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'The City of Abraham's Children': The Religious Communities of Damascus in the Late 7th A.H./13th A.D. Century

Introduction

As one of the oldest cities in the world, Damascus has been home to a diverse population of ethnic and religious groups for millennia. Markedly, as a major religious and cultural centre, Jews, Christians and Muslims, the three global 'Abrahamic' faiths[1], have cohabited for well over a thousand years.[2] As a Byzantine metropolis, Syria was under Christian suzerainty until the 7th century A.D. In 635 A.D., the Byzantine hegemony over Syria, which had been firmly established since 324 A.D., was under threat by an Arab-Islamic invasion. Victory at the hands of the Umayyad Muslims meant that Damascus soon became the capital city of a rapidly emerging Umayyad-Islamicate (associated with regions in which Muslims are culturally dominant, but not specifically with the religion of Islam.)[3] empire, which at its peak stretched from Spain in the West, and as far as India in the East, between 661–750 A.D. Thereafter, inter-Muslim rivalry saw the demise of the Umayyad dynasty at the hands of an assertive Abbasid empire which consolidated its own political and religious legitimacy, and shifted the new Islamic empire's capital from Damascus to Baghdad. Perhaps by way of acknowledging its past importance, the Syrian provinces were recognised, at least in name, as an 'empire' by the ruling Abbasids.[4] During the same period, 'Abraham's children'; the Jews, Christians and Muslims of Damascus, cohabited in a largely peaceful *détente* where Islamicate-rule prevailed under the leadership of Sultan Baibars (1260 – 1277). Muslim diversity was facilitated by the establishment of the four major Sunnī law schools; Hanafi, Maliki and Ḥanbali, with the Shāfiʿī school adopted by the state and its institutions. The Maliki school held a major influence over large areas of North-Africa but, had only a small presence in Damascus. The city and its surrounding municipalities preferred the Shāfiʿī and Hanafi schools, respectively. Despite occasional theological differences, all four Muslim schools of law (*madhāhib*) maintained a peaceful coexistence. Shī'a were also present in the mix of Muslim pluralism, and were represented by the Fatimid and 'Batanites' (*Ismāʿilīyyah*). In addition to the majority diverse Muslim population in Damascus, the Jews also had a sizable and visible presence.

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[1] For a detailed explanation of the term, 'Abrahamic', see al-Faruqui, *Trialogue of the Abrahamic Faiths*, edited by Isma'il Raja, (Maryland: International Istitute of Islamic Thought, 1982).

[2] T. A. Carlson, 'Contours of Conversion: The Geography of Islamization in Syria in, 600–1500', *Journal of American Oriental Society*, 135(4) (2015), pp. 791-816.

[3] See M.G.S. Hodgson, The Venture of Islam: The Classical Age, vol. 1, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1977).

The Jewish community of Damascus was centred around four major theological sects: Rabbis, Qaraītes, Samaritans and Khayābira. These Jewish sects allowed free professions (doctors, scholars, artisans and merchants, etc.) and each maintained its particular religious norms and social customs. The Damascene Christians were far greater in number than their Jewish counterparts and were generally made up of two denominations: Jacobite and Melkite. Although consisting of many prominent merchants, comprising a very influential community, Christians were subjected to a number of legal restrictions and taxes under Muslim rules. The identity politics and socio-political conflicts that exist within such culturally, ethnically and religiously diverse communities, has always been a contentious feature of plural societies. The particularities of early medieval Damascene society, with its significant Jewish and Christian communities, and the legal strictures and prohibitions adopted by Muslim rulers in an effort to retain their own supremacy and induce minority faith communities into it, is a central exploration of this study.[5] Furthermore, in attempting such political strategies, the fine balance between inter-communal cohesion, economic embargoes, and excessive taxes by state executives on Jewish and Christian entrepreneurs, often weakened Muslim political hegemony internationally.[6] Beyond the restrictive impositions on trade, by targeted state financial policies, a degree of social dysfunction within other social institutions; universities and *madāris* (educational institutions), state and religious institutions etc., appear to have become have become undermined. This is because, dysfunctionality usually occurs when the state fails to mitigate the impacts of its restrictive, and often discriminatory, policies on minority groups and influential communities, causing both disruption and social dissent as a consequence of state mismanagement.[7]

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[4] See *Country Profile: Syria*. Available at: https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/cs/ profiles/Syria.pdf.

[5] M. Saleh & J. Tirole, 'Taxing Unwanted Populations: Fiscal Policy and Conversions in Early Islam', (Working Paper: Toulouse School of Economics, 2018).

[6] R. W. Bulliet, (*Religion and the State in Islam: From Medieval Caliphate to the Muslim Brotherhood*, (Denver: University of Denver, Center for Middle East Studies, 2013).

[7] B. Braude, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2014).

The Islamisation of Egypt, Sassanid Mesopotamia and Syria appears to have adopted a less-zealous and more inclusive approach towards its Jewish and Christian minorities, in relative concordance[8] Further, doctrinal differences among minority Christians under Muslim rule, were not subjected to imposing orthodoxy as they were under Christian rule. In later Ottoman territories, both Protestant and Catholic missions were permitted to engage freely, unlike the territorial orthodoxies present within the then, theologically divided European Christendom. Although numbers of Jewish and Christian communities have gradually declined within majority-Muslim spaces, the doctrinal sects present in both religious communities have remained a feature of a number of contemporaeneous Muslim societies. In Syria, the decline of Ottoman rule coupled with later, European colonial rule, resulted in a major depletion of Jews and Christians via migration to the various western locales.

In exploring these historical occurrences, this study seeks to examine the impacts of these developments upon the three monotheistic communities of Damascus and how this shared city-space was controlled and occupied by each religious community. The influences of the invasions by the Mongols and, later, the Crusaders upon the three faith communities of Damascus, along with the political and cultural hegemony of Muslims and their management of state-financed policies and economic strategies will be assessed. This study is divided into two parts; the first focusing on each religious tradition, exploring their various theological sects and schools present within Damascene society. The second part examines how the various ruling Muslim dynasties developed their state finances and policies towards their religious minorities. The primary focus of this study centres on thirteenth century Damascus state finance policies of ruling Muslims on their Jewish and Christian counterparts. This research study, therefore, relies on four main areas of investigation: Muslims in Syria and Damascus, Jews within the same geo-historical context, Christian presence and influence within the same period and region, and, state finance policies implemented by Muslim rulers on all three faith communities in Damascus.

Muslim Hegemony

In thirteenth-century Syria, the overwhelming majority of its population was Muslim. This was also true of its ancient capital, Damascus, although Judaism and Christianity held a historic and influential presence. As a result of its importance as a regional capital for an ever-increasing Muslim presence, Damascus soon became a stronghold of Islamic orthodoxy. This phenomenon was further bolstered when the Zengid and Ayyubid dynasties exerted their official religious policies on Damascene society. It is claimed that the Shāfiʿī madhhab was instituted and spread across Damascus by Qadi Muhammad

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[8] S. K. Sadr, *The Economic System of the Early Islamic Period: Institutions and Policies*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Othman Abu Zura (d. 915).[9] By 897, the Tulunids appointed Abu Zura as Grand Judge (*Mufti*) of the Shāfiʿī school in Damascus.[10] Under the rule of the Ihsididin, several Shāfiʿī schools held the office of Qadi of Damascus.[11] Even after the Mamluks exerted control over the city, Damascus was still led by Shāfiʿī judges, albeit as a deputy (*nā'ib*ʾ, plural, *nuwāb*) of the Ismāʿīlī Grand Qadi of Cairo.[12] By 1076, the Fatimids lost control of Damascus after the Seljuq Turks subjugated the city and revived the orthodoxy of the Shāfiʿī madhhab .[13]

By the time that the Zenigid and Ayyubid dynasties controlled the region, the school dominated the city. Shāfiʿī ascendency continued in Damascus even after the Mamluk victory over the Mongols at Ayn Jalut in 1260.[14] It was not until the rule of Sultan Baibars, in 1265-1266 A.D., that Damascus was ordered to establish four Qadis, one each for the four Sunni Muslim schools of law: Hanafi, Maliki, Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbali . However, the Shāfiʿī school retained exclusive jurisdiction in matters of the public treasury and the property and inheritance of orphans.[15] While the Shāfiʿī madhhab no longer enjoyed exclusive dominance over Damascus after 1265-1266, the school developed a multi-dimensional approach towards the teaching of religious law in Damascus. Nur al-Dīn founded religious schools (*madāris*) based on the Seljuq prototype, as an alternative to the previously established Shīʿa (Fatimid) system. The newly-established schools received substantial financial support via various charitable means and endowments. Ziadeh[16] claims that most of the schools were under the direct control of the Shāfiʿī family and Ibn Saddad asserts that of the 84 law schools in Damascus, during his era, 35 were of the Shāfiʿī madhhab and all law schools were ultimately under the rule of the Ayyubids and Mamluks.[17] By the end of the Mamluk period, Nuʿaymī (d. 1520 A.D.) reported that of the 128 law schools then present in Damascus, 75 were of the Shāfiʿī school.[18] After the dominating presence of the Shāfiʿī schools in Damascus, the Ḥanafī schools were the second largest numerically. The Ḥanafī madhhab had many adherents in the city and was the most prominent during the rule of the Seljuqs, with the first Ḥanafī madrasa established in Damascus by 1098.[19] It is reported by both, Ibn Asakir (d.1176) and Ibn Tulūn (d. 1546) that the Damascene Muslims were somewhat reluctant to pray behind the Ḥanafī Qadi, Muhammad ibn Musa al-Butasi, in the Grand Mosque and preferred instead to pray behind a Shāfiʿī imāmat at *Dar al-Ḥayl* ("Place of Horses") Mosque.[20] Whether Shāfiʿī followers were greater in number during specific periods in Damascus' history is debatable, however, during Zengid, Ayyubid and Mamluk rule, the relationship between both law schools appears to have remained equally balanced.

