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Women as Patrons of Religious Architecture in Ayyubid Damascus

The articulation and elaboration of Islamic doctrine was from the beginning almost entirely the work of men. The only scholarly role to which women were freely admitted and in which their words might carry authority was the transmission of hadith — a role which required piety, reliability, a good memory, and some knowledge of Arabic, but not a command of the advanced sciences of the faith such as fiqh. For the most part, women could not study or teach in Sunni institutions of learning, and custom admitted them only reluctantly even to public worship in the mosque.¹ In view of all this, the active role taken by women in underwriting religious architecture and institutions of learning in Seljuqid and Ayyubid Damascus is no self-evident fact. It is something that demands explanation.

Evidence of a concern on the part of Muslim women during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to propagate the faith can be found throughout Syria. In Aleppo, the formidable Dayfa Khatun² provided the city with one of its finest monuments, the Madrasat al-Firdaws, beyond dispute the most impressive madrasa built by any Ayyubid ruler in Syria. This was in fact the single madrasa in Aleppo during the Zangid-Ayyubid era to be founded by a woman (out of more than fifty madrasas in the city dating from those 133 years). Mystical Islam, on the other hand, seems to have attracted broader support from women; five of the twenty-plus Sufi hospices (Ar., khānqāh, ribāṭ) established in Aleppo between the death of Nur al-Din (1174) and the Mongol invasion (1260) were owed to female patrons.³

However, it was Damascus, during the eighty-five years between Saladin’s entry into the city in 1174 and the Mongol occupation of 1260, which witnessed the most intense and sustained patronage of religious architecture by women.⁴ This tradition goes back at least to 1110–11, when the Seljuqid princess Sāfwat al-Mulk, widow of the conqueror of Syria Taj al-Dawla Tutush (1078–95) and mother of his son and successor Duqaq (1095–1104), ordered the construction of a small but elegant funerary cupola for her son and herself as part of a larger compound on the Upper Sharaf west of the walled city. This compound included the Qubbat al-Tawwis — the Peacock Cupola (a mausoleum for her and her son Duqaq) — a spacious mosque, and a Sufi hospice (khānqāh). She herself died and was laid to rest in her mausoleum in 1119.⁵ Her efforts surely presage the initiative of her learned and pious daughter, the princess Zumurrud Khatun, two decades later. In 1132, Zumurrud Khatun⁶ built the Madrasa Khatuniyya extra-muros — only the fifth madrasa to be founded in Damascus. It was located on the Upper Sharaf west of the walled city.

This was the last major contribution by a woman to the religious topography of Damascus until Saladin occupied the city, but in his time women again became active and influential patrons of religious architecture there. A few numbers will demonstrate the point:⁷

1. Altogether, some 160 new religious and charitable institutions were founded in Ayyubid Damascus; of these, women underwrote 26, 16 percent of the total.⁸

2. In the same period, 29 Sufi hospices (zāwiya, ribāṭ, khānqāh) were established; of these women sponsored 6 (21 percent).

3. Out of 63 madrasas⁹ constructed or endowed in Damascus under the Ayyubids, 15 (24 percent) were founded by women.

4. During these 85 years, we can identify 147 persons who underwrote the building of religious and charitable institutions; of these 21 (14 percent) were women.

By the numbers, women seem seriously underrepresented as patrons of architecture. Had men and women enjoyed equal resources and opportunity, we would expect to find 73 women patrons rather than 21; likewise, women would have provided 80 of the city’s religious and charitable institutions, not just 26. Women thus participated at less than one-third of the statistically predicted level. However, these overall figures mask some important distinctions within the data. In particular, women’s support for madrasas and Sufi hospices — the key religious institutions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries — was much higher than their overall rate of participation: roughly 40 percent of the “predicted” level. However disadvantaged they may have
been, then, women had a significant voice in defining the character of Islam in Ayyubid Damascus.

When we say this, of course, we have to recognize that not all women could claim such a voice. Only a very small number were in a position to do so, and any further analysis requires us to know who these were. Plainly we must be dealing with women of elite status — but here (as so often) “elite status” is an ambiguous category. It undoubtedly connotes relatively high social prestige, but — as we shall see further on — not necessarily extraordinary wealth, personal prominence, or direct access to the centers of power.

Again, our census data are suggestive. First off, they reveal the dominant role of the ruling family: thirteen women (62 percent of female patrons) were members of the Ayyubid house by birth or marriage. Among these, eight were patrilineal descendants of the dynasty’s eponym, Najm al-Din Ayyub, while three had been born into the petty Turkish dynasties of Syria and the Jazira and entered the Ayyubid clan through marriage. The family origins of two are unknown. The centrality of the Ayyubid princesses, and the concurrent marginality of the other three groups, is confirmed by the number of institutions founded by each group. Ayyubid women were responsible for 17 out of 26 foundations, nearly two-thirds of the total.

Four women patrons (19 percent) were daughters of amirs, and were thus connected to the powerful military caste of the Ayyubid confederation. However, the fathers of these four women are very obscure; their very names are known to us only because of the charitable works of their daughters. We find no wives, sisters, or daughters of any of the leading amirs of the day, in spite of the extraordinary wealth and power possessed by these men, and in spite of the military class’s generous support for religious and charitable institutions.

Two other women (10 percent) were attached to Ayyubid princely households, one as a servant, the other as the daughter of a courtier. Finally, two were daughters of ulama. In contrast to the amiral families, their fathers were well-known and influential persons, among the most prominent scholars in the city. One of these two women, late in her life, even married into the Ayyubid house of Homs and hence might be added to the total of the princesses royal.

A closer scrutiny of this data complicates the relatively simple picture we have sketched so far. First, the general social background of women patrons mirrors that of their male counterparts: architectural patronage in Ayyubid Damascus was mainly the work of princes of the Ayyubid house, amirs, and ulama. However, the distribution of patrons among these groups for men and women is very different. Among women, 62 percent (13 of 21) of female patrons came from the ruling house, but overall only 19 percent of all patrons (28 out of 147) were Ayyubids. The importance of these royal women is not restricted to the narrow realm of female patronage: of the 28 Ayyubid patrons only 15 were men. Moreover, Ayyubid princes constitute only one-eighth of the total of 126 male patrons. To put this point in a different perspective, nearly one-half of the patrons from the Ayyubid house were women. Without the contribution of its women, the ruling family would have had rather a modest impact on the religious infrastructure of Damascus. In this ideologically and culturally crucial arena of public life, then, men and women at the top of the sociopolitical hierarchy apparently enjoyed near parity. This is by any measure a surprising fact, and one for which there seems to this point no obvious explanation.

In contrast, women from amiral and ulama families are grossly underrepresented relative to the proportion of male patrons from these two social categories. Four out of 39 amiral patrons (10 percent) were women — a mere one-fifth of the “predicted” number. Likewise, women number 2 out of 23 ulama patrons — i.e., 9 percent of this group, also about one-fifth of their expected share. If we place the data in a different framework — viz., the ratio of a given sub-group to the whole body of patrons — we obtain results of similar character. Out of 126 male patrons, 35 (28 percent) were amirs, while among women only 4 out of 21 (19 percent) came from amiral families. Among ulama families the disproportion is much the same: 21 male patrons (17 percent of men) were members of the “religious establishment,” while only 2 women (10 percent of female patrons) came from such backgrounds. All this creates a second puzzle: in view of the nearly equal role of Ayyubid women, how can we account for the poor showing of their sisters from military and scholarly families? Again, there is no immediately obvious answer.

If we now turn our attention to the institutions founded by women, we discover a different but complementary set of problems. Women concentrated on three types of buildings: madrasas, Sufi hospices, and mausolea. In the preference which they displayed for each type, there is no clear difference — allowing for the very small numbers in question — between women of different backgrounds (see table 1).

Madrasas constitute 15 of the 26 institutions (58 percent) endowed by women. As in the time of the Seljuqids
and Nur al-Din, the madrasa continued to be the most favored object of patronage under Ayubid rule; madrasas represent almost 40 percent of total new patronage (63 items out of 160), and 36 percent of patronage by men. Even so, the commitment by these women to this central educational institution of Sunni Islam is remarkable. It hardly seems possible to imagine that they felt excluded or alienated from the “official” Islam of their era. This idea is supported in that the madhhabs for which women endowed their madrasas are distributed much as they are among male patrons (see table 2).

The six khanqahs and ribats are in line with the number of Sufi institutions endowed by men (23) during this era. As with madrasas, though not to the same degree, we can discern a certain concentration of women’s patronage in this category. That is, they endowed some 20 percent of all the Sufi institutions in Damascus, as opposed to their 16 percent of totally new patronage. From another perspective, ribats and khanqahs equal almost one-quarter (6 of 26 for 23 percent) of foundations by women; among men Sufi institutions are half that proportion (23 out of 165 for 14 percent). The numbers in question, however, are perhaps too small to warrant our inferring any substantial difference between the religious orientations of men and women.

Finally, women built five structures of a more modest kind: monumental tombs (turbas), in two cases combined with oratories (masjids). Compared to the total of 50-odd mausolea erected during this period, it is a very small number, 10 percent of the total. (Most women of elite status would have been interred in family mausolea constructed by their fathers, brothers, or husbands.) Three of these mausolea were built principally for the women buried there, one for the founder’s son and one for an Ayubid sultan — no less than al-Kamil Muhammad (d. 1238). Looked at in the aggregate, then, the institutions favored by women do not differ in any obvious way from those sponsored by men. Should we then conclude that these female patrons exhibited no distinctive religious sensibility, that they saw Islam with the same eyes as did men of their class? Or to put the problem in positive terms, can we say anything concrete about the religious values of “elite” women in Ayubid Damascus, and how these values are reflected in their architectural patronage?

The sort of aggregate analysis we have pursued above is ill-calculated to answer such questions. Instead, we will develop, so far as the sources permit, an individual profile of each patron that focuses on the institutions founded by her, but which also tries to determine her social standing and religious outlook.

We begin with the eight women of lesser rank: two from the court, four daughters of amirs, and two daughters of ulama. These women were in no position to endow educational complexes on a grand scale. Even so, their foundations left a clearly visible mark on the city’s religious topography. Collectively, they left behind four madrasas, two Sufi hospices, two tomb-mosques (labeled both turba and masjid by our texts), and a mausoleum — 9 of the 26 monuments in our census. Their work in this realm shows that women of quite varying rank and material means could have a certain public impact on the social and cultural life of Ayubid Damascus. None of these women is anonymous (though some are hard to track down), and some emerge from the fog of our sources as identifiable actors, even as real individuals.

**WOMEN OF THE COURT**

1. *A*^2^*isha, the widow of Ibn al-Dammagh al-*^5^*Adili. To this patron is owed the Madrasah Dammaghyyia, just east of the Citadel, inside the Bab al-Faraj. It was clearly a substantial foundation, since it was endowed for both Hanafi and Shafi’i professors, and the first appointees to each position were eminent figures in their respective...
schools: the chief qadi of Damascus Shams al-Din al-Khuvayi (Shafi'i) and Ifitiqhar al-Din al-Khashghari (Hanafi).

