



# Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization (JITC)

Volume 11 Issue 1, Spring 2021

pISSN: 2075-0943, eISSN: 2520-0313

Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc>

Issue DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.111>

Homepage: <https://journals.umt.edu.pk/index.php/JITC>

Journal QR Code:



## Indexing



Article:

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Author(s):

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Published:

Spring 2021

Article DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.111.05>

QR Code:



Alwi Alatas

Citation:

Alatas, Alwi. "Education and socio-political change in the 11th and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries Abbasid realm." *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 11, no. 1 (2021). 79-98.

[Crossref](#)

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Publisher Information:

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# Education and Socio-political Change in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Centuries Abbasid Realm

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## Abstract

Education is an important instrument of change; though the process is usually very slow - very different from revolution - and its broad impact cannot easily and clearly be observed. Good and balanced education will expectedly have a good impact on society, economy and politics; while, bad policy and culture of education will accordingly have the opposite effect. This article analyses the change in religious education in the Abbasid realm in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries and its relation with the socio-political change in the region. This study finds that those changes were approximately concurrent and suggests mutual influence between them. For deeper analysis, this study uses the concept of education proposed by Syed Muhammad Naquib (SMN) al-Attas.

**Keywords:** education, *madrassa*, Abbasid, SMN al-Attas, socio-political change

## Introduction

Education is very important in the process of character building though people may differ regarding the methods in which education is carried out.<sup>1</sup> Education, in a sense, is an instrument used by the society to maintain its values and to prepare its young generation for the future.<sup>2</sup> This is generally true for any society at any given time, today as well as in the past. However, the values, from Islamic point of view, first of all pertain to the goodness of an individual and the real future is no other than the Hereafter.<sup>3</sup> Educational institutions play important role in this process. It is safe to assume that good education will contribute positively to the wellbeing of individuals, and therefore of society. Accordingly, when something wrong occurs in the society, there is a high probability that a proportional failure in the widespread educational system and practices has a significant share in it.

In the beginning of Islamic history, the scholarly interaction between teachers and students went on in a very humble environment, usually done in mosques, but not on the expense of the quality of its result. Over time, primary educational institutions such as

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<sup>1</sup>N. Russell Middleton, Jr., *Education* (East Bay: Charleston, 1893), 1-2.

<sup>2</sup>T.W. Moore, *Philosophy of Education: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2010), 53.

<sup>3</sup>Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1993), 84-5.

*kuttāb* or *maktab* emerged,<sup>4</sup> and then *madrasa* that corresponds to higher education or college.<sup>5</sup> Religious educational institutions or schools in the Islamic world are basically an extension of religious teachers, and also, on the other side, of mosques.<sup>6</sup>

The above mentioned educational development mainly occurred during the Abbasid period. The Abbasid Caliphate began with relatively strong governance, but in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries had suffered socio-political decline. The decline was reflected socially by the occurrences of sectarian disputes in several regions, and politically by a lack of central control over the provinces and the seizure of Western Abbasid regions by the Fatmids and the Crusaders. Later on, especially by the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the situation in the Abbasid realm had gradually changed and improved.

The territories covered by this study were those that belonged to the Abbasids and in several places in this article put as the Abbasid realm. These territories had changed several times during the period of study, especially in its Western sphere, which more or less represents the political ups and downs in that realm. The changes discussed by this study actually consist of three aspects: political, social, educational. But to make it easier, the first two are generally combined into socio-political. All these changes were occurred in the Abbasid context, but the intensity of the changes may not be evenly distributed across the Abbasid realm. Political change in the context of this study focuses on the centre and Western Abbasid realm, especially al-Shām (Greater Syria). Social change discusses the conflicts among the religious groups in the 11<sup>th</sup> century Baghdad and several other Abbasid cities and the later lessening of this conflicts, especially among the Sunni schools of law and theology.

The change in education relates to the wider acceptance of Sufism by the Muslim scholars in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The importance of *tasawwuf* here emphasizes on its role to bring people to the illuminative aspect of knowledge, that knowledge – in this case religious knowledge – is not only about memorization, understanding or ability to debate, but more to bring people closer to God. In this connection, al-Ghazālī's thoughts and role will be discussed to explain this change. Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) is of course not the first or the only Sufi and cannot represent the whole variety of Sufis. However, he lived in the period of study, his important role in Sufism cannot be denied and several aspects of his thought are very helpful in explaining the phenomenon under study. Another aspect of

<sup>4</sup>Hamdan Husein Batubara, and Dessy Noor Ariani, "Kuttab Sebagai Potret Pendidikan Dasar periode Klasik," [Kuttab as a Portrait of Classical Basic Education], *Muallimuna* 1, no. 2 (April 2016): 101-3; J. M. Landau, "Kuttāb," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* 5, eds. C. E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzel, B. Lewis and Ch. Pellat (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 567.

<sup>5</sup>J. Pedersen, "Madrasa," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* 5, eds. C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, B. Lewis and Ch. Pellat (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), 1123.

<sup>6</sup>George Makdisi suggests that the development of higher educational institutions in Islamic history developed from *masjid* to *masjid-khan* or *masjid-inn* and finally to *madrakah*. Their main subject was basically *fiqh* (jurisprudence). George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 32.

educational change recounts the widespread of *madrasa*. But it should be kept in mind that education was not only represented by college institution, but also by less formal forms of education, such as teacher-student networks, which for centuries have been responsible for the transmission of Islamic scholarship. It should also be noted that the focus of education in this article is religious education for adult.

Accordingly, this article wants to examine whether the above mentioned educational transformation happened in chorus, at least roughly, with the socio-political changes in the Abbasid realm and whether there was correlation between them? This paper will try to answer this question, especially using the concept of education of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas.

