A NOTE ON MUSLIM JUDGES AND THE PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE*

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As any student of Islamic law would be aware that the _Shari'ah_ demands the enforcement of justice, the establishment of the Islamic judicial institution would be essential without which justice and fairplay can never be upheld. Instead, tyranny and arbitrariness will be rampant. For this very reason, the Islamic judiciary evolved during the time of the Prophet himself: the appointment of both ‘Ali and Mu’adh as _qādis_ in Yemen and ‘Uttāb b. ‘Usayd in Mecca. Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, continued the practice; he appointed, among others, ‘Umar b. al-Khattāb as a _qādi_ for about a year (though none appeared before him). Generally speaking, during the reign of the Rightly Guided Caliphate, the judicial institution took a form similar to that in the period of the Prophet. There was no demarcation of judicial powers from that of other powers. The institution was headed by the Caliph who was assisted by several appointed deputies.

As for the Umayyad period, sources mention that the Caliphs were not involved in appointing judges neither in the capital nor in the leading towns of the great territorial divisions. The administration of justice was left to provincial governors and their legal secretaries. However, the most significant contribution of the Umayyads was the establishment of the

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* Paper presented at Il Joseph Schacht Conference on Theory and Practice in Islamic Law, organised by the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), Granada, Spain, 16-20th December, 1997.

2 Amin, Muhammad, _Ta’rikh al-Qudàt_ fi l-Islàm, Cairo, n.d., 11.
3 Ibid., vol. 1, 104.
5 Waki’, Akhbâr al-Quḍât, vol. 1, 141 and vol. 3, 235. The report speaks about the appointment of Ibn Lahî’a that is, ‘he was the first judge in Egypt ever appointed by the Caliph and was paid 30 dinars monthly as salary. This is because, previously, the local governors used to appoint the judges’ (ibid.).
Maṣālim court. This establishment enabled the public to seek redress against officials including judges.

It was the Abbasid Caliphate which introduced a significant change in the appointment and dismissal of judges. Under the Abbasids, judges were appointed in the same manner as governors (wāli), that is by the same appointing authority i.e. the Caliph in Baghdād. Under this arrangement, theoretically speaking, judges were perceived to be on equal footing with local governors. Equally interesting is that under the Abbasids, the judiciary was put under the control of the central government by creating the post of Chief-Judge (Qādi al-Qudat), the highest judicial post. The post signifies that all subordinate judges were to work under the Chief-Judge. The credit for this significant move is due to Caliph Ḥārūn al-Rashīd because prior to his time, qādis or judges, irrespective of whether they were appointed to the capital or to the various provinces, were of equal status with no hierarchy among themselves.

As far as the writer is concerned this move by the Caliph was not an unexpected one. The Abbasid government was very much disposed to the centralisation of political power, administration as well as law and justice. Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr, for example, in contrast to the practice of the Umayyads, started to appoint not only judges but also governors and administrators to centralise all such appointments. Since the appointment of both judges and governors in the past was left to the local authority, the act of Abū Ja'far was a new initiative to bring all political and administrative tasks under the proper central control of the government in Baghdād. As the provincial administration was kept under governors appointed by the Caliph in the capital city, likewise, the judicial administration was entrusted to the provincial qādi appointed by the central government.

Centralisation led to standardisation. Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr tried to persuade Imām Mālik to agree to make the Muwatta the sole and ultimate reference for all judges and muftis throughout the Abbasid government. However, Imām Mālik declined for a purely academic reason. Had Imām Mālik agreed to this

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8 Shabārū, al-Quṣūṣ, 19.
proposition, the Abbasids would have been the first Islamic government to make Islamic fiqh uniform and «codified».

Soon after this, the next head of state of the Abbasid government namely, Hārūn al-Rashîd continued his predecessor’s aspiration. He persuaded another leading jurist namely, Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798), to compile the principles of the law of taxation or revenue which resulted in the writing of Kitāb al-Kharāj. Not only that, Hārūn al-Rashîd moved further to consolidate the position of Chief-Judge (Qādi al-Quḍāt) which was an adaptation of the Persian institution of mobedan-mobed. The first qādi to be appointed to this highest post in the history of Islamic judiciary was Abū Yūsuf, the author of Kitāb al-Kharāj. Under the purview of this institution, at least in theory, the Chief Qādi was supposed to be appointed by the Caliph and the former in turn, by delegation from the Caliph, appointed qādis subordinate to him to various parts of the city and to outlying districts. In other words, the qādi al-quḍāt is, above all, a judge. However, to him was delegated the judicial administration: the nomination, control and dismissal of judges.

The inclination and measures of the Abbasid government to centralise all matters pertaining to political and administrative tasks inclusive of judicial administration have been seen as the evidence of their long-standing political statements and claims that the government which overthrew the Umayyads was more legitimate and pious. The stand of the Abbasids was very clear and they had made it clear on most political occasions after they overthrew the Umayyads. One of the many examples is the speech delivered by Abū Ja’far al-Manṣūr when he visited Mecca. He addressed the people of Mecca considering himself as the ruler appointed by Allah to administer this world. Also, he disclosed his pious intentions to rule the people of Mecca with the guidance and help from Allah.