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[9] S. al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʻAlī Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Quḍāt Dimashq: al-thaghr al-basām fī dhikr min Walī Qiḍā' al-Shām*, (Dimashq: Maṭbūʻāt al-Majmaʻ al-ʻIlmī al-ʻArabī, 1956).

[10] H. Halm, 'Die Ausbreitung der Safi itischen Rechtsschule von den Anfangen bis zum 8. /14. Jahrhundert', (Wiesbaden: Tubinger Atlas DesVorderen Orients, 1974).

[11] S. al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʻAlī Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Quḍāt Dimashq.*

[12] Al-Subkī, Tāj al-Dīn ʻAbd al-Wahhāb, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyyah*, (Cairo: Ali Albabi Publications, 1964), vol. 8, p. 309.

[13] H. Halm, 'Die Ausbreitung der Safi itischen Rechtsschule...'.

[14] Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al- Ẓāhir*, (Bibliotheca Islamica, (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag & Druckerei de Lagna, 1983).

[15] S. al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʻAlī Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Quḍāt Dimashq.*

[16] N. Ziaden, *Damascus Under the Mamluks*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), p. 52.

[17] Ibn Shaddād, *Al-'Alāq al-Khaṭīrah fī al-Dhikr Umarā' al-Shāmwa al-Jazīrah*, vol. 3 (Beirut: *s.n.*, 1963), p. 226.

[18] al-NuʿAymī', *Al-Dāris fī -al-Tārīkh al-Madāris*, vol. 1, (Dimishq: Maṭbaʻat al-Taraqqī, 1948), pp. 3-7.

According to the account of Ibn Saddad (d.1234), Damascus had 34 Hanafi schools and 35 Shāfiʿī schools, with a further 7 schools jointly teaching both Hanafi and Shāfiʿī law. Al-Nua'ymī records that there were 57 Shāfiʿī schools and 51 Hanafi schools in Damascus during his era, whereas, Ibn Abd al-Hadi (d.1504) states that the majority of Damascene mosques were Shāfiʿī.[21] However, the city traditionally had two Muftis (legates), one from each law school[22] and the same condition applied to the office of, Qaḍi al-'Askar (Military Judge), in Damascus.[23] Although both the schools of Maliki and Ḥanbali had followers in the city, their numbers always remained relatively few. Because the Maliki school has always been traditionally associated with a majority following in North-Africa, the followers of the Maliki school in Damascus were locally known as Maghāriba (North-Africans). Al-Almawi, therefore asserts that migrants from the Maghrib; Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians, Libyans and Egyptians were present within Damascene society during this period.[24]

By the middle of the twelfth Century, a leading Maliki scholar, Abu al-Hajj Yusuf al-Findalawi, settled in the city.[25] During the era of Nur al-Din, a *ẕāwiyaḥ* (small retreat) was established in the Grand Mosque, which Ibn Jubayr recorded as being for the teaching of the Maliki school for students travelling from the Maghrib. Taj al-Din, asserts that al-Nua'ymi claimed that there were four Maliki schools present in Damascus during his time.[26] The migration of significant numbers of North-Africans to Damascus was a particular feature of Mamluk dominance in both Syria and Egypt, and is recorded in the writings of Ibn Abd al-Hadi, who was himself of the Maliki school. He also stated that Damascus had only a few Maliki mosques during his period.[27] The first Maliki Qadi, Abd al-Salam ibn Umar al-Zawawi (d. 1282) was appointed during the reign of Sultan Baibars.[28] In contrast, the followers of the Ḥanbali school were more prominent in Damascus than their Maliki counterparts. During the time of Nur al-Din, two Ḥanbali schools were established: al-Sharafīyyaḥ or madrasa al-Shirāzī, which was established by Sharaf al-Islam ibn Abd al-Wahhab al-Shirazi (d. 1142) and the Mismarīyyaḥ, founded by a wealthy merchant and Qur'ān reciter (*qāri*), Mismar al-Hilali al-Hawrani (d, 1248).[29] Al- Shirazi particularly substantially contributed to the spread of the Ḥanbali school in Damascus.[30] The exact number of Ḥanbali schools present in Damascus has been the subject of debate. During the Ayyubid era, it was claimed that seven Ḥanbali schools were established in the city. However, Ibn Saddad states there were eight schools, whilst Nua'ymi claims there were ten Ḥanbali schools in Damascus. The disparity in the actual number of Ḥanbali schools in Damascus probably reflects the historical reality, particularly in the al-Ṣālihīyyaḥ suburb, of a swelling migration settlement of a number of prominent Palestinian Ḥanbali families. Further, other migrants of the Ḥanbali *madhhab* came from Banū Qadūma and Iraq during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[31] The majority of the population from the Damascene municipalities including Darraya, Zamalka and al-Mizza, for example, were followers of the Shāfiʿī *madhhab*.[32]

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[19] Abd al-Hādī ibn Yusuf, *Ṯimār al-Maqāṣid fī al-Dhikr al-Masājid*, edited by M. A. Tallas, (Beirut: *s. n.*, 1967).

[20] Abd al-Hādī ibn Yusuf, *Ṯimār al-Maqāṣid*...

[21] Tāj al-Dīn, *Muʿīd al-Niʿam wa al-Mubīd al-Niqām*, (London: Luzac, 1908), p. 56.

[22] Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥlat Ibn Jubāyr*, (Cairo: Al-sa'adah publication., 1908) (Cairo:), p. 251.

[23] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Ẓāhira fī al-Mulūk Miṣr wa al-Qāhira,* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1930).

[24] A. Almawi, al-Munajid, S., (Ed.), *Mukhtaṣar Tanbīh al-Ṭālib wa al-Irshād al-Dāris ilā al-Aḥwāl dūr al-Qurʾān wa al-Ḥadīth wa al-Madāris*, (Dimashq: Dār Sa'd al-Din lil-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 2013).

[25] Khayr al-Dīn' al-Ziriklī, *Al-'Aʿlām*, (Beirut: Dar Al-'Ilm, 2002), vol. 8, p. 247.

[26] Tāj al-Dīn, *Muʿīd al-Niʿam wa al-Mubīd al-Niqām*..., p. 56.

[27] Abd al-Hādī ibn Yusuf, *Ṯimār al-Maqāṣid*...

[28] A. Kremer, *Mittelsyrien und Damaskus*, (Wien: Gedruckt bei den P.P. Mechitharisten, 1853), p. 11.

Damascus was considered a Sunnī stronghold in contrast to cities like Tripoli and Aleppo. In a similar way that the Fatimids consolidated their Shī'a dominance over certain strategic cities under their control, the Ayyubids, Mamluks and Seljuqs all maintained Sunnī control and state dominance in Damascus. However, establishing and maintaining Shī'a dominance was not easy under Fatimid control of the region and the war for Damascus by the Ismā'ilī Fatimids required a challenging effort to maintain the *status quo*.[33] Even from within Damascus the Fatimid Shī'a ruler faced fierce resistance from its Sunnī inhabitants. Added to this was the looming presence of an imminent Seljuq invasion from the hinterlands beyond the city. As a result, Damascus was considered the restless northern base of Fatimid power.[34] Sedition within the city was instigated by the Qarmatians, who although themselves Shī'as, propagated and proselytised against the Ismā'ilī Shī'as.[35] Bernard Lewis claims that the Qarmatians led a revolt of Damascus against the Fatimids but, it was unsuccessful.[36]

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[29] Khayr al-Dīn' al-Ziriklī, *Al-'Aʿlām*, (Beirut: Dar Al-'Ilm, 2002), vol. 4, p. 177.