Of ʿAṣima herself we know almost nothing but her name and that she had been the wife of one Shuṭaʿ al-Din Mahmud b. al-Dammagh. He had been a boon companion of al-ʿAdil Abu Bakr, sultan between 1200 and 1218, throughout the latter’s life, accompanying and amusing him both during his youth and after he became sultan.16 In so doing Shuṭaʿ al-Din had acquired a large fortune, including his patrimonial residence near the Citadel, the ancient palace of the Tṣaqiṭites. Of Shuṭaʿ al-Din’s own ethnic or professional background we also know nothing, but his father’s laqab (al-Dammagh) suggests that he had held the office of placing the royal seal (tamgha) on state documents.17

In any event, Shuṭaʿ al-Din died in 614 (1218), and his house and fortune presumably passed to his widow ʿAṣima. In 638 (1240–1), for reasons unstated, she converted the house into a madrasa and endowed it with waqfs. (We can surmise that 638 a.h. marks her own death a quarter-century after her husband, but the texts do not tell us that.) Apart from such material and financial support, she also placed there a valuable relic — a sandal of the Prophet whose twin was held at the dār al-hadith founded by al-Ashraf Musa (ruled in Damascus 1229–37).18 Damascus was full of memories of ancient prophets and the Companions, but it had few traces of Muhammad himself, so this pair of sandals not only enhanced the sacredness of the two buildings housing them, but demonstrated the unbroken prophetic presence in Damascus itself.19

2. Arghun al-Hafiziyya. The Princess (khāṭīn) Arghun left a modest architectural heritage, but at least the sketch of a life.20 Sauvaget calls her — on what authority is not clear — a freedwoman of al-ʿAdil Abu Bakr. At some point she was placed in the service (fi khidmati wa-tarbiyatih) of one of the great sultan’s lesser sons, al-Hafiz Arslansah, who was made lord of Qalat al-Jabar on the Euphrates in (1201–2).21 It is to him that she owes her nisba, of course. Al-Hafiz died in 1242, and she must have retired to Damascus to live out her life no later than that. She is said to have been an intelligent woman of great wealth, but she fell afoul of the bitter struggle for control of Damascus between al-Salih Ayub and his uncle al-Salih Isma'il. The former’s eldest and favorite son was treacherously imprisoned in the Citadel by Isma'il in 1239; he was kept there for five years until his death (whether from natural causes or foul play is disputed) in 1244.22 Arghun had sent food to the young prisoner, and in retaliation Isma'il confiscated 400 (sic!) chests of valuables (māl). But her fortune quickly recovered when Damascus was conquered by al-Salih Ayub in 1245. When she herself died five years later in 1250 she was clearly again a wealthy woman. She had purchased a garden in the suburb of Salihiyah and in it constructed a funerary masjid, where she was interred. The endowment is said to have been a good one, and as a further act of piety she also made her house in Damascus a waqf for her slaves.

The case of Arghun al-Hafiziyya demonstrates how a woman of obscure origin, beginning as the household servant of a minor prince, could rise to considerable wealth and property, and thereby could contribute to the distinctive religious topography of Damascus. We do not know how she acquired her wealth, since she was neither a princess of the blood royal nor the wife or favored concubine of an Ayubid prince. In the struggle for Damascus in the late 1230’s and early 1240’s she was willing to take a dangerous personal role, and that too was most uncommon for a woman of her station. She must have been a remarkable person, and we can only regret that a fuller portrait of her seems beyond our grasp.

MILITARY FAMILIES

3. Sitt al-ʿIraq bint al-Shuṭaʿ. She is known only for (and from) a mausoleum (turba) which she built for her son in Salihiyah in 616 (1219). The sixteenth-century chronicler Ibn Tulun, no doubt following an inscription on the mausoleum, identifies her very tersely as the ḥāja Sitt al-ʿIraq bint al-Shuṭaʿ al-Maliki al-Nasiri. We can say a bit more only because this mausoleum adjoins one erected by a man who must have been her father, Shuṭaʿ al-Din Tughril b. Haydar al-Maliki al-Nasiri, who had died in 1197–98.23 From Shuṭaʿ al-Din’s name we can deduce the following: he was an amir, probably in the service of Saladin (though “al-Ṣalāḥi” would be the more usual nisba for this ruler). He was also Turkish, probably of Turkmen rather than mamlik descent, since Tughril might be a mamlik name, but Haydar never is. He seems to have left no trace in the very numerous chronicles of the period.

4. Fatima bint Sunqur al-Tughtakini. Here we have only a locale and an uncertain name, but this is enough to encourage some interesting conjectures, though in the end it yields little secure information. Ibn Tulun mentions a turba and the masjid in it on the south bank of the Nahr Yazid, a point which marks the lower boundary of Salihiyah.24 Ibn Tulun’s phrasing probably means that
the turba contained a mihrab, a very common though not universal feature in mausolea. It was constructed by a woman whose name he gives as Fatima bint al-Sunqur al-Tughdasi, who died in 606 (1210) and was buried there. As given, her father's name is confused and probably erroneous; probably we should read it as Sunqur al-Tughtakini. Ibn Tulun gives us a precise death date, so it is likely that he got his information about the founder from the mausoleum's inscription, which he must have had some trouble deciphering. The name of the founder's father is not only Turkish but especially typical of mamluks. Almost certainly he had been a soldier if not an amir, but more we cannot say. Ibn Tulun also calls Fatima al-hurma; the precise meaning in this context is not clear — probably just "wife." This humble building, like the preceding one, reminds us that the "military elite" included people of quite modest means and social standing.

5. Fatima Khatun bint al-Salar. Here is another Fatima of obscure origin, although her roots may also be traceable to the military aristocracy of the early twelfth century, a conjecture admittedly based on nothing more than a suggestive coincidence of names and places. In 629 (1231-32) she built and endowed a madrasa for the Hanafis on the eastern slope of Mt. Qasyun, between the settlements of al-Qabun and Salihyya. It was called the Madrasa Mayuriyya after the nearby hamlet or farmstead (mazra'a) of Mayur which constituted its endowment. Mayur obviously furnished a respectable income, since the madrasa's first professor was the well-known Hamid al-Din al-Samarqandi (d. 1237-38).

The Mayuriyya was certainly less important in itself than as a part of a broader religio-political movement of the time, the establishment of the Hanafi madhhab as a major element in Damascene society. Pouzet analyzes the situation in the following way:

With the rise to power of the most important Hanafi prince of the dynasty, al-Mu'azzam ʿIsa . . . the movement to establish madrasas for the Hanafi madhhab would accelerate rapidly. . . . Most of the madrasas associated with the Hanafi prince al-Muʿazzam ʿIsa would be built outside the city, on Qasyun in particular. Here, in his own madrasa, would repose the man whose immediate entourage would be responsible for nearly one-quarter of the Hanafi madrasas of Damascus. That shows the place which he holds in this madhhab's history in Damascus. 27

But if the Mayuriyya was produced in the innovative atmosphere instigated by al-Muʿazzam ʿIsa (albeit not by a known member of his entourage), it may also have had roots in the Seljuq military aristocracy of the early twelfth century. Ibn ʿAsakir mentions the "mosque of al-Mayur, constructed by the salār Ismaʿil b. ʿUmar b. Bakhtiyar." In his note to this typically terse entry, Elisséeff identifies this figure as Zayn al-Din Ismaʿil b. ʿUmar b. Bakhtiyar, who fled Damascus in 1149 after a dust-up with the city's ruler and went to Baʿalbek, then in the possession of Nur al-Din. His father ʿUmar had become shihna (urban prefect) of Damascus in 1118, succeeding his own father Bakhtiyar in that office. Bakhtiyar, an associate of the atabeg Zahir al-Din Tughtigin, had been shihna from 1095 to his death in 1118. 28 Bakhtiyar is an Iranian name, not a Turkish one, but presumably he had entered the city in the train of the Seljuqids.

The coincidence of a mosque in the village of Mayur built by the salār Ismaʿil, and the endowment of this village in favor of a madrasa built adjacent to it by "the salār's daughter" seems too suggestive to overlook. That is all the more so because salār was a rarely used title in Damascus after the mid-twelfth century. If our conjecture has any substance, Fatima would have been one of the last known descendants of the Seljuq military aristocracy under whose aegis the architectural renaissance of Damascus had commenced a century earlier.

6. Fatima bint al-Amir Gökçe. Our third Fatima is in some ways the most mysterious of all. We are not sure if her name was Fatima or something else, to begin with, nor do we know whether she was one woman or two. Our information comes almost entirely from two typically cryptic entries in ʿÍzz al-Din b. Shaddad's catalogue, with some uncertain addenda by Nuʿaymi two centuries later. 29 What we have is the following.

In the Harat al-Qassaʿin ("Street of the Wood-Platter Makers"), just south of Strait Street and inside the Bab al-Jabiya, was a certain Madrasa Qassaʿiyya. It was founded, according to Ibn Shaddad, in 593 (1196-97). It is so named because of its location, but it was also called the Khutuniyya after its founder. Ibn Shaddad gives her name as Khutlubush Khatun bint Kukja, while Nuʿaymi (or his editor) produces Khutlisha (with alif maqṣura). Already we have a problem, since neither version seems a possible name. Perhaps we should read "Khutlumush" (mod. T. "Kutlamış"), or Khülîluja, roughly, "Fortunate, Felicitous." Her father's name can be rendered as Gökçe ("Blue-green"), itself not common. Our problems are compounded by the remark of Nuʿaymi that Ibn Shaddad saw an inscription over the portal giving her name as Fatima bint al-Amir Kukja.

All these puzzles deepen as we proceed. There is a sec-
ond building, the Khanqah Qassā'iyya, which possesses overlapping but somewhat contradictory attributes. According to Ibn Shaddad, it is located in the Qassaʿin, which he places outside Damascus on the Southern Shāraf. It was, he says, founded by the Khutut Khutulja (al-f māmuḍatu), the daughter of Saladin’s sister Sitt al-Sham. If that is correct, she could hardly be our first Khutulmuš/Khuṭulja, in spite of the similarity of name and the apparent closeness of the two buildings to each other. However, the usually reliable Nu‘aymi states that the khanqah’s supervisor told him that the foundress’s real name was Fātimah, and that is one coincidence too many. Nu‘aymi also cites Ibn Shaddad, with the reading “Khāṭūn bint Khutuljā.” No date is given for this foundation, but the first shaykh, Baha’ al-Din Muhammad al-Baṣīli al-Hanbali, died in 1251–52 at the age of seventy. So the information is suggestive but ambiguous; we can well imagine that Ibn Shaddad and Nu‘aymi were themselves confused by the bits of data at their disposal.

On a more general level, we should note that the part of the city where the two Qassaʿiyas were erected was not the aristocratic quarter between the Citadel and the Umayyad Mosque, where most of the major Islamic foundations were situated. It was instead a Muslim-dominated but lower-class district in the southern part of the city; according to Pouzet, the Qassaʿiyā was the only thirteenth-century madrasa in this part of the city. To place a madrasa and a khanqah there was to expand the network of Islamic institutions into a religiously underdeveloped area. The rationale for this initiative is of course left unstated by our sources, but it is plausible to think that property values were far lower there and that a madrasa could be constructed much more cheaply than in the traditional areas of concentration.

