

Al-Bājūrī's Life and Scholarship

Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Bājūrī b. al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Jayzāwī b. Aḥmad was born in 1198/1783–4.¹ His education began with the study of the Qurʾān and its recitation (*tajwīd*) under his father's tutelage in his hometown of Bājūr, a village in the province of Manūfiyya in Lower Egypt. Writing about 100 years after al-Bājūrī's birth, nineteenth-century Egyptian cabinet minister ʿAlī Mubārak (d. 1893) describes the village of Bājūr as containing five mosques, each housing a tomb of the deceased namesake of the mosque.² They include Jāmiʿ al-Arbaʿīn, Jāmiʿ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Jāmiʿ Shihāb al-Dīn, Jāmiʿ Sayyidī Mazrūʿ, and Jāmiʿ Yūnus. It also contained one *zāwiyya* (Sufi lodge) called Zāwiyya ʿAjūr, indicating a strong Sufi presence in the village. Attached to the *zāwiyya* was a poultry farm, eleven small gardens that produced various types of fruit, one of which was bequeathed for the descendants of a certain Rustum Bayk who was buried there, and the rest being for some of the residents of the area. At the time of Mubārak's writing, the population totaled 1,998 people, all of whom were Muslim. The people of Bājūr were famous for making a licorice root drink and for growing cotton. The village itself was well known for the luminaries it produced, in particular al-Bājūrī.³

At the age of fourteen, al-Bājūrī entered al-Azhar—an institution of which he would later become rector—in order to study the traditional sciences of Islam. At the time, a typical day of study would have begun after the morning prayers with the study of the Qurʾān, followed by *ḥadīth*.⁴ Then studies of the Qurʾānic sciences, such as its proper pronunciation (*tajwīd*) or its variant readings (*qiraʾāt*) commenced. This was followed by the study of various *ḥadīth* sciences, theological studies (*uṣūl al-dīn*)—which necessarily entailed the study of logic (*manṭiq*), as discussed later in this work—followed by the foundational sources of Islamic law (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and its derived rulings (*furūʿ al-fiqh*). After the evening prayers, a time associated with

spiritual contemplation and worship, the study of Sufism—Islamic mysticism—was undertaken.⁵

By al-Bājūrī's time, the Islamic sciences were often studied from condensed summary texts, with commentaries—sometimes word by word—and super-commentaries. There was an emphasis on oral and aural transmission of knowledge and the memorization of didactic poems or condensed texts on various sciences, from music to logic, Qur'ānic recitation to law. Such emphases also lent themselves well to educating the visually impaired, as there was a college for the blind at al-Azhar.⁶

After a year of studying the Islamic sciences, his studies were interrupted by the invasion of the French. In 1798, al-Bājūrī left al-Azhar and went to Giza (al-Jīza),⁷ where he remained until 1801; he then returned to al-Azhar to complete his education. He excelled in his studies and began to teach and write on a variety of topics. In 1807, at the age of twenty-four, he completed his first book, a commentary on the work of one of his most important teachers, Muḥammad al-Faḍālī (d. 1821). He studied with al-Faḍālī until the latter's death; thus his studies as a student under the guidance of a master continued at least until then, though he had begun teaching and writing. Like al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) before him, who began writing prior to being granted a full license to teach,⁸ al-Bājūrī's writing and teaching at this stage were arguably part of the pedagogy. It should be noted, however, that even when one is promoted to the level of *shaykh* and teacher, the practice of studying texts and disciplines under the tutelage of another master often continues; one is always a student.

Al-Bājūrī's Teachers and Students

Al-Bājūrī studied with some of the most important scholars of his day. Listed among his prominent teachers are:

1. Muḥammad al-Amīr al-Kabīr al-Mālikī (d. 1817)
2. ʿAbdallāh al-Sharqāwī l-Shāfiʿī, Shaykh al-Azhar [1793–1812], (d. 1812)
3. Dāwūd al-Qalʿāwī (d. uncertain)
4. Muḥammad al-Faḍālī⁹ (d. 1821)
5. Ḥasan al-Quwaysnī, Shaykh al-Azhar [1834–1838], (d. 1838)
6. Abū Ḥurayba al-Shintināwī l-Naqshbandī [Sufi shaykh], (d. 1852)¹⁰

Those who list al-Bājūrī as a teacher include Salīm al-Bishrī (d. 1916), who was Shaykh al-Azhar (1900–4, 1909–16), and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Inbābī (d. 1895), who also served as Shaykh al-Azhar in 1882 and again from 1886 to 1895. Another prominent student of al-Bājūrī was Rifā‘a al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (d. 1873), translator of French works of geography, author of a popular travelogue recording his experiences in Paris,¹¹ and considered by many a sort of proto-reformer. Although al-Bājūrī's and al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's professional lives overlapped and they both studied under al-Sharqāwī, al-Bājūrī appears to have had no inclination toward the reformist leanings of al-Ṭaḥṭāwī. It is reported that ‘Abbās I (d. 1854), the grandson of Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha, and khedive of Egypt from 1849 to 1854, attended some of al-Bājūrī's lectures,¹² indicating, perhaps, that it was a period of better relations between al-Azhar and the government, as compared with the somewhat strained relations of Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha's reign.

Scholars of diverse disciplines and *madhhab* affiliations studied with al-Bājūrī, coming from within and outside of Egypt. Interestingly, al-Bājūrī also had students who were the grandson and great-grandson of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, namely ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥasan b. Muḥammad (b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb) Āl al-Shaykh (d. 1869) and ‘Abd al-Laṭīf b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥasan Āl al-Shaykh (d. 1876), both of whom served as head of the religious estate at various times when the Saudi/Wahhabi alliance ruled parts of the Arabian peninsula.¹³ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān had studied under his grandfather Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb until the age of thirteen, when the latter died.

When Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha put down the Wahhābī revolt of 1818, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and his son ‘Abd al-Laṭīf moved to Egypt with their families. There they studied with scholars of al-Azhar for eight years, including some of the most prominent jurist-theologian-Sufis of the day, including al-Bājūrī's teacher al-Quwaysnī, the Mālikī jurist and Khalwatī Sufi Aḥmad al-Ṣāwī (d. 1825–6), and al-Bājūrī himself. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān studied *Sharḥ al-Khulāṣah* with al-Bājūrī, being al-Ashmūnī's (d. 900/1494–5) commentary on the thousand-line didactic grammar poem known as *Alfiyat ibn Mālik*.¹⁴ Despite the political circumstances that may have brought ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and his son to Egypt, and their involvement in the conflict between the Ottomans and Saudis before and after residing in Egypt, their studying with top Azharī scholars indicates that the political animosity between Ash‘arīs and Wahhābī/Atharīs may not have been as clear-cut or far-reaching as some modern proponents of each school might assume. Indeed, Gilbert Delanoue mentions that refutations of and reactions to Wahhābī ideology did not surface in Egypt until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, indicating the con-

tinued strength and influence of al-Bājūrī's and his predecessors' views.¹⁵

Al-Bājūrī wrote a number of *ijāzas* for various scholars; these can be found in Dār al-Kutub library in Cairo. They include an *ijāza* for Shaykh ʿAbd al-Munʿim b. Muḥammad al-Suyūfī l-Jurjāwī l-Ṣaʿīdī l-Mālikī (d. 1326/1908). Al-Bājūrī grants him permission to narrate all that al-Bājūrī has narrated of *ḥadīth* (*al-marwīyyāt*), that for which al-Bājūrī has a chain of narration and permission (*sanad*), and in particular, those chains in which Shaykh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Amīr al-Kabīr is found. A similar *ijāza* exists for Shaykh Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Jarjāwī (d. c. 1267/1851). A third exists for a Ḥanafī scholar, possibly of Turkish origin, named Ḥusnayn Aḥmad Jalbī, known as al-Maḥḥ al-Būtījī l-Ḥanafī. Another exists for a Ḥanbalī scholar named ʿAbd al-Sallam b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Shaḥī l-Dimashqī l-Ḥanbalī. A fifth *ijāza* exists for ʿAlī b. ʿAwd al-Bardīsī l-Jarjāwī (d. 1280/1864).¹⁶ It is important to note that al-Bājūrī had students from all four Sunnī *madhhabs* (schools of law), as it indicates that, despite sometimes vehement disagreements between the schools, each was seen as valid and legitimate in al-Bājūrī's day (and prior), as discussed later in this work.

In addition to future rectors and scholars of law, theology, and history, some of al-Bājūrī's students were also prominent in Sufi movements, such as Muḥammad b. Khalīl al-Ḥifnāwī l-Hajrasī (d. 1910), an important figure in the development of the Rashīdī Idrīsī tradition and an initiate of the Khalwatiyya Sufi order.¹⁷

A student of some of al-Azhar's luminaries, and later a popular teacher of future scholars and leaders, al-Bājūrī appears to have risen above the general masses of students and professors. While there is little in the historical record to indicate how or why, it is probable that his rise through the scholarly ranks was a combination of academic acumen, personal connection to important scholars, and unquantifiable good fortune. Given some of his administrative decisions as rector of al-Azhar, discussed below, it is also probable that he had an assertive personality that may have attracted the attention and respect of his contemporaries.

A Traditional Shaykh al-Azhar in an Era of Attempted Reform

Al-Bājūrī taught at al-Azhar, and in 1847, at the age of sixty-four, became its rector (Shaykh al-Azhar), a position that he held until the

end of his life. Little is known about his life prior to being appointed as the Shaykh al-Azhar. It is likely that his time before the appointment was spent teaching and writing, since all of his completed works were written before he assumed this well-respected and influential position. Upon his appointment, a certain al-Sayyid Muḥammad Shihāb al-Dīn (d. 1857–8) delivered twenty lines of poetry in praise of al-Bājūrī, which are reproduced in ‘Abd al-Razzaq al-Bayṭār’s (d. 1917) *Ḥilyat al-bashar fi tārikh al-qarn al-thālith ‘ashar*. They are offered below in translation:

Do you see the clouds scattered with its pearls ornamenting
the gardens of roses and gillyflowers
Or the heralds of morning that breathed and covered the
gloom of darkness with its rays
Like the rejoicing nightingales manifesting the ascending
star, the era enjoying the graces of its abundant fortune
He is an elucidating star, the resplendence of its light dis-
pensing with need of lamp and illumination
The dynasty of his grandeur raised the banner of glory, and
attacked by the drawn sword of his famed merit.¹⁸
How noble a scholar and gallant leader, a destination to
which people traverse quickly across the barren waste-
land for his sweeping knowledge
He made the ascendant stars appear in the rising places of
his glory; at the way stations he travels on with ease
His commentaries processed (like a beautiful bride), delicate
and fine, gleaming with the beautiful qualities of being
inked and penned
He is a land of merits and an ocean of virtues; pure, the
impurities of turbidity passed him by
I repeated the praise of his ornamented qualities for he is
sugar, the sweetness of which was intensified by refining.
He is a garden of gnosis manifesting low-hanging fruit
(from the two gardens of Paradise), a sheath unbuttoned
(like a blossoming bud).
No wonder the times became delightful by his goodness
and his sweet fragrance perfumed the entire universe.
Oh fate, give the bow to him who knows how to shape it
(i.e. al-Bājūrī), for you have been excessive in what came
before and what followed.¹⁹
This is the winner of the racetrack’s prize, who won the
glory by his praiseworthy endeavor

He is the master of the time, aid of his era, glory of his
 age, facilitator of difficult matters
 The world rejoiced at him, and by him its face shone with
 the cheer of a happy person.
 The cosmos is resplendent because of him, and it said
 "make things ample and easy for him; the most lumi-
 nous Imam is Shaykh al-Bājūrī."
 Oh friend, speak of what has been narrated of him (i.e.
 great deeds) and say "the transmission of my hadith is
 authentic"
 Blessed is he who by the Station of Ibrahim has performed
 the obligation of his accepted pilgrimage
 And walked (between the hillocks Safa and Marwa) and
 circumambulated the Ka'ba of beneficence and power, he
 who completes his religious rites without deficiency
 So enjoy the bliss of drawing near, and make up what was
 missed from avowed superogatory works
 And to him I give the daughter of thought (i.e. this poem),
 unveiled in the shyness of her parted eyelids.
 The goals of that which she hopes is the breaking of her
 seal,²⁰ that has ended with the utmost reverence.

