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# Suq al-Qutn and Suq al-Suf: Development, Organization and Patterns of the Everyday Life of a Damascene Neighbourhood

By Astrid Meier and Stefan Weber

The history of a house can only come to life if we know something about the people who lived in it. For any historical period before the 20th century, our knowledge about individuals outside of the narrow elite circles is spurious at best. Yet it is especially frustrating to work on pre-modern Middle Eastern societies because of a variety of aggravating circumstances. Some concern the level of development in a field where only a small percentage of the available sources has been made accessible to researchers through careful editing, indexing and cross-referencing, and the long search for information about the Bayt al-'Aqqad in the available documentation is a fine example of these difficulties. On the other hand, it is the perfect illustration of how much can be learnt if we are able to read the material and textual evidence in each other's light.

It is however not only because of a lack of basic scholarly tools that it is difficult to identify a specific individual, a location or a building in a Middle Eastern city at any particular time. Contrary to common assumptions about an unchanging "traditional" Islamic society, the city of Damascus and the people who lived in it were subject to changes and transformations which affected the urban environment, social structures, cultural norms and many other fields of societal organization. We are therefore fortunate to know more about the second example of an elaborate 18th-century house within the precinct of the ancient Roman theatre. The western neighbour of the Bayt al-'Aqqad is known as Dar al-Hawraniyya (see map, Fig. 297, *dar* = large house). It is through the eyes of its owner, Abu Bakr called Bakri, son of Hasan, known under the surname of Ibn al-Hawraniyya, that we invite you on a brief visit of the neighbourhood of Suq al-Suf and Suq al-Qutn, where both houses were located.

In early Ottoman times, Suq al-Suf and Suq al-Qutn were part of the same neighbourhood (*mahalla*), which was normally called after the latter. It belonged to the larger zone of the Inner Shaghur which encompassed the region *intra muros* circumscribed by the three points of Bab al-Jabiya, Bab al-Saghir, and the cross-roads of the *via recta* with Suq al-Buzuriyya. The names of the *suqs* in the region under discussion changed throughout the centuries – except for the Cotton Market (*Suq al-Qutn*). The *History of Damascus* by Ibn 'Asakir (d. 1178) and a 15th-



century document listing all assets of the Umayyad mosque confirm a remarkable continuity of this location and its name. In these sources, *Suq al-Qutn* was placed to the west of the Hisham Mosque and east of Bab al-Jabiya (see below). The historian Ibn ‘Abd al-Hadi (d. 1503) located Suq al-Qattanin “under” (*taht*) Suq Jaqmaq in Fusqar (Talas 1975: 263). This location corresponds with the use of Suq al-Qutn in Ottoman court documents, where it is normally used for the stretch between Bab al-Jabiya and the Hisham mosque. Other names appeared and disappeared in the sources. Suq al-Suf in front of Bayt al-Aqqad is a relatively new name, dating from the middle of the 18th century but in earlier court records this part was also called Suq al-Ghazl wa-Matbakh al-Sukkar. In the following, we will stay with the common use of today and apply the names of Suq al-Qutn and Suq al-Suf for the southern, and al-Dhira’ and Midhat Pasha (before 1878 Suq Jaqmaq and al-‘Ubi further east, see *Figs. 297, 300, and 301*) for the northern street. Other names will be pointed out during the discussion of the relevant periods.

Suq al-Suf and Suq al-Qutn were mainly known as places of commerce and manufacturing as their names indicate, but they were residential areas as well as the location of a number of religious institutions. On our walk with Ibn al-Hawraniyya through his neighbourhood, we shall focus on two topics. The first traces the development of the built environment of this area through the ages. Looking back from the present-day situation, three periods will be highlighted: the transformation of the Roman *decumanus* into suqs in early Islamic times; the destruction wrought by the invasion of Timur Lenk’s armies in 1401 and the slow reconstruction of the neighbourhood in late Mamluk times; and the 19th century when new ways of urban planning resulted in what is known to the present day as the Suq Midhat Pasha. In the second part, we will explore the neighbourhood under its different aspects in order to try to understand what daily life in an urban quarter could have looked like in Ottoman times. We shall look at the neighbourhood of Suq al-Suf and Suq al-Qutn as a commercial centre, as a place of religious devotion and education, as a habitat and a place to live.

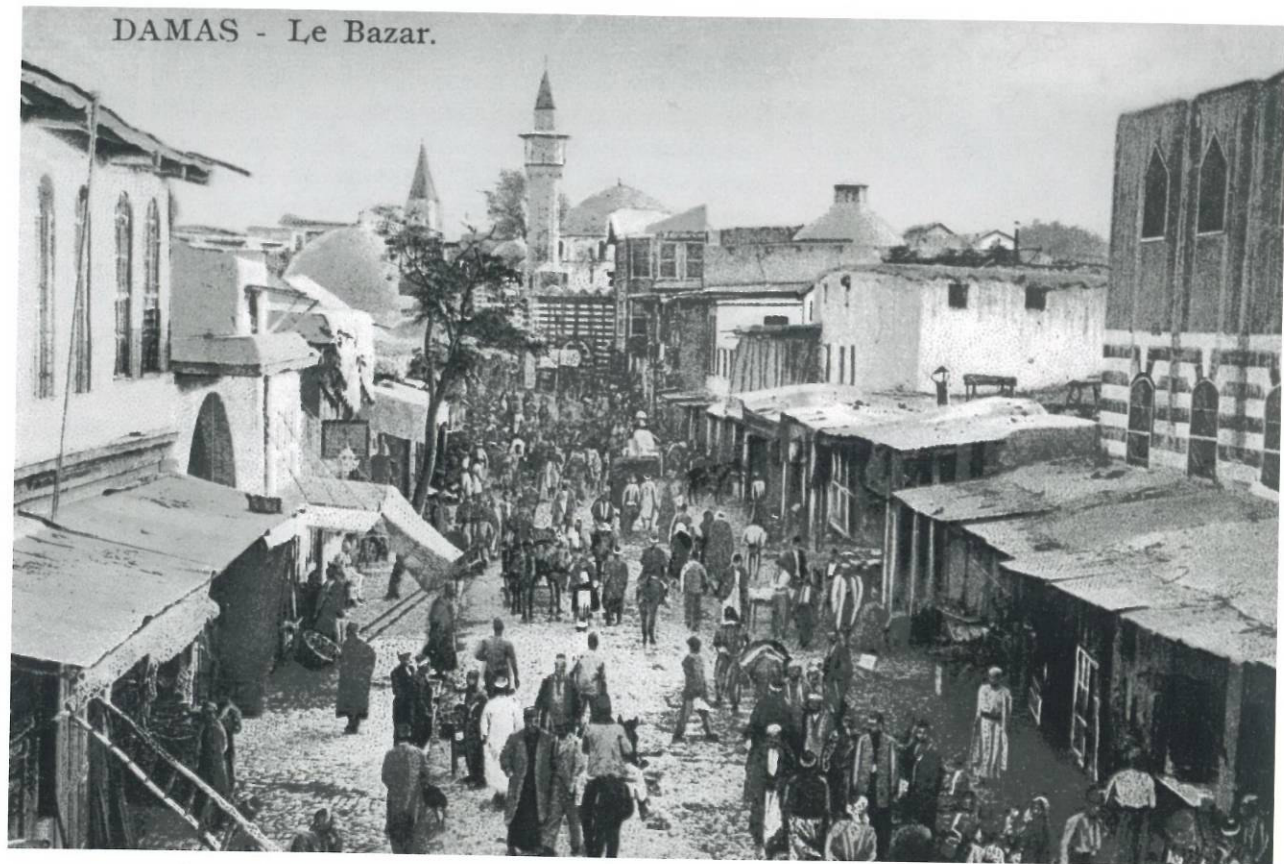
### Getting to Know Ibn al-Hawraniyya

Before we start, allow us to briefly introduce our guide. The attempt to get to know Ibn al-Hawraniyya is a pertinent example of the difficulties mentioned above. He may have been a prominent man within his own quarter, but he evidently played no important role in the larger Damascene society. His name does not appear in the contemporary chronicles or in the biographical dictionaries of the period. We owe all we know about him at this moment to the traces he left in the records kept by the judges and scribes of the religious courts (*mahkama shar’iyya*) of Damascus. His name comes up in about a dozen entries, mainly from the *Mahkama al-*



*Kubra* in Suq al-Buzuriyya, where people from the southern and central inner city quarters usually went to register contracts, endowments and other business that needed notarial certifying. These entries document Ibn al-Hawraniyya's rise from a subordinate position (*beshe*) in the military forces to the more important rank of commander of a Janissary unit (*jurbaji*) between 1776 and 1787 (198/336/502, 2.5.1190; 221/178/289, 20.8.1201).<sup>1</sup> We do not know if he accompanied the yearly pilgrimage caravan (*hajj*) from Damascus to Mecca and Medina in his official military function; after all, the protection of the hajj was one of the main tasks of the Ottoman military in Damascus. But it is evident that he, his wife and two of his four daughters had performed the pilgrimage before 1801 (245/55/103, 20.4.1216). Ibn al-Hawraniyya invested both in agricultural lands outside the city (248/57/106, 4.6.1216) and in commercial real estate near his house in Suq al-Suf, to which we shall come presently. Pursuing such non-military activities was not uncommon for a man of his background. Yet he seems to have been uncommonly successful. This secured him a position among the small group of notables of his neighbourhood: he succeeded his father, Hajj Hasan Beshe, as administrator of the Qal'i mosque after 1794 (229/66/121, 1.1.1209; 250/90/130, 28.10.1216). The *imam*, i.e. the prayer leader of that same mosque, acted from that time on as his steward in all his affairs. Ibn al-Hawraniyya never appeared again in person in front of the *qadi* as he had done in earlier years.

In 1801, finally, one is left with the vague impression that Ibn al-Hawraniyya wanted to order his affairs once and for all. He sold his agricultural plantations in the village of Bayt Ranis to his four daughters (248/56/105, 12.4.1216) and on the same day, he endowed his house and all his commercial assets to them and their descendants (248/53/102, 12.4.1216).<sup>2</sup> This was his third endowment on record. The first was dated from 1796 and was also destined for his daughters and their families, but it included some stipulations which were of a more charitable character. They concern a stipend for the *imam* of the Bashura mosque near Bab al-Saghir and yearly sums for prayer mats and oil for the lamps of the mosque, helping continue prayer services there (239/27/48, 12.9.1210). This first endowment clearly shows a certain attachment of Ibn al-Hawraniyya to the larger neighbourhood in which he was living. The second endowment is mentioned in the same year and seems to have been entirely of a charitable nature (*jiha birr*), but it is not known what institution should have benefited from it. The endowed assets were four shops in the vicinity of the Qal'i mosque. Even at this early moment, the administration was in the hands of the founder's four daughters (235/191/103, 7.10.1210). Shortly after 1801, Ibn al-Hawraniyya disappears from the records and in 1802 his post at the Qal'i mosque is given to somebody else, probably because he had died in the meantime (250/351/643, 15.12.1217).



### 1. The Development of the Suq al-Qutn Neighbourhood

*We meet Ibn al-Hawraniyya at the entrance to the old city of Damascus, outside the gate called al-Jabiya (Bab al-Jabiya). Many reasons could have brought him here outside the city walls: maybe he just came back from a voyage or the pilgrimage (hajj); or he had gone on an official visit to the Ottoman Saray; or he had met friends in the Meadow (al-Marja) outside the town where many Damascene went for leisure. Before reaching Bab al-Jabiya, he had come through Darwishiyya Street.*

Darwishiyya Street, passing the old city outside the walls from the west, was the new Ottoman centre of Damascus. Its outstanding importance developed shortly after the incorporation of Damascus into the Ottoman Empire (1516) and was the outcome of a change of attitude towards the city's defence system. Like in many

289. Darwishiyya Street in the late 19th century. The mosque of Darwish Pasha in the background (Photo Collection Lemke).

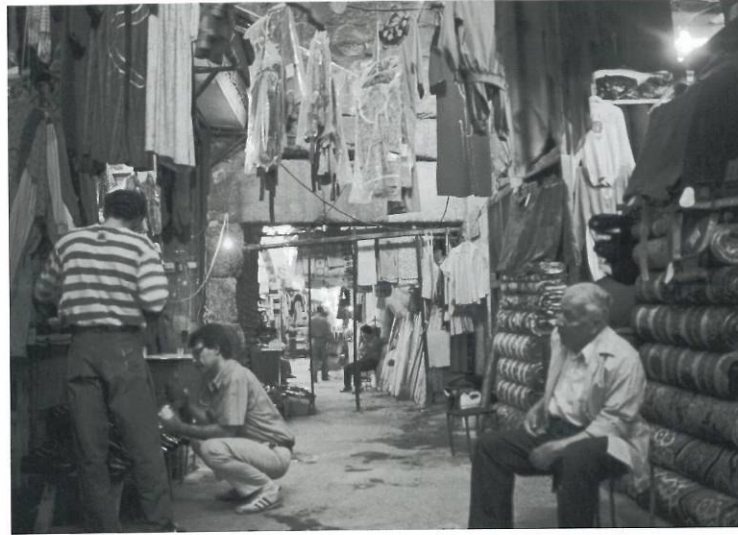
290. Sinan Pasha Mosque and its fountain from the Suq Sinan Pasha, early 20th century (Photo Collection Lemke).



other cities of the region, city walls became of secondary importance – nobody seemed to expect enemies like the Mongols or Crusaders anymore. The western double wall disappeared under new houses and a ditch became most probably the plot for the eastern row of buildings of the Darwishiyya Street. Quarters outside the wall had developed since the 11th and 12th centuries, but during the 16th century the connection between the areas inside and outside the walls became much closer. The Ottomans moved the Saray from inside the walls westwards to a location *extra muros* in front of the entrance of what later became Suq al-Hamidiyya. Already during the last years of Mamluk rule (1260–1516), the Siba'iyya (915/1509 to 921/1515), the first major mosque on this road, had been built. Many Ottoman mosques followed, of which only the Darwishiyya mosque (979/1571 to 982/1574–75) and the Sinaniyya mosque (994/1586 to 999/1591) will be mentioned here, both commissioned by Ottoman governors. In Darwishiyya Street, Ottoman rule attained its highest visibility. It was the main route of the important north-south traffic and every year the Hajj caravan, which was of major economical importance and played a special role in legitimizing Ottoman power, left the city on this road to the south (see below).

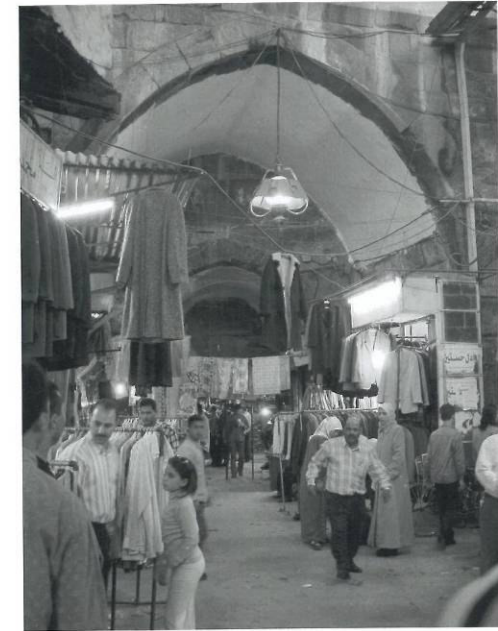
Before the Darwishiyya started to play such an important role in the life of the city, the *via recta* had been the “main” street. Coming from the north Ibn Hawraniyya would turn left in front of the Sinaniyya (Fig. 290) to enter the Straight Street through one of its gates to the west, Bab al-Jabiya, or an opening north to it





leading to the Suq al-Dhira' (Fig. 297).<sup>3</sup> The Sinaniyya is placed like a seal on the western end of the *via recta* and was planned as a group of buildings (*kiilliye*) belonging to the same *waqf*. Ottoman foundations were often arranged in this way, but we can find another example in Damascus in the Tawrizi complex, dating back to Mamluk rule. Next to the mosque proper, Sinan Pasha commissioned a market street (*suq*), a primary school (*maktab*) and the – no longer existing – bathhouse (*hammam*) and a fountain (*sabil*). This cluster was outside of what is considered the old city *intra muros*.

