>172</sup> Bakhit, "Aleppo and the Ottoman Military", p. 30

<sup>173</sup> See Bakhit, "Aleppo and the Ottoman Military", pp. 27-34

<sup>174</sup> N. Elisseeff, "Dimashk" in *EI2* (Brill Online)

Damascus was also the base of operations for Muslim aspirants to the recovery of Jerusalem and the expulsion of the “infidels” from what was previously Muslim territory. Certain circumstances in the history of Aleppo under Islam were of a noticeably divergent nature to the universalist, orthodox Sunni tale that Damascus weaved for itself through the centuries. In the early centuries of Muslim Empire, Aleppo was effectively on the periphery of the far-flung domains of the *Dar al-Islam*. Although Aleppo, and by extension all of Syria, was part of the territory that is termed the “central lands” of Islam, the city itself was situated on the boundaries between the domains of the believers and those of the arch-enemies of the early Muslims, namely the Byzantines. Far more seriously, it was Aleppo and not Damascus that flirted with Isma‘ili Shi‘ism for a not insignificant period of time under the Hamdanid regime, which made Aleppo its political center and its subject population overwhelmingly Shi‘ite.<sup>175</sup>

Damascus’ centuries-long self-image as the upholder of Muslim orthodoxy also allowed it to build for itself a hard-earned reputation as a preeminent center of learning and scholarship. The Damascene intellectual tradition remained strong throughout the Mamluk and Ottoman periods, and its position as the center for the *hajj* caravan without doubt made it an ideally suited location for the gathering of notable ‘*ulama*’ of the Muslim world and the discussion of matters that were of intra-confessional relevance, as well as the spread of various Sufi orders within the city itself.<sup>176</sup> Damascus duly received more non-Damascene ‘*ulama*’ as visitors and residents than Aleppo during the first two centuries of Ottoman rule, and this must have contributed to the relatively cosmopolitan outlook of the city’s indigenous intellectual elite.<sup>177</sup> Significantly, Damascus was also the Arab city in which the largest number of *Rumi* ‘*ulama*’ resided.<sup>178</sup> On the other hand, Aleppo was to a large extent “a city whose renown was vested neither in political nor cultural greatness, but in its trade.”<sup>179</sup> Writing in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi reported that, among other structures,

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<sup>175</sup> J. Sauvaget, “Halab” in *EI2* (Brill Online)

<sup>176</sup> Rafeq, “Qafilat al-Hajj al-Shami”, p. 210

<sup>177</sup> Abdul-Karim Rafeq, “Relations Between the Syrian ‘*Ulama*’ and the Ottoman State in the Eighteenth Century”, *Oriente Moderno* 79 (1999), p. 74, hereafter Rafeq, “Relations Between the Syrian ‘*Ulama*’...”

<sup>178</sup> Rafeq, “Relations Between the Syrian ‘*Ulama*’...”, p. 80

<sup>179</sup> Masters, “Aleppo”, p. 19

Aleppo had 61 mosques, 217 Qur'an schools, and 176 *tekkes*.<sup>180</sup> In comparison, according to Evliya, there existed around 800 mosques, 2100 *tekkes*, and 700 Qur'an schools in Damascus.<sup>181</sup> Although Evliya's figures are probably exaggerated, the proportional discrepancy between his figures for each city demonstrates Damascus' undoubted supremacy in *Bilad al-Sham* as the leading center of Islamic learning bar none. This is despite Aleppo's greater commercial pedigree, and its larger population, which modern scholarship has estimated at around 115,000 only a few years after Evliya's visit, making the city the third largest Ottoman metropolis after Istanbul and Cairo.<sup>182</sup>

The relationship involving the exchange of scholars between *Bilad al-Rum* and *Sham* was, of course, mutual, as several of the Damascene '*ulama*' also studied in some of the major Anatolian centers of learning, as well as Istanbul. Aleppo was by no means left out of the picture, and in fact, the percentage of Aleppine '*ulama*' who studied in the Ottoman capital was not less than that of the Damascene '*ulama*' who did the same, according to Abdul-Karim Rafeq's figures from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. But of course, as Rafeq himself indicates, this was at least partly due to Aleppo's relative proximity to the Ottoman capital.<sup>183</sup> Nevertheless such individuals, having been better-travelled than our Aleppine biographers, may have acquired a more universalist conception of history, the world around them, and indeed also their own selves as members of a far-flung Ottoman state and an even larger Muslim *umma*. Unlike some of their Damascene counterparts who developed such universalist outlooks, however, this undoubtedly sizeable section of the Aleppine '*ulama*', which included the abridger of Ibn Tulun's history Ibn al-Mulla among numerous others, does not seem to have taken an interest in the art of historical composition, which remained the exclusive sphere of local biographers. This matter may seem slightly perplexing when tackled within a purely Ottoman context, but can certainly be explained through a broader understanding of Islamic history and historiography. The bare fact remains that, long before the Ottoman conquest of *Bilad*

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<sup>180</sup> Masters, "Aleppo", pp. 35-36

<sup>181</sup> Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname* (Istanbul, 1985), Mümin Çevik (ed.), p. 107

<sup>182</sup> Andre Raymond, "The Population of Aleppo in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries According to Ottoman Census Documents", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, 4 (Cambridge, 1984), p. 455

<sup>183</sup> Rafeq, "Relations Between the Syrian '*Ulama*'...", p. 80

*al-Sham*, it was Damascus, not Aleppo, which alongside Cairo developed and sustained universalist biography as a distinct historiographical tradition. Cairo, despite its notorious past as capital of the heretical Fatimids, served as the center for the illustrious Ayyubid dynasty and later, of course, the Mamluk Sultans. Damascus was similarly a Muslim city with a proud political, cultural and intellectual history; Aleppo could simply not be compared to either of the two cities in these terms.

However, one can still raise another thought-provoking matter: given that Damascus was one of two pioneering examples of universalist biographical writing, why didn't the tradition "spill over" into Aleppo or other centers of Muslim historiography? Admittedly, this is a highly complicated question which one cannot hope to answer in a manner that is entirely satisfactory. Nevertheless, all evidence seems to indicate that historiographical traditions, insofar as they are biographical in nature, are indigenously invented rather than conceived as a result of outside influence(s). One might point to the early *tabaqat* literature of *hadith* scholars in order to refute this claim, but there are grave doubts as to whether that brand of writing was indeed consciously historical; history as an independent or semi-independent discipline came only with the early local biographers, who composed historical works dedicated to the towns or regions in which they resided, and the universalist school initiated by Ibn Khallikan in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. The cosmopolitan, universalist traditions of Cairo and Damascus emerged simultaneously; Cairene universalism did not "spill over" into Damascus, nor did the reverse occur, and the approach of the leading exponents of this joint Cairene-Damascene tradition was never adopted or imitated elsewhere in the Muslim world. Presumably, local biographical collections, having appeared during the waning of caliphal power, as well as being manifestations of local pride, were also independently conceived. There is no evidence that al-Khatib's history of Baghdad inspired Ibn 'Asakir to compose his work on Damascus; nor is there any acknowledgement by the Aleppine Ibn al-'Adim that Ibn 'Asakir was his forerunner. Traditions of biographical writing are therefore "invented", and once they are "invented" seem to be almost effortlessly perpetuated, as the local historiography of Aleppo and the universalism of Damascus demonstrate. Historiographical traditions may, on the other hand, disappear just as suddenly as they emerge; nowhere is this more evident than in Cairo after the passing of the Mamluk period.

A significant feature of the Arabic historiography of the Ottoman period is the relative paucity of Cairene biographical literature, both in comparison with the rich Damascene tradition and, even more tellingly, in contrast to the city's own historiographical heritage in Mamluk times. P.M. Holt's piece on the Arabic sources of 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Egypt, for instance, does not mention a single biographical dictionary,<sup>184</sup> nor does the more recent work of Michael Winter, specifically for the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>185</sup> In fact, modern scholars are largely dependent on Syrian, particularly Damascene, sources, in addition to Ottoman-Turkish sources, for the construction of Egyptian history during the early phase of Ottoman rule.<sup>186</sup> We now know that there are indeed a few Egyptian biographical dictionaries dating from at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but these are all of the local or restricted variety(s). The centennial dictionary, originally a Cairene creation, is from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards perpetuated as a tradition not by the Egyptians themselves, but rather by their Damascene counterparts. The art of universalism in biographical writing belongs exclusively to Damascene historians after the Ottoman conquest of the Arab lands. In their efforts to cover as wide a geographical scope as possible in their universalist dictionaries, Damascene historians often utilized written sources from other parts of the Empire, including several Egyptian works. For instance, we learn of a certain Badr al-Din al-'Ala'i al-Misri, an Egyptian historian whose work is now no longer extant, only from Ghazzi's *Kawakib*.<sup>187</sup> Ghazzi, whose universalist approach to historiography compels him to consult texts from different parts of the Ottoman Empire (if not quite the entire Muslim world), thereby reveals the existence of certain historical works, now lost, that can only be accessed through his own reproductions of them. We can ponder the nature of al-'Ala'i al-Misri's work only through what is preserved of it in Ghazzi's *Kawakib*, and Joseph Escovitz has

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<sup>184</sup> See P.M Holt, "Ottoman Egypt (1517-1798): An Account of Arabic Historical Sources" in *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt* (New York, 1968), pp. 3-12. To his credit, Holt does not claim to be listing *all* the sources, but his study is still almost comprehensive, as he mentions 18 historical works, many of which are still unpublished.

<sup>185</sup> See Michael Winter, "Ottoman Egypt, 1525-1609" in M.W. Daly (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Modern Egypt From 1517 to the End of the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 2, pp. 1-3

<sup>186</sup> See, for example, P.M Holt, *Egypt & The Fertile Crescent, 1516-1922: A Political History* (Cornell, 1966), and more recently, Michael Winter, *Egyptian Society Under Ottoman Rule, 1517-1798* (New York, 1992)

<sup>187</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 1, p. 5

concluded that it is a chronicle combined with obituaries (*wafayat*) of notables provided year-by-year.<sup>188</sup> As such, it is a semi-biographical work, but it is a significant fact that Ghazzi uses ‘Ala’i only for his entries on Egyptian notables, indicating that the historical work is most likely of a local nature.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century is almost no different; biographical dictionaries produced in Cairo exist, but they are noticeably restricted in scope, and like Ghazzi before him, Muhibbi, through his biographies of Egyptian notables, preserves some sketches of Cairene sources that are now lost. Among them is a certain Mudin al-Qawsuni’s biographical dictionary dedicated to Cairo’s ‘*ulama*’ class; others deal with the litterateurs and poets of the city. Muhibbi also utilizes the voluminous collection of al-Minawi, who wrote a history of Sufis from the rise of Islam to his own day. Whether our knowledge of Egyptian biographical writing during the first two centuries of Ottoman can lead us to a firm conclusion that the tradition had experienced a decline is a debatable issue. In terms of the level of output of the Cairene school of historiography, there can be little doubt that, during the period in question, the total number of historical works pales in comparison to the vast amount of literature produced in Mamluk times. This in itself may be taken as an element of decline, but what of the fading universalism in Egyptian biographical literature? Unlike the relatively straightforward task of enumerating the historical works produced in the Ottoman era and comparing those to the amount written during the reign of the Mamluk Sultans, the waning cosmopolitanism and universalism in Egyptian historiography after the Ottoman conquest cannot reasonably be termed “decline”, but rather a change in approach to historical writing. Cairo itself had experienced a “decline”, in a sense, having been superseded by Istanbul as capital of the universal Muslim state. But a political and military decline does not necessarily correlate with a similar decline in historiography; the fact that Cairo reverted to local and restricted biographical writing after the fall of the Mamluk Empire can only be explained by a shift in the focus of its historians, now eager to highlight the continued significance of their city and its notable individuals despite its political fall from grace.

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<sup>188</sup> See Joseph H. Escovitz, “A Lost Source for the History of Early Ottoman Egypt”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 97, 4 (1977), pp. 513-518

Other Arab regions likewise pale in comparison to the Damascene, and even Aleppine, schools of biographical writing in particular and historical writing in general. Judging by contemporary academic literature on Ottoman Palestine, for instance, an indigenous historiographical tradition seems to have been virtually non-existent in the first two centuries of Ottoman rule. Dror Ze'evi depends primarily on Ottoman documents for his study of the district of Jerusalem,<sup>189</sup> whereas Abdul-Karim Rafeq utilizes Damascene histories to construct the political history of the city, at least for the parts of relevance to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>190</sup> The first biographical dictionary composed in Jerusalem during the Ottoman period was completed well into the 18<sup>th</sup> century by a certain Hasan ibn 'Abd al-Latif, and this work was rather limited, containing a very small number of biographies. More importantly, this *Tarajim Ahl al-Quds fi al-Qarn al-Thani 'Ashar al-Hijri* (Biographies of the People of Jerusalem in the 12<sup>th</sup> Hijri Century) was produced solely for the Damascene centennial biographer Muradi's benefit, as the latter had several contacts in different locations within the Ottoman realms, and these correspondents supplied him with information on the events and local notables of the city or region in question.<sup>191</sup> Even the incomparable Egyptian historian 'Abdul-Rahman al-Jabarti initially took an interest in history as a mere informant for Muradi, before deciding to complete his own work after his master died.<sup>192</sup>

The Iraqi biographical dictionary of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries was similar to its Egyptian counterpart in the restrictedness, though not always the localism, of its composition. But while Cairo was the sole representative of Egyptian historiography, Iraq had three major centers of learning and scholarship in Basra, Najaf, and of course Baghdad. Needless to say, some Iraqi biographers were Shi'ites, and these had by the Ottoman period created their own sub-genres of biographical literature, notably the

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<sup>189</sup> See Dror Ze'evi, *An Ottoman Century: The District of Jerusalem in the 1600s* (New York, 1996)

<sup>190</sup> See Abdul Karim Rafeq, "The Political History of Ottoman Jerusalem" in Sylvia Auld & Robert Hillenbrand (eds.), *Ottoman Jerusalem, The Living City: 1517-1917* (Altajir World of Islam Trust, 2000), pp. 25-37

<sup>191</sup> Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "The 'Ulama' of Ottoman Jerusalem (16th-18th Centuries)", in Sylvia Auld & Robert Hillenbrand (eds.), *Ottoman Jerusalem, The Living City: 1517-1917* (Altajir World of Islam Trust, 2000), p. 46

<sup>192</sup> David Ayalon, "The Historian al-Jabarti and His Background", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 23, 2 (London, 1960), p. 224

dictionaries of *sayyids* (male descendants of the Prophet through the ‘Alid lineage).<sup>193</sup> Collections of *hadith* transmitters, by then constituting a generally defunct biographical tradition in other Muslim lands, were being compiled by Sunni and Shi‘ite scholars alike well into the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>194</sup> There is also an example of biographical writing that is devoted to litterateurs, compiled by a certain ‘Abd al-‘Ali b. Nasser (d. 1664), a native of Bahrain who spent the better part of his life in Basra.<sup>195</sup> Another noteworthy dictionary of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is ‘Abdul-Qadir b. ‘Umar al-Baghdadi’s (d. 1682) *Tarajim al-‘Ulama’* (Biographies of the Learned), the testimony of a well-travelled scholar who had been to Cairo, Damascus, and journeyed as far west as Edirne within the Ottoman realms.<sup>196</sup> In terms of their comprehensiveness in geographical scope, the Iraqi dictionaries were rather inclusive, but they are, in any case, examples of restricted biographical writing in terms of profession, and thus do not belong to a similar universalist tradition as that which existed in Damascus.

Ahmad ‘Ahdi (d. 1593), a native of Baghdad and a well-travelled individual, having wandered through Anatolia and spent some time in Istanbul, wrote his *Gülşen-i Şu‘ara* (Garden of Poets) in Ottoman-Turkish about the poets whom he met or knew by reputation through his travels. Individuals of different social status and occupation, including Vezirs and Sultans, were included in his dictionary, as the main criterion of selection was whether a person had written any poetry.<sup>197</sup> As a Baghdadi who spent the larger part of his life in his hometown, ‘Ahdi may be counted among the historians of Ottoman Iraq, but more generally he belonged to the central Ottoman tradition of biographical writing dedicated to poets, an obviously restricted sub-genre of historiography. (Whether this was indeed historiography is itself a questionable matter in any case.) The composition of biographical works on poets, a thriving tradition in early Classical Islam, was by now all-but extinct in Damascus, due perhaps to the development of a more universalist character in Damascene biography. Poets were well-represented in the universal dictionaries of Damascenes, and long passages of poetry

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<sup>193</sup> Imad Abdul-Salam Raouf, *Al-Tarikh wa’l Mu’arrikhun al-‘Iraqiyyun fi al-‘Asr al-‘Uthmani* (Baghdad, 1983), pp. 85-86, hereafter Raouf, *Al-Tarikh wa’l Mu’arrikhun al-‘Iraqiyyun*

<sup>194</sup> See Raouf, *Al-Tarikh wa’l Mu’arrikhun al-‘Iraqiyyun*, pp. 82-83 & 86-87

<sup>195</sup> Raouf, *Al-Tarikh wa’l Mu’arrikhun al-‘Iraqiyyun*, pp. 84-85

<sup>196</sup> Raouf, *Al-Tarikh wa’l Mu’arrikhun al-‘Iraqiyyun*, pp. 88-89

<sup>197</sup> Raouf, *Al-Tarikh wa’l Mu’arrikhun al-‘Iraqiyyun*, pp. 81-82

were often quoted in biographical entries, but the dedication of entire volumes to poets was no longer a common practice.

