

**THE HAZA TRADITION IN MUSLIM
EDUCATIONAL LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF THE LATE
BALKAN PRACTICES
(19TH-20TH CENTURIES)**

**BY
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INTRODUCTION

The meaning of education in its totality in the context of Islam is inherent in the connotations of the terms *tarbiyya*, *ta'lim* and *ta'dib* taken together. What each of these terms conveys concerning man and his society and environment in relation to God is related to the others, and together they represent the scope of education in Islam, both 'formal' and 'non-formal'.¹

It is known that from the earliest periods of Islam, its educational system began with the mosque as its centre, from which developed gradually other educational institutions such as the *maktab* (the elementary education),² the *bayt al-hikma* (the house of wisdom),³ *majālis* (the gatherings of scholars and students),⁴ the *dār al-'ulūm* (sin. *'ilm*),⁵ and the *madāris* (sin. *madrasa*, school or college). Besides, in the fields of medicine, astronomy and devotional sciences there arose hospitals, observatories, and *zāwiya* within the Sufi fraternities.

¹ S. M. N. al-Attas, *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, ed. by S. M. N. al-Attas (Jeddah: King Abdulaziz University, 1979) Appendix B, pp. 157-158.

² For more details see Mehdi Nakosteen, *History of Islamic Origins of Western Education*, (Colorado: University of Colorado Press, 1964) p. 46; George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges; Institutions of learning in Islam and the West*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), p. 19; Ahmad Shalaby, *History of Muslim education*, (Karachi: Indus Publication, 1979), pp.18-23.

³ For details see Ahmad Shalaby, pp. 96-97.

⁴ See George Makdisi, pp.10-12.

In the first century A.H., in and around the mosque (*masjid*)⁵ started the learning by heart and understanding of the Qur'an and next to it the study of ḥadīth, by which the proper conduct for Muslims had to be ascertained. The Prophet was often questioned on matters of belief and conduct, ḥadīths and several other issues in or outside the mosque. That is why, he sat in a mosque surrounded by a *halqa* (circle)⁷ of people and instructed his audience, and then the latter repeated the ḥadīths three times until they learned them. After the death of the Prophet, the companions held discussions in the same way and, thus, scientific studies began with the collection and arrangement of ḥadīths. It was from the study of the Qur'an and of ḥadīth that the science of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) began to develop, and later, Arabic philological studies were enthusiastically performed in the mosque. Thus the mosque continued to be used for the teaching of several Islamic subjects. As Muslim education of the first few decades consisted largely of religious instruction based on religious doctrines, it was proper that mosques, which were intended for worship, should be used for teaching purposes.

After the expansion of Islam, the number of students gradually increased and consequently the number of *halqas* (circles) in the mosques increased as well. Inevitably existence of numerous study circles led to some sort of disturbance as it prevented worship from being conducted properly. Moreover, studies developed and discussions and debates about new subjects came into being. These subjects could not be adequately conducted in the mosque, where every one should be reverent and quiet. Therefore,

⁵ Ahmad Shalaby, pp.99-102.

⁶ *Masjid*, (a place of worship, specifically a place of prostration, it comes from Arabic root verb "*sajada*", "to prostrate oneself" in prayer before God), see J. Pedersen and G. Makdisi, "Madrasa", *Encyclopaedia Of Islam*.

⁷ For the *halqa* see Mehdi Nakosteen, p.45; Ahmad Shalaby, pp.216-219.

under these circumstances, the education later on moved from the mosque (*masjid*) to other places, mainly *madrasa* (pl. *madāris*).⁸

Although the *madrasa* proper began to evolve, there was for a long time much overlapping between the mosque and the *madrasa*, for even after the appearance of *madrasas*, the regular mosques remained as schools as they previously were, and the distinction between the *madrasa* and mosque was very slight.⁹ For example, al-Azhar which was founded by the Fāṭimids in 359A.H./970A.D. was originally established as a mosque, but later it was formally organized in 378A.H./988A.D. and declared as a higher learning institution.