Abū Ja’far is also reported to have explicitly mentioned that judgeship is one of the four important pillars of his government. The Abbasids manifested

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17 Ibn Qutayba, Abū Muḥammād Abī Allāh b. Muslim, ‘Uyun al-Akhbār, Cairo, 1925, vol. 2, 251: Ayyūhā al-nās innāmā anā sūfūn Allāh fi arḍāhi, asūsukum bi tawfiqīhi wa tasdīdīhi wa ta‘yīdīhi wa tabādhīhi (see ibid.).
18 Ibn al-Athîr, ‘Izz al-Dīn Abū al-Hasan ‘Ali b. Muḥammad, al-Kāmil fi al-Tā’rikh, Beirut, 1985, vol. 5, 46. In addition to the appointment of a judge, he also mentioned the other remaining three posts which are of significant importance for the government, namely head of police, head of
this desire and claim by calling all persons in their domains, including the rulers, to abide by Shari'ah principles.\(^\text{19}\) This included judicial administration. For this very reason, the Abbasid caliphs paid serious attention to the appointment of judges because, as expressed by al-Manṣūr: «I am responsible to my people to appoint their judges who are firm and uphold justice so that injustice may be avoided and the status of scholars is upgraded».\(^\text{20}\) On this, Schacht noted: «Under the Abbasids, when the main features of the Shari'ah had already been definitely established, when Islamic law had come to be recognised, in theory at least, as the only legitimate norm of behaviour for Muslims, and when the kādīs, bound to apply this law, were appointed by the central government under the direct authority of the Caliph, the caliph himself had to be incorporated into the system».\(^\text{21}\) The special attention shown by the Abbasids to judgeship is substantiated by the remuneration granted to the judge and his assistants.\(^\text{22}\)

**ABBASID JUDGES IN EGYPT (132-254/750-868): AN OVERVIEW**

The main purpose of this part of the discussion is to shed some light on each and every judge appointed in Egypt so as to apprehend the general features and trends of judgeship during this period. To begin with, we may note that Egypt, unlike the capital Baghdad, had experienced different political and legal developments than Baghdad and, perhaps other provinces and localities. Egypt (also known as Misr) was conquered by 'Amr b. al-‘Āṣ in 18-21/639-641. Following the conquest, it came under the governors appointed by the Rightly Guided Caliphs (21-38/658-676) before it was taken over by the Caliphate of the Umayyads (36/658-676). Later, Egypt was ruled by governors affiliated to the Umayyad government (38-132/658-750) before it was taken over by the

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\(^{21}\) Schacht, An Introduction to Islamic Law, 52.

\(^{22}\) In year 155 A. H. a judge in Egypt used to receive 30 dinars for the salary for one month. Later, Caliph al-Ma'mūn increased the salary to 160 dinars per month. See al-Kindi, Wulāt Misr, 369, 421.
Abbasids (132-254/750-868). After this period, Egypt was subject to the rule of the Tulunids for a number of years (254-292/868-905) before the Abbasids were able to recover Egypt from the Tulunids. The second victory over Egypt lasted for only 31 years before the control of Abbasids of Egypt (and elsewhere) started to decline and fell to many dynasties and the Mamluks.23

As this paper concerns only the first part of Abbasid rule and governance of Egypt, it will exclude the second part of Abbasid rule which was restored after the defeat of the Tulunids in 292/905. The first part of the Abbasid rule extended over 122 years and it appointed 22 judges throughout this period.24 The judges, generally speaking, were of diverse legal education background. Also, their terms of appointment varied. A few of them were reappointed after dismissal.25 Some of them were acting as judges before they were officially appointed to the bench.26 Also, interestingly, the reasons that led to the dismissals (except in the case of death) were of different categories and kinds which are worth reflection as far as qualifications for judgeship are concerned.

Before we discuss issues of both appointment and dismissal of judges, it is worth presenting the general state of judgeship and judicial administration in that period as an essential introduction to a more analytical type of research later on. Generally speaking, all the judges were appointed by the Caliph in Baghdad who was also vested with the authority to dismiss and remove the judges from the post. This is simply because the power of appointment was vested in the Caliph or in persons empowered by the Caliph. Self-appointment of a qādi was out of the question.27 Some of the appointments were either based on nomination by scholars in Baghdad or scholars of the respective localities, or local governors, or personal desire of the Caliph. Therefore, there are cases where the judges were appointed by the local governors instead of the Caliph as in the case of ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir who appointed ʿIsā b. al-Munkadir in 212/828.28 Interestingly, in this particular appointment, six potential candidates were proposed to ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir but the governor was more inclined to appoint ʿIsā simply because the latter was known to be simple and undemanding.29 Although most of the

24 Excluding judges who were appointed for more than one time.
25 For example, Ghawth b. Sulaỳmān was appointed to the post of judgeship for three times while al-Muafaḍḍa b. Fāḍila was appointed for two times. See al-Kindī, Wulāt Miṣr, 269, 272, 282, 285, 290.
28 Al-Kindī, Wulāt Miṣr, 326.
29 Ibid., 328.
judges were appointed by the central government, only al-Ma'mûn visited Egypt in 217/832 when he was away from Baghdad for a military mission. As no judge was appointed to the post after the dismissal of Judge ïsä b. al-Munkadir in 214/830, al-Ma'mûn had to temporarily appoint Yahyä b. Aktham after al-Ma'mûn failed to persuade 'Alî b. Ma'bad b. Shaddâd to take the office. There was another case in which a judge was initially appointed by a local governor and later endorsed by the Caliph. A good example is the appointment of Judge al-Mufaddal b. Faḍâla for the second time by the local governor Dâwûd b. Yazîd b. Hâtim where the appointment letter was later confirmed by a letter from Hârûn al-Rashîd.31

