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Mailing Address:
All correspondence should be addressed to:
AJIS, PO Box 669, Herndon, VA 20172-0669 USA
Phone: 703-230-2847 • Fax: 703-471-3922
www.ajis.org • ajis@iiit.org

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EDITORIAL

Editorial Note

DAVID H. WARREN

This issue of the *American Journal of Islam and Society* comprises three main research articles, which respectively engage with the themes of political loyalty, justice and the just ruler, and popular preaching. We begin with Abdessamad Belhaj's study, "Political Loyalty in Reformist Islamic Ethics: Resources and Limits." Belhaj's point of departure is to consider the work of three prominent Muslim scholars: the Egyptian-Qatari Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (1926-2022), the Mauritanian ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah (b. 1935), and the Iraqi-Qatari ʿAlī al-Qaradāghī (b. 1949). Belhaj examines these three thinkers' contributions to the question of political loyalty, especially when Muslims are the minority in non-Muslim contexts. In this informative and insightful work, Belhaj highlights the subtle differences in each authors' approach while also placing them in conversation with well-known European theorists such as Roger Scruton and Carl Schmitt. At the same time, Belhaj also notes some of the important limitations around the Muslim reformist view (as he defines his three subjects) with regard to the political loyalty of Muslims toward non-Muslims, especially in increasingly pluralist states and societies.

We then turn to Fadi Zatari and Omar Fili's contribution, "Justice and the Just Ruler in the Islamic Mirror of Princes." The article explores the concept of justice in the *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* literature, while also advancing an important critique of Muslim modernists' own criticism

of this body of work. As Zatari and Fili argue, modernist critics of this classical literature on justice and just rule have typically contended that pre-modern Muslim political thought lacked a proper definition of justice, and instead preferred to merely uphold an authoritarian status quo. Reductive views of the premodern tradition are increasingly coming under criticism from a range of angles, and this article contributes to that conversation in significant ways.

For our third research article for this issue, we then have Hatim Mahamid and Younis Abu Alhaija's work, "Popular Religious Preaching as Informal Education and its Impact on Medieval Islamic Culture." Their article considers the place of popular preaching in premodern Muslim culture and society, which the authors highlight also acted as a kind of mass education for the public. By considering a range of different popular preaching assemblies and gatherings, often sponsored by Sufi shaykhs or rulers, the authors show that the primary objective of these events and initiatives was the preserving of Islamic values and moral rules. At times, however, popular preaching also functioned simultaneously as a certain kind of propaganda, a form of political activity, and even as leisure.

This issue also includes two insightful forum pieces. The first is Mohamed Alio's contribution, "The Mazrui Dynasty: Serving Islam in East Africa" and the second is Shahzar Raza Khan's piece on the famous Urdu poet Akbar Allahabadi. This issue of the *American Journal of Islam and Society* also includes several book reviews, including Iymon Majid's review essay "Integrating Kashmir." Majid's essay considers two recently published and important works, Shahla Hussain's *Kashmir in the Aftermath of Partition* and Hafsa Kanjwal's *Colonizing Kashmir: State-Building under Indian Occupation.*

David H. Warren
Lecturer of Middle East Studies and Arabic
Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri
Assistant Editor, American Journal of Islam and Society

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ARTICLES

Political Loyalty in Reformist Islamic Ethics: Resources and Limits

ABDESSAMAD BELHAJ

Abstract

This article critically examines three authoritative Islamic discourses on political loyalty produced by prominent figures of Sunni reformist Islam: The Egyptian-Qatari Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (1926-2022), the Mauritanian ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah (b. 1935), and the Iraqi-Qatari ʿAlī al-Qaradāghī (b. 1949). First, I analyze the key arguments presented in each discourse: al-Qaradāghī advocates that allegiance is determined by fairness, whereas al-Qaraḍāwī retains a realist perspective on loyalty in context, while ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah argues for a complementary relationship between loyalty to religion and to the homeland. Second, I

Abdessamad Belhaj is a senior researcher in Islamic studies at the Research Institute for Religion and Society-NUPS, Hungary. He is the author of *Authority in Contemporary Islam: Structures, Figures and Functions* (Ludovika Egyetemi Kiadó: Budapest, 2023).

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discuss the three discourses in terms of the foundations, manifestations, and implications for political loyalty. Finally, I point out some of the limitations of the reformist notion of political loyalty toward non-Muslims, particularly in pluralist societies.

Keywords: Political Loyalty; Sunni Reformism; Ethics

Introduction

Loyalty is a moral foundation that is essential to politics, group identification, and religion. All communities and organizations construct an idea of loyalty to form and maintain alliances and partnerships. The ultimate penalty for breaking this rule of commitment is betrayal and treason.[1] In particular, a code of loyalty is crucial for political ethics since it illustrates the norms of inclusion, in-group dynamics, and mechanisms of exclusion as well as the guidelines for creating a shared society, especially in a world that is increasingly pluralist. Loyalty has been defined as "perseverance in an association to which a person has become intrinsically committed as a matter of his or her identity."[2] While betrayal entails cutting off disloyal people, the political virtue of loyalty entails binding loyal ones. To preserve continuity and order, religious communities, like political cultures, have a stake in making their codes of loyalty clear.

In Islamic political ethics, the question of loyalty is posed as follows: To whom should a Muslim give their support and be loyal to, to whom should he distance himself from and consider an enemy? We can distinguish between two positions within the Sunni realm: 1. Salafist absolutism, which sees no possible friendship or alliance with non-Muslims (though, Salafism is made up of a variety of discourse strands and stances, some are sophisticated and engaged with modernity while others are quietist or militant);[3] 2. and reformist Sunnism which supports a more nuanced position that takes into account alliances with non-Muslims in cases of peaceful and normal relations, based on values of justice and peace. The Salafist approach has been the focus of academic studies on Islamic political allegiance. Since terrorism perpetrated in the name of Islam has caused instability in many Western countries, most

loyalty research to date has focused on the securitization of allegiance, that is, the relationship between political loyalty and extreme Islamist ideologies and terrorism.[4]

The reformist stances on political loyalty is still not well understood or contextualized. Comparing reformist discourses on loyalty to Salafi arguments - particularly radical Salafism[5] - or envisioning the reformist perspective as a pursuit to adapt Islamic law to norms of Western citizenship, has been the main subject of inquiry.[6] Thus, it is necessary to consider Sunni reformist thinking on political allegiance as a moral basis of group identification, conceptualizing the self and the other, and its processes of forming alliances and creating enemies. This is all the more important since the Sunni reformist school of thought is authoritative and widely representative. This article aims to accomplish this task by closely examining the discourses of three important Sunni reformist figures: the Egyptian-Qatari Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (1926-2022), the Mauritanian ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah (b. 1935) and the Iraqi-Qatari ʿAlī al-Qaradāghī (b. 1949). First, I present each scholar's background, their place in the religious and political landscape, and the primary points of their discourse; second, I critically analyze the foundation, forms, and implications of the reformist conceptions of political allegiance in the context of international relations. Lastly, I also point out some of the limits in the reformist notion of political loyalty to non-Muslims, particularly in pluralist societies.

This article views political allegiance as a moral and social process that (re)builds and transforms identities. The theoretical framework underpinning this study also draws on the works of the sociologists Georg Simmel and Helena Flam. Simmel defined loyalty as the "activation of society" and the "inertia of the soul,"[7] while Flam views loyalty as a regular and important social emotion, asserting that gratitude and loyalty are the two emotions that solidify social relations and turn them into permanent institutions.[8] This paper also makes use of Jonathan Haidt's moral foundations theory, particularly his research on loyalty and disloyalty, which highlights the moral basis of the ways people and groups establish alliances, delineate boundaries, negotiate family, tribal, national, and religious loyalties, foster group cohesion, and engage in rivalries.[9] Political philosophy has also informed this article, particularly

the ideas of R. Scruton, who believed that virtue or friendship should be the foundation of governmental loyalty.[10] These authors share the belief that political allegiance is a moral and/or religious commitment rooted in a set of values that are shared by both communities and individuals, in addition to being a contract between citizens.

1. Reformism: Loyalty and disloyalty from a political realist perspective

Reformism, a mainstream school of thought in Sunni Islam that developed from Muḥammad ʿAbduh's (1849–1905) *iṣlāḥ* movement, takes a moderate and nuanced approach to loyalty in contemporary Islamic ethics. Reformists aim to strike a balance between upholding the tradition's spirit and contextualizing it in the present. They adhere to a concept of political relations between Muslims and non-Muslims on the basis of whether a group is hostile to Muslims or not (and not on the mere difference in religions). Three important voices, those of Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah and ʿAlī al-Qaradāghī, whose influences on Islamic movements and ethics in the West as well as in the Arabic speaking Sunni world have been substantial in the last 30 years, will serve as examples of the reformist perspective.