Al-Bājūrī had to agree to some conditions of his appointment, namely that he would not oversee the officially recognized Sufi orders, which may have been the responsibility of previous rectors, and to consult other scholars before making major institutional decisions.²¹ Prior to and during his tenure as Shaykh al-Azhar, he had a heavy teaching load. It is mentioned that he taught al-Rāzī's *Tafsīr* (exegetics) on the Qur'ān, a multivolume work which is said to contain so many digressive discussions into theology and other matters that it "contains everything except exegesis."²² Those who attended were not merely young students aspiring to scholarship, but also many of the great scholars of al-Azhar. However, al-Bājūrī was apparently too "weak" to complete the voluminous exegesis; an incomplete commentary, presumed to be his lecture notes on al-Rāzī's *tafsīr*, is listed among his uncompleted works.²³

Teaching long days most of his professional life may have been partially a result of the political dynamic between al-Azhar and the khedive. Muḥammad 'Alī Pasha (d. 1849)²⁴ was often in conflict with the scholars of al-Azhar and had severely cut their funding, partially by appropriating the endowments of teaching mosques.²⁵ Muḥammad 'Alī Pasha, an Albanian appointed as governor of Egypt under the Ottomans, sought to centralize and expand his power over Egypt and

the surrounding areas in the Sudan. Influenced by British and French models of education and government, as well as his own perceptions of political rule, which derived, according to Gran, from his Albanian heritage,²⁶ he began a project of military, commercial, agricultural, educational, scientific, and political "reform."

The term "reform" is problematic in this era, as the popular implications of the term often suggest the import of "advanced" foreign ideas and technology that must be absorbed by the followers of the "old ways," and that these ideas either replace or transform what was previously prevalent.²⁷ While Muḥammad ʿAlī's reform efforts did involve many European components, there were other elements from within Egypt and the broader Islamic lands.²⁸ Muḥammad ʿAlī and his supporters among the *ʿulamāʾ* (religious scholars) such as Shaykh al-Azhar Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār (d. 1835) were interested in the study of Western medicine from an empirical perspective. However, those particular theological or legal matters on the agendas of later reformists, as well as matters of secularization, became more prominent in the years after al-Bājūrī's death, and appear to have played a minimal role in comparison to the economic, military, and political changes attempted by Muḥammad ʿAlī.

Al-Bājūrī, along with many other scholars of al-Azhar, opposed the reform program of Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha, even during the term of the pro-government Shaykh al-Azhar Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār (1830–35).²⁹ The end of al-ʿAṭṭār's term also marks a more pronounced turn away from Muḥammad ʿAlī's reform attempts, and a return to al-Azhar's majority view of religion and government. Historical sources³⁰ inform us of the resistance of al-Bājūrī and his contemporaries to Muḥammad ʿAlī's reform efforts, though explicit reference to them in his works is not easily found.

One possible reference to the early reformist or proto-reformist discourse is al-Bājūrī's discussion of *wadʿ ʿī ilāhī* and *wadʿ ʿī bashrī* knowledge, the former being that which is based on divine revelation—directly and apodictically or through probabilistic deduction via principles and methods drawn from divine revelation—and the latter being knowledge that stems solely from human speculation on matters which cannot be known through direct empirical observation or purely rational sources. More specifically, al-Bājūrī identifies an example of *wadʿ ʿī bashrī* knowledge as *siyāsat al-ḥukamāʾ*, which might be best translated as political philosophy, from which kings derive principles of leadership and rule.³¹

This may be an implicit reference to discussions of *siyāsa*, a term covering everything from policing, hygiene, schooling, and other social issues, "all of which was taken up—on the whole from 1860

onward—as the responsibility of government.”³² Rifā‘a al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (d. 1873), a younger contemporary and student of al-Bājūrī, and proto-reformer, wrote of *siyāsa* thus: “Islamic countries, however, have neglected to teach the rudiments of the science of sovereign government and its application.”³³ Al-Bājūrī may not have seen this matter as one of sacred relevance, and thus may have been seeking to downplay its importance, without rejecting it outright. Indeed, he recognizes that Allah is the source of all things, but emphasizes the fact that *wad‘ī bashrī* knowledge is acquired by humans through reflection and investigation, and related to matters in which the *Sharī‘a* is apparently silent. Despite al-Bājūrī’s recognition of the study and application of various forms of *siyāsa* by the rulers in his day, and proto-reformers such as al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s greater emphasis on the subject after al-Bājūrī’s death, discussion of such matters was not restricted to the nineteenth century, and such a statement by al-Bājūrī could easily have been written hundreds of years prior. Therefore, al-Bājūrī’s mention of it is not necessarily a reference to discussions of Western and secular reform.

Another possible implicit reference to the discussions of modernization around al-Bājūrī is his assessment of the theory of cloud formation and rainfall, found in his discussion on water that is suitable for ritual ablutions, wherein he distinguishes between the “proper” interpretation of the origins of rain, and the “incorrect” interpretation attributed to the Mu‘tazilīs, who were presumably long gone by al-Bājūrī’s time. Discussing the various forms of water that are found bubbling from the ground and falling from the sky, al-Bājūrī says that “All water descends from the sky. Allah says in the Qur’ān ‘Have you not seen that Allah sends down water from the sky . . .’ [Zumar: 21]. Mujāhid [d. 104/722] said: ‘There is not water on the earth except that it is from the sky . . .’”

