BOOK REVIEWS

I

MUSLIM EDUCATION AND THE SCHOLARS’ SOCIAL STATUS UP TO THE FIFTH CENTURY MUSLIM ERA IN THE LIGHT OF TĀRĪKH BAGHDĀD
by Dr. Munir-ud-Din Ahmed, Verlag, Der Islam, Zürich, 1968. Price not given. Pages 290.

This excellently published book earned its author the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Hamburg in July 1967. As the title page itself indicates, the information on Muslim Education and the Scholars’ Social Status contained in the book is confined up to the 5th/1rth century and is based on the Tārīkh Baghdād of al-Ḥāfiz Abū Bakr Ahmad Ibn ‘Ali ibn al-Khaṭṭāb al-Baghdādi (d. 463/1070-71), a biographical dictionary published at al-Qāhirah/Baghdād, 1931, in 14 volumes. This dictionary is ‘a store-house of information’, as the writer rightly states in his introduction and has preserved the biographies of 7831 scholars who had something to do with the city of Baghdād, and flourished in the first five centuries of the history of Islam.

There is no doubt that these five centuries saw the production of most of the original works in the history of Islam. Pioneers of Islamic Sciences, scholars of arts and literature, mujtahid imāms and world-renowned Muslim thinkers, all of them belong to these centuries which also witnessed the most glorious cultural and political achievements of the Muslims.

In these circumstances it is almost inconceivable to think as the writer does, (p. iv. 10) “that this institution (i.e. of Madrasa) came into being as late as the fifth century after Hijra. Furthermore, Madrasa was not invented but rather developed out of an educational system, which was in vogue for over four centuries at the time of Madrasa’s establishment”. It seems quite arbitrary to assert that the institution of madrasa in the history of Islam owes its origin to the establishment of al-Madrasa al-Nizāmiya in Baghdād and to declare the entire educational system that preceded its establishment as “the pre-Madrasa period” (p. v. 5), as the author of the present work, Dr. M. Ahmed, would have us believe. There is no denying the fact that the Ṣabāḥ were entrusted with the teaching of the Holy Qur’hān to their newly converted fellows. ‘Umar I had overheard his sister who was learning the opening verses of the Sūrah Tāhā from a Ṣahḥābi—an incident that enkindled his heart with the light of faith. Even before mosques were built at al-Madīna, ‘Aṭṭāb b. Asīd was sent by the Prophet to teach the Ḍaḥš the Qur’hān and the tenets of Islam. Besides the Jawām, the dwellings of the learned Ṣabhābah and Ṣāḥibīn, developed into the seats of learning in Mecca, al-Madinah, Kufah, Baṣrah, Fustāt and Damascus and other cities and places. “Already in the first century a man built a hall (majlis) for teaching tradition; for it he bought forty tree trunks at one dinar a piece (Ibn Sa’d 7, i, 88).” “The Azhar mosque was completed in 361/972 (Tritton, p. 98) and in 378/988 the Wazir Ya’qūb ibn Killīṣ appointed 35 salaried lawyers to teach in it and had a house built beside it as a residence” (Tritton, p. 101). In a word, it is erroneous to opine and think that no Madrasa existed before Madrasah Nizāmiyah or the term ‘Madrasa’ was not used for the sense it conveys before the Nizāmiyah. Long before its establishment we find the
These are the madāris for verses of the Qurʻān where recitation has ceased and a home of revelation with deserted courts. The context suggests study-places.

Besides, we have no doubt that large crowds of disciples gathered round teachers, the companions and their successors, in mosques as well as dwellings—places which were considered seats of learning.

Abū Dardā had such a large crowd of disciples round about him as are found in the trains of the kings (Dhahabi, Tadhkirah, I. p. 22). Muʻādh b. Jabal together with 32 other companions related Ḥadīth to their disciples at Emesa (Imām Ahmad, Musnad, V. p. 328). Ḥudhayfah delivered lectures on Ḥadīth to a band of eager disciples in a mosque at Kūfah (Ibn Saʻd, Ṭabaqāt, III. part 2, p. 23), Ubayy b. Kaʻb was one of the many companions who taught Ḥadīth to their students in the mosque at Madinah (ibid.). It is related that such a large crowd of them collected round a companion when he related Ḥadīth that he was compelled to get on to the roof of a house in order to continue his address (ibid., V. p. 213). Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, the founder of the Ḥanafite School of Muslim Law, reports that when he went to Mecca with his father in order to perform the pilgrimage, he saw there a large crowd listening with great attention to a companion who related to them the Ḥadīth of the Prophet.