1.1. Al-Qaraḍāwī: Loyalty in context

Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī was an influential Egyptian Sunni jurist, theologian, and preacher who resided in Qatar from the 1960s until his passing in 2022. In particular, his impact has been felt in three areas: 1. Al-Qaraḍāwī's complete works (105 volumes) consist of approximately 170 books on Islamic law and ethics. 2. His enormously successful religious television programs (his al-Jazeera program drew millions of regular viewers). 3. The establishment of the International Union of Muslim Scholars in Qatar in 2004 (he presided over the latter organization from 2004 to 2018) and the European Council for Fatwa and Research in Dublin in 1997. To date, these two institutions have been instrumental in revitalizing Sunni Islam's legal thought.[11]

Al-Qaraḍāwī discussed the subject of loyalty in Islamic political ethics in several of his writings, but three in particular are important. First, he states in *al-Waṭan wa-l-muwāṭana fī ḍaw' al-uṣūl al-'aqadiyya wa-l-maqāṣid al-shar'iyya* (*The Homeland and Citizenship in Light of Theological Principles and the Higher Purposes of the Sharia*), at the outset of his argument, that Muslims have historically understood homeland, *waṭan* to mean the place where a person was born or raised, and with which they have a material and emotional relationship, signifying a sense of belonging and loyalty. This interpretation was not at odds with another idea, which holds that Muslims are more deeply and profoundly affiliated with Islam than they are with their native country or territory.[12] This allegiance and sense of belonging are owed to God, His Messenger, and the country that upholds these beliefs. A Muslim's pride, allegiance, and affiliation are all derived from accepting God as his Lord, Islam as his religion, and Muḥammad as his Messenger. The Islamic community thus becomes his family and brotherhood. To put it another way, according to al-Qaraḍāwī, religious and national allegiance are compatible with one another. Loyalty to one's homeland is an expression of commitment to a local identity that is defined by a territory; loyalty to the Islamic realm is still far more expansive and vast, delimited by religion rather than national boundaries.[13]

Al-Qaraḍāwī, therefore, believes that adherence to Islam and local identities can coexist. There is a hierarchy between the two kinds of loyalty, though. Islamic loyalty should be prioritized, and it eclipses national allegiance. In other words, if a person upholds their allegiance to Islam—that is, to God, the Islamic faith, and the Prophet Muḥammad's authority—they can support national loyalty as a supplement to Islam. However, if the latter loyalty is absent, then devotion to one's country has no ethical value. The essential and fundamental allegiance to be maintained is to Islam. Moreover, global allegiance to one's motherland might be asserted as a secondary and complementary loyalty. Nevertheless, under normal circumstances, allegiance to one's homeland and to Islam should not conflict.

The issue arises when a person's commitment to their homeland and allegiance to it clash with other affiliations and attachments.

Al-Qaraḍāwī admits that there can occasionally be a conflict of allegiance between one's allegiance to mankind, Islam, one's native country, or an ethnic group. One of these allegiances and loyalties must be given priority in this situation. In his view, there is only one solution to the dilemma of whether allegiance to Islam or the nation (or other allegiances) takes precedence above religion: preference should be given to loyalty to Islam because there is no alternative to religion, while there are alternatives to the homeland for example. Put differently, while homelands may vanish, Islam never does. This is, in fact, consistent with al-Qaraḍāwī's hierarchy of allegiance, which places the highest priority on fidelity to Islam.[14]

Al-Qaraḍāwī mentions two historical examples of steadfast allegiance to Islam and disappearing allegiances to one's native place. The first example is the Prophet Muḥammad and his companions, who faced a conflict between their religion and their homeland (Mecca). They left their homeland for the sake of God, as Mecca oppressed the believers, and limited their ability to spread the Islamic faith.[15] The second precedent, he argues, is that of nationalism, which emerged when the Islamic Caliphate was split apart and the idea of a single country and state was violated, turning Muslims toward a kind of fanaticism for their own states or mini-states as every nation strove to substitute allegiance to God, His Messenger, and the larger Muslim world with allegiance to its own tiny nation.[16]

Thus, according to al-Qaraḍāwī, Islamic faith is the cornerstone of political allegiance. Regarding the implications of this loyalty, he asserts that a Muslim's duty to his *umma* is to protect its boundaries and not permit anyone to assault it, take possession of its property, desecrate any of its holy symbols, or diminish the dignity of some of its children.[17] That is to say, this allegiance is divided between two domains: 1. the Islamic world as a whole composed of states and territories that make up the physical *umma.* 2. loyalty to Muslims as people whose integrity and dignity should be upheld and preserved outside the actual boundaries of the Islamic world, as a larger symbolic *umma.*

Coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims is a topic that al-Qaraḍāwī discusses in his *Fī fiqh al-aqalliyyāt al-muslima* (*On the*

Jurisprudence of Muslim Minorities). According to him, Islamic ethics makes a distinction between people who coexist peacefully with Muslims and people who harbor animosity toward them. Islamic morality dictates that non-Muslims that live in peace should be treated with respect and justice. While righteousness is superior to justice and denotes love and favor, justice is defined as fairness. To be just is to assert your rights, and to be righteous is to relinquish part of your rights. Giving someone their right without taking away from it is justice or fairness; giving someone more than their right while showing them compassion and favor is righteousness. And so, for al-Qaraḍāwī, the Quran prohibits association with those who are hostile to Muslims because they fought and opposed Muslims and forcibly removed them from their homes, much as Quraysh and the Meccan polytheists did to the Messenger and his companions.[18] In his view, the fact that it is acceptable to marry Christian and Jewish women and consume their food shows that Islamic ethics perceives no harm in friendship with non-Muslims who live in peace with Muslims. With this permission, close family and community ties are strengthened, and Muslims are encouraged to treat non-Muslims with kindness and respect in order to preserve positive social interactions.[19]

Finally, in his book *Ghayr al-muslimīn fī al-mujtam‘ al-Islāmī* (*Non-Muslims in the Islamic Society*), al-Qaraḍāwī stated the principle of tolerance towards non-Muslims in Islamic society. He maintains that Islamic ethics upholds the dignity of every person, regardless of their race, religion, or color. Islamic ethics also holds that religious differences among people are a result of God's will, who granted humans freedom and choice. It is not the role of a Muslim to force others to become Muslims. Therefore, Islamic ethics does not present a conflict between Muslims' duty to treat non-Muslims with justice and righteousness and their requirement to classify them as disbelievers. Islamic ethics teaches that God hates injustice, loves equality, requires high moral standards even towards polytheists, requires fairness, and punishes those who oppress others—even when they are Muslims oppressing non-Muslims.[20]

1.2. ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah: Complementarity of loyalty between religion and citizenship

Born in 1935, Bin Bayyah is a Mauritanian Sunni Muslim scholar who has had prominent roles in organizations pertaining to Islamic law and ethics in the Gulf States and Europe; Bin Bayyah is the head of the UAE Council for Fatwa and a key member of the Dublin-based European Council for Fatwa and Research.[21] ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah's text titled *al-Walā' bayna al-dīn wa-l-muwāṭana* (*Loyalty between Religion and Citizenship*) was published on the European Council for Fatwa and Research in Dublin website in 2014. Bin Bayyah begins by stressing the concept of having multiple loyalties:

> *From the perspective of the meaning of walā' (loyalty), it could be different depending on the context. This leads us to state that this concept is not rigid or a legal reality like prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Rather, it sometimes means belonging to the religion by supporting it and assisting its people, especially in the case of aggression against it. Here, we should refer to the Quranic verse 5:55 {Your true allies are God, His Messenger, and the believers––those who keep up the prayer, pay the prescribed alms, and bow down in worship}.[22] Loyalty could mean belonging in terms of kinship, and in here we should refer to the Quranic verse 33:6 {In God's Scripture, blood-relatives have a stronger claim than other believers and emigrants, though you may still bestow gifts on your protégé},[23] and the Quranic verse 19:5 {I fear [what] my kinsmen [will do] when I am gone, for my wife is barren, so grant me a successor––a gift from You}.[24] Loyalty could be formed by the bond of an oath and emancipation from slavery, as in the Quranic verse 33:5 {–if you do not know who their fathers are [they are your] 'brothers-in-religion' and protégés}.[25] […] There is a system of loyalties in Islam, indicated by a group of verses and hadiths of the Prophet, which encourage the development of virtues, whatever their source, and condemn vices, aggression, and tyranny.[26]*

In this text, ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah both restates and expands upon the idea of displaying multiple loyalties. He illustrates the polysemy of the term *walā'* in Islamic authoritative sources and demonstrates the range of contexts and usages of loyalty in Islamic ethics. As noted by Marina Rustow, *walā', wilāya, muwālāt* (loyalty) in medieval Islamic political thought indicated that God, friends, allies, sponsors, clients, rulers, political and religious organizations, could all be considered objects of allegiance.[27] By highlighting the various meanings of loyalty found in Islamic authoritative writings, ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah would be able to appeal to two audiences who have doubts about the possibility of Muslim allegiance to non-Muslim states: 1. Extremist Muslims who would find it difficult to refute this argument in favor of various loyalties by arguing that allegiance ought to be based on one's Muslim identity or religious beliefs only. Indeed, we can observe his usage of verses from the Quran to support his assertion, presumably in response to radical Muslims who would question him about it or use a single verse out of context. 2. The second group of people this discussion is intended for are ordinary Muslims who are unsure about how to balance their religious allegiance with their other commitments. Many Muslims were afraid that obtaining European citizenship would go against their Islamic affiliations, because they had been taught by Salafi preachers in Europe for a long time that the only valid loyalty that was acceptable was to Islam. Therefore, his remarks aim to absolve Muslims who believe they have de facto numerous allegiances to their families, ethnic groups, religions, and home countries and feel obligated to support all of them simultaneously.

ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah also expands here on the rationale behind Muslims' allegiance to non-Muslims. Beyond religion, loyalty is a virtue, and betrayal is a vice that is condemned along with other vices. This moral reasoning presents a sensible defense of Muslim loyalties, arguing that Muslims are urged to observe moral standards in addition to Islamic law (even if the latter can frequently be interpreted as ethical guidelines). Loyalty to one's home nation is, in fact, a necessary quality of virtue; moral coherence is essential in this situation as religious allegiance and patriotism are related. ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah thus shifts the focus of the discussion to a universal moral framework that holds that both Muslims

and non-Muslims share a moral code of virtue that governs plural societies. Yet, the relationship between loyalty to religion and to a nation is complex, as Bin Bayyah puts it:

> *Loyalty can be considered in the form of circles and ranks, and they can communicate and interact instead of clashing and fighting. Loyalty to religion is a given for every Muslim, and indeed for every religious person, and it is the highest peak of the pyramid of loyalties. It does not exclude loyalty to the homeland in the concept of citizenship that we referred to, as it is not incompatible with loyalty to religion as long as the citizenship contract does not include a departure from the religion, abandonment of rituals, or a restriction on a Muslim's freedom to live out his faith. The relationship between the citizenship contract and religion can be visualized in areas including what is legally required and of course desirable, such as the right to life, justice, equality, freedoms, protection of property, prevention of arbitrary imprisonment and torture, the right to social security for the poor, the elderly, and the sick, cooperation between members of society for the public good, and the duties that result from it, such as paying taxes and defense on behalf of the homeland against aggression and compliance with the laws in fulfillment of the citizenship contract. In reality, this is included in fulfilling the covenant and respecting its requirements, and this is included in loyalty to the religion {O you who have believed, fulfill [all] contracts}.*[28]