Madrasas may have existed as early as the 9th century A.D., but the most famous one was founded in 459A.H./1066-67A.D. by the vizier Nizām al-Mulk (1018-1092) in Baghdad. In his time, immediately afterwards, the *madrasas* spread in 'Irāq, Khurasān and in other parts of the Islamic lands, and it is considered that he has the greatest reputation as a builder of *madrasas*. Next to Nizām al-Mulk, in Damascus the two rulers Nūr al-Dīn b. Zangī (541-569A.H./1146-1163A.D.) and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (570-589A.H./1174-1193A.D.) displayed a generous activity in this direction which spread not only into the other towns of Syria, but into the other parts of Muslim world such as Palestine, Egypt as well as Hijāz. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, after Nizām al-Mulk, has the greatest reputation as a builder of *madrasas*.¹⁰ Moreover, during the period of the Ayyūbids and Mamlūks, the number of *madrasas* increased to an extraordinary degree. For instance, in Asia Minor, *madrasas* spread under the Seljūqs, the oldest known date from 7th A.H./13th A.D. century, and in Tunis, many *madrasas* were erected under the Hafṣids (625-

⁸ *Madrasa* means college, it is a genuine Arabic formation from the word *darasa*, "to read" or "to study". See *Ibid*.

⁹ For further information see George Makdisi, pp.21-34.

¹⁰ "Madrasa", *EL*; Ahmad Shalaby, pp.205-210.

941A.H./1228-1534A.D.), the oldest being the *Madrasat al-Ma'rad* in about 650A.H./1252A.D. In Spain until 7thA.H./13thA.D. century, there were no *madrasas* and instruction was given in the mosques, but in the following century a large *madrasa* was founded by the Naşrid Yūsuf Abū al-Ḥajjāj in 750A.H./1349A.D in Granada.¹¹ During the Ottoman empire, the first *madrasa* was established by Orhan Gāzī (1288-1360) in Iznik. After the conquest of this town in 1331A.D., he changed one of the churches into *madrasa*, and later this *madrasa* was considered as one of the important institutions, and in 14th century A.D. it was the most significant centre of learning of the Ottoman empire.¹² Later, during the 15th-16th centuries A.D., the *madrasas* spread in other cities of the Ottoman Empire such as Bursa, Edirne, Aksaray and Istanbul, and in various cities in the Balkans such as Skopje (*tur.*, Uskup), Bitola (*tur.*, Manāstir) and Sarajevo (*tur.*, Yeni Bosna).¹³ An important contribution was made to the *madrasa* system by Kanūni Sultan Sulayman (Sulayman the Magnificent or Lawgiver, 1494-1566) during 1520-1566A.D., when the famous *madrasas* of Sulaymāniya were founded.¹⁴

As already mentioned, education in Islam was originally religious in nature, and the principal subjects were studied in the mosque in the earliest period. To the Qur'ān and ḥadīth which were studied in the *madrasa* were later added the study of *fiqh*, Arabic language and *kalām* (theology), which were followed by some other subjects such as *tafsīr* (exegesis), *uṣūl al-fiqh* (the methodology of jurisprudence), *naḥw* (grammar) and *adab* (literature).¹⁵

¹¹ "Madrasa", *EF*

¹² M. C. Baysun, "Mescid" *İslam Ansiklopedisi*.

¹³ See Cahid Baltacı, *XV-XVI. Asırlar Osmanlı Medreseleri*, (Istanbul: İrfan Matbaası, 1976) pp. 72-555.

¹⁴ See Mehmet Ipsirli, *Scholarship and Intellectual Life in the Reign of Suleyman the Magnificent*, in *The Ottoman Empire in the Reign of Suleyman the Magnificent*, ed. by Tulay Duran, (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Center, 1988) pp.18-58, passim.

¹⁵ For the development of the subjects in details see Bayard Dodge, *Muslim Education in Medieval Times* (Washington: The Middle East Institute, 1962) pp. 31-88.

After the development of the educational system in the following centuries, the sciences taught in the *madrasas* were generally classified into two groups. As Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406) informs us in his famous *Muqaddima* the sciences are divided as '*ulūm al-'aqliyya* which are based on observation by the senses and deduction,¹⁶ and '*ulūm al-naqliyya* which are dependent on the lawgiver and are based on transmission, including those of linguistic sciences.¹⁷

The sciences which belong to the first group are *manṭiq* (logic), *aritmāṭiqā* (arithmetic), *handasa* (geometry), *hay'a* (astronomy), *mūsīqī* (the theory of tones), *tabī'īyyāt* (physics) and *ilāhiyyāt* (metaphysics). Needless to say, each of these sciences has its own subdivisions.

As for the sciences which belong to the second group, they are Qur'ān, ḥadīth, *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *kalām*, *taṣawwuf* (mysticism), *ta'bīr al-ru'yā* (interpretations of dreams), *luga* (language), *naḥw*, *bayān* (rhetoric), and *adab* (literature). Again, some of these subjects have their subdivisions.