In the Ottoman center, on the other hand, the sub-genre of dictionaries dedicated to poets quickly became rather popular and thrived from about the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>198</sup> These writers of the *tezkeres*, from prominent urban centers such as Bursa, Edirne, and Istanbul itself among other locations, were evidently anxious to prolong their genre just as the localists of Aleppo and the universalists of Damascus demonstrated their passion for perpetuating their own brands of historical writing.<sup>199</sup> But Ottoman Istanbul, then with its recently acquired image as the center of a Muslim universe, did not create its own tradition of universalist biography. The closest the Ottoman center came to producing universalist biographical writing was the 16<sup>th</sup> century historian Taşköprüzade, though even his biographical dictionary, based at least on stated intent, focused almost exclusively on *'ulama'*.<sup>200</sup> It is significant that Istanbul in particular did not produce its own variety of cosmopolitan and universalist writing; this may be adduced to the fact that the great city by the Bosphorus was then relatively new to the world of Islam, even if it had assumed a position of paramountcy over a great number of Muslim dominions. One must not forget that, when the Ottomans triumphantly entered the Arab lands and overcame their last rivals for universal supremacy in the Sunni Muslim world during the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Istanbul had by then been under their rule for little more than half a century. More generally, the Ottoman center's cultivation of biographical collections dedicated to poets was doubtless part of an effort by Ottoman biographers to highlight an aspect (among many) of the cultural richness of the Empire.

Finally, and for once, we move beyond the Ottoman realms to that state's Eastern Frontiers. Persian biographical literature, while existent for centuries, similarly never assumed the universalist approach that the Damascene and Cairene traditions developed. Ann Lambton affirms that Persian biographical literature was "perhaps more

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<sup>198</sup> See J. Stew Art-Robinson, "The Ottoman Biographies of Poets", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 24, ½ (Chicago, 1965), pp. 57-74

<sup>199</sup> J. Stew Art-Robinson, "The Ottoman Biographies of Poets", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 24, ½ (Chicago, 1965), p. 65

<sup>200</sup> Barbara Flemming, Franz Babinger, Christine Woodhead, "Tashköprüzade" in *EI2* (Brill Online)

limited in scope than its Arabic counterpart”, and that the tradition did not include any authors who resembled the comprehensive approach of the likes of Ibn Khallikan.<sup>201</sup> Rather, biographical dictionaries in Persian were at all times restricted to certain social or occupational groups, including Sufis and poets, but an almost inordinate proportion of them were dedicated to Shi‘ite religious figures.<sup>202</sup> Such was the case even before the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when the new Safavid sovereigns started working towards the establishment of doctrinal uniformity in the lands of the old Persian Empire. The Persian tradition also included several examples of local historiography, a genre which was perpetuated for centuries.<sup>203</sup> This is in stark contrast to the Sunni universalism of certain strands of Arabic historical thought, and may be considered to represent a localist attitude adopted by the vast majority of Persian scholars. It also indicates the pride, conscious or otherwise, of the Persian intellectual elite in the glories of the pre-Muslim past, before their age-old civilization was superseded by the Muslim empire,<sup>204</sup> which at least in theory represented a more universally-oriented culture. At first, that “other” civilization that had absorbed Persia into the lands of Islam was distinctly Arab in terms of its political, military, and intellectual elite. The growth of localism in Persian historiography can therefore also reasonably be attributed to a historical memory of the *shu‘ubiyya*<sup>205</sup> in the early centuries of Islam. In any event, it can now clearly be observed that Damascus stood alone in the Ottoman period as the only major Muslim urban center among countless others to have developed and sustained a biographical tradition that was universalist and cosmopolitan in vision and scope.

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<sup>201</sup> Ann Lambton, “Persian Biographical Literature” in Bernard Lewis & P.M Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), p. 141, hereafter Lambton, “Persian Biographical Literature”

<sup>202</sup> Lambton, “Persian Biographical Literature”, p. 142

<sup>203</sup> Lambton, “Persian Biographical Literature”, p. 144

<sup>204</sup> Lambton, “Persian Biographical Literature”, p. 142

<sup>205</sup> The *Shu‘ubiyya* was an early movement in Islam denying the privileged position of the Arabs in Muslim society; See S. Enderwitz, “Shu‘ubiyya” in *EI2* (Brill Online)

## **Part II.**

### **A.**

#### **Ottoman Lives, Arabic Portraits: Situating Syrian Biographical Literature in an Ottoman Context**

The distinct natures of biographical writing in Aleppo and Damascus are patently clear, and the contrasting historical visions of the two cities' leading intellectuals are also no less apparent. A question of greater difficulty arises, however, and that is the connection between established historiographical realities and the self-identification of their leading exponents. It can be taken as given that the identification with a Muslim *umma*, as a self-evident truth and as a spiritual rather than geographical entity, was of similarly utmost importance in the minds of all biographers, as they were themselves members of the learned elite in Muslim society. This becomes obvious when considering the predominance of the historians' own kind (the '*ulama*') in the biographical dictionaries. But the *umma*, more specifically as a *Dar al-Islam* (House of Islam), existed equally as a geographically limited area where the rule and law of Islam prevailed, and stretched from India in the east to the Maghreb in the west. It is with this geographical, as distinct from spiritual, "House of Islam" that the Damascene universalists felt a markedly greater association than their Aleppine localist counterparts. Evidence for this is the great effort exerted by Damascene historians of the universalist tradition to gather information on notable men (and less often women) from remote areas within the *Dar al-Islam*, areas which the biographers had never visited (ex. Persia and Western North Africa) and with which they had never shared a similar

historical experience as part of the same Muslim state (India). Biographies of individuals from those distant lands include entries not only on their '*ulama*' classes, but also rulers and, somewhat infrequently, state bureaucrats and administrators. By contrast, Aleppine historians made a conscious effort to exclude notable individuals within the *umma* who had never at least entered Aleppo itself, let alone the Ottoman realms or the greater *Bilad al-Sham* region.

It is important for us to determine the levels of identification which the biographers chose for themselves, in terms not of culture or religion, for which the answer would be obvious, but rather geography. More specifically, what we are most concerned with here is situating our biographers, and some of the individuals on whom they wrote in their dictionaries, within an Ottoman setting, if that is indeed possible. It must be stressed that the exercise here is not concerned with establishing whether there was a high degree of *loyalty* to the Ottoman *state*, a matter which can and has been easily answered in the affirmative, but rather the extent of the biographers' (and some of their subjects') *belonging* to an Ottoman *world*. In attempting to offer some insight, albeit slightly inconclusive, to this question, some key themes must be addressed. Paramount among them is the discourse(s) on the Ottoman state and dynasty, particularly the language and terminology used to portray and describe the Sultans and the Empire as well as, on occasion, the capital city Istanbul. Also important are biographies of certain members of the Ottoman bureaucratic and religious elite, both provincial and central, as well as lesser men of non-Arab extraction; these may help us establish general patterns of representation and reveal some principles through which the biographers judged the subjects of their historical works. Ethnic awareness and prejudice in the biographies of both Turkish-speaking and Arabic-speaking individuals will also be discussed. Finally, accounts of Arabic-speaking travelers to the lands of the Ottoman center, and Turkish-speaking *Rumis* going the other way, will be investigated. The themes explored will allow us to shed greater light on the extent of the historians' (and other Arabic-speaking individuals') mental integration in an Ottoman world and state.

1. *From Rulers of Rum to Masters of Islam: Images of Sultan and State*

Apart from the biographies of his “masters and peers” in the fields of Muslim scholarship, who constitute the main purpose of *Mut‘at al-Adhhan*, the Damascene Ibn Tulun writes on no more than a handful of provincial governors, but finds it necessary to write on the two longest-reigning and most famous Mamluk sultans of his lifetime (Qaitbay and Qansuh al-Ghawri) and, strangely, Tahmasp I the Safavid Shah, who is instantly and derogatorily referred to as a “Kharijite heretic” (*al-khariji al-mulhid*).<sup>206</sup> Most importantly, Ibn Tulun gives a biographical sketch of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II, but chooses not to write on any of his successors (three of whom reigned during Ibn Tulun’s lifetime).

It is a significant point that Ibn Tulun chose to write comparatively lengthy biographies of the two Mamluk Sultans, but only a few lines on Mehmed the “Conqueror,” and nothing at all about the latter’s successors Bayezid II, Selim I and Süleyman I. In his chronicle *Mufakahat al-Khillan*, the Damascene historian offered a mostly sober assessment of the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk domains, and if anything seemed to look more favorably upon the Ottomans while condemning certain practices of the Mamluks, such as their pillaging of Syrian villages while heading to the field of battle at Marj Dabiq.<sup>207</sup> His decision to include Qaitbay and Ghawri is understandable, however, as they had ruled over the biographer’s native Damascus for the longest period among the Mamluk Sultans of his lifetime, and were also perceived as the most prominent. His choice of Mehmed II *alone* among Ottoman Sultans, however, requires some explanation. The selection of Mehmed II is itself obvious, the exclusion of his successors, in particular Selim and Süleyman, less so. Mehmed II was a natural choice: a “*mujahid, murabit*” (both essentially meaning holy warrior, with *murabit* often also connoting “frontier warfare”),<sup>208</sup> and the conqueror of Constantinople, the last vestige of Eastern Christian power, and a city that had eluded capture since the very early days of Islam. Yet there is a strikingly erroneous detail that

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<sup>206</sup> Ibn Tulun, *Mut‘at al-Adhhan*, Vol. 2, p. 311

<sup>207</sup> See Shams al-Din Ibn Tulun; *Mufakahat al-Khillan fi Hawadith al-Zaman* (Cairo, 1964), 2 Vols.

<sup>208</sup> Ibn Tulun, *Mut‘at al-Adhhan*, Vol. 2, p. 709

Ibn Tulun adds to his short biography of Fatih: “After him, his son Bayezid, known as *Yıldırım*, meaning thunderbolt, assumed power.”<sup>209</sup>

Of course, Bayezid II was not known as *Yıldırım*; that was the title of an earlier Sultan by the same name, and the reign of this *Yıldırım* Bayezid I ended a full 80 years before Bayezid II ascended to the throne. This factual blunder leaves Ibn Tulun’s reader in a state of complete bewilderment at the extent of his (lack of) knowledge of Ottoman affairs. The Ottoman state and dynasty seems, to Ibn Tulun’s mind, not only remote, but almost irrelevant, judging by his sheer ignorance of even the most basic historical facts. The term *murabit*, which Ibn Tulun used to describe Mehmed II, is quite likely also an indication of the perceived distance and remoteness of the Ottoman Sultan, since a *murabit* is a person who engages in *ribat*, a term that often denotes the engagement not merely in regular *jihad* (holy war), but holy war *at the frontier*.<sup>210</sup> At any rate, the Damascene biographer’s poor state of knowledge when it came to the Ottoman world, as manifested in *Mut‘at al-Adhhan*, appears also to have been combined with a general lack of interest, which explains his exclusion of Selim I and Süleyman I from the dictionary, despite the fact that the former passed through Ibn Tulun’s hometown on two occasions during his campaigns against the Mamluks. We do know that, at some later point, Ibn Tulun did indeed develop a keener interest in the Ottoman dynasty, dedicating a biographical collection to its Sultans, a work that is now lost. One wonders, however, whether the Damascene historian committed similar errors of fact in that volume as the one he made in connection to Mehmed II.

Ibn Tulun cannot, however, be taken to represent the general Damascene or even Arab outlook towards the new rulers in terms of his apparent lack of knowledge and interest, even at that very early stage. Ibn Tulun’s Damascene contemporary, Badr al-Din al-Ghazzi, the father of the biographer Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi, took a trip to *Rum* as early as the 1520’s and left a travelogue recording his experiences, in which he offers a generally very flattering picture of the lands of the Ottoman center.<sup>211</sup> The late 17<sup>th</sup> century millennial biographer Ibn al-‘Imad also reveals that there was apparently some

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<sup>209</sup> Ibn Tulun, *Mut‘at al-Adhhan*, Vol. 2, p. 709

<sup>210</sup> For more on the term *ribat* and its various nuances, see J. Chabbi, “Ribat” in *EI2* (Brill Online)

<sup>211</sup> An unpublished manuscript of this travelogue can still be found in Köprülü Library in Istanbul; ms. No. 1390

Arab interest in the Ottoman state and dynasty long before the Ottomans acquired their status as unrivalled masters of the Muslim world. According to Ibn al-Imad, Shihab al-Din Ahmad b. al-Hussein of Mecca (d. 926/1519-20) composed a treatise dedicated to Bayezid II, in which he offered eulogies of praise to the Sultan.<sup>212</sup> This is a slightly unusual case, not least because there is no indication that Shihab al-Din ever travelled to *Rum*, or even left Mecca, where he eventually died and was buried. Nevertheless, it confirms that there was, in certain circles, an interest in the world of the *Rumis* prior to the Ottoman takeover of the central lands of Islam.

Ibn al-‘Imad offers more biographies of Arabic-speaking ‘*ulama*’ who exemplify a relatively early Arab interest in the Ottoman world. In his *Shadharat*, we find some examples of ‘*ulama*’ from *Bilad al-Sham* who went on fruitful journeys to *Rum* before the Ottoman conquest. An outstanding case, ‘Ala’addin ‘Ali (d. 901/1495-96), known as al-‘Arabi, was an Aleppine scholar who spent many years in the lands of the Ottoman center, learning and teaching in Edirne, before finally passing away in Istanbul.<sup>213</sup> There are even individuals from Arabic-speaking regions which were never officially part of the Ottoman realms but nevertheless chose to explore the Ottoman lands, seemingly out of pure curiosity. One such example is ‘Ali b. Maymun of Fas (d. 917/1511-12), who passed through Mamluk Egypt and Syria on his way to *Rum*, where he settled in Bursa for some time, finally dying in *Bilad al-Sham* on his way back to the Maghreb. He composed a travelogue in which the details of his journey were recorded, according to Ibn al-‘Imad. ‘Ali b. Maymun’s biographer also reveals that he “did not acquire fame for his knowledge and wisdom until he reached Hamah (in Syria) upon his return from the lands of *Rum* (*Bilad al-Rum*).”<sup>214</sup> Although Ibn al-‘Imad does not indicate why this was the case, there is an implication in his statement that the Ottoman region of *Rum* was already quite respected for its intellectual tradition in Syria even before the coming of the Ottomans.

Indeed, there is also a clear effort by this universalist biographer to include several *Rumi* and Ottoman individuals who had, crucially, lived *before* the Ottoman conquest of Syria, the vast majority of whom were unsurprisingly ‘*ulama*’. This is significant

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<sup>212</sup> Ibn al-Imad, *Shadharat al-Dhahab*, Vol. 8, p. 141

<sup>213</sup> Ibn al-Imad, *Shadharat al-Dhahab*, Vol. 8, p. 5

<sup>214</sup> Ibn al-Imad, *Shadharat al-Dhahab*, Vol. 8, p. 82

because the earlier dictionary of Ibn Tulun, a contemporary of those *Rumis* on whom Ibn al-‘Imad wrote, had not demonstrated similar interest in the scholars of *Rum*. This is surely related to the nature of Ibn Tulun’s work, which is of course predominantly localist in scope and essence, but may also indicate the greater mental integration that Damascene ‘*ulama*’ experienced in the next century as part of a greater Ottoman world. In Ibn al-‘Imad’s millennial history, *Rumis* are recognized not simply as a minor or secondary part of a far-flung Muslim community, but as an important constituent of the *umma* even before the Ottomans’ expansion into the Arabic-speaking world.

The examples of Badr al-Din al-Ghazzi in Damascus, ‘Ala’addin al-‘Arabi in Aleppo and Shihab al-Din Ahmad in Mecca indicate that, to some Arabic-speaking elites, the Ottoman Empire was not an entirely remote or alien entity, and that they themselves had (or would have had, in the case of al-‘Arabi) little difficulty in being integrated in it once Selim I’s forces successfully conquered their lands of origin. ‘Ali b. Maymun’s case is itself quite interesting, as he visited *Rum* well before Ottoman troops came within touching distance of his homeland, and even received the benefits of *Rumi* scholarship during his journey.