ULAMA FAMILIES

7. Sāfiyya al-Qaṣïyya. Sāfiyya is known to us only through her ribât, located near the Madrasa Zahiriyya, hence in the prestigious district between the Citadel and Umayyad Mosque. She was the shaykhah of this establishment, which indicates that it had been founded for women and that she herself had adopted a life of ascetic piety. We are told that she died in 683 (1235–36), and that she was the daughter of the Hanafi chief qadi ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAta’ī. It is this last item that piques our interest.

Shams al-Dīn ʿAbdallāh b. Muhammad b. ʿAta’ī al-Adhra’ī (1199–1274) was indeed one of the leading Hanafi scholars of Damascus, and he had the strength of personality to face down even the fearsome Sultan Baybars in a famous dispute over whether the state had the right to seize private property recovered from the infidels. However, Shams al-Dīn ʿAbdallāh’s public career really began only in 1266, when Baybars instituted the four-qadi system in Damascus and appointed him qādī al-qudat for the Hanafis. His father and uncle had migrated to Damascus from the Hawran town of Adhriyat (modern Darʿa) late in the twelfth or early in the thirteenth century; both were Hanbalis at the time and settled among the other Hanbali migrants in Salihiyah. When and under what circumstances Shams al-Dīn ʿAbdallāh became a Hanafi are not known. He was a close associate neither of the later Ayubid princes nor of Baybars, so we must assume that he received the chief qadishiyya due to his or his family’s standing among the Hanafi scholars of Damascus.

Shams al-Dīn is certainly Sāfiyya’s father, but the dates create a problem. If she was born when he was twenty (ca. 1220), then she would have died at the age of fifteen. That was sadly commonplace, of course, but how had she become a shaykhah, the directress of her own ribât, by that age? One can speculate endlessly, but perhaps the puzzle is the result of a scholarly error, e.g., Nu‘aymi might have misconstrued Birzalī’s notoriously tangled handwriting, reading 633 instead of (for example) 683.

8. Amāt al-ʿAtīf bint Nasīh al-Dīn al-Hanbali. In contrast to most of the women so far discussed, we know quite a bit about Amāt al-ʿAtīf. She was the daughter of a noted Hanbali scholar, and for many years the close companion and spiritual adviser of Saladin’s sister Rabī’ā Khutun (d. 1246; see below, no. 20). Her remarkable career was defined by both connections.

Amāt al-ʿAtīf’s father, Nasīh al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Rahman, was a scion of a prestigious Hanbali clan, the Banū al-Shiraḍi, who claimed descent from the Companion Sa’īd b. ʿUbad, and who had come to Damascus during the reign of the first Seljuk ruler Tutush (1078–1195) in the late eleventh century. Nasīḥ al-Dīn was born in 1159. He studied in Baghdad, Mosul, and Isfahan, and was in Saladin’s entourage at the conquest of Jerusalem in 1187. But in spite of his family’s standing and his personal merits, his rise to prominence was not uncontested. By his time there were several major Hanbali families in the city competing for religious precedence besides his own, for example, the Banu al-Munaja and the Banu Qudama. Thus he had to wait for the death of the great faqih Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudama in 1225 before he could claim the riṣāṣat al-Hanābiyya, and he was bumped from his professorship at the Madrasa Misma-
riyya by the Banu al-Munajja. For this he was soon compensated, however. Apparently at the prompting of her friend Amat al-Latif, Rabi'a Khatun built the Madrasat al-Sahiba in Salihiyah expressly for him in 1231.

Amat al-Latif had joined the service of this princess sometime after the latter's return to Damascus around this time. Rabi'a Khatun had been residing in Irbil in northern Iraq for some four decades as the wife of its ruler Muzaffar al-Din Gökboğ, but she now returned to her father's old mansion (the famous Dar al-Aqiqi near the Umayyad Mosque). The exact date is uncertain; in spite of the explicit words of our sources, it could hardly have taken place after Gökboğ's death, since that occurred in 1233. In any case, she loved Amat al-Latif deeply and expended a great deal of money on her behalf. Amat al-Latif remained in the princess's favor until the latter's death at the age of eighty-plus in 1246.

But at this point, for quite obscure reasons, Amat al-Latif got into trouble with the new regime of al-Salih Ayyub, who had conquered Damascus earlier the same year. She was condemned to pay a heavy fine and held under close guard in the Citadel for three years. The preacher and historian Sibt b. al-Jawzi tells us that he was involved in working out her case with al-Salih Ayyub's agents. Upon her release she married an Ayyubid prince, al-Ashraf Musa, son and designated successor of the recently deceased ruler of Homs al-Mansur Ibrahim. This marriage did not put her at the center of Ayyubid politics, however; al-Ashraf had been expelled by the forces of Aleppo from his inheritance the same year; he went with his new wife to the Euphrates towns of al-Rahba and Tall Bashir, which he held until the Mongol invasion of 1259-60. She herself died at an unknown age in 1255, leaving a substantial fortune: 600,000 dirhams, apart from milık and waqf properties. It is presumably this wealth that was used to endow her Hanbai madrasa and dâr al-hadîth in Salihiyah — the Madrasat al-Álîma.34

The case of Amat al-Latif weaves together themes of piety, high politics, and the social status and influence that a few old learned families might achieve — a status sufficient to involve them intimately in the affairs of the ruling family. That sort of relationship was not unknown in Zangid and Ayyubid times, but it was certainly rare.

THE HOUSE OF AYYUB

As already indicated, four of the women from the house of Ayyub are anonymous; we know them only through the monuments they left to posterity, even though they come from the wealthiest and most visible cluster of patrons, the Ayyubid family. Since we know nothing about them as individuals, a close scrutiny of their patronage may tell us the level of knowledge which we can elicit from general circumstances. In that context, the distinctive contribution made by the lives of better-known women in this group will come into sharper focus. Following the four anonymous patrons, we will break the remaining nine Ayyubids into two groups: (1) four princesses who entered the ruling family through marriage; (2) five who were born into the family, concluding with two nieces and two sisters of Saladin.

9–10–11. The three daughters of al-Kamil Muhammad. Al-Kamil Muhammad died in Damascus on 22 Rajab 635 (10 March 1238), just two months after he had taken the city from his brother and rival al-Salih Isma'il. Sometime thereafter, his three daughters (none of whom is named) purchased property on the east side of the north wall of the Umayyad Mosque, near the Ma'údhanat 'Isa and the Bab al-Átifaniyin. They erected a mausoleum (turba) adjacent to the wall and opened a window and door into the north arcade of the mosque. Qur'án reciters were also appointed. On 21 Rabi' I 637 (21 October 1239), al-Kamil's body was transferred from the Citadel and reinterred in this place, called by our texts the Turba Kampiliyya.35

This terse narrative raises two points. The Turba Kampiliyya can be read as a conventional expression of piety, albeit one which was possible only because of the great wealth and prestige of the man buried there. The three women selected a site sanctified both by its proximity to the great mosque itself and by the fact that the tomb of Saladin (in the Madrasa 'Aziziyya) was very close by. Moreover, al-Kamil's father and predecessor was interred in the Madrasa 'Adilîyya Kubra, located just to the west of the mosque. In this light, al-Kamil's tomb was a powerful (if ironic) symbol of dynastic continuity. It also confirmed the status of this part of Damascus as in effect a royal City of the Dead. The innate sanctity of the mausoleum's site was enhanced by the continual presence of Qur'án reciters, and by the windows which opened into the courtyard of the Umayyad Mosque, thus ensuring that al-Kamil would benefit from the prayers of the worshipers there. There is nothing odd in all this for Ayyubid Damascus, but it does demonstrate with great clarity how the rulers of this dynasty, in no sense regarded as sacred figures, could still be brought within the realm of the sacred.

The second point is why the mausoleum was erected by al-Kamil's daughters instead of one of his sons, al-
Adil II or al-Salih Ayyub. Again, this is no strange thing in itself; it was quite common for women of the Ayyubid family to provide this service for their male kin. But circumstances no doubt played a role, for the extraordinarily tangled politics of Damascus during the two years following al-Kamil’s death must have made it impossible for either of the sultan’s male heirs to see to this matter.36

12. The mother of al-Salih Isma’il. The Madrasa Salihyya (also known as the turba of Umm al-Salih) was located in the Balata quarter in the walled city, near the hospital of Nur al-Din.37 This institution was a comprehensive one, providing instruction in three of the core religious sciences: Shafi’i fiqh, hadith, and Qur’anic recitation (iqra’). We do not know when it was begun, perhaps after al-Salih Isma’il regained Damascus in 1239. It must have been completed by Shawwal 638 (April 1241), since that is the death date of its first professor of fiqh, Najm al-Din Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Maqdisi, called Ibn al-Hanbali.38 As a madrasa strictly speaking — i.e., as a college of fiqh — it seems never to have reached the first rank in a city already full of madrasas. On the other hand, Pouzet regards it as “the most important [center] of instruction in the Qur’anic sciences in Damascus, at least in the second half of the [thirteenth] century.”39

As with the daughters of al-Kamil, we do not know even the name of al-Salih’s mother. Nor do we know her race, or whether she was a legal wife or an umm walad of al-Adil I. I have found no report on her death. We are told only that she gave birth to al-Salih Isma’il in 598 (1201–2). But in spite of her anonymity, she had means and motive to construct and endow a major religious-educational complex, one which was clearly intended to rival the most important foundations of the previous century.

The Salihyya was no doubt in part an act of family piety; its popular name implies that she was buried there, as were three of her grandchildren through al-Salih who died between 1284 and 1313. Surely she intended this edifice to be her son’s sepulchre as well, but his adventurous career ended when he was captured by Mamluk forces at the battle of Abbasa in 1251 and shortly afterwards put to death by strangulation.40

13. Khutlu-Khayr bint Ibrahim b. Abbass. Khutlu-Khayr bint Ibrahim b. Abbass was the wife of Saladin’s eldest brother Shahanshah b. Ayyub, who had died in 1148, and the mother both of Iz al-Din Farrukshah, one of Saladin’s most trusted collaborators until his death in 1183, and of Adhra’ Khatun (discussed below, no. 19). We know almost nothing about her, not even how to restore her name correctly. The Turco-Arabic compound Khutlu-Khayr (“Fortunate-Good,” on the model of Malik-Shah, “King-Monarch”) seems plausible, but Pouzet reads “Khuṭṭalḫiz.” At some point — whether before or after Shahanshah’s death we do not know — she was also the wife of an obscure Hajib (commander-in-chief) Mubarak b. Abbass, by whom she had two sons who played a significant political-military role in Damascus under Saladin and his immediate successors.