Al-Bājūrī further narrates from Mujāhid the possibility that there could be water on earth that is left over from the creation of the world, though he implicitly rejects the Mu‘tazilī view, which he introduces with the passive past tense verb *qīla* (“it is said”), thus indicating that what follows is a weaker opinion. Al-Bājūrī says

It has been said that that which descends from the skies, its source is from the ocean. Allah most high raises it, ejecting it by his kindness (*luṭf*) and perfects its amount until it is made pleasant by that raising, then He causes it to descend to the earth in order that it is utilized. . . .³⁴

This, like the discussion of *siyāsa* mentioned above, might appear to be a subtle reference to “Western” scientific discussions of his day,

however, it is in fact based on al-Barmāwī's assessment of the subject, written two centuries prior.³⁵ Therefore, in the absence of specific reference to issues of his day, attributing such discussions to al-Bājūrī's assessment of modernization is speculative at best. Despite al-Bājūrī's awkward denial of empirical fact based on a supernatural interpretation, the very fact that al-Bājūrī, by way of al-Barmāwī, was aware of an empirical interpretation of the workings of the natural world indicates that we should approach popular notions of "modernization" and "reform" with caution. This is especially true with regard to what knowledge pre-modern societies may have possessed before coming into contact with modern Western thought.

In al-Bājūrī's day, the benefits of reform and modernity tended to benefit Ottoman-Egyptian elites "involved in the army and the new industries,"³⁶ rather than those outside this sphere, such as the rural masses, or quite often, the *'ulamā'*. Scholars at al-Azhar with heavy teaching loads and shrinking endowments not surprisingly may have comprised a large number of people who objected to Muḥammad 'Alī's reforms, not merely on conservative religious grounds, but also because they perceived such reformation and modernization to be irrelevant in their spheres of concern.

Al-Bājūrī lived in a time in which reforms attempted by Muḥammad 'Alī were partially undone by Abbas I; the full impact of the impetus toward modernization on a wide-scale cultural level really began after his death. My initial assessment, which remains after sustained investigation, is that al-Bājūrī's life seems to have been unaffected by the political projects of his country's leaders,³⁷ and his works do not appear to be significantly impacted by modern circumstances; legal and theological controversies related to relations with Europe or modernization are ambiguous if not wholly absent. This is especially notable in comparison to his younger contemporary al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, whose work, especially after al-Bājūrī's death, helped modernization take root.

Despite the apparently minimal impact of modern politics on his thought, al-Bājūrī's administrative life was certainly affected by the politics of his day. Snouck Hurgronje reports of al-Bājūrī's tenure as Shaykh al-Azhar:³⁸

Ibrāhīm al-Bājūrī was Shaykh al-Azhar from 1263/1847 up to his death, Dhūl-ḩaḩah 1277 (June 1861).³⁹ In his last years, however, he was really no longer capable of fulfilling his official duties due to his old age. The government therefore gave him in Muḩarram 1275/August 1858 four "deputies" (*wukalā'*) to assist with the official duties. These were:

Shaykh Aḥmad Kabûh al-ʿIdwî l-Mâlikî, Shaykh Ismâʿîl al-Ḥalabî l-Ḥanafî, Shaykh Khalîfah al-Fashnî l-Shâfiʿî, Shaykh Muṣṭafâ l-Şâwî l-Shâfiʿî. After Bâjûrî's death, his office remained vacant, and the official duties were carried out by the two remaining "deputies": Shaykh Kabûh and Shaykh Khalîfah al-Fashnî, until the year 1281 (1864–65).⁴⁰

The official duties referred to above included dealing with a number of administrative and institutional crises, including the event that led to the appointment of four deputies mentioned by Snouck Hurgronje. One such incident in 1270/1853 required al-Bâjûrî to call in soldiers to search the quarters of the Maghribî students, after a group of students attacked al-Bâjûrî over an issue of daily rations. The ringleaders of this attack were deported, though they testified that they had not intended any harm to al-Bâjûrî.⁴¹

Muḥammad ʿAlî's policy of conscription also affected the daily functions of al-Azhar. The policy, designed to support his military campaigns, brought harm and suffering to many across Egypt.⁴² Conscripts, usually from rural or impoverished urban backgrounds, faced protracted and trying military service in lands far from their homes—service that frequently resulted in their deaths.⁴³ Draft evasion was not uncommon and often involved self-maiming, absconsion, bribery, pleading, violence, and trickery.⁴⁴ During the Crimean War (1853–1856), al-Azhar became a haven for young men evading conscription into the army.⁴⁵ Each village had quotas and the village headmen (shaykhs) were responsible for managing the conscription of those eligible in their villages; failure to do so could result in caning, whipping, or imprisonment. In one instance, a group of village headmen searching for draft-evaders sought permission from al-Bâjûrî to apprehend them. At the time, al-Bâjûrî was sitting in his chair (kursî) teaching; he ordered the students present to forcibly eject the village headmen from the premises. The students attacked the headmen, beating them with "sandels, fists, and canes." In the process, one of the village headmen was killed, but it was not known who had struck him, so his death apparently went unpunished.⁴⁶

Muḥammad ʿAlî had used al-Bâjûrî's predecessor, Shaykh al-Azhar al-ʿAṭṭâr and other ʿulamâʾ to enforce the draft; however, under al-Bâjûrî the autonomy of the ʿulamâʾ was revived, giving them more power in relation to the government.⁴⁷ Al-Bâjûrî's bold order to eject the village headmen may reveal a multifaceted intent; in part, it may have been a display of his concern for his students, but it may also have been a form of political resistance. Al-Bâjûrî does not appear

to have had any reservations about acting according to his beliefs or speaking his mind, even when it was in opposition to proposed or actual state policy. For example, when the Khedive Sa'īd wanted to forcibly relocate the Coptic Christians from Egypt to the Sudan, he sought a fatwā (legal edict) from al-Bājūrī regarding its permissibility, to which al-Bājūrī is reported to have responded:

If you mean by your project the people of the Covenant who are the dwellers of the land and its owners, then grace be to Allah, no change has occurred to the Islamic Covenant and no breach thereof to incur their victimization and they must be left under the Covenant to the day of doom.⁴⁸