Although the Abbasids had introduced the institution of qâdi al-qudât, the appointment of judges, particularly in provinces outside Baghdad as in the case of Egypt, was carried out mostly by the local governors as in the cases of the appointment of Khayr b. Nu'aym (133-135/751-753)32, Ghawth b. Sulaymân (135-140/753-758)33, Abû Khuzayma (144-154/762-771), etc. Equally true is that most of the appointment letters came directly from the Caliph in Baghdad which reinforced the centralization adopted by the Abbasids. The first person to be appointed as a judge by the central government direct was 'Abd Allah b. Lahi'a al-Hâşramî (155-164/772-781)34 followed by al-Mufaḍḍal b. Faḍâla (168-169/785-786)35, 'Abd al-Rahmân al-'Umârî (185-194/801-810)36, etc. In this respect, the qâdi al-qudât, in the Abbasid period, was perceived to have played a role only in presenting or nominating candidates.37

Having said this, we may question whether this was actually the practice. However, upon a thorough study, it appears that there was hardly any instance during that period, for the Chief-Judge even nominating candidates for the post let alone exercise the power of appointing judges. In most cases, the Caliph or the

30 Ibid., 333.
31 Ibid., 290.
33 Ibid., 269.
35 Al-Kindî, Wu‘ût Misr, 285. He was appointed by Mûsâ b. Muṣ‘ab, then the governor of Egypt, as the latter was instructed by the Caliph al-Mahfî to issue an appointment letter on the Caliph’s behalf (ibid).
36 Ibid., 296.
37 Encyclopaedia of Islam [New Edition], vol. 4, 374. It was only after the Fatimid caliphate and onwards that the qâdi al-qudât was able to exercise their powers personally, as part of the general delegation that they had received (ibid.).
local governors, as the case may be, consulted the local scholar instead of qādi al-quḍāt for nominations of candidates and appointment of judges. At this stage, a preliminary conclusion may be made that the notion of centralised administration of justice by introducing the institution of qādi al-quḍāt was not really in practice.

Also, from an overall perspective, it seems that the period of office of judges was not uniform. While some of the judges enjoyed relatively longer period at their posts, others had to serve for very short periods before they were removed or dismissed for one reason or another. For comparison, I cite the cases of Hārūn b. ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Aźzi (217-226/832-841) and Muhammad b. Abī al-Layth al-Khawārizmī (226-237/841-852) who both had served for nearly eleven years each.38 and the case of Ibrāhīm b. Iṣḥāq al-Qārī (204-205/820-821) who served only for six months.39 The longest period of service of a judge belongs to Judge Bakkār b. Qutayba. He held office for 24 years, 6 months and 16 days.40 It is equally interesting to note that some of the judges were appointed to the post more than once as in the case of Ghawth b. Sūlāmān. He held the office three times and died while he was in service.41 As for the reasons leading to termination of office, with the exception of death, they vary and will be discussed later in detail.

From a jurisdictional point of view, the judges were given limited jurisdictions i.e. restricted to civil cases such as the administration of mosques, waqf, family law and bayt al-māl. Although the judges were competent in both civil and criminal matters, the religious nature of their office led to limiting their jurisdictions to civil cases.42 The literature on the biography as well as on the institution of judicial administration indicates

39 Ibid., 321.
40 Ibid., 362.
41 Ibid., 269-271, 272-274 and 282-284.
42 Once a qādi died, his post is terminated and all the cases in his trials are transferred to another qādi. See al-Khaṣṣāf, ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Aźiz, Sharḥ Ādāb al-Qādī, Baghdād, 1978, vol. 3, 152.
43 This phenomenon even from the very early Islamic legal history has affected the development of Islamic law in Muslim societies. Therefore, it is not surprising to conclude that, «Historically, the areas of Sharī‘a law that were most developed in the classical fiqh corresponded to the areas where qadis in the Sharī‘a court were best able to retain jurisdiction over disputes, while legal issues in other areas tended to be dealt with by secular tribunals with more flexible procedures and greater enforcement powers, such as the police tribunals. The Sharī‘a rules of intestate succession and family law are the two most developed portions of the Sharī‘a, and recourse to Sharī‘a courts [perhaps the writer meant by Sharī‘a court the qādi’s court] was very common for resolution of disputes on these subjects. The Sharī‘a courts also had jurisdiction over piyyûn [awqaf] which were very important legal institutions in traditional Islamic societies, allowing for the consolidation and protection of private property and often providing the financial basis for schools, hospitals, mosques and other public institutions». See Kamali, «Sharī‘a», 441.
clearly that Muslim judges in the past were more involved in civil cases rather than in criminal cases. As for the literature on the biography of the judges such as al-Kindi's Kitāb Walāt Miṣr, most of the cases cited are of civil cases whereas criminal cases are hardly to be found. Surprisingly, the literature on the institution of judicial administration (e.g. al-Ahkām al-Sulṭāniyya) reinforces the above finding. Al-Māwardi, for example, in his al-Ahkām al-Sulṭāniyya, has elucidated the jurisdiction of a ḍādi Court as covering ten areas all of which are civil cases in character. He wrote that the jurisdiction of a ḍādi lies in resolving disputes; preventing tyranny and safeguarding the rights of those whose rights have been infringed; administration of property of the person who has no capacity to administer them namely, orphans, infants, lunatics and the like; administering waqf property; executing a will in accordance with the terms stipulated in it; acting as a wāli ḥākim (legal guardian on behalf of the Caliph or head of state) to a woman who has no wāli provided that the couple who intend to marry are compatible (kuf); removing any obstacles on the public road or on an open area and similar action; scrutinising and deciding on the competence and integrity of potential witnesses and ensuring that the judgement or sentence is passed impartially regardless the fact that the party is strong or weak. The limits on the jurisdiction of a ḍādi Court are due to the fact that criminal cases and the like fall outside the jurisdiction of the ḍādi’s Court; they were administered in special courts such as maẓālim court, ḥisba, shurṭa and qaḍā’ al-‘askar.

