

Piety, Knowledge, and Rulership in Medieval Islam:  
Ibn al-Jawzī's Ameliorative Politics

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**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation examines the political thought of Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1201), a Sunni Muslim religious scholar who flourished as a preacher in twelfth-century Baghdad. During this period, Baghdad was the main arena of conflict between the Abbasid caliphs and the Seljuq sultans as both sides competed to exert control over the city. The militarized rule of the Seljuqs also entailed heavy taxation and harsh punitive measures on the populace. Through an intertextual reading of various genres in the Islamic intellectual tradition, this study reconstructs Ibn al-Jawzī's intellectual response to the shifting political dynamics of the twelfth-century Islamic world.

This dissertation argues that Ibn al-Jawzī adopted an ameliorative approach to politics and emphasized the values of piety and religious knowledge as the hallmarks of ideal Islamic rulership. To ensure that the ruling authorities govern based on piety and the *sharī'a*, Ibn al-Jawzī envisions a greater role for religious scholars in the political sphere. His ideal ruler is one who devotes himself to the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, adheres to Islamic legal and ritualistic precepts, and consults with scholars. These ideals depart from the dominant political discourses of his time that prioritize the ruler's ability to maintain societal order, regardless of his moral and religious qualities. Yet Ibn al-Jawzī's emphasis on piety and knowledge did not steer his political thought towards the radical ideologies upheld by certain fringe groups such as the Khārijites. Instead, he pursues an ameliorative approach to politics that aims at mediatory, moderate, and pragmatic reform. This approach is best represented by the preacher who uses his rhetorical skills to tame the arbitrary

nature of power and guide the ruler towards righteous rule. It also comes across in Ibn al-Jawzī's juristically prudent effort to protest against dismal political situations without overtly sanctioning the act of rebellion against a ruler who rules unjustly and impiously.

A study of Ibn al-Jawzī's political discourses points towards a new reading of the history of Islamic political thought that, rather than focusing solely on Muslim thinkers who promulgated the principle of "might is right," takes into account as well diverse and competing approaches to power. It sheds light on the various creative ways in which Muslim intellectuals utilized writings to effect social and political reform.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the year 530/1136, the Abbasid caliph al-Rāshid (r. 529/1135-530/1136) was deposed by a group of officials, jurists, and judges assembled by the Seljuq sultan Mas'ūd b. Muḥammad (d. 547/1152). This event owed much to al-Rāshid's bold and confrontational stance in opposing the sultan.<sup>1</sup> After entering Baghdad and causing al-Rāshid to flee the city, Mas'ūd ordered several jurists to issue a juridical opinion (*fatwā*) calling for the caliph's deposition. The *fatwā* declared that the caliph's sin (*fisq*), involving confiscation of property, shedding of innocent blood, and wine drinking, had disqualified him from the caliphate.<sup>2</sup> Al-Rāshid was not physically present in Baghdad to witness his own deposition, but fate eventually caught up with him in Isfahan where he was killed in dubious circumstances by a group of Ismā'īlī *bāṭinī* assassins.

Al-Rāshid's deposition hints at the crucial role of Muslim religious scholars, collectively known in Arabic as the '*ulamā*', in medieval Islamic political culture. There can hardly be any doubt that Mas'ūd possessed the coercive and military power to dethrone al-Rāshid. Yet he took pains to ensure that it was the religious scholars, not himself, who passed the final verdict to depose al-Rāshid. Although certain historians intimate that the scholar-jurists were muscled by Mas'ūd into confirming the caliph's sinful acts, it is undeniable that they were an important part of the

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<sup>1</sup> Eric J. Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place: Power, Authority, and the Late Abbasid Caliphate* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), pp. 165-71; Deborah G. Tor, "A Tale of Two Murders: Power Relations between Caliph and Sultan in the Saljuq Era," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 159 (2009), pp. 291-93.

<sup>2</sup> Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-'Imrānī, *al-Inbā' fī ta'rīkh al-khulafā'*, ed. Qāsim al-Sāmarrā'ī (Cairo: Dār al-Āfāq al-'Arabiyya, 1999), p. 222; Abū'l-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa'l-umam*, eds. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā and Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1992), vol. 17, p. 312; 'Izz al-Dīn b. al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī'l-ta'rīkh*, ed. C. J. Tornberg (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1966), vol. 11, pp. 42-43; Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Ta'rīkh al-khulafā'* (Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 2001), p. 479; trans. H. S. Jarrett as *History of the Caliphs* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1881), p. 458.

equation.<sup>3</sup> This saga involving the Seljuq sultan and the Abbasid caliph suggests that deposition was a legal issue that demanded a juridical solution. At a deeper level, the involvement of the scholars in the deposition of al-Rāshid testifies to the intimate connection between political theory and practice. The pronouncements of religious scholars, especially when they concerned the caliph, did carry weight in the political sphere.

This dissertation examines the political thought of Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), one such scholar in sixth/twelfth-century Baghdad, and discusses it in relation to that of other scholars who lived before, during, and after his time. Although scholarly articulations of Islamic political thought has attracted more attention in modern scholarship, Ibn al-Jawzī's contribution to this field has been virtually neglected. This is despite the fact that Ibn al-Jawzī wrote during a period of rapidly shifting dynamics between various power constellations in the Islamic world. Tension between the Abbasid caliphs and the Seljuq Turks reached its peak during the sixth/twelfth century. The Crusades raged on in the Levant, spurring counter-Crusade efforts by Muslim dynasties such as the Zengids and the Ayyubids. Although a dominant force in the Mediterranean in previous centuries, the Fatimid caliphate languished throughout the sixth/twelfth century until its demise in 567/1171. In light of these developments, a study of Ibn al-Jawzī's political ideas offers a window into medieval Muslim intellectual responses to the turbulent politics of their time.

Here, I explore how Ibn al-Jawzī, as a Sunni Muslim religious scholar, tackled issues such as the necessity of rulership, the ideal qualities of rulers, and the permissibility of rebellion against an unjust and sinful ruler. I focus more on the ways in which religious scholars conceived of

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<sup>3</sup> According to the historian Ibn al-ʿImrānī (d. 580/1184), for instance, Masʿūd “gathered the judges and jurists and compelled them to testify against al-Rāshid, accusing him of drinking wine. And by God, no one among them had even seen him drink water. Thus they testified out of fear of being punished [by Masʿūd] and deposed al-Rāshid on the grounds of his sin (*fīsq*).” Ibn al-ʿImrānī, *Inbāʾ*, p. 222; translated in Tor, “A Tale of Two Murders,” p. 292 n. 75.

politics and rulership than on how rulers, such as the Abbasid caliphs and the Seljuq sultans, projected political authority and legitimacy. Since this dissertation studies the political ideas and discourses formulated by scholars such as Ibn al-Jawzī, it also serves as a point of departure to probe the role of scholars and intellectuals in medieval Islamic politics. Overall, this dissertation addresses the following questions: What role did Muslim religious scholars play in the politics and government of sixth/twelfth-century Baghdad? What visions of political order did they uphold amidst intense political insecurity and competing spheres of power? In what ways did they use their writings as means to bring about ideal rulership or to protest against political situations that fell short of their political ideals?

I argue that Ibn al-Jawzī's political thought emphasizes piety (*taqwā* or *wara'*) and religious knowledge (*ilm*) as the twin pillars of ideal Islamic rulership. This emphasis is manifested in his vision of a greater role for religious scholars in the political sphere in order to counsel rulers to rule according to the *sharī'a*. I also show that Ibn al-Jawzī's ideal ruler is one who devotes himself to the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, observes Islamic legal and ritualistic requirements, and surrounds himself with scholars. These ideals depart from the dominant political discourses of his time that stress the ruler's ability to maintain societal order and stability, regardless of whether he was pious or sinful, just or unjust. I additionally argue that Ibn al-Jawzī adopts an ameliorative approach to pious and learned rulership that steers away from the radical politics of certain factions in medieval Islamic world. On one hand, Ibn al-Jawzī's ameliorative politics is best represented by the scholar-preacher who uses his rhetorical skills to navigate unpredictable and harsh political situations to effect political reform; on the other, it comes across in Ibn al-Jawzī's juristic prudence in protesting against sinful and unjust rulership without overtly condoning the act of rebellion.

## The Late Abbasid Caliphate: A Brief Sketch

In 11/632, the lack of consensus over a successor after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad led to confusion and quarrels in the nascent Muslim community.<sup>4</sup> After a long and heated debate, various Arab tribes agreed on the election of the Prophet's father-in-law Abū Bakr (r. 11/632-13/634) as the first caliph (*khalīfa*). Abū Bakr and his successors—'Umar (r. 13/634-23/644), 'Uthmān (r. 23/644-35/656), and 'Alī (r. 35/656-40/661)—are known in the Sunni Muslim tradition as the “Rightly Guided Caliphs” or Rāshidūn caliphs (*al-khulafā' al-rāshidūn*). After the fourth caliph 'Alī was assassinated in 40/661, a man named Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān (r. 41/661-60/680) seized power as the sole caliph of the Islamic world. Shortly after becoming caliph, Mu'āwiya appointed his son Yazīd as successor, an act which marked the inauguration of the Umayyad caliphal dynasty. Umayyad rule collapsed in 132/750 when revolutionaries fighting in the name of the Prophet's uncle al-'Abbās (d. 32/653) overthrew the Umayyads and established the Abbasid caliphate.<sup>5</sup>

The Abbasids, with their seat of power in Baghdad, were the model of a “classic caliphate.”<sup>6</sup> To a greater degree than the Umayyads, they maintained a centralized administration staffed by bureaucrats steeped in Sasanian Persian court culture and sponsored various branches of learning. But as the empire grew, key provinces gradually slipped away as governors began to

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<sup>4</sup> Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 28-35.

<sup>5</sup> For studies on the so-called Abbasid Revolution, see Moshe Sharon, *Black Banners from the East: The Establishment of the 'Abbāsīd State—Incubation of a Revolt* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983); idem, *Black Banners from the East II: Revolt—The Social and Military Aspects of the 'Abbāsīd Revolution* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1990); Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Longman, 2004), pp. 123-28; Jacob Lassner, *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory: An Inquiry into the Art of 'Abbāsīd Apologetics* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1986); R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 104-27.

<sup>6</sup> Hugh Kennedy, *The Caliphate: A Pelican Introduction* (London: Pelican Books, 2016), p. 87.

govern in an autonomous fashion, while the caliphs became titular figureheads subordinated to their Turkish generals. The Abbasids also had to come to terms that they were no longer the only caliphs in the Islamic world. The Ismāʿīlī Fatimids established a caliphate in North Africa in 297/909. In Cordoba, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III, a descendant of an Umayyad prince who escaped Syria after the Abbasid Revolution, proclaimed himself caliph in 316/929. When the Buyids, a Shīʿite dynasty from the Daylam region of Iran, occupied Baghdad in 334/945, the political subordination of the Abbasid caliphate was institutionalized.

After al-Qādir (r. 381/991-422/1031) was installed as caliph in 381/991, caliphal fortunes began to experience an upswing. Al-Qādir appointed judges and successfully declared his son as successor without consulting the Buyid emir.<sup>7</sup> The caliph also intervened in religious debates to assert his religious leadership of the Sunni community. Late in his reign, al-Qādir held a public recitation of the Qādirī Creed (*al-Iʿtiqād al-Qādirī*), in which Sunni traditionalist doctrines were upheld and Shīʿite and Muʿtazilite beliefs denounced. Anyone who subscribed to the Muʿtazilite doctrine of the “createdness” of the Qurʾān was deemed an unbeliever.<sup>8</sup> To counter Ismāʿīlī-Fatimid claims to leadership of the Islamic world based on their descent from the Prophet, al-Qādir also issued a manifesto invalidating the ʿAlid lineage of the Fatimids.<sup>9</sup>

Abbasid history witnessed another turning point in 447/1055 when the caliph al-Qāʾim (r. 422/1031-467/1075) invited the Seljuq Turks led by Ṭughril Beg (d. 455/1063) to quell an uprising

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<sup>7</sup> Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, pp. 65-67.

<sup>8</sup> The earliest extant text of the creed is in Ibn al-Jawzī’s chronicle *al-Muntaẓam fī taʾrīkh al-mulūk waʾl-umam* (vol. 15, pp. 279-82). For discussions of it, see George Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl et la resurgence de l’Islam traditionaliste au XIe siècle (Ve siècle de l’hégire)* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1963), pp. 299-310; Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, pp. 70-72; Kennedy, *Caliphate*, pp. 182-85.

<sup>9</sup> Again, the earliest extant text of the so-called “Baghdad Manifesto” is in Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, pp. 82-83. The manifesto is discussed in Shainool Jiwa, “The Baghdad Manifesto (402/1011): A Re-Examination of Fatimid-Abbasid Rivalry,” in *The Fatimid Caliphate: Diversity of Traditions*, eds. Farhad Daftary and Shainool Jiwa (London: I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2018), pp. 22-79.

by a Buyid official. The coming of the Seljuqs did not spell the end of troubles for the Abbasids. Although the Seljuqs presented themselves as staunch Sunni warriors determined to liberate the Abbasids from the Shī'ite Buyids, relations between the Abbasid caliphs and Seljuq sultans in the ensuing decades were often strained and hostile.<sup>10</sup> Abbasid efforts to regain control of the caliphal administration, appointment of successors, and coinage earned the ire of the politically aggressive Seljuq sultans as they sought to constrain the caliph's autonomy in order to expand their influence in Baghdad. After his arrival in Baghdad, Ṭughril began a series of construction projects in the city, culminating in the Madīnat Ṭughril (City of Ṭughril).<sup>11</sup> He even forced al-Qā'im's hand in arranging for a marriage between himself and the caliph's daughter.<sup>12</sup>

Seljuq encroachments upon Baghdad peaked during the reign of al-Qā'im's successor, al-Muqtadī (r. 467/1075-487/1094).<sup>13</sup> Al-Muqtadī's caliphate overlapped with the reign of the Seljuq sultan Malikshāh (d. 485/1092), the high point of the Great Seljuq empire. Malikshāh's empire owed much to his vizier Nizām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092), whose founding of the Nizāmiyya madrasa in Baghdad had a lasting impact on the city's intellectual culture.<sup>14</sup> Although al-Muqtadī enjoyed the first twelve years of his reign without interference from Malikshāh, the situation began to

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<sup>10</sup> George Makdisi, "Les rapports entre calife et sultân à l'époque saljûqide," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 6/2 (1975), pp. 228-36.

<sup>11</sup> For a brief account of this and other Seljuq building projects in subsequent decades, as well as the Abbasid response to them, see Vanessa Van Renterghem, "Social and Urban Dynamics in Baghdad during the Saldjûq Period (mid. V<sup>th</sup>/XI<sup>th</sup>-mid. VI<sup>th</sup>/XII<sup>th</sup> c.)," in *İslam Medeniyetinde Bağdat (Medînetü's-Selâm) Uluslararası Sempozyum (International Symposium on Baghdad [Madinat al-Salam] in the Islamic Civilization)*, ed. İsmail Safa Üstün (Istanbul: M. Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 2011), pp. 185-88.

<sup>12</sup> George Makdisi, "The Marriage of Ṭughril Beg," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 1/3 (1970), pp. 259-75.

<sup>13</sup> Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, pp. 118-34.

<sup>14</sup> George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), pp. 302-3; idem, "Hanbalite Islam," in *Studies on Islam*, ed. Merlin Swartz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 231-35.

change in 479/1086 when the sultan made his first official visit to Baghdad. During the visit, Malikshāh made efforts to win the support of the populace by visiting mosques and cemeteries. He even increased the *iqṭā*'s of the caliph's companions to gain support from them. In the following years, the Seljuqs and their officials embarked on large-scale construction projects in Baghdad and its surrounding areas. Malikshāh's efforts culminated in his order for al-Muqtadī to leave Baghdad in 485/1092. This did not materialize as the sultan died ten days after issuing the order. With the deaths of Malikshāh and Niẓām al-Mulk, Seljuq power began to unravel.

The ascension of al-Mustarshid (r. 512/1118-529/1135) to the caliphate in 512/1118 marked another step towards the revival of caliphal power and authority. In addition to strategically managing the caliphate's relationship with the Seljuq princes and regional emirs, al-Mustarshid raised his own army, which consisted of various emirs and the populace of Baghdad. The caliph even led armies in person onto the battlefield and scored several victories, securing the defense of Baghdad. Nevertheless, hostilities and a battle with the new Seljuq sultan of Iraq, Mas'ūd b. Muḥammad, contributed to al-Mustarshid's downfall, leading to his alleged murder by Ismā'īlī *Bāṭinī* assassins while being held prisoner in Mas'ūd's camp. Al-Mustarshid's son, al-Rāshid, keen to avenge his father's death, was deposed by Mas'ūd with the help of religious scholars, as outlined above. He was also murdered by a group of *Bāṭinī* assassins, a fate shared with his father.<sup>15</sup>

After al-Rāshid's deposition in 530/1136, Mas'ūd installed al-Muqtafi (r. 530/1136-555/1160) as caliph. In order to ensure that the new caliph would not present further troubles to the Seljuqs, Mas'ūd "took all that was in the caliphal palace of horses, mules, furniture, gold, silver...not leaving anything in the royal stable except for four horses and three mules for drawing

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<sup>15</sup> On the tumultuous politics of al-Mustarshid's and al-Rāshid's reigns, see Tor, "A Tale of Two Murders"; Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, pp. 144-65.

water...[since] the oath of allegiance (*bayʿa*) was pledged to al-Muqtafi on the condition that he have neither horseman or any instrument of travel.”<sup>16</sup> However, al-Muqtafi gradually carved out his own zone of autonomy by asserting his prerogatives in the appointments of viziers and of professors at the Nizamiyya. The caliph also formed and led an army consisting solely of Armenian and Greek soldiers, excluding the Turkish mamluks heavily employed by previous caliphs.<sup>17</sup>

Midway through his reign in 544/1149, al-Muqtafi appointed Ibn Hubayra (d. 560/1165), a Hanbali scholar-turned-court official, to the caliphal vizierate. Thus began an alliance that would not only secure Abbasid independence from the Seljuqs, but also cement the Abbasid caliphate’s status as an active force to be reckoned with in Iraq. Iraqi provinces under Seljuq dominion, including Hilla, Kufa, Wasit, Tikrit, and Basra, fell to the Abbasids due to the combined efforts of al-Muqtafi and Ibn Hubayra. Both caliph and vizier also successfully defended Baghdad twice against Seljuq forces, putting an end to Seljuq encroachments into the city.<sup>18</sup> By the end of al-Muqtafi’s reign, Seljuq power continued on a downward spiral that had begun after the deaths of Malikshah and Nizam al-Mulk. This decline had much to do with the internecine conflicts and fragmentary politics among the Seljuq princes and elites. On top of that, Abbasid success in scoring victories on the battlefield and in defending Baghdad against Seljuq forces kept Baghdad and its surrounding regions increasingly out of reach from the Seljuqs. Sultan Sanjar’s (d. 552/1157) move

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<sup>16</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *Muntazam*, vol. 17, p. 314; translated in Deborah G. Tor, “The Political Revival of the Abbasid Caliphate: Al-Muqtafi and the Seljuqs,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 137/2 (2017), p. 306.

<sup>17</sup> Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, p. 173; Tor, “Al-Muqtafi and the Seljuqs,” pp. 313-14.

<sup>18</sup> On al-Muqtafi, see Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, pp. 169-78; Tor, “Al-Muqtafi and the Seljuqs.” For a study of Ibn Hubayra’s career and his intellectual formation, see Henri Laoust, “Le Hanbalisme sous le califat de Bagdad (241/855-656/1258),” *Revue des études Islamiques*, 27 (1959), pp. 107-10; Herbert Mason, *Two Statesmen of Mediaeval Islam: Vizir Ibn Hubayra and Caliph an-Nasir li-Din Allah* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), pp. 13-66.

of the capital from Isfahan to Marv also meant that Seljuq activities became confined to the eastern parts of Iran, giving the Abbasids greater room to maneuver in Iraq.

Abbasid political and military gains stalled during the reigns of al-Muqtafi's son, al-Mustanjid (r. 555/1160-566/1170), and grandson, al-Mustaḍī' (r. 566/1170-575/1180). Both caliphs were more preoccupied with court intrigues and palace factions than with administration and conquests. Nonetheless, owing completely to the efforts of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (d. 589/1193) in overthrowing the Fatimid caliphate in 567/1171, al-Mustaḍī' would go down in history as the caliph during whose reign the Friday oration (*khuṭba*) in Cairo returned to the Sunni Abbasids.

Caliphal revival peaked during the reign of al-Nāṣir (r. 575/1180-622/1225), who oversaw the demise of the last Seljuq sultan of Persia and Iraq, Ṭughril III, in 590/1194.<sup>19</sup> An energetic and ambitious ruler himself, al-Nāṣir pursued a rigorous foreign policy against regional rivals. The caliph also maintained a tight supervision of communications within Baghdad, which involved forcing the population to use only carrier pigeons bred in the caliphal court.<sup>20</sup> The most far-reaching of al-Nāṣir's religio-political policies was his attempt to reform and unify the chivalric urban associations commonly known as *futuwwa* orders. The caliph carried out an extensive program of reform by reorganizing them along Sufi lines and proclaiming himself as their spiritual head (*qibla*). The new *futuwwa* system acquired a "federal" character when al-Nāṣir began admitting various princes and governors while binding their allegiance to himself. Efforts were

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<sup>19</sup> Another branch of the Seljuq dynasty known as the Seljuqs of Rūm survived in Anatolia until 707/1307. The classic scholarly treatment of al-Nāṣir's caliphate remains Angelika Hartmann, *An-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh (1180-1225): Politik, Religion, Kultur in der spätern 'Abbasidenzeit* (Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1975). See also idem, "al-Nāṣir Li-Dīn Allāh," *EF*; Mason, *Two Statesmen*, pp. 69-132.

<sup>20</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 12, p. 440, where he writes unfavorably of al-Nāṣir. See also Hartmann, *An-Nāṣir*, pp. 96-98; idem, "al-Nāṣir Li-Dīn Allāh"; Mason, *Two Statesmen*, pp. 118-19.

also carried out to appease the Shī'ites of Baghdad via the building of shrines and mosques.<sup>21</sup> Al-Nāṣir's achievements continued under his successors, al-Zāhir (r. 622/1225-623/1226) and al-Mustanṣir (r. 623/1226-640/1242), with the latter founding the famous Mustanṣiriyya madrasa in Baghdad in 631/1234. Unfortunately, the revitalized Abbasid caliphate was no match for the onslaught of the Mongols who destroyed Baghdad and killed the last caliph al-Musta'ṣim (r. 640/1242-656/1258) in 656/1258.

### The Life and Times of Ibn al-Jawzī

Enter Ibn al-Jawzī, who flourished as a scholar and preacher between al-Muqtafi's reign and the early half of al-Nāṣir's reign. What follows is a biographical sketch of key aspects of Ibn al-Jawzī's life that will inform our discussion of his political thought in the following chapters.<sup>22</sup>

Abū'l-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī b. al-Jawzī was born sometime between 508/1114 and 510/1116 to a fairly wealthy family that traced its lineage back to Abū Bakr. After his father's death, he was placed under the care of his paternal aunt who took him to study under Ibn Nāṣir (d.

<sup>21</sup> The Shī'ite historian Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā (d. c. 709/1309) claims that al-Nāṣir subscribed to Twelver-Shī'ite views, while Suyūṭī writes that he harbored Shī'ite sympathies (*yataṣhayya*) and favored the Twelver-Shī'ites. Muḥammad b. Ṭabāṭabā b. al-Ṭiqṭaqā, *al-Fakhrī fī'l-adab al-sultāniyya wa'l-duwal al-Islāmiyya* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1960), p. 322; trans. C. E. J. Whitting as *Al-Fakhrī: On the Systems of Government and the Moslem Dynasties*, reprint (London: Darf Publishers, 1990), p. 309; Suyūṭī, *Ta'rīkh al-khulafā'*, p. 495; *History of the Caliphs*, p. 475.

<sup>22</sup> For modern biographical accounts of Ibn al-Jawzī's life, see Merlin Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa'l-Mudhakkirīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1971), pp. 15-38; idem, *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb Akhbār aṣ-Ṣifāt: A Critical Edition of the Arabic Text with Translation, Introduction and Notes* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 3-32; Henri Laoust, "Ibn al-Djawzī," *EF*; idem, "Le Hanbalisme sous le califat de Bagdad," pp. 112-16; Stefan Leder, *Ibn al-Ğauzī und seine Kompilation wider die Leidenschaft: der Traditionalist in gelehrter Überlieferung und originärer Lehre* (Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1984), pp. 15-42; Ḥasan 'Isā 'Alī al-Ḥakīm, *Ibn al-Jawzī* (Baghdad: Dār al-Shu'ūn al-Thaqāfiyya al-Āmma, 1988). For medieval sources, see Yūsuf b. Qizughlī Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zamān fī ta'rīkh al-a'yān* (Hyderabad-Deccan: Osmania Oriental Publications Bureau, 1952), vol. 8, part 2, pp. 481-503; Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa'l-a'lām*, ed. 'Umar Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1988), vol. 42, pp. 287-304; 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Rajab, *al-Dhayl 'alā'l-ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamid al-Fiḳī (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1952), vol. 1, pp. 399-433; 'Abd al-Ḥayy b. Aḥmad b. al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, eds. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Arnā'ūt and Maḥmūd al-Arnā'ūt (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1986), vol. 6, pp. 537-40.

550/1155), a leading Ḥanbalī *ḥadīth* traditionist in Baghdad. Ibn Nāṣir directed the young Ibn al-Jawzī's elementary education in Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, and introduced him to the Ḥanbalī school of law and theology.<sup>23</sup> Before he turned ten, Ibn al-Jawzī commenced his studies in the art of preaching (*wa'z*) under a traditionist Sufī preacher named Abū'l-Qāsim al-'Alawī (d. 527/1132).

Having completed his elementary education in Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, grammar, and literature in his adolescent years, Ibn al-Jawzī proceeded to advanced education in the religious sciences, which included Islamic law (*fiqh*). This milestone was achieved just around when al-Rāshid was deposed. Ibn al-Jawzī's legal studies began under a Ḥanbalī jurist and theologian named Ibn al-Zāghūnī (d. 527/1132), who also took over the supervision of his training in preaching. After Ibn al-Zāghūnī's death, Ibn al-Jawzī continued his legal education under several other Ḥanbalī jurists, the last of whom was Abū Ḥakīm al-Nahrawānī (d. 556/1160). Ibn al-Jawzī must have impressed Nahrawānī since after the latter's death, Ibn al-Jawzī succeeded him as professor of law in two madrasas. By the end of his life, in addition to producing numerous legal works, Ibn al-Jawzī had already held several distinguished chairs in Islamic law, taught in various madrasas, and even founded his own madrasa in Baghdad.<sup>24</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzī's spiritual quest brought him into contact with asceticism (*zuhd*) and mysticism (*taṣawwuf*); he even considered himself a Sufī at some point in his life.<sup>25</sup> Although Ibn al-Jawzī's involvement with Sufism is not well documented, his ascetic behavior caught the eye

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<sup>23</sup> A short list of Ibn al-Jawzī's teachers in the study of Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* can be obtained in Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa'l-Mudhakkirīn*, pp. 17-20.

<sup>24</sup> Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, p. 13; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, p. 211; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, p. 413.

<sup>25</sup> As shown in George Makdisi, "The Hanbali School and Sufism," *Biblos (Coimbra)*, 46 (1970), pp. 80-83. For Ibn al-Jawzī's engagement with Sufism, see Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa'l-Mudhakkirīn*, pp. 23-25; idem, *Medieval Critique*, pp. 14-16; Āmina Muḥammad Naṣīr, *Abū'l-Faraj b. al-Jawzī, 510-597 A.H.: āra'uhu al-kalāmiyya wa'l-akhlāqiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1987), pp. 193-272.

of his grandson Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256), who wrote that “he was an ascetic with respect to all things of this world” (*zāhid fī l-dunyā*).<sup>26</sup> He shortly became quite disillusioned with the excessive practices of certain Sufi groups, and came to realize that scholarly knowledge (*‘ilm*) superseded all forms of supererogatory acts (*nāfila*) and asceticism.<sup>27</sup> This is clearly expressed in *Talbīs Iblīs* (*The Devil’s Deceit*), where he castigates excessive Sufi piety and abstention from knowledge.<sup>28</sup> However, Ibn al-Jawzī never entirely abandoned the ascetic ideal and continued “to appreciate the values of the simple life grounded in discipline and self-denial.”<sup>29</sup> He also composed several laudatory biographies (*manāqib*) of several early pious ascetics<sup>30</sup> and wrote a reworked abridgement of Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣfahānī’s (d. 430/1038) *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā’*, a biographical dictionary of Sufis, titled *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*. Ibn al-Jawzī’s devotion to asceticism and knowledge is an important factor to keep in mind when reconstructing his model of an ideal ruler.

As one of the most prolific writers of the medieval Islamic period, Ibn al-Jawzī authored works that ran the full gamut of disciplines in the Islamic intellectual tradition, including Qur’ānic studies, *ḥadīth*, law, history, laudatory biographies (*manāqib*), theology, preaching, and medicine.

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<sup>26</sup> Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mir’at al-zamān*, vol. 8, part 2, p. 482.

<sup>27</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Laftat al-kabid ilā naṣīhat al-walad* (Ḥamāh: Dār al-‘Awda, 1971), pp. 17, 22; idem., *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*, eds. Sayyid Ibrāhīm and al-Sayyid Muḥammad Sayyid (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1996), pp. 27-38, 76, 78-79, 145, 172, 267-68; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, p. 403; Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī’s Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa l-Mudhakkirīn*, p. 24.

<sup>28</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, ed. Khayr al-Dīn ‘Alī (Beirut: Dār al-Wa‘ī al-‘Arabī, 1970), pp. 167-80, 360-84. See also idem., *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*, pp. 107-8, 487-90. A previous generation of orientalists, including D. S. Margoliouth, have regarded *Talbīs Iblīs* as evidence of Ibn al-Jawzī’s hostility against Sufism, and thus presented him as a rigidly conservative and fanatic Ḥanablī. But as Makdisi (“Hanbali School and Sufism”) and Swartz (*Ibn al-Jawzī’s Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa l-Mudhakkirīn*, pp. 23-25; *Medieval Critique*, pp. 14-16) have argued, Ibn al-Jawzī was not opposed to Sufism per se, but rather to the extreme and excessive trends he observed in certain Sufi groups of his time, which he believed had contravened the *sharī‘a*.

<sup>29</sup> Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, p. 14.

<sup>30</sup> Including the caliphs ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13/634-23/644) and ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 99/717-101/720), Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab (d. 94/712), al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/777), Rābi‘a al-‘Adawīyya (d. 185/801), Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ (d. 187/803), and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855). See Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mir’at al-zamān*, vol. 8, part 2, pp. 485-86 for a more complete list.

There is no agreement on the total number of works composed,<sup>31</sup> but all scholars agree that his literary output was exceptionally prodigious. Ibn al-Jawzī's writings spread far and wide, reaching various parts of the Islamic world, including Egypt and Syria.<sup>32</sup> They were widely acclaimed by medieval biographers, especially those pertaining to the fields of preaching (*wa'z*), Qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*), *ḥadīth*, as well as history (*ta'rīkh*) and biography (*manāqib*). Yet there were those thought otherwise: Ibn al-Qādisī (d. 632/1235) pointed out that Ibn al-Jawzī's works contained many mistakes simply because he was writing too much, while al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) opined that he spread himself too thinly across the disciplines and did not excel in a particular one.<sup>33</sup>

The discipline in which Ibn al-Jawzī stirred up most controversy was theology (*kalām*).<sup>34</sup> Most members of the Ḥanbalī school took a “non-interventionist” or “non-cognitive” approach in “[refusing] to inquire into the modality (*kayf*) of God's attributes...or to interpret the meaning of the attributes in any way.”<sup>35</sup> This led to the view that the Ḥanbalīs were anthropomorphists who interpreted God's corporeal attributes in a literal manner, a reputation which Ibn al-Jawzī found repugnant and insulting to the legacy of the school's eponymous founder Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibn al-Buzūrī (d. 694/1294) reports more than 340, whereas Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) claims to have come across more than a thousand when he was in Cairo. See Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, pp. 413, 415.

<sup>32</sup> Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī (*Mir'at al-zamān*, vol. 8, part 2, p. 483) reports that he received a catalogue of his grandfather's writings in Syria.

<sup>33</sup> Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, p. 414; Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 42, p. 300.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī's theological views are given detailed treatment in Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, pp. 17-64; Naṣīr, *Abū'l-Faraj b. al-Jawzī*, pp. 93-189. See also al-Ḥakīm, *Ibn al-Jawzī*, pp. 42-43; Jon Hoover, “Ḥanbalī Theology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 632-33; Livnat Holtzman, *Anthropomorphism in Islam: The Challenge of Traditionalism (700-1350)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp. 166-69, 227-28.

<sup>35</sup> Hoover, “Ḥanbalī Theology,” p. 628.

241/855).<sup>36</sup> As a self-made theologian who acquired his knowledge of theology mainly through reading,<sup>37</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī did not write a comprehensive treatise of theology addressing issues like the existence and attributes of God, Muḥammad’s prophethood, the afterlife, and the caliphate. But he did write what Merlin Swartz terms “*kalām*-style works” that “make use of the terminology and methods of argumentation employed by authors of the classical works on *kalām*.”<sup>38</sup> In several such works, Ibn al-Jawzī lashed out at his Ḥanbalī colleagues for subscribing to anthropomorphism and suggested a dual approach to interpret God’s attributes—a non-interventionist approach for the masses and metaphorical interpretation (*ta’wīl*) for scholars.

Inasmuch as Ibn al-Jawzī aimed to salvage the reputation of the Ḥanbalī school in the Sunni scholarly community, his theological ideas increasingly alienated him from his peers. This strained relationship was exacerbated by Ibn al-Jawzī’s often harsh and polemical tone towards his colleagues and the revered predecessors of the Ḥanbalī school.<sup>39</sup> As we shall see in Chapter Five, the cursing of the second Umayyad caliph Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiyā (r. 60/680-64/683), an issue that contained political and theological undertones, constituted yet another fault line between Ibn al-

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<sup>36</sup> This was despite the fact that Ibn Ḥanbal “had no qualms about speaking of God in creaturely or corporeal terms, so long as there were Qur’ān or *Ḥadīth* texts in support.” Ibid. For an overview of the debates concerning anthropomorphism, see Livnat Holtzman, “Anthropomorphism,” *EF*.

<sup>37</sup> And so was the case for other fields of knowledge as well (Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, p. 403). Ibn al-Qādisī (Ibid., p. 414; Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, p. 46 n. 3) notes that Ibn al-Jawzī “was not skilled in unravelling the theologians’ (*mutakallimūn*) complex arguments” and, as such, relied a lot on the writings of Abū’l-Wafā’ b. ‘Aqīl (d. 513/1119). Ibn ‘Aqīl was a fifth/eleventh-century Ḥanbalī jurist and theologian who was accused of subscribing to Mu‘tazilite doctrines and other ideas deemed heterodox by the Ḥanbalī school. He was eventually forced to recant his beliefs in public. Although Ibn al-Jawzī had never met Ibn ‘Aqīl personally, he was deeply acquainted with his writings and had a high regard for him. According to Merlin Swartz, both thinkers saw eye to eye on the primacy of reason and the use of metaphorical interpretation (*ta’wīl*) in understanding God. For a comprehensive study of Ibn ‘Aqīl, see Makdisi, *Ibn ‘Aqīl et la resurgence de l’Islam traditionaliste*. Regarding Ibn ‘Aqīl’s influence on Ibn al-Jawzī, see Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, pp. 18-23.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that Ibn al-Qādisī claimed to have found no words of praise in Ibn al-Jawzī’s writings, only allegations against and criticisms of other scholars. See Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, p. 414.

Jawzī and his Ḥanbalī peers. In Ibn al-Jawzī's theological writings, the general Ḥanbalī prohibition of Yazīd's cursing was usually lumped together with anthropomorphism as views which he accused his Ḥanbalī colleagues of having insinuated into the true teachings of Ibn Ḥanbal.

While Ibn al-Jawzī's scholarly learning is widely acknowledged, it was his eloquence in preaching that earned him public fame. He had already begun preaching before huge crowds even before he turned twelve. He inherited the five pulpits left vacant after Ibn al-Zāghūnī's death in 527/1132, and also trained students in the art of preaching. His grandson Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī's quick rise to prominence as one of the most prominent preachers in Ayyubid Damascus is a testament to his far-reaching influence in this field.<sup>40</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī also authored numerous important works on preaching, including *Kitāb al-Quṣṣās wa'l-mudhakkirīn* (*The Book of Storytellers and Preachers*), a work aimed at "introducing young preachers and students in this field to the theory and art of preaching (*qaṣaṣ-wa'z*)" and "putting the science of *qaṣaṣ-wa'z* on a firmer moral and intellectual foundation than it had hitherto known."<sup>41</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzī came into the public spotlight after Ibn Hubayra became vizier in 544/1149. He was brought into the service of the caliphal court as part of an effort to foster a closer alliance between the Abbasid caliphate and traditionalist Ḥanbalī preachers who could rally the masses to their cause. Ibn Hubayra gave Ibn al-Jawzī permission to preach in the Mosque of al-Manṣūr

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<sup>40</sup> On Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī's preaching career in Damascus, see Daniella Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria: Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons under the Zangids and Ayyūbids (1146-1260)* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 128-39. On his grandfather's influence on him, see Tryggve Kronholm, "Akhbaranā jaddī: Preliminary Observations on the Dependence of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī in His *Kitāb al-Jālis aṣ-ṣāliḥ wa-l-anīs an-nāṣiḥ* on the Works of His Grandfather," *Orientalia Suecana*, 33-35 (1984-1986), pp. 241-56; idem, "Dedication and Devotion: The Introduction to the *Kitāb al-Jālis aṣ-ṣāliḥ wa-l-anīs an-nāṣiḥ*, Ascribed to Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256)," *Orientalia Suecana*, 38-39 (1989-1990), pp. 81-91.

<sup>41</sup> Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣās wa'l-Mudhakkirīn*, p. 68. Similar argument in Angelika Hartmann, "Les ambivalences d'un sermonnaire Ḥanbalite: Ibn al-Ġawzī, sa carrière et son ouvrage autographe, le *Kitāb al-Ḥawātīm*," *Annales Islamologiques*, 22 (1986), p. 90; idem, "La predication Islamique au moyen âge: Ibn al-Ġawzī et ses sermons (fin du 6<sup>e</sup>/12<sup>e</sup> siècle)," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, 5/6 (1987-1988), p. 345.

(*Jāmi' al-Manṣūr*), a stronghold of the Ḥanbalīs, and to hold public sermons in his palace every Friday.<sup>42</sup> Both men also shared a close friendship, and Ibn Hubayra became an important source for Ibn al-Jawzī when he wrote about the caliphal court and administration.<sup>43</sup>

Ibn Hubayra's recruitment of Ibn al-Jawzī was consistent with the pattern of preachers serving as mediums through which the Abbasid caliphs and the Seljuq sultans exerted influence over Baghdad's social and intellectual landscape. The Ḥanbalīs generally supported the caliphate, while the Seljuqs occasionally sent preachers with Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite theological leanings to Baghdad, some of whom would preach against the Ḥanbalīs and other traditionalists. These fiery sermons often led to riots that prompted intervention by the ruling authorities.<sup>44</sup> In this respect, Ibn Hubayra's recruiting of influential traditionalist preachers like Ibn al-Jawzī served a dual purpose in establishing traditionalist Sunni doctrines as orthodoxy and in countering Seljuq political influence in Baghdad.<sup>45</sup>

By Ibn al-Jawzī's time, the Ḥanbalīs were already a majority among the population of Baghdad, an exceptional situation considering that the rest of the medieval Islamic Middle East was dominated by the Ash'arite and Māturīdite schools of theology.<sup>46</sup> An inclusive school itself,

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<sup>42</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, p. 168; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, pp. 402-3; Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa'l-Mudhakkirīn*, p. 28.

<sup>43</sup> Leder, *Ibn al-Ğauzī*, pp. 31-33; Ḥasan 'Īsā 'Alī al-Ḥakīm, *Kitāb al-Muntaẓam li-Ibn al-Jawzī: dirāsa fī manhajihī wa-mawāridihī wa-aḥammīyatihi* (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1985), pp. 528-29.

<sup>44</sup> For examples, see George Makdisi, "Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 24/1 (1961), p. 47; Jonathan P. Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), pp. 58-59.

<sup>45</sup> Leder, *Ibn al-Ğauzī*, pp. 28-31; Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, p. 41.

<sup>46</sup> Wilferd Madelung, "The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks," in *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), p. 110 n. 3; Khaled El-Rouayheb, "From Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 1566) to Khayr al-Dīn al-Ālūsī (d. 1899): Changing Views of Ibn Taymiyya among Non-Ḥanbalī Sunni Scholars," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, eds. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 295-98.

Ḥanbalism was also a “genuinely popular movement” that attracted a large number of “part-time scholars” along with followers from the unlearned classes.<sup>47</sup> The level of political favor gained from the caliphal court ebbed and flowed with individual caliphs,<sup>48</sup> and Ibn al-Jawzī’s career reflected this. The proclamation of the Qādirī Creed attests to Ḥanbalī ascendancy under al-Qādir and al-Qā’im,<sup>49</sup> but caliphal support petered off thereafter, only regaining momentum after Ibn Hubayra acceded to the vizierate.

Ibn al-Jawzī’s preaching career flourished during Ibn Hubayra’s tenure as vizier. When al-Mustanjid became caliph, Ibn Hubayra retained his post and Ibn al-Jawzī received robes of honor from the caliph. Ibn al-Jawzī was also given authorization to preach at the Palace Mosque (*Jāmi‘ al-Qaṣr*) where he denounced heretical innovations (*bida‘*) and defended the Sunna.<sup>50</sup> Ḥanbalī fortunes declined briefly again following the death of Ibn Hubayra in 560/1165, halfway through the reign of al-Mustanjid. The caliph also banned preachers from holding sermons in Baghdad at the end of the same year.<sup>51</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī lived in fear and kept a low key during this period.<sup>52</sup>

Political support for the Ḥanbalī school revived and reached its peak during the reign of al-Mustanjid’s son, al-Mustaḍīr. Despite his political and military passivity, al-Mustaḍīr actively patronized Ḥanbalī religious institutions and scholars. Immediately after he received the oaths of

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<sup>47</sup> Daphna Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition: The Sunni ‘Ulama’ of Eleventh-Century Baghdad* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 140-43.

<sup>48</sup> Madelung, “The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks,” p. 137 n. 70.

<sup>49</sup> George Makdisi, “The Sunni Revival,” in *Islamic Civilization 950-1150*, ed. D. S. Richards (London: William Clowes & Sons Limited, 1973), pp. 155-168.

<sup>50</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, p. 141; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, p. 403.

<sup>51</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, p. 172.

<sup>52</sup> Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī’s Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa’l-Mudhakkirīn*, p. 29.

allegiance, al-Mustaḍī' lifted his father's ban on preaching activities.<sup>53</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī's career also acquired additional political significance after he entered the caliph's service. He regularly preached in the traditionalist quarters of Baghdad with crowds often ranging, according to some accounts, between one and two hundred thousand<sup>54</sup> and with the caliph occasionally in attendance.<sup>55</sup> Equally popular were the sermons he held every Thursday in the courtyard of the new Rayḥānīyīn caliphal palace, which were attended by the caliph, members of his court, and the public.<sup>56</sup> Perhaps the only other preacher who could rival Ibn al-Jawzī's fame in preaching was Abū'l-Khayr al-Qazwīnī (d. 590/1194), an Iranian Shāfi'ī-Ash'arite scholar and professor at the Niẓāmiyya.<sup>57</sup> Like Ibn al-Jawzī, he was also given permission to preach in the courtyard of the caliphal palace, and for a period of time both men would preach there on alternate weeks.<sup>58</sup> In 571/1176, al-Mustaḍī' gave Ibn al-Jawzī inquisitorial powers to curb the growth of extreme Shī'ism (*rafḍ*). Ibn al-Jawzī declared atop a pulpit that as part of the caliph's drive to extinguish heretical innovations (*bida'*) he now possessed the authority to raid the houses of those reported to have insulted the Companions of the Prophet (*ṣaḥāba*), humiliate them in public, and even commit them to prison.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, p. 191.

<sup>54</sup> Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa'l-Mudhakkirīn*, p. 31; Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zamān*, vol. 8, part 2, p. 482; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, p. 411. Dhahabī (*Ta'rīkh*, vol. 42, p. 300), however, is skeptical of these numbers.

<sup>55</sup> Various accounts in Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, pp. 190-254. The largest of these sermons was attended by an estimated—in his own words—three hundred thousand people (*ibid.*, p. 203). See also Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, pp. 404, 408; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt*, vol. 6, p. 538.

<sup>56</sup> Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa'l-Mudhakkirīn*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>57</sup> For a brief biography, see Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zamān*, vol. 8, part 2, pp. 443-44.

<sup>58</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, pp. 148, 200, 204, 220, though Ibn al-Jawzī claims that the caliph preferred his sermons to those of al-Qazwīnī.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222; Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa'l-Mudhakkirīn*, pp. 32-33.

Ibn al-Jawzī's close relationship with the caliph greatly benefited the Ḥanbalī school.<sup>60</sup> In addition to endowing Ḥanbalī religious institutions, al-Mustaḍī' ordered for Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's tomb to be redecorated in 574/1178 with an inscription that referred to him as "The Crown of the Sunna" (*tāj al-sunna*). Benches (*dikak*; singular: *dikka*) were also erected in the Palace Mosque (*Jāmi' al-Qaṣr*) for Ḥanbalī scholars, including Ibn al-Jawzī and the jurist Ibn al-Munā (d. 583/1187), an effort which many claimed was unprecedented for the Ḥanbalīs.<sup>61</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzī's fame and Abbasid caliphal support for the Ḥanbalīs remained largely uninterrupted during the first half of al-Nāṣir's caliphate. Under another Ḥanbalī vizier Ibn Yūnus (d. 593/1197), the Ḥanbalīs of Baghdad enjoyed immense support from al-Nāṣir's mother Zumurrud Khātūn (d. 599/1203).<sup>62</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī continued to preach at the caliphal palace and drew large crowds, as witnessed by the Spanish traveler Ibn Jubayr (d. 614/1217) in 580/1184.<sup>63</sup> He also received recognition for his literary abilities from al-Nāṣir and wrote works praising the caliph.<sup>64</sup>

Along with public fame came several intense rivalries with his Ḥanbalī peers, most notably 'Abd al-Mughīth al-Ḥarbī (d. 583/1187)<sup>65</sup> and the family of the Ḥanbalī Sufi 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī/Jīlī (d. 561/1166). These rivalries were mainly due to theological differences, although personal animosities and competing political interests were at stake too. After the arrest of Ibn Yūnus in 590/1194, Rukn al-Dīn 'Abd al-Salām, the grandson of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlī, teamed up

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<sup>60</sup> In his own words (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, p. 249), people remarked that it was largely due to him that the Ḥanbalī school now enjoyed such an elevated status among the ruling authorities.

<sup>61</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, pp. 214, 248-49.

<sup>62</sup> For the vizierate of Ibn Yūnus, see Mason, *Two Statesmen*, pp. 92-97; Hartmann, *An-Nāṣir*, pp. 180-84.

<sup>63</sup> Muḥammad b. Jubayr, *Rihla*, trans. Roland Broadhurst as *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, reprint (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2013), pp. 229-33; Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa'l-Mudhakkirīn*, p. 34.

<sup>64</sup> Hartmann, *An-Nāṣir*, pp. 187-88; idem, "Les ambivalences," p. 66.

<sup>65</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī's rivalry with 'Abd al-Mughīth will be discussed in Chapter Five.

with the newly appointed Shī'ite vizier Ibn al-Qaṣṣāb to arrest Ibn al-Jawzī and exile him to Wasit. He was allowed to return to Baghdad five years later, owing to the efforts of Zumurrud Khātūn, and died there in 597/1201.<sup>66</sup>

The overall picture that emerges from this brief account of Ibn al-Jawzī's life is that of a scholar who maintained a high-profile public life in sixth/twelfth-century Baghdad. His proximity to the circles of power also exemplifies the dynamic, but no less tense, alliance between scholars and rulers during a period in which the scholarly class was less hierarchicalized and bureaucratized, as it increasingly came to be under the Mamluks and the Ottomans.

### Revisiting the History of Islamic Political Thought

While previous scholarship on Islamic history has often dismissed the late Abbasid caliphate as an impotent institution that has outlived its heyday, recent decades have witnessed an increasing number of works that offer a more accurate account of the Abbasids between the fifth/eleventh and early seventh/thirteenth centuries. Several studies have shown that far from being ineffectual rulers, the later Abbasid caliphs were in fact active political players who relied on a mix of administrative, military, and diplomatic acumen to hold their own in the struggle for hegemony.<sup>67</sup> Although political and military history is not lacking in studies seeking a more accurate picture of the late Abbasids, the study of Islamic political thought has not caught up.

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<sup>66</sup> For details leading up to Ibn al-Jawzī's exile as well as the contributing factors, see Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, pp. 23-27, 33-45.

<sup>67</sup> Makdisi, *Ibn Aqil et la résurgence de l'Islam traditionaliste*; idem, "Les rapports entre calife et sultan"; Mason, *Two Statesmen*; Hartmann, *An-Nāṣir*; Tor, "Tale of Two Murders"; idem, "Al-Muqtafi and the Seljuqs"; Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*; Patrick Scharfe, "Portrayals of the Later Abbasid Caliphate: A Reappraisal of the Buyid-Era Caliphs in Arabic Chronicles, 334/945-447/1055," *Journal of Abbasid Studies*, 1/2 (2014), pp. 108-142; Hayrettin Yücesoy, "Caliph and Caliphate up to 923/1517," *EP*.

Over the past century, the study of medieval Sunni Muslim political thought has developed what comes close to a standard corpus of thinkers: al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) and al-Baghdadī (d. 429/1037) during the cusp of the Sunni Revival; al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058) as representing the fullest expression of the theory of the caliphate; al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) and al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) during the Seljuq period; and post-Abbasid thinkers including Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), Ibn Jamā‘a (d. 733/1333), and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406). Among them, Māwardī has garnered most scholarly attention ever since the publication of his famous treatise, *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya* (*The Ordinances of Government*), in 1853. While previous scholars in the nineteenth century studied the work as a means to understand Islamic government, H. A. R. Gibb examined it in relation to political developments in fifth/eleventh-century Baghdad and viewed it as a blueprint and legal apologia for the Abbasid caliph to challenge Buyid dominance.<sup>68</sup> Gibb’s thesis is extended in later works by E. I. J. Rosenthal, Ann K. S. Lambton, Antony Black, and Patricia Crone.<sup>69</sup> Rosenthal’s *Political Thought in Medieval Islam* elucidates the political ideas associated with the Sunni writers listed above, but adds to his discussion the Muslim philosophers (*falāsifa*), including al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), and Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198). Lambton expands the list by including thinkers from among the Khārijites, Zaydīs, Mu‘tazilites, as well as

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<sup>68</sup> This view is further nuanced in Eric J. Hanne, “Abbasid Politics and the Classical Theory of the Caliphate,” in *Writers and Rulers: Perspectives on Their Relationship from Abbasid to Safavid Times*, eds. Beatrice Gruendler and Louise Marlow (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004), pp. 49-71. For a brief overview of scholarship on Māwardī’s *Aḥkām*, see Donald Little, “A New Look at *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya*,” *The Muslim World*, 64/1 (1974), pp. 1-3. For Gibb’s studies, see H. A. R. Gibb, “Al-Mawardi’s Theory of the Caliphate,” reprinted in *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, eds. Stanford J. Shaw and William R. Polk (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 151-65; idem, “Some Considerations on the Sunni Theory of the Caliphate,” reprinted in *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, pp. 141-50; idem, “Constitutional Organization,” in *Law in the Middle East, Vol. 1: Origin and Development of Islamic Law*, eds. Majid Khadduri and Herbert J. Liebesny (Washington, DC: The Middle East Institute, 1955), pp. 3-27.

<sup>69</sup> E. I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam: An Introductory Outline* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958); Ann K. S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam: An Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Theory: The Jurists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

the Twelver and Ismāʿīlī Shīʿites. Both Black and Crone enhance previous studies substantially in terms of historical and geographical range.

Yet just a cursory look at the foregoing list of Sunni thinkers reveals a significant gap in thinkers between Ghazālī in the early sixth/twelfth century and Ibn Taymiyya in the early eighth/fourteenth century. This lacuna can be attributed to the widely accepted thesis, beginning with Gibb, arguing that Islamic political thought had been in decline since Māwardī, with subsequent thinkers either having nothing new to offer or gradually sacrificing the ideals of the *sharīʿa* in order to accommodate legal ordinances to their contemporary political circumstances. According to Gibb, “in his zeal to find some arguments by which at least the show of legality could be maintained, al-Mawardi did not realize that he had undermined the foundations of all law,” and hence ended up “divorcing the Imamate from the Sharia and the complete negation of the rule of law.”<sup>70</sup> Māwardī’s theory of the caliphate or imamate,<sup>71</sup> as expressed in his *Aḥkām*, represented “the first step in the process by which Sunnī thinkers were gradually forced by political circumstances to remove the imamate altogether from the jurisdiction of the *sharīʿa*.”<sup>72</sup> This thesis has also been adopted by Rosenthal, Lambton, and Crone, as Frank Vogel points out:

This is a gripping tale because during the same period the caliphate goes through various life and death throes, is finally terminated, and then begins a half-life in other bodies. All these accounts share in degrees a single approach to the succession of Muslim theories about the caliphate. They

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<sup>70</sup> Gibb, “Al-Mawardi’s Theory of the Caliphate,” p. 164; idem, “Some Considerations,” p. 143.

<sup>71</sup> The term used to denote the office or function of the *imām*, which referred to a person or learned man whose example is followed, or who is imitated. A prayer leader constitutes such an example, and so did religious scholars. See Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968), part 1, p. 91. However, in Sunni political discourse, the supreme *imām* is the one whose “imitators were not merely a small group of people at prayer or a major school founded by a great scholar, but rather the entire community of believers, the entire *umma*,” and thus by extension, “the one whose rule extends over all Muslims.” See Crone, *Political Thought*, p. 17; Ovamir Anjum, “Political Metaphors and Concepts in the Writings of an Eleventh-Century Sunni Scholar, Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī (419-478/1028-1085),” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 26/1-2 (2016), pp. 11-12. *Imāma* and *imām* were the Shīʿite terms for the supreme leader and his office, but eventually also became the preferred term in Sunni theological and legal writings when referring to the caliphate and caliph. The terms *khalīfa* and *khilāfa* were more widely used in historical and literary works. Unless stated otherwise, I will use these terms interchangeably.

<sup>72</sup> Little, “A New Look,” p. 3.

construe it as a series of capitulations, a progressive bending or abandonment of legal principles to justify existing circumstances, which in the end weakened *sharī'ah*'s claim on rulers and acquiesced in, or even aided and abetted, a sorry history of arbitrary and semi-secular absolutism.<sup>73</sup>

A similar narrative is observed in a recent monograph by Ovamir Anjum on Ibn Taymiyya's political thought. Probing into why Sunni religious scholars prior to Ibn Taymiyya compromised their political and religious ideals to maintain the legal fiction of the caliphate, Anjum cites their "theological cynicism toward reason in postrevelational life on the one hand and elitism on the other" as the prime cause that militated against a "Community-centered vision of Islam."<sup>74</sup>

These grand narratives are not completely off the mark. The rapid rise and fall of Muslim dynasties from the late Abbasid period to the rise of the Ottomans, along with the societal upheavals that ensued, did impress upon religious scholars the notion that order and stability should carry the day. Many of them, as will be shown in Chapter One, sought compromise by writing in favor of rulers who could maintain order but lacked the prerequisites of justice and piety. Many argued against resisting rulers who acted impiously and ruled unjustly in order to avoid a potential anarchy that would result from rebellion. Nevertheless, focusing on such ideas only yields a partial picture of Islamic political thought and overlooks other modes of political thinking that did not necessarily compromise the ideals of piety, knowledge, and justice for the sake of preserving order. The resulting history of Islamic political thought is therefore one whereby the principle of "might is right" represented the order of the day.

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<sup>73</sup> Frank E. Vogel, "Tracing Nuance in Māwardī's *al-Aḥkām al-sultāniyyah*: Implicit Framing of Constitutional Authority," in *Islamic Law in Theory: Studies on Jurisprudence in Honor of Bernard Weiss*, eds. Kevin Reinhart and Robert Gleave (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 331. Aziz al-Azmeh voices similar concerns in his review of Black and Crone: "Islamic Political Thought: Current Historiography and the Frame of History," in *Times of History: Universal Topics in Islamic Historiography* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), pp. 200-1.

<sup>74</sup> Ovamir Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Several works in recent years have sought to rectify the above narrative by focusing on the post-Abbasid centuries as a period of refinement and innovative readjustment for Islamic political thinking. According to Anjum, the role of Ibn Taymiyya is crucial in that regard since he revolutionized Islamic political thought by “politicizing the Community” and by redefining the caliphate into a rational political institution to facilitate the life of the Community.<sup>75</sup> Mona Hassan’s monograph, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History*, demonstrates that the loss of the Abbasid and Ottoman caliphates in 1258 and 1924, respectively, far from marking the end of the Muslim quest for legitimate leadership, in fact invigorated it and produced creative intellectual and institutional solutions.<sup>76</sup> After the fall of Baghdad in 656/1258, Mamluk-era Sunni scholars continued to build on and refine the political discourses of their predecessors in response to new socio-political realities.<sup>77</sup> Writing on the period between 656/1258 and the age of Süleymān (r. 926/1520-974/1566) in the tenth/sixteenth century, Hüseyin Yılmaz elucidates the various ways in which Ottoman political writers employed Sufi vocabulary and concepts to redefine the caliphate as a moral paradigm for the Ottoman sultans. Framing the Ottoman caliphate in Sufi terms allowed thinkers to impose moral requirements on the sultan so that he ruled in manifestation of God’s attributes such as mercy, clemency, and munificence.<sup>78</sup>

The foregoing studies bring to light the sustained rigor of Islamic political discourse over the centuries, even after the extinction of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. But in spite of these scholarly advances, the late Abbasid period, especially during the sixth/twelfth century, is still

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., pp. 228-65.

<sup>76</sup> Mona Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 98-141.

<sup>78</sup> Hüseyin Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

perceived as a monolithic period of accommodationist jurist-theologians who forewent the Islamic ideals of rulership to maintain social order. It appears as if Islamic political thought had to wait till the post-Abbasid period to undergo a thorough and rigorous intellectual revolution. The neglect of late Abbasid political thought goes hand in hand with the neglect of thinkers, such as Ibn al-Jawzī, whose ideas did not quite conform to the accommodationist strain of political thinking characteristic of the jurist-theologians. In that respect, this dissertation adds to the above studies by studying an overlooked time period and thinker.

Despite his wide renown, Ibn al-Jawzī remains an underexplored figure. His legacy took a negative turn after the translation of his heresiographical work *Talbīs Iblīs* (*The Devil's Deceit*) by D. S. Margoliouth. The passages selected for translation present an overall portrait of a conservative, fanatical, and puritanical Ḥanbalī scholar.<sup>79</sup> Although Merlin Swartz and George Makdisi have done much to rehabilitate Ibn al-Jawzī's image as a complex but nonetheless controversial thinker, scholarly literature on him has been scarce. Most works focus on his preaching, his theological views, and his massive chronicle *al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa'l-umam* (*The Well-Ordered History of Kings and Nations*).<sup>80</sup> He has fared better in Arabic

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<sup>79</sup> Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>80</sup> Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣās wa'l-Mudhakkirīn*; idem, *Medieval Critique*; idem, "Arabic Rhetoric and the Art of the Homily in Medieval Islam," in *Religion and Culture in Medieval Islam*, eds. Richard Hovannisian and Georges Sabagh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 36-65; idem, "The Rules of the Popular Preaching in Twelfth-Century Baghdad, According to Ibn al-Jawzī," in *Prédication et propagande au Moyen Âge: Islam, Byzance, Occident*, eds. George Makdisi, Dominique Sourdél, and Janine Sourdél-Thomine (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), pp. 223-39; Hartmann, "Les ambivalences"; idem, "La predication"; Joseph de Somogyi, "The 'Kitāb al-muntaẓam' of Ibn al-Jawzī," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1 (1932), pp. 49-76; idem, "Ibn al-Jawzī's School of Historiography," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 6/1/3 (1956), pp. 207-14; Julia Bray, "A Caliph and his Public Relations," *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 7/2 (2004), pp. 159-70. Other more focused studies on specific works by Ibn al-Jawzī include Daniel Reig, "Le Ṣayd al-Ḥāṭir d'Abū l-Farağ Ibn al-Ġawzī," *Studia Islamica*, 34 (1971), pp. 89-123; Stefan Leder, *Ibn al-Ġawzī*; Jane Dammen McAuliffe, "Ibn al-Jawzī's Exegetical Propaedeutic: Introduction and Translation," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 8 (1988), pp. 101-13; Devin J. Stewart, "Of Rhetoric, Reason, and Revelation: Ibn al-Jawzī's Maqāmāt as an Anti-Parody and Sefer Taḥkemoni of Yehudah al-Ḥarīzī," *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 19/2 (2016), pp. 206-33.

scholarship, best exemplified by the works of Āmina Muḥammad Naṣīr, Ḥasan al-Ḥakīm, and Nājiya Ibrāhīm.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, his huge written corpus remains virtually untapped in scholarship on Islamic political thought.<sup>82</sup>

Since Ibn al-Jawzī was close to the ruling circles of his time, benefited from political patronage, and witnessed first-hand the power tussles between the Seljuqs and the Abbasids, an inquiry of his political thought offers us a window into how religious scholars living in sixth/twelfth-century Baghdad responded to the turbulent politics of their time. After all, as the political theorist Sheldon Wolin has argued, groundbreaking political theorizing often takes place during times of crisis.<sup>83</sup> The sixth/twelfth century was such a time for Baghdad. Not only did Seljuq rule bear harshly on the populace, organized crime by urban gangs (‘*ayyārūn*), harassment by Turkish tribesmen, and religious strife also contributed to a general sense of chaos.<sup>84</sup> The conflicts between the Abbasids and the Seljuqs pushed intellectuals to reassess the hierarchy of power in the Islamic imagination.

### Approaching Ibn al-Jawzī’s Political Thought

A vexing question in the study of Islamic political thought is where exactly to look for it. Ovamir Anjum writes that “where one looks for political thought in a given thought-world depends

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<sup>81</sup> To mention a few: Nājiya Ibrāhīm, *Ibn al-Jawzī wa kitābuhu al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī’ fī khilāfat al-Mustaḍī’: dirāsa tārikhiyya taḥlīliyya* (Amman: Dār Zahrān li’l-Nashr wa’l-Tawzī’, 2002); Naṣīr, Naṣīr, *Abū’l-Faraj b. al-Jawzī*; al-Ḥakīm, *Kitāb al-Muntaẓam*.

<sup>82</sup> Arab scholars have scored better on this front, though the scope and number of works published are small. See, for instance, Kāmil Muḥammad Muḥammad ‘Uwayḍa, *‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Jawzī: shaykh al-zuhhād wa-imām al-wu’āz* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1993), pp. 123-73; Ibrāhīm, *Ibn al-Jawzī wa kitābuhu al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī’*; Aḥmad al-Sirrī, “Ibn al-Jawzī wa’l-wa’z al-siyāsī,” *Kān al-tārikhiyya*, 7/25 (2014), pp. 181-197.

<sup>83</sup> Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*, expanded edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 9.

<sup>84</sup> Christian Lange, *Justice, Punishment and the Medieval Muslim Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 7-10; Vanessa Van Renterghem, *Les élites bagdadiennes au temps des Seldjoukides: étude d’histoire sociale* (Beirut: Presses de l’IFPO, 2015), vol. 1, pp. 445-81.

on its fundamental commitments.” In the case of Islamic history, jurists carried the most authority since “they not only spoke in the name of God, but often claimed the exclusive authority to do so.” Therefore, “theology and religious law are the natural places to look for direct or indirect debates about political concepts.” Works of theology (*kalām*) and law (*fiqh*) constituted the main platforms upon which jurists dealt with “ideas that animated actual struggles over power, authority and legitimacy.”<sup>85</sup> The Sunni discourse on the caliphate, usually constituting a chapter in theological treatises, is a case in point.

Looking for Ibn al-Jawzī’s political thought while proceeding with these assumptions presents us with two interrelated problems. First, as noted above, Ibn al-Jawzī did not write a comprehensive theological compendium in which debates associated with the constitutional arrangements of rulership, as embodied by the caliphate, were addressed in detail; the works of theology he composed were short, focused studies on specific theological questions. His fullest theological work, *Kitāb Akhbār al-ṣifāt*, is a condemnation of his Ḥanbalī colleagues’ anthropomorphic leanings, but does not cover prophecy and the caliphate and other topics usually found in comprehensive theological treatises. As for the field of law, Swartz has noted that despite having enjoyed a successful teaching career in law and having authored numerous legal writings, “[Ibn al-Jawzī’s] legal works never attracted the attention his writings in other fields did, especially those having to do with *ḥadīth*, *wa‘z* and *uṣūl ad-dīn*.”<sup>86</sup>

The second issue has to do with Ibn al-Jawzī’s reservations about the scholastic nature of classical *kalām* and *fiqh* writings. According to Swartz, his outlook was one “that understood the importance of eloquence, of simplicity, clarity, and vigor in human discourse, and one that was on

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<sup>85</sup> Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, pp. 16-20.

<sup>86</sup> Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, pp. 13-14.

the whole impatient with the obfuscations of the scholastic theologians.”<sup>87</sup> As he writes in *Ṣayd al-khāṭir* (*The Hunt for Fleeting Ideas*), “most jurists (*fuqahā*) [focus] on the sciences of disputation (*‘ulūm al-jadal*) and whatever [that allows them] to beat their opponents.” However, “the study of law and the hearing of *ḥadīth* are not enough for the goodness of the heart unless they are mixed with heart-softening narrations (*raqā’iq*) and insights into the biographies of pious predecessors (*siyar al-salaf al-ṣāliḥīn*).” Serious scholars should “combine their study of law and *ḥadīth* with the reading of the biographies of pious predecessors and ascetics of this world in order to soften the heart.”<sup>88</sup> In short, while scholastic disputations only go so far as to establish abstract proofs concerning points of law and theology, stories and biographies of pious Muslims show such points in action and are therefore more effective in steering people towards piety and righteousness.

The foregoing issues have pushed me to venture into other genres in the Islamic intellectual tradition in search of Ibn al-Jawzī’s political ideas. The works encountered throughout this journey fall into various genres, including advice literature for rulers, preaching and homily, heresiography, polemics, as well as history and biography among others. Through an intertextual reading of these works, I show how Ibn al-Jawzī’s preaching instructions; his ruminations about the relationship between rulers and religious scholars; his biographical accounts of caliphs and early Companions of the Prophet; as well as debates concerning an Umayyad caliph who lived five centuries prior to his time can be connected and synthesized to reconstruct his political thought.