The event that led to the appointment of four deputies to assist al-Bājūrī in his administrative duties, which also may have allowed him to focus on teaching and scholarship, was a clash between Syrian and Egyptian students which required police and army intervention and resulted in the arrest of more than thirty of the Egyptian students. Thus, by 1858, al-Bājūrī's ability to oversee the often unruly students of al-Azhar was clearly at issue, and it appears he was ultimately relieved of such administrative duties, though he retained the most important aspects of his position as Shaykh al-Azhar—namely teaching, scholarship, and probably religious consultation with the government. This arrangement lasted until al-Bājūrī's death, after which the position of Shaykh al-Azhar went unfilled until 1864–65, when Shaykh al-Arūsī (d. 1293/1876) was appointed. During this interim the administrative duties associated with the position were performed by Shaykh Kabūh and Shaykh Khalīfa al-Fashnī, as mentioned previously.

Al-Bājūrī's Character

The chronicles relate that al-Bājūrī was a deeply pious man devoted to seeking knowledge and its benefits, as well as to educating others and benefiting them thereby. He is described as one whose tongue was always "wet with praise" of Allah and the recitation of the Qur'ān, which he would complete in a day and a night, or nearly so. His love for the family of the Prophet is noted, and it is said that he would visit them often. Whether this refers to visiting the Prophet's descendants who were alive in his time, or the tombs of his famous descendants buried in Egypt is unclear, but the latter is probable.⁴⁹

I have not seen any written documentation on al-Bājūrī's personal life, however, there are oral reports among Azharīs about his well-known difficult relationship with his wife, to whom he apparently stayed married despite their hardships, in order to protect her from the pains a future husband might cause her, and to protect any future husband from her!⁵⁰

Al-Bājūrī's administrative life, as mentioned earlier, appears to have involved him in some difficult worldly matters, such as the incident with the village *shaykhs* seeking draft-evaders. In his final years, he likely devoted himself to teaching and worship, having been removed from official duties and replaced by four deputies. Toward the end of his life, al-Bājūrī fell ill and was confined to bed. He died on Thursday, 28 Dhūl Qa'ḍa 1276/17 June 1860. Snouck Hurgronje and others have said that it was in the year 1277/1861, while still others have placed his death as late as 1281/1865, although this is incorrect. Al-Bājūrī was laid to rest in a graveyard called *turba al-mujāwirīn*, where other scholars of al-Azhar had been buried, including the prolific Azharī commentator Muḥammad al-Dasūqī (d. 1230/1815).⁵¹

Al-Bājūrī's Works

In his biographical notice on al-Bājūrī, Shaykh 'Alī Jum'a—former Grand Mufti⁵² of Egypt—lists twenty completed works attributed to al-Bājūrī.⁵³ The first batch of works deals mostly with *kalām*, *manṭiq*, and the linguistic sciences. Al-Suyūṭī also began his voluminous writing career with the same subjects,⁵⁴ a clear indication that the trivium/quadrivium method had been firmly rooted in the Islamic curriculum for many centuries. Once he had sufficiently covered the trivium, al-Bājūrī ventured into the realm of law, though he did return to author some works on theology. His final work, perhaps his magnum opus, *Ḥāshiyā 'alā sharḥ b. al-Qāsim al-Ghazzī 'alā matn Abī Shujā' fī fiqh al-Shāfi'iyya* [A gloss on Ibn al-Qāsim al-Ghazzī's commentary on Abū Shujā' 's manual of Shāfi'ī *fiqh*] was completed some twenty years after his initial prolific production of works, with only the *Mawāhib al-laduniyya sharḥ al-shamā'il al-Muḥammadiyya* breaking the apparent silence in 1835. He did, however, leave at least six unfinished works that address a host of topics ranging from *uṣūl al-fiqh* to *kalām*, as well as two works on *tafsīr*. Perhaps these works, his heavy teaching load, and, in the latter part of his life, his official administrative duties, slowed the publication of additional works.

Sufism is treated in al-Bājūrī's theological and legal works, especially in his *Tuḥfat al-murīd*. This list of his works includes his commentary on the *Burda*—a poem covering the biography (*sīra*) of the Prophet from a decidedly Sufi perspective—and commentaries on Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī's (d. 974/1566–67) and Aḥmad al-Dardīr's (d. 1201/1786) works on the birthday (*mawlid*) of the Prophet. The latter is really a subject of jurisprudence, but is also tied to Sufism, as the Sufis are often the most active proponents of *mawlid* celebrations.

Chronological List of al-Bājūrī's Completed Works⁵⁵

- 1222/1807: *Ḥāshiyā 'alā risālat al-Faḍālī fi qawl "lā illah illa-Llāh"* [A gloss on al-Faḍālī's Epistle on the saying "there is no god but Allah"]. This text covers many possible grammatical and theological interpretations and implications of the testimony of faith, "there is no god but Allah."
- 1223/1808: *Ḥāshiyā taḥqīq al-maqām 'alā risālat kifāyatu al-'awām fi mā yajibu 'alayhim fi 'ilm al-kalām li-l-Faḍālī* [Verification of the station: A gloss on al-Faḍālī's Sufficiency of the common folk regarding that which is obligatory upon them of the science of *kalām*]. This work, following al-Sanūsī, is a statement of creed which outlines the core points of later Ash'arī thought, namely that which is necessary (*wājib*), impossible (*muṣṭahīl*), and possible (*jā'iz*) with regard to Allah and His messengers. Additional information about the Prophet's genealogy, definitions of core terms, and discussions of intra-Ash'arī disagreements, like those found in *Tuḥfat al-murīd* and *Ḥāshiyā 'alā muqaddimat al-Sanūsī* are also included.
- 1224/1809: *Fatḥ al-qarīb al-majīd sharḥ bidāyat al-murīd fi l-tawḥīd li-l-Shaykh al-Sibā'ī* [Openings from the close and majestic: A commentary on al-Sibā'ī's "The seeker's introduction to *tawḥīd*"].
- 1225/1810: *Ḥāshiyā 'alā mawlid al-Muṣṭafā li Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī* [A gloss on Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī's "The birthday of the chosen one (the Prophet Muḥammad)"]. A text discussing the proofs, merits, and history of celebrating the Prophet Muḥammad's birthday.