[30] Khayr al-Dīn' al-Ziriklī, *Al-'Aʿlām*, (Beirut: Dar Al-'Ilm, 2002), vol. 7, p. 228.

[31] Tāj al-Dīn, *Muʿīd al-Niʿam wa al-Mubīd al-Niqām*..., p.56.

[32] See A. Kurd, 'Darb al- Ḥawṭa ʿalā al-Jamīʿ al-Ghuṭa', *Majallāt al-Majmaʿ al-'Ilmī al-'Arabī*, vol. 5 (1925) p. 218 and Ibn al-Aṯīr, *At-Tārīkh al-Bāhir fī al-Dawla al-Atā Abikīyyaḥ*, edited by Ṭulīmāt, A., (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1963).

[33] Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-mawāʻiẓ ẉ a-al-iʻtibar bi -dhikr al -khiṭat ẉ a-al-athar yakhtaṣṣ u dhalika bi-akhbar Iqlim Miṣr wa-al-Nil wa-dhikr al-Qahirah wa-ma yataʻallaq bi-ha wa-bi-Iqlimha* (Būlāq al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Ṭibāʻah al-Miṣrīyah, 1853).

[34] Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-mawāʻiẓ ẉ a-al-iʻtibar*... and Zakkar, *Madkhal ilā al-Tārīḫ al-Ḥurub al-Shalibīyyaḥ*, (Bayrut, Lubnan: Dar al-Amanah: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 1975), p.84.

[35] Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Dayl al-Tārīkh al-Dimashq*, (Bayrut: al-Aba' al-Yasuʻiayn, 1908).

[36] B. Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson: 2011), pp. 106-107.

The Ismā'ilī Fatimids had worked hard to establish their Shī'a theological stronghold over the city. By as early as 1126 A.D., they had established a *dār al-da'waḥ* (missionary institution) in Damascus that was instrumental in successfully attracting adherents to the fold.[37] For the Fatimids, this period represented a 'golden age' of Baṭinīyyaḥ Damascus that was largely instituted by Zahir al-Din Taghtakin and *wazīr* (vice-consult) Abu Ali al-Mazdagani. However, their proselytising scheme was not to last as the majority of the Damascene population did not warm to their plan and added to this was their 'unholy' alliance with the Christian Crusaders, which made their regime extremely unpopular. As a consequence, in 1129, the regime was toppled and a massacre of the city's Shī'a population occurred.[38] Estimates vary as to the exact number of victims, ranging from 6,000 to 20,000.[39] Goldziher, says that the source of these figures is attributed to al-Qalanisi and despite the arguments regarding the precise number of victims, the figures give us at least some indication of the overall size and composition of the Shī'a population.[40] After this devastating blow to their power-base, the Fatimids concentrated on their strongholds that existed outside of the city.[41]

During the following subsequent reigns of the Zengid and Ayyubid dynasties, the influence and presence of Shī'ism gradually waned in the city. The Zengids and Ayyubids progressively oversaw the institutionalisation of Sunnī Islam as the dominant force in Damascus by implementing strategic religious policies aimed at counteracting any Shī'a influence. When Ibn Jubayr visited the city in 1187, he noted of the Batinites that 'God placed the heretics (*al-rāfidaḥ*) under the control of a Sunnī sect called al-Nubuwīyyaḥ (or al-Nabawīyyaḥ).[42] These people are killing the heretics wherever they find them'.[43] It is highly probable that the al-Nabawīyyaḥ were largely comprised the Sunnī Aḥdat sect of Damascus. The al-Nabawīyyaḥ is claimed to be an off-shoot of the Futūwwa from the Iraq/Iran region.[44] By the era of the Mamluks, the Batinite Shī'as were in combat against them throughout Syria. As a result of Mamluk victories, Sultan Baibars was able to take control of the Batinite bases in the northern coastal mountains by 1174, bringing the Batinite influence in the region to an abrupt end.[45] In addition to the Ismā'ilī Batinites, other Shi'i sects were traditionally present in Damascus. According to al-Jarazi, by the thirteenth century, Damascus was home to both the Aliden (*'Alāwīyyaḥ*) and Jafarīyyaḥ, the followers of the moderate twelve Shī'a Imāmīyyaḥ ('The Twelvers').[46]

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[37] Ibn al-Imād, *Shaḏarāt al-Ḏahab fī al-Akhbār man Ḏahab*, vol. 5, (Bayrut: al-Maktab al-Tijari lil-Ṭiba'ah wa-l-Nashr wa-al-Tawzi', 1966), p. 325.

[38] B. Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam...*, pp. 106-107.

[39] A. Dūrī, *Arabische Wirtschaftsgeschichte, übersetzt aus dem Arabischen...*, (Zürich-München: Artemis, 1979).

[40] Goldziher, 'Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Shīʿa und der sunnitischen Polemik', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1 (1967), p. 279.

[41] Tāj al-Dīn, *Muʿīd al-Niʿamwa al-Mubīd al-Niqām*, (London: Luzac, 1908), p. 56.

[42] It should be noted that the majority of Shi'i sects ('Alāwīyyaḥ, Imāmīyyaḥ, Ismā'ilī etc.) were considered by most Sunnī scholars of the period as *Batinites* (heretics).

[43] Goldziher, 'Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Shīʿa und der sunnitischen Polemik', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1 (1967), p. 279.

[44] Goldziher, 'Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte der Shīʿa'..., p. 279.

[45] Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-'Asqalānī', Al-Durar al-Kā Mina fī al-'Ayān al-Miʾāt al-Ṭāmina*, (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Ḥadithah, 1966-1967).

It is recorded that in 1260 a Shi'i adherent was executed in Damascus after he was found to have been assisting the Mongols in their attempt to invade the city.[47] Generally, the Twelver Shī'as of Damascus were peaceful, non-aggressive citizens of whom the renown medieval scholar Ibn Taymiyyah is recorded as saying of Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr al-Sakakini (d.1321), a Damascene Shi'i scholar, '*Huwa min man yatasnanbīhī al-Shī'awayatashayabīhī al-Sunnī*' «through him Shī'a became Sunnī and Sunnī became Shī'a».[48] Amongst these known, moderate Shī'i scholars was also al-Zayn Jafar ibn Ali al-Mughit al-Balabki (d. 1336).[49] According to al-Jazari, the moderate Shi'i scholars of Damascus established a number of endowed (*awqāf*) religious seminaries.[50] Junboll claims that Damascus witnessed greater and more contentious disputes between Sunnī scholars, unlike in other Sunnī-majority cities like Aleppo, than their Shī'a counterparts, with a number of Shī'a scholars becoming Sunnīs.[51]

Jewish and Christian Dhimmah

Islam generally divides mankind into two groups; 'believers' and 'non-believers' (or Muslims and non-Muslims). These definitions meant that in the Islamicate spaces of medieval Syria, the 'believers' enjoyed all of the religious and civil rights afforded them. Non-Muslims are further sub-divided into two futher categories; polytheists (*Mushrikūn*) and 'people of scripture' (*aḥl al-Kitāb*).[52] The latter sub-group includes both Jews and Christians. As *aḥl al-Kitāb* both religious minorities lived relatively free lives under Muslim rule as *dhimmah* ('protected') people living under different laws. Their *dhimma* status meant that on condition of paying an exemption tax called *jizyā* they were not only guaranteed protection by the Muslim state, they were exempted from defending the state and were required to abide by certain dress codes.[53] In the Middle Ages the Islamicate spaces came under substantial pressure by the threat of invasion by both the Crusaders and the Mongols. As a direct result, the social and economic climate for the *dhimma* under Muslim rule changed quite dramatically. Religious minorities such as the Jewish and Christian communities were subjected to harsher restrictions and greater monitoring and taxing by the State. In such times the social life of the *dhimma* in the Islamic state underwent a crisis due to increased securitisation. This was particularly true for the Jews and Christians of Damascus.

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[46] See A. Dūrī, *Arabische Wirtschaftsgeschichte, übersetzt aus dem Arabischen*... and Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyawa al-Nihāya fī al-Tārīkh*, vol. 13, (Qahirah: Mạtba'atḤijazi, 1936), p. 222.

[47] A. Dūrī, *Arabische Wirtschaftsgeschichte, übersetzt aus dem Arabischen*....

[48] M. Borgolte, „Der Gesandtentauch der Karolingermit den Abbasiden und mit den Patriarchen von Jerusalem", *Speculum*, 54/2 (1979).

[49] Dūrī, *Arabische Wirtschaftsgeschichte, übersetzt aus dem Arabischen*....

