al-Ḡazzī
Najmuddīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad
(b. 1570, d. 1651)

Life

Ḡ. was the most important historian of Damascus in the second half of the 10th/16th and the first third of the 11th/17th century. The only surviving detailed biography of Ḡ. was written by Muḥammad al-Amin al-Muḥībbī (d. 1111/1699), in his centennial biographical dictionary Ḥulāṣat al-āṭar fī ʿaʾyān al-qarn al-hādī ʿashar. Muḥībbī drew his information from two works written by Ḡ. himself. The first is a biography of Badruddīn Muḥammad al-Ḡazzī, Ḡ.’s father, entitled Bulğat al-wājīd fī tarjamat Shayḫ al-Islām al-wālīd, which did not survive to date. The second is Ḡ.’s al-Kawākib al-sāʿira, his biographical collection about notables who lived in the 10th/16th century, in which much information is provided on the author and his family.

Ḡ.’s full name was Najmuddīn Muḥammad b. Badruddīn Muḥammad b. Raḥīmuddīn Muḥammad b. Shihābuddīn ʿAbd al-Ḡazzī al-ʿĀmirī al-Quraishī al-Dimashqī. The family produced members of ʿulāmāʾ for several generations. His father Badruddīn (904-984/1499-1577), a productive teacher and writer, also held the highest religious positions as the leader of the Qurʾān readers, the imam of the Umayyad mosque, and the Shafiʿi mufti. Born on 11 Shaban 977/19 January 1570, Ḡ. received his religious education from his father. Upon his death on 26 Shawwal 984/16 January 1577, his mother assumed the responsibility. Ḡ.’s teachers were among the outstanding ʿulāmāʾ of the time. The first was the Ḥanafī mufti of Damascus while his principal teacher for at least 35 years was Shihābuddīn ʿAbd al-ʿĪtāwī (d. 1025/1616), the Shafiʿi mufti. Among his important teachers were Qādī Muḥībbuddīn b. Abī Bakr al-Ḥamawī (d. 1016/1608), the influential Arab scholar in Damascus; the city’s Ottoman chief qadi, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Saʿūdī (d. 999/1590) who taught Ḡ. Qur’anic exegesis and whom Ḡ. calls the most intelligent and knowledge-seeking of all the Turkish scholars; and several prominent Egyptian ʿulāmāʾ such as Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Ramlī and Zaynuddīn al-Bakrī. Ḡ. gives a list of the history books that he read which inspired him and provided him with information for his own historical works. These were writings by Jalāluddīn al-Suyūṭī, Muḥīruddīn al-Ḥanbalī, Ibn Ṭūlūn, Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, ʿUmar al-ʿUrūdī, al-Shaʿrānī, al-ʿAlāʾī, ʿAbd al-Ḥimṣi, Taṣḵīḥprizāde, Qutbuddīn al-Nahrawalī, al-Nuʿaymī, etc. Ḡ. was also well-traveled, and went to many parts of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and to Istanbul. He performed the Hajj twelve times, and met many scholars and sufis of his time. Ḡ. was on good terms with the Ottoman rulers. Like his father and grandfather and many ʿulāmāʾ at the time, Ḡ. was also a sufī. He was an adherent of the Qādirī order.
Gb. became a popular and famous scholar, teacher and author. He also officiated as imam, Friday preacher, and mufti. He held several positions at madrasas, some given to him by his shaykh al-‘I技师, who resigned from them in favor of him. As it was customary, Gb. had to share such an appointment with another ‘alim.6 Gb. had many students and his reputation spread even in the Hijaz where he was known as “the hadith scholar of the age”, or “the scholar of al-Sham.”