Here, the concepts of coexistence, diversity, and hierarchy of loyalty are reaffirmed by ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah. Even though religious commitment is the highest kind of loyalty, it can coexist with citizenship and loyalty to one's country for two reasons. On the one hand, a contract that clearly outlines the rights and obligations of Muslim citizens serves as the legal basis for citizenship. However, one issue that might make peaceful coexistence between loyalty to religion and to the homeland impossible is that the contract of citizenship should not contain any clause that requires a Muslim to give up their religion, rites, or freedom

of practice. In principle, there should be no issues at this point because every European citizenship contract guarantees the freedom of religion (I will discuss the topic of freedom of religion in Europe below). On the other hand, religion and citizenship can coexist ethically since Islamic ethics upholds many of the fundamental human rights that modern constitutions promote, such as the right to life and the pursuit of justice. Modern constitutions and Islamic ethics both strike a balance between these rights and the responsibilities that citizens have to their country of origin (homeland security for example). Then, Muslims should understand that, in order to completely implement Islamic ethics and the requirement of respecting agreements and contracts, they must demonstrate political loyalty to their home countries. ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah concludes his statement as follows:

> *Loyalty to Islam is not a hanging, exclusionary wall that bans every worldly relationship with people. It does not deny the foundation of faith, and does not mix love with hatred or submissiveness, and obedience with rejection of Islam. Rather, a Muslim should deal with people in order to bring about benefits and to ward off harm, and should exchange friendly greetings with them, and deal with them in accordance with the social and ethical conventions around good relationships with good words and beneficial deeds. This is in accordance with God's words in Quran 2:83: {Speak good words to all people},*[29] *and the Prophetic saying, as reported by al-Tirmidhī {behave with people with good morals}.*[30] *Friendships should be established, and covenants and deals should be concluded. All of this is approved by reason and accepted by the Prophet's conduct.*[31]

In the absence of religious persecution, ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah advocates for regular interactions with non-Muslims rather than separating Muslims from European societies. He makes use of two sets of loyalty ethics. First, he endorses the ethics of virtue, which he has already mentioned, restating that a Muslim should act and speak in a way that is respectful of non-Muslims, as the Prophet did. The ethics of friendship follow from the ethics of virtue, which consists of having cordial

interactions and preserving positive ties with non-Muslims. He thus supports an Aristotelian-Conservative theory of loyalty which states that friendship and affection serve as the basis for loyalty.[32] As Fletcher puts it, "loyalties crystallize in common projects and shared life experiences" since friendship "rests on loyalty, and requires an implicit understanding of continuity and reciprocal reliance, caring, relations and shared histories. And so, loyalty does not arise in the abstract but only in the context of particular relations."[33]

On the other hand, the pursuit of the public interest, which calls for collaboration to bring about advantages and prevent harm to others, is another moral justification for maintaining positive ties with non-Muslims. The ethical stance used by ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah in his argument regarding loyalty to non-Muslims may offer a means of bridging the doctrinal gap—and corresponding differences in beliefs—that Salafism emphasizes between Muslims and non-Muslims. It might also be a means of evading Islamic legal regulations for behavior in non-Muslim countries, which typically advise against assimilating into society. By emphasizing values, ethics also help to reconcile the traditional Islamic concept of *walā'* (loyalty) with the contemporary idea of citizenship.

1.3. ʿAlī al-Qaradāghī: loyalty as faith and fairness

ʿAlī Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Qaradāghī is the president of the International Union of Muslim Scholars and a central figure of authority in reformist Islam. He was born in 1949 in the Qara Dagh area of the Sulaymaniyah Governorate in Iraqi Kurdistan. He is a Kurdish–Iraqi Sunni and holds Qatari nationality; his family, which provided several religious scholars in the area, claims to be descended from al-Ḥusayn, son of ʿAlī. Al-Qaradāghī underwent his basic religious education in Qara Dagh, and then moved to Sulaymaniyah and Baghdad to expand his learning. He obtained his undergraduate degree in Sharia in 1975 at the Great Imam College in Baghdad, an M.A. in Comparative Jurisprudence from the Faculty of Sharia and Law at Al-Azhar University in 1980. He then went on to obtain his Ph.D. in Sharia and Law from Al-Azhar University in 1985 – with a dissertation in the field of contracts and financial transactions.

He joined the Faculty of Sharia at Qatar University in 1985 as Assistant Professor, and in 1995 he was promoted to the rank of Professor. He published more than 30 books and over one hundred research papers, most of which are on the subject of Islamic financial transactions, banking and economics, and Islamic jurisprudence. Al-Qaradāghī is active in a number of international Islamic organizations; he is Chairman of the Supreme Consultative Council for Interfaith Rapprochement of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (Jeddah) and Vice President of the European Council for Fatwa and Research (Dublin). He is also on the board of a number of Islamic banks and Islamic insurance companies inside Qatar, including the Qatar Islamic Insurance, and outside Qatar, including the Dubai Islamic Bank, Bahrain Investors Bank and First Investment in Kuwait.[34]

Al-Qaradāghī states in the introduction to his text on *al-walā' wa-l-barā'*, published in 2020, that so long as faith endures, Muslim believers remain faithful to one another. And when someone disobeys God, their loyalty does not come to an end. In a similar manner, loyalty continues among believers even when they quarrel. Even if they murder a Muslim, the believers still have loyalty and a sense of brotherhood. Loyalty does not terminate just because of a disagreement.[35] He asserts that there is no doubt that a Muslim must detest sins, especially those committed by believers or his brothers in faith, and so he abhors them.[36] However, according to Islamic law, al-Qaradāghī adds, a Muslim's detestation of sins is not permitted to turn him against other believers; instead, he loves them out of faith and prays for them, urging them to modify their disobedience using all methods at their disposal and in accordance with their abilities.[37] Al-Qaradāghī, therefore, bases his argument for Islamic loyalty on the mutual trust among Muslims. The year 2020, when the text was released, is rather notable for the fallout from Muslim-upon-Muslim strife in the Middle East that eroded mutual confidence. The tumultuous decade of 2010–2020, marked by the Arab Spring and its aftermath, the war in Iraq, among other factors, had deepened the political, ethnic, and religious splits among Muslims in the Middle East. Thus, al-Qaradāghī aims to restore trust between Muslims and emphasizes their shared communitarian identity as Muslims rather than focus on their piety.

Regarding disavowal, *barā'*, al-Qaradāghī argues that it targets specific acts rather than people.[38] Al-Qaraḍāwī ignored this crucial distinction which al-Qaradāghī adds to the reformist discourse: Islamic ethics place more emphasis on behaviors and attitudes than it does on people as a whole. So, there is no hatred toward a group of people or an individual, only a distance that is expressed via behavior or attitude.[39] To that end, al-Qaradāghī argues, the Prophet Muḥammad made every effort for more than twenty years to deal with the polytheists who disobeyed the covenants and expelled the Muslims. However, when it became evident to him that they were determined to oppose him, he disavowed them.[40] Al-Qaradāghī joins al-Qaraḍāwī in asserting that there is little doubt that it is forbidden for a Muslim to have loyalty to, love for, and support for those who combat Islam since the majority of God's teachings are centered on denouncing violent polytheists who waged war against Muslims.[41]

Al-Qaradāghī is more concerned with the claims of disavowal directed toward other Muslims. He attributes the division and rise of mistrust among Muslims to the Salafi movement's dissemination of an absolutist interpretation of the *al-walā' wa-l-barā'* concept. To counter Salafism, he utilizes the accusation of religious innovation known as *bid'a* (Salafism typically accuses its opponents of introducing new religious concepts). Al-Qaradāghī asserts that certain Salaf scholars consider it heresy for Islam to have as its official motto *al-walā' wa-l-barā'*, loyalty and disavowal. In so doing, he references early Muslim Sunni scholars such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d.855 CE), an important figure of authority for Salafis and conservative Sunnis, and who rejected the making of loyalty and disavowal a defining concept in Islam.[42] He continues by saying that before the Kharijite movement, which tried to excommunicate Muslims who committed serious faults as well as their adversaries by urging the obligation of disavowing them and the imperative of combating them, this expression (of loyalty and disavowal) was not employed by Muslims as a rallying cry. Al-Qaradāghī asserts that it is forbidden to use this concept as a catchphrase and a weapon to denounce Muslims and declare them to be unbelievers.[43]

Al-Qaradāghī uses this concept of loyalty of righteousness to describe the Islamic norm of relations with peaceful non-Muslims, much

like al-Qaraḍāwī. Al-Qaradāghī makes it clear that this norm is Quranic, and therefore authoritative, and requires Muslims to show loyalty of righteousness and charity towards peaceful non-Muslims. He bases his claim on two Quranic verses, specifically Q 60:8-9 (He does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with anyone who has not fought you for your faith or driven you out of your homes: God loves the just. But God forbids you to take as allies those who have fought against you for your faith, driven you out of your homes, and helped others to drive you out: any of you who take them as allies will truly be wrongdoers).[44] Disavowal is therefore restricted to those who started battling Muslims for their religion and drove them from their homes.[45]

In his conclusion, al-Qaradāghī calls for a Muslim ethics of balance (*fiqh al-mīzān*). This ethical perspective is based on two distinct scales: the scale of war, hostility, and eradication, which requires severity and disavowal to ward off and eradicate enemies, and the scale of peace and coexistence, which calls for righteousness, justice, and benevolence.[46] Moreover, he criticizes the Salafi movement's imbalanced view of allegiance and disavowal, which views non-Muslims as adversaries in and of themselves.[47] Additionally, al-Qaradāghī adopts a realist perspective toward international relations in which violence occurs and calls for a suitable response of self-preservation. Here, al-Qaradāghī exclusively encourages the disavowal of hostile non-Muslims who start wars against Muslims.[48] Similar to al-Qaraḍāwī, this conclusion suggests that international interactions should be approached from a political perspective rather than a theological one. Political conflict, or its lack thereof, is what determines loyalty; political loyalty can stem from more than just following the Islamic faith.