Just behind the mosque the city gate of al-Jabiya (Bab al-Jabiya) led into the inner city. On its southern side a local saint is buried, called Sitti or Sayyida Jabiya, considered the protector of the city's entrance. In popular culture such saints play a vital role, and people pray to them about the concerns of daily life – a custom not only widespread in the Arab East but common in many cultures. Bab al-Jabiya is the western end of the Straight Street and both – the gate and the street – are closely connected with the antique heritage of Damascus. Bab al-Jabiya is probably situated at the exact location of the Roman western gate, while Suq al-Qutn developed from the southern walkway of the *decumanus maximus* (Sack 1989: 15). As a matter of fact, the history of the *suq* in the Middle East is closely connected with the Roman street pattern.



291. Bab al-Jabiya, from outside (s.w. 1996).

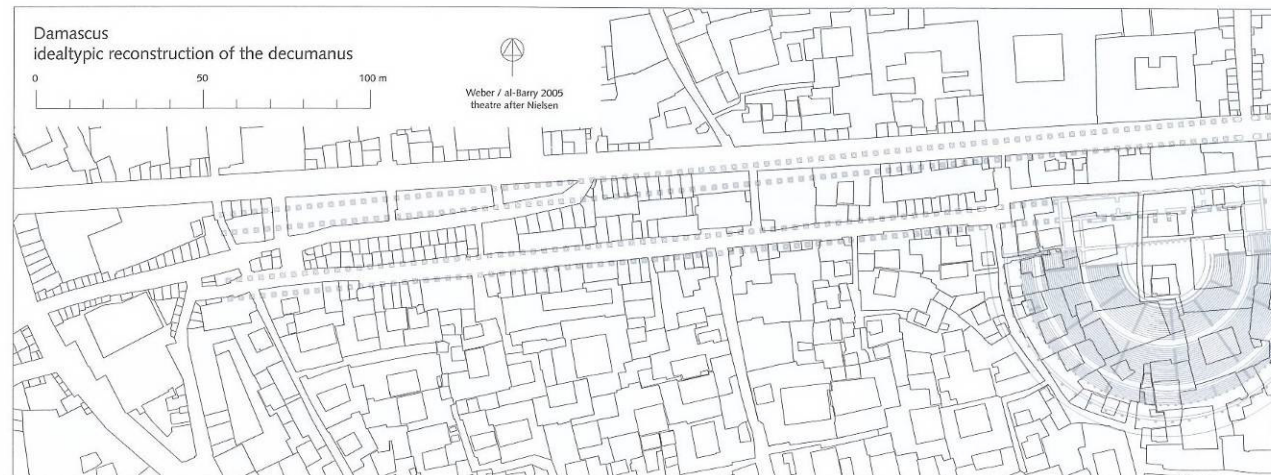
292. Bab al-Jabiya, from inside (s.w. 2002).

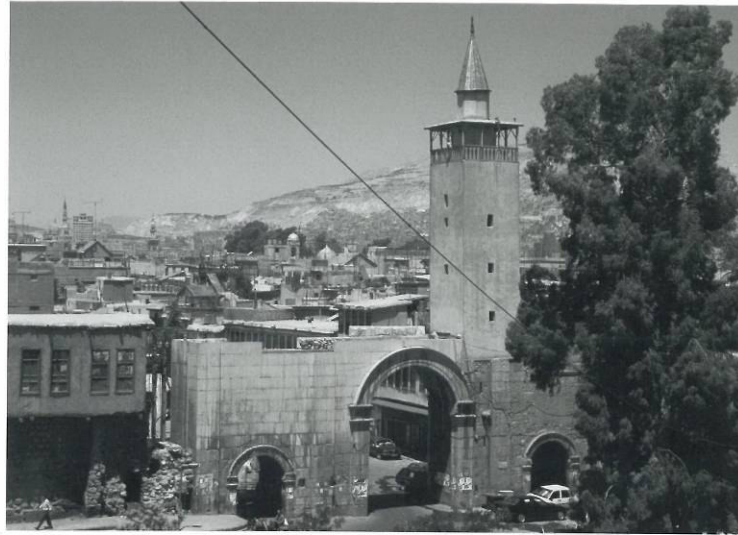
293. The decumanus maximus and Suq al-Qutn. Hypothetical reconstruction based on the size of the decumanus after Wulzinger and Watzinger and the location of the theatre after Nielsen (Weber and al-Barri 2005).

### From the *via recta* to the Suq al-Tawil

The track of the Suqs al-Qutn, al-Suf and al-Dhira' up to the eastern end of the *via recta* follows the *decumanus*, the main street of antique Damascus. In the Roman period it was an arcade street of 25.92 m in width, subdivided into a middle road (13.68 m) and two walkways (6.12 m) on its southern and northern side. From the western (Bab al-Jabiya) to the eastern gate (Bab al-Sharqi, Fig. 294, which is in large parts *in situ*) it covered a distance of about 1.5 km. We have no archaeological proof that the whole length was provided with arcades, but based on some remaining columns at Bab al-Sharqi (Fig. 295) and observations in other cities of the region, Wulzinger and Watzinger developed a model of arcades, giving the bay two columns of 3.50 m (Watzinger/Wulzinger 1921:42). They stopped their reconstruction of the *decumanus* some 100 m east of Bab al-Jabiya, but if one applies their model to the stretch from the Roman theatre to Bab al-Jabiya (Fig. 293), the direct relationship of the *decumanus* with Suq al-Qutn and al-Dhira' is evident. This is corroborated by a very telling description of the gate by the historian Ibn 'Asakir (d. 1178) in his *History of Damascus*:

The gate al-Jabiya, to the west of the city. It gets its name from the village al-Jabiya, because who goes to [that village] leaves from this [gate], since [the gate] (...) leads to it [the village]. It had three arches: a large one in the middle and two small ones on each side, exactly like Bab al-Sharqi. And from the three arches three markets stretched from Bab al-Jabiya to Bab al-Sharqi. The central suq was for the people and one of the two [other] *suqs* for those who went east-





294. *Bab al-Sharqi, from outside*  
(s.w. 1994).



295. *Bab al-Sharqi, from inside*  
(s.w. 1994).



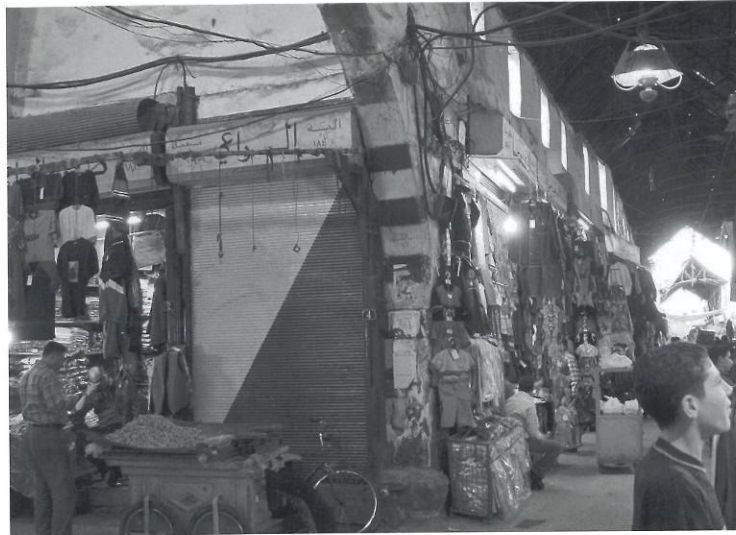
wards on their mount and the other for those who went westwards on it, so that two riders would not run into each other (...). The big gate and the northern one are blocked. The southern gate remains until now (Ibn 'Asakir 1954: 187).

Thus in the twelfth century the original setting of the gate – as archaeologists have assumed – was still known and the situation seems to have been quite similar to what it is now. The change from the *decumanus maximus* to the Suq al-Tawil (the Long Suq as it is often called today) seems to have happened before the turn of the millennium.

It was Jean Sauvaget who first established the direct link between *suq* and *decumanus* as a pattern of Middle Eastern urbanism in his article on the town of Latakia (Sauvaget 1934/1954). Based on his observations he developed a model of the transformation of an arcade street to a *suq* which stressed that shops were built in the middle of the street. Thus the way for the pedestrians between the shops and the columns became a market street while the wider middle driving line was blocked by shops. In antiquity the main axis through the town was not only a shortcut from the east to the west or vice versa. It was also the most important commercial street in town. Eugen Wirth stresses the similarities between the colonnade streets and the *sugs*:

Die Kolonnaden gewährleisteten auch die für Bazargassen charakteristische Einheitlichkeit des Baubestands beiseitig der Straße, und wir können wohl auch schon mit einer beginnenden Verdrängung der Wohnfunktion aus diesen Ladenstraßen rechnen (Wirth 2000: I 137).

The *suq* can be seen as the functional heir of the Roman *decumanus* or *cardo* as the main commercial street. Thus the borderline between both is fluent as the development from the one to the other seems to be an ongoing process without a clear cut. We have learned from many examples in the region that already in late antiquity, especially under Byzantine rule, this axis with its rows of shops started to be built over. Petra provides a well-studied example in Jordan. In Palmyra excavations brought to light a similar situation most probably dating back to Umayyad times (661-750) (As'ad / Stepniowski 1989). The symmetrically laid-out examples of Palmyra and the *suq* of Damascus (and Aleppo) suggest that we are dealing with a well-planned urban undertaking and not with a chaotic wild growth, as is often claimed. This is also the case of the Umayyad city of 'Anjar (Lebanon) that was founded in the first half of the 8th century (~ 715). Its layout as a city following an ideal plan, recalls the plan of the *castrum* with symmetrically cutting *decumanus* and *cardo* (Finster 2003: 211–216). This model was already lost in the later Roman period and no longer applied in Byzantine times. Under the new Muslim rulers it was brought back and modified. As an imperial 'Islamic' city 'Anjar had a relatively



296. *Suq al-Qutn*, most probably the sidewalk of the Roman *decumanus*. The shops on the left are located on the middle part of the *decumanus* (s.w. 2002).

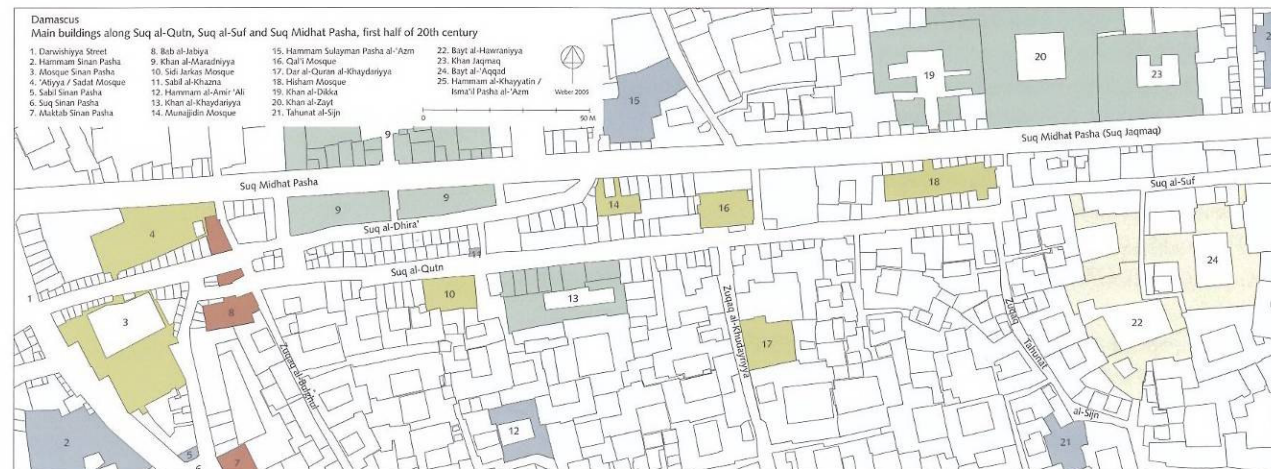
297. *Suq al-Qutn* and *Suq al-Suf* with its main buildings (situation 1920) (s.w. 2005).

small *hammam* (compared to the huge Roman *thermae*), a mosque, royal palaces and three shopping areas. One was the shopping hall west of the mosque and most probably east of the small palace. The most impressive examples are the *cardo* and *decumanus maximus*, which were lined up with rows of shops. Thus the most important market street was not only maintained, it was built according to antique models. 'Anjar is not representative due to its uniqueness. But in Umayyad times *suqs* were also planned and built in already existing cities according to this model. The shopping complexes in Doura Europos could be mentioned in this context (Rostovtzeff 1934, 1938). A very important example is that of the town of Bet Shean /Baysan, where a dated inscription from Umayyad times (120/737–38) was found which identifies the builder as well (Khamis 2001: 163, 170). This *suq* is still built following the antique pattern, as a row of shops next to a main street. Alan Walmsley connected this development in the early 8th century, seen also in the paved *suq* with arcades in Bayt Ras (Jordan) from the period of the Caliph Hisham (724–742), with an economic boom in Bilad al-Sham after the reforms of caliph 'Abd al-Malik (685–705) (Walmsley 2002: 145).

The example of Damascus is interesting, because it suggests that the model of the early *suq* became a pattern of how to build a market street in Islamic times. None of today's shop structures in Damascus date back to the Umayyads, and antique *spolia*-like columns – as one would expect and still *in situ* in other parts of the city, like those from the *peribolos* on the east of the Umayyad mosque – were

not found. Most of what is standing today dates back to the Ottoman period (Fig. 296). On the other hand one can find an astonishing congruence in the pattern of shops and the size of colonnades in the hypothetically reconstructed *decumanus* (see Fig. 295, western section). As a conclusion one may formulate three hypotheses: First, most probably the layout of the shops as we find them today in Suq al-Qutn is linked to the *decumanus* and its being overbuilt. Second: we do not know when parts of the *decumanus* were overbuilt by shops, but having in mind all the examples of how *suqs* were built in Umayyad times, the layout of Suq al-Qutn and al-Dhira' as we know it today (two parallel market streets divided by two rows of shops) could have been an act of urban planning in Byzantine or early Islamic times, probably the Umayyad period. Third: since no evidence of remaining material from antiquity or the early Islamic period was found, the borders of the shops from Ottoman times as we see them today are not given by older structures of Roman columns or Umayyad walls. The similarity of sizes must be explained by a more or less fixed model of how to build a *suq*. It seems that this model developed into a pattern of urbanism quite early in Islamic times and that it was applied rather unchanged after periods of destruction.

