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Scholars of the Circles: Training of Qādīs and Transmission of Islamic Scholarship Along the East African Coast from the mid-19th century to the 21st century

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Abstract

Since the mid-19th century, darsa has played a significant role in shaping Islamic scholarship along the East African coast. This article discusses, firstly, the methodology adopted in darsa teaching and the influence of chuo (Qur'ān School) on the orientation of Qādīs. Islamic learning was based on a comprehensive syllabus (manhaj) that incorporated various disciplines to train Qādīs for their future career. Secondly, the syllabus and its role in training Qādīs are examined. Towards the turn of the twentieth century, a formalised system of Islamic learning was established in form of a madrasa, and the older syllabus was modified. The final part of the article illustrates the role of Qādīs in the transmission of Islamic learning over generations through an intellectual chain.
Qādīs can be regarded as the main actors in disseminating Islamic knowledge along the East African coast. In the course of their training, Qādīs were educated in halaqa (learning circles) held in mosques that was preceded by early childhood learning in chuo (Qur’ān School). In this article, I will discuss the influence of early education in the training of Qādīs and the role played by Qādīs in advancing Islamic knowledge. I will particularly focus on the syllabus, its change during the course of the 20th century, and the generations of Qādīs involved in this process.

Qādīs, including other ‘ulama’, were educated in local centres of Islamic learning held in mosques in the form of halaqa. Mosques have played a significant role in establishing traditions of Islamic learning in the East African coast and can be regarded as pioneer centres of Islamic education in the region. The Riyāda Mosque-Madrasa in Lamu serves as an example of these centres. Prominent scholars were linked to centres of Islamic learning established in mosques. For instance, Al-Amin b. Ṣāli al-Mazrū‘i (d. 1947), Chief Qādī of Kenya (1937-1947), studied at the Riyāda Mosque-Madrasa. Ṣāli b. Aḥmad Badawi Jamāl al-Layl (d. 1987), Chief Qādī of Kenya in 1948, taught at the Riyāda Mosque-Madrasa.

Darsa was held in mosques either in a group or individually between the teacher and his student. Students would learn from various scholars in their respective specialisations. The method and time of teaching would vary according to the availability of the teacher and the needs of students. Usually, darsa was held in the mosques after prayer times. Sometimes individual students would go to the teacher’s residence and request to be taught a particular discipline.1 Normally a competent student would be

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1 El Zein noted that in Lamu, teachers divided knowledge into two parts; one given during the day to laymen and the other given secretly to the chosen elite at night. See Abdul Hamid M. El-Zein, The Sacred Meadows: A Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 34. Teaching family members at night seemed to be a common practice in places such as Lamu. Extra coaching was given to
asked to read the text (matn) and the teacher would follow with a commentary (sharh). In some cases, the master would dictate the text with a commentary and the students would write it down.² It was during commentary time that students interacted with their teacher in discussion. Through this system of learning in a study circle, the oral tradition of transmitting Islamic knowledge “helped to establish the authority of teachers who were to follow and it served as the criterion to distinguish one student from another as far as his closeness to the master”.³

Although mosques have significantly contributed in educating Qādis along the East African coast, there was an important early stage of their learning that was conducted in private houses. These ‘private schools’ were referred to by different names, depending on the region: chuo in East Africa, katatib in the Sahara, and duksi in the Horn of Africa. Learning in these traditional Islamic schools was similar to that which took place in nursery schools, which focused on teaching the child the basics of the Arabic alphabet and recitation of Qurān. Normally, the children were taken to chuo at a very early stage and taught the Arabic alphabet through a common syllabus adopted almost entirely throughout the East African coast. Qā'idah al-baghdādiyya⁴ was the basic text used in chuo. The text contained reading exercises on the Arabic alphabets and the last chapters of the Qurān. Once children were conversant with reading the Arabic scripts, they were gradually taught the recitation and memorisation of the Qurān. Memorisation of the Qurān at an early stage oriented children for future memorisation of the religious texts in various disciplines. Nasr noted the significance of oral tradition and memory in the transmission of knowledge in that they


⁴ Despite the popularity of the Qā'idah al-baghdādiyya and its importance in early childhood learning, the name of the author is neither mentioned nor known.
"affect the whole of the Islamic intellectual tradition and educational system".  
In addition to the recitation of the Qur’ān, children would be exposed to some local religious rituals such as maulidi (celebration of Prophet Muḥammad’s birthday). The famous text used widely during maulidi celebrations was Barzanjī in the name of its author Ja‘far b. Ḥassan b. ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad al-Hadmi b. Zayn al-‘Abidīn al-Barzanjī (d. 1180/1765). Other texts recited during the maulidi ceremony included ʿSimṭ al-durra ḥī ṣīkh khawīr al-bashīr by ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn al-Ḥibshī, al-Burdah fī madhī al-Nabi and al-hamziyya fī madhī khayr al-bariyya by Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Saʿīd al-Būṣīrī (d. 694/1294).  
The reason for this early orientation of the child to these rituals was that most of the waalimu (teachers) who studied in local centres of Islamic learning were influenced by Ṣūfī traditions. It was through these rituals in early Islamic education that gave children a ‘Ṣūfī touch’ that oriented them towards Ṣūfī orders such as the ‘Alawiyya (masharifū).

**Manhaj (syllabi) for training Qādīs**

Training of Qādīs in mosques or a scholar’s residence followed a comprehensive syllabus that incorporated various disciplines in order to equip learners with the necessary qualification in their future careers. The syllabus was fairly common across the region from Zanzibar to Lamu and beyond. The mode of teaching along the East African coast was influenced by centres of Islamic learning such as Ribāṭ in Tarim, established in 1887. The syllabi were based on texts written between the 13th and 18th centuries. Texts were imported from Haḍramawt and Egypt following the Shāfī‘ī madhhab. The adoption of Shāfī‘ī madhhab in the East African coast was influenced by Haḍrami scholars, particularly the ‘Alawiyya from Haḍramawt, which was regarded as “a blooming centre of Shāfī‘ī Islamic scholarship and jurisprudence”.  

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were reprinted in Singapore and India in the latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century. The extension of the 'Alawīya networks spanning the East African coast and the islands of Singapore and Indonesia made communication easier and printing of these texts more economical than in the Arab world. Another factor that cemented the links between Africa and Asia was the prevalence of Shāfi‘ī madhhab. I will document the various disciplines and texts taught in the local centres of Islamic learning.  

**Al-Tajwīd (Recitation of Qur‘ān)**

The Qur‘ān contained significant portions of verses that related to rules which Qādīs would need in their career. It was therefore imperative for Qādīs to study and understand the Qur‘ān. Due to its significance, it was given priority over other disciplines. Before studying recitation (al-tajwīd), the learner would be expected to have undergone early training in childhood, as noted above. Syllabi for al-tajwīd emphasized proper pronunciation and recitation.

The following texts were used:


The book contains basic teachings of the science of recitation (*ʿilm al-tajwīd*).

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9 I have noted in my interviews with Qādīs in Zanzibar and Mombasa that the sequence and names of texts may vary from one place to another, but in most cases it will adopt the manner that I have presented below. I have mentioned dates and places of publication as footnotes. In cases where date of publication is not mentioned, I have indicated (n.d.) to mean ‘date not known’. It should be noted that texts mentioned have been printed in several places and times. Therefore most of the dates of publications provided do not correspond to the dates when the original texts were written.

10 The author was a teacher of *al-Madrassa al-Tahdhibiyya* in Hamah, Syria.

11 The book was published in Mombasa by Maktaba wa Maṭba‘a al-ʿAlawīyya (n.d.).
2. *Al-Burhān fī tajwīd al-Qurān* by Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq Qamhāwī. It provides the learner with various topics on pronunciation and recitation of Qurān (*ḥilm al-tajwīd*) in a question-and-answer format using simple Arabic language. The book was written according to Ḥafṣ recitation (*qirā'a*) adopted by Shāfī‘ī madhhab.