## 2. The Concept of Education of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas

Islam lays a strong emphasis on the importance of knowledge – along with *adab* (good manners or right action) – and the process of instilling it into human beings, all of which signify basic elements in Islamic education. Syed Muhammad Naquib (SMN) al-Attas defines education, in its simple form, as “a process of instilling knowledge into human beings.” What al-Attas means by knowledge (*ilm*) is “the arrival of the soul at the meaning of a thing or an object of knowledge,” with the definition of meaning (*ma'nā*) as “recognition of the place of anything in a system which occurs when the relation a thing has with others in the system becomes clarified and understood.” Thus at the end he defines education, based on Islamic worldview, as “the recognition and acknowledgment, progressively instilled into man, of the proper places of things in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition and acknowledgment of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence.” Since such recognition and acknowledgment constitute the meaning of *adab*, al-Attas insists that the proper Arabic term for education is *ta'dīb*.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, in the other place, he defines education as “the instilling and inculcation of *adab* in man.”<sup>8</sup>

In term of its purpose, Islamic education is more properly categorised as person-centred, which stresses the importance of “personal success and happiness in this world and particularly in the Hereafter,” rather than society-centred that aim at social and economic achievement and recognition, thus making education merely “a utility for

<sup>7</sup>Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education* (Kuala Lumpur: Ta'dib International, 2018).

<sup>8</sup>Quoted from Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas: An Exposition of the Original Concept of Islamization* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1998), 133. We can see here that the concept of knowledge and *adab* in al-Attas philosophy of education are inseparable. This is approximately in line with the understanding of early Muslim scholars like, for example, 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak (d. 797) who said, “We stand more in need of *adab* than a great deal of knowledge (*ilm*).” Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy*, 141.

personal or national socio-economic mobility.”<sup>9</sup> This aim reverberates the fact that it is the individual that will be personally made responsible to his God for everything he did in his life. Yet, it does not mean that society has no importance in Islamic education. For aiming at individual will hopefully give a proper impact to the society, while targeting socio-economic improvement does not necessarily require and bring in individual goodness and personal happiness. Despite the above position, individual and society should actually be seen in a more integrated, and not antagonistic, understanding, for the man of *adab* to be produced by Islamic education is fully aware of his individuality and his proper relationship with his society, as well as with his God, with his own self, and with other creatures.<sup>10</sup>

The choice between person-centredness and social-centredness is generally influenced by the priority given to one of the two kinds of knowledge, the illuminative and the more intimate one (*maʿrifa*) and the general one (*ʿilm*). The former, bestowed on one’s soul, signifies affection and confidence, and “can only be received by man through his acts of worship and devotion ... depending upon God’s grace and his own latent spiritual power and capacity created by God,” while the latter pertains to things with more practical values.<sup>11</sup> For al-Attas, *maʿrifa* is personally obligatory (*fardʿ ayn*) and actually a basis for *ʿilm* that is only socially obligatory (*fardʿ kifāya*).<sup>12</sup> The importance of the first kind of knowledge to the second one is explained as follow:

The first knowledge unveils the mystery of Being and Existence and reveals the true relationship between man’s self and his Lord, and since for man such knowledge pertains to the ultimate purpose for knowing, it follows that knowledge of its prerequisites becomes the basis and essential foundation for knowledge of the second kind, for knowledge of the latter alone, without the guiding spirit of the former, cannot truly lead man in his life, but only confuses and confounds him and enmeshes him in the labyrinth of endless purposeless seeking.<sup>13</sup>

Understood and implemented as such, education will become person-centred, because *maʿrifa* can only be achieved individually and it is not for socio-economic pragmatism. While the emphasis on general knowledge (*ʿilm*) as the most important category for man’s learning will only indicate that the educational position is society-centred, since this type of knowledge “would bear considerable influence in determining his secular role and position as a citizen”<sup>14</sup> and “naturally directs the attention solely to the problems of state and society, for the state and the society are the true referents in respect of the *fardʿ*

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<sup>9</sup>Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy*, 121-3. In al-Attas own words, in Islam “the purpose of seeking knowledge is to produce in the seeker a good man,” differ to the Western civilization whose purpose is “to produce in the seeker a good citizen.” See al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 85.

<sup>10</sup>Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy*, 151-2.

<sup>11</sup>Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 79-80.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 84.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>14</sup>Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 84.

*kifāyah*.”<sup>15</sup> However, this last position – or even to put general knowledge at the same level with *maʿrifa* – will only bring each kind of knowledge not in their proper places, a situation that would consequently lead to the condition of “loss of *adab*,” which means loss of justice, for a man of *adab* would always recognizes and acknowledges the hierarchical order of knowledge as explained above and he knows that those knowledge which “provide guidance (*hidāyah*) to life are more superior to those that are practically useful.”<sup>16</sup> The symptom of the loss of *adab* is marked by what al-Attas coins as “socialization,” “levelling” and “despiritualizing,” which in our modern time would aid to the process of secularization.<sup>17</sup> The problem of “socialization” is already explained in the previous paragraphs, which implies the reduction of the position of man, knowledge and education into the grip of mere social and worldly existence and context. “Levelling,” in our case of education and the hierarchy of knowledge, is having in mind and expressing in attitude that those two kinds of knowledge, and consequently of their respective possessors, are of the same standing, while they are actually not. And since the first kind of knowledge is the real abode and source of spiritualism, lowering its status to the same level or even lower than the general knowledge would only means “despiritualizing.” These problems apply to many other aspects of Islam as well, all of which reflect the loss of *adab*. This loss of *adab*, along with the confusion and error of knowledge, will generate a situation that allows the emergence of false leaders, who will in turn support for further confusion of knowledge and loss of *adab*, thus creating a vicious circle.<sup>18</sup>

Al-Attas is actually addressing the problem of his age when he explains his ideas. However, as we can see later in this paper, his explanation could much be applied to our topic of discussion. Before going to that part, the history of Muslim education and its socio-political situation in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries needs a thorough elucidation.

