THE BLOODLESS COUP OF SALĀH AL-DĪN AL-AYYŪBI

Curriculum Reforms in the Ayyūbid's Egypt (569/966 AH) (1174/1263 AD)

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INTRODUCTION

The period of Ayyūbid rule in Egypt (569/966 AH) (1174/1263 AD) was an important historical Islamic juncture, in which the curriculum demonstrated a wonderful ability to be a dominant or subordinate tool in its relation with politics.

INTRODUCTION

- Establishment of the Sunni Ayyūbid state in Egypt.

- Relationship between curriculum of the and Ayyubid state and its adopted madhab.

- Educational practices: Institutions, Curriculum, Ranks & status of scholars, Students and their social background. Financing of education.

- Conclusions.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SUNNI AYYŪBID STATE IN EGYPT

The Ayyūbid succeeded the Fatimids (969 AD/358 AH-1171 AD/567 AH) in ruling Egypt, Syria, and North Africa. They were aided by the following factors:

1. Decline of Fatimid caliph authority.
2. Power struggle between Fatimid viziers and army commanders.
3. Ailing economy (famine and plague)
4. Failure of Ismā'īli *da'wah*'s to penetrate into the public inhabitants of Egypt and win over the Sunni majority.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SUNNI AYYŪBID STATE IN EGYPT

Meanwhile, the north east of Egypt was witnessing the rising of a new power: The *atābakiya*

(Atābak is a hereditary title of nobility indicating a governor of a nation or province who was subordinate to a monarch and charged with raising the crown prince)

Upon an appeal from the Fatimid Vizier (Shāwar), Shīrkūh, a right hand man for Nūr al-Dīn, and his nephew Salāh al-Dīn al-Ayyūbi, entered Egypt. The latter consolidated his power as a Fatimid vizier and later took over from the last Fatimid caliph in a bloodless coup.

RESTORATION OF SUNNISM IN EGYPT

The preoccupation and devotion of Salāh al-Dīn to the idea of *jihād* against the crusaders did not deter him from Restoring Sunnism in Egypt and eliminate the unpopular Shī'a Fatimid intellectual heritage.

RESTORATION OF SUNNISM IN EGYPT

He took the following measures:

1. Establishing a number of Sunni law colleges in Egypt.
2. Founding a *house* for *hadīth*.
3. Destruction of Fatimid collections of Ismā'īli books.
4. Giving preference to the Shāfi'ite *madhhab*.
5. Relegation of al-Azhar mosque status.
6. Introduction of *al-Hisbah* doctrine.
7. Allocation of endowments for charity and educational institutions.

CURRICULUM AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ADOPTED MADHHAB OF THE STATE

- Standardization of curriculum (abolition of dual character of Fatimid exoteric and dogmatic esoteric curriculum)

- Sponsoring of *madrasas* for different Sunni *madhāhib*, with special preference towards Shāfi'ites. To emphasize that official adherence and sympathy, the *madrasas*, including its curriculum have been placed under the direct supervision and management of the Shāfi'ite judicial authorities.

- Clear support for Sufism probably as a response to the direct threat posed by Ismā'īlism.

CURRICULUM AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ADOPTED MADHHAB OF THE STATE

- Patronage of the Ash'arite Doctrines. That could be justified by the fact that:

1- the Ayyūbid doctrine was Ash'arism, which seeks in its dogmatic and philosophical part to reconcile theological differences among the Islamic sects. In its political part, it attempted to propagate a supporting political da'wah to the Sunni Abbasid caliphs and to the adherent sultāns who vindicated their caliphate and took upon themselves the duty of jihād (Ahmad Fuad Al-Syed, Tārīkh Misr al-Ayyūbiyyah Zaman Salātin Bani Ayyūb)

2- Salāh Al-Dīn's personal adherence to Ash'arism.