Gb. married a daughter of Shaykh al-‘I技师, but his wife died during a plague. Then he married another daughter of his shaykh. He died in the house of another wife about whom we have no information. Seven years before his death Gb. was afflicted with light paralysis. He died on 18 Jumada II 1061/8 June 1651 when he was 83 years old. The information we have about his brothers, children and grandchildren indicates that they also continued the family tradition of learning and piety.7

As far as his attitude toward the Ottomans is concerned, Gb. can be regarded as a loyal Ottoman subject. He included the biographies of a considerable number of Ottoman qadis who served some time in Damascus and more often than not he portrayed them as just, pious and learned. Sometimes their knowledge of Arabic won his admiration. There are several anti-Ottoman or anti-Turkish expressions - notably more in the earlier parts of Kawakib than in Lutf. Such expressions, where they occur, are ethnic or cultural, never political. They refer to such legal and administrative terms as qanun and yasaq that are described as contravening the shari’a law.

Gb. wrote biographical entries about seven Ottoman sultans, four in Kawakib (Beyazid II, v. 1, 122-124; Selim I, v. 1, 208-211; Suleyman I, vol. 3, 156-157; Selim II, vol. 3, 156), and three in Lutf (Murad III, 648-651; Mehemmed III, 152-156; Ahmed I, 271-274). He praised Beyazid II for his religiosity, his support for mosques, sufi centers, as well as the Haramayn, the two holy cities in the Hijaz. The image of Selim I is positive for destroying the unjust rule of al-Gawri, the last Mamluk Sultan, for defeating the Safawids, and for supporting sufis. In his short biography of Suleyman I (less than two pages), he praised this ruler for improving the conditions of the pilgrims on their way to the Hajj and for the many mosques which were built during his reign. He too gets credit for his patronage of sufis. His religiosity and justice are emphasized, but surprisingly his campaigns are not mentioned, which can be taken as an indication for the extent that Gb. was obsessed with religious considerations to the exclusion of almost everything else.

Gb.’s work is a rich source for political, social, religious, cultural, economic and urban history of Syria. Several biographies provide information about power struggles in Damascus and Greater Syria. Even though the world of the ‘ulama’ is the one Gb. knows best, his work includes much information about the sufis, their tariqas and their growing influence during his time.
WORKS

1 Al-Kawākib al-sā’ira fī aʿyān al-miʿa al-ʿāshira

In his introduction to the Kawākib, Ġ. explains that he decided to collect the biographies of distinguished ‘ulamāʾ of the tenth century because no one before him had done it. Ġ. reported what he himself saw and heard and what was reported to him by contemporaries as well as the information he received from scholars of Cairo, the Hijaz, and the Ottoman capital. He examined works of prominent scholars. Occasionally, Ġ. judges the authors of books that he uses. For example, he accuses Ibn al-Hanbali of not knowing the art of history. Despite his justified doubts about al-Shaफrani’s historical accuracy (he says that the dates given by the latter are “approximate”), Ġ. cites him as a source not less than 90 times in the Kawākib. Ġ. praises Ahmad al-Ḥimṣi’s (d. 934/1527) chronicle as a fine book, but adds that he chose the way of brevity and approximation.

While early authors of biographical collections took ṭabaqa to mean 20 years, or 10 years or more, Ġ. defined a ṭabaqa as 33 years, influenced by a hadith in which the Prophet says that a generation is 33 years. The first volume gives the biographies of those who died from 900/1494 until the end of 933/1527, the second volume is about those who died from 934/1528 until 966/1559, and the third volume gives the biographies of those who died from the beginning of 967/1560 until the end of 1000/1592. Within each ṭabaqa, Ġ. arranged the biographies alphabetically, beginning with those named Muḥammad, as was customary.

Ġ.’s concept of aʿyān was different from that of his near contemporaries Būrīnī (d. 1024/1615), Ibn al-Hanbali and al-Muḥibbi. Ġ. argued that this term was reserved for the ‘ulamāʾ and military commanders, while true aʿyān were predominantly ‘ulamāʾ of all kinds and specializations, and sufis. He included also sultans and notable Ottomans, especially the Ottoman governors of Damascus. Only rarely does he write about military men, artisans, merchants and the like, whom he regarded generally as a part of the common people (‘awāmm). He specifically says that he does not include the captains of the janissaries (bölükbaşi) and their like. Ġ. recorded anecdotes about as well as personality characteristics of the figures he included in his work and mentioned their date of death and place of burial.