[50] C. Cahen, 'Vom Ursprung bis zu den Anfängen des Osmanenreiches', *Der Islam*, vol. 1 (1968).

[51] T. W. Junboll, *Handbuch des islamischen Gesetzes*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill–Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1910).

[52] I. M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 85.

[53] See B. Broquire, 'The Travels of Bertrandon de la Broquire, A.D. 1432-1433.' in T. Wright, (ed.), *Early Travels in Palestine*, (London: Bohnp, 1848), and M.R.N. Lange, *De Judische Welt*, (Mu̇nchen: Christian Verlag, 1984), p. 96

The Damascene Jews

The Jews of medieval Damascus were largely conglomerated in and around the south-eastern part of the city, south of the straight Roman road which stretches from *bāb al-Ghabiyyah* to *Bāb al-Sharqī*. The area was known as *ḥarat al-Yahūd* ('Jewish Quarter').[54] Geographically, this area exposed the Jewish community to increased vulnerability due to the lack of natural and man-made defences in the south of the city. Benjamin von Tudella (d. 1173) visited Damascus during his travels to the East in the latter half of the twelfth century and he estimated that the Jewish population of the city numbered around 3,000.[55] Tudella refers to another estimate of 10,000 Jews given by Petachiah from around the same period but, Tudella questions this figure and suggests it is more likely to be an estimate for the number of Jews in the whole of Syria.[56] Contemporaneous historians are vague regarding the Jewish population of Damascus but, most acknowledge that there were more Jews in Damascus than in all of the Crusader states put together.[57] This fact is both revealing and interesting in terms of an implied preference for Jews regarding under which rule; Christian or, Muslim, they chose to live. In addition to ibn Qadi's account, Shuba (d.1447) and Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373) also mention that the outbreak of the plague in Damascus in, 1363, was particularly devastating for the Jewish community. Zaideh states that 'the disease was particularly severe among the Jews and fifty people died each day, so about 1,000 Jews died from the first of *sha'bān* to the first of *ramaḍān*.'[58] Despite the apparent contrary nature of many of the reports regarding the Jewish population of Damascus, the chroniclers largely agree that the Damascene Jews were both wealthy and educated.[59]

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[54] M.R.N. Lange, *De Judische Welt*, p. 96.

[55] M.R.N. Lange, *De Judische Welt,* p. 96.

[56] H. Halm, 'Die Fatimiden', in, U. Haarmann (ed.), *Geschichte der Arabischen Welt*, vol. 2, (Waas: Geschichte der Kreuzzüge, 1987), p. 228.

[57] Zayyāt, 'Firaq al-Yahūd fī al-Islām', in *Majāllat al-Mashriq*, (1936-1938), p. 165.

[58] N. Ziadeh, *Damascus Under the Mamluks*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), p. 52.

[59] S. Kortantamer, *Mufaḍḍal ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il, Ägypten und Syrien zwischen 1317 und 1341 in der Chronik des Mufaḍḍal b. Abī l-Faḍā'il*, (Freiburg im Breisgau: K. Schwarz, 1973).

In this period, Damascus appears to have been a theological 'hotbed' with all three monotheistic faith communities engaged in religious sectarianism and dogmatic contention. Amongst the Jewish community of Damascus there were three main doctrinal sects: the Rabbis, known in Arabic as *al-Rabiyyūn*, the Karaites (Karaites) referred to in Arabic as *al-Qaraīn* or *al-Qara'īn*, and the Samaritans, referred to in Arabic as *al-yahūd al-Samāra'* or *al-Samāriyūn*.[60] There was also a fourth Jewish sect known as *Khayābirah̦* (lit., 'the Khayberians'). Al-Qalqashandi, al-Umari and al-Nuayri do not provide any further information regarding the number or conditions of the Khayberians of Damascus. Ibn Kathīr, himself a Damascene scholar, notes that in 1301 "this month (*shawwāl*) a meeting was held between [city officials] and Khayberian Jews, who were [thereafter] forced to pay the *jizyā*, like other [Damascene] Jews".[61] It is worth noting that during the Fatimid era of Damascus, Jews were said to have much control of the city's finances.[62] From amongst the four Jewish sects of medieval Damascus, the *Rabbiyūn* was the largest group, with two synagogues in the city.[63] They were seconded by the Karaites whose single place of worship was first referred to in 1321.[64] The Samaritans, the smallest of the three major sects, unlike the other two sects, did not have their own synagogue.[65] The noted wealthy and highly educated status of the Jewish community can perhaps be explained by the major professions they held. The Damascene Jews were permitted to participate in what were termed as the 'free-professions'; physicians, astronomers, translators and administrators among others.[66] Iblis al-Samiri, for example, is recorded as working as *nā'ib shadd al-dawāwin* ('Representative of the Supreme Inspector'),and Abd al-Sayyid ibn al-Muhaddab, who was appointed as *mubāshir al-bimāristan al-nūri*, administering at the city hospital, founded by Nur al-Din.[67] Al-Maqrīzī claims that the Jews and Muslims of Damascus enjoyed a relatively peaceful co-existence that was generally quite harmonious.[68] However, al-Maqrīzī's account fails to consider the precarious situation that Jewish minorities, despite their apparent cultural assimilation, often found themselves at the hands of their Muslim rulers. Medieval Jewish and Arab travellers note no persecution of the Jews nor any anti-Semitic riots occurring in the city.[69] Some Arab sources appear to hold the Jews in some contempt, for example, Ibn al-Athir (d. 1253), is noted as stating that the Jews "only pay the *jizyā* to avoid being persecuted".[70] Similarly, Ibn Kathīr refers to the Jews as "boisterous souls". But these 'off-the-cuff' remarks are personal judgements and observations and are not considered to be the normative opinions of the general Muslim population of Damascus, and there is evidence to suggest that a Jewish identity occasionally inhibited opportunities to work as high-ranking officials for the Muslim state that a number of Jews were often compelled to become Muslims.

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[60] S. Kortantamer, *Mufaḍḍal ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il...*

[61] Ibn Kaṯīr, *Al-Bidāyawa al-Nihāya fī al-Tārīkh*, (Qahirah: Mạtba'al-Ḥijazi, 1936), Vol. 13 p.222.

[62] S. Kortantamer, *Mufaḍḍal ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il....*

[63] Ṣuqāʿī (Ibn al-) F., (1974), Sublet, J., (Ed.), *Kitāb talī Wafayāt al-'Ayān*, (Damascus: Institut Françạis de Damas).

[64] S. Kortantamer, *Mufaḍḍal ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il...*

[65] Ibn Ab al-Faḍāʾil, Moufaḍḍal, *al Nahj al Sadīdwa al-Dur al-Farīd fī mābaʿd al-Tārīkh ibn al-'Amīd*, (Beirut: Dar Saad al-din Publications, 2017), p. 366.

[66] K. Bosl, *Europa im Mittelalter*, (Berlin: Primus Verlag, 1976), pp. 149-150.

[67] See B. Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2011), pp.106-107, and Ibn al- Aṯīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, (Bayrūt: Dar Ṣādir, 1965-1967).

[68] Whose full name was Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Qādir ibn Muḥammad al-Maqrīzī (1364–1442) was a medieval Egyptian Arab historianduring the Mamluk era, known for his interest in the Fatimid dynasty and its role in Egyptian history.

Between 1279 and 1293, a series of decrees were passed by consecutive Sultans declaring "neither Christians nor Jews were [to be] employed in the administration of the Sultan, or [to be appointed] among the emirs".[71] Al-Dhahabī also records that in 1280 an order arrived in Damascus requiring any Jew or Christian holding a position within the civil service, should either convert to Islam or be put to death. They were collectively taken to *sūq al-ḥayl* ('Horse Market'), where they were publicly threatened with death, upon which many converted to Islam.[72] Another example of state persecution of the *Dhimmi* Jewish minorities was the seizure and closure of their synagogues and the conversion of some into mosques. For example, in 1270 A.D., the synagogue belonging to the *Rabbiyūn* sect was occupied by Shaykh Khidr al-Mihrani (d. 1278) for a period of time and the Karaite synagogue was demolished in 1321. In such times of crisis, the Jews and Christians of Damascus were required to pay what was called *al-amwāl al-mushālaha* ('reconciliation money') in addition to their required payment of the *jizyā* and *haragh*. They were also required to distinguish themselves from Muslims by dressing in a particular fashion.[73] In a Sultanic edict of 1300, the *Rabbiyūn* and Karaite Jews were forced to wear yellow and the Samaritans had to wear red turbans. Jews and Christians were forbidden to carry weapons or ride a horse in the city. Jews visiting public bathshad to wear a bell around their necks in order to be identified.[74] Medieval Arab chroniclers mention these dramatic and discriminatory measures against the *dhimmi* but, most accounts are absent of any objective opinion of such practices. Other prohibitions included visiting or engaging with other religious and theological schools and seminaries of other religious traditions (at one period this ban was even extended to the Muslim Ḥanbalis). These state controls and measures against the Damascene *dhimmi* Jews and Christians are evidence that at certain periods in the city's history religious minorities were subjected to discrimination and persecution.