Although the writer is in a way correct in saying (p. 25) that it is not the whole of truth to say that al-Jāhiliyya indicates barbarous practices, etc., “it should be borne in mind that the expression ‘al-Jāhiliyya’ is applied to pre-Islamic Arabia not to indicate that they were illiterate or barbarous but to make it clear that their insistence on certain rites and rituals practised usually by all Arab tribes was due to their ignorance or vanity. Although one cannot contend that (p. 30): “The science of Kīrā’ā was, as a matter of fact, developed much later”, it is to be considered that this science was essentially based on the recitation of the Prophet and his Companions and was necessarily developed and systematized in conformity with their recitation and pronunciation. Th sciences of Tajwīd, Taʻṣīr (Exegesis) and other branches of the study of the Qurʻān which one by one made their appearance were potentially there in those halcyon days, since the Companions, Arabs as they were, precisely understood the meanings of Qurʻānic expressions and idiomatic phrases, and pronounced them with full accuracy in the same manner as the pre-Islamic poets composed verses without knowing the sciences of Grammar, Rhetoric and Prosody etc. In fact, the Islamic sciences were developed in the light of the Arab usages and performances for the guidance of the non-Arabs who were not familiar with Arabic and all the paraphernalia of Arabic. The point under discussion is, in a way, supported by the author himself as he says (p. 30): “However, the first explanations about the more difficult passages of the Qurʻān came from Muhammad himself”.

A general tendency prevails today to prove the superiority of the present generation to their forefathers. The writer also, perhaps following the same tendency, writes: “Experts of Philosophy and Rhetoric...were more capable of understanding the Qurʻān than their forefathers” (p. 35). In points of conviction and belief, the essential concomitants of knowledge, the preceding learned people surely excelled the later ones as is established by the Prophetic saying: Khayr al-Qurūn qarni thumma al-ladhina yalūnahum etc.—There can, in fact, be no comparison between a generation and its
successor. Our whole cultural edifice is based on the learning of our forefathers, and the building would not have seen the light of the day without the original bases.

The author also states (vide p. 57): "The first man, who compiled the Tradition is said to have been Ibn Jurayj (d. 151/768)". The information is based on the text of Baghdādī which, as we have checked, in fact, indicates that Ibn Jurayj and Ibn Abi ‘Arūba were the first writers of books. (Ṭārīkh Baghdādī, X. p. 401).

Apparently ‘books’ have been identified with collection of Tradition, whereas books on other subjects were also being compiled in those days. It may be mentioned that Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri (d. 124/744) is considered to have been the first man to compile Ḥadīth. ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr b. Ḥazm was another Tābi‘ī who had prepared a collection of Ḥadīth.

Following the views of Goldziher, Guillaume and other orientalists, the writer categorically asserts (p. 38), “The first 4 Caliphs...and Umayyads gave al-Fikh hardly any chance to develop into the level of a systematic science...”. He also states, “All of the four Sunni...were founded in the days of ‘Abbāsid’s”. Perhaps he forgets that in fact, these schools founded their views on the decisions of the Șahābah and their followers who flourished in the early days of the Umayyads, and these decisions (الحكم) were being followed even before the ‘Abbāsids came to power. Distinction in schools no doubt increased in prominence under the early ‘Abbāsids when almost every famous teacher of the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth was considered as the leader of a school and even a student earning some name aspired for leadership. Makbūl and Awzā‘i of Syria, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ibn Abi Layla, Ḥasan, Zufar, Ibn al-Qāsim, Sa‘d b. al-Layth in Iraq and Egypt, and a host of others were considered as founders of their own schools.

Again, Imām Abū Ḥanīfa seems to have, for the first time, introduced Munāṣararah as a method of instruction in his own ḫalqa (circle). The new practice subsequently developed into an institution which gained popularity with the scholars of repute. This method can undoubtedly be easily traced to Shūrā, mutual consultation. To begin with munāṣara in the presence of the teacher was simply mutual consultation ending in some agreed decision, and in cases of continuous argumentation leading to no decision the teacher used to intervene and lead them through his convincing arguments to a decision. Sometimes, however, even the teacher’s argument was challenged and was not considered acceptable. We, therefore, find many cases in which Abū Yūsuf and Shaybānī separately or together differed from the views of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa. Similarly, Imām Shāfi‘ī argues with his teacher, Shaybānī, and differs from him—a kind of munāṣara which is often mentioned in Kitāb al-Umm, and Ṭārīkh Baghdādī (II. 172-82). This point has been rather unwarrantably mentioned by the author of the book under review in the following words:

“(P. 70)-The Ḥanafite school not only accepted it (munāṣara) as a legitimate way of confrontation with the other schools, it adopted the institution of al-Munāṣarah as a means of instruction in their educational institutions, too”.

As academic verbal duels became the fashion of the day with learned scholars and often gave rise to mutual brawl and bitterness the learned prescribed certain rules and regulations for holding such discussions and the institution developed into a fullfledged science (‘Īlm al-Munāṣarah).
The statement that a maid-servant corrected her master’s notes of lectures (vide p. 87) could not be traced in the Tārīkh Baghdād. Some mistake must have occurred in the references given (Note No. 7. II. 123, III. 471; XII. 210, II. 266-67).

