A Portrait of 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī’s Education and Instruction

Shawkat Toorawa

The scholar of the medieval Islamic world is variously characterised, but perhaps his most distinctive feature was the eclectic and dichotomous nature of his education. Although many scholars specialized in the religious sciences, which covered many different disciplines, there were also many who devoted themselves to the foreign or ancient sciences. Study and teaching of the religious sciences were in general provided for by the institution of waqf, but waqf deeds excluded the foreign or ancient sciences. Thus, it is all the more remarkable that some scholars managed to pursue both sets of disciplines. The exclusion of the foreign sciences did not prevent diligent and inquisitive scholars from seeking the knowledge of foreign sciences from numerous libraries (sometimes overseas or at great distance), from masters “in the...
privacy of their homes, or in the waqqf institutions, outside of the regular curriculum.”

The prominent Muslim physician, grammarian, lexicographer, jurisconsult, sometime alchemist, and philosopher ʻAbd al-Latif al-Baghdadi (557–629/1162–1231) was such a scholar. His sirah (autobiography) formed part of a larger work entitled Tārīkh (History, or Diary), written for his son Sharaf al-Dīn Yūsuf. Extracts of the work survive in the notice devoted to ʻAbd al-Latif by Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah (d. 668/1270) in his biographical dictionary of physicians, the ʻUyūn al-anbā‘ fi ṭabaqāt al-ʿāthibā‘ (Choice Information on the Classes of Physicians). In these fragments, ʻAbd al-Latif speaks of his samā‘s (auditions), his resolve to master tibb (medicine) and kīmiyā (alchemy), his diligence in learning the various qirā‘āt (variant Qur’ānic recitations), and his devotion to the works of Ibn Sinā (d. 428/1037). What is remarkable is that his education encompasses a vast span of knowledge, tremendous motivation, and memorization. And yet, ʻAbd al-Latif is neither an isolated example of this sort of education, nor a unique product of his age. Indeed, by looking at the curriculum followed by ʻAbd al-Latif, we can get “some insight into one of the best products of the Muslim educational system.”

Early Life of ʻAbd al-Latif

Name. His name was Abū Muḥammad ʻAbd al-Latif b. Yūsuf b. Muḥammad b. ʻAlī Saʿd al-Baghdādī, known as Ibn al-Labbād, Muwaffaq al-Dīn. According to the chroniclers, he was known primarily as ʻAbd al-Laṭif and as Ibn al-Labbād.

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2Makdisi, Rise of Colleges, 77.


Date of birth and death. All the chroniclers place ʻAbd al-Laṭīf’s birth in 557/1162–63; Ibn Khallikān specifies Rabī‘ I. He died on 12 Muḥarram 629/19 November 1231.

Early Life. Though his ancestors came from Mosul in northern Iraq, ʻAbd al-Laṭīf was raised in the company of eminent scholars in Baghdad, where he was probably born. His father, Yūsuf b. Muḥammad, probably Shaykh Abū al-ʿIzz al-Mawsīlī, obtained certificates of audition (ijāzāt) from senior scholars of Baghdad, Khurasan, Syria and Egypt.9 His uncle, whom he referred to as Sulaymān, was most likely the Abū al-Faḍl Sulaymān b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Mawsīlī al-Ṣūfī recorded in the Shadharāt; he died in 612/1215. He was born in 528/1133 and studied hadith under Iṣmāʿīl b. al-Samarqandī and other authorities.

At an early age ʻAbd al-Laṭīf was also put under the care of:

a. Abū al-Najīb, probably Diyar al-Dīn Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī ʻAbd al-Qāhir b. Abū Allāh b. al-Bakrī.10 He was a Sunni mystic, knowledgeable in Shāfiʿī law (fiqh), exegesis (tafsīr), and theology (ṣūfī al-dīn). He was born in 490/1097 and died in 563/1168. ʻAbd al-Laṭīf mentions that under Abū al-Najīb’s guidance he had little time for pleasure and leisure (luʿb wa-lahw), his efforts being spent entirely on the learning of hadith.

Among friends of ʻAbd al-Laṭīf’s family was Ibn Abī Ḫayyābī. The latter wanted to meet ʻAbd al-Laṭīf but never got the chance; in the notice he devotes to ʻAbd al-Laṭīf, he includes a letter he wrote to him.11 ʻAbd al-Laṭīf was apparently close to Ibn Abī Ḫayyābī’s father, al-Qāsim, to his grandfather, Yūnus, and to an uncle of his whom he mentions as the man who introduced him to Aristotle.12 Wüstenfeld identifies this unnamed uncle as Rashīd al-Dīn Abū al-Ḫasan ʻAlī b. Khalifah and indicates that he was the head of a hospital.13

Early Education

Ibn Abī Ḫayyābī records that ʻAbd al-Laṭīf studied hadith with the following:

b. Abū al-Fatḥ Muḥammad b. ʻAbd al-Bāqī b. Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Baghdādī Ibn al-Battī. He was born in 477/1084 and died in 564/1169, at the age of eighty-seven.14 He is identified by the biographers as the chief traditionist of Iraq (musnad al-

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9 Ibn Abī Ḫayyābī, ʻUyūn, 683/635.
11 Ibn Abī Ḫayyābī, ʻUyūn, 690–91/641–42.
13 F. Wüstenfeld, Geschichte der arabischen Ärzte und Naturforscher (Gottingen: Dieterich, 1840), p. 132.
14 Ibn Taghribirdi, al-Nujum al-zāhirah fi mulūk Misr wa l-Qāhirah, 14 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1929–1972), 4:218. All ages are given in years calculated according to a lunar calendar.
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"Irāq). He heard hadith from Mālik b. ʿAlī al-Bāniyāsī, Ḥamad b. Aḥmad al-Ḥaddād, al-Ṭamīmī, and others. His samāʾ is reported to have been sound (ṣahīḥ), according to Ibn al-ʿImād, author of the Shadharāt.

c. Abū Zurʿah Tāhir b. Muḥammad b. Tāhir al-Maqdisī al-Hamadhānī. He was born in 481/1088 in Rayy and died in Hamadhān in 566/1170. He is cited as one of the teachers of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥayyā b. al-Rabiʿ (so too is Ibn al-Batti). His own teachers included ʿAbdūs, al-Sālarmakī, and al-Kāmilī.