However, not all the above mentioned subjects were studied in the *madrasas*. For instance, *ṭib* (medicine) which is considered as a subdivision of *tabī'īyyāt* (physics) was studied in the hospitals, called *bimāristān*. The *bimāristān* of Ṣalāhiyya in Jerusalem which was established by the Faṭimids as one of the greatest hospitals of that time can be given as an example to this.¹⁸

In the Ottoman empire, excluding the Balkans which will be examined later in the chapter one, the subjects in the *madrasas* were grouped into three: '*ulūm al-juz'iyya*, '*ulūm al-āliya* and '*ulūm al-'āliya*. The subjects of the '*ulūm al-juz'iyya* were *ḥesāb*

¹⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimat ibni Khaldūn*, ed. by Khalil Shaḥāda, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981) p.549.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.549-550.

¹⁸ 'Abdul-Jalil H. 'Abdul-Mahdī, *Al-Madāris fī Bayt al-Maqdis fīl-'Aṣr al-Ayyūbī wa al-Mamlūki*, vol:1, (Amman: Maktabat al-Aqṣā, 1981) pp.343-350.

(mathematics), *handasa* (geometry), *hay'a* (astronomy) and *hikma* (wisdom). The subjects of the *'ulüm al-âliya* were *kalâm*, *balâga* which includes *ma'anî*, *badî'* and *bayân*, *manîq*, *şarf*, and *naḥw*. The subjects of *'ulüm al-âliya* were *tafsîr*, *ḥadîth*, *uṣûl al-ḥadîth*, *fiqh*, *uṣûl al-fiqh*, and their branches.¹⁹ Yet, starting from the 14th century, because of some controversial issues pertaining to the religious beliefs, the study of the subjects of the *'ulüm al-juz'iyya*, except the *hikma*, was abolished from the religious *madrasas*, while the subjects belonging to the two other groups were strongly emphasised.²⁰

With the expansion of Islam and the development of the Islamic culture and thought, parallel to the works in religious sciences, Muslim scholars began to author various books in some other areas such as philosophy, logic and science. Besides, numerous translations from other languages into Arabic began to appear. Most of the original works by the Muslim scholars as well as some translated works were studied in the *madrasas* as textbooks. Some of these works are as follows:

For instance, during the time of the Ayyûbids and Mamlûks, in the *madrasas* of Jerusalem, under the subject of *tafsîr* the following books were studied: *Al-kashshâf 'an ḥaqa'iq al-tanzîl* of al-Imâm Abî al-Qâsim al-Zamakhsharî (d.537/1143), *Ma'âlim al-tanzîl fi al-tafsîr* of al-Imâm Abî Muhammad al-Bugawî (d.516A.H.), *Mafâtîḥ al-Gayb* of al-Imâm Fakhrud-Dîn al-Râzî (d.606/1209), *Anwâr al-tanzîl wa asrâr al-ta'wîl* of al-Imâm 'Abdullah al-Baydâwî (d.685/1280) and so on. Again in the same *madrasas* under the subject of *manîq* (logic) the following books were studied: *Al-Shamsiyya* of

¹⁹ Huseyin Atay, *Fatih Suleymaniye Medreseleri Ders Programlari ve Icazet-Nameler*, (in *Vakiflar Dergisi*, vol:13, Ankara, 1981) pp.190-194.

²⁰ "Mescid" *Islam Ansiklopedisi*. The subject of *hikma*, according to Baysun in *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, was abolished, whereas according to Atay, on the contrary, it was one of the main subjects in the religious *madrasas*. See Huseyin Atay, pp. 191, 194-195.

Najmud-Din 'Umar al-Qazwini (d.693A.H.) and *Tahdhib al-Mantiq wa al-Kalam* of Sa'dud-Din al-Taftazani (d.1389A.D.) etc.²¹

During the Ottoman Empire in the *madrasas* of Istanbul and many other cities (including main Balkan cities), under the subject of *fiqh* the following books and their commentaries were studied: *Hidaya* of Burhanud-Din al-Mirginani (d.593A.H.), *Durar* and its commentary *Gurar* of Molla Husrev (d.885/1480), *Multaqa al-Abhur* of Halabi Ibrahim (d.1549A.D.) and some other books.²²