Al-Qaradāghī's reasoning often seeks to moderate Salafi rhetoric regarding loyalty to sinful Muslims and non-Muslims. *Fiqh al-mīzān*, or the ethics of balance, also refers to the ethics of moderation. His main points center on the need to temper the loyalty and disavowal dogma and upon treating both Muslims and non-Muslims fairly. Because sinful Muslims still share a Muslim identity with other Muslims, he does not permit their banishment; peace should bind together Muslims and non-Muslims.

This perspective may be explained by the context in which his text was published. The perception of Islam with regard to its interactions with non-Muslims suffered significant harm due to radical Islamism, which was particularly violent in the years 2013–2020, and was notably utilizing the dogma of loyalty/disavowal as a pretext to kill both Muslims and non-Muslims. It is also important to note that al-Qaradāghī wrote a significant book in 2018 called *Fiqh al-mīzān* (*Ethics of Balance*) in which he argues that in all aspects of religion and interpersonal transactions, balance should be maintained according to the values of justice, wisdom, and reason.[49] Between 2003 and 2020, the Muslim world (especially in the Middle East) experienced excesses that were brought about by both internal and external variables, including the complicity of some Islamic discourses in supporting terrorism. Al-Qaradāghī's balance draws on al-Qaraḍāwī's *wasaṭiyya* approach, and sets out to clarify that the core of Islam is one of moderation. *Wasaṭiyya* is a normative phrase that can imply either "the approach of the middle way" or "the way of moderation." Although these expressions suggest various things, many Muslim thinkers and religious organizations refer to their own perspective as "Islamically mainstream." Al-Qaraḍāwī's *wasaṭiyya*, which is the school of Islamic thought that has gained the most traction, asserts that it shuns both the overly tolerant (modernism) and rigid viewpoints (Salafism).

2. Discussion

Al-Qaraḍāwī, ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah and al-Qaradāghī, who represent a reformist stance on disavowal and allegiance, provide a coherent and authoritative Muslim discourse on the foundation of loyalty, its forms, and its flexibility to assist Muslims in reconciling multiple loyalties in non-Muslim contexts. Nonetheless, in a secular nation-state setting, this viewpoint has its own limits.

2.1. The foundation of loyalty

Roger Scruton, the British conservative philosopher, made the observation that as time passes, liberal thinkers and social scientists increasingly

attribute loyalty to political obligations, whereas conservatives and earlier sociologists believed that it is more likely to be based on friendship or virtue.[50] Carl Schmitt has reduced political actions and motives to the specific political distinction between friend and enemy,[51] while John Kleinig poses the question of whether loyalty is a practical disposition or only a sentiment.[52] This explains why, despite Muslims' best efforts, many groups would prefer to label Muslims as strangers and enemies, expecting Muslims to exhibit sentiments of loyalty and friendliness in addition to the duties outlined in their citizenship contract. Supporting a liberal interpretation of loyalty as the political duties of citizenship—that is, as a pragmatic attitude—is insufficient for conservatives in Western nations who demand a commitment based on sentiments and friendship.

We have seen how Sunni reformism rests its understanding of loyalty primarily on the existence of war or peace, rather than on the acceptance or rejection of Islamic belief or the legitimate religious and political system. However, Sunni reformism makes a distinction between loyalty to Muslims and non-Muslims. The former is based on community membership (solidified by the factor of religion), whereas the latter is based on whether or not non-Muslims attack the Muslim community. As long as they maintain cordial ties with non-Muslims, the norm is that loyalty to them is morally binding. Thus, political commitments to Muslims (because of their common communitarian unity) and non-Muslims (because of their peaceful interactions) serve as the foundation of loyalty.

Although al-Qaraḍāwī stresses that loyalty must be both a sincere attachment and a practical support—that is, both a feeling and a practical disposition—if we take into account the entirety of a person's relationships with both Muslims and non-Muslims, loyalty becomes evident as a practical disposition. Put another way, discord breeds disloyalty while harmony fosters loyalty. According to al-Qaradāghī, there should be mutual trust among Muslims and a communal sense of belonging that transcends disagreement. This would favor loyalty as sentiment over practical disposition. On the other hand, it is still practical as well since religious bonding and communitarian life between Muslims imply a set of obligations to be fulfilled. He makes it plain that, when it comes to

non-Muslims, loyalty is a practical disposition one should adhere to in times of peace. For ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah, a Muslim should act and speak in a way that is respectful toward non-Muslims and cultivate friendships with them, which entail friendly interactions and maintaining positive ties. He clearly supports the ethics of virtue and friendship as the foundation of relations with non-Muslims.

2.2. Implications of loyalty

Sunni reformism places a strong emphasis on the idea of *hostis* (public enemy), which Schmitt described as a fighting collectivity of people against another collectivity in a similar way. As Schmitt puts it "never in the thousand-year struggle between Christians and Moslems did it occur to a Christian to surrender rather than defend Europe out of love toward the Saracens or Turks. The enemy in the political sense need not be hated personally."[53] Thus, Sunni reformism concurs with other Muslim Schools of thought that links should be held together by allegiance to the Muslim community, although they disagree with Salafism in the ties to be maintained with non-Muslims (Salafism insists on the disavowal of non-Muslims). In other words, Salafism views non-Muslims or sinful Muslims as *inimicus* more than as *hostis* (the public enemy).[54] That is to say, the enemy is a rival in a struggle (of beliefs), a personal foe that one should despise. The three religious scholars under study here hold the opinion that hostility directed towards Muslims is the reason loyalty towards non-Muslims comes to an end. Hostility is defined by ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah precisely as the religious persecution of Muslims. The premise for the three scholars is that non-Muslims breach first the code of friendship, alliance, and loyalty that Muslims have formed with non-Muslims although hostility could manifest in many kinds of attacks. Therefore, it would be unjust to ask Muslims to adhere to this loyalty code.

For al-Qaraḍāwī, ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah and al-Qaradāghī, the fundamental condition of interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims is one of peace and cooperation. As a result, in this instance, no disavowal should be maintained. It becomes evident to disavow non-Muslims when

they assault Muslims. Al-Qaradāghī believes that disavowing Muslims is abnormal and should not happen at all. Al-Qaraḍāwī and al-Qaradāghī both advocate for a set of moral principles governed by justice, where loyalty is seen as secondary to a strong sense of treating others fairly.

2.3. Forms of loyalty

Sunni reformists do not exhibit strict forms of loyalty that exclude multiple or adaptable allegiances. They do not believe that adherence to strict beliefs is a prerequisite for community membership either. Because this framework permits loyalty to both Muslims and non-Muslims simultaneously, there is space for a range of loyalties. Therefore, by incorporating non-Muslims into its circle of political allegiance based on cordial relations and peace, Sunni reformism offers a more inclusive kind of loyalty. This makes it possible for millions of Muslims who live outside the Muslim world to maintain many allegiances (although that could be difficult in some circumstances). This flexible loyalty does not make one less loyal to Muslims because it maintains justice as the cornerstone of human relationships. Out of a concern for justice both Muslims and non-Muslims who are not hostile should expect each other's loyalty.

2.4. The realm of Islam vs the realm of hostility

The fact that none of the three legal discourses under consideration have addressed the question of loyalty to non-Muslims from the framework of the traditional division of the abode of Islam vs. the abode of war is one of their key contributions. Salafism generally contends that one should migrate from non-Muslim lands—the home of war and disbelief—to Muslim lands—the abode of Islam—by virtue of one's disavowal of non-Muslims. This viewpoint is consistent with traditional *fiqh* conceptions of Muslim-Non-Muslim relations, in which religious affiliation divides territory, but reformist jurists have abandoned this idea. They successfully integrated the concepts of statehood, citizenship, ethics, and political responsibilities into their perception of Muslim loyalties. Secularization may help to explain this shift from law to ethics and

politics. Since Muslim countries' rejection of *fiqh*-based Islamic international law in the 19th century, territorial division based on Muslim or non-Muslim status is no longer applicable. Furthermore, one of the many effects of globalization may be the blurred borders between Muslim and non-Muslim nations due to the millions of Muslims and non-Muslims who travel back and forth between the two worlds, as well as the common organizations, agreements, and areas of interest that bind them together.

As demonstrated by the European Council for Fiqh and Research (ECFR), the Assembly of Muslim Jurists in America (AMJA), the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), and the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), Sunni reformism was among the first Muslim intellectual attempts to overcome the dichotomy of the abode of Islam vs. the abode of war. Some of them declared the West to be *dār al-'ahd*, or "the territory of treaty," and approached Muslim existence in the West within the framework of international treaties and covenants that recognize and protect Muslims and their religion, whereas others viewed the division between the abode of Islam and abode of war as anachronistic.[55]

2.5. Limits to the Sunni reformist perception of loyalty

The discourses of Sunni reformism on loyalty offer ample opportunities for collaboration in both domestic and international affairs. However, these discourses are hampered by two primary limits. Firstly, they do not prioritize loyalty to the state. Conversely, modern states, Muslim and Western alike, expect their citizens to be loyal to them, sometimes in an exclusive manner. Certain states who wage wars in the Middle East force Muslims to choose a side in the conflict by imposing a clash of loyalties upon them. Therefore, encouraging transnational allegiance to the *umma* might be perceived as weakening the contractual allegiance to the state and the country. It is seen sometimes as dubious to disregard state allegiance as the primary form of political loyalty when transplanted into a non-Islamic environment.[56] Sunni reformism does not negate the validity of allegiance to homeland or state, even though

it is subordinated to loyalty to religion. Exceptional rules govern allegiance to states, particularly secular states. For instance, in the wake of September 11, al-Qaraḍāwī permitted American Muslim soldiers to fight Muslim nations under the banner of the allegiance of these soldiers to the United States. Even in this instance, it was the preservation of Islam in the United States and warding off suspicion that supported this argument, rather than the requiring of an initial political loyalty to the government's policies as such.[57] In some circumstances when states pursue power and narrow interests, disregarding virtue and friendship in international relations, the tension between religious and political commitments can be at odds with the transnational loyalty to the *umma* promoted by Sunni reformists.