To these must be added another from whom ʿAbd al-Laṭīf studied in the Dār al-Dhahab, a second-story madrasah (madrasah muʿallaqah) founded by Fakhr al-Dawlah b. al-Muṭṭalib, namely:


ʿAbd al-Laṭīf also studied grammar with:

f. Ibn al-Khashshāb, i.e. Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad Ibn al-Khashshāb al-Baghdādī, who was born in 492/1098–99 and died in 567/1172, when ʿAbd al-Laṭīf was ten. Many of ʿAbd al-Laṭīf’s teachers also studied with him (e.g. Wajīh al-Ḥīn, al-Qazwīnī, al-Kindī). He was one of the leading grammarians of his day, in addition to expertise in lexicography, geometry, philosophy, and chess, and wrote a number of commentaries on grammatical works as well as a commentary on the Maqāmāt of al-Ḥarīrī. The work ʿAbd al-Laṭīf mentions is:

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15 Ibn al-ʿImād, Shadharāt, 4:213.
16 Ibn al-ʿImād, Shadharāt, 4:217.
19 Ibn al-ʿImād, Shadharāt, 5:218.
20 Ibn al-ʿImād, Shadharāt, 4:218.
23 al-Subkī, Tabaqat al-shāfiʿīyyah, 7:322.
1. al-Maʿānī by al-Zajjāj. This is the Kitāb fi maʿānī al-Qurʾān by Abū Išāq İbrahim b. Muhammad al-Sarī al-Zajjāj.⁴ Abū al-Latif studied this work according to the recension/reading (qirāʾah) of Ibn al-Khashshāb (see above) who had studied it from the renowned female grammarian Shuhdah bt. Āḥmad b. al-Faraj b. Āmr al-Ibarī.⁵

Besides hadith, Abū al-Latif was occupied with the study of khaṭṭ (calligraphy), the memorisation of the Qurʾān, and the memorisation of other key texts, among them:

2. al-Faṣīḥ. This is the Kitāb al-Faṣīḥ of Thaʿlab (d. 291/904), described in the Wafayāt as small in size but great in benefit (ṣaghīr al-ḥajm kabīr al-faʿīdah).⁶

3. al-Maqāmāt of al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122).

4. The Diwān of al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965).

g. Al-Anbārī. Abū al-Latif’s father took him, when he was an adolescent, to Kamāl al-Dīn al-Anbārī, a schoolmate of his father’s from his Niẓāmīyah days. Kamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Rahmān b. Muḥammad b. Ubayd Allāh Abū al-Barakāt al-Anbārī al-Naḥwī was born in 513/1119 and died in 577/1181.⁷ He came to Baghdad where he studied in his youth law (fiqh) with Saʿīd b. al-Razzāz and became accomplished in khilāf, the disputed questions of the law (in one’s own madhhab and in the other madhhabs). He then became a repetitor (muʿīd) in the Niẓāmīyah, as it was customary for the master-jurisconsult to have one in a college of law. He studied literature (adab) with Abū Manṣūr al-Jawālīqī, the professor of Arabic grammar (shaykh al-naḥw) at the Niẓāmīyah, and Ibn al-Shajārī. He studied hadith with his father whilst in Anbār and with Abū al-Wahhāb al-Anmāṭī in Baghdad. Al-Anbārī eventually acquired the position of professor of Arabic grammar at the Niẓāmīyah. He was incredibly prolific. His works include al-Insāf fi masāʾil al-khilāf bayna al-baṣrīyin waʾl-kūfīyin (The Just Treatment of Grammatical Differences between the Schools of Basra and Kufa), and commentaries (sing. sharḥ) on the Diwān of al-Mutanabbī, on the Maqāmāt of al-Ḥarīrī, and on the Adab al-Kāتب of Ibn Qutaybah. He is most famous for the Nuzhāt al-ʿalībbāʾ fi ṭabaqāt al-udābāʾ. Abū al-Latif read the introduction to the Faṣīḥ with al-Anbārī, but because he was still young al-Anbārī referred him to his disciple Wājih al-Dīn al-Wāṣīṭī, who held his ḥalqah in the Zafarīyah Mosque (on him see below). Abū al-Latif writes that he later mastered al-Anbārī’s one hundred and thirty works on naḥw, fiqh, uṣūl al-fiqh, uṣūl al-dīn, taṣawwuf and zuhd (asceticism).⁸ He also

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⁵ Al-Suyūṭī, Bughyat al-wuʿāt fi ṭabaqāt al-lughawīyin waʾl-nuḥāt (Cairo: Maktabat ʿIsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1964–65), 311. Shuhdah (d. 574/1178) had samāʿs from her own father Abū al-Khaṭṭāb, al-Naʿīmī, Thābit b. Bundar, who seems to have been the father of the Abū al-Qāsim of item d, and others.
⁷ See al-Suyūṭī, Bughyah, #1507.
⁸ Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt, 3:463 (#504).
5. The Kitāb of Sibawayh (d. between 177/793 and 180/796–97), the famous book that served as the basis for many later works in the tradition of grammatical study. A large work, of approximately one thousand leaves, it contains numerous examples from the Qurʾān and over a thousand verses of pre-Islamic poetry.

6. Al-Sirāfiʾs commentary on the Kitāb of Sibawayh by Abū Saʿīd Hasan (al-Hasan) b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Marzubān, who was born 290/903 and died in 368/979. He was very famous even during his own lifetime and Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī (see above) was envious of him. It is reported that in 368/979, the latter bought a copy of the shahrī for two thousand dirhams in order to find fault with it but found none.

Other famous commentators of the Kitāb include: al-Mubarrad (d. 315/927), Ibn al-Sarrāj (d. 316/928), al-Rummānī (d. 384/994), al-Maʿarrī (d. 449/1057), al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1143), and Ibn al-Ḥājib (d. 646/1248).

7. Al-Muqtadab of al-Mubarrad, the great philologist and author of al-Kāmil. He was born in Basra in 211/826 and died in Baghdad in 285/898.

h. Wajih al-Dīn. Wajih al-Dīn’s full name is Abū Bakr al-Mubārak b. Abī Ṭālib al-Mubārak b. Abī al-Azhār Saʿīd Wajih al-Dīn Ibn al-Dahhān al-Ḍarīr; his biography appears in Ibn Khallikān. He had in his youth memorized the Qurʾān and all its variant readings on the authority of Abū Saʿīd Nūr b. Muḥammad b. Sālim al-Adīb and Abū al-Faraj al-ʿAlāʾ b. ʿAlī, the poet known as al-Sawādi. He then moved to Baghdad from Wāsiṭ, settled, and resided in the Zafarīyah Mosque. He attended the mājlīs of Abū Muḥammad Ibn al-Khashshāb al-Nahjī and served as an advanced student (ṣāḥib) of al-Anbārī. He studied hadīth with Abū Zurʿah (see above) and Ḥanafī fiqh too, though he had started out Ḥanbalī. He became professor of grammar at the Niẓāmīyah; because of the waʿaf restrictions permitting only the tenure of a Shāfiʿī professor, he changed to this mādhhab (according to Ibn Khallikān, he was reproached by some for his apparently indiscriminate inter-school movement). He was born in 532/1137 in Wāsiṭ and died in 612/1215.