### 3. The Socio-political Deterioration and Improvement in the Abbasid Realm in the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> Centuries

The Abbasids had gradually experienced weakness in the political sphere especially after the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup> In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the Ismāʿīlī (*Shia*) Fatimid dynasty emerged in North Africa and then centred in Cairo, Egypt. In the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Fatimid influence grew stronger and expanded into parts of al-Shām (Greater Syria), Hijāz, and Yemen, which previously laid under the Abbasids. For the time being, the Abbasid power was significantly dimmed and seriously threatened by the Fatimids.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 119.

<sup>16</sup>Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy*, 138. It should be underlined that the problem of knowledge discussed here is only one example of what implies in the concept of *adab* of al-Attas.

<sup>17</sup>Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 110-121.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>19</sup>Ahmad Lamei Giv, “The Effective Reasons for the Rise and Fall of Abbasids States,” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 7, no. 3 (May 2016): 452.



In the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Abbasids were helped by the presence of the Seljūq Turks who entered and ruled from Baghdad in the name of the Caliph, replacing the vizierate of the Imāmī Buyid Dynasty. Al-Shām, Hijāz and Yemen were now taken back by the Seljūq, pushing the Fatimids to retreat to the Egyptian border. However, in 1092, the vizier and the sultan of Seljūq died, followed by a prolonged division in its territory.<sup>20</sup> The same thing happened among the Seljūq leaders in Syria.<sup>21</sup> At around the same period, the Fatimids also experienced a political crisis and continued to decline without ever rising again. The ones that took advantage of this situation were the Franks from Western Europe. They hailed the call of the Pope for the crusade and a few years later, at the end tip of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, they were successful in taking over Jerusalem and its surrounding regions.<sup>22</sup> The success of the crusaders was made possible by the political crisis in al-Shām, Asia Minor and also at the central power of the Seljūq. This crisis had only found a solution by the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century with the emergence of strong and pious leaders in al-Shām, represented by Nūr al-Dīn Mahmūd Zankī (d. 1174) and then by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (d. 1193). During this period, the Muslim leaders in the region to a significant degree reunited. In the last three decades of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn completely erased the already decayed Fatimid Dynasty and then successfully resealed Jerusalem from the crusaders.

Along with the decline of the Abbasids and the break-up of the Seljūq, as mentioned before, the socio-religious situation in the Abbasid realm was also in trouble. Religious scholars and the masses were divided into several groups and many of them were heatedly in conflict. The emergence of many religious groups in the 11<sup>th</sup> century was described by Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) as something like a deep sea which, without adequate guidance, would make many people drown.<sup>23</sup> Scholars were divided into various groups within the disciplines of *fiqh* (law or jurisprudence), *adab*<sup>24</sup> (literature), *falsafa* (philosophy), *kalām* (theology) and so on. These disciplines in the 11<sup>th</sup> century had reached a level of maturity, but at the same time developed into intellectual confrontations among them.<sup>25</sup> Not only intellectual debate, the differences among the schools of thought sometimes provoked clashes within the community. In 1073 and 1086, for example, there

<sup>20</sup>Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 52-53.

<sup>21</sup>Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 104.

<sup>22</sup>Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmilfīl-ta'rīkh, part 1: The Years 491-541/1097-1146, The Coming of the Franks and the Muslim Response*, trans. D.S. Richards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 22; C. Cahen, "Crusades," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, eds. B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat and J. Schacht (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 64.

<sup>23</sup>Abū Hāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, trans. W. Montgomery Watt (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), 18.

<sup>24</sup>*Adab* here means literature, which is different from the earlier meaning of the word and the concept of *adab* given by al-Attas.

<sup>25</sup>Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, 153.

were skirmishes in a district of Baghdad between Sunni and Shia communities which led to the burning of houses in that part of the city.<sup>26</sup>

Disputes did not only occur between the *Sunni* and the *Shia*, but also among the four *Sunni* schools of law (*Ḥanafī*, *Mālikī*, *Shāfiʿī*, *Ḥanbalī*). As if each of them claimed their group as the sole bearer of the truth. The scholars from one school of jurisprudence (*madhhāb*) tended to be hostile to scholars from different schools and accused those schools as misguided. The study of jurisprudence was restricted within one school and those who were interested to learn from the other schools would face resentment from his own school. Ibn ʿAqīl al-Ḥanbalī, for example, was censured by the *Ḥanbalīs* for being close to the scholars from other schools.<sup>27</sup> Attacks and accusations against those from different schools of law or thought happened repeatedly. One time an *Ashʿarī* preacher talked in Baghdad denouncing the followers of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal as unbelievers.<sup>28</sup> Another time a group of *Ḥanbalīs* attacked a lecture given by an *Ashʿarī* scholar and then yelled, “Today is the day for *Ḥanbalīs*, not *Shāfiʿīs* or *Ashʿarīs*!”<sup>29</sup> On another occasion, a *Ḥanafī* judge commented that if he became a governor of a city he would prescribe *jizya* to be paid by the followers of *Shāfiʿī* in that city.<sup>30</sup>

Skirmishes sometimes happened between different schools of law or thought, such as what had happened between the *Ḥanafīs* and the *Ḥanbalīs* in the Madrasa (College) of al-Sarakhsī in 1012. The founder of that madrasa, Abū Saʿd al-Sarakhsī, was killed during the incident.<sup>31</sup> A riot, this time between the *Ḥanbalīs* and the Asharites, occurred in Madrasa Nizāmiyya in Baghdad in 1077, causing the death of some students.<sup>32</sup> In the following year, another riot around the Nizāmiyya complex again happened between the people because of religious differences.<sup>33</sup> Conflict between religious factions in Baghdad had frequently

<sup>26</sup>George Makdisi, “The Topography of Eleventh Century Baghdad: Materials and Notes (II),” *Arabica* 6, no. 3 (September 1959): 290-1. For other examples of *Sunni-Shia* conflicts in different years see, for example, ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *The Annals of the Seljūq Turks: Selections from al-Kāmil fīl-Taʾrīkh of ʿIzz al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr*, trans. D.S. Richards (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 229, 242-3.