**Tafsīr al-Qurān (Commentary of Qurān)**

After acquiring a good command of Qurān recitation, the learner was then exposed to the commentary of the Qurān (*tafsīr al-Qurān*). The most popular commentary of the Qurān used in the East African coast was *Tafsīr al-Qurān al-ṣazīm li al-Imām Fīrān al-Jalālayn* by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī (d. 863/1459) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), locally referred to as *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. Commentary of *al-Jalālayn* is provided in the margins: *Lubāb al-nuqūl fī asbāb al-nuzūl* by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī and the book *Fi ma‘rifat al-nāsīkh wa al-mansūkh* by Abu ʿAbdallah Muḥammad b. Ḥazm. A further commentary on *al-Jalālayn* was written by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṣāwī al-Mālikī (d. 1241/1825) *Hāshiya al-ṣawī ʿala tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, which was used as a complementary text alongside *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. Students had to be given explicit permission (*ijāza*) by their teacher to hold *darsa* on *tafsīr al-Qurān*. When the teacher was satisfied that his student had acquired the necessary knowledge of Qurān and related sciences, he would allow him to hold a *darsa* at mosque in the presence of other scholars. If no objection was raised by any of the scholars present, the student would be regarded as qualified to hold *darsa* on his own.

**Ḥadīth (Sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad)**

The main sources for the discipline of Ḥadīth were texts written by Imām al-Nawawī. Reliance on al-Nawawī’s texts in Ḥadīth reflects the preference of the Shāfī‘ī madhhab. It was part of the canon to use texts

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12 The author was a teacher of Qurān recitations (*qirā‘āt*) at al-Azhar University. The book was written in 1375/1955.

13 Published in Singapore by Maktaba wa Maṭba‘a Suleiman Mar‘ī (n.d.).

interchangeably between disciplines. For instance, *Bulugh al-marām* was taught in *ḥadīth* sessions as well as *fiqh*. The main texts used in *ḥadīth* were:

1. *Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn* by Abu Zakariya Sharaf al-Dīn al-Nawawī al-Dimashqī (d. 676/1277). Other texts used included *al-Adhkār al-muntakhaba min kalām sayyid al-abrār* by the same author.


3. *Al-ʾAḥādith al-Mukhtāra al-jāmiʿa li mīʿat wa thalāthina ḥadīthan nabawiyyan fi al-ḥikmat wa al-ādāb wa al-akhlāq al-marḍiyya* compiled by Al-Amīn (b. ʿAlī) al-Mazrūʿī (d. 1947). This was used in the coastal part of Kenya.

**Fiqh (Jurisprudence)**

Freitag noted the significance of *fiqh* and the “weight which was laid on jurisprudence and the training of future judges and muftīs”.

Jurisprudence was regarded as the core subject that Qādīs would rely on in their career. The syllabi of jurisprudence seemed to be the most extensive ones in comparison with those of other disciplines. The syllabi taught in jurisprudence demonstrated a system of gradual learning that would take the student from basic texts (*mabādiʿ*) to major references (*ummahāt al-kutub*). In the field of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the following sequences of texts were used:

1. *Al- Risāla al-jāmiʿa wa al-tadhkirat al-nāfīʿa al-muṣhtamīl ʿala mā la buddha minhu min al-ʿaqāʾid wa al-ʿibādat wa al-ādāb*, by Aḥmad b. Zayn al-ʿAlawi al-Ḥibshi (d. 1145/1733). The text was

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17 Freitag, ‘Hadhramaut’, p. 171.
18 Published by Shamsudin Haji Ahmed & Co., Mombasa (n.d.) and Maktaba wa Matbaa Suleiman Marī, Singapore (n.d.).
known as Risāla and was compiled from Imam al-Ghazālī’s books on Shāfi‘ī jurisprudence. The book was also taught in other countries adopting the Shāfi‘ī madhhab, such as Indonesia. A.K. Bang noted that ‘Alawi in Batavia (Jakarta) translated al-Risāla al-jāmi‘a into Malay in 1875 for teaching children in the Madrasa.\textsuperscript{20} The text covered basic teachings of Islam for beginners, including rules for ritual purity such as ablution (\textit{wuḍū’}). It further provided brief details on the pillars of Islam. The final part explored the means of protecting the heart and other parts of the body from sins.

\textit{Al-Risāla al-jāmi‘a} was complemented by \textit{Irshād al-muslimin li aḥkām furūḍ al-dīn mufatahan bi bāb jalīl al-miqdār fī bāyān mā jā‘a fī ittibā‘i al-‘ilm wa faḍl al-‘ulamā‘ al-‘abrār}, \textsuperscript{21} also known as \textit{Babu mā jā‘a}. The text has a brief introduction on the etiquettes of learning and rewards (\textit{faḍl}) of scholars. It focuses on ritual purity and provides details of ablution (\textit{wuḍū‘}), complete ablution (\textit{al-ghusl}) and conditions of prayer (\textit{ṣalāt}). Abu Bakar b. Sumayt (d. 1290/1874) wrote an Arabic commentary \textit{al-Tiriyāq al-nāfī‘i min al-‘ama sharh mā jā‘ fī ittibā‘i al-‘ilm wa faḍl al-‘ulamā‘} in 1283/1867.\textsuperscript{22}

2. \textit{Matn safina al-najāh fī usūl al-dīn wa al-fiqh ‘ala madhhab al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī} \textsuperscript{23} by Sālim b. Samīr al-Haḍrami.\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Safina al-najāh} follows the format of \textit{al-Risāla al-jāmi‘a} focusing on rituals (\textit{‘ibādat}), such as purification (\textit{al-ṭahara}) and prayer (\textit{ṣalāt}) with more detailed information. Commentaries used include:


\textsuperscript{21} Despite its popularity on the East African coast, the author of \textit{Irshād al-muslimin} and its place of origin are not known.

\textsuperscript{22} Published in Delhi by Maktaba Ishā‘at al-Islam (n.d.).

\textsuperscript{23} Published in Mombasa by Maktaba wa Maṭba‘a al-‘Alawiyya (n.d.).

\textsuperscript{24} Flourished around 19th century. Brockelmann, \textit{Geschichte}, vol. II, p. 651, no. 4c.
a) *Nail al-rajā sharh safinat al-najāh* by Aḥmad b. ʿUmar al-Shaṭiri from Ḥaḍramawt.25

b) *Wasilat al-najā ʿala safinat al-najāh* written by Ḥassan b. ʿAmīr (d. 1979).26


4. *Al-Riyāḍ al-badiʿa fi uṣūl al-din wa-baʿd furūʿ al-sharīʿa.* by Muḥammad b. Sulaymān Ḥasaballah, an Egyptian scholar who lived in Hijāz.28

The student at this stage was expected to have learnt the basic rituals and thereafter was exposed progressively to matters of muʿāmalāt (transactions).

5. *Matn al-ghāya waʾl-taqrib* by al-Qāḍī Abū Shujāʿ Aḥmad b. al-Husayn al-Aṣfahānī (d. 500/1106).29 The text was referred to as *Matn Abū Shujāʿ* in the name of the author. The book starts with purification (al- ṭahara) and pillars of Islam.

There are various commentaries of *Matn al-ghāya*, which included:

a) *Ḥāshiya ʿalā fath al-qarīb* by Ibrahim b. Muḥammad al-Bājūrī (d. 1277/1861).30


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25 The commentary was written in 1355/1936.

26 The book was written in Zanzibar and published in Cairo in 1379/1951.


7. *Umdat al-sālik wa ʿuddat al-nāsik*\(^{34}\) by Imām Shihāb al-Dīn Abī al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. al-Naqīb al-Miṣrī (d. 769/1367).\(^{35}\)

Among the commentaries used for *Umdat al-sālik* was *Anwār al-masālik sharhu umdat al-sālik* by Muḥammad Al-Zuhrī al-Ghamrāwī.

8. *Fatḥ al-qarīb al-mujīb*\(^{36}\) by Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Ghazzī (d. 918/1512).\(^{37}\) Mr. L.W.C. van den Berg noted in his preface to the edition of *Fatḥ al-Qarīb* that "from year to year European control over Moslem peoples is extending, so it is unnecessary to insist upon the importance of rendering the two works [*Fatḥ al-qarīb* and *Minhāj al-ṭalibīn*] that form the basis of the legal literature of the school of Shafī‘i accessible, not only to a small number of Arabic scholars, but also to magistrates and political agents".\(^{38}\)


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\(^{32}\) The book was written in 1367/1948 and published in Singapore by Maktaba wa Maṭba‘a Suleiman Marī (n.d.).

\(^{33}\) Brockelmann noted that the author flourished in the 10th/16th century. See Brockelmann, *Geschichte*, supp. vol. II, p. 555, no. 1f.

\(^{34}\) Published in Cairo by Maktaba wa maṭba‘a Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa aulādihi bī Miṣr in 1368/1948.