On her son Farrukshah’s death, she endowed a madrasa in his name on the prestigious Upper Sharaf west of the walled city, a not atypical act of piety and remembrance, as we have already seen.41 As noted by Sauvaget long ago, the madrasa is interesting in that it is in fact a simple domed tomb chamber some 9 meters square with no evidence that any extra chambers (for prayer, storage, or residence) were ever built. It does adjoin a smaller qubba of the same form, but that is a separate structure built almost half a century later for Farrukshah’s son al-Amjad Bahramshah. Sauvaget’s conclusion is still very much to the point:

The madrasa cited by our sources is thus no specialized building, expressly constructed for purposes of instruction, but only an institution sheltered by the founder’s tomb. What constitutes it is essentially a waqf whose revenues served to pay a professor, around whom a few students grouped themselves in a corner of the funerary chamber.62

14. Ismat al-Din Khatun bint Mu’ in al-Din Önır. Ismat al-Din witnessed, and in fact took part in, the great political changes which affected Damascus in the middle decades of the twelfth century.43 She was the daughter of the dic-tator Mu’in al-Din Önır, who dominated the city between 1140 and his death in 1149. She lived through the city’s two-front struggle for independence against Zangi, on the one side, and the Second Crusade, on the other. She was married to Nur al-Din in Aleppo in 1147, an event that gave him at least a tenuous link to the city which he occupied in 1154. The marriage had no issue, however. Some two years after Nur al-Din’s death and Saladin’s occupation of Damascus in 1174, she found herself again married, this time to the young Kurdish general. This marriage too produced no children — no surprise, since she must have been well in her forties by the time of her second marriage. She died in her native Damascus in 1185. She was thus in her person a bridge between the Seljuqid, Zangid, and Ayyubid periods. In spite of her political prominence and her significant role
as a patron of religious architecture, we know her only by her laqab, not her given name.

She left a distinct mark on the city’s religious architecture, in three of the major zones of construction: a Hanafi madrasa inside the walled city, a khanqah on the Southern Sharaf west of the town, her own mausoleum on Mt. Qasyun in Salihiya, and another mausoleum which she had constructed for her father (v. supra, no. 8). The madrasa and mausoleum were certainly built in Ayyubid times; we cannot date the khanqah. Of these only her personal mausoleum is extant. However, it is the madrasa which raises the most intriguing questions.

Ilmawi first tells us (following Ibn Shaddad and Nu‘aymi) that it is located in the Mahallat Hajar al-Dhabab, which is the quarter lying between the Citadel and the Umayyad Mosque. Then, speaking in his own voice (“Aqul”), he says that it was now destroyed and replaced by a house; it had been situated beside Straight Street, just east of the mosque of Tankiz (which lay outside the walls on the Upper Sharaf), and south of the river (Banas). These statements are mutually contradictory and suggest some confusion between the madrasa and the khanqah.

As to the madrasa’s foundation, Ibn Shaddad’s information is characterized as terse, suggestive, and confusing:

It was founded by (ansha’atha) the princess, the daughter of Mu’in al-Din Önör and wife of the martyr Nur al-Din Mahmud b. Zangi. It is named after her (tunsahu ileyha). Her brother Sa’d al-Din [Mas’ud b. Önör] made it an endowment for her benefit (awqafah… ileyha) and the benefit of her posterity after her, but she died without issue. The madrasa was transferred (intaqalat) in 573 [1177-78].

The whole account is full of problems. The last sentence may mean that the waqf went into effect and the madrasa began operating in 573 (1177-78), or simply that the madrasa, already established, was moved into its new edifice. More importantly, how do we reconcile the statements that the madrasa was found by I‘Ismat al-Din and endowed by her brother? She was after all still alive and presumably possessed a great deal of property in her own name. Conceivably he was simply acting as her agent, but the verb awqafa seems to imply more than that. Here, as so often, an apparently simple act of patronage must have been in reality a complex family affair, the nature of which is now beyond our grasp.

15. Terken Khatun bint Izz al-Din Mas’ud. We turn now to two princesses from the Turkish dynasties of the Jazira, who entered the Ayyubid house through marriage and played a substantial role in the religious life of their adoptive city. The first is the wife of al-Ashraf Musa (r. 1229-37), Terken²⁵ Khatun. She was the daughter of the last truly independent Zangid abatag of Mosul, I‘izz al-Din Mas’ud b. Qutb al-Din Mawdud b. ‘Imad al-Din Zangi b. Aqsunqur (r. 1180-93). Her father had been Saladin’s most enduring and effective Muslim opponent, and her brother Nur al-Din Arslan Shah (r. 1193-1211) strove throughout his reign to restore the independence of the principality he had inherited. But it was all to no avail. Terken Khutan’s marriage in 1208-9 to the most powerful Ayyubid ruler in the Jazira, al-Ashraf Musa, was arranged at the behest of the latter’s father al-‘Adil and symbolized a definitive Ayyubid paramountcy over the now very weak Zangid princes. As one would expect, we know little about her life as al-Ashraf’s wife, but her death in 1242 was noted by Abu Shama, which suggests that she was a woman of some substance in Damascus.

She had not resided there long, since her husband had come into possession of the city by siege only in 1229. Even so, she left two monuments: a funerary madrasa for the Shafi‘is in Salihiya, and a ribat.⁶⁶ The location of the ribat is uncertain, and in fact only its name (Ribat bint I‘izz al-Din Mas’ud) connects it to her. The funerary madrasa was a more substantial affair, located in Salihiya near two other royal foundations — the Dar al-Hadith al-Ashrafiyya extra-muros built by her husband, and the Madrasa Murshidiyya built by her niece Khadija Khatun, daughter of al-Mu‘azzam ‘Isa. The madrasa and tomb chamber were apparently already constructed but were not formally endowed until her death. This would imply that she, in common with many donors, planned to draw on the incomes of the properties to be endowed until she actually passed from the scene.

16. ‘Azizat al-Din Akshu Khatun.⁶⁸ This patron and the following introduce us to the family of al-Mu‘azzam ‘Isa, the longest-ruling (and perhaps the most influential) of the Ayyubid princes of Damascus. He was invested with the city in 1198 at the behest of his formidable father al-‘Adil Abu Bakr. He ruled there under his father’s close tutelage (no doubt with increasing frustration) until the latter’s death in 1218, and then nine years under the suzerainty of his older brother al-Kamil Muhammad until his own demise in 1227. In spite of al-Kamil’s efforts to assert his titular authority, al-Mu‘azzam skillfully fended him off, to all intents and purposes ruling his own
domains as an independent sovereign. Part of his policy of independence was his marriage in 1221 to Akhshu Khatun bint Qutb al-Din II-Ghazi, sister of the Artukid ruler of Mardin, Nasir al-Din Artuq Arslan. Al-Mu'azzam's motives for this marriage are contested, but for a change it had nothing to do with his father al-Adil, who had died three years earlier.59

In view of her own Turkish origins and her husband's ardent support for the Hanafi madhhab, it is no surprise that Akhshu Khatun's sole architectural enterprise was a madrasa (the so-called Maridaniyya, named after her native city) endowed in favor of the Hanafis. As such, it was very much a part of the cluster of princely foundations for this school which sprang up in the family and entourage of al-Mu'azzam during the 1220's. Pouzet counts no less than eight of these: three by al-Mu'azzam, his wife and daughter, five by his personal mamluks. (To those of al-Mu'azzam's family should be added the madrasa of his younger brother al-Aziz Uthman, lord of Banyas and Subayba — an addition which makes four in the family, and a total of nine.) As Pouzet also notes, several of these (the correct number is six) were grouped in fairly close proximity on Salihiyya, which added a strong Hanafi element to what had been a predominantly Hanbali settlement.50

Akhshu Khatun's madrasa is still extant, a simple but very harmonious structure of moderate size.51 Ibn Shaddad states that it was founded in 610 (1213) but not formally constituted as waqf until 624 (1227), the year of al-Mu'azzam's death. The former date is impossible because, first, she was not yet married to al-Mu'azzam; and, second, the edifice was expressly built as a madrasa, and fourteen years is a long time to leave a structure unused (610 may be a scribal error for 620, an easy and very common slip in Arabic). Although the Maridaniyya includes a funerary cupola, Akhshu is not buried there. After her husband's death, she went on the hajj to Mecca and then continued to reside there. After the funds she had brought with her were exhausted, she took up the humble profession of water carrier, refusing to accept any income from her waqaf in Damascus, since those monies had been dedicated to God's purposes. Akhshu Khatun's career as a widow makes us want to know a great deal more about her than we do. Had she always been given to such stern piety and self-denial, or was she driven to it by the political crisis following al-Mu'azzam's death? She was not the mother of the new ruler, al-Nasir Dawud (r. 1227-29), and the combination of tight seclusion in the Citadel and no influence over the new prince could have held little appeal for her. But in the end we do not know; her actions must be left to speak for themselves.

17. Khadija Khatun bint al-Malik al-Mu'azzam Is. Apart from the three anonymous daughters of al-Kamil Muhammad, Khadija is the first Ayubid princess in our discussion to have entered the ruling family by birth instead of marriage. We unfortunately have no revealing anecdotes of the kind we have for her "stepmother," but we can situate her within the ruling family. She was the full sister of al-Mu'azzam's son and successor al-Nasir Dawud. Her mother was Turkish (presumably an umm walad, but this is not specified) who long outlived her two children, dying only in 1273-74 at the age of ninety. We do not have Khadija's birthdate, and her death is dated to A.H. 650 or 654 (the former seems the better attested). She also suffered the common but unhappy fate of becoming a pawn in her father al-Mu'azzam's haute politique; in 1226-27, looking for a counterweight against his two brothers al-Kamil Muhammad and al-Asraf Musa, he contracted a marriage between her and that amazing adventurer, the Khwarizmshah Jalal al-Din Mingburnu. Unfortunately for al-Mu'azzam's designs, but no doubt happily for Khadija herself, her father died before she could be sent to join her new husband. The latter remained embroiled in his wars in the Kazira and Armenia, and in 1231 he was killed by a Mongol raiding party. So far as we know Khadija never remarried.52

Even after her brother's ouster from Damascus at the hands of his uncles al-Kamil Muhammad and al-Asraf Musa in 1229, she remained there until her own death some twenty years later. Following in the path established by her father al-Mu'azzam, she founded her own funerary madrasa for the Hanafis in Salihiyya.53 Ironically, she placed it adjacent to a dar al-hadith built by al-Asraf Musa, the man who had driven her brother from Damascus. Khadija's madrasa was the last of the Hanafi madrasas belonging to al-Mu'azzam's "cluster." According to a surviving inscription, the madrasa was quite well endowed — substantially wealthier, it would seem, than the Maridaniyya. According to one source, she died in the garden of the Maridaniyya, so there may have been closer ties between her and al-Mu'azzam's widow Akhshu Khatun than we would otherwise suppose.

18. Ismat al-Din Zahra Khatun bint al-Malik al-Adil. Zahra Khatun belonged in principle to the previous generation, since she was a daughter of al-Adil I, Khadija's paternal grandfather. But we know nothing about Zahra's age, and in fact she may well have been no older
than her niece, since her madrasa — the 5 Adiliyya Sughra — was formally endowed in 656 (1258). Although there are many ambiguities and gaps in our data, this madrasa embodies an intriguing and suggestive story.