The professors who taught in the *madrasas* had, according to their field of teaching, a specific term of designation, such as *mudarris*, *shaykh* and *ustadh*. The term *mudarris* generally was designated for the professor of *fiqh* (law, jurisprudence), and the term *shaykh* was generally used for all other fields such as Qur'anic studies, hadith, grammar and logic. The professors of these fields were called as *Shaikh al-qira'a*, *Shaikh al-hadith*, *Shaikh an-nahw*, and their post were *mashykhata al-qira'a*, *mashykhata al-hadith*, and so on.²³ As to the term *ustadh*, it was a kind of honorary designation, which has continued in use till the present day in the Arabic countries, and in the contemporary Arabic usage, it is the equivalent of the Western term "professor".²⁴

The students (*talaba*, *tullab*, sing. *talib*) were systematically trained by those professors in different fields of Islamic studies and were able to select their professors as they pleased. The students studied many years under the professors and when they

²¹ For more information of other books and as well as the subjects in details see 'Abdul-Jalil H. 'Abdul-Mahdi, *Al-Madaris fi Bayt al-Maqdis fil-Asr al-Ayyubi wa al-Mamluki*, vol:1, pp.13-113.

²² For more information of other books and as well as the subjects in details see "Mescid" *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, Mehmet Ipsirli, *Scholarship and Intellectual Life in the Reign of Suleyman the Magnificent*, pp.30-35; Huseyin Atay, *Fatih Suleymaniyeye Medreseleri Ders Programlari ve Icazet-Nameler*, (in *Vakiflar Dergisi*, vol:13, Ankara, 1981) pp.194-195; Ismail Hakki Uzuncarsili, *Osmanli Devletinin Ilmiye Teskilati*, (Ankara: Turk Tarihi Kurumu Basimevi, 1988) p. 20-31.

²³ George Makdisi, p. 153; and "Madrasa" *EI*.

²⁴ "Madrasa" *EI*.

completed their studies proficiently, then traditionally they obtained a licence to teach, so-called *ijāza*, either by one professor or more than one.

Having provided a brief survey on Islamic education and its educational institutions, now it will be proceeded with the *ijāza* tradition which has a long history in the Muslim educational life. This introductory section will start with lexicographical and technical meanings of *ijāza* and then will proceed with the historical development of *ijāza* in the Muslim world, its significance, and finally the genres of *ijāza*.

1. The meaning of *ijāza*

Ijāza is an Arabic term derived from the root-verb *ajāza* which means, as Ibn Manzūr states in his *Lisān al-‘Arab*²⁵ with reference to the etymological origin, that to “lean upon” as on a cushion. Al-Nawawī, in his *al-Taqrīb wa al-Taysīr li-Ma‘rifati Sunan al-Bashīr al-Nazīr*, says that this verb used to refer to the water which irrigated the fields or satisfied the thirst.²⁶ Finally, al-Fayrūzābādī, in his *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīt*, in this regard says to give permission, or licence or authorization.²⁷

Technically, according to Ibn Manzūr, thus the noun *ijāza* refers to the authorities on whom a student relies to support his claim to knowledge in a particular science. For al-Nawawī, the student asks a professor to give him an *ijāza*, that is, to satisfy his thirst for knowledge, and for al-Fayrūzābādī, with regard to education, it refers to giving permission to teach.

²⁵ See Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol.1, under “*ajāza*” (Beirut: 1970), p.25.

²⁶ M. Abu Zakariyā Al-Nawawī, *Al-Taqrīb wa al-Taysīr li-Ma‘rifati Sunan al-Bashīr al-Nazīr*, (n.d.) p.18.

²⁷ Al-Fayrūzābādī, *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīt*, ed. by M. Naim al-Araqsusi, 3rd edition, (Beirut: Muesset al-Risalah, 1993) p.652.

The term '*ijāza*' in Islamic pedagogy signifies generally a '*licence to teach*', and more specifically refers to a certificate issued by a professor in an institution of higher learning to a student who has attended a course of lectures to the professor's satisfaction, and who is deemed henceforth qualified to transmit the same subject to his own students.²⁸

Thus, the *ijāza* was issued by the grantor (*al-mujīz*, i.e. '*alim* or professor) who gives licence to transmit from him all what he narrated. Generally, this *ijāza* contains of: the title of books or compilations and the subjects as well, for the transmission of which a licence is issued. This transmission from the grantor could be either in general or in detail. The chain of transmitters went back until it ended up either with the author of the book, or the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) or others.²⁹

2. The tradition of *ijāza* in the Muslim world and its significance

In Muslim tradition the authoritative character of the transmission derives ultimately from the Prophet, chosen by God to receive the revelation, the religious knowledge (*'ilm*) necessary for salvation, transmitted to him through the agency of the Archangel Gabriel (Jibrīl). This knowledge the Prophet passed on orally to his Companions (*aṣḥāb*, *ṣaḥāba*, pl. of *ṣāḥib*), and they to their Successors (*tābi'ūn*), and they

²⁸ R. Y. Ebied and M.J.L. Young, *An Early Eighteenth-Century Ijāzah Issued in Damietta*, in *Le Muséon - Revue D'études Orientales*, vol.:87, (1974) p.445.