A second limit that needs to be highlighted in connection to the reformist approach is the idea of collective disavowal in situations where Muslims and non-Muslims are at war. Although the three scholars do not support hostility toward an aggressive nation as a whole, they do not make it clear that relations between civilians should not deteriorate to the point where people reject one another outright, because this would be in violation of the principle of fairness. Stated differently, if a Muslim country is at war with a non-Muslim country, then why should Muslims be hostile towards non-Muslims in general, civilians and soldiers alike? Although governments and armies' aggressive and hostile actions undermine trust, it is unreasonable to penalize a whole population collectively for hostile activities committed by its government and army.

Furthermore, minority Muslims in the West have not really made much of an impact on society or politics. The marginalization of Muslims in European societies raises concerns about the inclusion and commitment of the European liberal state, aside from the securitization limit (i.e., the securitization of Islam and anti-terror campaigns reducing trust in Muslims). Laws and governments in Europe claim Muslim citizens, but their impact on the political and social fabric is negligible. Muslims typically come from the most vulnerable socioeconomic classes, while in the West, security-military agencies and powerful economic corporations define policy. Even though the Muslim vote is becoming more significant in elections, especially in France, it is still insufficient to shape

policies that are friendly to Muslims. The more states support hostile policies toward Muslims in the Middle East, for instance, the more the distance grows between Western governments and their Muslim citizens. This causes some to blame Muslims and doubt their allegiance. For example, the manner in which European governments have handled protests and speeches regarding the Gaza war, as well as how Muslims have responded to this, is also important. In the case of France, for instance, the far left won important legislative elections in July 2024 by appealing to Muslims and mobilizing them around the conflict in Gaza. However, this was exploited by other right-wing and conservative groups to charge Muslims and the far left of being followers of foreign interests and Islamist agendas.[58]

Perhaps one of the most significant obstacles to mutual loyalty between Muslims and non-Muslims is the foreign policies of Western states in the Muslim world. Western states are accused by many Muslims of endorsing aggressive Middle Eastern policies, cooperating with terrorist organizations and military interventions (Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Libya, etc.). The fact that Muslims in Europe have an affinity with Middle Eastern countries also causes distrust in European states. In this regard, Imène Ajala has examined the foreign policy allegiances of French and British Muslims, specifically with regard to Palestine. In these cases, Muslims are increasingly seen as a threat from within and as the "other," creating concerns about their loyalty. The 9/11 attacks further solidified the problematization of Muslims in Europe under the security paradigm.[59] Ajala also calls attention to how ethnic group politics are rejected by the French political system. It is significantly more difficult for ethnic communities to mobilize and exert influence under a framework that is strongly centralised and unfriendly to the expression of particular interests.[60] Even though French foreign policy did not alter much in recent years, Ajala's work helps us appreciate the extent to which allegiance to French foreign policy has come to be seen in terms of loyalty to the French state. This makes any disagreement with this policy appear as a sort of betrayal.

Whether or not Western secular states persecute Muslims for their religious beliefs is another contentious subject. While Western secular

states safeguard religious freedom and do not generally interfere with people's religious views, some claim that Muslims have been persecuted by France (via the "headscarf ban") and Britain (via PREVENT). While there may not be any interference with religious beliefs in private, there may be restrictions when it comes to Muslim schools, attire, public discourse, political activities, etc. For example, there is disagreement on how the French government deals with its Muslim citizens. Some, such as Edwy Plenel, would even accuse the French government of persecuting Muslims in France and engaging in Islamophobia.[61] Numerous organizations, thinkers, and activists are fighting Islamophobia in France, and endorse this position. Others are more nuanced. They acknowledge attacks on mosques and Muslims, as well as the obvious ethnic and religious tensions within French society. However, they maintain that, aside from far-right political forces, the French state is generally tolerant and does not actively target its Muslim minority, and is far from being an Islamophobic or anti-Islamic state.[62] Yet, these acts of Islamophobia against Muslim in France are not seen by France's reformist Muslim discourses in France as grounds for disloyalty.[63]

Conclusion

Three Sunni reformist legal discourses (by al-Qaraḍāwī, ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah, and al-Qaradāghī, respectively) on loyalty have been critically analyzed in this article. Al-Qaraḍāwī stresses the notion of multiple loyalties as well as the hierarchy of loyalties wherein allegiance to Islam is paramount, even when in times of peace, loyalties can be reconciled. ʿAbdallāh b. Bayyah bases his idea of loyalty on virtue and friendship with non-Muslims, endorsing the complementary attachments between religion and citizenship in the West. As for al-Qaradāghī, he emphasizes that treating non-Muslims fairly is essential to allegiance, with the exception of those who are hostile towards Muslims. His position serves as an example of how Sunni reformism frames loyalty in terms of conflict and peace as well as promoting justice in interactions with other communities. In particular, Sunni reformism encourages loyalty to non-Muslims who do not persecute Muslims. Muslim reformists encourage flexible

loyalties as well. Compared to Salafism, it is more pragmatic and less normative. It recognizes that allegiances to one's family, ethnicity, religion, country, and so forth are complementary, hierarchical, or situational. Reformist Muslims also have a tendency to be inclusive, treating non-Muslims fairly as neighbors or as fellow citizens of the same country. Since they can survive in vast empires, far-off places, and pluralist cultures, flexible loyalties are able to adapt to diversity. Although it is still significant, the religious component is neither absolute nor separate from other types of allegiances. Here, loyalty is viewed in terms of ethics rather than belief since it is more of a virtue with multiple facets than only a religious teaching or dogma to be blindly followed.

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Justice and the Just Ruler in the Islamic Mirror of Princes

FADI ZATARI AND OMAR FILI

Abstract

This article aims to understand the main characteristics of the concept of justice in the works of *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* (Islamic advice literature). First, the article explores the modernist critique of the classical understanding of justice, which claims a preponderance of tyranny in pre-modern Muslim political

Fadi Zatari is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations, İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Turkey. His academic publications have appeared in several academic journals such as *Journal of Islamic Ethics*, *Turkish Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* and *Journal of al-Tamaddun*. Omar Fili is a Research Assistant at the Center for Islam and Global Affairs. He obtained both his BA and MA from İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University. His interests include Islamic history and classical political thought. His work has appeared in *Journal of Islamic Ethics*, *Turkish Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, and *darulfunun ilahiyat*.

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thought. Modernist critics argue that pre-modern Muslim political thought lacked a proper definition of justice, and simply aimed to legitimize the authoritarian status-quo. Second, the article will analyze the primary sources in *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* literature to understand of how it conceptualized good governance and justice. The article aims to liberate the study of classical Islamic sources from the modernist lens of analysis so it can be understood on its own terms. This article argues that the *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* literature is misunderstood and many political and ethical principles are missed due to unsound approaches. The article seeks to show that *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* not only gave a clear definition of justice, but also integrated it into a broader conceptual system of political definitions that was meant to be a practical guide to good governance.

Keywords: *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah*, Islamic advice literature, justice, balance, absolute rule, parables.

Introduction

The Islamic political tradition is full of concepts that have consistently appeared throughout Islamic history. However, modernism has caused considerable confusion when it comes to understanding said concepts.

Al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah is also interchangeable with *Ādāb al-Mulūk*. In general, these two terms are used to denote the Islamic political literature that is roughly equivalent to the European "mirror for princes." Though there are differences in understanding and religious backgrounds, both were concerned with proposing ethical/practical advice to ruling figures to achieve political success. Therefore, the al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah and European Mirror for Princes are comparable in terms of their end goals. However, it is crucial to note that this is not an exact equivalence. Most importantly, the terms Adab/Mirrors are used interchangeably for the sake of convenience and due to their overarching nature of rendering practical advice to the ruler. This means two things, using the term "mirrors" only reflects the most general commonalities and not complete comparability. In addition, the article recognizes that Adab literature is heavily immersed in Islamic law, thought and ethics. Consequently, showing care for political success is a combination of religious and political considerations.

Justice is perhaps the best example of this phenomenon, becoming a victim of the anachronistic interpretation of the Islamic political tradition. The *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* literature has been heavily criticized by some modernist Arab critics as merely a tool for power that elites used to legitimize their rule. Not only that, but modernist critics saw this literature as part of a focused effort to instrumentalize Islam for political ends. In this perspective, works on political ethics were masks that covered up the unjust, unethical reality that was Muslim political practice, which allowed tyrannical rule to persist.[1] However, a close reading of the primary sources shows that the pre-modern *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* literature views justice as a law of nature that political life was obliged to follow. To not follow this law of nature would be to risk society falling into chaos. The article aims to contextualize the definition of justice within the Adab literature and how it was understood. This contextualization will then allow us to understand Islamic political thought on its own terms, rather than solely through the eyes of its modernist critics.

It is important to note that since this article is concerned with *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah*, other branches of Islamic political thought are beyond the scope of inquiry.[2] The basic method here will be to use the primary sources as the main references, and analyze how justice is conceptualized in these works in order to discern patterns. It will specifically focus on the parables and stories in these primary sources because they are the main narrative tools found in this genre of literature. *Al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* used parables and quotations as a practical tool to teach Muslim rulers important lessons about good governance.[3] These teachings illustrated the need to cultivate Muslim political culture on its own terms and beliefs while balancing it with real world socio-political needs. *Ādāb* works relate justice to divine action as well as the material prosperity of the state and the efforts to achieve it, and clearly define justice as the maintenance of a balance between these interrelated elements.[4] The ideal is that a political ethics rooted in the social reality should regulate group action in the political realm in tandem with Islamic teachings. Understanding this point will clarify that justice was conceptualized as

a form of balance, and highlight an element of Islamic political thought that critics tend to overlook.