The 5 Adiliyya Sughra is located in the cluster of religious buildings just east of the Citadel and faces the Dar al-Hadith Nuriiya. It had originally been a mansion belonging to the amir 4 Izz al-Din 5 Abdan al-Falaki; on his death in 1212, the house seems to have passed into the possession of another amir, Ibn Musak, who had family connections to the Ayyubids. At some later point, it became the property of one of al-5 Adil’s daughters, 5 Ismat al-Din Zahra2 Khatun. Here we can best proceed by turning to a terse narrative of the fifteenth-century Damascene historian Ibn Qadi Shuhiba (preserved by Nu‘aymi):

The 5 Adiliyya Sughra was a mansion (dar) known as [the mansion of] Ibn Musak. It was the property of 5 Ismat al-Din Zahra2 Khatun, daughter of al-Malik al-5 Adil . . . b. Ayub. Then Zahra2 Khatun transferred ownership [of the mansion] to the daughter of the paternal uncle of her father — viz., to the Lady Baba Khatun, daughter of Asad al-Din Shirkuh. [She transferred] the aforementioned mansion, the village of Kamid, the hissa of the village of Barqum in the territories of Aleppo, the hissa of the village Bayt al-Dayr of al-Aghar (?), the bath known as [the bath of] Ibn Musak. Baba Khatun in turn placed all of that in waqf for the benefit of the assignor Zahra2 Khatun and those who would come after her, to be a burial-place (mad- fann) and madrasa and residence block (mawaidi2 li‘lsukra‘). She [presumably Baba Khatun] formally stipulated that the madrasa should have a professor (mudarris), an assistant (mu‘udd), an imam, a muezzin, a gatekeeper, a supervisor (qayym), and twenty faqirs. And she placed in waqf the aforementioned properties (jihat), including a part to meet the needs and expenses of the madrasa, and another part for the benefit of [Zahra2 Khatun’s] relatives and freedmen. All that was done at the beginning of Ramadan 655 [September 1257].

Ibn Qadi Shuhiba’s information in part repeats the data of the surviving foundation inscription, but with enough differences to make it clear that he was not copying from it. Most likely his account is a précis of the official endowment deed held at the chief qadi’s court. The inscription (also a précis, of course) adds the following things: a different date of endowment (A.H. 656, without month), some additional properties, and a slightly different statement of the madrasa’s beneficiaries. In particular, the waqf was to provide for the five prayers and for Qur‘an reciters, while the edifice was to be a hospice for Zahra2 Khatun’s eunuchs and freedmen (ribah li-

Khuddamiha wa-taqi‘iha). Interestingly, the inscription makes no mention of Baba Khatun at all; it ascribes the endowment simply to Zahra2 Khatun herself.

It is impossible to be sure just what was going on here, but we might surmise that Zahra2 had become mentally incompetent in her old age or otherwise unable to act in her own name. In order to ensure the legal validity of her property dispositions, her residence (the Dar ibn Musak) was signed over to her cousin Baba Khatun (who must herself have been very elderly, since her father Shirkuh had died in 1169). In turn, Baba Khatun made it waqf for Zahra2 as primary beneficiary, with her household servants and a Shafi‘i madrasa as ultimate beneficiaries. Even if this hypothetical reconstruction is off the mark, the history of the 5 Adiliyya Sughra points to the very complex operations embodied in the simple term “patronage.”

19. Adhara2 Khatun int Nur al-Dawla Shahanshah. Adhara2 Khatun can be situated quite precisely within the Ayyubid house. She was the daughter of Saladin’s brother Shahanshah and full sister of 4 Izz al-Din Farrukhshah, who died in 1183; her mother was presumably the Khutlu-Khayr Khatun mentioned above (no. 13). She was therefore Saladin’s niece, though, since her father had died in 1148 and Saladin was born in 1138-39, she must have been almost as old as he. Through her father, she was half-sister to another of Saladin’s favorite nephews, Taqi al-Din 4 Umar, (d. 1191), famed for his reckless courage, his unbridled political ambition, and his widespread pious charitable foundations. Through her mother, finally, she was half-sister to two of the notable amirs of Saladin’s time — Sa‘d al-Din Mas‘ud, lord of Safad, and Badr al-Din Mawdud, shihna (urban prefect) of Damascus for some twenty years — both of whom died in 1205-6.

Adhara2 Khatun was the founder of two institutions, the Madrasa Adhrawiyya (for both Shafi‘is and Hanafis) and a ribat, both located just inside the Bab al-Nasr, south of the Citadel (adjacent to the modern Suq Hamidiyya). Whether they were integrated or separate edifices is not clear. The foundation date of the madrasa is also contested. Abu Shama states simply that upon her death (10 Muharram 593) she was interred in the madrasa named after her. According to our next source, Ibn Shaddad, 4 Adhara2 herself established it in 580 (1184-85). Nu‘aymi’s principal source for the Madrasa Adhrawiyya appears to be the fifteenth-century Damascene chronicler al-Asadi, who gives us two problematic bits of data, both stemming from normally well-informed four-
teenth-century sources. Following a marginal note in his copy of Ibn Kathir, Asadi states that ʿAdhraʾ died before her father Shahanshah (hence before 1148) and before the construction of the ʿAdhrawiyya. This, I think, must be rejected. A reference to Dhahabi, however, is more interesting: ʿAdhraʾ died and was buried in her house. She had willed her house to her mother (presumably Khutlu-Khayr, though this is not stated), and the latter placed it in waqf upon her death as a madrasa for the Shaffiʿis and Hanafis. This statement is plausible on its face, and the date of 593 is reinforced by Nuṣayni’s note that Fakhr al-Din ibn ʿAsakir began to teach there in 593. All this undercuts Ibn Shaddad’s foundation date of 580, thirteen years prior to ʿAdhraʾ’s death. Overall, it does seem clear at least that the madrasa (and perhaps the ribat as well) had been ʿAdhraʾ Khatun’s house, all the more as a bath named after her was located there. No inscription survives to clarify — or further confuse — the situation.

20. Rabiʿa Khatun hint Najm al-Din Ayyub. We have already encountered Rabiʿa in our account of her confidante and adviser, the Hanbali shaykh Amat al-Latif (no. 8). As noted there, the Princess Rabiʿa built the Madrasat al-Sahiba in 1231 for Amat al-Latif’s father Nasih al-Din ibn al-Hanbali.58

We are told that Rabiʿa died in 643 (1246), at more than eighty years of age. She was thus about a quarter-century younger than her famous brother Saladin, and would have been only a young girl during his rapid rise to power in the 1170’s. As a very young woman, she was married to the amir Saʿd al-Din Masʿud b. Muʿtin al-Din Önur. The date of this marriage is unknown, but it probably occurred shortly after Saladin’s occupation of Damascus in the autumn of 1174, since Saladin married Saʿd al-Din’s sister ʿIsmat al-Din in 1176. The double alliance with the heirs of the last major Seljuqid-era ruler of Damascus could only strengthen Saladin’s otherwise tenuous ties to this crucial city. In any case, Saʿd al-Din died in 1185, the same year as his sister. His young widow was soon remarried, this time to one of Saladin’s most important supporters and generals, Muzaffar al-Din Gökboğlu. At that time Gökboğlu held Harran and Edessa from Saladin, and five years later he inherited his father’s distant territory of Irbil. Rabiʿa Khatun thus spent more than forty years away from Damascus, until shortly before her husband’s death in 1233.

When she came back, she took up residence in her father’s old mansion, the Dar al-ʿAqiqi (which became the madrasa of al-Zahir Baybars in 1277), living there until her death. She must have returned no later than 1231, and probably sooner, since the inaugural lectures in her new madrasa were given at that time and she is said to have been in attendance. Her choice to endow a madrasa for the Hanbalis (the only royal foundation in favor of that school during the Ayyubid era) is an interesting one. Our sources ascribe it to the personal influence of Amat al-Latif. No doubt that is so, but her husband Gökboğlu had long shown an interest in the Hanbalis; when the Hanbali settlement on Salhiyya had been unable to complete a new Friday mosque, he sent the money from Irbil (in 1202-3) to provide the funding for construction and a modest endowment — 3,000 dinars according to one source, plus 1,000 dinars later on to ensure a supply of water.59 In a sense, Amat al-Latif may have been preaching to the converted.

Sauvaget comments that the Madrasat al-Sahiba is the only one in Salhiyya whose plan is intact. (When I saw it in 1973, it had been converted to a girls’ school; it was of course impossible to get beyond the courtyard, but it appeared to be in sound condition overall.) He also notes the North Syrian style of the façade — no surprise perhaps, in view of the many decades which Rabiʿa spent in the Jazira.

The sixteenth-century chronicler and historian of Salhiyya, Ibn Tulun, gives us a brief but tantalizing glimpse into how madrasas were financed in Ayyubid times:

They say that the endower of this madrasa managed the matter poorly. She undertook first to build [the edifice] solidly. Before the madrasa was completed, she still had only a small amount of funds, with which she purchased an exiguous waqf. In contrast, her sister — who built the Shamiyya — administered her affairs well. She purchased the waqf first and used the income from it to build [the edifice].59

Brief as it is, this passage suggests one reason why the conversion of one’s private home into a madrasa was so popular: there were few construction costs, and the waqf could be fully instituted immediately upon the donor’s death. If a donor chose to build a new edifice, she either had to expect a long delay before instruction could begin (a very common situation, in fact) or possess enough money to provide construction funds apart from what was needed to establish an adequate endowment. If Ibn Tulun is correct, Rabiʿa tried the latter approach. In fact she put up a handsome structure, but the salaries paid by her madrasa must have fallen short. Perhaps the ascetic Hanbalis of Salhiyya took this as a sign of religious merit.
21. Sitt al-Sham Zumurrud Khatun bint Najm al-Din Ayyub. Sitt al-Sham was a second sister of Saladin, probably older than Rabi'a. Her impact on the life of thirteenth-century Damascus can be measured not only by her extensive patronage (two madrasas and a khanqah), but also by the fact that she is the only Ayyubid princess to receive a genuine biographical notice, one that does not restrict itself to identifying her comprehensive genealogical ties to the ruling family, but tells us something about her own achievements. We do not learn a great deal from it, but we do get as much data as we normally have for a leading faqih or amir. There is no obvious way to account for such public notoriety, but perhaps we can connect it with her thirty-five-to-year widowhood (following her second marriage), which allowed her a degree of independence she could not easily have enjoyed under a husband's jealous eye. However that may be, Abu Shama's biography is worth quoting in extenso.