Despite the state's growing patronage of Ash'arism and Shāfi'ism in Egypt it did not provide one regular and uniformed curriculum for its sponsored *madrasas* and *khānaqāhs*.

CURRICULUM AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ADOPTED MADHHAB OF THE STATE

Most of *madrasas* in Egypt adopted syllabus that included:

1. *fiqh* according to one of the Sunni four *madhāhib*.

2. Ash'arite theology

3. *hadīth* sciences.

4. Qur'an sciences that involved *tafsīr*.

5. Arabic language and literature.

Lesser emphasis was given to *al-ʿŪlūm al-'Aqliyya* (rational sciences) and *'ulūm al-Awā'il* (sciences of the ancient) such as *al-Mantiq* (logic), *al-Riyādhiyāt wa al-Hisāb* (arithmetic and accounting), *al-Handasah* (geometry), *falak* (Astronomy) and *al-Tabī'iyyāt* (the natural sciences).

MAJOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The educational institutions in the Ayyūbid period were more or less, like the educational institutions in the Muslim world at that time. Among them:

1. Madrasas
2. Khānaqāhs
3. Jāmi's
4. Ribāts
5. Maktabs
6. Maktabas (Libraries)
7. Bīmarīstāns

'ULAMA AND TEACHERS IN THE AYYŪBID PERIOD

- Due to their deeply rooted social status, ruling elites were obliged to cop and sometimes to simulate the natural veneration of the community towards the *'ulama*. Hence, they demonstrated a vigilant respect and accommodated their demands.

- Procedures of selecting the *mudarrisīn* (professors) who can work in *madrasas* have been strict.

The levels and ranks of people who worked in the field of *tadrīs* (learning) in the Ayyūbid period were:

- *Qur'an qāri*
- *Mu'allim*
- *Mu'addib*
- *Mudarris*
- *Mu'īd*
- *al-Shaykh*
- *al-Qādi*

STUDENTS AND THEIR SOCIAL BACKGROUND

- *shuyūkh*'s relationship with their *tullāb* in the Ayyūbid period exceeded the simple limits of teaching and learning, it reflected a spiritual and ethical parental relation model.

- Students of the existing institutions of learning were divided according to their *madhhab* affiliation within the Sunni context.

- Besides providing educational and learning opportunities for their students, *madrasas* provided and also means of living.

- The standards of living for teachers and students were dependent on the value of the *waqf* endowed to the *madrasah*, and the amount of revenues that the *waqf* yielded.

STUDENTS AND THEIR SOCIAL BACKGROUND

- *madrasas* helped in providing equal opportunities to the children of rich and poor alike, and students from all walks of life had full access to education.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Religious and leadership authority in the Ayyūbid Sunni state was assumed by the *'ulama* while the political authority was undertaken by the sultāns.

2. The fundamental change in the Ayyūbid religio-educational policies, was the success in restoring Sunnism in Egypt and abolishing the Ismā'īli doctrine of the Fatimids. Second to it was the restoration of allegiance to the Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad. *Madrasas* played a very significant role in the execution of these two policies.

CONCLUSIONS

3. The autonomy that Sunni *'ulama* maintained in early Islam up to the military Seljūks, deteriorated further under the military patronage state of the Ayyūbids (1175-1265). The elite *amīrs* and *a'yān* became involved in the social and intellectual life of Egypt, and due to the militarization of the system, they were able to patronize the *'ulama*'s by offering them positions at various state-sponsored institutions. In return for the latter full support.

4. Formal and informal institutions of education in the Ayyūbid period were arenas in which power and politics received a fundamental expression.

CONCLUSIONS

5. The Ayyūbid chain of *madrasas* and *khānaqāhs* to some extent, helped to forge and restore a common Sunni identity in Egypt.

6. Learning was free in the Ayyūbid period, it was open to all and in some cases, students received stipends for their support from the *waqf* income. The *waqf* was deeply embedded in the thoughts and practices of medieval Islamic community.

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