²⁹ Gunaymah, Muhammad A., *Tārīkh al-Jāmi'at al-Islāmiyya al-Kubrā*, (Tetuwān, 1953), p.219; al-Majlisi, Muhammad Bakir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, 2nd edition, vols: 102, (Beirut: Muassasat al-Wafā', 1983), p.166; and see also Agha Buzruk al-Tahrani's *al-Dhari'ah ilā Taṣānif al-Shi'ah*, quoted in both Abdullah Fayyad, *Tārīkh al-Tarbiyah.....*, (Baghdad: Maṭba'ah as'ad, 1972), pp.233-234, and Mahmud al-Mar'ashī, *Al-Musalsalāt fī al-Ijāzāt*, vol:1, (Qum: Hafidh, 1416 A.H.-1995 A.D.), p.9.

to their successors (*tābi'u'l-tābi'ūn*), and so on, down through the centuries to the '*ulamā'*' (sing. '*ālim*', scholar). Such was the transmission of ḥadīth accounts relating to the deeds, words and attitudes of the Prophet, called his Sunna. The vehicle of this transmission was the spoken word, recited, read aloud, as was the 'Recitation' itself, the Qur'ān.

The *ijāza* was granted in two ways: orally and written. But, historically the oral way of practice precedes the written one.³⁰ Before it came to have this broader meaning, the *ijāza* was simply one of eight methods of validly transmitting ḥadīths, being classified lower in the scale of reliability than direct transmission by word of mouth.³¹ The *muhaddiths* are the first to use this term for the sake of science. Because they are the earliest Muslims who gave importance to writing down knowledge. Later on this method was used for the other sciences.³²

Thus, the first technical term related to *ijāza* were derived from the verb *sami'a*, to hear. The derivative term *sama'* was used in ḥadīth literature and came to mean the certification of audition (*ijāzat as-sama'*). This certification was appended to a book, or other writings, certifying that the owner, and perhaps others along with him who were then also named, studied the materials under his direction. The master could also authorize the person(s) named to transmit the contents on his authority as author of the book, or as one who was duly authorized to make the authorization.

The elements involved in *ijāzat as-sam'a* were: the certifier, *musmi'*; the reader or reciter, *qāri'*; the auditors, *sāmi'ūn* (sing. *Sāmi'*); and the writer of the certificate, *kātib*,

³⁰ Abdullaah Fayyad, *Al-Ijāzāt al-'ilmiyyah 'inda al-Muslimīn*, (Baghdad, 1967), p.21; and Muhammad A. Gunaymah, *Tārikh al-Jāmi'āt al-Islāmiyya al-Kubrā*, (Tetuwān, 1953), p.223.

³¹ Mahmud Al-Mar'ashī, *Al-Musalsalāt fī al-Ijāzāt*, vol:1-2, (Qum: Hafidh, 1416 A.H.-1995 A.D.), pp.6-7; and I. Goldziher and S. A. Bonabakker, "idjaza", *Encyclopædia Of Islam*, 2nd ed.

³² Muhammad A. Gunaymah, p.220.

kātib as-sama', or *kātib at-ṭabaqah* or *muthbit as-sama'*.³³ Such a certificate of audition involved the reading of the text or its recitation from memory. This reading or recitation was expressed by two basic terms, one connected with the Qur'ān, the other with ḥadīth, both of which terms were closely interrelated and sometimes even synonymous: *qara'* and *sami'a*.³⁴

The *ijāza* to transmit ḥadīth included the authorization permitting others to do the same: authority and authorization were both transmissible. Next to the licence to transmit ḥadīth, other types of licences developed, like the licence to teach law, *al-ijāza li't-tadris*. With the development of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), the licence was no longer primarily for the preservation of ḥadīth for posterity, but it developed further into a licence to instruct, to teach.³⁵