NECESSARY QUALIFICATION TO QADISHIP/JUDGESHIP

It is now necessary to embark on the main theme of the paper which is the qualifications necessary for a person to be appointed to be a judge of the ḍādi Court with special reference to the Abbasid judges of Egypt. The question of qualification is always related to another significant matter, that is, the training scheme that a potential and prospective judge should undergo to qualify for the post. Not many works are presently available which shed light on the actual training schemes adopted by the early Muslim societies in producing capable jurists and practitioners to serve both academic institutions and the courts.

44 In al-Kindi’s Walāt Miṣr, there are a few criminal cases reported such as the cases on qadhf and blasphemy against the Prophet (Walāt Miṣr, 269 and 288).
45 Al-Māwardi, al-Ahkām al-Sulṭāniyya, 78-79.
Perhaps, the works of George Makdisi would be of some help on the early history of Islamic education.

When the Abbasids took over the Caliphate from the Umayyads, the *madhhab* or guild of law in Islam was not yet established. Potential jurists, *qâdis* and *mufîs*, as the case may be, were trained academically in certain localities by leading Companions and Successors who happened to reside here. It was only in the declining years of the Umayyads, that one sees the emergence of schools of law in certain localities where the founders lived. Obviously, during this period, there was no attempt to introduce a kind of professional certificate or diploma to evidence formal legal training for the purposes of practising in the courts, or to issue a *fatwâ* or to teach law at mosques and other relevant places. The literature is silent on this issue which leaves modern researchers, including Makdisi, unable to discuss legal education and training during this period of Islamic history.

It was only during the fifth/eleventh century that one sees professionalisation and development of guilds of law:**(a)** the apprentice being the undergraduate law student (*mubtadi* or *mutafaqqih*) who normally spent four years of legal study under the direction of one master,**(b)** the journeyman being the graduate (*sâhib or faqîh*) who, if he wished, could go on to graduate studies that lasted an indefinite period of time,**(c)** the master being the master-juristconsult (*faqîh or muftî*), accredited as such by the license to teach law and issue legal opinions (*îjâzat al-tadrîs wa l-iftâ‘*). This legal education and training was conducted in a college of law which began in a mosque and was later developed to a hostel or *khân* for out-of-town students. These lodging places are the Islamic inns of court exclusively for law students.

This brief account about legal education and the certificates to teach and issue a *fatwâ* (*îjâzat al-tadrîs wa l-iftâ‘*) is unfortunately silent on the question of professional certificates to practise in courts either as judges or the *shâhid*-notary (professional notary witness) or other auxiliaries of the office of the *qâdi* and the court. As for the post of the *shâhid*-notary, Makdisi points out that the post was available only to the student who had successfully completed his legal studies** which was presumably done in four years. However, Makdisi

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48 Ibid., *Encyclopaedia of Islam* [New Edition], vol. 5, 1124 (see Madrasa).
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 *Encyclopaedia of Islam* [Madrasa], 1124.
has indicated that both the *shāhid* and *qādi* are of professor level and were accredited to teach law. This statement gives the impression that judges particularly in the fifth century of Hijra were academically sound and of professional level.

However, we are not in position to verify this statement as there is no reliable measure of the academic qualifications of the muftis, professors of law and, what more, of the judges. Makdisi has rightly pointed out that Islamic law is always individualistic; this may be seen in the function of the *qādi*, the *mufti* and the *modarris* or professor of law, as well as in the *madrasa*, the college of law. Being individualistic, the *qādi* was alone responsible for his legal decisions; the *mufti* was alone responsible for his legal opinions, based on *ijtihād*, and individual personal activity of research into the sources of law. The most striking example is the issuance of licence to teach (*ijāzat al-tadrīs*) or in the Christian West, the *licentia docendi* which is granted to a doctorate holder who has defended his own thesis against opponents. The practice was long-established in the Islamic world before it emerged in law university of Bologna, in the London Inns of Court, as well as in Paris, Oxford and even Salerno. However, the practice of conferment of degrees, unlike in the Christian West, was not institutionalised as the practice was always individualised.

On the other hand, in relation to qualifications and professional certificates for judgship, one is perplexed to find out that the nomination and selection of judges were not exclusively based on academic qualifications or reputation. As the second half of the Abbasid government started to witness the establishment of schools of law by their respective founders and master architects, the post of judgship should ideally have been taken by the most qualified academician. However, this was not the case. During that period, many leading jurists were available not only in Baghdad, but also in other provinces such as in Medina, Egypt and other localities. For example, while both al-Layth b. Saʿd and Imam al-Shāfiʿî (d. 204/820) were in Egypt, Imam Malik b. Anas (d. 178/795) was in Medina. Surprisingly enough, these great jurists were not even nominated for the post of judgship in their respective provinces. However, there were a few leading jurists who were actually nominated for judgship some of whom declined in spite of the insistence of the Caliph as in the case of Abū Ḥanīfa (d.