ʿAbd al-Laṭīf’s diligence is evidenced by his method of learning. He says that he would memorise and repeat his lessons even on his way home or to the mosque. Wajih al-Dīn would not only teach ʿAbd al-Laṭīf grammatical commentaries, but also take him along when he went to al-Anbārī for recitation and consultation. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf would then return home and re-read the lesson till he had it completely memorised, often spending most of the night doing so. This he did for a long time at

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29 Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt, 4:199 (#584).
30 Published in Cairo in 1900.
31 Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt, 3:463.
33 Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah, ʿUyun, 684/635.
34 Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah, ʿUyun, 684/635.
the hands of his teacher and his teacher’s teacher (al-shaykh wa-shaykh al-shaykh), i.e. Wajih al-Din and al-Anbārī. He became so accomplished that he had his own students and gave his own commentaries, on the grammar of Ibn al-Jinnî for instance.

In this fashion, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf studied, learned and memorized very many books. He mentions specifically the following:

8. al-Luma. In all probability, that of Abū al-Fath ʿUthmān, Ibn Jinnī al-Mawsili, memorised by ʿAbd al-Laṭīf in eight months. Ibn Jinnī was the son of a Byzantine slave of Sulaymān b. Fahd al-Azādī al-Mawsili. He was prolific: among his works are a treatise on Arabic vowels and consonants entitled Sirr al-sināʿah (The Secret of the Craft) and a commentary on the Ḥawādīth of al-Mutanabbi. Al-Mutanabbi said of Ibn Jinnī that he was more knowledgeable than himself about his poetry (Ibn Jinnī aʿrafa bi-shiʿrī minnī). Ibn Jinnī, whose principal teacher was Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisi, was born before 330/941 and died 392/1002.

The three commentaries of the Luma mentioned by ʿAbd al-Laṭīf are those of:


10. Al-Sharīf ʿUmar b. Ḥamzah (d. ?), and

11. Ibn Barhān (d. 456/1064).

He also says that he read every commentary he could lay his hands on.

12. Adab al-kātib, a philologically-oriented handbook for chancery secretaries by the celebrated Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889). ʿAbd al-Laṭīf says he learned it by heart in less than six months.

13. Taqwīm al-lisān, attributed to Ibn Qutaybah, probably identical with one of the chapters of Adab al-kātib. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf says he learned it by heart in fourteen days, amounting to a fascicle a day.

14. Mushkil al-Qurʾān, probably the Kitāb taʿwīl mushkil al-Qurʾān by Ibn Qutaybah, a treatise on the variant readings of the Qurʾān (qirāʿāt), rhetoric (balāghah) in the Qurʾān, and the inimitability of the Qurʾān (iʿjāz al-Qurʾān).

15. Gharīb al-Qurʾān by Ibn Qutaybah, its full title being Kitāb tafsīr gharīb al-

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35 Ibn Abī ʿUṣaybiʿah, ʿUyun, 684/635.
36 Ibn Abī ʿUṣaybiʿah, ʿUyun, 684/635.
37 Ibn Khallikān, Waqayāt, 1:313 (#423).
38 Ibn Abī ʿUṣaybiʿah, ʿUyun, 684/635.
39 This has been published several times.
40 (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahrām liʿl-Tarjama waʿl-Nashr, 1989).
Qurʾān, a philological commentary on the difficult vocabulary in the Qurʾān.

16a. al-İdāh, a grammatical work by Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasān b. Ḥaṣm b. Abān (d. 377/987), divided into 196 chapters of which 1–166 are on nahw and 167–196 on taṣrīf, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf read many commentaries on it too.

16b. al-Takmilah, also by Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasān. Though some biographers list the Takmilah and the İdāh as separate works, al-Qīfī suggests that the Takmilah (as the title suggests) was a completion of İdāh. [On the Muqtaḍab, see (7) above.]

17. The Kitāb of Ibn Durustawayh (ʿAbd Allāh, d. 346/956–57). The mention simply of al-Kitāb suggests the Kitāb al-kuttāb (but a case might be made for the Kitāb al-hadāyā because of its similarity to works by al-Fārisī and Ibn Jinnī). Ibn Durustawayh was a student of Thaʿlab, Ibn Qutaybah and al-Mubarrad.

ʿAbd al-Laṭīf also read numerous mabsūṭāt (lengthy works) and mukhtaṣarāt (epitomes or short works).

i. Ibn ʿUbaydah al-Karkhī (d. 605/1208), whose full name was Abū ʿUbayd Allāh al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥaṣm. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf studied several works under the guidance of this scholar, including: the Kitāb al-uṣūl by Ibn al-Sarrāj on grammar and al-ʿArūḍ by Ibn al-Khaṭīb al-Tabrizī on prosody.

18. Kitāb al-uṣūl. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf read a copy of it that was in the waqf of Ibn Khashshāb (d. 567/1172) in the Ribāṭ al-Maʾmūnīyah. This is the Kitāb al-uṣūl al-kabīr of Abū Bakr Muhammad b. al-Sarī, Ibn al-Sarrāj (d. 316/929). He was the youngest pupil of al-Mubarrad and thus received his special attention. He taught Abū al-Qāsim al-Zajjāj, al-Rummānī, Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī and al-Fārisī. He was an ardent admirer of Sibawayh’s, as his work reveals.

19. al-ʿArūḍ. This is al-Kāfī fī al-ʿarūḍ waʾl-gawāfī by Abū Zakariyā Yahyā b. ʿAlī al-Shaybānī, Ibn al-Khaṭīb al-Tabrizī (d. 502/1108). He was a student of al-Maʿarrī and studied hadith under Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī, al-Tanūkhī and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, among others. His other works include a commentary on the Lumaʾ (on which see above) and commentaries on the poetry of al-Mutanabbi, of Abū Tammām,
of the Hamāsāt, and of al-Maʿarrī’s Saqṭ al-zand.\footnote{Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt, 6:192 (#800).}

\textit{Abd al-Latīf}’s formal education ends here.

\textbf{Later Education}

**Baghdad**

At some point after the death of al-Anbārī in 577/1181, \textit{Abd al-Latīf}’s education became primarily, though not exclusively, concerned with the foreign sciences.