The Damascene Jews underwent a degree of cultural assimilation into the dominant Arab-Islamic civilisation in which they lived. Their leaders adopted Arabic names and titles, such as *nājid* ('assistant' or 'helper') and *rāʿis* ('leader').[75] The leaders of the *Rabbiyūn* and Karaite Jews were known as, *rā'is* and the Samaritan Jewish representative of Damascus was called a *muqaddam* ('representative'). The *rā'is* of the Samaritans was actually located in Nablus, Palestine. Each Jewish *rā'is* had his helper or *burnās* (*barnās*) who would collect religious alms from the Jews. The head of the synagogue was known as *khaybir* or *dayyān*, and the attending Judge was called a Hazzan, appointed by the Bayt al-Dīn (Beth Din), a Jewish court of law composed of three rabbinic judges, responsible for matters of religious law and the settlement of civil disputes among Jews. It was not the task of the *rā'is* or his assistants to collect official taxes (*jizyā*, etc.), this was the duty of the State and its administrators. The *nājid*, however, was tasked with collating lists of eligible tax payees (*ruqāʿa*) and their addresses, along with newly arrived immigrants, new-borns, emigrants, and converts to Islam.[76] The policies adopted by the Muslim-state towards the *dhimmi* Jewish and Christian communities allowed for a limited degree of self-management and autonomy.

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[69] Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-mawā'iẓ ẉa-al-i'tibar bi-dhikr al-khiṭat*...

[70] S. Kortantamer, *Mufaḍḍal ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il*...

[71] S. Ḏahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, (Isṭānbūl: Ayā ṣofia, *s.d.*), p. 99.

[72] Abu Muhammad al-Yāfiʿī, 'Mirʾāt al-Ghanān wa alʿIbrat al-Yaqẓān fī al-Ḥawādiṯ al-Zamān,' vol. 4, p. 232.; *Sulūk*, Vol. 1, p. 971; *Nujūm*, vol. 8, pp. 133-134, (1918-1920).

[73] S. Jazārī, *Ḥawādiṭ al-Zamān*, in *Al-Ḏahabī, al-Jazarī*, (Köprülü: Istanbul), p. 89.

[74] S. al-ʿUmarī, *Al-Taʿrīf bī al-Muṣṭalaḥ al-Sharīf*, (Qāhirah: Maṭbaʿat al-ʿĀṣimah, 1894), p. 144.

An important question to consider, is how the Jews felt and reacted to the state persecution they sometimes faced. The Jews appear to have employed a number of specific responses to their Muslim rulers as a means of both trying to pacify and remind them of their Muslim sensitivities and responsibilities. In doing so, they would refer to the Prophet Muhammad's treatment of Jews, the treaties he entered into with them at the citadel of Medina. They also referred to the charter of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, when he entered Jerusalem victoriously and forbade the conversion of synagogues and churches into mosques, and assured the religious protection of Jerusalem's Jews and Christians. When Shaykh Khidr seized the synagogue in 1270, the Jews appealed to the Sultan saying: 'O Muhammad ibn Abdullah! We are under your protection and your care; we have no state and no Sultan'. In reply, the Sultan exclaimed: 'Join us!'. Meaning, become one with us, as the *dhimmi* Jews of Madinah were considered as one *ummah* (nation), protected by their religious adherence as Jews under the rule of the Prophet Muhammad. Ibn al-Furāt asserts that after the Jews received such a positive response from the Sultan that their persecution was actually limited to a few individual fanatics.[77] However, a sure means of pacifying their Muslim rulers was through the constant process of conversions to Islam by many Damascene Jews. Some chroniclers suggest that such conversions were a mere 'convenience' towards a political purpose or, that conversion to Islam meant that Jews could remain in their official state post, or achieve some new post. For example, in 1301 when the *dayyān al-yuḥūd* ('Supreme Judge of the Jews'), his sons and a number of other prominent Jews converted to Islam, it was met with some scepticism by many Muslims.[78] It is also claimed that some Jews went to great lengths to avoid paying their taxes and produced a number of forged documents to prove their case. Some Jews claimed, it is said, they were direct descendants from the Jews of Medina during the Prophet's era, and were therefore exempt from paying tax. Others simply bribed civil servants to achieve their goal.

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[75] al-Nuwayri, *Nihayāt al-'Arab fī al-Funun al-Adab*, (al-Qahirah: Wuzarat al-Thaqafah wa-al-Irshad al-Qawmi, 1963).

[76] E. Ashtor, 'Baibars al-Manṣūrī und Ibn al-Furāt, als Geschichts quellen fur die erste Periode der Bahri mamluken mit drei Exkursen: verbun den mit Edition und Uebersetzung der, At-Tuḥfah al-Mulūkīya fī al-Dawla al-Ṭurkīyyaḥ des Baibars al-Manṣūrī.' (unpublished, Ph.D. Thesis.), *Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität*, in Wien, 1936.

[77] K. al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī bī al-Wafayāt*, vol. 12, (Leipzig: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 2019), p. 156.

Further, a number of outward manifestations: Arabizing Jewish names, adopting contemporaeneous Arabic dress, engaging in Arabic cultural practices, were also employed as a means of increasing Jewish assimilation. Poggibonsi recalls that Ibn al-Ṣafidī records an episode when Jews invited the well-known proselytiser, Shaykh al-Hassan Ibn Ali Ibn Hud al-Judami (d. 699 A.H./1300 A.D.), who was famous for converting many Jews to Islam, to dinner in the Jewish quarter of Damascus.[79] While at dinner the Shaykh was apparently plied with a constant flow of alcohol until he was quite drunk. According to al-Ṣafidī's account the Jews did this in order to damage the Shaykh's reputation as payback for his 'aggressive' proselytising of Jews to Islam. Despite the intermittent periods of tension and bouts of persecution, relations between the Jewish minority and their Muslim rulers were generally peaceful. When Jews were accused of treason during the Mongol attempt to sack the city in 1260, the Muslim authorities supressed the charges because unlike their Christian counterparts, the Jews did not attempt to exploit the weaknesses of their Muslim rulers and were not guilty of any wrongdoing or, collaborating with Hulegu, the Mongol leader during their invasion of the city.[80]

The Christians

The relations between the Christian *dhimmi* and their Muslim rulers in Damascus were often affected by external political and military conflicts from beyond the city. Sometimes relations could be affected by the individual preferences of specific Muslim rulers. Yet, despite occasional external conflicts with the Crusaders or Mongols, Christians held high positions in state offices in Damascus from the Fatimid through the Mamluk period. Although it is difficult to ascertain exact population figures for the Christian presence in Damascus during the period under study, it is fair to assume that the Christians outnumbered the Jews. Both contemporaneous Arab and European accounts state that the Christians not only occupied districts within the city of Damascus but they also lived in fairly large numbers in towns, villages and countryside around the city.[81] Some villages around Damascus were majority inhabited by Christians, like Shaydaniyyah and Qara.[82] In the city, Christians traditionally resided in areas such as the north-eastern neighbourhood of the city, called *bāb al-thūma* ('The Gate of Garlic'). Both the Jewish and Christian communities were connected by the ancient Roman road or 'Straight Street' that dissects across Damascus.[83]

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[78] S. Jazārī, *Ḥawādiṯ al-Zamān*, in *Al-Ḏahabī, al-Jaẓarī*, (Köprülü: Istanbul), p. 89.

[79] N. Poggibonsi, *A Voyage Beyond the Seas*, (Jerusalem: Francican Press, 1945), pp. 78-79.

[80] N. Poggibonsi, *A Voyage Beyond the Seas*, pp.78-79.

[81] Ibn al-Ṣuqāʿī, *Kitābt alī Wafayāt al-'Ayān*, (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1974).

[82] Ibn al-Ṣuqāʿī, *Kitābt alī Wafayāt al-'Ayān*.