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53 *Ibid*. Makdisi writes: «Like the *qādi*, the *shāhid* frequently held the post of notary simultaneously with a professorship of law». The source of reference to this effect as cited by Makdisi is ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Ismāʿīl al-Maqdisi’s *Tārājim Rījāl al-Qarnayn al-Sādīs wa al-Sābī*, ed. M. al-Kawtharī, Cairo, 1947, 217.

54 *Encyclopaedia of Islam* [Madrasa], 1133.

150/767) while some others accepted the appointment as in the case of Abū Yûsuf, the most prominent student of Abū Ḥanīfa.

What concerns us here is the position of Imām al-Shāfi‘ī in Egypt because his reputation as one of the leading jurists is beyond any doubt. Nevertheless, he was not nominated for the post. Instead, during his stay in Egypt, it was Lahi‘a b. ‘Isā who was appointed as the Judge of Egypt (199-204/815-820).56 As a matter of fact, the Judge’s biographical information is not as impressive as al-Shāfi‘ī’s.57 It is the perception of many researchers that among the reasons which restrained nominees from accepting the offer is that holding of post would render the administration of justice void of religious principles as judges were appointed by the Caliph vis-à-vis a secular authority.58 Presumably it is for this same reason that Imām al-Shāfi‘ī who was known to the authority as a person not interested in the post was not offered it, otherwise, al-Shāfi‘ī would have accepted the post earlier still. This is supported by the report of al-Shīrāzī who states on the authority of his professor of law, Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarî, that Abū ‘Alî b. Khayrān (d. 320/932) chided the great Shāfi‘ī scholar Ibn Surayj for accepting the post: «This matter was never indulged in by our companions; it was prevalent only among the followers of Abu Hanîfa».59

This report, however, seems to contradict another report that Imām al-Shāfi‘ī himself had persuaded Ahmad b. Ḥanbal to accept the post of judgeship in Yemen in the time of Ḥarūn al-Rashīd but Ibn Ḥanbal refused. On the contrary, Ibn Ḥanbal firmly underscored that the reason why he affiliated himself with al-Shāfi‘ī was to acquire the knowledge and not to seek any post. Not only that, Ibn Ḥanbal is reported to have said that had al-Shāfi‘ī repeated the same offer for the second time, he would have definitely left al-Shāfi‘ī’s circle of knowledge for another professor of law for his legal education.60 As there is no reliable evidence of the reason for al-Shāfi‘ī not being appointed a judge, the writer tends to consider this case as an exceptional case to al-Shāfi‘ī because he may have preferred to be a professor of law rather than a judge.61

56 Al-Kindî, Wulāt Misr, 316-320.
57 Ibid.
58 Makdisi, Rise of Colleges, 200.
61 Al-Kindî reported one case where the nominee for the post declined to accept it arguing that the status of a qādi would be inferior to that of jurists in the eyes of Allah in the Hereafter (Wulāt Misr, 314).
No matter what the reason that led the Caliph or the local governor to appoint judges from non-leading jurists or non-professors of law, it is well established in the literature of judgeship that the judges were not always necessarily and sufficiently expert in law. As in the case of judges in Egypt, al-Kindî reported that Ghawth b. Sulaymân (135-140/753-758; 140-144/758-762; 167-168/784-785) was not a man of fiqh but he was known for his good understanding of judicial matters and its policies (kāna aʼlam al-nās bi maʼāni al-qāḍā wa siyyasatihi). Wâkî’, the author of Akhbâr al-Quḍât, also pointed out some judges who were not professionally known as jurists such as ʻAbd al-Raḥmân b. Ishâq and Muhammad b. Abî Rijâ’. In another report, a candidate to the post of judgeship refused to accept the offer arguing that he was not well-versed in judicial matters nor in fiqh. Hârûn al-Rashîd, however, managed to persuade him by saying that he could resolve his problem in fiqh simply by consulting the experts of fiqh without affecting his career as a judge. As a matter of fact, there was a reported case whereby the presiding Judge, al-Mufaḍḍal b. Faḍâla, sought the confirmation of Imam Mâlik b. Anas in Medina before pronouncing judgement in a case of blasphemy.

Apart from formal and specific training for judiciary, we have some evidence to suggest that some of the judges were trained on the job as it were by the presiding judge. Put differently, the senior judge would, on many occasions, appoint his own deputy to assist him in judiciary tasks and to train him. In some cases, once the presiding judge retired or was dismissed or was not able to hear cases due to serious illness, his deputy would hear cases on behalf of the judge. The appointment of Ghawth b. Sulaymân as a judge in 135/753 succeeding the Judge Khayr b. Nuʻaym is a good example. Ghawth was the scribe (kâtib) to Khayr in the court. As Khayr was suffering from judhâm i.e. leprosy, he asked to be released from the office but this was rejected by Ibn Abî ‘Awn, the local governor. He had no option but to authorise his scribe to deal with cases in his own house. In an-
other report, the Judge was asked to nominate the future judge and he nominated his scribe, Ghawth b. Sulaymān. This is further substantiated by the report that Ghawth, unlike Khayr b. Nuʿaym,70 was not a noted scholar or faqih. Instead, he was acknowledged for his deep and sound knowledge of the judiciary and its policies and objectives.71 It seems that his close acquaintance with the Judge Khayr had exposed him indirectly but adequately to the skills of judicial works which are probably not to be found in any textbook.