\(^{36}\) Published by Maktaba wa Maṭba‘a Suleiman Marī, Singapore (n.d.).


10. Minhāj al-ṭālibīn wa ʿumdat al-muṣṭīna fī fiqh madhhab al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī by Sharaf al-Dīn al-Nawawi (d.676/1277). Minhāj al-ṭālibīn was considered to be the basic Shāfiʿī text in jurisprudence. Qādisis along the East African coast used it as a reference text in their legal cases. It was translated into English to assist British Judges and Magistrates in dealing with Islamic law cases. According to Howard, it “occupies the first rank for deciding legal cases”. The text presents an extensive coverage of jurisprudence (fiqh) according to the Shāfiʿī madhhab. It explores in detail areas such as rituals (ibādāt) that were covered in introductory texts.

The significant part of Minhāj al-ṭālibīn in training Qādisis was the detailed information provided on transactions (muʿāmalāt) upon which Qādisis based their judgements in courts. The text provided details of transactions such as sale (al-bayʿ), sale by advance (al-salam), security (al-rahn), bankruptcy (al-taflīs), partnership (al-shīrka), agency (al-wakāla), loan (al-ʿariya), usurpation (al-ghaṣb), pre-emption (al-shufʿa), farming leases (al-musāqā), and hire (al-ijāra). On the law of personal status, the text presents regulations of endowment (al-waqf), gifts (al-hība), inheritance (al-farāʾīd), wills (al-wasiyya), marriage (al-nikāh), divorce (al-ṭalāq), and maintenance (al-nafaq). The final part of the text deals with crimes and punishments (kudud), war (jihād), poll tax (al-jizya), hunting and slaughtering of animals (al-ṣayd wa ḍabāṭīh), animal sacrifices (al-udhīya), oaths (al-aymān), vows (al-nadhr), administration of justice (al-qāda), evidence of witness (al-shahādat), procedure (al-daʿwa al-baynāt) and manumission of slaves (ʿitq).

Several commentaries of Minhāj al-ṭālibīn were used to complement the text, including:

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40 Published in Cairo by Maktaba wa maṭbaʿa Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa aulādihi bi Miṣr in 1338/1920.

41 Howard, Minhaj et Talibin, p. 5.
a) *Al-Sirāj al-wahhāj `ala matn al-minhāj* by Muḥammad Al-Zuhrī al-Ghamrāwī.\(^{42}\)

b) *Al-Ibtihāj fi bayān iṣṭilāḥ al-minhāj* by Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ (d. 1925), written by his son ʿUmar b. Sumayṭ (d. 1976).\(^{44}\)

c) *Fatḥ al-wahhāb* by Zayn al-Dīn Abū Zakariyyā b. Muḥammad al-Ansārī al-Miṣrī (d. 936/1530).\(^{45}\)

d) *Maslak al-muḥtāj ila bayān iṣṭilāḥ al-minhāj* by Ḥasan b. ʿAmīr (d. 1979).\(^{46}\)

In addition to the above *fiqh* texts, students would also be taught principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). The main texts used in this discipline were *al-Waraqāt fi uṣūl al-fiqh* by Imam al-Ḥaramayn, Abū al-Maʿāli ʿAbd al-Malik b. Yusuf al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085)\(^{47}\) and *Latāʾif al-ishārāt ilā sharḥ tashīl al-ṭuruqāt li naẓm al-waraqāt fi uṣūl al-fiqhīyya* by ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Quds b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Shāfīʿī.\(^{48}\)

Another important area of Islamic jurisprudence was Islamic law of Inheritance (*mīrāth*), which Qāḍīs were expected to master. It was normal routine for the learners to memorise the basic text on Islamic law of inheritance, *Matn al-rahbiyya*.\(^{49}\) The main text used in teaching Islamic law of inheritance (*mīrāth*) was *Matn al-rahbiyya fi ʿilm al-farāʾiḍ wa al-mīrāth `ala al-madhāhib al-arbaʿa*,\(^{50}\) by Muwaffīq al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Rahbī

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42 Published in Cairo by Maktaba wa maṭbaʿa Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa aulādihi bī Miṣr in 1352/1933.
43 The book was written in 1337/1919.
44 The book was written in 1354/1935 and printed in Cairo in 1937.
46 The book was published in Cairo in 1386/1966.
49 In my interviews, I noticed that a number of Qāḍīs in Zanzibar and Kenya had memorised *Matn al-rahbiyya*.
50 Published in Cairo by Dār al-Qāhirā li al-ṭibāʿa (n.d.).
(d. 579/1183). In addition to the text, students used a commentary, Ḥāshiyyat Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Baghrī ʿala sharḥ matn al-raḥbiyya fi ʿilm al-farāʾiḍ li al-Imām Sibṭ al-Māridinī.\(^{51}\)

**Al- Lugha al-ʾarabiyya (Arabic language)**

Learning Arabic language was regarded as a necessary tool that assisted students in advancing their studies on their own after having acquired ijāza from their teachers. A good command of the Arabic language served as a sign of competence of the student in holding darsa, in particular, in making commentary of Qurān. Due to the fact that the Arabic language was the *lingua franca* of their time, Qādis were expected to demonstrate their competence in Arabic. References used in the courts were in Arabic and Qādis were expected to write their court proceedings and judgments in Arabic. Hence, emphasis was put on the Arabic syllabus to ensure that Qādis would have a good command of and eloquence in the language. There were two points of emphasis: Arabic grammar (*al-nahw*) and morphology (*al-ṣarf*).

Arabic grammar was taught in the following sequence:

1. *Matn al-ʾajrūmiyya*\(^{52}\) by Abū ʿAbdallah Muḥammad b. Muḥammad, famously referred to as Ibn ʾAjrūm al-Ṣanhājī (d. 723/1323). The text presented the basic teachings of Arabic grammar, including structure of sentences, nouns and verbs.

There were several commentaries on *Matn al-ʾajrūmiyya*:

a) *Sharḥ mukhtaṣar jiddan ʿala matn al-ʾajrūmiyya*\(^{53}\) by Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlan (d. 1304/1886), also referred to as Daḥlan.\(^{54}\)


\(^{51}\) Published in Cairo by Maṭbaʿa al-Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī in 1393/1973. The book was written in 1146/1734.

\(^{52}\) Published in Cairo by Maktaba wa maṭbaʿa Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Halābī wa auļādīhī bi Mīṣr in 1367/1948.

\(^{53}\) Published in Cairo by Maṭbaʿa al-Maḥmudiyya al-Tijāriyya, (n.d.).

\(^{54}\) The text was written in 1291/1874.
c) Commentary of *Mutammima al-ājrūmiyya*\(^{55}\) by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Rīnī, famously known as al-Haṭṭāb.\(^{56}\)

After studying the text of *Matn al-ājrūmiyya* and its commentaries, the student was exposed to a more detailed study of Arabic grammar (*al-nahw*) using the following texts:


Commentaries of *Alfiyyat ibn mālik* used include:

a) *Irshād al-sālik sharh alfiyyat ibn Mālik*\(^{57}\) by ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Sharnūbī al-Azharī.

b) *Sharh ibn ʿaqīl ʿala alfiyyat ibn Mālik* by Qāḍī Bahāʾ al-Dīn ʿAbdallah b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-ʿAqīl (d. 769/1367).


In the field of morphology (*al-ṣarf*), the basic text used was *Matn al-binā wa al-asās* by Mulla ʿAbdallah al-Danqārī, together with *Matn al-taṣrīf* by ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. ʿImād al-Dīn, famously known as al-Zijānī (d. 655/1257).

**Taṣawwuf (Mysticism)**

*Taṣawwuf* was considered to be part and parcel of Islamic learning. At times, Qāḍīs would receive Ṣūfī teachings aside from their normal darsas. For instance, Fatāwī b. ʿĪsā (d. 1987) attended Qādiriyyya sessions while receiving Islamic teaching under his teacher ʿAbd al-Rahīm b. Maḥmūd al-Washīlī (d. 1936) in Zanzibar.\(^{58}\) Almost all *Taṣawwuf* teaching was

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\(^{55}\) Published in Cairo by Maktaba wa maṭbaʿa Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa aulādihi bī Miṣr in 1356/1937.

\(^{56}\) The text was written in 1288/1871.

\(^{57}\) Published in Beirut by al-Maktaba al-shaʿbiyya (n.d.).