Modernist Justice and *Ādāb al-Mulūk* Literature

Justice is a prominent concept in classical Islamic political thought, based on the belief that it as a religious value commanded by Allah and the Prophet. However, modernist critics argue that the principle of justice in classical Islamic thought remained a religious teaching with little to no manifestation in reality. Modernist critics see historical reality in the Muslim world as a vicious cycle of injustice and little more than a "cover-up operation" by jurists and scholars to preserve doctrinal integrity. To illustrate these points, Ibrahim Boutchich argues that justice has taken on a primarily worldly form, with Islam becoming a tool for political convenience and the longevity of the state as a result. As Boutchich writes, "Indeed the Sultanic authors did not care at all for… producing an epistemological theory of justice as much as they cared for utilizing texts about justice in order to legitimatize the ruling power, and to defend the continuity of the state and ensure its stability."[5] According to Boutchich's logic, the principle of justice was defined in the rulings of courts by authorities that sought to confine its meaning to suit their own interests. From this perspective, the idea of justice was a heavily mutilated concept in practice since it was tailored to fit the rulers while disregarding the interests of their subjects.[6] Within this framework, justice depended solely on the ruler's personal traits of compassion and mercy and was never concerned with building an organic society that truly institutionalized justice. According to this critique, *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* works that dealt with justice attempted to give an image of prosperity and fairness as concomitant with political power but without giving any clear explanation of how that was the case. From this perspective, the *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* literature only provides a sparkling image with no real substance, while also failing to provide a solution for the contradiction between justice and the absolute rule of a monarch. Boutchich argues that the reason for this problem was the "Asiatic mode of production."[7] That is, the various populations residing in the Islamic world depended

on tightly controlled agriculture to sustain itself. This socio-political order became, under the control of an autocratic central authority, a government that treated its people like slaves. The eastern peoples - as Boutchich calls them - have become accustomed to this status quo, which this led to them succumbing to their own bondage. Revering tyrants and praising their exploits became second nature, and gave birth to the milieu that later would produce *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah*.

Boutchich regards his approach as validated by Islamic history in the post-Rashidun period. The new reality, starting from the Umayyads and continuing afterwards, made the *bay'ah* (the oath of allegiance) into an act of forcefully imposing government instead of seeking consent from the governed.[8] Thus, political life in Islamic historical experience was a tyranny built on coercion, which is the opposite of the popular consent found in the principle of the social contract and personal freedoms found in the works of Rousseau.[9] For Boutchich, authors of the Adab writings successfully mixed several concepts by taking a utilitarian approach that allowed justice to be repurposed into the service of the ruling authority. The image of the ruler who sits far above his subjects made him unaccountable for any injustice, and religion was a way to ensure the ruler was above the law, and his interpretation of justice beyond question.[10] Consequently, this means that justice was not based on a contract between the ruler and the ruled, nor was it based on consent, but rather on power and force. The Adab authors who called upon the ruler to be just and moderate in his rule, therefore, created a contradiction in the very concept of justice. For how can power ever be just if it is in the hands of one man?

According to modernist critics, another contradiction found in the *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* literature are the references to the equality between people of both high and low rank in society. Yet, these same works are rife with casteism, as in they clearly divide society into different ranks and prescribe different attitudes towards each class. In the end, justice becomes identified with the figure of the sultan who is beyond reproach, thereby marginalizing the people who have no role in dictating rules. Under these circumstances, Boutchich argued, justice became a tool in the hands of illegitimate rulers who were supported by

a utilitarian class of intellectuals. The *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* literature imposes obedience as a foundation of justice through a combination of fear and limited compassion, while also denying any possibility of political participation.[11] Boutchich concluded that the Adab authors realized that there was no way to change the tyrannical status quo, as the Muslim ummah had historically failed in all its attempts to establish real justice. As a result, the Muslims had essentially resigned themselves to be servants of the ruler.[12] This approach to the Adab works is based on the perception that Muslim political practice is based on absolutism and unrestricted power, directing the state's energy to maintaining its survival as the main objective.[13]

From this perspective, the Muslim state becomes an agent of injustice by maintaining its existence through force and the absolute control over the populace. The moment its power becomes established is the moment that tyranny and injustice take hold, and this is justified by religious rhetoric to maintain the desired status quo. The advice literature justifies injustice and absolutism as the basis for conceiving of the state in both thought and action.[14] In this reality, Adab literature was a main tool of defining political authority as the use of unrestricted force and coercion to achieve survival for the political order. Ethical principles such as justice were tailored to fit the needs of the ruler. This need led to the positioning of the ruler as someone above ethical principles, and gradually elevating him to the level of something like a deity, who was free to do what he wished at any time and who was owed unconditional obedience.[15] Ethical reasoning and references to the principles of justice are not genuine or realistic, according to the critics of advice literature. The reality was that justice was a fantastical principle promoted in *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah*, but immediately demolished by the reality of an absolutist ruler. Ethical principles supported by the Adab literature were only a tool to excuse the reality of political authority, while also justifying the inherent injustice of the ruling authorities.[16] This approach did not only entail the separation of the religious from the political, but in fact brought make them both under the complete control of an individual ruler.[17]

The outcome of this dynamic is a vision of justice as arbitrary, which is illustrated by the place that the common people have in this political

structure. Upon reading the Adab literature, one finds that the people are depicted as a lost and formless mass in need of guidance. Their existence was one of being helpless before the power of the ruler's authority, who is obliged to act with sternness to quell their cravings and appetites. Under these circumstances, some critics pointed to the idea that the ruler and his tailored justice are necessary. If there is a transgression by the ruler it is the result of the people's own imperfections and corruption.[18] The instrumentalization of justice here is not just to portray the ruler as a man of compassion and mercy, but also to establish his rank as a master, and the people as slaves who must obey in order to receive his justice. The critics of the *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* literature see it as painting the essential nature of mankind as evil and corrupt. Thus, the presence of political authority is to quell the evil that comes from uncontrolled human activity, as the stability of the political order depends upon the degree of restrictions that are placed on the people.[19] The division between the ruler and the ruled is not in the sphere of power alone, but also extends into ethics. Since the ruler is one who is responsible for restricting the passions of the people, he also has an exclusive monopoly over good ethics and is the ultimate judge of good character.[20] The general population are simply a rabble, who know nothing and are in need of constant control and guidance by the ruler.

Justice and Injustice

The principle of justice is present across the corpus of the Muslim political tradition. It is deemed as the pillar that upholds the order of the heavens and the earth, as well as a principle whose centrality is agreed upon by almost all authors.[21] Abū Manṣūr al-Thaʿālibī (d.1038) describes justice as the center of political life, the greatest virtue and a bringer of great benefits.[22] The ideal of justice was of such centrality to classical Islamic political thought that Ibn al-Ḥaddād devotes an entire work to dedicated to the concept, (d. c.1275) *al-Ǧawhar al-Nafīs fī Siyāsat al-Raʾīs* (*The Precious Gem on The Governance of the Leader*). *Al-Ǧawhar al-Nafīs* defines justice as balance, one that brings order to the world and an indispensable asset to the state as if it were a law of nature. Ibn al-Ḥaddād

considers politics to be the governing of the affairs of faith and the world in order to improve the soul and civilization. Both of these objectives are based on justice, understood as a balance that prevents excessiveness that would bring about a state of injustice. If one ruins his soul, then he transgresses against himself and one who ruins the world transgresses against others, meaning that he is committing injustice. Such is the nature of governance and the essential presence of a balance that brings prosperity.[23] Ibn al-Azraq (d. 1491) affirms the same principle using the oft-quoted "circle of justice."[24]

"The world is an orchard and the state is its fence, the state is an authority by which people live, the Sunnah is a rule governed by authority, authority is an order upheld by soldiers, soldiers are supporters upheld by wealth, wealth is sustenance cultivated by the people, the people are servants encompassed by justice, justice is sought after and with it is the ordering of the world, the world is an orchard and the state is its fence."[25]

Al-Ghazālī (d.1111) put the responsibility for just rule on the ruler's shoulders, promising that their memory and achievements would be well preserved as a result of their good actions.[26] It becomes apparent then that personal investment on part of the rulers in the wellbeing of their people is an integral part of politics. As for the further benefits for the Muslim ruler himself, al-Ṯaʿālibī affirms that justice makes a ruler's reign last, and grants him divine favor, as well as obedience and loyalty from the regions under his control.[27] Furthermore, the presence of a just polity is a sign of sound reason and the triumph of wisdom over selfishness. Rulers who compete to perform justice and avoid tyranny last longer and witness more prosperity. In addition, the presence of the just ruler turns the people's forced loyalty and into a genuine love.[28]

The significance of justice here comes from appreciating the manner in which it is described as the pillar that upholds the affairs of the world and the Islamic faith. Justice is deemed as the main reason behind the betterment of all creation. It binds them with comradery, makes them well spoken, brings unity and equity, ensures success, and prevents strife and fatal differences.[29] Injustice, on the other hand, is seen as a force of chaos and one of the main reasons for instability and state failure. It is

the victory of selfish shortsightedness over wisdom and the bringer of society's unraveling, which leads to the destruction of states and rulers alike.[30] Injustice includes depriving of people of their rights and the misuse of authority by the ruler, showing an extreme lack of a guiding moral compass. Al-Ghazālī explains this state of affairs by dividing injustice into two categories. One is the mistreatment of the people by the ruler, and the strong and wealthy abusing the weak and poor. The second type is injustice of the self, as sins are considered to be a high form of committing injustice against one's own self.[31]

If the ruler as an individual is willing to commit injustice against himself then it will be easier to do the same against others. This principle persists for all who hold a position of authority. The consequences of injustice are dire, bringing tribulations and all sorts of hardships without respite. The ruler that presides over this state of affairs ought to become an example for others, a failure in the art of statecraft in all respects. Al-Thaʿālibī asserts that the people will not fight for such a leader, and will be defeated by opponents who govern more justly even with less resources and manpower. In addition, an unjust government will be deprived of longevity, and will continually lack the resources and loyalty it needs. Finally, that political order and its rulers will only be remembered for their hideous conduct by later peoples.[32]

Classical authors' description of justice and injustice should be understood on its own terms. The modernist critique misses the meaning behind the exposition of justice in the fashion described above. Equality is not the underlying principle of justice. Rather justice is equity and balance, based on the consideration of different kinds of people and their various needs on the part of the ruling authority. Ibn Raḍwān (d. 1381) defines it as such, "Justice is a noun meaning equity and preventing transgression, having sound scaling, upright measuring, a noun that encompasses all traits of honor and attributes of generosity."[33]

Ibn Raḍwān divides justice in a fashion similar to al-Ghazālī's division of injustice. The first kind of justice is the one concerned with authority and holders of power. The second relates to how one assesses oneself and one's relationship with Allah, and finally justice refers to the relations between an individual and the others around him.[34] The Adab literature's

perspective views justice as a part of a greater whole concerned with the wellbeing of the believers in this world and the hereafter. The definition of justice and injustice based on equity and relations between the self, the other and Allah puts into perspective the role of ethics as a guiding map of conduct on the road of competent governance.[35] Adab works depict the socio-political order as one based on balance and careful consideration on the part of all actors, each according to his own place, capabilities and responsibility. This includes the ruler. The assertion that only coercion was considered as means of governing shows a lack of understanding. It is a judgment of the socio-political body in the premodern Muslim world that is made according to enlightenment-era social contract theory, and is not useful for understanding classical Muslim thought.