Similarly, like the Jewish community, the Christians in medieval Damascus were divided into different dogmatic sects and theological denominations, each with its own particular church, including the Jacobites (*al-ya'āqib*) and Melkites (*al-nāṣr al-malkanīyyaḫ*).[84] Each denomination had autonomy to elect its own leader, which was thereafter reported to the Sultan. The elected respective Patriarch (Baṭrīq) regulated the religious affairs of his community in much the same way the Jews organised their own religious affairs. During the Mamluk era of the city, relations between the Christians and their Muslim rulers appear to have been very cordial, with many Christians holding high positions of administration in government offices. However, when some Damascene Christians colluded with the Mongol conqueror, Kitbuqa (c.1260), a Christian Mongol general, relations between Christian and Muslims were extremely estranged. It is alleged that Christian leaders of Antioch and Tripoli, Hethum of Arminian (r. 1222-1269)[85] and Bohemord (r. 1252-1276), respectively, drew the Mongol invaders into the city, where it was claimed that Christians marched triumphantly through the streets of Damascus during their festive processions with crosses and bells.[86] Arab-Islamic chroniclers claim that during such occasions, the Christians openly consumed alcohol, destroyed mosques and committed a number of acts of wrong-doing. Al-Jazarī states that:

> 'My father told me that, "when I came to al-Ḥadraḥ, after the prayer on the second Friday of Ramadan of that year (658 A.H./1260 A.D.), I found the shops of al-Hadrah were occupied by Christians, who were selling and drinking wine; they even poured it on the worship cloth (*maṣalaḫ*). I cried when I came to my shop in the 'Market of Spears' (*sūq al-rammahīn*)"'.[87]

After the victory of the Mamluks over Kitbuqa at Ain al-Jalut (1260) where Muslims were liberated from the grip of the Mongols over the city, they sought their revenge upon the Christians. Holding the Christians responsible for their collusion and treachery, Muslims attacked and killed Christians, plundering their homes, businesses and churches. As the news of the Mongol invasion of Syria prevailed in 1267, it is most probable that Sultan Baibars sent Christians to Egypt in around 1262. This apparent diplomatic move actually allowed Baibars to plunder the Christian town of Qara and expel its remaining inhabitants, many of whom were slaughtered in the process. Baibar's motives appear to be driven by revenge for the assumed treachery of the Christians in aiding the Crusaders. Equally, al-Dhahabi records that Shaykh Khidr in 1270, sacked and robbed the houses of Christians, destroying their food stocks and spilled their wine, after which it is claimed he was abducted by a Christian militia.

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[83] A. Kurd, 'Darb al- Ḥawṭa ʿalā al-Jamīʿ al-Ghuṭa', p. 218.

[84] N. Ziadeh, *Damascus Under the Mamluks*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), p. 52.

[85] Hethum I (1213 – 21 October 1270), ruled the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia from 1226 to 1270.

[86] U. Haarmann, 'Der Arabische Osten im späten Mittelalter', in U. Haarmann (ed.), *Geschichte der Arabische Welt*, vol. 2 (Waas: Geschichte der Kreuzzüge, 1987), p. 293.

[87] S. Ḏahabī, *Kitāb Duwāl al-Islām fi al-Tārīkh*, vol. 2, (Hyderabad: *s.n.*, 1944-1945), pp. 120-130.

The chronicler, al-Dhahabi stated that this event was, 'one of the good deeds of the Shaykh'.[88] Just like their Jewish counterparts, the Christians of Damascus were occasionally subjected to various forms of discrimination and harassment. As al-Jazarī records, their churches were often destroyed or converted into mosques, with Christians forced to pay extra taxes and wear distinguishing clothing that identified their religiosity.[89] Some travellers to the city record that Christians were subjected to directed forms of hatred from their Muslim citizens, and were subjected exclusively to special curfews between the period, 1260-77.[90] They were excluded from posts in public offices unless they converted to Islam and similar occurrences are recorded between the years, 1279-90, when Qalawun issued a law forbidding Christians of Syria 'statehood'. The term 'statehood' denotes a modern concept of nation-state political, 'belongingness' and we have employed the term to suggest inclusion in or, exclusion from the medieval Mamluk Sultanate. Although this order appears to have been exempted in Damascus. The only cities where Jews and Christians were not subjected to discriminatory dress codes, were in the towns and cities where they were the majority: al-Karak and al-Shawbak. Although, the victims of occasional persecution, Christians in Damascus, were often able to influence the economic and political outcomes in the city. For example, the physicians Ibn al-Quff (d.685 A.H./1286 A.D.) and 'Alam al-Din Ibrahim ibn Abu al-Wahsh had considerable influence over the Sultan.[91]

Christian businessmen and merchants in the city, like Musà ibn al-Shubaki, who had businesses with the Sultan, were able to exert pressure on their Muslim rulers.[92] Equally, prominent Christian artisans and architects used their influential connections and networks, such as the masonic lodges and craft guilds, to assert their political and social influence on their Muslim over-lords.[93] Occasionally, influential connections or personal friendships could not protect particular individuals. For example, in 1288 A.D., a male Christian was caught publicly consuming alcohol in the company of a female Muslim. As a consequence, he was executed by public cremation at the *sūq al-ḥayl* ('Horse Market'), while the Muslim woman was given a more lenient punishment.[94] But for Christians who perhaps opportunistically converted to Islam, like their Jewish counterparts, were often thereafter preferred for government posts, or were often permitted to perform legitimate legal functions.[95] Tolan, claims that those Jews and Christians who became Muslims through *al-ṭurq al-ṣufīyyaḥ* (‘the Sufi Lodges’) were not given any special privileges or concessions from their respective Shaykhs.[96]

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[88] Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt*, (Bayrut: al-Maṭba'ahal-Amirkaniyyah, 1936-1942).

[89] Gucci Frescobaldi, *Visit to the Holy Places of Egypt, Sinai, Palestine and Syria in 1384*. «Collectio Maior» 6 (Jerusalem: *s.n.,* 1948).

[90] A. Melkonian, *Die Jahre 1287-1291 in der Chronik al-Yûnînîs*, (Unpublished, Ph. D. dissertation), (Freiburg: Universitatsverlag Becksmann, 1975). According to al-Maqrizi (d.1442) both Sultans Baibars and Qalawun treated Christians with particular severity.

[91] Quṭb ad-Dīn al-Yūnīnī, *Ḏayl Mirʾāt al-Zamān*, (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

[92] S. Jazārī, *Ḥawādiṭ al-Zamān*, in *Al-Ḏahabī, al-Jazarī*, (Köprülü: Istanbul), p. 89.

[93] Ibn al-Hajj, *Madkhal al-sharʿ al-sharīf ʿalā l-madhāhib al-arbaʿa; Al-madkhal ilā tanmiyyat al-aʿmāl bi-taḥsīn al-niyyāt wa-l-tanbīh ʿalā baʿḍ al-bidaʿ wa-l-ʿawāʾid allatī untuḥilat wa-bayān shanāʿatihā*, (Qahira: Dar al-Turath, 1936), pp. 46-48.

Not all of the historical clashes between *dhimmi* Jews and Christians and their Muslim rulers have been chronicled as often many were confined to specific localities or were relatively minor events. Occasionally there were hostilities between Jews and Christians, particularly when Christians who had converted to Islam zealously constructed mosques in very close proximity to existing synagogues.[97] Whilst Muslim rulers were quite familiar with Christian religious festivals, some Damascene Muslims even celebrated them. Muslim rulers were aware of the influence that Christians could apply due to the prominent political and social roles held within the Mamluk Sultanate and, therefore, while Christians enjoyed a certain degree of religious autonomy, Muslims managed them with great care.[98]

Political and economic relations between the Mamluk-rulers and various European states had an important, positive and significant effect on the Christians of Damascus, as well as other parts of the Mamluk empire.[99] However, after the precarious recovery of the Mamluk state in the wake of large Mongol devastation across Syria and the city of Damascus, the financial and political ramifications on the relatively wealthy Christian minority community, cannot be fully realised in the absence of statistical resource material. It is fair to say however that both the Jewish and Christian communities of Damascus, although often the subjects of discrimination and mistrust, were generally successful businessmen and financiers. As such, the Jewish and Christian minorities of Damascus, although often held in contempt, they were always of a certain importance to the city.

State Financed Policies aimed at Damascene Jews, Christians and Muslims

The thirteenth century appears to mark a shifting decline between Muslim rule and their Jewish and Christian counterparts in medieval Damascus. The oppressive legislation also forbade Jews and Christians from living together, eating and socialising, as well as interning their (Jewish and Christian) dead within close proximity to each other.[100] State finance legislation in medieval Damascus had a number of objectives, some of which included degrading and ostracising Jews. Medieval concerns tended to focus somewhat on the negative impacts of Jewish-Christian communal intermingling, with many Christian (and Jewish) theologians warning of the serious negative outcomes of such close proximity between Jews and Christians. A number of contemporary scholars tended to dismiss the medieval statements as merely rhetorical responses shaped bythirteenth century prejudices and acute anti-Semitism.

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[94] Abd al-Hādī ibn Yusuf, *Ṯimār al-Maqāṣid*...