\textbf{j.} The son of Amin al-Dawlah Ibn al-Tilmīdī. \textit{Abd al-Latīf} says he learned a great deal from him.\footnote{Ibn Abī Uṣaybi’ah, ʿUyun, 685/636. Amin al-Dawlah Ibn Tilmīdī is Abū al-Hasan Hibat Allāh b. Saʿīd b. Hibat Allāh (d. 560/1165).} Ibn Khallikān also highlights this teacher-student relationship.\footnote{Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt, 6:77 (#304). Ibn Khallikān studied under \textit{Abd al-Latīf} and was between 19 and 20 years old when his teacher died.} This education was very likely medical.

\textbf{k.} Abū Allāh Ibn Nāʿīlī. \textit{Abd al-Latīf} praises highly this member of the Almoravid ruling family\footnote{Ibn Abī Uṣaybi’ah, ʿUyun, 685/636: min awlād al-mutalaththinah.} who left the Maghrib upon the accession of \textit{Abd al-Muʿmin} in 524/1130. He is not mentioned in the biographical works.\footnote{Makdisi, Rise of Colleges, p. 86, does not identify him; and Silvestre de Sacy opts for alternate readings: Ibn al-Tatālīf (Relation de l’Egypte, 461), or Ibn al-Bābīlī (483 n. 47).} He did, we are told, receive Ḥaḍrat al-Raḍī al-Qazwīnī\footnote{Ibn Al-Qazwīnī is probably Raḍī al-Dīn Abū al-Khayr Abī Ṣaqqārī (d. 590/1194) who taught in the Nizāmīyah and excelled in dialectic, disputation, ʿuṣūl, exegesis and sermons (Ibn al-ʿImād, Shadharāt, 4:300–1).} and Ibn Sakīnah.\footnote{Ibn Sakīnah is Diwān al-Dīn Abū Ahmad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. al-Amin al-Baḍādī (d. 607/1210) who studied Arabic philology under Ibn Khashshāb and disputation and dialectic under Abū Maṣṭūr al-Razzāz.} \textit{Abd al-Latīf} found Ibn Nāʿīlī’s teaching style strange (ʿajīb)\footnote{Ibn Abī Uṣaybi’ah, ʿUyun, 685/636.} but credits him with excellence in the fields of \textit{al-kīmiyāʾ} (alchemy) and \textit{al-ṭilasmāʾ} (onomatopoeia and numerology) and related fields. He was in possession of the works of two authors in particular: Jābir b. Ḥayyān and Ibn Wāḥshiyyah. By frequent mention of these, Ibn Nāʿīlī inspired in \textit{Abd al-Latīf} a love for all knowledge (shawqān liʿl-ʿulūm kullihā).\footnote{Ibn Taghrībirdī, Nujum, 5:105.} With Ibn Nāʿīlī, \textit{Abd al-Latīf} read:

\textbf{20.} The \textit{Mugaddimah} of Ibn Bābashādī. This is Abū al-Hasan Tāhir b. Ahmad al-Miṣrī, a jeweller by trade.\footnote{Ibn Abī Uṣaybi’ah, ʿUyun, 685/636.} Besides the \textit{Mugaddimah}, which is a grammatical work, he is credited with a commentary on the \textit{Jumal} of al-Zajjāj and one on the \textit{Uṣūl} of Ibn al-Sarraj.
21. Muqaddimah hisāb/Ḥassāb. I have been unable to identify this work.\(^{58}\)

When Ibn Nā`ilī left to join the Abbasid Caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh (r. 575–622/1180–1223), Abd al-Laṭīf who would meet Ibn Nā`ilī again in Damascus (see below) pursued his studies without respite, “putting my shoulder to the wheel, setting myself to the task with utmost seriousness and earnestness.”\(^{59}\)

He read four works of al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), the great scholar and Niẓāmīyah professor of law and author of the magisterial Ḥiyā`\(^{3}\) ʿulūm al-dīn, namely:

22. al-Maqāṣid. This is the Maqāṣid al-falāsifah (Positions of the Philosophers);

23. al-Mi`yār, i.e. Mi`yar al-`ilm (The Measuring Standard of Knowledge), on logic;

24. al-Mīzān, or Mīzān al-`amal (The Scale of Deeds); and


He also read all the books of Ibn Sīnā (d. 418/1027),\(^{60}\) large and small volumes. He also got hold of a copy of:

26. The Kitāb al-tahṣil of Bahmanyār. Abū al-Ḥasan Bahmanyār b. al-Marzubān (d. 456/1067) was a disciple of Ibn Sīnā. The Kitāb al-tahṣil is a comprehensive interpretation of Ibn Sīnā’s philosophy, including treatments of logic, metaphysics, physics and cosmology. He is also known for his Kitāb fi marātib al-wujūd. Ibn Sīnā’s Kitāb al-mubāḥathah reportedly consisted of answers to queries raised by Bahmanyār.

Abd al-Laṭīf then studied books attributed to Jābir b. Ḥayyān and Ibn Waḥshīyah on alchemical transformation and experimentation. The legendary figure of Abū Mūsā Jābir b. Ḥayyān b. Abd Allāh al-Kūfī (d. ca. 200/810) was reported to have been a great philosopher, alchemist and chemist. He is judged to have been the first man to suggest the transformation of lead and base metals into gold and is supposed to have written up to 500 works. These include Asrār al-kīmiyā` (The Secrets of Alchemy) and Uṣūl al-kīmiyā` (The Principles of Alchemy), the latter of which was widely translated into Latin. He is credited also with several discoveries, including aqua regia, sulphuric acid, nitric acid and nitrates of silver. The works attributed to him seem to have come out of Shiite and Muslim gnostic circles in the late third/ninth and early fourth/tenth centuries.\(^{61}\) Abū Bakr Aḥmad [or Muḥammad] b. ʿAlī al-

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\(^{58}\) This title might be Muqaddimah hisāb, that is, an introductory work on arithmetic. It might also be read as The Introduction of Hassāb or as a copyist’s error for Muqaddimah Ibn al-Khashshāb, that is, the commentary by Ibn al-Khashshāb (see above) on al-Muqaddimah al-wazīyāh fi al-nahw by the vizier Ibn Ḥubayrah (d. 560/1165). See De Sacy, Relation, 484 n. 52

\(^{59}\) Ibn Abī Usaybi’ah, ʿUyūn, 685/636.

\(^{60}\) Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt, 4:216–19.