Notwithstanding the above, there are many reports which acknowledge the high academic achievements of a few judges in Egypt. Included in this category are Abū Khuzayma Ibrāhīm b. Yazīd (144-154/758-771) who has recognised as a faqih by Ibn Lahiʿa,72 Ismāʿīl b. al-Yasaʿ al-Kindī (164-167/781-784) who was sent by Caliph al-Mahdī from Kufa,73 Abū Ṭāhir ʿAbd al-Mālik b. Muḥammad al-Ḥazmī (170-174/787-791) who was said to be very competent in the Mālikī school of law,74 Ishāq b. Furāṭ whose appointment was made on the merit of a strong and high recommendation by leading scholars of Egypt including Imām al-Shāfiʿi who remarked that Ishāq was well-versed in the disagreements of the jurists (kāna yatakhyyar bi al-ašākūm),75 Lahīʿa b. ʿIsā al-Ḥaḍramī (196-198/812-814) who was acknowledged both as faqih and a muḥaddith (traditionalist),76 Ibrāhīm b. al-Jarrāḥ (205-211/821-827) whose knowledge of faqih is evident from reports of his judgment in which he deliberated and cited many juristic views on the dispute before arriving at his own verdict based on the facts of the case,77 al-Hārith b. Miskīn (237-245/852-860), a jurist in the Mālikī school of law whose reputation superseded the more recognised jurist in the Mālikī school of law i.e. Aṣbah78 and Bakkār b. Qutayba (246-273/868-887) whose knowledge is not only testified by al-Muzānī, the author of Mukhtaṣar al-Muzānī but also

70 Khayr was able to argue on the basis of the Qurʿān that the mutʿa payment in favour of the ex-wife is obligatory. For details, see al-Kindī, Wuṭūr Miṣr, 263.
71 Ibid., 269.
72 Ibid., 275. This is further supported by the fact that Abū Khuzayma was nominated together with another two names for the post but his name was chosen by the local governor, Yazīd b. Ḥāṭim. See Ibn Ḥajar, Raʿf al-īṣr, vol. 1, 44.
73 Ibid., 280. He was the first judge who came from outside Egypt as well as the first Ḥanafi judge in Egypt (ibid.).
74 Ibid., 289.
75 Ibid., 296; Ibn Ḥajar, Raʿf al-īṣr, vol. 1, 114. Al-Shāfiʿi is also reported to have recommended Ishāq to some governors for the post of judgeship (Ibn Ḥajar, Raʿf al-īṣr, vol. 1, 1115).
77 Ibid., vol. 1, 25; al-Kindī, Wuṭūr Miṣr, 326.
was also able to produce his own writings to rebut the allegations of al-Shāfi‘ī in *Mukhtasar al-Muzani* against Abū Ḥanīfa.\(^7^9\)

### DISMISSAL FROM JUDESHIP

The literature on this question normally mentions five reasons for the dismissal of a judge from his office. These reasons include injustices on the part of the judge,\(^8^0\) the physical condition of a judge that would hinder him from performing his duties diligently such as madness, blindness, deafness or an illness which is not curable as well as affecting his duties,\(^8^1\) immoral practices of a judge (*fisq*),\(^8^2\) resignation\(^8^3\) and apostasy.\(^8^4\) However, during the period of the Abbasid’s Egypt, it has been observed that some of the dismissals were brought about not by the judge’s conduct but rather by the improper conduct and practices of the judge’s helpers or auxiliaries. The Abbasids, in order to assist the judge, had allowed the judge to appoint his own auxiliaries. There were court clerks, the *kātib* who kept the record of the cases, the *muzakki* who investigated and examined the character of ordinary witnesses and the *mutarjim*, the interpreter, who translated the witnesses’ statements.\(^8^5\)

The study has revealed that judges such as al-Mufaddal b. Faḍāla (174-177/791-794) and ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. ‘Abd Allah al-‘Umarī (185-194/801-810) were removed from the office simply because one of their assistants acted in the manner which was not proper and unjust. The former judge was dismissed because his witness officer, Fulayj b. Sulaymān, was bribed to include unreliable people in the list of witnesses who could testify.\(^8^6\) As for the latter judge, his auxiliaries were misusing and misappropriating public property kept in the *bayt al-māl*. The judge al-‘Umarī had to pay a high price for this as he was dismissed and imprisoned.\(^8^7\) He was also accused personally to have...

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\(^7^9\) *Ibid.*, 151, 154.


\(^8^1\) Ibn Farḥūn, *Tabṣīrat al-Ḥukkām*, vol. 1, 24.

\(^8^2\) *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 78.

\(^8^3\) As the qādī is only an agent or representative appointed by the Caliph, the judge has an exclusive right to terminate the appointment by tendering his resignation. See Ibn Abī al-Damm, *Ādāb al-Qādī*, 92; al-Ṭārābulusi, ‘Alī’ al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Khalil, *Mu‘īn al-Ḥukkām fī mā Ṭataradd bayn al-Khāṣṣayn min al-Αl-Kām*, Beirut, n. d., 33.


misappropriated one hundred thousand dinars of public funds. Having said this, al-'Umari managed to keep the office for about nine years because the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd was reluctant to dismiss him as al-'Umari was one of the descendants of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. The dismissal took place by the order of the governor of Egypt, Muhammad b. Hārūn, immediately after the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd.