[95] Quṭb ad-Dīn al-Yūnīnī, *Ḏayl Mirʾāt al-Zamān*...

[96] J. Tolan, Keil, M., & Buc, P., (eds.), *Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe: The historiographic legacy of Bernhard Blumenkranz*, (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2016).

[97] Abd al-Hādī ibn Yusuf, *Ṯimār al-Maqāṣid*...

[98] Abd al-Hādī ibn Yusuf, *Ṯimār al-Maqāṣid*...

[99] J. Tolan, Keil, M., & Buc, P., (eds.), *Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe*...

By the thirteenth century, the impacts of Christian Crusaders on various Muslim sultanates and emirates began to weaken Islamic hegemony in the region. Both Jewish and Christian minorities were able to capitalise on importing goods, products, techniques and ideas from the West into the Middle East, as a means of gaining both economic advantage and great social prestige.[101] Armenians and Greeks were two particular ethnic groups who played extremely significant, if not somewhat disproportionate, roles in the financial, commercial and political life in the region, particularly in the major cities of thethirteenth century Middle East. The minority traders and businessmen, including Jews, Christians, Armenians and Greeks, were able to profit on their ability to freely move between the bipolar spaces of medieval Islam, the *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb* ('place of conflict'). As a result, Kuran asserts that the many individuals from these minorities involved in cross-continental trade became considerably richer than their Muslims peers.[102] In time, relative economic reforms gradually raised the living standards of Muslims as the Middle Eastern economy was improved by the restoration of regional economic competitiveness and recovery. A 'Eurocentric' perspective on Jews and Christians under Muslim-rule has typically interpreted the 'clannish' construction of such medieval *dhimmi* through the vantages of European imperialism and religio-cultural supremacism but, in the context of thirteenth-century Syria, none of the later Orientalist constructs had yet emerged. For example, the European Crusader *schema* was originally designed to stem the spread of Islam and save the Holy land for Christians.[103] The existing Jewish and Christian *dhimmi* under Muslim-rule were themselves indigenous Middle Eastern peoples, living in Islamicate societies and as minorities exempted from the duties of the Muslim compatriots; from the call of *jihād* or defence of the Islamic state. Further, the Jewish and Christian *dhimmi* were not compelled by religious restrictions from travelling to and from the West (*dār al-ḥarb*) to trade and introduce new technologies and intellectual developments from beyond the Islamicate spaces. Non-Muslim invasions into medieval Muslim states inevitably had a negative impact on the *triumvirate* Abrahamic co-existence, resulting in a degree of scape goating of *dhimmi* communities. Yet, beyond the periods of tension and hostilities, it is fair to assume that Jewish and Christian minorities were able to capitalise commercially on their ability to move more freely beyond the bipolar realms of *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb*.[104]

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[100] A. Mirakhor, 'Islamic Finance and Globalization: A Convergence?', *Journal of Islamic Economics, Banking and Finance*, 3/ 2 (2007), pp. 11-72.

[101] T. Kuran, 'The economic ascent of the Middle East's religious minorities: the role of Islamic legal pluralism', *The Journal of Legal Studies*, 33/ 2 (2004), pp. 475-515.

[102] T. Kuran, 'The economic ascent of the Middle East's religious minorities'...

[103] N. Schoon & Julinda, N., 'Comparative financial systems in Judaism, Christianity and Islam: The case of interest', in, *Christianity and Islam: The Case of Interest*, (Guilford: Surrey Business School, University of Surrey, 2012).

A number of questions arise as to why Muslims would allow their non-Muslim citizens to benefit commercially and economically from a disadvantaging prohibition on the majority of their Muslim citizens? Why were the networks and political links by *dhimmi* Jewish and Christian businessmen unevenly favouring an economic rise of the West, at the expense of the East? Contemporaneous historical literature opposes the once prevalent view that in the early medieval period, Muslims deliberately left such commercial and financial opportunities to their non-Muslim counterparts. Historical chroniclers instead suggest that Muslim traders and financiers had established and controlled a massive market-share of local and regional business over non-Muslims. Although, by the twelfth century Jewish, Greek and Armenian merchants were beginning to dominate business and trade in a number of cities across the Islamicate spaces: Alexandria, Tripoli and Damascus.[105] The Jewish and Christian traders and merchants were able to establish a string of networks that facilitated bilateral commercial enterprises between East and West, with goods and revenues flowing in both directions. It is fair to assume that these cross-continental commercial ventures were aided by both, personal links and religio-cultural proximity between the Damascene Jews and Christians and their European co-religionists. Twelfth century Ottoman maritime studies attest to Muslim political and geographical domination of the Mediterranean but, also a measurable decline in Muslim economic and commercial competitiveness. By the thirteenth century, Muslim entrepreneurialism had declined massively with Europe, possibly inhibited by territorial wars in Eastern Europe and Spain. However, for Jewish and Christian *dhimmi*, the business and commercial interests with Europe increased exponentially. This is not to overlook the reality that the rural-urban commerce locally and nationally was increasingly dominated by Arabs, Turks and other Muslim sub-ethnic groups. The majority of the coastal trade along the Muslim-Mediterranean coastline was largely conducted by small vessels owned by Muslim traders from across the Islamicate spaces.[106] Regardless of Muslim commercial domination across the Islamic regions, greater opportunities and profits were far more lucrative for the Jewish and Christian minorities through their East-West trading networks. Whilst the historical binary concept of the world according to Islamic law appears to have inhibited Muslim entrepreneurialism beyond Muslim-majority spaces, some Muslims routinely traded with and in non-Muslim spaces from the early days of Islam. Further, professional money lenders, despite the prohibition of interest, had included substantial numbers of Muslims until quite recent times.[107]

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[104] Goldstein-Sabbah, Murre van den Berg Nijmegen, *Modernity, minority, and the public sphere: Jews and Christians in the Middle East*, (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

[105] R. Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy*, (New York: Methuen, 1981).

[106] See L. Valensi, 'Craftsmen and Traders in Cairo in the 18th Century', *Annals History Social Sciences* 30/4 (1975), pp. 925-929; D. Panzac, 'International and Domestic Maritime Trade in the Ottoman Empire during the 18th century', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 24/2 (1992), pp. 189-206; E. Eldem, *A History of the Ottoman Bank*, (Beyoglu, Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Historical Research Center, 1999), and R. Jennings, *Christians and Muslims in Ottoman Cyprus and the Mediterranean world, 1571-1640*, Vol. 1., (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

In medieval times usury was a prohibition incumbent upon all three monotheistic traditions, although it was quite often individually overlooked. Conveniently ignoring religious laws against lending while charging interest did not appear to matter for a number of Muslim entrepreneurs, who aggressively pursued their financial trade, often monopolising certain markets by extending business opportunities to progeny, family and tribesmen. Financial business deals often extended beyond their economic advantages and opened doors of influence to both political and diplomatic ends. Many Muslims however were less liberal in their business dealings, and minority Muslim groups like the Shī'a and the Kurds, who were less willing to compromise their religious beliefs, were not able to enjoy the same commercial advantages as their Arab Sunnī co-religionists.[108] Interestingly, the economic successes of Middle Eastern non-Muslim *dhimmi* far superseded the accomplishments of minorities based elsewhere. For example, the most dynamic sectors of the Middle Eastern trade were dominated by the Jewish, Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Orthodox Christians despite their occasional vulnerability to discrimination and persecution.

Ahmed asserts that well before the advent of Islam, the Byzantines and the Romans had granted a degree of jurisdictional autonomy to Jews, varied Christian denominations, and later Muslim minorities who entered their domain.[109] Under Muslim-rule, it is claimed that was not until the 'Pact of Umar', that a definite intercommunal arrangement was facilitated under the Caliphs, 'Umar I and 'Umar II (r. 682-720) The treaty was so important in providing a model for Islamic legal pluralism and setting policies vis-à-vis minorities. For centuries the treaty was used as a template by which successive Muslim rulers could modify the particularities of their changing administrative requirements towards the Dhimmi.

