

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn al-Ṣāliḥī l-Dimashqī l-Ḥanafī

Ibn Ṭūlūn

DATE OF BIRTH 1473
PLACE OF BIRTH Al-Ṣāliḥiyya, Damascus
DATE OF DEATH 1546
PLACE OF DEATH —

BIOGRAPHY

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn was one of the most prolific writers of his age, mostly noted for his works on Prophetic traditions, jurisprudence and history. His autobiography, *Al-fulk al-mashḥūn fī aḥwāl Muḥammad ibn Ṭūlūn*, is an excellent source for his intellectual and religious career as well as the traditional Islamic education of his time. Born in al-Ṣāliḥiyya, a suburb of Damascus on Mount Qāsiyūn, Ibn Ṭūlūn belonged to a family of scholars, including his paternal uncle, Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ṭūlūn, a *qāḍī* and *muftī* of the Palace of Justice (Dār al-‘adl). Ibn Ṭūlūn was said to have completed the reading of the Qur’an by the age of seven. When he was 11, he received a stipend from the *waqf* of the Māridāniyya madrasa to pursue his study of jurisprudence. He also received *ijāza* from his contemporary, the Egyptian scholar al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505).

Besides his post as preacher in the Umayyad Mosque, he occupied numerous teaching and administrative posts of a religious nature, such as his position as Ḥanafī *muftī* of Damascus. Avoiding any political involvements during the late Mamluk and early Ottoman eras, he lived as a bachelor and devoted most of his life to scholarship and writing. In his autobiography, the list of books he studied and his own works (750 titles) show the breadth of his interests and writings, especially in the fields of history, Arabic grammar, Hadith and jurisprudence. Many of these works are no longer extant.

Ibn Ṭūlūn was interested in many fields of learning, including various traditional Islamic sciences as well as history, medicine and astronomy. His works on history and the Prophetic traditions do not deal directly with Christian-Muslim relations, but he alludes briefly to events related

to Christians. For instance, in his work *I'lām al-sā'ilīn 'an kutub Sayyid al-mursalīn* ('Enlightening questioners about the writings of the Master of messengers'), he cites the letters that MuḤammad sent to Christian rulers such as the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, the Muqawqis of Egypt and the Negus of Abyssinia (*I'lām al-sā'ilīn*, various places). In his works on history, he gives an account of various historical disputes between Christian and Muslims. For example, on 3 April 1481 three shops in Damascus owned by Christians were robbed (*Mufākahat al-khillān*, vol. 1, p. 33). On 6 May in the same year, it was reported from Jerusalem that 3,000 Abyssinian Christians entered the city to celebrate the Easter. Their leader, sitting on a golden seat that was specially prepared for him, ordered the church bells to be rung, which interfered so much with the Muslim call to prayer that the voice of the *mu'adhdhin* was not heard. When a Muslim shouted out, 'O, Islam', the Christians set about him with their weapons; and it was said that he actually died (*Mufākahat al-khillān*, vol. 1, p. 33).

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Primary

- R. Hartmann, *Das Tübinger Fragment der Chronik des Ibn Ṭūlūn*, Berlin, 1926
 Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Al-fulk al-mashhūn fī ahwāl MuḤammad ibn Ṭūlūn*, Cairo, 1929
 Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Al-qalā'id al-jawhariyya fī tā'rikh al-Ṣālihiyya*, ed. MuḤammad AḤmad Duhmān, 2 vols, Damascus, 1949-56
 Ibn Ṭūlūn, *I'lām al-sā'ilīn 'an kutub Sayyid al-mursalīn*, ed. Maḥmūd al-Arnā'ūt, 2 vols, Beirut, 1987
 Ibn al-Ghazzī, *Al-kawākib al-sā'ira bi-a'yān l-mi'a al-'āshira*, Beirut, 1997, vol. 2, pp. 51-53
 Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān*, ed. Khalīl al-Mansūr, 2 vols, Beirut, 1998

Secondary

- W.M. Brinner, art. 'Ibn Ṭūlūn', *El2*
 Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Munajjid, *Al-mu'arrikhūn al-dimashqiyyūn*, Cairo, 1956, pp. 79-81

WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Risāla fī ḥukm 'Īsā 'alayhi al-salām huna nuzūlih,
 'A treatise on the verdict about the descent of Jesus
 (peace be upon him)'

DATE Before 1536

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Arabic

DESCRIPTION

Like many other works by Ibn Ṭūlūn, this treatise is not known to be extant. Its title is listed by Ismā‘īl Pasha al-Baghdādī together with Ibn Ṭūlūn’s other 40 works of Hadith, while Brockelmann mentions it as *Irshād dhawi l-‘irfān li-nuzūl Isā ‘alayhi al-salām*. Strangely enough, this title is not mentioned in Ibn Ṭūlūn’s autobiographical *Al-fulk al-mashḥūn*, where more than 750 titles of his works are listed.

SIGNIFICANCE

It can be assumed that Ibn Ṭūlūn wrote this work as a historian and scholar of Hadith. It was thus probably a study of the authenticity of the prophetic traditions about the ascension of Jesus and his return to earth at the Last Judgement, rather than a polemical work against Christianity.

MANUSCRIPTS —

EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS —

STUDIES

Ismā‘īl Pasha al-Baghdādī, *Hadīyat al-‘ārifīn. Asmā’ al-mu’allifīn wa-āthār al-muṣannifīn*, Beirut, Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, n.d., vol. 2, pp. 240-41

Brockelmann, *GAL*, vol. 2, p. 481, S 2, p. 494

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