

# Western Influence in Ottoman Lands | Syria

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During the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire needed to meet the challenge of an increasingly powerful, prosperous and industrial Europe. Traditional madrasas and mosques were no longer considered sufficient as educational institution for a modern society. Madrasa Jaqmaqiyya, for example, was transformed into a new kind of civil prep school called Maktab Rushdiyya. It taught Ottoman and European history, literary and official writing, and a variety of languages including French, Ottoman and Persian, but neither the Arabic language nor Arab history was on offer. By the early 20th century, these reforms began to backfire as Christian minorities and non-Turkish Muslim majorities called for individuation and free expression rather than unity and obedience. In Damascus, Maktab Anbar became a new educational centre and a focal point for Arab political awakening.



**Name:**  
Madrasa al-Jaqmaqiyya

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 762–822 / AD 1361–1421/2 Mamluk

**Details:**  
Damascus, Syria

**Justification:**  
A Mamluk-period madrasa that was converted into a modern civic school during the late Ottoman period and which is currently the Museum of Epigraphy.

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**Name:**  
Maktab Anbar

**Dynasty:**  
AH 1280s/AD 1870s Late Ottoman

**Details:**  
Damascus, Syria

**Justification:**  
An extravagant marble-carved doorway lintel in the Maktab Anbar courtyard, both the school's curriculum and its visual setting reveal strong European influence.

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**Name:**  
Maktab Anbar

**Dynasty:**  
AH 1280s/AD 1870s Late Ottoman

**Details:**  
Damascus, Syria

**Justification:**  
A painted and gilded ceiling in the courtyard iwan of Maktab Anbar; the building, originally the private residence of a wealthy owner, was transformed into a modern state school in the latter part of the 1280s/1870s.

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**Name:**  
Maktab Anbar

**Dynasty:**  
AH 1280s/AD 1870s Late Ottoman

**Details:**  
Damascus, Syria

**Justification:**  
The courtyard arcade of Maktab Anbar combines traditional features of a Damascene residence with a taste for the carved marble of the Western Baroque.

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