These periods of destruction must have been quite dramatic. If we want to know why the quarter looks as it does today we need to consider the role of Timur Lenk (Tamerlan) and the destruction caused by the invasion of his armies in 1401. With the exception of Bab al-Jabiya, all buildings in Suq al-Qutn and its immediate vicinity date back to the 15th century or later. Buildings before 1400 are only known from written sources. Ibn 'Asakir informs us about the layout of the *suqs* in the





times of Nur al-Din (1154–1174), listing from the west to the east, Suq al-Hajjamin (coppers), al-Qattanin (cotton merchants), and al-Qalanisiyyin (cap makers) (Ibn ‘Asakir 1954: 57, 129, 154, compare Sack 1989: Beilage 3). Furthermore, he mentioned the water channels (*qanat*) of the area – one of them directly at the Jabiya Gate, a now vanished Hammam al-‘Asadiyyin and some mosques, like the Masjid Ibn ‘Atiyya and a “hanging” mosque at the Jabiya Gate (*masjid mu‘allaq ‘ala Bab al-Jabiya*) (Ibn ‘Asakir 1954: 77, 91, 98, 162, 164, see as well 93). Ayyubid building activities (1178–1260) were after Sauvaget quite negligible in the quarters under discussion (Sauvaget 1934 after Sack 1989: 26). The excavations in Bayt al-‘Aqqad (see Mortensen above: p. 334) would seem to corroborate these findings, because no ceramics from the Seljuq and Ayyubid periods were found there. However, this cannot be generally applied to the whole quarter but points to the fact that the plot of Bayt al-‘Aqqad was still not used and the theatre served – if at all – only as a quarry. This picture changed dramatically after the major destruction of the quarter by Timur Lenk in 1401.

### **Destruction and Reconstruction: Suq al-Qutn and its Neighbourhood after the Mongols (1401)**

In September 802/1399 Timur Lenk (1336–1405) left his capital Samarqand and started a campaign against the Ottoman and Mamluk Empires. After destroying several cities, his army arrived in front of the gates of Damascus in 1400 and laid siege to it. After heavy fighting the citadel surrendered, and Timur, in negotiations, pressed as much money out of the town as possible. Nevertheless, looting and killing started on the 6th March 1401 when Timur’s soldiers entered the town from Bab al-Saghir. The main battles left the quarter of Shaghur completely destroyed, in particular the district inside Bab al-Jabiya up to the citadel (Atassi 2001: 7; for detailed descriptions of the events see Ibn Qadi Shuhba 1997: IV 142 ff., especially 165 ff.). After three days of looting the invaders set the city on fire and, with the help of strong winds, much of the city was turned into ashes, including large parts of the Umayyad mosque (Ibn Qadi Shuhba 1997: IV 177; Ibn ‘Umar Bashah 1986: 285 f.). The fire was devastating, because most of the upper floors were built of wood and mud bricks (al-‘Ulabi 1987: 186). When Timur left soon after, Damascus was in ruins.

It took several years before reconstruction work started, and many decades before the city recovered from this catastrophe. In the Umayyad mosque, the first communal Friday prayer could be held in the courtyard a whole year after the fire (20th March 1402) and following the prayer, clean-up work was organized (Ibn Qadi Shuhba 1997: IV 265). The western minaret of the mosque was first repaired

at the end of 814/1411 so that the muezzin could call to prayer again (Nu'aymi 1990: II, 207). In 1410, the rearrangement of the *suqs* around the Umayyad mosque started on a large scale. Al-Qalqashandi claims that up to the time of his writing in 819/1416 nothing was rebuilt except the Umayyad mosque and the Citadel (al-Qalqashandi 1985: II 193).

Many destroyed buildings, like the Madrasa al-Sahibiyya or the al-Diya'iyya in al-Salihiya, were never rebuilt, or it took decades to repair them, as with the Qaymariyya Bath that was first rebuilt in the early 16th century by Muhibb al-Din al-Karkay (d. 1520).<sup>4</sup> Reconstruction itself met many problems. People had left town and built houses in the Ghuta and the Mamluks had difficulty bringing them back into the city. In 811/1408–09, Amir Shaukh al-Mahmudi ordered the people to return to town to rebuild their houses and schools. Not long after that, a similar order arrived from the Sultan in Cairo, al-Malik al-Nasir Muhammad (al-'Ulabi 1987: 191). Moreover, there was a lack of skilled craftsmen, since Timur had taken many well-trained tradesman, artisans and doctors with him to Samarqand. Also, the weak financial situation did not allow the construction of new buildings or the repairing of old ones. Many *waqf* properties were destroyed and did not provide the income needed for new investments. The Ayyubid Qilijiyya School commissioned in the middle of the 13th century provides a good example of this calamity. All its endowed assets were located *intra muros* and they had burned down in 1401. Thus, it had no income and it took one and a half centuries until *qadi* Muhammad Jalabi ibn Abi l-Su'ud was able to rebuild the *madrasa* in 964/1556–57 (al-'Ilmawi 1947: 103).

In the neighbourhood of Bab al-Jabiya the situation was worse than in many other parts of the city. It seems that the quarters around Suq al-Qutn were totally destroyed. Many buildings along the main roads had belonged to the Umayyad mosque. In 816/1413–14 a council drew up a report surveying the properties of this *waqf*, which gives us some insight into the situation more than a decade after the destruction.<sup>5</sup> The report mentions that the areas within Bab al-Jabiya with the Suqs al-Jukhiyin and Habbalin and the Masjid 'Atiya were under reconstruction, as well as Suq al-Qadmaniyyin and Suq al-Qattanin with the Masjid al-Jarkas and Qasariyyat Qarabugha (*waqf*: p. 46b ff.).

It is worthwhile to stress again that all buildings in the neighbourhood were built after 1401. We will see most of them once more while continuing our walk through Suq al-Qutn. The Sabil al-Khazna was rebuilt by Amir Jarkas al-Suduni already in 807/1405, the Hisham mosque with its minaret followed in 830/1427, and around 1460/70 the Qal'i Minaret was erected. A few years later, in 878/1473–74, the Dar al-Quran/College al-Khaydariyya and its *khan* were founded.<sup>6</sup> In those years the construction had most probably just been completed of the *qa'a* and *iwan* in the Bayt al-'Aqqad itself.

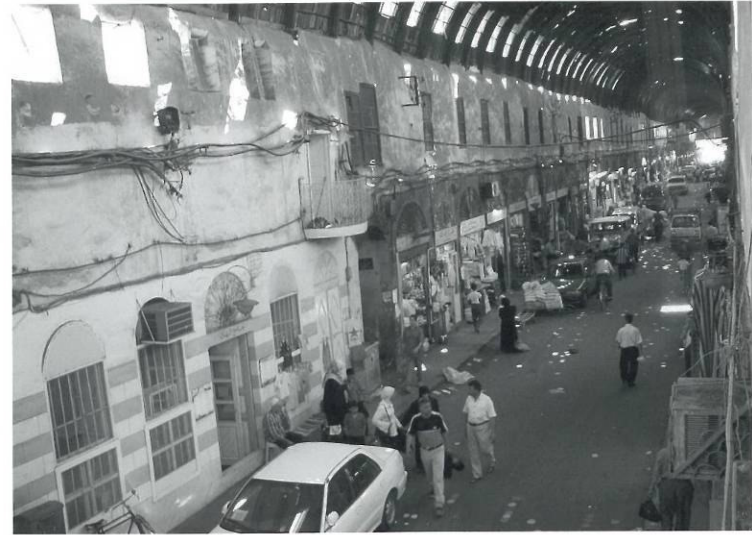


298. *Suq Midhat Pasha*, c. 1930.  
On the right, remains of Khan  
al-Maradiniyya (Photo Collection:  
Lemke).

299. *Suq Midhat Pasha* (s.w. 2002).

The investments of the governor Sayf al-Din Jaqmaq seem to have been of special importance for the future development of the area. He had commissioned the Madrasa al-Jaqmaqiyya with his *turba* close to the Umayyad mosque in 822/1419–20 and a *khan* and *suq* just to the north of Suq al-Suf, which became the nucleus of a new commercial centre (for the *madrasa* see al-'Ilmawi 1947: 82 f.; al-Nu'aymi 1990: I, 374 f.). In the Ottoman period other *khans*, like the Khan al-Zayt and the *khan* of Sulayman Pasha, continued this development. The quarter now began also to attract many families of the upper strata. Bayt al-'Aqqad was most probably one of the very important houses of the city and sources for this neighbourhood also mention, among others, the house of the *qadi* Shams al-Din Muhammad Ibn Muzalliq (d. 1497) east of Bayt al-'Aqqad. The Muzalliq family had become rich in trade early in the 15th century, and by 1500 several members had entered the religious establishment of Mamluk Damascus and obtained the highest position as *qadi* of the Shafi'i rite (Ibn Tulun 1964: 172). Qutb al-Din al-Khaydari (d. 1489), another Shafi'i *qadi*, founded his Dar al-Quran (see below) close to his house and thus close to Bayt al-'Aqqad (Busrawi 1988: 62). On her return from Cairo in 923/1517, Siba'i, the wife of the last Mamluk governor of Damascus, moved into the house of Yakhshabay, who lived in the area and was one of the most prominent figures of late Mamluk Damascus – among other functions he had been commander of the citadel and chief chamberlain (see Ibn Tulun 1964: I 153, 333; II 64).





If we want to understand how Suq al-Qutn and its direct vicinity evolved into the pattern that we see today, it is necessary to look at the two broad topics discussed above: the development of *suqs* out of the antique *decumanus* and the caesura of the destruction caused by the troops of Timur Lenk. Although other disasters struck the quarter, none of them was as catastrophic as Timur Lenk's brief passage.<sup>7</sup> Only during the late 19th century did a similar wave of change come over the city, transforming it profoundly. During the period of reform and modernization of urban institutions many streets and *suqs* in Damascus were widened. In 1295/1878, the Ottoman governor Midhat Pasha commissioned the straightening of the *via recta* to create a new bazaar parallel to the ancient *suqs* (Figs. 298 and 299). The starting point was again a fire: Suq Midhat Pasha seems to have been a delayed planning response to the fire that in 1277/1860 devastated the Suq al-Jadid at the Khan al-Maradiniyya (other sources mention that Midhat Pasha had set fire intentionally to make space for the new *suq*). A new street was pierced for the 470-m-long bazaar that cut the Khan al-Maradiniyya in half and created a new opening in the western city wall. The style was quite different from the old *suqs*. With a width of nearly 8 m, it was twice as wide as Suq al-Suf, which should allow traffic on wheels to enter the commercial district and facilitate exchange between this district, the connected *suqs* al-Khayyatin and al-Buzuriyya (both widened as well), and the new public centre *extra muros* at the Marja Square. The Suq Midhat Pasha stood at the very beginning of a development that modernized the traditional

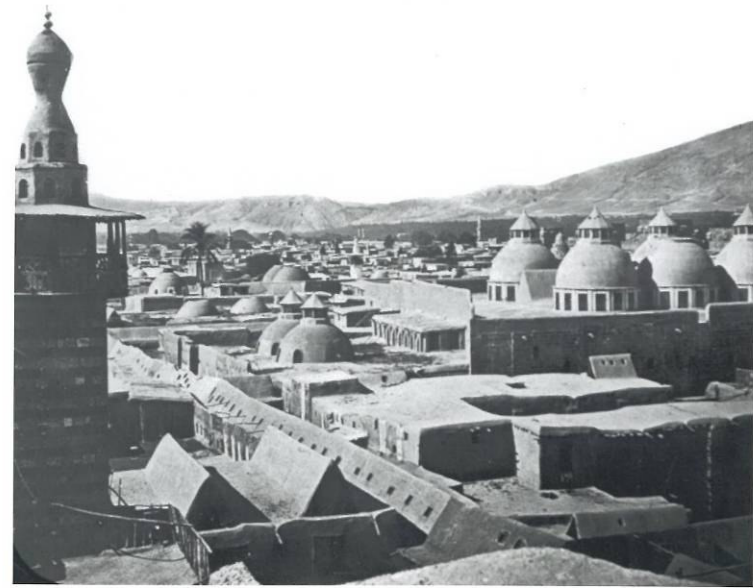
institution of the *suq* by adapting its layout to new needs and tastes. In the spirit of modernization one preferred straight streets (not only by name) and covered markets, similar to the arcades fashionable in Europe and Istanbul at that time. The barrel-vaulted structure and the widened arcades of shops were most probably to influence the arcades, which were to be even much more visible in the famous *Suq al-Hamidiyya* a decade later (Weber 2004c: 44 ff.). Nevertheless, it was not only catastrophes and governors that brought change to the city, but most of all the needs of the people living in it and shaping their environment in their daily affairs.

## 2. Commerce and Manufacture

*Coming from Bab al-Jabiya, Ibn al-Hawraniyya is now standing at the crossroads of Suq al-Qutn and Suq al-Dhira', facing the impressive long frontage of the Khan al-Maradiniyya. From there it is only a short distance to one of the main market streets of the city, the suq called Jaqmaq after the Mamluk official who had built a khan at about the height of the Hisham Mosque (Fig. 309). Many other khans were built there over the centuries and the shops were full with merchandise, of both local and European manufacture. This street was always busy and masses of people made it hard to pass through. It might have been a little easier to pass in the narrower and more modest parallel street of Suq al-Qutn.*

The busy life of the *suqs* and their colourful shops are a feature of Damascus that was described at length in nearly every travelogue ever written about the city (for one of the most colourful see Wetzstein 1857). Even though it did not match Cairo or Aleppo in its importance as a commercial centre, it was a junction of long-distance and regional trade and a stopping place for caravans. Before the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 nearly all goods had to be transported overland by camels. Caravans arrived from Aleppo and Baghdad and from Beirut and went on to Jerusalem or Cairo. Yet the most important caravan of all in the eyes of the Damascenes was the yearly pilgrimage to the sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina in the Hijaz (*hajj*). Pilgrims came from the central areas of the Ottoman Empire, from Iran and Iraq and from Northern Syria and their number often reached 20,000. The influx of strangers who had to be fed, clothed, transported and protected provided many Damascene with work and a profitable livelihood. The pilgrimage also determined the yearly rhythm of urban life. The *hajj* season lasted for nearly six months, starting in early Ramadan, the 9th month of the Islamic calendar, with the arrival of the first pilgrims. It reached its first peak on the days of departure, normally in the first half of Shawwal, when all Damascus would attend the procession of the *mahmal* – the sacred litter, a conical dome-frame of wood, covered with gold-embroidered cloth – around the city (Fig. 302). Some days later, the whole hajj caravan departed in a festive procession in the direction of the south

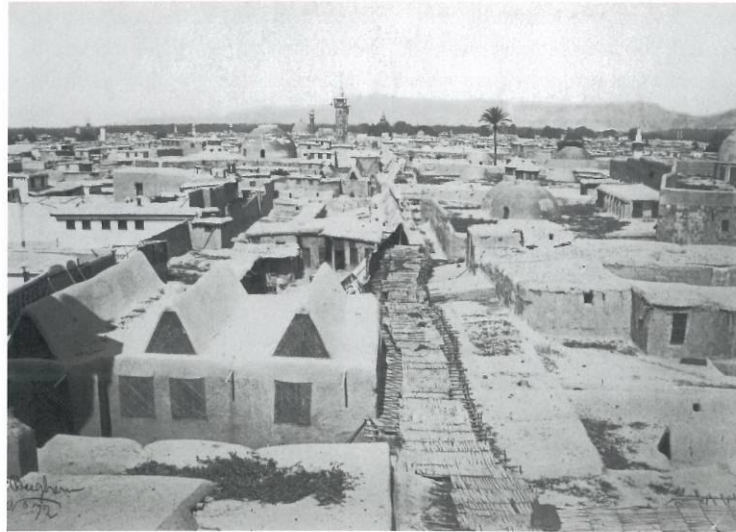
300. *Suq al-‘Ubi and Jaqmaq*  
(Photo: TU Dresden).