- 1225/1810: *Hāshīya ‘alā mukhtaṣar al-Sanūsī fī l-mantiq* [A gloss on the abridgment of al-Sanūsī on the science of logic].
- 1226/1811: *Hāshīya ‘alā matn al-sullam li-l-Akhḍarī fī ‘ilm al-mantiq* [A gloss on al-Akhḍarī’s text: The staircase of the science of logic]. Another commentary on a popular work of *mantiq*, with a useful discussion of the types of *mantiq* and the various opinions regarding its permissibility.
- 1226/1811: *Hāshīya ‘alā matn al-Samarqandīya fī fann al-bayān* [A gloss on Samarqandī’s text on the science of rhetoric].
- 1227/1812: *Fath al-khabīr al-laṭīf sharḥ nazm al-taṣrīf fī fann al-taṣrīf li-l-Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. ‘Isā* [The opening of subtle knowledge: A commentary on the poem of conjugation regarding the science of conjugation].
- 1227/1812: *Hāshīya ‘alā matn al-Sanūsīya fī ‘ilm al-tawḥīd* [A commentary on al-Sanūsī’s text on the science of *tawḥīd*]. A short text covering the details of *tawḥīd* according to the later Ash‘arī school. The *matn* is terse and packed with statements needing further clarification, thus al-Sanūsī himself produced a commentary on the text. This text is also the source of al-Faḍālī’s work mentioned above, as well as numerous other texts including *Matn Ibn ‘Ashir* and al-Bājūrī’s *Risāla* listed below. The impact of this text on Ash‘arī thought cannot be understated, and indeed is an area of important future research.
- 1227/1812: *Hāshīya ‘alā mawlid al-Muṣṭafā li-l-Shaykh al-Dardīr* [A commentary on Shaykh al-Dardīr’s birthday of the chosen]. Another text discussing the topic of celebrating the Prophet’s birthday.
- 1229/1813: *Fath rabb al-bariyya sharḥ al-durra al-bahiyya fī nazm al-ājurūmiyya li-l-‘Allāma al-‘Imrīṭī* [The opening of creation: A commentary on al-‘Allāma al-‘Imrīṭī’s “The radiant pearl regarding Ibn al-Ājurūm’s poem”]. A work discussing the popular didactic text on Arabic grammar by Ibn al-Ājurūm.
- 1229/1813: *Hāshīya ‘alā al-Burda al-sharīfa li-l-Būṣṭrī* [A gloss on al-Būṣṭrī’s “The Poem of the cloak”]. Another

text commonly studied and commented upon in the *ḥāshiyā* tradition, al-Būṣīrī's *Burda* [*The Poem of the Cloak*] is hugely popular around the world today and has been for centuries. Al-Bājūrī's lengthy commentary covers basic explanations of intended meaning, grammatical analysis, and historical background, as well as more detailed issues such as the debate over whether the Prophet had been given knowledge of the Pen (*qalam*) and Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*).

- 1234/1818: *Ḥāshiyā al-is'ād 'alā Bānat Su 'ād* [The commentary of happiness on the poem entitled "Bānat Su 'ād"]. A commentary on an early Islamic poem by the Companion Ka' b. Zuhayr (d. 24/644–5), also sometimes called *Qasīdat al-burda* [*The Poem of the Cloak*], as the Prophet gave his cloak to Ibn Zuhayr in appreciation of his poem. The same occurred to al-Būṣīrī in a dream, which is why his work is also referred to as the *Burda* [*The Poem of the Cloak*].
- 1234/1818: *Tuḥfat al-murīd sharḥ Jawharat al-tawḥīd li-l-laqqānī* [The gift of the aspirant: A commentary on the gem of divine unity]. A commentary on al-Laqqānī's didactic poem (in *rajz* meter) summarizing the basic creed and methodology of Sunnī Islam according to the later Ash'arīs. While it is a one-volume text under 400 pages (in the edition used for this work) it may in fact be al-Bājūrī's most important work, as its popularity spread beyond the Shāfi'ī school. In it, al-Bājūrī lays out his three-dimensional conception of Islam, focusing mainly on *'aqīda* (as the original poem does); yet also discussing his views on *ijtihād*; the necessity of following *madhhabs*; the role, importance, and methods of Sufism; the errors of the philosophers; and a host of other issues.
- 1234/1818: *Fath al-fatāḥ 'alā daw' al-miṣbāḥ fi aḥkām al-nikāḥ* [The opening of the opener on the light of the lamp regarding the rulings of marriage]. A treatise on the subject of marriage.
- 1236/1820: *al-Tuḥfat al-khayriyya 'alā al-fawā'id al-Shanshūriyya sharḥ al-manzūma al-rahbiyya fi l-mawāriṭh* [The beneficent gift regarding al-Shanshūrī's useful benefits: A commentary on the poem al-Rahbiyya regarding inheritance].