These licences to teach (*ijāza*, i.e. written) were first issued in Baghdad as early as third century of the Hijra. And soon, in the fourth century, became a universally used educational procedure in all the lands of Islam. This passed afterwards to other subjects, and thus the master would grant a recognised certificate to those students who satisfactorily passed the prescribed course of study under him. During the early period, the *ijāza* (licence) was usually written upon the fly-leaf of the book studied.³⁶

³³ Biographical notices often mention that a scholar was a writer of *ṭabaqahs*, which fact was meant as a testimonial to his trustworthiness, accuracy and usually good handwriting. The *musmi'* could himself be the author (*mu'allif*) of the work being studied; or he could be another scholar authorized to teach the book, in which case he cited his authority going back directly to the author, or through one or more authorized scholars intervening between the author and himself (*sanad, isnād, riwāyah*). The *qāri'*, reader, was usually the person who was the most qualified to read the book, or recite it by heart. The auditors were cited in the certificate by the writer, *kātib*, who gave the exact portion of the book studied by each auditor, if not studied equally by all. The writer was usually one of the students who could be relied on to give the exact names, the number of sessions and the place and dates involved. For further details see S. Al-Munajjid, *Ijāzāt al-sama' fi al-makhtūṭāt al-qadīma*, in *Majallat Ma'had al-makhtūṭāt al-'Arabiyya*, vol:1, fasc:2, (1955) pp.232-241; and George Makdisi, pp.140-141.

³⁴ George Makdisi, pp.140-141.

³⁵ Abi 'Abdullah Muhammad Al-Majāri, *Barnārij al-Majāri*, ed. by Muhammad Abū al-Ajfān, (Beirut: Dar al-Garb al-Islāmi, 1982), p. 53.

³⁶ Ahmad Shalaby, *History of Muslim education*, (Karachi: Indus Publication, 1979), pp.147-148.

The examinations

The *ijāza* was issued after an oral examination satisfying the examining scholar as to the competence of the candidate. At first a simple process, the examination developed into a sophisticated disputation in which the candidate for the licence defended a thesis or series of theses. When the candidate had proved his proficiency in disputation he was given the *ijāza* (licence) to teach law (*tadrīs*). The origin and development of this *ijāza* follows a line running parallel to that of the development of the science of *fiqh* from the science of *ḥadīth*. And also the exam took place on particular books that had been studied by the candidate. For example, Ibrahim b. Makram al-Shirazī was granted an *ijāza* to teach law and issue *fatwas* by two professors, and he was also examined by other professors on particular books and, as a result, was licenced to teach those books.³⁷

The age of students for granting *ijāza*

The *ijāza* was granted usually to students at an advanced age, in their thirties, forties or even later, with exception of some who received it at an early age. The great Syrian jurisconsult al-Auza'ī was said to have first issued legal opinions at the age of thirteen. The eponym of the Shafī'ī School of law studied under the great jurisconsult of Mecca, Muslim b. Khalid, who licensed Shafī'ī when he was fifteen years of age. Tajud-Dīn as-Subki was licensed to teach law and issue *fatwas* at the age of eighteen, and there are some other cases similar to them. In fact, they were excellent skilled disputants with a retentive memory.³⁸

³⁷ Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daw' al-lāmi' li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsi'* quoted in G. Makdisi, pp.151-152.

³⁸ Ibn al-'Imād al-Hanballī, *Shadharāt adh-Dhahab fī Akhbār man dhahab*; Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalanī, *Al-Durar al-Kāmina fī a'yān al-mī'a al-thāmina*, and An-Nu'aimī, *Al-Dāris fī tarikh al-Madaris*, all quoted in G. Makdisi, p.149.

In all these and other such cases the ages cited are understood to be out of the ordinary. Since the authorization was personal in character, it depended on the professor issuing it. In addition, some masters were not free with their authorizations. For instance, the jurisconsult Abu Ishaq Ibrahim b. Yahya al-Dimashqī made it very difficult for the students to obtain a licence, and he often sent a candidate away, declaring him unqualified.³⁹ The same is reported of ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘id ‘Uthmān Abū ‘Umar,⁴⁰ and there are other similar cases. However, some students declared themselves that they were not competent and qualified to obtain a licence. Since it was a great responsibility for them, they avoided it, as in the case of Ibn Ḥubaysh who said: “By God, I am not competent to obtain a licence (*ijāza*).....”⁴¹