The typical structure of Ġ.’s biographies is as follows: Personal name, ancestors, dates of birth and death, place of birth and residence, his legal school (madhab), his virtues or characteristics, positions held, events related to him and the place of burial. While some notices are very short (not more than a line and a half), others, especially of famous persons, are extremely long.

The first volume Kawākib contains 652 biographical entries (three of which are repetitive, making the actual number of entries 649), the second volume contains 551,
and the third 345 entries (two of which are repetitive, making the actual number of entries 343). The three volumes of Kawākib include altogether 1543 biographies.

Jibrā’il Sulaymān Jabbūr, the editor of the Kawākib, who performed a pioneering service by publishing this important text, did so without having all extant manuscript copies of the work at his disposal. While the first two volumes were published in 1945 and 1948, the third was published much later, in 1959. He did not publish the Supplement (Lutf al-samar), which is a continuation of Kawākib, although the Zāhiriyya Library copy that he did use has it under the same cover as the three parts of Kawākib. This task has been completed very successfully in 1981 by Muḥammad al-Shayḥ, the editor of Lutf.

2 Lutf al-samar wa-qaf al-ţamar min tarājim a’yān al-ţabaqa al-ţilā min al-qarn al-hādī ʻashar

It is important to note that Š. did not consider Lutf as a separate work, but as the natural continuation of Kawākib for another 33 years, as he clearly states at the beginning of Lutf.12 Yet, Lutf is distinctly different from Kawākib, in that it is much less based on earlier biographers and much more on Š.’s own observations and experiences, because it describes Š.’s contemporaries and near contemporaries. There are fewer biographies of people who lived outside Syria. Though it covers one full generation, it is relatively limited in size and includes 283 biographies only (much less than 649, 551 and 343, the number of entries included in the three parts of Kawākib). In these four volumes we have a monumental work consisting of a total of 1819 biographical entries for a period of 133 years. The notables described by Lutf fall into three main categories: 50 members of the political and administrative establishment, 254 members of the religious establishment, and others, such as saintly people, poets and writers.

3 Bulğat al-wājid fī tarjamat Shayḥ al-Islām al-wālid

Š.’s biography of his father was written intermittently, its title having been changed several times. The work in its final form also contains Š.’s autobiography until he reached the age of 27 (i.e. until 1004/1595-96).13

Although Maḥmūd al-Shayḥ, the editor of Lutf, who has written the most detailed bibliographical survey of Š.’s works states that Bulğat al-wājid is lost (mafqūd),14 we know its contents from later sources that used Bulğat. We also know that it was arranged in five fascicules. Following the historian Sharafaddin Mūsā al-Anšārī (d. after 1002/1593-94), al-Shayḥ states in his Nuzhat al-nāẓir that “it seems that al-Gazzi wrote it by installments. One part stops in the year 999/1590. The work consisted of 10 chapters: The father’s lineage (nasab); his teachers; his writings (Š. mentions more than hundred, fifty of them in fiqh); his birth and death; his good qualities; his authorities in hadith. He named the work al-Durr al-lāmi‘ bi-anwar al-badr al-sāṭi‘, the shining pearls about the bright moon.”15
G. also wrote three travelogues. Al-Shaykh writes in his introduction to Lutf that his journey to Istanbul took place in 1032/1622. A copy of this travelogue titled Al-Iqd al-manẓūm  fi al-riḥla ilā al-Rūm is believed to be located in Köprülibi Library (Istanbul), ms. no. 1390 and there is apparently also a Turkish translation of the work. G. mentions a travel of his to Baʾalbak in the year 1027/1618 with an official delegation to deal with the situation there in connection with the military and political activities of Emir Fahri  al-Mānī. He mentions that he described the event in a separate treatise. This work has not survived to date. And finally, G.’s treatise about one of his pilgrimages is mentioned by al-Shayḥ. An autograph copy of the work, in which he describes the stations on the hajj route, is at the Zāhirīyya Library in Damascus (’Āmm 7930).