Related to the above discussion is the case of interference of a third party which affects the credibility of the office of a judge. This is where neither the judge nor his assistants were responsible for an action which rendered the performance of the judge questionable among the authorities and public. There is only one case pertaining to this aspect. It took place under the judgeship of Ibrāhīm al-Jarrāḥ (205-211/821-827) who was acknowledged as a profound scholar as he always recorded the views of many leading jurists in his court decision. His performance was well received until his son, Ishāq, came from Iraq, who then started interfering with court cases without the knowledge of the father. One interesting instance is where the son wrote a letter to his father’s assistant to suspend the case which had been decided by this father. The letter was actually forged and this was found by the assistant after he investigated the matter.

On the other hand, it is obvious that it was the judge who put himself to unnecessary trouble and the natural consequence was his dismissal from the office. The kind of actions varied from one judge to another. The dismissal of Judge Iṣmā‘īl b. al-Yasa’ al-Kindī (164-167/781-784), for example, was due to the fact that he was so committed and loyal to his school of law causing unnecessary hardship to the local people who were accustomed to a different school of law. As the Egyptians were Mālikis and approved the practice of ḥabs, an opposite view will not be welcomed. However, the Judge, being a Ḥanafī scholar viewed that the practice should be deemed illegal. The worst part was his dispute with a leading Egyptian scholar, al-Layth b. Sa‘d on the same legal point. As the Judge was so intransigent in his view, al-Layth wrote a letter to Caliph al-Mahdī complaining that the Judge seemed to harm and

87 Ibid., 309.
88 Ibid., 310.
89 Ibid., 308.
90 Ibid., 309.
91 Ibid., 326.
92 Ibid., 322.
93 Ibid., 280. As a matter of fact, Judge Iṣmā‘īl was the first Iraqi appointed to the office of judgeship (ibid., 281).
conspire against the Sunna of the Prophet which was prevalent in Egypt (innaka wallaytanà rajulan yakidu sunnat Rasûl Allâh bayn azharina). Based on the merits of the letter and perhaps the reputation of the writer himself, the Caliph in Iraq decided to dismiss Judge Ismâ’il in 167/784 although the Judge was renowned as a scholar and pious person.

Similarly, Judge ʿIsâ b. al-Munkadîr (212-215/828-831) faced dismissal by his unwise action. He was appointed by the local governor after consulting a group of leading scholars in Egypt. Before appointment, he had been close to a group of people who were actively involved in amr bi al-maʿrûf wa nahy ʿan al-munkar (i.e. Sufis). When he assumed office, he was approached by this group to use his «power» to prevent wrong-doing by the newly appointed local governor, Abû Ishâq al-Rashîd. Upon listening to their allegations, he took immediate action (unfortunately without investigating the allegation!). Although the Judge was advised by his assistants not to take any action he remained firm. He argued, it was necessary to uphold the law and rights of Allah. The group suggested to him to write a letter to Caliph al-Maʿmûn expressing his dissatisfaction with the new local governor and he did write to that effect. The Caliph was patient enough to call for his governor to defend himself against the allegations which the governor did. For this simple but unwise action, the judge was dismissed, put in prison in Egypt, before he was transferred to the central prison in Iraq where he died.

More interestingly, there was a judge who was dismissed due to his offensive attitude to the local people. Muḥâmmad b. Mâsrûq al-Kindî (177-184/794-800) was removed from office as he was so arrogant and too strict in implementing his decisions in a manner which was unprecedented.

It is also vital to note that many dismissal cases were «politically inspired». In other words, the judges were dismissed not because of their poor performance in court. Instead, some of the judges were dismissed because they disapproved an intervention by the political authority in the court proceedings. An excellent example is the case of Judge Khayr b. Nuʿaym who was unhappy when the local governor issued an order to release a soldier who was put into

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94 Ibid., 281.
95 Ibid., 280. There is another report that reveals a different reason leading to his dismissal which was his illness after eating poisonous food prepared by both the head of post office (i.e. Sirâj b. Khâlid) and a newly appointed governor of Egypt (i.e. Ibrâhîm b. Šâlih). The reason was that the Judge Ismâ’il refused to cooperate with them to take advantage from the government posts for their personal interests (ibid., 281-282).
96 Ibid., 327.
97 Ibid., 332.
98 Ibid., 293-295.
prison by Judge Khayr because the former was not able to bring two male witnesses to support his false accusations of zinā (qadhf). The Judge refused to resume his duties although the local governor had asked him to. Subsequently, the Judge was dismissed.99 Political dismissal was more obvious in the reign of Caliph al-Mu’tasim when he removed his judge in Egypt, Hārūn b. ‘Abd Allāh (217-226/832-841) because the judge did not comply with the Caliph’s instructions to subject all the jurists and scholars in Egypt to the test (fitna) on the issue of the polemical question about the creation of al-Qur’an.100 As a result, he was initially prevented from issuing any court decisions before being eventually dismissed from office to give way to Muḥammad b. Abī al-Layth al-Khwārizmī (226-237/841-852) to take the office of judgeship simply because the latter was more prepared to enforce the Caliph’s desire and political/ideological doctrine in the fullest sense.101