(Fig. 303). The next occasion was the return of the caravan, usually in the second month of the following year. The welcome procession once again brought out the whole population, but the day often lacked the joyous atmosphere of the departure because of the frequent calamities that befell the pilgrims on their long route (Barbir 1980: 108–177).

Alongside its spiritual aspects, the caravan was a major commercial undertaking and huge quantities of goods were transported to and from Damascus. All the main caravan routes met at Bab al-Jabiya. The commercial centre of Damascus was located just inside of it on both sides of the *via recta* where goods could be transported with ease. This explains the concentration of the different forms of guest-houses and storage facilities, workshops and shops (*khan*, *qaysariyya*, *makhzan*, *dukkan*, *hanut*) that can be found on this side of the city. Together with the *suqs* around the Umayyad mosque, Suq Jaqmaq was the market street *par excellence*. Protected by a wooden roof from the sun as well as rain (Figs. 300 and 301), huge masses of people came there to buy whatever they needed, but probably – like today – also for “window-shopping” although at that time, there were no windows. The shopkeepers displayed their goods on *mastabas*, the many uses of which Kremer described with loving detail:





301. Suq al-'Ubi and Jaqmaq  
(Photo Collection: Badr al-Hage).

302. Official gathering for the hajj  
caravan with the mahmal, late  
19th century (Photo Collection:  
Lemke).

On both sides of the market a Mastabbe or stoop made of stone and clay has been built which is one and a half feet high and two to three feet wide. This stoop provides the shop-keepers with the advantage of displaying their wares and also gives them a place upon which they can spread a carpet on which they sit to smoke a pipe; it is also an amenity for the shopper who can rest there while sampling the goods and bargaining. Often the Mastabbe is completely panelled with wood and separated from the other shops by two wooden walls which are erected at both ends, whereby one shop is naturally brought out prominently, sitting directly in the street. The Damascenes excel in ornamenting and decorating their shops. And the custom of some shop-keepers of placing large bunches of violets, snow-drops and anemones or other flowers create a pleasant impression (Kremer 1854: II, 2, transl. by Schilcher 1985: 13).

Besides long rows of shops the area abounded with other commercial buildings like *khans* or *qaysariyyas*. They could fulfil different functions, from sheltering travellers and their mounts to serving as storage rooms or as workplaces. The most prominent example in the Suq al-Qutn area is the Khan al-Maradiniyya (1055/1646). This *khan* for spindle makers is one of the few larger foundations erected in the middle of the 17th century and originates from the *waqf* of Bahram Agha who was the *ketkhuda* (lieutenant) of the mother of Sultan Ibrahim (al-Muhibbi 1970: III, 408 f.). With the construction of Suq Midhat Pasha the *khan* was divided into two halves. While the entrance area with the gate still provides space for a row of



shops, the surviving part in the north continued to be used as a *khan* until the French bombardment of the Sidi 'Amud/al-Hariqa quarter in 1925. Strolling through the *suq* one would not notice passing a large commercial estate because the outside of the structure is shaped as a row of shops and only the portal is designed as an eye catcher (Fig. 304). Like many other *khans* in the city the portal of the Maradiniyya is a rectangular stone structure on two floors (upper floors are normally clay brick structures), while the actual gate is set in a high, rising, archway and topped by a small rectangular window. Though the Khan al-Maradiniyya was endowed by an important person from the capital, the design of the gate is purely local. The masonry is shaped by horizontal stripes of stones of different colour (*ablaq*), a feature developed in Ayyubid and Mamluk Syria. It can also be seen at the Khan al-Khudayriyya (Fig. 305), made out of white limestone and black basalt. The Khan al-Maradiniyya is one of the first buildings where orange sandstone is added, which became the typical arrangement in the 18th century (see the *qa'a* of Bayt al-'Aqqad, Weber and Mortensen above: p. 267). The gate shows other features developed in Ottoman Damascus out of the Mamluk heritage like the twisted ribbons and small colour paste medallions.

Going back from Suq al-Dhira' to Suq al-Qutn one arrives at the Khan al-Khudayriyya where the difference between Damascene craftsmanship under the Mamluks and the Ottomans, respectively, is quite distinguishable. The portal belongs to the Mamluk structure (878/1473–4, see below), while the gate itself is an



Ottoman addition from the early 17th century. The decorative patterns from the earlier era are made of stone, which show motifs of cut and moulded ribbons, while the Ottoman addition (cutting the Mamluk *muqarnas*) shows the typical colour paste decoration of its time.

All of the *khans* of Damascus were built or considerably changed in Ottoman times (in contradistinction to Aleppo or Tripoli). The only (three) Mamluk *khans* of the city are all close to Suq al-Qutn. While the Khan al-Khudayriyya preserved at least parts of the portal (most of the interior is a 19th-century structure), the Mamluk foundations of Khan al-Dikka and Khan Jaqmaq were both totally rebuilt (Fig. 297). The Khan al-Dikka was reconstructed in the last two decades of the 19th century (integrating many antique columns), while the Khan Jaqmaq (see above) was rebuilt with a beautiful (but today very dirty) portal in the very early 17th century. Next door one can enter the handsome courtyard of the Khan al-Zayt, built most probably shortly before 1600. In the first half of the 18th century many large *khans* were built. One of them – dated 1145/1732–33 and commissioned by the Ottoman governor Sulayman Pasha al-ʿAzam – lies in the direct vicinity of Bayt al-ʿAqqad (Scharabi 1983: 292 ff). In the 19th century it was called Khan al-Hamasina after the travelling merchants from Homs who used it for lodging at that time (Qasatly 1876: 110). Qasatly describes the *khan* of Sulayman Pasha (d. 1742) as the most beautiful and largest *khan* of the city, only surpassed by the *khan* of his nephew Asʿad Pasha al-ʿAzam (d. 1757) in the Buzuriyya Suq. Both belong to the unique





Damascene architectural school of domed *khans*. In no other city of the empire can courtyards of *khans* be found, which are covered by domes, as in Damascus (Khan al-Jukhiya, Khan al-Tutun, Khan al-Safarjalani, Khan al-‘Amud, Khan al-Ruzz – to name only the most important, Weber 2000: 244 ff.).

Suq al-Suf and Suq al-Qutn were, as their names indicate, the urban centres of the wool and cotton trade. Yet they were also part of a larger network of manufacturing activities that constituted the textile industry of Ottoman Damascus. Its numerous specialised branches were probably the most important provider of work in the urban economy in the 18th and 19th centuries (Rafeq 1991: 510; Reilly 2002, 82). Textile manufacturing linked the city to its rural hinterland. Not only were raw materials like cotton, wool and silk brought to the urban markets by the producers or specialised traders, but the villages were also consumers of goods manufactured in the city.

Even more important were the regional and international connections of textile trading and manufacturing. Wool was bought from nomads tending their herds on the fringes of the desert to the north and the south of Damascus. Large quantities of cotton came from the Orontes valley around Hama. Silk was a product of village industry, especially in the mountainous regions along the coast; to Damascus it came mainly from the Shuf area of Mount Lebanon. Damascus was thus a market of regional importance for the whole of what is today Southern Syria, Lebanon, Israel / Palestine and Jordan. From the middle of the 18th century,

it also became a target for the increasing import of textiles from Europe. They were very much sought after, because of their cheap price and good quality, and they were sold in specialised shops, probably in Suq Bab al-Barid on the western side of the Umayyad mosque, “the finest and most beautiful market of all the city” as Qasatli remarked in 1876 in his description of Damascus. In 1853 Kremer saw shops selling European textiles in Suq Jaqmaq (1854: 5), and this competition, especially in the 19th century, affected many branches of the local industry (Qasatli 1876: 121–124; Schilcher 1985: 71–75; Rafeq 1991: 510).

At least since early Ottoman times, trading and manufacturing had been organized in associations or “guilds” (*hirfa* or *sinf*, in Damascus often also *ta’ifa*). In the 18th century it was regularly forbidden by the courts to exercise a craft if one was not a member of an association (Rafeq 2002: 102). At a young adult age one could take an apprenticeship to learn the specifics of a trade, and after long years of training and working it was possible to reach the level of “master craftsman” (*ustadh* or *usta*, *mu’allim*). Masters normally owned a workshop (*dukkān*, *hanut*) where they employed apprentices and more advanced workers. Owning a workshop involved first of all possessing the right to exercise the craft in a certain place and having the appropriate equipment like looms, wheels etc. In the Damascene records, this right was called by the Turkish term *gedik* and could be sold and bought like other commodities and rights. Often the ground, and even the shop building itself, did not belong to the craftsman, but to religious endowments (*waqf*) and had to be rented from them. Rents for shops were usually very modest, if compared with the cost of the *gedik* (Rafeq 1976, 157–159).

Cooperation between masters within an association was not usual, but it occurred occasionally (Rafeq 1991: 504). Women, although a considerable workforce in many of the more menial occupations, do not appear as members. All of these associations were headed by an elder (*shaykh*) who was elected among the masters. He, or sometimes an officially appointed “headman”, known under the title *bash*, represented his craft in the relations with other corporations and with the Ottoman administration. Although the majority of the workforce was Muslim, being a Christian or a Jew was not an obstacle to membership in most associations; but the *shaykh* was usually a Muslim.

In the 18th century, the organisation of these associations or guilds had become rather formal and bureaucratic, providing the state with an easy access to taxing the manufacturing industries. It also helped control the number of practitioners, the quality of workmanship and the prices of goods. Numerous associations were affiliated to the textile industry, and they included Muslims as well as Christians and Jews. The location of many of these associations and their specialized markets just inside Bab al-Jabiya along, and near, the *via recta* had a long tradition as we have already seen above.

305. *Khan al-Khudariyya, portal (s.w. 2003).*



Being the centre of activity of the cotton merchants (*qattan*, see Qasimi 1988: II, 360), Suq al-Qutn was the place to which the raw cotton was brought, usually by those who produced it. The Wool Market (*Suq al-Suf*) was the continuation of the Cotton Market farther east. In the middle of the 18th century, it came to be regularly referred to as such in the court documents, normally as a part of the wider *mahalla* of Suq al-Qutn. Only 19th-century authors use the name without further explanation (Qasimi 1988: II, 275). Wool traders normally went out during the shearing season to buy raw wool from producers and had it transported back to their store rooms in Suq al-Suf. The third important staple of the textile industry was silk (*harir*). The centre of the silk trade was on the other side of Suq Jaqmaq in the Khan al-Harir. For its supply, Damascus depended mainly on the silk industry of Mount Lebanon, especially in the Shuf region (Rafeq 1966: 179).

In the process of buying and selling raw materials, professional weighers were employed (*wazzan*, *qabban*, Qasimi 1988, II: 347-348) whose instruments were officially controlled. They could be found in every quarter of the city and were collectively responsible for the taxation of the raw materials. These could then be processed in different ways. A certain amount of all three staples was exported to Europe in a raw state, but large quantities entered the manufacturing and finishing processes for which Damascus was famous.

Different branches of the textile industry can be found in the Suq al-Qutn neighbourhood. First the raw materials had to be cleaned: wool was scoured, and



cotton had to be ginned, which was the trade of the *hallaj* (Qasimi 1988: I, 102). Such workshops were to be found just to the west of the Hisham mosque (8/179/373, 20.5.1061). The next steps consisted in the spinning and weaving of threads: spinning was often farmed out to poor women who worked in their own dwellings (*ghazzala*, Qasimi 1988: II, 328, see also *kabbabat al-harir*, II, 382). Weaving, however, was the work of men (*ha'ik*, Qasimi 1988: I, 86) which was done in workshops equipped with looms (*nawl*). They can be found all over the city. The spinning of silk was often done in warehouses to have enough space to spread the threads (*fat-tal*, Qasimi 1988: II, 334; Rafeq 1976: 154). The manufacturing process could also include bleaching (*qasr, qisara*), dyeing (*sabgh, sibagha*), fulling (*daqq*) and printing (*tab'*), i.e. pressing a wooden cube soaked with ink on a plain cloth, producing a geometrical design. The result was a large variety of textile products that ranged from the very basic to extremely luxurious. The long chain of production was mostly controlled by persons who were involved in trade and who also owned the raw materials, and it was production on demand (Marcus 1989: 164; Schilcher 1985: 71–75).

Although workshops of the textile industry were to be found all over the city, notably also in the Christian quarters farther east, the neighbourhood of Suq al-Qutn had a high concentration of such establishments. Many dye works (*mas-bagha*) were situated here, for instance in the Khan al-Khaydariyya where a number of shops specializing in the dyeing of silk are mentioned (1/319/603, 13.4.993). Another *masbagha* lay just to the north of the Khaydariyya college (100/24/40, 22.5.1154; 174/78/114, 7.2.1180). In the middle of the 19th century, the German traveller Kremer saw cloth printers at work in Suq al-Qutn and silk fullers just opposite the entry of Suq al-Buzuriyya (1854: 6, 11). Many workshops specialised in *alâjâ* and *qutni*, two different sorts of cloth both made of cotton and silk (Qasimi 1988: I, 39). We know of some important buildings dedicated to this luxury product: the so-called Khan al-Alaja, part of the early Ottoman endowment of 'Isa al-Qari and the direct eastern neighbour of Bayt al-'Aqqad (102/60/173, 9.4.1185; 102/58/172, 2.8.1185), and a *khan* of Sulayman Pasha al-'Azm of 1735 (74/136/268, 26.5.1148) in the Shanbashiyya neighbourhood near the Hammam al-Rikab farther east. The manufacturing and trade in *alaja* was probably one of the most lucrative sectors of the Damascene textile industry, even in the 19th century when European imports were steadily on the increase (Ghazzal 1993: 125–139). Marked differences in status and wealth appear among the groups involved in the textile industry. Whereas the women who had to earn their daily living by spinning were among the poorest strata, the merchants of luxury cloth like the *alaja* often belonged to the richest persons of Damascene society. This can be learnt from the hundreds of inheritance cases that were registered with the courts around 1700 (Establet / Pascual 1994: 132).