\(^{58}\) Farsy, ʿAbdallah Şaleh Farsy, *Baadhi ya wanavyuoni wa kishafi wa mashariki ya Afrika*, 1972, p. 4.
dominated by al-Imām Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī’s (d. 505/1111) writings in the field. Of the basic texts used in ‘softening the hearts’ of the Qādis in training was the Bidāyat al-hidāya, incidentally also taught at al-Azhar University. The following sequence of texts by al-Imam al-Ghazālī formed the syllabus for taṣawwuf:

1. **Bidāyat al-hidāya.** The text was divided into two parts. Part one deals with etiquettes of sleeping, ablution and preparation for prayer and fasting, while part two covers topics on avoidance of sins, sins of the heart, and etiquettes of friendship with Almighty God. A commentary commonly used for this text was Marāqi al-ʿubudiyya ʿalā al-ajwiba al-makkiyya by Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. ʿArabī al-Nawawī al-Jawī (d. 1888).\(^{59}\)

2. **Minhaj al-ʿābidīn ilā jannat rabb al-ʿālamīn.**

3. **Iḥya ʿulum al-dīn.**

Other Ṣūfī texts were used as supplementary material in order to provide specific orientation for the local Sufi orders. The ʿAlawīyya texts were based on the works of al-Ḥabīb ʿAbdallah b. ʿAlawī b. ʿAbdallah al-Ḥusaynī al-Ḥaddād (d. 1720):\(^{60}\)

4. **Al-naṣāʾiḥ al-diniyya wa-al-waṣāya al-imāniyya.**

5. **Risālat al-muʿāwana wa al-muẓāhara wa ʿl-muwazāra li ʿl-rāḡhiba ṭin al-muʿminīna fi sulūk al-ṭariq al-ākhira.**

6. **Rāṭib al-Quṭb al-Ḥaddād,** which was a collection of supplications (aḍʿiyya).

In addition to taṣawwuf, Qādis were also taught the etiquettes of learning by using the text Taʿlim al-mutaʿallim ṭariq al-taʿallum by Burhān al-Dīn al-Zarnūjī (lived circa 600/1203)\(^{61}\) and its commentary Sharḥ taʿlim al-mutaʿallim ṭariq al-taʿallum by Ibrāḥīm b. Iṣmāʿīl.\(^{62}\)

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60 Ibid., supp. vol. II, p.566, no. 4.
62 The book was written in 996/1588 and dedicated to the Ottoman Sultān Murad III. See Becker, *Materials for Understanding of Islam*, p. 47.
Aqīda/tawhīd (Theology/Monotheism)
Teaching of theology did not attract much attention. The reason for this may have been the complexity of the subject itself that was mainly based on philosophical debates and sectarianism. Therefore, teaching of theology was based on the particular tradition of the student. For instance, the ʿAlawiyya used ʿUmar b. ʿAbdān b. Sumayj’s Hidāyat al-ikhwān, a commentary of aqīdat al-imān. Another text used in teaching theology was Jawharat al-tawhīd by Abū al-Imdād Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm b. Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Laqqānī (d. 1041/1631).

Ijāza (Permission)
Upon completion of the structured syllabus and demonstrating good command of the disciplines, the Qādī was awarded an ijāza (certificate) by his master. Normally the ijāza was given in writing, although sometimes it was awarded verbally. Writing of ijāza was a well-known practice along the East African coast by ʿulamā' and Qādis but its nature and format differed from one scholar to the other. In some cases a student would be given specific ijāza (permission) in teaching a particular book or discipline. The awarding of the ijāza signified recognition among the student’s peers and permission from the master to teach and hold darsas. The ijāza would also be used by the student to support his academic standing and avoid any embarrassment since without it “his academic bonafides might be questioned”.

Students also travelled to prominent scholars to obtain certification: “intellectual and academic convention demanded that leading scholars be pursued wherever they were ... and even few sessions with them would improve the ijāza of the student”. In cases where people could not travel to pursue studies and meet the scholar, they would request...
the *ijāza* from him through other colleagues. Bang gives an example of Ḥabīb Ṣāliḥ (d. 1935) receiving a coveted *ijāza* from Ḥadramawt scholar ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥibshi. This was jointly issued to both Ḥabīb Ṣāliḥ and ʿAbdallāh Bākathīr while travelling to Ḥadramawt in 1897.\(^6^7\) Besides signifying academic recognition, *ijāza* also served to entrench the tradition of the scholar who issued it. Depending on the affiliation of the scholar, in most cases the *ijāza* would reflect the transmission of a particular tradition, whether Ṣūfī or otherwise, from the scholar to his student. The tradition of awarding *ijāza* was institutionalised, in the sense that recipients of such *ijāza* over time awarded them to their own students. This ensured the continuity of this tradition for generations, as in the case of Ḥabīb Ṣāliḥ’s *ijāza* which “brought not only a licence, but also the power to give licences to others whom Ḥabīb Ṣāliḥ might feel were qualified”.\(^6^8\)

The first *ijāza* (fig. 1) represents the traditionalist Ṣūfī order from Fatāwī b. ʿIsā (d. 1987), while the second (fig. 2) reflects the reformist tradition from ʿAbdallāh Farsy (d. 1982). Fatāwī’s *ijāza* emphasised that his student should revise the prominent texts by Ṣūfī scholars such as al-Ghazālī, al-Shaʿrānī and al-Ḥaddād. The *ijāza* also highlighted the importance of Ṣūfī *adhkār* (supplications) and *istighfar* (repentance), and urged the *murīd* (follower) to associate himself with these rituals. It illustrates the power given by the mentor to his *murīd* by stating: “I have permitted to the bearer to grant *ijāza* to whoever deserves to be granted”.

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\(^6^8\) El Zein, _The Sacred Meadows_. p. 134.
Figure 1: Ijāza from Fatawī b. 'Isā (d. 1987)
Translation of Fatāwī’s ijāza to his student Hadhar bin ‘Abdallah

CERTIFICATE (Shahada)

This certificate has been issued by al-Madrasa al-Shiraziyya

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Beneficent

Praise is to Allah who has taught Adam the names and achieved testimony from His Lord the Creator of Earth and Heaven, and to whom the Angels have submitted and prostrated to His command. And praise and prayers be upon our master Muhammad companion of the miracles and his companions.

The disciplined and dedicated student and one of the Qādiṣ of Zanzibar, Brother Sheikh Hadhar b. ‘Abd Allah Hadhar, has spent his efforts in pursuit of knowledge from renowned scholars including Sheikh Mūsā bin Qāsim and Sheikh Muḥammad bin Ḥasan in various disciplines such as commentary of Qurʾān, sayings of the Prophet and jurisprudence, and in Arabic language such as Arabic grammar and morphology, and part of mysticism. It has come to my mind to award him certificate from what I have taught him with justice from those disciplines and I grant him ijāza to read and guide the people and learn from various scholars as I have been granted ijāza by my renowned teachers, particularly my master and teacher al-Imām who is conversant in all disciplines and knowledgeable of Allah and former Mufti of Zanzibar [Ḥasan bin ‘Amīr]. I have permitted the bearer to grant ijāza to whomever deserves to be granted and to continue studying the Holy Qurʾān and associating himself with awrād, adhkār, ʿadhiya (supplications) and istighfār (repentance) and I have advised him to fear Allah and revise books, specifically books of the three Imāms after revising jurisprudence (fiqh) books, and these are books of al-Imām al-Ghazālī, al-Imām al-Shaʿrānī and our master al-Ḥaddad. And I have reminded him
not to forget me in his supplications. And Allah will take us and him under His care and will not deny us seeing Him in the name of Muḥammad and his companions, and praise of Allah be upon our master Muḥammad and his companions.

Written by the needy for the mercy of Allah Fatāwī bin ʿIsā al-Shirāzī al-Shāfiʿī al-Qādirī may Allah forgive them (āmin) written in Rabiʿi al-awwal.69 (I have granted to this brother whatever has been granted to me by my teacher Ḥasan bin ʿAmīr.)70

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69 The year when the ijāza was written is not mentioned.

70 I am thankful to Sheikh Hadar b. Abdallāh Hadar who kindly gave me a copy of the above ijāza during my interview with him at his residence in Kizimkazi, Zanzibar on 19th June 2005.
Figure 2: Ijāza from ʿAbdallah Ṣāleḥ Farsy to his student Mwinshehe who was Qādi in Zanzibar.
In the name of God, Most Gracious Most Graceful
Praise be to God the Creator and the Sustainer of the Worlds,
May the blessing of God and His peace be upon the prophet
and all the Muslims especially the Companions of the Prophet.