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we may note that most of the judges were knowledgeable in Islamic law even though they were not necessarily amongst the leading scholars except in the case of a few judges. These judges with high legal education were known to both the public and the appointing authority. This is obvious as some of the appointments were on the strength of nomination by scholars either in Egypt or in Baghdad. However, it now becomes obvious that there were no formal academic qualification certificates issued by the Central Goverment to the qualified candidates for the post of judgeship. The appointment was simply by letter of appointment102 and the same procedure would have probably applied to dismissals. We also note that most of the appointments came from the Caliph himself rather than the Chief Judge in the capital city. Even, in the case of appointment by the local governor, it seemed that the appointments were later endorsed by the respective Caliphs. It is very interesting to note that there

99 Ibid., 269.
100 Ibid., 338. Although Hārūn b. ‘Abd Allāh had already rejected the witnesses who refused to accept the doctrine that al-Qur’an is makhliq, he had no courage to subject the scholars to this fitna (ibid., 337-338).
101 Ibid., 338-339.
102 Al-Māwardī says that a qādi may be appointed by means of oral order in case the proposed appointee is present, and by means of written order in case the appointee is not present before the appointing authority. The order should be clear and expressed in words that mean that the Imām or his deputy, as the case may be, have appointed such and such person at such and such place to administer the justice at the court of law (al-Ahkām al-Sultānīyya, 66).
were judges who were dismissed but later reappointed to the post, as in the case of Ghawth b. Sulaymān for the third time (167-168/784-785) after being dismissed in his second appointment (140-144/758-762). Likewise, Lahī*a b. ʿIsā al-Ḥadramī (196-198/812-814 and 199-204/815-820) was reappointed by the local governor who had himself dismissed Lahī*a in the first place. This shows that the judges were of high credibility, at least, in the eyes of the local governor(s) because the previous dismissal did not necessarily disqualify the dismissed judge from future appointment.

As for dismissals, many factors contributed. While some reasons are personal, other reasons are beyond the control of a judge as they normally involve political intervention. However, there was no case of dismissal due to serious moral flaw or lack of knowledge. As for personal shortcomings, the majority of the cases involved improper conduct of the judges’ assistants which resulted in the judges’ termination. Generally speaking, one contemporary scholar has observed that the rate of dismissal of the judges in the Abbasid period was relatively small compared to the Umayyad’s. Of course, the reason was that the judges in the Abbasid period, unlike in the Umayyad period, were appointed by the central government and not by the local governors. Therefore, the power to dismiss the judges lay in the hand of the Caliphs or alternatively the Chief-Judge. Equally interesting is the principle of law that upon the death of the appointing authority, the qādī will continue in his office and no fresh appointment by the succeeding ruler is required because the office of qādī is a branch of wilāya ʿāmma and therefore, the demise of the ruler does not make any difference to its validity.

Out of many judges in Egypt in this period of time, it was only Judge Ghawth b. Sulaymān who was offered a post in the capital city because he was able to decide on one case involving the Caliph, Abū Jaʿfar al-Ḥaḍhrāʾ, and his wife, Umm Musā, in a manner agreeable to both the parties. However, Ghawth turned down the offer as he found it to be more convenient to be in Egypt. The profile of the judges also reveals that the judges were of different schools of law which tend to refute the prevailing view in the secondary sources that the judges in Egypt were of a homogeneous outlook belonging to one school of law, that is Shāfiʿi school of law.

103 Al-Kindī, Wulāt Misr, 315, 316.
106 Ibid., 283-284.
Equally true it is that the Chief-Judge was not directly or indirectly involved in the appointment and dismissal of judges in Egypt. This finding seems to contradict the prevailing view in most of the secondary sources that the Chief Judge was given the ultimate authority to appoint as well as dismiss judges in the local provinces. Perhaps the only exception, to the best of the writer’s knowledge, relates to the dismissal of al-Ḥārith b. Miskîn (237-245/852-860). He was dismissed by the Chief Judge in Baghdad, Ja’far b. ‘Abd al-Wāḥid. Even then, the dismissal was effected on the instructions of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil. The study also discloses that not all of the judges were Egyptian, a few of them came from Kūfa and this is not surprising because Kūfa, at that time, was the centre of legal education.

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to examine and analyse both the appointment and dismissal of Muslim judges from the historical perspective of academic qualification. The focus of this piece of research is the practice of the judiciary in Egypt during the Abbasid period (132-254/750-868). The main references are Waki’’s *Akhbār al-Qudàt* and al-Kindī’s *Kitāb Wulāt Miṣr*. These books are highly original and relatively comprehensive and offer fairly detailed information on issues pertaining to both the appointment and dismissal of judges particularly in early Islamic history of Egypt. The profile of each and every judge is scrutinised to appreciate reasons leading to both their appointment and dismissal. The finding of the research might be useful to understanding judicial practices and their relation to the profession or qualification scheme which was followed at that point in time.

RESUMEN

Este artículo pretende analizar tanto el nombramiento como el cese de los cadíes desde el punto de vista de sus cualificaciones académicas. Se centra en la práctica del cadiazgo en Egipto durante el período ‘abbási (132-254/750-868). Las fuentes principales son los *Ajbār al-quḍāt* de Waki’ y el *Kitāb wulāt Miṣr* de al-Kindī. Ambas obras contienen material de una gran originalidad y son bastante completas, ofreciendo detallada información sobre temas relativos tanto al nombramiento como al cese de los jueces

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durante los primeros siglos de la historia islámica de Egipto. Se estudia la biografía de cada juez para averiguar cuáles fueron las razones que determinaron su nombramiento y su cese. Los resultados obtenidos son de interés para comprender las prácticas judiciales y su relación con las aptitudes profesionales que se consideraban necesarias en aquella época.