In Dhu al-Qa'da of this year (616 [1220]), Sitt al-Sham, the daughter of Ayyub b. Shadhli and the sister of the kings (mušíık) Salah al-Din and al-5Adil, passed away in Damascus. The hafta Zaki al-Din mentions that she died on 16 Dhu al-Qa'da; another [authority] adds that [this took place] at the end of the day on Friday. She is the one after whom the two madrasas in Damascus are named: one of them lies south of the hospital of Nur al-Din; the other is outside Damascus in the 5Awniya Quarter (mahallat al-5Awniya). The latter is also known as the Husamiyya, taking its name from her son Husam al-Din Ibn Lajin. She had buried him there, and she herself was interred in the grave (qabr) in which he had been placed. Among the three graves it is the one next to the doorway. The southernmost of these is the grave of her brother [al-Mu'azzam Sayf al-Islam] Turanshah. The middle one belongs to her paternal cousin Nasir al-Din Muhammad b. Shirkuh b. Shadhli, who had married her after Lajin. Abu al-Muzaffar Sibt b. al-Jawzi says: She was the first in rank among the princesses (sayyidat al-khawatin), intelligent, deeply pious, and greatly devoted to prayer, good works, and alms. Every year thousands of dinars were expended in her residence [dar] on the manufacture of potions, narcotic electuaries, and medicinal plants, and she would distribute these to the people. Her gate was a refuge of seekers and a sanctuary for those who mourn. She provided a generous endowment for the two madrasas, and she received an impressive funeral.

In spite of the fascinating details in this notice, significant ambiguities remain, even on major points of her life and work. First, the identity of her first husband is a complete mystery, and although she was clearly deeply devoted to her son Husam al-Din, his very name is disputed. He is most often called Husam al-Din 5Umar in our texts, but his funerary inscription, dated Ramadan 587 (September–October 1191) identifies him as Abu Abdallah Muhammad b. 5Umar b. Lajin, as does a waqf text for the Shamiyya intra-muros cited by Sauvaire. The funerary inscription also gives him pompous titles suggesting that he must have been a very senior and highly honored officer in Saladin's armies: al-mawāl al-amir islahsalār al-ajall al-ghāzi al-shahid al-sa'īd (i.e., "the lord, the amir, the most noble marshal, the fortunate martyrghazi"). But he hardly shows up in our sources; I find him once in Ibn al-Athir as the conqueror of Nablus in 1187, and his death notice four years later is laconic at best.

Whoever Husam al-Din was, two of the monuments built by Sitt al-Sham were commonly known by his name — Husamiyya. In the waqf inscription for the Shamiyya intra-muros (dated 628 [1231]), Sitt al-Sham prominently identifies herself as "Umm Husam al-Din," and the waqf income for that madrasa was first intended for her descendants through Husam al-Din. Finally, we note that she and her son were buried side by side, in the same qabr. Very probably he was her only son (pace the remark in 5Ilmawi that she was the mother of al-Salih Isma'il); it is no abuse of the evidence to surmise that she was inconsolable over his loss and desperately concerned to preserve his memory. The first of these monuments was a khanqah in Saliihiyya. The building is apparently not extant and the date of construction is unknown, though the year of Husam al-Din's death, 1191, is a good guess. The second "Husamiyya" is the great funerary madrasa extra-muros, on the Upper Sharaf close to the Citadel.

This madrasa, in our texts labeled the Shamiyya Baraniyya, poses certain problems of its own. Sitt al-Sham's brother Turanshah had died in Alexandria in 1180; her cousin and second husband Nasir al-Din Muhammad b. Shirkuh passed away suddenly in Homs in Dhu al-Hijja 581 (March 1186). The brief epitaph on Turanshah's tomb states that his body was brought to Damascus in 578 (1182) and then transferred to this madrasa in Sha'ban 582 (October–November 1186). These facts suggest that the madrasa was almost certainly built initially to commemorate her brother Turanshah. Probably while it was still under construction her husband Nasir al-Din died and was laid to rest there as soon as the tomb chamber was completed. The death of her son Husam al-Din five years later compelled her to undertake the sad duty of preparing yet a third tomb. The Shamiyya extra-muros must have made a fitting monument for these three men and for Sitt al-Sham herself; Ibn Shaddad calls it "one of the largest and most imposing madrasas, one of the most generously endowed, and possessing among the greatest numbers of scholars of law (fuqaha").
We come finally to the Shamiyya intra-muros, located in the prestigious religious residential district near the hospital of Nur al-Din. This structure had been her residence, and we have already seen how she used it during her long widowhood as a center of charity. The puzzle lies in the long gap between her death in 1220 and the actual foundation of the madrasa twelve years later, in 1231. The gap is explained by the text of the deed of waqf, combined with a few scraps of data in the chronicles. In her final illness, she summoned the chief qadi of Damascus and some of the notaries (shuhud) to her home and had them witness her intention to establish her home as a madrasa. As her executor, she named one Abu Bakr al-Ansari (called Ibn al-Shiraji, "son of the sesame-oil seller"), who was a registered witness-notary (mu'addal), and had administered her divān (presumably the bureau for the official transactions and stipends she received as a member of the ruling family). It is he who actually placed the relevant properties in waqf. The initial beneficiaries of the waqf are worth noting: Sitt al-Sham herself during her lifetime, then the daughter of her son Husam al-Din (named Zumurrud Khutun, like her grandmother), and then to her children and descendants, as long as Husam al-Din’s lineage should endure. Only when it died out was the house to be made a madrasa, supported by the income of the waqf. We have here then a classic waqf ṣahlī, a family trust, with a general charitable purpose as ultimate beneficiary. But it is clear that Sitt al-Sham’s granddaughter, her only hope of direct posterity, must have died by 1231 leaving no children behind. Sitt al-Sham’s vast wealth, deep piety, and political influence could not prevent the final frustration of her simplest personal hopes, which indeed had been repeatedly shattered throughout her long life. In that year, instruction began in Sitt al-Sham’s former mansion, and a summary of the deed of waqf was carved over a lintel of the madrasa, naming only the scholars and students of Shafi'i jurisprudence as beneficiaries.

This concludes our survey of women patrons in Ayyubid Damascus. It now remains to ask what general conclusions are suggested by this material, sometimes rich, often sparse, and always full of gaps and contradictions. In my judgment, any conclusions will be based on three points established in the preceding discussion: the prominent role of women from the ruling family, the tightly interwoven relationships among many of these women, and the exceptionally high number of women patrons in this one medium-sized city during a single century. What we need to do is to join these three points together within a more general explanatory structure.

We might begin by noting that Ayyubid Damascus was a city of political and military immigrants. This was so for many reasons. Damascus was a major principality within the Ayyubid confederation, second only to Cairo. At the same time, it was consistently the focal point of Ayyubid power struggles. Finally (in contrast to most other Ayyubid courts) there was no stable hereditary succession there, especially after the death of al-Mu'azzam 'Isa in 1227. All these things made Damascus a pole of attraction for a constantly changing political elite. In a sense, the number of women patrons can be understood simply as a function of the number of princes, amirs, and even ulama who came to the city to try to make their careers, or who fled there from failure elsewhere.

On another level, the city had enormous religious prestige with its splendid mosque, its tombs of the Prophet’s Companions, its shrines commemorating a host of ancient prophets and sacred figures, and its burgeoning roster of madrasas. It was arguably the most exciting center of Sunni religious thought in the thirteenth century, no doubt due in large part to the broad patronage of religious institutions begun (or rather sharply intensified) by Nur al-Din and continued, at an even higher pitch, under the Ayyubids. It is not surprising, given such an unprecedented level of activity and such a broad base of patronage, that elite women should become uncommonly visible as patrons of religious architecture there. Again, they were only being dragged along by a powerful tide.

There is perhaps one further element in all this. For the Ayyubid family, Damascus was the place one came home to. It was for them a kind of sacred city, a status symbolized by its role as the most important Ayyubid funerary center. From Saladin through al-'Adil and al-Kamil Muhammad, every head of the confederation was buried here, along with many of the most prestigious regional princes — not only rulers of Damascus like al-Mu'azzam 'Isa and al-Ashraf Musa, but al-Mu'azzam Turanshah of the Yemen and Nasir al-Din Muhammad of Homs. The women of the family, scattered far afield during their younger and middle years, likewise tended to go there late in their lives: Rabi'a Khutun after the death of Gökböri of Irbil, Sitt al-Sham after the death of Nasir al-Din Muhammad of Homs, Arghun al-Hafiziyya after she left the service of al-Hafiz in Qal'a at Ja'bar.

But we must not oversimplify. Women’s patronage in Ayyubid Damascus was not quite the same as men’s. This is so not because they favored different institutions or a
different version of Islam — we have already shown that they did not — but because they were differently constituted as a group than their male counterparts. We have already noted the strong role of women from the ruling family in this patronage; half of Ayyubid royal patrons (13 — or 14 if we include Amat al-Latif — out of 27) were women. Moreover, the Ayyubid princesses were two-thirds of the total number of female patrons and contributed two-thirds (17 out of 26 items) of patronage by women. If we add three women who had especially close ties to the ruling family (Arghun al-Hafiziyah, Amat al-Latif, and ʿAʾisha bint al-Dammagh), and whose patronage was no doubt linked to this close relationship, there are 16 women altogether in an expanded “Ayyubid household.” This larger Ayyubid household contributed 20 out of the 26 foundations we have enumerated — more than three-quarters of the total. Now these proportions are very different from those among male patrons, where we find a division into roughly equal thirds between Ayyubid princes, amirs, and “men of the turban” (i.e., ulama plus senior bureaucrats). Indeed, Ayyubid princes are very much the minority in this triad when women are subtracted, whereas the patronage of the other two categories would hardly be affected if they had included no women. In short, the contribution of women to the religious life of Damascus was not the work of all women, or even of all women patrons. It was very specifically a contribution by the women of the royal family.

This fact may modify somewhat our thinking about the distinctiveness of patronage by women in Ayyubid Damascus. Support by women for religious institutions was far from rare in medieval Islam, but at any given moment it normally flowed from one exceptionally powerful figure — typically, the mother or sister of the reigning monarch. However, such a concentration of patronage reflected, and was rooted in, the concentration of political power in a single autocrat. In contrast, the wide dispersal of political power among the Ayyubid princes almost inevitably meant that female patronage would be diffused among many women rather than monopolized by one dominant figure. But we must avoid the fallacy of “Ayyubid exceptionalism.” The dynasty was in most ways a typical Middle Eastern polity of its era. With the Ayyubids as with other dynasties, only women from the ruling family, or closely connected with it, possessed the wealth, status, and prestige to attempt a major role on the public stage.