There is, however, a second important feature in Ibn Tulun’s biography of Mehmed II; one of the terms used to describe the Ottoman Sultan is “the Sultan of the lands (or country) of *Rum* (*sultan bilad al-rum*).”<sup>215</sup> In *Kawakib*, Ghazzi uses the synonymous term “the Sultan of *Rum* (*sultan al-rum*)” to describe Bayezid II,<sup>216</sup> but to no other Ottoman Sultan is the same term applied in Ghazzi’s first dictionary, nor does it appear at a single point in his second biographical work *Lutf al-Samar*. It is known that the Ottomans themselves described their Sultans as *Sultan-i Rum*, a Persianized equivalent of the Arabic *sultan al-rum*, serving to indicate Ottoman mastery over the territories of the defunct Byzantine (and therefore Roman, from which *Rum* derives) Empire. Thus the branding of the House of Osman as Sultans of *Rum* is necessarily considered an indication of the dynasty’s prestige; in the Arabic *sultan al-rum*, however, the term assumes a second meaning, which is not contradictory to the first but not as flattering either. In Ghazzi’s *Kawakib*, all Ottoman Sultans after Bayezid II are described as “Sultans of Islam”; the implication by Ghazzi here is that, while the

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<sup>215</sup> Ibn Tulun, *Mut‘at al-Adhhan*, Vol. 2, p. 709

<sup>216</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 1, p. 122

Sultans of his lifetime certainly represented the entire Muslim *umma*, Bayezid is merely recognized as the sovereign of a realm that is both territorially designated and spatially (as well as spiritually) limited. The significantly more exalted title of later Sultans as sovereigns of Islam certainly surely has to do with the Ottoman conquest of the Arab lands, and more specifically their newly assumed status as protectors of the Holy Shrines of Islam, which to Ghazzi gave the Ottomans a universal Muslim appeal that they had previously lacked. Indeed, under Selim I, the Ottoman state becomes “The Muslim Sultanate (*al-saltana al-Islamiyya*)”.<sup>217</sup> This is in direct contrast to the Mamluks, who are never referred to as such by Ghazzi or even earlier historians of the 16<sup>th</sup> century like Ibn al-Hanbali or Ibn Tulun.

Bayezid II, the subject of another biography by Ibn al-‘Imad, is again described by the latter as “*Sultan al-Rum*”.<sup>218</sup> In *Shadharat*, Selim I is also described as “the king (*malik*) of *Rum*,” but only in the biography of the penultimate Mamluk Sultan Qansuh al-Ghawri, and in the context of the second Mamluk-Ottoman war.<sup>219</sup> That Selim is given this title in his adversary’s biography is understandable because the Ottoman dynasty, before vanquishing the Mamluks, had not yet acquired the right or privilege of considering itself the sole Muslim power with universal appeal. In Selim I’s own biography, however, the House of Osman is viewed rather differently; no longer was its rule regarded as territorially restricted to *Rum*, but rather came to be seen as a “house (i.e. the House of Osman) on which the foundations of the Muslim Sultanate were raised by God.”<sup>220</sup>

Only in the works of Ibn Tulun, Ghazzi, and Ibn al-‘Imad are Ottoman Sultans ever referred to simply as rulers of *Rum*, and this invariably occurs in a historical context *preceding* the Ottoman conquest of the Arab lands. Abdul-Karim Rafeq is therefore mistaken in his assertion that *sultan al-rum* was a designation consistently applied to all Ottoman Sultans after 1516. He is correct, however, in indicating that, while Mamluk rulers were frequently referred to as “our Sultan (*sultanuna*),” their Ottoman successors did not receive the same label. As Rafeq himself explains, “the

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<sup>217</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 1, p. 208

<sup>218</sup> Ibn al-Imad, *Shadharat al-Dhahab*, Vol. 8, p. 86

<sup>219</sup> Ibn al-Imad, *Shadharat al-Dhahab*, Vol. 8, p. 114

<sup>220</sup> Ibn al-Imad, *Shadharat al-Dhahab*, Vol. 8, p. 143

reason, it seems, is that the Mamluk Sultan... was more visible locally. He governed from the capital in Cairo, visited Syria on occasion, defended the country, and died and was buried in it. The Ottomans, by contrast, for the first time in Arab-Islamic history transferred the seat of power outside the Arab world, to Istanbul.”<sup>221</sup> While it appears true that Ottoman Sultans seemed more alien to their Syrian-Arab subjects than the Mamluks, it is by the same token not unreasonable to suggest that the Ottoman dynasty, to its Syrian-Arab biographers, held greater Islamic prestige. In the dictionaries of Ghazzi, Ibn Tulun and Ibn al-‘Imad, Mamluk Sultans are nowhere referred to as “Sultans of Islam,” an honorific denoting universality that was given only to the Ottomans, and also frequently used by other biographers such as Burini, Muhibbi, and the Aleppine ‘Urdu. Other complimentary phrases were coined or recycled by the Syrian biographers to describe their rulers. On one occasion, Burini refers to Ahmed I as “the king of kings of all the lands (*malik mulook al-anam*)”, while his predecessor Mehmed III earns the title “servitor of the Two Holy Cities (*khadim al-Haramayn al-Sharifayn*)” in Ghazzi’s *Lutf al-Samar*, and is in fact the only Sultan in all Syrian biographical collections of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries to receive it.<sup>222</sup>

Ottoman Sultans are also often referred to as *al-Sultan al-A‘zam* (the greatest or most exalted Sultan) as distinct from merely *al-Sultan al-‘Azim* (simply great or exalted Sultan), a term reserved for other, lesser Muslim sovereigns such as rulers in the Indian subcontinent and the Maghreb. This is particularly the case in Muhibbi’s *Khulasat al-Athar*. The designation of the Ottoman Sultan as a *Sultan A‘zam* naturally stems from the dominant position of the Ottomans among other Muslim states, but can also be regarded as a conscious acknowledgment by the biographers that they were situated within the Ottoman realms and an Ottoman world. It is inconceivable that historians writing in other Muslim states would have used the term *Sultan al-A‘zam* in reference to the rulers of the Ottoman Empire. The transformation of the Ottoman Sultans’ image from rulers of a specific region called *Rum* and a particular people (*Rumis*) to sovereigns of a universal community of Islam in the eyes of their Arabic-speaking

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<sup>221</sup> Rafeq, “Relations Between the Syrian ‘*Ulama*’...”, p. 87

<sup>222</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 153. Needless to say, this does not mean that the other Sultans were not considered to have held the same title, but only in Ghazzi’s biography of Mehmed III does it appear.

biographers was, thus, achieved in as little or even less time than the Ottoman state's own rise from obscurity as an Anatolian *beylik* to a major Mediterranean power.

Apart from the language and discourse used to depict the Ottoman Sultans, there is not much information that is of great interest in their biographies, nor do these biographies add much to our knowledge of the Sultans' lives or reigns. The biographers, however, focus on certain themes in their portraits of the ultimate sovereigns of Islam. All Sultans are depicted, quite naturally, as pious and committed Muslims; a reader of the biographical dictionaries would scarcely notice any signs of one Sultan seeming less virtuous or morally-guided than any of his predecessors and successors. The Sultans' patronage and construction of religious foundations and the treatment of the *'ulama'* class of Istanbul (always positive) are also commonly discussed, but again one would be hard-pressed to detect any significant differences in the portrayals of the different Sultans' custodianship of pious institutions. When a Sultan is known to have been an avid poet, that is sometimes mentioned and, on occasion, their poetry is cited and even discussed (always flatteringly). Due to the relative concision of his entries, the millennial biographer Ibn al-'Imad appears less interested in the Ottoman Sultans' poetry than the likes of Ghazzi and especially Muhibbi, the latter of whom generally provides the greatest amount of detail in his biographies.

The Sultans' military exploits or, otherwise, the successful conquests accomplished in their names (when Sultans were in fact not active participants in military campaigns) also receive special attention. In an article on the Damascene biographer Ghazzi, Michael Winter rightly indicates the peculiarity behind this historian's neglect of Süleyman I's military campaigns in the latter's biography in *Kawakib*. Winter writes on Ghazzi's biography of Sultan Süleyman: "his campaigns are not mentioned, which can be taken as an indication for the extent that Ghazzi was obsessed with religious considerations to the exclusion of almost everything else."<sup>223</sup> It is of course rather evident that Ghazzi's emphasis in *Kawakib* as in *Lutf al-Samar* was on religious matters, but this does not distinguish him greatly from the other biographers, with the possible exception of Burini, whose close relations with Ottoman bureaucrats in Damascus gave the temporal authorities greater representation in *Tarajim*

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<sup>223</sup> Winter, "al-Gazzi"; p. 2

*al-A'yan* than in other dictionaries. But more seriously, Winter fails to note that Ghazzi's inattention to Süleyman's campaigns represent an exceptional lapse, rather than a general pattern of emphasis which the Damascene biographer followed in his entries. This becomes evident in the biographies of other Sultans in both *Kawakib* and *Lutf al-Samar*. For instance, the only aspect of Mehmed III's tenure as Sultan that Ghazzi elaborates on in some length is his achievement on the field of battle against Christian armies in the West.<sup>224</sup> As for the similarly brief biography of Ahmed I, Ghazzi identifies the Ottomans' defeat of some *Celali* rebels among the principal achievements during that Sultan's reign.<sup>225</sup> And as Michael Winter himself indicates, Selim I was admired for his accomplishments in the field of battle, particularly his defeat of the Shi'i Safavids.<sup>226</sup>

One last point seems worthy of note in the context of the Syrian scholars' biographies of Ottoman Sultans. It is significant that the Damascene Muhammad Khalil al-Muradi, writing in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, does not include a single Ottoman Sultan in his centennial biographical collection. And yet he chose to include a Muslim sovereign in the remote lands of the Indian sub-continent in the dictionary.<sup>227</sup> Quite naturally, this indicated the growing irrelevance of the authorities in the Ottoman capital with the gradual rise of certain centrifugal tendencies and the semi-autonomous status achieved by the 'Azm family in the province of Damascus, which had been dominated by it since the 1720s. As such, Muradi manifests an ostensibly localist sentiment within a universalist historiographical framework; the historical worldview of the Damascene intellectual elite had not changed, but its attitude (or at least that of one of its major exponents) towards matters of a more specific nature was being slowly transformed as local forces successfully consolidated their power in the city. We are of course not directly concerned with Muradi, whose biographical work clearly reflects a period of historical change in Damascus during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but his example sheds some light on our own biographers, particularly the universalists among them. Although it is difficult, with any degree of precision, to determine the extent of the Damascene historians' integration into an Ottoman world solely through their depictions of their

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<sup>224</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, pp. 153-155

<sup>225</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 273

<sup>226</sup> Winter, "al-Gazzi"; p. 2

<sup>227</sup> Rafeq, "Relations Between the Syrian 'Ulama'...", p. 87

sublime sovereigns, it is nevertheless clear that they had a greater feeling of belonging to the Empire than their successor Muradi by mere virtue of having included Sultans in their biographical collections. And they, of course, played a not insignificant role in perpetuating the Ottoman dynasty's image as a legitimately universal Muslim line of rulers, nobly and virtuously serving the *Dar al-Islam*, over which they reigned supreme.

In direct correspondence to the transformed image of the House of Osman from Sultans of *Rum* to universal Muslim sovereigns, discourses on the Ottoman state and capital equally stressed the universality of the state and eulogized the imperial city. The special religious significance of Istanbul, then a relatively newly emergent reality, and one which would have been unthinkable only decades earlier, is clearly manifest in Ibn al-Hanbali's and Ghazzi's works, the latter repeatedly referring to the imperial city as *Islambol*, a term he must have picked up while on his journeys in *Rum*. Ghazzi's father Badr al-Din, an even earlier observer and a visitor to the city, repeatedly refers to Istanbul as "glorious/much exalted Constantinople (*Qustantiniyya al-'Uzma*)" in his travelogue.<sup>228</sup> Also in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, 'Urdu describes Istanbul as "the home of the Sunni Sultanate (*dar al-saltana al-sunniyya*)",<sup>229</sup> a tribute to both dynasty and capital city, while Muhibbi uses the term "*Dar al-Khilafa*," literally meaning the house or home of the caliphate, in reference to Istanbul, where he spent 5 years. That the Ottoman capital is, at this relatively early stage, regarded as the home of a universal caliphate by an Arabic-speaking observer, is quite significant.<sup>230</sup> No less important is 'Urdu's designation of the city as a "home" for a universal, Sunni dynasty, particularly considering 'Urdu's defamatory attitude towards the Shi'ites and Druzes in his dictionary.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> See Badr al-Din al-Ghazzi; *Al-Matali' al-Badriyya fi al-Manazim al-Rumiyya*; ms. no. 1390; Köprülü Kütüphanesi, Istanbul

<sup>229</sup> 'Urdu, *Ma'adin al-Dhahab*, p. 69. There is a distinct possibility that *sunniyya* may in fact be *saniyya*, meaning brilliant/splendid. It is unfortunately quite impossible to draw definitive conclusions from the context in which the phrase occurs, but in any case the word *saniyya* would be no less flattering than *sunniyya*.

<sup>230</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 12

<sup>231</sup> See, for instance, biographies of the Druze Abu Bakr al-Armanazi in *Ma'adin al-Dhahab*, pp. 65-68, and the Twelver Shi'ite Baha' al-Din al-'Amili, pp. 287-292. Despite his personal relations with some members of the Shi'ite community in Aleppo, 'Urdu, as Shafi'i *mufti* in his hometown Aleppo, was clearly intolerant of the creeds and practices of heterodox and heretical sects in Islam.

‘Urđi was just as vocal in his praise for the state, using such expressions as “the Ottoman state, may God uphold its authority till the end of days”<sup>232</sup> and, when speaking of the House of Osman, wishing that “god preserve their rule for all eternity.”<sup>233</sup> Admittedly, it is difficult to assess whether such phrases as those in ‘Urđi’s and other biographical dictionaries are in fact mere expressions of loyalty or actual manifestations of a feeling of belonging in an Ottoman setting. As these and other eulogistic phrases appear frequently in several historical sources of the period in question, distinguishing those among them that may be effective statements of self-identification from others that are not much more than simple flattery is far from a straightforward task. In the specific case of ‘Urđi, it would be exceedingly difficult to accept that the Aleppine biographer, having never left his hometown and possessing relatively little knowledge of the outside world, could identify with a broader Ottoman world, though that is still not entirely impossible. Nevertheless, the mere inclusion of such expressions in the biographical dictionaries is itself significant.

When referring to the position of *mufti* in Istanbul, ‘Urđi’s Aleppine predecessor Ibn al-Hanbali feels forced to correct himself when initially naming it “*mufti* of the *Rumi* dominions (*mufti al-mamalik al-Rumiyya*),” adding the phrase: “or rather, the *mufti* of the Muslim dominions (*mufti al-mamalik al-Islamiyya*).”<sup>234</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali’s self-correction is an apt demonstration of the shifting discourse on the Ottomans in Syrian historical sources of the 16<sup>th</sup> century; the Aleppine biographer recognizes the universality of the state and its chief religious officer, the *mufti* of Istanbul, while bringing to mind memories of a bygone era, when that same prestigious position in the Ottoman realms could not boast universal Muslim appeal. Muhibbi, writing over a century later, also refers to a number of *muftis* of Istanbul as “*mufti al-mamalik al-Islamiyya*,” which importantly indicates that Arab ‘*ulama*’ were not only resigned, but readily acceptant, of the Turkish-speaking *Rumis*’ dominance of the highest positions in the Ottoman religious hierarchy.

Another important point relates to the Ottoman state (*dawla*) which, along with its ruling dynasty, acquired universal Muslim appeal after the Ottoman conquest of Syria

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<sup>232</sup> ‘Urđi, *Ma‘adin al-Dhahab*, p. 313

<sup>233</sup> ‘Urđi, *Ma‘adin al-Dhahab*, p. 332

<sup>234</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab*, Vol. 2, p. 604

and Egypt in 1516-17. Prior to the conquest, the Ottoman state was never referred to in terms denoting universality, but rather as a “*dawla rumiyya*” (*Rumi state*) or “*mamlaka rumiyya*” (*Rumi kingdom*). Allusions to a “*Rumi state*,” a “*Rumi kingdom*” or even a “*dawla turkiyya*” (*Turkish state*) can still be found, particularly in Ghazzi’s *Kawakib*, in reference to the Ottoman state *after* its successful takeover of the Arab lands, but they are few and not as consistently used by the biographers as descriptions of the Ottoman state as, for example, “*al-dawla al-jarkasiyya*” (literally “the Circassian state”) is in connection with the Mamluk state. When the term *dawla* is used, at any rate, it does not always denote “state”, but often may also mean “turn,” indicating the turn in power of a specific group, dynasty, or even people (in this case “Turks” or “Circassians”).<sup>235</sup> This is evidently the case when biographers use the term “*dawla rumiyya*,” in which they aim to demonstrate that the historical epoch they are describing is the “period” or “turn” of the *Rumis*.

## 2. *Of Vice and Virtue*

There are a number of entries in the biographical collections, Damascene and Aleppine alike, which epitomize the biographers’ approach to the assessment and characterization of notable individuals in their works, either as possessors of features that are praise-worthy or, otherwise, men whose qualities could only be regarded as derogatory. These allow the reader to draw certain conclusions concerning the general outlook of the biographers and the attributes that they themselves regarded as necessary for the portrayal of individuals in a positive or negative light. Some common themes do appear, notably the administration of justice (or lack thereof) by provincial or district governors as well as Ottoman judges. Another, related and complementary to but not identical with the first, concerns the proper exercise of worldly power, be it morally-guided or corrupt and oppressive. A recurrent theme in all biographical dictionaries concerns the treatment of the ‘*ulama*’ classes, in Ottoman Syria as in other regions of the Ottoman and Muslim worlds, by rulers and state bureaucrats. At times there are even discussions of the piety of individuals serving in the structures of temporal

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<sup>235</sup> For more on the term *dawla*, see Bernard Lewis, “Devlet and Hükümet” in *Political Words and Ideas in Islam* (Princeton, 2007), pp. 3-10

authority. Below is a select group of examples, mostly individuals from Ottoman administrative circles, which typify the major characteristics of vice and virtue discussed by the biographers, but some, particularly those in which the individual in question is negatively treated, are also among the most interesting and thought-provoking entries offered in the biographical collections.

