

Sheikhdom among Muslims: A Historical Study of its Religious and Scientific Concepts during the Centuries (6-10 AH / 12-16 AD)

Riad Salim Awad^a & Taha Ibrahim Shabeeb^b

Abstract

In modern Islamic society, “Sheikh” generally refers to an elder, righteous, or knowledgeable person, with its meaning being self-explanatory. Historically, however, the meaning, especially in the context of the administrative structure of Islamic society in general during the Zengid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk reigns, varies widely from its modern context. Historically, “Sheikh” was used to designate administrative employees in society, especially in their capacity in the Islamic state, signifying their professional status within society’s administrative organization. In a modern context, this study aims at analyzing the nature and scope of their professional roles, specifically sheikhs, describing their job descriptions, importance, major scholars designated with such a status, as well as the Islamic families from which these scholars hailed within the general Islamic society. One major inference to be realized from such an analysis is that the sheikhdom comprised multiple professionals in society, especially those in science, due to its importance to Islamic society. Many Islamic families aimed to acquire such a status, with the inevitable goal of maintaining it in subsequent generations, for which they sought to provide their progeny with comprehensive Islamic studies, a necessary foundation to lead as sheikhs in society.

Keywords: Sheikh of Islam, Sufism, Islamic jurisprudence, administrative system, religious institutions, Prophetic Hadith, Inheritance.

Introduction

During the reign of the Zengid dynasty, many scientific and administrative roles existed within the institutions of the Arab-Islamic State.¹ Similar to other periods, these roles were also found in the Ayyubid and Mamluk dynasties.² These periods embody the cultivated image of Islamic society,

^a Riad Salim Awad (corresponding author), History Department, College of Arts, University of Kirkuk, Iraq. ORCID: 0000-0003 4426-8650. Email: riadawad90@uokirkuk.edu.iq.

^b Taha Ibrahim Shabeeb, College of Education for Humanities, University of Anbar, Iraq. ORCID: 0000-0002-2736-0458. Email: taha.shabeeb@uoanbar.edu.iq.

¹ The Zengid dynasty was an Islamic state founded by the leader Imad al-Din Zengi. He served as a field commander under the Seljuk state, which was loyal to the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad. Imad al-Din Zengi seized control of the city of Mosul and the Al-Jazeera region in 521 AH (1127 AD). He then expanded his emirate into the Levant, taking control of Aleppo. After his death in 541 AH (1146 AD), his sons inherited his kingdom. One of his sons, Saif al-Din Ghazi, took over the city of Mosul. Aleppo fell under the control of his other son, Nur al-Din al-Shahid, whose name was Mahmoud. Mahmoud was known for his political ambition and the expansion of his emirate, successfully gaining control over the Levant and Egypt. He is regarded as the founder of the Zengid state, which effectively came to an end with his death in 569 AH (1174 AD). Bin Shosh Marwan, “Civilizational achievements of the Alzinkia state and its effects in the East during the centuries of (6-7 AH/12-13 AD),” *Journal of Historical Research* 6, no. 1 (2022): 222-235, <https://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/article/193654>.

² The Ayyubid dynasty was one of the Islamic states established in Egypt following the fall of the Fatimid Caliphate in the year 567 AH (1171 AD). The Ayyubid influence soon extended to the Levant, the Hijaz, Yemen, Nubia, and parts of the Islamic Maghreb. This dynasty lasted for 81 years, coming to an end at the hands of the Mamluk state in 648 AH (1250 AD). Sultan Salah al-Din Yusuf bin Ayyub (d. 589 AH / 1193 AD) is regarded as the founder of the Ayyubid state. He initially served as a minister for Sultan Nur al-Din Mahmoud Zengi in Egypt, which enabled him to overthrow the Fatimid Caliphate and restore Egypt under the rule of the Abbasid Caliphate. After the death of Nur al-Din Mahmoud Zengi in 569 AH (1174 AD), Salah al-Din moved to the Levant and took control of the region. Basil

shedding light on the elegant lifestyle they sought to adopt, alongside their hostile environment resulting from warfare and the political turbulence in which the state was engulfed during those years. Among many other crucial roles in such a society, the Islamic sheikhdom played a pivotal founding role in establishing many institutions in science and management within the Islamic state. For better comprehension of the roles played by the sheikhdom in such a society, in addition to introducing readers to its importance in representing Islamic civilization at its peak, I shall choose to discuss: “Sheikhdom among Muslims: A Historical Study of Its Religious and Scientific Concepts from 6th to 10th Century AH (12th to 16th Century AD).”

The research has multiple objectives, primarily to shed light on the functional frameworks of the scientific and administrative institutions of the Arab-Islamic State. It’s postulated that a host of modern Islamic titles, such as “Sheikh,” began to be used as official titles for posts within the institutions. Another is to determine the concepts of Islamic Sheikdom that were officially recognized and accepted as formal state positions. The research shall investigate the various types of Sheikdoms, their place in the world of Islam, and the qualifications required of those who occupy such positions. Furthermore, this research shall determine the official institution that assigns a person to a position that makes them a Sheik and shall describe the institutions where this assignment is carried out. Also, the individuals who managed to win the state’s trust to occupy this position shall be identified.

Another is to find scholarly lineages devoted to raising their offspring according to a strict Islamic scholarly curriculum, so that they can take up these roles. The research is divided into two main parts. In the first part, the meaning of the sheikhdom and its different types, such as the sheikhdom of schools of jurisprudence, the sheikhdom of the Prophet’s hadith, the sheikhdom of reading the Qur’an, the sheikhdom of grammar, the sheikhdom of medicine, and the sheikhdom of Sufism, will be explained. These different parts should be explored in order of importance, along with examples of institutions where sheikhs were appointed. The second section concerns the transfer of a sheikh’s functions to scholarly families. It shall introduce exemplary instances of scholarly lineages that transferred these functions and shall culminate in the key findings that arose from this investigation.

Methodology

The present research uses a descriptive-analytical approach because of its methodological superiority for tracing the course of the establishment of the office of the sheikhdom within administrative and scientific frameworks of the Islamic state during the periods of the Zangid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk sultanates (the 6th to 10th centuries AH, or the 12th to 16th centuries AD).

Matans Kasouha, Sherine Hamoudi and Wafaa Sareem, “Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi and the establishment of the Ayyubid state,” *Al-Baath University Journal -Series of historical, geographical and social sciences* 43, no. 10 (2021): 59-113, <https://journal.homs-univ.edu.sy/index.php/History/article/view/465>. Mohd Bakri, Mohamad Fikri, and Shu’aibu, “Nur Al-Din Mahmud Zanki’s (1146-1174 CE) Perspective On Bayt Al-Maqdis: A Historical Overview,” *Journal Al-Muqaddimah* 12, no. 2 (2024): 83. Mamluk: Its establishment was announced in Egypt after it overthrew the Ayyubid state in (648AH/ 1250AD). It was also loyal to the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad. Then the Mamluks were able to control the land of the Hijaz and Levant. The Sultan Najm Al-Din Ayyub bin Muhammad (d. 647AH/ 1249AD) is considered the founder of this state, which passed through two eras, the first: the era of the *Bahriyya* Mamluk state, then the era of the Circassian Mamluk state (*Al-Burjiyya*). The rule of the Mamluk state continued until (923AH/ 1517AD), that is, for two and a half centuries, when it fell at the hands of the Ottoman Empire in the Battle of Raydaniya. Abdullah atiyee, “Dictionary of the names of the Mamluk sultans and princes in Egypt and the Levant through what is mentioned on their buildings and in historical documents and sources,” *Annual of Arab Archaeologists* 11, no. 1 (2008): 649-725, <https://dx.doi.org/10.21608/cguua.2008.38249>.