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<sup>87</sup> However, Swartz also acknowledges that “Ibn al-Jawzī’s position on *kalām* is a complicated matter,” since “[o]n the one hand he condemns its use by preachers; on the other he himself is known to have made considerable use of it in his preaching.” Swartz, “Arabic Rhetoric and the Art of the Homily in Medieval Islam,” pp. 40, 56-57 n. 28.

<sup>88</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*, pp. 228-29. Translated and brought to my attention in Abdessamad Belhaj, “Legal Knowledge by Application: Sufism as Islamic Legal Hermeneutics in the 10<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” *Studia Islamica*, 108 (2013), pp. 103-5.

In light of the above discussion, one of this dissertation's contributions to the study of Islamic political thought is its illustration of what Sunni Muslim political discourse would look like when written from the perspective of a religious scholar whose life revolved around preaching and homiletics. Most writings surveyed in modern studies of Islamic political thought are those written by medieval jurists and theologians such as Māwardī, Juwaynī, Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyya. What results is a jurist/theologian-centric history of Islamic political thought.<sup>89</sup> The sources examined in this dissertation draw attention to a form of Islamic political discourse that employs a different discursive strategy from those employed by the jurists and theologians. They reveal a sophisticated political thinker who displayed the marks of a preacher close to the circles of power. They demonstrate Ibn al-Jawzī's sensitivity towards the crucial yet taut relationship between rulers and religious scholars at court. His firm grasp of Arabic rhetoric geared his political discourse towards the exhortative and homiletic nature of the preacher rather than towards the scholastic and argumentative bent of the theologian or jurist. True to his word, the works surveyed are indeed replete with stories of early pious ascetics and rulers used to illustrate his arguments. These considerations should not give one the impression that Ibn al-Jawzī was unaware of the juristic and theological treatments of rulership. In fact, Chapter Five will show that not only was he well acquainted with the juristic-theological discourse, he was also able to synthesize them in a juristically prudent fashion to hold his own in a debate on rebellion.

I now come to my approach in analyzing Ibn al-Jawzī's writings. In addition to reading the texts for ideas and statements related to rulership, I also situate them in their socio-political and intellectual contexts to bring Ibn al-Jawzī's position in the history of Islamic political thought into

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<sup>89</sup> This can be attributed to a wider problem in studies on Islam and Islamic history, which tend to identify normative Islam with Islamic law as formulated by the jurists. For a diagnosis of this problem, see Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 117-29,

sharper relief. This approach takes into account what Gabrielle Spiegel calls the “social logic of the text.” For Spiegel, texts are not only “material embodiments of situated language use”; they also possess material realities that are embedded in specific social and political networks in a given time and place. “[T]exts both mirror and generate social realities” by functioning “as products of the social world of authors and as textual agents at work in that world, with which they entertain often complex and contestatory relations.”<sup>90</sup> This is relevant for Ibn al-Jawzī’s works in accounting for their various functions in sixth/twelfth-century Baghdad. For instance, his *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍīʾ fī khilāfat al-Mustaḍīʾ* (*The Radiant Light Illuminating the Caliphate of al-Mustaḍīʾ*) reflects al-Mustaḍīʾ’s military passivity and his patronage of religious institutions. But by virtue of it being a mirror for princes dedicated to al-Mustaḍīʾ, it also aims at political reform by counseling the caliph to uphold piety and religious knowledge. An analysis of Ibn al-Jawzī’s political discourses must take into account how his writings seek to legitimize existing political structures as well as their pedagogical functions in reforming society and politics.

Taking into consideration Ibn al-Jawzī’s status as a leading scholar of sixth/twelfth-century Baghdad, his political discourses also have to be situated in a context of conversation, debate, and polemic with other scholars. Here I take my cue from Quentin Skinner’s methodological framework in mapping Ibn al-Jawzī’s ideological context, which encompasses inherited political traditions from past thinkers as well as ideas prevalent in his own time and place.<sup>91</sup> According to Skinner, by situating political writers in their ideological contexts, “[w]e can begin to see not

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<sup>90</sup> Gabrielle Spiegel, “History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text,” reprinted in *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 24-28, quotes on pp. 24-25.

<sup>91</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Volume I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 116-118; idem, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume 1: The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. x-xv.

merely what arguments they were presenting, but also what questions they were addressing and trying to answer, and how far they were accepting and endorsing, or questioning and repudiating, or perhaps even polemically ignoring, the prevailing assumptions and conventions of political debate.”<sup>92</sup> Skinner’s approach allows us to better appreciate Ibn al-Jawzī’s interventions in the political debates and discourses of his time. For Ibn al-Jawzī, such a context includes the religious scholars of the four Sunni schools of law, especially the Ḥanbalīs, and Shī‘ite scholars from the Twelver and Ismā‘īlī traditions. An examination of Ibn al-Jawzī’s political thought is thus not only an exercise in a close reading of his writings, but also one of understanding the various discourses he was building on and arguing against.

### Dissertation Outline

In this dissertation I make two interdependent arguments. First, I argue that Ibn al-Jawzī’s political thought displays a marked emphasis on piety and religious knowledge as the hallmarks of ideal Islamic rule. Rooted in his personal ascetism and insistence that knowledge of the *sharī‘a* remains paramount in guiding one towards God, Ibn al-Jawzī’s emphasis on piety and knowledge in governance departs from the dominant political discourses of his time that stress the ruler’s ability to maintain order and secure obedience regardless of his morals. My second argument demonstrates how Ibn al-Jawzī pursued his political ideals. I argue that he does so in an ameliorative manner. By ameliorative I mean an approach that is educative, mediatory, moderate, and pragmatic in relation to power and authority. This approach strikes the middle ground between the radical and revolutionary political doctrines of the Khārijites on one hand and the accommodationist approach of the Sunni jurists and theologians on the other. In Ibn al-Jawzī’s

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. xiii.

context, ameliorative politics is best represented by the scholar-preacher who uses the various rhetorical tools at his disposal to guide the ruler towards pious and just rule. It is also manifested in his effort to protest against sinful and unjust rulership while adhering to the main contours of mainstream Ḥanbalī political thought. Such an approach allows Ibn al-Jawzī to pursue his program of political reform and navigate the unpredictable and turbulent politics of sixth/twelfth-century Baghdad. These arguments are illustrated through the five chapters that follow. Given the polymathic range of Ibn al-Jawzī's scholarly expertise, in addition to stressing his role as a scholar-preacher who maintained close relations with the caliphal court, these chapters also focus on his various scholarly roles—as an admonisher, panegyrist, historian and biographer, as well as jurist and theologian—to highlight his versatile and eclectic approach to political thought.

The first chapter of this dissertation surveys Sunni political discourses before, during, and after Ibn al-Jawzī's time by focusing on topics such as the necessity of installing a ruler; the duties of a ruler; the methods of appointing a ruler; the ruler's qualifications; and the legality of rebellion against an impious and unjust ruler. In my survey, I sketch the normative political concepts and vocabulary that were used to discuss these subjects in the sixth/twelfth century in order to discern Ibn al-Jawzī's ideological context. Thinkers living after Ibn al-Jawzī's time are also taken into account to provide a more *longue-durée* contextualization of his ideas. My discussion in this chapter stresses change over time in showing how socio-political changes in the Islamic world affected Sunni scholarly treatments of the above issues.

Chapter Two examines Ibn al-Jawzī's views on how religious scholars should deal with rulers. In contrast to other Sunni scholars who view political power as inherently corrupt and thus advise against associating with rulers, Ibn al-Jawzī's ameliorative approach to politics advocates for a crucial role for scholars in government. Righteous scholars well versed in the art of preaching

have a duty to admonish rulers to rule with justice and piety, especially since a pious and just ruler guarantees the well-being and salvation of the Muslim community. But rather than stopping at a relationship of collaboration between rulers and scholars, Ibn al-Jawzī in fact envisions scholars assuming authority over the rulers in certain matters of government. This chapter also examines Ibn al-Jawzī's proposed strategies for preachers who have the sincere intention to reform rulers by way of preaching and admonition.

Chapter Three offers a glimpse of how Ibn al-Jawzī's preaching strategies are put into practice. It focuses on his attempt to blend panegyric with admonition in a mirror for princes dedicated to his patron-caliph al-Mustaḍī'. In the first chapter of the work, Ibn al-Jawzī legitimizes the caliphate of al-Mustaḍī' by constructing a sacred genealogy for the caliph. This genealogy stretches through Muḥammad and Abraham to Adam and consists of several ancestors of the Abbasid dynasty who were renowned for their piety and religious knowledge. This chapter argues that even in Ibn al-Jawzī's words of praise, reminders for rulers to remain pious while surrounding themselves with scholars equipped with religious knowledge are ubiquitous.

Chapter Four considers Ibn al-Jawzī's role as a historian and biographer by examining his biographies of the Abbasid caliphs as a form of political discourse. Although Ibn al-Jawzī selected reports and anecdotes that depict the Abbasids as good rulers endowed with the royal virtues of justice, awe, and generosity, there is a heavier emphasis on reports that showcase the caliphs' devotion to the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, their close relationship with scholars, as well as their public and private acts of piety. These biographies illustrate Ibn al-Jawzī's model of pious and learned rulership, and provide a sketch of what piety and knowledge in rule meant to him.

As much as Ibn al-Jawzī emphasized piety and knowledge as the ideal qualities of a ruler, he still had to confront the legality of rebelling against an unjust and sinful ruler. Chapter Five

examines this issue with regard to his treatment of the rebellion of the Prophet's grandson al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī (d. 61/680) against Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya (r. 60/680-64/683). I argue that despite an aversion towards rebellion in the Ḥanbalī political tradition, Ibn al-Jawzī adopted a juristically prudent approach that allowed him to justify Ḥusayn's actions against Yazīd without overtly condoning the act of rebellion. He achieved this by synthesizing various elements of historiography, the Sunni discourse on the caliphate, and the laws of rebellion, shifting the debate from one on the permissibility of rebellion to one on the question of legitimacy.

Overall, this study makes several contributions. Firstly, it points us towards a new reading of the history of Islamic political thought that does not forefront the principle of "might is right," but is instead sensitive towards competing approaches to power and rulership. An analysis of Ibn al-Jawzī's political thought speaks to the diverse ways in which Muslim religious scholars used texts to respond to and make sense of the socio-political circumstances specific to their times. This dissertation shows that in light of political instability and societal disorder, legitimization of the powers that be need not always be the only solution to which intellectuals had recourse. The case of Ibn al-Jawzī suggests that intellectuals could still find space within society and ideas to articulate creative solutions in response to socio-political circumstances that fell short of the ideal.

Secondly, Ibn al-Jawzī's ameliorative approach to politics draws attention to the role of rhetoric in the cultivation of righteous rule in pre-modern Muslim societies. The close link between rhetoric and politics has long been a subject of inquiry. Plato and Aristotle, for instance, recognized the powerful force of rhetoric in politics.<sup>93</sup> Yet they also saw its appeal to the emotions as a

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<sup>93</sup> Robert C. Rowland and Deanna F. Womack, "Aristotle's View of Ethical Rhetoric," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 15/1-2 (1985), pp. 13-31; George Klosko, "Persuasion and Moral Reform in Plato and Aristotle," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 47/184 (1) (1993), pp. 31-49; James Martin, *Politics and Rhetoric: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 18-26; Jamie Dow, *Passions and Persuasion in Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

potential for widespread harm if misused. One can hardly miss rhetoric's contribution to humanist political discourses during the Renaissance when perusing scholarly literature on the history of Western political thought.<sup>94</sup> This dissertation contributes to these conversations by bringing in a medieval Muslim perspective. In the case of Ibn al-Jawzī, rhetoric is primarily channeled through the act of preaching, which is informed by a tactical awareness of human emotions.<sup>95</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī's political discourses demonstrate that the preacher's skill in persuading and moving audiences by appealing to their common sentiments can be harnessed towards promoting righteous rule. In that respect, this dissertation opens up avenues for more cross-cultural perspectives on the relationship between rhetoric and politics in pre-modern societies.

Thirdly, a study of Ibn al-Jawzī's political thought sheds light on intellectual life during the peak of Abbasid revival in medieval Baghdad. His career as a preacher overlapped with four caliphs—al-Muqtafi, al-Mustanjid, al-Mustaḍī', and al-Nāṣir—who adopted very different political and religious policies, ranging from the expansionist rule of al-Nāṣir to the largely palace-bound position of al-Mustaḍī', and from al-Mustaḍī''s immense support for the Ḥanbalīs to al-Nāṣir's ecumenical support for the Sunnis and Shī'ites in realizing his aim of a unified Muslim community. Ibn al-Jawzī's political discourses bear imprints of these approaches. For instance, his mirror for princes dedicated to al-Mustaḍī' reflects the caliph's military passivity and encourages the caliph's continued patronage of scholars. His treatise on the cursing of Yazīd reveals a canny approach to the question of rebellion so as to not get on the bad side of al-Nāṣir, who maintained

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<sup>94</sup> See, for instance, Skinner, *Foundations*, Vol. 1, pp. 23-48, and more recently idem, *From Humanism to Hobbes: Studies in Rhetoric and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>95</sup> The works of Jonathan Berkey and Linda Jones are welcome first steps in investigating preaching and oratory in relation to political power: Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority*; Linda G. Jones, *The Power of Oratory in the Medieval Muslim World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); idem, "A Case of Medieval Political 'Flip-Flopping'?: Shifting Allegiances in the Sermons of al-Qadi 'Iyad," in *Preaching and Political Society: From Late Antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages*, ed. Franco Morenzoni (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 65-110.

a close watch over religious scholars in Baghdad. In short, an account of Ibn al-Jawzī's political thought speaks very pertinently to the reigns of these four caliphs.

Lastly, this present study provides additional perspectives on the divisions within the Ḥanbalī school of law and theology in Baghdad. I have briefly outlined how Ibn al-Jawzī's theology became a matter of controversy between him and his Ḥanbalī peers. Many of them deemed his theological thought to be tainted by Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite influences, as Swartz has shown.<sup>96</sup> Swartz calls Ibn al-Jawzī a "Ḥanbalī eclectic" for this reason, but claims that he "was a thoroughgoing Ḥanbalī both in his juridical views and in his political philosophy."<sup>97</sup> According to Aziz al-Azmeh, however, despite Ḥanbalism's reputation for rigorist and fundamentalist tendencies, it "has also striven systematically to adopt a minimalist view of dogmatics and of ritual observance, and has been historically open to the exercise of wide latitude in matters of legal and political theory and practice that exclude and go beyond the bounds of the strict and minimalist rigorism of its dogmatics."<sup>98</sup> Chapter Five gleans the extent to which this latitude can be stretched with respect to the question of rebellion, and contends that Ibn al-Jawzī was not as thoroughgoing a Ḥanbalī in his political thought as Swartz had assumed. His treatment of Ḥusayn's rebellion against Yazīd contains traces of ideas more recognizable among the Mu'tazilites and certain Shāfi'ī groups. Even if one were to downplay such influences, the fact that such a debate took place at all goes to show that the Ḥanbalīs of Ibn al-Jawzī's time were far from unanimous in their conceptions of politics and rulership.

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<sup>96</sup> Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, pp. 38-45, 62-64.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>98</sup> Aziz al-Azmeh, "Orthodoxy and Ḥanbalite Fideism," *Arabica*, 35/3 (1988), p. 255.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Politics and Rulership in Medieval Islam: Key Concepts, Tropes, and Vocabulary

Medieval Sunni Muslim political thought drew from a wide array of sources. These diverse literary and textual genealogies include the Greek philosophical tradition; Persian ethics and statecraft; scattered statements on taxation and war; *ḥadīths*; Qur'ānic verses; juridical opinions from different Sunni schools of law (*madhāhib*; singular: *madhhab*); historical precedents from the formative years of Islam; as well as polemics against rival schools of thought such as the Shī'ites and the Mu'tazilites.<sup>1</sup> The objective of this chapter is to map out key political concepts and vocabulary from the fourth/tenth to the eighth/fourteenth century, covering the period before, during, and after Ibn al-Jawzī's time. This survey will allow us to better situate Ibn al-Jawzī's political thought in the broader history of Islamic political thought.

Islamic political ideas can be located in a variety of genres, including theological (*kalām*) and legal (*fiqh*) treatises, advice literature, philosophical writings incorporating Greek wisdom, historical chronicles and biographies, and so on. But the most detailed treatment of the question of rulership and its place within divine law (*sharī'a*) took place in works of *kalām* and, to some extent, *fiqh*.<sup>2</sup> The bulk of discussion in these writings focused on the institution of the caliphate (*khilāfa*) and the figure of the caliph (*khalīfa*). This is understandable since the caliphate was the first form of universal rulership known to Muslims after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad and also the prime cause for the early schisms that divide the Muslim community up to this day. This, however,

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the different genealogies and strands of political thought in Islam, see Aziz al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship: Power and Sacred in Muslim, Christian and Pagan Polities* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997), pp. 83-114.

<sup>2</sup> As Ovamir Anjum argues, "In an Islamic context, theology and religious law are the natural places to look for direct and indirect debates about political concepts." Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, p. 17.

did not mean that Muslim jurists and theologians were always fixated with the caliph. Many concepts and vocabulary that initially developed in relation to the caliphate were transferred and applied to non-caliphal rulers such as sultans, kings, and emirs, especially after the fall of the Abbasid caliphate in 656/1258.<sup>3</sup> Obtaining a grasp of the language and key ideas in the Sunni discourse on the caliphate is thus crucial to a discussion of Ibn al-Jawzī's political thought.

This chapter will focus on several essential features of the caliphate discourse: the necessity of the caliphate, duties of the caliph, qualities required in a caliphal candidate, methods of appointment, and the issue of deposition and rebellion against a sinful caliph. I adopt a historical approach in tracing how views regarding these subjects changed over time. In this respect, the larger socio-political context surrounding each thinker is crucial, but attention must also be drawn to the dialectical relationship that each writer had with the previous traditions and views available to him. In addition, Sunni discourses on the caliphate were embedded in a centuries-old scholastic tradition of debate with other rival schools of thought. Therefore, I will also take into account the polemical context surrounding the aforementioned subjects to bring certain points of contention into sharper focus.

### 1.1. Discursive Conventions and Genres

The topic of the caliphate or imamate received its most systematic treatment in works of systematic theology (*kalām*) and, to a lesser extent, positive law (*furū' al-fiqh*).<sup>4</sup> Although al-

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<sup>3</sup> In Aziz al-Azmeh's words, the offices of caliph and sultan were "historically, ceremonially, and technically distinctive, but functionally and legally concordant." Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, pp. 163, 181-88, quote on p. 186. For specific examples, see Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate*, pp. 108-11, 118-20.

<sup>4</sup> According to Bernard Weiss, the imamate and the constitutional arrangements for its establishment and theoretical grounds for its authority were "considered to be among the fundamentals belonging to the sphere of theological discourse rather than among the more subsidiary matters belonging to the disciplines of *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*." Bernard Weiss, *The Spirit of Islamic Law* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), p. 174.

Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) claims in his theological treatise, *al-Iqtiṣād fī'l-i'tiqād*, that the topic of the imamate is “not among the important matters (*al-muhimmāt*), and it does not belong to the art of the intelligibles (*al-ma'qūlāt*), rather it is one of the legal topics (*al-fiqhiyyāt*),” a foray into books of law in search of a discussion on the nature of the imamate is sure to leave one disappointed. It is only in rare instances that one comes across a theoretical treatment of the imamate in *fiqh* books.<sup>5</sup> Any discussion of the role of the imam in works of positive law is often undertaken in relation to topics such as *jihād*, the distribution of alms and war booty, and the punishment of rebels and brigands. These discussions do not dwell much on the foundations of the imam’s authority, but assume these fundamentals as a given when dealing with the aforementioned matters of public law. It is not until Māwardī that we come across political thought written in a legal format, an attempt that lacks predecessors and successors.<sup>6</sup>

The Sunni discourse on the caliphate developed alongside the increasing systematization of *kalām* in scholarly circles during the course of the fourth/tenth century, attesting to the intricate connection between theological disputes and political legitimacy. After all, the main causes leading to the split of the otherwise unified Muslim community (*umma*) were political in nature, involving disputes among the Companions of the Prophet (*ṣaḥāba*) in early Islam. Already in the creeds of the eponymous founder of the Ash‘arite school of theology, Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/936), we find statements on the imamate revolving around the proper sequence of the four

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<sup>5</sup> For instance, Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī’s (d. 476/1083) brief discussion of the subject under the chapter heading *bāb adab al-sultān* in his *al-Tanbīh fī'l-fiqh al-Shāfi'ī*, ed. ‘Imād al-Dīn Ḥaydar (Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1983), pp. 248-49. Abū Zakarīyā al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) deals with the imamate alongside his discussion of rebels (*bughāh*): *Rawḍat al-tālibīn*, eds. ‘Ādil Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd and ‘Alī Muḥammad Mu‘awwaḍ (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1992), vol. 7, pp. 262-69. For Ghazālī’s statement, see Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtiṣād fī'l-i'tiqād*, ed. Muṣṭafā ‘Umrān (Cairo: Dār al-Baṣā’ir, 2009), p. 504; trans. Aladdin M. Yaqub as *Moderation in Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 229.

<sup>6</sup> Vogel, “Tracing Nuance,” pp. 335-36; al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, pp. 169-70; Crone, *Political Thought*, p. 223; Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, p. 110; Hanna Mikhail, *Politics and Revelation: Māwardī and After* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 19.

Rāshidūn caliphs who succeeded the Prophet and an express disapproval of rebellion against a ruling imam.<sup>7</sup> Al-Ash‘arī’s ideas on the imamate, as articulated in his theological writings, eventually formed the basis for later writings on the subject. One of the earliest attempts to theorize the caliphate along Ash‘arite lines came in the form of a *kalām* treatise by al-Bāqillānī (a Mālikī jurist with Ash‘arite theological leanings; d. 403/1013) entitled *al-Tamhīd fī ‘l-radd ‘alā ‘l-mulhida al-mu‘aṭṭila wa ‘l-rāfiḍa wa ‘l-khawārij wa ‘l-mu‘tazila*, a polemical work against the doctrines of the Shī‘ites, Khārijites, and Mu‘tazilites.<sup>8</sup> Subsequent generations would witness similar efforts by Shāfi‘ī jurists and theologians such as Māwardī (d. 450/1058), al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) and his student Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233), Ibn Jamā‘a (d. 733/1333), and al-Ījī (d. 756/1355). Among the Ḥanafīs, we have al-Bazdawī (d. 493/1099), Abū ‘l-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114), and al-Taftāzānī (d. 793/1390). Ḥanbalī attempts at a theoretical treatment of the imamate began with Abū Ya‘lā b. al-Farrā’ (who was the *qāḍī* of the caliphal harem in Baghdad and wrote the first extant Ḥanbalī *kalām* manual; d. 458/1066) and continued with Ibn al-Jawzī’s teacher Ibn al-Zāghūnī (d. 527/1132).

Sunni theoretical discussions of the imamate usually constituted a chapter at the end of *kalām* treatises. This placement owes largely to the schema of theological writing: the subject of the imamate falls under the rubric of what Richard Frank calls “human destiny and the order of human society relative to this destiny,” which includes other topics such as the ontological status of human agency and prophecy.<sup>9</sup> However, before delving into the subject, theologians often

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<sup>7</sup> Richard J. McCarthy, *The Theology of al-Ash‘arī* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953), pp. 246-50. Ann Lambton points out that there is no mention of the imam in earlier creeds attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa (the eponymous founder of the Ḥanafī school of law; d. 150/767). See *State and Government*, p. 70.

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of Bāqillānī’s treatment of the imamate in his *Tamhīd*, see Yusuf Ibish, *The Political Doctrine of al-Baqillani* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1966); Lambton, *State and Government*, pp. 70-77.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Frank, “The Science of *Kalām*,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 2 (1992), pp. 12-14.

added a caveat indicating that the imamate did not really form part of theology and was not among the fundamentals of belief (*uṣūl al-i'tiqād*), even though it had become customary to write about it in theological works.<sup>10</sup> Ghazālī, for instance, expresses regret that this very subject “excites fanaticisms (*ta'aṣṣubāt*).”<sup>11</sup> Writing in a similar vein more than a century later, Āmidī claims, “It rarely happens that [the issue of the imamate] is detached from fanaticism and passions (*al-ahwā'*), the stirring up of discord (*fitan*) and enmity (*shaḥnā'*), as well as the conjecturing (*al-rajm bi'l-ghayb*) of the rights of the imams and pious forebears (*salaf*) with contempt.”<sup>12</sup> As much as the theologians were reluctant to regard the imamate as a theological subject, they nevertheless admitted that ignorance of its fundamental principles would lead one to error. This ambivalent attitude suggests that precisely because the imamate *was* a controversial and heated subject among different groups of Muslims, it had to be given due attention as a subject of theology even though it did not merit as much discussion as did more fundamental theological issues like the existence of God and prophecy. Situated in a scholastic genre such as *kalām* and against the backdrop of increasing sectarian strife, the theoretical treatment of the imamate constituted a platform upon which Sunni theologians upheld orthodoxy against rival schools of thought such as the Shī'ites and Mu'tazilites.<sup>13</sup> The key points of contention between these schools will be brought into clearer focus below.

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<sup>10</sup> Abū'l-Ma'ālī al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād ilā qawāṭi' al-adilla fī uṣūl al-i'tiqād*, eds. Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsā and 'Alī 'Abd al-Mun'im 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1950), p. 410; trans. Paul E. Walker as *A Guide to Conclusive Proofs for the Principles of Belief* (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 2000), p. 225; Ghazālī, *Moderation*, p. 229; 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-aqdām fī 'ilm al-kalām*, ed. Alfred Guillaume (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 478; Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām fī 'ilm al-kalām*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd Mazyadī (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2004), p. 309; 'Abd Allāh b. al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ ma'ālim uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. 'Awwād Maḥmūd 'Awwād Sālim (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya, 2011), p. 823.

<sup>11</sup> Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, p. 504; *Moderation*, p. 229.

<sup>12</sup> Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, p. 309.

<sup>13</sup> In that regard, claims by Patricia Crone and Aziz al-Azmeh that Sunni theologians “no longer knew why” the imamate constituted a subject in theological writings or that they merely did so “in keeping with convention” due to

## 1.2. Necessity of the Imamate

Sunni scholarly treatments of the imamate usually begin with a discussion of whether the imamate is necessary and, if so, on what basis. On this point, one observes a more or less unanimous agreement among Sunni jurists and theologians by Ibn al-Jawzī's time that the appointment of an imam is obligatory (*wājib*) as a collective obligation (*farḍ kifāya*). This point is largely directed against certain groups of Khārijites and Mu'tazilites who held that the imamate was not an obligatory institution and therefore could be dispensed with.<sup>14</sup> Two thinkers associated with the so-called "Sufis of the Mu'tazilites" (*Ṣūfīyyat al-Mu'tazila*), Abū Bakr al-Aṣamm (d. 200/816 or 201/817) and Hishām al-Fuwaṭī (d. 218/833), are usually singled out by name as proponents of the non-obligatory stance to be argued against. Both thinkers claimed that as long as believers took the law into their own hands, maintained order in society, and lived according to the Qur'ān, there was no need for an imamate, which would eventually devolve into coercive kingship (*mulk*).<sup>15</sup> Their Sunni counterparts did not share the same level of optimism.

While Sunni theologians generally maintain that the imamate is necessary, subtle differences in argument can be observed in their justification for this necessity. Most of them

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"a topical aggregation specific to the constitution of the thematic conformation of *kalām*" overlook the imamate as a locus of contention between rival Muslim schools during the medieval Islamic period. Crone, *Political Thought*, p. 223; al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, p. 109.

<sup>14</sup> For a general survey of Khārijite and Mu'tazilite political thought, see Wilferd Madelung, "Imāma," *EP*<sup>2</sup>; Lambton, *State and Government*, pp. 22-27, 36-42; Crone, *Political Thought*, pp. 54-69.

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, Abū Ya'la b. al-Farrā', *al-Mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. W. Z. Ḥaddād (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1974), p. 222; Abū'l-Yusr al-Bazdawī, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Hans Peter Linss (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, 1963), pp. 186-87; Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, p. 313. It is important to note that despite huge similarities between their political ideas, al-Aṣamm and al-Fuwaṭī differ on certain points: the former maintained that the imamate could be dispensed with during peacetime, while the latter objected to the appointment of an imam during times of chaos. See Hayrettin Yücesoy, "Political Anarchism, Dissent, and Marginal Groups in the Early Ninth Century: The Ṣūfīs of the Mu'tazila Revisited," in *The Lineaments of Islam: Studies in Honor of Fred McGraw Donner*, ed. Paul M. Cobb (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 61-84; Osman Aydınlı, "Disputations on 'the Necessity of the Imamate' in the Mu'tazilite Political Theory," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1/1 (2007) (online resource: <http://khartoumspace.uofk.edu/handle/123456789/2008>).

adduce the line of reasoning that human beings are in need of association by nature and will come together to form societies due to mutual needs and interests. This idea can be traced back to Aristotle who claims that man is a social animal (*zoon politikon*). This idea found its way into Muslim ethical and political writings beginning with al-Jāhiz (d. 255/869).<sup>16</sup> The description of humankind's associational and social nature usually corresponds to a pessimistic anthropology lamenting that association inevitably leads to discord (*fitna*) and injustice (*ẓulm*) due to the avaricious and jealous nature of humankind. Therefore, human beings are in need of someone to restrain them and settle their disputes, and this can only be achieved through an imam or ruler who is obeyed (*imām muṭāʿ*). Several Sunni theologians would add to this another trope, as seen in the following statement by Ghazālī:

It is confirmed by observing the social upheavals that ensue when the sultans and imams die. If these upheavals are prolonged and not quickly terminated by the appointment of another sultan who is obeyed, disorder would persist and the sword would prevail (*dāma al-harj wa-ʿamma al-sayf*), famine would spread, livestock would diminish, and industry would collapse; and whoever wins would plunder; and no one who manages to stay alive would have time to worship or seek knowledge; and the majority would die under the shadows of the swords.<sup>17</sup>

Similar justifications can also be observed in works from the mirror for princes genre usually dedicated to sultans and provincial rulers in the Islamic world.<sup>18</sup> Post-Mongol Sunni thinkers such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and Ibn Jamāʿa (d. 733/1333) adduce the maxim which reads (with minor variations), “Forty/sixty years of an unjust ruler (*imām jāʿir*) are better than a single night without a ruler (*sulṭān*).”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Crone, *Political Thought*, pp. 259-60.

<sup>17</sup> Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, p. 506; *Moderation*, p. 231. Similarly, Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, p. 311.

<sup>18</sup> For instance, Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyāsatnāma*, trans. Hubert Darke as *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), pp. 9-10. For Muslim mirrors for princes, see Ann K. S. Lambton, “Islamic Mirrors for Princes,” in *La Persia nel Medioevo* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1971), pp. 419-42. For a survey of scholarly literature on this genre, see Louise Marlow, “Surveying Recent Literature on the Arabic and Persian Mirrors for Princes Genre,” *History Compass*, 72/2 (2009), pp. 523-38.

<sup>19</sup> Aḥmad b. Taymiyya, *al-Siyāsa al-sharʿiyya fī iṣlāḥ al-rāʾi wa-l-raʿiyya*, ed. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿUmrān and Bakr b. ʿAbd Allāh Abū Zayd (Mecca: Dār ʿĀlam al-Fawāʿid, 2008), p. 233; trans. Omar A. Farrukh as *Ibn Taimiyya on*

To the extent that Sunni jurists and theologians go at lengths to justify the necessity of the imamate using the line of reasoning outlined above, they often regard it as only constituting an argument based on reason (*‘aql*) and thus insufficient in proving why the appointment of an imam was obligatory as a legally sanctioned necessity. Reason could prove why humans needed a ruling authority, but it could not demonstrate why they needed it in the form of the imamate or caliphate.<sup>20</sup> “One does not learn through reason a thing’s obligatory nature, its permissiveness or its unlawfulness, its beauty or ugliness,” says Abū Ya‘lā.<sup>21</sup> One only knows about these qualities by way of revelation (*sam‘*), a view shared by most Sunni theologians during Ibn al-Jawzī’s time.<sup>22</sup>

What constitutes “revelation,” however, is less clear. For some, this meant the Qur’ān, and so we see the use of Qur’ānic verses being cited to justify the necessity the imamate.<sup>23</sup> But these instances were rare, probably due to a reluctance to use the Qur’ān for political means and to the danger of veering too close towards the Shī‘ite practice of pointing certain Qur’ānic verses to the imam in their treatises. The use of *ḥadīth* was common practice during the late second/eighth and early third/ninth centuries, developing in tandem with the articulation of Prophetic Sunna and *ḥadīth* transmission as part of the Sunni discursive tradition. As part of Sunni attempts to refute

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*Public and Private Law in Islam or Public Policy in Islamic Jurisprudence* (Beirut: Khayats, 1966), p. 188; Badr al-Dīn b. Jamā‘a, *Tahrīr al-aḥkām fī tadbīr ahl al-Islām*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh b. Šālīḥ b. Muḥammad ‘Ubayd (Riyadh: Maktabat Dār al-Minhāj li’l-Nashr wa’l-Tawzī‘, 2012), p. 246.

<sup>20</sup> Crone, *Political Thought*, p. 271.

<sup>21</sup> Abū Ya‘lā, *Mu‘tamad*, p. 222; idem, *al-Aḥkām al-sultāniyya*, ed. Maḥmūd Ḥasan (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1994), p. 23.

<sup>22</sup> This can also be read as a refutation of Shī‘ite doctrine, which argues that the imamate is obligatory based on reason. See Madelung, “Imāma”; Najam Haider, *Shī‘ī Islam: An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 25-28.

<sup>23</sup> For instance, Q 4:59: O you who believe, obey God, the Messenger, and those in authority among you (*ūlī’l-amr minkum*); Q 2:30: Verily I am creating on earth a *khalīfa*....; Q 38:26: O David, we have made you a *khalīfa* on earth. See Abū’l-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-sultāniyya*, ed. Aḥmad Jād (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2006), p. 16; trans. Wafaa Wahba as *The Ordinances of Government* (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 1996), p. 3; Abū’l-Ḥasan b. al-Zāghūnī, *al-Īdāḥ fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. ‘Iṣām al-Sayyid Maḥmūd (Riyadh: Markaz al-Malik Fayṣal li’l-Buḥūth wa’l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya, 2003), p. 602; Ibn Jamā‘a, *Tahrīr*, p. 245.

Shī'ite arguments that the Prophet had chosen 'Alī b. Abī Tālib as his successor by designation (*naṣṣ*), scholars argued for the necessity of the imamate by pointing out that Abū Bakr had been designated—explicitly or implicitly (hence hinting at an implicit *naṣṣ*, *al-naṣṣ al-khaṭī*)—by the Prophet to become caliph.<sup>24</sup> Again, due to Sunni efforts of distinguishing themselves further from the Shī'ites who argued vigorously for Prophetic *naṣṣ* on 'Alī, the use of *ḥadīth* alluding to Abū Bakr's *naṣṣ* in justifying the Sunni imamate receded to the background beginning in the fourth/tenth century.<sup>25</sup>

Moving away from *naṣṣ* for Abū Bakr, Sunni scholars from the fifth/eleventh century onwards claim that the imamate was obligatory based on the formal jurisprudential principle of *ijmā'* (consensus), which by Ibn al-Jawzī's time had been furnished with a revelational basis (*mustanad*) in Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*.<sup>26</sup> A common argument adduced was that the Companions of the Prophet were more preoccupied with the election of an imam to succeed the Prophet after his death than with his burial.<sup>27</sup> If the imamate had indeed been dispensable, the Companions, being steadfast in their faith and adherence to the *sharī'a*, would have dispensed with it long ago.<sup>28</sup> This

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<sup>24</sup> Hayrettin Yücesoy, "Justification of Political Authority in Medieval Sunni Thought," in *Islam, the State, and Political Authority: Medieval Issues and Modern Concerns*, ed. Asma Afsaruddin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 15-17. For a discussion of Abū Bakr's *naṣṣ*, see Asma Afsaruddin, "In Praise of the Caliphs: Re-creating History from the *Manāqib* Literature," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 31/3 (1999), pp. 332-35.

<sup>25</sup> Yücesoy, "Justification," pp. 17-18.

<sup>26</sup> On the revelational basis of *ijmā'*, see Bernard Weiss, "Al-Āmidī on the Basis of Authority of Consensus," in *Essays on Islamic Civilization: Presented to Niyazi Berkes*, ed. Donald P. Little (Leiden: Brill, 1976), pp. 342-56; idem, "The Primacy of Revelation in Classical Islamic Legal Theory as Expounded by Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī," *Studia Islamica*, 59 (1984): 79-109; Wael B. Hallaq, "On the Authoritativeness of Sunni Consensus," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 18/4 (1986), pp. 427-54.

<sup>27</sup> Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 186; Wael B. Hallaq, "Caliphs, Jurists and the Saljūqs in the Political Thought of Juwaynī," *The Muslim World*, 74/1 (1984), p. 32 for Juwaynī's argument; Ghazālī, *Faḍā'ih al-bāṭiniyya wa faḍā'il al-Mustazhiriyya*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Qutb (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, 2009), pp. 154-55; trans. R. J. McCarthy as "The Infamies of the Bāṭinites and the Virtues of the Mustazhirites" in *Deliverance from Error* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1980), p. 235.

<sup>28</sup> Abū'l-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, ed. Claude Salamé (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1993), vol. 2, p. 823; Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, p. 310.

mode of argument not only set the Sunnis apart from the Shī‘ites, but it also constituted the definitive refutation against those who argued against the necessity of the imamate, to the point that al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114) deemed such arguments to be of no consequence at all.<sup>29</sup>

### 1.3. Role and Duties of the Imam

The list of duties (*wājibāt*) of the imam had become fairly standard by Ibn al-Jawzī’s time, albeit with minor variations: guarding of the faith (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), which includes upholding the established sources and the consensus of the *salaf* and weeding out heresy and innovation; enforcing the laws (*tanfīdh al-aḥkām*) between disputants; maintaining peace and security so people can conduct businesses and travel safely; dispensing of legal punishments (*iqāmat al-ḥudūd*); strengthening of frontiers (*taḥṣīn al-thughūr*); engaging in *jihād* against those who resist the supremacy of Islam after being invited to embrace it, until they convert or enter into a covenant of protection (*dhimma*); collection of alms (*ṣadaqāt*) and legal land taxes (*fayʿ*) without imposing fear or injustice; assessment of payments and allocations made by the treasury; appointment of men who are trustworthy and of good counsel in the performance of administrative and financial functions; and finally, personal oversight of these functions to regulate the affairs of the community and to guard the faith, instead of relying on delegation of authority while being preoccupied with pleasure or worship.<sup>30</sup> Overall, to quote Māwardī, the notion of “*ḥirāsat al-dīn wa-siyāsat al-dunyā*” (guarding of the faith and regulating the affairs of the world) sums up the various duties stipulated for the imam.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, vol. 2, p. 823.

<sup>30</sup> Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, pp. 40-41; *Ordinances*, p. 16. See also al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, p. 174.

<sup>31</sup> Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 15; *Ordinances*, p. 3.

Despite the standard repertoire of public duties, the conceptual role of the Sunni imam-caliph—whether he is the “deputy of God” (*khalīfat Allāh*) or the “successor of the Messenger of God” (*khalīfat rasūl Allāh*)—has long been a matter of scholarly debate since the late nineteenth century. This subject received renewed attention in recent decades with the publication of Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds’s book *God’s Caliph* in 1986.<sup>32</sup> The writings by Sunni jurists and theologians do not yield any clearer a picture. Māwardī disapproves of the title *khalīfat Allāh* in his *Aḥkām*, citing the common example of Abū Bakr rejecting it in favor of *khalīfat rasūl Allāh* and the view of the majority of scholars (*jumhūr al-‘ulamā’*) that it is sinful to be called *khalīfat Allāh*. But in his work on statecraft, *Tashīl al-naẓar*, he claims without reservation that “the king is God’s caliph [i.e., *khalīfat Allāh*] in his lands.”<sup>33</sup> Abū Ya‘lā appears to favor *khalīfat rasūl Allāh*, but is less harsh on *khalīfat Allāh*.<sup>34</sup> Ghazālī saw no qualms in calling the Abbasid caliph al-Mustaẓhir (r. 487/1094-512/1118) “deputy of God over creation” (*khalīfat Allāh ‘alā’l-khalq*).<sup>35</sup>

The *khalīfat Allāh* versus *khalīfat rasūl Allāh* debate speaks to the larger question of whether the Sunni imam-caliph possessed religious significance along similar lines as the Shī‘ite imam. Most of the Sunni caliph’s duties listed above concern administration, communal affairs, and military duties. Unlike the (Twelver and Ismā‘īlī) Shī‘ite imam who has the authority to define religious law, the Sunni caliph enforces the law.<sup>36</sup> As such, the caliph maintains a minimal role in

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<sup>32</sup> Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God’s Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

<sup>33</sup> Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, pp. 120, 254.

<sup>34</sup> Abū Ya‘lā, *Aḥkām*, p. 33.

<sup>35</sup> Ghazālī, *Faḍā’ih al-bāṭiniyya*, p. 153.

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion of the role and duties of the Fatimid imam-caliph, see Paul Walker, “The Role of the Imam-caliph as Depicted in Official Treatises and Documents Issued by the Fatimids,” in *The Study of Shi‘i Islam*, eds. Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), pp. 411-32.

religious affairs, namely to ensure that religious rulings are implemented and that heterodoxies do not spin out of control in the *umma*.<sup>37</sup> It is in this respect that early theorists of the caliphate such as Bāqillānī regarded the caliph as an agent (*wakīl*) of the community who acted on the community's behalf.<sup>38</sup>

Beginning with Māwardī, a change in the conception of the role of the caliph can be detected. In the preface to his *Aḥkām*, he writes:

God, exalted is His might, has appointed (*nadaba*) for the community a leader (*za'im*) to succeed the Prophet and protect the faith (*milla*).<sup>39</sup> To him He has entrusted the conduct of policy (*siyāsa*) so that the management of affairs may be undertaken upon the prescribed way (*dīn mashrū'*) and consensus may be obtained on the right course to pursue. The imamate is, therefore, the foundation (*aṣl*) upon which the principles of faith (*qawā'id al-milla*) are established whereby the welfare of the community (*maṣāliḥ al-umma*) is maintained, such that all public matters (*al-umūr al-'amma*) are guaranteed by it and all special functions (*al-wilāyāt al-khāṣṣa*) are derived from it.<sup>40</sup>

As much as Māwardī disapproves of the title *khalīfat Allāh*, his caliph “was seen as chosen by God to be the center of the divine mission on earth, and the Muslim community merely his extension.” As a “foundation of faith,” Anjum observes, “Māwardī gave the caliph all the symbolic sanctity he could short of equating him with a Shī'ī *imām*.”<sup>41</sup> This is a far cry from Bāqillānī's conception of the caliph as the community's *wakīl*.

The idea of the caliph as the mainspring of a legitimate Muslim community is further accentuated in Ghazālī's writings. Responding to claims that the Sunni imamate should be

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<sup>37</sup> Juwaynī, for instance, writes that the caliph should not interfere with the schools of law, but should just support each one of them. See Anjum, “Political Metaphors and Concepts,” p. 13; Hallaq, “Political Thought of Juwaynī,” p. 36.

<sup>38</sup> Ibish, *Political Doctrine*, p. 99; Lambton, *State and Government*, p. 76.

<sup>39</sup> During Māwardī's time, the term *milla* is commonly understood as denoting *dīn* (faith/religion/creed) or *sharī'a* (divine law). See al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt al-fāz al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ṣafwān 'Adnān Dāwūdī (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam; Beirut: Al-Dār al-Shāmiyya, 1992), p. 773; Muḥammad b. Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1955-1956), vol. 11, p. 631.

<sup>40</sup> Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 13; *Ordinances*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>41</sup> Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, pp. 119-20.

suspended since the Abbasid caliph during his time did not fulfill all the requisites for the imamate, Ghazālī writes:

This is a serious attack on law-based judgments (*al-ahkām al-sharʿiyya*) and an explicit declaration of their inoperativeness and neglect. It would call for the clear declaration of the corruption (*fasād*) of all administrative posts (*wilāyāt*), the unsoundness of the judging of judges (*quḍāh*), the collapse of God's laws (*huqūq Allāh*) and prescriptions, the invalidation of retaliation for blood and wombs [i.e., offspring] and property, and the pronouncement of the invalidity of marriage contracts issuing from judges in all the regions of the earth and the remaining of God's claims in the custody of creation (*dhimam al-khalq*). For all such things would be legal only if their fulfillment issued from judges who owe their authority to an appointment by the imam (*maṣḍar al-quḍāh tawliyat al-imām*); if the imamate is void, their appointment is also void, and thus their authority dissolves and they become private individuals (*iltahāqū bi-āḥād al-khalq*).<sup>42</sup>

This alarmist outcry reflects a perceived need to maintain the Sunni imamate for the sake of a legitimate public sphere in light of the Nizārī-Ismāʿīlī threat. In many respects, it largely stems from the caliph's key role in appointing judges who maintained and enforced divine law.<sup>43</sup> But the much amplified religious significance of the caliph is undeniable. By the time we get to Āmidī (d. 631/1233) in the early seventh/thirteenth century and the Mālikī jurist and exegete Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272) after the fall of the Abbasid caliphate in 656/1258, the Sunni imam-caliph had come to be referred to as a “pillar of faith” (*ʿamad/rukn al-dīn*).<sup>44</sup>

Whether or not one views the caliph as *khalīfat Allāh* or *khalīfat rasūl Allāh*, the trend towards an increasing religious sanctification of the Sunni imamate is perceptible. Much of this could be due to political developments. Keeping in mind that many kings and sultans have gained power over large swathes of Muslim lands based on the notion of “might is right” by the fifth/eleventh century, “many Muslims, unwilling to give full-hearted support to such kingship, clung all the more tenaciously to the idea of the caliphate which—now that it was removed from

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<sup>42</sup> Ghazālī, *Faḍāʾih al-bāṭiniyya*, pp. 153-54; *Deliverance*, p. 235; Crone, *Political Thought*, pp. 238-39.

<sup>43</sup> Regarding the need for a caliph or state in appointing judges, see Mohammad Fadel, “Nature, Revelation and the State in Pre-Modern Sunni Theological, Legal and Political Thought,” *The Muslim World*, 106/2 (2016), p. 283.

<sup>44</sup> Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, p. 311; Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-ahkām al-Qurʾān*, eds. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Ḥifnāwī and Maḥmūd Ḥamid ʿUthmān (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1996), vol. 1, p. 280.

the ugliness of practical politics—was the one political office consonant with the universalism inherent in their religion.”<sup>45</sup> This was especially the case in Baghdad, where the populace sided with the Abbasid caliph when Buyid and Seljuq rule bore down harshly on them. As a symbol of Muslim unity, the caliphate became a rallying point for disaffected Muslims who looked for opportunities to denounce Buyid and Seljuq policies, such as taxation, as contravening the *sharī‘a*.

#### 1.4. Qualifications for the Imam

The conditions (*shurūṭ*) or qualities (*ṣifāt*) required of an imam generated much debate and polemics across sectarian divides. In broad strokes, the imam ought to be a free, male, adult member from the Prophet’s tribe of Quraysh who is free of physical and mental handicaps. He should also be a man of probity (‘*adāla*) and piety (*wara’*). The candidate should possess sufficient religious knowledge (‘*ilm*) to practice independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) or to qualify as a *mujtahid*,<sup>46</sup> though certain scholars such as Bāqillānī and Āmidī only required the level of knowledge to be a judge (*qāḍī*), a rank lower than a *mujtahid*.<sup>47</sup> Lastly, he should also possess competence (*kifāya*) in governance as well as courage (*najda* or *shajā‘a*) in the defense of Muslim territories and the waging of war. An imam should ideally be the most excellent or meritorious man (*al-aḥḍal* or *al-fāḍil*) of his time. Unlike the Shī‘ites, the Sunnis did not stipulate infallibility (‘*isma*) to be a condition. Of the above, the conditions of Quraysh descent, probity, competence, knowledge, and, corollary to that, merit and infallibility were most hotly debated.

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<sup>45</sup> Roy P. Mottahedeh, “Some Attitudes Towards Monarchy and Absolutism in the Eastern Islamic World of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries A.D.,” *Israel Oriental Studies*, 10 (1980), p. 91.

<sup>46</sup> The imam should be able to engage in independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) to a level at which he is able to deliver a legal opinion (*fatwā*) without consulting (*yastaftī*) other jurists. See, for instance, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mutawallī (d. 478/1085), *al-Ghunya fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. ‘Imād al-Dīn Aḥmad Ḥaydar (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya, 1987), p. 178; Juwaynī, *Irshād*, p. 426; *Guide to Conclusive Proofs*, p. 235.

<sup>47</sup> Ibish, *Political Doctrine*, pp. 97-98; Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, p. 324. See also Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, p. 112.

The Quraysh requirement is encountered in all Sunni treatments of the imamate, even those written after the fall of the Abbasids in 656/1258.<sup>48</sup> In support of this, writers often cite the Prophetic *ḥadīth*, “The imams are from the Quraysh,” uttered by Abū Bakr during the “Saqīfa” event (which led to the election of Abū Bakr as first caliph of the Muslim community) in response to the claim by the rival Anṣār camp, “An *amīr* from us and an *amīr* from you.”<sup>49</sup> Even then, a change over time can be discerned in the sources. Earlier writers such as Māwardī, Bazdawī, and Ghazālī state that the imam should be of Quraysh descent based on the existence of an explicit text (*naṣṣ*) such as the *ḥadīth*, “The imams are from Quraysh,” as well as the consensus of the Companions and those who came after them. If the *ḥadīth* had been unsound, the Muslims would not have submitted to the election of Abū Bakr during the Saqīfa meeting.<sup>50</sup> ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) and Abū Ya‘lā even confidently assert that the Quraysh would never fail to produce an individual qualified for the imamate.<sup>51</sup> According to Ghazālī, the fact that even the Fatimid rival caliphs had to justify their caliphal claims based on Qurayshite descent demonstrates that people would only obey a caliph from the Quraysh.<sup>52</sup> However, cracks in confidence did not take long to set in.

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<sup>48</sup> Nawawī, *Rawḍat al-tālibīn*, vol. 7, p. 263; ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar al-Bayḍāwī in *Nature, Man and God in Medieval Islam*, trans. and eds. Edwin E. Calverley and James W. Pollock (Leiden: Brill, 2002), vol. 1, p. 1096; Ibn Taymiyya in Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, p. 258; Ibn Jamā‘a, *Tahrīr*, p. 250; ‘Aḍūḍ al-Dīn al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif fī ‘ilm al-kalām*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Umayra (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1997), vol. 3, p. 585.

<sup>49</sup> For a detailed discussion of the event and the rhetorical strategies employed by historians and chroniclers in describing the debates that ensued, see Tayeb El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History: The Rashidun Caliphs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 26-58.

<sup>50</sup> Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 20; *Ordinances*, p. 4; Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, pp. 187-88; Ghazālī, *Faḍā‘ih al-bāṭiniyya*, p. 162.

<sup>51</sup> Lambton, *State and Government*, p. 79 for Baghdādī; Abū Ya‘lā, *Mu‘tamad*, p. 241.

<sup>52</sup> Ghazālī, *Faḍā‘ih al-bāṭiniyya*, p. 162.

By the time of Māwardī's death in 450/1058, the Seljuq Turks had already ousted the Buyids out of Baghdad and established themselves in the caliphal capital. The physical threats posed by the Seljuqs to the Abbasid caliph were more alarming than those of the Buyids a century earlier: caliphs were forced to leave Baghdad, coerced into marrying the Seljuq sultan's daughter, and even assassinated.<sup>53</sup> Writing barely a generation after Māwardī, Juwaynī states in an earlier work of theology, "There is, however, some disagreement among the people over [the Quraysh requirement] and I personally believe there is room to construe the matter in different ways."<sup>54</sup> In a later work dedicated to the Seljuq vizier Nizām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092) entitled *Ghiyāth al-umam*, he deems Qurayshite descent the least important of conditions required for the imamate and rejects the notion that it is based on Prophetic *ḥadīth* and consensus. The *ḥadīth* "The imams are from the Quraysh," he claims, has a weak chain of transmission.<sup>55</sup> At best, this condition was only intended to honor the Prophet's family and has had no bearing on the actual performance of duties required of an imam. In a situation whereby a caliphal candidate from the Quraysh cannot be found, the requirement can be dropped altogether and Muslims should proceed to designate a qualified non-Qurayshite imam.<sup>56</sup>

Juwaynī's career overlapped with the reigns of al-Qā'im (r. 422/1031-467/1075) and al-Muqtadī (r. 467/1075-487/1094), a period when the Seljuq sultans were at the height of power and most coercive towards the caliphs. It is in light of these political circumstances that Juwaynī laments, "We see a Qurayshī [imam] while the flock are fighting each other in the provinces and

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<sup>53</sup> Makdisi, "The Marriage of Ṭughril Beg"; Tor, "A Tale of Two Murders"; Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, pp. 96-101.

<sup>54</sup> Juwaynī, *Guide to Conclusive Proofs*, p. 235.

<sup>55</sup> Hallaq, "Political Thought of Juwaynī," p. 34; Crone, *Political Thought*, pp. 234-35.

<sup>56</sup> Hallaq, "Political Thought of Juwaynī," p. 38.

falling prey to death.” For Juwaynī, who deems *kifāya* (the ability to govern the *umma*) the most important requirement for the imamate, the Abbasid caliph was no imam at all. Hence, if a qualified non-Qurayshite candidate can be sought out, his appointment would not be unlawful.<sup>57</sup> Nizām al-Mulk, the dedicatee of the book, was such a candidate.

Juwaynī’s radical proposals were vehemently opposed by his student, Ghazālī, who went at lengths to defend the Quraysh requirement. If at all, Ghazālī claims, Qurayshite descent is the only condition that can be authoritatively based on an explicit text (*naṣṣ*), given the Prophetic *ḥadīth* “The imams are from the Quraysh.”<sup>58</sup> But the tone had already been set. Juwaynī’s trepidations and concerns became reality when the Muslim world found itself without a Qurayshite caliph symbolizing universal Muslim leadership following the Mongol sack of Baghdad, after which his ideas found new life. Al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), the seventh/thirteenth-century Shāfi‘ī scholar, in discussing the imam’s descent, comfortably writes:

If a Qurayshite who fulfills all conditions [for the imamate] cannot be found, then [one could look to] a Kinānī, failing whom a man from the descendants of Ismā‘īl can be considered. If the conditions are [still] not fulfilled in them...a non-Arab (‘*ajam*) can be invested with authority. ... [Or] a Jarhamī,<sup>59</sup> and Jarham was of Arab origin. If a Jarhamī cannot be found, then a man from the descendants of Ishāq.<sup>60</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzī, who writes mid-point between Juwaynī’s and Nawawī’s time and realizing the competition which the Abbasids faced from rival claims to authority, would build on the Quraysh requirement in putting forward a rigorous defense of Abbasid genealogical claims, as will be discussed in Chapter Three.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>58</sup> Ghazālī, *Faḍā’ih al-bāṭiniyya*, p. 172; *Deliverance*, p. 238.

<sup>59</sup> According to lore, a Meccan tribe which Ismā‘īl married into during pre-Islamic times.

<sup>60</sup> Nawawī, *Rawḍat al-ṭālibīn*, vol. 7, p. 263.

The condition of probity (‘*adāla*) is related to the issue of infallibility (‘*iṣma*), which the Shī‘ites claim for their imam. While most jurists do not dwell much on ‘*adāla*,<sup>61</sup> Ḥanbalī scholars such as Abū Ya‘lā and Ibn al-Zāghūnī added that this requirement can be disregarded when a strongman obtains the imamate by force and acts unjustly.<sup>62</sup> Even a wine-drinking ruler who engages in illegal appropriation of booty (*ghulūl*) has to be fought alongside with during *jihād*.<sup>63</sup> The Ḥanbalī position on ‘*adāla* has much to do with their stance on usurpation as a means of gaining power and on rebellion against a sinful ruler, which I will address in later sections of this chapter.

The imam’s infallibility is fundamental to the Twelver and Ismā‘īlī branches of Shī‘ism, since protection from error guarantees the imam’s inerrancy in his interpretive efforts. Furthermore, Shī‘ite scholars argue that if error is permitted to the imam, there would be a need of another imam to restrain him from error, and what results is an infinite regress (*tasalsul*). Against this and due to the fact that most rulers of their time were not immune from sin to begin with, almost all Sunni scholars make it a point to highlight that infallibility is not a prerequisite for one to assume the imamate. We observe increased attention towards refuting Shī‘ite arguments on infallibility beginning in the latter half of the sixth/twelfth century as Sunni scholars ramped up their defense of Sunni orthodoxy.<sup>64</sup> Scholars such as Rāzī, Āmidī, and Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286) argue that Shī‘ite claims of infallibility contradict the agreement or consensus of the *umma* after the Prophet’s death.

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<sup>61</sup> Scholars such as Baghdadī merely mention that the imam must possess enough probity to be accepted as a witness in court. Crone, *Political Thought*, p. 225.

<sup>62</sup> Abū Ya‘lā, *Mu‘tamad*, p. 242; idem, *Aḥkām*, p. 24; Ibn al-Zāghūnī, *Idāh*, p. 611.

<sup>63</sup> Abū Ya‘lā, *Aḥkām*, p. 24.

<sup>64</sup> A listing of Shī‘ite arguments and detailed point-by-point refutations can be found in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arba‘in fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Maḥmūd ‘Abd al-Azīz Maḥmūd (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2009), pp. 421-25, and Bayḍāwī in *Nature, Man and God*, vol. 1, pp. 1098-1100.

According to Rāzī and Bayḍāwī, the *umma* had agreed that “the blamelessness of Abū Bakr was not an obligation,” though both scholars are unwilling to concede that Abū Bakr himself was *not* blameless—in some sense, they wanted to have their cake and eat it by elevating Abū Bakr’s status to compete against Shī‘ite imputations of infallibility to ‘Alī.<sup>65</sup> For Āmidī, the Rāshidūn caliphs’ lack of infallibility is proven by the fact that they consulted opinions just like regular individuals and even differed amongst themselves.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, an acknowledgement of the *umma*’s contracting of the imamate to the Rāshidūn caliphs also includes acceptance of their fallibility.

The condition of competence (*kifāya*) received extra attention from Juwaynī and his student Ghazālī, both of whom lived during a period in which the Seljuq sultans attempted to impose their will on the Abbasid caliphs. Despite this state of affairs, Juwaynī’s and Ghazālī’s solutions were radically different. For Juwaynī, as mentioned above, *kifāya* constitutes the most important quality of a ruling imam, even surpassing knowledge (*‘ilm*).<sup>67</sup> In the absence of an Abbasid imam with *kifāya*, Juwaynī’s solution is straightforward: the reigning caliph should be replaced by someone possessing competence in political and military affairs.<sup>68</sup>

Ghazālī, however, fervently disagreed with this and devised a unique formulation in response. For him, *kifāya* entails competence to govern and aims to order religious and worldly affairs, while *najda* is “a show of power (*zuhūr al-shawka*),” seeking the help of armies and possessing the ability to subdue rebels and fight infidels.<sup>69</sup> Key to Ghazālī’s line of reasoning is

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<sup>65</sup> Rāzī, *Arba‘īn*, p. 421; Bayḍāwī and Maḥmūd al-Iṣfahānī’s (d. 749/1348) commentary in *Nature, Man and God*, vol. 1, pp. 1098-99.

<sup>66</sup> Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, p. 326.

<sup>67</sup> Hallaq, “Political Thought of Juwaynī,” p. 39.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 39-40.

<sup>69</sup> Carole Hillenbrand, “Islamic Orthodoxy or Realpolitik? Al-Ghazālī’s Views on Government,” *Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies*, 26 (1988), pp. 83-84.

his claim that these four qualities are all found in the person of al-Mustazhir.<sup>70</sup> However, he was not oblivious to the fact that al-Mustazhir was largely confined to the caliphal palace without much say in administrative affairs, let alone in leading armies against enemies and infidels. Acknowledging this course of events, Ghazālī reformulates *najda* in such a way that the Abbasid caliph al-Mustazhir fulfills it *through* the Seljuq Turks:

In this age of ours, from amongst the (various) kinds of human beings it is the Turks who possess force (*shawka*). Almighty God has given them the good fortune to befriend and love [the caliph] to such an extent that they draw near to God by helping him and by suppressing the enemies of his state/dynasty (*dawla*). They yield themselves to belief in his caliphate and imāmate and in the necessity (*wujūb*) of obedience to him, just as they submit themselves to the (religious) obligations of God's commands and the confirmation of the truth (*taṣdīq*) of His message by His messengers. So this is a *najda*, the like of which has not (ever) been established for anyone but him, so how can there be any dispute about his *najda*?<sup>71</sup>

Similarly, with *kifāya*, Ghazālī writes that aside from al-Mustazhir's astuteness and powers of discernment, the caliph fulfills it *through* consulting with good counsellors and appointing a capable vizier.<sup>72</sup>

Ghazālī's statements constitute a theory of delegation. In practice, delegation of authority was nothing new in the political history of the caliphate and was carried out during the reigns of strong and weak caliphs alike. Juristic and theoretical framing of delegation had to wait till Māwardī, who formulated it using the systematic legal framework of *fiqh*.<sup>73</sup> But it was Ghazālī who first treated the issue of delegation in relation to the qualities of the imam. In other words, not only does the imam delegate authority to subordinate officials, his *conditions* or *qualities* can be

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>73</sup> See, for instance, his definition of the "delegated vizierate" (*wizārat tafwīḍ*) and "executive vizierate" (*wizārat tanfīdh*) in *Aḥkām*, pp. 50, 56; *Ordinances*, pp. 23, 27.

delegated as well.<sup>74</sup> Later scholars, perhaps due to the waning of the Seljuq empire and a resurgence of caliphal authority beginning with the reign of al-Muqtafi (r. 530/1136-555/1160), hardly dedicate much discussion to *kifāya* or *najda*, let alone replicate Ghazālī's formulation. In the long run, however, it would be the Juwaynian strand of political thought which gained traction after 656/1258 as Sunni thinkers looked to non-Qurayshite sultans as "imams" who possessed actual *kifāya* or *najda* in managing political and military affairs.<sup>75</sup>

The discussion of religious knowledge (*ilm*) was often met with ambivalence, mainly because it directly concerned the religious scholars (*ulamā'*) who wrote on the imamate and who also saw themselves as custodians of *ilm* and as heirs of the Prophet in matters of religious law and tradition. The condition of *ilm* was also a point of contention between the Sunnis and the Shī'ites. Both parties ascribe different criteria of knowledge to Abū Bakr and 'Alī: Sunnis emphasize Abū Bakr's knowledge of legal and religious matters encompassing the offering of legal opinions (*fatāwā*) and the transmission of *ḥadīth*; Shī'ites appeal to 'Alī's esoteric knowledge of the unseen (*ghayb*) and his eloquence.<sup>76</sup>

What began as part of Sunni-Shī'ite dialectics translated into varying notions of *ilm* with respect to the Sunni caliph and Shī'ite imam respectively. The Sunni imam-caliph was expected

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<sup>74</sup> This theoretical attempt has led to certain scholars like Leonard Binder and, following him, Ann Lambton to claim that Ghazālī devised a "tripartite" structure of the imamate consisting of the imam-caliph as the embodiment of the *umma* and *sharī'a*, the Seljuq sultan as wielder of power (*shawka*), and the *ulamā'* as upholding knowledge (*ilm*; which I will discuss next in this section). See Leonard Binder, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Islamic Government," *The Muslim World*, 45 (1955), p. 240; Lambton, *State and Government*, pp. 113-15. Crone (*Political Thought*, p. 248) views Ghazālī's theoretical efforts as suggesting a church and state division: "Al-Ghazālī was the first clearly to articulate the fact that the Muslim world had developed something similar to the division between state and church in medieval Europe."

<sup>75</sup> Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate*, pp. 98-141.

<sup>76</sup> Asma Afsaruddin, "The Epistemology of Excellence: Sunni-Shī'i Dialectics on Legitimate Leadership," in *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies*, eds. Gudrun Krämer and Sabine Schmidtke (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 49-69.

to possess knowledge of religious law to which the average believer had or could have access; the imam was only superior by virtue of his ability to “process this information better and apply it more effectively in appropriate circumstances that contributed to the welfare of the polity as a whole.”<sup>77</sup> For the Shī‘ites, the imam’s status as the repository of esoteric knowledge implied that his ‘ilm had to exceed that of the lay believer.<sup>78</sup> Most Sunni scholars refuted such Shī‘ite claims, claiming that they infringed on the prerogatives of the Prophet or that they had no basis in reason or revelation, as encapsulated by the following passage by Nasafī:

The imam’s ‘ilm is required for the execution of the affairs of the subjects (*tanfīdh umūr al-ra‘īyya*), so it is meaningless to stipulate whatever is in addition to that in terms of sciences. It has been established that the imamate is the successorship to prophecy (*khilāfat al-nubuwwa*), and the Prophet has said: “I am the most knowledgeable in the affairs of your faith (*umūr dīnikum*) and you are the most knowledgeable in the affairs of your world (*umūr dunyākum*). Thus whoever stipulates the imam to be knowledgeable in affairs of the world or knowledge of the unseen (*‘ilm al-ghayb*) has elevated the rank of the caliphate above that of prophecy, and this is downright unbelief.

...

As for the imams, they do not come with a command that is concealed from the people of this world; rather, they are entrusted with acting in accordance with what the Messenger brought forth from the Qur’ān and other [religious commands], and this is evident to all people. The scholars of the community have concerned themselves with the knowledge of all of this. The imam acts in accordance with that [command] and judges between humankind based on it, but he is similar to the rest of the community (*huwa ka-sā’ir al-umma*) in carrying it out by making clear what is right and wrong. Therefore, it is meaningless to stipulate that he be infallible.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Asma Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence: Medieval Islamic Discourse on Legitimate Leadership* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 143-44.

<sup>78</sup> It is nonetheless interesting to note that after the Fatimid Ismā‘īlīs achieved statehood, certain jurists such as al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān (d. 363/974) downplayed the imam’s knowledge of the *ghayb*. See al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, *Da‘ā’im al-Islām*, trans. Asaf A. A. Fyzee, rev. and ann. Ismail Kurban Husein Poonawala as *The Pillars of Islam, Vol. 1: Acts of Devotion and Religious Observances* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 59. See also Wilferd Madelung, “A Treatise on the Imamate of the Fatimid Caliph al-Manṣūr Bi-Allāh,” in *Texts, Documents and Artefacts: Islamic Studies in Honour of D. S. Richards*, ed. Chase F. Robinson (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 76-77.

<sup>79</sup> Nasafī, *Tabṣīrat al-adilla*, vol. 2, pp. 833, 837. See also Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, p. 325.