<sup>27</sup>Dr. Majid ʿIrsan Al Kilani, *Misteri Masa Kelam Islam dan Kemenangan Perang Salib*, [The Mystery of Islam's Dark Times and The Victory of the Crusades] trans. Asep Sobari, and Amaluddin (Bekasi: Kalam Aulia Mediatama, 2007), 18-9.

<sup>28</sup>Ibn al-Athīr, *The Annals of the Seljūq Turks*, 207; Kilani, *Misteri*, 23.

<sup>29</sup>A. R. Azzam, *Saladin* (Harlow: Pearson, 2009), 17; Kilani, *Misteri*, 27.

<sup>30</sup>Kilani, *Misteri*, 33.

<sup>31</sup>George Makdisi, “Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh Century Baghdad,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24, no.1 (1961): 18.

<sup>32</sup>Ibn al-Athīr, *The Annals of the Seljūq Turks*, 193; Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī, *Al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa-l-Umam* 16 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1992), 81.

<sup>33</sup>Ibn al-Athīr, *The Annals of the Seljūq Turks*, 195. For other examples of similar partisan conflicts in different years and places see, 207 and 282.



occurred for over a century. This also reflected in some other cities, such as Nishapur.<sup>34</sup> The disputes were now and again instigated by strong competition to secure religious positions and to get government support for the interests of their groups.<sup>35</sup> This somewhat illustrates what would al-Ghazālī warn that the people and their rulers became corrupted and unchecked because the religious scholars were corrupted by worldly love, so as losing their role in guiding people through their knowledge and wisdom;<sup>36</sup> in other words “the sickness has become general, the doctors have fallen ill, and mankind has reached the verge of destruction.”<sup>37</sup>

The feud between religious groups which, engendering the socio-religious tension, had in some measure influenced political development, because of the importance of these religious groups in the society and to the political and military leaders.<sup>38</sup> Religious groups, including the schools of law, in the cities of Iran, Iraq and the other adjacent regions had developed into groups of *aṣabiyya* with high fanaticism, whose core communities may be small and limited, but these schools of thought had now served as the primary identification for the Muslim communities, more than tribal identity and the like.<sup>39</sup>

However, this socio-religious situation underwent a significant change in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Disputes between religious groups had been greatly reduced and the tendency to cooperate between the different religious schools had increased. *Madrasas*, originally devoted to only one school of law, at this juncture gave equal recognition to the different *Sunni* schools of law, while also opening their hands to the theology of *Ash‘arī* and to Sufism. Certainly it does not mean that conflict between different schools had totally vanished. However, the fragments of this dispute “were a far cry from the violent *fitnas* that had disrupted life in the cities of Iran and Iraq from the tenth to the twelfth century.”<sup>40</sup>

At around the same period, religious education in the Abbasid realm also experienced certain development and change. What kind of development and change involved in education is explained below.

#### 4. Religious Education in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century

In religious education, Islamic law had taken a leading position and its schools became the sources of legitimation for the other schools such as tradition (*hadīth*) and theology (*kalām*), each of which had then associated itself with certain school of law. In this way we find, for example, how the traditionists associated themselves with the *Hanbalīs* and the

<sup>34</sup>Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 167.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* 4 (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2011), 705.

<sup>37</sup>Al-Ghazālī, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, 80.

<sup>38</sup>Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 172.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Daniella Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria: Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons under the Zangids and Ayyubids (1146-1260)* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 8.

*Ash'arīs* with the *Shāfi'īs*.<sup>41</sup> The popularity of law (*fiqh*) might be stimulated by the importance and practical function of legal procedures in the state level as well as in daily life. Its advancement – along with the development of theology, traditions (*hadīth*) and literature which mostly represent practical aspects of knowledge – had contributed greatly to the scientific development, but at the same time tended to isolate the illuminative aspect of knowledge to the other side of human instructional endeavours.<sup>42</sup> It does not mean spiritual teachings and practices, represented largely by Sufism were entirely neglected from religious education. However, it developed along a different path and school and its reception in the life and career of a jurist was relatively limited. At this stage, Islamic law had already matured, became a heritage, and was no more in the process of formation, of which the four schools of law were the only possible channels to embrace for the *Sunnīs*.<sup>43</sup> Each school had been proud of their achievement and boast of their superiority. All the above development, however, brought a serious side effect, namely fanaticism and hostility against different schools, as already portrayed before. The widespread of religious debates and quarrels in the 11<sup>th</sup> century had dragged many sections of the society into social – and maybe political – tension.

Mosques and private houses had initially become the places in which Islamic law was taught. Some of these mosques were later equipped with accommodation for the students of law and known as masjid-khan. By the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, a specific building intended for legal studies, known as *madrasa*, became widespread. It was usually incorporated a library and lodgings for the teachers and the students.<sup>44</sup> The *madrasa* at that time functioned as a college of law.<sup>45</sup> Islamic law was of course not the only subject studied in this institution, but it was the very reason for its existence.<sup>46</sup> The Arabic word *darasa*, which is the root for *madrasah* and has a general meaning of 'learning,' in the era of the development of this institution was often used specifically in the context of *fiqh* (Islamic law). *Mudarris* was usually used to mean instructor in Islamic law and *dars* means *fiqh* lesson, while a different term, for example, was used for a *hadith* lesson, namely *majlis al-implā*'. Several examples of these usage for the city of Nishapur can be found in *al-Muntakhab* of al-Fārīsī.<sup>47</sup>

The establishment of *madrasa* consequently increased the prestige of schools of law, and at the same time epitomised its leading development in educational arena. However, for the time being, it did not reduce the excessive zeal of each school of law, if not instead strengthened it. A few examples regarding this have already been mentioned before. Fanaticism which was prevalent among the schools of law, and other religious groups such

<sup>41</sup>Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 8-9.