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APPENDIX A. RELIGIOUS MONUMENTS AND FOUNDATIONS BY WOMEN PATRONS IN AYYUBID DAMASCUS

I. MADRASAS
3. Madrasa Shāmīyya extra-muros or Madrasa Ḥusāmīyya (Shaʿfiʿī). Founded by Sitt al-Shām Zhuʿurrūḍ Khāṭūṭ bint ʿAyūb, sister of Saḥāb al-Dīn, sister of al-Muʿāẓẓam Turānshāh, mother of Ḥusām al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. Lājīn. Date of foundation: 582 (1186), date when Turānshāh’s body was transferred to the madrasa’s tomb chamber. Map: Munajjīd, no. 4; Duḥman, no. 120. Cross-references: I.7; I.2.
5. Madrasa Qasīʿīyya or Khāṭūṭīyya (Hanafi). Founded by Fāṭima bint Gāṭrū, also called Khulṭūmnūsh. Date of foundation: 593 (1196-97), date given by Ibn Shahīdād, based on inscription and deed of waqf. Cross-references: II.4.
10. Madrasa Śaḷīḥīyya or Turbat Umm al-Ṣāḥīb (Shaʿfiʿī). Founded by the mother of al-Ṣāḥīb Iṣmāʿīl. Date of foundation: 638 (1241), date of first professor’s death (term. ad quern). Map: Munajjīd, no. 56.
12. Madrasa Aṭābākīyya (Shaʿfiʿī). Founded by Terkhen Khāṭūṭ, daughter of Īzz al-Dīn Māṣʿūd, lord of Mosul, wife of al-Asḥraf Mūsā. Date of foundation: 640 (1242), date of founder’s


II. KHANQĀHS AND RIBATS


6. Ribāṭ of the daughter of ʿĪz al-Dīn Masʿūd, lord of Mosul. Founded by Terken Khātūn, daughter of ʿĪz al-Dīn Masʿūd of Mosul, wife of al-Asfīr of Musta. Date of foundation: 626 (1229), date of al-Asfīr’s conquest of Damascus (term. a quo); 640 (1242), date of founder’s death (term. ad quem). Cross-references: I.6

III. MAUSOLEA AND COMMEMORATIVE STRUCTURES


2. Turba and maqṣād of Fāṭima bint Sunqūr. Founded by Fāṭima bint Sunqur al-Tughutkini. Date of foundation: 606 (1210), date of founder’s death (term. ad quem).


NOTES

Author’s note: This article is dedicated to Oleg Grabar, who first guided me to the art and architecture of Syria almost thirty years ago, and whose creative teaching and scholarship have ever since remained an inspiration and challenge.

1. Louis Pouzet, Domains au VIIe/XIIe s. : Vie et structures religieuses dans une métropole islamique (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1988), pp. 396–403. There are in fact cases of upper-class women attending hadith recitations, though they would of course sit apart from the men, usually behind a screen. But this did not lead to becoming a scholar and teacher in one’s own right, except insofar as learned women might provide some teaching to other women in the privacy of their homes.


3. This statement is derived from the list of hospices given in Jean Sauvaget, Les perles choisies d’Inn ak-Chînna (Beirut: Institut Français de Damas, 1933), pp. 99, 105–6. We should note in passing that Ayyubid Cairo shows little evidence of patronage by women; Neil D. MacKenzie, Ayyubid Cairo: A Topographical Study (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1992), lists only two mausolea, although one of them was the important turba added by Shahār al-Durr to the mausolea of al-Salāḥ Ayyub.

4. After this article went to press, I learned from Dr. ʿAbd al-Rażāq Muʿādhd (Moza) that he had published a contribution on the same topic: “Ishāḥ al-mar’ā fi al-imāra bi-Dimashq khilāl al-ṣāḥid al-aʿyūbī,” al-Ṭurūth al-ʿArabī (Damasus), no. 29 (Safar 1408/October 1987), pp. 216–25. Dr. Muʿādhd was kind enough to send me a copy of his concise and well-documented article. Although I could not incorporate his findings within my own discussion, I can say that on topics where our articles overlap, we are in broad (though not complete) agreement. In particular, I would point to his classified list of monuments sponsored by women (pp. 218–22), and his stress on the central role of women from the ruling family (p. 225).

The discussion of individual monuments in this article may be clarified by a few remarks on the religious topography of Ayyubid Damascus. The core of the city was of course the walled compound, an ovoid encompassing an area of roughly 130 hectares. Within this ovoid, the original center of Muslim settlement was the northwestern quadrant, marked by Straight Street on the south, the Citadel in the northwest corner, and the Umayyad Mosque on the east. This area, with its aristocratic mansions and the major mosques, was the area where the Muslim elite had resided since Umayyad times. Not surprisingly, the major religious monuments inside the walls (many of them converted mansions) were situated here. The most intensively built-up areas were (a) two quarters lying between the Citadel and the Umayyad Mosque (al-Balâta to the north, Hajar al-Dhabah to the south), and (b) the streets north of the Umayyad Mosque, up to the Bab al-Paradis. A second Muslim-dominated area was the area south of Straight Street, reaching east to the Bab al-Saghīr (or Shaghir); however, this district
was always much poorer, and it saw significant religious construction quite late. The northeastern quadrant was the Christian quarter, though of course it retreated (unevenly) toward the east as the city’s Muslim population grew. The Jewish quarter, never terribly large in Islamic times, lay south of Straight Street and east of Bab al-Saghir. There was no significant Muslim religious construction in either zone at least down to early Ottoman times.

There were two other zones of Muslim religious architectural activity, both outside the walls, and both first developed for this purpose in the twelfth century. The older zone lay along the two bluffs which stretched west of the walled compound, north and south respectively of the narrow flood plain carved by the Barada and Banas rivers. The northern bluff was normally called the Upper Sharaf (al-sharaf al-a’d), the southern one the Southern Sharaf (al-sharaf al-qibla). The Upper Sharaf was particularly prestigious. This district, outside the crowding, noise, and stench of the walled compound, had long been a favorite spot for aristocratic pavilions and gardens, and for Seljuq and Zangid patrons it was an ideal locale for religious ensembles which could still be close to the centers of Muslim life.

The second zone to be developed lay on the flank of Mt. Qasyun, some two kms to the northwest. In contrast to the Sharaf district, this one had begun as a refugee settlement — the Dayr al-Hanabila (“Hanbali Compound”) founded by Hanbali refugees from the Palestinian village of Jammā’il near Nablus after 1154. The refugees had Nur al-Din’s moral support, but laid out their settlement on their own. The settlement quickly took the name of al-Salihiyah, from the “upright men” who dwelt there. Salihiyah was exclusively Hanbali for half a century, but in the first half of the thirteenth century it rapidly became the district of choice for new religious and commemorative construction by Muslims of all schools. One of the most impressive sights in Damascus is still the mile-long main street in Salihiyah, lined on both sides with Ayubid madrasas and mausolea. See Michael Meinecke, “Der Survey des Dama- zener Altstadtviertels als-Salihiyah,” Damascener Mitteilungen 1 (1983): 189–241, esp. pp. 190–96.

6. Sauvaget, Les monuments auxyubides de Damas, 3 fascs. (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1938–1950), 1, 8–9; Nikita Elisséeff, La description de Dames d’Ibn ‘Asákîr (Damas: Institut Français de Damas, 1959), pp. 164–65, nn. 1 and 2. Sauvaget’s conclusions have recently been reviewed and modified by D. Sourdel and J. Sourdel-Thomine, “Dossiers pour un corpus des inscriptions arabes de Damas,” Revue des études islamiques, 47, 2 (1979): 154–56. Ibn ‘Asákîr states that she built the mosque, and there is a foundation and waqf inscription in her name (amara ba-‘imarat hadâ al-masbaad wa’l-turâs filat). In accordance with a rather common Seljuq-Zangid pattern, sometime after the death of her first husband Tutush, Safwat al-Mulk married the atabeg of her son, Zahir al-Din Tughtigin (r. 1104–27). When she died Tughtigin married another woman, who became the mother of his son and successor Bûrî. (On her see D. and J. Sourdel, “Dossiers,” pp. 157–58). In his turn, Bûrî married the daughter of Safwat al-Mulk, Zumurrud Khutan, who was thus in a certain sense, though not legally, his step-sister. No doubt similarly complex relationships can be discerned in contemporary California families.

7. Daughter of a certain amir Jawali, possibly the notorious Jawali Saqaq; through her mother Safwat al-Mulk she was the half-sister of Duqaq, son of the Seljuq conqueror of Syria Tutush b. Alp Arslan (d. 1095) and the last Seljuqid prince of Damascus. She was first married to Taj al-Mulk Bûrî (atabeg of Damascus, 1128–31); by him she was the mother of Shams al-Mulk Isma’il b. Bûrî (r. 1131–34). She was married a second time to the atabeg Zangi b. Aq-Sunqur. After his death in 1146 she withdrew to Medina where she lived in pious seclusion until her death in 1161. She was heavily involved in the violent politics of Damascus during the reigns of her husband and son, in spite of which she was noted for her piety and learning. She should not be confused with Saladin’s sister Sitt al-Sham Zumurrud Khutan, who died in 1219 and is discussed at length below. On Zumurrud Khutan and the Madrasa Khutuniyya extra-muros: Henri Sauvage, “Description de Damas,” Journal asiatique, sér. 9 (hereafter cited as JA) vol. 4 (1894): 255–55, 302–4, nn. 52–65; Nikita Elisséeff, Nur al-Din: un grand prince musulman de Syrie au temps des Croisades, 3 vols. (Damas: Institut Français de Damas, 1967) 2: 354; 3: 921.

8. Figures below are derived from an itemized census of religious monuments built or restored in Damascus under the Ayyubids. This census was originally confined to the period 1193–1260, but in this paper I have added data from Saladin’s era, 1174–1193. As presented here, the census is defined by the following parameters: (1) It omits data on fortifications, since these were usually the exclusive prerogative of the reigning prince of Damascus and therefore distort the overall percentages. (2) The figures cited here include only religious and charitable institutions and their founders. Certain institutional types are systematically excluded from the census. Thus, we omit a large number of small oratories and neighborhood mosques (masjids and public baths (hammâm) — we can estimate about 150 and 50 respectively — because these cannot be reliably dated and because it is seldom possible to identify their founders. On the other hand, we do possess what seems to be an exhaustive list of monumental tombs (turba, qâb); and these are included in the totals. Some mausolea were very modest structures, but others were supported by elaborate endowments providing for repairs, caretakers, Qur’än-reciters, etc. They are thus religious institutions no less than mosques or madrasas are. (3) Unless otherwise stated, the listed figures do include restoration and repair projects (injâdid), because these sometimes represented major initiatives, a wholesale reworking of an edifice, just as “rehab” do with us. The Umayyad Mosque, for example, was a constant object of attention by the ruling prince of the city. Out of 180 “acts of patronage” in the period 1193–1260 (where my data base is more detailed), 29 (16%) represent restorations. As it happens, no restorations are ascribed to women. Thus, if restora- tions were removed from consideration, patronage by women would appear even more significant than it now does.
Consort lector: Patronage is an elusive congeries of acts and intentions, and in the end no precise definitions are possible. In particular, it would be helpful if we had a fixed principle of "one patron, one building," but we do not. Several people were usually mixed up in the decision to construct a new edifice or found a new institution. By "the patron," I mean the person who decided to build something and provided the money to do it with. But it is clear that such decisions were often carried out and the money expended by someone else — usually a near relative who was the executor of a departed patron's estate. At other times, however, relatives were using their own funds to create a memorial for the departed. At still other times the two situations were blended in undetermined ways. And some monuments, like the Jami' Muzaffari in the Hanbali settlement of Salihiya, were erected by numerous patrons, each acting quite autonomously. I have sorted things out as well as I can. Each person who provided funds for the express purpose of establishing or restoring a religious char- itable edifice is identified as a patron; each initiative by an in- dividual is counted as an "act of patronage." In our census, there are thus 147 patrons who were active in the period 1174-1260, and they contributed 190 acts of patronage.