G. wrote not less than 51 works altogether, many of which are lost. Apart from his historical works, he wrote on hadith, tafsīr, fiqh, Arabic language, literature, poetry, ethics, medicine, and sufism.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscripts

(1) Al-Kawāki b al-sāʾira  fi aʿyān al-miʿa al-ʿāshira

Manuscripts: (1) Beirut, Beirut University Library [TBC]; 49 lines, nesih. One volume in 3 parts. The first part was completed at the end of Rabiʿ I 1159/April 1746, and the third on 1 Muharram 1161/2 January 1748. It is not clear when the second volume was completed. Includes the Supplement,  dayl or Lutf, as well. The manuscript was the property of al-Ǧazzā family and was given to Beirut University Library in 1928. (2) Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, no. 9891; 49 folios, 25 lines, [TBC]. An excerpt of the Kawāki b including only several shortened biographies of persons whose biographies are in the full work under the title Nayyirāt al-kawāki b al-sāʾira  fi tarājim aʿyān al-miʿa al-ʿāshira. Copied in 1150/1737. (See W. Ahlwardt. Verzeichnis der arabischen Handschriften der Koenigl. Bibliothek zu Berlin (Hildeshein, New York, 1980. Reprint of the 1897 edition, vol. 9), no. 9891.) (3) Cairo, al-Azhar Library, no. 348, Abaza 6646; 359 folios, 23 lines, nesih. (See  Fihris al-kutub al-mawjūda biʾl-Maktaba al-Azhariyya ilā 1368/1949. Part 5 (Cairo, 1949), 533.) Copied in 1100 (1688 or 1689); so it may be the oldest available copy. The text reaches until the year 966/1559, the end of the second generation (tabaqa). Includes only the first parts of Kawāki b. The first part has many lacunae. (4) Damascus, Maktaba Zāhirīyya, 41 Taʾriḥ (also 3406  Āmm); 217 folios (166 for Kawāki b, 51 for Lutf), 45 lines, riqʿa. (See Yusuf al-ʿUshsh.  Fihris maḥṭūtāt Dār al-Kutub al-Zāhirīyya: al-Taʾriḥ wa mul-haqātuhū (Damascus, 1366/1947), Part 1: 187-188.) Copied between 1158-62/1745-49. The copying of the third volume of Kawāki b was completed on 24 Jumada I 1161/22 May 1748. Both Jabbūr, the editor of Kawāki b, and Maḥmūd al-Shayḥ, the editor of Lutf, relied on this most complete and accurate manuscript, while al-Shayḥ
compared the text with the Medina and Topkapı Saray manuscript. (5) Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, no. 3708; 568 folios, 29 lines, nesih. Includes Kawākib (no. 3708/1, 451 folios) and Lutf (no. 3708/2, 117 folios). (See Arthur J. Arberry. *A handlist of the Arabic manuscripts in the Chester Beatty Library* (Dublin, 1955-66), vol. 3, 91.) Copied in 1108/1697. 6 biographies are missing. (6) Istanbul, Topkapı Saray Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Hazine 1286; 247 folios, [TBC], nesih. Includes the first two parts of Kawākib. (F.E. Karatay. *Topkapı Saray Müzesi Kütüphanesi Arapça Yazmalar Kataloğu* (Istanbul, 1966), vol. 3, 575-76; Lutf, ed. al-Shayḥ, vol. I, 175-180.) (7) Istanbul, Topkapı Saray Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Emanet Hazinesi 1220; 186 folios, 27 lines, [TBC]. Includes the third part of Kawākib (86 folios) and the dayl or Lutf (100 folios). (F.E. Karatay. *Topkapı Saray Müzesi Kütüphanesi Arapça Yazmalar Kataloğu* (Istanbul, 1966), vol. 3, 575-76; Lutf, ed. al-Shayḥ, vol. I, 175-180.) The manuscript is almost complete; only 4 biographies are missing. It includes one biography which is missing in all other manuscripts. (8) London, British Museum, no. 938; 738 folios, [TBC]. (See *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum orientalium qui Museo britannico asservantur, Pars 2. Arabic Manuscripts* (London, 1838-1871), 430-431, no. 938.) Completed in 1134/1722. (9) Medina, Maktabat Arif Hikmat, 182 Ta’riḥ; 329 folios, 31 lines, nesih. (See ʿUmar Rida Kahhala. *al-Muntaṣab min maṭāḥiṭ al-Madina al-Munawwara* (Damascus, 1393/1973), 83.) Completed in 1173/1759. Unlike the Zāhiriyya manuscript, it does not include a list of contents. It is not a copy of the Zāhiriyya manuscript, nor do the two manuscripts have a common source. Hence its usefulness for a comparison to establish the text of the work. (10) Rampur, Rampur Library, no. 3708; [no further details available]. (See *Fihrist kitab Arabi, Catalogue of Arabic Books in the Rampur State Library*. Rampur, 1902); also see Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, Supplement 2 (Leiden, 1938), 402, for a statement that a copy of Lutf is located in the Rampur Library, India.)