Ibrahim Pasha (d. 1013/1604-1605), known as Hacı for his noted piety, was first a *defterdar* and later a *beylerbeyi* in Aleppo. His greatest achievement was apparently the expulsion of Damascene janissaries wreaking havoc in Aleppo and its countryside, an accomplishment which his Aleppine biographer ‘Urđi predictably applauds. Hacı Ibrahim Pasha was apparently most reputed for his sense of justice and righteousness, however; according to ‘Urđi, Ibrahim Pasha himself presided over several court cases, to the point that “during his time, the judge’s doors were shut.”<sup>236</sup> Evidently, the Ottoman *qadi* of the time, Muzaffer Efendi, was no longer needed, nor was he consulted by the governor of Aleppo, a situation that was greatly unusual, and probably without precedent, in the history of Ottoman Syria. The people of Aleppo, having grown so fond of their governor, reportedly wept for Ibrahim Pasha after he was transferred to the governorship of Egypt,<sup>237</sup> where he came to be involved in local Mamluk intrigues, eventually leading to his violent murder.<sup>238</sup>

There is a single crucial element in ‘Urđi’s biography of Ibrahim Pasha, and indeed in other biographies which give reference to the Damascene janissaries’ violent acts in Aleppo. Whenever the transgressions of Damascene janissaries in Aleppo are mentioned, the troops are referred to as “Damascenes” (*dimashqiyyun*), which is unusual considering the fact that ‘Urđi certainly knew that the majority of these janissaries were not actually Damascenes by birth or origin, nor were they speakers of Arabic. This, however, is possibly an indication of a sense of local rivalry, resentment and even envy that Aleppine elites may have felt with regard to the superior political position of Damascus in *Bilad al-Sham* during the Ottoman period and in earlier epochs as well. The description of the janissaries of Damascus as “Damascenes” rather than merely disorderly Ottoman troops speaks volumes about the state of mind of the

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<sup>236</sup> ‘Urđi, *Ma‘adin al-Dhahab*, p. 77

<sup>237</sup> ‘Urđi, *Ma‘adin al-Dhahab*, p. 78

<sup>238</sup> ‘Urđi, *Ma‘adin al-Dhahab*, p. 80

Aleppine intellectual during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but it is difficult to build definite conclusions since ‘Urđi stands alone as a historian of Aleppo during this period.

Nevertheless, there is a clear contrast between ‘Urđi’s depiction of the Ottoman troops of Damascus and the accounts offered by Damascene biographers such as Burini and Muhibbi. In his own biography of Hacı Ibrahim Pasha, Burini, a full generation older than his Aleppine counterpart, writes only briefly of the governor’s exploits against the Damascene troops, but of course does not describe them as “Damascenes”. The term Burini uses, the “janissaries of Damascus (*yeniçeriyyat al-Sham*)”, is more accurate and neutral than that which ‘Urđi selects. Similarly, Muhibbi chooses a straightforward and unbiased term, the “soldiers of Damascus (*Jund al-Sham*)”, in reference to the janissaries serving in his hometown and its peripheries.<sup>239</sup> Although Burini does not dwell greatly on the issue or on the career of the *beylerbeyi* of Aleppo, he heaps the highest possible praise on Ibrahim Pasha, comparing his spirit of justice and general goodwill to that of the *Rashidun* caliphs of early Islam.<sup>240</sup> Both Muhibbi and Burini appear openly sympathetic to the city and people of Aleppo when speaking of the damage inflicted by the Damascene janissaries on ‘Urđi’s hometown. But they, of course, do not manifest similar sentiments of local rivalry as their Aleppine counterpart.

Another Pasha known as Hafız Ahmed (d. 1031/1621-22) ascended to the Grand Vizierate, but before assuming the highest post in the Ottoman bureaucracy served as *beylerbeyi* in Damascus for 7 years. On his way to that city, he passed through Aleppo, which of course enabled ‘Urđi to include him in his history. In contrast to Hacı Ibrahim Pasha of Aleppo, Hafız Ahmed Pasha is portrayed by ‘Urđi as a gluttonous, money-grubbing individual and one who pursued all types of worldly pleasures, elements of his character which the Aleppine historian views with a great deal of disdain. Hafız Ahmed Pasha accepted bribes for the appointment of individuals to important posts in the Damascene administration. He unjustly confiscated the possessions of some Damascenes and received several additional unwarranted payments from them, according to ‘Urđi. When Ahmed Pasha became Grand Vezir, people in the Sultan’s circle purportedly tried to keep a distance between him and the ultimate Muslim

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<sup>239</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 4, p. 449

<sup>240</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 320

sovereign, apparently because they feared that Ahmed Pasha could exert some influence on the Sultan with his “intelligence, trickery, and deceptiveness.”<sup>241</sup>

A similarly despised Ottoman governor was Mehmed Pasha (d. 1033/1624), a *beylerbeyi* of Aleppo later demoted to the *sancak* of Adana, a man infamous in much of Syria and Eastern Anatolia for his unjust administration wherever he governed. According to Ghazzi, Mehmed Pasha’s reputation for over-taxation and general oppression preceded him even in Istanbul (*Islambol*, to Ghazzi’s taste), which the biographer discovered first-hand during his visit to the imperial capital.<sup>242</sup> Ghazzi claims to have asked some of his colleagues in the ‘*ulama*’ class of Istanbul about the circumstances of Mehmed Pasha’s appointment to the *sancak* of Adana, which was granted despite his notoriously terrible record of service as governor in Aleppo. The answer was that the Grand Vezir (who is unnamed, but may well be Hafız Ahmed Pasha himself) had earlier promised Mehmed the governorship of Aleppo for a huge sum of money, and fearing potential embarrassment if Mehmed Pasha were to be summarily dismissed and summoned to Istanbul, whereupon the Grand Vezir’s own reputation may have been tarnished had Mehmed decided to expose him, he chose merely to demote Mehmed to the rank of *sancakbeyi*.<sup>243</sup> Sadly for Ghazzi, during the tenure of the next Grand Vezir Ali Pasha, Mehmed was promoted to the governorship of the province of Damascus, the biographer’s hometown, purportedly due to Ali Pasha’s close acquaintance with Mehmed Pasha’s brother.<sup>244</sup> His tenure in Damascus was rather brief and uneventful, however, but somewhat surprisingly Ghazzi reports that his one personal encounter with the Pasha was pleasant, without indicating the circumstances behind their meeting.<sup>245</sup>

Very few individuals, however, are given such horrible and disturbing assessments as Deli Ibrahim Pasha in Burini’s *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, and fewer still receive such vivid descriptions of their careers and characters by their biographers. Deli Ibrahim Pasha was of Armenian origin, according to Burini, and after serving in the imperial palace in Istanbul during his childhood and early youth, rose through the ranks and was

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<sup>241</sup> ‘Urđi, *Ma‘adin al-Dhahab*, p. 140

<sup>242</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 202

<sup>243</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 203

<sup>244</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, pp. 204-205

<sup>245</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 212

eventually assigned to the governorship of Diyarbakır. His reign was one of great terror and violence, as he “displayed a brand of injustice that any individual with an ounce of faith cannot possibly accept.”<sup>246</sup> Burini goes on to claim that “he attempted to make the acquaintance of every woman whose reputation for beauty he had heard of, and by any means possible.”<sup>247</sup> An especially terrible anecdote that Burini relates is Deli Pasha’s violent confiscation of a considerable sum of money from a certain Recep Hoca, a wealthy notable of Diyarbakır. After forcibly giving up 5000 gold pieces, Recep was killed and sliced into four pieces for no apparent reason. The numerous transgressions and injustices committed by Deli Pasha provoked a reaction from the notables of the province, who launched a petition to Sultan Murad III, leading to the Pasha’s arrest.<sup>248</sup> At his trial, according to Burini, those who had initially accused him of misbehavior were hugely uncomfortable testifying against the governor in an Ottoman court, allegedly because Ibrahim’s sister was “very well-liked by the Sultan”.<sup>249</sup> İ.H. Danişmend reveals that Ibrahim’s sister was, in fact, a famous *ketkhüda* of the imperial *harem*, known as Canfeda Hatun, a woman who indeed wielded considerable power.<sup>250</sup> Burini himself reveals that this sister had earlier also entered the palace service along with Ibrahim and another of her brothers (Mahmud).<sup>251</sup> Canfeda Hatun’s power and influence, of course, clearly explains the Diyarbakır notables’ fear of indicting their governor.

At any rate, Deli Pasha was immediately restored to his office in Diyarbakır, and there he exacted vengeance on many of those who had earlier condemned him and continued with his unrelentingly violent and oppressive ways until the people of Diyarbakır (commoners as well as notables) were provoked into a state of open rebellion against the Pasha. Deli Pasha violently suppressed the uprising and committed acts of unspeakable inhumanity, but his demise came with the accession of Mehmed III

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<sup>246</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 321

<sup>247</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 321

<sup>248</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 321

<sup>249</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 322

<sup>250</sup> İ.H. Danişmend; *İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi* (Istanbul, 1972), Vol. 3, p. 521. For more on Canfeda Hatun and the extent of her influence, see Leslie Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 131-32

<sup>251</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 321

to the Ottoman throne and the latter, already acquainted with the man and familiar with his history and temperament, ultimately had him arrested and hanged. In his final hours, Deli Pasha was surrounded by executioners (*jalladun*), and after his killing his body was thrown into the sea, before his sister intervened and pleaded with the authorities to give her brother Ibrahim a proper burial.<sup>252</sup> The fact that Ibrahim was hanged is testament to the remarkably sinister reputation he had acquired during his tenure in Diyarbakır. Even some of the most notorious of rebels, traitors and dissenters, such as Ali Canbulad and some *Celalis* who were Deli Pasha's contemporaries, were strangled to death, as strangling was an (in fact the only) indication of honorable death. Deli Pasha's death, on the other hand, was hardly honorable, but to Burini, the man had surely received his just rewards.<sup>253</sup> It is interesting, however, that Deli Ibrahim is neither explicitly nor latently castigated in any way for his ethnic or cultural origins. Rather, Burini seems to view his case as one in which Muslim (and Ottoman) justice was served, even if it was achieved after a long overdue point.

Deli Ibrahim Pasha was not the only Ottoman official responsible for sparking a popular urban uprising in the eastern provinces of the Empire. Ahmed b. Süleyman, a contemporary of Burini, an Ottoman judge in Damascus and apparently a native of Ankara, acquired notoriety for his unparalleled record of corruption, according to his biographer. Burini claims that Ahmed Efendi never refused a bribe and lacked any sense of justice.<sup>254</sup> During Ahmed's tenure, even the sale of charitable endowments (*waqf*) was seemingly limitless, prompting one observer to compose the following verse:

“In Ahmed's time, *waqfs* were sold in so great a number

Until they were worth little more than cucumber”<sup>255</sup>

Ahmed Efendi's term ended in disgrace, as he was stoned by some of the city's commoners (*'awam*), who demanded that his tenure be terminated, which it indeed was

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<sup>252</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A'yan*, Vol. 1, p. 322

<sup>253</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A'yan*, Vol. 1, p. 322

<sup>254</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A'yan*, Vol. 1, p. 85

<sup>255</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A'yan*, Vol. 1, p. 86

shortly thereafter.<sup>256</sup> This *qadi*, among the most disreputable figures in Burini's *Tarajim al-A'yan* (as well as Ghazzi's *Lutf al-Samar*, where Burini's account is slightly abridged but otherwise reproduced verbatim), is denounced not for belonging to a certain ethnic background, but simply for his numerous vices.

Nevertheless, such dishonest Ottoman officials as Ahmed Efendi are naturally and inevitably counter-posed by men of similar power and prestige who chose not to use their positions for greater worldly or material gain. For instance, Derviş Pasha (d. 985/1577-78), a *beylerbeyi* of Damascus, is applauded for his conduct during the spread of the plague in Damascus. According to Ghazzi, a convicted man who was imprisoned for failing to pay his debts fell violently ill, and realizing the danger this presented for the other prisoners Derviş Pasha had him immediately released. He then proceeded to reconcile all those who were in prison on similar charges with their creditors, and had the first group released, thus helping avert what may have developed into a human disaster.<sup>257</sup>

Nor were vices only indicated by the biographers when they applied to men who possessed worldly or religious authority. One apparently dishonorable civilian is Ibrahim of Karaman (d. 964/1557), a man who was considered among the notable merchants in Aleppo. According to the Aleppine historian Ibn al-Hanbali, Ibrahim, initially a donkey-seller, made a fortune from his dealings in various markets, both "forbidden" (*haram*) and "permissible" (*halal*), and managed to accumulate 100000 *akçes* towards the end of his life. Ibrahim also owned many slaves; on two separate occasions slaves managed to steal some of their master's money, and were punished severely. The first attempted to escape but, when located by his master, was promptly crucified at the gate of one of Aleppo's old marketplaces.<sup>258</sup> The second, dragged through the streets of the city while attached to the tail of a horse, was a victim of incessant torture and ridicule.<sup>259</sup> Despite his purportedly unlawful trading activities and his blatant cruelty, Ibrahim is condemned only for his general lack of virtue, and his

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<sup>256</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A'yan*, Vol. 1, pp. 90-91

<sup>257</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 2, p. 150

<sup>258</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab*, Vol. 1, p. 88

<sup>259</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab*, Vol. 1, p. 89

biography is devoid of any allusions to his ethnic or cultural background as causes of his terrible actions and immorality.

There are certain cases where odd eccentricities of certain individuals, viewed neither positively nor negatively, are noted. Ibrahim Pasha (d. 1010/1601-2), a governor in Egypt at one point and eventually an Ottoman and Muslim martyr in the battlefield against Christian forces in the Balkans, is depicted as a man of many virtues by Burini. A certain oddity from his career in Egypt, however, stands out as the most interesting episode of his tenure as governor. Ibrahim Pasha apparently wished to tear down the pyramids, in the belief that they contained great treasures of earlier monarchs. He was eventually discouraged from doing so, as a warning came his way that the pyramids may have unleashed bizarre, even unwelcome, mysteries if torn down. Those who persuaded Ibrahim Pasha to abandon his initial plan of destroying the pyramids apparently informed the man that the ‘Abbasid caliph al-Ma’mun had long ago attempted and failed in achieving that very aim.<sup>260</sup>

There are also instances where the biographer is perhaps expected to be more critical of a notable individual when the latter displays an unquenched thirst for worldly pleasures. For instance, Muhibbi writes of Hasan Pasha (d. 1054/1644-45), a *sancakbeyi* in Gaza whose tenure appears to have been largely uneventful but is nevertheless judged positively. Hasan Pasha, however, acquired a reputation for his love of women and engaged in sexual activity with several women in Gaza. In his lifetime, he was the father of no less than 85 children, according to Muhibbi, and unsurprisingly did not know most of their names. His insatiable hunger for the pleasures of the material world put him badly in debt; during his term as district governor, he oversaw the construction of a lavish park in Gaza which was never completed after his death.<sup>261</sup> Such eccentricities did not receive any negative comment by Muhibbi, who merely remarked that the Pasha had an enjoyable life, and admired him for his sexual prowess. It is possible that Hasan Pasha of Gaza was, at one point or another, married to all the women with whom he engaged in sexual activities, or more likely that his female slaves were the victims of his lust and bore him children, which by Islamic law would have

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<sup>260</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 323

<sup>261</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 2, p. 16

been perfectly legitimate. In any case, he escaped any denigration or criticism from his Damascene biographer Muhibbi.