<sup>42</sup>Azzam, *Saladin*, 18.

<sup>43</sup>Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods*, 152.

<sup>44</sup>Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 165.

<sup>45</sup>Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 27.

<sup>46</sup>Azzam, *Saladin*, 30.

<sup>47</sup>See for example 'Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārīsī, *Al-Muntakhab min al-Siyāq li-Tārīkh Naysābūr* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1989), 139.

as the theologians, had suffocated the socio-religious milieu and fragmented the society into a narrow grouping and hampered the possibility of wider unity. This situation, however, changed in the following period. Among those who would make an important contribution to the improvement of education, which will subsequently be discussed, are Nizām al-Mulk (d. 1092) and al-Ghazālī (d. 1111).

### 5. Nizām al-Mulk and the Nizāmiyya

Nizām al-Mulk became the Seljūqid Vizier in 1063, during the leadership of Alp Arslān (d. 1072). The previous sultan and vizier of Seljūq were both Ḥanafīs and severely against the other schools, especially the *Shāfiʿī* and *Ashʿarī*. Nizām al-Mulk chose a different religious policy. Though he promoted the *Shāfiʿī*-*Ashʿarī* schools that he adhered to, he built a religious platform which was friendlier to the different religious schools.<sup>48</sup>

Among his policies, his educational project might be considered the most that had far-reaching impact. In 1067 he founded Nizāmiyya Madrasa in Baghdad whose reputation were so prominent that it was often regarded as the first madrasa in Islamic history. Nizāmiyya is not the first madrasa, of course, and the initial curriculum is still based on one particular school of law. The Nizāmiyya in Baghdad taught *Shāfiʿī* law, while the other Nizāmiyyas built later on in several important Seljūqid cities adhered to the school of *Shāfiʿī* or *Ḥanafī*. But there were something new that make Nizāmiyya different quite significantly from the previous madrasas. First, the government support and strong funding enabled Nizāmiyya to recruit the best scholars to teach at the institutions. The first Nizāmiyya *mudarris* in Baghdad, Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 1083), was a great *Shāfiʿī* jurist who had vast academic influence.<sup>49</sup> In Nishapur, Nizāmiyya Madrasa was led by Abū-l-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī who was the most prominent theologian of Ashʿarī in his era.<sup>50</sup>

Second, the school had generated closer cooperation between religious scholars and the government. On the one hand, this actually made the scholars more exposed to worldly attraction as mentioned before. But on the other hand, this also opened a new page which could mutually be beneficial to both the parties. The involvement of the religious scholars in the Nizāmiyya had introduced them to more direct socio-political problems, not only to pure religious matters.<sup>51</sup> It seemed that this educational institution also helped prepare officials with a more monolithic religious background as expected by Nizām al-Mulk.<sup>52</sup> Third, the establishment of Nizāmiyya had significantly encouraged the spread of *madrasas* in the following periods.<sup>53</sup> Since that time, many *madrasas* were established

<sup>48</sup>Azzam, *Saladin*, 19; Ibn al-Athīr, *The Annals of the Seljūq Turks*, 227-228, 257.

<sup>49</sup>Ibn Khallikan, *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary* 1, trans., B Mac Guckin de Slane (Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland. 1843), 10.

<sup>50</sup>Pedersen, "Madrasa," 1126.

<sup>51</sup>Azzam, *Saladin*, 31-2.

<sup>52</sup>Nizām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings*, trans., Hubert Darke (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 159-60.

<sup>53</sup>Pedersen, "Madrasa," 1126.

through the support of emirs, though *madrasas* that were not funded by government officials also existed and spread, thus channelling more and more religious scholars in creating strong intellectual milieu.

The establishment of *madrasas* would become important tools to consolidate *Sunni* Islam.<sup>54</sup> But for the time being, they were still not sufficiently able to diminish religious quarrels. As mentioned earlier, there had been several conflicts claiming casualties in the Nizāmiyya quarter. In the meantime, al-Ghazālī would offer another remedy for the society.

## 6. The Role of al-Ghazālī

When Nizām al-Mulk was killed by an assassin in 1092, al-Ghazālī was already the head of Nizāmiyya in Baghdad. He produced some of his important works during his tenure in the madrasa. However, in 1095 he experienced a spiritual crisis, resigned from his teaching post in Nizāmiyya, and travelled to Damascus and Jerusalem to practice Sufism. His life was never the same after that.

Al-Ghazālī had exerted intellectual endeavour since a very young age to examine various doctrines and thoughts of the existing religious groups and tried to find the most trustworthy approach to achieve truth. He rejected and was unsatisfied with several main religious approaches and ended up with Sufism. He was fully aware that Sufism is not merely intellectual or doctrinal, rather something to be experienced, and this later dimension had become the main reason for his *‘uzla* (seclusion) to al-Shām for about two years, and then to his hometown in Tūs, Iran.<sup>55</sup> His Sufi exercises did not give him miraculous experiences such as those attained by some great Sufi saints, but enough to convince him that Sufism is the best path to achieve the truth.<sup>56</sup>

This change affected the subsequent writings of al-Ghazālī, of which the most influential is *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* that became an important reference, even today. Some scholars suggest that al-Ghazālī’s role is very crucial in incorporating Sufism into the fold of Sunni orthodoxy, along with the four Sunni schools of law (*Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfi‘ī, Ḥanbalī*) and theology (*Ash‘arī, Māturīdī*).<sup>57</sup> Some others do not really agree to such conclusion.<sup>58</sup> However, it is safe to say that his recommendation for Sufism had an important impact in bringing schools of law and Sufism – and also *kalām* – much closer than ever before. It is true that before and during al-Ghazālī’s time the seeds toward the

<sup>54</sup>“The Rise and Decline of the Fatimid Empire,” n.d., retrieved on 22 February 2021 from <http://www.ismaili.net/Source/1359b.html>

<sup>55</sup>Al-Ghazālī, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*.