This method is preferred because it can describe the objects of research, analyze the subject's different dimensions, and draw conclusions by linking them.

To make the process of choosing cited examples and historical figures transparent and methodologically sound for the attainment of this study's goals, selection criteria were needed. The criteria for selecting scholarly figures and their families included two primary considerations: scholarly standing and leadership in their field, as well as the duration of tenure through hereditary succession within a given family. Scholarly standing and leadership were a priority, and a high standing recognized by contemporary sources through official titles of high respect, such as "Shaykh al-Madhab," "Shaykh al-Islam," "Shaykh al-Shuykh," or "Sheikh of Sheikhs," had to be recognized. It was also important to consider families that maintained the title of sheikh through multigenerational transfer, such as the Ibn 'Asākir and Ibn Hamawayh families. Regarding the collection of data, this research relies mainly on the type of sources that were either contemporary or nearly so to the era of investigation, thus obtaining firsthand information about academic and administrative affairs.

Source materials include biographical compendia and *Tabaqāt* books such as Al-Dhahabi's *Tārīḥ al-Islam*, Al-Ṣafadī's *Al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*, and Ibn al-'Imad's *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, where biographies of scholars along with their posts can be found. Moreover, for data about the post of sheikhdom within schools or institutions of knowledge, especially within Syria's and the Levant's Damascus, key information can be identified from Al-Nu'aymī's *Al-Dāris fī Tārīḥ al-Madāris*, or *The Student in the History of Schools*. Also surveyed, for administrative writings, such as a detailed description of the administrative system of the Mamluk state, for example, Al-Qalqashandī's *The process of data analysis* involved a number of steps. The first step was that of classification, whereby the type of positions existing in a sheikhdom had to be identified, based on the titles and functions noted in the texts. Then a description of each position was provided, defining its nature, the functions its occupants perform, and its rank within the system. Then a process of interpreting and synthesizing, whereby the hereditary succession of scholarly knowledge from one generation of a family of scholars to the next had to be analyzed, based on the manner through which such successions had actually occurred. Finally, a conclusion had to be drawn from the verifiable data that had been classified and analyzed.

Definition of the Sheikhdom Function and Its Types

"Sheikhs," according to linguists, is the plural form of the word 'sheikh' and denotes a man who is old enough to have gray hair. The title of 'sheikh' is given to people who are recognized for their intelligence and faith, thus paying them homage and treating them with reverence, much like what is done for older men.³ Historically, the significance of this title evolved. It was to be attached to different individuals who filled academic and administrative positions in the scientific and administrative systems of Arab-Islamic states, from the era of the Zengids, through the Ayyubids, to the Mamluk era. Every title of "sheikh" had a different set of connotations, intellectual, religious, and administrative, along with its own tasks and obligations. Varieties of sheikhdom posts can be found throughout the periods of these states, including:

³ Muhammad bin Makram Ibn Mandhur, *Lisan al-Arab (Tongue of the Arabs)* (Beirut: Dar Sader, 1993), 3/31; Ahmed bin Ali bin Ahmed Al-Fazari Al-Qalqashandi, *subh al-a'sha fi sina't al-'insha*, ed. Youssef Ali Tawil (Damascus: Dar Al-Fikr, 1987), 6/17.

The Sheikhdom of Islamic Jurisprudence

There are two forms of sheikhdom found within the jurisprudential traditions of the Islamic world. Firstly, for the larger Muslim community, the sheikh is a person who wields power by virtue of his knowledge and understanding, placing him above others of his time. His knowledge and sagacity make his appointment to this revered office only logical. Secondly, the appointment of a 'sheikh' is done through a formal ruling within a specific orthodox school of jurisprudence. In this case, the 'sheikh' is identified as the head of a specific school of jurisprudence to which he belongs.

The Sheikhdom of the Jurisprudential Schools of Thought at the Level of the Islamic World and Its Cities

The sheikhdom in Islamic learning, particularly law, is the most common phenomenon or institution in the Muslim world, representing the foundation of the Muslim order. All activities of Muslims, religious, scientific, administrative, economic, and even military, are subject to jurisprudential verdicts that are issued by Muslim jurists. These verdicts determine and regulate these activities according to the precepts of the Muslim code of law.⁴ The sheikhdom of the different schools of jurisprudence has always maintained a prominent and extensive presence within the Islamic setting. Under the Zengid and Mamluk regimes, Muslim jurists had multiple names or rather, a multitude of sheikhdoms, to denote the variability of these schools of jurisprudence. These include, for example, the Shafi, Hanafi, Hanbali, and Maliki schools of thought.

The title 'sheikh of the school of thought' was commonly given to several jurists, indicating that they had knowledge of a certain area of jurisprudence. They served as the main scientific and religious leaders of their schools. These titles have appeared frequently in the various Islamic historical writings. For instance, the title 'Sheikh of the Shafi'i school of thought' and its equivalents, 'head of the Shafi'i school,' refer to the head of the Shafi'i jurists. These titles can be found among the illustrious jurists from other schools within Islam, where they take equivalent titles such as 'Sheikh of the Hanafi,' 'Sheikh of the Hanbali,' and 'Sheikh of the Maliki school of thought.' These Sheikhs, therefore, form the highest echelon of scholarship among jurists from their respective schools.

There was a highest Sheik who had vast knowledge of this collection of sects, to whom all jurists from different parts of the Islamic world referred. This was a renowned scholar of the main schools of Islam, as well as the various sects. It is for this reason that this person was known as the Sheikh of sects, the Sheikh of Islam, the Sheikh of Sheikhs of Islam, or the Sun of sects.⁵ Among the jurists who were given these titles was the judge and jurist Sharaf al-Din Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Abi Asroun al-Mawsili (d. 585 AH/ 1189 AD), who was nicknamed the Sheikh of the Doctrines,⁶ as well as the judge and jurist Izz al-Din Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Salam al-Sulami (d.

⁴ Fakhruddin, Fakhruddin, Sudirman Hasan, Dwi Hidayatul Firdaus, and Hakmi Hidayat. "From Fiqh al-Ibadat to Muamalat: Repositioning Zakat Management in Indonesia in the Perspective of Maqāsid Al-Sharī'ah." *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 1 (2024): 1257–1279. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22373/sjkh.v8i1.19637>.

⁵ Al-Qalqashandi, *subh al-a'sha fi sina't al-'insha*, 3/302, 6/58, 156, 7/347, 348, 8/176, 9/180, 14/119, 449.

⁶ Imad al-Din Muhammad bin Muhammad Al-Asbahani, *Al-Barq al-Shami*, ed. Faleh Hussein, (Amman: Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, 1987), 3/138; Abu Hafis Omar bin Al-Khader Al-Lamsh, *Tarikh Dinisar*, ed. Ibrahim Saleh (Dar Al-Bashaer, 1992), 130; Qutb al-Din Musa bin Muhammad Al-Yonyani, *Dhail mir'at Azzaman* (Cairo: Ministry of Judicial Investigations and Cultural Affairs of the Indian Government, Dar al-Kitab al-Islami, 1992), 4/143.