### 3. Religion and Education

*On his way through Suq al-Qutn, Ibn al-Hawraniyya passes a small mosque on his right which is called Sidi Jarkas. Facing it, just on the other side of the road, he sees the public fountain called Sabil al-Khazna (Fig. 312). Arriving at the next crossroads, Ibn al-Hawraniyya is standing now in front of the Qal'i Mosque, the minaret of which he had seen from afar (Figs. 306 and 307). He has a special relationship to this mosque because he serves as an administrator and is responsible for its legal and financial affairs. Behind him is the entrance of Zuqaq al-Khudayriyya, called after the college of the Mamluk qadi al-Khaydari, the doorsteps of which he could see farther on to the left if he turned around (Fig. 308). From where he is standing, he can see the minaret of the Hisham Mosque (Fig. 309).*

Suq al-Suf and Suq al-Qutn were without any doubt important sectors of the urban economy, but could the same be said for the religious life of the neighbourhood? Evidently, the number and importance of its religious and educational institutions cannot be compared with those in the immediate neighbourhood of the Umayyad mosque. In Ottoman times, the religious buildings of Suq al-Qutn are very rarely mentioned. This, however, does not mean that the quarter lacked places to pray (*masjid*). Dozens of them are listed in the earliest descriptions of the city, especially along the important arteries like the Fusqar (part of the *via recta*, later known as Suq Jaqmaq), Suq al-Qutn and the perpendicular smaller alleys towards Bab al-Saghir (Jalabert 2001-2002: 25-30). Already in the 12th century, the only church mentioned for this sector had been given up. It had belonged to the Jacobites and must have been located to the south-east of the so-called "new" prison which probably had been situated within or near the ancient theatre (Elisséef 1959: 221; Jalabert 2001-2002: 30-31, 36).

Although many of the early mosques remained in use, they changed functions and names and only a few of them gained some renown outside the quarter itself. As already described in detail above, all of Suq al-Qutn's religious buildings date back to the last century of Mamluk rule. In the larger neighbourhood of the inner Shaghur, the most important pre-Ottoman foundation had probably been the Qassa'iyya college in the alley of the same name that later came to be known as the Khudayriyya (Nu'aymi 1990: I, 434-437). It was founded in Ayyubid times (593/1197) by a woman from an elite family who had stipulated that the teaching post in the collage should go to the most knowledgeable (*a'lam*) Hanafi jurist of the time. Like the whole neighbourhood it was in ruins after the Mongol invasion, and its professors had to teach in the Umayyad mosque. The collage seems to have been repaired soon after and functioned well into Ottoman times. The court records show that members of the important 'ulama families were appointed to teach there during the 18th century (e.g. 18/36/48, 22.11.1100; 56/34/152, 25.6.1138; 149/110/ 263,

1.6.1171). Yet at the beginning of the 20th century, Badran found that except for some wall fragments nothing of the building was left (Badran 1986: 195).

In Suq al-Qutn itself and its immediate vicinity, there were at least five complexes functioning in the 18th century: from west to east, the 'Atiyya mosque, the Sidi Jarkas mosque, the Qal'i mosque where Ibn al-Hawraniyya served as an administrator, the Dar al-Qur'an or Madrasa al-Khaydariyya, and the Hisham mosque. This is confirmed by a considerable number of appointment deeds for various posts in these institutions from the main court of Damascus (*Mahkama al-Bab*).

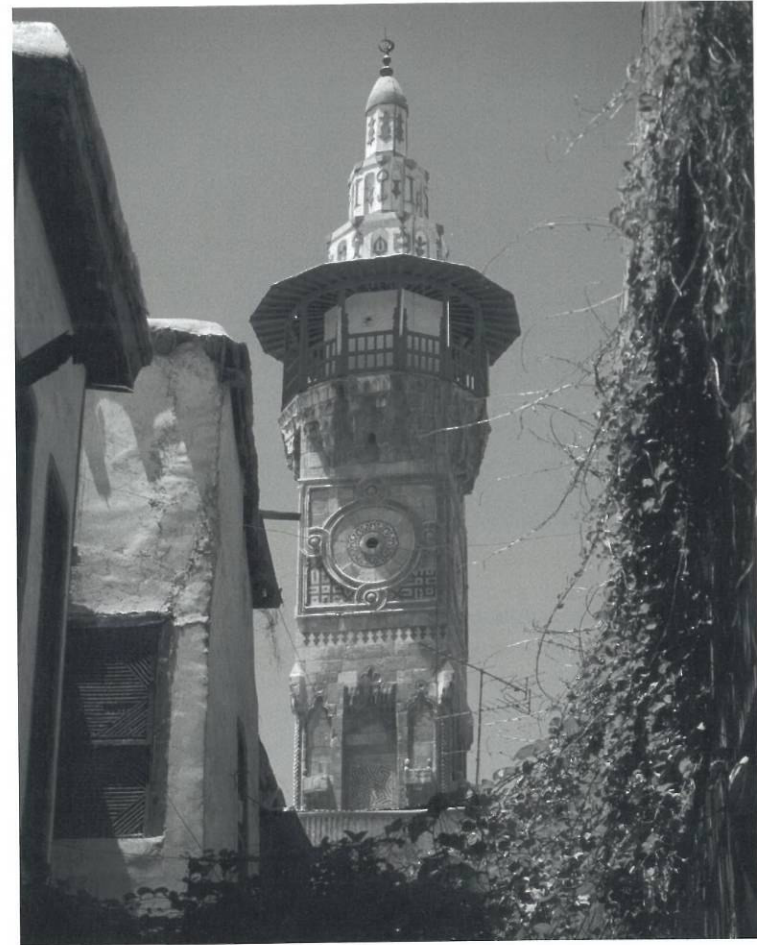
The 'Atiyya mosque is said to be named after an *imam* of the mosque then called Bab al-Jabiya who had lived in the 10th century (Ibn 'Asakir 1954: 77; Talas 1975: 95, Nu'aymi 1990: II, 257–258). In late Ottoman times it was known under the name of Sadat mosque (*sada*, pl. *sadat* are the descendants of the Prophet, 754/9/8, 1.6.1300). (It is worth mentioning in this context because of the people who controlled it). From the late 16th and well into the 18th century it was in the hands of the Hijazi family who managed the Qal'i mosque as well.

The Qal'i mosque was probably the most important religious establishment in the neighbourhood in Ottoman times (Talas 1975: 246). The praying hall was unfortunately rebuilt in the 19th century and recently it was totally altered in an orientalising fantasy style using white marble and ignoring any local tradition (a fashion sadly quite widespread in “restorations” by the *Waqf* Ministry). But its undated minaret still stands in its original splendour (*Fig. 306*). Due to its similarities with the minarets of Hisham (830/1427) and Tawrizi (832/1428–29), Meinecke attributes the minaret to the 1420s (Meinecke 1992: II, 348), while we see similarities to the Dar al-Qur'an al-Sabuniyya (868/1464) and the remaking of al-Saqifa mosque (869/1465, see *Weber and Mortensen* above: p. 232 f.). Its upper part shows most prominently a rectangular frame with an inserted circle of moulded ribbon building-knots on the spots of intersection. This motif can be seen in the buildings from the 1460s. On the other hand, its inner circle shows exactly the same pattern in colour paste as one can find on the minaret of the Hisham mosque (*Fig. 307*). The minaret was evidently built between 1420 and 1460 and forms together with the minaret of the Hisham mosque a unique landmark that helped Ibn al-Hawraniyya to orientate himself – as it helps us today – when strolling through the streets and alleys of Damascus.

The history of the Qal'i mosque is intimately linked with several notable families of Suq al-Qutn. In contradistinction to the Qassa'iya college for instance, the Ottoman administration or *'ulama* circles from outside the quarter did not seem involved in its affairs. In early Ottoman times it had been given to a newcomer who had profited from his connections to some members of Ottoman high society in Istanbul. Born in Hims in 1523, Shams al-Din Muhammad came to Damascus



306. Minaret of the Qal'i Mosque,  
from south (s.w. 1998).



around 1560, after a long sojourn in Mekka, which left him with the surname of al-Hijazi. Shams al-Din seemed to have had a rather extraordinary personality that shines even through the entries of his biographers who had to stick to the rather strict conventions of their genre. He had studied medicine, but was interested in alchemy and divinatory techniques as well. In Damascus, he continued his education in jurisprudence and soon was allowed to teach and give legal opinions (*fatwa*). Due to his connections to several Ottoman chief judges, he got to teach in several of the most important colleges of Damascus, among others in the Umayyad mosque. He was very rich but it is not clear how he made his fortune: His biog-



307. Minaret of the Hisham Mosque with the minaret of the Qal'i in the background (s.w. 1998).

308. The Khaydariyya College, street façade (s.w. 1998).

rapher Muhibbi seems rather sceptical about his ability to have made so much money from healing and teaching people. His gaining of a huge number of salaried posts was frowned upon even by his contemporaries who must have been accustomed to this very widespread practice. Both he and his son 'Abd al-Haqq were famous for their teaching sessions in the Qal'i mosque where they attracted a large public. Shams al-Din Muhammad died in 1611, a week after he had collapsed in front of the Qal'i mosque. He had been standing in the doorway of the attached bakery when a man asked him for a legal opinion (*fatwa*). Then, having written the following words: "Praise to God, Lord, give me more knowledge ..." his hand is said to have stopped just before he could write the answer "no" (Muhibbi 1970: IV, 163-165, Güneş 1981:107-109).

This rather controversial outsider was able to secure the succession of his son 'Abd al-Haqq to the Qal'i mosque, a famous man of letters (*adib*) who also became the chief physician (*hakimbashi*, *ra'is al-attiba'*) of Damascus (Muhibbi 1970: II, 310-316). Up to the middle of the 18th century, one or several members of the Hijazi family were to control various posts in the running of the mosque (see also Muradi 1988: IV, 7). These included not only the indispensable tasks of prayer leader (*imam*), teacher (*mudarris*) and manager (*mutawalli*), but also more menial occupations like lighting the lamps (*sha'al*) or spreading the carpets (*farrash*) (e.g. 36/59/122, 8.10.1130). In practice, many of these tasks were probably performed by other people who were paid a smaller salary than the remuneration attached to the



post. At least since the middle of the 17th century, the Hijazis had held the same posts in the 'Atiyya mosque as well (36/31/46, 1.7.1130). They were employed as Quran readers in the third mosque of the neighbourhood, the Sidi Jarkas/Sharkas (Talas 1975: 230). Even though one of the oldest mosques in the neighbourhood, it is the newest in construction. Its entire building dates back to 1341/1922–23. The administration of this endowment lay in the hands of the founder's descendants because of a stipulation in the endowment deed (31/78/141 15.7.1123; 146/202/452, 22.1.1170).

The Hijazi line came to an end in 1753 when Shaykh 'Abd al-Latif b. As'ad, who also served as chief physician of Damascus left his post to a man who did not seem to belong to the religious establishment but to the merchant community of the quarter. Hajj Taghlib, son of Su'udi, son of 'Abd al-Mu'ti, called al-Qattan or al-Wazzan (weigher), was probably a cotton merchant, as his name said, yet he also took over the posts of Qur'an reader and muezzin (139/233/266, 3.11.1166). The division between a commercial and a religious-scholarly sphere was never as clear-cut as it may seem at first sight. The *'ulama* were engaged in commercial activities and there are many examples of men who in their youth worked in trade and only later turned to religious learning (e.g. Muradi 1988: II, 19; Güneş 1981: 96). Hajj Taghlib shared his responsibilities with a member of a well-known *'ulama* family, Sayyid Ahmad Efendi b. Ahmad Efendi al-Bahnasi. Taghlib was to begin the line from father to son that would last three generations to the turn to the 19th century



(244/47/75, 4.2.1214). At the end of this period we learn for the first time of Ibn al-Hawraniyya's involvement in the administration of the Qal'i mosque. First he represented his father Hasan Beshe, who seems to have served as an administrator at least until 1799 (229/66/121, 1.1.1209; 244/47/4.2.1214). Bakri himself is mentioned as a *mutawalli* in a document from 1802 (25/90/130 28.10.1216), but he lost his post to his co-administrator Muhammad Sa'id of the well-known Ayyubi family soon afterwards, probably due to his death (250/351/643, 15.12.1217).

The Khaydariyya college, or as the Damascene called it, the Khudayriyya, had been founded as a school for the teaching of the Qur'an in 878/1473–4 by the *qadi* Qutb al-Din al-Khaydari (d. 1489) (Busrawi 1988: 62; Nu'aymi 1990: I, 7; Badran 1986: 5–9; Talas 1975: 213; Duhman 1982: 139–147; Meinecke 1992: I, 191; II, 404). The college which was built on the foundation of a smaller mosque gave its name to the neighbourhood and the street which formerly had been known as the Qassa'iyya. Only the southern part of the inner section of Shaghur retained its old name. It is the only complete surviving Mamluk religious institution in the quarter worth mentioning. The exterior of the school is of a simple but very effective design (Fig. 308). Two-thirds of the lower façade is structured by a horizontal black and white striping (*ablaq*), only the gate rises a bit higher. The upper part is of white plastered clay and wood. A rectangular panel with interwoven geometrical patterns is placed prominently over the entrance. The praying hall itself follows the model of the so-called *qa'a* type. One could explain it as a mosque or *madrassa* with courtyard and several *iwans*, but the courtyard is covered by a ceiling and the structure becomes a large hall (*qa'a*). The Khaydariyya college has two *iwans*. The very high rising arch to the south opens into the main prayer and teaching area with the wonderfully worked *mihrab*. As in houses (see Bayt al-'Aqqad) the *iwans* are not barrel vaulted, but covered by a flat beam ceiling. The small northern *iwans* opens to the "courtyard" as well, marked by a step under the arch, while the central section of the *qa'a* has a small rectangular fountain in the middle. The resemblance with *qa'as* of houses is striking and in fact their development is related to each other (Weber 2004a: 284 ff.).

The founder had stipulated in his endowment deed that the administration of the *madrassa* should stay in the hands of his descendants. From the end of the 17th century onwards, it was the Abu Rikab family who controlled its management (14/155/333, 26.2.1096; 47/104/243, 11.11.1136; 122/88/198, 4.12.1160; 216/362/537, 29.2.1198). The Rikab were a family with a military background who had established themselves farther east in the Shaghur quarter on the main route to Bab al-Saghir. They controlled the Shanbashiyya mosque and had built a bath right next to it which gave its name to the neighbourhood (see map, Fig. 25, No 9, *Hammam al-Rikab*; e.g. for the mosque 45/152/316, 29.6.1135; 155/398/835, 29.1.1173; for the bath 25/216/396 10.1.1114; 216/300/438, 29.10.1197). Members of the family shared the

309. The Hisham Mosque,  
from west (s.w. 1994).



responsibility of reading the Qur'an with a well-established *'ulama* family named Qulaqsiz (Muhibbi 1970: I, 301; Muradi 1988: IV, 29); not less than ten brothers participated at any given time in the well-paid reading post at the college (18/35/46, 22.11.1100; 32/154/423, 6.5.1124). The college was probably used primarily as a mosque for the five daily prayers and as a meeting place for sufi sessions. Badran reports that in the early 20th century Sufis of the Shadhiliyya order met there on certain nights and after the morning prayer for their *dhikr*. During Ramadan the famous *hadith* collection of al-Bukhari was read there (Badran 1970: 5). The college serves today as a mosque for the neighbourhood and was recently renovated, unfortunately not very well. However, it is nice to visit a small handsome Mamluk structure still serving the neighbourhood.

The location of the Hisham mosque had a long tradition as a place of praying. All early sources mention mosques at this place, easy to identify by the fountain and the canalisation called al-Shaykh, but under different names (Ibn 'Asakir 1954: 57; Talas 1975: 61). From the time of the historian Ibn Shaddad (d. 1285) it was known as Masjid Ibn Hisham. Its minaret and maybe also the mosque itself had been rebuilt by the qadi Badr al-Din b. Muzhir in 830/1427 after the destruction caused by the Mongols (Nu'aymi 1990: II, 234–235; Gaube 1978: 80; Meinecke 1992: II, 343). Only the beautiful *mihrab*, today painted in shiny colours, remains from the old prayer hall, which was completely rebuilt in the 1920s or 1930s (Fig. 310). During its reconstruction some of the original inscriptions were integrated into



the new portal. But its minaret (Figs. 307, 309) – like its “twin” at the Qal’i mosque – belongs to a school of very attractively worked minarets of the 15th century. Towards the end of the 16th century the mosque had been restored by order of the Amir Qansuh al-Ghazzawi (d. 1591), a prominent Ottoman official who had served as governor of the southern districts of ‘Ajlun and Safad and as commander of the pilgrimage caravan (Ghazzi 1997: III, 180).