The *ijāza*: Personal act of authorization

The authority and competence resided in the ‘*ālim*, the learned man of religion, specifically in the jurisconsult, *faqīh*. When the master-jurisconsult granted the *ijāza* to teach law, he acted in his capacity as the legitimate and competent authority in the field of law, it was as an individual, not as part of a group of master-jurisconsults acting as a faculty. Throughout its history down to modern times, the *ijāza* remained a personal act of authorization, from authorizing ‘*ālim* to the newly authorized one. The sovereign power had no part in the process: neither caliph, nor sultan, nor *amīr*, nor *qāḍī*, nor anyone else, could grant such an *ijāza*. There being no church in Islam, no ecclesiastical hierarchy, no university, that is to say, no guild of masters, no one but the individual master-jurisconsult granted the *ijāza*. However, no one could legally force him to do so,

³⁹ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Al-Durar al-Kāminā fī a‘yān al-mī‘a al-ithāminā*, quoted in G. Makdisi, p.150,

⁴⁰ Ibrahim Ali Al-‘Aksh, *Al-Tarbiya wa al-Ta‘līm fī al-Andalus*, (Amman: Dar al-Fayhā’ & Dar ‘Ammār, 1986), pp.156-157.

⁴¹ Al-Muqrī, *Nafh al-Tayyib* quoted in Ibrahim Ali Al-‘Aksh, p. 156-157.

or to refrain from doing so. The line of religious authority rested, not with sovereign power, but rather with the religious scholars, the '*ulamā*'. Moreover, the institutions in which the '*ulamā*' taught were creations completely independent of the sovereign as such, and in no need of his sanction to come into existence. Indeed the sovereign had no say in the matter of the *ijāza* even when he was the founder of the institution. Islamic education, like Islamic law, is basically individualistic, personalist.⁴²

Types of *ijāza*

As for the types of *ijāza* there are six types, and they are as follows⁴³:

1. The Specific *ijāza*: Here the *ijāza* is granted by a certain person to another certain person. The four essential parts of this most prestigious type of *ijāza* are: the specific mention of the professor's name, his student's name, the subject matter and use of the term *ajaztu*.
2. The Non-specific *ijāza*: Here the professor's name as well as that of the student are mentioned, the subject matter is, however, dropped. Thus, the professor would say that he gave his student the permission to transmit that which the student has studied with him without specifying any book or subject-matter.
3. The General *ijāza*: Here the professor's name is mentioned, but his students as a group, without specific mention of their names, are given a general permission to transmit knowledge received from him in a specific subject.

⁴² G. Makdisi, p.271

⁴³ For details see Nashabi, Hisham, *The Ijaza: Academic Certification in Muslim Education*, and Ibrahim Ali Al-'Aksh, *Al-Tarbiya wa al-Ta'lim fi al-Andalus*, pp.151-153. In this reference, the types of 3-4 I have not quoted, because both are considered very weak *ijāzas* and refuted by many scholars, like Ibn al-Zubayr in his *Silat al-Sila*, and al-Māwardī.

4. The *ijāza* on a particular book: This type of *ijāza* is very specific; the professor attests that a particular student has studied with him a particular book, or that he has memorized a specific text. Only when the student gives evidence to that effect, he is granted this type of *ijāza*.
5. The *ijāza* by correspondence: This type of *ijāza* is specific to ḥadīth literature. It is used when an *‘ālim* writes down a text and sends it to one or more of his students accompanied by a "letter-*ijāza*" permitting them to transmit to other students the information that the professor wrote down.
6. The honorific *ijāza*: These *ijāzas* are often restricted to *‘ulamā’*, and are often exchanged among them as a sign of mutual respect and appreciation.

One may find variants of each one of these types of *ijāzas*. A general characteristic common to all *ijāzas*, however, is that they are, as we cited earlier, all personal rather than institutional. This, indeed, is the most outstanding characteristic of certification in Muslim education.

The significance of *ijāza*

The value of *ijāzas* to the modern student of Islamic civilization is great. The most important significance of *ijāzas* can be reduced to five points, which are as follows:

- a. They contain a considerable amount of detailed biographical information. The biography of the scholars who transmitted words, attitudes and accounts related to the deeds of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is narrated with the mention of their names,

genealogies, titles and works, in addition to those of their professors who authorized them, and so on. This can be considered as a great source for Islamic bibliographies.

b. They contain a lot of valuable historical information about the scholars, their scientific activities, practices, views and thoughts.

c. They give much information about the cities that were centres of learning and scholarship at particular periods.

d. They reveal the books mostly studied in the cultivation of particular subjects.

e. Finally, a picture can be obtained from them about the development of Islamic academic life and its underlying currents of ideas.