\(^{61}\) EF, 2:357–59, s.v. “Jābir b. Ḥayyān.”
Nabāṭi Ibn Wahshiyah is supposed to have been an alchemist and astronomer who wrote a number of works drawing from Syriac sources and died ca. 190/800. The consensus is that most of the works attributed include authentic Syriac and other material but were penned in Arabic quite a bit later, again in the late third/ninth and early fourth/tenth centuries.\textsuperscript{62} The main works attributed to him include: \textit{Kitāb al-filāḥah al-nabaṭiyyah} (On Nabataean Agriculture), \textit{Kitāb tankalūshā} (On Teucros), and \textit{Kitāb al-sumūm} (On Poisons). \textsuperscript{63} Abd al-Laṭīf devoted much time and effort to the study of alchemy, a field he was later to reject: “The most forcible of those who misled me was Ibn Sinā, through his book on this ‘Craft’ with which he supposedly ‘perfects’ his philosophy.”

\textit{Mosul}

In 585/1189, \textsuperscript{63} Abd al-Laṭīf, aged twenty-eight, left Baghdad because none of the intellectuals there were of any interest to him and went to Mosul, where he was also to be disappointed by the paucity of scholars. Fortunately for him, however, he came across a few men of learning, such as:

l. Kamāl al-Dīn b. Yūnus. Abū al-Faṭḥ Kamāl al-Dīn Mūsā b. Yūnus al-Mawṣili was born in 551/1156 and studied at the Nizāmīyah in Baghdad beginning in 571/1175. He studied grammar under Ibn Saʿdīn al-Qurṭubi and Kamāl al-Dīn al-Anbārī.\textsuperscript{64} After the death of his father Yūnus al-Mawṣili, Kamāl al-Dīn b. Yūnus taught in the madrasah which eventually came to be named the Kamālīyah, after him, attached to the mosque of Amīr Zayn al-Dīn in Mosul. He died in Mosul in 639/1242.\textsuperscript{65} In the person of Kamāl al-Dīn b. Yūnus, \textsuperscript{63} Abd al-Laṭīf found an able mathematician and jurist who was also interested in alchemy.

After a year of vigorous independent study supported by a teaching position at the madrasah of Ibn Muhājir, \textsuperscript{63} Abd al-Laṭīf heard about Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (al-Maqtūl), whom people praised very highly, particularly with respect to ancient sciences. He, therefore, obtained some of his works from Kamāl al-Dīn, who was himself quite taken with al-Suhrawardī’s writings.\textsuperscript{66} His books studied by \textsuperscript{63} Abd al-Laṭīf are:

27. \textit{al-Talwihāt} [Intimations];

28. \textit{al-Lamḥah} [The Glimmer]; and

29. \textit{al-Maʿārij} [The Ascending Steps]\textsuperscript{67}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{62} \textit{EI²}, 3:963, s.v. “Ibn Wahshiyah.”
\item \textsuperscript{63} Ibn Abī Usaybiʿah, \textit{Uyūn}, 685/637.
\item \textsuperscript{64} Ibn al-ʿImād, \textit{Shadharāt}, 5:206.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Broekelmann, \textit{GAL}, SI:859.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Ibn al-ʿImād, \textit{Shadharāt}, 5:206, 153; Ibn Khallikān, \textit{Wafayāt}, 3:446. This is not Abū Ḥafs Ḥāfṣ al-Suhrwardi (d. 632/1234).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Al-Suhrawardī was executed by Şalāh al-Dīn in 587/1191 for heretical beliefs.

**Damascus**

‘Abd al-Laṭīf left for Damascus in 586/1190. There he found a number of scholars who gathered through the generous patronage of Şalāh al-Dīn; he identifies: Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Laṭīf, the son of Abū al-Najīb; the Secretary, Ibn Ṭalḥah; members of the house of Ibn Juhayr; Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, the vizier who was later executed; and the vizier Ibn Hubayrah. 68 ʿAbd al-Laṭīf writes also of meeting:

m. al-Kindī al-Baghḍādī al-Naḥwī. This is Tāj al-Dīn Abū al-Yumn Zayd b. al-Ḥasan (d. 613/1217). He had studied under Ibn al-Khashshāb, Abū Mansūr al-Jawāliqi and Abū al-Saʿādah al-Shajāri. He first lived in Alepp, where he traded in old clothes. He later befriended the ʿAmīr ʿIzz al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Ayyūb (nephew to Şalāh al-Dīn) and accompanied him to Egypt where he was able to avail himself of the great libraries. He studied the Kāmil, the Kitāb al-manḥaj, and works by Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī under the guidance of Ibn Mansūr, as well as the Kitāb of Sibawayh, the Muqtaḍāb, the Īdāh and the Takmilah (see above). ʿAbd al-Laṭīf found him and his methods strange and thus left him.

During this time, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf worked on several of his own books (see below). While in Damascus, he came across ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Nāṣīlī again, who was now living in the Maʿdīhanah al-Ghbarbiyah. He was the subject of some controversy and two factions had formed around him, one for him and one against him; the former included al-Khaṭṭāb al-Dawlaʿi. 69 ʿAbd al-Laṭīf says that he (himself) spoke to Ibn Nāṣīlī and reproached him for delving into alchemy and philosophy whereas he could rather have become someone without equal in his day in both the Islamic (al-ʿulūm al-sharʿīyah) and the rational (qaʿliyah) sciences. 70 Because of his interest in philosophy and alchemy, Ibn Nāṣīlī was slandered by many. 71 Apparently he set out for Acre in order to complain to Şalāh al-Dīn about al-Dawlaʿi but returned ill, was hospitalised, and died. Al-Muʿtamid, the governor of Damascus, who was a keen alchemist, took possession of all of Ibn Nāṣīlī’s books.

68 Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Laṭīf is identified by Ridā (Ibn Abī Usaybiʿah, ʿUyūn, 686, n. 3) as Ibn Labbād (coincidentally, the sobriquet of our ʿAbd al-Laṭīf), an expert in speculative theology, philosophy, medicine, and astrology. The identity of Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār is unclear. Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Thābit Ibn Ṭalḥah al-Kāṭīb al-Baghḍādī (d. 599/1202–3) was educated in Nishapur but settled in Damascus where he was a kāṭīb to the Ḥājīb of the Bāb al-Tawbiʿ (687, n. 41). The illustrious Ibn Juhayr family produced four ʿAbbasid viziers. ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn Hubayrah briefly occupied the post vacated by his more famous father. ʿAwn al-Dīn Ibn Hubayrah (d. 560/1165): see ʿEF, 3:802–3, and Ibn Khallikān, Waṣfāt, 4:114–28; 6:230–44.
70 Ibn Abī Usaybiʿah, ʿUyūn, 687/638.
71 Ibn Abī Usaybiʿah, ʿUyūn, 686/637.
Jerusalem

Abd al-Latif next set out for Jerusalem and Acre in order to join up with Salah al-Din’s camp. He first met Bahá’ al-Din Ibn Shaddád who had heard of Abd al-Latif’s fame in Mosul. Abu al-Mahasin Yusuf b. Rafi’ al-Asadí al-Mawṣilí Bahá’ al-Din Ibn Shaddád (d. 632/1234) was born in Mosul, studied there and then went to Baghdad where he subsequently became an assistant teacher at the Niẓāmiyyah. He then travelled to Aleppo and Damascus and Salah al-Din, for whom he became judge of military personnel (qādī askar) from 584/1188 until 589/1193. The fame of Ibn Shaddád was considerable and he was visited by the likes of Ibn Khallikân, Abū Shāmah and Ibn Wāṣil. Ibn Shaddád is the author of a famous biography of Salah al-Din, Kitāb Strat Salah al-Din, known also as al-Nawādīr al-sultāniyāh wa’l-mahāsin al-yūsufiyāh. It was at Ibn Shaddád’s suggestion that Abd al-Latif went to visit Imad al-Din al-Katib, whose tent was adjacent to Ibn Shaddád’s.