- 1238/1822: *al-Durar al-ḥisān ‘alā fathī al-Raḥmān fī mā yahşīlu bihi al-islām wa-l-īmān li-l-Zubaydī* [The splendid pearls, a commentary on al-Zubaydī’s book, “The opening of the Merciful in that which is attained by *islām* and *īmān*”]. A commentary on a short work discussing some essential aspects of faith and practice.
- 1238/1822: *Risālat al-Bājūrīyya fī fann al-kalām*, or *Risāla fī ‘ilm al-tawḥīd* [al-Bājūrī’s “Epistle on the science of *kalām*” or “Epistle on the science of *tawḥīd*”].⁵⁶ A short epistle on the subject of *tawḥīd*. Essentially an abridgment of al-Faḍālī’s *Risālat kifāyat al-‘awām fī mā yajibū ‘alayhim fī ‘ilm al-kalām* (discussed above). A concise summary of the main points of Ash‘arī’s *‘aqīda* designed for the lay person.
- 1251/1835: *Mawāhib al-laduniyya sharḥ al-shamā’īl al-Muḥammadiyya* [The mystically imparted gifts: A commentary on al-Tirmidhī’s work on the characteristics of Muḥammad].⁵⁷ A commentary on al-Tirmidhī’s collection of *ḥadīths* describing various aspects of the Prophet’s life, manners, appearance, and interactions. Interpretations and explanations of the *ḥadīths* are given.
- 1258/1842: *Ḥāshiyā ‘alā sharḥ Ibn al-Qāsim al-Ghazzī ‘alā matn Abī Shujā‘ fī fiqh al-Shāfi‘iyya* [A gloss on Ibn al-Qāsim al-Ghazzī’s “Commentary on Abū Shujā‘’s manual of Shāfi‘ī *fiqh*”]. A large two-volume *ḥāshiyā* on Ibn al-Qāsim al-Ghazzī’s *sharḥ* on Abū Shujā‘’s *Manual of Shāfi‘ī fiqh* (known as *Matn Abī Shujā‘*). The short *matn* is arranged according to the traditional chapters (*abwāb*) of standard *fiqh* books. The *sharḥ*, being a terse commentary, is expounded on by al-Bājūrī’s gloss, which goes much deeper than the original *matn* or *sharḥ*. The *matn* also does not always conform to the later relied upon (*mu‘tamad*) positions in the *madhhab*, thus on its own it would not be considered a sufficient text from which to learn *fiqh*. Rather, it seems to be a tradition to honor the *matn* by expounding on its contents while also offering what were later deemed to be the more correct views on various matters.
- *al-Musalsalāt* [A collection of chains of authorization]. A collection of a type of *ḥadīths* called *al-tasalsal*, which al-Bājūrī describes as

a class of narrations, the apparent meaning of which is that there is no dust on them, either with regard to the attribute of what has been narrated, or with regard to the narrator, or his state, or with regard to the time in which it was narrated.⁵⁸

In this work, al-Bājūrī narrates a number of *ḥadīth*, in which each link in the chain of narration has a similar circumstance, such as being narrated on a given day, at a holiday prayer, while the narrator holds the hand of the one he narrates from, or while holding a set of prayer beads.

Unfinished Works

- *Hāshiyā ‘alā jam‘ al-jawāmi‘ fī uṣūl al-fiqh li Tāj al-Subkī* [A gloss on Tāj al-Subkī's "Collection of collections regarding *uṣūl al-fiqh*"].⁵⁹
- *Hāshiyā ‘alā sharḥ al-Sa‘d li ‘aqā'id al-Nasafī* [A gloss on Sa‘d [al-Taftazānī's] commentary on al-Nasafī's creed].⁶⁰
- *Hāshiyā ‘alā matn al-manhaj fī fiqh al-Shāfi‘iyya li Shaykh al-Islām Zakariyya al-Anṣārī* [A gloss on Shaykh al-Islām Zakariyya al-Anṣārī's text: "The method regarding Shāfi‘ī *fiqh*"].⁶¹
- *Sharḥ manzūma al-Shaykh al-Bukhārī fī l-tawḥīd* [A commentary on the didactic poem of Shaykh al-Bukhārī regarding *tawḥīd*].
- *Hāshiyā ‘alā tafṣīr al-Rāzī* [A gloss on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's exegesis on the Qur'ān].
- *Ta'liq ‘alā tafṣīr al-kashāf li-l-Zamakhsharī* [A commentary on al-Zamakhsharī's exegesis: "The discoverer of revealed truths"].
- *Hāshiyā ‘alā sharḥ al-Talkhīṣ* [A gloss on al-Taftazānī's commentary on al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī's (d. 739/1339) popular rhetoric text: "Epitome of the key regarding the science of meanings and clarification."]⁶²

Al-Bājūrī's literary output further illuminates the contours and textures of the archetypal scholar. He wrote on the core sciences—*fiqh*, *uṣūl al-dīn*, and *taṣawwūf*—as well as their ancillary and supporting

sciences. His *fiqh* writings were based on the Shāfi‘ī school, in a lineage that stretches back to al-Ghazālī, via al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), Ibn Ḥajar, and al-Ramlī (d. 1004/1596). His theological writings were deeply entrenched in al-Sanūsī’s thought, along with other later Ash‘arīs such as al-Taftazānī (c. 792/1390) and al-Rāzī. His Sufism is imbued with Ghazālian, Naqshbandī, and a great deal of Shādhilī thought, as demonstrated by the many references to Shādhilī scholars such as al-Būṣṭrī, al-Shādhilī’s forefather Abū Madyan (d. 594/1198), and others.⁶³

I became interested in al-Bājūrī’s works with the notion that to understand al-Bājūrī’s thought is to understand an important and widespread conception of Sunnī Islam as it was taught in the pre-modern world, especially in al-Azhar and similar centers of learning. Prior to the changes made to al-Azhar’s curriculum in the twentieth century, a student at al-Azhar would customarily study most of the texts found in a compendium called *Majmu‘at al-mutūn*.⁶⁴ Study would consist of reading commentaries and glosses on these core texts (*mutūn*), followed by the opportunity to write commentaries.⁶⁵ While many of al-Bājūrī’s contemporaries wrote similar commentaries, sometimes on the same works, it is unclear why al-Bājūrī’s became the standard even after his time, especially in Shāfi‘ī law and Ash‘arī theology.