Other similarly prominent individuals, of course, were praised precisely for their avoidance of certain splendors of the material world. Perviz Pasha (d. 1015/ 1606), a *Rumi* who was initially a slave in an Ottoman household before rising through the ranks and becoming a *beylerbeyi* (of an unnamed province), spent his last years in retirement in Ghazzi's hometown Damascus. In his short biography of the man, Ghazzi deems it worthy of note that Perviz Pasha "did not drink alcohol, and did not look favorably upon those among his followers who drank it. He punished those who drank alcohol and removed them from his service."<sup>262</sup> One must assume that, since Ghazzi chose to point to this fact and recognize the virtue of Perviz Pasha partly through it, other Pashas' drinking habits were almost taken for granted by the learned men of *Bilad al-Sham*. Indeed, allusions to drinking or other such immoral habits are few and far between. As such, when they are mentioned they must represent anomalies that are worthy of comment, whether laudatory or derisive. Ghazzi's friend Burini, it may be recalled, was also a drinker of alcohol, and according to Ghazzi developed this immoral habit because of his personal relations with Ottoman officials in Damascus. This, of course, confirms that the common perception at the time, rightly or wrongly, was that individuals serving the bureaucratic and administrative institutions of the state were alcohol-drinkers and, therefore, did not represent the highest of moral virtues. It does not, however, necessarily mean that Ottomans *in particular* were viewed as morally corrupt, but simply that temporal authorities *in general* were perceived as inferior to the '*ulama*' in terms of their knowledge, faith, and therefore also in their morality (which in the context of Islamic societies was probably true). Perviz Pasha, in any case, died on the battlefield when he was allegedly close to 100 years old, according to his biographer, when voluntarily joining Damascene troops in their defense of the city against the forces of the rebellious Pasha of Aleppo, Ali Canbulad.<sup>263</sup>

For all biographers, one of the most important virtues that good men in worldly office possess is a respect, admiration and even appreciation for the '*ulama*', the class to which the biographers themselves belonged. It follows, therefore, that those who are

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<sup>262</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 340

<sup>263</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 340

involved in what is perceived as the ill-treatment of the intellectual elite in Muslim societies are treated very negatively in the biographical collections. As such, the *Rumi* tax-collector in Damascus, Iskender b. Ishak (d. 1061/1650-51), a man who was apparently of Bosnian origin, is despised by Muhibbi since he “sought to impoverish the pious (*sulaha*’) and the learned (*’ulama*’).”<sup>264</sup> Sadly, Muhibbi does not elaborate on this contention, nor does he give evidence for the ways in which Iskender had attempted to deprive the *’ulama*’ of their possessions or finances. Nevertheless, Iskender’s general unpopularity is noted, and his policies seem to have accomplished their purpose, albeit temporarily, as Muhibbi wrote that “the power of the *’ulama*’ in Damascus was decreased and poverty was inflicted upon them.”<sup>265</sup> Not long after leaving Damascus, Iskender was stabbed and killed in Istanbul, and Muhibbi seemed to applaud this violent turn of events, citing two poems by unnamed authors which rejoiced the killing of a man who was certainly disliked in the city in which he had served. One of the poems was particularly cynical and rather scornful:

“They inform us that Iskender has passed on as he was struck by a sword  
But the arrow of destiny has struck him and others who are similarly deplored  
And he who has not died by the sword will die by other means, Take my word.”<sup>266</sup>

It is again important to note that the negative qualities of Turkish-speaking *Rumis* and Ottoman officials as some of those discussed above were not seen as related to their ethnic and cultural origins. An individual’s features were, for the most part, seen as vices or virtues based on preconceived notions and key elements such as justice and righteousness, corruption and dishonesty, and the person’s background was rarely mentioned in connection with his personal or professional characteristics. There are, though, a few cases where the biographers manifested certain prejudicial attitudes towards Turkish-speaking *Rumis*, and these will be discussed in the next section.

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<sup>264</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 403

<sup>265</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 403

<sup>266</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 403

### 3. Ethnic Awareness and Prejudice in Syrian Biographical Writing

Any exercise involving the evaluation of the levels of self-identification for a particular social or intellectual group should necessarily take into account the extent to which its members associated themselves with a certain territorially and ethnically restricted unit. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that ethnic self-identification, particularly in pre-modern times, should not automatically be regarded as synonymous with a political adherence to the ethnic group with which a given individual associates himself, but rather it can also signify a simpler sense of cultural belonging. For the specific case of the authors of biographical collections in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Syria, it is important to determine whether sentiments of “Arabness” existed in their works, or at least establish whether they manifested some conscious understanding of their existence in an “Arab” setting. Equally significant is uncovering any hints of prejudice or preconceived pejorative images of groups that were perceived as outsiders. Of particular interest in this case are the *Rumis*, since it was their “state” and “turn” to rule Syria during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, in the eyes of the biographers.

The question of Arab ethnic prejudice against Turks has been most comprehensively addressed by Ulrich Haarmann in an article entitled *Ideology and History, Identity and Alterity: The Arab Image of the Turk from the Abbasids to Modern Egypt*.<sup>267</sup> In his brief discussion of the Ottoman period Haarmann argues that, fundamentally, the essential motifs of Arab prejudice against Turks persisted, as the latter group had been associated with such derogatory qualities as barbarism and immorality since the days of the ‘Abbasid caliphate. Haarmann does admit, however, that his evaluation of the Arabs’ attitude toward their Turkish-speaking overlords during Ottoman times is based exclusively on examples from Egypt. To his credit, he acknowledges that it would be problematic to construct a conclusive argument on the *general Arab* image of Turks by depending solely on Egypt, and concedes that his “remarks will remain tentative” for the section on the Ottoman period.<sup>268</sup> As such, it would be useful to look at Syrian sources, specifically our biographical material, to

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<sup>267</sup> Ulrich Haarmann; “Ideology and History, Identity and Alterity: The Arab Image of the Turk from the Abbasids to Modern Egypt”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20, 2 (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 175-196, hereafter Haarmann, “Ideology and History”

<sup>268</sup> Haarmann, “Ideology and History”, p. 184

check for further examples of “Arab” ethnic prejudice (as well as awareness) against “Turks”, thus contributing to our limited knowledge of the subject.

Surprisingly, there are almost no ethnic attributions in the Aleppine historian ‘Urđi’s *Ma’adin al-Dhahab*. Such terms as *Rum*, *Rumi*, *Arwam*, *Turk* and *Atrak* (all applying to Turks) appear rarely and intermittently in the biographies; the same applies for other ethnic attributions such as *Kurdi* (for Kurds) and *‘Ajami* (for Persians). In the rare cases where such terms are applied to certain individuals, there is every indication that they are strictly geographical rather than ethnic designations, and they serve to make up for the biographer’s ignorance of the concerned individual’s *specific* town or city of origin. Ethnic attributions are more frequent in Ibn al-Hanbali’s earlier biographical dictionary, but are still much less regular and recurrent than in most Damascene historical works. There are numerous examples of individuals in Ibn al-Hanbali’s *Durr al-Habab* where a geographical designation is given to an individual (for instance, Karamani, Tabrizi, or Kostantini) but ethnic attributions as *Rumi* or *‘Ajami* are not. Similar to ‘Urđi, Ibn al-Hanbali uses terms which seemingly denote ethnicity as geographical rather than ethnic descriptions. The same cannot be said of the Damascene biographers (both localist and universalist), who more often than not place geography side by side with ethnicity, when utilizing such two-worded phrases as *al-Qustantini al-Rumi* (for a Turkish-speaking native of Istanbul), *al-Bursawi al-Rumi* (for a Turkish-speaking native of Bursa), and *al-Tabrizi al-‘Ajami* (for a Persian-speaking native of Tabriz). With the apparent absence of ethnic attributions in Aleppine biographical dictionaries, particularly in the work of ‘Urđi, it is also well-nigh impossible to identify clear examples of prejudice against Turkish-speaking individuals, whether they were Ottoman officials or not.

Yet there is a noticeably greater sense of ethnic awareness and even pride in Ibn al-Hanbali’s *Durr al-Habab* than in his successor ‘Urđi’s *Maadin al-Dhahab*. Ibn al-Hanbali writes of Üveys Bey (d. 949/1542), an *Arabistan defterdarı* (which Ibn al-Hanbali translates literally and quite accurately as *daftardar Diyar al-‘Arab*), who according to his approving biographer was “strongly partial (*shadid al-ta’assub*) to the sons of Arabs (*awlad al-‘Arab*).”<sup>269</sup> Here the term *awlad al-‘Arab* is most certainly an

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<sup>269</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab*, Vol. 1, p. 325

allusion to the settled, Arabic-speaking population of Aleppo and perhaps other settled populations in *Bilad al-Sham*. A second example, Iskender Bey, another *Arabistan defterdari* of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and a close friend of Ibn al-Hanbali, apparently had a consummate knowledge of military affairs, which alongside his courage made him valuable to the governors of Aleppo in their campaigns against people whom the Aleppine biographer calls *al-‘arab*.<sup>270</sup> The meaning of *‘arab* (which in modern times is a term that denotes all Arab peoples) in this context is certainly “Bedouin Arab”, since no urban-based revolt or conflict between the Ottoman authorities and rebels based in Syria is known to have taken place during the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when Ibn al-Hanbali was busy composing his work. Bedouin uprisings, on the other hand, remained part of a recurring trend for decades during the Ottoman period, and indeed never really ceased.

Thus, with Ibn al-Hanbali we find a clear example of a distinction between the two terms *awlad al-‘arab*, denoting an urban Arabic-speaking population, and *‘arab*, referring to unsettled Arabic-speaking elements. Also with Ibn al-Hanbali, we find the sole expression of Arab ethnic pride and consciousness in the two Aleppine dictionaries. It is perhaps unusual that ‘Urđi did not manifest similar sentiments in his *Ma‘adin al-Dhahab*; one would generally expect to find examples of attachment to a specifically defined ethno-cultural group in the work of a local historian, yet ‘Urđi does not supply his reader with a single such case. ‘Urđi appears not to have given much attention to individuals’ ethnic origins; the fact remains that to him, an individual’s defining characteristics, merits and demerits were determined simply by his personal and professional conduct. Ibn al-Hanbali adopted a similar approach in his work, rarely alluding to the ethnic backgrounds of notables who were obviously not of Arabic-speaking stock, but he was distinct from ‘Urđi in his own evident self-identification to the *awlad al-‘arab*. This may well be related to his own awareness of having descended from the fabled Arab tribe of the Banu Rabi‘a, and we may recall that Ibn al-Hanbali expressed a great deal of pride at being associated with “Arabs” in his brief biographical dictionary dedicated to that tribe. In that work, his “Arabs” (*‘arab*) were evidently Bedouins, rather than fully sedentary Arabic-speaking peoples, but his pride in belonging to the lineage of an illustrious old Arab tribe that was nonetheless also

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<sup>270</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab*, Vol. 1, p. 293

Bedouin may have contributed to his feelings of affinity to the Arabic-speaking peoples in a more general sense.

Similarly, in Ibn Tulun's semi-biographical volume on the governors of Damascus, the terms *awlad al-'arab* and *abna' al-'arab* (both meaning "the sons of Arabs") seem to denote exclusively the Arabic-speaking populations of urban centers such as Damascus, whereas the word *'arab* is clearly used in reference to Bedouin elements, some of which, according to the author, rebelled against Ottoman authority under the leadership of some tribal chieftains, but without any success.<sup>271</sup> In the Ottoman portion of his book on the judges of Damascus, Ibn Tulun again uses the terms *awlad al-'arab* and *abna' al-'arab* on several occasions to distinguish the Arabic-speaking residents of his hometown from the incoming Turkish-speaking *Rumis* (alternatively *arwam*). There is one interesting anecdote that the Damascene local historian relates on a certain Ahmed Efendi, an Ottoman *qadi* of Damascus and a native of Iznik, during the outbreak of the plague in Damascus in the year 930/1524. While he fled from area to area in *Bilad al-Sham* to avoid being overcome by the plague, it became obvious that Ahmed Efendi, alongside one of his companions, was traveling while being accompanied by a number of unmarried women (*harim*; Ibn Tulun's implication is that these *harim* were not merely accompanying the judge, but that Ahmed Efendi was engaged in sexual activity with them). This was viewed with much disapproval by some of the "wise men (*'uqala'*) among the sons of the Arabs (*abna' al-'arab*)", according to Ibn Tulun, and Ahmed Efendi's actions were of course regarded as unlawful.<sup>272</sup> There is a hint of anti-*Rumi* prejudice in Ibn Tulun's anecdote, which clearly reveals that native scholars of Damascus objected to the actions of an Ottoman *qadi* when he engaged in unlawful and immoral behavior. The implication here may be that it is still the Arabic-speaking scholars who, to Ibn Tulun, held the greatest religious authority and possessed the greatest ability to interpret the holy law, since they were the original Muslims who brought the religion to other peoples. The *Rumi* Ahmed Efendi, on the other hand, is seen as corrupting the position of *qadi* in the earliest stages of Ottoman (and therefore *Rumi*) rule.

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<sup>271</sup> See Shams al-Din Ibn Tulun, *Qudat Dimashq: al-Thaghr al-Bassam fi Dhikr man Wulliya Qada' al-Sham* (Damascus, 1959), Salah al-Din al-Munajjid (ed.), p. 237 & p. 243, hereafter Ibn Tulun, *Al-Thaghr al-Bassam*

<sup>272</sup> Ibn Tulun, *Al-Thaghr al-Bassam*, p. 311

*Awlad al-‘arab* is also used in Ghazzi’s *Kawakib* and *Lutf al-Samar* to denote Damascus’s urban, Arabic-speaking population, and the Damascene centennial biographer frequently applies the term *Bilad al-‘arab* (the lands of the Arabs) to the lands where Arabic predominated as a spoken language. *Bilad al-‘arab* also often appears in Muhibbi’s *Khulasat al-Athar* and Ibn al-Imad’s *Shadharat*, where as in Ghazzi’s two biographical dictionaries, it is clearly contrasted to another geographical entity termed *Bilad al-Rum*, or sometimes simply *Rum*, denoting the regions of the Ottoman Empire to the northwest of Syria. Burini, however, seemed to prefer the terms *diyar al-‘arab* and *diyar al-Rum* when referring to the Arabic-speaking and Turkish-speaking geographies, respectively.

Despite the word *‘arab* being generally used in the context of “Bedouin,” there is some evidence that the term was also used in a more general sense, and at times also included settled Arabic-speaking populations. In *Lutf al-Samar*, Ghazzi writes the phrase “*‘arab Ghazza*” (the Arabs of Gaza) in reference to townspeople who were natives of that city;<sup>273</sup> there is no clearer indication of the use of the term *‘arab* to denote the population of an urban setting. But Burini supplies us with another unambiguous, yet far more interesting, case where *‘arab* again assumes the same meaning. Ahmed b. Mehmed Efendi, a *qadi* in Damascus and later in Mecca, was quite well-travelled in the Arab lands, even visiting Egypt on one occasion, but the impression he formed of Arabic-speaking populations was anything but positive. In Burini’s words, “he considered that being branded as Arab (*al-ittisaf bil-‘arabiyya*) was among the greatest of shames.” Ahmed Efendi also insulted Arabs (*‘arab*) by referring to them as *tat*,<sup>274</sup> a term which in Ottoman usage probably meant “wretch”, particularly in the context in which the *qadi* used it. There is no doubt that, in this case, the term *‘arab*, as distinct from the more complicated construction *awlad al-‘arab*, also includes urban-dwellers and not simply Bedouin tribes, since here it is used in reference to an Ottoman official insulting Damascenes.

A namesake of Ahmed Efendi and also a chief judge in Damascus, Ahmed b. Hasan Efendi (d. 995/1586-87), was a close personal acquaintance of Burini, and his father Hasan Efendi had once served as *kadiasker*. When speaking of Hasan in Ahmed’s

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<sup>273</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 304

<sup>274</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 197

biography, Burini reveals that he was “very fond of the sons of Arabs (*awlad al-‘arab*), to such an extent that he would imitate their style of dress.”<sup>275</sup> This is despite the absence of any indication that Hasan Efendi had ever visited the Arab lands; it appears that his appreciation of all things “Arab” was developed from afar. Both Ahmed and Hasan are admired for their deep sense of justice and, equally important, their lack of interest in material wealth. The integrity and incorruptibility of Hasan Efendi, in particular, is according to Burini evidenced by his presiding over certain court cases which involved some of those closest to him, only to rule in favor of their adversaries, demonstrating his unquestioned impartiality and moral judgement.<sup>276</sup> In one anecdote, Burini claims that Hasan Efendi gave an unnamed woman 3000 *akçes* for a book written by the illustrious Celaleddin Rumi, when her asking price was just 1000 *akçes*, simply because the distinguished *qadi* thought that this work of Rumi was far more valuable than the initial price demanded by the woman.<sup>277</sup> Hasan’s attraction to what he regarded, rightly or otherwise, as Arab culture warrants some comment, however, and Burini’s mention of that particular side of the Ottoman judge’s personality is especially noteworthy. Burini’s delight at Hasan Efendi’s pro-Arab inclinations manifests the Damascene biographer’s own relatively well-developed level of ethnic awareness and his sense of ethno-cultural pride, though this of course is far from a representation of a conscious political allegiance to an Arab geography or entity.

When writing of the incomparable *mufti* of Istanbul Ebu’s-Su‘ud (d. 1574), Burini expresses his surprise, even disappointment, that the great scholar of Islam never entered the “lands of the Arabs (*diyar al-‘arab*),” but rather rotated throughout his career within the “lands of the Turks (*diyar al-Rum*) filling post after post.”<sup>278</sup> Burini’s disappointment is clearly a product of his strong identification with the “lands of the Arabs”, which he appears to have regarded as his own in the cultural as well as the territorial sense, clearly explaining why he took exception to the *qadi* Ahmed b. Mehmed Efendi’s denigration of Arabs. There was perhaps also a belief that even the most distinguished of Ottoman and non-Arab ‘*ulama*’ could benefit from the rich

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<sup>275</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 68

<sup>276</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 67

<sup>277</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 72

<sup>278</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 242

tradition of scholarship that still existed in the Empire's Arab lands, with Damascus as its leading exponent.