These passages suggest that although Sunni jurists and theologians emphasized the quality of *‘ilm*, they were not willing to confer to the imam esoteric knowledge and infallibility from error.<sup>80</sup> The imam’s *‘ilm* is not conceived to be any different from that of a regular lay person.

Even if the Sunni imam is not expected to possess privileged, esoteric knowledge on the same level as the Shī‘ite imam, the bar set requiring him to be a *mujtahid* remains a high one, as Frank Vogel argues:

At the time when Māwardī was writing, scholars had begun to see *ijtihād* capacity as a high attainment even for scholars, though they continued to insist on it as a prerequisite for serving as judge or mufti. In any event, the knowledge and skill which by Māwardī’s time was requisite for scholarly *ijtihād* would rarely be found in any individual who was at the same time interested in, and capable of, attaining, exercising, and holding the highest political office.<sup>81</sup>

Indeed, by Ibn al-Jawzī’s time, scholars had already come to terms that the Abbasid caliphs lacked *‘ilm*.<sup>82</sup> Some scholars—in particular, the Ḥanbalīs if Abū Ya‘lā can be taken as a good representative—even suggest dropping the requirement altogether if necessity calls for it, since the imam’s task is to defend Muslim territories and dispense legal punishments, not to serve as a judge.<sup>83</sup> An argument along similar lines can be observed in Juwaynī’s *Ghiyāth* where he argues in favor of a non-Qurayshite candidate possessing *kifāya* over a Qurayshite capable of *ijtihād* but lacking *kifāya*.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> What Crone and Hinds deem as the Umayyad caliph’s “superhuman insight” still falls short of the Shī‘ite imam’s knowledge of “deaths (or “destinies”) and trials (*al-manāyā wa’l-balāyā*).” Certain Twelver Shī‘ite scholars attribute to ‘Alī “knowledge of all the schisms (*fitan*)” and “future events” (including his own death). For a discussion of the Umayyad conception of the caliphate, see Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, pp. 24-42; Wadād al-Qāḍī, “The Religious Foundation of Late Umayyad Ideology and Practice,” in *Saber Religioso y Poder Político en el Islam: Actas des Simposio Internacional, Granada, 15-18 Octubre 1991*, ed. Manuela Marín (Madrid: Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional, 1994), pp. 232-73. For the Shī‘ites, see Afsaruddin, “Epistemology,” p. 62.

<sup>81</sup> Vogel, “Tracing Nuance,” pp. 340-41.

<sup>82</sup> For example, Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, vol. 2, pp. 832-33, stating that most caliphs after the Rāshidūn caliphs did not arrive at the level of *‘ilm* required to be a *mujtahid*. See also Wael B. Hallaq, “Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 16/1 (1984), pp. 12-15.

<sup>83</sup> Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, vol. 2, p. 833; Abū Ya‘lā, *Mu‘tamad*, pp. 242, 248.

<sup>84</sup> Hallaq, “Political Thought of Juwaynī,” p. 39.

Again, it would be Juwaynī's student, Ghazālī, who formulated a creative response to the Abbasid caliph's lack of *'ilm*. Ghazālī also has similar reservations about *'ilm* as a required condition for the imamate and saw it only as a "distinguishing characteristic" (*maziyya*).<sup>85</sup> However, he does not go as far as Abū Ya'ālā or Juwaynī in advocating for the total disregard of *'ilm*. He insists that *'ilm* exists in the reigning Abbasid caliph, al-Mustaẓhir, by virtue of him "exploiting the talents of the *'ulamā'* and seeking their help, and, in doubt, choose to follow the best and most learned."<sup>86</sup> Just as *najda* can be delegated to the Seljuq Turks, *'ilm* could similarly be fulfilled through consultation with the *'ulamā'*.<sup>87</sup> This is not only a call for a higher involvement of religious scholars like Ghazālī himself in government at a theoretical level, but also an attempt to subordinate the caliph to the scholars in matters of *'ilm* and, in effect, "to render [the caliph's] legitimacy ever more dependent on [the scholars]," who considered themselves the true heirs of the Prophet's legacy.<sup>88</sup>

Lastly, the appointment of a less excellent candidate (*al-mafḍūl*) as imam was an issue of contention between different schools of law. Early Ḥanbalī creeds and al-Ash'arī assert that only the most excellent in the Muslim community can be elected imam.<sup>89</sup> Al-Ash'arī even denounces the imamate of the less excellent (*imāmat al-mafḍūl*) as worldly kingship (*mulk*). There have also been early reports of Abū Ḥanīfa only accepting the imamate of the most excellent (*imāmat al-fāḍil*). A different view developed among the early Shāfi'īs: al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820) himself is

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<sup>85</sup> Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, p. 508; *Moderation*, p. 233.

<sup>86</sup> Ghazālī, *Faḍā'ih al-bāṭiniyya*, p. 173; *Deliverance*, p. 239.

<sup>87</sup> He asks, "Why can [the caliph] not fulfill the aim of knowledge *through* the best men of his time, just as the aims of power and competence can be fulfilled through others?" Ghazālī, *Faḍā'ih al-bāṭiniyya*, p. 172; *Deliverance*, p. 238.

<sup>88</sup> Vogel, "Tracing Nuance," p. 339.

<sup>89</sup> Madelung, "Imāma."

reported to have ranked ‘Alī above ‘Uthmān in excellence, and hence regarded ‘Uthmān’s reign as *imāmat al-maḥḍūl*.<sup>90</sup> Wilferd Madelung argues that “[t]his less rigid approach permitted the Shāfi‘īs to treat the post-*Rāshidūn* caliphate as a basically sound imāmate which could be judged by standards derived from the ideal early caliphate.”<sup>91</sup> Later Sunni thinkers would build on and modify these early views.

Most Sunni jurists and theologians beginning in the fifth/eleventh century agree that the contracting of the imamate to a less excellent man is permitted if the appointment of the most excellent candidate (*al-aḥḍal* or *al-fāḍil*) as imam leads to civil strife (*fitna*). Bazdawī points out that the majority of Sunni scholars drew parallels with the prayer imamate (*imāmat al-ṣalāh*) and argue based on the *ḥadīth*, “Pray behind every imam, pious or sinful,” that since it is permissible to pray behind a sinful prayer imam, the contracting of the imamate to a *maḥḍūl* is lawful if supplied with reasoning (*istidlāl*).<sup>92</sup> Others drew on a fixed repertoire of historical tropes to illustrate this point. Some invoked the Saqīfa incident in which Abū Bakr took both ‘Umar and Abū ‘Ubayda b. al-Jarrāḥ by the hand and said, “I am satisfied with [the selection of] either of these two men for you [as caliph], so offer your oath of allegiance to any one of them you wish.”<sup>93</sup> In this case, Abū Bakr, regarded as the most excellent man of the *umma*, was willing to concede the imamate to either of two supposedly less excellent candidates. In the Ḥanafī-Māturīdite tradition, a commonly

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<sup>90</sup> It is important to note that al-Shāfi‘ī wrote before consensus was reached on the four-caliphs thesis, which upholds the sequence of Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī ranked in descending terms of merit (*taḥḍīl*). See Josef Van Ess, “Political Ideas in Early Islamic Religious Thought,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 28/2 (2001), pp. 153-56; Crone, *Political Thought*, pp. 134-35.

<sup>91</sup> Madelung, “Imāma.”

<sup>92</sup> Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 188. Similarly, Juwaynī, *Irshād*, pp. 430-31; *Guide to Conclusive Proofs*, pp. 237-38.

<sup>93</sup> ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Simnānī, *Rawḍat al-quḍāh wa-ṭarīq al-najāh*, ed. ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Nāhī (Baghdad: Maṭba‘at As‘ad, 1970), vol. 1, p. 66.

cited anecdote is the consultative council (*shūrā*) instituted by ‘Umar to determine his successor.<sup>94</sup> As the argument goes, ‘Umar made the selection of his successor a matter for consultation (*shūrā*) among six persons despite the fact that ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī were evidently more excellent than the others. ‘Umar still proceeded to delegate to them the task of electing one through whom the public interest (*maṣlaḥa*) of the people will be best served.<sup>95</sup> Clearly, the views of Abū Ḥanīfa did not deter later Ḥanafī theologians from accepting an *imāmat al-mafḍūl*.

### 1.5. Methods of Appointment and Succession

The issue of how an imam became established in office involved Sunni-Shī‘ite polemics. In fact, it constituted the crux of the disputes between both schools of thought. The debate revolved around two questions related to the succession to Muḥammad after his death: Who was his rightful successor? And by what means was this successor singled out? In Sunni *kalām* treatises, these questions occupy the bulk of the chapter on the imamate, which is often replete with Shī‘ite claims on the subject followed by Sunni refutations and counter-arguments.<sup>96</sup> I will briefly outline several of these arguments and counter-arguments before moving on to internal Sunni developments with regard to methods of appointment and succession.

For the Twelver and Isma‘īlī Shī‘ites, the only way to guarantee a continuous, pristine line of infallible imams is through designation (*naṣṣ*), with each incumbent imam explicitly naming his

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<sup>94</sup> For a treatment of *shūrā* in Islamic thought and practice, see Roy P. Mottahedeh, “Consultation and the Political Process in the Islamic Middle East of the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” in *Arabian Studies in Honour of Mahmoud Ghul: Symposium at Yarmouk University, December 8-11, 1984*, ed. Moawiyah M. Ibrahim (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1989), pp. 83-88; Patricia Crone, “*Shūrā* as an Elective Institution,” *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, 19 (2001), pp. 3-39.

<sup>95</sup> Simnānī, *Rawḍat al-quḍāh*, vol. 1, p. 67; Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, vol. 2, pp. 834-35; Qurṭubī, *Jāmi‘*, vol. 1, p. 286; Sa‘d al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *A Commentary on the Creed of Islam*, trans. Earl Edgar Elder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), p. 149.

<sup>96</sup> For instance, of the fifty-four printed pages of Rāzī’s chapter on the imamate in his *Kitāb al-Arba‘īn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, forty-two pages are devoted to this issue.

successor. The Shī'ite doctrine of *naṣṣ* can be traced back to the belief that the Prophet had appointed 'Alī by an explicit designation (*naṣṣ jaliyy*) at a place called Ghadīr Khumm with the following words: “Whomever I am his master, 'Alī is his master too” (*man kuntu mawlāhu fa-'Alī mawlāhu*; also called “*khabar al-mawlā*”). Another commonly quoted tradition presents the Prophet as saying, “Your relationship to me is like that of Aaron to Moses” (*anta minnī bi-manzilat Hārūn min Mūsā*; also called “*khabar al-manzila*”). Twelver and Ismā'īlī Shī'ites deem both traditions to be widely transmitted (*mutawātir*). In addition to these two *ḥadīths*, Shī'ite accounts usually cite a plethora of Qur'ānic verses pointing towards 'Alī's imamate and his descendants.<sup>97</sup>

Against this, Sunni thinkers affirm that the imam is singled out via election (*ikhtiyār*), meaning that the office is “filled by the community.”<sup>98</sup> This is so despite the dynastic nature of the Abbasids and other ruling dynasties in the medieval Islamic world during Ibn al-Jawzī's time. The notion of an elected sovereign is one with historical precedents in Roman/Byzantine political theory and Old Testament kingship, which uphold the idea of divine election.<sup>99</sup> But while the Roman/Byzantine Christian political tradition looks towards God's singling out of Saul for Israelite kingship followed by popular acclamation as a theoretical prototype, Sunni writings on the imamate retain a certain level of ambivalence towards divine election. On one hand, Sunni writers of mirrors of princes dedicated to non-caliphal rulers like the Seljuq sultans had no qualms about conceiving the sultan as obtaining his power and authority directly from God who bestowed

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<sup>97</sup> See al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *Pillars*, vol. 1, pp. 18-122; Ḥasan b. Yūsuf b. 'Alī b. al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, *Al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar: A Treatise on the Principles of Shī'ite Theology, with Commentary by Miqdād-i Fāḍil al-Ḥillī*, trans. William McElwee Miller (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1928), pp. 74-78; Rāzī, *Arba'īn*, pp. 430-40.

<sup>98</sup> Crone, *Political Thought*, p. 226.

<sup>99</sup> Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre: Etude sur le “césaropapisme” byzantin*, trans. Jean Birrell as *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 48-53; Andrew Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy: Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 5-7.

sovereignty on whomever He chooses.<sup>100</sup> On the other, Sunni writers were adamant in distancing the imamate from any pretensions of divine election and insisted that the appointment of an imam was effected through the community alone. This ambivalence can be better understood once we return to Sunni-Shīʿite polemics.

ʿAlī’s succession to the Prophet, as espoused by the Shīʿites, is refuted mainly on the basis that if there had been an explicit designation of ʿAlī by the Prophet, the community would have known about such a weighty matter and would not have gone against the Prophet’s commands.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, ʿAlī himself did not press for his claims despite being passed over for the imamate multiple times during the reigns of his predecessors.<sup>102</sup> Before the crystallization of Sunni orthodoxy in the tenth century, a sizable group of proto-Sunnis—including Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, al-Ḥaṣan al-Baṣrī, and a substantial number of *ḥadīth* folk (*aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*)—held that Abū Bakr was appointed to the imamate by implicit designation (*al-naṣṣ al-khafī*) or by indication (*al-naṣṣ biʾl-ishāra*), when the Prophet designated him to lead the prayers during his final illness.<sup>103</sup> Perhaps realizing that this argument leaned too close to Shīʿite positions, Sunni theologians as early as al-Ashʿarī and even later Ḥanbalīs, such as Abū Yaʿlā and Ibn al-Zāghūnī, argued against the notion of an implicit or hinted designation.<sup>104</sup> Eventual Sunni orthodoxy maintains that Abū Bakr was elected by the Companions of the Prophet by way of consensus (*ijmāʿ*). Despite the fact that the subsequent three Rāshidūn Caliphs ascended to the imamate through different means,

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<sup>100</sup> Nizām al-Mulk, *Book of Government*, pp. 9-10; Ghazālī, *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, trans. F. R. C. Bagley as *Ghazālī’s Book of Counsel for Kings* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 45-46. See also Mottahedeh, “Some Attitudes Towards Monarchy and Absolutism.”

<sup>101</sup> Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 183; Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, vol. 2, p. 841.

<sup>102</sup> Mutawallī, *Ghunya*, p. 180; Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, vol. 2, pp. 842-43.

<sup>103</sup> Afsaruddin, “In Praise of the Caliphs,” p. 334; Yücesoy, “Justification of Political Authority,” p. 16.

<sup>104</sup> McCarthy, *Theology of al-Ashʿarī*, p. 116; Abū Yaʿlā, *Muʿtamad*, p. 223; Ibn al-Zāghūnī, *Īdāh*, pp. 610-12.

Sunni theologians usually maintain that their imamate was established by Companion consensus.<sup>105</sup> The overall vision is that of a polity forged out of the Companions' consistent pursuit of consensus.

Substantial space is also dedicated to refuting the scriptural claims of the Shī'ites regarding 'Alī's succession to Muḥammad. The *khavar al-mawlā* and *khavar al-manzila* are considered *āḥād* reports and hence not conclusive. With regard to the *khavar al-mawlā*, theologians argue on the basis of etymology that the term *mawlā* merely conveys the meaning of *nāṣir* (helper or ally) or *mu'tiq* (emancipator), not that 'Alī is more worthy (*al-awlā*) than any other believers of the imamate. As for the *khavar al-manzila*, Sunnis point out that the Prophet uttered this statement to 'Alī upon deputizing (*istakhlafa*) the latter to look after Medina before he went for the Tabūk campaign, because it had grieved 'Alī to be separated from him. The Prophet intended to draw parallels with Aaron, who deputized for Moses when he was alive but did not succeed him as leader of the Israelite tribes.<sup>106</sup> To fight fire with fire, Sunni theologians would also put forward several Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadīths* in support of their claims for the Rāshidūn caliphs. Initially used by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and his circle to include 'Alī within the ranks of the Rāshidūn caliphs, the *ḥadīth* which reads "The caliphate after me will last for thirty years followed by kingship" (*al-khilāfa ba'dī thalāthūn sana thumma mulk ba'da dhālika*) began to be deployed in a polemical context to justify the reigns of the Rāshidūn caliphs.<sup>107</sup> Another commonly cited *ḥadīth* is the one

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<sup>105</sup> Ibn al-Zāghūnī, *Īdāḥ*, pp. 612-29. Similar arguments in Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth al-umam fī iltiyāth al-ḥulam*, eds. 'Abd al-Mun'im and Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī (Alexandria: Dār al-Da'wa, 1979), pp. 42-43.

<sup>106</sup> See, for instance, the point-by-point refutation by Rāzī in his *Arba'in*, pp. 450-52.

<sup>107</sup> Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, vol. 2, pp. 860, 875, 881; Rāzī, *Arba'in*, p. 445; Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Madī (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa'l-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyya, 2002), vol. 5, p. 288. For a discussion of the *ḥadīth*'s provenance, see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early Abbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunni Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 169-78.

that reads, “Be guided by those who come after me, Abū Bakr and ‘Umar” (*iqṭadū bi’l-ladhayni min ba’dī Abī Bakr wa-‘Umar*).<sup>108</sup>

The idea of appointment by election (*ikhtiyār*) serves as the Sunni counterpoint against the Shī‘ite notion of *naṣṣ* and therefore carries most weight in a Sunni-Shī‘ite polemical context. However, as far as its relevance to historical realities is concerned, election as a method of installing an imam-caliph in office had already become a moot point by Ibn al-Jawzī’s time.

By the end of the eighth/fourteenth century, Sunni jurists and theologians have come to accept three means of installing an imam in office: (1) election (*ikhtiyār*); (2) testamentary designation by the previous imam (*‘ahd* or *naṣṣ*, though not to be confused with the Shī‘ite *naṣṣ*); and (3) compulsion or brute force (*ghalaba* or *qahr*). Election is usually listed and discussed first since it forms the mainstay of the Sunni doctrine of the imamate against the Shī‘ites. The election of an imam is usually construed as being effected through a body of individuals known as the *ahl al-ḥall wa’l-‘aqd* (people who loosen and bind) or *ahl al-ikhtiyār* (electors). After the imam is selected, the process of election is concluded with the swearing of the oath of allegiance (*bay‘a*) to the imam by members of the community or just a group of them. According to Roy Mottahedeh, the *bay‘a* “was a voluntary offering of allegiance to a ruler,” and “a sign that one claimed military authority, and not just ‘deputized’ rule.”<sup>109</sup> In Sunni juristic discussions of the imamate, the *bay‘a* is that which seals the deal in affirming the legitimacy of one’s imamate as a contract between the candidate and the Muslim community at large, so much so that the very first thing chroniclers

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<sup>108</sup> Rāzī, *Arba‘īn*, p. 444; Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām*, p. 321.

<sup>109</sup> Roy P. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, rev. ed. (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), pp. 50-51.

usually record when documenting a certain caliph's reign is the precise date on which the *bay'a* ceremony took place.<sup>110</sup>

The issue of who and what class of individuals constituted the electors remains elusive. Some regarded them as scholars while others simply regarded them as individuals with experience in government and administration (e.g. generals and viziers).<sup>111</sup> More ink is spilled over the number of electors required for an election. On one extreme, Ḥanbalīs such as Abū Ya'la and Ibn al-Zāghūnī require the generality (*jumhūr*) of the electors to be present.<sup>112</sup> It is only when the imamate is contracted by the generality of the electors that it can be considered an indisputable product of consensus (*ijmā'*). Ibn al-Zāghūnī justifies this stance by claiming that the swearing of the *bay'a* to Abū Bakr was attended by all members of the *ahl al-ḥall wa'l-'aqd*, and no one among the Companions disputed it.<sup>113</sup>

On the other end of the spectrum, al-Ash'arī and his followers accept election by only one elector, a situation analogous to marriage, which can be validly contracted by a single guardian of legal probity.<sup>114</sup> This view also became popular in non-Ash'arite circles. For instance, Nasafī, a Ḥanafī-Māturīdīte theologian, agrees with al-Ash'arī that stipulating consensus (*ijmā'*) in the

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<sup>110</sup> As Crone highlights, "the pledge of allegiance was constitutive of the imamate" (*Political Thought*, p. 227). On the *bay'a* ceremony, see Eric J. Hanne, "Ritual and Reality: The *Bay'a* Process in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Islamic Courts," in *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean*, eds. Alexander Beihammer, Stavroula Constantinou, and Maria Parani (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 141-57.

<sup>111</sup> Crone, *Political Thought*, pp. 227-28.

<sup>112</sup> Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, p. 119.

<sup>113</sup> Ibn al-Zāghūnī, *Īdāh*, p. 621. Other thinkers like Māwardī, Mutawallī, and Juwaynī use this anecdote for precisely the opposite position—that the imamate does not have to be contracted by the generality of the electors to be valid and approved by consensus. In their account, those present at the Saqīfa meeting pledged the oath of allegiance to Abū Bakr without waiting for those who were absent to arrive or for the news of the contracting of his imamate to reach them. Furthermore, Māwardī is of the opinion that Abū Bakr's *bay'a* was ratified by only five electors. See Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, pp. 22-23; *Ordinances*, p. 5; Mutawallī, *Ghunya*, pp. 184-85; Hallaq, "Political Thought of Juwaynī," p. 33.

<sup>114</sup> Lambton, *State and Government*, p. 81; Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, p. 114.

election of an imam leads to a delay in the establishment of the imamate, and thus suggests that the contracting of the imamate by one elector fulfills the consensus of the Muslims.<sup>115</sup> Among the Ash‘arite theologians, Ghazālī took the single-electer stance to another extreme by arguing that one elector suffices as long as he is obeyed, on the side of the multitudes, and possesses military power (*shawka*).<sup>116</sup> In light of the influence wielded by Seljuq rulers over caliphal succession during his time and his gloomy acknowledgement that “public authority today follows nothing but military power (*shawka*),” Ghazālī saw the caliph as owing his power to the Seljuq sultan and legitimated the latter’s position in return. Crone notes that Ghazālī calls this undertaking “delegation” (*tafwīḍ*), except that the relationship between caliph and sultan/emir is now reversed: instead of the caliph delegating authority to viziers or governors, it is now the sultan/emir who delegates authority to the caliph by swearing allegiance to him.<sup>117</sup> In other words, insofar as Ghazālī is prepared to accept an election devoid of the community, he also concedes that obedience and loyalty can only be obtained by force.<sup>118</sup>

The second method, testamentary designation (*‘ahd* or *naṣṣ*), was nothing new to Sunni jurists and theologians as this was the prevalent practice after the Rāshidūn period. Sunni thinkers accepted it as valid on the grounds that this was the method used when Abū Bakr appointed ‘Umar as successor. Some even regarded the *shūrā* set up by ‘Umar as a form of designation, in the sense that the imam “designates” a group of potential successors instead of just one, and the candidates choose the imam from among themselves.<sup>119</sup> Bāqillānī and Abū Ya‘lā deemed testamentary

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<sup>115</sup> Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, vol. 2, p. 848.

<sup>116</sup> Hillenbrand, “Ghazālī’s Views on Government,” p. 83.

<sup>117</sup> Crone, *Political Thought*, p. 244.

<sup>118</sup> Hillenbrand, “Ghazālī’s Views on Government,” p. 83.

<sup>119</sup> Crone, “*Shūrā*,” pp. 36-37; Qurṭubī, *Jāmi‘*, vol. 1, p. 284.

designation valid only if followed by a *bay‘a* from the electors. This was the opinion of most jurists and theologians, according to Māwardī, who disputes it by arguing that Abū Bakr’s nomination of ‘Umar “was not dependent on approval by the Companions” and that the incumbent imam’s choice “is more effective and his decision more worthy of enforcement.”<sup>120</sup>

Over time, one obtains a general sense that testamentary designation had become the preferred, or even default, means of installing an imam in office. Bazdawī, for instance, lists it first and cites the general opinion of the *ahl al-sunna wa’l-jamā‘a* stating that it is obligatory for the people to carry out an election if the incumbent imam does not appoint a successor.<sup>121</sup> While Ghazālī still entertains the idea of election as a method of appointing an imam (though effectively reducing it to a single-electors scenario) in his polemical treatise against the Ismā‘īlīs, *Faḍā’ih al-bāṭiniyya wa-faḍā’il al-Mustazhiriyya*, he lists the following three methods in his *kalām* treatise, *al-Iqtisād fī’l-i’tiqād*, written later: designation (*tanṣiṣ*) by the Prophet, designation (*tanṣiṣ*) of a suitable successor from among the ruling imam’s sons, and the delegation of authority (*tafwīḍ*) by a man who wields military power (*dhū shawka*)—no mention whatsoever of election.<sup>122</sup>

Much scholarly attention has been given to seizure of power by compulsion or brute force (*ghalaba* or *qahr*) beginning with H. A. R. Gibb. According to Gibb’s account, while the usurpation of power by military strongmen and independent princes in far-flung provinces had become commonplace by the fifth/eleventh century, Māwardī “regularize[d] the situation” using a designation called the “emirate by seizure/usurpation” (*imārat al-istīlā*).<sup>123</sup> Māwardī’s

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<sup>120</sup> Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 31; *Ordinances*, p. 9.

<sup>121</sup> Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 189.

<sup>122</sup> Hillenbrand, “Ghazālī’s Views on Government,” p. 88.

<sup>123</sup> Gibb, “Al-Mawardi’s Theory of the Caliphate,” pp. 162-63; idem., “Constitutional Organization,” p. 18.

concessions mandate that the usurping ruler offer allegiance to the caliph and govern in accordance with the *sharīʿa* in return for the caliph’s validation of his rule. Gibb argues that Māwardī’s ideas can be traced back to the “Asharite insistence on the historic continuity of the caliphate,” which ended up “divorcing the Imamate from the Sharia and the complete negation of the rule of law.”<sup>124</sup> All it took was the abolition of the caliphate by the Mongols in 656/1258 for jurists such as Ibn Jamāʿa to transfer Māwardī’s formulation of the *imārat al-istīlāʾ* from a provincial governor to the imam himself.<sup>125</sup> His gloomy assessment notwithstanding, Gibb overlooks the fact that accession to the imamate by force or compulsion had already found expression in several statements by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal incorporated into Ḥanbalī creeds such as the following:

Whoever overwhelms [the people] with the sword until he becomes caliph and is called Commander of the Faithful, it is not permissible for anyone who believes in God to pass the night without regarding him as imam, be just or unjust, for he is the Commander of the Faithful.<sup>126</sup>

Ḥanbalī treatments of the imamate by Abū Yaʿlā and Ibn al-Zāghūnī usually do not mention usurpation as an independent way of installing an imam in office, but instead discuss it in relation to election (*ikhtiyār*) or consensus (*ijmāʿ*).<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Gibb, “Some Considerations,” p. 143. Gibb’s arguments have been incorporated by later scholars like Rosenthal, Lambton, and Crone. Recent critiques of Gibb’s pessimistic remarks on the relationship between political discourse and the *sharīʿa* include al-Azmeh, “Islamic Political Thought” and Vogel, “Tracing Nuance.”

<sup>125</sup> Gibb, “Some Considerations,” p. 143.

<sup>126</sup> Abū Yaʿlā, *Muʿtamad*, p. 238; idem, *Aḥkām*, p. 28. For Ḥanbalī creeds, see Henri Laoust, “Les premières professions de foi Hanbalites,” in *Mélanges Louis Massignon*, Vol. III (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1957), pp. 7-35; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, ed. and trans. Michael Cooperson as *Virtues of the Imām Aḥmad ibn Hanbal*, (New York: New York University Press, 2013-2015), vol. 1, pp. 324-25; Christopher Melchert, “Early Ḥanbalī Creeds” (unpublished; online resource: <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:3f641916-8c75-4114-8e90-db25de3fa7be>).

<sup>127</sup> Abū Yaʿlā mentions it to justify his point that the imamate can only be contracted with the complete obedience of the people, including the electors, while Ibn al-Zāghūnī regards it as a kind of *ijmāʿ* obtained under difficult circumstances (*ʿalā muḍāyaqa*).

It is not until Juwaynī that we see usurpation being given thorough treatment as a method of obtaining the imamate, though he only recognizes its validity under dire circumstances.<sup>128</sup> The “imamate by force” is crucial to Juwaynī’s contention that there could be no imamate without an imam who wielded *de facto* power. If a ruling Qurayshite imam lacks *kifāya* and is therefore incapable of managing the affairs of the *umma*, the electors should depose him and elect a non-Qurayshite imam. However, a situation might also arise whereby someone seizes power and declares himself imam. Juwaynī deems such an imamate legitimate and lawful as long as the usurping imam is able to defend Islam and govern the *umma* effectively.<sup>129</sup>

Juwaynī’s “imamate by force” would be picked up by post-656/1258 Sunni thinkers and listed as a third method of installing an imam, after election and testamentary designation. Living during the height of Mamluk rule, Ibn Jamā‘a admits that this was the only form of imamate which existed in his time.<sup>130</sup> Both he and Nawawī share the opinion that if there came a time that was devoid of an imam and a candidate who is not fully qualified for the imamate takes power by military force, obedience to him is still necessary to ensure the unity of the Muslims. The same rules apply even if the usurping imam was sinful (*fāsiqan*), ignorant (*jāhīlan*), or disobedient to God in his actions (*‘āṣiyyan bi-fi’lihi*).<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate*, pp. 105-7; Sohaira Siddiqui, “Power vs. Authority: al-Juwaynī’s Intervention in Pragmatic Political Thought,” *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 28/2 (2017), pp. 203, 206 n. 39.

<sup>129</sup> Hallaq, “Political Thought of Juwaynī,” pp. 38-40; Crone, *Political Thought*, pp. 234-36.

<sup>130</sup> Lambton, *State and Government*, p. 141.

<sup>131</sup> Nawawī, *Rawḍat al-ṭālibīn*, vol. 7, p. 266; Ibn Jamā‘a, *Tahrīr*, p. 259.

## 1.6. Deposition and Rebellion

Deposition and rebellion against a ruling imam is a complex issue that involves not only the socio-political concerns of the Sunni thinkers themselves, but also sectarian polemics and the historical memory of certain events in early Islam. For Sunni jurists and theologians, since it is the duty of the imam to manage the affairs of the *umma* and to safeguard Islam, any impediments which hinder his ability to do so constitute sufficient grounds for his deposition or removal from office. Physical disabilities such as loss of sight, sanity or reason, hearing, and speech impair good judgment, while loss of both hands or legs impedes movement, all of which result in detrimental effects for the management of political and military affairs. Capture by enemies without hope of release voids the incumbent's imamate, and a new imam is to be appointed. If the ruling imam renounces Islam and becomes an infidel (*kafara*), there was unanimous agreement that he ought to be removed from office. Abū Ya'ālā even suggests that he has abandoned the faith and should be killed.<sup>132</sup> For Juwaynī, a powerless imam lacking in *kifāya* who does not demonstrate competence in governing the community warrants deposition by the *ahl al-ḥall wa 'l-'aqd*.<sup>133</sup>

But what if the imam lost his moral probity ( *'adāla*) and fell into sin (*fisq*)? This question naturally arose in regards to the qualifications required for the Sunni imam. Contrary to the Shī'ites, Sunni thinkers argue that infallibility is not a required qualification for the imamate. However, a potentially fallible imam leaves the Sunnis with the need to confront the problem of moral transgression and sin on the part of the imam, which became a thorny problem when debating their

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<sup>132</sup> Abū Ya'ālā, *Mu'tamad*, p. 243.

<sup>133</sup> This view is more pronounced in his later work *Ghiyāth al-umam*. See Hallaq, "Political Thought of Juwaynī," p. 39. In his *Irshād*, a theological treatise written earlier, there is more hesitation regarding the issue: "An imam may voluntarily depose himself without cause also. What is related about the resignation of al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī may be understood as due to his realization of his own personal inability, or one may attribute it to some other cause." See Juwaynī, *Irshād*, p. 426; *Guide to Conclusive Proofs*, p. 235.

Shī'ite adversaries.<sup>134</sup> This then brings us to the next question: should a sinful imam be resisted and deposed? The Khārijites and Mu'tazilites were of the opinion that he should be, with force if the situation called for it.<sup>135</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025), a Shāfi'ī jurist of Mu'tazilite theological persuasion, even claims that this position was established by the consensus of the Companions of the Prophet and that there was no disagreement among them over it.<sup>136</sup>

As much as the Sunni response to the above questions has to be read in the context of these polemical exchanges, one also has to consider early historical events during the Rāshidūn period. If the Saqīfa meeting supplied the historical precedents in dealing with the election of the imam, the murder of the third caliph 'Uthmān was the equivalent for the problem of deposition even if writers did not make such connections explicit. It is widely acknowledged that the last years of 'Uthmān's reign saw the beginning of troubles within the Muslim community owing to grievances towards his new centralizing program and the favoring of his Umayyad kinsmen for wealth dispensation and political appointments.<sup>137</sup> The caliph's brutal murder in his own house in Medina sparked a civil war which would last through the reign of 'Alī until the enthronement of Mu'āwiya as caliph in 41/661.

The question that loomed large during the two centuries following 'Uthmān's murder was whether the rebels—being Muslims themselves—were justified in killing him. The issue ultimately boiled down to 'Uthmān's moral status: if he had been a just imam throughout the twelve years of his caliphate, the rebels had no right to go against him; if he was guilty of sin, his

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<sup>134</sup> See, for instance, Rāzī, *Arba'īn*, pp. 421-25.

<sup>135</sup> Crone, *Political Thought*, pp. 58, 66.

<sup>136</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawhīd wa'l-'adl*, eds. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Qāsim, Ṭaha Ḥusayn, and Ibrāhīm Madkūr (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa'l-Irshād al-Qawmī, al-Idāra al-'Āmma li'l-Thaqāfa, n.d.), vol. 20, part 1, pp. 201-7, especially p. 203.

<sup>137</sup> El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics*, pp. 122-204.

imamate was forfeited and the rebels were right to kill him.<sup>138</sup> For the Shī‘ites, according to whom the first three Rāshidūn caliphs were illegitimate usurpers of ‘Alī’s rights, ‘Uthmān had been unjust even before he became caliph. For the Khārijites, he had only been a rightful imam for the first six years of his reign, but descended into unbelief (*kufr*) for the remaining six, and therefore had to be deposed.<sup>139</sup> Sunni apologetics eventually sided with ‘Uthmān and exculpated him from moral blemish and sin. After all, he was among the ten Companions promised Paradise by the Prophet, according to a widespread *ḥadīth*.<sup>140</sup> The blame for his murder shifted from the Companions to a mindless group of riff-raff (*ghawghā’*) whose actions led to discord (*fitna*) within the *umma*.<sup>141</sup>

The doctrinal developments outlined above played an enormous role in shaping how ‘Uthmān’s murder was depicted in Sunni chronicles and historical writings. Chroniclers employed various rhetorical strategies as tropes to narrate ‘Uthmān’s refusal to abdicate when confronted by the rebels as a righteous defense of the *umma* against *fitna*. After the rebels arrive in Medina, for instance, we encounter prominent individuals of the community offering advice to the caliph to remain steadfast and to not give in to the rebels’ demands, such as Ibn ‘Umar’s (d. 73/693) statement: “I do not recommend that you remove a shirt (*qamīṣ*) that God has girded you with, and make a precedent whereby every time a people disliked their caliph or *imām* they overthrew him, thus endangering the foundations of religion and the order of the community.”<sup>142</sup> A different

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<sup>138</sup> Crone, *Political Thought*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>139</sup> Al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn wa-ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn*, ed. Helmut Ritter (Istanbul: Jam‘iyyat al-Mustashriqīn al-Almāniyya, 1933), p. 454; Abū Ya‘lā, *Mu‘tamad*, p. 230.

<sup>140</sup> Maya Yazigi, “*Ḥadīth al-‘ashara*, or the Political Uses of a Tradition,” *Studia Islamica*, 86 (1997), pp. 159-67.

<sup>141</sup> Van Ess, “Political Ideas,” p. 155.

<sup>142</sup> El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics*, pp. 149-50. The invoking of Ibn ‘Umar is significant. Biographers and chroniclers often depict him as remaining aloof from the political conflicts of his time, even paying allegiance to Umayyad rulers like Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya, ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, and al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, whom many early Muslims regarded as tyrannical. Several statements advocating for patience towards, instead of rebellion against, unjust rulers are attributed to him: “I do not fight in [times of] *fitna*, and I pray behind whoever wins”; “Pay your alms to your rulers—whoever

rendition of this statement comes in the form of a Prophetic *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet foretells the troubles facing ‘Uthmān: “It may come that God may gird you with a shirt one day (*la ‘alla Allāh yaqmuṣuka qamīṣan*). If this happens, and people try to make you renounce it, do not let them have their way.”<sup>143</sup> When besieged in his own house, ‘Uthmān resisted rebel demands by claiming that he would not remove a shirt that God had put on him. ‘Uthmān’s words assume a prophetic tone in other instances: “Know that if you kill me, you will never pray in unity again, nor carry out military campaigns united or receive your rightful booty. You will all become enemies of one another like this” (clasping his hands such that the fingers crossed one another).<sup>144</sup> The overall message is clear: rebellion and regicide will ultimately lead to civil strife.

Early Muslim scholars developed different positions on deposition and rebellion against a sinful imam.<sup>145</sup> Despite affording a large measure of discretion to the ruling powers, Mālik (d. 179/795) insists that they have to be just and legitimate, and therefore supported rebellion against illegitimate or unjust rulers.<sup>146</sup> Al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820) is reported to have argued for the removal of an unjust imam on the grounds that an evil-doing judge or commander should be removed.<sup>147</sup>

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was pious, it is for him; and whoever was sinful, it is against himself”; and “We are with whoever wins.” Over time, Ibn ‘Umar became a mouthpiece of the traditionalists who cautioned against taking part in any fighting between men of power, to the extent that Sufyān al-Thawrī is reported to have claimed, “We adhere to ‘Umar’s words in the time of unity (*fī l-jamā‘a*) and his son’s in the time of division (*fī l-firqa*).” See L. Veccia Vaglieri, “‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb,” *EP*; Saud al-Sarhan, “Early Muslim Traditionalism: A Critical Study of the Works and Political Theology of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal,” Ph.D. dissertation (University of Exeter, 2011), pp. 155, 184-86.

<sup>143</sup> El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics*, pp. 134, 383 n. 37.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>145</sup> The positions of early Muslim scholars such as Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and al-Shāfi‘ī are often murky and at times contradictory, and therefore may or may not be historically accurate. Statements by later scholars regarding such early figures might also involve a huge degree of back projection. Nonetheless, an attempt to obtain a rough picture of their views is still worthwhile.

<sup>146</sup> Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>147</sup> Taftāzānī, *Commentary*, p. 150: “The basis for this view is that the evil-doer according to al-Shāfi‘ī is not a person of authority, for since he does not look after himself, how can he look after others?” Al-Shāfi‘ī was also suspected of conspiring to rebel against the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd. See Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, p. 80.

Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) takes the opposite position with the justification that “an evil-doer is a person of authority even to the extent that it is valid for an evil-doer who is a father to give in marriage his daughter who is a minor.”<sup>148</sup> Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s (d. 241/855) position tends closer to that of Abū Ḥanīfa.<sup>149</sup> So pronounced was Ibn Ḥanbal’s stance against rebellion that Ḥanbalī creeds from the mid-third/ninth century onwards usually included a substantial section on the need to obey the imam, pray behind him, fight *jihād* with him, and entrust one’s alms to him, regardless of whether he was pious or sinful.<sup>150</sup>

Up until Ibn al-Jawzī’s time, Ḥanbalī scholars were largely consistent with Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s views in categorically opposing deposition and rebellion. According to Abū Ya‘lā, sin (*fisq*), unlike unbelief (*kufṛ*), does not cast the imam out of the faith and does not prevent him from administering his duties. Instead of fighting against him, one should counsel him and not obey any unlawful commands he issues.<sup>151</sup> This was Ibn Taymiyya’s position as well.<sup>152</sup> For Ibn al-Jawzī’s teacher, Ibn al-Zāghūnī, although it is permissible to remove a judge if he falls into sin, the analogy does not hold for a sinful imam because deposition will lead to civil strife (*fitna*), disagreements

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<sup>148</sup> Taftāzānī, *Commentary*, p. 150; Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 7-9, 308-9, 478, noting that there are reports claiming that he held the duty of forbidding wrong to be obligatory by word and sword. It is also important to note that Abū Ḥanīfa, along with Mālik, the Murjī‘a, and Qadarīs, and Mu‘tazilites, was one of the supporters of Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya against al-Manṣūr. See Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, pp. 73, 148; Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>149</sup> Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1950-56), vol. 13, pp. 52, 173-74, vol. 14, p. 76; Abū Bakr al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*, ed. ‘Aṭīyya al-Zahrānī (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1989-99), vol. 1, pp. 130-44.

<sup>150</sup> Al-Sarhan, “Early Muslim Traditionalism,” p. 179; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 15, pp. 87-89; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Virtues*, vol. 1, pp. 306-7, 314-15, 324-27. This is in contrast with Ḥanafī creeds which, according to Madelung, rarely mention the imamate after the Rāshidūn caliphs (Madelung, “Imāma”).

<sup>151</sup> Abū Ya‘lā, *Mu‘tamad*, p. 243.

<sup>152</sup> Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, p. 251; Rosenthal, *Political Thought*, p. 55; Lambton, *State and Government*, p. 146. But his position was radically different with regard to the Mongols, whom he regarded as Khārijites who “asserted what was not permitted” despite having converted to Islam. See Denise Aigle, “The Mongol Invasions of Bilād al-Shām by Ghāzān Khān and Ibn Taymīyah’s Three ‘Anti-Mongol’ Fatwas,” *Mamluk Studies Review*, 11/2 (2007), pp. 89-120, especially pp. 101-3.

between people (*ikhtilāf al-nās*), dissolution of the state (*shatāt al-dawla*), and disorder in the faith/community (*ikhtilāl al-milla*).<sup>153</sup> As I will demonstrate in Chapter Five, Ibn al-Jawzī's discussion of al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī's (d. 61/680) rebellion against the second Umayyad caliph Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya (r. 60/680-64/683) represents a unique intervention in Ḥanbalī discourses on deposition and rebellion.

We now move from the Ḥanbalīs to thinkers from other legal and theological schools. The Ḥanafīs, like their Ḥanbalī counterparts, appear to be largely consistent in claiming that an imam who has sinned is not to be deposed.<sup>154</sup> Shāfi'ī thinkers, on the other hand, appear more conflicted over the issue.<sup>155</sup> According to the Ḥanafī-Māturīdite theologian Bazdawī, some Shāfi'īs equate sin to unbelief, and therefore a sinning imam is one who has left the faith and warrants deposition. Other circles adopt al-Shāfi'ī's analogy vis-à-vis a sinning judge: an imam who sinned did not descend into unbelief but still had to be removed from office. Another group of Shāfi'īs leaned closer to Ḥanafī and Ḥanbalī views in rejecting deposition altogether, since a deposed judge can be substituted by another but the deposition of an imam leads to corruption (*fasād*).<sup>156</sup> Nevertheless, the prevailing view over time among the Shāfi'īs steers away from deposition.<sup>157</sup> Even those who were in favor of discontinuing the imamate of a sinner would usually only permit the imam's self-

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<sup>153</sup> Ibn al-Zāghūnī, *Īdāh*, pp. 632-33.

<sup>154</sup> Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 190; Taftāzānī, *Commentary*, p. 150.

<sup>155</sup> As noted by the Mamluk-era Shāfi'ī scribe Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418). See Qalqashandī, *Ma'āthir al-ināfa fī ma'ālīm al-khilāfa*, ed. 'Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1980), vol. 1, p. 72.

<sup>156</sup> Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, pp. 190-91.

<sup>157</sup> Taftāzānī, *Commentary*, pp. 150-51: "That which is written down in the books of the Shāfi'ītes permits the removal of a judge for evil-doing, but not an Imam, the difference being that in the removal of the Imam and the appointment of another there is occasion for stirring up sedition, since he possesses power which the judge does not." See, in addition, Nawawī, *Rawḍat al-ṭālibīn*, vol. 7, p. 268; Ibn Jamā'a, *Tahrīr*, p. 283.

removal from office, rather than being deposed by others.<sup>158</sup> The Ash‘arite position displays similar ambiguities: while the extant creeds of al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/936) suggest that he opposed armed rebellion against an erring imam,<sup>159</sup> some scholars would group his adherents in the pro-deposition camp.<sup>160</sup>

A detailed treatment of how an imam is to be deposed—if this is indeed permissible—is not typically encountered in juristic and theological discourses of the imamate, a point much belabored by many scholars of Islamic political thought. Even if writers addressed this issue at all, most of them are content to just state that an imam who turns oppressive and sinful should abdicate as this entails a much lower social cost.<sup>161</sup> In his *Ghiyāth*, Juwaynī suggests that the *ahl al-ḥall wa’l-‘aqd* should be responsible for the deposition of an imam who does not demonstrate competence in governing the community, though “this probably meant no more than that the electors had to declare him deposed.”<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Several studies have noted the difference between Māwardī and Abū Ya‘lā—both writers of treatises on government bearing the same title, *al-Aḥkām al-sultāniyya*—concerning the issue of deposition, namely that the former seems less reluctant than the latter to contemplate the possibility of deposing a sinful imam: Little, “A New Look at *al-Aḥkām al-sultāniyya*,” pp. 13-14; Hanne, “Abbasid Politics and the Classical Theory of the Caliphate,” p. 60; Christopher Melchert, “Māwardī, Abū Ya‘lā, and the Sunni Revival,” in *Prosperity and Stagnation: Some Cultural and Social Aspects of the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, ed. Krzysztof Kościelniak (Krakow: UNUM Publishing House, 2010), pp. 51, 58-59. Less discussed is Māwardī’s claim that “An incumbent must step down (*kharaja minhā*), and may not be reinstated upon regaining probity without a new appointment” (*Aḥkām*, p. 42; *Ordinances*, p. 17). This appears to be Juwaynī’s view as well: “If [the imam] should commit acts of impiety and cease, because of his impiety, to have the qualities commensurate with the imamate, he may divest himself without being deposed” (*Irshād*, pp. 425-26; *Guide to Conclusive Proofs*, pp. 234-35).

<sup>159</sup> McCarthy, *Theology of al-Ash‘arī*, p. 250. See also Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Fūrak, *Mujarrad maqālāt al-shaykh Abī’l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī*, ed. Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Sāyih (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 2005), p. 191, where the belief is that al-Ash‘arī advocated for rejecting the transgressing imam in the heart while demonstrating outward obedience towards him in order to prevent civil strife.

<sup>160</sup> Abū Ya‘lā, *Mu‘tamad*, p. 243; Ibn al-Zāghūnī, *Īdāh*, p. 630.

<sup>161</sup> Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 42; *Ordinances*, p. 17; Juwaynī, *Irshād*, p. 425; *Guide to Conclusive Proofs*, p. 235; Qurtubī, *Jāmi‘*, vol. 1, p. 287.

<sup>162</sup> Crone, *Political Thought*, p. 231.

### 1.7. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the key concepts, tropes, and vocabulary located in medieval Sunni theological (*kalām*) and legal (*fiqh*) treatments of the caliphate/imamate before, during, and after Ibn al-Jawzī's time. It has also traced how Sunni political discourses on rulership evolved over time vis-à-vis changing socio-political and intellectual developments from the fourth/tenth to the eighth/fourteenth century. This allows us to better situate various aspects of Ibn al-Jawzī's political thought, which the following chapters will examine, in the larger scheme of history.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **The Rule of the Learned: Reassessing the Relationship Between Religious Scholars and Rulers**

The current chapter illustrates Ibn al-Jawzī's ameliorative politics by examining his treatment of the relationship between religious scholars and rulers. It argues that unlike other Sunni scholars before and during his time who viewed power as inherently corrupt and thus expressly cautioned against associating with rulers, Ibn al-Jawzī envisions a greater role for men of learning, especially preachers, in government in order to command rulers to do right and forbid them from wrong. This view culminates in his suggestion that scholars who embody the *sharī'a* ought to dictate the ruler's coercive and punitive powers, while the ruler merely serves as an executive functionary of the scholars. As much as Ibn al-Jawzī's ideas can be read as a critique of the dominant Sunni discourses of his time on scholar-ruler relations, they also reflect the increasingly significant role of preachers in the political spheres of medieval Islamic cities like Baghdad, Aleppo, and Damascus.

#### 2.1. Scholarship on Medieval Muslim Attitudes Towards Rulers

A previous generation of scholars characterized the relationship between religious scholars and rulers as one of passive resistance.<sup>1</sup> According to this view, political and religious authority was vested in the person of the Prophet and then passed on to the Rāshidūn caliphs, who were themselves pious Muslims ruling according to Islamic precepts. All of this came to an end when

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<sup>1</sup> S. D. Goitein, "Attitudes Towards Government in Islam and Judaism," in *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), pp. 197-213; Munir-ud-Din Ahmed, *Muslim Education and the Scholars' Social Status up to the 5<sup>th</sup> Century Muslim Era (11<sup>th</sup> Century Christian Era) in the Light of Ta'rīkh Baghdād* (Zurich: Verlag "Der Islam," 1968), pp. 224-52; Khalil 'Athamina, "The 'Ulamā' in the Opposition: The 'Stick and Carrot' Policy in Early Islam," *Islamic Quarterly*, 36/3 (1992), pp. 153-78; Lambton, *State and Government*, p. 314; L. Carl Brown, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

the Umayyads came to power. Behaving like secular rulers, the Umayyad caliphs were largely indifferent towards matters of religion. Religious authority thereafter became dispersed among groups of people who came to be known as the *‘ulamā’* or religious scholars. The scholars regarded the caliphs who came after the Rāshidūn caliphs as illegitimate from a religious point of view. They collected *ḥadīth* and preserved Islamic law and learning from incursions from the impious Umayyads, forming what Marshall Hodgson termed a “piety-minded opposition.”<sup>2</sup>

According to the piety-minded opposition paradigm, religious scholars, deprived of military strength, “had no choice but to adopt methods of passive resistance to express their protest against those rulers who deviated from the *sunna*.”<sup>3</sup> One approach was to abstain from visiting rulers or people of power—truly pious scholars stayed away from rulers, whereas those who frequented the court had their scholarly reputations discredited. This attitude was also manifested in the scholars’ refusal of posts—especially in the judiciary<sup>4</sup>—and gifts (*‘atā’*) from rulers. Although the Abbasids staked their claim to rule on their affinity with the Prophet’s family, they became no different from the godless Umayyads before them, a bitter lesson learned from the experience of al-Ma’mūn’s *Mihna*, which was aimed at persecuting scholars and judges who did not adhere to the doctrine of the createdness of the Qur’ān. The fragmentation of Abbasid imperial authority beginning in the third/ninth century shifted political power into the hands of so-called “secular” rulers like the Seljuq sultans who only maintained symbolic allegiance to the Abbasid caliphs. Over time, the rise and fall of dynasties in the Islamic world gave rise to the view among

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<sup>2</sup> Steven C. Judd, *Religious Scholars and the Umayyads: Piety-Minded Supporters of the Marwānid Caliphate* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Athamina, “‘Ulamā’ in the Opposition,” p. 157.

<sup>4</sup> A. J. Wensinck, “The Refused Dignity,” in *A Volume of Oriental Studies Presented to Edward G. Browne on His 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, eds. T. W. Arnold and R. A. Nicholson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), pp. 491-99.

religious scholars that politics and government were irrelevant to a believer's salvation. Instead of occupying themselves with the nearly impossible task of reforming rulers, scholars should strive to ensure that the moral foundations of the *umma* remain intact through the believers' adherence to the *sharī'a*.

The pious-minded opposition paradigm gave rise to the view that a separation of religion and politics had taken place in medieval Islam. This thesis found its clearest expression in works by H. A. R. Gibb, Ira Lapidus, and Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds.<sup>5</sup> Particularly noteworthy is Crone and Hinds's *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, which debunks the myth deeming the Umayyads to be godless rulers with purely secular political concerns. But while the book manages to rehabilitate the Umayyads' religious image, it still presumes an oppositional relationship between scholars and caliphs that had been brewing since Umayyad times and peaked with al-Ma'mūn's attempt to impose doctrine on the learned class during the *Mihna*, hence reaching a conclusion that is in line with the separation thesis. Political quietism, coupled with a belief that power was inherently corrupt, had become the rule of the day.

Several studies have emerged to challenge the piety-minded opposition paradigm.<sup>6</sup> Among them, Muhammad Qasim Zaman's monograph, *Religion and Politics under the Early 'Abbāsids*, has been key in demonstrating that collaboration, rather than opposition, more accurately

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<sup>5</sup> H. A. R. Gibb, "An Interpretation of Islamic History," in *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, pp. 3-33, especially pp. 11-12; Ira M. Lapidus, "The Separation of State and Religion in the Development of Early Islamic Society," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 6/4 (1975), pp. 363-85; Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*.

<sup>6</sup> Zaman, *Religion and Politics*; Louise Marlow, "Kings, Prophets and the 'Ulamā' in Mediaeval Islamic Advice Literature," *Studia Islamica*, 81 (1995), pp. 101-20; Hanne, "Abbasid Politics and the Classical Theory of the Caliphate"; Yaacov Lev, "Piety and Political Activism in Twelfth Century Egypt," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 31 (2006), pp. 289-324; Jan-Peter Hartung, "Enacting the Rule of Islam: On Courtly Patronage of Religious Scholars in Pre- and Early Modern Times," in *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, eds. Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 295-325; Noah Feldman, "The Ethical Literature: Religion and Political Authority as Brothers," *Journal of Persianate Studies*, 5 (2012), pp. 95-127; Judd, *Religious Scholars and the Umayyads*.

characterizes the relationship between religious scholars and caliphs, at least during the early Abbasid period. As far as the scholars are concerned, Zaman argues that “it was their *support*, not their opposition to the ‘Abbāsids, which was to become the most distinctive feature of their relationship with the caliphs.”<sup>7</sup> There were indeed scholars who dissociated themselves from the ruling authorities, but they were not typical.<sup>8</sup>

A recent work by Ovamir Anjum studies Ibn Taymiyya’s (d. 728/1328) attempt at redefining the relationship between the political and religious spheres in his political writings. Anjum’s trajectory of Islamic political thought paints a picture of “the mainstream classical ulama’s deliberate flight from politics” that is rooted in the “unrelenting legal formalism” that had permeated the ranks of the ‘*ulamā*’. This intellectual trend gained momentum among scholars of Ash‘arite theological persuasion who strove to maintain their hold on the *sharī‘a* while preserving “the empty symbol of the caliphate.”<sup>9</sup> Anjum argues that Ibn Taymiyya subjected this paradigm of political thought to a total critique from within in conceiving of a greater role for not only the religious scholars, but also the Muslim community at large, in government.<sup>10</sup> Through mutual cooperation (*ta‘āwun*), rulers and ruled complete each other (*istikmāl*) in ensuring that political rule is based on the revealed law.<sup>11</sup>

The present chapter deals with the *textual treatment* of scholar-ruler relations. It shows that several strands of Ibn Taymiyya’s ideas can already be discerned in Ibn al-Jawzī’s analysis of the

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<sup>7</sup> Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, p. 82. Author’s emphasis.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>9</sup> Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, pp. 134-35.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 228-65. See also Baber Johansen, “A Perfect Law in an Imperfect Society: Ibn Taymiyya’s Concept of ‘Governance in the Name of the Sacred Law’,” in *The Law Applied: Contextualizing the Islamic Shari‘a*, eds. Peri Bearman, Walfhart Heinrichs, and Bernard Weiss (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), p. 275.

<sup>11</sup> Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, p. 248.

relationship between rulers and scholars, though the configurations of power envisioned by both men differed. To be sure, Ibn al-Jawzī was not the first scholar to advocate for a closer alliance between rulers and scholars. Most scholars writing on the caliphate and authors of mirrors for princes do urge rulers to seek the advice of religious scholars. As discussed in the previous chapter, Ghazālī even insists that the caliph fulfills the qualification of *‘ilm* by consulting with scholars. Be that as it may, scholars like Ghazālī remain ambivalent over the practice of scholars visiting the ruler’s court, especially when the ruler in question is a tyrant.

Ibn al-Jawzī’s treatise *‘Atf al-‘ulamā’ ‘alā’l-umarā’ wa’l-umarā’ ‘alā’l-‘ulamā’* (*The Inclination of the Religious Scholars Towards the Rulers and of the Rulers Towards the Religious Scholars*) is devoted solely to the subject of scholar-ruler relations, a rare genre in itself.<sup>12</sup> More significantly for this chapter, it represents a unique attempt to tackle head-on the dilemma underlying ruler-scholar relations—the need for rulers to consult righteous scholars versus the righteous scholars’ abstention from associating with rulers.<sup>13</sup> This chapter will focus on the *‘Atf*, alongside other works such as *Talbīs Iblīs* (*The Devil’s Deceit*), *Ṣayd al-khāṭir* (*The Hunt for*

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<sup>12</sup> Other works composed along similar lines include Suyūṭī’s (d. 911/1505) *Mā rawāhu al-asāṭīn fī ‘adm al-majī’ ilā’l-salāṭīn* (*What the Notables Have Transmitted about Not Going to the Rulers*) and ‘Alī al-Qārī’s (d. 1014/1606) *Tab‘īd al-‘ulamā’ ‘an taqrīb al-umarā’* (*The Distancing of the Scholars from Proximity to the Rulers*). For a study of Suyūṭī’s treatise, see Christian Mauder, “Al-Suyūṭī’s Stance Toward Worldly Power: A Reexamination Based on Unpublished and Understudied Sources,” in *Al-Suyūṭī, a Polymath of the Mamlūk Period*, ed. Antonella Ghersetti (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 81-97.

<sup>13</sup> In Ibn al-Jawzī’s writings, the term commonly used to refer to the ruling powers is *sulṭān*, followed by *amīr*. By itself, *sulṭān* originally meant “power” or “authority” in an abstract sense. Beginning in the fourth/tenth century, it came to denote the holder of power or authority and was often used to refer to the caliph. The term was used as a title beginning with the Seljuq Turks in the fifth/eleventh century and eventually passed on to petty rulers and chieftains who had assumed *de facto* power alongside the caliph in the central Islamic lands. *Amīr* often referred to military commanders or governors who represented the caliph or sultan in a specific region. During the Rāshidūn period, for instance, “the commanders of armies, and occasionally of divisions of an army were called *amīrs*, and so were the governors who were initially the conquering generals.” The *amīr* was usually tasked with organizing the army, maintaining peace and order in a city through appointed agents, and issuing instructions on financial policy. See J. H. Kramers and C. E. Bosworth, “Sulṭān,” *EP*<sup>2</sup>; A. A. Duri, “Amīr,” *EP*<sup>2</sup>. It is often vague to whom specifically Ibn al-Jawzī is referring to when he uses these terms, but there is no doubt that he had in mind individuals who held some degree of political, military, coercive, and punitive power. For the sake of prose and convenience, I shall translate these terms, as they arise, collectively as “rulers” or “ruling authorities.”

*Fleeting Ideas*), *al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa'l-umam* (*The Well-Ordered History of Kings and Nations*), *Minhāj al-qāṣidīn wa-mufīd al-ṣādiqīn* (*The Path of the Pursuers and the Instructor of the Truthful Ones*), and *Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa'l-mudhakkirīn* (*The Book of Storytellers and Preachers*), to reconstruct Ibn al-Jawzī's thoughts on this matter. Before delving into the treatise, I will outline how political developments leading up to the late sixth/twelfth century colored Ibn al-Jawzī's conception of religion and politics.

## 2.2. Religion and Politics in the Period of *Shawka*

The rise of the Seljuq Turks marked a turning point in the history of the Abbasid caliphate and left a huge imprint on Islamic political thought. The forceful nature of their dealings with the Abbasid caliphs drove home the point that brute force (*shawka*) based on military power could carry the day, as Stefan Leder aptly describes in the following passage:

Patrons of the reestablishment of Sunni Islamic rule, [the Saljuqs] introduced a new division of power which did not leave significant temporal power to the caliph. The Saljuqs also established the ruler's title Sultan which became with the end of the twelfth century a widely spread term used for independent local rulers. Sovereignty in this context implies the necessity of a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence (*qahr*), and is often postulated by use of pastoral, natural, or religious metaphors.<sup>14</sup>

In the heyday of Seljuq power under Malikshāh (d. 485/1092) and his vizier Nizām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092), jurists like Juwaynī and Ghazālī articulated creative solutions to address the balance of power between the Seljuq sultan and the Abbasid caliph (see Chapter One). Differences notwithstanding, their solutions placed great emphasis on *shawka*, a quality which both jurists conceded that the Abbasid caliph no longer possessed. The harsh nature of Seljuq rule also impressed upon the population of Baghdad in several ways, particularly through exorbitant taxes

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<sup>14</sup> Stefan Leder, "Sultan Rule in the Mirror of Medieval Political Literature," in *Global Medieval: Mirrors for Princes Reconsidered*, eds. Regula Forster and Nequín Yavari (Boston: Ilex Foundation, 2015), p. 97.

and the oppressive measures of the Seljuq representative known as the *shihna*.<sup>15</sup> The *shihna*, who was tasked with maintaining order in Baghdad, usually contributed to the ongoing urban unrest and gained a reputation for unruly behavior and greed, constant harassing of the caliph, as well as arbitrary and unpredictable punitive measures.<sup>16</sup>

The waning of Seljuq power in the sixth/twelfth century did not spell the end of *shawka*-dominated politics. The rise of regional rulers went hand in hand with a growing militarization of cities across the Islamic heartlands as “[g]overnment consisted primarily in the collection of taxes and military defense against outside forces.”<sup>17</sup> In Baghdad, the Abbasids had to deal with palace factions that pitted the caliphs against intimate members of their circle. During Ibn al-Jawzī’s own time, the politics of *shawka* is perhaps best exemplified by Quṭb al-Dīn Qaymāz (d. 570/1175), a powerful military man whose political career peaked during the reign of Ibn al-Jawzī’s patron-caliph al-Mustaḍī’ (r. 566/1170-575/1180).<sup>18</sup> After ascending the ranks to become the commander of the army, Qaymāz dominated the first half of al-Mustaḍī’’s reign, isolating the caliph within the palace and restricting access to him. He also acted arbitrarily in Baghdad and its environs by incurring high taxes on the population and expelling several inhabitants of the *dār al-khilāfa* to build a large palace for himself. Qaymāz’s downfall came about when he began targeting the

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<sup>15</sup> On taxes, see Stefan Heidemann, “Unislamic Taxes and an Unislamic Monetary System in Seljuq Baghdad: Protest of Legal and Religious Scholars in the Period of al-Ghazali,” in *İslam Medeniyetinde Bağdat (Medīnetü’s-Selâm) Uluslararası Sempozyum (International Symposium on Baghdad [Madinat al-Salam] in the Islamic Civilization)*, ed. İsmail Safa Üstün (Istanbul: M. Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 2011), pp. 493-506. On the *shihna*, see Ann K. S. Lambton, “Shihna,” *EP*; Lange, *Justice*, pp. 48-54; Renterghem, *Les élites bagdadiennes*, vol. 1, pp. 458-67; idem, “Controlling and Developing Baghdad: Caliphs, Sultans and the Balance of Power in the Abbasid Capital (Mid-5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> to Late 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Centuries),” in *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture*, eds. Christian Lange and Songül Mecit (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 125-26;

<sup>16</sup> Renterghem, “Controlling and Developing Baghdad,” p. 126; Lange, *Justice*, p. 49 n. 143.

<sup>17</sup> Lange, *Justice*, p. 7; Maxim G. Romanov, “Computational Reading of Arabic Biographical Collections with Special Reference to Preaching in the Sunnī World,” Ph.D. dissertation (University of Michigan, 2013), pp. 135-39.

<sup>18</sup> For brief accounts of Qaymāz’s career, see Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, pp. 197-202; Renterghem, *Les élites bagdadiennes*, vol. 1, pp. 216-18.

caliph's storeroom chief (*ṣaḥīb al-makhzan*) and intimate, Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār. After setting fire to Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār's house, Qaymāz pursued the fleeing Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār to the caliphal palace. Al-Mustaḍīr saw this and climbed onto the palace roof and shouted to the common people, "Quṭb al-Dīn's wealth is yours and his blood is mine!"<sup>19</sup> A mob formed and sacked Qaymāz's house. Qaymāz was forced to leave Baghdad and died in Mosul.

The above political developments shaped Ibn al-Jawzī's political views. A brief passage in the preface to his multi-volume chronicle *al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa'l-umam* attests to what he regarded as a lamentable political situation:

Among the greatest errors of the *sulṭāns* and *amīrs* is their consideration of their predecessors' policies (*siyāsāt*) and acts on their own basis (*bi-muqtaḍāhā*), without looking into what was revealed by divine law (*al-sharʿ*). And it is among their errors to call their acts which stray from divine law *siyāsa* (governance), for *sharʿ* is *siyāsa*, not that which the *sulṭān* carries out based on his own judgment (*raʾy*) and desires (*hawā*). These people say, "Since *sharʿ* does not come with what suffices for *siyāsa*, we need to supplement it with our judgment." So they execute one who should not be executed and carry out what should not be carried out, calling this *siyāsa*.<sup>20</sup>

These lines indicate a sense of political disillusionment and a recognition that punishment of crime by the state had become increasingly arbitrary and excessive. Aimed at demonstrating the absolute power of the ruler, the public character of punishment meted out against criminals and supposed heretics reinforced the general feeling of social insecurity.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, Ibn al-Jawzī's statement also reflects the growing tension between the concepts of *sharīʿa* and *siyāsa* in Islamic legal and political discourse and practice. In early Islam, *siyāsa* bore the meaning of "statecraft" or "management of the polity." But as rulers and their officials meted out more arbitrary and informal punishments over time, they were also quick to latch onto the concept of *siyāsa* to justify their acts. So much so that beginning in the fifth/eleventh

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<sup>19</sup> Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, p. 202.

<sup>20</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 1, p. 117; similar statement in idem, *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 146.

<sup>21</sup> Lange, *Justice*, pp. 7-10.

century, the term acquired a penal meaning and came to denote a form of punishment—usually severe, physical, and capital—administered under the discretionary authority of the ruler. In this sense, unlike scripturally sanctioned punishments (*ḥudūd*; singular: *ḥadd*), “*Siyāsa* is a punishment not prescribed by the *Sharī‘a* for an offense not defined by the *Sharī‘a*.”<sup>22</sup>

Much of the tension between *sharī‘a* and *siyāsa* played out in the realm of discretionary punishment (*ta‘zīr*), generally defined as “the punishment for every crime or sinful act for which no concrete penalty is specified in the revealed law.”<sup>23</sup> In theory, the authority to implement *ta‘zīr* lay with the judge (*qāḍī*). From the sixth/twelfth century onwards, however, *ta‘zīr* was more often than not inflicted by members of the governmental administration (e.g. the *shihna*, *shurṭa* or police force, and *muḥtasib* or market inspector) under the authority of the ruler “as a punishment for reasons of state expediency (*siyāsa*).”<sup>24</sup> As a result, “*ta‘zīr* and *siyāsa* became the backdoor entry for the imposing, for policy reasons (*siyāsatan*), of severe punishments by the authorities, from torture and punishment to capital punishment.”<sup>25</sup>

These political and intellectual developments had their fair share of supporters and critics. Thinkers and rulers supporting these developments “seem to have accepted that the *Sharī‘a* was incapable of dealing with the problems of the real world and that *siyāsa*, equated with extra-*Sharī‘a*

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<sup>22</sup> C. E. Bosworth, I. R. Netton, and F. E. Vogel, “*Siyāsa*,” *EF*; Fauzi M. Najjar, “*Siyasa* in Islamic Political Philosophy,” in *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Honor of George F. Hourani*, ed. Michael E. Marmura (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 92-110; Bernard Lewis, “*Siyāsa*,” in *In Quest of an Islamic Humanism: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Memory of Mohamed al-Nowaihi*, ed. A. H. Green (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1986), pp. 3-14; Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 182-231; Lange, *Justice*, pp. 42-44, 180-81; Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, pp. 59-60, 95-107.