We do not know much more about the history of the mosque during Ottoman times. Like other institutions it seems to have welcomed new arrivals in town and provided them with shelter. At that time it seems to have been associated with the Umayyad caliph Hisham b. ‘Abd al-Malik (died 743) because of the name Hisham (Muhibbi 1970: I, 166). An interesting case involving the mosque was presented to

310. *The Hisham Mosque, prayer hall of the 20th century (s.w. 1994).*



the court at the end of the year 1730 (40/215/513, 17.6.1143). A number of inhabitants of Suq Jaqmaq and the administrator presented themselves before the *qadi* and complained that the barred doorway that gave access to the small square to the east had become the meeting place of women and men of ill repute, which damaged the moral integrity of the quarter as a whole. They argued that another door, which gave access from the *suq* to the south, was sufficient for the needs of the people who wanted to pray and that the mosque would be better served if the eastern doorway was made into a shop. The judge allowed this transformation.

In the second half of the 18th century, the Hisham mosque came into the hands of the Sa'di Jibawi family (124/104/194, 10.3.1162; 159/420/776, 12.7.1173). They were not only a prominent *sufi* family firmly implanted in the Qubaybat neighbourhood in the southern part of the Midan, but another branch had founded a lodge in the outer Shaghur, and its first shaykh, Ibrahim Efendi (d. 1756) had served as administrator of the endowments of the Umayyad mosque for decades (Muradi 1988: I, 41). Later on, it was the Hanbali Mufti of Damascus who became the administrator of the Hisham mosque (msd 240/217/357, 12.12.1212). Thus, all religious institutions of Suq al-Qutn – the management of which was not in the hands of the founder's descendants – had come to be controlled by families or individuals who at the turn of the 19th century belonged to the religious establishment of Damascus. This concentration could be seen as part of a wider tendency towards centralisation which was on different levels one of the most prominent features of the reform era of the 19th century.

#### 4. Water, Bread and Coffee: Looking after Daily Needs

*We left Ibn al-Hawraniyya standing in front of the Qal'i Mosque. He remembers now that he has to do some shopping and turns to the bakery on the corner of Khudayriyya Street. Not far from it, in the same row of shops, Ibn al-Hawraniyya owns a barber shop, near the coffee-house called Ibn Nuqta. Here, also, the shops were included in his early endowments. This was probably the commercial centre of the neighbourhood, until Ibn al-Hawraniyya's later endowment laid the base for another one nearer to the Hisham Mosque.*

Besides being places of commerce and manufacturing, as well as religious devotion and education, Suq al-Qutn and Suq al-Suf were also residential areas. Basic goods and services were available there and people did not have to leave their own neighbourhood except if they required more specialised goods. Every quarter had its small market (*suwayqa*) that offered what was needed for daily life. One of the basic needs was access to water. The water system of Damascus goes back to Roman times and was carefully preserved and augmented following the Muslim

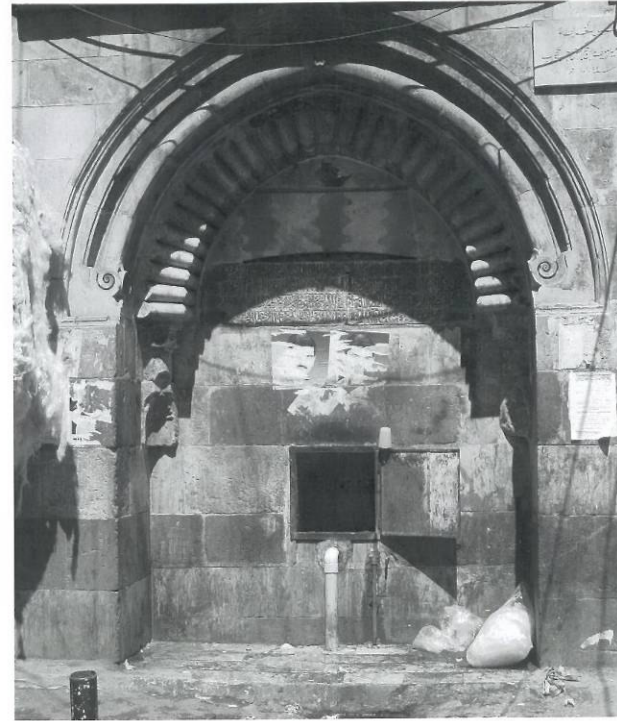


conquest (Sack 1989: 48–53, Elisséeff 1954: 257–276). A complex network of canalization distributed the water of the Barada river to all parts of the city. The southern part of the city *intra muros* depended mainly on one of the seven branches of the Barada river called Qanawat. Outside the city walls it crossed the quarters of Qanawat, Ta'dil and Bab al-Sarija in the form of an aqueduct, the remains of which still can be seen in Qanawat today. The canal went underground from the spot where it reached Bab al-Jabiya and followed the course of the *via recta* to the east (see map, Fig. 311, based on the map of Wulzinger/Watzinger of 1924, adapted according to observations on the ground). From this main canal, smaller waterways branched out to the north and the south. Their location can be determined above ground from the placing of water dividers (*tali'*, sometimes *taqsim*).

In Suq al-Qutn we know of three such – main – divisions: one next to the Sidi Jarkas mosque, the second near the Qal'i mosque, and the *tali'* in front of the Hisham mosque (212/48/75, 13.10.1195). The latter sent the water in the direction of the water-mill known as al-Tahunat al-Sijn and from there in different directions into the inner areas of Shaghur. Thus, the water was led to *hammams*, public foun-

311. The water system of Suq al-Qutn and neighbourhood (Weber 2005).

312. Sabil al-Khazna (s.w. 2004).



tains (*sabil*), and in the end found its way to the private fountains and basins (*bi'r*, *birka*) in the open courtyards of nearly every house. Public fountains were important urban landmarks. The Sabil al-Khazna (Fig. 312), opposite the Jarkas mosque, was restored soon after the invasion of the Mongols in 807/1405, according to an inscription still *in situ* (Gaube 1978: 65; Sack 1989: 65). The fountain was connected to the modern water network and still serves public needs, while other fountains of the quarter lost their function (Fig. 313). The map (Fig. 311) shows the distribution of private fountains according to the French cadastre (1926 to 1934) which usually can be relied upon for an adequate representation of the situation of the late 19th century. For earlier periods it is necessary to refer to descriptions of houses in court records, where fountains are regularly mentioned.

All houses had their own pipe system which sometimes were funded and owned by religious endowments. Securing the water supply often led to complex long-term arrangements and location contracts. When Ibn al-Hawraniyya bought a part of what later was to become his large house in 1776, the details of the water supply were carefully listed in the contract (198/336/502, 2.5.1190) and he rented the



use of the water pipes for 35 years from the endowment to which they belonged.

Access to water was a precondition for the establishment of a public bath (*hammam*) as well. Not only religious prescriptions regarding personal hygiene, but also cultural norms and social practise made the bath an indispensable part of urban life. It was a place where people could meet and relax. Popular lore highlights its special importance as a meeting place for women in general and as a marriage mart in particular. Several public baths can be found in the larger neighbourhood, but none is situated in Suq al-Qutn or Suq al-Suf themselves. In a small alley near the Khudayriyya was the Hammam al-Amir 'Ali, which was part of a family endowment (34/2/4 end of 11.1127; 142/154/323, 22.6.1167). The second bath on the south of the *via recta* was the *hammam* of the Rikab family near the Shanbashiyya mosque that was already mentioned in the context of the history of the Khudayriyya. The bathhouses just on the other side of the *via recta* bear much more illustrious names: the bath of Nur al-Din in Suq al-Buzuriyya, the *hammam* of Sulayman Pasha al-'Azm near the Khan al-Maradiniyya, and the bath of Isma'il Pasha al-'Azm in the Taylors Market (Suq al-Khayyatin) just opposite the entrance to Suq al-Suf.

Other hygienic needs could be fulfilled inside the quarter. Along the main road one could find several barber shops, one was placed just in the front wall of the Hisham mosque facing Suq al-Qutn (135/211/336, 4.10.1165; others: 248/56/104, 12.4.1216; 93/21/38, 13.11.1150). There was at least one soap factory in the quarter, called the Masbana al-Kiwaniyya in Khaydariyya Street (112/8/17, 6.12.1156). Qasimi, writing in the late 19th century, considered the locally produced soap called *baladi* to be of inferior quality. Only rural or poor people used it. Richer persons preferred soap from Nablus or another kind of Damascene soap called *ja'fari* (*sabban*, Qasimi 1988: II, 268–269).

Another basic feature of a residential quarter was to supply the inhabitants with food. Large quantities of a staple product like wheat, however, were most probably bought in the specialised market (Suq al-Qamh) which already in the 16th century seems to have been moved from the Suq al-Buzuriyya into the Midan quarter (Marino 1997: 97). People who could afford it bought what they needed for the year at harvest time and stored it in their houses (Marino 2003: 501–502). Others depended on the market which made them more dependent on the conjunctures of prices and supply. Wheat was the basis for bread-making. To cope with the huge demand for bread, which was eaten in various forms and qualities with every meal, there were a considerable number of bakeries in each quarter. Several must have existed along Suq al-Qutn: we know of two almost facing the Qal'i mosque, both prominently located in the corner premises of the *Zuqaq al-Khudayriyya* or the *Dakhla Ibn Nuqta*, respectively. Both were part of larger family endowments (43/545/894, 21.10.1134; 43/319/536, 27.12.1133; 216/219/333, 11.1.1197).

313. *The present day blocked fountain  
(XII-953) opposite Tahunat al-Sijn  
(s.w. 2004).*



Because so many depended on a daily supply of bread, the efficient production of the commodity was a highly political issue in times of shortages and crises, and these were recurring phenomena during the 17th and 18th century. They often led to urban unrest and violence, as can be learned from the detailed accounts of the contemporary historians Ibn Kannan and al-Budayri. The grain trade was a major area of commercial speculation which implicated not only merchants as such, but also many people belonging to the military, the administration or the religious establishment (Marino 2003: 499–500). In times of dearth and widespread hunger, the importance of the millers' and bakers' guilds (associations) became very evident. Bakeries, but also individuals, depended on the work of mills (*tahun, tahuna*) for their flour. In the inner city, there were only very few mills because of the lack of running water. Centuries ago one of them had given its name to the neighbourhood (*zuqaq*) of Tahunat al-Sijn. It was still working in Ottoman times, when it was part of the large imperial endowment for Mecca and Medina (*al-Haramayn al-Sharifayn*) (167/141/295, 22.11.1175). At the peak of a crisis, the political authorities, via the guilds, sometimes intervened in the distribution of flour and bread by

fixing their prices. In 1743, and on several other occasions later, the governor As'ad pasha al-'Azm, himself known as one of the most successful speculators in grain, had to fix the prices for flour and bread in order to control the growing unrest of the population (Rafeq 1966: 163, 175–178; Marino 2003: 502–503).

Wheat was also the basic element for another product of the food industry that was produced in the neighbourhood. Large workshops were dedicated to the making of starch (*nashan*) which seems to have been a great favourite with Damascene (*nashwati*, Qasimi 1988: II, 482–484). It was a main ingredient of *baluda*, a kind of sweet jelly made of flour, sugar and grape syrup (*dibs*) which was sold, according to Kremer, at every corner of the markets (1854: 3). The process of making starch required a lot of space because wheat had to be soaked in water for long periods of time. These workshops were called *qa'at al-nashâ*, and one was situated just north-east of the Khaydariyya Madrasa, in the area facing the Qal'i mosque (55/31/65, 3.3.1138; 232/393/568, 18.5.1210). The production of starch was a profitable trade. Even Sulayman Pasha 'Azm added a *qa'at al-nasha* to his endowment, located just beside his *khan* (74/136/268, 26.5.1148).

For a long time, a sugar factory had been the immediate neighbour of Bayt al-'Aqqad to the east (8m/133/-, 25.4.1119; 124/123/222, 14.4.1162; 144/79/98, 15.6.1167). This Matbakh al-Sukkar had given its name to the neighbourhood which included also the plots where Sulayman Pasha al-'Azm had built his famous *khan* before 1735. Different kinds of sugar were used, especially for the fabrication of a variety of sweets. The most elaborate confections were sold in the Suq al-Buzuriyya. Sugar was a luxury product and appreciated as a medicine, but it was probably not often used in ordinary kitchens where other sweeteners like honey or grape syrup took its place (*sukkari*, Qasimi 1988: I, 184–185). In the middle of the 18th century, the sugar kitchen of Suq al-Suf was transformed into a dye works (102/58/172, 2.8.1185; 102/60/173, 9.4.1185).

There must have been other shops in the area selling various kinds of food like meat, dairy products, vegetables and fruits, or other staples such as chick peas (*hummus*), lentils (*'ads*), etc. It is more difficult to locate them however, because they did not always require specific equipment and could therefore easily change their function. However, we do know about the existence of several coffee shops in Suq al-Qutn (*qahwa*). Coffee had been introduced into the Ottoman Empire from Yemen in the first half of the 16th century. The habit of coffee drinking was religiously controversial because of its intoxicating effect. Early on, it had even been banned, but in Damascus it became widespread in the second half of the 16th century. The consumption of tobacco (*tutun*) provoked similar reservations till the early 18th century; from then on, smoking or – better – drinking tobacco, became socially accepted and led to the emergence of several related associations (Rafeq 1991: 498).



The most famous cafés were to be found outside the old city along the Barada. Suq al-Qutn probably did not have large coffee-houses as we know them today, but only small shops where coffee was made and sold. One was located near the Qal'i mosque and was called the Qahwakhane Ibn Nuqta. It belonged to the endowments of two prominent families of Suq al-Qutn: the Hajjar and the Ibn Nuqta (93/21/38, 13.11.1150; 249/80/140, 2.12.1215) who will be introduced in the next section. Another coffee-shop in Suq al-Suf was associated with the Ayyubi family (102/60/173, 9.4.1185; 102/58/172, 2.8.1185); it was situated just around the corner from Bayt al-'Aqqad where formerly the Matbakh al-Sukkar had been located. The plot had evidently been subdivided and the remainder of the plot served at that time as a dye work. And last, but not least, there was the coffee-house of Ibn al-Hawraniyya in the southern wall of the Hisham mosque. It seems to have been quite spacious, because it had an *iwan* on its eastern side (248/53/102, 12.4.1216). More than a hundred years later, a coffee-house named after Ibn al-Hawraniyya and belonging to his endowment still existed, but it had been transferred to another location just opposite the small square at the eastern side of the Hisham mosque (1212//207, 11.3.1322).

