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Ibn al-Shiḥna, Muḥibb al-Dīn

Ibn al-Shiḥna, Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū l-Faḍl Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Ghāzī b. Ayyūb b. Ḥusām al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Khutlū (d. 890/1485) was a historian, man of letters, administrator, and Ḥanafī *qāḍī l-quḍāt* (chief judge). He belonged to an important family from Aleppo and is especially known for his detailed topographical description of the city.

Born in 804/1401–2 in Aleppo, Ibn al-Shiḥna died in Cairo at the age of 84. His name reflects his descent from an illustrious ancestor, the *amīr* Ḥusām al-Dīn Maḥmūd Ibn Khutlū, who had been appointed by the Zangid ruler Nūr al-Dīn in 564/1170 to the office of *shiḥna* of Aleppo—the official responsible for public order in the city. Ibn Khutlū had an oratory and a *madrasa* bearing his name built at the base of the citadel of Aleppo. He died at an advanced age in 616/1219–20 and was buried in a mausoleum near the southern cemetery of al-Maqām. Around the mid-eighth/

fourteenth century, members of this family began to distinguish themselves in the field of law. Ibn al-Shiḥna relates that his grandfather was the first in the family to teach in the *madrasa* founded by their ancestor and that his father later became the Ḥanafī *qāḍī l-quḍāt* of Aleppo in the early ninth/fifteenth century.

A scholar in many fields, Ibn al-Shiḥna studied religious sciences, grammar, logic, and law in Syria and Egypt. He also wrote poetry. As a professor at various *madrasas* in Aleppo, his many students included Sibṭ Ibn al-'Ajamī (d. 884/1479), who, in his book *Kunūz al-dhahab* ("Golden treasures"), took up and supplemented the information provided in Ibn Shiḥna's history of Aleppo, and the well-known Egyptian traditionist and biographer al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497), to whom we owe the most detailed biography of Ibn Shiḥna, which appears in his book *al-Daw' al-lāmi' li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsi'* ("Brilliant light on the people of the ninth century").

By about the middle of the ninth/fifteenth century Ibn al-Shiḥna had become one of the most important figures in Aleppo, where he not only taught at several *madrasas* but was also the military *qāḍī*, the Ḥanafī *qāḍī*, preacher (*khaṭīb*) in the Great Mosque, state secretary (*kātib al-sirr*), and superintendent of the army (*nāẓir al-jaysh*). He then moved to Cairo, where he was twice appointed *kātib al-sirr*, from 857–8/1453–4 and from 863–6/1459–62 by the ruling sultans. Between 866/1462 and 876/1471 he periodically fulfilled the function of Ḥanafī *qāḍī l-quḍāt*, and in 882/1477 was named *shaykh* of the *khānqāh madrasa* al-Shaykhūniyya (founded by the *amīr* Shaykhū al-'Umarī in 756/1355). At his death he was buried in a mausoleum located near that of Sulṭān Barqūq, in Cairo.