For his part, Ghazzi describes Ebu's-Su'ud as "the greatest of all *Rumi* scholars" and as a man who had "no equal in knowledge, leadership and faith," and also praises the *mufti* for his negative though not entirely uncompromising stance on coffee-drinking.<sup>279</sup> Coffee-drinking, incidentally, is a recurrent theme in Ghazzi's *Kawakib*; a particularly interesting anecdote that the Damascene biographer relates concerns Yunus al-'Ithawi, a Shafi'i scholar who was also the father of Ghazzi's teacher Ahmad al-'Ithawi. Yunus was vehemently opposed to coffee-drinking, and once delivered a sermon in which he declared it forbidden for a Muslim to drink that strange concoction, then a recent discovery in *Bilad al-Sham* and the Ottoman world, much to the chagrin of the *beylerbeyi* Mustafa Pasha and the head judge in Damascus. The two Ottoman officials seem to have enjoyed coffee and, equally if not more important, had taken offense to the repeated allusions to "injustice" made by 'Ithawi in the sermon.<sup>280</sup> But 'Ithawi, who also wrote a treatise in which he elaborately made his case against coffee-drinking, was reconciled with the authorities despite his uncompromising views, and came to no harm.<sup>281</sup> Most significantly in Ghazzi's biography of Ebu's-Su'ud, however, there is no comment on the matter which took Burini's attention: the fact that the *mufti* never visited the Arab lands. Burini's biographies of Ahmed Efendi and Hasan Efendi, as well as the *mufti* Ebu's-Su'ud, reveal his deep sense of cultural and territorial attachment to the Arab lands (*diyar al-'arab*) and people ('*arab* or '*awlad al-'arab* as interchangeable), sentiments that do not appear as strongly in any of the other universalists' dictionaries. Burini, of course, did not travel outside *Bilad al-Sham*, unlike Ghazzi, Muhibbi, and Ibn al-Imad; it can therefore be reasonably assumed that his greater sense of Arab territoriality derived, at least in part, from his relatively limited experience of the world outside Syria in general and Damascus in particular.

Although Burini does not consistently use the term *Rum* in reference to the primarily Turkish-speaking individuals of cities and towns in Anatolia and regions further west in the Ottoman world, when he does speak of *Rum* or *Arwam* it is

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<sup>279</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 3, pp. 35-36

<sup>280</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 3, p. 207

<sup>281</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 3, p. 222

invariably as an indication of ethnic as well as geographical background. One clear example lies in the biography of a certain Ahmed b. Shahin Efendi, the son of an Ottoman janissary and a Turkish-speaking mother residing in Damascus. It so happened that this Ahmed Efendi was Burini's student at one point and, according to his teacher and biographer, sought a life of learning and piety, choosing not to follow in his father's footsteps. This man, apparently still young at the time when Burini was writing his dictionary, was "of *Rumi* origin, even though he was also of Arab (*'arabiyy*) birth and residence."<sup>282</sup> The reference to *Rumi* here is geographical but also certainly ethnic, and Burini heaps much praise on this Ahmad Efendi for his efforts in mastering the Arabic language, though as a resident of Damascus since birth it must have surely been more difficult for him to learn his "native tongue", Turkish.

This brings us to another hugely significant point: the admiration of *Rumis*, among other non-Arab peoples, by all biographers, Aleppine and Damascene alike, for their knowledge and sometimes mastery, of Arabic. Mehmed Bostanzade, a *mufti* of Istanbul at one time, was close to the Ghazzi family, particularly the biographer Najm al-Din and his father, before his accession to the highest religious post in the Ottoman realms. He also possessed a consummate knowledge of Arabic, according to Ghazzi, and this was worthy of the Damascene biographer's comment and commendation.<sup>283</sup> But not only '*ulama*' were applauded for their knowledge of the language of the Muslim Holy Scriptures; lower-level Ottoman bureaucrats and administrators serving in the Arab provinces also received some praise when they were known to possess a knowledge of Arabic, and even the odd Pasha was known to have mastered the language.<sup>284</sup>

But it is unlikely that the biographers' praise of *Rumis* for their knowledge of Arabic was a sign of Arab ethnic pride. On the contrary, it must be understood as a conscious feeling, specific to the '*ulama*', of their native language's importance in the context of Muslim literature and learning. The fact that *Rumis* were praised for their knowledge of Arabic on more religious than ethno-cultural purposes is attested by complimentary remarks offered elsewhere to individuals who had in fact been native

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<sup>282</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A'yan*, Vol. 1, p. 139

<sup>283</sup> Ghazzi, *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 104

<sup>284</sup> For instance, Cafer Pasha of Yemen in Ghazzi's *Lutf al-Samar*, Vol. 1, p. 304

speakers of the language, such as Muhammad al-Tunisi in Ghazzi's *Kawakib*, among countless others.<sup>285</sup> Further proof of Arabic's relevance, in the biographers' unified view, to any well-rounded understanding of the religious sciences, is that it is often placed in a list alongside other primarily religious fields of learning when a notable scholar's knowledge and overall intellectual acumen are being considered. (for instance, in Ghazzi's *Kawakib*: "the legal sciences (*al-'ulum al-shar'iyya*), logic (*al-'ulum al-'aqliyya*), the Traditions (*al-hadith*), and Arabic (*al-'arabiyya*).")<sup>286</sup>

At times, the biographers' pride in their native tongue led them to reveal clear signs of ethno-linguistic prejudice. Indeed, this brand of prejudice is the most recurrent in the biographical collections, and is again probably more connected to a conscious attempt at the protection of the Arabic language as the language of Islam than it is a sign of purely ethno-centric bigotry. The biographers' pride in the Arabic language is, therefore, highlighted not only by their praise of those non-natives (and natives) who were able to speak it fluently, but also in their criticism of those who claimed to but did not possess a mastery of the language. One example comes from Burini's *Tarajim al-A'yan*, in the biography of a *Rumi* judge by the name of Hüseyin b. Abdülnebi.<sup>287</sup> Burini meticulously analyzes Hüseyin Efendi's poetry, and in what is the longest section of the latter's biography criticizes its quality on linguistic and grammatical grounds, while attempting to demonstrate its lack of clarity and, at times, establish its meaninglessness.<sup>288</sup> Hüseyin Efendi is, on one occasion, described as an "arrogant egotist", and his biographer also points to what he believes is his "lack of literary charm and ability, his stupidity, and his insanity."<sup>289</sup> In his analysis (or rather bashing) of the Ottoman *qadi*'s poetry, Burini repeatedly insults the man, on one occasion claiming that even "jackasses (*hamir*)" have a better grasp of grammar.<sup>290</sup> Worse still, according to Burini, Hüseyin Efendi had a demeaning attitude towards his father, a facet of his personality that was not appreciated by the Damascene biographer.<sup>291</sup> There is,

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<sup>285</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 2, p. 16

<sup>286</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 2, p. 29

<sup>287</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A'yan*, Vol. 1, p. 178

<sup>288</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A'yan*, Vol. 2, p. 188-194

<sup>289</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A'yan*, Vol. 2, p. 186

<sup>290</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A'yan*, Vol. 2, p. 189

<sup>291</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A'yan*, Vol. 2, p. 186

however, no indication that Hüseyin Efendi's ethnic background had anything to do with his supposedly deficient knowledge of Arabic.

Another example, from Muhibbi's *Khulasat al-Athar*, can also more accurately be classified as a case of linguistic, rather than purely ethnic, prejudice, and is found in the biography of Nasuh Pasha, an early 17<sup>th</sup> century *beylerbeyi* of Aleppo and a later Vezir. Nasuh Pasha, originally a native of Rumeli and a servant in the Ottoman palace, quickly rose through the ranks and established himself as a governor in Syria.<sup>292</sup> Towards the end of his career, he met Sultan Ahmed I and married his daughter, before the Sultan decided to execute the *damad* Pasha for reasons that are undisclosed (or unknown to his biographer Muhibbi).<sup>293</sup> Muhibbi makes a single pejorative comment in Nasuh Pasha's biography, and it is in fact not about the governor himself but the "Turks (*atrak*)."<sup>294</sup> Apparently, Nasuh Pasha was better known as Nasif Pasha in Ottoman circles, despite the fact that the Arabic-speaking population of *Bilad al-Sham* knew him by his real name Nasuh and referred to him as such. Muhibbi seems to take offense with the Ottomans' corruption of the name when he writes: "It is common practice for the Turks (*atrak*) to change words and letters, so they say Nasif instead of Nasuh; their changes (of letters) have no discernible limitations, nor is there any grammatical condition to prevent them."<sup>294</sup> Muhibbi's irritation at the "Turks'" corruption of the name Nasuh can be described as a latent example of ethno-linguistic prejudice, but it must again be pointed out that the Damascene biographer's feelings of contempt are rooted in his and the *'ulama's* recognition of the significance of the Arabic language. As such, Muhibbi's statement on Nasuh/Nasif Pasha can be regarded as an expression of an Arabic-speaking scholar's belief that his language, the language of Islam, must not be corrupted. The fact that Nasuh Pasha's name was corrupted by those who referred to him as Nasif, presumably members of the Ottoman bureaucratic elite, is also telling since it indicates that it is the temporal authorities who are coming under verbal attack from a representative of the religious, intellectual elite of Damascus. Nevertheless, Muhibbi's statement may also be reasonably considered a mild illustration of "Arab" prejudice against "Turks."

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<sup>292</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 4, pp. 448-49

<sup>293</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 4, p. 451

<sup>294</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 4, p. 448

The Damascene scholar ‘Abdul-Baki b. Muhammad, known as Ibn al-Samman (d. 1088/1677) and noted for his literary and poetic skills, was a long-time resident in Istanbul who eventually passed away in Edirne.<sup>295</sup> He was also a friend of Muhibbi, who met him not in Damascus but in Istanbul during his trip to *Rum*. Ibn al-Samman was an exceptionally well-travelled individual, having spent time in Egypt, *Rum*, and even the island of Crete. Muhibbi claims that “there wasn’t a single town in the lands of *Rum* (*Bilad al-Rum*) which he did not enter.”<sup>296</sup> Muhibbi writes of a number of interesting encounters he had with Ibn al-Samman, but one in particular stands out as an apt example of the linguistic prejudice held by certain Arabic-speaking ‘*ulama*’ towards the Turkish-speaking population of *Rum*. The two men were once on a boat, heading to Beşiktaş, and began a lengthy discussion on ships, enumerating their different types and names. Among the ships listed, Ibn al-Samman mentioned one which the Arabs called “the crow (*al-ghurab*),” “a long vessel driven by oars.” Ibn al-Samman then pointed out that certain people (obviously of Turkish-speaking origin) mistakenly believed that the Arabic name *al-ghurab* was translated from the Turkish for crow, *karga*, a mistaken adaptation for the Turkish (originally Greek) word for vessel or galley, *kadırga*. Ibn al-Samman, who took exception to that interpretation, was once forced into a heated argument with an unnamed individual who upheld it, with the Damascene scholar apparently prevailing when pointing out that the vessel was likened to a crow since its color was black and its oars resembled that bird’s wings.<sup>297</sup>

It is not at all surprising that we find such anecdotes and expressions of linguistic pride in Muhibbi’s *Khulasat al-Athar*. After all, the Damascene universalist-centennial biographer of the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century wrote five books on Arabic grammar and linguistics, including one entitled *Qasd al-Sabil fima fi Lughat al-‘Arab min Dakhil* (An Inquiry into Loan Words in the Language of the Arabs), which identifies certain non-Arabic words that had been Arabicized.<sup>298</sup> Naturally, such a work indicates the pride of a Muslim ‘*alim* in the language of his Holy Scriptures, and must not be interpreted as a manifestation of Arab localism resulting from a fear of Turkish and Persian encroachments into the Arabic language. Maintaining the purity of Arabic is almost

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<sup>295</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 2, p. 282

<sup>296</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 2, p. 270

<sup>297</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 2, p. 273

<sup>298</sup> Sabbagh, *Min A‘lam al-Fikr al-‘Arabi*, p. 131

tantamount to preserving the purity of the early Islamic literature which had helped define the specific culture and self-image of Islamic civilization. It is within such a context that Muhibbi's and other intellectuals' work on Arabic grammar and linguistics is best viewed.

It is difficult to detect many signs of purely ethnic (as opposed to partly linguistic) prejudice in Muhibbi's *Khulasat al-Athar*. Only one example stands out as particularly striking. Before Muhibbi made his journey to *Rum* in the company of his uncle Sun'ullah and Mehmed Izzeti, his father went on a similar trip, accompanied by another Mehmed known as Ismeti, a *Rumi* and soon-to-be *kadiasker*. Fadlallah al-Muhibbi, in fact, took two trips to *Rum* in his lifetime, visiting his old patron Mehmed Ismeti in his home on one occasion during his second journey.<sup>299</sup> Our biographer Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi quotes part of his father's biography of Ismeti in Fadlallah's now no longer extant dictionary of contemporaries, in which the older Muhibbi writes favorably of the man himself but quite derogatorily of his people in the following verse:

“In truth, the way he treated me did not change

Which considering the infamy of his background is quite strange”<sup>300</sup>

Apart from the verse above, which in any case is attributed to Fadlallah not Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi, there are precious few hints of purely ethnic prejudice in the biographies of non-Arab notables in *Khulasat al-Athar*.

Cases of direct or even latent bigotry against the *Rumis* are just as scarce in other Damascene sources. There is not a trace of anti-Ottoman or anti-*Rumi* prejudice in Ibn al-'Imad's entries on 16<sup>th</sup> century notables, for instance. There is one case in Ibn Tulun's book on the Mamluk and Ottoman governors of Damascus that stands out as perhaps the most blatant illustration of ethnic prejudice against the *Rumis* in the biographical literature. Ibn Tulun reports that, after the death of an early *beylerbeyi* of Damascus named Ferhad Pasha (d. 928/1522), the people of the city feared the “plundering of the Turks” (*nahb al-arwam*), apparently because of a certain preconceived notion held by Damascenes that it was customary for *Rumis* to engage in

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<sup>299</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 4, p. 112

<sup>300</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 4, p. 114

such acts following any of their leaders' deaths. But Ferhad Pasha's deputy (*qaim-maqam* or *kaymakam*; sub-governor), Ali Pasha, managed to set the people's minds to rest. And there are no indications that Ottoman troops acted violently or maliciously in Damascus in the aftermath of the *beylerbeyi's* death.<sup>301</sup> Nevertheless, the reader would be hard-pressed to locate a more apt demonstration of Damascene stereotyping and prejudice against "Turks" in any of the historical sources of Ottoman Syria during the period in question.

Ghazzi's *Kawakib* supplies us with another, which he derives from his father's *Rumi* travelogue. Muhayya b. Muhammad al-Misri al-Rumi, a native of Egypt who spent most of his life in *Rum* and is thus also termed a *Rumi*, met Ghazzi's father Badr al-Din on the latter's trip to the Turkish-speaking lands. He was held in the lowest regards by Badr al-Din, although Najm al-Din does not explain why. According to the younger Ghazzi, his father had described Muhayya as "insane (*safih*)", and his "people (*qawm*, which may also denote tribe or family)" as "dirty (*badhi*)" and "low (*khasis*)".<sup>302</sup> This is the one clear example of ethnic prejudice associated with a *Rumi* in Ghazzi's two biographical collections. As such, it is rather curious that Michael Winter, in his article on Ghazzi in the database *Historians of the Ottoman Empire*, wrote that "there are several anti-Ottoman or anti-Turkish expressions."<sup>303</sup> Although Winter does concede that they are ethnic and cultural rather than political, one still struggles to find a handful, let alone "several," examples in which there is explicit or even implicit ethno-cultural prejudice in the two dictionaries that Ghazzi composed, and sadly Winter does not provide any specific cases or references in his article where such an instance was recorded. Even in Muhayya al-Misri's biography, the obvious example of ethnic prejudice is ascribed not to Ghazzi himself, but rather his father Badr al-Din, though perhaps this is a minor point. It is also not entirely clear whether the group that has in this case been ethnically stereotyped as "dirty" and "low" is the Egyptians or the *Rum* (or perhaps even neither, if what Ghazzi meant by *qawm* was simply tribe or family), although it does appear more likely that Muhayya was castigated for his *Rumi* rather than Egyptian "qualities". That is because natives of Egypt, as Arabic-speakers who

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<sup>301</sup> Ibn Tulun, *I'lam al-Wara*, p. 240

<sup>302</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 2, p. 252

<sup>303</sup> Winter, "al-Gazzi", p. 2

were considered less alien than Turks both culturally and linguistically, were not nearly as susceptible to ethnic stereotyping as *Rumis*. Also, Badr al-Din al-Ghazzi had met Muhayya in *Rum*, not in Egypt.

In terms of ethnic consciousness and prejudicial attitudes towards the “other” or “outsider” in linguistic, territorial and ethnic terms, the worldviews of Damascene and Aleppine historians differed significantly. Aleppo’s greater trade links with the world of Islam, as well as its historians’ almost exclusive concern for events in the city itself, may have mitigated the ethnic awareness and prejudice of its elite residents. Damascene historians, on the other hand, may have preserved some memory of their city’s great Arab past as the center of a Muslim Empire ruled by a distinctly Arab elite, thus forming a clearer self-image and a distinctly if moderately more negative attitude to those who were perceived as “different” or “other.” Yet obvious differences also exist among the individual biographers of each city. In the Aleppine case, ‘Urđi’s ethnic awareness is, at best, muted, while his predecessor Ibn al-Hanbali does manifest a certain Arab pride, but without seeming to exhibit any negative attitude towards *Rumis* or other non-Arab and non-Aleppine individuals. Ibn Tulun appears to be the most prejudiced of Damascene historians, perhaps owing to his localism and relatively limited knowledge of the world outside his hometown, as well as being an eyewitness to the conquest of Damascus by a remote and distant *Rumi* power. It is somewhat paradoxical, however, that Ibn Tulun manifests the greatest sense of Arab ethnocentrism among all biographers, considering his own origins as a descendant of a Mamluk and son of a *Rumi* mother. Burini, a universalist who cultivated the friendships of many Ottoman officials but nonetheless never left *Bilad al-Sham*, displays a greater sense of Arab particularism and territorialism than the other (more) universalist biographers, as evidenced by his biography of the *mufti* Ebu’s-Su‘ud among others. As such, there is an unmistakable connection between an individual historian’s travel experience and the level of ethnic consciousness and prejudice that he may develop. Whereas Ibn al-Imad does not provide us with a single expression of any negative attitudes towards *Rumis*, those offered by his pupil Muhibbi appear to be predominantly rooted in linguistic rather than ethnic proclivities. Ghazzi’s one example across the 133 *hijri* years he writes on in his two voluminous works, Muhayya al-Misri, is taken from an external source, albeit one that was composed by his father.