The Just and Unjust Sultan

To maintain the integrity of the Muslim state and the safety of the community, the ruler must maintain balance in all state affairs. This means that justice is the underlying framework for political authority to govern. For this to occur, Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī (d.1127) instructs the ruler that the people are not to be seen as a source of wealth, capital, and servants. Rather, they should be seen as if they were members of his household and brothers, who secure the community as loyal soldiers and supporters.[36] If this balance is achieved, then loyalty and social cohesion will follow. Therefore, the most effective way to better the socio-political body is justice. Governance and political authority are explained in the mirror for princes literature in terms of having personal investment in the wellbeing of society. All social groups are interdependent, just as the betterment of the soul is inseparably linked to the betterment of the world around it. The rules stipulated through political ethics combine worldly concerns with piety and spiritual wellbeing. The wellbeing of the ruler's soul and his piety are directly linked to the wellbeing of the people and just governance. This links legitimate rule and good governance.[37] The Adab literature sets expectations for what good governance should be, by emphasizing the need for justice and the real threats of not abiding by proper political ethics.

A competent ruler is mentioned as a cause of justice since he has the direct authority to direct sound policies, and also to employ officials of a high caliber. If both the ruler, the society and the elites are invested in balancing between needs and objectives with general well-being, then loyalty is guaranteed. The ruler has to lead this effort by using the best methods and following ethical principles to remain connected with his people. Niẓām al-Mulk advises the Muslim ruler to be attentive to his subjects' needs, and to dedicate two days a week in order to receive grievances and help whoever was in need.[38] The personal investment in justice on the part of the ruling authority relates to al-Ṭurṭūshī's advice regarding filling the ranks of the court with people of knowledge, wisdom, sound opinion, honor and dignified backgrounds.[39] Therefore, rather than simply masking tyrannical rule, it is clear that Adab works view justice as necessary for wise administration as a whole.

Al-Ṭurṭūshī considers justice as a value worthy in itself, and not just a tool of utilitarian politics. The moral arguments and rhetoric present in the Adab literature deal with justice and all ethically positive principles as if they are laws in the world of politics ordained by Allah. An unjust ruler is an aberration that merits a reaction akin to a natural phenomenon, being a bad ruler kills the state just as illness kills the body. Al-Ṭurṭūshī illustrates this view by quoting a parable of the unjust ruler, describing him as a thorn in a foot that the afflicted seeks to pull out by all means.[40] Justice is not used as a utilitarian excuse here, but as a principle that covers all forms of sound governance under the primary objective of securing worldly and heavenly prosperity. If the principle of justice is utilitarian then it would have been up to the powers that be to define it at their discretion. Instead, the Adab works continually warn the ruler not to use coercion and not to simply do as they please without deliberation or council.

Furthermore, Abū Bakr Al-Murādī (d.1096) cautions against utilitarianism by warning the ruler against empowering his armies by weakening his civilian population and vice versa. To do so would be to throw the natural order out of balance by transgressing and ignoring essential needs.[41] Therefore, rather than a utilitarian argument excusing whatever is necessary to defeat one's opponents, al-Murādī insists upon

maintaining a balance even when it comes to the military. Justice, then, cannot be defined by actions that prefer certain groups or factions over others to acquire an advantage. Rather, justice is the taking into consideration of the balancing of needs when making decisions.

Within this framework, justice is both an objective in its own right, and a way to reach higher levels of prosperity. Advice literature prizes justice as the cardinal virtue upon which good political practice is based.[42] Al-Murādī describes the just authority as one that has four benefits, bountifulness, praiseworthiness, triumph and longevity. Justice is the quality of moderation in all affairs, which makes it the cardinal virtue by which greater benefits are attained. Al-Murādī argues this by asserting that this state of affairs needs little effort to ensure loyalty or maintain order.[43] In essence, justice does not simply provide balanced governance as a part of the objective of ensuring general well-being. It is also a way to govern effectively as well as ensure the future success of the Muslim state. The Adab literature denied the idea of a ruler governing as he pleases, as the ruler is to abide by the rules of Islam and make decisions with great care.[44] The various authors in the Adab literature describe justice as the pillar of the heavens and earth. It is a law that Allah has enforced on creation, while the warnings of the damage done to the spirits of those in authority who act unjustly further points to a link between divine action and justice.[45]

Narration as a moralizing method

Al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah was fundamentally concerned with the practical, rather than the laying out of a detailed theoretical framework. What was crucial, then, was to propose concepts and relate them to parables that explain what is practical, and there was no interest in laying out a political theory as such. Parables played a central role in delivering the message to the ruler in question, to drive home desired principles. These works did not view reason as the only trustworthy source of knowledge, but rather viewed revelation, sense perception, and also histories and reports as equally important sources of knowledge. Consequently, the use of parables to transmit knowledge is a feature of historical reports

and also Islamic teachings. The *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* literature engaged the authorities in a manner that went beyond reasoned arguments, since reason cannot instill ethics or morality on its own. A principle like justice cannot be taught by reason's dependence on utilitarian logic, which is limited by human shortcomings. Depending solely on reason defeats the purpose of *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* that positioned ethics as values to be sought on their own terms and because of their relations to the divine, not for worldly benefits alone.

Al-Māwardī (d. 1058), an example of an author who uses historical reports, warns that the necessity of obedience to a ruler cannot co-exist with injustice, as obedience is dependent on justice and wise governance. To illustrate this point, he quotes a teaching by the Sassanid Emperor Ardashir.

> *If a king turns away from justice, the subjects will abandon obedience "to the king."*[46]

A similar claim is found in the advice Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 822) gave to his son Abdullah Ibn Ṭāhir (d. 844) after becoming a governor under the Caliph al-Ma'mūn (r. 813-833).[47] The letter reiterates the centrality of just rule and equates it to political competence.[48]

> *And avoid evil desires and transgressions, turn away your thoughts from them, and show your innocence of these [two things] to your subjects. Govern with justice, stand among them with truth and knowledge that leads you to the path of guidance.*[49]

Considering these principles, parables play the role of transmitting knowledge and teachings to rulers, and are used in great quantities in Adab literature. The stories follow a similar format, and they all echo each other. They use well-known figures such as Ardeshir, Alexander the Great and others rulers from pre-Islamic times, as well as Caliphs and other Muslim rulers as well. One story shows Alexander the Great questioning wise men in India about the seeming lack of laws in their land. They answered:

Because we hand out justice from ourselves and because of the just rule of our kings over us.

He asked them which is better, courage or justice? To which they answered:

If justice is utilized, then courage is no longer necessary.[50]

Another parable is given in the example of Emperor Shapur (r. 240-270) in which he expresses his ideas of governance to his successor.

The regulation of revenue and its fulfillment coming with cultivating the land and the increase of its yield. The goal of achieving this and more is only through the betterment of its people, upholding justice among them, showing leniency towards them, aiding them in their striving [towards cultivating the land], incentivizing them by improving their livelihood and alleviating any difficulties in regard to their needs.[51]

A number of parables are sourced from Islamic history as well, demonstrating an effort to link the Muslim polity with wise governance and successful political establishment. Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī (d. 1366), narrates a story mentioning the Abbasid Caliph al-Muhtadī's (r. 869-870) attitude towards one of his subjects' complaints. Ibn Nubātah narrates that a Palestinian came to complain about the injustices that were inflicted upon him. While the culprit is not mentioned, it is safe to say that it was likely one of the Caliph's officials. Otherwise, the man would not have sought an audience with the Caliph in the first place. Eventually, the man's problems are solved, leading to the former fainting out of happiness and remaing under al-Muhtadī's care until he awoke. The Palestinian man commented:

I did not expect to live until I saw justice served, the happiness that came over me took my breath away.

To which, al-Muhtadī responded,

> *It was essential to serve you with justice when you were still in your country, and if it was not so then I will pay you your travel expenses. He [i.e., the Caliph] had given the man 20 dinars previously, but he ordered another 50 dinars to given and asked him for forgiveness regarding his predicament.*[52]

The last narration given by Ibn al-Rabī' is a piece of advice given by a king to his successor as a reminder of the judgment in the hereafter. It also emphasizes the ephemeral nature of the world.

> *Do not be worried of the world, for nothing will be unless by Allah's predestination. And do not regard it as essential for it did not remain in the hands of those before you. And do not refuse it either despite of that, for heaven is not earned except by it [i.e., the world].*[53]

The fact that Ibn al-Rabī' includes this narration teaching about the ephemeral nature of the world demonstrates that Adab writers viewed justice as part of a larger framework that aimed at success not just in this world, but the next. Al-Ṭurṭūshī also quotes a series of hadiths and Qur'anic verses that show the connection between the immanent world and divine action.

> *Whenever We intend to destroy a society, We command its elite (to obey Allah) but they act rebelliously in it. So, the decree (of punishment) is justified, and We destroy it utterly, (Qur'an, 17:16).*[54]

He continues soon after by quoting a hadith as follows.