Imad al-Din Abū Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Katib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 597/1201), son of another famous katib, was born in Kashan, where he spent his early youth. In Damascus he was appointed katib to Nūr al-Din and mudarris in a madrasa built in his honour; he also undertook diplomatic missions. In 569/1173, on Nūr al-Din’s death, he abandoned office and went to Mosul where he became ill. When he recovered he went to join Salah al-Din, from whom he gained favour and with whom he was to have great influence. He is the author of the celebrated literary anthology Kharīdat al-qaṣr wa-ja’ridat ahl al-asaṣr.

Abd al-Latif found al-Katib al-Iṣfahānī busily writing in the decorative thuluth script without so much as a rough draft, and al-Iṣfahānī questioned him on matters of kalām. Imad al-Din suggested a visit to al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil. This was Muḥyī al-Din Abū Ali Abd al-Rahmān b. Ali al-Lakhmi al-Baysānī al-Asqalānī (d. 596/1200). Born in Asqalān, he was trained at the Diwān al-inshā’ in Cairo where he served as katib to many Cairene vizier families. Taking over from Ibn Khallāl as katib in 563/1169, he became katib to Salah al-Din on the new Sultan’s accession to the throne in 564/1171. Without interrupting the flow of his work, al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil questioned Abd al-Latif on a Qur’ānic verse. Abd al-Latif handled himself well and al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil told him to go to Damascus, for which he would receive a retainer.

Abd al-Latif requested to be sent to Cairo, insisted (wa-qaṭlu urīdu miṣr [...] fa-qaṭlu la’ buddā ʿī min miṣr), and finally obtained permission to do so, with a letter of introduction. This is testimony not only to al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil’s influence but also to Abd al-Latif’s reputation.

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72 Ibn al-Imād, Shadḥarāt, 6:158.
73 Ibn al-Imād, Shadḥarāt, 6:158.
74 Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt, 7:84–100 (#842).
76 Ibn Abī Uṣaybi’ah, ʿUyān, 687/638.
78 Ibn Abī Uṣaybi’ah, ʿUyān, 687/638.
When he first arrived in Cairo ʿAbd al-Laṭīf was met by the wakil, probably the agent of the treasury (wakil bayt al-māl), Ibn Sanāʾ al-Mulk. Ibn Sanāʾ gave ʿAbd al-Laṭīf money and provisions and introduced him to the various leaders (arbāb) of the region, from whom he received gifts and blessings. His residence was the al-Ḥājbīb Luʾluʾ Mosque. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf informs us that his intention of going to Cairo was to seek out three men: Yāsīn al-Simiyāʾī, Mūsā b. Maymūn, and Abū al-Qāsim al-Sharīʿī. We know that he also received instructions (waṣīyah) from al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil every ten days or so, although the exact nature of this waṣīyah is not known.

n. Yāsīn al-Simiyāʾī might be the Abū al-Ṭāhir Ismāʾīl b. Sāliḥ b. Yāsīn al-Sāʾī mentioned in the Shadharāt, but as ʿAbd al-Laṭīf mentions him in relation to alchemy, which he is said to have taught al-Shāqānī and in which he apparently surpassed Mūsā b. ʿImrān, then perhaps he is Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Iraqī al-Simāwī to whom is attributed a book concerning the so-called cultivation of gold. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf did not like him, calling him a con artist (mushaʿbīdh), a liar (kadhdhāb), and a sweet-talker (muḥālī).

o. Mūsā b. Maymūn, whose full name was Abū ʿImrān Ibn Maymūn b. ʿUbayd Allāh (Maymūn) al-Qurtubī, is better known as Maimonides, the famous Jewish theologian philosopher, and physician. He was born in Cordoba in 527/1135, but fled Spain with his family in 533/1149 because of persecution. After staying in Fez for ten years, he traveled east, arriving some time after 561/1166 in Egypt, where he worked first as a jeweler. Later, he became a physician as a protégé of al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, then of al-Malik al-Aḍḍal. He wrote twelve medical works in addition to brief monographs on such topics as asthma, haemorrhoids, personal hygiene, sexual intercourse, and pharmacology. He wrote in both Arabic and Hebrew and died in Fustat in 606/1208. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf informs us that one of his medical works was based on the sixteen books of Galen. This is probably the Kitāb al-nabāḍ al-kabīr, in sixteen parts and four volumes. Mūsā also wrote ʾSināʾat al-maʿāniq (The Craft of Logic) when he was sixteen, which draws heavily from Ibn Sināʾ, al-Fārābī, and al-Ghazzālī. In 587/1190 he wrote Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn (Guide of the Perplexed; Hebrew: More Nevochim) for fellow Jews and which ʿAbd al-Laṭīf read. His verdict is harsh: “I looked through it and found it an evil book that corrupted the articles of Law and Faith with elements he [Mūsā] thought would reform them.”