More substantively, it is quite obvious that Ulrich Haarmann's discussion of Arab-Egyptian prejudice against Ottoman Turks cannot be accurately applied to the Syrian historical literature of the same period. We may therefore conclude with absolute certainty that speaking of the "Arab" attitude toward "Turks", or simply attempting to evaluate it within a single analytic totality, would be dangerously misleading. There emerges a clear difference between Egyptian and Syrian images of Ottoman and Turk even if the reader accepts Haarmann's study of Egyptian prejudice without question. Furthermore, it would be exceedingly difficult, perhaps even impossible, to draw a specifically Syrian image of *Rumis*, considering the drastically contrasting worldviews of Aleppine and Damascene historians.

#### 4. *The Arab Discovery of Rum, and the Yearning for Home*

The biographical collections of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Syria provide us with countless examples of Arab travelers, 'ulama' and otherwise, who journeyed to the lands of the Ottoman center for various reasons. The motivations for such trips were varied, occasionally having to do with commercial interests, pure curiosity or even political exile, in which case Ottoman Istanbul was sometimes the chosen asylum. Most frequently, however, individuals went on their long journeys to *Rum* to gain further religious education in prestigious Ottoman schools and, in many cases, to acquire lucrative teaching posts. The Muhibbi family, of course, represents one such example, with Muhammad Amin, Sun'ullah and Fadlallah all spending lengthy periods in the cities of Bursa, Edirne and Istanbul. The Ottoman conquest of Syria also resulted in an influx of *Rumi* scholars to the major urban centers of *Bilad al-Sham*, and on the whole the exchange of scholars between the Arabic and Turkish-speaking lands was substantial and continuous. Thus, Arabic-speaking scholars in Syria and elsewhere had ample opportunity to "discover" their *Rumi* counterparts, through a process of communication and interaction within the Arab lands and, for some, a more ambitious

process involving the crossing of many miles and spending extended periods of time in the towns and cities of *Rum*.

And yet a certain pattern appears in many, if not most, of the biographies of individuals from both ethno-linguistic groups. Many Arabs and *Rumis*, after leaving their cities and lands of origin, experienced a deep sense of longing and desire to return. Some of these cases resulted from feelings of despair after negative personal and/or professional developments took their toll on the individuals' collective psyche, but the vast majority occurred despite successful lives and careers being carved out in distant lands. The careers of members of the Muhibbi family, in particular, testify to this case, but so too do those of the Ghazzis (the biographer Najm al-Din and his father Badr al-Din), whose respective periods of residence in Istanbul we currently know little about, though it is quite evident from the younger Ghazzi's *Kawakib* that both father and son had managed to cultivate the acquaintance of several prominent Ottoman '*ulama*'.

There are, of course, numerous exceptions that appear in the dictionaries. One such case from the *Rumi* side is Ebu Bekir Karaoğlu (d. 926/1520), a remarkably well-travelled Hanafi scholar, born in his hometown Khurasan and brought up in Aleppo, later moving on to Tabriz, then Istanbul and finally, Cairo and Damascus.<sup>304</sup> From Ibn Tulun's brief biography of the man, it is evident that Ebu Bekir had exerted considerable influence on Ottoman policy-making during the time of Bayezid II. Ibn Tulun claims that Ebu Bekir was influential in reconciling Bayezid II and the Mamluk Sultan Qaitbay, thus helping end the first Mamluk-Ottoman war.<sup>305</sup> Indeed, Shai Har-El mentions Ebu Bekir (as Abu-Bekir) in his work on the Ottoman-Mamluk war, entitled *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East*, where he refers to the *Rumi* scholar as an Ottoman "envoy." According to Har-El, Ebu Bekir's master was the famous Ottoman *mufti* 'Ala'addin 'Ali al-'Arabi, a scholar of Aleppine origin who was better known in Ottoman circles as Molla Arap.<sup>306</sup> Molla Arap, in fact, led the Ottoman negotiating team

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<sup>304</sup> Ibn Tulun, *Mut'at al-Adhhan*, Vol. 2, p. 216

<sup>305</sup> Ibn Tulun, *Mut'at al-Adhhan*, Vol. 2, p. 217

<sup>306</sup> Shai Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East: The Ottoman-Mamluk War, 1485-1491* (Leiden, 1995), p. 202, henceforth Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East*. Har-El's source is not Ibn Tulun's biographical account of Ebu Bekir, but rather the same author's more famous historical work, the chronicle *Mufakahat al-Khillan fi Hawadith al-Zaman*.

that concluded the treaty of 1491 with the Mamluks; by that time, Ebu Bekir had already spent several months in Damascus and Cairo.<sup>307</sup> It was not to be his last visit to the Arab lands. Ibn Tulun himself reveals that when Selim I eventually dealt a decisive blow to the Mamluk state, Ebu Bekir accompanied him first to Damascus, then to Cairo, and finally took the decision to reside in the first city for the rest of his life. During his time in Damascus, according to Ibn Tulun, he initiated the construction of a *madrassa*, which was abruptly halted during the uprising of Janbirdi al-Ghazali in 1520 and never completed after Ebu Bekir's death.<sup>308</sup> Ebu Bekir Karaoğlu is nonetheless certainly among the first Ottoman scholars, and one of the most prominent, to take the momentous decision of settling in a Syrian city soon after the Ottoman conquest.

A somewhat similar reverse case involves an Aleppine scholar and Hanafi jurist by the name of Ibrahim b. Muhammad (d. 956/1549). Ibrahim was a long-time resident in Istanbul and eventually died in the Ottoman capital, and is one example of a Syrian scholar who left his hometown to settle and pass away in a region of *Rum*. According to his Aleppine biographer Ibn al-Hanbali, Ibrahim was a man of considerable influence whose reputation for knowledge preceded him, as he was regularly consulted by Sa'di Çelebi, the *mufti* of Istanbul, in some pressing legal matters.<sup>309</sup> Ebu Bekir Karaoğlu and Ibrahim b. Muhammad, however, seem to be in a minority among the '*ulama*', or at least those among them who are represented in the biographical collections, in that they left their lands of origin to spend the rest of their careers elsewhere.

There are, however, also examples of Arabic-speaking individuals who were not of the '*ulama*' class but still had certain skills to offer to the populations of the Empire beyond *Bilad al-Sham*. A certain Taqi al-Din b. Sharaf al-Din (not to be mistaken with his namesake and more famous contemporary, the astronomer Taqi al-Din b. Ma'ruf al-Shami al-Sa'di, also a native of Damascus), a Damascene physician and traveler who took very little interest in the religious sciences,<sup>310</sup> took a trip to Istanbul, managed to make his way into the Ottoman palace and won Sultan Murad III's favor by successfully healing some of the Ottoman palace's child servants who happened to be

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<sup>307</sup> Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East*, p. 210

<sup>308</sup> Ibn Tulun, *Mut'at al-Adhhan*, Vol. 2, p. 217

<sup>309</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab*, Vol. 1, p. 94

<sup>310</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A'yan*, Vol. 2, p. 108

ill.<sup>311</sup> Abu Bakr al-Suhyuni (d. 993/1585), a native of the Suhyun mountains in Syria, a gifted religious scholar but more famous as a leading astronomer of his age, travelled to Istanbul in order to assist in the launching of a scientific, specifically astronomical project, which according to Burini was quickly discontinued for reasons that the biographer chose not to elaborate upon. (It is most likely that Burini was referring to the launching of the Taqi al-Din observatory in Istanbul, which functioned for a very brief period (1577-80) before being shut down.) But even after the termination of the initial plan and of the tasks that were given to him, al-Suhyuni remained in Istanbul until his death, although there is no evidence that he participated in any other scientific or observatory enterprises.<sup>312</sup>

A reader of the dictionaries would find less difficulty, however, in locating biographies of Arabic-speaking individuals who went to *Rum* and came back to their original homes. Ibrahim Ibn al-Tabbakh (d. 1006/1597-8), a Damascene scholar who gained much of his education in *Rum* and spoke very good Turkish, decided not to wait for promotion from a 40 *akçe* post in a Bursa college to the most lucrative of Ottoman teaching positions at a daily wage of 50 *akçes*, instead leaving to return to his hometown, which he saw as a “paradise with limitless fruits.” Another of Ibn al-Tabbakh’s motivation for deciding to remain in Damascus and never again return to *Rum* was, according to his biographer Burini, the man’s realization that the city “did not possess any great ‘*ulama*’.”<sup>313</sup> Whether Ibn al-Tabbakh’s attitude to the city’s intellectual elite was sound or correct is questionable; his deep sense of duty toward his hometown, to which he ostensibly returned to reinforce its scholarly tradition, was nonetheless apparent regardless of the validity of his views. One wonders whether Ibn al-Tabbakh’s outlook on the state of Damascene scholarship was influenced by his own intellectual formation, which he gained primarily in Anatolia, according to his biographer. Perhaps the scholarly tradition of Damascus at the time had developed and moved in a different direction from its central Ottoman counterpart(s) in its methods and approach to the instruction of the religious sciences, and this may well have been perceived by Ibn al-Tabbakh as a demonstration of the city’s intellectual obsolescence

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<sup>311</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 2, pp. 109-110

<sup>312</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 276

<sup>313</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 300

and the poor quality of its men of knowledge. Nevertheless, this among many examples indicates the affinity that Damascene, and more generally Syrian scholars, had for their cities and perhaps also regions of origin.

This same Ibn al-Tabbakh, incidentally, was purportedly also a man with a keen sense of righteousness, as he routinely “objected to actions by the judges that violated the Holy Law,” to the extent that a friend of Burini, the Ottoman *qadi* Tacettin b. Yahya Efendi, cynically observed: “with the death of Ibrahim, we are now rid of he who holds us to account.”<sup>314</sup> The last statement may be an effective admission of guilt by an Ottoman judge to corrupt conduct. More importantly, it is also an implicit but seemingly unashamed admission by Burini himself that he had formed relations with certain individuals who did not always adhere to the moral standards of the learned in Muslim society. In fact, Burini openly admits to committing some acts that may be deemed immoral. Two of the Damascene historian’s acquaintances, Ahmad and Shams al-Din, two brothers and scholars from the Khalidi family of Safad in Palestine, were infamous for their pederastic tendencies in their hometown.<sup>315</sup> On one occasion, the two men were put on trial in Damascus for the sexual abuse of one of Shams al-Din’s young male pupils, but Burini intervened to testify in their favor, despite prior knowledge that the allegations leveled against them were true. The Khalidis were found innocent, and in Ahmad’s biography Burini appears rather unapologetic about the entire affair.<sup>316</sup>

Another outstanding example is Muhammad Ibn Maghush, a Maliki *‘alim* from Tunisia, who went to Istanbul by sea and once there mingled with the city’s finest scholars, even meeting the greatest of Ottoman Sultans, Süleyman I. According to Ghazzi, the Sultan took quite a liking to the man, inviting him to stay in the imperial capital while promising him a salaried post. But Ibn Maghush chose not to remain there for long, informing the Sultan that he was “fed up with the winter of *Rum* (*shita’ al-Rum*) and the severity of its cold.”<sup>317</sup> Ibn Maghush soon took a long overland trip to Egypt, along the way passing through several cities in *Bilad al-Sham*, including Aleppo and Damascus, and resided in each of them for an extended period of time, adding to his

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<sup>314</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 303

<sup>315</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 24

<sup>316</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 1, p. 25

<sup>317</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 2, p. 16

growing list of pupils in the process. Among his students was Ibn al-Hanbali, Aleppo's historian for the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>318</sup> Ghazzi indicates that another of them, Shihab al-Din al-Tayyibi of Damascus, wrote a book in honor of his master in which he recorded the many tales of Muhammad Ibn Maghush's epic journey.<sup>319</sup>

'Abdul-Latif b. al-Jabi (d. 1026/1617), the son of a Damascene merchant and therefore not a member of the city's intellectual elite, decided to follow a different path than that which his father had chosen, pursuing his religious studies in his hometown before spending some years in *Rum* and eventually coming back to teach in a Damascus *madrasa*.<sup>320</sup> Muhibbi claims that 'Abdul-Latif composed a short travel book, in which the author expressed his deep admiration for certain islands in the Marmara Sea and the Aegean. It appears that this particular Damascene scholar travelled by sea as well as by land. Particularly noteworthy for 'Abdul-Latif was an exotic fruit that he had found in the Aegean island Sakız (Chios), which he described as a "yellow watermelon."<sup>321</sup>

A certain Aleppine scholar by the name of Ibrahim b. Ahmad, known as al-Kawakibi, took a trip to the lands of *Rum*, where he added to the education he had received in Aleppo, and was assigned to Egypt as a judge before returning to Istanbul. On his initial journey in *Rum*, he married the daughter of a *Rumi* scholar, Abdülbaki Torsunoğlu, and shortly after Kawakibi's return to Istanbul from Egypt, both his wife and father-in-law passed away.<sup>322</sup> Ibrahim requested that he be relieved of his duties in the Aya Sofia college, but when his request was refused he left without prior notice to return to his hometown Aleppo. In Aleppo, he experienced a falling out with his parents, and though they were reconciled thanks to the best efforts of his teacher, the historian 'Umar al-'Urđi, Kawakibi decided to leave Aleppo again when offered the post of *qadi* in Mecca.<sup>323</sup> One wonders whether Kawakibi's distressing personal affairs contributed to his decision to leave Aleppo for a second time, despite his obvious pining to return home in the aftermath of even greater personal tragedy in Istanbul. It is also unclear where the Aleppine scholar eventually passed away, but the circumstances of

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<sup>318</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 2, p. 16

<sup>319</sup> Ghazzi, *Kawakib*, Vol. 2, p. 17

<sup>320</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 3, p. 17

<sup>321</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 3, p. 18

<sup>322</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 12

<sup>323</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 13

his life and career are an apt demonstration of the sentiment that many prominent ‘*ulama*’, Arabic-speaking or otherwise, attached to their hometowns.

There is an almost infinite supply of similar cases. Jar-Allah b. Abu Bakr, a Hanafi scholar and native of Jerusalem, made a trip to Anatolia and reached Istanbul, gaining some posts and additional education along the way, before returning to his hometown and eventually being assigned as its *mufti*.<sup>324</sup> Muhammad b. Sha‘ban (d. 1020/1611-12) of Tripoli in North Africa visited Istanbul towards the end of his life, where the *mufti* Sunullah received him and, apparently in recognition of Muhammad’s love for his hometown, promised that he would be assigned *qadi* of Tripoli.<sup>325</sup> Similarly, Muhammad b. ‘Abdul-Haqq (d. 1033/1623-24) was a scholar who, upon the completion of his education in *Rum*, requested that he be offered a teaching post in his hometown Jerusalem. Only two days after his return to the city, however, disaster struck the man as he fell violently ill and passed away.<sup>326</sup>

There are also men who were forced to flee their homelands because of their fears of imprisonment or death due to political pressure, only to return once the danger had passed. Yusuf Ibn al-Amiri (d. 943/1537), a native of Aleppo, a bureaucrat in the city during Mamluk times and a man who accumulated considerable wealth, fell out of favor with the Mamluk authorities due to fiscal irregularities and was forced into exile, choosing Istanbul as a new home for himself.<sup>327</sup> As soon as word of Ottoman victory in the East reached the imperial capital, however, he went back to “the land of the Arabs (*diyar al-‘Arab*)”, where he eventually passed away in the Salihyya suburb of Damascus, according to Ibn al-Hanbali.<sup>328</sup> Ibn al-Amiri’s strong affection seems not to have been restricted to his hometown Aleppo, but embraced a greater geographical area which certainly encompassed *Bilad al-Sham*, and most likely the Arab lands in a more general sense.