<sup>56</sup>Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 187.

<sup>57</sup>See for example Azzam, *Saladin*, 19 and Walter C. Klein in the introduction of al-Ash‘arī’s *Ibanah*, Abūl-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Ismā‘īl al-Ash‘arī, *The Elucidation of Islam’s Foundation*, trans. Walter C. Klein (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1967), 1.

<sup>58</sup>Mohamed Abubakr A. al-Musleh, “Al-Ghazālī as an Islamic Reformer,” (PhD Diss., The University of Birmingham, 2007), 263.

mutual approach between religious knowledge and Sufism had begun to emerge. We read, for example, the story of the sympathetic and respectful encounter between al-Shīrāzī and the old leader of the Sufis in Bistam, al-Sahlaki,<sup>59</sup> or about Abū-l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Hakkārī (w. 1093), a great Sufi who was also known as a *hadīth* narrator.<sup>60</sup> However, this affinity was still very limited.

It is not easy to find a Muslim scholar who was at the same time expert in jurisprudence and in Sufism before the time of al-Ghazālī, since each represents different path and method. But after the time of al-Ghazālī it became more and more common to find such a combination among the scholars. It seems that al-Ghazālī’s thought had assisted to bring a new value to the religious circle which suggest that the religious scholars actually need spiritual discipline to ensure the fulfilment of their inner faculty as well as to safeguard the eternal meaning of their scholarly career, while the Sufis has to be guided by Islamic law so as not to deviate from the *sharia* rules. Thus, in the following era we find quite a lot of examples of such combination. Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī Muhrān (d. 1150), for example, was a Shāfi‘ī jurist and the caḍi of Nisibis, but later gave up his position and lived a Sufi life in a mountain.<sup>61</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Akkāf al-Nīsābūrī (d. 1155) was an ascetic and a jurist, that is, expert in law comparison.<sup>62</sup> Abū-l-Ḥasan ibn al-Khul (d. 1156) was the shaykh of the *Shāfi‘īs* in Baghdad who “united both learning and practical piety.”<sup>63</sup> Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 1166) was a great Sufi and a *Ḥanbalī* scholar.<sup>64</sup> He graduated from Nizāmiyya *madrasa* and later led a *Ḥanbalī madrasa* in Baghdad. One of his teachers, Abū Sa‘īd al-Mukharrimī (d. 1119), instructed him both in *Ḥanbalī* jurisprudence and Sufism.<sup>65</sup> Muḥammad ibn Yaḥya al-Zabīdī (d. 1160) was a *Ḥanafī* jurist from Yemen who also a grammarian and a Sufi.<sup>66</sup> The list will be too long.

It seems that the jurists’ reception of Sufism had softened their fanatical attitude toward other schools and made them more willing to cooperate and be united. Al-Ghazālī himself highly appreciates the founders of the Sunni schools of law in his *Ihyā’*, illustrates their qualities in knowledge and piety, and criticised the attitude of the contemporary scholars

<sup>59</sup>Ibn al-Athīr, *The Annals of the Seljūq Turks*, 208.

<sup>60</sup>Abū al-Fidā’ Ismā‘īl Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya* 16 (Hajar, 1998), 138.

<sup>61</sup>‘Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al-Kamil fil-Ta’rikh, part 2, The Years 541-589/ 1146-1193: The Age of Nuruddin and Saladin*, trans. D.S. Richards (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 38.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 73.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 162.

<sup>65</sup>Herbert Mason, *Two Statesmen of Medieval Islam: Vizir Ibn Hubairah (499-560AH/1105-1165AD) and Caliph an-Nasir li Din Allah (553-622AH/1158-1225AD)* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), 31.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 29-30.

who did not really follow those *Imāms*.<sup>67</sup> It does not mean, of course, that there was no more quarrel among the scholars of different schools after him. However, it could be said that the number of disputes and skirmishes had decreased and gradually replaced by eagerness to cooperate.

### 7. Religious Education in the Era of Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn

Many emirs after Nizām al-Mulk established *madrasas* in their territories, while Sufism increasingly attracted participation of scholars, officials, and commoners, paving the way for a widespread culture of knowledge and piety. Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥamza ibn ‘Alī (d. 1161), an important government official, for example, built a *Shāfi‘ī* madrasa in his city and one day, after a pilgrimage, he gave up his position and followed a Sufi path.<sup>68</sup> Other emirs usually did not choose such a drastic change, but they utilised their position to support the spread of knowledge and piety. This trend reached its peak in al-Shām and Egypt under Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn.

Both rulers, Nūr al-Dīn and then Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, were well-known for their personal piety and great support for religious causes. It could be said that they were among the most important fruits of that era and in turn they strengthened the religious atmosphere in their kingdoms. Nūr al-Dīn became the sultan in Aleppo in 1146, just before the Second Crusade. He built many religious institutions such as mosques and Sufi *khanqa* that were regularly received assistance from his government. His support for the building of madrasas was remarkable. About this, Azzam writes: Prior to Nūr al-Dīn, 16 privately constructed madrasas existed in the Zengid Empire. During his reign 40 madrasas were constructed, of which Nūr al-Dīn himself personally commissioned 20.... Crucially it appeared to matter little to which *madhab* the madrasa was commissioned; Hanafis built madrasas for *Shāfi‘īs* and *Shāfi‘īs* for *Hanafīs*, and we see no signs of tensions in Syria which existed further east.<sup>69</sup>

Indeed, there was a new spirit of cooperation among the schools of law in this period, though the existence of each school and the ruling to follow only one school for each individual had been maintained. Nūr al-Dīn and Shirkūh, for example, built a madrasa in Aleppo which accommodated two schools of law, *Hanaḥī* and *Shāfi‘ī*, each represents the school adopted by each leader. Gradually, more schools of law were included in certain

<sup>67</sup>Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* 1 (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2011), 90-1.