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80 Ibn Abī ʿUṣaybiʿah, ʿUyun, 687/638.
81 al-Ḥājbīb Luʾluʾ is Amīn Murr Riḍwān al-Saljūqī al-ʿĀdilī (d. 598/1202).
83 Ibn al-ʿImād, Shadharāt, vol. 4, p. 323.
84 Ibn Abī ʿUṣaybiʿah, ʿUyun, 687/638.
p. Abū al-Qāsim al-Sharīṭī is Abū al-Qāsim Hibat Allāh b. ʿAlī al-Anṣārī al-Buṣayrī (d. 598/1201). He studied hadīth under Abū ʿSādiq al-Madīnī and Muḥammad b. al-Barakāt al-Saʿīdī. He is the author of a work entitled Mukhtaṣar fi ʿilmay al-nāsikh waʾl-mansūkh (Epitome on the Science of Abrogating and Abrogated Scriptural Texts). ʿAbd al-Laṭīf was very impressed with this man, whom he was apparently seeking in Cairo. From Sharīṭī, whom he met in a large gathering in a mosque, he learned of the works of the classical masters, in particular those of al-Fārābī, al-İskandar al-Afriḍīsī, and Thamistiyūs (Themistius). ʿAbd al-Laṭīf explains that he had thought that Ibn Sinā was in possession of all wisdom (kuntu azunnu anna ʿI-ḥikmata kullahā ḥāzahā Ibn Sinā) but that Sharīṭī soon won him over. Al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) was such a famed commentator on Aristotle that he earned the title al-Muʿallim al-Thānī “the Second Master,” Aristotle being the first. Though ʿAbd al-Laṭīf does not specify the works, he almost certainly read:

Al-İskandar al-Afriḍīsī is Alexander Aphroditaus, regarded in medieval Europe and in the Islamic world as the most authoritative medieval commentator on Aristotle of his age (d. ca. 200 CE). There is speculation that Alexander met Galen ca. 180 CE and was subsequently appointed teacher of peripatetic philosophy in Athens. His works were translated by ʿHunayn b. Ishāq (d. 260/873), Ishāq b. ʿHunayn (d. 289/910–11), and Abū Bīshr Mattā (d. 328/940). His commentaries on Aristotle are only available in fragments or quoted in other works, most extensively in those of Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198). Thirty-five small treatises are available in Arabic manuscripts.

ʿAbd al-Laṭīf very likely read two medical tracts attributed him:

31. Fī al-mālānkūliyyā (On melancholia); and

32. Fī al-ʿ İlāl al-laṭī tiḥduthu fi jam al-miʿdah (On diseases afflicting the pylorus).

Jerusalem

Upon Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s negotiation of a truce with the Franks (Shaʿbān 588/August 1192), ʿAbd al-Laṭīf returned to Jerusalem and took the opportunity to visit him. He took with him as many of the books of the ancients as he could manage and sought out the ruler. He found him generous and perspicacious and remained in his company for a time. Indeed, his praise of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn is without reservation. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn

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86 Ibn al-ʿImād, Shadhārāt, 4:338.
88 See E2, 2:778 and the references cited there.
89 Ibn Abī ʿUsaybiʿah, ʿUyūn, 688/639.
90 He wrote commentaries on the Categories, Hermeneutics, the First and Second books of Analytics, Sophistics, Rhetoric, and Poetics. He also wrote on Nichomachean Ethics, On Meteorology, On the Heavens, and on Alexander Themistius’ On the Soul. His original works are numerous and include works on Intelligence, Time, Substance, Unity, the Void, and similar topics.
provided ʿAbd al-Laṭīf with a stipend of 30 dinars a month; this was supplemented by his sons to make a total of 100 dinars. This is a handsome salary; as Makdisi points out, “This amount, at the time, was ten times the normal monthly stipend of a college professor of law... . Ten dinars is half the amount paid to a physician of the fourteenth century.”

**Damascus**

ʿAbd al-Laṭīf then returned to Damascus, where he took up studies and teaching in the Umayyad Mosque. He devoted himself to the study of the ancients and his desire to learn them increased the more he read. His affection for Ibn Sīnā seriously declined and he soon realised the fallacy of alchemy (buṭlān al-ḵīmiyā). He goes on to say that he was saved from two great and ruinous errors: “My thanks to God were thus redoubled, for most intellectuals have followed the road to perdition simply through alchemy and the books of Ibn Sīnā.”

At Ṣālāḥ al-Dīn’s death (27 Ṣafar 589/3 March 1193), which ʿAbd al-Laṭīf blamed on the incompetent bloodletting of his physician, Damascus soon came under the rule of al-Malik al-ʾAfḍal, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s oldest son.

**Cairo**

ʿAbd al-Laṭīf remained with him until al-Malik al-ʾAzīz went to Cairo to oppose his brother al-ʾAfḍal (592/1196). ʿAbd al-Laṭīf joined him; and was paid from the treasury. In Cairo, he spent time again with Abū al-Qāsim al-Sharīʿī. During this time ʿAbd al-Laṭīf was teaching at the Azhar Mosque and he describes his daily routine. From dawn till the fourth hour, he taught the Islamic sciences. Mid-day, students who wished to study medicine and other subjects, by which he probably means the foreign sciences, came to his house. He would return to the Mosque at the end of the day to teach other students. At night he would do his own studying. He followed this pattern till al-Malik al-ʾAzīz’s death in 595/1198. He then took up residence in town, supported by stipends from Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s remaining sons. It was at this time that Egypt suffered a plague. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf wrote about this plague and the inflation that followed it in his fascinating Kitāb al-ifādah waʾl-iʿtibār fīʾl-umūr al-mushāhadaḥ waʾl-ḥawādith al-muʿāyyaḥ bi-ard Miṣr (Book of Utility and Reflection on the Conditions Observed and the Events Witnessed in the Land of Egypt), which survives.

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93 Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah, ʿUyūn, 688/639.
95 Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah, ʿUyūn, 689/640.
96 The day and night were each divided up into twelve ‘seasonal’ hours (sāʿāt zamanīyah). The fourth hour would have been ca. 10–11 a.m.
97 Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah, ʿUyūn, 689/640.
98 See *Relation de l’Égypte par Abd-Allatif*... cited in note 6 above; and *The Eastern Key*. Kitāb al-ifādah waʾl-iʿtibār of ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baḥgādī, tr. J. A. Videan, I. E. Videan and K. H. Zand (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964). For an example of the interest that his keen observations continue to generate, see P. Provençal, “Nouvel essai sur les observations zoologiques de ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-
Al-Malik al-‘Aṣ̣īl Sayf al-Dīn (Latin: Saphadin) Abū Bakr b. Ayyūb (d. 619/1218) then took over the sultanate (596/1199–1200) and dispersed Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s sons (i.e. his own nephews). He was recognised by the Abbasid Caliph in 604/1207.

Jerusalem

‘Abd al-Latīf went to Jerusalem again, where he stayed a while teaching a variety of subjects (kāthīr min al-‘ulūm) in the Aqṣā Mosque, and where he wrote a great deal.

Damascus

In 604/1207 he left for Damascus. He stayed in the Aziziyah Mosque, where he taught law and studied independently. Many students came to him, not only to study grammar, in which he had previously distinguished himself, but also to study medicine, for which he was then renowned.

Aleppo and Erzjinjan

‘Abd al-Latīf next went to Aleppo (after 609/1212), where he composed a number of works, thence to Anatolia (after 617/1220) where he stayed many years in the service of al-Malik al-Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Dāwūd b. Bahram (Dāwūd Shāh; d. 624/1225), the governor of Erzjinjan, to whom he dedicated a number of works. Dāwūd Shāh was his patron until his defeat at the hands of al-Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Kay-Qubadh (r. 616–634/1219–1237) in 625/1228.