Sheikhdom among Muslims: A Historical Study of its Religious and Scientific Concepts during the Centuries 660 AH/ 1261 AD),⁷ who was called the Sheikh of Islam.⁸ Likewise, the Judge Alaa al-Din Ali bin Mahmoud bin Mughli (d. 828 AH/ 1424 AD) was called the Sheikh of the Doctrines.⁹

As for the jurists who assumed leadership of the sect to which they belonged, including the sheikh, the jurist Sharaf al-Islam Abd al-Wahhab bin Abd al-Wahid al-Shirazi (d. 536 AH/ 1141 AD) was the sheikh of the Hanbalis in the Levant because he was the most knowledgeable in this doctrine.¹⁰ The sheikh, judge, scholar, jurist, Sadr al-Din Sulayman bin Abi al-Izz Al-Adhra'i (d. 677 AH/ 1278 AD) was the sheikh of the Hanafi school of thought in all Muslim countries.¹¹ The sheikh jurist Jamal al-Din Muhammad bin Ahmad bin al-Shuraishi (d. 685 AH/ 1286 AD) assumed leadership of the Maliki jurists in Damascus.¹² The sheikh jurist Muhyiddin Muhammad bin Yaqoub bin al-Nahhas (d. 695 AH/ 1295 AD) was known as the Sheikh of the Hanafi school of thought in the Levant, as he was the most prominent jurist of that school.¹³ The sheikh and jurist Sadr Al-Din Muhammad bin Omar bin Al-Marhil (d. 716 AH/ 1316 AD) was a brilliant scholar in the Shafi'i school of thought, and assumed the leadership of the Shafi'i school of thought in his time.¹⁴ The jurist, judge, and historian Burhan al-Din Ibrahim bin Muhammad bin Mufleh (d. 803 AH/ 1400 AD) was the sheikh of the Hanbalis and their leader in Damascus and the Levant.¹⁵ The sheikh and jurist Taqi al-Din Abu Bakr bin Abdullah bin Qadi Ajloun (d. 928 AH/ 1521 AD) assumed the position of Sheikh of the Shafi'is in Damascus because he was the most knowledgeable of his peers in Shafi'i jurisprudence.¹⁶

The difference between the trans-regional title of 'Sheikh of the school of thought' and 'Sheikh of the school' raises questions about their relative positioning within a hierarchical structure. Historical records reveal that these two titles operated in a parallel, rather than hierarchical, mode. The "Sheikh of the school of thought" (for example, the Sheikh of the Shafi'is of the Levant) had a considerable religious and intellectual authority, known as *marja' iyya 'ilmiyya*. His standing had a moral and referential basis—he was the ultimate intellectual reference for all believers of a particular school of thought. His word was sought on difficult questions of religion.

On the other hand, the 'Sheikh of the school' held a formal, appointed rank within a concrete setting, namely a particular educational institution. His office had a practical, localized, and intellectual supervisory role limited to that specific school. Even if the 'City Sheikh' held a

⁷ Syed Mohd Jeffri, Syed Jaafar, Sa'adan Man, Norhidayah Pauzi, Mohd Hafiz Jamaluddin and Muhammad Safwan Harun, "Sumbangan Izz Al-Din Ibn Abd Salam (m. 660H) Dalam Perkembangan Sejarah Dan Tamadun Islam: Contribution of Izz Al-Din Ibn Abd Salam (d. 660H) in the Development of Islamic History and Civilization," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 19, no. 2 (2024): 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol19no2.1>

⁸ Shams al-Din Muhammad bin Ahmed Al-Dhahabi, *Tarikh al-'islam wa wafyat al-mashahir wal-a'lam*, ed. Bashar Awad Marouf (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 2003), 14/933.

⁹ Shams al-Din Muhammad bin Abdul Rahman Al-Sakhawi, *al-daw' allaami' li'ahl al-qarn al-tasi'* (Beirut: Al-Hayat Library Publishing House, no. d.), 6/34-35; Abd al-Hayy ibn Ahmad Ibn al-Imad al-Hanbali, *Shadharat al-dhahab fi Akhbar min dhahab*, ed. Mahmoud al-Arnaout (Damascus: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1986), 9/268-269.

¹⁰ Abdul Qadir bin Muhammad Al-Nu'aيمي, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, ed. Ibrahim Shams al-Din (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1990), 2/50.

¹¹ Jamal al-Din Abu al-Mahasin Yusuf Ibn Taghri Bardi, *al-Manhal al-Safi wal-Mustafi' ba'd al-Wafi*, ed. Muhammad Muhammad Amin (Egypt: Egyptian General Book Authority, 1986), 6/57.

¹² Al-Nu'aيمي, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 1/89-90.

¹³ Al-Nu'aيمي, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 1/402.

¹⁴ Taj al-Din Abd al-Wahhab bin Ali bin Abd al-Kafi Al-Subki, *Tabaqat al-shafi'ya al-kubra*, ed. Mahmoud Muhammad, and Abd al-Fattah Muhammad (Dar Hajar for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 1992), 9/253; Al-Nu'aيمي, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 1/21.

¹⁵ Burhan al-Din Ibrahim bin Muhammad Ibn Muflih, *Al-Maqasad al-Arshad (The best intention)*, ed. Abd al-Rahman bin Suleiman al-Uthaymeen (Riyadh: Al-Rushd Library, 1990), 1/237.

¹⁶ Al-Nu'aيمي, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 1/223.

superior rank within the larger intellectual structure, he was usually not their supervisor. The nature of their interaction was that of a highest intellectual authority to the localized deans or department chairs, each acting within their complementary spheres of influence—regional, ideological for the first, and academic for the second.

The Sheikhdom of Jurisprudence in the Schools

There was a specific office, known as the sheikhdom of the schools of thought, within the judicial framework of Islam. Damascus is a bright example of this type of institution, where numerous institutions of jurisprudence and hundreds of teachers of jurisprudence are found. These schools varied in numerous traditions, namely the Shafi'i, Hanafi, Hanbali, and Maliki.¹⁷ In each school, a sheikh was assigned based on the jurisprudential school of thought to which the person was affiliated or trained. For instance, the person responsible for the Shafi'i school was the highest learned authority for Shafi'i teachers and students. The same applied to the Hanafi, Hanbali, and Maliki schools, each of which had a sheikh who was a key component of its administrative structure. However, the position of a sheikh within a jurisprudential school is viewed on a scholarly, rather than an administrative, basis.

The historical texts provide no specific, objective description of the tasks that the school sheikh had to undertake. While the lack of a detailed description of a person's duties is a common feature of these texts, a distinction between the duties of a school sheikh and those of a Nadhir, who served as the school's administrative and/or financial manager, is possible. The Nadhir's duties, as detailed in such works as *Al-Dāris*, included administration of the school's foundation, salaries, maintenance, and supplies.¹⁸

Due to the delegation of administrative and financial duties to a separate point from the sheikh's duties, the role now takes on a decidedly academic and scholarly bent. The scientific supervisory power presumably had among its main duties:

1. **Supervising Academic Standards & Curriculum:** The sheikh is responsible for the quality & accuracy of the knowledge being transferred, to suit the specific school of jurisprudence or thought, for instance, Shafi'i or Hanafi.
2. **Scholarly Arbitration and Fatwa Issuance:** It was the ultimate internal reference for settling disputes among faculty members and students, along with the possible issuance of fatwas that had relevance to the academic activities of the school.
3. **Validation of Academic Credentials:** The role of the sheikh was also important to the academic validation process, where the examination of the students resulted in them being awarded the 'ijazah' or license to teach if they had mastered the 'texts and sciences.'