<sup>23</sup> Christian Lange, “Public Order,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Islamic Law*, eds. Peri Bearman and Rudolph Peters (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 170; M. Y. Izzi Dien, “*Ta‘zīr*,” *EF*; Wael B. Hallaq, *Sharī‘a: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 322-23.

<sup>24</sup> Lange, *Justice*, p. 217.

<sup>25</sup> Lange, “Public Order,” p. 170.

punishments, was justified by its utility alone.”<sup>26</sup> For the Seljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk, “justice implied also the threat of punishment (Persian: *siyāsat*) and the exercise of coercive force” for the sake of maintaining order.<sup>27</sup> Certain jurists merged *siyāsa* and *taʿzīr*, and accorded the ruler authority over the implementation of *taʿzīr*.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, opponents of this strand of thought attached negative connotations to *siyāsa*, equating it with corporal punishment meted out by repressive rulers in an arbitrary manner without any regard for divine law, to the extent that a later Shāfiʿī scholar al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442) wrote: “The judgments of the chamberlains (*ḥujjāb*) are called judgment of *siyāsah*, which is a satanic term. Most of our contemporaries who do not know its origin employ it carelessly, saying that when a matter does not accord with the judgments of the *sharīʿah* it must be according to the judgments of *siyāsah*.”<sup>29</sup> Maqrīzī’s statement echoes Ibn al-Jawzī’s words concerning rulers who claim that *siyāsa* completes whatever the *sharīʿa* lacks in the realm of governance.

Ibn al-Jawzī does not dwell much on the *siyāsa-sharīʿa* tension in the statement quoted above, but he hints at a call for the realm of politics to be subsumed under the *sharīʿa*. For him, the two spheres of *siyāsa* and *sharīʿa* ought to be neither separate nor complementary; *sharīʿa* in fact encompasses *siyāsa* and contains all aspects of *siyāsa*. After all, God had said, “We have neglected nothing in the Book” (Q 6:38) and “There is none that can revise His decree” (Q 13:41).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, p. 104.

<sup>27</sup> Ann K. S. Lambton, “Changing Concepts of Justice and Injustice from the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> Century to the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> Century in Persia: The Saljuq Empire and the Ilkhanate,” *Studia Islamica*, 68 (1988), pp. 35-37, quote on p. 35. See also Lange, *Justice*, p. 42.

<sup>28</sup> Lange, *Justice*, p. 217.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Yossef Rapoport, “Royal Justice and Religious Law: *Siyāsah* and *Sharīʿah* under the Mamluks,” *Mamluk Studies Review*, 16 (2012), p. 95, and Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, p. 105.

<sup>30</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 146.

These views found resonance in his grandson Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256) who argues along the same lines, claiming that “*sharī‘a* is *siyāsa* perfected.”<sup>31</sup> As we shall see later with regard to his discussion of ruler-scholar relations, Ibn al-Jawzī’s idea of *siyāsa* as a branch of *sharī‘a* is spelled out more clearly in institutional terms as he advocates for the rule of scholars over rulers in certain spheres of government.

While political developments leave much to be desired, there is at least one aspect of sixth/twelfth-century Baghdad that must have pleased Ibn al-Jawzī: the dominance of Ḥanbalī preachers in Baghdad’s public sphere. The fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries witnessed the increasing prominence of popular preachers in various parts of the Islamic world.<sup>32</sup> Iraq, especially in Baghdad where popular preaching flourished, experienced an influx of Iranian preachers during the late sixth/twelfth century.<sup>33</sup> The growth of preaching activity in Baghdad also coincided with the art of preaching (*wa‘ẓ*) gradually coming into its own as an established discipline taught in mosques and madrasas.<sup>34</sup>

According to Merlin Swartz, the tradition of preaching in Baghdad “was linked closely, though not exclusively, with the Hanbalite school, which, from its inception in the ninth century,

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<sup>31</sup> Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *al-Jalīs al-ṣāliḥ wa’l-anīs al-nāṣiḥ*, ed. Fawwās Ṣāliḥ Fawwāz (London: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 1989), p. 55. Also discussed in Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, pp. 195-96, with translation on p. 196 n. 33 and in Leder, “Sultanīc Rule,” pp. 105-6.

<sup>32</sup> Merlin Swartz, “Preaching and Sermons, Islamic,” in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1988), p. 73. For developments in Baghdad, see Renterghem, *Les élites bagdadiennes*, vol. 1, pp. 74-80. For general studies on preaching in medieval Islam, see Johannes Pedersen, “The Islamic Preacher: Wā‘iẓ, Mudhakkir, Qāṣṣ,” in *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume*, eds. D. S. Loewinger and Joseph de Somogyi (Budapest, 1948), vol. 1, pp. 226-51; idem, “The Criticism of the Islamic Preacher,” *Die Welt des Islams*, 2 (1953), pp. 215-31; Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority*.

<sup>33</sup> Romanov, “Computational Reading,” pp. 219-21.

<sup>34</sup> George Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), pp. 173-93. Brought to my attention in Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria*, p. 116 n. 5.

had maintained a strong populist orientation.”<sup>35</sup> The close links between popular preaching and the Ḥanbalī school could not have found a better exemplar in the person of Ibn al-Jawzī, whose eloquence in preaching attracted the attention of Ibn Hubayra and al-Mustaḍī, both of whom were patrons of Ḥanbalī scholars and institutions. It was also during the reign of al-Mustaḍī that Ibn al-Jawzī’s preaching career reached its greatest heights.

Popular preaching also contained political undertones, as preachers used their public meetings (*majlis*) as platforms to push for certain religio-political causes.<sup>36</sup> This could translate into either cordial or antagonistic relationships between rulers and preachers. Rulers like the Abbasid caliphs and Ayyubid sultans made efforts to sponsor preaching gatherings (*majlis al-wa‘z*) and attended them in person, whereas certain preachers cultivated a reputation for their oppositional stances against the ruling authorities.<sup>37</sup> For famed preachers like Ibn al-Jawzī, who had a huge following among the common folk, the increasing contact between rulers and preachers served as opportunities for them to counsel rulers to act piously and justly or to rebuke them by stressing “the ephemeral, even diseased, character of worldly success, wealth, and power.”<sup>38</sup> The preacher’s aim of cleansing sins and purifying souls can be extended to rulers as well, while

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<sup>35</sup> Swartz, “Preaching and Sermons, Islamic,” p. 73. Daphna Ephrat writes that while the Shāfi‘īs and Ḥanafīs dominated the madrasa professorships in Baghdad, the Ḥanbalīs “largely controlled the professorship in the great mosques of the city as well as the office of preacher, positions that were not subsidised by the state.” Daphna Ephrat, “The Seljuqs and the Public Sphere in the Period of Sunni Revivalism: The View from Baghdad,” in *The Seljuqs*, eds. Lange and Mecit, p. 145. See also Figure 3.26 in Romanov, “Computational Reading,” p. 214.

<sup>36</sup> Swartz, “Rules of the Popular Preaching,” p. 223. Even sermons that do not contain political content but touch on sensitive theological subjects often involved intervention by the ruling authorities who otherwise had little interest in policing preachers. In Baghdad, for instance, the rivalries between the Ḥanbalī, Ash‘arite, and Mu‘tazilite theologians resulted in intensely polemical sermons and even in several arrests and exiles, hence making it “an inflammable city.” See Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority*, pp. 58-59; Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria*, pp. 116-17.

<sup>37</sup> Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority*, pp. 59-62; Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria*, pp. 123-28.

<sup>38</sup> Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority*, p. 60.

keeping in mind the overarching goal of effecting moral and spiritual reform of the Muslim community. These socio-political developments, as well as Ibn al-Jawzī's own career as a preacher, colored his views of how rulers and scholars should conduct affairs with each other.

### 2.3. Engaging with Ghazālī

When scholars speak of Muslim engagement with politics, Ghazālī remains the most often-cited thinker who looks askance at religious scholars frequenting the court of rulers.<sup>39</sup> It is thus worthwhile to consider what Ghazālī wrote, especially since he devoted substantial space to this subject in his monumental *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*). An overview of Ghazālī's views is all the more crucial for the fact that Ibn al-Jawzī wrote a reworked abridgement of the *Iḥyā'* entitled *Minhāj al-qāṣidīn wa-mufīd al-ṣādiqīn* (*The Path of the Pursuers and the Instructor of the Truthful Ones*). As much as the *Minhāj al-qāṣidīn* is an abridgement of the *Iḥyā'*, Ibn al-Jawzī occasionally took small liberties to modify Ghazālī's statements or to substitute *ḥadīths* used by Ghazālī with other *ḥadīths* he deemed more appropriate. In this respect, the points at which Ibn al-Jawzī departs from Ghazālī, even if only slightly, can be quite revealing of how he interpreted the *Iḥyā'* and of his own views on a given subject.

Ghazālī's position on the association of religious scholars with rulers is ambivalent. In the *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, a mirror for princes addressed to the Seljuq sultan Muḥammad b. Malikshāh (d. 511/1118), Ghazālī urges the ruler to "meet devout '*ulamā*' and ask them for advice" and to "beware of meeting '*ulamā*' with worldly ambitions who might inveigle, flatter and seek to please him in order to gain control over his terrestrial body by stealth and deceit."<sup>40</sup> In a similar vein,

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<sup>39</sup> Goitein, "Attitudes," pp. 206-7; 'Athamina, "The '*Ulamā*' in the Opposition," pp. 161-62; Lambton, *State and Government*, pp. 314-15.

<sup>40</sup> Ghazālī, *Book of Counsel for Kings*, pp. 19-23, 59. See also Feldman, "Ethical Literature," pp. 113-16.

Ghazālī insists in the *Faḍā'ih al-bāṭiniyya*, a book written at the behest of the caliph al-Mustazhir to refute Ismā'īlī doctrines and teachings, that the quality of knowledge (*'ilm*) exists in al-Mustazhir by virtue of him “exploiting the talents of the *'ulamā'* and seeking their help, and, in doubt, choose to follow the best and most learned.”<sup>41</sup>

A different tone is observed in the *Ihyā'* with regard to despotic rulers (*al-salāṭīn al-ẓalama*), which constitutes the subject of a chapter.<sup>42</sup> Ghazālī writes that there are three possible relationships open to scholars with respect to despotic rulers and officials: (1) the worst relationship, that is to visit these men of power (*dakhala 'alayhim*); (2) being visited by the rulers, which is less harmful for scholars; and (3) the safest option, that is avoiding them altogether (*i'tazala 'anhum*).<sup>43</sup> The harshest words are leveled against the first group. Although despotic and unjust rulers are the focus of Ghazālī's criticisms, one gets a sense in reading the chapter that nearly all of the rulers of his time fit this description. Expressing these sentiments is a string of Prophetic *ḥadīths* and sayings from early Muslim scholars that caution against visiting rulers. Taken together, these *ḥadīths* and reports can be categorized into two broad categories: (1) those that categorically condemn scholars who visit rulers; and (2) those that warn scholars of the dangers and temptations that await them when visiting rulers. Those in the first category include:<sup>44</sup>

1. *Ḥadīth* on the authority of Abū Hurayra: “The most detested of all those who recite the Qur'ān (*qurrā'*) are those who visit rulers.”
2. *Ḥadīth* on the authority of Anas b. Mālik: “Scholars are the trustees of God's messengers over those who worship Him, as long as they do not mix with rulers. If they do that, they would have betrayed the trust of God's messengers. So be on your guard against them, and stay away from them.”

<sup>41</sup> Ghazālī, *Faḍā'ih al-bāṭiniyya*, pp. 172-73; *Deliverance*, pp. 238-39.

<sup>42</sup> Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (Cairo: Mu'assasat al-Ḥalabī, 1967), vol. 2, pp. 181-94; trans. Yusuf T. Delorenzo as *Al-Ghazālī on the Lawful and the Unlawful: Book XIV of the Revival of the Religious Sciences (Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn)* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2014), pp. 201-37.

<sup>43</sup> Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, vol. 2, p. 181; *Al-Ghazālī on the Lawful and the Unlawful*, p. 201.

<sup>44</sup> Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, vol. 2, pp. 181-82; *Al-Ghazālī on the Lawful and the Unlawful*, pp. 202-4.

3. Saying by Sufyān al-Thawrī: “In the fire of hell there is a valley inhabited only by those scholars who used to visit kings.”
4. Saying by Awzā‘ī: “There is nothing more hated by God than a scholar who visits a governor (*‘āmil*).”
5. Saying by al-Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyād: “No one ever grew closer to a holder of power (*dhū sulṭān*) except that they grew more distant from God.”

Reports belonging to the second category include:<sup>45</sup>

1. *Ḥadīth*: “After me there will come rulers who will lie and oppress. So anyone who upholds the untruths that they speak and assists in the wrong that they do will have no relationship with me, and I will have none with him; nor will that person pass by the pool of paradise.”
2. Statement from Ḥudhayfa: “Beware of the places of trial (*mawāqif al-fitan*)!” When asked what those places were, Ḥudhayfa replied, “The doors of the rulers (*abwāb al-umarā’*). You might enter the presence of the ruler and find yourself verifying his untruths, and saying things about him that are fictitious.”
3. Statement from Saḥnūn: “What could be less becoming of a scholar than to be sought at his regular place, but not found; and then to have it said to those who seek him, ‘He is with the ruler.’ I used to hear it said that if you see a scholar in love with the world, then do not trust him in matters of your religion until you have tested him. I have tested myself and found that whenever I visit a ruler, I incline toward him; regardless of how harshly I speak with him or oppose his desires.”

The reports in the first category depict scholars who attend any ruler—just or unjust—in the harshest terms, deeming them to be detested by God and destined for hellfire. Those in the second category are not at all forgiving, but they are slightly milder in comparison to those in the first category since the focus is on the ruler’s court as a site of temptation where scholars might forsake their piety if they are not steadfast in their faith.<sup>46</sup>

In Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Minhāj al-qāṣidīn*, all but one of the harsh reports belonging to the first category are omitted.<sup>47</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī’s account consists almost entirely of reports in the second

<sup>45</sup> Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, vol. 2, p. 181; *Al-Ghazālī on the Lawful and the Unlawful*, pp. 202-3.

<sup>46</sup> A similar attitude can be observed in a different section of the *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, the same work in which Ghazālī urges scholars to seek out devout scholars, hence further attesting to Ghazālī’s ambivalent views on scholar-ruler relations. See Ghazālī, *Book of Counsel for Kings*, p. 87; brought to my attention in Marlow, “Kings, Prophets and the ‘Ulamā’,” p. 114 n. 52.

<sup>47</sup> The one retained is now expressed as a *ḥadīth* with slightly different wording: “No worshipper ever grew closer to a ruler except that they grew more distant from God.” Ibn al-Jawzī, *Minhāj al-qāṣidīn wa-muḥīd al-ṣādiqīn*, ed. Kāmil Muḥammad al-Kharrāṭ (Damascus: Dār al-Tawfīq li’l-Ṭibā’a wa’l-Nashr wa’l-Tawzī’, 2010), vol. 1, p. 404.

category, namely those that depict the ruler's court as a site of temptation and trial for the visiting scholar. Several of Ghazālī's reports from the second category are retained, while Ibn al-Jawzī adds a couple of his own that express similar sentiments:<sup>48</sup>

1. *Ḥadīth* on the authority of Abū Hurayra: "Whoever comes to the door of the ruler is tested" (*man atā abwāb al-salāṭīn iftatana*).
2. Someone once said to 'Alqama: "If you enter the presence of the rulers, they will acknowledge your noble rank (*sharaf*)."' 'Alqama said in reply, "[But] I fear that what they take from me will be greater than what I take from them."
3. A ruler once asked an ascetic, "Why do you not visit me?" The ascetic replied, "I fear that I will be subject to temptations once you draw me close and will feel deprived once you drive me away. You do not have anything that I yearn, and I do not have anything that might strike fear in you. Those who come to you seek to satisfy themselves with what you can offer, but I am satisfied with that which [God] has provided me in order to not be in need of you."

For Ibn al-Jawzī, the act of visiting rulers indeed involves being subjected to the temptations of worldly pleasures, which rulers are ever ready to offer and which scholars often find difficult to refuse. But scholars who visit rulers are not expressly condemned as godforsaken and belonging to hell. Ibn al-Jawzī's focus is on the corrupt effects of the ruler's court and less on condemning the scholar's act of visiting rulers in and of itself. In effect, Ibn al-Jawzī softens Ghazālī's harsh stance towards scholars who attend rulers.

Ghazālī also addresses scholar-ruler relations in the ninth book of the second quarter of the *Ihyā'* regarding the tenet of "commanding right and forbidding wrong" (*al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy 'an munkar*).<sup>49</sup> In the fourth chapter of the book, titled "Commanding Rulers (*al-umarā' wa'l-salāṭīn*) to Do Good and Forbidding Them from Evil," Ghazālī writes that of the four levels (*darajāt*) of commanding right and forbidding wrong—(1) informing one of one's sins (*ta'rīf*); (2) admonition (*wa'z*); (3) use of harsh language (*takhshīn*); and (4) use of force (*qahr*) which entails

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 404-5.

<sup>49</sup> Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, vol. 2, pp. 437-55. Ghazālī's discussion of "commanding right and forbidding wrong" is given detailed treatment in Cook, *Commanding*, pp. 427-68.

striking the ruler to compel him to the truth—only the first two are permissible (*jā'iz*) with respect to rulers. The use of force leads to disorder (*fitna*) and greater evil and is thus forbidden to subjects. As for harsh language like “O tyrant (*ẓālim*)! O you who does not fear God!” Ghazālī deems it impermissible if there is potential for conflict that causes harm to others. But if one only fears for oneself, a confrontational approach is not only permissible, but also recommended (*mandūb*).<sup>50</sup> Following these statements are anecdotes featuring prominent early Muslims like al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/777) who acted courageously in rebuking and admonishing the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs. Ghazālī’s closes his exposition by lamenting that while early scholars and learned men cared little about the power of rulers when commanding right and forbidding wrong, and even risked being martyred in doing so, scholars of his time are too covetous of wealth and glory to speak truth to power. They would rather keep silent. Even when they do speak, they are often not in the correct state of mind and fail to reform rulers.<sup>51</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzī preserves the bare bones of Ghazālī’s chapter on commanding right and forbidding wrong in the corresponding chapter of his *Minhāj*, but with slight modifications. He is in agreement with Ghazālī that only the informing of one’s sins (*ta’rīf*) and admonition (*wa’ẓ*) are permissible when confronting rulers.<sup>52</sup> As for the use of harsh language (*takhshīn*), Ibn al-Jawzī admits that most scholars (*jumhūr al-‘ulamā’*) permit it, but he does not go further, as Ghazālī does, in deeming it a recommendable act. While Ghazālī writes that it was customary for the pious forebears (*salaf*) to expose themselves to danger in openly rebuking rulers, Ibn al-Jawzī adds that one should not do so because harshness would only provoke rulers towards greater wrongdoings

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<sup>50</sup> Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, vol. 2, p. 437; Cook, *Commanding*, pp. 140, 446.

<sup>51</sup> Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, vol. 2, p. 455; Cook, *Commanding*, pp. 140, 446.

<sup>52</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Minhāj*, vol. 1, p. 533.

than that which harsh language was initially intended to prevent. This defeats the purpose of reforming the ruler in the first place. This, Ibn al-Jawzī claims, is because rulers crave glorification and cannot stand being humbled by harsh rebuke.<sup>53</sup> Following this is a nostalgic recounting of eighteen anecdotes of early Muslim scholars who admonished and rebuked rulers, all of which strike a similar tone as Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*.<sup>54</sup>

Like Ghazālī, Ibn al-Jawzī's treatment of commanding right and forbidding wrong ends with a short passage commending the pious forebears for their efforts in speaking truth to power in order to glorify the *sharī'a*, without regard for their own lives. However, he adds that while rulers of the past recognized the virtue of knowledge and endured the severity of the scholars' admonitions, rulers in his day are those whom it is better for one to avoid. If one is ordered to meet them, one should be contented with admonishing them gently (*bi-laṭīf al-maw'iza*).<sup>55</sup> The pessimistic tone adopted largely takes its cue from Ghazālī.

On the whole, while Ghazālī thinks that it is the scholars themselves who have become more corrupt during his time, Ibn al-Jawzī places most of the blame on the rulers of his day who have become more coercive in their dealings with those who admonish them.<sup>56</sup> Insofar as Ibn al-Jawzī thinks that rulers should be avoided, it is not because there is an inherent evil in scholars visiting them as Ghazālī perceives it to be, but because they have become harsher in their ways. In his *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*, Ibn al-Jawzī points out that harsh politics results in two dangers: the admonisher

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 533-49. Ibn al-Jawzī, however, states that his anecdotes are drawn from his mirror for princes, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī' fī khilāfat al-Mustaḍī'*, which he dedicated to his patron-caliph al-Mustaḍī'. This book is the focus of Chapter Three.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 549.

<sup>56</sup> This observation is Cook's. See his *Commanding*, p. 141.

either ends up putting his own life at risk or praises the ruler to the point of flattering him.<sup>57</sup> Worse still if the ruler is a tyrant. Such dangers make the ruler's court a potential site of corruption if frequented by scholars who crave worldly wealth—and there were many of them indeed during Ibn al-Jawzī's time. Hence, at a general level, scholars should avoid attending rulers or mingling with them so as to not harm their faith.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, Ibn al-Jawzī's opposition to associating with rulers is not an absolute one. As I will come to shortly, there is space in his political thought for the scholar with sincere intentions to visit the ruler in order to admonish him.

Both Ghazālī and Ibn al-Jawzī acknowledge that scholars might find themselves in situations where they are forced to be in the ruler's presence. In such a situation, Ghazālī adopts an all-or-nothing approach in encouraging the use of harsh language towards the ruler which might potentially lead to the scholar's martyrdom. This confrontational approach, Jonathan Berkey notes, was a popular one among preachers during Ibn al-Jawzī's time, and those who adopted it were lauded by biographers.<sup>59</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, on the other hand, suggests proceeding with extreme caution (*ghāyat al-taḥarruz*) and politeness (*talattuf*), signaling a more pragmatic approach that ensures both the safety of the scholar and the admonition's effectiveness.<sup>60</sup> This approach is largely

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<sup>57</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*, p. 420.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 301-3, 405-7, 470-71.

<sup>59</sup> Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority*, p. 61.

<sup>60</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*, pp. 419-20; Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority*, pp. 60-61. Michael Cook (*Commanding*, pp. 121-28, 140-41) interprets Ibn al-Jawzī's remarks as approximating a "state-friendly tendency" that aims to "tone down Ghazzālī's politics in a sense favorable to the state." This, he claims, is due to socio-political changes beginning in the fifth/eleventh century as more Ḥanbalī scholars enjoyed state appointments, a far cry from the attitude of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal who shunned positions of power. Cook's arguments do not accurately reflect Ibn al-Jawzī's political stances and his approach to preaching. While it is true that Ibn al-Jawzī enjoyed immense patronage from the caliph al-Mustaḍī, this did not mean that his allegiance extended to all caliphs and rulers. His position towards al-Mustaḍī's successor al-Nāṣir, for instance, was more ambivalent, oscillating between praise and condemnation (Angelika Hartmann, *An-Nāṣir*, pp. 186-89; idem, "Les ambivalences," pp. 66-67). Ibn al-Jawzī's aversion to the use of harsh language when admonishing rulers is hardly due to a supposed tendency on his part to cozy up to the ruling authorities. It is more due to the possible dangers of risking one's life should rulers find such harsh rebuke unwelcoming. Moreover, a wider reading of Ibn al-Jawzī's oeuvre, as I shall come to shortly, suggests

informed by his experience as a preacher who appealed to the emotional, moral, and spiritual sensitivities of his congregation in order to achieve a moral and spiritual reform of society. It comes into sharper focus when we venture beyond the *Minhāj* and delve into his other writings.

#### 2.4. Revisiting Scholar-Ruler Relations

In Ibn al-Jawzī's writings, there is a general sense that relations between religious scholars and rulers have become a thorny problem by his time. In *Talbīs Iblīs*, a heresiographical work targeted at various groups in society, whom he claims to have succumbed to the wiles of Satan, Ibn al-Jawzī castigates scholars for flattering rulers and for sanctioning their unjust actions.<sup>61</sup> The problem also lies with certain men of learning who deliberately keep away from the ruler in order to practice religious devotion, and then mount their moral high horses in maligning scholars who present themselves to the ruler.<sup>62</sup> Rulers themselves are also at fault. While past rulers such as al-Manṣūr (r. 136/754-158/775) and Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170/786-193/809) valued knowledge and the company of scholars, rulers in Ibn al-Jawzī's time vie for ignorance (*yatasāwūna fī'l-jahl*).<sup>63</sup> Some keep up pretensions of awe (*hayba*) and are thus too proud to seek knowledge and consult the scholars in matters of religion.<sup>64</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzī confronts the tension between scholars and rulers head-on in a short treatise aptly titled *'Atf al-'ulamā' 'alā'l-umarā' wa'l-umarā' 'alā'l-'ulamā'* (*The Inclination of the Religious Scholars Towards the Rulers and That of the Rulers Towards the Religious Scholars*;

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that even if the risk of death is not in sight, he still perceives this approach as ineffective in reforming the harsh and coercive rulers of his time.

<sup>61</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, pp. 132-33.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>63</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*, p. 420.

<sup>64</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 145.

hereafter, *ʿAtf*). The above discussion from the *Minhāj* is quite telling of Ibn al-Jawzī's position. But the fact that the *Minhāj* takes its cue from Ghazālī means that he has to adhere to the main contours set out by Ghazālī, and is therefore left with little leeway to expound his views fully. In the *ʿAtf*, Ibn al-Jawzī's own views take center stage. One can more or less pinpoint two main functions of the work: (1) to defend the practice of scholars visiting rulers, and (2) to serve as a guide for scholars who intend to admonish rulers.

Ibn al-Jawzī begins the *ʿAtf* by delineating two different kinds of leadership among humankind: the religious scholars and the rulers. This, according to the author, is the primordial order of the world decreed by God who divided the “lords who set things right and govern” (*arbāb al-taqwīm wa'l-siyāsa*) into the religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*), who issue legal opinions (*fatāwā*) to prevent humans from committing injustice to each other, and the rulers (*umarāʾ*), who are responsible for restraining those who cannot be set aright except by the sword. Despite this division of labor, both scholars and rulers are similarly tasked to “lead humankind to the most upright of morals and the clearest of paths, and to guard them from error.”<sup>65</sup>

This noble state of affairs, however, did not last. Ibn al-Jawzī claims that most scholars in his day and age are divided into two groups: (1) the righteous ones who are fearful for their faith and maintain their distance from the rulers, and (2) the hypocrites who associate with rulers to gain worldly benefits and thus do not enjoin the ruler to do right and forbid him from wrongs. As for the rulers, most of them do not even pay attention to scholars and are not mindful of how distant the righteous jurists are from them. Worse still, these rulers deem scholars to be no different from the common folk (*ʿaddan lahum fī jumlat al-suwaq*). Yet the rulers are the foremost of people in

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<sup>65</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *ʿAtf al-ʿulamāʾ ʿalāʾl-umarāʾ waʾl-umarāʾ ʿalāʾl-ʿulamāʾ*, ed. Ibrāhīm Bājis ʿAbd al-Majīd (Riyadh: Ibrāhīm Bājis ʿAbd al-Majīd, 2006), p. 27.

society who should benefit from the knowledge of the scholars because this benefit (*naḥ*) does not only affect the ruler, but is also enjoyed by others beyond his immediate circle.<sup>66</sup> Herein lies the main crux of the problem underlying scholar-ruler relations during Ibn al-Jawzī's time: "If it harms the ruler to be close to [the scholar who only comes to him for worldly benefits] while the righteous scholar keeps away, then who will enjoin him to do good and guide him to proper conduct in accordance with the Sunna and the Book?"<sup>67</sup> The *ʿAtf* is composed to resolve these contradictions and to propose a middle-ground approach that will resolve them.<sup>68</sup>

The treatise's first chapter is addressed to scholars and begins with a defense of the practice of visiting rulers.<sup>69</sup> As a prelude to this defense, Ibn al-Jawzī adduces a narrative already familiar to us in the discussions above by marking out three distinct phases in the history of scholar-ruler relations. In the first phase, early generations of rulers used to love knowledge and those who attained rulership (*imāra*) were perfect in their souls (*kāmil fī naḥsihi*). The second phase began when rulers found themselves in need of scholars who could advise them in matters related to faith and the various sciences. Over time, chamberlains (*ḥujjāb*)<sup>70</sup> at the court grew in number and people were barred from seeing the ruler except when they had matters related to the state. Those who gained access to the ruler mixed in deception with their advice. This social phenomenon is characteristic of the third phase, in which rulers are left to act according to their own whims and

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., pp. 27-28.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>69</sup> The book is divided into two chapters: the first addressed to scholars, the second to rulers. The first chapter occupies twenty-eight printed pages in the 2006 Riyadh edition, whereas the second chapter only takes up two.

<sup>70</sup> D. Sourdel, C. E. Bosworth, and A. K. S. Lambton, "Ḥādjib," *EF*. For the role of the *ḥujjāb* in late Abbasid Baghdad, see Renterghem, "Controlling and Developing Baghdad," p. 119.

fancies without a proper grasp of true knowledge.<sup>71</sup> These developments, however, should not deter the righteous scholar from admonishing rulers.

At this point, Ibn al-Jawzī acknowledges that there have been *ḥadīths* transmitted which forbid proximity with rulers and also sayings from the pious forebears that warn against this practice. After listing two *ḥadīths*<sup>72</sup> and seven sayings from early Muslim scholars cautioning against associating with rulers,<sup>73</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī interjects immediately with a remark saying that these *ḥadīths* are not sound and that the sayings from the pious forebears are targeted at the majority group (*al-ghālib*) of scholars. For such scholars, visiting the ruler indeed constitutes a trial because they either replace advise with flattery in order to enjoy the vanities of this world, remain silent when confronted with the ruler’s wrongdoings, or regret that they let slip the things of worldly pleasure when they notice them in the presence of the ruler.<sup>74</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī’s *ʿAtf* is directed less at scholars of this sort and more at those with a sincere intention to reform the ruler.

At several points in the *ʿAtf*, Ibn al-Jawzī stresses that the act of visiting rulers and entering their presence is not reprehensible in and of itself. “There is nothing objectionable,” he writes, “in people entering the ruler’s presence while their intentions towards the ruler is sound.”<sup>75</sup> The

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<sup>71</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *ʿAtf*, p. 29. This narrative does not map neatly onto the “piety-minded opposition” thesis, which suggests that religious scholars stood in opposition to the Umayyad regime from the moment of its inception (for instance, ‘Athamina, “‘Ulamā’ in the Opposition”). Ibn al-Jawzī’s examples of rulers who welcomed scholars and their rebuke included Umayyads like ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān and ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and Abbasids like al-Manṣūr and Hārūn al-Rashīd.

<sup>72</sup> (1) “Whoever resides in the desert becomes ignorant. Whoever follows the hunt becomes heedless. Whoever comes to the door of the ruler is tested. No worshipper ever grew closer to the ruler except that they grew more distant from God.” (2) “The scholars are the trustees of the prophets (*umanā’ al-rusul*) as long as they do not attend to the rulers and obtain worldly benefits. If they do so, they have betrayed [the trust of] the prophets. So stay away from the rulers.” Ibn al-Jawzī, *ʿAtf*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., pp. 29-32.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., pp. 32-33.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., pp. 45, 50.

problem arises when scholars—the majority of them, in fact—succumb to the temptations of worldly desires and vanities. No doubt, entering the ruler’s court exposes one to many sins (*ma‘āṣin*). For instance, the ruler might be living in a property that is usurped (*dūr maghṣūba*). Scholars might be required to kneel and prostrate in front of the ruler as this was court protocol. One might be bedazzled by the palaces of gold and silver and the silk clothes worn by the ruler and his officials. One might also hear words which are not permissible to be uttered.<sup>76</sup> But these dangers should not be the reason for abandoning the duty of commanding right and forbidding wrong, for doing so is simply ignorance. The general welfare (*al-naḥ‘ al-‘āmm*) to be gained from enjoining the ruler to do right and forbidding him from wrongdoing should not be abandoned for the sake of preventing a specific harm (*ḍarar khāṣṣ*). If the scholar deems it safe for himself—physically and spiritually—to attend the ruler, then it is permissible for him to socialize with the ruler because of the opportunity to command right and forbid wrong and to instruct the ruler in matters related to the truth.<sup>77</sup> How this is to be achieved will be the subject of the following section.

## 2.5. Strategies of Preaching to the Ruler

Before even proceeding to admonish and preach, scholars must observe the situation of the ruler. Ibn al-Jawzī claims that there are three types of rulers. The first is the just ruler (*‘ādil*) who desires the truth and acts based on the *sharī‘a*. For such rulers, not only is aiding them obligatory (*i‘ānat hādhā wājiba*), but frequenting them is also considered a form of worship (*al-taraddud ilayhi ‘ibāda*).<sup>78</sup> There is no reason to keep away from them unless one is preoccupied with one’s

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 48. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, *Minhāj*, vol. 1, pp. 405-7; Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, vol. 2, pp. 182-83; *Al-Ghazālī on the Lawful and the Unlawful*, pp. 205-9.

<sup>77</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *‘Atf*, p. 54.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

own affairs or for fear of worldly vanities.<sup>79</sup> The second kind is the ruler who acts rightly and also wrongly at various moments. It is necessary for scholars to admonish rulers of this sort and not leave them to their mere fancies.<sup>80</sup> The last is the tyrant who has been overcome by transgression (*jawr*) and injustice (*ẓulm*). Ibn al-Jawzī explains that there are two common approaches that scholars adopt to deal with this type of ruler: staying away from him or rebuking him in a bold manner even though it might result in death.<sup>81</sup> This observation mirrors Ghazālī's all-or-nothing approach outlined above, whereby he strongly condemns scholars who visit the ruler's court but encourages harsh language should a scholar find himself in the presence of a ruler.

After listing three *ḥadīths*<sup>82</sup> and one anecdote related to the merits of speaking truth to power, Ibn al-Jawzī proceeds immediately to argue that although confrontational admonition (*al-mubāriza bi'l-tadhkīr*) is permissible in the face of tyrants (*jabbār*; the third kind of ruler), it is preferable to admonish with politeness and civility (*talattuf*).<sup>83</sup> This is because harshness (*tashdīd*) is of no benefit, especially when it comes to kings (*mulūk*). Kings generally do not tolerate overbearing admonishers, because they perceive themselves as solely entitled to behave in a

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp. 33, 45.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. In *Talbīs Iblīs*, pp. 145-48, Ibn al-Jawzī lists twelve sins (or, in his words, Satan's delusions) commonly observed in the tyrants of his day.

<sup>82</sup> (1) The Prophet is asked, "What is the best *jihād*?" The Prophet replied, "Speaking a word of truth to an oppressive ruler." (2) "The most dignified of the martyrs is Ḥamza b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib [the Prophet's paternal uncle], followed by the man who stood up to the oppressive ruler, commanded him to do right and forbade him from wrong, and was killed in doing so." (3) "The best form of *jihād* is speaking a word of justice to the oppressive ruler." Ibn al-Jawzī, *Aḥf*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 36. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*, p. 419; idem, *Kitāb al-Quṣṣās wa'l-mudhakkirīn*, ed. and trans. Merlin Swartz as *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣās wa'l-Mudhakkirīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1971), pp. 143, 229 (English translation). In permitting confrontational admonition, Ibn al-Jawzī departs from his stance in the *Minhāj* where he pronounces against this approach (*Minhāj*, vol. 1, p. 533).

haughty manner.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, rulers possess force and coercive power. If they feel humiliated by a sharp reprimand (*tawbīkh*), the admonisher might end up putting his life on the line.<sup>85</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī admits that he had mentioned several examples of scholars speaking boldly to rulers in his *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍīʾ fī khilāfat al-Mustaḍīʾ*, a mirror for princes dedicated to his patron-caliph al-Mustaḍīʾ. But he goes on to say that one should not be deluded by these examples because the rulers involved had tolerated the harsh language leveled at them; not all rulers are that tolerant.<sup>86</sup>

Since the rulers of his day are easily offended, Ibn al-Jawzī suggests that it would be a mistake to speak to them as if one would to the common folk. Indeed, rulers are often intoxicated by the sense of leadership they possess (*fā-inna al-riʾāsa lahā sakra*).<sup>87</sup> It would also be a grave misstep to address the sermon to him directly (*lam yuwājih biʾl-khiṭāb*), “for kings remain aloof from the people in order to maintain their rank. However, when they are given a sermon directly they feel their esteem to be slipping.” Therefore, Ibn al-Jawzī writes in his manual of preaching, *Kitāb al-Quṣṣās waʾl-mudhakkirīn*, “It is much better that the sermon be of general character (*ʾāmma*), in which case the ruler can glean from it what is particularly relevant to him.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *ʿAtf*, p. 36. It is intriguing that Ibn al-Jawzī switches from *salāṭīn* (the more common term used in the work to designate rulers) to *mulūk* in this part of the text. In the terminology of medieval Islam, *mulūk* “were rulers who seized power for their own aggrandizement rather than the execution of God’s will, turning God’s slaves (that is, human beings) into slaves of their own and using their power for the satisfaction of private interests rather than the fulfilment of collective needs” (Crone, *Political Thought*, p. 7). Keeping this in mind, Ibn al-Jawzī probably intended to sync the negative connotations associated with the term *mulūk* with the overbearing and unjust nature of the third kind of rulers, i.e., the tyrants (*jabbār*). For additional discussion of the terms *malik* and *mulūk*, see Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 53-56; for *jabbār*, see *ibid.*, pp. 155-56 n. 30.

<sup>85</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*, p. 419.

<sup>86</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *ʿAtf*, p. 39.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>88</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-Quṣṣās*, pp. 143, 228-29 (English translation).

To make sure that the sermon is truly effective in appealing to the ruler's emotional and moral sensitivities, Ibn al-Jawzī recommends scholars to pursue an eclectic approach by mixing advice with praise and words of caution. Above all, one should “mix admonition with a mention of the nobility of rulership (*faḍl al-wilāya*).”<sup>89</sup> One can also adduce examples of just rulers from the past.<sup>90</sup> Through this approach, rulers are given due recognition of the loftiness of their office and yet reminded of the heavy burden of rulership on their shoulders. Ibn al-Jawzī quotes a statement by a jurist to a caliph as an example: “Verily God has not created anyone above you [in rank], so do not be content [with yourself] if there is someone more grateful to God than you.”<sup>91</sup> In addition, one should admonish by way of allusion (*ishāra*), instead of being explicit (*taṣrīḥ*). Statements about the rewards pertaining to just rule ought to also incorporate words of caution against injustice in the gentlest way possible.<sup>92</sup> As an example, Ibn al-Jawzī brings up a statement he once made to his patron-caliph al-Mustaḍī: “O Commander of the Faithful, if I speak I fear you, if I stay silent I fear for you. But I put my fear for you above my fear of you, due to my love for you. Verily God has not created anyone above you [in rank], so do not be content [with yourself] if there is anyone more grateful to God than you.”<sup>93</sup>

As effective as the above methods might be when admonishing a ruler, there are after all rulers who could not be bothered with admonitions. For such cases, Ibn al-Jawzī suggests that it is better not to admonish him since the sermon would only go to waste, especially if it leads to

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<sup>89</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *ʿAtf*, p. 38.

<sup>90</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*, p. 419.

<sup>91</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *ʿAtf*, p. 38. See also idem, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī fī khilāfat al-Mustaḍī*, ed. Nājiya Ibrāhīm (Beirut: Sharikat al-Maṭbūʿāt li'l-Tawzīʿ wa'l-Nashr, 2000), p. 135, where the jurist is identified as the Muʿtazilite scholar ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd (d. 144/761) and the caliph as al-Manṣūr.

<sup>92</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *ʿAtf*, p. 38.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

nothing but whipping or execution.<sup>94</sup> If the scholar can be certain that he will be entering the presence of a ruler who would most likely kill him, then he should reflect on this. If his martyrdom is for the glorification of Islam, there is no blame on him for taking the risk. Nonetheless, there is still no harm in proceeding with politeness and civility.<sup>95</sup>

The approaches outlined above attest to Ibn al-Jawzī's skill and experience as a preacher who maintained close relations with the ruler's (or more specifically, the caliph's) court. As a skilled rhetorician, Ibn al-Jawzī was cognizant of the various kinds of strategies to adopt in order to sway the hearts and minds of his congregation. Having preached in front of large audiences with the caliph in attendance,<sup>96</sup> he was also aware of the intricate yet fragile relationship between preaching and power. A minor misstep in speech could anger the ruler and put the preacher's life at risk. This might be the case even when the ruler assures the preacher that he will welcome everything the preacher says.<sup>97</sup> But despite these dangers, Ibn al-Jawzī insists in the *'Atf* that there is nothing reprehensible in the practice of visiting rulers and admonishing them if one does so with the right intentions. It is after all only with purity of intentions that scholars are able to get their hands dirty with politics. At its core, the task of commanding rulers to rule in accordance with the *sharī'a* and forbidding them from sin remains a noble one due to Ibn al-Jawzī's belief that a just and pious ruler secures the general welfare of the community.<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, as I will discuss in

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>96</sup> See the various accounts, with respect to al-Mustaḍīr, in Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, pp. 190-254.

<sup>97</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*, p. 420.

<sup>98</sup> On the role of preachers in commanding right and forbidding wrong before rulers, see Jones, *Power of Oratory*, pp. 47, 164-67.

the following section, what Ibn al-Jawzī has in mind with respect to the scholar’s role in government extends beyond admonition and counseling.

## 2.6. Scholars as Rulers

The second chapter of Ibn al-Jawzī’s *ʿAtf* is addressed to rulers. It is short in comparison to the long chapter directed to scholars, but it adds an additional layer to what we already know of his views on scholar-ruler relations. More specifically, it offers an indication of the hierarchy of power and authority which Ibn al-Jawzī envisions for ideal Islamic rule.

Ibn al-Jawzī begins the chapter with a short excursus on the noble nature of rulership. He reminds the ruler that the foundation (*aṣl*) of his rule is religion (*dīn*). The knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of religion is with the religious scholars, whereas the ruler is tasked with protecting religion.<sup>99</sup> In this sense, “if the scholars order a person to carry out certain legal obligations (*wājibāt*) and forbid him from indulging in legal prohibitions (*maḥẓūrāt*), but the person refuses, then it is up to the ruler to set things right by applying discretionary punishments (*siyāsa*).”<sup>100</sup> This runs parallel with God’s words: “We have sent Our messengers (*rusul*) with clear proofs (*al-bayyināt*), and sent down the Book and the Balance with them, so that people would uphold justice. And We sent down iron (*al-ḥadīd*), wherein are great might and benefits for mankind, and so that God may know those who will help Him and His messengers unseen. Truly God is strong and mighty” (Q 57:25). Ibn al-Jawzī proceeds to provide a short exegesis of the verse. “Clear proofs (*al-bayyināt*),” he claims, means the clear indications (*al-dalālāt al-wāḍiḥāt*) of the truthfulness (*ṣidq*) of the messengers. If

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<sup>99</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *ʿAtf*, p. 57. This statement echoes the Persian adage attributed to the Sasanian king Ardashīr, who is believed to have said to his son, “Know that kingship (*mulk*) and religion (*dīn*) are two brothers, the one cannot do without the other. For religion is the basis (*ass*) and kingship the guard (*ḥāris*). That which has no basis falls to pieces, that which is not guarded perishes.” Quoted multiple times in Feldman, “Ethical Literature.”

<sup>100</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *ʿAtf*, p. 57.

their truthfulness is well established, then it is an obligation to obey their command and accept the scripture (*al-kitāb*) that came with it. However, there might exist those whom scripture cannot reform. The ruler's justice (*ʿadl*) is targeted at this group of people, since after all, “the sayings of the messengers have been put in order by iron, that is the sword (*al-sayf*).”<sup>101</sup> This suggests that the words and commands of scripture do occasionally require political authority or coercive force to be implemented among humankind.<sup>102</sup>

With the above points laid out, Ibn al-Jawzī goes on to argue the case for the primacy of religious scholars over rulers in certain matters of governance:

If the ruler understands the worth (*qadr*) of knowledge (*ʿilm*) and the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*), he will make sure that he is at their disposal like the *shihna* and [that his power] issues from their authority (*ayqana annahu bayna aydihim kaʾl-shihna yaşduru ʿan amrihim*). Therefore, if [the scholars] order [the ruler] to kill someone, he will do as they say. If they order him to strike someone, he will do so as well. For if he acts according to his caprice, he is no longer the deputy of God (*nāʾiban ʿan Allāh*) and His messenger; his authority (*wilāya*) is tyranny (*jawr*) and not legitimate rule (*imāra*).<sup>103</sup>

This loaded statement indicates that in Ibn al-Jawzī's ideal hierarchy of power and authority, it is the religious scholars who define the limits of the ruler's coercive and punitive policies. In these respects, scholars hold legislative sway over the ruler who merely functions as their executive arm. It is thus required for rulers to “exalt the worth (*qadr*) of the scholars, be close to them, and learn

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid. A different interpretation of the verse is obtained in Ibn al-Jawzī's work of Qur'ānic exegesis, *Zād al-masīr fī ʿilm al-tafsīr*, where “iron (*al-ḥadīd*)” is understood as the anvil (*sindān*), pair of tongs (*kalbatayn*), and hammer (*miṭraqa*) with which God had sent Adam down to earth in order to facilitate his life there. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr fī ʿilm al-tafsīr*, ed. Muḥammad Zuhayr al-Shāwīsh (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1984), vol. 8, p. 174.

<sup>102</sup> Similarly, writers of medieval Islamic ethical writings often highlight the mutual dependence of religion and political authority, notions which owe much to Persian political ideas presenting political authority and religion as brothers or twins. According to Noah Feldman, “the mutual dependence of religion and political authority proposed by the Islamic ethical writers represents an original, theoretically provocative, two-fold claim about the capacities of constitutional government. First, to be vital and successful, political authority must be grounded in a set of metaphysical claims about the world that are shaped by a community and applied through a legal system. Second, for religion, so understood, to play its dual role of sustaining political authority as well as spiritual fulfillment, it must be protected and its dictates enforced by political authority. One without the other means failure.” Feldman, “Ethical Literature,” p. 98.

<sup>103</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *ʿAtf*, p. 57.

from them.”<sup>104</sup> Indeed, the noble rank of the scholars is exactly what inclines rulers to them (*ya ‘tifu al-umarā’ ‘alā’l-‘ulamā’*, alluding to the title of the treatise). Rulers should not foster contempt towards scholars and place them on an equal level with the common folk. Similarly, it is required for scholars to understand the worth of the ruler and not deny it because if it were not for his supervision of socio-political affairs and his guardianship of the community, they would not be able to pursue knowledge safely.<sup>105</sup>

Before unpacking the above statements, it is important to situate them in a wider intellectual context. By Ibn al-Jawzī’s time, Sunni political thought had developed a nuanced but delicate balance between scholars and rulers with the aim of maintaining a legitimate social and moral universe that is in accordance with the *sharī‘a*. Political power, administration, and communal welfare belonged to the ruler’s sphere; religious knowledge, law, as well as civil and private legal matters to the scholar’s sphere.<sup>106</sup> Yet some degree of interaction and overlap did occur between these spheres—in the ways by which rulers attempted to interfere in juridical and theological debates, and also in the jurists’ vision of a legitimate socio-political order as presented in the texts they wrote.<sup>107</sup> There is some sense, when reading works like Māwardī’s *al-Aḥkām al-*

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>106</sup> Vogel, “Tracing Nuance,” p. 350. See also Crone, *Political Thought*, p. 394: “scholars took over the task of guiding people; the deputy of God [i.e., the caliph] was left with the coercive role, which eventually passed to kings.” This did not mean that the ruler did not have a role in religious affairs. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the caliph was understood in juridical-theological writings to maintain a minimal role in religious affairs in ensuring that religious rulings are carried out and in combating heterodoxies, while the definition of law remained in the hands of the jurists (though, see Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, pp. 456-82, for a different argument, but one that is more suited to post-Abbasid, Mamluk and Ottoman contexts and non-legal genres). Above all, the caliph was expected to guard the faith according to the notion of *ḥirāsāt al-dīn wa-siyāsāt al-dunyā*. Over time, the non-caliphal rulers who emerged in the political landscape of the medieval Islamic world, such as sultans, emirs, and kings, were gradually perceived in the same manner. See *ibid.*, pp. 216-23.

<sup>107</sup> The former case can be easily gleaned from historical chronicles, whereas the latter case has not been sufficiently analyzed in a critical manner in modern scholarly literature. See Frank Vogel’s diagnosis of this problem in “Tracing Nuance,” pp. 345-47.

*sulṭāniyya*, for instance, that scholars of *fiqh* were not only carving out a “zone of scholarly and private autonomy” free from intrusion by rulers, but also beginning to overreach into the ruler’s realm by “working to widen the sway of scholarly *ijtihād*,” as demonstrated in Frank Vogel’s careful analysis of the *Aḥkām*.<sup>108</sup> However, Vogel argues, Māwardī’s approach was subtle. In instances where the rulers’ authority could potentially clash with scholarly authority, “he employs innuendo, ambiguity, and indirection.”<sup>109</sup>

There is no sense of Māwardī’s nuance and ambiguity in Ibn al-Jawzī’s proposal that the scholars’ authority subordinates that of rulers in certain matters of governance. Religious scholars, in Ibn al-Jawzī’s political framework, do not just uphold the divine law and admonish rulers to do the same. If the statement claiming “If [the scholars] order [the ruler] to kill someone, he will do as they say. If they order him to strike someone, he will do so as well” is of any indication, Ibn al-Jawzī could be implying that scholars ought also to have sway over the ruler’s coercive functions. Or he might be hinting at a situation whereby the theoretical authority to implement discretionary punishments (*taʿzīr*) was restored to the judge (*qāḍī*) chosen from the ranks of the religious scholars. Such a claim might not be too far-fetched since, according to Baber Johansen, from the sixth/twelfth century onwards, beginning with the jurist al-Marghinānī (d. 593/1197), Islamic legal theory began to float the idea that judges could implement *taʿzīr* on the basis of state expediency (*siyāsa*).<sup>110</sup> Regardless of what Ibn al-Jawzī had in mind, it is clear that only by acting according

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., pp. 354-56. This overreach includes (1) making scholarly *ijtihād* a prerequisite for appointment to political offices; (2) “[omitting] to mention any powers in the ruler to make regulations or laws, even on such matters as taxation or administration, disregarding the historical fact that caliphs had always promulgated such laws”; and (3) “[omitting] to mention the idea, which gained much currency later, that one holding public authority but who is not a *mujtahid* enjoys the power to select, from among various views endorsed by scholars, a single view suitable for implementation.”

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 339.

<sup>110</sup> Baber Johansen, “Eigentum, Familie und Obrigkeit im hanafitischen Strafrecht: Das Verhältnis der privaten Rechte zu den Forderungen der Allgemeinheit in hanafitischen Rechtskommentaren,” *Die Welt des Islams*, 19 (1979), pp. 54-55. Article brought to my attention in Lange, *Justice*, p. 47 n. 134.

to the scholars' precepts can a ruler's polity be considered a legitimate *imāra*. Rulers and scholars need each other, but this mutual dependence is quite a disproportionate one. Based on Ibn al-Jawzī's short exegesis of Q 57:25, insofar as the teachings of scripture occasionally require a ruler's coercive power to be enforced, the ruler's sword only enters the picture when the messengers' teachings and commands prove ineffective. Moreover, the primary responsibility for guiding the people towards legal obligations and away from prohibitions lies with the religious scholars. It is only when scholars' efforts fall short that rulers set things right by applying *siyāsa*. In other words, the ruler mainly functions as the supplier of coercive means to enforce the scholar's rulings. His role is secondary to that of the scholars. This is only one step away from making the explicit claim that scholars ought to take over the reins of government in order to establish the rule of the wise. Ibn al-Jawzī's political configuration thus ends up veering close to Plato's concept of the philosopher-king, except that in this context it is the scholar-preacher, not the philosopher, whom one finds at the top of the political hierarchy.<sup>111</sup>

Moving beyond the technicalities of Ibn al-Jawzī's configurations of power and authority, it is hard to miss the point that religious knowledge ( *ilm* ), as upheld by the scholars, constitutes the principal element in rulership. As outlined in Chapter One, Sunni jurists and theologians before and during Ibn al-Jawzī's time had come to acknowledge that the Abbasid caliph lacked the prerequisite level of *ilm* to qualify as a *qāḍī* or *mujtahid*. Some scholars like Juwaynī and Abū Ya'la suggested leaving *ilm* out of the equation when appointing a caliph. Ghazālī, in his creative

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<sup>111</sup> I am grateful to Suzanne Smith for bringing this point to my attention. For Plato's notion of the rule of the wise, see Paul Stern, "The Rule of Wisdom and the Rule of Law in Plato's Statesman," *The American Political Sciences Review*, 91/2 (1997), pp. 264-76; David Sedley, "Philosophy, the Forms, and the Art of Ruling," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*, ed. G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 256-83. For the philosopher-king in Islamic political philosophy, see Hans Daiber, "Philosopher-King," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia Of Islamic Political Thought*, eds. Gerhard Bowering et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 413-14; Crone, *Political Thought*, pp. 193-96.

solution to this problem, insisted that the caliph still possessed *‘ilm* by virtue of him consulting with the scholars. Ibn al-Jawzī’s arguments in the *‘Atf* can be read as an extension of Ghazālī’s political configuration: not only do scholars advise and admonish the ruler, they also dictate his policies when it comes to carrying out punishments and other coercive measures.

## 2.7. Concluding Remarks

Given its moderate, pragmatic, and mediatory approach to power, Ibn al-Jawzī’s treatment of scholar-ruler relations can be best characterized as ameliorative. It is moderate in that he avoids Ghazālī’s all-or-nothing approach in dealing with rulers. While he admits that the court is a site of corruption, there is no shame in righteous scholars visiting rulers as long as they do so with the sincere intention of admonishing and reforming them; and indeed scholars are encouraged to do so for the sake of ensuring the harmony and well-being of society as a whole. At the same time, rulers are in need of scholars to counsel them so that they rule in accordance to divine law. But given the harsh politics of Ibn al-Jawzī’s day, a high level of pragmatism is also required. Instead of rebuking rulers in a harsh manner, scholars should proceed with utmost tact and caution, and modulate their words and tone depending on the ruler’s personality. Whenever possible, rulers should be admonished with politeness and civility (*talatṭuf*). Not only does this approach ensure the scholar’s personal safety, it is also more effective in enjoining rulers to do right and forbidding them from wrongs.

Ibn al-Jawzī’s arguments in the *‘Atf* also highlight the mediatory aspect of his political thought. They remind readers that although the politics of military brute force (*shawka*) remains the order of the day, there are ways to navigate it to bring about pious and just rulership. This is where the preacher, who is sensitive to rhetorical subtleties and the affective responses of his audience, has an important role to play in comparison with other groups of scholars such as the

jurists (*fuqahā*'), theologians (*mutakallimūn*), and *ḥadīth* traditionists (*muḥaddithūn*). These latter groups might possess religious knowledge of the highest degree that is crucial for societal and political reform, but the preacher's mastery of rhetoric and the art of homily better equips him to deal with unpredictable and arbitrary politics.<sup>112</sup> The skilled preacher, armed with rhetorical tools to tailor his language according to the ruler's personality, is able to deal with tyrants and to negotiate with different levels of power. Therefore, Ibn al-Jawzī could also be implying that it is the preacher who is best suited to the role of admonishing and reforming rulers.<sup>113</sup> Yet Ibn al-Jawzī's vision for the role of the preacher was not confined to admonition and counseling. There is a strong indication in the *ʿAtf* that he idealized a situation in which scholars functioned as the arbiters of legitimate rulership and dictated how rulers should inflict punishments. In such a political configuration, the ideal candidate might again be the scholar-preacher who is able to reform rulers using effective methods of exhortation. If these arguments hold true, what better person than himself, arguably the most high-profile preacher in Baghdad, to fill this role?

As much as the arguments put forward in the *ʿAtf* are informed by Ibn al-Jawzī's experience as a preacher who was close to the caliph's circle, they also reflect the shifting dynamics between preachers and rulers in the wider medieval Islamic world. According to Daniella Talmon-Heller, the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries witnessed the cultivation of closer relations between preachers and rulers in cities such as Damascus and Aleppo. Preachers close to the court

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<sup>112</sup> For a study of the preacher's rhetoric and homilies, especially as they pertain to Ibn al-Jawzī, see Swartz, "Arabic Rhetoric and the Art of the Homily."

<sup>113</sup> Merlin Swartz and Angelika Hartmann have argued that several of Ibn al-Jawzī's works display efforts to raise the profile of the art of preaching (*wa'z*) in the Islamic sciences alongside *ḥadīth*, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), exegesis (*tafsīr*), and to provide it with a firmer moral and intellectual foundation as an independent science in itself. In the *Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ*, for instance, he defends storytelling (*qaṣaṣ*) and preaching (*wa'z*) against jurists and *ḥadīth* traditionists who claim that they are a form of innovation (*bid'ā*). See Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa'l-Mudhakkirīn*, pp. 55-61, 69-70; Hartmann, "Les ambivalences," p. 90; idem, "La predication," p. 345. The *ʿAtf* could very well be an effort to raise the profile of preaching in the political sphere.

were hardly criticized and accused of flattery in biographical sources. In fact, “courtly patronage only enhanced the position of preachers...as full partners to the successes of the sultan.”<sup>114</sup> Similar developments can also be observed in the Baghdadi social scene with preachers, such as Ibn al-Jawzī, who maintained close ties with the caliphal court. Aside from Ibn al-Jawzī, there is also the example of Abū Manṣūr al-Muẓaffar (d. 547/1152), whose widely attended sermons in Baghdad earned him a close relationship with the caliph al-Muqtafī (r. 530/1136-555/1160) who sent him on numerous diplomatic missions.<sup>115</sup>

It is now opportune to revisit Ibn al-Jawzī’s assessment of the relationship between *siyāsa* and *sharī’a*. As mentioned earlier, Ibn al-Jawzī critiques rulers who are quick to justify their arbitrary acts of policy by simply labeling them as *siyāsa* and, in doing so, accuse the *sharī’a* of being deficient in dealing with various issues pertaining to governance. The crux of the problem here, to borrow Anjum’s words, “had to do with whether the Sharī’a could be identified with the jurists’ enterprise (*fiqh*) or whether there was room left within the Sharī’a but outside of *fiqh*.”<sup>116</sup> The notion of *sharī’a* under attack by such rulers and their supporters is the one articulated in juridical (*fiqh*) texts by the religious scholars. And this is also very likely how many scholars of *fiqh* regarded the *sharī’a*—as legal ordinances formulated in accordance with the schools of law.<sup>117</sup> But while the *siyāsa* advocates viewed scholarly *fiqh* as overly formalistic and rigid and thus ill-equipped to address political issues in the real world, scholars from the anti-*siyāsa* camp expected

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<sup>114</sup> Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria*, pp. 126-27.

<sup>115</sup> Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority*, p. 59.

<sup>116</sup> Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, p. 106.

<sup>117</sup> Aziz al-Azmeh, “Chronophagous Discourse: A Study of the Clerico-Legal Appropriation of the World in an Islamic Tradition,” in *Times of History*, pp. 67-100; Vogel, “Tracing Nuance,” pp. 345-46. This is different from claiming that *all* Muslims viewed the *sharī’a* in this manner. See Shahab Ahmed’s treatment of this issue in *What is Islam?*, pp. 113-75.

all matters, including policy and criminal punishments, to fall under the *fiqh*-based legal ordinances typically formulated in juridical writings.

Over time, Muslim religious scholars found creative ways to deal with the tension between *siyāsa* and *sharīʿa*. Scholars like al-Ṭurṭūshī (d. 520/1126) saw *siyāsa* and *sharīʿa* as independent but complementary spheres working in tandem with each other towards an ideal socio-political order.<sup>118</sup> The Mamluk-era Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) sought to harmonize both spheres—hence the title of his treatise *al-Siyāsa al-sharʿiyya*—by arguing in favor of cooperation between rulers, religious scholars, and the community (*umma*) at large in the affair of governance.<sup>119</sup> For him, “the principles of good governance are religious principles on par with religious duties such as prayer and fasting, even though they are not necessarily part of the legal norms established by jurists.”<sup>120</sup> Other scholars, including Ghazālī, Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), and Maqrīzī, were less generous to the ruling authorities and advocated for the primacy of juridical doctrines.<sup>121</sup> *Siyāsa* for them was nothing beyond the laws formulated by religious scholars. Even then, this group of scholars had various ways of protesting the abuse of *siyāsa* by rulers. Ghazālī and Subkī, for instance, insist that rulers follow the stipulations laid down by jurists in managing human affairs. Others sought relief in texts by “[circumscribing] criminal justice as much as possible, delimiting it from other realms of law,” in hopes of protecting legal ordinances from being encroached upon by rulers.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, pp. 98-102.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., pp. 228-65; Rapoport, “Royal Justice and Religious Law,” pp. 92-93.

<sup>120</sup> Rapoport, “Royal Justice and Religious Law,” p. 93.

<sup>121</sup> For Ghazālī, see Anjum, *Taymiyyan Moment*, p. 106; Najjar, “*Siyasa* in Islamic Political Philosophy,” pp. 98-99. For Subkī and Maqrīzī, see Rapoport, “Royal Justice and Religious Law,” pp. 93-96.

<sup>122</sup> Lange, *Justice*, p. 181.

Ibn al-Jawzī's resolution lies somewhere in between Ibn Taymiyya's harmonization and Ghazālī's and Subkī's insistence on the primacy of juridical doctrines. He argues that the *sharī'a* is self-sufficient and not in need of the complementary sphere of *siyāsa*. But for Ibn al-Jawzī, the overall thrust of his solution seems to be that while protecting the legal ordinances from political encroachment is a noble goal in itself, the *sharī'a* can be further guarded if scholars themselves took over the *siyāsa* prerogatives of the ruler and subordinated him to their commands—except that the scholar he has in mind is more likely a preacher than a jurist. In this sense, Ibn al-Jawzī's ideal configuration of power and authority comes closer to the Platonic rule of the wise than to Ibn Taymiyya's model of cooperation between ruler, scholar, and community.<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless, irrespective of their different approaches, both Ḥanbalī scholars Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Taymiyya envisioned closer ties between scholars and rulers—a far cry indeed from the persistent aversion to politics exhibited by their school's eponymous founder Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Though in the short run, Islamic history unfolded in exactly the opposite direction from what Ibn al-Jawzī intended: the final decades of the Mamluk sultanate witnessed sultans overruling the decisions of judges and passing laws “not in the name of *siyāsah* but rather in the name of the correct application of the shari‘ah itself.” See Rapoport, “Royal Justice and Religious Law,” pp. 97-100.

<sup>124</sup> Regarding Ibn Ḥanbal's “apolitical politics,” see Cook, *Commanding*, pp. 87-113.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Panegyric in Service of Religious Knowledge and Piety: Genealogical Legitimation of the Abbasid Dynasty

While the previous chapter has discussed Ibn al-Jawzī's proposed strategies for preaching to rulers, this chapter examines how these strategies are applied in his mirror for princes, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī' fī khilāfat al-Mustaḍī'* (*The Radiant Light Illuminating the Caliphate of al-Mustaḍī'*; hereafter, *Miṣbāḥ*), dedicated to the Abbasid caliph al-Mustaḍī' (r. 566/1170-575/1180). It highlights Ibn al-Jawzī's dual roles as a panegyrist and skilled preacher who praised his patron caliph but yet made sure to embed admonition in his panegyric. My discussion focuses on the book's first chapter, in which Ibn al-Jawzī exalts the office of the caliphate and legitimizes the Abbasid dynasty by way of a sacred genealogy stretching back to Adam. This sacred genealogy displays a marked focus on Abbasid ancestors who were well known for their religious knowledge and piety. These efforts demonstrate how Ibn al-Jawzī blends panegyric with admonition, an approach he proposed in the *'Atf*. Since the *Miṣbāḥ* was a work dedicated to a ruling caliph, this rhetorical strategy also sheds light on Ibn al-Jawzī's ideal caliphate as one that rests on the twin pillars of religious knowledge (*'ilm*) and piety (*taqwā* or *wara'*).

#### 3.1. Date of Composition

There is no doubt regarding Ibn al-Jawzī's authorship of the work. Biographers usually mention the *Miṣbāḥ* among the large corpus of writings attributed to him.<sup>1</sup> He also refers to it in several of his writings. Its date of composition is harder to ascertain. Nājiya Ibrāhīm argues that

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<sup>1</sup> See Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zamān*, vol. 8, part 2, p. 484, where the book is listed as a work of history and biographies under the title *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī' bi-faḍā'il al-Mustaḍī'*; Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 42, p. 292, quoting Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, p. 404, where it is mentioned under the title *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī' fī dawlat al-Mustaḍī'*, and on p. 419, quoting Ibn al-Qaṭī'ī, under the title *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī' li-da'wat al-Mustaḍī'*.

Ibn al-Jawzī composed the work shortly after al-Mustaḍīʾ’s accession to the caliphate in 566/1170, but the textual evidence she offers is sparse.<sup>2</sup> We can only claim with certainty that it was composed after al-Mustaḍīʾ’s son and successor Abūʾl-ʿAbbās Aḥmad received the regnal title of “al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh”—since the title is mentioned in a list of Abbasid caliphs located in the book<sup>3</sup>—and before al-Mustaḍīʾ’s death in 575/1180. When exactly the future al-Nāṣir received his regnal title remains unknown, a problem compounded by the fact that al-Mustaḍīʾ only declared him successor about a day or a week before his death.<sup>4</sup> There is also a slight possibility that al-Nāṣir received his regnal title even before he was proclaimed successor. But since historical chronicles hardly provide details related to al-Nāṣir’s life before he became caliph, any attempt to provide a narrower range of dates for the *Miṣbāḥ*’s composition remains speculative at best.