## 5. Living in the Neighbourhood

*Finally, after a long day of work and managing daily affairs Ibn al-Hawraniyya is coming home. Passing his shops and his coffee-house near the Hisham Mosque, he turns right into the small alley called "the dark one" to enter the splendid inner courtyard (juwwani) of his house. He has just spent a lot of money to build himself the largest house in the neighbourhood and to embellish it. It stretched through the whole plot of the Roman theatre. Many houses were rebuilt after the devastating earthquake of 1173/1759. His neighbours to the east (Bayt al-'Aqqad) had divided and rebuilt their house repeatedly since the early 18th century, for the last time probably in the 1760s, while his neighbour to the south, Ibrahim Bek al-'Azma enlarged the house of his father Isma'il two decades later. When he enters his courtyard, craftsmen are still working on the rooms and buildings in what will become the most magnificently decorated house in the quarter.*

On his way home from Bab al-Jabiya, Ibn al-Hawraniyya had to pass either by the busy Suq Jaqmaq or Suq al-Qutn and Suq al-Suf. But they were only busy during the daytime. Every night, the city closed down. Most parts of the inner city were no longer accessible to strangers, because after dusk the gates (*bawwaba*) that protected neighbourhoods and smaller residential units were closed. The Bawwabat Zuqaq al-Bulghul (Fig. 314), located directly south of Bab al-Jabiya, is one of the very few remaining old *bawwabas* of a quarter. In many quarters and streets, one can frequently observe traces of gates that have meanwhile disappeared

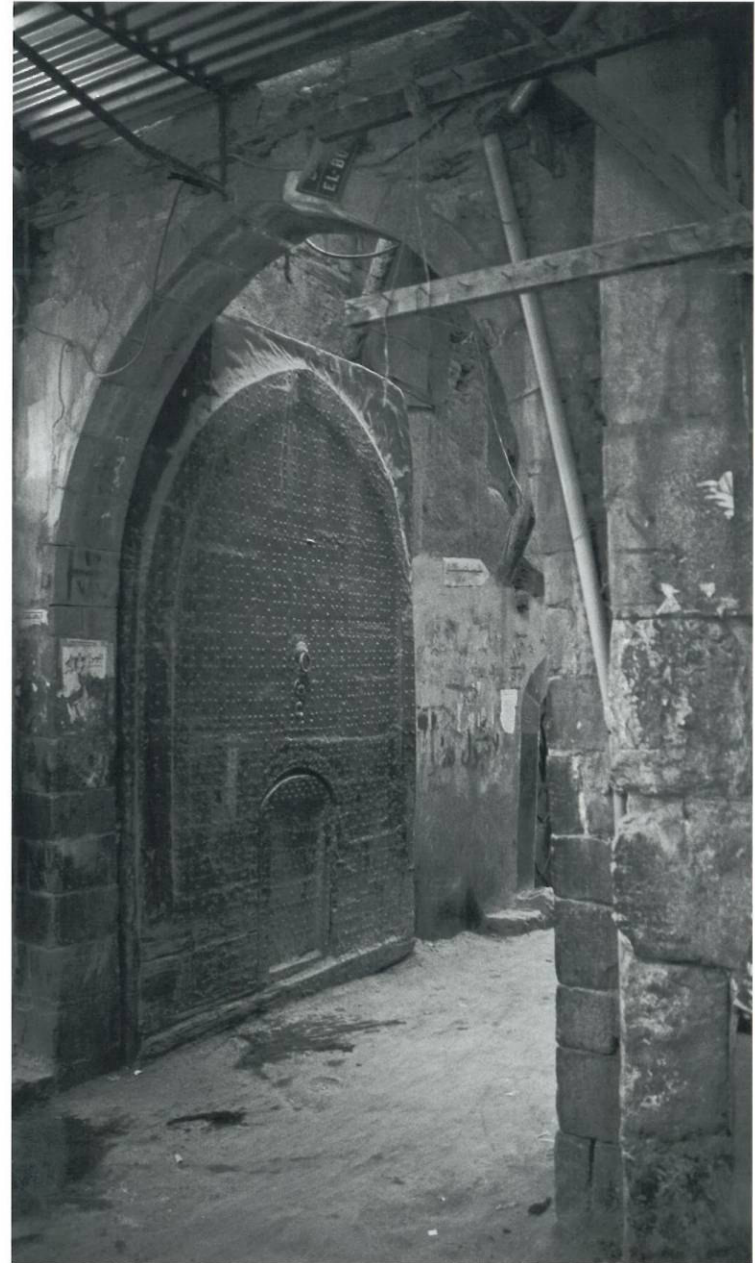
(Fig. 315). Every gate had its guardian who was responsible for the security of the inhabitants and their goods. Kremer reports that in the middle of the 19th century the guardians opened the gates only if one had a lantern (1854: I, 17). They were not supposed to sleep during their service, but there are many stories that indicate that they often did (e.g. Ansari 1991: I, 223–224).

City quarters or neighbourhoods (*mahalla*) and their subdivisions (*zuqaq*, *hara*) were geographical entities as well as zones of solidarity (Miura 1995: 148–150). They often corresponded to the main thoroughfares and were named after them. *Mahallas* were also administrative units with a certain degree of autonomy. Their inhabitants were collectively responsible in matters of taxation and security. Like the craft guilds, city quarters were headed by a *shaykh* supported by a rather informal council which consisted of the most influential persons in the neighbourhood who were often counted among the “notables” (*a‘yan*). They represented the inhabitants (*ahl al-mahalla*) in cases in which the quarter as a whole was concerned. We have already seen an instance of this when the eastern doorway of the Hisham mosque was transformed into a shop because it had become a meeting place of evildoers. Many of these cases concerned issues of “public morality” (Rafeq 1990: 180). They range from slander and evil talk to wine drinking and accusations of prostitution. People who breached the moral code could be brought before the *qadi* and expelled from the neighbourhood.

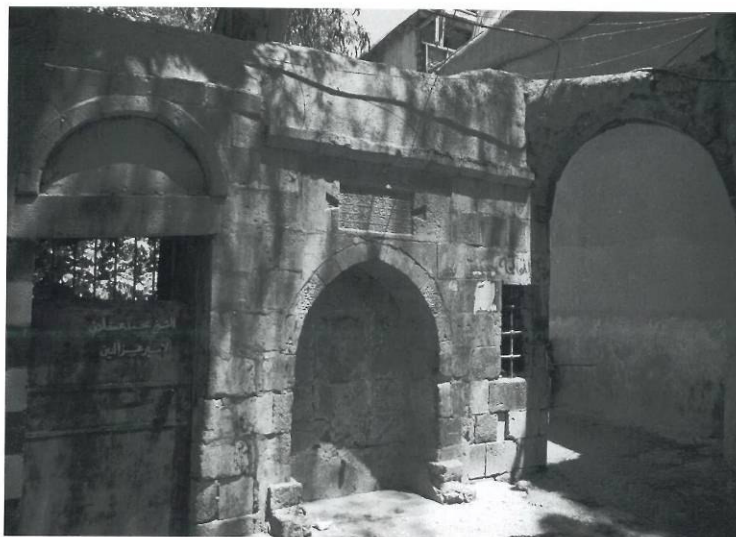
The *ahl al-mahalla* were also collectively responsible for paying blood-money if somebody was killed in their neighbourhood and the murderers had not been found. They could even be forced to pay blood-money if somebody killed himself, if we can believe a story related by the *qadi*, Sharaf al-Din al-Ansari (d. after 1593). On the first day of the year 1000 [!] of the Hijra, a poor man was found dead in his bakery. The day before, he had tried to sell his biscuits (*ka’k*), walking through the market street with a full tray on his head (a familiar scene even today). Although he had worked all day long, he had earned the ridiculous sum of one *‘uthmani*, which did not even cover the daily rent for his workshop. When he was not able to pay that day, the clerk who had come to collect the rent on behalf of the endowment that owned it threatened him with a law suit and prison. This was the usual way to make people pay their debts. A bad day, but it went from bad to worse: when he came home, his wife wanted to have dinner, but the only thing he could offer was his biscuits, which he presented saying: “Tomorrow will be a better day!” His wife got angry and threatened to divorce him because he had neglected to fulfil his duties as a husband. The next morning his neighbours found him dead in his bakery. They then informed the *ahl al-mahalla* who, after an official inquiry, had to pay a fine (Ansari 1991: I, 213).

Forced or not, ties of solidarity undeniably existed within a city quarter. The feeling of a shared urban environment becomes more pronounced if one leaves the

314. *Bawwabāt Zuqāq al-Bulghul*  
(s.w. 1994).







315. Door, fountain and arch of a bawwaba to a dakhla in Midan (s.w. 1994).

main routes and enters the small alleys (*dakhla*). Everyone who ever walked through the old city of Damascus has probably had the experience of standing suddenly in front of a closed gate or in a cul-de-sac (*dakhla ghayr nafidha*). Different grades of accessibility characterise this hierarchical ordering of urban space down to the smallest units (Wirth 2000: 332–333). Even houses (*dar*, *bayt*) were divided into areas of different accessibility (*barrani*, *juwwani*, see below), but they were protected by law from any peeping eyes or other intrusions from outside. Neighbours, for instance, were not allowed to place windows or build roofs in a way that would enable them to look into other dwellings, otherwise they could be expelled from the quarter (Rafeq 1990: 182).

This ordering of space is also used in the court records to identify the location of a building. In the place of an address, a document usually stated *mahalla*, *zuqaq* and *dakhla*, if applicable, and then proceeded to delimit a house against its neighbours. The information we can gain from such entries provides our main access to the history of houses and the people who lived in them. Unfortunately, the information is often not precise enough to allow us to pinpoint the actual location on a modern map and leaves us with a pattern of relationships that change over time and in their spatial distribution. Yet our sample is biased in several aspects. In the collected documents, Suq al-Qutn and Suq al-Suf appear as a mosaic of independent and comparatively large and expensive houses. The sample does not include any location or purchase contracts for units smaller than portions of houses. We

know, however, that it was common to rent only apartments or even rooms. In the poorer areas outside the city walls, shared residential units called *hawsh* were quite numerous, but only few examples were found in the city *intra muros* (Marino 1997: 253–260). None appear in our sample. Thus, the poorer strata of the inhabitants of the quarter escape our scrutiny.

Tracing the history of houses reveals change, but also remarkable continuities. Houses or parts of them were bought and sold, fell into ruin, or were divided according to the inheritance rules of Islamic law. An important means to counter such processes of ongoing division were endowments (*waqf*). Endowing a house meant – at least in theory – to keep it undivided for eternity. A founder could stipulate whatever use he or she wanted to make of their property. Many houses in the neighbourhood belonged to important charitable foundations. The imperial *waqf* for the two sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina (*al-Haramayn al-sharifayn*), for instance, held several houses in the Zuqaq al-Khudayriyya and the area named after the Hammam al-Amir ‘Ali (e.g. 30/243/226 29.5.1121; 47/306/618, 20.8.1136; 240/481/766, 2.12.12). A few houses belonged to the religious institutions of the quarter that we have mentioned above; they were usually located in their vicinity (e.g. Qal’i: 47/280/569, 25.2.1136; Hisham: 49/18/67, 13.1.1135; Jarkas: 47/321/639, 15.4.1136; Khaydariyya: 216/362/537, 29.2.1198).

The majority of endowed houses, however, were part of so-called family endowments (*waqf dhurri*). In Ottoman times, the practice of endowing a house or part of a house for the benefit of one’s descendants was very widespread. This meant that houses could be kept in the hands of one family over long periods of time. This continuity is also reflected in the names of smaller alleys. Whereas the main thoroughfares within the quarter are named after “public” buildings like the Khaydariyya/Khudayriyya, Hammam al-Amir ‘Ali or Tahunat al-Sijn, alleys were called after important families with houses in their vicinity. The blind alley that cut to the south between the Qal’i and the Hisham mosques, for instance, was called after the Hajjar and the Ibn Nuqta families that we have already met as owners of a coffee-house, a bakery and several shops (122/186/420, 30.8.1165).

Different branches of the Hajjar family had established a number of endowments, the assets of which were clustered in the neighbourhood that took over their name. The Hajjar were counted among the descendants of the Prophet (*ash-raf*) and were active in both trade and religious learning (Sayyadi 1993: 83–84). The most prominent member of the family was Hasan b. Ahmad who in his youth had worked in trade, but later on had held several important teaching posts in the first half of the 17th century (Muhibbi 1970: II, 15). In the 18th century, one line was intimately linked with the Manjak-‘Ajlani family who were prominent in the Midan quarter *extra muros* and had also the control over vast endowments dating back to Mamluk times. Another lineage of three generations, of whom we know nothing

but their names and some of their marriage ties, took over what is today known as Bayt al-ʿAqqad (see *Weber and Mortensen* above: p. 266). The house even retained the name Hajjar nearly twenty years after it had been sold out of the family (102/60/173, 9.4.1185; 102/58/172, 2.8.1185).

The Ibn Nuqta family established themselves in the quarter at the end of the 17th century. The eponym of the family, Ahmad Efendi b. Muhammad who referred to himself as al-Khatib al-Sulami, worked as a clerk in the financial administration of Damascus. His name was remembered in the quarter of Suq al-Qutn as the founder of a large endowment to which the already mentioned assets belonged (72/31/72, 27.4.1147, Muradi 1988: I, 108).

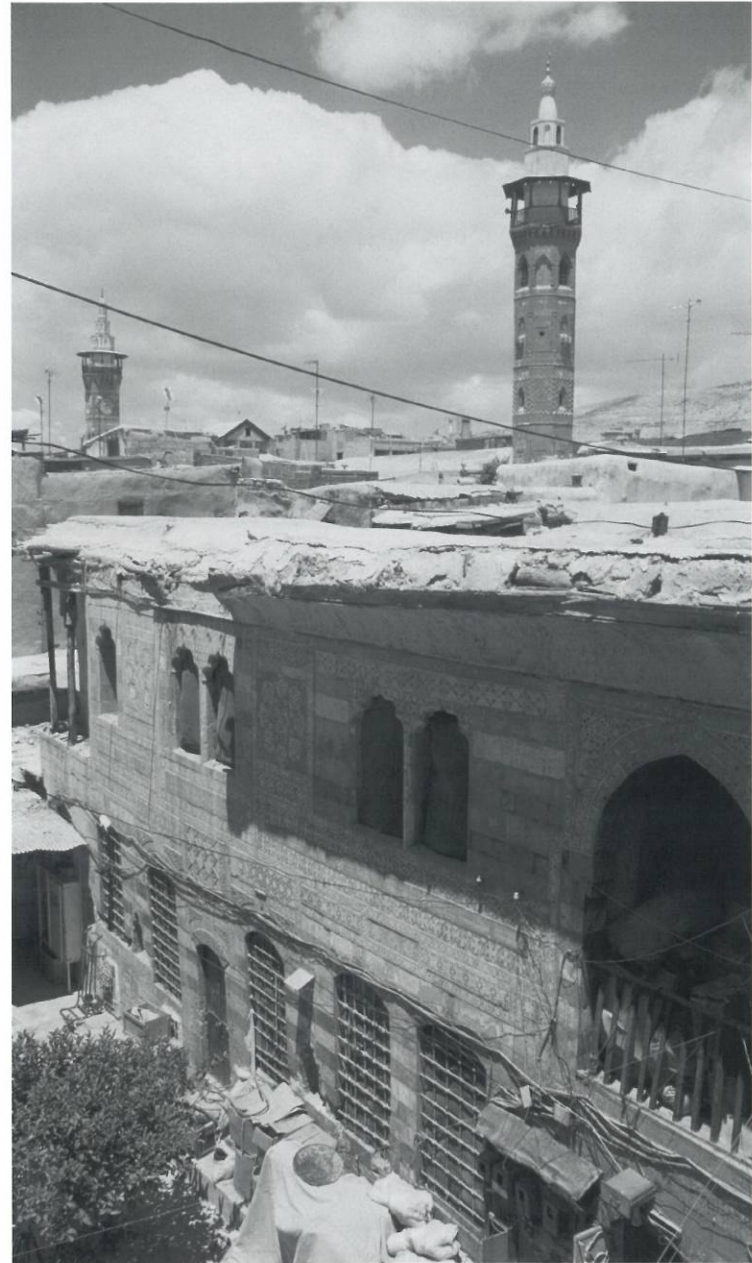
It is more difficult to learn something about the people who lived in the precinct of the ancient Roman theatre. For this neighbourhood, the second half of the 18th century – particularly after the earthquake of 1759 (Budayri 1959: 222–226; Duhman 1982: 194–216) – seems to have been a period of far-reaching changes that remodelled the division of space within its confines. In more than twenty court documents from these decades, we can witness changes in ownership of buildings and the ground they were built on, the selling of so-called ruins (*anqad*) usually tied to the permit to build anew, and new endowments. Around 1800 the neighbourhood presented a new interior, of which Ibn al-Hawraniyya's elaborate house and the Bayt al-ʿAqqad are the best examples (for the changes in the latter, see *Weber and Mortensen* above: p. 267 ff.).