This distinction makes it clearer that the sheikh was the pinnacle of the institution's academic structure, representing its academic mission and integrity, whereas the Nadhir was responsible for the sustainability of its operations.

¹⁷ Riad Salim Awad, "Religious and Cultural Dimensions Reflections in Levantine Schools Architecture During the Zengid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk Periods," *Journal of Islamic Architecture* 8, no. 3 (2025): 675–690. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18860/jia.v8i3.25934>.

¹⁸ Riad Salim Awad, and Taha Ibrahim Shabeeb. "The Position of Supervisor (Al-Nadhir) and Its Inheritance by the Scholarly Families in Damascus During the Centuries (7-9 AH / 13-15 AD)," *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities* 6, no. 1 (2025): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.58256/g6525c98>.

According to historical archives, the school sheikh's role is significantly different from that of other school posts, especially that of the administrative and financial manager, known as the *Al-Nadhir*. The *Al-Nadhir* deals with the administrative and financial side of the school, including preparing salaries, handling school operations, preparing learning materials such as books, furniture, illumination, food, and cleaning, and maintaining the learning facility.¹⁹ An example that demonstrates the difference between the duties of the school Sheikh and the school principal is that of Sheikh Taqi al-Din Yusuf bin Yahya al-Shirazi, who lived until the year 751 AH/1350 CE, being simultaneously the head of Hanbali jurists in the school, namely the 'Al-'Alemah, and the principal of that school.²⁰ This shows that the duties of being the Sheikh of Hanbali jurists differ largely from those of a school supervisor.

In addition, the position of the school sheikh is not required to be combined with a teaching position. For instance, the Badr al-Din Hussein bin Ali bin Qadi Adhra'at, who passed away in 814 AH/1411 CE, was the Sheikh of Shafi'i jurists at the school, namely '*Al-Khabisiyya*', without being a teacher.²¹ Also, the case of Sheikh Imad al-Din Abu Bakr Bin Ali Al-Husseini, who died in 833 AH/1429 CE, was the Sheikh of Hanafi jurists at the school '*Al-Jaqmaqiyya*' and a teacher.²²

The Sheikhdom of the Prophet's (PBUH) Hadith

Recorded from the previous era, there are known forms of 'sheikhdom' that relate to hadiths of the Prophet, such as a title given to hadith specialists. It is the person who is known for his or her memorization of a considerable number of Prophetic hadiths, besides being a main reference for those studying this field. Among the most revered individuals who have had the honor of being bestowed this title is Sheik Jamal al-Din, Yusuf bin Abd al-Rahman al-Mizzi, who passed away in 742 AH (1341 CE) and was universally recognized as the greatest expert on hadith.²³ Furthermore, Sheik Nafis al-Din, Sulaiman bin Ibrahim al-Makki, who lived until 825 AH (1421 CE), was the titleholder as the sheikh of hadith experts in Yemen.²⁴ Sheik Burhan al-Din, Ibrahim bin Muhammad, Sibt ibn al-Ajami, who lived until the year 841 AH, or 1437 CE, was known as the sheikh of hadith experts in Aleppo, and he was also known as "Hafiz al-Islam," a title of honor for memorizing a lot of the Prophet's (PBUH) hadiths.²⁵

In different sheikhdoms of the Prophetic Hadith, the Houses of Hadith stood as institutions where the teaching of the Noble Hadith was carried out. One of the most important institutions is the House of Hadith, known as *Al-Ashrafiyya*, established in Damascus, where Kamal al-Din Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Sharishi served as the hadith sheikh for eight years until 718 AH or 1318 AD.²⁶ In these, the teacher of the Hadith was assisted by a deputy, the deputy teacher of Hadith. Among those who served as deputy teacher of the Hadith in Damascus was Sheik Sudhan al-Din Ibrahim ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Fazari, who died in 729 AH/1328 CE. In other parts of the world,

¹⁹ Al-Nu'aيمي, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 2/87.

²⁰ Ibn Muflih, *Al-Maqasad al-Arshad*, 3/134; Al-Nu'aيمي, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 2/88.

²¹ Al-Nu'aيمي, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 1/176.

²² Al-Nu'aيمي, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 1/376-377.

²³ Abu Al-Hajjaj Yusuf bin Abdul Rahman Al-Mizzi, *Tahdheeb Al-Kamal fi Asma' Al-Rijal*, ed. Bashir Awad Ma'rouf (Beirut: Al-Resala Foundation, 1980), 1/102; Ibn al-Imad al-Hanbali, *Shadharat al-dhahab fi Akhbar min dhahab*, 8/236-237.

²⁴ Al-Sakhawi, *al-daw' allaami' li'ahl al-qarn al-tasi'*, 3/ 259.

²⁵ Shams al-Din Muhammad bin Ahmad Al-Dhahabi, *Al-kashf fi ma'rifat min lah riwayat fi al-kutub al-sita*, ed. Muhammad Awwam (Jeddah: Dar al-Qibla for Islamic Culture, 1992), 1/118; Khairuddin bin Mahmoud Al-Dimashqi Al-Zirakli, *Al-A'lam*, ed. Abdullah Omar Al-Baroudi (Dar Al-'Ilm Lil-Mallain, 2002), 1/65.

²⁶ Shams al-Din Muhammad bin Ahmad Al-Dhahabi, *Mu'jam al-shuyukh al-kabir*, ed. Muhammad al-Habib al-Hayla (Taif: Al-Siddiq Library, 1998), 1/139.

another school, namely *Al-Dhahiriyya Al-Barquqiyya*, found in Egypt, had a leadership structure for the Hadith, where Zain Al-Din Abu Bakr bin Omar Al-Qimni, who passed away in 833 AH or 1429 CE, served.²⁷

Historical documents also report the existence of other sheikhdoms among these scholarly households, such as the *Sheikh of Al-Riwayah*. Responsibilities that came with this title included reciting the Prophetic Hadith to the pupils, hearing them read it back to assess their memorization, and repeating the recitation until its content was memorized.²⁸

The Sheikhdom of Reading the Holy Qur'an

One area that has attracted considerable academic attention among Muslims is the study of reciting and memorizing the verses of the Holy Qur'an.²⁹ Persons who earn exemplary knowledge in this subject and become the leading figures for Qur'an recitation efforts earn the title of Sheikh of Recitations. Among such people who earned this prestigious title is Sheikh Zain al-Din Abd al-Salam bin Ali bin Omar al-Zawawi, who passed away in 681 AH (1282 CE) and was known as the Sheikh of Reciters of Damascus.³⁰ Another prominent figure is Sheikh Diya' al-Din Abdullah bin Ibrahim al-Jadari, who passed away in 779 AH (1377 CE) and was the Sheikh of Qur'anic readers, known as Alf az-Zikr, or Al-Qurra', of Mosul.³¹ The profession of the recitation experts of Qur'anic sciences was that of the Sheikh of Qur'anic Recitation. For example, the Sheikh of Qur'anic Recitation at the Al-Salihiyah school of the old city of Damascus was the Sheikh Alam al-Din Ali bin Muhammad al-Sakhawi, who passed away in 643 AH (1245 CE).³²