I certify that SHEIKH MWINYI SALEH MWINYI [written in upper case letters] was a student of mine. He learnt translation of Quran (Tafsir), the Tradition of the Prophet (Hadith), Jurisprudence (Fiqh), History and other subjects concerning Religion. He has ability to teach the above mentioned subjects to those who wish to be taught. I am confident that he can teach the above mentioned subjects. I, myself, learnt these subjects from various “Ulamaa” (men of learning). They are as follows:-

Firstly, Sheikh Ahmed Muhammad Momry Comorian who passed away in the 23rd of Rabii Al-Thani 1357 (A.H.) and was taught by Al-Kadhi Sheikh Ali Abdulla Al-Mazrui who died on the 2nd of Safar 1312 and was in turn educated by the learned
Sheikh Othman bin Hassan Al-Dimyaty who died on the 30th of Muharram 1265. He was a student of the most learned Sheikh Muhammad bin Muhammad Al-Amiir Al-Kadir who passed away in 1233.

Signature
Abdulla Saleh Farsy [signed]
8/2/77
Stamp:
Abdulla Saleh Farsy
Chief Kadhi of Kenya

Development of Darsa to Madrasa

The training of ‘ulamā’, including Qādis, along the East African coast took place in the darsa in mosques. However, in the early twentieth century, darsa developed into a more formalised system of Islamic learning. This ‘formalisation’ resulted in the establishment of institutions in the form of madrasa, and in the development of a new syllabus.

The establishment of madrasa education influenced two main areas of Islamic learning: darsa and chuo. Lienhardt’s history of Riyāda Mosque-Madrasa in Lamu illustrates the development from darsa to madrasa.71 Ḥabīb Ṣaliḥ (d.1935) first held darsa in Bilād Mosque, and then built a hut that served as a Musalla (praying place). Later, with the assistance of the local people, he built Riyāda Mosque and established a madrasa within the courtyard of the mosque, which he named Ribāt al-Riyāda in 1900.72 The madrasa adopted new methodologies of teaching that were practised in Tarim where “students studied as a group following common syllabi in a structured way ... and lasted for a

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71 Peter Lienhardt, ‘The Mosque College of Lamu and its Social Background’, 
Tanzania Notes and Records, 1959, p. 231.

72 Ibid., 234. See also Ahmed Bin Sumeit, ‘The Role of the Riyāda Mosque-
madrasa in enhancing the Islamic Identity in Kenya’, in Mohamed Bakari 
and Saad S. Yahya (eds.), Islam in Kenya (Kenya: Mewa Publications, 
1995).
prescribed period of four years". In 1955 another madrasa was established near Riyaḍa mosque with the name Madrasat al-Najāh al-Islamiya. Another example of darsa that became a madrasa was the Ukutani madrasa in Zanzibar. Abdallah Muḥammad Bakāthir bought a house from an 'Alawiyya family (Al-Husaynī) in the Ukutani quarter in 1909, and held darsa in the courtyard of the house. This darsa developed into the Madrasa Bā Kāthīr. As with the Riyaḍa Mosque-Madrasa in Lamu, Madrasa Bā Kāthīr was influenced by 'Alawiyya institutions in Ḥaḍramawt. Parallel to the establishment of Madrasa Bā Kāthīr was the expansion of the Barza mosque into the Madrasat al-nur near Ukutani.

Another development of formalised education was the establishment of the Muslim Academy in Zanzibar in 1952. The Academy was meant to be different from the traditional Islamic learning offered in mosques and madrasa. In 1952 the British Administration established the Academy based on an Indian model that had been introduced to Sudan in the 1930s and then to Nigeria in the late 1940s. It seemed to the British that Islamic learning provided in both mosques and madrasa could not provide graduates suitable for colonial administrative and judicial structures. The British Resident elaborated on the main objective of establishing the Muslim Academy: "(it) would provide for education in Moslem law, religion and culture for a limited number of pupils. Besides being of value here, it would assist us in the provision of kadhis both here and on the mainland". When the Academy opened in 1952, teaching

73 Freitag, 'Hadhramaut', p. 171.
74 Madrasat al-Najāh al-Islamiya was officially inaugurated by 'Alawiyya scholar 'Abd al-Qādir b. Muḥammad b. 'Ali al-Hibshi on Tuesday 6 Rabi' al-Thani 1375/22 November 1955.
75 Forthcoming, Roman Loimeier, Between Social Skills and Marketable Skills: The Politics of Islamic Education in Zanzibar in the 20th century (Leiden: Brill, 2009). I thank Loimeier for providing me with the draft and allowing me to quote from it.
76 Ibid. Example of institutions built by the British are the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh, India, and the Law school in Kano, Nigeria, established in 1934.
was based on a five-year study programme that covered Islamic subjects and Arabic language. Additional subjects offered were calligraphy and English language, as optional subjects from third year. In 1957, elementary mathematics was included. After the revolution in 1972, the syllabus was extended to incorporate subjects such as Kiswahili, Geography, Physics, Chemistry and Biology. After a long history of intellectual contribution, the Muslim Academy was closed down in 2007 by the Zanzibar government. Most of the Qādis in Zanzibar and Pemba studied at the Academy under the patronage of renowned ‘ulamā’ of the region. Students from neighbouring countries also studied at the Academy that “became a beacon of the new system of Islamic education for the whole of Eastern Africa”.

The madrasa also had an impact on chuo education. As noted above, the sequence of Islamic learning began for a child in the chuo, proceeding to the madrasa and the darsas in the mosques upon reaching puberty (tamyīz). This sequence of Islamic learning was altered with the introduction of madrasa, whereby children were taken directly to madrasa. While the emphasis of chuo was on learning the Qurān, madrasa education exposed children to a wider syllabus of Islamic religious teaching. Parents preferred sending their children to the madrasa for the comprehensiveness of the madrasa syllabus and its pedagogical methodology.

The darsa-madrasa development was followed by an expansion of the syllabus. As stated above, transmission of Islamic learning was based on texts taught in mosques. However, towards mid-twentieth century, new texts were introduced. For instance, in the field of jurisprudence (fiqh), the teaching text used in madrasa was al-Mabādi‘u al-fiqhiyya ‘alā madhhab al-Imam al-Shāfi‘i by an Egyptian author,

78 Loimeier devotes a whole chapter on the Muslim Academy in his forthcoming book, *Between Social Skills*.


80 The series was first published in Cairo in 1935.
ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Jabbar. The text comes in a series of four books that takes
the learner gradually from matters of purity (tahāra) to detailed issues
of transactions (muʿāmalāt). Another discipline that was influenced by
new texts was Arabic language, in which the text of al-Nahw al-Wādiḥ
by the Egyptian authors ʿAlī al-Jārim and Muṣṭafā Amīn was
introduced.⁸¹ The text is divided into two categories: one for primary
level (al-madāris al-ibtidāʿyya) in the form of two books, and the other
for secondary level (al-madāris al-thānawīyya) in three books. The
series is structured in a simple way to assist the learner in studying the
essentials of Arabic grammar. Before introducing a principle (qāʿida) of
Arabic grammar, it first provides examples of how to use the principle
with a brief explanation and then gives exercises to implement the
principle. The series also provides guidelines for teachers. The simplicity
of these texts seems to have appealed to madrasa teachers in preference
to the older texts.

The establishment of madrasa education and syllabus development
were influenced by an influx of graduates from higher learning institutions
in the Muslim world in the 1980s. Upon their return, these young
graduates established madrasa and imported syllabi from their
respective institutions of higher learning abroad. Some from Gulf
countries were employed by religious organisations to propagate Islam.
Most of these graduates were absorbed in the madrasa teaching. Other
graduates who came from less affluent countries were employed in the
civil service and some were recruited as Qāḍīs in Zanzibar and Kenya.
The new generation of young graduates trained by various Islamic
universities seemed gradually to replace locally trained teachers. This
trend not only changed the intellectual climate along the East African
coast but also influenced the institutional framework of centres of Islamic
learning and their syllabi.