### 3.2. The Reigns of al-Mustanjid and al-Mustaḍīʾ

Before delving into the text, it is crucial to consider the reigns of al-Mustaḍīʾ (r. 566/1170-575/1180) and his father al-Mustanjid (r. 555/1160-566/1170). By the time they acceded to the caliphate, the Abbasids were already undergoing an upswing in political and military fortunes, largely due to the efforts of al-Mustarshid (r. 512/1118-529/1135), al-Rāshid (r. 529/1135-530/1136), and al-Muqtafi (r. 530/1136-555/1160). Al-Mustarshid and al-Muqtafi personally led armies and even scored victories on the battlefield. Meanwhile, the Seljuqs were plagued by infighting and were now physically more distant after Sultan Sanjar (d. 552/1157) moved the

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<sup>2</sup> See her introduction to Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 42-44.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>4</sup> Hartmann, *An-Nāṣir*, p. 70; Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Shāma al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn fī akhbār al-dawlatayn*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2002), vol. 3, pp. 34-35, quoting the Baghdadi historian Ibn al-Qādisī (d. 632/1235), a contemporary of Ibn al-Jawzī; Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 40, p. 34; Ismāʿīl b. Kathīr, *al-Bidāya waʾl-nihāya fīʾl-taʾrīkh*, (Cairo: Maṭbaʾat al-Saʿāda, 1932), vol. 12, pp. 304-5.

capital to the city of Marv, shifting the political center of the Seljuqs further away from the caliphal seat in Baghdad.

These political and military gains took a step back as tensions from within the Abbasid court beset the reigns of al-Mustanjid and al-Mustaḍī'.<sup>5</sup> Both caliphs assumed office on the heels of internal court politics and intrigue. As heir-apparent to his father al-Muqtafi, al-Mustanjid narrowly escaped an assassination plot orchestrated by one of al-Muqtafi's concubines aimed at securing her own son on the throne.<sup>6</sup> Al-Mustaḍī's ascension to the caliphate came about as a result of his father's murder by certain members of the court, a gruesome event which involved al-Mustanjid being deposited in a bath and boiled to death.<sup>7</sup> Unlike their predecessors, al-Mustanjid and al-Mustaḍī' removed themselves from political and military affairs and allowed members of the caliphal court to run the show. Al-Mustanjid, for instance, spent most of his time hunting in spite of the internal chaos unfolding between different members of his court.<sup>8</sup> As for al-Mustaḍī', Ibn al-Jawzī had already begun to notice during the first year of his reign that he "kept himself secluded from most people and would not ride [out in public] save accompanied by an attendant, and no one but [his army commander] Qaymāz entered his presence."<sup>9</sup>

In spite of the foregoing developments, al-Mustanjid and al-Mustaḍī' were careful to appease the populace and the elites of Baghdadi society. Both caliphs were reported to have

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<sup>5</sup> Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, pp. 181-203; P. A. Mackay, "Patronage and Power in 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Century Baghdad. The Life of the Vizier 'Aḍud Al-Dīn Ibn Al-Muẓaffar," *Studia Islamica*, 34 (1971), pp. 27-56.

<sup>6</sup> Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, pp. 184-85.

<sup>7</sup> Some accounts even claim that al-Mustaḍī' had been in treasonous correspondence with several court officials to kill his father. See Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 11, pp. 360-61; Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zamān fī ta'rīkh al-a'yān* (Hyderabad-Deccan: Osmania Oriental Publications Bureau, 1951), vol. 8, part 1, pp. 284-85. Ibn al-Jawzī, however, only writes that al-Mustanjid fell ill and died shortly after (*Muntazam*, vol. 18, p. 190).

<sup>8</sup> Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, pp. 183-200.

<sup>9</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, vol. 18, pp. 192-93.

abolished the illegal tolls (*rafʿ al-mukūs*) as soon as they ascended to the caliphate, an act which constitutes a pious trope in biographies of rulers, as I will come to in the next chapter.<sup>10</sup> Beginning with al-Mustanjid’s reign, annual ceremonies—interestingly referred to as *daʿwas*—were held in which various religious scholars, Sufis, and state dignitaries in attendance were “fed, honored, and given money.” A similar ceremony also took place during the first days of al-Mustaḍīr’s reign and resumed during the second half of his caliphate with the usual attendance of the notables of the state (*arbāb al-dawla*), scholars (*al-ʿulamāʾ*), Sufis (*al-Ṣūfiyya*), and Qurʾān reciters (*qurrāʾ*).<sup>11</sup>

While not politically and militarily ambitious, al-Mustaḍīr was especially adept at building up his religious reputation. Five days after his oath of allegiance ceremony, al-Mustaḍīr bestowed 1,300 silk garments upon the notables of the state (*arbāb al-dawla*), judges, the army, and a group of religious scholars.<sup>12</sup> This display of generosity extended to the endowment of—mostly Ḥanbalī—*madrasas* and the redecoration of the shrine standing over Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s tomb with an inscription referring to him as “The Crown of the Sunna” (*tāj al-sunna*).<sup>13</sup> Al-Mustaḍīr’s religious image also received a tremendous boost early on in his reign when Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (d. 589/1193) overthrew the Fatimid caliphate in 567/1171 and pronounced the *khuṭba* in Cairo in the name of the Abbasid caliph.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the caliph engaged in pious public efforts that included

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 140, for al-Mustanjid, and 191, for al-Mustaḍīr. On the *mukūs*, see W. Björkman, “Maks,” *EF*; Heidemann, “Unislamic Taxes,” p. 498.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, pp. 163, 174, 191, 213-14, 219-20, 229, 238, 250. Brought to my attention in Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, pp. 194-95, 250 n. 45-49.

<sup>12</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, p. 191.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 248-49.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī composed a book titled *al-Naṣr ʿalāʾl-Miṣr* (*The Victory over Egypt*) and presented it to al-Mustaḍīr in the same year to commemorate the event. See *ibid.*, p. 196.

the commissioning of the building of a big mosque in the marketplace, converting a church into a mosque, distributing alms, and endowing Ḥanbalī religious institutions.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.3. The Title of the Work and Major Themes<sup>16</sup>

The work's title, *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī' fī khilāfat al-Mustaḍī'*, is a wordplay on the caliph's regnal name, which describes him as seeking light or illumination from God. The title of the book might hint at a work of panegyric or about the caliphate of al-Mustaḍī', but its contents and themes suggest otherwise.<sup>17</sup> The book is divided into seventeen chapters with the following headings:

- Chapter 1: The dignity of the caliphate and the glorification of its power (*sulṭān*)
- Chapter 2: Instruction by way of admonition (*al-amr bi'l-tadhkīr*)
- Chapter 3: The need for admonition (*tadhkīr*)
- Chapter 4: Notables who attended admonition sessions (*majālis al-tadhkīr*) and sought admonition
- Chapter 5: Admonishing and preaching to the ruler (*sulṭān*)
- Chapter 6: The virtue of justice (*faḍl al-'adl*)
- Chapter 7: The censure of injustice (*dhamm al-ẓulm*)
- Chapter 8: What the ruler should do for himself
- Chapter 9: The governance and management of subjects (*siyāsat al-ra'āyā wa-mudārātihim*)
- Chapter 10: The attainment of wealth and its spending
- Chapter 11: Select portions from the biographies of caliphs and reports about them
- Chapter 12: The caliphs who admonished
- Chapter 13: The caliphs who were admonished
- Chapter 14: The men of power (*umarā'*) who exhorted
- Chapter 15: The men of power who were exhorted
- Chapter 16: Homilies (*mawā'iz*) and testaments (*waṣāyā*)
- Chapter 17: Kings, *sulṭāns*, and men of power who practiced asceticism (*tazahhada*)

The structure and subjects of the *Miṣbāḥ* are generally similar to an earlier treatise written by Ibn al-Jawzī titled *al-Shifā' fī mawā'iz al-mulūk wa'l-khulafā'* (*The Cure in the Admonition of Kings*)

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 196-253.

<sup>16</sup> A detailed examination of all the themes in the *Miṣbāḥ* lies beyond the scope of this chapter. In this chapter, I will only highlight those which are relevant to my discussion. Interested readers should consult the following: Nājiya Ibrāhīm's introduction to Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 41-75; idem., *Ibn al-Jawzī wa kitābuhu al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī'*, especially pp. 203-33; al-Sirrī, "Ibn al-Jawzī."

<sup>17</sup> This is probably why Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī mentioned the work under Ibn al-Jawzī's historical and biographical writings, and why the manuscript was listed wrongly in the catalog of the Iraqi Museum library as a work about al-Mustaḍī'. See Ibrāhīm's introduction to Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 57.

and Caliphs), with one notable exception: the *Shifā'* contains a chapter on “the virtue of *jihād*” (*faḍl al-jihād*) whereas the *Miṣbāḥ* does not.<sup>18</sup>

The contents listed above indicate that the *Miṣbāḥ* fits more squarely into the mirror for princes genre. The subjects pertaining to justice, proper management of the affairs of subjects, and wealth—addressed via an eclectic mix of quotations from the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth*, Greek and Persian wisdom, and notable individuals in the Muslim tradition—can also be found in other Islamic mirrors for princes such as those written by Niẓām al-Mulk (*Siyāsatnāma*) and Ghazālī (*Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*). For instance, in the chapter on justice, Ibn al-Jawzī quotes the adage attributed to the Sasanian king Ardashīr, “Religion and kingship are twins,”<sup>19</sup> and the famous “Circle of Justice,”<sup>20</sup> both common tropes for justice in Islamic mirror for princes.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the chapter is filled with Prophetic *ḥadīths* on the merits of being a just ruler. With regard to personal conduct, the caliph is urged not to be preoccupied with sensual desire (*hawā*) and easily consumed by anger (*ghaḍab*), but rather to exercise forbearance (*ḥilm*) and forgiveness (*ʿafw*).<sup>22</sup> The chapter on wealth

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<sup>18</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Shifā' fī mawā'iz al-mulūk wa'l-khulafā'*, eds. Fu'ād 'Abd al-Mun'im Aḥmad and Muḥammad al-Sayyid al-Ṣaḥīfāwī (Alexandria: Mu'assasat Shabāb al-Jāmi'a, 1978), pp. 73-77. This omission will be addressed later.

<sup>19</sup> This is a common theme in the so-called “testament of Ardashīr” (*ʾahd Ardashīr*). See the discussion in Nasrin Askari, *The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma as a Mirror for Princes* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 159-63; Feldman, “Ethical Literature.”

<sup>20</sup> “Kingship is supported by the army, the army by money; and money is extracted from [harvests from] the earth. The earth becomes fertile through cultivation, and cultivation cannot be complete except through justice.” Also expressed in Ibn Qutayba's (d. 276/889) *Uyūn al-akhbār*; see translated passage in Bernard Lewis, *Islam: From the Prophet Muhammad to the Capture of Constantinople, Volume 1: Politics and War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 185. An extended version can be located in Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Franz Rosenthal as *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), vol. 1, pp. 81-82. For a study of the Circle of Justice, see Linda T. Darling, “Islamic Empires, the Ottoman Empire and the Circle of Justice,” in *Constitutional Politics in the Middle East: With Special Reference to Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand (London: Hart Publishing, 2008), pp. 11-32.

<sup>21</sup> Erik Ohlander, “Enacting Justice, Ensuring Salvation: The Trope of the ‘Just Ruler’ in Some Medieval Islamic Mirrors for Princes,” *The Muslim World*, 99/2 (2009), pp. 237-52.

<sup>22</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 212-13.

contains sayings on how wealth should be managed and a section detailing the types of wealth in the treasury, with emphasis on the *ghanīma*, *fay'*, and *khums*.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to the topics mentioned above, Ibn al-Jawzī claims that it is necessary for a ruler to show himself to the commoners (*'awāmm*) at certain times, instead of secluding himself in the palace, so as to ensure that grievances are redressed and justice meted out.<sup>24</sup> Justifying this are numerous *ḥadīths* cautioning that the doors of Paradise will be closed to rulers who close their doors to the people. The caliph should also surround himself with pious religious scholars. “It is necessary for the ruler (*sulṭān*) to ensure that his council (*majlis*) not be devoid of eminent religious scholars,” Ibn al-Jawzī writes.<sup>25</sup> For indeed, “association (*mukhālaṭa*) with people of knowledge and goodness (*ahl al- 'ilm wa 'l-khayr*) brings benefits.”<sup>26</sup> He also quotes Ibn 'Aqīl who urges rulers not to seclude themselves to a point that scholars are unable to offer them advice and that those who eventually gain access to them are the ones with worldly desires.<sup>27</sup> These words of advice are commonly found in Islamic mirrors for princes and echo statements in the *'Atf* advising rulers to not hold scholars in contempt and to learn from them.

But given that the *Miṣbāḥ* is addressed to al-Mustaḍī', these words of advice acquire additional significance. As mentioned earlier, the caliph began his reign largely sequestered in the caliphal palace, perhaps due to the control Qaymāz exerted over him. More activity is recorded of the caliph after the death of Qaymāz in 570/1174. Since then, the caliph made occasional trips to

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 259-75.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 246-50.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 219-20.

a pavilion built for him outside the palatial walls.<sup>28</sup> Preachers who were banned from preaching in public during al-Mustanjid's caliphate were given permission to resume their activity and al-Mustaḍī' himself regularly attended public sermons held in Baghdad. Al-Mustaḍī' 's reign also coincided with the peak of Ibn al-Jawzī's preaching career. A symbiotic relationship developed whereby al-Mustaḍī' would bestow favors on Ibn al-Jawzī and the Ḥanbalī school, while Ibn al-Jawzī acted as the caliph's spokesperson in Baghdad. This relationship saw its clearest manifestation in 571/1176 when al-Mustaḍī' appointed Ibn al-Jawzī as the director of a campaign against the growth of extreme Shī'ism (*rafīḍ*) in Baghdad. Ibn al-Jawzī was given power to raid the homes of those who were suspected of slandering the Companions of the Prophet, put them in prison, and bring down their public reputation.<sup>29</sup> In light of these developments, Ibn al-Jawzī's counseling of the caliph to not seclude himself in the palace and to associate with pious religious scholars might not only be a plea for al-Mustaḍī' to continue with his participation in religious circles.<sup>30</sup> It might also serve to convey Ibn al-Jawzī's own hopes and expectations to remain in the caliph's good favors.<sup>31</sup>

Insofar as the *Miṣbāḥ* is intended as a work of advice, it also differs from most Islamic mirrors for princes in its heavy emphasis on exhortation and admonition. It is a mirror for princes that belongs to what Julie Scott Meisami calls the "homiletic tradition," which are more concerned with "the moral qualifications of the ruler and his commitment to the faith" and less on problems

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<sup>28</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, pp. 222, 227-28.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 222; Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa 'l-Mudhakkirīn*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Sirrī, "Ibn al-Jawzī," pp. 191-92.

<sup>31</sup> See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, p. 222, in which all preachers were banned from preaching except for Ibn al-Jawzī and another two preachers; p. 223, where he reports having received robes of honor from the caliph; and p. 238, in which he was invited to al-Mustaḍī' 's annual ceremony of bestowing honors upon prominent officials of the state, religious scholars, and Sufis.

of statecraft and administration characteristic of the “administrative” mirrors.<sup>32</sup> The sections on justice, proper ruler conduct, and the management of wealth only occupy about one-fifth of the entire book. Most of the remaining nearly-five-hundred printed pages (Chapters 11 to 17) are devoted to anecdotes or reports (*akhbār*) on caliphs, sultans, emirs, and viziers. These reports depict the rulers in a pietistic fashion, with almost all of them characterized by asceticism (*zuhd*), fear of God and divine punishment (*taqwā*), piety (*waraʿ*), compassion (*rifq*), and generosity (*karam*). We also come across numerous reports of caliphs being earnest in prayer, weeping excessively,<sup>33</sup> interacting with righteous and pious people (*al-ṣāliḥūn*), going on pilgrimages, and hearing *ḥadīth*. Hardly anything is mentioned of their political and military activities. Even Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170/786-193/809), a caliph most celebrated for his military campaigns against the Byzantines, is better remembered in the *Miṣbāḥ* as a ruler who sheds copious tears, commits himself to one hundred prostrations every day, and constantly having an entourage of jurists around him.<sup>34</sup>

The *Miṣbāḥ*’s homiletic message culminates in the work’s final two chapters. Of the two, Chapter 16 can be regarded as the climax of the entire work. It is saturated with *ḥadīths* and sayings by prominent early Muslims such as al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) lamenting the radical uncertainty of what comes next after death and the fear of punishment in the

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<sup>32</sup> Julie Scott Meisami, *The Sea of Precious Virtues (Baḥr al-Favāʿid): A Medieval Islamic Mirror for Princes* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991), pp. vii, 330 n. 6. See also al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, pp. 97-99.

<sup>33</sup> In particular, ʿUmar b. ʿAbd ʿAzīz and Hārūn al-Rashīd. The former not only wept, but also “used to gather jurists (*fuqahā*) every night to remind each other of death, the Day of Resurrection, and the afterlife, and then weep as if there was a funeral in front of them.” See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 321-22, 368. On weeping as a sign of piety in medieval Islam, see Linda G. Jones, “‘He Cried and Made Others Cry’: Crying as a Sign of Pietistic Authenticity or Deception in Medieval Islamic Preaching,” in *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History*, ed. Elina Gertsman (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 102-35; Christopher Melchert, “Exaggerated Fear in the Early Islamic Renunciant Tradition,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 21/3 (2011), pp. 288-90.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 366-76. Hārūn al-Rashīd’s pious image will be discussed in the next chapter.

afterlife.<sup>35</sup> One *ḥadīth* quoted has the Prophet pleading to God to help him bear the agonies of death (*sakarāt al-mawt*), while another offers vivid detail about how people will sweat so profusely out of fear on the Day of Resurrection that their sweat will sink seventy cubits deep into the earth and rise up to reach their ears.<sup>36</sup>

Given most of the *Miṣbāḥ*'s exhortative, pietistic, and homiletic bent, one can argue that it is structured like a long, extended sermon to the caliph. In this framework, Ibn al-Jawzī begins by exalting the office of the caliphate and glorifying the Abbasid dynasty (Chapter 1). He then reminds the caliph of the need for admonition (Chapters 2-5), followed by advice on how the caliph should act towards his subjects and officials (Chapters 6-10). The author proceeds with examples of al-Mustaḍī' 's caliphal predecessors who engaged in pious acts to remind the caliph that he ought to do the same (Chapters 11-15). The homiletic tone of the *Miṣbāḥ* achieves its greatest pitch in Chapter 16 where the caliph is reminded to keep death and the afterlife in his thoughts as well as to live a pious and ascetic life. The overall format of the work largely accrues with Ibn al-Jawzī's suggestion for preachers to "mix admonition with a mention of the nobility of rulership (*faḍl al-wilāya*)" and to "mention the conduct of just rulers (*siyar al-ʿādilīn*) from the past."<sup>37</sup> A preacher like Ibn al-Jawzī would regard this approach as more effective in reforming rulers if compared to the specific advice on political and military matters in the "administrative" mirror for princes. After all, an effective sermon or exhortation with enough rhetorical force to tap into a ruler's

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<sup>35</sup> On the fear of punishment and torment in the afterlife, see Erik Ohlander, "Fear of God (*Taqwā*) in the Qur'ān: Some Notes on Semantic Shift and Thematic Context," *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 50/1 (2005), pp. 137-152; Melchert, "Exaggerated Fear."

<sup>36</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 693, 697. These sayings and utterances pale in comparison with what is presented in a parallel chapter of the *Shifā'* where the reader is confronted with graphic descriptions of souls in Hell vomiting and choking on all of the food consumed, crying till their intestines break, and undergoing other forms of torments. Presumably, Ibn al-Jawzī wanted to spare al-Mustaḍī' from these gruesome imageries. See idem, *Shifā'*, pp. 113-19.

<sup>37</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *ʿAtf*, p. 38; idem, *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*, p. 419.

emotional depths and turn him towards piety and asceticism goes furthest in bringing about moral and spiritual reform. The *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter, which I now turn to, should be read and understood in this context.

### 3.4. Analysis of the *Miṣbāḥ*'s First Chapter

The *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter—titled “The dignity of the caliphate and the glorification of its power” (*fī bayān sharf al-khilāfa wa-tahni`at al-sulṭān bihā*) and spanning fifty printed pages—can be broadly divided into three parts: (1) a juridical-theological discussion of the caliphate; (2) a genealogical legitimation of the Abbasids; and (3) praise for the dignity of the caliphate and an elucidation of the need for obedience to the caliph. On the whole, the chapter is a rich amalgamation of different modes of discourse dealing with the subject of the caliphate, encompassing the language of theology (*kalām*), law (*fiqh*), *ḥadīth*, and laudatory biographies (*faḍā'il/manāqib*). I will explicate the contents of the chapter and, along the way, provide an analysis of how Ibn al-Jawzī selected, manipulated, and reshaped his textual precedents in support of his political ideals.

#### 3.4.1. Juridical-Theological Discourse on the Caliphate

The first part of the chapter constitutes a discussion of the caliphate one usually encounters in theological and legal treatises. It is short—comprising only three sections (*fāṣls*) out of the sixteen in the chapter—and opens with a definition of the caliphate:

Verily the caliphate is a deputyship on behalf of God (*niyābatan `an Allāh*) among His servants and lands, and in the execution of His commands (*awāmir*) and judgments (*aḥkām*). He raised prophets for His commands and judgments and then caliphs after the prophets.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 89.

The above statement serves as a commentary on the term *khalīfa*. The caliph deputizes for God in the governance of humankind, but he only does so after the prophets of bygone eras have brought God's laws and commands to humankind.<sup>39</sup> He is at once *khalīfat Allāh* and *khalīfat rasūl Allāh*. Succession to the Prophet does not exclude, but runs parallel to, the deputyship of God.

After delineating the role of the caliph, Ibn al-Jawzī proceeds to discuss the necessity of the caliphate, now referred to as the imamate (*imāma*).<sup>40</sup> Like most Sunni jurists and theologians before and during his time, Ibn al-Jawzī states that “the imamate is necessary, in contrast to those who reckon that it is not.”<sup>41</sup> He does not dwell on whether the imamate is necessary based on reason or revelation, a question usually addressed in theological treatises, but instead puts forward a proof (*dalīl*) to support his claim that the imamate is necessary. According to this proof, human beings are in need of association (*mukhālaṭa*) by nature. But humans also tend towards injustice (*ẓulm*) and are thus in need of restraint (*wazʿ*). This restraint is required so that worldly and religious affairs are kept safe. Well-ordered religious affairs are not achieved except through well-ordered worldly affairs, which are only obtained by the appointment of an imam who is obeyed (*imām muṭāʿ*).<sup>42</sup> A further demonstration of this is that God has ensured this state of affairs beginning with the creation of Adam, whom He taught all the names and upon whom He bestowed

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<sup>39</sup> This conception of caliphs as successors to the prophets was already in place during the late Umayyad period (c. 101/720-132/750) in the letters of the Umayyad court letter and prose writer, ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Yaḥyā al-Kātib (d. 132/750). See al-Qāḍī, “Religious Foundation,” pp. 244-48; Uri Rubin, “Prophets and Caliphs: The Biblical Foundations of the Umayyad Authority,” in *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, ed. Herbert Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 73-99.

<sup>40</sup> The shift in terminology from caliphate (*khilāfa*) to imamate (*imāma*) bepeaks Ibn al-Jawzī’s sensitivity to the discursive conventions of how the caliphate is treated in theological treatises—Sunni theologians generally referred to the caliph and caliphate as “imam” and “imamate” respectively. In court documents, the caliph is also addressed as “imam.” See Hilāl al-Ṣābi’, *Rusūm dār al-khilāfa*, trans. Elie Salem as *The Rules and Regulations of the ‘Abbāsīd Court* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1977), pp. 81-98. In the *Miṣbāḥ*, al-Mustaḍī is usually referred to as *al-imām al-Mustaḍī bi-Amr Allāh amīr al-muʾminīn*. Unless otherwise indicated, I will follow Ibn al-Jawzī’s wording.

<sup>41</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 89.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 89-90. Similar statement in Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, pp. 504-6; *Moderation*, pp. 229-31.

prophethood. Since then God has never left a period devoid of a prophet carrying out divine laws. God sealed the line of the prophets with Muḥammad and made it incumbent upon humankind to have deputies (*nuwwāb*) after his death in order to establish truth (*iqāmat al-ḥaqq*). Although Ibn al-Jawzī does not deal rigorously with the “reason vs. revelation” debate, he closes his discussion of the necessity of the imamate by affirming that he has established the soundness of his claims in terms of revelation (*sharʿan*) and reason (*ʿaqlan*).<sup>43</sup> Upon closer inspection, the arguments above come close to the “reason” argument usually deemed insufficient by most Sunni theologians in proving why the imamate is a legally sanctioned necessity.

Ibn al-Jawzī’s discussion of the imamate is followed by a section on the qualifications required of an imam and the methods of appointment. For qualifications, Ibn al-Jawzī lists five: (1) religious knowledge (*ʿilm*); (2) perceptive knowledge (*maʿrifā*); (3) administrative skill (*tadbīr*); (4) the upholding of religious ordinances (*muḥāfiẓat ḥudūd al-sharʿ*); and (5) Quraysh descent due to the *ḥadīth*, “The imams are from the Quraysh.”<sup>44</sup> Though short, this list of requirements contains much that reflects the political realities of Ibn al-Jawzī’s time and what Ibn al-Jawzī himself expected from the caliph. Even though the list hints at a significant emphasis on knowledge, Ibn al-Jawzī does not go further to indicate that the caliph ought to possess the level of knowledge sufficient to qualify as a *mujtahid* or even a *qāḍī*. This could very well reflect Ibn al-Jawzī’s recognition that the rulers of his time—al-Mustaḍīʾ included—no longer possessed the requisite level of knowledge. Along with this recognition is Ibn al-Jawzī’s advice that rulers should surround themselves with pious religious scholars and consult with them regarding religious matters.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 90.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

Noticeably missing from Ibn al-Jawzī's list of qualifications is courage (*najda* or *shajā'a*), which pertains to the caliph's military capabilities. Here it would be apt to return to a point made earlier regarding the chapter on *jihād* in Ibn al-Jawzī's other advice manual, *al-Shifā' fī mawā'iz al-mulūk wa'l-khulafā'*, but which is absent in the *Miṣbāḥ*. The *Shifā'*'s chapter on *jihād* consists of *ḥadīth* after *ḥadīth* extolling the merits of fighting *jihād*.<sup>45</sup> Since both works are structured similarly, the omission of the chapter on *jihād* in the *Miṣbāḥ* seems puzzling. But when viewed in light of the caliphal qualifications outlined by Ibn al-Jawzī, this omission does not appear to be unintentional. It would be difficult to deny that al-Mustaḍī's tendency to withdraw from political and military administration conditioned Ibn al-Jawzī's conception of the caliphate. However, if remaining removed from political and military affairs meant having more time on hand to attend religious sermons and to engage in pious public efforts such as building mosques and endowing religious institutions, such a trade-off would not seem so detrimental after all. It might in fact be better to counsel the caliph to spend time with scholars than to induce him towards costly military undertakings. Moreover, by Ibn al-Jawzī's time, the Abbasid caliphs had long ceased to be concerned with fighting *jihād* against unbelievers and were more concerned with their struggles with palace factions and other Muslim regional powers such as the Seljuqs.

Regarding the methods of appointment, Ibn al-Jawzī is equally terse. An imam can come to office via designation (*naṣṣ*) from the previous imam or via a contract (*'aqd*) from an assembly of electors (*ahl al-ḥall wa'l-'aqd*)—both methods listed in this order.<sup>46</sup> Here we observe the

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<sup>45</sup> This refers to the “lesser *jihād*,” not the “greater *jihād*” against one's desires, since the chapter includes *ḥadīths* such as “Know that Paradise is beneath the shadows of the swords (*ẓilāl al-suyūf*)” and “Fighters who fight in the name of God and get their share of booty (*ghanīma*) receive in advance two-thirds of their reward in the afterlife and only one-third will remain (to their credit). If they do not receive any booty, they will get their full reward (*tamma lahum ajrahum*).” Ibn al-Jawzī, *Shifā'*, pp. 74, 76.

<sup>46</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 90.

prioritizing of testamentary designation over selection by the electors as a means of installing an imam in office. As discussed in Chapter One, testamentary designation gradually came to be seen as the default means of appointing an imam, especially when one scrutinizes the writings of Bazdawī and Ghazālī; only if the incumbent imam does not designate a successor should an election be carried out. Like Bazdawī and Ghazālī, Ibn al-Jawzī recognizes that testamentary designation had become a prevalent practice in his time. They also legitimize a longstanding Abbasid practice throughout most of its history.

After discussing the qualifications of the imam and the methods of appointment, Ibn al-Jawzī makes supplications to God for al-Mustaḍī' in a section praising him as an imam chosen by God. He remarks that God made al-Mustaḍī' His deputy (*nā'ib 'anhu*) and would not be contented with any other deputy aside from al-Mustaḍī'; so there was no other way for the people to please God except by recognizing him as the rightful imam.<sup>47</sup> Panegyric undertones notwithstanding, this cyclical logic stresses al-Mustaḍī's role as a *khalīfat Allāh* directly appointed by God.

### 3.4.2. Genealogical Legitimation of the Abbasid Dynasty

Next we arrive at Ibn al-Jawzī's attempt to provide a genealogical legitimation for al-Mustaḍī's caliphate.<sup>48</sup> This is the longest part of the *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter and constitutes the core of the chapter. Here, Ibn al-Jawzī deploys his firm grasp of *ḥadīth* and *manāqib* literature<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>48</sup> I follow Fred Donner's lead in viewing "genealogical legitimation" as resting "on the assumption that the mere fact of membership in a particular kinship or ethnic group accords legitimate claim to special status." The requirement that the caliph had to be a member of the tribe of Quraysh rests on this style of legitimation. See Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1988), pp. 104-11.

<sup>49</sup> On *manāqib* literature, see Charles Pellat, "Manāqib," *IE²*; Asma Afsaruddin, "In Praise of the Caliphs: Re-creating History from the *Manāqib* Literature," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 31/3 (1999), p. 329.

to glorify and legitimize the Abbasid dynasty and, at the same time, to admonish al-Mustaḍī' to uphold religious knowledge and piety in his rule.

Ibn al-Jawzī begins the genealogical part of the chapter by highlighting the divine election of the Quraysh and, by extension, the Banū Hāshim (the clan to which the Prophet, the Abbasids, and the 'Alids belong). He first traces the Quraysh's genealogy back to Adam:

When God chose Adam and whoever came after him among the prophets and messengers, He raised the rank (*martaba*) of Abraham, His friend (*khalīl*), over everyone before him [i.e., Abraham]. Then [God] chose from his progeny (*wuld*) Ishmael until the selection arrived at the Quraysh, and [thus] God made leadership (*riyāsa*) and authority (*imāra*) reside in them.<sup>50</sup>

In addition, Ibn al-Jawzī cites two *ḥadīths* consisting of the Prophet calling for obedience to the Quraysh as long as they rule justly in accordance with divine law; failure to do so would result in punishment in the afterlife. The author then extends this prophetic genealogy to the Banū Hāshim. In doing so, he adduces a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet claims that God chose Ishmael from the offspring of Abraham, then the Banū Kināna from the progeny of Ishmael, the Quraysh from the Banū Kināna, the Banū Hāshim from the Quraysh, and finally the Prophet from the Banū Hāshim.<sup>51</sup>

These efforts are not original to Ibn al-Jawzī. The right of the Quraysh to rule over the Muslim community had become an agreed upon tenet in Sunni political discourse, especially with respect to the caliphate. The grafting of rulers and dynasties—including the Abbasids—onto the sacred line of the Biblical patriarchs had also become common practice by Ibn al-Jawzī's time.<sup>52</sup> If at all, the tracing of Hāshimite roots to Adam gives the Abbasid line a primeval character, in a

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<sup>50</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 91.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 92-94.

<sup>52</sup> See, for instance, İlker Evrim Binbaş, "Structure and Function of the Genealogical Tree in Islamic Historiography (1200-1500)," in *Horizons of the World: Festschrift for İsenbike Togan*, eds. İlker Evrim Binbaş and Nurten Kılıç-Shubel (Istanbul: Ithaki, 2011), pp. 465-544.

sense that Adam prefigures the future Abbasid caliphs who succeed the prophets in establishing divine rule among humankind in the here and now.<sup>53</sup>

After charting a divine and sacred genealogy for the Banū Hāshim, Ibn al-Jawzī expounds on the virtues of members of the Hāshimite clan who were Muḥammad’s forefathers: Hāshim himself (great-grandfather of Muḥammad; d. 497), ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim (Muḥammad’s grandfather; d. 578), and ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib (Muḥammad’s father; d. 570). Hāshim, whose proper name was ‘Amr, is described as someone generous in disposition. During the years of drought, he crushed (*hashama*) bread to make broth (*tharīd*) for the people of Mecca and was called “Hāshim” from then onwards.<sup>54</sup> After Hāshim’s death, the leadership of the clan passed on to his brother al-Muṭṭalib, who assumed the right of supplying water and food to the pilgrims (*al-siqāya wa’l-rifāda*). Muḥammad’s grandfather ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib (whose name was Shayba) took the place of al-Muṭṭalib after the latter’s death.<sup>55</sup>

At this point, Ibn al-Jawzī inserts an account of how ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib dug the Zamzam well and acquired the right of *siqāya*, thus excluding the Quraysh from it.<sup>56</sup> The inclusion of a report on the Hāshimite right to *siqāya* is not insignificant. During the early years of Abbasid rule, the right of *siqāya* played a prominent role in the articulation of Abbasid legitimacy. It was claimed that the Abbasid progenitor al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib (d. 32/653) inherited it after the death

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<sup>53</sup> Aziz al-Azmeh, “Monotheistic Monarchy,” in *Times of History*, p. 284. For an in-depth study on figural/typological interpretation, see Erich Auerbach, “Figura,” in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 11-76.

<sup>54</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 94.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 95-96.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 96-97. This story is also in the earliest extant biography of the Prophet by Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767). See ‘Abd al-Malik b. Hishām, *Sīrat rasūl Allāh*, trans. Alfred Guillaume as *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishāq’s Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 62-63.

of his father ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, prior to the advent of Islam.<sup>57</sup> The details are murky, but a tinge of anti-‘Alid polemic can be detected in one narration which claims that he received it from his half-brother Abū Ṭālib in return for settling a debt.<sup>58</sup> In a report recorded by Ibn Sa‘d (d. 230/845), drinking from the *siqāya* of the family of al-‘Abbās is considered *sunna*.<sup>59</sup> We also see the *siqāya* being evoked in a letter attributed to al-Manṣūr (r. 136/754-158/775) refuting the legitimacy claims of the ‘Alid rebel Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya (d. 145/762):

You know quite well that in the Jāhiliyya our claim to honor rested on the task of supplying water for the great mass of pilgrims and holding custody of the well of Zamzam. This responsibility devolved upon al-‘Abbās from among his brothers. Your forefather contested it with us, but ‘Umar judged in our favor against him. We have continued to discharge this responsibility in both the Jāhiliyya and Islam. ... More than one of the Banū Hāshim have sought this office, but only al-‘Abbās’s descendants attained it. The water supplying belonged to him, as his inheritance from the Prophet, and the caliphate lies with his progeny.<sup>60</sup>

In the statement above, the *siqāya* of al-‘Abbās is used to bolster the claims of the Abbasids against the ‘Alids in general, and ‘Alī and his father Abū Ṭālib (d. 619) in particular.<sup>61</sup> In line with ‘Abd

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<sup>57</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, “al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib,” *EP*<sup>2</sup>; Andreas Görke, “al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib,” *EP*<sup>3</sup>; Herbert Berg, “‘Abbasid Historians’ Portrayals of al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib,” in *Abbasid Studies II: Occasional Papers of the School of Abbasid Studies, Leuven, 28 June-1 July 2004*, ed. John Nawas (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2010), pp. 16-17.

<sup>58</sup> Görke, “al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib.” For details, see Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dūrī (Weisbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978), vol. 3, pp. 15-16. The fact that Balādhurī (d. 279/892) himself enjoyed the patronage of the Abbasid court, serving as a boon companion of al-Mutawakkil (d. 232/847-247/861) and al-Musta‘īn (r. 248/862-252/866), might have played a role in his inclusion of this report. See C. H. Becker and F. Rosenthal, “Al-Balādhurī,” *EP*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> Muḥammad b. Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, eds. Eduard Sachau and Eugen Mittwoch et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1904-1940), vol. 4, part 1, p. 17.

<sup>60</sup> Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa’l-mulūk*, trans. Jane Dammen McAuliffe as *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Vol. 28: ‘Abbasid Authority Affirmed* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 175; Crone, *Political Thought*, p. 92.

<sup>61</sup> To which some Shī‘ites would respond by quoting the Qur’ānic verse Q 9:19: “Do you consider providing water (*siqāya*) for the pilgrims and repair of the sacred mosque to be like believing in God and the Last Day and fighting on behalf of God? They are not equal with God. God does not guide those who do wrong.” See Ja‘far b. Aḥmad b. al-Haytham, *Kitāb al-Munāẓarāt*, trans. Wilferd Madelung and Paul E. Walker as *The Advent of the Fatimids: A Contemporary Shi‘i Witness* (London: I. B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001), p. 77; al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, *Pillars*, vol. 1, p. 26. I thank Ali Asgar Alibhai for these references.

al-Muṭṭalib's right to *siqāya*, Ibn al-Jawzī closes his section on the virtues of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib with a narrative about the latter successfully praying for rain during a long period of drought.<sup>62</sup>

After 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, Ibn al-Jawzī mentions the children of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib—al-'Abbās, Abū Ṭalib, and 'Abd Allāh—and proceeds to a short section on 'Abd Allāh (the father of the Prophet).<sup>63</sup> The author mentions the story about how a woman named Fāṭima bt. Murr noticed the light of prophethood (*nūr al-nubuwwa*) on 'Abd Allāh's face when he walked past her.<sup>64</sup> The selection of this anecdote by Ibn al-Jawzī ties in well with the title of the work itself and the regnal title of al-Mustaḍī', both derivations of the word *ḍaw'* connoting an illuminating light.

The following section, comprising reports of the various stages of Muḥammad's life, is surprisingly brief. Ibn al-Jawzī begins the section with Muḥammad's birth and includes a statement by the Prophet's mother Āmina regarding the unusual circumstances of her pregnancy.<sup>65</sup> The section continues with a brief account of Muḥammad's childhood and how he was placed under the guardianship of his grandfather 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and uncle Abū Ṭalib after the death of his mother. The narrative then moves to Muḥammad's marriage to Khadīja, followed by his attainment of prophethood when God made him second in rank to Himself in terms of reverence (*ḥurma*) and obedience (*tā'a*).

The author quotes the first half of Q 4:59 ("Obey God and obey the Prophet") to justify obedience to Muḥammad, and then immediately claims that God makes the Prophet's *khulafā'* third in rank, followed by the second half of the verse ("And those in authority among you" [*ūlī'l-*

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<sup>62</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 97-101.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 101-2.

<sup>64</sup> On the light of prophethood, see Uri Rubin, "Pre-existence and Light: Aspects of the Concept of Nūr Muḥammad," *Israel Oriental Studies*, 5 (1975), pp. 83-86.

<sup>65</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 106.

*amri minkum*]).<sup>66</sup> This is no small rhetorical strategy, for Ibn al-Jawzī equates “those in authority” with the caliphs after Muḥammad with a single stroke of the pen. Unlike the Shī‘ites, who use Q 4:59 to justify the necessity of the imamate, the imam’s infallibility, and ‘Alī’s succession to the Prophet,<sup>67</sup> the Sunnis hardly use it to validate the caliphate or imamate. They also do not usually point the verse to the caliphate/imamate in their works of exegesis. According to Asma Afsaruddin, medieval exegetes often understood “those in authority” to refer to diverse groups of people, such as the religious scholars and learned classes, commanders who took part in the Prophet’s military expeditions, as well as Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, among others. Although it came to be associated with political rulers (*al-salāṭīn*) in general after the third/ninth century, “those in authority” was never referred to the ruling caliphs specifically.<sup>68</sup> To my knowledge, by Ibn al-Jawzī’s time, Māwardī appears to be the only Sunni jurist to have quoted Q 4:59 to justify the necessity of the caliphate/imamate based on revelation.<sup>69</sup>

In reading Ibn al-Jawzī’s mention of the caliphs in this section and what comes immediately after, one cannot help but suspect that one of the aims of the section on Muḥammad

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>67</sup> For Shī‘ite uses of the verse in both Twelver and Ismā‘īlī writings on the imamate, see Martin J. McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022)* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1978), p. 120; Abbas K. Kadhim, “Politics and Theology of Imāmī Shī‘a in Baghdad in the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> Century,” Ph.D. dissertation (University of California, Berkeley, 2009), p. 168; Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, *al-Maṣābīḥ fī ithbāt al-imāma*, trans. Paul E. Walker as *Master of the Age: An Islamic Treatise on the Necessity of the Imamate* (London: I. B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2007), p. 77; al-Qāḍī al-Nu‘mān, *Pillars*, vol. 1, pp. 27, 29, 31-33; Ibn al-Haytham, *Advent*, p. 78. For an account of Twelver Shī‘ite exegetical commentaries on the verse, see Jennifer Thea Gordon, “Obeying Those in Authority: The Hidden Political Message in Twelver Exegesis,” Ph.D. dissertation (Harvard, 2014), pp. 72-96.

<sup>68</sup> Asma Afsaruddin, “Obedience to Political Authority: An Evolutionary Concept,” in *Islamic Democratic Discourse: Theory, Debates, and Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. M. A. Muqtedar Khan (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006), pp. 37-42. Even Ibn al-Jawzī did not interpret the verse in this manner in his work of Qur’ānic exegesis. He introduces four possible meanings for “those in authority”: (1) the commanders (*al-umarā’*), (2) the religious scholars (*al-‘ulamā’*), (3) the Companions of the Prophet (*aṣḥāb al-nabī*), and (4) Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, vol. 2, pp. 116-17.

<sup>69</sup> Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 16; *Ordinances*, p. 3.

is to lead the reader to a higher appraisal of the caliphate, which comes third in rank after God and the Prophet. Muḥammad is undoubtedly an important figure, given that he spread God's message and revelation, but more significantly, his role as the seal of the prophets (*khātam al-anbiyā'*) foreshadows the coming of the Abbasid caliphate.

We now arrive at the crux of the *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter: a long section on the Abbasid family, which Ibn al-Jawzī titles "The Virtues of al-ʿAbbās" (*faḍā'il al-ʿAbbās*). This section contains numerous *ḥadīths* and reports attesting to the virtues and merits of the three Abbasid ancestors: al-ʿAbbās (d. 32/653), his son ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās (d. 68/687), and grandson ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh (d. 118/736).

Ibn al-Jawzī begins his *faḍā'il al-ʿAbbās* by noting that among the children of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, God honored three with Islam: Ḥamza, al-ʿAbbās, and Ṣafīyya.<sup>70</sup> ʿAlī's father, Abū Ṭālib, is missing from the list.<sup>71</sup> The relationships of al-ʿAbbās and Abū Ṭālib, both uncles of the Prophet, to Islam constituted a polemical issue between the Abbasids and the ʿAlids. During the Abbasid Revolution, the call to return rulership of the *umma* to the family of the Prophet was used to galvanize supporters of the Abbasid cause against the Umayyads. But after overthrowing the Umayyads, the Abbasids had to deal with the fact that they came to power with much backing from the ʿAlids, descendants of Abū Ṭālib himself, who had a better record of open resistance against the Umayyads.<sup>72</sup> In an attempt to invalidate ʿAlid claims to the caliphate, the early Abbasids stressed al-ʿAbbās's legal inheritance (*wirātha*) of the Prophet's legacy based on the argument that a paternal uncle had greater claims to inheritance than a cousin (ʿAlī) or daughter

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<sup>70</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 109.

<sup>71</sup> The Prophet's father, ʿAbd Allāh, died before the arrival of Islam.

<sup>72</sup> Lassner, *Islamic Revolution*, p. 4.

(Fāṭima).<sup>73</sup> This claim is vividly expressed in al-Manṣūr's letter to Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya: "My, how you pride yourself on kinship through a woman, as to delude the uncouth and the rabble! But God did not make women equal [in such matters] to uncles and fathers or [even] to paternal relations and guardians. God gave the uncle status equal to a father, giving him [legal] precedence in His book over the less significant mother."<sup>74</sup> It did not take long, however, for 'Alid partisans to retort saying that al-'Abbās was only the Prophet's half uncle, whereas Abū Ṭālib was his full uncle. The Abbasids had to muster more effective arguments against the 'Alids. One argument involved emphasizing the fact that Abū Ṭālib never embraced Islam even till his death.<sup>75</sup> In this sense, Ibn al-Jawzī's mention of al-'Abbās's embrace of Islam might have served as a subtle polemic against Shī'ite claims of rightful leadership in the Islamic world.

Yet al-'Abbās's Islamic credentials were not beyond reproach. After all, he had fought on the side of the Meccans against the Prophet in the famous Battle of Badr (2/624). This embarrassing episode as well as when exactly al-'Abbās converted to Islam posed a problem for early Abbasid historians and compilers. Shī'ite polemicists included al-'Abbās among the *ṭulaqā'* (Meccans who had not yet converted to Islam when Muḥammad's conquest of Mecca took place) and invalidated his Abbasid descendants' claim to the caliphate, claiming that the caliphate is forbidden to the *ṭulaqā'* and the sons of the *ṭulaqā'*.<sup>76</sup> To deal with this problem, some Abbasid sources indicate that al-'Abbās did fight for the Meccans and was therefore captured and ransomed, while others depict him as having already converted before Badr and was forced to conceal his

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<sup>73</sup> Sharon, *Black Banners*, pp. 95-96.

<sup>74</sup> Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 28, pp. 169-70.

<sup>75</sup> Sharon, *Black Banners*, p. 97; Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 28, pp. 170-71.

<sup>76</sup> Ibn al-Haytham, *Advent*, pp. 84-86.

faith due to his fear of losing the *siqāya* and *rifāda*.<sup>77</sup> Ibn Sa‘d’s and Balādhurī’s biographical accounts of al-‘Abbās reveal a deliberate attempt to demonstrate his service to Islam by stressing his role in the Prophet’s meeting with the Anṣār at ‘Aqaba, his protection of the Prophet in Mecca (somewhat mirroring Abū Ṭālib’s protection of the Prophet against the Quraysh in Mecca), and his supposedly early embrace of Islam even before Badr.<sup>78</sup>

Perhaps in anticipation of potential counter-arguments related to al-‘Abbās’s role in Badr, Ibn al-Jawzī adduces the Battle of Ḥunayn (8/630) as an “antidote.” In Ḥunayn, at least, al-‘Abbās’s role in fighting alongside the Prophet is safely affirmed and lauded by the early sources. Certain traditions even go so far as to attribute the Prophet’s victory to al-‘Abbās’s perseverance and loud voice.<sup>79</sup> In the *Miṣbāḥ*, Ibn al-Jawzī paints a similar picture of al-‘Abbās’s role in Ḥunayn when he writes that “people fled from the Messenger of God while al-‘Abbās held his ground.” He takes it a step further and blows Ḥunayn out of proportion by adding, “and so God established the caliphate in [al-‘Abbās’s] offspring” (*fā-thabata Allāh al-khilāfa fī wuldihi*).<sup>80</sup> Badr might have marred al-‘Abbās’s reputation in Islam, but Ḥunayn, on the other hand, is framed as the event that not only affirmed his place in the eyes of God, but also obtained the caliphate for his Abbasid descendants.

Although the section is entitled “The Virtues of al-‘Abbās,” Ibn al-Jawzī’s focus is on al-‘Abbās’s son, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-‘Abbās, whose biographical account and virtues occupy most of the *Miṣbāḥ*’s first chapter. A total of twelve reports—a mix of *ḥadīths* and anecdotes—are selected

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<sup>77</sup> Berg, “‘Abbasid Historians’ Portrayals of al-‘Abbās,” pp. 18-25.

<sup>78</sup> Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 4, part 1, pp. 3-5; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, pp. 2-22.

<sup>79</sup> Görke, “al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib.”

<sup>80</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 110.

with the aim of portraying Ibn ‘Abbās as a paradigmatic figure of religious knowledge (*‘ilm*) and wisdom (*ḥikma*). In Muslim biographical writings, Ibn ‘Abbās’s excellence in different fields of knowledge has been imbued with an aura of myth and legend.<sup>81</sup> Much of this is presented as preordained during his infancy and childhood, involving certain rites of initiation by the Prophet. Ibn al-Jawzī presents several reports of the Prophet praying to God to endow Ibn ‘Abbās with sacred knowledge:<sup>82</sup>

1. *Ḥadīth* on the authority of Abū Saḥīl b. Mālik: “The Messenger of God prayed for ‘Abd Allāh b. al-‘Abbās and said, ‘O God, bless him and spread [knowledge] from him (*unshur minhu*)!’”
2. *Ḥadīth* on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās: “The Messenger of God was in the house of Maymūna [wife of the Prophet and also Ibn ‘Abbās’s aunt] and I placed the water for the night ablution for him. Maymūna [then] said, ‘O Messenger of God, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās has placed this here for you.’ [The Prophet] said, ‘May God instruct him in [matters of] faith (*al-dīn*) and teach him esoteric exegesis (*al-ta’wīl*).’”
3. *Ḥadīth* on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās: “The Messenger of God embraced me (*ḍammanī ilayhi*) and said, ‘O God, teach him wisdom (*ḥikma*)!’”
4. Report on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās: “I saw Gabriel twice and the Messenger of God prayed for wisdom for me twice.”

These reports conform to a “*schemata* of election and institution” in that they portray Ibn ‘Abbās’s eminent religious stature in the Islamic tradition as guaranteed by the Prophet and Gabriel since he was a child.<sup>83</sup>

What is presented here is only one version of a cluster of traditions in which the Prophet prays to God for the young Ibn ‘Abbās’s knowledge and wisdom after a series of events. For instance, Ibn al-Jawzī’s version has the Prophet embracing Ibn ‘Abbās and uttering “O God, teach

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<sup>81</sup> L. Veccia Vaglieri, “‘Abd Allāh b. al-‘Abbās,” *EP*<sup>2</sup>; Claude Gilliot, “‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abbās,” *EP*<sup>3</sup>; idem, “Portrait ‘mythique’ d’Ibn ‘Abbās,” *Arabica*, 32/1 (1985), pp. 127-84.

<sup>82</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 110-13. See similar reports in Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 119-20; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, pp. 27-29; *Akḥbār al-dawla al-‘Abbāsiyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘a li’l-Ṭibā‘a wa’l-Nashr, 1971), pp. 25-27.

<sup>83</sup> Gilliot, “Portrait ‘mythique,’” pp. 133-46. I borrow the phrase “*schemata* of election and institution” from Herbert Berg, “Ibn ‘Abbās in ‘Abbāsīd-Era *Tafsīr*,” in *‘Abbasid Studies: Occasional Papers of the School of ‘Abbasid Studies*, Cambridge, 6-10 July 2002, ed. James E. Montgomery (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2004), p. 134.

him wisdom!” In another version, the Prophet passes his hand over the boy’s forelock (*masaḥa ‘alā nāṣiya*); places his hand over the boy’s shoulders; or, after passing his hand over the infant boy’s head, spits into his mouth—or, in some versions, rubs the boy’s palate with his saliva—and utters the foregoing statement.<sup>84</sup> This act of spitting into the mouth of an infant, known as *taḥnīk*, reflects an old Bedouin custom marking a tribal leader’s selection of his successor.<sup>85</sup> Seen in light of the Prophet’s words to the young Ibn ‘Abbās, the *taḥnīk* signifies the transfer of religious authority from the former to the latter. In another version of the anecdote, al-‘Abbās brings the infant Ibn ‘Abbās to the Prophet, who administers the *taḥnīk*, utters the above statement, and returns the infant to his father saying, “Take the father of [future] kings (*khudh ilayka abā al-amlāk*),” indicating the transfer of temporal authority as well.<sup>86</sup> These reports gained prominence during the early Abbasid period as Abbasid legitimists used them to counter ‘Alid claims to legitimate leadership of the *umma*. Ibn al-Jawzī, being far removed from this early Abbasid polemical milieu, does not cite these versions of the report.<sup>87</sup> Nonetheless, the idea that the Prophet had granted religious authority to Ibn ‘Abbās, and by implication the Abbasids, is still conveyed to al-Mustaḍī’.

Ibn al-Jawzī also goes at lengths to portray Ibn ‘Abbās as a polymath in the different branches of knowledge, referring to him as *al-baḥr* (as an “ocean of knowledge”) and *al-ḥabr* (as the “learned man” of the Muslim community).<sup>88</sup> The most significant of these branches is Qur’ānic

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<sup>84</sup> Gilliot, “Portrait ‘mythique,’” pp. 142-43.

<sup>85</sup> Lassner, *Islamic Revolution*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>87</sup> Nor are they found in Ibn al-Jawzī’s collection of forged *ḥadīths* titled *Kitāb al-Mawḍū‘āt*, which aims to caution against the use of unreliable *ḥadīths* due to their negative social consequences.

<sup>88</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 118, 122.

exegesis (*tafsīr* and *ta'wīl*), to which Ibn al-Jawzī dedicates most attention.<sup>89</sup> He presents five reports in support of Ibn 'Abbās's exegetical abilities, with the following line repeated twice: "What an excellent interpreter of the Qur'ān Ibn 'Abbās is (*ni'ma tarjumān/turjumān al-Qur'ān Ibn 'Abbās*)!"<sup>90</sup>

In addition to Qur'ānic exegesis, Ibn al-Jawzī also mentions Ibn 'Abbās's sagacity in other fields of knowledge. With respect to *ḥadīth*, the young Ibn 'Abbās is regarded as a child prodigy, having narrated from the Prophet 1,660 *ḥadīths* in the thirteen years he spent with the Prophet.<sup>91</sup> Perhaps the most telling anecdote about Ibn 'Abbās's range of knowledge is one in which he holds a gathering (*majlis*) for people waiting outside his door to consult him on different matters. The narrator Abū Ṣāliḥ reports, "I saw people gather until the path became too narrow for them, for no one could come and go." Abū Ṣāliḥ then went in to notify Ibn 'Abbās of the situation, whereupon Ibn 'Abbās instructed Abū Ṣāliḥ to inform those who wanted to ask him about the Qur'ān and its different readings (*ḥurūf*) to enter. After Ibn 'Abbās was finished with this group, Abū Ṣāliḥ was again instructed to call in another group of people who wanted to consult him regarding the interpretation of the Qur'ān (*tafsīr* and *ta'wīl*). The process continued with the lawful and unlawful

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<sup>89</sup> For the semantic differences between *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl*, see Claude Gilliot, "Exegesis of the Qur'ān: Classical and Medieval," in *Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān*, ed. Jane McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2002) (online); Andrew Rippin, "Tafsīr," *EP*; Ismail Poonawala, "Ta'wīl," *EP*. For Ibn 'Abbās's role in Sunni *tafsīr*, see the following studies by Herbert Berg: *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam: The Debate over the Authenticity of Muslim Literature from the Formative Period* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), pp. 129-37, 173-218; "Ibn 'Abbās in 'Abbāsīd-Era *Tafsīr*"; "The *Isnād* and the Production of Cultural Memory: Ibn 'Abbās as a Case Study," *Numen*, 58 (2011), pp. 259-83; "Lexicological Hadith and the 'School' of Ibn 'Abbās," in *The Meaning of the Word: Lexicology and Tafsīr*, ed. S. R. Burge (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2015), pp. 67-88.

<sup>90</sup> These two reports are attributed to the caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd (d. 34/654). See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 114, 119. Similar reports in Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, p. 120; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 30.

<sup>91</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 118-19. Ibn al-Jawzī also carefully notes that Ibn 'Abbās was born three years before the *Hijra* and was therefore thirteen years of age at the time of the Prophet's death. Ibn 'Abbās's age at the time of the Prophet's death is not a detail unanimously agreed upon by medieval Muslim scholars. As Gilliot points out, most scholars adopt an "age trick" to "make Ibn 'Abbās older than he could have been at the date of Muḥammad's death by ten, twelve, thirteen, or even fifteen years" in order to "make Ibn 'Abbās's claims about the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions appear more authentic." See Gilliot, "Abdallāh b. 'Abbās."

(*al-ḥalāl wa'l-ḥarām*), religious duties (*al-farā'id*), Arabic grammar, poetry, and the oddities in speech (*al-gharīb min al-kalām*), a list that more or less runs the gamut of knowledge in the early Islamic intellectual tradition.<sup>92</sup>

The heavy emphasis on Ibn 'Abbās's abundant religious knowledge has roots in Abbasid-'Alid polemics during the early Abbasid period. According to Jacob Lassner, "Since the time the 'Alid Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) articulated Shī'ite doctrine in the eighth century, the link between sacred learning and the authority to rule became a recurrent theme of political disputes."<sup>93</sup> As much as the Abbasids insist on al-'Abbās's legal precedence—as the Prophet's uncle—over other 'Alid members, al-'Abbās's late conversion to Islam and his controversial role at the Battle of Badr scarred his religious image. Not much can be said as well about his religious learning. This lacuna, Herbert Berg argues, could be filled by his son Ibn 'Abbās, whose religious knowledge and sage-like scholarly image is well attested in the Islamic tradition by Sunnis and Shī'ites.<sup>94</sup> However, the virtue of religious knowledge is also one which the Abbasids and 'Alids would claim for Ibn 'Abbās and 'Alī respectively, resulting in a competition of virtues across sectarian lines. This competition of virtues can be inferred when reading a report that refers to Ibn 'Abbās as "the ocean [of knowledge]" and another one with Ibn 'Abbās himself claiming that his knowledge and that of the other Companions of the Prophet combined are only like a small drop of water in the seven seas when compared to 'Alī's knowledge.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 115-17.

<sup>93</sup> Lassner, *Islamic Revolution*, p. 27.

<sup>94</sup> Berg, "Ibn 'Abbās in 'Abbāsid-Era *Tafsīr*," p. 145. For instance, the early fifth/eleventh-century Ismā'īlī propagandist Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. 411/1020) regards Ibn 'Abbās's religious knowledge as surpassing that of Abū Bakr and 'Umar. See Kirmānī, *Master*, pp. 97-102.

<sup>95</sup> Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib*, ed. Yūsuf al-Biqā'ī (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā', 1991), vol. 2, p. 38. The latter report is also found in Sunni *manāqib* works, and it is for this reason that Twelver Shī'ite scholars like Ibn Shahrāshūb (d. 588/1192; also a contemporary of Ibn al-Jawzī) and Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 673/1275) utilized it with the aim of mining the Sunni written corpus for accounts to support distinctly Shī'ite positions on various

In light of this competition of virtues, Qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*) became the branch of knowledge in which the Abbasids invested most scholarly energy. According to Berg, Ibn 'Abbās's prominence as towering exegete in the Sunni tradition increased in the first half of the third/ninth century, coinciding with the zenith of Abbasid power in the Islamic world.<sup>96</sup> His mythic status in Qur'ānic exegesis owed much to Abbasid propaganda and patronage. After all, what better way to challenge 'Alī's religious precedence than to give an Abbasid the final say regarding the Qur'ān?<sup>97</sup> The 'Alids were also not lacking in reports emphasizing 'Alī's exegetical abilities, with some challenging Ibn 'Abbās's religious precedence by hinting that Ibn 'Abbās's exegetical knowledge had been acquired from 'Alī.<sup>98</sup> In addition, as discussed in Chapter One, the Shī'ite tradition often attributes privileged and esoteric knowledge to 'Alī, which extends to his interpretation of the Qur'ān in both *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl*.<sup>99</sup> *Ta'wīl* or esoteric interpretation of the Qur'ān played an even greater role in the Fatimid-Isma'īlī bid to religious authority. In this context, Ibn al-Jawzī's inclusion of *ḥadīth* no. 2 ("May God instruct him in [matters of] faith and teach him *ta'wīl*"), which foretells Ibn 'Abbās's expertise in *ta'wīl*, might have been intended as a reminder

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subjects, hence turning Sunni scholarship on its own head. Furthermore, many reports in Ibn Shahrāshūb's section on 'Alī's superiority in *ilm* in his *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib (The Virtues of the Family of Abī Ṭālib)* have chains of transmission ending with Ibn 'Abbās. See *ibid.*, pp. 36-68. On Ibn Shahrāshūb and his scholarly technique, see B. S. Amoretti, "Ibn Shahrāshūb," *EF*; Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "Ebn Šahrāšūb," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (accessed online); Matthew Pierce, "Ibn Shahrashub and Shi'a Rhetorical Strategies in the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Century," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies*, 5/4 (2012), pp. 441-54. For Ibn Ṭāwūs's approach, see Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, pp. 9-25.

<sup>96</sup> Berg, "Ibn 'Abbās in 'Abbāsīd-Era *Tafsīr*," p. 137.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>98</sup> Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib*, vol. 2, p. 53.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37; Kirmānī, *Master*, pp. 101-3.

to al-Mustaḍī' that the Abbasid line was equal, if not superior, to the 'Alids in terms of sacred and scriptural knowledge.<sup>100</sup>

In addition to Ibn 'Abbās's religious knowledge, Ibn al-Jawzī also includes reports praising his piety and generosity. For instance, when Ibn 'Abbās lost his vision temporarily, he refused treatment because he would have had to refrain from prayer for five days.<sup>101</sup> Regarding his generosity, Ibn al-Jawzī cites an anecdote in which Ibn 'Abbās responded to a letter by the first Umayyad caliph Mu'āwiya with a poem denigrating him for his miserliness.<sup>102</sup>

After Ibn 'Abbās, the narrative shifts to 'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh, to whom Ibn al-Jawzī dedicates a short but significant section.<sup>103</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī claims that 'Alī "was the most handsome of the Qurayshites on the face of the earth and the one who performed the most prayers among them" and thus refers to him as "'Alī al-Sajjād."<sup>104</sup> In medieval Muslim sources, this title, meaning "the one who prostrates himself," is often mentioned in relation to 'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh due to his immense piety.<sup>105</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī also cites a report which claims that "'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-

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<sup>100</sup> For both Twelver and Ismā'īlī Shī'ites, the requirement of religious knowledge is of utmost importance for the imam. The Abbasid caliph is often ridiculed in Fatimid-Isma'ili works as an imam lacking knowledge in religion matters. See Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Naysābūrī, *Kitāb Ithbāt al-imāma*, trans. Arzina R. Lalani as *Degrees of Excellence: A Fatimid Treatise on Leadership in Islam* (London: I. B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010), pp. 74-75; Kirmānī, *Master*, p. 119.

<sup>101</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 114-15.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 119. This is despite the common depiction of Mu'āwiya as a generous ruler in the Islamic tradition. See El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics*, p. 285; idem, "The Redemption of Umayyad Memory by the 'Abbāsids," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 61/4 (2002), pp. 242-43, 249; Aram A. Shahin, "In Defense of Mu'āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān: Treatises and Monographs on Mu'āwiya from the Eighth to the Nineteenth Centuries," in *The Lineaments of Islam: Studies in Honor of Fred McGraw Donner*, ed. Paul M. Cobb (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 177-208.

<sup>103</sup> For modern scholarly treatments of 'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh, see K. V. Zetterstéen, "'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās," *EF*<sup>2</sup>; Moshe Sharon, "'Alī b. 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās," *EF*<sup>3</sup>; Lassner, *Islamic Revolution*, pp. 39-54.

<sup>104</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 120.

<sup>105</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 5, p. 230; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 70; *Akhbār al-dawla*, pp. 144-45.

‘Abbās used to do one thousand prostrations (*sajda*) every day.”<sup>106</sup> If his father is portrayed as the paradigmatic figure of knowledge, ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh represents the virtue of piety. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh’s piety is also said to have earned him the respect of the Quraysh. Ibn al-Jawzī mentions a report claiming that whenever ‘Alī went to Mecca the Quraysh would suspend their meetings and attend ‘Alī’s gathering (*majlis*) to honor him; if he sat they would sit, if he stood they would stand, if he got up to walk they would walk together with him.<sup>107</sup> Having recognized ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh’s outstanding piety, Ibn al-Jawzī emphasizes his role in the divinely elected genealogy of the Abbasids by calling him “father of the caliphs and imams” (*abū’l-khulafā’ al-a’imma*) from whom “God brought forth (*nashara*) the caliphs of excellence.”<sup>108</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzī follows ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh’s biographical section with a legitimation of the Abbasid dynasty via an endorsement of designation (*naṣṣ*) from the Prophet to his uncle al-‘Abbās.<sup>109</sup>

1. *Ḥadīth* on the authority of Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh: “I heard the Prophet say, ‘May there be among the descendants of al-‘Abbās kings (*mulūk*) who will assume authority of my community and through whom God will strengthen the faith.’”
2. *Ḥadīth* on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, who said that al-‘Abbās said, “O Messenger of God, what is there for us in this affair?” [The Prophet] said, “To me is prophecy and to you the caliphate. By you it will begin and by you it will be sealed.”
3. *Ḥadīth* on the authority of Ibn Rizq: “The Prophet said to al-‘Abbās, ‘I will grant intercession to those who love you, not for those who loathe you.’”

<sup>106</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 120-21. Due to ‘Alī’s rigorous prayer habits, many sources refer to him as “Dhū’l-Thaḥīnāt” (“the one who has calluses,” due to excessive amounts of daily prayers). See Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 5, p. 230; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 70; *Akhbār al-dawla*, p. 144.

<sup>107</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 121.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., pp. 120-22.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., pp. 122-23.

The claim that the Prophet had designated his uncle al-‘Abbās to be his successor has roots in Abbasid-‘Alid polemics dating back to the Abbasid Revolution.<sup>110</sup> As the ‘Alids began to emphasize their direct blood ties to the Prophet through his daughter Fāṭima, the Abbasids turned their attention to al-‘Abbās’s legal right to inherit the Prophet’s authority based on his status as the Prophet’s uncle, as I have discussed earlier. This doctrine held sway at the Abbasid court during the reign of al-Manṣūr. After much back and forth, the ‘Alids shifted attention away from Fāṭima to ‘Alī as the direct recipient of the Prophet’s legacy. The Prophet is claimed to have personally designated (*naṣṣ*) ‘Alī as his successor. On their part, the Abbasids circulated traditions about the Prophet hinting to al-‘Abbās that the caliphate will come to his progeny, matching ‘Alid claims of the Prophet’s designation of ‘Alī. This doctrine was adopted by a wing of the extremist Rāwandīyya sect loyal to the Abbasid regime<sup>111</sup> and became official court doctrine during the caliphate of al-Mahdī (r. 158/775-169/785). The *Akhbār al-dawla al-‘Abbāsiyya* mentions how al-Mahdī made use of this doctrine:

The organization of the Abbasid Shī‘a originated in Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya, and on this Abū Muslim based his propaganda. This went on until the time of al-Mahdī. Al-Mahdī bade them, however, to link the *imāma* to the name of al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, telling them, “The *imāma* belonged to al-‘Abbās, the Prophet’s paternal uncle, since he was the worthiest of all men to succeed him and was his nearest kinsman. After him the *imāma* passed on to ‘Abd Allāh b. al-‘Abbās, after him to ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh, after him to Muḥammad b. ‘Alī, after him to Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad, after him to Abū ‘l-‘Abbās [i.e., al-Saffāh], after him to Abū Ja‘far [i.e., al-Manṣūr], after him to al-Mahdī, continuing in the progeny of al-Mahdī and it is thus established in them until today.”<sup>112</sup>

According to Muhammad Qasim Zaman, as Abbasid caliphs and propagandists moved towards cultivating a more “orthodox” image in alliance with the proto-Sunni ‘*ulamā*’, they did not dwell

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<sup>110</sup> What follows is based on the following works: Sharon, *Black Banners*, pp. 84-87; Lassner, *Islamic Revolution*, pp. 6-9; Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, pp. 34-48.