The Sheikhdom of Grammar

Among the most well-known sheikhdoms recognized by Muslim scholars is that of the Sheikhdom of Grammar. This was a title of high honor held by illustrious scholars who had a thorough grasp of the science of grammar. Of these was Abu Muhammad al-Qasim b. Ahmad al-Lurqî, who died in 661 AH, or 1262 AD. His title was that of the al-'Ulama al-Nahw, or the sheikh of grammar, of the *Al-Adiliyya* school of Damascus. Moreover, he was also the sheikh of the reciters of the Levant; thus, he had two prestigious titles.³³ Another prominent figure was Badr al-Din Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Maktoum al-Suwaidi, who died in 797 AH/1394 CE and became the sheikh of grammar at the school of Al-Nasiriyah in Damascus.³⁴

The Sheikhdom of Medicine

Among these numerous sheikhdoms, the so-called "sheikhdom of medicine" included leadership by prominent figures of the era. Among these is Sheikh Jamal al-Din Ahmad ibn Abdullah al-Dimashqi, who lived until 694 AH / 1294 CE and, being a skilled physician, took over the

²⁷ Jamal al-Din Abu al-Mahasin Yusuf Ibn Taghri Bardi, *Al-nujum al-zahira fi muluk misr wal-qahra* (Egypt: Ministry of Culture and National Guidance, 1963), 15/167; Al-Sakhawi, *al-daw' allaami' li'ahl al-qarn al-tasi'*, 6/36.

²⁸ Taj al-Din Abd al-Wahhab bin Ali bin Abd al-Kafi Al-Subki, *Mu'id al-ni'am wa mubid al-niqam*, ed. Muhammad Ali al-Najjar (Cairo: Al-Khanji Library, 1993), 111.

²⁹ Arman Asmad, Elsayed Mohamed Abdalla Amin, Mohamed Mohi El-Din Ahmed and Ahmed Youssef. "Qur'an Versus Kabbalah: A Reading into Palestinian-Israeli Conflict," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 20, no. 1 (2025): 245–265. <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol20no1.18>

³⁰ Alam al-Din al-Qasim bin Muhammad al-Ishbili Al-Barzali, *Tarikh Al-Barzali*, ed. Omar Abd al-Salam Tadmurri (Beirut: The Modern Library, 2006), 2/10-11.

³¹ Ibn al-Imad al-Hanbali, *Shadharat al-dhahab fi Akhbar min dhahab*, 7/634.

³² Al-Nu'aيمي, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 1/243.

³³ Al-Nu'aيمي, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 2/207.

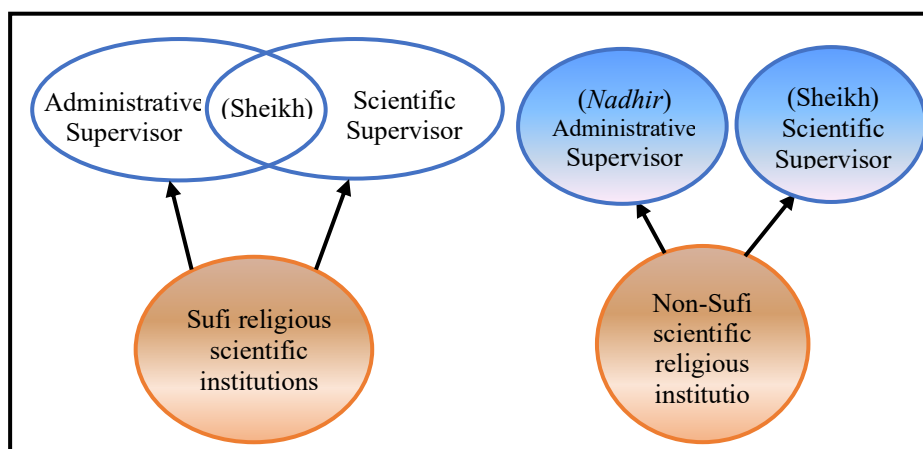
³⁴ Al-Nu'aيمي, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 1/281.

Sheikhdom among Muslims: A Historical Study of its Religious and Scientific Concepts during the Centuries leadership of the *Al-Dukhawariyya* school of medicine, a prestigious medical school, due to his expertise and proficiency in medical science.³⁵

The Sheikhdom of Sufism

In the era of the Zengids, Ayoubids, and Mamluks, numerous Sufi religious complexes sprouted across the Islamic world. These complexes began to be provided with a variety of names, such as *Khanqah*,³⁶ *Ribat*,³⁷ and *Zawiya*³⁸ (in singular). The plural forms of these are *Khawaniq*, *Rubut*, and *Zawaya*, respectively. These complexes were headed by a person called the ‘sheikh’, who was basically administrative. Furthermore, the position of a ‘sheikh’ entails different roles, depending on the setting. This supposes that the ‘sheikh’ of the Sufis had two roles: administrative and academic. The most prominent roles of a ‘sheikh’ of a Sufi order include.

Figure 1: Comparison between the Concept of the Sheikhdom Function within Sufi and Non-Sufi Scientific Religious Institutions



Sheikhdom of Sheikhs

The highest rank within the Sufi Sheikhdom is that of the Sheikh of Sheikhs. This rank requires the holder to be responsible for organizing and administering all religious institutions of the Sufis (*khawniq*) within the state, overseeing their construction and maintenance, besides being answerable for attending to followers of the Sufi sect, especially the poor dervishes (*Drawish*). The person who holds such a prestigious position must be known for his religious uprightness and be favorably viewed within society. Notably, this position is customarily filled by the state’s secret scribe, who is known as the scribe of *Diwan al-Insha*.³⁹ Historically, the Sheikh of the Sheikhs had a link to the Sheikh of Khanqah al-Saliyyah, known as the Khanqah of Sa’id al-Su’ada, who was based in Cairo. After the establishment of Al-Khanqah Al-Nasiriyah at Siryaqus by Sultan Al-

³⁵ Al-Nu’aimi, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 1/129.

³⁶ Khanqah: A Persian word that is translated from the word (fana kah) Some sources state that it is a Persian word that means home or house. It was introduced in Islam around the year 400 AH/1009 AD, and it was designated for the Sufis to retreat there to worship God. Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Abd al-Razzaq Al-Zubaidi, *Taj Al-Arous fi Jawaher Al-Qamoos* (Dar Al-Hidaya, no. d.), 25/270.

³⁷ Al-Ribat: It came from linking something, and Al-Murabitah is: perseverance, i.e. staying at the enemy’s edge, and Al-Ribat in origin: the place where Muslims camp to fight, and with the expansion of the Arab-Islamic state, the concept of Al-Ribat changed and it turned into a house of worship and a center of education. Ibn Mandhur, *Lisan al-Arab*, 7/302.

³⁸ Zawiya: places where Sufis worship, where they resort to seclusion away from people, and it means seclusion from them. Ahmed Mukhtar Abdel Hamid Omar, *Dictionary of Contemporary Arabic Language* (Alam al-Kutub, 2008), 2/1012.

³⁹ Al-Qalqashandi, *subh al-a’sha fi sina’t al-’insha*, 4/200, 12/100.