⁸¹ The series was published in Cairo by Dār al-Maʿārif in 1956.
⁸² For the life history of Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ, see Bang, Sufi and Scholars.
The transmission of Islamic learning through intellectual chain of Qādis

Transmission of Islamic learning along the East African coast formed a network of ʿulamāʿ. Qādis were the main actors in establishing the intellectual tradition. For instance, Ahmad b. Sumayṭ taught many students in addition to producing his various scholarly writings. Interaction between students in the centres of Islamic learning exposed them to this network and opened avenues for recruitment in their future careers. Whenever a vacant position for a Qādi arose, the teacher/mentor would recommend (tazkiya) his potential students to be recruited as Qādis. Martin noted that “The East African ʿulamāʿ class was also closely knit ... they knew each other personally, and many posts and positions were reserved for recruits from within their own groups.” Students regarded their teachers as spiritual mentors as well as career advisors.

Karl Mannheim notes that most generation theories tend “to establish a direct correlation between waves of decisive year-classes of birth.” In my classification of the generations of Qādis, I have instead considered the year of death that seems to be commonly shared by Qādis in a particular generation. For this purpose, I have selected Qādis whose years of death run from 1869 to 2006. To demonstrate the continuity of the intellectual chain of transmission of Islamic knowledge, contemporary Chief Qādis have been included in the chain. The other factor that I have considered in grouping Qādis into various generations is the teacher-student relationship that qualifies as a common criterion for distinguishing Qādis in their respective generations. This intellectual tutelage, however, did not necessarily imply that all the generations adopted similar traditions. Mannheim pointed out that certain factors could bind members of a generation, as in the case of teacher-student relationship in my classification, although such factors did not necessarily result in establishing a concrete group. Following

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83 Martin, ‘Notes on some members’, p. 530.
85 Ibid., p. 292.
Mannheim’s argument, I will attempt to show that although Qādīs were connected through an intellectual chain running across generations, their orientation reflected diverse traditions within the generations.

Factors that cemented the link between generations of scholars included the zeal to learn under reputable and saintly scholars. Family ties also strengthened the connection between generations. Transmission of Islamic knowledge through family links was a common phenomenon throughout the East African coast. It was a normal practice for ‘ulamā’ to ‘manufacture’ future scholars from within their families. For instance, we find a father Abū Bakar b. Sumayṭ (d. 1874) mentoring his son Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ (d. 1925), who in turn teaches his son ʿUmar b. Sumayṭ (d. 1976). This demonstrates that “scholarly connections and religious education developed along with family ties”.86 Non-family members were accommodated in the process of learning through other factors, such as traditions, ethnicity and locality.

Generations of Qādīs from the mid-19th century to the 21st century

I have classified Qādīs into eight generations from the mid-19th century to the 21st century according to their year-classes of death. I have only mentioned a few Qādīs who were linked through the teacher-student connection. The eight generations of Qādīs presented in the figure (No. 4) are limited to a few examples reflecting the teacher-student link between Mombasa and Zanzibar. The aim of presenting the generations is to demonstrate the mode of transmission of Islamic knowledge from the teacher to his student through an intellectual chain, and to trace some of the intellectual traditions since the end of the 19th century. I have mentioned only Shāfiʿī Qādīs based on Farsy’s Baadhi ya wanavyuoni wa kishafī wa mashariki ya Afrika. Ibāḍī Qādīs are not included in the generations although there are a significant number of Ibāḍī scholars who interacted with their Shāfiʿī colleagues in the transmission of Islamic learning, particularly in Zanzibar and Pemba.

Qādis of the first generation can be regarded as the ‘pioneer Qādis’ of Zanzibar and Mombasa. They share a common feature in that both were born outside Zanzibar: Muḥyiddin al-Qaḥtānī (d. 1286/1869) was born in Barawa, Somalia, while Abū Bakar b. Sumayṭ (d. 1290/1874) was born in Ḥaḍramawt. Both travelled widely. Abū Bakar b. Sumayṭ travelled in the Indian Ocean as an experienced sea captain and merchant. Muḥyiddin al-Qaḥtānī worked in Mombasa and Lamu before settling in Zanzibar during the reign of Seyyid Saʿīd b. SULTĀN. Muḥyiddin al-Qaḥtānī differed from his contemporary in that the former engaged in political campaigns, siding with the al-Mazrūʿi at the time of conflict between al-Mazrūʿi and Seyyid Saʿīd b. SULTĀN. The influence of Muḥyiddin al-Qaḥtānī on his kinsmen can be seen in Barawa ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd al-Ghānī al-Amawī (d. 1314/1896), and in Comorian students such as Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ḥasan al-Moroni, (d. 1307/1890). Similarly, Abū Bakar b. Sumayṭ taught his son Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ. In addition to transmitting knowledge, the two ‘pioneer Qādis’ also disseminated Ṣūfī orders of their home countries. Muḥyiddin al-Qaḥtānī represented the Qādiriyya tradition while Abū Bakar b. Sumayṭ was a leading figure of the ʿAlawīyya order. Through their teachings, both scholars inculcated Ṣūfī traditions in their students which passed on to later generations.

Qādis of the second generation adopted the trend established by their predecessors of confining the transmission of knowledge within family or ethnic boundaries. In Zanzibar, ethnic affiliation such as that between Barawa and the Comorians influenced the transmission of knowledge, as in the case of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Amawī who taught his son Burhan b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Amawī (d. 1935) and the Comorian Abdul Rahīm al-Washili (d. 1936). Although family connections influenced the process of transmission of knowledge in Zanzibar, as in the case of the Sumayṭ family, this trend was also dominant in Mombasa with the al-Mazrūʿi family. The influence of Qādis of the second generation within

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87 Bang, Sufi and Scholars, p. 45.
family boundaries can be seen in the case of 'Ali 'Abdallah al-Mazrū'ī whose main students were his son Sulayman and Muḥammad Qāsim al-Maʿāmīri. Transmission of Islamic knowledge within the second generation of Qādis was also confined within geographical boundaries of the Qādis. The intellectual influence of Qādis Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ḥasan Al-Moroni (d. 1890) and 'Abd al-'Azīz b. 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Amawī (d. 1896) was confined within Zanzibar and its environs, while 'Ali b. 'Abdallah b. Naḥḥī al-Mazrū'ī (d. 1894) was limited to Mombasa, with the exception of his visit to Pemba in 1304/1887.

A remarkable feature of 'Ali b. 'Abdallah al-Mazrū'ī’s visit to Pemba was his influence in converting some of his students from Ḥādi to Shāfī. Sulṭān Barghash b. Saʿīd (r. 1870-1888) was disturbed by this, and imprisoned him until his death in March 1888. The limitation of the transmission of knowledge within geographical boundaries seems to have been caused by political conflict between the Mazrū'īs and Būsāīdis in Mombasa and Zanzibar respectively. 'Ali b. 'Abdallah al-Mazrū'ī and 'Abd al-'Azīz b. 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Amawī were influenced by the prevailing political situation in the mid-nineteenth century. 'Abdallah b. Naḥḥī al-Mazrū'ī, the father of 'Ali b. 'Abdallah al-Mazrū'ī, fled to Mecca with his sons when the Būsāīdī conquered Mombasa and drove out al-Mazrū'ī rulers in 1837.88 In 1846, 'Ali b. 'Abdallah al-Mazrū'ī returned to Mombasa and offered his support to his cousin Mbārak b. Rāshīd al-Mazrū'ī who resisted Būsāīdī rule. In contrast with 'Ali b. 'Abdallah al-Mazrū'ī’s opposition against the Būsāīdī in Mombasa, 'Abd al-'Azīz b. 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Amawī in Zanzibar cooperated with Būsāīdī Sultans and was commissioned by the court of the Sultan to attend various state functions outside of Zanzibar. Al-Amawī became a close confidant of successive Sultans and was “more than a Qādis: he was almost a minister.”89 Al-Amawī also engaged in


debating with Christian missionaries in Zanzibar, although in some cases he co-operated with them. He assisted Bishop Steere in 1864 in translating some parts of the Bible.\(^\text{90}\)

The third generation of Qādis, particularly ʿĀhmād b. Sumayṭ, reflects a shift: it extends the local network to a regional and even global one. ʿĀhmād b. Sumayṭ travelled widely and studied under prominent scholars in Ḥaḍramawt, Mecca and Egypt. Bin Sumayṭ’s period coincided with a wave of Pan-Islamism that exposed him to intellectual and political ideas, such as those of the Ottoman Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Hamīd II.\(^\text{91}\) Through him, local scholars like al-ʿĀmin al-Mazrūʿī were exposed to developments beyond the East African coast. Despite the fact that ʿĀhmād b. Sumayṭ was based in Zanzibar, he managed to link the intellectual towns of Zanzibar and Mombasa. It is through his efforts that the intellectual chain was connected between the two sides of the Būṣaʿīdī Sulṭānate, Zanzibar and Mombasa. The influence of ʿĀhmād b. Sumayṭ on his students across the East African coast can be seen in Figure 4. The influence of the Bin Sumayṭ family in general was significant, particularly on al-Mazrūʿī scholars in Mombasa. For instance, Abū Bakar b. Sumayṭ taught Sulaymān b. ʿAlī al-Mazrūʿī, while ʿĀhmād b. Sumayṭ taught Sulaymān b. ʿAlī al-Mazrūʿī and Al-ʿĀmin b. ʿAlī al-Mazrūʿī.