To err is human and even experts sometimes do commit mistakes in their expression but for such a mistake they do not lose their prestige and status. The incident stated by the author concerns the famous mubaddith, Ahmad ibn Sulaymān who, while dictating, made a certain grammatical mistake. One of the audience corrected him rather rudely. But when he finished his dictation he asked some of them to catch hold of him; and then he recited the following verses of Ḥilāl b. al-ʿUla al-Raqqi:

سبيل يدان كان يعرس نوافذ فإذالله في موقف الضر يسلم
وما ينعم الأعراب، ان لم يكن تقي و مباشر ذاتقوى لسان معجم

“There will soon be worn out a speech expressed correctly. Would that it survived for the sake of that for which it was meant!

“Expression with accuracy will not give benefit if it is devoid of piety; and an incorrect speech does no harm to him who possesses piety”.

Obviously a teacher commands respect of the taught even after committing mistakes (p. 90). Similarly, one or two rare cases should not be considered as the usual happenings of those days. It is indeed interesting to note such rare cases as the following ones which indicate the care and caution with which the teachers used to teach and avoid all possible cases of doubt and suspicion: (p. 92).

“A certain teacher did not allow students, who had no beard, to attend his classes (IV, 201). Another would not let good-looking boys come to his lessons (V, 230)”.

The following statement based on the references given under note No. 7, p. 91 does not seem to be in accord with the text referred to (see p. 91), as it only indicates that the teacher always desired to know through his maid-servant as to what was the number of the students present, and if the number corresponded with the actual number of the students present, he proceeded with the lesson. On the particular occasion under reference the leading student forgot to include himself and the teacher found out that they were more than the reported number. So, he refused to teach them on the assumption that they were not truthful and hence they could not be trusted with the sayings of the Prophet. According to another reference (i.e. IX 407-08) the teacher taught one student only, and when he was requested to give reason, he explained that the people of Ḥādīth possessed but little of manners; and conversed among themselves whenever they gathered to listen to their lessons—this he could not stand.

Dr. Munir-ud-Din Ahmed is, however, to be congratulated for the excellent work he has published to elucidate Muslim Education and the scholars’ status up to the 5th century Muslim Era in the light of Tārīkh Baghdād, perhaps, for the first time in English. The work is divided into three parts beside the preface (VI-VII), bibliography, list of periodicals and index (pp. 255-290).

Part One consisting of 24 pages supplies the Introduction which inter alia discusses the Tārīkh Baghdād, its author, and the importance of Biographical dictionaries for the science of Ḥādīth.

Part Two (pp. 25-193) is devoted to Education in Islam and educational system elucidating elementary education, advanced studies, nature of classes, methods of teaching, places where lessons were imparted, and the students and their teachers.
Part Three (pp. 194-254) deals with social status of the scholars throwing light on the grades of the society, relationships of the scholars with the general public, with one another, and with the government, and the financial conditions of the scholars.

A few orthographic mistakes may be mentioned, by the way, just to avoid them at the time the work is revised and published a second time:

| p. 93.24 | read universally instead of universally |
| 115.15 | incidentally instead of incidently |
| (also pp. 122.2; 125.6; 131.2). |
| 117.17 | ordinarily instead of ordinarilly |
| 121.21 | Abū Ḥudhayfa instead of Abū Ḥudayfa |
| 122.7 | two instead of too |
| 124.4 | Sulayk instead of Salyk |
| 126.24 | al-Ḥattābin instead of al-Ḥuttābin |
| 190.23 | buried instead of burried |
| 135.2 | pursued instead of persued |
| 136.3 | divided instead of devided |
| (also p. 142.10) |

Students of Islamic Culture and Muslim Education will, no doubt, hail this work as a very valuable contribution to the subject.

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II


"Throughout the period in question one person dominated the Anglo-Egyptian scene: that was Sir Evelyn Baring, later Lord Cromer. More than anyone else Cromer was responsible for the turn that Anglo-Egyptian relations took." (p. xi).

With these words the author prefaces a judicious analysis of the varying political constellations in Egypt between 1882 and 1919. The "Prelude to the Occupation" is an account of how the ‘Urābī revolt and all that it stood for was wiped out by Lord Dufferin with a stroke of pen to be replaced by the prerevolutionary autocratic rule of the Khedive. Chapter II, "International Entanglements; 1882-1896", describes how the aftermath of the occupation of Egypt proved to be an unending source of troubles to England on three levels—within the Cabinet, on the international scene, and within Egypt itself. The author states that the book is an attempt to show the extent to which the strength and weakness of certain characters dominated the course of Anglo-Egyptian relations. In Chapter III, entitled "The Man on the Spot" she deftly depicts the character of the central figure in this book. Chapter IV gives an insight into the interwoven functions of the dual administration in Egypt: the official government and the British advisers. "Rumblings of Opposition" is a brilliant exposé of the trends in the incipient Egyptian press. The author consistently keeps her purpose in view, viz., emphasis on the personalities who shaped things. Whereas in the "Prelude" it were the military and the economists who dominated the scene in the following chapters, attention is focused on the politicians and bureaucrats and then on the writers. The strength of ‘Afaf Luṭfi al-Sayyid’s study is that in spite of this design the book does not degenerate into a mere description of characters. Rather the