<sup>111</sup> For an account of the Rāwandīyya, see Etan Kohlberg, “al-Rāwandīyya,” *EF*; Farouk Omar, *The ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, 132/750-170/786* (Baghdad: The National Printing and Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 192-99; Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 86-91.

<sup>112</sup> *Akhbār al-dawla*, p. 165. Translation in Sharon, *Black Banners*, p. 86.

too much on the doctrine promulgated by al-Mahdī. Instead, they moved towards an acceptance of Abū Bakr as the rightful successor of the Prophet, followed by ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī. However, the idea of al-‘Abbās being conferred the caliphate via *naṣṣ* from the Prophet remained a frequent motif in Abbasid propaganda and panegyric poetry alluding to the Abbasid dynasty’s kinship with the Prophet.<sup>113</sup>

Being more than four hundred years removed from the Abbasid-‘Alid polemical milieu, the three *ḥadīths* quoted above serve no more than panegyric purposes to praise the caliphate of the Abbasids as being directly conferred by the Prophet. If this work were directed at the Sunni ‘ulamā’, Ibn al-Jawzī’s citing of the above *ḥadīths* would run against the orthodox belief that Abū Bakr was the rightful successor to the Prophet, followed by ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī. However, considering that the intended audience for the work is primarily al-Mustaḍī’, Ibn al-Jawzī could allow himself some liberty in citing such reports to achieve maximum panegyric effect. Elsewhere in the *Miṣbāḥ*, one also comes across five different instances of a *ḥadīth* that originally gave expression to the messianic claims of the Abbasids during the Abbasid Revolution: “From us [i.e., the Abbasids] there will be the *ṣaffāḥ*, the *manṣūr*, and the *mahdī*.”<sup>114</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī leaves out the second, messianic part of the *ḥadīth* claiming that “the *mahdī* will hand [the caliphate] over to Jesus, the son of Mary,” thereby leaving us with a stripped-down version of the *ḥadīth* that appears to legitimize Abbasid rule.

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<sup>113</sup> Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, p. 47.

<sup>114</sup> The titles mentioned in the *ḥadīth*, meaning “the blood-shredder,” “the victorious,” and “the one guided by God,” correspond to the regnal titles of the first three Abbasid caliphs. On the messianic qualities of these three titles, see Bernard Lewis, “The Regnal Titles of the First ‘Abbāsid Caliphs,” in *Dr. Zakir Husain Presentation Volume* (New Delhi, 1968), pp. 13-22. For a discussion of the *ḥadīth*, see Roy P. Mottahedeh, “The ‘Abbāsid Caliphate in Iran,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 4: The Period from the Arab Invasions to the Saljuqs*, ed. R. N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 66; Hayrettin Yücesoy, *Messianic Beliefs and Imperial Politics in Medieval Islam: The ‘Abbāsid Caliphate in the Early Ninth Century* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), pp. 26, 43-45.

Ibn al-Jawzī's genealogical legitimization of the Abbasid dynasty ends with two *ḥadīths*: “God does not appoint a caliph until He has passed His right hand over his forelock” (*yamsaḥa Allāh nāṣiyatahu bi-yamīnihi*); “If God wants to put forward [literally: create, *yakhluqu*] someone [literally: a man, *khalq*] for the caliphate, He will pass His right hand over his forelock” (*masaḥa ‘alā nāṣiyatihi bi-yamīnihi*).<sup>115</sup> The implication that the caliph is appointed by God cannot be more obvious. Since the *Miṣbāḥ* was intended for al-Mustaḍī’, the inclusion of these two *ḥadīths* aims to exalt al-Mustaḍī’ as a God-chosen caliph.

Before moving on to the third part of the *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter, a few points need to be made. First, insofar as Ibn al-Jawzī's genealogical legitimization of the Abbasid dynasty functions as panegyric, it does so in light of the changing political landscape of the medieval Islamic world. Writing on late medieval France, Gabrielle Spiegel claims that genealogy “transforms the connection between the political past and present into a real one, seminally imparted from generation to generation,” hence “allowing perceived relationships between historical figures and events in the past and present to be viewed as part of one continuous stream of history.”<sup>116</sup> The genealogical legitimization of the Abbasids in the *Miṣbāḥ* operates in like fashion—the Abbasid line is regarded as a God-chosen genealogy beginning with Adam through al-‘Abbās and Ibn ‘Abbās down to al-Mustaḍī’ himself. But while medieval French genealogies were “written above all to

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<sup>115</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 129-30. This is despite the fact that Ibn al-Jawzī himself lists these *ḥadīths* in his collection of forged *ḥadīths* titled *Kitāb al-Mawḍū‘āt*. Jonathan Brown has argued that earlier Sunni scholars allowed for laxity when it came to “discourse on manners, preaching and history because they saw these subjects as falling outside the true purviews of religion: law and ritual,” but notes that Ibn al-Jawzī's more stringent approach, which “admitted no distinction between laws and preaching,” constituted a turning point. However, Ibn al-Jawzī clearly sees no problem in violating his own rules for panegyric purposes. For Ibn al-Jawzī's discussion of these *ḥadīths*, see his *Kitāb al-Mawḍū‘āt min al-aḥādīth al-marfū‘āt*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn b. Shukrī b. ‘Alī Būyā Jīlār (Riyadh: Maktabat Aḍwā’ al-Salaf, 1997), vol. 3, p. 302-4. For Jonathan Brown's treatment of the use of unreliable *ḥadīths* by Sunni scholars, see his article, “Even If It's Not True It's True: Using Unreliable Ḥadīths in Sunni Islam,” *Islamic Law and Society*, 18 (2011), pp. 1-52, especially pp. 20-25 on Ibn al-Jawzī's approach.

<sup>116</sup> Gabrielle Spiegel, “Political Utility in Medieval Historiography: A Sketch,” reprinted in *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 97.

exalt a line and legitimize its power” and to display “a family’s intention to affirm and extend its place in political life,”<sup>117</sup> the Abbasid genealogy has one extra layer: not only is it dynastic, it also a sacred one descending from Muḥammad’s family line. At a time when the Islamic world had long been dominated by rulers originating from Turkish and Central Asian tribes, a genealogy like that of the Abbasids becomes charged with even greater socio-religious significance. Even though the Abbasid caliph had become one among many rulers in the Islamic Middle East jockeying for regional supremacy during Ibn al-Jawzī’s time, the fact that he was descended from the Prophet’s clan elevates his religious standing in the eyes of Muslims. Buyid and Seljuq attempts to attach themselves to the genealogy of the Abbasids by forging marriage alliances between their daughters and the Abbasid caliphs demonstrate the lengths to which various groups would go in order to augment their standing in Muslim society.<sup>118</sup>

Second, while there is no doubt that Ibn al-Jawzī intended his genealogical legitimization of al-Mustaḍī’ to serve as a panegyric, he still manages to insert admonition in a subtle manner. Roy Mottahedeh, in referring to Ghaznavid panegyric poetry, argues that “panegyric not only memorialises the ‘good deeds’ shown by rulers, but it also holds rulers up to a standard by ‘external prodding.’”<sup>119</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī’s genealogical legitimization of the Abbasid caliphate can be considered one such “external prodding.” Key to this are the Abbasid ancestors Ibn ‘Abbās and ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh, both paradigmatic figures of religious knowledge and piety in the Islamic tradition. The author’s focus on these two learned and pious men could have been intended to serve as a reminder

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>118</sup> See, for instance, Makdisi, “Marriage of Ṭughril Beg.”

<sup>119</sup> Roy P. Mottahedeh, “Finding Iran in the Panegyrics of the Ghaznavid Court,” in *Medieval Central Asia and the Persianate World: Iranian Tradition and Islamic Civilisation*, eds. A. C. S. Peacock and D. G. Tor (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015), p. 135.

to al-Mustaḍī' that the Abbasid line is imbued with the virtue of religious knowledge and piety, and that he ought to emulate them to continue this legacy. In concrete terms, he should patronize religious scholars (like Ibn al-Jawzī) and institutions (especially those associated with the Ḥanbalīs), and observe Islamic ritualistic requirements such as praying and fasting. The above approach conforms with Ibn al-Jawzī's recommendations for preachers preaching to rulers, which involve a subtle mix of admonition and praise instead of direct admonition and harsh rebuke, as discussed in the previous chapter. This approach ensures the preacher's safety and enhances the likelihood of reforming the ruler.

### 3.4.3. The Dignity of the Caliphate and the Need for Obedience

The final part of the *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter emphasizes the importance of obedience to the caliph. Ibn al-Jawzī begins by reiterating that the caliphate is a deputyship on behalf of God (*niyābatan 'an Allāh*) with reference to several Qur'ānic verses:

God has called the ruler (*sulṭān*) a king (*malik*) just as He called Himself a king, for He said regarding His own claim, "the King, the Holy" (*al-malik, al-quddūs*; Q 59:23). And He said regarding the right of the *sulṭān*, "Truly God has raised up Saul for you [in this context, the Israelites] as king" (Q 2:247). This is because the subjects of the *sulṭān* are in the position of being under the dominion of [someone else] (*fī maqām mamlūk*) and, because of this, [God] said, "Indeed I found a woman<sup>120</sup> ruling over them" (Q 27:23). Then He ordered humankind to be obedient to the *sulṭān* just as He commanded obedience to Himself and to His Messenger, for He said, "Obey God, obey the Messenger, and those in authority among you" (Q 4:59).<sup>121</sup>

In this passage, the caliph is again regarded as directly appointed by God. He acts in a mimetic fashion in relation to God in ruling over the rest of mankind, who by nature are in need of a ruler.

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<sup>120</sup> Most exegetes claim that this refers to Bilqīs, the queen of Sheba referred to in the Bible.

<sup>121</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 130-31.

The quoting of Q 59:23 also alludes to the sacred and holy nature of the caliphal office, an idea not foreign to panegyric poetry and court documents.<sup>122</sup>

The quoting of Q 4:59 for the second time in this chapter leads us to the main thrust of the section on obedience. Ibn al-Jawzī's situating the theme of obedience at the very end of the chapter has precedents in Umayyad and early Abbasid state letters written on behalf of the caliph. In these letters, a case for obedience would be made after detailing the indispensability of the caliphate to religion after the death of the Prophet.<sup>123</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī further accentuates the importance of obedience by citing a total of eight statements, including six *ḥadīths*, mostly detailing the eschatological consequences of disobedience.<sup>124</sup> In a panegyric poem composed by the author himself and inserted between these *ḥadīths*, it is stated that “[one's] faith is not received [by God] except through love of you [i.e., al-Mustaḍī'].”<sup>125</sup> The overall message to be hammered into the mind of the reader is clear: disobedience to the caliph entails separating from the community (*al-jamā'a*), which removes one from the faith. In some sense, this ties in with the concept of *al-sam' wa'l-tā'a* (“hearing and obeying”), which is mentioned five times in the Qur'ān. According to Andrew Marsham, *al-sam' wa'l-tā'a* “recalled both pre-Islamic political language and the language of the Hebrew Bible, where the Israelites ‘hear and obey’ God’s covenant.” Uttered in a

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<sup>122</sup> Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, p. 161. For an example, see al-Ṣābi', *Rules and Regulations*, p. 10, where the word *muqaddasa* is used in relation to the caliphal office.

<sup>123</sup> Al-Qāḍī, “Religious Foundation,” pp. 251-56; Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*.

<sup>124</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 131-34.

<sup>125</sup> “*Wa lā yuqbal al-īmān illa bi-ḥubbikum*.” Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 133. In another poem recited in person to al-Mustaḍī' during one of Ibn al-Jawzī's public sermons and also recorded in the *Muntaẓam*, a similar idea is expressed: “Love for the Abbasid house is the foundation of faith” (*ḥubb banī al-'Abbās aṣl al-īmān*). Idem, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, p. 228.

Muslim context, the phrase connotes the “connection between the leading of prayer and the leading of Muslims in politics and war.”<sup>126</sup>

To further illustrate the potency of this point, Ibn al-Jawzī goes on to underscore the importance of the caliphate for the *umma*:

The caliphate is the cause for the security of humankind in their bodily and religious [needs], and through it lives (*muḥajj*) are protected, knowledge and works are obtained, livelihood (*arzāq*) is earned, and mutual transgressions (*taḏālum*) are averted. If not for the protection of the caliph, prayers would not be possible, the worshipper would be unable to worship, the scholar would not be able to spread his knowledge, and the merchant would not be able to embark on his travels.<sup>127</sup>

This passage echoes Ghazālī in his *Mustaḏhirī*, where he refutes arguments claiming that the caliphate is dispensable because the Abbasid caliph no longer fulfilled all the required qualifications (see Chapter One). For Ghazālī the caliphate is needed to maintain the legality of the Muslim public sphere; for Ibn al-Jawzī it is needed to maintain the various yet interconnected social functions of the community. Nonetheless, the underlying idea is similar: without the caliph, society would simply break down.<sup>128</sup>

In the final section of the chapter, Ibn al-Jawzī reminds al-Mustaḏīʾ that as much as his caliphate is the greatest blessing (*niʿma*) from God, it also demands the greatest gratitude (*shukr*) to God. Quoting al-Manṣūr’s testament to al-Mahdī, the author specifies how al-Mustaḏīʾ’s gratitude to God can be achieved: by responding to power (*qudra*) with forgiveness (ʿ*afw*), obedience (*ṭāʿa*) with mutual affection (*taʿāluḥ*), and victory (*naṣr*) with humility (*tawāḍuʿ*). Above all, the caliph should rule with God-fearing piety (*taqwā*) and justice (ʿ*adl*).<sup>129</sup> This counter-

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<sup>126</sup> Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*, pp. 74-75, 170.

<sup>127</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 134.

<sup>128</sup> Ghazālī’s alarmist tone aims to hammer this idea into the hearts and minds of his readers; whereas Ibn al-Jawzī, a skilled preacher, aims more to achieve a pedagogical effect by gradually leading the reader to the conclusion that obedience to the caliph, communal unity, and faith are closely interconnected. I am indebted to Suzanne Smith for this point.

<sup>129</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 135.

balances the previous section's emphasis on obedience to the caliph, suggesting that all subjects owe the caliph full obedience only if the caliph is a God-fearing and just ruler. This advice would seem ineffective in the eyes of a thinker like Juwaynī, who would choose a candidate possessing competence and bravery in war for the caliphate over one with outstanding piety and fear of God. For Juwaynī, in Ovamir Anjum's words, "the world is not so enchanted that the piety of the ruler would in itself ensure prosperity and piety of the ruled."<sup>130</sup> Yet the idea of a pious ruler guaranteeing a pious community of believers, by way of a moral contagion, is precisely what Ibn al-Jawzī envisions for an ideal caliphate. When one reads his exhortation to the caliph in this section alongside subsequent chapters in the *Miṣbāḥ*, a running theme can be discerned: a caliph who rules with God-fearing piety and justice facilitates the moral and spiritual reform of the community. This, for Ibn al-Jawzī, goes a longer way in bringing about moral and spiritual reform than counseling the caliph on political, administrative, and military matters. After all, the aim of preaching to rulers is not to produce more politically effective statesmen, but to cultivate reformed individuals and, ultimately, a reformed society.<sup>131</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī closes the first chapter of the *Miṣbāḥ* with prayers to ensure that al-Mustaḍī' rules with gratitude to God, piety, and justice. Indeed, the well-being of the caliph guarantees the well-being of the believers.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Anjum, "Political Metaphors and Concepts," p. 15.

<sup>131</sup> Swartz, "Rules of the Popular Preaching," pp. 227, 230.

<sup>132</sup> As can be seen in a quote by al-Fuḍayl b. 'Iyād (d. 187/803): "If my prayers cannot be answered except when they are offered regarding the imam, then if I [only] did them for myself they will not offer me recompense (*lam tajzanī*). [But] if I prayed for the imam then the welfare (*ṣalāḥ*) of the imam guarantees the welfare of the worshippers and the lands." Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 136.

### 3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has offered a glimpse of how Ibn al-Jawzī's preaching strategies are put into action in a mirror for princes written for an Abbasid caliph. The *Miṣbāḥ* showcases Ibn al-Jawzī's skills as a panegyrist and preacher who mixes admonition with praise while tailoring his words to the specific socio-political circumstances of al-Mustaḍī's caliphate. This strategy is deployed in the book's first chapter where Ibn al-Jawzī begins by extolling the role of the caliph as a deputy of God (*khalīfat Allāh*) needed to prevent social disorder. This is followed by a genealogical legitimization of the Abbasid dynasty by grafting the Abbasids onto a sacred line of prophets running through Muḥammad, imbuing it with a sacred quality. Much space is devoted to highlighting the scholarly and pious images of Ibn 'Abbās and 'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh, both ancestors of al-Mustaḍī. Through this genealogy, Ibn al-Jawzī not only exalts the Abbasid caliph's sacred genealogy, but also implicitly admonishes al-Mustaḍī to uphold religious knowledge and piety. This is in agreement with what he proposed in works like the *'Atf* and *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*. In the *Miṣbāḥ*, various elements of the Sunni caliphate discourse, *ḥadīths*, and the *manāqib* tradition are reworked into a subtle effort at legitimization and admonition.

Since the *Miṣbāḥ* was dedicated to al-Mustaḍī, the above efforts also hint at Ibn al-Jawzī's political agenda to bring about a caliphate that is based not only on justice (*'adl*), but also on religious knowledge and piety. It ultimately mattered little that al-Mustaḍī did not pursue *jihād* like his forefather Hārūn al-Rashīd. Most scholars have acknowledged the bitter reality that although the caliph was still the "Commander of the Faithful," he no longer possessed the resources and willpower to subdue unbelievers. After all, that was already being taken care of by individuals closer to the frontiers like Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Caliphs like al-Mustaḍī had more pressing matters in the caliphal court to deal with. In Ibn al-Jawzī's political theology, as long as al-Mustaḍī

maintained justice in his own realm, remained pious, and supported religious scholars like Ibn al-Jawzī himself, the well-being of the Muslim community can at least be guaranteed. And considering Ibn al-Jawzī's huge following in Baghdad, this did not put al-Mustaḍī' in a position of weakness, especially when the need arose to negotiate with different power brokers in Baghdadi society to deal with factions at court. What Ibn al-Jawzī specifically has in mind with regard to justice, knowledge, and piety will constitute the focus of the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Embodying Ideal Rulership: Biographical Accounts of the Abbasid Caliphs

In this chapter, I dig deeper into Ibn al-Jawzī's conceptions of ideal rulership. I do so by examining his biographies of the Abbasid caliphs from Abū'l-'Abbās al-Saffāḥ (r. 132/749-136/754) to al-Mustaḍīr (r. 566/1170-575/1180) in his multi-volume chronicle *al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa'l-umam* (*The Well-Ordered History of Kings and Nations*). This chapter focuses on Ibn al-Jawzī's role as a historian and biographer, and treats his caliphal biographies as a source of political thought. It argues that insofar as Ibn al-Jawzī portrays most of the Abbasid caliphs as just, munificent, and awe-inspiring rulers, there is a higher number of anecdotes that highlight the caliphs' commitment to piety and religious knowledge. These anecdotes demonstrate Ibn al-Jawzī's emphasis on piety and religious knowledge as the pillars of ideal Islamic rule and provide a sketch of what pious and learned rulership meant to him.

#### 4.1. Caliphal Biographies in the *Muntaẓam*

The biographies of caliphs in Ibn al-Jawzī's *Muntaẓam* remain relatively untapped in studies of Islamic historiography.<sup>1</sup> These biographies are prefixed to the events and obituaries of the year in which a given caliph assumes office. This arrangement is unusual as biographies of

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<sup>1</sup> The *Muntaẓam* is hardly used in two recent monographs that focus on caliphal biographies: Tayeb El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Ma'mūn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Recent works by Julia Bray, Heather Keaney, and Patrick Scharfe have brought more attention to the *Muntaẓam* in their studies of certain caliphs: Bray, "A Caliph and his Public Relations"; Heather Keaney, *Medieval Islamic Historiography: Remembering Rebellion* (New York: Routledge, 2013), especially pp. 47-74; Scharfe, "Portrayals of the Later Abbasid Caliphate," pp. 123-39. For general studies on the *Muntaẓam*, see Somogyi, "'Kitāb al-muntaẓam'"; idem, "Ibn al-Jawzī's School of Historiography"; al-Ḥakīm, *Kitāb al-Muntaẓam*.

rulers usually came after the announcements of their deaths.<sup>2</sup> In these biographies, Ibn al-Jawzī provides the caliph's full name, genealogy, physical features, his own opinions on the caliph's personality, followed by anecdotal reports (*akhbār*) to substantiate his assessment of the caliph. Most of these anecdotes are not original to Ibn al-Jawzī and can be found in well-known biographical and historical works by Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845), al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071).<sup>3</sup> According to Julia Bray, "The anecdotes are not anchored to any particular time. They illustrate essential characteristics of the caliph, and relationships between the caliph and his advisers. They centre on a limited number of themes and return to these themes several times, adding an element of progression."<sup>4</sup> Events (*ḥawādith*) concerning the caliph's military activities and affairs at court do not form part of the biography, but are instead narrated under the year in which they occurred.

The reader therefore obtains a more free-standing portrait of a caliph's personality in comparison with the biographies obtained in the *ta'rīkh al-khulafā'* (history of caliphs) genre whereby the political and military events taking place during a caliph's reign are integrated into the anecdotal reports illustrating his personality.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, since Ibn al-Jawzī's caliphal biographies come before the events of a particular caliph's reign, they "serve to colour the reader's understanding of the subsequent events of his reign."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Konrad Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 68.

<sup>3</sup> For a brief discussion of Ibn al-Jawzī's sources, see Somogyi, "Kitāb al-muntaẓam," pp. 64-68.

<sup>4</sup> Bray, "A Caliph and his Public Relations," p. 164.

<sup>5</sup> Examples of *ta'rīkh al-khulafā'* include *al-Inbā' fī ta'rīkh al-khulafā'* by Ibn al-Jawzī's peer, Ibn al-Imrānī (d. 580/1184); Ibn al-Sā'ī's (d. 674/1276) *Mukhtaṣar akhbār al-khulafā'*; and Suyūṭī's *Ta'rīkh al-khulafā'*. On this genre, see Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 46-47, 75-76, 120-21.

<sup>6</sup> Bray, "A Caliph and his Public Relations," p. 164.

Ibn al-Jawzī's historiographical framework implies that a caliph's personality had implications for his rule. Caliphal behavior and actions (e.g. his display of generosity and munificence, how often he prayed, and his relationship with religious scholars) were bound up with religious and ethical concerns, as aptly articulated by Tayeb El-Hibri:

Discussion of these issues [related to ideals of political rule, ethical behavior, and theoretical questions about the nature and direction of historical change] took place in conjunction with the focus that narrators accorded to analyzing human behavior. ... Important political and military personalities, such as the caliphs, did get extra attention in many stories in the chronicles, but this focus was related not to their political importance as much as to their individual characters, and to how they dealt with a range of ethical, political, and historical challenges. ... The drama of personal lives was intertwined with the political prospects of the state, and the former had as much influence as the latter in signaling the fortunes of the caliphate and the fate of the community, and in setting the stage for diverse trajectories of historical tragedy.<sup>7</sup>

The blurring of boundaries between “the drama of personal lives” and political rule is indicative of how medieval Muslim historians conceived of the world as an integrated system in which the economy, society, polity, and a ruler's personality are mutually connected according to God's design.<sup>8</sup> A caliph's moral and religious conduct, perhaps even more than his political and administrative acumen, could be the main factor that determines the outcome of his rule.<sup>9</sup> Hence, the reports which Ibn al-Jawzī selects to illustrate his assessment of a particular caliph speak to his vision of a divine order effected through a rightful caliphate.

Ibn al-Jawzī's caliphal biographies constitute a rich source for studying his political ideas.<sup>10</sup>

Konrad Hirschler claims that although “chronicles lacked the explicit legalistic and philosophical

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<sup>7</sup> El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, pp. 13-14. Similar ideas expressed in Humphreys, *Islamic History*, pp. 136-47.

<sup>8</sup> Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 128.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Hayrettin Yücesoy, “Meta-Narratives: Political Legitimacy, Fate and Piety in the Narratives of the Abbasid Civil War,” *Turkish Journal of Islamic Studies*, 10 (2005), pp. 65-79.

<sup>10</sup> For studies examining historical and biographical writings as a source for political thought, see Spiegel, “Political Utility”; P. M. Holt, “The Virtuous Ruler in Thirteenth-Century Mamluk Royal Biographies,” *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 24 (1980), pp. 27-35; idem, “The Sultan as Ideal Ruler: Ayyubid and Mamluk Prototypes,” in *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World*, eds. Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead (London: Longman: 1995), pp. 122-37; Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography*, pp. 109-14; Alex Mallett,

statements of the main genres of political thought...it was in chronicles that such explicitly formulated ideas were taken up, reworked and possibly also, to a certain degree, prepared.”<sup>11</sup> The same can also be said about caliphal biographies. A recurring mention of anecdotes detailing how caliphs fast and pray, for instance, is quite telling of what Ibn al-Jawzī wanted to see in his ideal caliph. With that in mind, this chapter reads Ibn al-Jawzī’s caliphal biographies “not for facts, but for their allusive power...to form a frame for social, political, and religious commentary.”<sup>12</sup> However, my discussion does not presuppose that the reports and anecdotes found in the *Muntaẓam*’s caliphal biographies are merely topoi or motifs. A discussion of their veracity is beyond the scope of this chapter; my focus here is on the political ideas conveyed by Ibn al-Jawzī use of reports and anecdotes.

My guiding principle is that the biographies ultimately tell us more about Ibn al-Jawzī than about the *actual* lives of the caliphs themselves. Ibn al-Jawzī must have begun writing the *Muntaẓam* during the reign of the Abbasid caliph al-Mustaḍī’, under whom his career as a preacher achieved its peak. He does not indicate when he finished composing the work, though one can place its *terminus ante quem* sometime between 574/1179 (the *Muntaẓam* ends after recounting the events of this year) and Ibn al-Jawzī’s death in 597/1201. This period corresponds with the tail end of al-Mustaḍī’’s caliphate and the first half of al-Nāṣir’s (r. 575/1180-622/1225) caliphate. Despite the frequent sectarian disputes in Baghdad involving the traditionalist Ḥanbalīs and the Twelver Shī‘ites, this was a time of Ḥanbalī ascendancy, given the immense support they enjoyed

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“Islamic Historians of the Ayyūbid Era and Muslim Rulers from the Early Crusading Period: A Study in the Use of History,” *Al-Masāq*, 24/3 (2012), pp. 241-52.

<sup>11</sup> Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography*, p. 109.

<sup>12</sup> El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, p. 216.

from the caliphal court.<sup>13</sup> Besides, the Fatimid caliphate had already been extinguished by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and the Seljuq threat to the Abbasids contained by the caliph al-Muqtafī and his Ḥanbalī vizier Ibn Hubayra. For a Ḥanbalī preacher like Ibn al-Jawzī, the Sunni Revival must have appeared to be in full swing with the Abbasid caliph at the helm of government. For these reasons, I have chosen to focus on the Abbasids, since this was the dynasty under which Ibn al-Jawzī lived and thrived as a preacher.

#### 4.2. Authorial Intent of the *Muntaẓam*

Before examining Ibn al-Jawzī's caliphal biographies, it is worthwhile to scrutinize his authorial motivations and intended audience for the *Muntaẓam*. This information can be obtained in the work's preface.<sup>14</sup>

In reading the preface, one obtains a strong sense that the *Muntaẓam* is aimed at comprehensiveness and a wide audience. Other historians, Ibn al-Jawzī claims, differ over which societal group (*tāʾifa*) to focus on in their works.<sup>15</sup> Some restrict their works to the prophets, some to kings and caliphs, some to religious scholars, while others choose to write only about litterateurs and poets. However, readers often seek a more complete account of the different groups in Muslim society. It is with this in mind that Ibn al-Jawzī presents the reader with a “comprehensive book aimed at every listener/reader” (*fā-ātaytuka bi-hādihāʾl-kitāb al-jāmiʿ li-gharaḍi kulli sāmiʿin*),

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<sup>13</sup> For an account of the sectarian conflicts in Baghdad between the third/ninth and sixth/twelfth centuries, see Henri Laoust, “Les agitations religieuses à Baghdād aux IV<sup>e</sup> et V<sup>e</sup> siècles de l'Hégire,” in *Islamic Civilization, 950-1150*, ed. D. S. Richards (London: William Clowes & Sons Limited, 1973), pp. 169-86; Abbas Hamdani, “Urban Violence at Baghdad in the Rivalry between the Abbasid and Fatimid Caliphates,” in *Ismaili and Fatimid Studies in Honor of Paul E. Walker*, ed. Bruce D. Craig (Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, 2010), pp. 197-214.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 1, pp. 115-18.

<sup>15</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī does not use the term *tāʾifa*, but it is implied. Michael Cooperson defines *tāʾifa* as “a group entrusted with an exclusive body of knowledge or characteristic activity.” For a discussion of the *tāʾifa* model in Islamic biographical writing, see Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, pp. 13-18.

implying that the *Muntaẓam* was written with a broad audience in mind.<sup>16</sup> Unlike other historical works that are only dedicated to a specific *ṭāʾifa*, the *Muntaẓam* has something for everyone because it documents the various groups in society in a catholic fashion. In line with this goal, the biographies that come after the narrative of events of a given year include rulers, *ḥadīth* narrators, jurists, ascetics, poets, litterateurs, and noteworthy people of good and bad repute, making the *Muntaẓam* “a mirror in which one sees the world and the occurrences therein in their entirety.”<sup>17</sup>

In offering a comprehensive history of the *umma*, the *Muntaẓam* also aims at edification, especially with respect to the subject of rulership. “The biography of a prudent man (*ḥāzim*) and the description of his achievements,” Ibn al-Jawzī claims, “will lead to good management (*ḥusn al-tadbīr*) and prudent handling of one’s own affairs (*istiʿmāl al-ḥazm*). On the other hand, the biography of a squanderer (*mufarriṭ*) and the details of his tragic end will generate a fear of immoderation (*tafrīt*). This then is an education for the powerful and a lesson for the thoughtful.”<sup>18</sup> This statement suggests that the wide readership which the *Muntaẓam* aims for includes rulers, in hopes that they learn about sound government by reading the biographies of past rulers.

Consistent with the pedagogical function of history-writing is Ibn al-Jawzī’s concern with how rulers are written about in history books. According to him, many historians do not write about aspects of rulership that matter, but instead obsess over reports on vile acts (*fawāḥish*) committed by rulers and their drinking of wine. This is not good historical practice, for if these reports are true one becomes responsible for the propagation of vile acts; if they are not then transmitting them amounts to slander (*qadhf*). The recording of these acts can do no good besides

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<sup>16</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 1, p. 115.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 117; also cited in al-Sakhāwī’s *al-Iʿlān biʾl-tawbīkh li-man dhamma ahl al-tawrīkh* and translated in Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Leiden: Brill, 1968), pp. 295-96.

corrupting the minds of others and encouraging others to partake in them.<sup>19</sup> They distract readers from the true goal of writing about rulers, that is to inform people about virtuous rule.

Rulers themselves are also partly responsible for this. As discussed in Chapter Two, Ibn al-Jawzī acknowledges that rulers of his time are quick to label their arbitrary policies and punishments *siyāsa* (governance), while claiming that divine revelation and the *sharīʿa* do not come with complete solutions for matters of policy and government. According to these rulers, *siyāsa*, exercised based on their personal opinion (*raʾy*), is required to complement the *sharīʿa*. As a result, they commit acts that are not legal from the perspective of the *sharīʿa*.<sup>20</sup> These statements suggest that Ibn al-Jawzī writes about rulers with an eye towards the *sharīʿa*. Qualities such as justice, generosity, piety, asceticism, and commitment to the Qurʾān and Sunna ought to be emphasized if they are present in a ruler.

#### 4.3. The Royal Virtues

I will first focus on what P. M. Holt terms the “royal virtues,” namely justice (*ʿadl*), awe (*hayba*), and generosity (*jūd*).<sup>21</sup> Prime among them is justice, which entails, according to Roy Mottahedeh, “preventing men from impinging on each other, and, especially, on each other’s property.”<sup>22</sup> Especially in light of the decentralized system of rule adopted by the Buyids and by other dynasties after them, such as the Seljuqs, the ruler’s justice was considered paramount “in keeping the overlapping and various interest groups in society from congealing as separate and

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<sup>19</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, vol. 1, pp. 116-17.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>21</sup> Holt lists generosity under “primitive virtues,” that is virtues “regarded by the Arabs since pre-Islamic times as aspects of *muruwwa*, i.e., manliness.” (“Virtuous Ruler,” p. 28) Here I group it together with justice and awe to show how they are interconnected in Ibn al-Jawzī’s caliphal biographies.

<sup>22</sup> Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, p. 179.

exclusive units.”<sup>23</sup> In Ibn al-Jawzī’s caliphal biographies, caliphal justice is manifested in both formal and informal modes.

One is through the caliph’s role as the head of the *maẓālim* (redress of grievances) court, which constituted the most direct expression of sovereign justice in the medieval Islamic period.<sup>24</sup> By receiving petitions against official and unofficial abuses of power at regular intervals of time, the caliph could demonstrate that he was the ultimate source of justice. In the *Muntaẓam*, the *maẓālim* activities of caliphs such as al-Mahdī (r. 158/775-169/785) and al-Muhtadī (r. 255/869-256/870) are given brief mentions.<sup>25</sup> The latter claimed that he would not begin his councils (*majlis*) until he has recited the following verse from his copy of the Qur’ān: “We shall set the just scales for the Day of Resurrection, and no soul shall be wronged in aught. Even if it be the weight of a mustard seed, We shall bring it forth. And We suffice as Reckoner” (Q 21:47).<sup>26</sup> When al-Hādī (r. 169/785-170/786) was riding to visit his sick mother, a man named ‘Umar b. Bazī‘ appeared before him to remind him that he had not addressed grievances for three days. Al-Hādī immediately beckoned for his followers to ride with him to the *maẓālim* court, and sent a servant in his place to attend to his mother.<sup>27</sup> Even during a period when the caliph had delegated the redressing of grievances to the vizier, Ibn al-Jawzī did not fail to mention that “many grievances were redressed” on the day al-Mustaḍī‘ (r. 566/1170-575/1180) was offered the oath of allegiance.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>24</sup> J. S. Nielsen, “Maẓālim,” *EF*<sup>2</sup>; Mathieu Tillier, “Courts of law, historical,” *EF*<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 218, vol. 12, p. 84.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., vol. 12, pp. 84-85.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., vol. 8, pp. 308-9.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., vol. 18, p. 191.

More frequently encountered are anecdotes of caliphs rendering personal justice informally without the use of courts. After all, some Muslim jurists such as Māwardī regard as one of the *mazālim*'s precedents 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz's (r. 99/717-101/720) practice of "[giving] back properties wrongly acquired" by members of the Umayyad family or administration against whom the judge (*qāḍī*) was powerless.<sup>29</sup> In the *Muntaẓam*, such anecdotes follow a rather uniform format of narration. They generally present the caliph, sometimes with an entourage of officials or soldiers, being intercepted by someone from the common folk. The individual involved personally makes an appeal to the caliph, after which the caliph dispenses justice on the spot. In one such anecdote, al-Mu'taṣim (r. 218/833-227/842) came across a woman who was weeping and told him that a soldier had taken hold of her son. Al-Mu'taṣim ordered for the soldier to return the boy to his mother, but the soldier refused. The caliph then grabbed the soldier by the arm and yelled at him. The intimidated soldier fell to the ground and ordered the boy to be released.<sup>30</sup> In another anecdote, al-Mu'taḍid (r. 279/892-289/902) was hunting with a group of soldiers when a watchman complained that several soldiers had stolen some of his cucumbers. After three culprits were identified, the caliph ordered them to be imprisoned and beheaded the following day. It turns out, however, that the caliph only ordered the soldiers to be imprisoned as warning, but called for a group of robbers to be executed instead.<sup>31</sup>

Some anecdotes feature a caliph roaming the city in disguise and then encountering a person who relates his grievances to the caliph without knowledge of the caliph's identity. The

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<sup>29</sup> Mathieu Tillier, "The Mazālim in Historiography," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Law*, eds. Anver M. Emon and Rume Ahmed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>30</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 11, p. 29.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., vol. 12, p. 307. This and other anecdotes in the *Muntaẓam* detailing al-Mu'taḍid's justice are discussed in Bray, "A Caliph and his Public Relations," pp. 164-67.

caliph discreetly sets things aright later, and the person is told what happened and realizes that the caliph was responsible all along for the turn of fortune.<sup>32</sup> In one such anecdote, al-Qādir's (r. 381/991-422/1031) chamberlain, Ibn Ḥājib al-Nu'mān, ordered a judge named al-Ḥusayn b. Hārūn to confiscate property belonging to a boy who had not come of age. Ḥusayn refused and this frustrated Ibn Ḥājib al-Nu'mān. He visited the tomb of a saintly figure named Ibn Bashshār in distress and prayed to God to relieve him of this affair. A *shaykh* saw him and asked against whom he was invoking God. Ḥusayn told the *shaykh* that it was Ibn Ḥājib al-Nu'mān and related what happened between him and the chamberlain, after which the *shaykh* left. Ḥusayn later went to Ibn Ḥājib al-Nu'mān who berated him harshly until a slave boy came to the chamberlain and uttered a few words. Upon hearing what the slave boy had to say, Ibn Ḥājib al-Nu'mān's facial expression changed and his tone switched from harsh to apologetic. He asked Ḥusayn if he had written to the caliph, which Ḥusayn denied. Only then did Ḥusayn realize that it was al-Qādir whom he encountered at the tomb.<sup>33</sup> The anecdotes above center on the caliph's justice, but they also draw attention to the caliph's common touch and his connection to the common folk.<sup>34</sup>

As important as justice is to a ruler, it needs to be complemented by *hayba*, which meant, according to Mottahedeh, a "salutary 'awe' or 'dread,' which surrounded kingly authority by virtue of its threat of coercion."<sup>35</sup> Writing about the *mazālim*, Māwardī points out: "Redress of wrongs involves persuading the fighting parties by the awesome presence (*hayba*) and dignity of the person in office to accept an equitable settlement and end their dispute. The official concerned

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<sup>32</sup> Such anecdotes recall 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb's patrolling of the streets of Medina at night. See the various accounts in Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manāqib amīr al-mu'minīn 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb*, ed. Zaynab Ibrāhīm al-Qārūf (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1980), pp. 82-88.

<sup>33</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 14, p. 354.

<sup>34</sup> This is Bray's argument. See "A Caliph and his Public Relations," p. 167.

<sup>35</sup> Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, p. 184.

must, therefore, be majestic, authoritative, and imposing (‘*aẓīm al-hayba*), as well as manifestly honest, free of avarice, and eminently pious.”<sup>36</sup>

In Ibn al-Jawzī’s caliphal biographies, the exemplar of caliphal *hayba* is al-Manṣūr (r. 136/754-158/775), whose biographical section comprises accounts of his kingly appearance as well as his intimidating and stern character. A person who caught sight of him in Mecca described him as being “infused with the splendor of kings (*ubbahat al-mulūk*).” When the astrologer Nawbakht encountered al-Manṣūr in prison, he immediately noticed his *hayba*.<sup>37</sup> One of his court servants, Sālim al-Abrash, claims that although the caliph was of the best of people, his whole demeanor changed when he put on his official robes (*thiyāb*)—his face would glow and his eyes would redden. This demeanor stayed the same even after al-Manṣūr left court and returned to his domestic quarters, as he related to Sālim: “O son, if you see me put on the robes and return from court, be sure that none of you comes close to me lest I do something bad to him.”<sup>38</sup>

Al-Manṣūr’s *hayba* also comes across in reports about his stern personality. The secretary of the caliphal chamberlain, al-Faḍl b. al-Rabī‘, said regarding al-Manṣūr’s court, “I have not seen any form of entertainment or anything that comes close to joy and amusement.”<sup>39</sup> In one incident, al-Manṣūr was delivering a sermon when a Zoroastrian in the audience stood up and accused him of commanding people to do what he himself had shunned and of forbidding offenses which he himself indulged. Unfazed, the caliph glanced at the man and ordered him to be taken into the caliphal court and given worldly material benefits (*al-dunyā*). Over a period of time, the

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<sup>36</sup> Māwardī, *Aḥkām*, p. 130; *Ordinances*, p. 87.

<sup>37</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 7, pp. 336-37.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 346. Also mentioned in Hugh Kennedy, *When Baghdad Ruled the World: The Rise and Fall of Islam’s Greatest Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004), p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 7, p. 346.

Zoroastrian man was offered nourishment, slave girls, and was even put in charge of the *ḥisba* and the *mazālim* court. Seeing that he had been enjoying these offerings, al-Manṣūr questioned him on what he accused him of during the sermon and on why he had abandoned his former views. The man admitted that he had been wrong in saying what he said and claimed that he has found himself fit to be part of al-Manṣūr's inner circle (*fī mushāraḳat amīr al-mu'minīn fī amānatihi*). The caliph denounced his insincerity and ordered his execution.<sup>40</sup>

Another instance of caliphal *hayba* is encountered in the biography of al-Muqtadī (r. 467/1075-487/1094). When al-Muqtadī's grandfather al-Qā'im was close to death, there was fear that chaos would ensue in Baghdad, especially since the *'ayyarūn* were waiting on the death of the caliph to begin their pillage.<sup>41</sup> However, due to the efforts of the vizier Fakhr al-Dawla and the Seljuq *shihna* in maintaining order, as well as al-Muqtadī's enthronement as caliph, "*hayba* was established."<sup>42</sup> In al-Muqtadī's biography, Ibn al-Jawzī writes approvingly of the caliph, claiming that "he was among the men of the sons of al-'Abbās (*min rijāl banī al-'Abbās*), possessing high ambition, courage, and *hayba*. During his reign, the dignity of the dynasty (*ḥishmat al-dawla*) was reestablished."<sup>43</sup> To flesh out the *hayba* of al-Muqtadī, Ibn al-Jawzī appends a report about the correspondences between al-Muqtadī and Malikshāh's brother Tutush. When Tutush's political and military strength had vastly increased after the death of his brother, he wrote a threatening letter to al-Muqtadī demanding his name to be included in the *khuṭba*. Al-Muqtadī replied with an equally harsh letter: "It would be proper to include you in the *khuṭba* when the world is under your

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 340-41.

<sup>41</sup> Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, p. 104.

<sup>42</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 16, p. 163.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 165. The only other Abbasid caliph in the *Muntaẓam* described as being "from the men of the sons of al-'Abbās" is al-Mu'taḍid (*min rijālāt banī al-'Abbās*). See ibid., vol. 12, p. 306.

control, when the treasury of money is in Isfahan [the Seljuq capital], when Isfahan is in your hands, when all the lands are in your grasp, and when there is no one left among the sons of your brother [Malikshāh] to oppose you. Only then shall you have the right to be ennobled with the *khutba* and be qualified for service (*khidma*).”<sup>44</sup>

The above account of al-Muqtadī’s caliphal *hayba* is noteworthy especially when read in the context of caliph-sultan tensions during the late fifth/eleventh century. The second half of al-Muqtadī’s reign witnessed aggressive Seljuq incursions into Baghdad by Malikshāh, as outlined in the Introduction. Malikshāh’s efforts culminated in his unsuccessful but nonetheless bold attempt to drive the caliph out of Baghdad. In light of these historical events, Ibn al-Jawzī’s mention of al-Muqtadī’s *hayba* could be a symbolic assertion of the caliph’s authority at a time when it hit a low point in the face of Seljuq coercion and threats. This ensured that readers, having read al-Muqtadī’s biography and then proceeding to the events taking place during his reign, would not have had in mind a weak caliph, even though historical reality dictated otherwise.

Caliphal *hayba* is balanced with generosity, another quality encountered in Ibn al-Jawzī’s biographies of the Abbasid caliphs. In Ibn al-Jawzī’s time, al-Mustanjid’s and al-Mustaḍīr’s generous bestowals of state dignitaries and religious elites with wealth and robes of honor have already been mentioned in the previous chapter. If al-Manṣūr best exemplified caliphal *hayba* according to Ibn al-Jawzī, his son al-Mahdī was the prime example of caliphal generosity. Al-Mahdī’s biographical section in the *Muntaẓam* presents an overall picture of a caliph who rewards greatly without hesitation. For instance, the poet Ibn al-Khayyāṭ al-Makkī once came to al-Mahdī and recited a poem praising him, after which the caliph offered him fifty thousand dirhams. After obtaining the money, the poet distributed it to the people at court, and recited another poem in

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., vol. 16, p. 165.

praise of al-Mahdī's generosity, to which the caliph responded with a dinar to match every dirham previously offered.<sup>45</sup> In another incident, a man came to al-Mahdī bearing what he claimed to be the Prophet's sandals and gave them to the caliph as a gift. Al-Mahdī ordered ten thousand dirhams for the man. After the man left, al-Mahdī admitted to his audience that he did not know if the Prophet had even laid eyes on the sandals, let alone worn them. But if he had rejected the man's offer, news of his bad court etiquette would spread among the people and tarnish his reputation.<sup>46</sup>

Al-Mahdī's generosity is contrasted with al-Manṣūr's miserliness, as clearly illustrated in the anecdote involving the poet al-Mu'mil b. Amīl.<sup>47</sup> When al-Mahdī was governor of Rayy, he awarded al-Mu'mil b. Amīl twenty thousand dirhams for poetry recited to him at his court. After obtaining news of this, al-Manṣūr ordered for the poet to be brought to him in order to test his skills. After the fearful poet recited a poem, al-Manṣūr praised him but scoffed that the poem was not worth twenty thousand dirhams. The caliph then ordered for him to be given four thousand dirhams and took the remainder of the twenty thousand from him. After the death of al-Manṣūr and the accession of al-Mahdī to the caliphate, the latter ordered twenty thousand dirhams to be reawarded to al-Mu'mil.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to al-Mahdī, the generosity of other Abbasid caliphs are also well attested. Al-Mutawakkil (r. 232/847-247/861) was generous to his officials, and his nephew al-Musta'in (r. 248/862-252/866) provided the army with five months of sustenance worth two million dinars.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., vol. 8, p. 210.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>47</sup> Al-Manṣūr's miserliness earned him the nickname *abū'l-dawāniq* ("the father of pennies"). Kennedy, *When Baghdad Ruled the World*, p. 16.

<sup>48</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 7, pp. 343-45.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., vol. 11, pp. 180-81, vol. 12, p. 6.

We also come across reports of caliphs engaging in charitable acts geared towards public welfare. Al-Muqtadī engaged in construction projects and public upkeep efforts during his reign, most likely to match and outpace Malikshāh public projects in Baghdad.<sup>50</sup> Al-Rāḍī (r. 322/934-329/940), who had virtually no control over the administration, is reported to have dispensed funds to aid the Twelver Shīʿite population of Karkh after a devastating fire. A total of ten thousand dinars were given to the Hāshimites and forty thousand dinars to the common folk to reconstruct what was burnt down.<sup>51</sup> Al-Qādir is known to have distributed the food prepared for his breaking of fast (*ifṭār*) during the month of Ramaḍān to several mosques.<sup>52</sup> His descendant al-Mustarshid is said to have been “distinguished in the path of his forefather al-Qādir” (*wa-tamayyazahu bi-ṭarīqati jaddihi al-Qādir*) and donated ten dinars to a charitable institution (*mabarra*).<sup>53</sup>

While generosity is a crucial component of a ruler’s catalog of virtues, Ibn al-Jawzī also takes caution to highlight al-Muqtadir (r. 295/908-320/932) as a glaring example of excessive and reckless generosity. Al-Muqtadir’s caliphate came after the reigns of al-Muʿtamid, al-Muʿtaḍid, and al-Muktafī, during which the Abbasid caliphate witnessed a brief resurgence after the so-called “Anarchy at Samarra.”<sup>54</sup> This brief revival of Abbasid authority peaked during the reign of al-

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., vol. 16, p. 166.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., vol. 13, p. 337.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., vol. 14, p. 355.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., vol. 17, p. 162.

<sup>54</sup> Term coined by Kennedy in *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, pp. 169-73.

Mu‘taḍid, of whom Ibn al-Jawzī writes favorably.<sup>55</sup> This glowing account stands in contrast with Ibn al-Jawzī’s biography of al-Muqtadir, which is filled with reports of his reckless generosity.<sup>56</sup>

The first third of al-Muqtadir’s biography shows a rather positive appraisal of the caliph’s early financial policies. Ibn al-Jawzī takes care to note that al-Muqtadir inherited twenty million dinars in the privy treasury (*bayt al-māl al-khāṣṣa*) and the public treasury (*bayt al-māl al-‘amma*) combined, hinting at a solid financial foundation for his caliphate.<sup>57</sup> The caliph was also generous and munificent, dispensing 315,426 dinars every year on the two holy sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina and the roads leading to them; 56,569 dinars on judges in different regions; 430,439 dinars on individuals responsible for market inspection (*ḥisba*) and the redress of grievances (*maẓālim*); and 79,400 dinars on postmen (*aṣḥāb al-barīd*).<sup>58</sup> He also distributed 10,000 dinars to the Hāshimites and doubled their daily sustenance. It is also reported that he donated similar amounts of money as alms to the people.<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately, these efforts hastened the impending bankruptcy of the Abbasid caliphate.

More than half of Ibn al-Jawzī’s biography of al-Muqtadir revolve around the caliph’s mismanagement of his inherited wealth. One anecdote relates that when al-Muqtadir assumed office, the jewel treasury was full of precious jewels and gems, some of which used to belong to the Sasanian Persian kings (*al-Akāsir*). Among these gems was the “Orphan” (*al-Yatīma*) which weighed three *mithqāls*. Al-Muqtadir took and distributed a portion of it to the eunuch Ṣāfi al-

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<sup>55</sup> “He was among the men of the sons of al-‘Abbās (*min rijālāt banī al-‘Abbās*), the most perfect of them and the most abundant among them in terms of experience (*tajriba*). The affairs of the caliphate was weak and the treasury empty [when he came to power, but] he governed well.” Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 12, p. 306.

<sup>56</sup> On al-Muqtadir’s “disastrous reign,” see Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, pp. 185-97.

<sup>57</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 13, p. 60.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 63-64. Ibn al-Jawzī does not provide his source for these figures.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

Ḥuramī and another portion to the vizier al-‘Abbās who returned it to the caliph saying that the gem is a property of the caliphate that is not to be distributed. After al-Muqtadir’s death, the jewel treasury was inspected and nothing remained in it.<sup>60</sup>

The caliph was especially notorious for his spendthrift attitude towards his palace intimates. In a lengthy account, Ṣāfi al-Ḥuramī reports an incident in which he was walking with al-Muqtadir’s father al-Mu‘taḍid through the women’s quarters until he arrived at the apartment of his concubine Shaghab (al-Muqtadir’s mother, also known as Umm al-Muqtadir). Al-Mu‘taḍid decided to spy on the five-year-old al-Muqtadir through a curtain. He saw the boy seated and surrounded by approximately ten servant girls (*waṣā’if*) around his age. In front of him was a bunch of rare grapes. The boy ate a grape and then fed everyone in the circle grape by grape until nothing was left. Al-Mu‘taḍid lamented to Ṣāfi:

If it weren’t for hellfire and shame (*al-nār wa’l-‘ār*), I would have killed this boy today! Killing him would save the *umma*. ... I am the man who straightened the affairs of this world after much disorder, but I will not be able to escape death. I know that after my death the officials will not choose anyone other than my son and they will settle on ‘Alī [al-Muktafi who became caliph after al-Mu‘taḍid’s death], but he will not live long.... Then because there will be no one older than Ja‘far [al-Muqtadir], they will settle on him [to be caliph] while he is still a youth. He has a tendency for being overly generous (*al-sakhā*), just like how he fed the servants. He will put himself and others on the same level when it comes to the precious things of this world. Servants will be covetous [for his favors] and women will soon take possession of him in order to gain favors for themselves. He will distribute his money in the same manner he distributed the grapes. Then the seeds of the destruction of this world will be sown, frontiers will be lost, and rebellions will spread. These will be the reasons for which the sovereignty of the Abbasids will come to pass.<sup>61</sup>

Ṣāfi continues his account saying, “Al-Mu‘taḍid died and al-Muktafi became caliph, but he did not live long. Al-Muqtadir succeeded him, and the situation which al-Mu‘taḍid described unfolded in the exact manner he envisioned. I attended on al-Muqtadir and saw how he called for money to

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 64-65.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 66.

be distributed to the slave girls and how he played with them. These actions confirmed what my master al-Mu‘taḍid mentioned and I wept.”<sup>62</sup>

In another report, Ṣāfi relates that he was attending on al-Mu‘taḍid when the caliph wanted to perfume himself. He summoned some musk perfume (*ghāliya*) to be brought to him, and the most fragrant perfume, commissioned by the caliph al-Wāthiq (r. 227/842-232/847), was sent to him. Al-Mu‘taḍid was amazed by its fragrance and could only bear to put a little on his beard. His successor al-Muktafi did the same by taking only thirty or forty *mithqāls* from it. Al-Muqtadir, however, took from each perfume box some 150 *mithqāls* and distributed the rest to those in his presence until he came to the perfume of al-Wāthiq. Upon seeing how little al-Mu‘taḍid and al-Muktafi had used, he expressed astonishment at both caliphs’ miserliness and disparaged them for it. He then ordered for the perfume to be distributed entirely among his slave girls, only to stop after seeing tears flowing down Ṣāfi’s cheeks.<sup>63</sup>

The anecdotes about al-Muqtadir’s squandering of caliphal wealth center on his private life, but for Ibn al-Jawzī, the consequences extend far beyond the private spheres of the caliph’s life. Al-Mu‘taḍid’s prognostication links the five-year-old al-Muqtadir’s personal habits in the most private of spaces in the caliphal palace to the financial fortunes of his reign and the eventual downfall of the Abbasid caliphate. These reports color the reader’s perception of the caliph before proceeding to the events that took place during his tumultuous reign, and remind the reader that financial mismanagement, even when it takes place in the realm of the ruler’s personal life, leads to far-reaching political crisis.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-67.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 67-68.

#### 4.4. Anecdotes of Piety and Knowledge

As much as Ibn al-Jawzī selects anecdotes to make apparent the justice, awe, and generosity of the Abbasid caliphs, the main thrust of his caliphal biographies is to present them as pious Muslim rulers devoted to religious knowledge (*ilm*). This is manifested through anecdotes portraying the caliphs' dedication to Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*; their proximity to religious scholars; their adherence to Islamic law and ritual; and their dreams about the Prophet and divine inspiration. Such reports are more frequently encountered in the *Muntaẓam* than reports about the caliphs' royal virtues discussed above.

The hearing and relating of *ḥadīth* and the memorization of the Qur'ān constitute common personality descriptors of the Abbasid caliphs. Al-Ma'mūn and al-Mustazhir, for instance, are said to have memorized the Qur'ān.<sup>64</sup> *Ḥadīth* activity is more frequently documented. One comes across brief statements by Ibn al-Jawzī saying that the later Abbasid caliphs al-Mustarshid and al-Muqtafi heard *ḥadīth* from their respective tutors (*mu'addib*).<sup>65</sup> Regarding al-Mustarshid, Ibn al-Jawzī adds that his vizier 'Alī b. Ṭirād even related *ḥadīth* on his authority. A group of people also heard a scholar named Abū'l-Faraj Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. al-Ahwāzī reciting *ḥadīths* on al-Mustarshid's authority (*qara'a 'alayhi*) while the caliph was in a procession to the *Ḥalba* district (a neighborhood in the eastern side of Baghdad), and these *ḥadīths* were in turn transmitted on their authority.<sup>66</sup> In some cases, a caliph's *ḥadīth* activity involved prominent religious

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., vol. 10, p. 52, vol. 17, p. 12.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., vol. 17, pp. 161, 313.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp. 161-62. Al-Mustarshid's religious learning seems to have been well attested in Shāfi'ī circles. According to Suyūṭī, the Shāfi'ī *ḥadīth* scholar Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245) mentioned al-Mustarshid in his biographical dictionary of Shāfi'ī scholars, saying that Abū Bakr al-Shāshī composed the work *al-'Umda fī'l-fiqh* for al-Mustarshid in honor of the caliph's title (*laqab*) "*umdat al-dunyā wa'l-dīn*." Subkī also mentions al-Mustarshid in his Shāfi'ī biographical dictionary and writes that he wore wool and used to retire alone in a room to pray. See Suyūṭī, *Ta'rīkh al-khulafā'*, p. 473; *History of the Caliphs*, p. 454.

personalities. Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170/786-193/809), who loved *ḥadīth* and the *ḥadīth* folk (*ahl al-ḥadīth*), is reported to have heard *ḥadīth* from Mālik b. Anas, while al-Shāfi‘ī and the chief judge Abū Yūsuf transmitted *ḥadīth* on his authority (*rawā ‘anhu*).<sup>67</sup> In addition, al-Rāḍī heard many *ḥadīths* from the famous *ḥadīth* collector Abū’l-Qāsim al-Baghawī and sent a lot of money to him before becoming caliph.<sup>68</sup>

Several Abbasid caliphs were also well known for their abilities in citing chains of transmission for *ḥadīths*, a process often referred to as “*asnada al-ḥadīth*.”<sup>69</sup> Most of these *ḥadīths* have Abbasid family *isnāds* consisting of Abbasid ancestors such as al-‘Abbās, Ibn ‘Abbās, and ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh.<sup>70</sup> There are clear hints at Abbasid legitimization here, but they could also aim at demonstrating the Abbasid caliphs’ commitment to *ḥadīth*. Even al-Amīn (r. 193/809-198/813), whose biographical section in the *Muntaẓam* paints an image of a negligent caliph preoccupied with amusement and wasteful spending, is said to have been well versed in *isnāds*. The court poet al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk (d. 250/864) relates that he heard al-Amīn say:

My father [Hārūn al-Rashīd] related to me on the authority of his father [al-Mahdī], on the authority of al-Manṣūr, on the authority of his father [Muḥammad b. ‘Alī], on the authority of ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās, on the authority of his father [al-‘Abbās] who said, “I heard the Prophet say: ‘Whoever dies in honor will be revived as one who is obedient’ (*man māta muḥriman ḥushira mulabbīyan*).”<sup>71</sup>

To illustrate al-Muhtadī’s knowledge of *ḥadīth*, Ibn al-Jawzī cites a report in which the caliph related a *ḥadīth* on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās who related that al-‘Abbās asked the Prophet, “O

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<sup>67</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 319.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., vol. 13, p. 336.

<sup>69</sup> For a discussion of the term *asnada al-ḥadīth*, see G. H. A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship of Early Ḥadīth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 18-19.

<sup>70</sup> Zaman argues that the use of family *isnāds* by the Abbasids served polemical purposes in countering ‘Alid claims to legitimacy. See Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, pp. 120-35.

<sup>71</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 9, p. 218.

Messenger of God, what is there for us in this affair?” The Prophet replied, “To me is prophecy and to you the caliphate. By you it will begin and by you it will be sealed.” This is followed by another *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet tells al-‘Abbās, “I will grant intercession to those who love you, not for those who loathe you.”<sup>72</sup> Abbasid family *isnād* notwithstanding, it is worthwhile to note the legitimist character of these two *ḥadīths* in reminding the reader that the Abbasid dynasty was given prophetic sanction even before it came to power.

Ibn al-Jawzī singles out al-Ma’mūn (r. 198/813-218/833), another early Abbasid caliph, to exemplify caliphal dedication to the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*.<sup>73</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī’s idealization of al-Ma’mūn’s religious knowledge begins with his account of the caliph’s childhood. He writes that al-Ma’mūn was sagacious and intelligent in his youth, and provides anecdotes depicting the young al-Ma’mūn as a boy who appreciated learning even in the presence of a harsh tutor.<sup>74</sup> The caliph’s memorization of the Qur’ān has been mentioned above, but Ibn al-Jawzī goes further by producing a report declaring that “no one among the caliphs knew the Qur’ān by heart except ‘Uthmān and al-Ma’mūn. Al-Ma’mūn recited the Qur’ān frequently, and Dhū’l-Ri’āsatayn [al-Ma’mūn’s vizier, al-Faḍl b. Sahl] related that he completed the recitation of the entire Qur’ān thirty-three times during Ramaḍān.”<sup>75</sup> What follows are anecdotes attesting to al-Ma’mūn’s knowledge of *ḥadīth*. For instance, we come across two anecdotes of the caliph reciting *ḥadīths* containing Abbasid family *isnāds*.<sup>76</sup> In another *ḥadīth*-based anecdote, he quizzes a young man, who claimed to be a

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., vol. 12, p. 82. Similar account in Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 122-23.

<sup>73</sup> Perhaps no other Abbasid caliph has received more historiographical coverage than al-Ma’mūn. See, in particular, El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, pp. 95-142; Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, pp. 24-69.

<sup>74</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 10, pp. 49-50.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp. 53, 58.

master of *ḥadīth*, about the *isnāds* of two *ḥadīths*. The young man could not answer al-Ma'mūn's questions and the latter began reciting the *isnāds* along with the *ḥadīths* from memory.<sup>77</sup>

For those familiar with Islamic history, this portrayal of al-Ma'mūn might seem ironic, considering his initiation of the *Mihna* (inquisition) aimed at persecuting religious scholars of traditionalist persuasion who did not adhere to the doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'ān.<sup>78</sup> Such scholars include Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, the eponym of the Ḥanbalī school of law to which Ibn al-Jawzī belonged. To be sure, Ibn al-Jawzī's depiction of al-Ma'mūn as a master of Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* is hardly unique. According to Michael Cooperson, while early biographers such as al-Ṭabarī depict the caliph as a good king—learned, eloquent, forbearing, with a good ear for verse—they “implicitly [deny] his interpretive power and indeed his claim to knowledge.” Al-Ma'mūn's image undergoes a change in the eleventh century, corresponding with the period of the Sunni Revival which witnessed the development of “the caliphate's new status as the symbol of an embattled Sunnism.” Biographers from that period onwards, including al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571/1175), and Ibn al-'Imrānī (d. 580/1184), portrayed al-Ma'mūn as “a scholar of *Ḥadīth* and a defender of the *sunna*.”<sup>79</sup> Tayeb El-Hibri hints that this “overly favorable representation” of al-Ma'mūn as a pious and just caliph grounded in the religious sciences might have roots in the pietistic program he initiated in Khurāsān before marching against his brother al-Amīn. Al-Ma'mūn demonstrated his pietism “by adopting an austere lifestyle and ordering the enforcement of traditional religious penalties (*hudūd*),” while accusing al-Amīn of

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 53-54.

<sup>78</sup> M. Hinds, “*Mihna*,” *EP*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, pp. 40-69.

frivolity and impiety. This move forced religious scholars to acknowledge al-Amīn's eventual defeat as an indication of his impiety.<sup>80</sup>

Al-Mutawakkil's abolition of the *Mihna* and the sanctification of the caliphs as the symbol of a unified Muslim *umma* contributed to the rehabilitation of al-Ma'mūn's religious image. Cooperson and El-Hibri do not take into account Ibn al-Jawzī's biography of al-Ma'mūn, but the above outline shows that Ibn al-Jawzī's depiction of al-Ma'mūn as a Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* master was very much in line with those of other biographers during his time. For Ibn al-Jawzī, whose career owed much to a reenergized Abbasid caliphate and who was keen to enhance the religious legitimacy of the Abbasid caliphate, past antagonisms between al-Ma'mūn and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal no longer mattered as much.

Another instance of caliphal commitment to religious knowledge in the *Muntaẓam* comes through in the Abbasids' eagerness to surround themselves with men of learning (*'ulamā'*). This portrayal is in line with Ibn al-Jawzī's vision of a closer alliance between rulers and scholars, as discussed in Chapter Two. We have also encountered Ibn al-Jawzī's description of how al-Mustanjid and al-Mustaḍī, two caliphs contemporary with him, convened annual ceremonies in which notables of the state, religious scholars, Sufis, and Qur'ān reciters were given food and robes of honor. The earlier Abbasid caliphs were certainly not lacking in pious anecdotes of them honoring men of learning. When al-Wāthiq's instructor Hārūn b. Ziyād came to him, the caliph honored him and displayed a high level of deference towards him. When asked about the man he was honoring, al-Wāthiq answered, "This is the first person who unstitched my tongue (*fataqa lisānī*) with the remembrance of God and drew me close to His mercy."<sup>81</sup> The pious imagery of al-

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<sup>80</sup> El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, pp. 102-3; Yücesoy, "Meta-Narratives," pp. 75-78.

<sup>81</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 11, p. 120.

Wāthiq in this anecdote might have been Ibn al-Jawzī's subtle way of rehabilitating the reputation of a caliph who was most zealous in implementing the *Miḥna*. In fact, al-Wāthiq's biography in the *Muntaẓam* ends with Ibn al-Jawzī exonerating him from direct responsibility for the *Miḥna* and shifting the blame onto the Mu'tazilite chief judge Ibn Abī Du'ād: "Al-Wāthiq resumed the *Miḥna*. [But] it was Ibn Abī Du'ād who pushed him to enforce it. It has been said that al-Wāthiq died having repented from the doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'ān. God knows best." Ibn al-Jawzī then provides a report on the authority of al-Wāthiq's son, the caliph al-Muhtadī, about his repentance.<sup>82</sup> Aside from al-Wāthiq, al-Rāḍī is also reported to have loved conversing with religious scholars.<sup>83</sup> Al-Muṭī' (r. 334/946-363/974), whose reign constituted the nadir of caliphal authority,<sup>84</sup> "was often surrounded by many adherents of the Ḥanbalī school, approximately thirty thousand of them, for he wanted to curry favor with them."<sup>85</sup> After he abdicated, he was known as "the virtuous *shaykh*" (*al-shaykh al-fāḍil*), possibly hinting at his active participation in Baghdad's religious circles.<sup>86</sup>

Among the Abbasid caliphs in the *Muntaẓam*, Hārūn al-Rashīd best embodies the close relationship between caliphs and scholars. As El-Hibri points out, "al-Rashīd is depicted as a caliph who always gave in to the advice of the 'ulamā', never put non-religious specialists before the 'ulamā', and always accepted ḥadīth as an unquestionable source of legal and spiritual guidance,

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 122. See also El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, pp. 124-25.

<sup>83</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 13, p. 336.

<sup>84</sup> Though see Scharfe, "Portrayals of the Later Abbasid Caliphate," for a different take on this subject.