Nasir Muhammad bin Qalawun Al-Mamluk,⁴⁰ the title of the position of the emerging Khanqah's sheikh was elevated to that of the Sheikh of the Sufi Sheikhs of Egypt.⁴¹

Among these prominent figures was a jurist, Sheikh Majd al-Din Musa bin Ahmed al-Aqsari, who lived until the year 740 AH/1339 AD,⁴² and was the Sheikh of Khanqah Shaykhun, Egypt, thereby becoming known as the Sheikh of Sheikhs among the Sufis.⁴³ Another prominent scholar who headed this Khanqah was Sheikh Jamal al-Din Mahmoud bin Ahmed al-Qaysari al-Ajmi, who lived until the year 799 AH/1396 AD. His roles included commanding the armies of Egypt and serving as a Hanafi judge.⁴⁴

The head of the Sufi sheikhs in Egypt is appointed directly by the Mamluk Sultan, thus signifying the importance of this position.⁴⁵ Then, in Damascus, the head of Al-Khanqah Al-Shamysatiyya asserts a similar position and is tasked with administrative oversight of all khanqahs, rubuts, and zawayas within Damascus and its surrounding areas. This entails the administration of the endowed properties and the allocation of necessary resources to maintain their service to followers of the Sufi faith. This is usually done through an appointment by either the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt or the Deputy Sultan of Damascus.⁴⁶

One of the most prominent holders of this post at Damascus was Sheikh Abu Al-Fatih Muhammad bin Ali Al-Juwayni. He was appointed by Sultan Nour Al-Din Mahmoud Zengi,⁴⁷ who made him the Sheikh of Sufism for all the cities of the Levant. Under his charge remained the khanqahs, rubuts, and zawayas of the Sufis, not only in Damascus but also in other important cities such as Baalbek, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. He held this position until the time of Sultan Saladin Al-Ayyubi,⁴⁸ until he died in the year 577 AH/ 1181 AD.⁴⁹

In Aleppo, there was also the office of the Sufi sheikhs, who was acting as the senior sheikh of the Khanqah of Aleppo. His role was the administrative supervision of all the khanqahs in Aleppo and its environs, carried out by appointment from the Sultan or his deputy, who was stationed in Aleppo.⁵⁰ Among other titles, the historian mentions that of the Sheikh of the Sheikhdome of Sheikhs. The most notable person to hold this title was the Sheikh and jurist Sharaf al-Din Yaqoub bin al-Tabani, who died in 827 AH (1423 CE).⁵¹

The Sheikhdome of Al-Khawaniq, Al-Rubut, and Other Sufi Zawaya

The administrative system for these Sufi religious and learning institutions comprises several sheikhdoms, including those in the Khawaniq gorges and the Rubut, among others. Not covered

⁴⁰ He assumed power in the year (693 AH/1293 AD), and died in the year (741 AH/1340 AD). Ibn al-Imad al-Hanbali, *Shadharat al-dhahab fi Akhbar min dhahab*, 8/233.

⁴¹ Al-Qalqashandi, *subh al-a'sha fi sina't al-'insha*, 4/39, 11/364-365.

⁴² Ibn Taghri Bardi, *Al-nujum al-zahira fi muluk misr wal-qahra*, 9/324.

⁴³ Ibn Taghri Bardi, *Al-nujum al-zahira fi muluk misr wal-qahra*, 12/158.

⁴⁴ Ibn Taghri Bardi, *Al-nujum al-zahira fi muluk misr wal-qahra*, 12/158.

⁴⁵ Al-Qalqashandi, *subh al-a'sha fi sina't al-'insha*, 4/39, 11/364-365.

⁴⁶ Al-Qalqashandi, *subh al-a'sha fi sina't al-'insha*, 4/200, 12/5.

⁴⁷ He took over the rule of the Levant in the year (541 AH/1146 AD), then Egypt, and continued to rule until he died in the year (569 AH/1173 AD). Ibn al-Imad al-Hanbali, *Shadharat al-dhahab fi Akhbar min dhahab*, 6/378.

⁴⁸ He declared his state in the year (567 AH/1171 AD), and died in the year (589 AH/1193 AD). Ibn al-Imad al-Hanbali, *Shadharat al-dhahab fi Akhbar min dhahab*, 6/488.

⁴⁹ Al-Nu'a'imi, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 2/120.

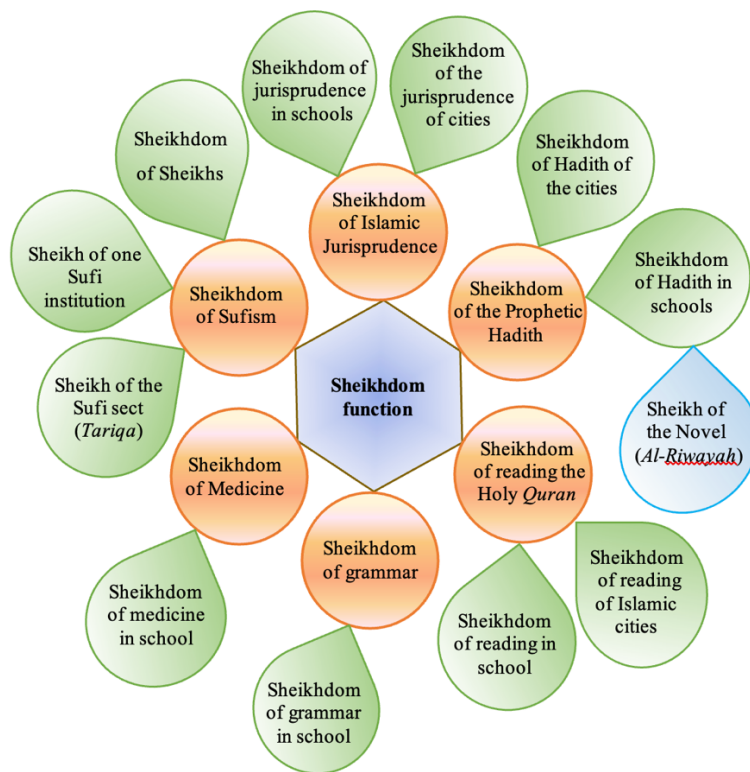
⁵⁰ Al-Qalqashandi, *subh al-a'sha fi sina't al-'insha*, 4/228; Muwaffaq al-Din Ahmad bin Ibrahim Abu Dhar, *kanawz al-dhahab fi tarikh halab* (Aleppo: Dar Al-Qalam, 1996), 1/389.

⁵¹ Al-Nu'a'imi, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 1/436.

Sheikhdom among Muslims: A Historical Study of its Religious and Scientific Concepts during the Centuries under this system, however, include those of *Al-Khanqah Al-Saliyah*, *Al-Khanqah Al-Nasiriyah*, and *Khanqah Shaykhun*, Egypt, as well as the Sheikhdom of *Al-Khanqah Al-Shumaysatiya*, found at Damascus, and the *Khanqah* of Aleppo. In these non-covered areas, a respective sheikh is tasked with monitoring the administration of the *Khawaniq* and the *Rubut*, along with the corresponding institutions of the *Zawaya*. It is this person who is responsible for maintaining these institutions, including cleanliness, hospitality to visitors, adequate accommodations, and companionship to make visitors feel less lost or foreign.⁵²

Among these, the prominent figures who held such a position of sheikhdom include the jurist Sharaf al-Din Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Fazari, who passed away in 705 AH / 1305 CE. His occupation was that of a sheikh at *Al-Ribat Al-Nasiri* in Damascus, where he also taught.⁵³ Likewise, Sheikh Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Aziz al-Hanafi, who passed away in 819 AH/1416 CE, was responsible for the administration of the Sheikhdom of *Al-Khanqah Al-Yunisian* in Damascus.⁵⁴ One of the leading exponents of Sufism is known as *Al-Tariqa*. The religious structure is closely tied to the Sufi belief system, which comprises different sects. Every sect selects a highest religious head, known as the sheikh of *Al-Tariqa*, who is recognized as the highest religious figure within a sect. In the realm of religious practices, the religious head of *Al-Tariqa* possesses unique qualities that set them apart from other Sufis.⁵⁵ It may thus be deduced from the above description that there existed six main domains of functions of a sheikhdom. These main domains of a sheikhdom's functions have numerous subtypes. These subtypes differ from their main domains (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Different Sheikhdom Functions



⁵² Al-Subki, *Mu'id al-ni'am wa mubid al-niqam*, 126.