3. The genres of *ijāza*

As it is mentioned earlier in relation to the types of *ijāza*, there is an *ijāza* called specific *ijāza*. In this type, there are genres of *ijāzas* in the fields of, primarily ḥadīth, and then other fields such as calligraphy, *tariqa* (religious order), Sufism, poetry, literature, medical sciences and Islamic sciences. After the development of ḥadīth *ijāzas* in early Muslim history, all other genres of *ijāza* came into existence.

The *ijāza* on calligraphy with all its various types were granted by the professors to their students for being qualified as a calligrapher or copyist and clerk in the government offices. For this genre of *ijāzas*, some examples can be found in al-Murādī's *Salk al-Durar* and in Ugur Derman's *Hattat İcazetnameleri*. Many students were interested in the mastery of the Islamic calligraphy and obtaining an *ijāza* because of the importance of calligraphy in both the government offices and copying the books, when the printing machine did not exist.

As for the *tariqa* and Sufi genre of *ijāzas*, it is very wide among the spiritual masters (*shaikhs*) to grant to their disciples (*murīd*) either a spiritual authority (to become the successor of that master) or permission to teach the books dealing with Sufism. To cite an example for granting a spiritual authority, the *ijāza* of Shaikh 'Abbās Afandī granted Hafīdh 'Umar Afandī in the *tariqa* of Ummī Sinān, a branch of Naqshibandiyya, in 1321 A.H., in Skopje (*Tur. Uskub*).⁴⁴ And here is an example for permission to teach a book dealing with Sufism, the *ijāza* of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya granted by his spiritual master Shaikh Farīdud-Dīn Gani-Shakar who confers spiritual authority to him and accords permission to teach *Tamhidāt* of Abu Shakoor Salimi, which deals with the fundamentals of faith.⁴⁵

As for the *ijāza* in the field of poetry, the *ijāza* granted by 'Alī b. Muhammad b. Mahfūz al-'Alawī to his son Siddīq b. 'Alī in 691 A.H. is an example for permission to teach a poetical work by 'Umar b. al-Farīd. It is as follows:

My son, Siddīq ibn 'Alī, the learned, righteous and enthusiastic student - may God inspire him to follow the right and true path, and protect him from associating with those who deserve condemnation to torment - has studied this poetical work of 'Umar b. al-Farīd under me except one poem

⁴⁴ The *Ijāza* [unpublished *ijāza* of Hafīdh 'Umar Afandī granted by Shaikh 'Abbās Afandī, in the year 1321A.H./1901A.D. (Personal collection, Husamettin Vardar, Skopje)].

⁴⁵ Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India During the thirteenth century*, (India: Idarah i Adabiyat i Delli, n.d.), pp.349-350.

which begins: *Sā'iq al-Az'an Tatwī al-Bid Tay*, and so I have certificated him to recite it after me as I do this after Shaikh Fakhru-dīn al-'Irāqī.⁴⁶

As for the medical sciences, in the Muslim world the importance of the medical profession was so well realised that from the beginning of the tenth century A.D., physicians had to pass an examination and obtain a certification without which they would not be allowed to practice this profession. For this genre of *ijāzas*, we are able to find some examples in Ibn Abī 'Usaibi'a's *Tabaqāt al-Atibbā*.⁴⁷

In addition, there are other genres of *ijāza* such as in the fields of grammar, mathematics and astronomy. However, the present work will concentrate on a specific genre of *ijāzas*, namely the one in the field of Islamic studies. In the first chapter, it will be dealt, first of all, with the analysis of *ijāzas* in general, and secondly the analysis of some Balkan *ijāzas* in particular, with respect to their language, arrangement, content, structure, and chain of transmitters (*silsila*). For the Balkans, at our disposal there are ten *ijāzas* from 19th and 20th centuries and these are the ones which will be used in making a comparison between the practices of *ijāza* granting in the Balkans and other areas, like Arabia, Persian and Anatolia, and this will be the task of the second chapter.

⁴⁶ Ahmad Shalaby, *History of Muslim education*, p. 148, taken from the MS. of the private possession of Professor A. J. Arberry.

⁴⁷ Ibn Abī 'Usaibi'a, *'Uyūn al-Anbā' fī Tabaqāt al-Atibbā'*, ed. Nizar Riḍā, (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1965).