I have endeavored to ask this question of some of my associates who have studied at al-Azhar or under Shāfi‘ī scholars, and have yet to hear any conclusive reasons for al-Bājūrī’s fame. A common explanation for such things among Azharīs is “ḥuḏūḏ al-kutub min ḥuḏūḏ kātibihā,” that is, the fortune of books is according to the fortune of their authors. In every generation, scholars of equal caliber produce books; for unquantifiable reasons, some become more famous than others. Perhaps the answer may be found in the activities of al-Bājūrī’s students and their positions in society, as some of them became Shaykh al-Azhar after his death. Gran mentions that al-Bājūrī taught many hours each day for most of his professional life,⁶⁶ interacting with many students and teachers as both a teacher and an administrator, thereby likely ensuring that a significant number of people were affected by his thought and influence. Additionally, since al-Bājūrī held the title Shaykh al-Azhar under Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha and his successors, this position of influence may have affected the popularity of his books. Sachau, however, believed that the quality of al-Bājūrī’s works warranted their popularity, so power may not be the deciding factor.

Al-Bājūrī does not explain in great detail his reasons for writing the commentaries that he did, other than the fact that a group

of students, colleagues, or people in general (*khalq*), would ask him to do so, sometimes multiple times. Or, in some cases with regard to his earlier works, it came to his mind to write one and his teacher gave him permission (*ijāza*) to do so. In the case of his *Hāshiya 'alā sharḥ Ibn al-Qāsim al-Ghazzī 'alā matn Abī Shujā' fī fiqh al-Shāfi'iyya*, he admits that there is great merit in the *Sharḥ* and in other glosses (*ḥawāshī*) such as that of al-Barmāwī, but that some of the passages are difficult and thus must be clarified and written in simpler terms.⁶⁷ Likewise in the introduction to his *Tuḥfat al-murīd*, being a *ḥāshiya* on al-Laqānī's *Jawharat al-tawḥīd*, he states that he was asked to write a gloss that would "unveil the ambiguous passages that contain allusions and secrets."⁶⁸ In doing so, he refers to previous commentaries, especially that of al-Laqānī's son, 'Abd al-Salām.

In the case of a commentary on his teacher's books, it is clear that such undertakings may have been motivated by a desire to sharpen his knowledge of the subject, serve other students by explaining the text, serve his teacher's legacy, and perhaps begin building a corpus of published and peer-reviewed texts for professional advancement. In the case of al-Bājūrī's commentaries on texts such as those by Ibn al-Qāsim al-Ghazzī or al-Laqānī, one may wonder why, after centuries of popularity, other commentators' works were eclipsed by al-Bājūrī's.

Al-Bājūrī's Commentaries and Their Predecessors

I have endeavored to compare three of al-Bājūrī's commentaries with their popular predecessors. I have compared *Hāshiya 'alā sharḥ Ibn al-Qāsim al-Ghazzī 'alā matn Abī Shujā' fī fiqh al-Shāfi'iyya* with al-Barmāwī's commentary on the famed Shāfi'ī text; *Tuḥfat al-murīd* with 'Abd al-Salām al-Laqānī's commentary; and al-Bājūrī's commentary on al-Akhḍarī's *Sullam* with his teacher al-Quwaysnī's commentary. Although there are aspects of al-Bājūrī's commentaries that appear to be derivative from previous commentaries, even those which his commentaries came to replace (especially al-Barmāwī's), they nonetheless evidence al-Bājūrī's navigation of the tradition and offer his own insight.

Al-Bājūrī's *Tuḥfat al-murīd* is one of his most popular works, being a commentary on the popular didactic poem *Jawharat al-tawḥīd* on Islamic theology. Al-Bājūrī's commentary is still studied today around the world, with multiple critical editions by various contemporary scholars. 'Abd al-Salām al-Laqānī's commentary on his father's poem was a standard commentary for centuries. Though substantial

in its depth, it is far shorter than al-Bājūrī's *Tuhfat al-murīd*. Its length and depth indicate that it might ideally be an introductory commentary, worth studying before reading al-Bājūrī's *Tuhfat al-murīd*.

Issues that al-Laḳānī treats in a sentence or two warrant paragraphs or even pages in al-Bājūrī's commentary. In discussing Allah's attribute of existence (*wujūd*), al-Laḳānī makes no mention of the controversial issue *wahdat al-wujūd* (the unity of existence). In contrast, al-Bājūrī, as well as his contemporary al-Ṣāwī,⁶⁹ go into considerably more depth. At times al-Bājūrī and al-Ṣāwī overlap in their depth (and wording, perhaps indicating borrowing or exposure to a common source), but al-Bājūrī often goes a bit further. Also, whereas al-Ṣāwī seems to offer more of an apologetic explanation of the term, al-Bājūrī is forgiving of its use, but pushes readers away from the topic. They make a similar statement about the common folk who say "Allah is existent in every place." Al-Bājūrī, however, rejects this, stating that it is impermissible, since it gives the mistaken impression of indwelling and incarnation, whereas al-Ṣāwī accepts and supports it when interpreted as "He is with every existent thing, that is, he is not absent from anything." Despite this overlap, al-Bājūrī additionally cites *shath* statements (ecstatic utterances), Junayd's ruling on al-Ḥallāj's execution, and treats the subject from his own perspective.

Al-Bājūrī's discussion of the verse of al-Laḳānī's poem on the matter of Allah preferring some angels and prophets over others provides further evidence that al-Bājūrī's commentary is more than a derivative summary, rather it is an expression of his views on the subject of theology. He examines such questions as: Are the angels better than all prophets, except Muḥammad? Are other prophets better than angels? Are some humans better than some angels, while other angels may be better than them? Is there a decisive statement on the matter? Should one refrain from even discussing the issue?

Interestingly, al-Bājūrī prefers the Māturīdī opinion over the dominant Ash'arī opinion, and argues that some humans (prophets) are better than all angels, some humans (including some of the Prophet Muḥammad's Companions) are better than some but not all angels, some angels are better than some humans, and some are lower in rank than some humans but better than others. Regarding the Māturīdī position expressed in al-Laḳānī's poem, al-Bājūrī says: "And this is the preponderant way," that is, the more reliable position.⁷⁰ Al-Ṣāwī holds the same opinion and both al-Bājūrī and al-Ṣāwī express their conclusion using the same language (again indicating either borrowing, or a shared source), while 'Abd al-Salām al-Laḳānī opines that all angels are better than all humans, except prophets, in disagreement