Of the latter figure, 130 represent original construction, 30 conversion, and 30 restoration or rebuilding. At the risk of emphasizing the obvious, the distinction between original work, restoration, and conversion is often hard to sustain. In brief, original work involves the erection of a new edifice, even if on a previously built-upon site. Conversion means turning an existing building to new uses. Restoration implies that an existing structure, however drastically overhauled, retains its previous function and identity.


A list of these foundations is given in Appendix A, "Religious Monuments and Foundations." Recall that the number of 160 excludes a very large number of neighborhood mosques (masajid), though it does include the several new Friday or congregational mosques (jama'as) erected during this period.

This figure includes both buildings constructed specifically to serve as madrasas and existing structures converted for that purpose. However, it includes no restoration projects. Conver- sions of buildings from one use to another were very common: thus, 20 out of the 68 madrasas in this group were converted structures, as were 5 of the 8 new Friday mosques (jami) established under Ayyubid rule. Converted madrasas had typically been the founder's private mansion; apart from limited struc- tural modifications, the main cost of a conversion lay in the endowment for professors' and administrators' salaries, student stipends, and maintenance expenses. This group of 63 includes buildings with compound functions: e.g., funerary madrasas or madrasas combined with Sufi hospices. However, it excludes zawiyas located in the Umayyad Mosque, since these were simply "endowed chairs" and did not involve the creation of a specialized locale for teaching and study. It also excludes the institutions called dar al-hadith, which seem to make their first appearance under Nur al-Din as part of his struggle to establish traditionalist Sunnism as the official form of Islam in his domains. Several hadith colleges — I have counted eight — were established in Damascus under him and the Ayyubids, but none are attributed to women.

Out of 147 patrons altogether, 38 (26%) were amirs or women from military families. Out of 190 acts of patronage in our data set, military patrons supplied 50 items (also 26%). An unusually close match between patrons and acts of patronage!

She is not counted among the thirteen princesses.

See Humphreys, "Politics and Architectural Patronage," pp. 153-55, for data and characterization. For the entire Ayyubid period (1174-1260), out of a total of 147 identifiable patrons of religious and charitable architecture, 86 (59%) belonged to these three groups. Out of 190 discrete acts of patronage (including restorations as well as original construction and conversion) 125 (66%) were sponsored by persons from these three categories. The other important groups are Sufis (15 persons), chancery and fiscal clerks (9 persons), and Ayyubid courtiers and palace officers (7 members).

It is true, as I have argued in "Politics and Architectural Patronage," pp. 168-69, that the importance of royal patron- age went well beyond the numbers of institutions founded directly by the Ayyubid princes. Briefly, the presence of a major princely court in Damascus constituted a pole of attraction for other potential patrons: amirs, ulama, senior bureaucrats, et al.


Dammāgh is not a widely attested ṣaqab. Dozy translates it as "timbre" based on a citation in Bakri's Description de l'Afrique du Nord. It can hardly be derived from damāgha, "to break open someone's head," or from dimāgh, "brain." Clearly it must come from Turkish jamgha/damgha, "stamp, seal."

On the Dar al-Hadith al-Ashrafīya and its school, see Humphreys, From Saladin to the Mongols, pp. 212-13; Sauvaise, "Description de Damas," JA 9/3 (1894): 271-73. Al-Ashraf's school was also near the Citadel's east gate, so the pair were in close proximity. How Aṭisah obtained her sandal is not known.


On her and her turba-maṣjid, see Nūṣaymī, Dīrās, 2: 243; Sauvaise, "Description de Damas," JA 9/6 (1895): 235-36, 282 n. 58 (which refers to the wrong al-Mughīth — a widely used title for Ayyubid princes); Sauvaget, Les monuments historiques de
Damas (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1932), p. 103. The monument was still extant under the name Sitti Hafia when Sauvaget wrote. There used to be a cenotaph there with a funerary inscription dated A.H. 648, but that belonged to a Rum Seljuqid princess: Répertoire chronologique de l’histoire arabe, 17 vols. (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1931; hereafter RCA), vol. 10, no. 4323, p. 213; cf. Meineck, “Survey,” p. 240, no. 110.

21. Al-Hafiz was often on stage in Ayyubid affairs, but always as a bit player. His career, such as it was, can most easily be traced in Ibn Wasi, Muyaffir al-kurab fi alhkar Banu Ayyu旭, ed. Jamil Al-Din al-Shaylil, S.a’d A. F. ْAshir, Hasanayn Rabí, 5 vols. (Cairo: Wizarat al-Thaqafa, 1953–77), 3: 133, 275–76; 4: 258; 5: 16, 75, 88, 279–80, 282, 308.

22. These events are recounted in Humphreys, From Saladin to the Mongols, pp. 255–78. On the misfortunes of Al-Salih Ayyub’s son, al-Mughith ْUmar, see ibid., pp. 257–58, 272–76.


24. Ibn Tūlün, ْQala’id, p. 234 — likewise the sole reference.

25. Several emendations are possible: e.g., Sunqur, Aq-Sunqur or (less likely) Il-Sunqur for her father’s name; for the final element, “al-Tughktikin,” easily restored from the otherwise unattested “al-Tughdasi,” seems the most likely reading. If this emendation is correct, it is possible though obviously far from certain that her father had been in the service of the atabeg Zahir al-Din Tughjīdī (d. 1128). The dates are plausible, and after the latter’s death Tughjīdī was not a widely used name in twelfth-century Damascus.


32. His full name was Nasih al-Din bin ْAbd al-Rahman bin Nasih al-Din bin ْAbd al-Wahhab bin Abi al-Faraj bin Shirāzi bin Anṣāri al-Hanbali. He died in Muhammad 674 (1236–37). His great-grandfather had come to Damascus. His grandfather (ْAbd al-Wahhab) had founded the Madrasa Sharafiya (or Sharifa), the first Hanbali college in Damascus, and taught there until his own death in 1141. Like his father, ْAbd al-Wahhab became ra’s al-Hanbaliya in Damascus.


34. On the Hanbali families and their interactions in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Damascus, see especially the introduction to Henri Laoust, Le précis de droit d’Ibn Qudama (Beirut: Institut Français de Damas, 1950).

35. Sibt b. al-Jawzi, Mirāt, p. 501; Nu’aymi, Dāris, 2: 80–81, 112; Sauvaget, “Description de Damas,” JA 9/4 (1894): 477–78; Meineck, “Survey,” p. 233, no. 82. The puzzle of Amat al-Latif’s arrest may be connected with his marriage to al-Asfar Musa. The latter’s father had been a determined opponent of al-Salih Ayyub’s ambitions in Syria and had been a key defender of Damascus in the siege of 1245. Amat al-Latif, with her long-standing links to the ruling family, may already have been betrothed to al-Asfar at this time. Al-Salih Ayyub did not take well to signs of disloyalty, and Amat al-Latif’s imprisonment may have been a way of punishing the disloyal Ayyubid branch of Homs. Of course, Amat al-Latif was also a wealthy woman, and at this point al-Salih Ayyub needed money in the worst way. In the meantime, al-Asfar had become ruler of Homs (his father died in 1246), but this town was seized by the ruler of Aleppo in 1248; he was compensated with Tall Bashir and al-Rahba. Very possibly Amat al-Latif was released by al-Salih Ayyub as a gesture of reconciliation and as a move in the rapidly developing rivalry between Cairo and Aleppo. In terms of age, the marriage must have been an unusual one: al-Asfar had been no more than roughly forty and probably older. Obviously there is still much to know. See Humphreys, From Saladin to the Mongols, pp. 276–78, 286–88, 293–95.


37. A survey of these events in Humphreys, From Saladin to the Mongols, pp. 239–65.


40. Pouzet, Damas, pp. 175–76. He deduces this importance from the caliber of the professors who taught there during this period.


44. Ibn Shaddad, A’lāq, p. 205. The Sa’d al-Din Mas’ûd mentioned here was the first husband of Saladin’s sister Rabî’a Khâtûn (v. infra); he died in Saladin’s siege of Masyafar’qin in 1185; Sauvaget, “Description de Damas,” JA 9/4 (1894): 305, n. 68.
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45. In Arabic her name is read as "Türkân"; the editor of Abū Shāma, Dhayl, p. 172, gives it as "Barakāt" — an easy error to make if the Arabic text lacks accurate diacritics.


52. The political context is given in Humphreys, From Saladin to the Mongols, pp. 170–215–21.

53. Murshidīya: Ibn Shaddād, Aʿlaq, p. 228; Nuʿaymī, Dāris, 1: 576 ff.; Sauvaget, "Description de Damas," JA 9/4 (1894): 278–79, 318 n. 166; RCEA, II: 239–84 (no. 1450); Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, Thīmār, p. 251 (no. 267); Sauvaget, Monuments historiques, p. 103; Meinicke, "Survey," p. 231, no. 73; on Khadija Khātūn, see Ibn Wāsīl, Muṣaffar, 4: 219 — but the statement that she died very shortly after her father is almost surely erroneous.

54. Nuʿaymī, Dāris, 1: 368.

55. RCEA, 12: 19–21 (no. 4427).

56. Information on her must be pieced together from disparate sources. Sauvaget’s text is confusing or erroneous and should be ignored. See Abū Shāma, Dhayl, pp. 11, 54; Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt al-ʿaṣyan wa-anbāʾ aḥnāʾ al-zaman, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Thaqāfa, 1972), 2: 453.


59. On the Jamiʿ al-Jabal (also called Jamiʿ Abī ʿUmar, Jamiʿ al-


60. Ibn Tūlūn, Qālaʾid, citing Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, p. 163.

61. The ʿAwwiyā is on the easternmost end of the Upper Sharaf, adjacent to the Citadel.


65. RCEA, 9: 147–48 (nos. 3407–8 [A.H. 582]). Our textual sources confirm the transfer of Turnashāh’s body from Alexandria but give no dates.


70. Items are listed in chronological order of construction or insofar as that can be determined. Obviously some of the dates given are only estimates. The period covered is 570–658 (1174–1260), from Saladin’s occupation of the city to the Mongol conquest. Pre-Ayyubid foundations (e.g., ʿIsmat al-Dīn’s mausoleum for her father Muʿin al-Dīn Onūr) are omitted. For the fifteen monuments still extant or at least accurately placeable, reference is made to two maps published by the Muḍiriyyat al-ʿAthār al-ʿĀmma in Damascus: (1) "Dimashq al-Qadima," drafted by Šalah al-Dīn al-Mumajjī and printed as an appendix to his edition of al-ʿIlmawī, Mukhaṣṣar tanzih al-fālak; (2) "Mukhtarat al-Salīḥiya," drafted by Muḥammad A. Duhmān and printed as an appendix to his edition of al-Murjja al-sundusyya al-fashaḥa fi taʾrīkh al-Salīḥiya (Damascus, 1947).