<sup>85</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 14, p. 46.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

so long as it was uttered by a *muḥaddith*.”<sup>87</sup> While acknowledging his cheerful nature (*tayyib al-naḥs*), love of jest (*mazḥ*), and skill at poetry,<sup>88</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī’s biography of al-Rashīd is peppered with personality descriptors that present him as an orthodox, pious caliph who loved the company of religious scholars. The caliph was also known for being steadfast in the Sunna, glorifying it and acting harshly towards innovators.<sup>89</sup> He found panegyrics aimed at lies (*al-madh bi’l-kidhb*) and flatterers loathsome, and hated disputes (*mirā’*) in matters of faith.<sup>90</sup> With regard to his relationship with religious scholars, we are told that he humbles himself (*yatawāḍa ‘u*) in their presence.<sup>91</sup> The *ḥadīth* traditionist Abū Mu‘āwiya al-Ḍarīr (“the blind”) relates an account in which he was having a meal with Hārūn al-Rashīd: “A man whom I did not know came and poured water on my hands. When Hārūn asked me, ‘Do you know who is pouring water on your hands?’”, I said I did not. He said, ‘It is I.’ I said in protest, ‘You, O Commander of the Faithful?’ He said, ‘Yes, in reverence for knowledge’ (*ijlālan li’l-‘ilm*).”<sup>92</sup>

The caliph’s commitment to leading military expeditions (*ghazw*) and undertaking pilgrimages (*hajj*) is also accompanied by reports detailing his relationship with scholars.<sup>93</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī writes that whenever al-Rashīd went on pilgrimage he would be accompanied by one hundred jurists and their sons; when he did not lead the pilgrimage, he would send three hundred

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<sup>87</sup> El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, p. 23. Similar observations in Bray, “A Caliph and his Public Relations,” p. 163.

<sup>88</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, pp. 326-27.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 324.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 325-26.

<sup>91</sup> Though in another report by Abū Sa‘īd b. Muslim, it is claimed that “al-Rashīd’s intellect is above the intellect of the ‘ulamā’.” *Ibid.*, p. 323.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 323. Also cited in and translated in El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, p. 24 n. 18.

<sup>93</sup> He alternated between going on pilgrimage in one year and leading military expeditions in the next. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 325.

men with all their expenses covered, along with the *kiswa* covering to drape the Ka‘ba in Mecca.<sup>94</sup> The reports in al-Rashīd’s biographical section also bespeak his eagerness to be admonished by proto-Sunni ascetics such as al-Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ,<sup>95</sup> Ibn al-Sammāk, al-‘Umarī, and al-Bahlūl. Al-Rashīd would hear their admonitions and weep profusely, to such an extent that the ascetic Manṣūr b. ‘Ammār claims, “I have never seen anyone shed more copious tears during the remembrance of God (*dhikr*) than three individuals: Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ, Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-zāhid (“the ascetic”), and Hārūn al-Rashīd.”<sup>96</sup> On a separate occasion, when Hārūn al-Rashīd heard Abū Mu‘āwiya recite a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet says, “I wish that I could be killed in God’s cause, then brought back to life and be killed again,” he wept until he was wailing out loud. He then asked Abū Mu‘āwiya, “O Abū Mu‘āwiya, are you of the opinion that I should go on military expeditions?” To which the traditionist responded, “O Commander of the Faithful, your place in Islam is the greatest and your rank the most exalted. But you only send soldiers [to these expeditions],” implying that the caliph did not always lead expeditions in person.<sup>97</sup>

The pious image of Hārūn al-Rashīd might bear some truth, but the fact that his biography contains a higher number of anecdotes attesting to his pious association with men of religion when compared to the other Abbasids merits a brief discussion.<sup>98</sup> According to El-Hibri, the idealization of al-Rashīd as a pious and orthodox caliph in chronicles and biographies owed much to the civil

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>95</sup> On the relations between al-Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ and Hārūn al-Rashīd, see Deborah G. Tor, “God’s Cleric: Al-Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ and the Transition from Caliphal to Prophetic Sunna,” in *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts: Essays in Honor of Professor Patricia Crone*, eds. Behnam Sadeghi, Asad Q. Ahmed, Adam Silverstein, and Robert Hoyland (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 195-228.

<sup>96</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 328.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp. 323-24.

<sup>98</sup> As observed too in El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, p. 25. Aside from the Rāshidūn caliphs, the only caliph in the *Muntaẓam* who surpasses al-Rashīd in terms of pious anecdotes is ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz.

war that ensued after his death: “Since [al-Amīn] was held responsible for provoking the civil war, and [al-Ma’mūn] for initiating the religious problem of the *miḥna*, writers nostalgically looked to Hārūn’s reign as an era that was as peaceful as it was free of later religious tensions. ... Similarly, the admiration of the ‘*ulamā*’ writing in the post-*miḥna* period for the religious tranquility of Hārūn’s reign impelled them to claim it as an era in which orthodoxy—articulated in exactly the terms they later used against the Mu‘tazila—formed the bedrock of state ideology.” The religious tensions stoked by the *Miḥna* “had to be undermined...by reference to an idealized past in the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd, when harmony prevailed, it was claimed, between the caliph and the ‘*ulamā*’.”<sup>99</sup> That being said, in addition to fleshing out his ideal of a close alliance between scholars and rulers, Ibn al-Jawzī’s pious portrayal of al-Rashīd could have served an additional function—to remind readers of a period in Abbasid history when moral and religious ideals prevailed, before things went wayward with the civil war and the *Miḥna*.

The foregoing paragraphs have focused on the Abbasid caliphs’ dedication to Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* and to their close relations with religious scholars as marks of learned piety and commitment to religious knowledge. I now turn to portrayals of the caliphs’ adherence to legal prescriptions of what is permitted and forbidden in Islamic law and of their steadfast performance of Islamic rituals. I shall categorize these acts of piety as legal and ritualistic piety.<sup>100</sup>

Legal piety is most telling in several caliphs’ efforts to forbid and abstain from drinking, and to ensure that only Islamically legal taxes are collected. Al-Muhtadī is said to have forbidden wine while al-Muttaqī (r. 329/940-333/944), who was eventually blinded and deposed, never

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<sup>99</sup> El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>100</sup> Donner distinguishes between two forms of piety in early Islam: (1) paraenetic piety which “concentrates on exhorting the hearer to do good or to be pious, rather than on defining exactly what is or is not pious behavior; and (2) legal piety which revolves around “offering a precise definition of what in fact constitutes piety.” Donner, *Narratives*, p. 100, see also pp. 64-65, 90-91.

consumed wine.<sup>101</sup> The latter even used to say that “the Qur’ān (*muṣḥaf*) is my boon companion (*nadīm*). I do not want any other companion (*jalīs*) other than it,” a statement which angered the courtiers around him.<sup>102</sup> The abrogation of taxes not in accordance with Islamic law also constituted a mark of just and pious rulership.<sup>103</sup> In Ibn al-Jawzī’s own time, for example, we come across accounts of al-Mustanjid and al-Mustaḍīr abolishing the illegal tolls (*mukūs*) and *ḍarā’ib* taxes as soon as they were offered the *bay’a*.<sup>104</sup> Although the reigns of these two caliphs were marred by palace intrigues and infighting, their abrogation of the illegal taxes secured their legacies as esteemed champions of the *sharī’a* in Ibn al-Jawzī’s eyes.<sup>105</sup>

Instances of the Abbasid caliphs’ ritualistic piety recur frequently in the *Muntaẓam*, especially with regard to the performance of prayers and fasting. Ibn al-Jawzī writes that Hārūn al-Rashīd used to pray one hundred *rak’as* (prayer cycles) every day until his death and never neglected them unless he was struck by illness.<sup>106</sup> In addition to abstaining from wine, we are also informed that al-Muttaqī often prayed and fasted.<sup>107</sup> We come across a public expression of ritualistic piety even in the biography of the most profligate of Abbasid caliphs, al-Muqtadir. When he was about to be seated for his *bay’a*, al-Muqtadir prayed four *rak’as* and raised his voice in prayer and supplication to God.<sup>108</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī also inserts a statement before adducing reports

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<sup>101</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 12, pp. 83-84, vol. 14, p. 3.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., vol. 14, pp. 3-4.

<sup>103</sup> Heidemann, “Unislamic Taxes,” p. 499.

<sup>104</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 18, pp. 140-41, 191.

<sup>105</sup> See also Ibn al-Jawzī’s glowing “review” of both caliphs in his *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 496-500.

<sup>106</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 326.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., vol. 14, p. 3.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., vol. 13, p. 60.

about his spendthrift behavior, saying that al-Muqtadir fasted a lot and was often carried away by prayer (*yatanaqqalu bi'l-ṣalāti kathīran*).<sup>109</sup>

Fasting during the month of Ramaḍān constitutes a mark of piety, but one also has to break fast the right way. The biography of al-Mu'tamid (r. 256/870-279/892) opens with a report by Ismā'īl b. 'Ubayd Allāh al-'Askarī who said, "We were in the presence of al-Mu'tamid in Samarra during Ramaḍān. When evening came, he made an invocation to God with a dried date (*tamr*) and broke fast with dried dates. Then he gave everyone present a dried date each and said, 'My father [i.e., al-Mutawakkil] said that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal related to him on the authority of 'Abd al-Razzāq [al-Ṣan'ānī], on the authority of Ja'far b. Sulaymān, on the authority of Thābit, on the authority of Anas [b. Mālik] that the Prophet used to break his fast with fresh dates (*ruṭabāt*) before praying. When fresh dates were unavailable, he would break his fast with dried dates (*tamarāt*). When dried dates were unavailable, he would take a few sips of water.'" Al-Mu'tamid proceeded to say, "I heard my father say that he heard Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal say: 'Abd al-Razzāq related to me on the authority of Mu'mar, on the authority of Wahb b. Munabbih who said: 'Indeed, the eyesight of the person who fasts becomes dim (*yazīghu baṣarahu*). But his eyesight will return once he breaks his fast with sweet foods (*ḥalāwa*).'"<sup>110</sup> The *isnād* of this *ḥadīth* is noteworthy since it not only consists of Companions of the Prophet such as Thābit and Anas as well as eminent traditionists such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī, but it also contains a transmission link between Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Mutawakkil, the caliph who lifted the *Mihna*.<sup>111</sup> This creates a

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., vol. 12, p. 104.

<sup>111</sup> On the relationship between Aḥmad b. Hanbal and al-Mutawakkil, see Christopher Melchert, *Aḥmad ibn Hanbal* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), pp. 14-16; Nimrod Hurvitz, "Biographies and Mild Asceticism: A Study of Islamic Moral Imagination," *Studia Islamica*, 85 (1997), p. 49; idem, "Schools of Law and Historical Context: Re-Examining the

threefold connection among the Abbasids, the traditionalist circles, and the Prophet, situating Abbasid ritual practice within a specifically Ḥanbalī vision of Sunni orthodoxy. Al-Mu‘tamid’s breaking of fast with dates also alludes to an ascetic practice, since dates were the fruit and sweets of the common people.<sup>112</sup>

In another anecdote related on the authority of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, we are told that al-Qādir used to send a servant to dispense food to the Madīna and Ruṣāfa mosques in Baghdad. Once, the servant noticed that all the people in the Madīna mosque had taken their share except a youth who returned the food. After the Maghrib prayers, the servant followed the youth and saw that he stopped by a house to request food. The servant reprimanded the youth for rejecting food donated by the caliph, but the youth replied that he could not take the food because it was given to him before the breaking of fast (*ifṭār*) and that he did not need it until it was time to break his fast. The servant related the incident to al-Qādir, who wept upon hearing it. The caliph ordered for more food to be brought to the youth, but only to be distributed to him when it was the appropriate time to break fast.<sup>113</sup>

Of the Abbasid caliphs in the *Muntaẓam*, it is al-Muhtadī who exemplifies caliphal legal and ritualistic piety. Al-Muhtadī’s biography yields an overall picture of a caliph who led a pious and ascetic lifestyle and sought a pietistic reform of the caliphal court. Al-Muhtadī, Ibn al-Jawzī writes, “was the most manifest of the caliphs in piety (*wara’*) and the most devoted among them to worship (*‘ibāda*).”<sup>114</sup> In line with his pious outlook, “he removed the musical instruments (*al-*

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Formation of the Ḥanbalī Madhhab,” *Islamic Law and Society*, 7/1 (2000), pp. 48-49; Cook, *Commanding*, pp. 103-5; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Virtues*, vol. 2, pp. 166-213.

<sup>112</sup> Muhammad Manazir Ahsan, *Social Life under the Abbasids, 170-289 AH/786-902 AD* (London: Longman, 1979), pp. 98, 108, 134, 145; Hurvitz, “Biographies and Mild Asceticism,” p. 52.

<sup>113</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 14, p. 355.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 12, p. 81.

*malāhī*), forbade luxury (*al-ghināʾ*) and drinking, and suspended the injustices committed by his associates. He zealously supervised the affairs of the *dīwān* and the land tax (*kharāj*), such that he would devote himself entirely to the accounts, with the secretaries seated in front of him. He never failed to hold audience on Mondays and Thursdays.”<sup>115</sup> Another report states that al-Muhtadī never ceased to fast from the day he assumed the caliphal office to the day he was killed.<sup>116</sup> These pietistic efforts, however, did not prevent his eventual demise at the hands of the rank-and-file Turks in Samarra who pursued him as he ran through the city with sword in hand and calling out to the common folk for support.<sup>117</sup>

In addition to his piety, al-Muhtadī was also known for his asceticism. Two reports in particular highlight al-Muhtadī’s asceticism by focusing on his dietary and dress habits. In the first, a man named Hāshim b. al-Qāsim al-Hāshimī relates:

I was in the presence of al-Muhtadī one evening during Ramaḍān. When the sun set and as I was preparing to leave, he said to me, “Sit down,” and so I sat down. The muezzin announced the prayer and [al-Muhtadī] stood up and came forward to lead us in prayer. ... He then called for food, and an earthenware vessel was brought to us in which there were round flat cakes of white bread and on which were vessels of salt, vinegar, and olive oil. He invited me to eat. I began to eat, thinking that they would now bring more refined foods (*nīqa*) in abundance, but he looked at me and asked, “Do you not fast?” I replied “yes.” He continued, “Do you not have the intention to fast?” To which I answered, “How not, since it is Ramaḍān?” He then said, “Well, eat and satisfy yourself, for there is no other food aside from what you see here.” I was astonished and after a little while I said, “And why, O Commander of the Faithful? For God has given you amply of His bounty.” He replied, “The situation is indeed how you described it, thanks be to God. But I thought that there was among the Umayyads ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and he lived in a simple and ascetic manner (*kāna min al-taqallul wa’l-taqashshuf*). Therefore, I was jealous because there has been no one among the Hāshimite [i.e., Abbasid] caliphs like him, and so I have taken upon myself [to adopt the lifestyle] you see here.”<sup>118</sup>

This anecdote sheds light on not only the quantity, but also the quality of the caliph’s dietary habits at court. The minimalist meal does not hint at luxury, which usually comes to mind when picturing

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., pp. 83-84.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>117</sup> See Kennedy, *When Baghdad Ruled the World*, pp. 293-94 for a colorful retelling of his murder by the Turks.

<sup>118</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 12, pp. 82-83.

a courtly feast, but instead points to an ascetic diet. Bread, the main component of the meal, was consumed by all classes in medieval Islamic societies and thus did not set al-Muhtadī apart from the rest of the populace.<sup>119</sup> The use of salt, vinegar, and olive oil for flavoring also hints at a poor man's diet.<sup>120</sup> There is no mention of meats, sweets, or fruits of sorts which the affluent classes consumed. This diet is also strikingly similar to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's diet, as described by his son Ṣāliḥ: "He often seasoned (*ya'tadimu*) [bread] with vinegar; at times I saw him eat a slice of bread, shaking the dust off it, placing it in a plate and sprinkling water on it until it softened, after which he would eat it with salt."<sup>121</sup> Nimrod Hurvitz argues that such a diet, consisting of the bare minimum "necessary to maintain the body and no more," is characteristic of what he calls "mild asceticism" in traditionalist circles. Mild ascetics like Ibn Ḥanbal adopted lifestyles that struck the middle ground between the world-renouncing attitudes of the extreme ascetics and the luxuries of courtly life.<sup>122</sup>

As for al-Muhtadī's dress habits, Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. 'Urfa recalled being told that "a basket (*safaṭ*) that belonged to al-Muhtadī was found. In it was a woolen gown (*jubba ṣūf*), a cloak (*kisā*), and a coarse woolen long cloak (*burnus*) which he wore for praying at night. He used to say, 'Am I not ashamed that the Abbasids did not have among them someone like 'Umar b.

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<sup>119</sup> Hurvitz, "Biographies and Mild Asceticism," p. 52, citing Ahsan, *Social Life*, p. 88.

<sup>120</sup> Hurvitz, "Biographies and Mild Asceticism," p. 52. See also Ahsan, *Social Life*, pp. 107-8, 133-35.

<sup>121</sup> Quoted in Hurvitz, "Biographies and Mild Asceticism," pp. 51-52, and idem, *The Formation of Ḥanbalism: Piety into Power* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), p. 62.

<sup>122</sup> Hurvitz, "Biographies and Mild Asceticism," pp. 51-54; idem, *Formation of Ḥanbalism*, pp. 61-62. The subject of "mild asceticism" has generated several noteworthy studies, even though the authors do not use that phrase. See, in particular, Franz Rosenthal, "'I Am You'—Individual Piety and Society in Islam," in *Individualism and Conformity in Classical Islam*, eds. Amin Banani and Speros Vryonis (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), pp. 33-60; Leah Kinberg, "What is Meant by Zuhd," *Studia Islamica*, 61 (1985), pp. 27-44; Christopher Melchert, "The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the Ninth Century C.E.," *Studia Islamica*, 83 (1996), pp. 51-70; idem, "The Piety of the Hadith Folk," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 34/3 (2002), pp. 425-39; Lev, "Piety and Political Activism."

‘Abd al-‘Azīz?’<sup>123</sup> As Richard Bulliet points out, wool was the fabric of the humble and was often associated with poverty and abjection. It is no coincidence then that the term “Sufi” is believed to have been derived from the Arabic term for wool, *ṣūf*.<sup>124</sup> The presence of woollen garments in this anecdote conjures up the image of an ascetic caliph along the lines of a Sufi<sup>125</sup> or even Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal himself, whose wardrobe during the winter consisted of cheap tunics, fur, and gowns patched with wool.<sup>126</sup>

My discussion of caliphal piety in the *Muntaẓam* would be remiss if I did not take into account the Abbasid caliphs’ dreams about the Prophet and divine inspiration. Much has been written about the role of dreams in medieval Islamic spirituality.<sup>127</sup> The legitimizing function of dreams—for instance, with regard to competing claims of orthodoxy, schools of thought, and rulership—has received the lion’s share of scholarly attention in recent decades. Abbasid historiography is replete with dreams of caliphs, some for the purposes of legitimizing the Abbasid

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<sup>123</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 12, p. 83.

<sup>124</sup> Richard Bulliet, *Cotton, Climate, and Camels in Early Islamic Iran: A Moment in World History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 46-47.

<sup>125</sup> For the dress of the Sufis, see Ahsan, *Social Life*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>126</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Virtues*, vol. 1, pp. 479-85; Hurvitz, *Formation of Ḥanbalism*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>127</sup> To mention a few studies, G. E. Von Grunebaum, “The Cultural Function of the Dream as Illustrated by Classical Islam,” in *The Dream and Human Societies*, eds. G. E. Von Grunebaum and Roger Cailliois (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), pp. 3-21; Toufy Fahd, “The Dream in Medieval Islamic Society,” in *Dream and Human Societies*, eds. Grunebaum and Cailliois, pp. 351-63; Leah Kinberg, “Literal Dreams and Prophetic *Ḥadīṡ* in Classical Islam—A Comparison of Two Ways of Legitimation,” *Der Islam*, 70/2 (1993), pp. 279-300; the essays in *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies*, eds. Özgen Felek and Alexander D. Knysh (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011); Ignaz Goldziher, “The Appearance of the Prophet in Dreams,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 44/2 (1912), pp. 503-6.

Revolution and succession struggles, some for literary enhancement.<sup>128</sup> In this section, I discuss Abbasid dreams as modes of pious legitimation.

While there is no doubt that dream anecdotes add an extra layer of divine and prophetic sanction to a caliph's legitimacy, they also serve as topoi to cast the caliph in a more pious light. Leah Kinberg's work on the "functional parallels" between *ḥadīths* and dreams as sources of guidance is of particular relevance. According to her, the dreams of the Prophet gradually achieved a status on par with *ḥadīth* as they were bolstered with prophetic sayings affirming their reliability. Such sayings include those claiming that although prophecy has ended, tidings (*mubashshirāt*) in the form of dreams remain as part of prophecy; an encounter with the Prophet in a dream is equivalent to catching the physical sight of him while awake; the devil will not take the Prophet's form and hence a vision of the Prophet could not have been made up; those who are reliable in dreams are also considered reliable in *ḥadīth*.<sup>129</sup> Also supplementing these sayings is the idea that "the ability to have good dreams (*manāmāt ṣāliḥa*) is listed among the virtues of the pious Muslims (*zuhhād*). Having good dreams is considered a Divine grace bestowed only on pious people."<sup>130</sup> Therefore, a caliph dreaming about the Prophet affirming the legitimacy of his caliphate or about prophetic inspiration for his regnal title would hardly regard this situation as a case of "bad dreams"

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<sup>128</sup> Johan Weststeijn, "Dreams of 'Abbasid Caliphs: Suspense and Tragedy in al-Ṭabarī's *History of Prophets and Kings*," *Oriens*, 38 (2010), pp. 17-34; Fahd, "The Dream in Medieval Islamic Society," pp. 352-56; Lassner, *Islamic Revolution*, pp. 3-36; El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography and Parable and Politics*, et passim.

<sup>129</sup> Kinberg, "Literal Dreams," pp. 283-88.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

(*adghāth ahlām*). If at all, it validates his status as a pious Muslim ruler. It is with this in mind that I now proceed to examine the dream anecdotes in Ibn al-Jawzī's caliphal biographies.

The *Muntaẓam* includes several examples of caliphs obeying Prophetic or divine injunctions in dreams that prompt them to carry out certain deeds in real life. One such instance involves al-Mu'tamid who suddenly woke up from his nap and commanded the courtier Yazīd al-Muhallabī to bring to him a prisoner named Manṣūr al-Jammāl. Upon inquiring into Manṣūr's situation and learning that he had been mistaken by a group of soldiers for a highway robber and subsequently arrested, al-Mu'tamid ordered for him to be released and given five hundred dinars. The caliph then related to Yazīd al-Muhallabī that he dreamt about the Prophet who said to him, "O Aḥmad [al-Mu'tamid's name], dispatch someone to the prison and retrieve Manṣūr al-Jammāl right now and treat him well, for he was maligned (*mazlūm*).” After the deed was done, al-Mu'tamid went back to sleep.<sup>131</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī includes another report with a congruous plotline narrated by Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān. This time al-Mu'tamid calls for two prisoners to be freed and when Ibn Ḥamdān inquired how he knew about the prisoners, the caliph answered that he saw a man in his dream who ordered him to free the two prisoners. Cautious and frightened, al-Mu'tamid cursed Satan and prayed to the Prophet. But he later saw the man again, who reproved him for not carrying out his orders. When al-Mu'tamid asked who he was, the man answered, "I am Muḥammad, the Messenger of God.” The caliph kissed the man's

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<sup>131</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 12, pp. 104-5.

hand and said apologetically that if he had known about the Prophet's identity earlier, he would have carried out his commands.<sup>132</sup>

Also encountered in the *Muntaẓam*'s Abbasid biographies are dreams in which the Prophet affirms a certain caliph's legitimacy. According to Ibn al-Jawzī, the Ḥanbalī vizier Ibn Hubayra related to him that the caliph al-Mustanjid once said, "I saw the Messenger of God in a dream fifteen years ago. He said to me, 'Your father will continue as caliph for fifteen years.' It was as he said. I saw him [again] four months before the death of my father. He took me through a great door and climbed to the top of a hill, where he prayed two prayer cycles with me. Then he donned me a shirt (*qamīṣ*) and said, 'Say: O God, guide me with those whom You have guided aright,' and he recited the prayer of humility (*du'ā' al-qunūt*)."<sup>133</sup> The biography of al-Mutawakkil, the caliph who abolished the *Miḥna* and proclaimed the creed of the proto-Sunnis as orthodoxy, is imbued with dreams. In one incident, the courtier 'Alī al-Jahm was summoned to al-Mutawakkil who related that he saw the Prophet in a dream. Al-Mutawakkil went towards the Prophet, and the Prophet said, "You are rising for me even though you are a caliph?" 'Alī assured al-Mutawakkil that this was a good dream and that his rising for the Prophet symbolized him standing up for the Sunna.<sup>134</sup>

Some caliphal dreams led to a regnal title. When al-Mutawakkil succeeded al-Wāthiq, there had been plans to call him "al-Muntaṣir." But he related that he dreamed of a piece of sugar descending from the sky with the words "Ja'far al-Mutawakkil 'alā-llāh," and this title was

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., pp. 105-8.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., vol. 18, p. 139. Ibn al-Athīr records a similar account and must have gotten his account from the *Muntaẓam* (*Kāmil*, vol. 11, p. 258). The reference to the shirt of the caliphate brings to mind 'Uthmān's statement that he will not renounce the shirt with which God has girded him. See El-Hibri's discussion in *Parable and Politics*, p. 383 n. 39.

<sup>134</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 11, p. 179; idem, *Virtues*, vol. 2, pp. 168-69. For al-Mutawakkil's other pious dreams, see *Muntaẓam*, vol. 11, pp. 180, 358; idem, *Virtues*, vol. 2, pp. 166-69.

eventually adopted.<sup>135</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī claims to have come across the handwritten statement of the Ḥanbalī scholar Abū'l-Faraj b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥaddād regarding the reason behind al-Muqtafi's regnal title: "Someone whom I trust related that al-Muqtafi saw the Messenger of God in a dream six days before his accession. The Prophet said to him, 'This charge (*amr*) is going to fall on you. Follow my example (*iqtafi bī*).' So he made 'al-Muqtafi li-amr Allāh' his regnal title."<sup>136</sup>

#### 4.6. Conclusion

In light of the discussion above, Ibn al-Jawzī's biographies of the Abbasid caliphs can be regarded as part of his oeuvre of pious biographies. These works include a biographical dictionary of Sufism (*Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*) and numerous other laudatory biographies (*manāqib*) of early pious ascetics such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Fuḍayl b. 'Iyād. The Abbasid caliphs, however, were not just pious Muslims, they were also pious rulers who patronized scholars and made efforts to lead by example in their commitment to Islamic law and ritual. This mode of depiction comes close to Ibn al-Jawzī's laudatory—and almost hagiographical—biography of the Umayyad caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz/'Umar II (*Sīra wa manāqib 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz*), which Nancy Khalek claims, "is thematically arranged so as to foreground the ascetic and pietistic qualities of 'Umar II."<sup>137</sup> Although we come across chapters dedicated to 'Umar II's justice,<sup>138</sup> the bulk of the work focuses on his asceticism and deep piety. We learn that he refused to own caliphal steeds (*marākib*) and

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<sup>135</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 11, p. 179.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., vol. 17, pp. 313-14. Also in Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 11, p. 43.

<sup>137</sup> Nancy Khalek, "Early Islamic History Reimagined: The Biography of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz in Ibn 'Asākir's *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 134/3 (2014), pp. 432 n. 6, 438-39.

<sup>138</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Sīra wa-manāqib 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, al-khalīfa al-zāhid*, ed. Na'im Zarzūr (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1984), pp. 87-141.

preferred to ride his own mule (*baghla*);<sup>139</sup> grew thinner due to his abstention from food;<sup>140</sup> wore cheap and patched garments;<sup>141</sup> wept out of fear of God;<sup>142</sup> only relied on the Qur'ān instead of the records of the caliphs (*kutub al-khulafā'*);<sup>143</sup> and gave lots of money to governors who ruled according to the Qur'ān and the Sunna.<sup>144</sup>

While Ibn al-Jawzī's biographies of the Abbasid caliphs abound with anecdotes and reports depicting the caliphs as good rulers upholding justice and generosity, most of them revolve around qualities and deeds that distinguish the Abbasids as pious Muslim rulers. Even the biographies of al-Amīn and al-Muqtadir, which certainly do not downplay their preoccupation with amusement and wasteful spending, are inserted with reports about their pious deeds. Al-Ma'mūn, the progenitor of the infamous *Miḥna*, is reworked into a pious caliph committed to the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. The chaos and power struggles during the reign of al-Muhtadī are offset by reports portraying him as the ideal ascetic caliph with steadfast adherence to Islamic ritualistic norms. Several scholars have claimed that Ibn al-Jawzī's *Muntaẓam* was "intended as a vehicle of Sunnī Revival," and that "he was writing for a reforming ruler" in such a way that the Sunni religio-political symbolism of the caliphate is accentuated.<sup>145</sup> To a large extent, the Abbasid biographies in the *Muntaẓam* bear out this claim, but with the added notion that Ibn al-Jawzī's vision of reform is one that stresses the roles of piety and religious knowledge in an ideal Muslim polity.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., pp. 62, 64-65, 68-69.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., pp. 15, 31, 71, 174.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., pp. 33, 71, 173-75, 178-80, 181-83.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., pp. 213-28.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., pp. 193-94.

<sup>145</sup> Bray, "A Caliph and his Public Relations," p. 163; Keaney, *Medieval Islamic Historiography*, p. 59; Scharfe, "Portrayals of the Later Abbasid Caliphate," pp. 123-31.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Debating Rebellion and Legitimate Rulership: The Case of al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī and Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya**

The previous chapters have shown that Ibn al-Jawzī’s political thought is characterized by a strong emphasis on the primacy of religious scholars in the political sphere and on the ruler’s need to uphold piety and religious knowledge in his rule. But what if the ruler fell short of these ideals and ended up committing unjust and sinful acts? Could he be resisted and deposed? While Chapter One has outlined how several medieval Sunni scholars dealt with these vexing questions, this chapter examines Ibn al-Jawzī’s ameliorative approach to them. Through this, I highlight his heretofore understudied role as a jurist and theologian. I take as my case study his treatise titled *al-Radd ‘alā’l-muta‘aṣṣib al-‘anīd al-māni‘ min dhamm Yazīd* (*The Refutation of the Zealous and Deviant Scholar Who Forbids the Censure of Yazīd*; hereafter, *Radd*). This treatise is the product of a debate in Ḥanbalī circles over the permissibility of cursing the second Umayyad caliph Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya (r. 60/680-64/683) on three counts: the massacre of the Prophet’s grandson al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī (d. 61/680) at Karbala; the pillage of Medīna; and the siege of Mecca resulting in the bombardment of the Ka‘ba with catapults.

Although written to address the cursing of Yazīd, the *Radd* also speaks to questions regarding rightful rulership and rebellion. I argue that Ibn al-Jawzī adopted a juristically prudent approach to rebellion against an unjust and sinful ruler—in this case, of Ḥusayn against Yazīd—that synthesizes the discursive elements of historiography, political discourse, and the laws on the treatment of rebels (*aḥkām al-bughāh*). Ibn al-Jawzī’s juristic prudence allowed him to shift the debate from one on the permissibility of rebellion to one on the question of legitimacy, enabling him to justify Ḥusayn’s actions against Yazīd without overtly condoning the act of rebellion.

### 5.1. Approaching Rebellion in Islamic Political Thought

Modern scholarship on Islamic political thought usually tends towards the view that Sunni thinkers gradually adopted political quietism as a religious obligation and rejected any right to rebel against a ruler who rules unjustly or has fallen into sin (*fisq*).<sup>1</sup> Scholars, however, acknowledge that this was not always the case with the Sunnis. Bernard Lewis identifies two distinct and contradictory principles in the Islamic political tradition: one quietist-authoritarian and the other activist-radical, both of which can be traced back to the days of the Prophet.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the early centuries of Islam after the death of the Prophet witnessed “emphatically Sunni” anti-caliphal revolts as well as generals and courtiers deposing and executing Abbasid caliphs, efforts which were “met with virtually no legitimist reaction on the part of the ‘*ulamā*’.”<sup>3</sup> When it came to the duty of “commanding right and forbidding wrong,” there were indeed early scholars who associated forbidding wrong with rebellion against rulers.<sup>4</sup>

Be that as it may, scholars claim that the activist strands of Islamic political thinking gradually gave way to political quietism as Sunni jurists eschewed rebellion and deposition of an unjust and sinful ruler.<sup>5</sup> Gibb identifies two reasons behind this trend: (1) the Khārijite insurrections in early Islam, which pushed jurists to stress obedience to rulers in order to preserve

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of modern scholarship on this subject, see Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 8-31.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Lewis, “On the Quietist and Activist Traditions in Islamic Political Writing,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 49/1, In Honour of Ann K. S. Lambton (1986), pp. 141-47; idem, *Political Language*, pp. 92-96.

<sup>3</sup> Deborah G. Tor, *Violent Order: Religious Warfare, Chivalry, and the ‘Ayyār Phenomenon in the Medieval Islamic World* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2007), p. 161.

<sup>4</sup> Cook, *Commanding*, pp. 52-53, 477-78.

<sup>5</sup> Lewis, “Quietist and Activist”; idem, *Political Language*, pp. 98-103; Lambton, *State and Government*, pp. 263, 313; Crone, *Political Thought*, pp. 135-39, 154-59, 301.

societal order and (2) the Persian tradition of kingship, which “fixed an impassable gulf between sovereign and subjects and taught the divine right of kings in its most absolute form, subject only to open religious apostasy on his part.”<sup>6</sup> These social and intellectual trends forced Muslim thinkers to yield to political quietism in order to preserve “the basic religious and legal prescriptions of Islam,” albeit with “great anguish.”<sup>7</sup> Even those who advocated for some degree of political activism limited “the duty of disobedience to clear violations of major prescriptions of the ritual law...and [specified] that this does not apply to the personal conduct of the ruler.”<sup>8</sup>

The above thesis has been challenged in recent years, most notably by Khaled Abou El Fadl who argues that the terms “activist” and “quietist” are not useful in addressing Muslim ideas on rebellion, especially when one moves away from the caliphate discourse usually located in works of theology (*kalām*) to the legal discourse on the treatment of rebels (or laws of rebellion; *aḥkām al-bughāh*) found in legal (*fiqh*) compendia. According to Abou El Fadl, although jurists favored order and stability, they did not legislate completely in favor of the rulers, but instead formulated “a legal discourse on rebellion that is largely unhelpful to those in power” in advocating for the benevolent treatment of rebels by the rulers.<sup>9</sup> In making these arguments, Abou El Fadl does not so much overturn the activist-to-quietist narrative as reframe the terms of debate over rebellion by focusing on the *aḥkām al-bughāh* found in legal works. Doing so allows us to better

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<sup>6</sup> Gibb, “Constitutional Organization,” pp. 14-17.

<sup>7</sup> Lewis, *Political Language*, p. 100.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard Lewis, “Islamic Concepts of Revolution,” in *Revolution in the Middle East, and Other Case Studies*, ed. P. J. Vatikiotis (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972), pp. 33-35.

<sup>9</sup> Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, p. 148.

appreciate the “linguistic practice of the juristic culture,” which “negotiates power primarily through the use of language.”<sup>10</sup>

The present chapter takes into account the laws of rebellion but also puts one foot back into the caliphate discourse, while paying attention to Ibn al-Jawzī’s manipulation of historical reports and narratives to advance his political views. I pay close attention to the language of Muslim juristic culture but also scrutinize the juristic prudence underlying efforts by jurists to find space within inherited doctrines and traditions to carve out subtle solutions in response to thorny questions such as rebellion.

## 5.2. Ibn al-Jawzī’s Rivalry with ‘Abd al-Mughīth and the Composition of the *Radd*

The *Radd* stems from the rivalry between Ibn al-Jawzī and his Ḥanbalī peer ‘Abd al-Mughīth al-Ḥarbī (d. 583/1187). The treatise was most likely written between al-Nāṣir’s (r. 575/1180-622/1225) ascension to the caliphate in 575/1180 and ‘Abd al-Mughīth’s death in 583/1187. Like Ibn al-Jawzī, ‘Abd al-Mughīth was a prominent figure in the Ḥanbalī circles of Baghdad and respected by many. Biographical accounts of him in chronicles and biographical dictionaries are generally filled with praise, presenting him as an influential authority of *ḥadīth*.<sup>11</sup> ‘Abd al-Mughīth’s wide-ranging influence in Baghdad attracted the attention of al-Nāṣir, who also heard *ḥadīth* from him and was even granted an *ijāza* by the *shaykh*.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 11, pp. 562-63; Muḥammad b. al-Najjār, *Dhayl ta’rīkh Baghdād*, ed. Caesar Farah (Hyderabad-Deccan: Osmania Oriental Publications Bureau, 1978), vol. 1, pp. 2-6; Dhahabī, *Ta’rīkh*, vol. 41, pp. 155-57; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, vol. 12, p. 328; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, pp. 354-58.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Abd al-Mughīth features prominently in the *isnāds* found in the *Rūḥ al-‘arīfīn*, a compilation of seventy *ḥadīths* al-Nāṣir collected on the authority of several influential transmitters of his time. ‘Abd al-Mughīth also appears in another list of *ḥadīth* transmitters drawn up for al-Nāṣir, while Ibn al-Jawzī is absent. See Mason, *Two Statesmen*, p. 126; Georges Vajda, “Une liste d’autorités du calife al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh,” *Arabica*, 6/2 (1959), p. 174; Erik Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition: ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 295-97.

The debate arose when an unnamed audience member at a sermon questioned Ibn al-Jawzī regarding Yazīd, specifically about what he did to Ḥusayn and what he commanded, which resulted in the pillage of Medina. The questioner asked if it was permissible to curse (*yalʿana*) Yazīd, to which Ibn al-Jawzī initially responded, “It suffices for him whatever he deserves. Silence is better” (*yakfīhi mā fīhi waʿl-sukūt aṣḥab*). The questioner persisted: “I know that silence is better. But is his cursing permissible?” Pressed, Ibn al-Jawzī answered, “The pious scholars (*al-ʿulamāʾ al-waraʿūn*), including Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, permitted it.” News of this reached ʿAbd al-Mughīth, who then composed a multi-volume work in support of Yazīd titled *Faḍāʾil Yazīd* (*The Virtues of Yazīd*), now no longer extant. ʿAbd al-Mughīth sent this controversial treatise to several of Ibn al-Jawzī’s companions, one of whom demanded a response from him.<sup>13</sup> The *Radd* was this response.

There was no love lost between Ibn al-Jawzī and ʿAbd al-Mughīth. While most chroniclers and biographers point to the above incident as setting off enmity between the two scholars, the Yazīd problem was probably only the igniting spark for a more protracted rivalry. The *Radd* begins with a string of accusations leveled against ʿAbd al-Mughīth, among them his sloppiness in evaluating *ḥadīths*, resulting in anthropomorphic conceptions of God, and his scant knowledge of law (*fiqh*).<sup>14</sup> The author of the Ḥanbalī biographical dictionary, Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1392), also reports several polemical exchanges between both men on other issues, such as whether the Prophet actually prayed behind Abū Bakr, which generated a treatise by ʿAbd al-Mughīth and a refutation by Ibn al-Jawzī. Another conflict broke out when ʿAbd al-Mughīth published a treatise

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<sup>13</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Radd ʿalāʾl-mutaʿaṣṣib al-ʿanīd al-mānīʾ min dhamm Yazīd*, ed. Haytham ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005), pp. 33-34.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 34-37. Ibn al-Jawzī’s anti-anthropomorphism stance was well-known among his Ḥanbalī peers and future generations. In his treatise titled *Akḥbār al-ṣifāt*, he deems mainstream Ḥanbalī anthropomorphic views as a deviation from the true teachings of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, although his was a minority position among the Ḥanbalīs. See Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, pp. 33-64; Hoover, “Ḥanbalī Theology,” pp. 632-33; Holtzman, *Anthropomorphism in Islam*, pp. 166-69, 227-28.

titled *al-Intiṣār li-musnad al-imām Aḥmad*, which affirmed that all the *ḥadīths* listed in Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad* were sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*).<sup>15</sup> 'Abd al-Mughīth's view on this issue was also shared by other Ḥanbalī peers, much to the chagrin of Ibn al-Jawzī, who takes issue with their willingness "to play fast and loose with the sources in order to provide textual support for a partisan point of view."<sup>16</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzī's harsh criticisms against 'Abd al-Mughīth and the rivalry between the two hardly did anything to diminish the celebrity of 'Abd al-Mughīth. He was buried alongside the notables of the Ḥanbalī schools, and many in his hometown of Ḥarbiyya appeared in large throngs for his funeral.<sup>17</sup> Sources describe him as a reliable and righteous transmitter of *ḥadīth* (*thiqatan ṣāliḥan*).<sup>18</sup> As for his composition of the *Faḍā'il Yazīd*, sources present it as a minor misstep in an otherwise illustrious scholarly career. Ibn al-Athīr (d. 606/1210) and Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) claim that 'Abd al-Mughīth wrote some odd and surprising things (*al-gharā'ib wa'l-'ajā'ib*) in it, while Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) opines that "it would have been better for him had he not authored the work."<sup>19</sup> The overall image remains that of a Ḥanbalī scholar of great repute.

### 5.3. Yazīd's Caliphate: A Brief Sketch

More than half of the *Radd* details the events that transpired during Yazīd's short reign as caliph (60/680-64/683). Most of the narrative focuses on the killing of Ḥusayn at Karbala. Ibn al-Jawzī lists three authors on whom he relied for his account of Yazīd's reign: Ibn Abī'l-Dunyā (d.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, p. 357.

<sup>16</sup> Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> Ibn al-Najjār, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 41, p. 156; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, p. 355.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vol. 11, p. 563; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, vol. 12, p. 328; Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 41, p. 156.

281/894), Ibn Sa‘d (d. 230/845), and al-Ṭabarī (referred to as Abū Ja‘far b. Jarīr; d. 310/923).<sup>20</sup>

Overall, the reports Ibn al-Jawzī selects to construct his narrative of Yazīd’s reign reflect the anti-Umayyad bias prevalent in early Abbasid historiography.<sup>21</sup> These reports were preserved mainly in Kufa and Medina where anti-Umayyad sentiments were rife, and revived on a large scale in the late third/ninth century to justify the massacres of the Umayyad dynasts by the new Abbasid overlords following the Abbasid Revolution. Abbasid-era chroniclers sought to dampen the bloodthirsty image of the Abbasids by presenting them as avenging the deaths of the Shī‘ite martyrs. The massacre of the Umayyads was framed as “an exact mirror of Karbalā’,” serving as redemption for the ‘Alid and Shī‘ite martyrs.<sup>22</sup> Below is a brief overview of Yazīd’s caliphate, which largely follows Ibn al-Jawzī’s narrative, but also draws from secondary scholarly works.<sup>23</sup>

The troubles associated with Yazīd’s reign began even before he assumed office, when his father Mu‘āwiya (r. 40/661-60/680) arranged for him to be next in line for the caliphate. Mu‘āwiya’s act of designating his own son for succession was the first of its kind in the history of the caliphate. Many Muslim religious scholars view it as marking the transformation of the caliphate (*khilāfa*) into kingship (*mulk*). In spite of this and most likely with a mix of persuasion

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<sup>20</sup> It is likely that Ibn al-Jawzī relied on Ibn Sa‘d’s *Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* and Ṭabarī’s *Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa’l-mulūk*. It is unclear as to which work of Ibn Abī’l-Dunyā Ibn al-Jawzī used for his narrative. For a list of Ibn Abī’l-Dunyā’s extant works, see James A. Bellamy, “Pro-Umayyad Propaganda in Ninth-Century Baghdad in the Works of Ibn Abī’l-Dunyā,” in *Prédication et propagande au Moyen Âge: Islam, Byzance, Occident*, eds. George Makdisi, Dominique Sourdel, and Janine Sourdel-Thomine (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), p. 84.

<sup>21</sup> On early Abbasid efforts at patronizing the writing of history, see Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>22</sup> Antoine Borrut, “Remembering Karbalā’: The Construction of an Early Islamic Site of Memory,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 42 (2015), pp. 268-70. See, in addition, Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 41.

<sup>23</sup> Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, pp. 88-90; idem, *Caliphate*, pp. 54-58; G. R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 46-50; H. Lammens, “Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya,” *EF*<sup>1</sup>; G. R. Hawting, “Yazīd (I) b. Mu‘āwiya,” *EF*<sup>2</sup>; L. Veccia Vaglieri, “(al-) Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib,” *EF*<sup>2</sup>; Najam I. Haider, “al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib,” *EF*<sup>3</sup>. For chronicles, the classic reference is Ṭabarī’s *Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa’l-mulūk*, trans. I.K.A. Howard as *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Vol. 19: The Caliphate of Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiyah* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

and coercion, Mu'āwiya ensured that Yazīd's succession passed smoothly.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, there were several prominent Companions of the Prophet who refused to offer Yazīd the oath of allegiance (*bay'a*): Ḥusayn, Ibn 'Umar (d. 73/693), Ibn al-Zubayr (d. 73/692), and Ibn Abī Bakr. Among them, Ḥusayn and Ibn al-Zubayr posed greater threats to Yazīd's legitimacy as caliph—the former being a descendant of the Prophet and potentially able to bank on support from Kufa (a hotbed of Umayyad resistance) against Yazīd, while the latter had established a power base for himself in the Hijaz. Ibn 'Umar, while not posing a significant threat to Yazīd's caliphate, would be important for Ibn al-Jawzī's discussion of Yazīd's caliphal legitimacy, as I will come to later. Upon succeeding Mu'āwiya, Yazīd made renewed attempts to secure allegiance by ordering for Ḥusayn, Ibn 'Umar, and Ibn al-Zubayr to be seized in order to obtain their oaths. All three men refused to pledge and fled to Mecca.

Throughout his time in Medina and Mecca, Ḥusayn received letters from the people of Kufa expressing their support for him to make a bid for the caliphate. During Yazīd's first year as caliph, Ḥusayn departed Mecca for Kufa with a small band of family and followers. A series of events ensued and led to the Battle of Karbala, in which Ḥusayn was killed by the forces of 'Umar b. Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ (d. 66/686) sent by 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād (d. 67/686), Yazīd's newly appointed governor of Kufa.

Ḥusayn's head was taken to Ibn Ziyād in Kufa, who is reported to have ridiculed it by poking it with a cane. When the head was brought to Yazīd in Damascus, he supposedly did the same and poked Ḥusayn's mouth with a cane while reciting verses of poetry.<sup>25</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī writes

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<sup>24</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī weaves together reports that depict Mu'āwiya as securing the *bay'a* from different groups of Muslims via harsh warnings and coercion, even threatening to kill those who might oppose him. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Radd*, p. 45.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 57, 59. Ṭabarī, *History*, vol. 19, pp. 76, 170, 174, 176.

extensively about Yazīd's ridiculing of Ḥusayn's decapitated head and presents reports of several Companions of the Prophet lamenting the situation.<sup>26</sup> Ḥusayn's head was eventually sent to the governor of Medina, who ordered it to be buried near the grave of his mother Fāṭima.

After Karbala, Ibn al-Jawzī's narrative continues in the year 62/681-2, during which criticisms against Yazīd had been growing in Medina, accusing him of impious acts. These acts include drinking wine and getting so intoxicated that he neglected prayers, enjoyment of singing girls, and playing with musical instruments and dogs. The Medinans declared Yazīd deposed and evicted the Umayyad governor of Medina. News reached Yazīd who then assembled an army to quash the Medinans at the Battle of Ḥarra in 63/683. Yazīd's army pursued the fleeing Medinans back to Medina and plundered the city for three days. The vanquished Medinans were forced to renew their oaths of allegiance to Yazīd and to offer themselves as his slaves.

With the Medinans subdued, Yazīd turned his attention to Ibn al-Zubayr in Mecca. Yazīd's army laid siege to Mecca for sixty-four days. The intense fighting and bombardment did not spare the Ka'ba from damage by catapults and fire. News soon came of Yazīd's death, ending both the siege and his reign.

#### 5.4. Debates on Attitudes Towards Yazīd: The Intellectual Context

Ibn al-Jawzī's account of Yazīd's caliphate aims to solidify the image of Yazīd as a sinful and unjust caliph who deserves to be cursed. For the Shī'ites, given their reverence for the family of 'Alī, the Battle of Karbala was a tragedy of seismic proportions and constituted the prime reason for them to curse Yazīd.<sup>27</sup> The situation was more complicated for the Sunnis.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Radd*, pp. 54-55, 58.

<sup>27</sup> Etan Kohlberg, "The Attitude of the Imāmī-Shī'is to the Companions of the Prophet," D.Phil. dissertation (Oxford, 1972), pp. 200, 209.

Sunni views on the permissibility to curse Yazīd are intricately tied to the larger debate concerning the Companions of the Prophet. With the development of *ḥadīth* criticism in the third/ninth century came the need to ascertain the integrity (*‘adāla*) of the transmitters, the most important of whom were the Companions of the Prophet. While their collective integrity during the time of the Prophet had been vouchsafed by Prophetic *ḥadīths* and Qur’ānic verses, the reports about their deeds after his death provide a far less conclusive picture. After all, the Companions fought each other and participated in civil wars that divided the Muslim community up to this day. Taking sides would thus entail rejecting a huge chunk of revelation and traditions transmitted over time, causing more schisms within the community.

Beginning in the fifth/eleventh century, a doctrine known as *‘adālat al-ṣaḥāba* (integrity of the Companions) developed in Sunni writings to address this dilemma. The cornerstone of *‘adālat al-ṣaḥāba* was that anyone who saw the Prophet was a Companion.<sup>28</sup> Since the Companions’ collective integrity is attested in the Qur’ān and *ḥadīths*, the doctrine of *‘adālat al-ṣaḥāba* stipulates the “presumption of continuity” (*istiṣḥāb al-ḥāl*). In the face of inconclusive evidence, one must abstain from believing that the Companions might have lost their integrity by participating in the civil wars.<sup>29</sup> Instead, one should continue to believe in the Companions’ integrity based on what is known about their sanctified status during the Prophet’s time, and refrain from discussing any reports pertaining to their participation in the civil wars.

In time, largely owing to sectarian pressures from the Shī‘ites, the notion of Companionship expanded beyond those who caught a glimpse of the Prophet to everyone in the

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<sup>28</sup> Amr Osman, “*‘Adālat al-Ṣaḥāba*: The Construction of a Religious Doctrine,” *Arabica*, 60 (2013), p. 278.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 293.

Prophet's age (*qarn*).<sup>30</sup> This argument was first put forward by Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038) and further expanded by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1070), who claims that the "age" (*qarn*) referred to in the Prophet's saying, "The best of people are of my age, then those who follow them" (*khayr al-nās qarnī thumma al-ladhīna yalūnuhum*), is equivalent to 120 years.<sup>31</sup>

The doctrine of *'adālat al-ṣaḥāba* contributed to an attitude of ambivalence towards Yazīd. Some Sunnis forbade cursing him on the grounds that it may lead to the vilification of his father Mu'āwiya, who was himself a Companion.<sup>32</sup> Even if Yazīd was not a Companion, his birth after the Prophet's death made him a Successor (*tābi'ūn*), and the *ḥadīth*, "The best of people are of my age, then those who follow them," could be cited as a proof text against cursing him. Nonetheless, the reports about his impious acts, his killing of Ḥusayn, as well as his attack of Mecca and Medina were too numerous to be ignored.<sup>33</sup> These reports resulted in diverse opinions on the cursing of Yazīd. Early scholars such as Mālik and Abū Ḥanīfa are reported to have held two opinions on this issue, namely to openly curse him (*taṣrīḥ*) or to curse him by hinting (*talwīḥ*), which opened the doors for subsequent generations of followers to selectively adhere to either position in supporting their own views.<sup>34</sup> When asked about the legality of cursing Yazīd, the Shāfi'ī jurist and Ash'arite theologian al-Kiyā al-Harrāsī (d. 504/1110) replied that "he was not one of the Companions" and cursed him on the basis of his impious acts, which included the playing of

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<sup>30</sup> Nancy Khalek, "Medieval Biographical Literature and the Companions of Muḥammad," *Der Islam*, 91/2 (2014), pp. 284-86.

<sup>31</sup> Khalek, "Medieval Biographical Literature," p. 289.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Sarhan, "Early Muslim Traditionalism," p. 143. This was also one of 'Abd al-Mughīth's arguments. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Radd*, pp. 75, 87.

<sup>33</sup> Taftāzānī even goes so far as to assert that these reports are "based on *tawātur*." Taftāzānī, *Commentary*, p. 154.

<sup>34</sup> Aḥmad b. Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977), vol. 3, p. 287.

backgammon (*nard*), hunting with leopards, and wine-drinking.<sup>35</sup> His former classmate and contemporary of similar juridical and theological persuasions, Ghazālī, argued the contrary position, claiming that it is absolutely forbidden to curse a Muslim, and that Yazīd was certainly a Muslim. According to Ghazālī, one also cannot be certain if Yazīd had indeed killed Ḥusayn, ordered it, or consented to it, since nearly four hundred years have passed and it is impossible to know the particulars of what transpired between those two men. Moreover, even if it were permitted to curse Yazīd, there is no sin in abstaining from it. One should thus refrain from cursing Yazīd and instead, if possible, invoke God’s mercy on him.<sup>36</sup>

Positions on the Yazīd problem varied within the Ḥanbalī school and even in the opinions of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. His student Abū Bakr al-Khallāl (d. 311/923) mentions two reports with regard to the issue:<sup>37</sup>

1. When asked by his student Muhannā about Yazīd, Ibn Ḥanbal answered, “He did in Medina what he did.” Muhannā asked, “What did he do?” To which Ibn Ḥanbal replied, “He killed [some] of the Companions of the Prophet ... in Medina, and did [something else].” “What did he do?” Muhannā asked again. Ibn Ḥanbal answered, “He looted it.” Then Muhannā asked, “[Is he worth] to report hadith from?” Ibn Ḥanbal replied, “No hadith should be related on his authority, nor is it meet for anyone to write down hadith that come on his authority.”
2. Another student Abū Ṭālib al-Mishkānī asked Ibn Ḥanbal his opinion about someone who said “God curse Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya,” and Ibn Ḥanbal refused to give an opinion. But Abū Ṭālib persisted and Ibn Ḥanbal replied, “The Prophet said, ‘Cursing a Muslim is similar to killing him.’ And he said, ‘The best of people are of my age, then those who follow them,’ and Yazīd was among them. [The Prophet also] said, ‘[O God,] whoever I curse or abuse, convert it into mercy to him [instead].’ So refraining (*imsāk*) [from cursing Yazīd] is preferable to me.”

Saud al-Sarhan argues that “according to al-Khallāl’s interpretation, even though Aḥmad did not like Yazīd I, and did not allow people to transmit ḥadīth from him, he did not curse him by name,

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 288-89.

<sup>37</sup> Translated in al-Sarhan, “Early Muslim Traditionalism,” pp. 139-40.

but generalised.”<sup>38</sup> However, there is another report not mentioned by al-Khallāl which circulated among later Ḥanbalīs in favor of cursing Yazīd:

Šālih b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal said to his father, “Some people attribute to us affection (*tawallī*) for Yazīd.” Ibn Ḥanbal replied, “Is there any believer in God who has affection towards Yazīd?” Then Šālih asked his father, “Why do you not curse him?” Ibn Ḥanbal replied, “When have you heard me cursing anything? Why do you not curse those whom God curses in His book?” Šālih asked again, “Where did God curse Yazīd in His book?” To which Ibn Ḥanbal replied by reciting a Quranic verse: “Would you then, if you were given the command, work corruption in the land and sever your ties of kinship? Such are they whom God has cursed, so He deafened and blinded their vision” (Q 47:22-23). Ibn Ḥanbal added, “Is severing the ties of kinship worse than killing?”<sup>39</sup>

These reports reflect different views by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal himself, which contributed to divisions among future generations of Ḥanbalīs over the Yazīd problem. This ambiguity also gave scholars like Ibn al-Jawzī and ‘Abd al-Mughīth leeway to adopt completely contrasting positions but yet muster the legacy of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in support of their positions. ‘Abd al-Mughīth, for instance, claims that it is better to abstain from cursing Yazīd out of respect for his father Mu‘āwiya;<sup>40</sup> whereas Ibn al-Jawzī accuses ‘Abd al-Mughīth of deliberately deviating from the supposedly pro-cursing views of Ibn Ḥanbal.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>39</sup> The earliest extant version of this report is found in Abū Ya‘lā’s *al-Masā’il al-‘aqādiyya*, in which he claims to have come across it from the handwriting of another Ḥanbalī scholar, Abū Ḥafṣ al-‘Ukbarī (d. 387/997). See Abū Ya‘lā b. al-Farrā’, *al-Masā’il al-‘aqādiyya min kitāb al-riwāyatayn wa’l-wajhayn: masā’il min uṣūl al-diyānāt*, ed. Su‘ūd b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Khalaf (Riyadh: Aḍwā’ al-Salaf, 1999), pp. 94-95. Ibn al-Jawzī cites Abū Ya‘lā’s *Mu‘tamad* as his source, but the report is absent in the extant abridged version of the *Mu‘tamad*. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Radd*, pp. 40-41; translation in al-Sarhan, “Early Muslim Traditionalism,” pp. 140-41.

<sup>40</sup> Other Ḥanbalīs who opposed the cursing of Yazīd include Abū Muḥammad al-Tamīmī (d. 488/1095), Abū Ṭālib al-‘Ukbarī (d. 244/858), and Abū’l-Ḥasan b. al-Bannā’. See Abū’l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. Abī Ya‘lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamid Fiqī (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1952), vol. 2, pp. 246, 273; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, p. 356; summary in Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, pp. 124-25 n. 180.

<sup>41</sup> Other pro-cursing Ḥanbalīs include Abū Ya‘lā, his son Abū’l-Ḥusayn b. Abī Ya‘lā (d. 526/1131), and Ibn ‘Aqīl (d. 513/1119). See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Radd*, pp. 40, 87; summary in Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, pp. 124-25 n. 180, though due to a misreading of Ibn Rajab, Swartz mistakenly identifies Abū Ya‘lā and Ibn Abī Ya‘lā as members of the anti-cursing camp. Ibn Rajab does state, on the authority of Ibn al-Jawzī, that Ibn Abī Ya‘lā authored a work about those who deserved to be cursed and included Yazīd in the list. See Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, p. 356. Abū Ya‘lā’s position will be discussed later.

While the *‘adālat al-ṣaḥāba* had the indirect effect of protecting Yazīd from vilification, Syrian Sunni historians beginning in the sixth/twelfth century actively sought to rehabilitate the much-maligned image of Yazīd. The reemergence of Damascus as an important political and cultural center under Nūr al-Dīn (d. 570/1174) and the Ayyūbids in the mid-sixth/twelfth century spurred efforts by Syrian Sunni scholars, especially Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 571/1176), to rely more heavily on early Syrian sources for the Umayyads.<sup>42</sup> This allowed them to avoid reproducing the anti-Umayyad tilt prevalent in the Iraqi historical tradition. Yazīd’s image greatly benefited from this trend, especially when we take into account his portrayal in Ibn ‘Asākir’s massive biographical dictionary, *Ta’rīkh madīnat Dimashq (History of Damascus)*, written under the patronage of Nūr al-Dīn. According to James Lindsay, “[t]he portrait that emerges of Ibn ‘Asākir’s Yazīd is one who, though certainly not the paradigmatic exemplar of prayer and fasting, is, despite his faults, a valid and reliable transmitter of ḥadīths and an intelligent son, who is worthy of the caliphate.”<sup>43</sup> This portrayal of Yazīd is in stark contrast with Ibn al-Jawzī’s narrative of his reign in the *Radd*, which relies heavily on Ṭabarī and the Iraqi historiographical tradition. Yet Ibn ‘Asākir does much more. After quoting the *ḥadīth*, “The best of people are of my age, then those who follow them,” he pairs it with a narrative report (attributed to Zurāra b. Awfā) which reads “An age is 120 years. Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya died at the end of the age in which the Messenger of God was sent.”<sup>44</sup> In a

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<sup>42</sup> Judd, *Religious Scholars and the Umayyads*, pp. 30-34. For Ibn ‘Asākir’s sources, see idem, “Ibn ‘Asākir’s Sources for the Late Umayyad Period,” in *Ibn ‘Asākir and Early Islamic History*, ed. James E. Lindsay (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2001), pp. 78-99. On Ibn ‘Asākir’s life and Nūr al-Dīn’s patronage of his career, see James E. Lindsay, “Ibn ‘Asākir, His *Ta’rīkh madīnat Dimashq* and its Usefulness for Understanding Early Islamic History,” in *Ibn ‘Asākir and Early Islamic History*, ed. Lindsay, pp. 2-9.

<sup>43</sup> James E. Lindsay, “Caliphal and Moral Exemplar? ‘Alī Ibn ‘Asākir’s Portrait of Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya,” *Der Islam*, 74 (1997), pp. 250-58, quote on p. 254.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 274.

single stroke of the pen, Ibn ‘Asākir elevates Yazīd to the rank of the Companions, rendering him even less susceptible to disparagement.

The Yazīd problem was not only about the permissibility to curse Yazīd; debates also addressed whether Ḥusayn and the Medinans had the right to resist him. This issue forces one to confront the thorny question of whether subjects can rebel against and depose a sinful and unjust caliph. I have discussed this issue in Chapter One, but of relevance to this chapter are the Ḥanbalī, Shāfi‘ī, Mu‘tazilite, and Ash‘arite positions. The Ḥanbalīs categorically rejected deposition and rebellion; the Mu‘tazilites argued that an unjust ruler should be removed, with force if necessary; while certain groups of Shāfi‘īs and Ash‘arites permitted the deposition of a sinful ruler.

Sunni jurists also address whether Yazīd was justified in ordering the killing of Ḥusayn and the pillage of Medina, a question which fell under the rubric of the laws on rebellion (*aḥkām al-bughāh*). The *aḥkām al-bughāh* define a rebel as one who defies the just ruler (*al-imām al-‘ādil*) by fighting him while relying on a reasonable pretext (*ta’wīl*). This pretext can be taken to mean either a religious interpretation, disagreement on a point of law, or grievance. Jurists were usually not concerned with what exactly constitutes a “just ruler” or even with when rebellion is justified. They were more concerned with how rulers should deal with rebels.<sup>45</sup> Broadly speaking, rebels must be “warned, debated, and given a full chance to repent before being fought,” and “are only to be fought only as long as they continue to fight.” Defeated rebels are neither to be killed, nor their property plundered. Dead rebels may not be crucified and their heads may not be severed; funeral prayers should also be performed over them. Such a treatment is in contrast to bandits or highway robbers (*muḥāribūn*) who are held liable for life and property destroyed, with

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<sup>45</sup> Jurists usually conflate the terms *‘ādil* (just) with *‘adl* (rightful, implying legitimate rule). Some jurists omit the words “just” or “rightful” altogether, and simply define rebellion as an act against an established ruler. Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, p. 241.

punishments that ranged from amputation of opposite limbs and crucifixion to banishment and execution. These rules were first given systematic exposition by al-Shāfi‘ī himself and adopted by Shafi‘ī and non-Shafi‘ī jurists in subsequent centuries.<sup>46</sup>

One example of the Ḥanbalī application of *aḥkām al-bughāh* to the Yazīd problem is encountered in a work titled *al-Masā’il al-‘aqdiyya* by Ibn al-Jawzī’s Ḥanbalī predecessor Abū Ya‘lā b. al-Farrā’, under the sub-heading, “Regarding Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya: Should One Pass Judgment on His Sins (*fisq*) or Not?” Abū Ya‘lā cites the pro- and anti-cursing reports by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal as well as supporting arguments (*wujūh*) for each position before writing in favor of cursing Yazīd, arguing that the rebellions by Ḥusayn and the Medinans were not aimed at pursuing power for themselves (*ṭalaban li’l-amr*). The Medinans and Ḥusayn should have been treated as rebels who resisted the orders of a ruler (*imtinā*) based on a pretext entailing displeasure with Yazīd’s preoccupation with drinking and impious amusements. Thus, “their rebellions did not necessitate killing, slaughter, and pillage of property, because rebels who are defeated by the imam are neither to be killed nor is their property to be plundered.”<sup>47</sup> But since Yazīd’s troops did just that, he deserved to be cursed. In line with *aḥkām al-bughāh*, Abū Ya‘lā’s focus is on Yazīd’s treatment of Ḥusayn and the Medinans as rebels, not on Yazīd’s legitimacy as caliph or his behavior. Yazīd deserves to be cursed because he transgressed the boundaries of *aḥkām al-bughāh*, not because he was sinful or unjust. Abū Ya‘lā’s treatment of the Yazīd problem is akin to what Abou El Fadl calls a “depoliticized” doctrine of rebellion, which “focused on the technicalities of the treatment to be afforded to rebels” regardless of whether the ruler is just or unjust.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 147-209.

<sup>47</sup> Abū Ya‘lā, *Masā’il*, pp. 102-4.

<sup>48</sup> Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, p. 330.

### 5.5. The Cursing of Yazīd under al-Nāṣir: The Political Context

The cursing of Yazīd was not just a doctrinal issue involving debates between religious scholars; it was a political issue as well. The Abbasid caliph al-Nāṣir took great interest in the cursing of Yazīd during the early years of his reign. Upon assuming office in 575/1180, he had the vizier Ibn al-‘Aṭṭār (whom he inherited from his father al-Mustaḍī) executed and did not have a vizier until 583/1187. During this period, the Shī‘ite mayor of the palace (*ustādh al-dār*), Majd al-Dīn Abū’l-Faḍl b. al-Ṣāhib (d. 583/1187), ran the show in the *dār al-khilāfa*. Ibn al-Ṣāhib wielded immense influence over al-Nāṣir to the extent that his name was mentioned only second to the caliph’s during the Friday *khuṭba*.<sup>49</sup> Under Ibn al-Ṣāhib, Baghdad witnessed large-scale public ceremonies venerating the Prophet’s family and the public cursing of Mu‘āwiya and Yazīd.<sup>50</sup> Although al-Nāṣir did not adhere to an official position, he closely monitored views towards Yazīd. He invited those who spoke publicly about Yazīd to express their opinions to him personally. An individual putting forward an uncompromising defense of Yazīd risked facing severe punishment.<sup>51</sup>

Al-Nāṣir was aware of the debate between Ibn al-Jawzī and ‘Abd al-Mughīth over Yazīd. One night at the grave of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, ‘Abd al-Mughīth had a brief encounter with al-Nāṣir, who was in disguise. Al-Nāṣir asked ‘Abd al-Mughīth, who pretended not to know to whom he was speaking, if he was the one who composed the work praising Yazīd. ‘Abd al-Mughīth answered “yes,” after which al-Nāṣir asked him if he would curse Yazīd, to which he answered, “I do not permit his cursing, for if I opened this door, it would lead people into cursing our present

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<sup>49</sup> Mason, *Two Statesmen*, p. 87.