⁵³ Al-Nu'aيمي, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 1/88.

⁵⁴ Al-Nu'aيمي, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 1/423, 2/148.

⁵⁵ Abdul Rahman bin Abdul Khaliq Al-Yousef, *Sufi Thought in the of the Qur'an and Sunnah* (Kuwait: Ibn Taymiyyah Library, 1986), 350.

Inheritance of Scientific Roles for Sheikhdome Functions

The study of intellectual lineages that entrusted successive generations of sheikhdome reveals a remarkable phenomenon of social significance within the highest intellectual echelon of the Mamluk and Ayyubid periods. It is, however, necessary to note that the lineages selected for a case study, such as that of Ibn Asakir, Ibn Hamawayh, and Ibn al-Jazri, can be considered successful and prominent examples of this trait. Their remarkably long-term trajectories across numerous generations of these intellectual lineages provide a solid basis for qualitative investigations. Although this type of study provides a good appreciation of dynamics and the possible extent of hereditary patterns, a numerical assessment of their prevalence is not possible. These instances of prevalence can be seen to be the maximum levels that such a phenomenon is known to achieve among the academic elite, although they must certainly be interpreted as proof neither of universality nor even of being the most preferred mode of succession to a sheikhdome among a host of other academics who, lacking a family tradition, might nevertheless have gained such a promotion through other, merit-based criteria.

Islamic family dynamics and the corresponding norms of upbringing of children in such families have made a considerable impact on a host of scientific and social organizations operating in Muslim-dominant states. These institutions keep stressing that serious attention from the scientific community is required on this pressing issue⁵⁶ to raise a generation of individuals with the skills necessary to handle upcoming tasks. Despite this, numerous investigations have largely focused on the modern experiences of Islamic families, with a remarkable lack of exploration of those from earlier eras.

Under the periods of the Zengids, the Ayyubids, and the Mamluks, the Arab-Islamic State saw the rise of various scholarly families that significantly contributed to maintaining scholarly and administrative activities in Egypt and the Levant.⁵⁷ The various scholarly families sought to get appointments as scholars or administrative personnel. The members of these scholarly families gave priority to the hereditary nature of their professions, and as such, they maintained these professions from father to son, to grandson, to brother, to uncle, or to a cousin. Among the offices that passed from generation to generation through these learned families was that of sheikhs. Succession to a sheikhdome was of two kinds: one where a single sheikhdome was passed to a family of learned men for several decades, and the other where a family was given a number of sheikhdoms, as opposed to a single office. Examples of learned families who succeeded to the office of a sheikhdome within the Islamic states are listed below.

Scientific families inheriting one of the functions of the Sheikhdome

Among these, scholastic lineages that held this office include that of Sheikh Nizam al-Din Ishaq bin Asim Al-Isbahani, who died in 783 AH/1381 CE. Indeed, this person was the Shaykh of the Sufi Sheikhs of *Al-Khanqah Al Nasiriyyah*, a title that was founded when his son, Shaykh Jalal al-Din Ahmad bin Ishaq Al-Isbahani, who died in the year 802 AH/1399 CE, took over this office.⁵⁸ In Damascus, the office of the sheikh's lineage passed from generation to generation of learned families, most prominently through the lineage of Ibn Asakir. The historian Thiqa al-Din Ali bin

⁵⁶ Riad Salim Awad, "The Role of Scientific Family Traditions in Societal Advancement in the Levant and Egypt: A Focus on Ibn Saghīr's Family (478-759 AH / 1085-1357 AD)," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 14, no. 2 (2024): 28–41, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.142.03>

⁵⁷ Adal Ibrahim Hussein, "The Asakir family and their scientific role in the Levant in the sixth and seventh centuries AH/second and thirteenth centuries AD," *Journal of Kirkuk University Humanity Studies* 9, No. 1 (2014): 203-225. <https://iasj.rdd.edu.iq/journals/journal/issue/5604>

⁵⁸ Ibn Taghri Bardi, *Al-nujum al-zahira fi muluk misr wal-qahra*, 11/217, 13/17.

al-Hasan bin Asakir, who lived until 571 AH/1175 CE, was the sheikh of the science of the Prophet's hadith at Dar al-Hadith al-Nuriyah in Damascus.⁵⁹ His son, Sheik Baha al-Din al-Qasim bin Ali bin Asakir, who lived until 600 AH/1203 CE, succeeded him. After that, his cousin, Sheik Fakhr al-Din Abd al-Rahman bin Muhammad bin Asakir, who lived until 620 AH/1223 CE, became the successor, followed by his brother, Sheik Zeyn al-Amanah al-Hasan bin Muhammad bin al-Hasan bin Asakir, who lived until 627 AH/1229 CE.

Then, the leadership was taken over by Sheikh Taj al-Din Abdul Wahhab bin al-Hasan bin Asakir, who died in 660 AH/1261 CE, and was succeeded by his son, Sheikh Amin al-Din Abdul Samad bin Abdul Wahhab bin Asakir, who died in 686 AH/1287 CE.⁶⁰ This reflects the importance of the office. It is also a sign that the family was keen to ensure that their children had a strong, academic, and Islamic education to enable them to take up key positions in the state, fulfill their set obligations, and maintain the family's illustrious name.

The Ibn Hamuyeh family is quite distinguished among the learned families who filled the rank of Sufi sheikh in Damascus. Sheik Mu'in al-Din al-Mu'ayyad bin Abdullah bin Hamawayh (who died 605 AH, or 1208 AD) initially took up the leadership of the Sufis at Al-Khanaqah Al-Shamysatiyya.⁶¹ His successor was his cousin, Sheik Sadr al-Din Muhammad bin Omar bin Hamawayh, who died 617 AH, or 1220 AD.⁶² Later, his son, Sheik Imad al-Din Omar bin Muhammad bin Hamuyeh, who died in 636 AH, or 1238 AD, took up the leadership, along with his brother, Sheik Kamal al-Din Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Hamuyeh, who died in 640 AH, or 1242 AD.⁶³ After this, the office of the sheikhhood was transferred to their uncle, Sheikh Taj al-Din Abdullah bin Omar bin Hamawayh, who died in 642 AH/1244 CE.⁶⁴ After this, his son, Sheikh Saad al-Din al-Khidr bin Abd Allah bin Hamawayh, who died in 674 AH/1275 CE,⁶⁵ took over. Then, his brother, Sheikh Abdullah bin Abdullah bin Hamawayh, who died in 678 AH/1279 CE, succeeded him.⁶⁶ This line of descent reveals that, for almost 80 years, the position of Sufi Sheikhs was held by seven members of the family of Ibn Hamuyeh, thereby underscoring the importance of this title at that time.