In the fifth generation of Qādis, Al-ʿĀmin al-Mazrūʿī represents a modernist/reformist trend. Pouwels regarded Al-ʿĀmin as “the first East African of any social stature to fully embrace modernist Islam, to write about it and to promote it publicly”.\(^\text{92}\) Al-ʿĀmin studied at Riyāda Mosque-Madrasa and his early tolerance of ʿAlawiyya tradition can be discerned in his book entitled Murshid al-ẓarīf ila fawāʾid al-ward al-Latīf li al-Imām al-Ḥaddād (commentary to a book of supplication by Imām al-Ḥaddād). Later, Al-ʿĀmin was influenced by reformist ideas, such

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\(^{91}\) Bang, *Sufī and Scholars*, p. 78.

as the Salafiyya tradition from Egypt, through writings of Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Rāshid Riḍa. Due to this exposure, he adopted the reformist agenda and criticised ʿAlawiyya in their claim to religious leadership based on their geneologies. The fact that Al-Amin studied under Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ, who belonged to the ʿAlawiyya tradition, did not seem to deter him.

ʿUmar b. Sumayṭ and Ḥassan b. ʿAmīr, among Qāḍīs of the sixth generation, reflect a traditionalist trend in disseminating Ṣūfī orders. ʿUmar b. Sumayṭ represented the ʿAlawiyya tradition while Ḥassan b. ʿAmīr was a leading figure of the Qādiriyya order in Zanzibar. ʿUmar b. Sumayṭ reflects the continuity of his father, Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ’s legacy in transmitting the ʿAlawiyya tradition. After his father’s death in 1925, ʿUmar b. Sumayṭ represented the ʿAlawiyya order along the East African coast where he used to give ijāza to his murids (followers). Al-Amīn al-Mazrūʿī, the student of ʿUmar’s father, carried the banner of reformist Salafiyya ideology in Mombasa. Despite the polarisation of these two antagonistic traditions, tolerance and accommodation prevailed between them. Kresse, quoting Sheikh Abdillahi Nasir, a renowned scholar in Kenya, mentions an incident where Al-Amīn al-Mazrūʿī and ʿUmar b. Sumayṭ “had been engaged in an intense intellectual argument yet despite their differing opinions they helped each other into their sandals before leaving the mosque.”93 ʿUmar b. Sumayṭ’s intellectual contributions were halted by the Zanzibar revolution in 1964 that forced him to seek refuge in his father’s birthplace in the Comore Islands.

Qāḍīs of the seventh generation represent the zenith of intellectual engagements in mid-twentieth century East Africa between the two opposing traditions: the traditionalists represented by ʿAlawiyya and reformists represented by Salafiyya. The reformist agenda initiated by Al-Amīn al-Mazrūʿī’s critique of rituals practised by the ʿAlawiyya was advanced by his leading students, ʿAbdallah Farsy and Muḥammad Qāsim al-Mazrūʿī, in Zanzibar and Mombasa respectively. In Zanzibar, Farsy adopted the reformist tradition despite the fact that his teachers

93 Kai Kresse, Philosophizing in Mombasa, p. 177.
were from Ālawīya scholars such as ʿUmar b. Sumayṭ, Ālāwī b. Abdulwahab b. Abūl-Ḥasan b. Āḥmad Jamāl al-Layl and Sulaymān al-ʿĀlāwī. Farsy challenged Ālāwīya religious leadership and rejected rituals such as *maulid* and *khitma* (Qurʾān recitation for the dead), which he regarded as innovations (*bidʿa*). Similarly, Muḥammad Qāsim in Mombasa followed the footsteps of his mentor and father-in-law Al-Amīn al-Mazrūʿī in his reformist ideas. Muḥammad Qāsim wrote extensively against traditions practised by Ālāwīya in his books *Hukumuzi za Sharia* (Rules of Sharia) and the newsletter *Sauti ya Haki* (Voice of Justice), which was published every three months from 1972 to 1982. The newsletter covered various social and political issues and served as a forum for criticising Ālāwīya practices.

Muḥammad Qāsim appointed Farsy as the *Mufīi* of the newsletter. Farsy utilised the forum to air his anti-*bidʿa* campaign against Ālāwīya. Before retiring from the office of Chief Qāḍī of Kenya, Muḥammad Qāsim recommended his colleague Farsy to take the post. For Muḥammad Qāsim, Farsy was not only an ally who shared his ideological thoughts, but was also an outsider who could advance the reformist agenda more aggressively along coastal Kenya. Farsy was appointed as Chief Qāḍī of Kenya in 1968. Farsy’s eloquence and persuasive speech earned him popularity amongst the youth who flooded his Mosque seminars (*darsa*). Mosques were polarised and used for attacking and counter-attacking between the two antagonist groups, Ālāwīyya and Salafiyya. Ālāwīyya adherents branded their rivals as Wahhābis (followers of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb) while reformist supporters referred to their rivals as *Ahl bidʿa* (people of innovation). Attacks transcended controversial matters and were directed to scholarly works, such as Farsy’s commentary of the Qurʾān which was rejected by Ālāwīyya. In Lamu, ʿAlī Aḥmad Badawī represented the Ālāwīyya tradition. Interestingly enough, he was taught by Al-Amīn al-Mazrūʿī. The difference between ʿAlī Badawī and Farsy, who belong to the same generation, reveals divergent trends of traditionists and modernists respectively. Sporadic cross-pollination of traditions between the two opposing trends influenced scholars, including non-Qāḍīs.
Among Qādīs of the eighth generation, Ḥammād Muḥammad b. Qāsim Mazrūʿī represents, on the one hand, continuity of Mazrūʿī influence on Qādīship in Kenya. On the other hand, his orientation symbolises a different tradition in terms of educational background and approach towards the two opposing trends, traditionalism and reformism. Ḥammād’s appointment as Chief Qādī of Kenya re-instated the Mazrūʿī religious leadership in coastal Kenya. After their political defeat by Būṣaṣaid Sulṭāns in 1837, Mazrūʿīs retreated to economic activities, particularly in property development and educational endeavours, which retained their social status.\textsuperscript{44} Mazrūʿī’s intellectual prominence in Mombasa was reflected in the appointment of Qāḍīs. \textsuperscript{45}ʿAli b. ʿAbdallah b. Naḍīb al-Mazrūʿī was the pioneer Mazrūʿī Qāḍī in Mombasa from 1856 to 1870. He was succeeded by Rāshid b. ʿAlī b. Naḍīb al-Mazrūʿī from 1870 to 1875. Later, Sulaymān b. ʿAlī b. Khamīs al-Mazrūʿī served as a Qāḍī in Mombasa from 1895-1932. He was then appointed as Chief Qāḍī of Kenya from 1932 to 1937. Sulaymān b. ʿAlī taught his kinsman Al-Amin b. ʿAlī al-Mazrūʿī who was appointed Qāḍī in 1932, and later Chief Qāḍī of Kenya from 1937 until 1947. Al-Amin continued the trend by teaching his son-in-law Muḥammad b. Qāsim who was appointed Qāḍī in 1946 and later Chief Qāḍī of Kenya from 1963 to 1968. To complete the circle, Muḥammad b. Qāsim taught his son Ḥammād who was appointed Qāḍī in Lamū in 1992 and Chief Qāḍī of Kenya in 2003.\textsuperscript{45}  

Ḥammād’s educational background reflects a different orientation compared to that of his predecessors. He was taught by his father and other local scholars such as Sharīf ʿAlawī bin Aḥmad al-Husainī in Malindi and former Chief Qāḍī of Kenya, Sheikh Naṣīr Nahdy. After completing his secondary education in 1968 he joined Egerton College and studied agriculture. Towards the end of 1970 he was appointed as the clerk of ʿAbdallah Farsy until 1975. He received a scholarship to study in Iraq in 1978 and joined the University of Baghdad College of Science. When the the Gulf War broke out, he travelled to Saudi Arabia and joined the Riyāḍ College of Education where he graduated with a

\textsuperscript{44} Pouwels, ”Sh. Al-Amin b. ʿAlī al-Mazrūʿī”, p. 335

\textsuperscript{45} Interview with Sheikh Ḥammād Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Mazrūʿī in Mombasa. 17th August 2006.
Bachelor of Education in Physics in 1984. In 1990 he received a scholarship to the University of Ibadan where he did his Masters. After his return to Kenya, he served as a Qāḍī in various places and was appointed as Chief Qāḍī in 2003. Ḥammād’s travels to various institutions and exposure to different cultures seem to have influenced him in his approach towards the two opposing trends, ‘Alwiyya and Salafiyya. Since his appointment as Chief Qāḍī, he has adopted a policy of balancing the antagonistic traditions and has called for reconciliation between them.