Another victim of forced political exile, but from the Ottoman side, was Abdürrahman of Amasya (d. 922/1516-17), who came to join the closed circle of Prince

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<sup>324</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 2, p. 127

<sup>325</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 3, p. 474

<sup>326</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 3, p. 482

<sup>327</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab*, Vol. 2, p. 601

<sup>328</sup> Ibn al-Hanbali, *Durr al-Habab*, Vol. 1, p. 602

Bayezid (soon to become Sultan Bayezid II). Abdürrahman eventually fell out of favor with members of the Ottoman elite in Istanbul, and Mehmed II soon called for his capture and execution. Upon hearing this news, Bayezid saved his long-time friend and associate from the wrath of his father, offering him a hefty sum of cash and a horse so he could begin his escape to Mamluk Syria by night. Abdürrahman reached Aleppo, where he received the bulk of his education in the religious sciences, but did not hesitate to return to *Rum* upon Bayezid's accession to the Ottoman throne. Obviously, Abdürrahman saw for himself an opportunity to acquire important and lucrative administrative posts during the reign of his friend the Sultan, but he was doubtless also motivated by a desire to re-acquaint himself with the land that he regarded as home. The highest rank he attained in *Rum* was as *kadiasker*, first of Anadolu and then Rumeli. Abdürrahman also accompanied Selim I on his campaign against the Safavid Shah Ismail I in 1514, but soon became senile and had to spend the last months of his life in retirement.<sup>329</sup>

It appears, therefore, that scholars of Arabic-speaking lands were not alone in harboring feelings of deep attachment to their homelands when they left for pastures anew. Ibn al-‘Imad writes of a *Rumi* (from an unspecified hometown) by the name of Alaüddin Ali b. Yusuf (d. 903/1497-8), who in his youth made a journey to Persia (*Bilad al-‘Ajam*), passing along the way through Herat, Samarkand and Bukhara, where he received a well-rounded education and acquired posts as a professor of the religious sciences. Then, in Ibn al-‘Imad's words, “his love of his homeland (*hubb al-watan*) overcame him, so he decided to go back to the lands of *Rum* (*Bilad al-Rum*).”<sup>330</sup> Alaüddin Efendi later achieved great success in his homeland *Rum*, acquiring a teaching post in Bursa before ascending to the position of head judge in the city, and finally passing away while serving as the *kadiasker* of Rumeli.<sup>331</sup>

Some individuals did not yearn for a return to a larger homeland like *Rum*, but simply to a specific city or town. Abdürrahman b. Hüseyin (d. 954/1547-8), a native of Bursa who spent most of his life in that city and appears to have been no more than a minor scholar of modest means, left his hometown for Edirne to occupy a 15 *akçe*

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<sup>329</sup> Ibn al-Imad, *Shadharat al-Dhahab*, Vol. 8, p. 109

<sup>330</sup> Ibn al-Imad, *Shadharat al-Dhahab*, Vol. 8, p. 18

<sup>331</sup> Ibn al-Imad, *Shadharat al-Dhahab*, Vol. 8, p. 19

teaching post. According to Ibn al-‘Imad, “he (Abdürrahman) came to be ill in Edirne while living alone in his home with nobody for companionship.” Abdürrahman returned to Bursa soon after his bout with illness, and fittingly passed away in his beloved city.<sup>332</sup> A markedly more prominent individual, Ibrahim b. Ali (d. 1028/18-19), a native of Iznik who twice served as chief judge in Damascus, showed a spirit of generosity and respect toward his peers, according to his biographer Muhibbi.<sup>333</sup> In particular, Muhibbi points to Ibrahim Efendi’s positive role during the siege of Damascus by the rebel Pasha ‘Ali Canbulad, which took place at the time of Ibrahim’s first tenure as *qadi*. The judge reportedly convinced Canbulad not to enter Damascus after emerging victorious in battle, so that additional strife and bloodshed could be avoided.<sup>334</sup> According to Burini’s biography of Canbulad, who was his contemporary, the Pasha of Aleppo was also offered 125000 pieces in silver to abandon his siege.<sup>335</sup> At any rate, Ibrahim Efendi, so influential in averting what seemed a likely disaster for the Ottoman city of Damascus, later decided to retire and spend his last years in piece in his hometown Iznik.<sup>336</sup>

There are numerous other examples of *Rumi ‘ulama’* and people of other professions leaving their original areas of residence and establishing themselves for years in “foreign” lands, only to go back to their “homelands” (*mawtan*, *watan*, or *balad*) with the ostensible aim of passing away and being buried there. The natural human sentiments of devotion to one’s perceived land of origin seem to have been similarly and equally experienced by both Arabic-speaking *awlad al-‘arab* in *Rum* and Turkish-speaking natives of *Rum* in the Arab and other lands. There are a few cases, on the other hand, of individuals who overcame their deep affinity to their homes and ended up residing in self-imposed “exile” for the duration of their lives. One such example is Badr al-Din Abu al-Fath of Cairo (d. 963/1555-6), who during his youth had the fortune of meeting Bayezid II on a trip to Istanbul, where he presented the Sultan with a book he had written on the 9<sup>th</sup> century Traditionist Bukhari. Bayezid, in turn, rewarded Badr al-Din and offered him a lucrative teaching post in the Ottoman capital, which the Cairene scholar declined because “he wished to go to his homeland (*watan*).”

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<sup>332</sup> Ibn al-Imad, *Shadharat al-Dhahab*, Vol. 8, p. 303

<sup>333</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 31

<sup>334</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 32

<sup>335</sup> Burini, *Tarajim al-A‘yan*, Vol. 2, p. 279

<sup>336</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 1, p. 32

The lure of Istanbul may have been difficult to resist for long, however, and soon after the Ottoman conquest of Egypt Badr al-Din returned, spending most of the remaining years of his life in the imperial city while earning a daily salary of 50 *akçes* in retirement.<sup>337</sup>

Then there are also certain very limited and peculiar cases of eccentrics, such as the Damascene scholar of the Hanafī school Muhammad b. Ahmad, better known in his time as Ibn al-Akram. Like his biographer Muhibbi, Ibn al-Akram set out for *Rum* shortly after the death of his father. He then returned to Damascus, and there is very little in his trip to *Rum* that is particularly worthy of note, based on Muhibbi's biography of the man. A unique facet of his character grabs the attention of his biographer, however. After returning to his hometown, Ibn al-Akram started dressing like *Rumi* scholars, according to Muhibbi, wearing "long dresses with wide sleeves."<sup>338</sup> This is most likely an allusion to the Mevlevis, the most prominent Sufī order in Anatolia at the time; Muhibbi also reveals that Ibn al-Akram "wore the dress of the Sufis",<sup>339</sup> but does not indicate whether Ibn al-Akram was a Mevlevi or a Sufi himself. Ibn al-Akram is a clear representation of individuals who, despite returning to their homelands, adopt certain customs of a people in a geographical locale that they had visited, demonstrating an affinity to the people of the region in question and their specific culture. In Ibn al-Akram's case, it was obviously the "*Rumi* dress" that made the greatest impression on his vision and memories of *Rum*. Ibn al-Akram had other eccentricities as well, most notably declaring himself a *shaykh al-Islam* when he was no more than a mere *mudarris* in Damascus.<sup>340</sup>

It cannot be stressed enough that such individuals as those described above, though expressing an obvious affection for their hometowns and/or homelands, experienced such sentiments only in cultural and territorial terms. "National" or political motivations were, of course, furthest from a Muslim scholar's mind when making a return to his land or city of origin. Nevertheless, the numerous examples of "homecomings" that the reader can find in the biographical literature of the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Ibn al-Imad, *Shadharat al-Dhahab*, Vol. 8, p. 336

<sup>338</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 3, p. 354

<sup>339</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 3, p. 355

<sup>340</sup> Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-Athar*, Vol. 3, p. 354

centuries indicate that a clear sense of belonging and integration into an Ottoman world was, for Arabic-speaking scholars of Ottoman Arab lands, not quite widespread or comprehensive, though it was still far from non-existent. The unquestioned political loyalty to the State as a legitimate and universal bastion of Sunni Islam did not transform itself into similarly strong sentiments of belonging to a far-flung and enormously diverse Ottoman world. Rather, it is safe to assume that the foremost geo-cultural entity with which most Arabic-speaking scholars identified was the pre-defined territorial unit from which they originated, whether this was restricted to a town, city, or perceived as a much larger region and in terms of a greater homeland. This appears to apply, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, even to the universalist scholars of Damascus. It is clear from Burini's language and discourse in *Tarajim al-A'yan* that this was the case. And even the better-travelled, markedly more cosmopolitan biographers like Ghazzi and Muhibbi spent the majority of their lives in their native Damascus after enjoying fruitful journeys to the lands of *Rum*, and cultivating the friendship of some prominent scholars in the Ottoman center. But it must be kept in mind that the universalists are classified as such not in the *absolute* sense; rather it is in contrast to the Aleppine localists, and indeed other scholars in the lands of Islam, that they may be branded as cosmopolitan and universalist. *Rumi* scholars and Ottoman officials also exhibited similar affinities to *Rum* and their hometowns within the region, judging by accounts of their lives in the dictionaries. It is, however, clear and incontrovertible from the biographical data that the Arabic and Turkish-speaking intellectual elites had not been joined in an absolutely cohesive system of scholarly and institutional unity. The age of mutual discovery for *Rumis* and Arabs, which gained much strength after the ultimate demise of the Mamluks did not, in the first two centuries of Ottoman rule, drastically alter the self-image of the Syrian-Arab '*ulama*', despite the obvious transformation in their perceptions of Sultan and State. This group of scholars, evidently eager to exploit the full diversity and richness of the educational institutions (for both knowledge and revenue) in the Ottoman world, was nevertheless generally unwilling to be fully assimilated into the Ottoman center, deciding ultimately to bring the financial and intellectual rewards of *Rumi* scholarship back home.

## B.

### Conclusion

The Aleppine and Damascene perceptions of the Ottoman State and its major protagonists through the first two centuries of Ottoman rule were not radically or fundamentally different, despite the drastically contrasting visions and approaches to historical writing that the leading intellectuals of each city adopted (with the exception of Ibn Tulun in Damascus's case). Aleppo's biographers, like their Damascene counterparts, contributed to the transformation of the image of Sultan and state during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and in modifying the terminology and discourse used to depict the Ottoman center as the indisputably leading temporal and spiritual authority in the Muslim dominions after 922/1516. This becomes clear when considering the variety of different terms applied to the Sultan in the post-Bayezid era, all effectively symbolizing the universality of his rule, as well as the descriptions of the imperial capital and some of its institutions, most notably the authority of the *şeyh ül-islam*, the *mufti* of Istanbul.

The designation of the Ottoman Sultan as a "Sultan of Islam," a new terminological development in Syrian historical scholarship during the 16<sup>th</sup> century and one that was surely connected to the Ottoman conquest of the Arab lands and the dynasty's custodianship of the Holy Cities of Islam, suggests some sense of identification with a greater Ottoman world. This is particularly true for Damascus, whose universalist biographers give great attention to the *Dar al-Islam* as a whole. As such, the Ottoman Sultan's perceived status as a "Sultan of Islam", especially when combined with the dominant Damascene worldview, reveals a strong awareness and even attachment, as distinct from mere loyalty, to the Ottoman realms.

And yet there is other evidence which indicates that a general Arab or even specifically Syrian recognition of association with a predominantly Turkish-speaking Ottoman world was still far from complete. The large number of Arabic-speaking scholars who made their way to *Rum*, only to return to their homelands at a later stage, reveals the extent to which the intellectual elite still held feelings of affinity to their

lands and cities of origin, and that such sentiments outweighed any sense of belonging to a larger geographical entity, whether that was an Ottoman or even a far wider *Dar al-Islam*. These feelings were not at all exclusive to the Arabs of Syria and other lands, but were shared by the Turkish-speaking *Rumis* as well, indicating the universality of such human emotions and, more importantly, demonstrating that most *Rumis* were equally uneager to completely abandon their own homelands.

Then, of course, there are those who never leave their homelands at any point in their lives (probably constituting the majority of the *'ulama'* class), and this naturally affects their conceptions of the world around them. In the biographers' case, Ibn Tulun stands alone among the Damascene historians as a scholar who appears not to have wandered beyond the gates of his city, while both Aleppines Ibn al-Hanbali and 'Urđi possessed modest (and in the case of 'Urđi, non-existent) travel experience. Unsurprisingly, all three men were local historians who were concerned almost exclusively with writing on the notable men (and in Ibn Tulun and Ibn al-Hanbali's case, women) of their cities. But it is obvious that Ibn al-Hanbali and 'Urđi after him possessed greater knowledge of Ottoman affairs than their Damascene counterpart, despite sharing Ibn Tulun's approach to biographical writing. This, however, is quite understandable. Ibn Tulun was a localist historian who, crucially, lived and wrote only during the *earliest* decades of Ottoman rule, after spending much of his life under the Mamluk regime. As such, his lack of knowledge and interest in the Ottoman State merely reflects the fact that he was almost entirely unfamiliar with the Ottoman world before Selim I's forces triumphantly entered Damascus. For the same reason, Ibn Tulun appears as a man who, among all biographers, displayed the most openly prejudicial attitudes toward the *Rumis*, who during his time were not as familiar an entity in Damascus and Syria as they became in later generations.

It may be viewed as paradoxical, on the other hand, that Aleppine scholars did not exhibit as keen a sense of ethnic consciousness (even considering the case of Ibn al-Hanbali) and provide as many expressions of prejudice as the Damascene biographers. After all, Damascenes were universalistic in their attitude and methods of historical composition, and placing all other variables aside Aleppine historians, as localists with their own city being the uppermost concern in their minds, should perhaps have manifested greater Arab ethnic solidarity and given their reader more expressions of

hostility towards non-Arabs and even non-Aleppines. But other historical factors come into play, and these help explain the scarcity of Aleppine examples of ethnic awareness and prejudice against *Rumis*. It is true that Damascus attracted a greater number of non-Arab scholars from different parts of the Ottoman and non-Ottoman Muslim world. But most such individuals did not spend the majority of their careers in the city for a variety of reasons, often including a profound sense of attachment to a perceived homeland. Most often, these '*ulama*' came to Damascus to acquire some additional education and possibly also spend a brief stint teaching in a Damascene *madrassa* or temporarily filling some other post. Damascus, of course, also received a great number of travelers on their way to the *hajj* on a yearly basis, but naturally many of those chose not to remain in the city for long while passing through it on their identical return route.

Aleppo, on the other hand, was a prominent trading metropolis which was well-accustomed to hosting "foreign" peoples, Ottoman and non-Ottoman, Muslim and non-Muslim, for extended periods of time. Not only *Rumis* and '*Ajamis* resided in Aleppo in pursuit of their commercial interests, but a significant number of Frankish "infidels" from the remote lands of Western Christendom spent much of their lives in the hometown of Ibn al-Hanbali and 'Urdu. And Aleppo was, after all, closer to both the Persian lands and *Rum* than Damascus in terms of actual geographical proximity, enhancing its familiarity with the non-Arabic-speaking world that surrounded *Bilad al-Sham*. Damascus can, conversely, be precisely described as a city that was situated in the heartlands of "*Arabistan*." Also, the greater religious diversity of Aleppo, which with its periphery included sizeable Christian and Muslim heterodox communities, in comparison to the overwhelmingly Sunni Damascus, may have also contributed to its biographers' relatively muted ethnic sentiment, if not quite their iconoclastic attitudes towards notorious heretics.

On the whole, the multiplicity of different religious and ethnic diversities that constituted an everyday reality in the Aleppine setting did not exist in Damascus. Aleppo represented the confluence of commercial networks in the Arab Near East and much more in the cultural sense, while Damascus epitomized the homogeneity and monolithic nature of a city where Sunni Islam continuously prevailed. Damascenes, of course, went to distant lands like *Rum* and explored "other" cultures, but their interactions with "foreign" individuals were probably less a part of everyday life than

was the case for Aleppines, who could capture an image of the world's diversity simply by remaining in their hometown. The universalism of Damascene historical scholarship is merely connected to the universality of its image as the heartland of Muslim orthodoxy and to its political importance in the context of Muslim history. Its cosmopolitanism was, therefore, exclusively intellectual; that of Aleppo was social, religious, and cultural.

At any rate, the Aleppine and Damascene models of historiography present us with distinct images and perceptions of the Ottomans from those offered, for instance, by Egyptian observers during the same period, judging by contemporary scholarship on the subject.<sup>341</sup> There is little evidence to suggest that Turks or Ottomans were, throughout the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, viewed by Syrian historians as uncouth, barbaric or immoral simply by virtue of their Turkish-ness or Ottoman-ness. The terms through which individuals were evaluated were concrete and preconceived, but rarely if ever incorporated specific or unchangeable traits that applied to a single ethnic or cultural group. It also appears that members of the Syrian intellectual elite were better (though not fully) integrated into the world of Ottoman scholarship and its institutions than the Egyptian elite, based on the relative paucity of examples from Ottoman Egypt of '*ulama*' who enjoyed successful careers in the lands of the Ottoman center, or even Egyptian travelers to *Rum*, who may have been outnumbered even by the distant and non-Ottoman Maghrebis.

Nevertheless, in order to improve our currently limited state of knowledge and understanding of the complex web of relations that bound the Ottomans and various Arab peoples together for no less than four centuries, it is necessary to push forward with further comparative research on the Arab lands and their intellectual elites. Any approach to this task that takes the Arab peoples under Ottoman rule as a single and homogeneous group, however, cannot possibly achieve the required objectives, but will

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<sup>341</sup> Apart from Ulrich Haarmann's work explaining Arab-Egyptian anti-Turkish prejudice, see Michael Winter, "Attitudes Toward the Ottomans in Egyptian Historiography During Ottoman Rule" in Hugh Kennedy (ed.), *The Historiography of Ottoman Egypt (c. 950-1800)* (Leiden 2001), pp. 195-210. See also by the same author: *Egyptian Society Under Ottoman Rule, 1517-1798* (New York 1992), pp. 29-32. In both works, Winter generally agrees with Haarmann's observation that the Ottoman state was viewed as entirely legitimate in its rule over Egypt, but also points to an "Arab" feeling of hostility towards "Turks."

rather lead us into a state of greater confusion. Rather, a series of comparative studies focusing on historical development through both time and geographical space, and based on thorough analyses of the specific social, political, cultural and intellectual realities that defined the experience(s) of different Arabs during the Ottoman period would certainly be the most sensible and correct way to proceed.

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