<sup>68</sup>Ibn al-Athīr, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fīl-Ta’rīkh*, 2, 131. It should be noted, however, that a phenomena where Muslim officials gave important donations and support to educational institutions had already existed before the emergence of *madrasa*, though its background and implication was not the same with the focus of this study.

<sup>69</sup>Azzam, *Saladin*, 34-5.



*madrasas*, which previously seemed unthinkable, so at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century there were several *madrasas* that taught the four Sunni schools of law.<sup>70</sup>

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn followed Nūr al-Dīn's policy. In 1171, not long after entering Egypt, he changed *Dāral-Ma'ūna*, a Fatimid detainment building in Old Cairo, and another Fatimid building, Hall of Justice, into two *Shāfi'ī* madrasas. His nephew, Taqī al-Dīn 'Umar, followed suit in the same year by purchasing one of the Fatimid palaces in Old Cairo, *Manāzil al-'Izz*, and changed it into a *Shāfi'ī* madrasa.<sup>71</sup> After the recapture of Jerusalem, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn built Madrasa Nāsiriyya in that city.<sup>72</sup> Besides, madrasa, schools of traditions (*hadīth*), hospices for the Sufis (*ribāṭs*) or other kind of religious establishments that could strengthen religious life were also promoted. A school of Traditions, *Dār al-Hadīth*, for example, was built in Damascus by al-Malik al-Ashraf, another nephew of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn.<sup>73</sup> Not only Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's family, other emirs also participated in this. Fakhr al-Dawla Abū-l-Muzaffar, the son of the Caliph's *wazīr*, built a hospice for the Sufis (*ribāṭ*) and a madrasa in Baghdad.<sup>74</sup> Ladies also played important roles. In 1184, the Caliph's mother established a *ribāṭ* in the Ma'mūniyya in Baghdad,<sup>75</sup> while sister of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Sitt al-Shām Zaman Khātūn, built a madrasa in Damascus and another madrasa outside the city.<sup>76</sup>

Beyond the endowment of the emirs, other madrasas were also built independently by Muslim scholars, yet with similar pattern of change. One good example of this was the Ḥanbalī Madrasa in Baghdad built by al-Mukharrimī and expanded by al-Jīlānī. A number of al-Jīlānī's students had participated in the struggle against the crusaders along with Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. The case was also the same with some of the graduates of Madrasa 'Adawiyya in the Kurdish region.<sup>77</sup>

### 8. Analysis Based on al-Attas Concept

Based on al-Attas' idea, the problem of leadership in the Abbasid realm and the following socio-political decline in the 11<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries was because of the problem of confusion of knowledge and loss of *adab*. Religious knowledge at that time heavily stressed the importance of jurisprudence, thus generated problems pertaining to *adab*. The term of *fiqh* that reduced its meaning into jurisprudence is actually an alteration from its original semantic meaning. This is somehow a corruption of

<sup>70</sup>Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 173.

<sup>71</sup>Ibn al-Athīr, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fīl-Ta'rīkh*, 2, 194.

<sup>72</sup>Ibn Khallikan, *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary* 2, trans. B Mac Guckin de Slane (Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1843), 189.

<sup>73</sup>Ibn Khallikan, *Ibn Khallikan's*, 2, 189.

<sup>74</sup>Ibn al-Athīr, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fīl-Ta'rīkh*, 2, 290.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 298.

<sup>76</sup>Ibn Khallikan, *Ibn Khallikan's* 2, 189.

<sup>77</sup>Kilani, *Misteri*, 251-260.

knowledge, because its original meaning had been neglected, so it became one of the issues addressed by al-Ghazālī in his book.<sup>78</sup>

The importance of *fiqh* cannot be denied, but the details of jurisprudence that become the main concern of the jurists are simply *farḍ kifāya* and parts of general knowledge (*‘ilm*). This focus had become the prominent characteristic of the scientific activities of many jurists in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and this had undermined and distorted the hierarchy of knowledge. In other words, the process of “levelling” had unconsciously occurred, as if the expertise in *fiqh* details – as well as the exhaustive arguments in theology – which is *farḍ kifāya* was put in the highest position in the scholarly tradition. Al-Ghazālī criticizes this in the introduction of *al-Ihyā’* that religious learnings had been forgotten and the lights of guidance had almost vanished – this is generally in line with al-Attas’ category of *ma’rifā* – and people were deceived to believe that jurisprudence (*fiqh*), debating skill (*munāẓara*) and theology (*kalām*) were the only categories of knowledge to be achieved.<sup>79</sup> The main concern of these three actually pertains to the general knowledge (*‘ilm*) and not to the illuminative knowledge (*ma’rifā*).