The Ottomans, driven perhaps by their endless imperial expansionist pursuits, utilized 'Umar's treatyto varying degrees. However, in the provinces that were neither majority Muslim or Turk, the development of a Millet system of semi-autonomy, provided a greater degree of flexibility in Ottoman suzerainty than 'Umar's treaty. But the functional cohesiveness between the Millet system and the treaty were often an unavoidable synthesis. According to these developed laws, Jews and Christian minorities were subjected to Islamic law in all commercial and financial dealings with Muslims. Conversely, Jews and Christians were free to select from alternative legal systems and jurisdictions when interacting with other non-Muslims.[110] Minorites could select from a number of legal frameworks; debt instruments, deeds, inheritance, and legal contracts, at least in principle. They were permitted to adhere to the religious dictates of their own faiths were convenient and suitable. Unlike their Turkish co-religionists, Arab conquerors were less flexible or facilitating in their fiscal system towards minorities (*dhimmi*). Sometimes this led to provoked insurrections and revolts as well as large-scale migration from Islamicate spaces by *dhimmi* communities to new regions or cities beyond Muslim domination.[111] Paying the *jizyā* and protection became interdependent and the principle of guaranteeing the protection of the lives and property of non-Muslim Dhimmi took preference over the Qur'ānic concepts of humility (*ṭawaḍāḥ*) and servitude (*khidmaḥ*) towards mankind. When 'Abū 'Ubaydah conquered Damascus, he guaranteed protection to all its residents providing they pay the *jizyā*. The agreed tariff for the payment of *jizyā* was set at one dinar per head for the city. Across Syria the rates set for *jizyā* payments differed from region to region and city to city. A later revision was made to the tariff by 'Umar of four dinars on those who possessed gold and forty dirhams on those who possessed silver, in his reorganised tax system.

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[107] See M. Rodinson, *Islam and Capitalism: Translated from the French*, (London: Pantheon, 1973), and C.P. Issawi, *An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa*, (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1982).

[108] C. E. Bosworth, 'The Concept of *Dhamma* in Early Islam', *The Arabs, Byzantium and Iran: Studies in Early Islamic History and Culture*, (London: Routlege, 1996).

[109] Z. Ahmad, 'The concept of Jizyā in Early Islam', *Islamic Studies*, 14/4 (1975), pp. 293-305.

Later Developments

The development of Islamic legal practices towards minorities, and the later Western colonisation of large parts of the Middle East, had unfavourable effects on the financial and economic situation in Syria. Islamic legal pluralism in the early medieval period facilitated Jews and Christians to choose their own judicial preferences in their commercial and financial contracts. At the same time, their ability to profit considerably by avoiding the Islamic legal framework cannot be overlooked. The considerable gains made through their businesses by Jewish and Christian merchants was not facilitated through Islamic legal processes but, rather, by minorities having the option to draught commercial contracts using an alternative legal system.[112] It might be claimed that as a result, the Middle Eastern economy suffered because minorities were able to capitalise on employing different legal frameworks through which to conduct commerce and trade. Syria's Islamic legal system hadhistorically evolved to manage the world via two distinct spaces, which were friend and foe. When Western colonisation of Muslim spaces began in the early modern period, the philosophical construction and legal understanding of a binary view of the world was obsolete and they were unable to respond to the rapidly changing reality of integrated capital markets.

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[110] H.Narain, 'Jizyah and the Spread of Islam', *Voice of India* (1990).

[111] Muhammad Faruque, 'Jizyah in Early Islam: Theory and Practice', *Islamic Culture* 61 (1987), pp. 55-70.

[112] E. Eldem, *A History of the Ottoman Bank*, (Beyoglu, Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Historical Research Center, (1999).

Conclusion

This study examined the process by which Muslims became the dominant majority in Damascus, Syria, and how they established several schools of law there (Shāfi'ī, Ḥanafī, Malikī and Ḥanbalī). The Shāfi'ī school was dominant, but the other three schools had an integral role in shaping Muslim life in Damascus. Further, while the Shāfi'ī madhhab established the majority of schools (*madhāris*) in the city, over time the other three schools facilitated the immigration and settlement of the followers of the three other Sunnī schools to the city from areas such as Iraq, Palestine and North-Africa. This historic establishment of all four Sunnī schools in the city, along with minority Shī'a sects, is evidence of the Muslim population's diversity in Damascus. In addition to the development of a very pluralistic Muslim population in the city, the Jewish community, although the smallest in number settled in the city, were also divided into several different theological sets. The Rabbis, Karaites, Samaritans and *Khayabira* were afforded autonomy to manage and organise their particular theological sect with relatively little interference from their Muslim rulers. Like the Christians, Jews were required to mark themselves out publicly by followinga specific dress code; however, they were no less disadvantaged than the Christians of the city and were known for their wealth and high level of education. Christians constituted a very integral part of Damascene society. Again, similar to their Jewish and Muslim counterparts, they were also divided into sects and denominations; Jacobites and Melkites. Perhaps because of their significant numbers, Christians were treated relatively harshly and unfairly in terms of civil rights and religious dress codes by their Muslim rulers.

The influence asserted by Christians from Tripoli and Antioch, encouraged both collusion and collaboration between Damascene Christians and Mongol and Crusader invaders to the city. And, whilst the Christians held positions of strength, influence and power in Damascene life, this reality offered no protection from Muslim revenge and retribution, once Muslim hegemony was firmly re-established in the city. Further, as this study has observed, when Jews or Christians converted to Islam, whatever their particular reason or motive may have been, the majority were favoured by the Muslim state administration, with many being rewarded with promotion or high-government posts. The often-controversial issue of the *jizyā* (protection tax) appears not to have been enforced as a 'poll tax' across different parts of the Islamicate spaces.

In the majority of cases examined, it seems that the *jizyā* was more a financial tax requirement upon non-Muslim communities. In some cases, it appears that the tariffs for the *jizyā* were set very low, almost as a required token payment to honour an established Prophetic tradition. Later, the tax was unified, codified and regulated by successive Caliphs. Often the *jizyā* came to represent a special form of income or land tax. Generally, it is fair to state that the three Abrahamic faiths lived in relatively peaceful conditions for the majority of time. The Mongol and Crusader invasions negatively impacted and aggravated the existing tensions between Muslims and Christians. The efforts by Muslim rulers to normalise Muslim-Jewish-Christian relations were achieved by developing greater political and economic relations with emerging European powers in which minority Damascene Christians (and Jews) played an important and sometimes vital role. The policies of Muslim statefinances did have occasional adverse impacts and effects on the relationships between 'Abraham's children' living in Damascus and it is hoped that further, detailed research studies will shed greater light on this fascinating, medieval religious *triumvirate*.

Abstract: This article discusses the relationships between the three Abrahamic faith communities (Jews, Christians and Muslims) of Damascus during the late 7th A.H./13th A.D. century, employing a textual research study, through the collation and critical review of a range of reference sources; historical and contemporaneous observations, personal narratives and accounts. Preliminary research results attest to a generally congenial co-existence between the religious groups that was occasionally disrupted by inter-communal clashes. However, later disturbances occurred between Christian and Muslim communities as a consequence of the Mongol invasion of the city and then later Christian Crusaders. The Abrahamic theological commonality largely tied the three monotheistic religious traditions together in a loose *triumvirate* social coalition. Despite Muslim political dominance being firmly established, the *jizyā* was not always enforced as an obligation on non-Muslims during the various Caliphate periods. Muslim hegemony enduredthroughout a number of inter-religious controversiesand intrigues due to a measurable success in Muslim politico-economic policies. These political manoeuvres appear to be significant factors in a religious tri-existence in which each community largely supported the *status*

Resumen: Este artículo analiza las relaciones entre las tres comunidades de fe abrahámica (judíos, cristianos y musulmanes) de Damasco a finales del siglo VII d. C./XIII d. C., mediante un estudio de investigación textual, a través de la recopilación y revisión crítica de una variedad de fuentes de referencia; observaciones históricas y contemporáneas, relatos y relatos personales. Los resultados preliminares de la investigación dan fe de una coexistencia generalmente agradable entre los grupos religiosos que ocasionalmente se vio interrumpida por enfrentamientos entre comunidades. Sin embargo, se produjeron disturbios posteriores entre las comunidades cristiana y musulmana como consecuencia de la invasión mongola de la ciudad y luego de los cruzados cristianos. La comunidad teológica abrahámica unió en gran medida las tres tradiciones religiosas monoteístas en una coalición social triunvirato flexible. A pesar de que el dominio político musulmán estaba firmemente establecido, la *jizyā* no siempre se impuso como una obligación para los no musulmanes durante los diversos períodos del Califato. La hegemonía musulmana perduró a lo largo de una serie de controversias e intrigas interreligiosas debido al éxito medible de las política y economía musulmanas. Estas maniobras políticas parecen ser factores *quo*. This study then, explores some of the historical events and activities that contributed to this particular period in Damascus' history.

Keywords: Jews; Christians; Muslims; Damascus; *Dhimmi*; Caliphate.

significativos en una existencia triple religiosa en la que cada comunidad apoyaba en gran medida el *statu quo*. Este estudio explora algunos de los eventos históricos y actividades que contribuyeron a este período particular en la historia de Damasco.

Palabras clave: Judíos; Cristianos; musulmanes; Damasco; *Dhimmíes*; Califato.