**Conclusion**

In this article, I have shown the transformation of Islamic education along the East African coast from the end of the nineteenth century. Both the form and content of Islamic learning has changed. A detailed exposition of the old and new syllabi illustrate the variety, depth and change of what is being taught. This article has also shown generations of Qāḍīs within which the transmission of Islamic knowledge from teacher to student has been effected. The teacher-student link cemented relationships that established a network, within which future Qāḍīs were recruited. The dissemination of knowledge was confined within family or ethnic boundaries, as in the case of the al-Mazrūʻī family in Mombasa and the Barawa-Comorian tribes in Zanzibar Intellectual traditions of the Qāḍīs were divided between traditionalists represented by ‘Alawīyya and reformists represented by Salafiyya.
Figure 4: Transmission of Islamic Learning through Eight Generations of Qādis’ Intellectual Chains in Zanzibar and Mombasa
APPENDIX

List of generation of Qadis and their students

Qadis of the first generation

1. Muhyiddin b. 'Abdallah al-Qahthani (d. 1286/1869).
   His students who were Qadis include:
   a) Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Hasan al-Moroni (d. 1307/1890)
   b) 'Abd al-'Aziz b. 'Abd al-Ghanii al-Amawi (d. 1314/1896)
2. Abu Bakar b. 'Abdallah b. Sumayt (d. 1290/1874). His students who were Qadis include:
   a) His son, Ahmad b. Sumayt (d. 1925)

Qadis of the second generation

   His student who was a Qadi was 'Abd al-Rahim b. Mahmud al-
   Washili Mngazija, (d. 1936).
2. 'Ali b. 'Abdallah b. Nafi' al-Mazruzii, (d. 1312/1894). His students who were Qadis include:
   a) His son, Sulayman, b. 'Ali al-Mazru'i
   b) Hemed b. Juma al-Mazru'i
   c) Khalfan b. 'Abdallah al-Mazru'i
   d) Muhammad b. Qasim al-Ma'amiri.
3. 'Abd al-'Aziz b. 'Abd al-Ghanii al-Amawi (d. 1314/1896), Chief Qadi of Zanzibar from 1832-1896.
   His students who were Qadis include:
   a) His son, Burhan b. 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Al-Amawi, (d. 1935), Chief Qadi of Zanzibar from 1907 to 1932
   b) 'Abd al-Rahim b. Mahmud al-Washili (d. 1936).
Qādis of the third generation
1. Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Māʿamīrī (d. 1910). His students who were Qādis include:
   a) ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. ʿUmar al-Saggāf \( (Mwene Abudu) \)
   b) Al-Amīn b. ʿAlī al-Mazrūʿī.
2. Aḥmad b. Abū Bakar b. ʿAbdallāh b. Sumayṭ (d. 1925). His students who were Qādis include:
   a) Sulaymān b. ʿAlī b. Khamīṣ al-Mazrūʿī
   b) Al-Amīn b. ʿAlī al-Mazrūʿī
   c) ʿUmar b. Sumayṭ
   d) ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. Maḥmud al-Washīlī
   e) ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Bakhashmar al-ʿAbbāsī, (d. 1953)
   d) Ḥassan b. ʿAmīr (d. 1979) was not a Qāḍī but served as the clerk of his teacher and mentor Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Washīlī.

Qādis of the fourth generation
1. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿUmar al-Saggāf (d. 1922) famously known as \( Mwene Abudu \). He was the Chief Qāḍī of Kenya (also referred to as \( Sheikh al-Islam \)) from 1902 to 1922. His student who was a Qāḍī was ʿAbd al-Majīd b. Zaharan (d. 1945).
2. Burḥān b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Amawī, (d. 1935), Chief Qāḍī of Zanzibar from 1891 to 1932. His student who was a Qāḍī was Fatāwī b. ʿIsā.
3. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. Maḥmud al-Washīlī (d. 1936). His students who were Qādis include:
   a) ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Bakhashmar al-ʿAbbāsī
   b) ʿUmar b. Aḥmad b. Sumayṭ
   c) Fatāwī b. ʿIsā
   d) Ḥassan b. ʿAmīr was not a Qāḍī but served as the clerk of Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Washīlī.
   His students who were Qāḍīs include:
   a) His son, Maʿmūn bin Sulaymān b. ʿAlī b. Khamīs al-Mazrūʿī
   b) Al-Amīn b. ʿAlī al-Mazrūʿī.

Qāḍīs of the fifth generation
1. ʿAbd al-Majīd b. Zaharan (d. 1945).
2. Al-Amin b. ʿAlī al-Mazrūʿī (d. 1947), Chief Qāḍī of Kenya from 1937 until his death. His students who were Qāḍīs include:
   a) ʿAbdallāh Ṣāliḥ Farsy
   b) Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Mazrūʿī
   c) ʿAlī b. Aḥmad Badawī.

Qāḍīs of the sixth generation
   His students who were Qāḍīs include:
   a) ʿAbdallāh Farsy (d. 1982)
   b) ʿAbdallāh Aḥmad Bafāḍīl.
2. Ḥassān b. ʿAmīr (d. 1979) was taught by a number of Qāḍīs although he did himself serve as Qāḍī. He was the clerk of his teacher and mentor Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Washīli. Ḥassān b. ʿAmīr travelled extensively and had many students on the Tanzanian mainland. His students who were Qāḍīs include:
   a) Ḥabīb Kombo, Chief Qāḍī of Zanzibar 1974-1985
   b) ʿAmīr Tajō (elder) (d. 1992), Chief Qāḍī of Zanzibar 1987-1992
   c) Mūsā Makungu (d. 2007)
   d) ʿAlī Ḥaṭīb Mranzi, the current Chief Qāḍī of Zanzibar since 2007.

Qāḍīs of the seventh generation
1. ʿAbdallāh Ṣāliḥ Farsy (d. 1982). He studied under the prominent scholars of Zanzibar who were not Qāḍīs, such as Muḥammad Mlory,

His students who were Qādis include:

a) Mūsā Makungu, former Chief Qādi of Zanzibar

b) 'Alī Khaṭīb Mranzi, the current Chief Qādi of Zanzibar since 2007.

2. Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Mazrūʿī (d. 1982), Chief Qādi of Kenya from 1963 to 1968. His students who were Qādis include:

a) His son, Hammad Muḥammad b. Qāsim, the current Qādi of Kenya since 2003

b) Al-ʿAmmīn b. Muḥsin al-Māʿamīrī.

3. 'Alīb. Aḥmad Badawi Jamāl al-Layl (d. 1987), Chief Qādi of Kenya in 1948. He studied under his father Aḥmad Badawi and his uncle’s son Abū Bakar b. 'Abdallah Bākathīr of Zanzibar. His students who were Qādis include:

a) Muḥammad Sheikh al-Wālī

b) Al-ʿAmmīn b. Muḥsin al-Māʿamīrī.


His students who were Qādis include:

a) Sayyid Nūr Abd al-Qādir

b) 'Alī Khaṭīb Mranzi, the current Chief Qādi of Zanzibar.

Qādis of the eighth generation


2. Mūsā Makungu (d. 2007) was appointed the Chief Qādi of Zanzibar in 1992 and retired in 2006. His student who was a Qādi is 'Alī Khaṭīb Mranzi.

3. 'Alī Khaṭīb Mranzi, the current Chief Qādi of Zanzibar since 2007.