Editions: Ed. Jibrāʾil Sulaymān Jabbūr, 3 vols. (Beirut et.al., 1945-59). Second edition in 1979. This edition includes a few footnotes indicating the difference between the original spelling in the manuscript and the editor’s version; occasional references to other sources that have biographies on the same person, such as Shaḍarāt al-ḏahab by Ibn ʿImād al-Ḥanbali; as well as indices for Kawākib (personal names; place names, groups, institutions; titles of books). Although most manuscript copies of the work give its title as al-Kawākib al-sāʿira bi-manāqib aʾyān al-miʿa al-ʾāshi-ra, the printed edition prepared by Jabbūr omitted the word “bi-manāqib”.

2 Lutf al-samar wa-qaff al-ṭāmar min tarājim aʾyān al-ṭabaqa al-ʿulā min al-qarn al-ḥādi ʿashar

Manuscripts: (1) Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1345 Taʿriḥ; 186 folios, 21 lines, nesih. A copy of the Zāhiriyya manuscript, the manuscript was copied in 5 Safar 1342/17 September 1923. Its use for the edition, therefore, was minimal. (2) Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 3402; [TBC]. Described by the catalogue with the
copy date of Rajab 1108/February 1697. (See Supplement of the Dār al-Kutub catalog, p. 424) This seems to be the oldest copy. Al-Shayḫ tried to locate this manuscript without success. Jabrūr does not mention these two manuscripts at all and did not consult them for his edition of Kawākib. (3) Cairo, Maktabat Taymūriyya, 1420 Taʾrīḫ; [TBC]. A copy of the Zāhirīyya manuscript. (See Fihris al-Ḥizāna al-Taymūriyya (Cairo 1367/1947, 4 vols.) vol. 3, 220, 270.) (4) Damascus, Maktabat Zāhirīyya, no. 41 Taʾrīḫ (also 3406 ʿĀmm); 51 folios, 45 lines, nesih. Completed on 11 Safar 1162/3 February 1749. The editor relied mainly on this manuscript, since it is the fullest, except for two missing biographies that the editor located in the Medina manuscript. (5) Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, no. 3708; 568 folios, 29 lines, nesih. (See Arthur J. Arberry. A handlist of the Arabic manuscripts in the Chester Beatty Library (Dublin, 1955-66), vol. 3, 91.) Identical with Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, no. 3402. It is a volume containing both the Kawākib (452 pages) and Lutf (116 pages). The date of completion is 12 Rajab 1108/4 February 1697. Six biographies are missing. (6) Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Emanet Hazinesi 1220; 186 folios, 27 lines, nesih. It is a volume containing both the Kawākib (86 pages) and Lutf (100 pages). The manuscript is not paginated. (7) Medina, Maktabat ʿĀrif Hikmat, 203 Taʾrīḫ; 114 folios, 27 lines, nesih. Unlike the Zāhirīyya copy, here the Lutf is presented as a separate volume. Since this manuscript was not copied from the same copy as the Zāhirīyya manuscript, the editor relied on it for comparing the two versions that have slight differences. Unlike the Zāhirīyya manuscript, it does not include a list of contents. Four biographies are missing. (8) Rampur, Rampur Library, no. 3708; [TBC]. Mentioned in Carl Brockelmann, Geschichte der arabischen Literatur, Supplement 2 (Leiden, 1938), 402.