Al-Ghazālī also points to the problem of “levelling”<sup>80</sup> by showing that the scholars of his generation were not supposed to see themselves as equals to the early generations. He explained how the founders of the schools of jurisprudence had a much higher position because they had five qualities that mostly related to the afterlife, such as devout (*‘ābidan*) and ascetic (*zāhidan*), all of which are parts of or paths to achieve the *ma’rifā* category of knowledge, and only one that was related to worldly aspects (*‘ilm* category), namely the one deals with *fiqh* details, while most of the scholars in al-Ghazālī’s era only possessed this last quality.<sup>81</sup>

The main attention to *farḍ kifāya* type of knowledge had also brought to the problem of “socialization”, in which many scholars were now utilizing their knowledge to achieve social and political position as well as economic gain. Education for some people, then, became a tool to make themselves good citizens, rather than good men, and it became something desirable for their worldly career. Al-Ghazālī mentions about the great interest among the students to pursue *fiqh* knowledge, but he warns that “to those who do not fear God, jurisprudence has turned into an object of pride and a means for acquiring name and fame.”<sup>82</sup> Socialization in fact did not give any positive impact to the upkeep of social bond

<sup>78</sup>Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, “Welcoming Address,” International Conference on al-Ghazali’s Legacy: Its Contemporary Relevance, Kuala Lumpur: The International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 24-27 October 2001, 5-6; Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education*, 11.

<sup>79</sup>Abū Hāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Revival of Religious Learnings: Imam Ghazzali’s Ihya Ulum-id-Din* 1, trans. Fazl-ul-Karim (Karachi: Darul-Ishaat, 1993), 14.

<sup>80</sup>Of course al-Ghazālī does not use this term in his writings.

<sup>81</sup>Al-Ghazālī, *Revival of Religious Learnings: Imam Ghazzali’s Ihya Ulum-id-Din* 1, 38; Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’* 1, 91.

<sup>82</sup>Al-Ghazali, *Revival of Religious Learnings: Imam Ghazzali’s Ihya Ulum-id-Din* 1, 17.

and harmony. It only encouraged self-importance and harsh competition among individuals and groups of people, which led to dispute and conflict. However, when Islamic learning was brought back to its original purpose, to create a good man, social problem was gaining its remedy; the schools of law, and people in general, started to unite and work together for the general benefit of the *umma*.

The situation also revealed the problem of “despiritualizing.” Spiritualism was clearly absent from the mainstream of Islamic studies and was no more the standard of pursuing and spreading knowledge. Aware of the popularity of *fiqh*, al-Ghazālī decided to use its structure as the model for his *Ihyā’*, but for the contents he introduced what are good for the reader’s happiness in the Hereafter.<sup>83</sup> In other word, he reintroduces spiritualism to the mainstream of Islamic studies. The spread of *al-Ihyā’* seemed to bring back people, especially Muslim scholars’, awareness about their oversight and they started to welcome spiritualism, or Sufism, to become part of the mainstream of learning and scholarly activities.

The role played by al-Ghazālī might provide a solution for the problem of loss of *adab*. According to al-Attas, the vicious circle of confusion and error in knowledge, loss of *adab*, and the rise of false leaders could only be solved by addressing first the problem of loss of *adab*, “since no true knowledge can be instilled without the precondition of *adab*.”<sup>84</sup> Al-Ghazālī actually started the restoration of *adab* with himself, through the purification of intention. He withdrew from his position in the Niẓāmiyya and focused on improving his own soul, only after which *al-Ihyā’* was possible to be written. Through *al-Ihyā’*, al-Ghazālī seeks to release people from their confusion and error of knowledge by showing the real meaning of religious knowledge in Islam and its real function for Muslims. The restoration of *adab* and the rectification of knowledge, following al-Attas’ explanation, could expectedly generate the subsequent good leaders such as Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn.

## 9. Conclusion

Religious education in the 11<sup>th</sup> century Abbasid cities grew rapidly and reached maturity in various fields, such as *fiqh*, theology, philology, and to a certain extent Sufism. Islamic jurisprudence had developed and crystallised into four Sunni schools of law. Their self-reliance was followed by strong fanaticism and, as a result, conflicts often occurred between the existing schools. However, in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, religious hostility, especially among the Sunni schools, was decreasing. In conjunction with this development, political deterioration and improvement happened. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Abbasid was getting weaker and its western territories had become vulnerable to the Fatimid expansion and to the crusaders incursion, but in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, several strong emirs in the Abbasid realm emerged and had gradually been able to retake its western

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 106. He gives example that the Holy Qur’ān, the fountain of all true knowledge, cannot be approached without the prescribed *adab* of ritual purity.

provinces. At around the same period, religious education had developed in the Abbasid realm. *Madrasas* were founded and spread widely, with law (*fiqh*) in the centre of its curriculum. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Sufism had received more and more attention and reception by the *Sunni* jurists, of which al-Ghazali had an important share.

All these changes, political, social and educational, had occurred at around the same period under study. To prove that there is a strong correlation among the three is difficult, but to think that these three aspects of change have no connection at all is also impossible. This study at least attempts to show that they were generally coinciding and suggests, though perhaps speculative, that changes in education had influenced the other two, social and political. This influence, of course, was not entirely one direction, because the social and political changes, in turn, prompted the intensification of changes in education.

An explanation for this can be sought through the thought of SMN al-Attas. The presence of Sufism in the 12<sup>th</sup> century Islamic education had actually emphasized the supremacy of illuminative knowledge (*ma'rifa*) over general knowledge (*'ilm*), which accordingly led to the process of restoration of *adab*, through the reversal of "levelling", "socialization" and "despiritualizing." This restoration had brought back people's awareness from confusion and error of knowledge, that knowledge in Islam is not supposed to be used to fight each other nor for worldly interest, but for the benefit in the hereafter, which gave impetus to the subsequent shrinking of socio-religious quarrels and to the increasing tendency for unity. Then, amid this improved religious atmosphere, good Muslim leaders emerged and reinforced further the new direction of education, a process that, despite partially and unevenly applied to the Abbasid realm during the period of study, was sufficiently observable in certain regions, such as al-Shām. Finally, this explanation is certainly not intended to undermine the complexity of the existing history, but as an attempt to explain the phenomenon that may in some measure be beneficial to academicians and general readers.

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