In the meantime, Ibrahim Bek b. Ismaʿil al-ʿAzma had also established himself in the south-east of the precinct in an ever-growing house, the nucleus of which he had probably inherited from his father (221/488/807 17.3.1203; 212/185/322; 9.2.1196; 244/32/53, 27.7.1214; 250/265/447, 18.9.1217). In both his and Ibn al-Hawraniyya's case, the ground their houses was built on belonged to different endowments and they had to pay a modest yearly ground-rent (*hikr*) to each of them. In the future, the Hawraniyyas and the ʿAzmas would become intricately linked by marriage ties. When in 1904 the ownership of the Hawraniyya house was contested, it was a female of the ʿAzma family who claimed that a quarter of the house had belonged to her father's estate and that she only wanted her rightful share. However, the *qadi* confirmed her share of the income of the *waqf*, but refused her claim on the property of the house. It was *waqf* and as such not dividable or inheritable. At that time, another branch of ʿAzmas was still living in the house to the south. Although nobody of this name was left, Ibn al-Hawraniyya's house was still known by his name (1212/207, 13.3.1322).

Bayt al-Hawraniyya provides us with a rare example of a relatively well-documented building-history of a house (Figs. 316–318). A number of court documents and six dated interiors of rooms help us to understand some aspects of its evolution. The house was arranged inside the old plot of the Roman theatre with a large



316. *Bayt al-Hawraniyya, juwwani, northern façade (s.w. 1998).*



*barrani* accessible from Suq al-Suf, connected by a passage under the western *murabba'* (room next to the *iwān*) to a large *juwwani*. On the northern side of the *juwwani* a *qa'a*, the reception hall – and most representative room – was erected, while in the west the *juwwani* led directly into the kitchen courtyard. A passage in the south-western corner gave access to a smaller *barrani*, which could be entered as well from Zuqaq Tahunāt al-Sij̄n. Each courtyard had a separate entrance and was connected to the neighbouring one. It is not easy to establish a clear functional division between the “inner” (*juwwani*) and “outer” (*barrani*) courtyards. The “inner” one seems to have been the main living space with its direct connection to the rooms of housekeeping (kitchen etc.). But since the *qa'a* as the representative reception hall could only be entered via the *juwwani*, visitors would be received in the “inner” part of the house as well. Nevertheless the *barranis* seem to have been the more public sphere of the house and the section where normal guests would be welcomed in dealing with their daily affairs. The northern *barrani* served most probably also as a kind of business area. Below the northern gallery (*riwāq*) one finds eyelets to tie mounts, and the large cellar in the east probably served as a depot. All four courtyards and two of the rooms contain fountains (*bahra*, *birka*, *fiskiyya*).

What seems to be one unit today, had been developed step by step. In 1190/1776 Ibn al-Hawraniyya bought a house which was located somewhere in the western half of what is today the *juwwani*. It consisted of an *iwān* on the west side, a *qa'a*, some other rooms, and a kitchen in the north. And he rented the ground of what soon became the smaller *barrani* (198/336/502, 2.5.1190). In 1201/1787 he rented and bought pieces of land east of his house – some of which were declared as empty or in ruin (*anqad*, *khaliyya min al-bina*; 221/157/251, -.6.1201; 221/157/250, 6.7.1201; 221/179/290, 10.8.1201). At the same time he arranged the water supply coming from the channel in Zuqaq Tahunāt al-Sij̄n (from the *tali'* Bawwabat Zuqaq Tahunāt al-Sij̄n) via another house (221/158/252, 6.7.1201). In the course of only a few months he must have pulled down all structures on the acquired land, only leaving parts of the kitchen of his first house, which are the only remains from the former building(s) and can be dated to the years around 1600. The rest of the *juwwani* and the small *barrani* were completely built anew. Already in 1202/1787–88 – only one year after the contracts for the ground were issued – the painted wooden wall panels (*'ajami*) of the eastern *murabba'* next to the *iwān* of the *juwwani* were finished, followed in 1204/1789–90 by the room north of it. The *qa'a* of the small *barrani* bears two *inscriptions* from 1204/1789–90 and 1206/1791–92. The years around 1790 seem to be the period of major construction work. However, if the court records only indicate the actual start of the work on site (and were not issued later in the process), the construction period itself was fairly short because it took only one or two years to finish – the rich interior decoration included. But this was only one

317. Bayt al-Hawraniyya, juwwani, northern façade. In the background Bayt al-'Aqqad during restoration (s.w. 1998).



section of the house – the building at large was not finished at all. During the next years additional units were added – maybe when new money was available – such as the northern room on the eastern side of the *juwwani* in 1212/1796–97. Ibn al-Hawraniyya started his investments in the house after he had attained the rank of commander of a Janissary unit (*jurbaji*) and the *qa'a* with its splendid and very elaborated external and internal façade – in its richness unique for Damascus – was constructed after he had sold his land outside the town and made his house into a *waqf*. But Ibn al-Hawraniyya maybe never saw his house completely finished since the *qa'a* is dated 1218/1803–04 – two years after the presumed year of his death.

The *qa'a* and the northern *barrani* leave us with some questions as well. The *waqfiyya* of 1216/1801 describes the house located between Suq al-Suf (north) and Zuqaq Tahunat al-Sijn (south), thus in its actual extensions (248/53/102, 12.4.1216). But it mentions only one *juwwani* and one *barrani* instead of two *barranis*. Since the small southern one was already finished by that time, the *waqfiyya* does not mention the northern *barrani*. Unfortunately, we did not find any hint about the acquisition of the northern courtyard in the records nor are there any inscriptions. The ground of the northern courtyard was in Ibn al-Hawraniyya's hands in the year of the *waqfiyya*, but its construction around 1800 – a remaking of a 17th-century structure – was most probably not yet finished like the *qa'a*. Thus Bayt al-Hawraniyya was not planned as a one-shot project but rather a structure that grew



unit by unit over at least 15 years. Only after turning it into a *waqf*, did it become a stable property unit. If Ibn al-Hawraniyya had not endowed it, it would have been divided among his wife and his four daughters after his death.

The house remained untouched. Many structures that we introduced on our walk with Ibn al-Hawraniyya are still standing, and many of the described features are visible (or “smellable”). But a closer look makes it evident that Suq al-Suf and its neighbourhood have undergone great changes in the meantime.

The old city *intra muros* and some quarters outside the city wall, like Qanawat and Suq Saruja were the places where rich people built their residences in the 18th and 19th centuries. Since the second half of the 19th century new quarters have developed outside the old city following a different architectural pattern. It featured a front house with a façade clearly structured by windows and lined up on the new streets at Qassa, Bawwabat al-Salihiyya, Jisr al-Abyad and al-Muhajirin. Accessibility for coaches from the late 19th century and for cars from the 1920s and 1930s onwards, became a main criterion for choosing a place to live. Especially after the First World War, no one was interested in investing in the old houses anymore, and during the 1940s, 50s and 60s more and more Damascene families moved out to build themselves “modern” houses in urban quarters like Abu Rummane, Rawda, Malki and al-Muhajirin. The population of the old city changed profoundly. Migrating from the countryside to the city, many new arrivals settled in the old city, because the abandoned residences offered cheap rents. Taken over by new owners, houses were subdivided into different apartments and the courtyards became a kind of semi-public square.

For most of the urban society, western patterns of housekeeping and organization became the very model of how to live in modern times. Those who could afford it adapted their houses correspondingly. Refrigerators, gas ovens etc. were introduced, and a kitchen like that preserved in the Bayt al-Hawraniyya has most probably not been used since the 1920s or 1930s. The water supply was adapted to new needs, too. A totally new network of supplying pipes was implemented in 1906 and was considerably enlarged in the early French Mandate period (1920–1945). Houses were supposed to have a private bathroom now, and *hammams* were considered as dirty and unhygienic. Many of them closed down and none were built in the new quarters.

Commerce and manufacture remained the main functions of the quarter under discussion. But the late 19th century and the 20th century were periods of profound changes which resulted in a physical transformation of the built environment. Already during the 19th century, *khans* had begun to lose their role as “harbours” of trade. Travelling merchants did not stay anymore in *khans* but used the new hotels that developed around the new city centre at the Marja square. Modern means of transportation guaranteed a more rapid exchange of goods and

318. Bayt al-Hawraniyya and Bayt al-‘Aqqad, plan of the ground floor (Weber 2004).







demands could be much more promptly satisfied when the train was utilized. Thus, the large storage facilities of *khans* were not needed anymore. Transformations of the world economic system profoundly affected the urban textile industry in particular. Various high-quality products were driven out by much cheaper and fashionable mass production from industrialised countries. Mainly low-cost production for the local market survived and manufacturers moved into the empty *khans*, paying only a symbolic rent. They had no interest in conserving the historical structures but had to adapt the buildings to their needs and with their means.

Nevertheless the *suq* remained the commercial centre of the city and it even gained in importance. Manufacturing and trade became more and more the main and unique function of some districts. *Khans*, houses and baths were turned into shops or places of production, and today the *suq* is more of a purely commercial area than it ever was before (the often claimed clear distinction between commercial and residential quarters never existed in Ottoman Damascus). Today thousands and thousands of people do their shopping here. For a long time it was mainly people from the countryside and poorer areas that came to the old city to purchase their needs, but today the *suqs* enjoy an ever-increasing popularity. It is again “chic” to stroll through the *suqs* and to have dinner in one of the newly opened restaurants. The demand for commercial space is high. An increasing commercialization of the residential districts in the direct vicinity of the *suqs* could be observed during recent years. The Zuqaq al-Bulghul, next to Bab al-Jabiya, is a good example: Until the middle of the 1990s a pure residential alley, but now a growing number of small businessmen are renting or buying single rooms of houses, opening them out towards the street and transforming them into shops. Today one may speak of the “Suq” al-Bulghul. This development, on the one hand, has the positive aspect of keeping the old city alive. But the uncontrolled transformation, on the other hand, often clashes with the principles of heritage management. A proper planning of this process and a zoning of streets would be helpful, and restoration architects should be consulted during this transformation.

However, there are much more urgent problems to solve. Many of the important and beautiful dwellings in the area have been turned into storage places, crumbling down because of a lack of maintenance, or their structures have been badly altered by people who had moved in during the 1950s and 1960s. The saving of these houses is an urgent task. Taking the last steps on our walk with Ibn al-Hawraniyya, we can look at his house as a good – but sad – example of this development. The abolition of family *waqfs* in 1949 lifted the injunctions to keep the house as a fixed unit. Different parts of the house were sold and the structure subdivided. Used by the new owners as shops, storage rooms and trading offices, the building became known as the Wikalat al-Ruzz and suffered considerably by the

## Notes

1) These records can be found today in the Centre of Historical Documents in Damascus. In the following they will be quoted as follows: Series *Mahakim Shar'iyya-Dimashq*, (register/ page/case number, *hijri* date). For an overview see Rafeq 1976: 141–146. We should like to thank Akram Ulabi for his generous help and never-ending patience. We thank Besh al-Barry for his patient and effective cooperation designing the maps, Bard al-Hage and especially Wolf-Dieter Lemke for their generous help in providing visual materials and Yasmine Barriane for her critical reading.

2) Endowments (*waqf*) are an institution of Islamic law that is of particular importance for the history of urbanism in the Middle East. Endowing meant to sequester a property (*milk*) for eternity and to reserve its income for a purpose that brought the endower nearer to God, and that he or she could choose quite freely as long as the last beneficiaries were the poor. It is therefore possible to establish a *waqf* for the benefit of oneself, one's family or other selected persons. On the other hand, endowments were the most important instrument to finance nearly all urban institutions, mosques as well as colleges, hospitals, public fountains, the upkeep of streets and canalisations etc. (Meier 2004).

3) This opening, which does not show a proper defense structure, was most probably cut through the city wall with the construction of Suq al-Jadid (today al-Dhira') at the Khan al-Maradiniyya (*waqf* by Bahram Agha 1055/1646). It is not directly connected to the Roman gate, and Ibn 'Asakir in the second half of the 12th century refers only to the one opening at Bab al-Jabiya. See below.

4) For the schools: Ibn Kannan 1947: 38, 40, and for their location: Meinecke 1983: 216, No 15 and 219, No 24. For the bath: Ibn Tulun 1964: II, 122. Similarly the Ghazaliya-Madrasa inside the Umayyad Mosque was still a ruin at the time of al-Nu'aymi (d. 978/1570–71) (al-Nuaymi 1990: I 324).

5) This unpublished endowment document lists the properties of the Umayyad mosque and was copied shortly after 922/1516 by order of Sultan Selim. This copy was recently edited by Sarab Atassi and Bassam al-Jabi. We thank both for letting us study the *waqf* document.

6) These buildings belong to the high number of important constructions during the 15th century. The most important ones are the Qasab/Aqsab mosque, Madrasa al-Jaqmaqiyya, the Tawrizi mosque complex, al-Ward mosque, Buzuri mosque, Madrasa al-Shadhbakliyya, al-Mu'allaq mosque, Khanqah al-Nahhassiyya, Dar al-Qur'an al-Sabuniyya, al-Saqifa mosque and the Haywatiyya mosque.

7) Thus sources inform us about several fires in Suq al-Qutn, one in 902/1496 (al-Busrawi 1985: 199) and another on the 8th of Muharram 917 / 6th April 1511 (Ibn Tulun 1964: I, 352).

lack of interest in its architectural and historical value. However, there are some initiatives being taken to change this. The city of Damascus expropriated the house and finally took it over in 2002. But for parts of the building it was already too late. The precious ceiling of the *qa'a* with its fine wood paintings (*'ajami*) had come down and many of its wallpanels were ruined while it had served as a storage room and later as a shop for clothes. Emergency repairs are planned but a sponsor for a proper restoration has not been found yet. We are convinced that Ibn al-Hawraniyya would share our hope that a project similar to the Bayt al-Aqqad, will be undertaken in the near future to save this pearl of residential architecture.