‘Abd al-Latīf travelled widely between 17 Dhū al-Qa‘dah 629/18 October 1228 and 9 Shawwāl 626/31 August 1229. Aleppo was under the governorship of Shihāb al-Dīn Atābekī when he arrived there and he was treated very well by him. He wrote many works there, taught many students medicine and the ancient sciences; he also taught hadith and Arabic at the Friday Mosque. He was, Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah assures us, always studying, writing and composing. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah had hoped to meet ‘Abd al-Latīf but the meeting never took place, though correspondence did continue. ‘Abd al-Latīf speaks of coming to Damascus (where Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah and his family were resident) but first wanted to present the Caliph al-Mustanṣir some of his works.


99 Efi 1:197; see also Abū Shāmāh’s Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn.


101 Efi, 2:711.


103 Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah writes: “I saw [‘Abd al-Latīf] when he was living in Damascus the last time he was there: a thin, elderly man, of medium height, sweet-voiced and expressive” (683/634–35).
Baghdad

'Abd al-Latīf died immediately after he arrived in Baghdad, on Sunday 12 Muḥarram 629/9 November 1231, and was buried next to his father in the Wardiyah Cemetery.

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The education of a polymath of the medieval Islamic world was a three-fold process. Besides the usual training in the Islamic sciences received at the hands of teachers qualified or certified (through ijāzah) to do so, the seeker of knowledge had to devote much time to independent study, and had also to seek masters outside the institutions for training in the so-called foreign sciences. 'Abd al-Latīf's education is an example of this process, and the autobiographical excerpts preserved by Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah allow us to see it in some detail. A striking feature of 'Abd al-Latīf's education is its combination of instruction in the institutional setting of the madrasah with instruction outside it, in private settings. Overall, his account provides only relatively limited information on the institutional part of his instruction. There seem to be significant omissions concerning his training in the Islamic sciences per se, particularly in law and theology.

'Abd al-Latīf's account, or what we have of it, provides great detail concerning his early auditions of hadith, his study of grammar and the Arabic language, and his studies in medicine, alchemy, and the other ancient sciences. We learn little of his studies in the Islamic sciences, yet he must have been well versed in them. Al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil questioned him about theology, he taught the Islamic sciences for the better part of the day at the Azhar when he resided in Cairo, and he even taught law in Damascus. 'Abd al-Latīf may have neglected to provide detailed information on these topics because he considered himself first and foremost an expert in Arabic grammar and the ancient sciences, and only secondarily a scholar of the Islamic sciences. It is also possible that Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, who, inasmuch as he was composing an entry for a biographical dictionary of physicians, was most interested in accomplishments in medicine and the ancient sciences, and accordingly omitted sections of 'Abd al-Latīf's work that focused on the Islamic sciences in particular. In either case, it must be recognized that the account we have of 'Abd al-Latīf's education reveals some important omissions that we may only begin to fill in by careful examination.

'Abd al-Latīf's adherence to one of the four Sunni legal madhhabs appears nowhere in the extant excerpts, and madrasahs appear only a handful of times in his account. Certainly, though, he was trained in Shāfi'i law; al-Subkī and others included him in their biographical works devoted to Shāfi'i jurists. Early on, he studied under Ibn Faḍlān at the Dār al-Dhahab Madrasah in Baghdad. He studied as a young man under Kamāl al-Dīn b. Yūnus at the Kamāliyah Madrasah in Mosul. Later on, he taught as a professor at the 'Aziziyah Madrasah in Damascus. The Dār al-Dhahab Madrasah, the Kamāliyah in Mosul, and the 'Aziziyah in Damascus were all Shāfi'i institutions. Ibn Faḍlān, under whom he studied at the Dār al-Dhahab Madrasah in Baghdad, was one of the leading Shāfi'i jurists of the time, and would become professor of Shāfi'i law at the Mustansiriyah. In addition, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was a great patron of Shāfiʿis in particular. These hints in 'Abd al-Latīf's account show the
importance of a Shāfiʿi affiliation for ʿAbd al-Latīf’s education and access to patronage and support.

In addition, ʿAbd al-Latīf clearly had important links with the Niẓāmiyah Madrasah in Baghdad. ʿAbd al-Latīf’s father had trained as a Shāfiʿi jurist at the Niẓāmiyah, and ʿAbd al-Latīf’s most important grammar teacher, Kamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Anbārī, had a long history at the Niẓāmiyah. Al-Anbārī had studied Shāfiʿi law there, along with ʿAbd al-Latīf’s father, under Ibn al-Razzāz and Arabic grammar and lexicography under the Niẓāmiyah’s grammar professor, Abū Manṣūr al-Jawāliqī. After serving as a repetitor (muʿid), he eventually assumed the post as the Niẓāmiyah’s professor of grammar and probably held this position at the time when ʿAbd al-Latīf studied under him. Wajih al-Dīn al-Mubārak al-Wāsiṭī, al-Anbārī’s student, assumed the position of grammar professor after al-Anbārī’s passing, and apparently had to adopt the Shāfiʿi legal madhhab in order to do so. It appears very likely that a significant part of ʿAbd al-Latīf’s study of Arabic grammar, lexicography, and literature took place at the Niẓāmiyah, and probable that he had studied Shāfiʿi law there as well.

In the end, though, while ʿAbd al-Latīf had certainly studied law, theology, and the other Islamic sciences and was well enough versed in them to teach these subjects, he apparently did not consider them his forte. As far as we know, he did not write any works on law or theology. He wrote several philologically-oriented works on hadith and the Qurʾān, including Gharīb al-hadīth, Sharḥ sabʿīn hadīthan and al-Radd ʿalā Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī fi tafsīr Sūrat al-ikhlāṣ, but the rest of his works are devoted to the language arts and the ancient sciences, especially medicine. His career shows how the Islamic and the ancient sciences continued to be studied and taught even though the institution of waqf did not support them directly. As ʿAbd al-Latīf’s description shows, many scholars taught the ancient sciences in a private setting, usually in their homes, while at the same time being supported by a salary for teaching Arabic grammar or in the Islamic sciences in an endowed institution. Certainly, it was more difficult to acquire an education in the ancient sciences than in the heavily supported Islamic sciences, and ʿAbd al-Latīf’s journeys and disappointments attest to those difficulties. Nevertheless, the transmission of knowledge in medicine, mathematics, philosophy, and other scientific fields was upheld and continued to flourish at the hands of outstanding individual scholars like ʿAbd al-Latīf al-Baghdādī.