Edition: Ed. Maḥmūd al-Shayḫ, 2 vols. (Damascus, 1981). A thorough and meticulous work of critical edition. The long “Introduction” to this edition is an extensive and informative study of Ǧ.’s life and works. Useful references to other biographical collections as well as to modern studies, mostly, but not exclusively, in Arabic, are provided in the footnotes. For each biography, the dates of birth and death according to the Hijri and the Christian calendars are given. There is information about topographical, historical and bibliographical terms that appear in the text. Textual variants between the manuscripts used for the edition are noted. Though the editor relied on the Zāhirīyya and Medina manuscripts, he also used Ḥulāṣat al-aṭṭar by al-Muhībī, who borrowed no less than 182 (out of 283) biographies from Lutf. The editor notes that there are several significant differences between the two biographers in that Mūhibī tended to Arabizeize Turkish and Persian terms and corrected some grammatical errors that can be found in the manuscripts of Lutf.

Appendices (by al-Shayḫ, at the end of his edition of Lutf): There are 9 appendices: 1) governors of Damascus since Ǧ.’s birth until 1033/1624 when Lutf ends; 2) Hanafi (Ottoman) qadis for the same period; 3) Hanafī muftis for the same period; 4) Shafīʿi muftis; 5) Hanbali muftis; 6) Maliki muftis; 7) the deputy qadis; 8) military
judges (ṣādiʿasker) in Damascus; 9) qadis who held positions outside Damascus. The editor provides dates of their terms. Indices to Lutf (by al-Shayh): Index of the biographies; index of persons who are mentioned in the text or the footnotes, but do not have a biographies; index of titles or nicknames (alqāb); place names; index of book titles; index of terms.


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1 Much of this chapter is based on the long introduction of Maḥmūd al-Shayh, the editor of G.’s *Lutf al-Samar* (Damascus, 1981), vol. I, 5-216.
3 There are seven other biographies of G. The best known among them are al-Ḥasan al-Būrīnī (d. 1024/1615), Ṣharafaddīn Mūsā al-ʾAnsārī (d. 1000/1591) and another short biography by Muḥībbī that discusses G. as a literary man and a poet.
5 Muhībbī, *Ḥulāṣat*, vol. 4, 192.
6 In one case, a teaching position at the prestigious madrasa al-Shāmiyya al-Barrāniyya, held by al-ʿĪṭāwī was disputed between G. and Muhammad al-Mayḍānī. Al-ʿĪṭāwī appointed G. shortly before his death to that position. Al-Mayḍānī went to Istanbul and came back with an appointment (berārī) for that madrasa. G. too traveled to Istanbul and obtained the appointment. The two rivals asked the intervention of the Ottoman qadi of Damascus. The judge admitted that G. was right, but asked him to divide that position with his rival in deference to his advanced age. After one year al-Mayḍānī died, and G. had the teaching position for himself.
Al-Shayḫ states that, according to a later writer of al-Ḡazzi family, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān, G. seems to have changed the title after five years, adding his autobiography, as well as a list of his own writings until 1004/1595-96, namely when he reached the age of 27. (See Laṭṭaʿif al-minna fi fawāʾid ḥidmat al-sunnah, Zāhirīyya Library, Damascus, no. ‘Amm 3876/141.) Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān also states that “G. organized the biography in forty chapters in a big volume which he entitled Bulğat al-wājid fi tarjamat al-Shayḫ al-wālid.” See Laṭṭaʿif al-minna, quoted by Lutf, ed. al-Shayḥ, vol. I, 15, note: 1.

18 For a list, see Lutf, ed. al-Shayḥ, vol. I, 105-121.

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