<sup>50</sup> Hartmann, *An-Nāṣir*, pp. 137-39.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

caliph.” Puzzled at this response, al-Nāṣir asked why this was the case, and ‘Abd al-Mughīth further explained, “Because [al-Nāṣir] does many reprehensible things, among them is such and such....” As ‘Abd al-Mughīth began to enumerate the list of ugly deeds al-Nāṣir is believed to have committed, the caliph walked away from him in disgust.<sup>52</sup> In another report of the incident, after being asked about his book on Yazīd, ‘Abd al-Mughīth said to al-Nāṣir, “God forbids seeing any excellence in [Yazīd]. But I believe that it is not necessary to depose the one who is caliph of the Muslims when sin (*fisq*) befalls him.” This greatly delighted al-Nāṣir, who spoke approvingly of ‘Abd al-Mughīth’s speech.<sup>53</sup> These reports are of doubtful authenticity and present a noticeably Ḥanbalī stance on the cursing of Yazīd and the question of deposition. But they suggest that the Yazīd problem also contained political connotations directly related to the caliphal office, which an ambitious caliph like al-Nāṣir could hardly ignore.

#### 5.6. Ibn al-Jawzī’s Arguments in Support of Cursing Yazīd

Having discussed the intellectual and political contexts surrounding the Yazīd problem, I now turn to Ibn al-Jawzī’s analysis of the issue. Ibn al-Jawzī’s analysis comes in the form of rebuttals against ‘Abd al-Mughīth’s arguments presumably put forward in the *Faḍā’il Yazīd*.<sup>54</sup> In this format, Ibn al-Jawzī first cites a statement by his opponent and then proceeds to refute it in a piecemeal fashion.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim (Riyadh: Jāmi‘at al-Imām Muḥammad b. Sa’ūd al-Islāmiyya, 1986), vol. 4, pp. 574-75; Dhahabī, *Ta’rīkh*, vol. 41, pp. 156-57; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, vol. 12, p. 328.

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, vol. 1, p. 356. Translations of both versions can be found in Mason, *Two Statesmen*, p. 94 and al-Sarhan, “Early Muslim Traditionalism,” p. 143.

<sup>54</sup> Although ‘Abd al-Mughīth’s *Faḍā’il Yazīd* is no longer extant, its main arguments can be inferred from Ibn al-Jawzī’s statements.

### 5.6.1. Addressing the Doctrine of ‘*Adālat al-Ṣahāba*

The most vexing issue in the Yazīd problem is the doctrine of ‘*adālat al-ṣahāba*, which contributed to the Sunni ambivalence towards the cursing of Yazīd. According to Ibn al-Jawzī, ‘Abd al-Mughīth made the argument that “Yazīd was of the second age/generation (*al-qarn al-thānī*), and the Prophet had said, ‘The best of people are of my age, then those who follow them.’”<sup>55</sup> As seen earlier, this was a common *ḥadīth* adduced by those in the anti-cursing camp. It was also attributed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and thus used by Ḥanbalīs who forbade cursing Yazīd by name. Ibn al-Jawzī’s rebuttal to ‘Abd al-Mughīth betrays a sense that he seems cornered: “[The Prophet] was pointing to the age in general (*‘umūm al-qarn*), not to the sinners (*fussāq*). And the second age included al-Ḥajjāj and others among the tyrants and innovators like Ma‘bad al-Juhanī.”<sup>56</sup> If this was all the *Radd* had to offer, it would have gone down in history as a pretty forgettable treatise. The moralistic and pietistic tone of Ibn al-Jawzī’s rebuttal lacks the erudition of his refutations against ‘Abd al-Mughīth’s arguments on various points of political thought, which I will discuss in the following sub-sections.

### 5.6.2. Delegitimizing the Oaths of Allegiance (*Bay‘a*) to Yazīd

By Ibn al-Jawzī’s time, Sunni thinkers were willing to consider three different methods of appointing a caliph: election (*ikhtiyār*), testamentary designation (*‘ahd* or *naṣṣ*) by an incumbent caliph, or seizure of power by compulsion (*ghalaba* or *qahr*). Regardless of how a caliph assumed office, his caliphate had to be ratified as a legitimate contract between himself and the community

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<sup>55</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Radd*, p. 88.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Al-Ḥajjāj (d. 95/714) was the governor of Iraq under the Umayyad caliphs ‘Abd al-Malik and al-Walīd. Subsequent generations of Muslims remember him as a cruel and tyrannical ruler. Ma‘bad al-Juhanī (d. 83/703) was one of the first proponents of Qadarism during the Umayyad period. The Qadarites upheld the idea that human beings possessed power over their own actions, in contrast to the deterministic and predestinarian ideas of the Jabrites.

by the oath of allegiance (*bay'a*). It is also this aspect of Yazīd's caliphate that Ibn al-Jawzī attacks first.

ʿAbd al-Mughīth claims that Yazīd's rule (*wilāya*) was legitimate, since it was established with the consent of the *umma* except for five individuals: Ibn Abī Bakr, Ibn ʿUmar, Ibn al-Zubayr, Ḥusayn, and Ibn ʿAbbās.<sup>57</sup> Of these, Ibn ʿUmar, who fled to Mecca after Muʿāwiya proclaimed Yazīd as successor and again when Yazīd assumed office, is singled out to bolster the latter's legitimacy as caliph. According to ʿAbd al-Mughīth, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal had said that Ibn ʿUmar eventually pledged allegiance to Yazīd, and therefore denying Ibn ʿUmar's actions entails slandering Ibn Ḥanbal.<sup>58</sup> If even an obstinate individual like Ibn ʿUmar pledged allegiance to Yazīd, the latter's caliphate must be valid.

Against this, Ibn al-Jawzī replies, "We have mentioned that when Ibn ʿUmar heard about Yazīd's [efforts to obtain his] oath of allegiance, he fled to Mecca, and it was said to him, 'If you refuse [to offer your allegiance], we will kill you,' and so he pledged allegiance [to Yazīd] under duress (*darūratan*)...out of fear for his own life."<sup>59</sup> By adducing the example of Ibn ʿUmar in backing Yazīd's legitimacy, ʿAbd al-Mughīth "only looked at [Ibn ʿUmar's] oath of allegiance in a superficial manner (*ṣūrat al-mubāyaʿa*) and forgot that it was given out of compulsion (*ʿan ikrāh*)."<sup>60</sup> Moreover, "no one who depended on Yazīd (*yuʿawwilu ʿalayhi*) consented to pledging allegiance to him [voluntarily]; even the populace denied it, except that they remained silent out

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<sup>57</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Radd*, p. 77.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 77-78.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

of fear for their own lives.”<sup>61</sup> Because Yazīd’s rule was established based on force (*qahrān*), without voluntary oaths of allegiance from even his own supporters, it was illegitimate.

Both ‘Abd al-Mughīth’s and Ibn al-Jawzī’s arguments hinge on whether an oath of allegiance pledged under duress (*darūratān*) is legitimate—the former claiming that it is, while the latter writes unfavorably of it. As seen in Chapter One, though they did not regard it as an independent method of appointing a caliph, most Ḥanbalīs before and during Ibn al-Jawzī’s time recognized the legitimacy of a caliph who took power by force, based on the following statement attributed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: “He who seizes power by the sword so that he becomes caliph and is called Commander of the Faithful, such that it is not permissible for anyone who believes in God to pass a night without recognizing him as imam, whether pious or sinful, he is the [rightful] Commander of the Faithful.”<sup>62</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī’s teacher, Ibn al-Zāghūnī, frames this as a form of consensus (*ijmā’*) taking place under difficult circumstances (*‘alā muḍāyaqa*), like a disturbance due to a delay or when someone lacking certain qualifications obtains power by the sword.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, by the sixth/twelfth century, usurpation had already been given thorough treatment as a method of obtaining the caliphate by Juwaynī, though he only recognizes its validity under dire circumstances.<sup>64</sup> Viewed in this context, Ibn al-Jawzī’s invalidation of allegiance obtained through duress represents a departure from not only the mainstream Ḥanbalī, but also the general Sunni views of his time.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>62</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Virtues*, vol. 1, pp. 324-25; Christopher Melchert, “Early Ḥanbalī Creeds” (online resource: <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:3f641916-8c75-4114-8e90-db25de3fa7be>). Also quoted in Abū Ya‘lā, *Mu‘tamad*, p. 238; idem, *Aḥkām*, p. 28.

<sup>63</sup> Ibn al-Zāghūnī, *Īdāh*, p. 611.

<sup>64</sup> Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate*, pp. 105-7; Siddiqui, “Power vs. Authority,” pp. 203, 206 n. 39.

Ibn al-Jawzī seems to acknowledge that he was of the minority opinion regarding the illegitimacy of an oath of allegiance obtained out of coercion:

The religious scholars have ruled in favor of the validity of an imamate established by force in circumstances of duress. The jurists have concluded by consensus that the imamate is obligatory because well-ordered religious and worldly affairs aimed at revelation are not obtained except by an imam who is obeyed. Therefore, the appointment of an imam is obligatory. The proof of this is that human beings are in need of association by nature, but humans tend towards injustice and are in need of restraint so that worldly and religious affairs are kept safe.<sup>65</sup>

Much of the wording here is similar to Ibn al-Jawzī's justification of the necessity of the caliphate in the *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter.<sup>66</sup> But when presented as a premise for a caliphate founded on force, it leaves Ibn al-Jawzī caught in a bind and he does not muster any arguments against this majority opinion.

The use of the term *ḍarūra* to frame Ibn 'Umar's oath to Yazīd also provides it with an additional layer of religio-legal significance. In Islamic law, the concept of *ḍarūra* denotes a state of necessity resulting from circumstances that may oblige an individual to carry out an action prohibited by the law.<sup>67</sup> Thus, Ibn al-Jawzī's characterization of Ibn 'Umar's oath to Yazīd as one pledged under *ḍarūra* might suggest that the swearing of allegiance to a sinful caliph like Yazīd is analogous to a legally prohibited action under normal circumstances.

### 5.6.3. Husayn as Rightful Caliph

Perhaps realizing that attacking Yazīd's *bay'a* is not sufficient to invalidate his legitimacy as caliph, Ibn al-Jawzī moves on to Yazīd's qualifications, another key component of the Sunni caliphate discourse. To underscore his model of an ideal caliph, six qualifications are listed: (1) companionship with the Prophet (*ṣuḥba*), (2) lineage (*nasab*; i.e., being from the Quraysh), (3)

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<sup>65</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Radd*, p. 78.

<sup>66</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>67</sup> Y. Linant de Bellefonds, "Ḍarūra," *EP*<sup>2</sup>.

courage (*najda*), (4) competence (*kifāya*), (5) piety (*wara*'), and (6) religious knowledge (*ilm*).<sup>68</sup> Aside from the qualification of *ṣuḥba*, which reflects the proximity of Yazīd and Ḥusayn to the time of the Prophet, the list is a fairly standard one encountered in most Sunni treatments of the caliphate in *kalām* works.

Ibn al-Jawzī proceeds to deny Yazīd's legitimacy on the basis of caliphal qualifications: "Yazīd never came close to [Ibn Abī Bakr, Ibn 'Umar, Ibn al-Zubayr, and Ibn 'Abbās] in any of these [qualifications]." <sup>69</sup> He continues, "The characteristics of the imam and qualifications of the imamate are all found in Ḥusayn, and no one in his time came close [in terms of qualifications]." A brief excursus on the *afḍal* (most excellent) vs. *maḍdūl* (less excellent) debate follows, whereby Ibn al-Jawzī adduces two historical anecdotes—the election of Abū Bakr and Abū Bakr's appointment of 'Umar as caliph—in support of Ḥusayn as the most excellent man of his time (*al-afḍal*), whose suitableness surpasses even that of other eminent Companions such as Ibn 'Abbas, Ibn 'Umar, and Ibn al-Zubayr.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, the fact that the Iraqis wrote to Ḥusayn promising to pledge allegiance to him after he arrived in Kufa shows that they deemed him to be most deserving (*al-aḥaqq*) of the caliphate.<sup>71</sup> In arguing for Ḥusayn's legitimacy—as the man who should have been caliph—over Yazīd, Ibn al-Jawzī also challenges the dominant Sunni historiographical vision of his time, which generally recognizes the legitimacy of Yazīd's caliphate despite misgivings about his actions and behavior. Even if one is ready to write off Yazīd, Ibn al-Jawzī's elevation of the most paradigmatic figure in Shī'ism over and above important

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<sup>68</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Radd*, p. 80.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., pp. 79-80.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

Companions in the Sunni tradition, such as Ibn ‘Abbās, runs the risk of offending the orthodox sensibilities of his Sunni traditionalist and Ḥanbalī peers, a situation to which Ibn al-Jawzī was no stranger when it came to his theological views.<sup>72</sup>

Without a valid oath of allegiance and lacking the caliphal qualifications, Yazīd was an illegitimate caliph in Ibn al-Jawzī’s eyes. But even if one were to acknowledge the legitimacy of his caliphate, was it lawful for Ḥusayn to rebel against him when he ruled unjustly and impiously?

#### 5.6.4. The Limits of Obedience

For ‘Abd al-Mughīth, the answer to the above question is “no,” since obedience to rulers is obligatory even if they rule oppressively. He quotes Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal as saying, “I believe in fighting alongside the imams even if they are oppressive and in praying behind every one [of them], whether pious or sinful, just as Ibn ‘Umar prayed behind al-Ḥajjāj.”<sup>73</sup> As mentioned in Chapter One, this saying is usually cited in Ḥanbalī creeds declaring the impermissibility of rebelling against an unjust and impious ruler. In Ḥanbalī books of theology, a *ḥadīth* pronouncing it impermissible to oppose sinful imams as long as they establish prayer for the believers and rule according to the Qur’ān is usually cited to the same effect.<sup>74</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzī offers a corrective against this; in his view, the obligation to obey oppressive rulers is only imposed in a situation of necessity (*li-mawḍi‘ al-ḍarūra*), just as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s statement, “We obey the pious and sinful, and whoever seizes power by the sword,” was expressed

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<sup>72</sup> Especially with respect to the issue of anthropomorphism. See Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, pp. 38-43; Hoover, “Ḥanbalī Theology,” pp. 632-33.

<sup>73</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Radd*, p. 80.

<sup>74</sup> Abū Ya‘lā, *Mu‘tamad*, p. 243; Ibn al-Zāghūnī, *Īdāh*, pp. 630-32; al-Khallāl, *Sunna*, vol. 1, pp. 76, 110-11.

to caution against civil discord (*hidhran min al-fitna*).<sup>75</sup> At first glance, Ibn al-Jawzī's position does not appear to differ much from 'Abd al-Mughīth's, since both men appeal to the legacy of Ibn Ḥanbal. But the qualifiers of "necessity" (*ḍarūra*) and "civil discord" (*fitna*) make all the difference—Ibn al-Jawzī implies that if there is no situation of necessity or discord in sight, no obedience is due a sinful ruler. Obedience is conditional only upon the ruler governing with piety and justice. As with 'Abd al-Mughīth, Ibn al-Jawzī's corrective is also rooted in Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's stance affirming that although obedience is due to rulers, obedience is not due to one who disobeys God.<sup>76</sup> This subtle yet significant rhetorical move provides Ibn al-Jawzī with some leeway to argue in favor of Ḥusayn's rebellion against Yazīd. Again, his use of the term *ḍarūra* in this context accentuates the religio-legal significance of the issue—obedience to sinful rulers is now made analogous to a legal prohibition under regular circumstances.

Ibn al-Jawzī also dismantles 'Abd al-Mughīth's statement that even Ibn 'Umar prayed behind the Umayyad governor al-Ḥajjāj. He argues that the Companions only prayed behind him and endured his wrongdoings out of necessity; al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī cursed him but forbade fighting him due to fear of civil strife.<sup>77</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī cites ten reports on the iniquities of al-Ḥajjāj and the Umayyads to bring to the reader's mind examples of sinful rulers who ought to be cursed.<sup>78</sup> We read about al-Ḥajjāj delaying prayers, not praying at the stipulated times, unlawfully killing other

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<sup>75</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Radd*, p. 81.

<sup>76</sup> Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 9, p. 124; al-Khallāl, *Sunna*, vol. 1, pp. 75, 113-14; al-Sarhan, "Early Muslim Traditionalism," pp. 180-81, 189-93. Despite Ibn Ḥanbal's insistence that one who disobeys God is not owed obedience, he was careful to condemn rebellion against unjust and sinful rulers. When asked to join the revolt against the caliph al-Wāthiq, he is reported to have advised the jurists who joined the revolt to repudiate the caliph in their hearts but not openly disobey him and cause disunity among Muslims. See Ḥanbal b. Ishāq b. Ḥanbal, *Dhikr miḥnat al-imām Aḥmad b. Hanbal*, ed. Muḥammad Naghash (Cairo: Maṭba'at Nashr al-Thaqāfa, 1977), pp. 81-82; al-Khallāl, *Sunna*, vol. 1, pp. 132-34; Melchert, *Aḥmad ibn Hanbal*, p. 13-14, 93.

<sup>77</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Radd*, p. 81.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-86.

Muslims, and collecting *zakāt* not due to him. Other reports contain anecdotes of the pious caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz debasing al-Ḥajjāj and censuring the Umayyad notables on their acts of transgression.<sup>79</sup>

#### 5.6.5. Justifying Ḥusayn’s “Rebellion”

With Yazīd’s legitimacy as caliph stripped away and unconditional obedience towards sinful rulers nullified, the stage is set to discuss Ḥusayn’s rebellion against Yazīd. According to Ibn al-Jawzī, ‘Abd al-Mughīth had labeled Ḥusayn a *khārijī* in *Faḍā’il Yazīd*.<sup>80</sup> This is no mere casual remark, since the word *khārijī* could lend itself to various interpretations.<sup>81</sup> While it was used in early legal discourses for rebels in general,<sup>82</sup> it eventually came to denote a group of Muslims who seceded from ‘Alī in protest against his proposal to submit to arbitration the differences arising out of ‘Uthmān’s murder. This group, known as the Khārijites, would eventually go down in history as dissidents with a reputation for excessive zeal, and for labeling Muslims who did not join their camp as unbelievers, the doctrine of *takfīr*. The more extremist Azraqī and Najdī wings declared that such Muslims, along with their wives and children, could be legally killed, enslaved, and have their property plundered.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> These anecdotes are also found in Ibn al-Jawzī’s biography of ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Sīra wa-manāqib ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz*, pp. 47-48, 64, 107, 133-35, 141.

<sup>80</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Radd*, p. 86.

<sup>81</sup> On the ambiguity of the term, see Jeffrey T. Kenney, *Muslim Rebels: Kharijites and the Politics of Extremism in Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 43-48.

<sup>82</sup> Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, p. 118.

<sup>83</sup> Kenney, *Muslim Rebels*, p. 24; Adam Gaiser, *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers: The Origin and Elaboration of the Ibādī Imāmate Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 39; Keith Lewinstein, “Kharijis,” in *The Princeton Encyclopedia Of Islamic Political Thought*, eds. Bowering et al., pp. 294-95.

This posed a problem for jurists formulating the *aḥkām al-bughāh*, which stipulate a more humane treatment of rebels by ruling authorities than that given to brigands or highway robbers (*muḥāribūn*). Nevertheless, most jurists—especially the Shāfi‘īs—extended the rules underscoring the benevolent treatment of rebels to the Khārijites. They argue that as fanatic as the Khārijite belief system might have been, it was after all a form of pretext (*ta’wīl*). Radical ideas do not cast the Khārijites outside the purview of the *aḥkām al-bughāh*.<sup>84</sup> But there were also jurists who were less forgiving, some claiming that the Khārijites ought to be treated as brigands given their violent means of rebellion, others arguing that they should be killed for causing chaos but not for their rebellion.<sup>85</sup> These positions show that laws concerning the Khārijites were far from conclusive. Therefore, ‘Abd al-Mughīth’s calling Ḥusayn a *khārijī*, instead of *bāghī*, might reflect an early Islamic juridical practice of calling any rebel a *khārijī*. Or it could have been intended to place Ḥusayn on a plane of ambiguity and to concurrently make Yazīd’s brutal response to his rebellion somewhat more palatable.<sup>86</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzī’s approach to Ḥusayn’s rebellion in the *Radd* comes in two parts, the first in a short interjection immediately after the reports on Yazīd ridiculing Ḥusayn’s head:

There is nothing conceited about the actions of ‘Umar b. Sa‘d and ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād [in killing Ḥusayn]. What is truly conceited were Yazīd’s own godforsaken actions, his poking Ḥusayn’s mouth with a cane, and his sending Ḥusayn’s head back to Medina. ... Is it permissible to do this [even] to the Khārijites? Has it not been decreed that [even] they are to be given the dignity of being prayed over and buried? Yazīd’s statement that he had the right to enslave [Ḥusayn’s family] is itself sufficient proof that he should be cursed, even if he had respected Ḥusayn’s head when it arrived,

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<sup>84</sup> Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, pp. 77, 151-52, 156-57, 171-72, 191-92.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184-85, 248-49.

<sup>86</sup> Ibn Taymiyya mentions that this view was held by extremist groups, such as the *nāṣiba* (a pejorative term used by the Shī‘ites to designate the adversaries of ‘Alī and the *ahl al-bayt*) who declared Ḥusayn to be a *khārijī* who should be killed because he disrupted the unity of the Muslim community. Some even called him the first rebel in Islam to rebel against the holders of power. Ibn Taymiyya deems these views to be excessive. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj*, vol. 4, pp. 553, 585.

prayed over it, not placed it in a large basin, and not poked it with a cane when he had already achieved his goal of killing [Ḥusayn]. But he was driven by ignorant malice.<sup>87</sup>

This brief rumination touches on the *aḥkām al-bughāh*. Like Abū Ya‘lā’s “depoliticized” treatment of the Yazīd problem discussed earlier, Ibn al-Jawzī is concerned here with how Yazīd dealt with Ḥusayn in relation to the latter’s status as a rebel. He only differs from Abū Ya‘lā in one respect: Abū Ya‘lā thinks Yazīd deserved to be cursed for killing Ḥusayn after defeating him, while Ibn al-Jawzī condemns Yazīd for making fun of Ḥusayn’s head and for not giving him a proper burial. This difference aside, both scholars kept in line with the *aḥkām al-bughāh*—we do not come across a discussion of whether Ḥusayn’s rebellion was lawful or whether Yazīd deserved to be resisted in the first place.

In a later part of the treatise, Ibn al-Jawzī takes the debate one step further when he responds to ‘Abd al-Mughīth’s claim that Ḥusayn was a *khārijī*. This response comes right after Ibn al-Jawzī had stripped away Yazīd’s caliphal legitimacy by invalidating his qualifications and the oaths of allegiance pledged to him. At this point, the question of whether Ḥusayn’s rebellion was lawful becomes irrelevant, and Ibn al-Jawzī’s terse response attests to this:

We say, however, that a *khārijī* is one who rebels against someone who has a legal right [to rule]. But Ḥusayn rebelled to resist falsehood and to establish what is rightful.<sup>88</sup>

Though short, this statement is carefully worded and best captures Ibn al-Jawzī’s juristic prudence in addressing the Yazīd problem. There is no doubt that he approves of Ḥusayn’s actions in going against Yazīd, but we get no indication—or elsewhere in the treatise—that Ḥusayn had rebelled against Yazīd as a caliph who fell into sin.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Radd*, pp. 63-64. I am grateful to Mohamad Ballan for helping me with this translation.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., pp. 86-87: *qulnā innamā yakūnu khārijī li-man kharaja ‘alā mustahiqq wa-innamā kharaja al-Ḥusayn li-daf‘ al-bāṭil wa-iqāmat al-ḥaqq*.

Ibn al-Jawzī's juristic prudence can only be fully grasped when we put the legal discourse of the *aḥkām al-bughāh* into conversation with Sunni historiographical views and the Sunni political discourse on the caliphate. In the *aḥkām al-bughāh*, a rebel is one who refuses to obey the just ruler and resists by fighting him. Ibn al-Jawzī's narration of Yazīd's reign using reports from the anti-Umayyad Iraqi historiographical tradition aim to drive home the point that Yazīd was sinful and unjust. His analysis of the oaths of allegiance pledged to Yazīd and his caliphal qualifications—both key subjects in the Sunni caliphate discourse—makes clear that he does not consider Yazīd a rightful ruler. By the time the reader arrives at the statement quoted above, the overall sense is that Yazīd was merely a false claimant to power, not a ruler to begin with. In that case, Ḥusayn cannot be considered a “rebel” as defined in the *aḥkām al-bughāh*. This renders moot the question of whether Ḥusayn was acting lawfully in “rebellious” against Yazīd.

Moreover, when the above passage is read alongside Ibn al-Jawzī's invalidation of Yazīd's caliphate and endorsement of Ḥusayn as the most excellent man (*al-aḥdāṭ*) of his time who should have been caliph, Ibn al-Jawzī could be implying that it is in fact Ḥusayn who was the rightful caliph and Yazīd the rebel, hence turning the entire framework of the *aḥkām al-bughāh* on its head.<sup>89</sup> It then follows that Yazīd was doubly wrong—for overstepping the *aḥkām al-bughāh* in his treatment of Ḥusayn while not being a legitimate ruler at all. For Abū Ya'īlā, who operated within the framework of *aḥkām al-bughāh*, Ḥusayn remained a rebel who was dealt with unjustly while Yazīd's legitimacy as caliph remained unscathed. Ibn al-Jawzī's approach, on the other hand,

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<sup>89</sup> There were indeed jurists, such as Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), who deemed Umayyad caliphs like Yazīd, Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, and 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān to be rebels against Ibn al-Zubayr, even though it was Ibn al-Zubayr who challenged Umayyad rule and was ultimately defeated. In Ibn Ḥazm's line of reasoning, a ruler who rules unjustly is to be treated as a rebel; if he terrorizes the people, he is to be considered a bandit. See Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, pp. 48, 213-14.

demonstrates how various elements of Sunni historical, legal, and political discourses can be synthesized to simultaneously condemn Yazīd and justify Ḥusayn's actions.<sup>90</sup>

The foregoing arguments do not rule out the possibility that Ibn al-Jawzī was influenced by political ideas outside the Ḥanbalī school of law. At first glance, the statement quoted above seems to belong less to a Ḥanbalī who denounced rebellion and the deposition of a sinful ruler, and more to a Mu'tazilite scholar who "emphasized the need for a just imām and the obligation of the community to remove an unjust imām, if necessary by force."<sup>91</sup> We see this in the writings of Mu'tazilite scholars such as al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869)<sup>92</sup> and 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025), who even claims that this position was established by the consensus of the Companions of the Prophet (*bi-ijmā' al-ṣaḥāba*) and that there was no disagreement among them over it.<sup>93</sup> As mentioned before, some Shāfi'īs and Ash'arites also permitted deposition of a sinful ruler. The idea that Ibn al-Jawzī was influenced by these pro-deposition claims is not too far-fetched of a claim to make as his theological ideas show marked influences from Mu'tazilism and Ash'arism, especially with regard to the issue of anthropomorphism.<sup>94</sup> Considering that the caliphate was usually discussed in

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<sup>90</sup> Unlike Abū Ya'lā's "depoliticized" treatment of the Yazīd problem, Ibn al-Jawzī's treatment of the Yazīd problem is quite characteristic of what Abou El Fadl (ibid., pp. 284-86, 330-31) calls the "revisionist" discourse on rebellion, which is that although rebellion is unlawful in the first place, "if a people rebels against a ruler because of his injustice, even if they are seeking to overthrow him, they are not to be considered rebels. ... The main emphasis of the revisionist trend was not on justifying rebellion, but on withdrawing support from unjust rulers." However, if a rebellion breaks out, Muslims should not assist the rebels or the rulers.

<sup>91</sup> Madelung, "Imāma"; Lambton, *State and Government*, p. 37; Crone, *Political Thought*, p. 229; Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, p. 90.

<sup>92</sup> Jamāl F. El-ʿAṭṭār, "The Political Thought of al-Jāḥiẓ with Special Reference to the Question of *Khilāfa* (Imāmate): A Chronological Approach," Ph.D. dissertation (Edinburgh, 1996), vol. 1, p. 181-82, 208-9, 218, summary in vol. 2, pp. 439-40; Charles Pellat, "L'imamat dans la doctrine de Ḡāḥiẓ," *Studia Islamica*, 15 (1961), pp. 47-49.

<sup>93</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, vol. 20, part 1, p. 203.

<sup>94</sup> Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, pp. 62-63: "If Ibn al-Jawzī's own theological stance was in many ways shaped by the non-anthropomorphist tradition within medieval Ḥanbalism, it is clear that he also drew on theological sources outside the school in the formulation of his position. Indeed, in theological matters Ibn al-Jawzī's position as articulated in *Kitāb Akhbār al-ṣifāt* can best be described as eclectic. ... Ash'arite influence can most readily be seen in Ibn al-Jawzī's insistence on the distinction between the *ṣifāt* and the *awṣāf*, but also to some extent in his understanding of the mutually interdependent relationship between reason and revelation, and his stand on the question of the divine

treatises on theology, it is possible that the influence of Mu‘tazilite-Ash‘arite political doctrines went hand in hand with Ibn al-Jawzī’s adoption of their theological views.

Despite the possible influence of the Mu‘tazilites and Ash‘arites, Ibn al-Jawzī’s approach to rebellion was much more subtle than theirs. He musters various components of Sunni historical, legal, and political discourse to delegitimize Yazīd’s caliphate and to endorse Ḥusayn’s rightful claim as caliph and his revolt against Yazīd, but nowhere in the *Radd* does Ibn al-Jawzī argue that a sinful ruler ought to be resisted and deposed. His shifting of the debate from one on the permissibility of rebellion to one on the question of legitimacy allowed him to have it both ways: writing against sinful and unjust rulership and yet adhering to the main contours of Ḥanbalī political thought. To make the overt claim that Ḥusayn was right to rebel against Yazīd *qua* sinful and unjust caliph would be to veer completely off course from the mainstream Ḥanbalī political tradition, since most Ḥanbalī scholars before and during Ibn al-Jawzī’s time categorically rejected deposition and rebellion. At the same time, it had the potential to brand him as a scholar whose ideas incite conflict. Given these circumstances, Ibn al-Jawzī had to tread carefully in crafting his refutations of ‘Abd al-Mughīth.

### 5.7. Later Ḥanbalī Reception of Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Radd*

In time, Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Radd* came to be remembered for two issues: his permitting of Yazīd’s cursing and his views on rebellion. The treatise was most likely written around the same

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attributes. Mu‘tazilism’s contribution to Ibn al-Jawzī’s thought can be seen in his emphasis on the importance of reason vis-à-vis revelation, but Mu‘tazilism’s influence is most evident in his approach to exegetical questions—especially in his reliance on the linguistic sciences (grammar, philology, and lexicography), and on literary criticism in dealing with the anthropomorphic expressions found in the Quran and the Sunna and, above all, in his consistent preference for *ta’wīl* (i.e., metaphorical exegesis).” According to Swartz (ibid., pp. 41-43, 56-64), Ibn al-Jawzī’s move towards the Shāfi‘ī-Ash‘arite position regarding deposition of an impious caliph in this context might have paralleled the shift in his theological views, which gradually showed marks of influence from Ash‘arism and Mu‘tazilism after al-Mustaḍī’s expulsion of the Turkish emirs in 569/1173.

time as or shortly before *Kitāb Akhbār al-ṣifāt*, in which Ibn al-Jawzī sets out his theological views and condemnations of anthropomorphism within the Ḥanbalī school. Merlin Swartz has argued that Ibn al-Jawzī’s tensions with his Ḥanbalī peers owed much to theological differences, which contributed to his increasing alienation from the school, and this was a time “when the author’s relations with the Ḥanbalī school of Baghdad were strained, perhaps even close to the breaking point.”<sup>95</sup> Indeed, the Yazīd problem represented another fault line between Ibn al-Jawzī and his colleagues. In *Kitāb Akhbār al-ṣifāt*, the general Ḥanbalī reticence towards cursing Yazīd is mentioned alongside anthropomorphism as issues that Ḥanbalī scholars have supposedly been “insinuating into the doctrine of [Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal],” and hence “brought shame and dishonor to the school.”<sup>96</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzī’s pro-cursing position did not seem to resonate with the majority of Ḥanbalīs during or after his time. According to a *fatwā* issued by the Syrian Ḥanbalī scholar ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī (d. 600/1203), it is forbidden to criticize Yazīd since this may lead one to do the same to his father Mu‘āwiya and open the door to conflict (*fitna*).<sup>97</sup> About a century later, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), another Syrian Ḥanbalī, names Ibn al-Jawzī among the Ḥanbalīs who permit the cursing of Yazīd, but adds that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and the Prophet forbade cursing anyone by name, even if they were sinners (*fussāq*). Yazīd should neither be cursed nor loved. Ḥusayn was indeed killed unjustly as a martyr (*qutla maẓlūman shahīdan*), but the killing of the prophets, ‘Alī, and ‘Uthmān were greater offenses and calamities. Yazīd might have been a sinner, but he was still a

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<sup>95</sup> Swartz (ibid., pp. 33-45) places the composition of the *Kitāb Akhbār al-ṣifāt* “sometime in the 580s (between 1185 and 1192).”

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 124: “You have embellished your doctrine with a narrowly partisan devotion (*‘aṣabīya*) to Yazīd [b. Mu‘āwiya] even though you know quite well that the founder of the school actually permitted the cursing [of Yazīd].”

<sup>97</sup> Al-Sarhan, “Early Muslim Traditionalism,” p. 142.

Muslim and better than certain rulers in history. Ibn Taymiyya follows these claims with passages exonerating Yazīd of the acts he had been accused of committing against Ḥusayn, the Medinans, and the Ka‘ba.<sup>98</sup>

The reception of Ibn al-Jawzī’s views towards rebellion by Ḥanbalī scholars is more convoluted and deserves more scrutiny. His statement claiming that “Ḥusayn had rebelled to resist falsehood and to establish what is rightful” was carefully worded so as to not carry the connotation that one should rebel against a ruler who had fallen into sin. But in the eyes of later Ḥanbalī scholars, to even suggest that Ḥusayn was right to rebel was simply too radical a statement to make. It also ran the risk of being misread. Ibn Mufliḥ (d. 763/1362), an eighth/fourteenth-century Syrian Ḥanbalī jurist, paraphrases numerous passages from the *Radd*—including that of Ḥusayn rebelling to resist falsehood—in his treatise *al-Ādāb al-shar‘iyya* when discussing the issue of cursing.<sup>99</sup> These quotations hint that Ibn Mufliḥ was aware of and has perhaps even read the *Radd*. Immediately after these passages, however, he quotes his teacher Ibn Taymiyya (referred to as “*al-shaykh* Taqī al-Dīn”): “Ibn al-Jawzī permitted rebellion against an unjust [ruler]” (*qad jawwaza Ibn al-Jawzī al-khurūj ‘alā ghayr al-‘ādil*),<sup>100</sup> which recasts Ibn al-Jawzī’s ideas in a more radical light.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj*, vol. 4, pp. 550, 553, 557-60, 567-69, 574-86; idem, *Majmū‘at al-fatāwā*, ed. ‘Āmir al-Jazzār and Anwar al-Bāz (Mansoura: Dār al-Wafā’, 1998), vol. 4, pp. 295, 308-10; al-Sarhan, “Early Muslim Traditionalism,” pp. 143.

<sup>99</sup> Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mufliḥ, *al-Ādāb al-shar‘iyya*, eds. Shu‘ayb al-Arna’ūt and ‘Umar al-Qayyām (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risāla, 1999), vol. 1, pp. 285-87. On Ibn Mufliḥ, see George Makdisi, “Ibn Mufliḥ,” *EF*<sup>2</sup>; Daniella Talmon-Heller, “Ibn Mufliḥ,” *EF*<sup>3</sup>. Ibn Mufliḥ is a good yardstick for measuring the reception of Ibn al-Jawzī’s ideas since he was one of the most widely cited Ḥanbalī jurist in the ninth/fifteenth century. See Christopher Melchert, “The Relation of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya to the Ḥanbalī School of Law,” in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, eds. Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), pp. 148-53.

<sup>100</sup> Ibn Mufliḥ, *Ādāb*, vol. 1, p. 287.

Ibn al-Jawzī's statement on Ḥusayn's uprising would go on to be cited as a legal precedent in Ḥanbalī law books, though by way of Ibn Taymiyya's misconstrued formulation. In the chapter on *aḥkāṃ al-bughāh* in Ibn Muflīḥ's Ḥanbalī law compendium, *Kitāb al-Furū*, it is stated: "Ibn 'Aqīl and Ibn al-Jawzī permit rebellion against an unjust ruler, and they mention Ḥusayn's rebellion against Yazīd for the sake of establishing what is rightful." Ibn Muflīḥ also mentions non-Ḥanbalī scholars: Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) condones rebellion against a ruler who transgresses, even if it involves war and weapons; Nawawī (d. 676/1277) permits the deposition of an unjust ruler only if it does not lead to greater harm. Ibn Muflīḥ proceeds immediately to refute the pro-rebellion positions by saying, "The transmitted texts (*nuṣūṣ*) of Aḥmad [b. Ḥanbal stipulate] that [rebellion] is not permitted and that it is an innovation that contradicts the Sunna. Thus he called for patience. ... Our teacher [i.e., Ibn Taymiyya] said that the greatest grounds for the breakout of most civil wars (*fitan*) is the lack of patience, since there are [only] two reasons for civil strife: ignorance or lack of patience."<sup>101</sup> One century later, Ibn Muflīḥ's statement would be cited verbatim by al-Mardāwī (d. 885/1480), a ninth/fifteenth-century Syrian Ḥanbalī jurist, in his law compendium, itself a detailed commentary on another Ḥanbalī law book by the Syrian Ḥanbalī jurist Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223) entitled *al-Mughnī*.<sup>102</sup> As in Ibn Muflīḥ's *Furū*, Ibn al-Jawzī's position is mentioned in the chapter on the *aḥkāṃ al-bughāh*, with Ibn Muflīḥ's line about Ibn 'Aqīl and Ibn al-Jawzī reproduced word for word.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Ibn Muflīḥ, *Kitāb al-Furū*, ed. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 2003), vol. 10, p. 180-81. Brought to my attention in Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, pp. 239 n. 9, 286 n. 161.

<sup>102</sup> Melchert, "Relation of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya," p. 148.

<sup>103</sup> 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī al-Mardāwī, *al-Inṣāf fī ma'rifat al-rajjih min al-khilāf 'alā madhhab al-imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiḳī (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1955-1958), vol. 10, p. 311. Ibn al-Jawzī's position is not mentioned in the corresponding section in Ibn Qudāma's *Mughnī*, nor in his other law books. See Muwaffaq al-Dīn b. Qudāma, *al-Mughnī*, eds. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī and 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥulw (Riyadh: Dār 'Ālam al-Kutub li'l-Ṭibā'a wa'l-Nashr wa'l-Tawzi', 1997), vol. 12, pp. 237-63; idem, *al-Muqni' fī fiqh al-imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, eds. Maḥmūd al-Arnā'ūt, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Arnā'ūt, and Yāsīn Maḥmūd al-Khaṭīb (Jeddah: Maktabat al-Sawādī, 2000), pp. 446-47; idem, *al-Kāfi fī fiqh al-imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*,

In sum, Ibn al-Jawzī's position on rebellion resounded enough to be cited as a legal precedent in Ḥanbalī legal compendia, but as a precedent that ought not to be followed. It did not matter that he carefully framed Ḥusayn's act as one that was against a false claimant to power rather than an unjust and sinful caliph. The fact that he had defended Ḥusayn at all was enough of a red flag for politically conservative Ḥanbalī scholars during and after his time. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya's and Ibn Mufliḥ's misconstruing of his views undermined their juristic prudence and prevented them from having any lasting impact on future generations of Ḥanbalīs.

#### 5.8. Ibn al-Jawzī's Juristic Prudence in the Context of al-Nāṣir's Caliphate

Ibn al-Jawzī's juristically prudent approach to the Yazīd problem might also have something to do with the caliph al-Nāṣir. Ibn al-Jawzī most likely wrote the *Radd* between 575/1180 and 583/1187 when a young and ambitious al-Nāṣir was beginning to assert his claim as the supreme Muslim overlord in the Islamic world. Al-Nāṣir's policies and actions were in contrast to those of his father al-Mustaḍīr, who remained largely confined to the caliphal palace and patronized (mainly Ḥanbalī) religious institutions and scholars.<sup>104</sup> Yet al-Nāṣir's ascension to the caliphate did not mark the end of political support for the Ḥanbalīs in Baghdad, and Ibn al-Jawzī continued to preach at the caliphal palace and drew large crowds.<sup>105</sup>

Nevertheless, there was a sense that al-Nāṣir had begun keeping tabs on Ibn al-Jawzī's sermons. On one occasion, when Ibn al-Jawzī was delivering a sermon, the caliph asked him who between Abū Bakr and 'Alī was the best man after the Prophet, a question that was intended to

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eds. Muḥammad Fāris and Mas'ad 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Sa'danī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1994), vol. 4, pp. 54-59.

<sup>104</sup> For an account of al-Nāṣir's activities during the early part of his reign, see Hartmann, *An-Nāṣir*, 86-90, 93-96, 137-44, 175-78; idem, "al-Nāṣir Li-Dīn Allāh," *EI2*; Mason, *Two Statesmen*, 88-99.

<sup>105</sup> Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa'l-Mudhakkirīn*, p. 34; Hartmann, *An-Nāṣir*, pp. 187-88.

confound him. Ibn al-Jawzī gave a careful, two-pronged answer that satisfied both the Sunnis and the Shī‘ites: “The best of men after him was he whose daughter married the other (or he who had married the daughter of the other)” (*man kānat ibnatuhu taḥtahu*).<sup>106</sup> Given the high-profile rivalry between ‘Abd al-Mughīth and Ibn al-Jawzī as well as al-Nāṣir’s tight supervision of communications, it is quite likely that the caliph was aware of what both men had written on the Yazīd problem.

These political circumstances might explain Ibn al-Jawzī’s cautious approach when discussing Ḥusayn’s uprising against Yazīd. As much as al-Nāṣir disliked uncompromising defenses of Yazīd, ‘Abd al-Mughīth’s forbidding of Yazīd’s cursing on the grounds that it will prevent people from cursing the present caliph and rebelling against him would have been music to his ears. Although Ibn al-Jawzī supported the cursing of Yazīd, he did not do so to align himself with al-Nāṣir, but rather out of his disdain for what he perceived to be Yazīd’s sinful acts. If he had gone further by overtly claiming that Ḥusayn was right to rebel against an unjust and sinful caliph like Yazīd, he could have risked ruffling feathers in the caliphal court.

## 5.9. Conclusion

This paper has examined the *Radd* as a composite text that speaks to questions related to Islamic political theory, law, theology, and historiography. It has explored the larger meaning and ramifications of what began as a simple question posed to Ibn al-Jawzī during a sermon. Although

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<sup>106</sup> This statement, in its Arabic original, is a rhetorical play on words. The Sunnis in the audience could take the person to whom the statement referred to mean Abū Bakr, whose daughter married the Prophet Muḥammad, while the Shī‘ites could interpret it to mean ‘Alī, who married Muḥammad’s daughter Fāṭima. For accounts of this incident, see Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, vol. 3, pp. 141-42; Dhahabī, *Ta’rīkh*, vol. 42, p. 293; Suyūṭī, *Ta’rīkh al-khulafā’*, pp. 495-96; *History of the Caliphs*, p. 475; Muḥammad b. Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb*, ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, Ḥasanayn Muḥammad Rabī‘, and Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ ‘Āshūr (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Jāmi‘at Fu‘ād al-Awwal, 1953), vol. 4, pp. 166-67; Hartmann, *An-Nāṣir*, p. 170; Mason, *Two Statesmen*, p. 99 (though here the incident is misread as Ibn al-Jawzī posing the question to al-Nāṣir as a way of testing al-Nāṣir’s sectarian allegiances).

the *Radd* was written to address the debates over the cursing of Yazīd in late sixth/twelfth-century Ḥanbalī circles in Baghdad, it also touched on key nodes of contention in Islamic political thought, namely what constitutes a legitimate caliphate, the limits of obedience, and the permissibility of rebellion. These subjects are usually discussed in Sunni discourses on the caliphate usually found in theological treatises. By itself, the Sunni caliphate discourse displays an aversion towards deposing an unjust and sinful caliph, let alone rebelling against him. The legal discourse of the *aḥkām al-bughāh* also has its own share of gaps: it advocates for the humane treatment of rebels but hardly addresses what constitutes rightful rule and when rebellion is justified. Ibn al-Jawzī synthesized these two discourses in an eclectic fashion, filling their respective gaps in the process. This approach allowed him to legislate against Yazīd without explicitly advocating for rebellion. Instead of openly making the argument that Ḥusayn had been right in rebelling against Yazīd *qua* sinful ruler, Ibn al-Jawzī mustered arguments from the Sunni caliphate discourse and used reports and anecdotes from the anti-Umayyad Iraqi historiographical tradition to delegitimize him as caliph. When the time came for Ibn al-Jawzī to address Ḥusayn's actions in going against Yazīd, the question of rebellion had become irrelevant as Yazīd was no ruler to begin with.

Ibn al-Jawzī's treatment of the Yazīd problem speaks to his ameliorative politics. Indeed, it does not tell us whether rebellion against an unjust and sinful ruler like Yazīd is permissible and, if so, when and how it is appropriate. But they draw our attention to how Muslim scholars drew on various discursive strategies to negotiate power and protest against dismal political situations. They show us how scholars saw spaces within inherited doctrines and traditions as opportunities to craft subtle solutions to difficult questions.

## CONCLUSION

Raphael Hythlodæus: That's exactly what I was saying—there's no room at Court for philosophy.

Thomas More: There's certainly no room for the academic variety, which says what it thinks irrespective of circumstances. But there is a more civilized form of philosophy which knows the dramatic context, so to speak, tries to fit in with it, and plays an appropriate part in the current performance. That's the sort you should go in for. ... The same rule applies to politics and life at Court. If you can't completely eradicate wrong ideas, or deal with inveterate vices as effectively as you could wish, that's no reason for turning your back on public life altogether. You wouldn't abandon ship in a storm just because you couldn't control the winds. On the other hand, it's no use attempting to put across entirely new ideas, which will obviously carry no weight with people who are prejudiced against them. You must go to work indirectly. You must handle everything as tactfully as you can, and what you can't put right you must try to make as little wrong as possible. For things will never be perfect, until human beings are perfect—which I don't expect them to be for quite a number of years!<sup>1</sup>

The above passage, from the English humanist philosopher Thomas More's (d. 1535) classic work *Utopia*, is part of a fictionalized debate between More and the traveler Raphael over the question of intellectuals serving in politics. The politically averse Raphael is adamant that his services would not be welcome at court because kings hardly consider the advice of philosophers, and even if they did, service at court would inevitably lead him to compromise his upright principles. More, however, sees things differently. He tries to persuade Raphael—though rather ineffectively—that there are spaces in politics for intellectuals to maneuver if they manage their political engagements with tact. Achieving this might involve treading the path of the scholar-rhetorician who is sensitive to the “dramatic context” of courtly affairs.

More's advice alludes to his humanist belief in the importance of eloquence in cultivating virtues.<sup>2</sup> Although Ibn al-Jawzī lived in an entirely different time period and cultural milieu, he would likely find much to agree with in More's stress on tact when dealing with the ruling

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. and trans. Paul Turner, reissued edition (London: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 41-42.

<sup>2</sup> On More's humanism and his critique of humanism, see Skinner, *Foundations*, Vol. 1, pp. 217-18, 255-62.

authorities.<sup>3</sup> Tact is the cornerstone of the scholar-rhetorician's approach to public and private affairs. As expressed by More in the passage above, it implies an acknowledgement of uncertainty and arbitrariness in political life, but yet allows room for fluid mediation between various groups with the aim of achieving societal reform. It pays attention to the emotive and affective aspects of human nature, and admits that perfections and totalizing reforms are nearly impossible. Nevertheless, in the stormy sea of politics, a scholar-rhetorician who proceeds with tact can at least steer the ship safely, if not calm the waves.

In Ibn al-Jawzī's parlance, tact is best represented by the term *talattuf*, connoting the preacher's politeness and civility when admonishing rulers. *Talattuf* should be adopted regardless of the ruler's personality in order for rulers to even pay attention in the first place. When confronted with the volatile tempers of rulers, gentle words of praise intermixed with subtle homiletics, rather than bold and harsh rebuke, are more likely to move their hearts towards the goal of pious rulership. In fact, one can easily imagine the above dialogue as taking place between Ibn al-Jawzī and Ghazālī over the practice of admonishing rulers. Ghazālī's all-or-nothing approach, as expressed in his *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, leans closer to Raphael's insistence that "there's no room at Court for philosophy," whereas Ibn al-Jawzī urges preachers to modulate their speech in accordance with the ruler's personality and to employ *talattuf* in whatever circumstances they find themselves. Tact and eloquence are key to political reform in a time of harsh and unpredictable politics. In Ibn al-Jawzī's context, they constitute the pillars of his ameliorative politics, which adopts an educative, mediatory, and pragmatic approach to reform.

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<sup>3</sup> Based on his analysis of Ibn al-Jawzī's homilies, Merlin Swartz has argued the case for applying the term "humanist" to Ibn al-Jawzī. See his "Arabic Rhetoric and the Art of the Homily in Medieval Islam," p. 40.

Given that Baghdad remained a scholarly hub of the Islamic world in the fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries, long past the glorious days of Abbasid imperial prestige, much of political theorizing during this period was informed by political developments there.<sup>4</sup> It was after all the seat of the Abbasid caliphate, still a symbol of Muslim unity. Political conflicts between the Abbasids and the Seljuqs were often played out in Baghdad, causing urban disorder. The flaunting of arbitrary authority by Seljuq representatives and the public nature of punishments meted out precipitated societal stress and uncertainty among the populace.<sup>5</sup> These developments produced varied responses from Muslim religious scholars.

Some became disillusioned with politics and withdrew from public life. The more extreme ones chose the path of renunciation, viewing seclusion from society and a life of poverty as the only way towards the cultivation of piety. The fact that Ibn al-Jawzī directs most of his criticisms in *Ṣayd al-khāṭir* and *Talbīs Iblīs* towards these extreme ascetics implies that they formed a significant part of Baghdad's social fabric.<sup>6</sup> Seclusion from society often went hand in hand with denying the government any form of legitimacy. Some even claimed that rulers are not necessary for humankind since human beings are perfectly capable of managing their own affairs. The extreme ascetics believed that only by avoiding contact with governmental officials can one shun the forbidden things (*ḥarām*) potentially obtained through illegal taxation.

Many groups of Sunni scholars accepted the legitimacy of the powers that be even if it meant "stretching the principles to keep reality within their domain."<sup>7</sup> During the first century of

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<sup>4</sup> For a brief discussion of Baghdad's status as an intellectual center during the Buyid period, see Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, pp. 31-36.

<sup>5</sup> Lange, *Justice*, pp. 25-98.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*, pp. 44-46, 143-46; idem, *Talbīs Iblīs*, pp. 167-80.

<sup>7</sup> Crone, *Political Thought*, p. 255.

Islam, there were avenues for groups to rebel against the ruling powers in hopes of forging an ideal Muslim polity based on piety and justice. Hence we read of the frequent armed rebellions by the Khārijites and the early ‘Alids against the Umayyads. The Khārijites, in particular, insisted on the imam’s merit (which consisted of piety, knowledge, and military skill) and called for rebellion and deposition if he fell short of these ideals.<sup>8</sup> But as the state’s coercive apparatus grew over time, large-scale rebellions diminished in number. Khārijism lost its popularity in the urban centers of Islam, whereas the Shī‘ites found ways to live alongside their Sunni counterparts while maintaining the integrity of their belief system. Meanwhile, Sunni scholars accepted the brute reality that replacing bad rulers with good ones had become virtually impossible. Even with a successful rebellion, one had to contend with the societal disorder that ensued. It was better to bear with a tyrant who was capable of maintaining order, which at least ensured that scholars could go about practicing their craft in peace, than to rebel and risk anarchical chaos.

Many scholars achieved a compromise by conceding that the best way to make sense of the political realities around them was to accept the legitimacy of any ruler, even if he came to power through force and did not fulfill the prerequisites of an ideal imam such as piety, justice, and knowledge. Sunni jurist-theologians such as Māwardī, Juwaynī, and Ghazālī enshrined these principles into theory by incorporating existing socio-political realities into their respective conceptions of legitimate government. Such realities included the enlarged arena of power holders, which now included the Buyids, Seljuqs, and other regional dynasties; the much reduced *de facto* authority of the Abbasids; and the emergence of the jurists, theologians, preachers, and Sufis as important players in Islamic societies. This juridical response was undoubtedly accommodationist,

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 57-58; Lewinstein, “Kharijis.”

but no less creative than other intellectual responses to the new developments in the fifth/eleventh- and sixth/twelfth-century Islamic world.

As for conducting affairs with rulers, there were several approaches available to Sunni scholars who did not pursue the path of renunciation.<sup>9</sup> One involved serving at the ruler's court and accepting government posts. Even though Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal kept his distance from the Abbasid court in Baghdad, many of his future Ḥanbalī adherents had no qualms about accepting state positions.<sup>10</sup> The fact that criticisms of scholars who served at court abound in biographical writings goes to show that this practice was commonplace. Some accepted support and honors from rulers but did not serve them.<sup>11</sup> Then there were those who adopted an approach closer to the renunciants. These scholars conceded that the rulers of their day were legitimate, regardless of how they attained power and how they carried themselves, but urged their peers to stay away from the court due to its corrupting effects. Rather than renouncing the world, these mildly ascetic scholars earned income through their occupations or trades, in hopes that their income would allow them to be self-sufficient enough to not depend on political appointments for their livelihoods.<sup>12</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzī's political thought displayed marks of influence from these various intellectual trends, but also departed from them in several significant ways. He clearly admired and embraced the ascetic ideal. But for him this ideal was best represented by figures such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak and Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ, who practiced mild asceticism and what Yaacov Lev calls "socially minded pietism." Extreme ascetics who claimed to renounce worldly wealth

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<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Lev, "Piety and Political Activism."

<sup>10</sup> Cook, *Commanding*, pp. 123-27, viewing Ibn al-Jawzī as a pro-state preacher.

<sup>11</sup> Lev, "Piety and Political Activism," pp. 311-12.

<sup>12</sup> Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, pp. 162-66.

almost always ended up begging others for money, and some even sought patronage from the wealthy to make ends meet.<sup>13</sup> Like Ibn Ḥanbal and Fuḍayl, Ibn al-Jawzī also saw the potential for corruption when religious scholars associated with rulers and thus generally cautioned against visiting rulers. But he did not categorically reject this practice if it was undertaken with the sincere aim of commanding right and forbidding wrong. While Ibn Ḥanbal and Fuḍayl preferred to remain aloof from the Abbasid caliphs of their day, Ibn al-Jawzī called for scholars with sincere intentions to take up the task of admonishing rulers and for rulers to take these scholars seriously. The political sphere was a potential site of corruption, but it could also serve as a platform for reform. In fact, Ibn al-Jawzī's ideal polity is a learned one in which the scholars dictated the rulers' punitive and coercive policies, while the rulers acted as the scholars' executive functionaries in these respects. Instead of rulers co-opting the scholars, it is the scholars who co-opt the rulers into their vision of ideal government. Rulers who follow the injunctions of the learned ensure the well-being and righteousness of the *umma*. These ideas were very likely informed by Ibn al-Jawzī's experience as the leading preacher of Baghdad who received patronage from the caliph and maintained close relations with members of the caliphal court.

Ibn al-Jawzī's vision of scholars taking over the rulers' coercive functions speaks to his emphasis on piety and knowledge as the twin pillars of ideal Islamic rule. This is spelled out in his panegyrics and biographies, as discussed in Chapters Three and Four. This argument requires further qualifications. Most Muslim scholars, regardless of sectarian affiliation, would agree with Ibn al-Jawzī that piety and religious knowledge are crucial for a ruler. The importance of piety and knowledge for the average believer is enshrined in the Qur'ān and the Sunna. As model rulers in the Sunni historical imagination, the Rāshidūn caliphs exemplified pious and learned rulership.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*, pp. 65-67, 164-69, 221-22, 465-66.

The same can be said of the twelve imams of the Twelver Shī'ite tradition. However, as political fragmentation and civil strife plagued the *umma* in the centuries following the death of the Prophet, the question then is how far were thinkers willing to stretch these ideals to preserve social order and stability. In juridical and theological writings, piety and knowledge were often the first qualities to be forgone when faced with a less-than-ideal caliphal candidate.<sup>14</sup> Yet rarely would we find writers who were willing to dispense with the prerequisite of competence in governance (*kifāya*). Many, especially the Ḥanbalīs, in fact argued that a ruler who came to power by force should be obeyed, whether he was pious or sinful, just or unjust.

Comparisons between Ibn al-Jawzī and other thinkers regarding piety and knowledge would be more straightforward if he had written a comprehensive treatment of rulership in the juridical-theological format. But given that he did not write a comprehensive treatise on theology and that almost none of his legal writings are extant today, we have to make do with the extant works at our disposal and infer Ibn al-Jawzī's position from them. With these works, I have observed that piety and knowledge are consistently embedded throughout his political discourses. His biographies of the Abbasid caliphs show us *what* piety and knowledge specifically entails with regard to rulers, while his work of advice and panegyric to al-Mustaḍīr demonstrates *how* he ensured that these ideals are implanted in government. Unlike mirrors for princes that focus more on concrete matters of governance, Ibn al-Jawzī's *Miṣbāḥ* reads like a long homily featuring Abbasid ancestors known for their pious behavior and commitment to religious knowledge. The anecdotes in the work hardly mention the caliphs' political and military aptitude. Instead, we find recurring mentions of caliphs surrounding themselves with scholars and weeping in fear of

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<sup>14</sup> For Juwaynī, the requirement that the imam-caliph be of Quraysh descent was the least obligatory, followed by knowledge and piety. See Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate*, pp. 103-5.

punishment in the afterlife. The same can be said of the Abbasid biographies in the *Muntaẓam*, where even problematic caliphs are given a pious and learned gloss. Al-Ma'mūn, who went down in Islamic history as a caliph who harbored heretical views, is rehabilitated as a caliph devoted to the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. The biography of the spendthrift al-Muqtadir is inserted with anecdotes detailing his assiduous dedication to prayer and fasting.

Even more telling of Ibn al-Jawzī's commitment to piety and knowledge is his treatment of Yazīd's caliphate. His argument that Yazīd's caliphate was invalid because the oath of allegiance was obtained out of duress is a clear departure from the general Sunni political doctrine, which accords legitimacy and obedience to rulers who seize power by force. This view even made its way into several Ḥanbalī creeds. For Ibn al-Jawzī, the contract of the caliphate should be conferred upon those who have fulfilled the caliphal qualifications and have obtained support from the populace at large. His endorsement of Ḥusayn's candidacy for the caliphate because his qualifications surpassed those of Yazīd and even other Companions of the Prophet shows that Ibn al-Jawzī entertained little or no compromise at all when it came to selecting the ideal candidate for the caliphate. Yazīd's ability to maintain order should not have eclipsed Ḥusayn's fulfillment of the caliphal prerequisites.

Furthermore, Ibn al-Jawzī's unwillingness to disregard and write away Yazīd's sinful behavior is another indication of his commitment to pious rulership. He was particularly upset with the majority of Sunni Muslims who defended Yazīd's caliphate and sinful acts just for the sake of enraging the Shī'ites.<sup>15</sup> This intellectual trend became more palpable beginning in the sixth/twelfth century. In his biography of Yazīd, the Syrian historian Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571/1176) glosses over Yazīd's fondness for wine and singing girls and counters this with reports about his transmission

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<sup>15</sup> Ibn Mufliḥ, *Kitāb al-Furū'*, vol. 10, p. 181. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd al-khāṭir*, p. 385.

of *ḥadīth* and his image as a worthy successor to Mu‘āwīya. His troops’ massacre of Ḥusayn and members of the Prophet’s family and their pillage of Medina were only given half a page of treatment.<sup>16</sup> Writing a few centuries later, Ibn Kathīr, another Syrian historian, claims that Yazīd was only accused of being a sinner (*fāsiq*) for drinking wine and indulging in unlawful acts, but not of heretical acts (*zandaqa*).<sup>17</sup> Sinning rulers should not be resisted. Therefore, Ḥusayn and the Medinans had no one but themselves to blame for the massacre and plunder committed by Yazīd’s troops. Ibn al-Jawzī, however, was not willing to let Yazīd off the hook. He insisted that Yazīd should be cursed for sanctioning, if not ordering, these acts.

In short, although we still do not have a conclusive picture of how Ibn al-Jawzī compares to other Sunni scholars in his emphasis on piety and knowledge, we can surmise based on the above arguments that he would be far less compromising than the jurists and theologians in dispensing with these qualities when times got rough. On the contrary, a pious and learned ruler was all the more required during harsh times. Such a ruler would guarantee the spiritual well-being of the believers and would be able to lead the *umma* towards salvation.

With regard to the question of what to do with a ruler who forsook his piety after assuming office, Ibn al-Jawzī knew he was treading on dangerous grounds. An uncompromising insistence on piety could potentially steer him towards Khārijite and Mu‘tazilite political theory, which holds that the community has the right to rebel against and depose an imam who has sinned. By Ibn al-Jawzī’s time, the Khārijites and the Mu‘tazilites were no longer a prominent presence in the urban centers of the Islamic Middle East. The view of them as unorthodox sects was highlighted repeatedly in traditionalist Sunni religious writings. It would thus not be wise for Ibn al-Jawzī to

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<sup>16</sup> Lindsay, “Caliphal and Moral Exemplar?”

<sup>17</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, vol. 8, p. 232.

pursue this path given his increasingly fraught relationship with his traditionalist Ḥanbalī peers. Although he was very much in favor of Ḥusayn going against Yazīd, the majority Sunni stance was that a sinful imam should not be resisted and deposed. His juristically prudent approach in tackling the Yazīd problem represents another instance of his ameliorative politics. It was an intellectually pragmatic approach that struck the middle ground between the Khārijites and Mu‘tazilites on one hand and the Sunni jurist-theologians on the other. By shifting the debate from one on the permissibility of rebellion to one on legitimacy, and by writing in favor of Ḥusayn’s actions without explicitly condoning rebellion against a sinning ruler, Ibn al-Jawzī shows his awareness of the discursive resources available to him as well as his sensitivity towards the intellectual and political climate of his day.

In sum, the case of Ibn al-Jawzī should alert us to the fact that there were thinkers who did not necessarily forgo, but instead placed added emphasis on, the qualities of justice, piety, and knowledge when politics got rough. This of course does not imply that Ibn al-Jawzī was not concerned with order in insisting on the ruler’s moral qualities. With the exception of the Khārijites and a few fringe groups, hardly any Muslim intellectual during Ibn al-Jawzī’s time would put forward political theories that advocated for ideals at the expense of social order. As long as rulership was deemed obligatory for the community of believers, social order was a corollary necessity. A political theory that allows room for disorder is ultimately self-defeating. To quote Sheldon Wolin, “No political theorist has ever advocated a disordered society, and no political theorist has ever proposed permanent revolution as a way of life.”<sup>18</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzī was not a political theorist, but his ameliorative approach to politics demonstrates that an insistence on justice, piety, and knowledge need not be antithetical to order

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<sup>18</sup> Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, p. 9.

and stability. In fact, his political discourses could even suggest an alternative vision of order and stability. Most jurists and theologians, when confronted with tumultuous politics, came to the conclusion that the moral qualities of the ruler ought not to take precedence over the need for societal order. Their political thought can be best encapsulated by the adage, “Better sixty years of tyranny than one night of anarchy.” Ibn al-Jawzī very likely saw things differently. In connection with his emphasis on the ruler’s moral qualities, he might have viewed social order as the natural result of a pious, just, and learned ruler. This is because only such a ruler could induce a righteous community that lived according to the precepts of the *sharī‘a* by way of a moral contagion. A righteous community steers away from the injustices and conflicts that lead to disorder.

My study of Ibn al-Jawzī’s political thought also suggests the need to take into account qualities such as piety and proficiency in religious knowledge in the analysis of political discourses. This might sound quite puzzling to modern sensibilities as such qualities hardly bear any impact on government and statecraft as we know them today. But such bewilderment reveals more about our modern study of political thought than about a medieval thinker like Ibn al-Jawzī. It is important to note that the academic enterprise of “the history of political thought” emerged in the United States during the late nineteenth century mainly as a study of how the core principles of democracy and popular government embodied by American political institutions eventually came to be.<sup>19</sup> Although the history of Islamic political thought had its origins in the pioneering works of British academics like Gibb and Lambton, the guiding questions were by and large similar to those posed by American historians of Western political thought: What were the limits on absolutism? Did subjects have any rights in relation to their rulers? What were the means of resistance against

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<sup>19</sup> John Gunnell, “History of Political Philosophy as a Discipline,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. George Klosko (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 60-62.

oppressive governments? This explains the slight tone of lament in the writings of Gibb and Lambton when they discovered that medieval Sunni Muslim thinkers did not spell out the means and procedures required for removing a sinful ruler.

A study of Islamic political thought that truly examines Muslim thinkers according to their own terms must take into account what they regarded as the key determinants of a successful polity. For pre-modern thinkers whose political worldviews consisted mainly of the divine, the ruler, and the ruled, qualities such as piety were conceived as making or breaking a given polity. Numerous studies in Islamic historiography have shown that the downfall of certain dynasties was often attributed to the rulers' impiety.<sup>20</sup> If the ancient Persian adage, "the people follow the religion of the ruler,"<sup>21</sup> often cited in medieval Muslim writings, is of any indication, thinkers like Ibn al-Jawzī did believe that a virtuous ruler could guarantee a community of believers that was upright in morals and belief. Qualities that we today relegate to the "religious" sphere of life were more often than not viewed as having a significant impact on society and politics.

At a broader level, Ibn al-Jawzī's political ideas point us towards new directions in the study of Islamic political thought. Rather than narrating the history of Islamic political thought as a linear trajectory of thinkers who gradually legitimized the principle of "might is right," modern scholarship would benefit from viewing it as made up of various discourses arguing for different visions of rulership. The variety of political discourses during the late Abbasid period ultimately reflects the ideological competition between rival schools of thought, different scholarly roles and preoccupations, as well as the shifting political dynamics between rulers, subjects, and the religious elites. While Ibn al-Jawzī's political discourses represent a preacher's perspective on

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<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, Yücesoy, "Meta-Narratives."

<sup>21</sup> Feldman, "Ethical Literature," et passim.

politics, as distinguished from those of the jurist-theologians who constitute the mainstay of modern scholarship on Islamic political thought, examining them opens a window into the diverse voices on politics during the late Abbasid period. It shows that the political crises of this period, far from stagnating political thinking, actually contributed to its vibrancy. Islamic political thought did not have to wait until the Mamluk and Ottoman periods to undergo a sudden burst of creativity. A more accurate picture of political thought during the late Abbasid period would contribute to more recent works on Mamluk- and Ottoman-era political thought by highlighting certain strands of continuity between Abbasid-era and post-Abbasid political thinking. The resulting history of Islamic political thought is therefore one that accounts for the sustained rigor of Muslim intellectuals across different eras in formulating ideas to make sense of and even alter the political circumstances unique to their own time and place.

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