The Ibn al-Jazri family traces their lineage through a series of luminaries who took over as Sheikhs, mainly through the school of Qur'anic Recitation (*al-Iqra'*). Specifically, Sheikh Shams al-Din Muhammad bin Muhammad bin al-Jazri, who died in the year 833 AH or 1429 AD, was the prominent personage to occupy the highest rank of knowledge devoted to Iqra' science at two centers – namely, *Al-Adiliyya Al-Kubra* school, or the *Al-Adiliya* Institute, and the *Al-Salhiyya* school, popularly known as *Turbat Umm Al-Saleh*. It was during this era that this illustrious Sheik, namely, Sheikh Shams al-Din, entrusted the key roles to his offspring, namely, his son, Sheikh Fath al-Din Muhammad bin Muhammad bin al-Jazri, who died in the year 814 AH or 1411 AD.⁶⁷

⁵⁹ Mohd Bakri, Mohamad Fikri, Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, and Shu'aibu Umar Gokaru. 2025. "The Ulama and Jihad: Examining Ibn 'Asakir's Role in the Narrative of Bayt Al-Maqdis' Liberation During Nur Al-Din Mahmud Zanki's Era". *Online Journal of Research in Islamic Studies* 12 (2), 36.

⁶⁰ Al-Nu'a'imi, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 1/ 62, 74, 75, 77, 78.

⁶¹ Ahmed bin Ali Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, *Anba' Al-Ghamr Bi Abna' Al-Omur*, ed. Hassan Habashi (Egypt: The Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, 1969), 1/125.

⁶² Izz al-Din Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Abi al-Karam al-Shaybani al-Jazari Ibn al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, ed. Omar Abd al-Salam Tadmuri (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1997), 10/366.

⁶³ Khalil bin Aibik Al-Safadi, *Al-Wafi bil-Wafiyat*, ed. Ahmed Al-Arnaout and Turki Mustafa (Beirut: Dar Ihya Al-Turath, 2000), 8/49.

⁶⁴ Ibn al-Imad al-Hanbali, *Shadharat al-dhahab fi Akhbar min dhahab*, 7/371.

⁶⁵ Al-Yonyani, *Dhail mir'at Azzaman*, 3/162.

⁶⁶ Al-Dhahabi, *Tarikh al-islam wa wafiyat al-mashahir wal-a'lam*, 15/361.

⁶⁷ Shams al-Din Abu al-Khair Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Yusuf Ibn al-Jazri, *ghayat al-nihayat fi tabaqat al-*

It can thus be concluded from these findings that the Ibn al-Jazri family bequeathed the title of sheikh of Iqra' from two institutions at the same time. Note that this is different from the family of Ibn Asakir, who bequeathed the title of sheikh of the science of Hadith from one institution, namely *Dar Al-Hadith Al-Nouriya*, or that of Ibn Hamawayh, who bequeathed the title from a lone institution, namely the *Al-Khanaqah Al-Shamysatiyya*, found in Damascus.

Scientific Families Inheriting Many of the Sheikhdome's Functions

Regarding the second type of leadership, passing through inheritance within the scholarship lines – Sheikdoms, attention is given to the transfer of different Sheikdoms. This is because of the expertise of individuals concerned in different areas of knowledge, and not merely one. One of the best lineages for this matter is that of the Ibn al-Sabouni family. Sheik Alam al-Din Ali bin Mahmoud bin al-Sabouni (640 AH / 1242 AD) was responsible for various Sheikdoms affiliated with different Sufi schools, one of which was Al-Ribat al-Khatuni, located in Egypt. His son, the historian Sheik Jamal al-Din Muhammad bin Ali bin al-Sabouni, who passed away in 680 AH / 1280 AD, was handling the Sheikdom pertaining to Prophetic hadiths at the 'Nouriya Hadith House' or '*Dar al-Hadith al-Nouriya*' found within the '*Askari Eidgah*' of Damascus.⁶⁸ We note that the scholars of this family inherited two sheikhdoms: the sheikhdome of Sufism in Egypt, and the sheikhdome of the science of the Prophetic Hadith in Damascus, due to their specialization in the sciences of Sufism and the Prophetic Hadith.

The Al-Shuraishi family contributed significantly to Islam's scholarship. Sheikh Jamal al-Din Muhammad bin Ahmad Al-Shurayshi lived until 685 AH / 1286 CE and held several key roles, namely as the successor of hadith scholarship at the *Umm Al-Saleh* School, the head of Sufism at *Al-Ribat Al-Nasiri*, and the head of the jurisprudence of the school of Malik in Al-Sham, Damascus.⁶⁹ His son, Sheikh Kamal al-Din Ahmad ibn Muhammad Al-Shuraishi, who died in 718 AH or 1318 CE, succeeded his father as an heir to the mastership of hadith science at Al-Umm Al-Saleh School, as well as the mastership of Al-Ribat Al-Nasiri, but he did not succeed to the mastership of jurisprudence according to the Maliki school.⁷⁰ In conclusion, the family held three prominent scholarly positions: leadership of hadith scholarship, leadership of Sufism, and leadership of Maliki jurisprudence (Table 1).

Table 1: Scientific Families Inheriting Sheikhdome Functions

Scientific family name	Sheikhdome of Islamic Jurisprudence	Sheikhdome of the Prophetic Hadith	Sheikhdome of reading the Holy Quran	Sheikhdome of grammar	Sheikhdome of Medicine	Sheikhdome of Sufism	Number of family sheikhs
Nizam al-Din Ishaq al-Isbahani						X	2
Ibn Asaker		X					6
Ibn Hamawayh						X	7
Ibn al-Jazri			X				3

qura' (Cairo: Ibn Taymiyyah Library, 2010), 1/129-130, 248-249.

⁶⁸ Al-Dhahabi, *Tarikh al-islam wa wafyat al-mashahir wal-a'lam*, 14/325, 15/401.

⁶⁹ Abu Al-Fida Ismail bin Omar Al-Qurashi Ibn Kathir, *Al-bidaya wal-Nihaya* (Dar Al-Fikr, 1986), 13/308.

⁷⁰ Al-Nu'aimi, *Al-daris fi Tarikh al-madaris*, 1/25, 87.

Ibn al-Sabouni		X				X	2
Al-Shuraishi	X	X				X	2

Conclusion

In concluding our research on the phenomenon of Islamic sheikhdom from the Zengid to the Mamluk periods, this study raises the following conclusions: The phenomenon of Islamic Sheikhhood is varied, since the title of Sheikh is neither limited to elderly or pious people, nor to every learned person. It is, rather, a title of occupation that belongs to the administrative structure of the scientific and administrative institutions of the Arab-Islamic State of that era. The roles of the sheikhs of schools of jurisprudence, houses of Qur'an, houses of Prophet's (PBUH) hadith, and medical schools basically had academic orientations. Administrative and financial tasks, on the other hand, remained the charge of another office, that of the school principal (*al-Nadhir*). Note that the roles of the sheikhs of Sufi schools (*Khawaniq*, *Rubut*, and *Zawaya*) included both academic and administrative tasks, where the Sufi sheikh was the superintendent without a separate administrative head. The sheikh of a school did not necessarily have to be a teacher at that particular school. Additionally, the functions of a sheikh and those of a school superintendent can be performed separately or combined, with a single person serving as both, and that person can also be a teacher. In most cases, the sheikh of the Sufi institutions was appointed by the Sultan, while the sheikhs of the *Khawaniq*, *Rubut*, *Zawaya*, and schools were appointed by the Sultan's deputy. The Arab-Islamic State witnessed the emergence of learned families that contributed greatly to the scholarly and administrative systems of Egypt and the Levant. These learned families competed for the privilege of being entrusted and inheriting the office of the sheikhdom for decades.

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