> *Indeed, the lizards starve to death from the sins of the son of Adam.*[55]

The Qur'anic verse is used here as a warning of divine retribution against transgressions. The elites are commanded to do good, but rebelled and are subsequently destroyed.[56] The hadith, by contrast, describes the effects of injustice on the world, and how the actions of those in power

can have repercussions for all creation. The parables from Hadith and Qur'an quoted by al-Ṭurṭūshī were used to evoke certitude in the heart of the rulers of the consequences of evil actions, and remind htem that Allah will not let them be forgotten. The parables use the same division of justice mentioned by Ibn Raḍwān, that committing injustice against the self and others is also contravening divine command.[57] This ultimately leads to Allah causing a general socio-political failure of the state as the consequence of harmful political action.

Parables found in the Islamic tradition affirm the principle of justice in a way that delivers the necessary information without going over detailed theoretical concepts. The critics who attack the use of parables in the Adab literature have limited themselves to relying solely on the concept of popular sovereignty found in modern Western thought. Moreover, these critics fail to understand the approach taken by writers in classical political thought, and their discussions of ethical principles and divine action were not a conspiracy to support unjust rulers. Rather, they reflected a cosmology that departs from an anthropocentric materialism, and places Allah as the only true causal agent in the world. Humanity struggles to achieve favorable outcomes by acting in a proper way, with justice being the main political virtue to bring divine favor. Consequently, advice literature offers a political vision that seeks a holistic perspective toward political action on the level of both the individual and the levels in order to relate political action to divine action and, subsequently, ethical principles. The modernist criticism of advice literature is thus both anachronistic and Euro-centric. Modernist critics judge the concept of justice in the Islamic tradition by the parameters of the modern ideals of equality and liberal democracy. This does a damaging disservice to the Islamic political tradition. These critics assume that the political tradition had been able to articulate a real vision of justice until colonialism came and taught the Muslim world its true meaning.

Conclusion

Criticisms of the conceptualization of justice in the advice literature from the Muslim world have focused on several key issues. Most prominently,

they argue that there was no clear approach to the principle from an epistemological perspective, and no intellectual foundations were laid that would enable the formulation of a robust definition of justice. Moreover, the critics accused the authors of advice literature as being little more than propagandists, who justified an unjust reality to preserve the ruling powers of the day. The ruler, so the critics claimed, was made into an untouchable and infallible man who governed absolutely. The authors of the advice literature then appear as mere Machiavellian tricksters, who only depict the ruler as a compassionate and just administrator while excusing his arbitrariness and condemning the empty nature of justice as conceptualized in the Islamic tradition. The result of this approach is a misunderstanding of the notion of justice in advice literature, and also how the Islamic tradition approached political concepts in general.

These criticisms do not engage with the subject matter on its own terms, but rather from a modernist perspective. This renders the critiques anachronistic for they are unable to understand the logic of mirrorists, how they engaged with political reality, nor how they proposed ideas. Advice literature was never concerned with detailing and theorizing underlying concepts of the state. Rather, they were more concerned with reality as it was and sought to make it better.[58] The goal, then, was not to detail concrete state mechanisms to depose an unfit ruler and hold them to account, but rather to offer ethical teachings that political life could depend upon. The ruler was a central figure in this vision. As shown throughout the article, this ethical approach did not only warn the unjust ruler of the threat of being deposed, but warned that the entire state would face annihilation. More importantly, the modernist critics did not register that Allah is the central actor in the classical worldview, not the ruler, or anyone else for that matter. Presenting this view as a justification for theocratic rule is simply wrong, for it ignores the political theology and the cosmology upon which it was based. An approach unburdened by modernist premises is crucial to understanding different political traditions from earlier historical eras.

Endnotes

1 For more details on these modernist critiques see Fadi Zatari and Omar Fili, "The Image of Sulṭān in Islamic Mirror of Princes," *darulfunun ilahiyat* 33, no. 2 (2022): 463-479.

2 Although no one division of Islamic political thought into sub-literature can be considered authoritative, Makram Abbas' division is one of the most well-known and comprehensive categorizations. He divides Islamic political thought into three major branches. The first is *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* which is the concern of this article. Second is *al-Siyāsah al-shar'īyah* that concerned itself with the theory of government and political concepts. Lastly is the Muslim philosophers, who engaged with political thought using Hellenic influenced ideals. For the details of this division, see Makram Abbas, *Al-Islām wa-al-Siyāsīyah fī al-'aṣr al-Wasīṭ*, [Islam and politics in the classical age]. Trans. Mohamed Haj Salem. Beirut: Nohoudh Center for Studies and Publications, 2020.

3 The dependence on parables and stories is a fundamental difference between Adab and the other genres of Islamic political thought. For example, it radically differs from the abstract and conceptual approach of al-Siyāsah al-shar'īyah. For a work that illustrates this, see Al-Juwaynī. *Ghiyāth al-Umam fī altyāth al-ẓulam* [The Aid of Nations in the Surrounding Darkness]. Beirut, Dar al-Minhaj, 2014.

4 The focus on the ethical as well as the practical separates Adab from the Hellenic-influenced Philosophers. The Philosophers sought to have ideal governance under a perfect ruler, not so much wanting to deal with the political reality as it was. For more, see Al-Fārābī, Abū Naṣr. *Kitāb Ārā' ahl al-Madīnah al-fāḍilah* [The Book of Opinions on the People of the Virtuous City]. Cairo, Hindawi Foundation for Education and Culture, 2016.

5 Boutchich, I. *Khaṭṭāb al-'adālah fī al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* [Discourse of Justice in the Sultanic Books of Governance]. Doha, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 15.

6 Boutchich, I. *Khaṭṭāb al-'adālah fī al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah*,18

7 Boutchich, I. *Khaṭṭāb al-'adālah fī al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah*,26.

8 The Umayyads were the first dynasty to rule over the Muslim world after the first phase of the conquests. They ruled from 661 C.E until they were overthrown by the Abbasids in 750 C.E

9 Boutchich, I. *Khaṭṭāb al-'adālah fī al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah*, 28

10 Boutchich, I. *Khaṭṭāb al-'adālah fī al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah*, 40, 47.

11 Boutchich, I. *Khaṭṭāb al-'adālah fī al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah*, 68.

12 Boutchich, I. *Khaṭṭāb al-'adālah fī al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah*, 69.

13 Such criticisms can be found in claims that authors of *al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* fully supported unrestricted rule. This assumption takes different forms but is an underlying one in almost all criticisms. For an example of this, see Aljumaiaan, M. Monarchism in al-Ṭurṭūshī's *Sirāj al-Mulūk* (The Lamp of Kings). Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter.

14 Abdullatif, Kamal. *Fī Tashrīḥ uṣūl al-istibdād: qirā'ah fī Niẓām al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah* [On Tyranny, a study on Islamic Heritage]. Beirut, al-Maaref Forum, 174.

15 Abdullatif, Kamal. *Fī Tashrīḥ uṣūl al-istibdād: qirā'ah fī Niẓām al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah*, 179, 180.

16 Abdullatif, Kamal. *Fī Tashrīḥ uṣūl al-istibdād: qirā'ah fī Niẓām al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah*, 251.

17 Abdullatif, Kamal. *Fī Tashrīḥ uṣūl al-istibdād: qirā'ah fī Niẓām al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah*, 253.

18 Al-'Allām, 'Izz al-Dīn. *Al-Ādāb al-sulṭānīyah dirāsah fī Binyat wa thawābit al-khiṭāb al-siyāsī* [The Mirror of Sulṭāns: a Study in the Structure and Principles of Political Writing]. Kuwait, 'Ālam al-Ma'rifah,188.

19 Abdullatif, Kamal. *Fī Tashrīḥ uṣūl al-istibdād: qirā'ah fī Niẓām al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah*, 116.

20 Abdullatif, Kamal. *Fī Tashrīḥ uṣūl al-istibdād: qirā'ah fī Niẓām al-Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah*, 118.

21 For more works on Islamic political thought and ethics, see Yılmaz, Hüseyin. "Books on Ethics and Politics: The Art of Governing the Self and Others at the Ottoman Court." In Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3-1503/4), (2 vols), pp. 509-526. Leiden: Brill, 2019.

22 Abū Manṣūr Al-Tha'ālibī, *Adāb al-mulūk* [The Ethics of Kings], edit. Jalīl al-'Aṭīyah. Beirut, Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2005, 89.

23 al-Ḥaddād, *al-Jawhar al-Nafīs fī Siyāsat al-Ra'īs* [The Precious Gem on The Governance of the Leader], ed. Raḍwān al-Sayyid. Beirut, Dār al-Ṭalī'ah, 1983, 61-62.

24 For a discussion on the circle of Justice, see London, Jennifer. "Circle of Justice." *History of Political Thought* 32, no. 3 (2011): 425-447. And for a study on its practical effects, see Darling, Linda T. "Do Justice, Do Justice, For That is Paradise": Middle Eastern Advice for Indian Muslim Rulers." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 22, no. 1 (2002): 3-19.

25 Ibn al-Azraq, Abū 'Abd Allāh. *Badā'i' al-silk fī Ṭabā'i' al-mulk* [Marvel of State conduct, and the nature of authority]. ed. 'Alī Sāmī al-Nashshār. Cairo, Dār al-Salām, 2008, 202. On the illustration of the role of justice regarding balancing different social classes, see Black, Antony. *History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011, 116.

26 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* [The Spilled Gold Dust in the Advice of Kings], Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīyah, 1988, 46.

27 Abū Manṣūr Al-Thaʿālibī, *Adāb al-mulūk* [The Ethics of Kings], edit. Jalīl al-ʿAṭīyah. Beirut, Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2005, 90.

28 Ibn al-Azraq, Abū ʿAbd Allāh. *Badāʾiʿ al-silk fī Ṭabāʾiʿ al-mulk* [Marvel of State conduct, and the nature of authority]. ed. ʿAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār. Cairo, Dār al-Salām, 2008, 204.

29 Ibn Radwan. *al-Shuhub al-lāmiʿah fī al-siyāsah al-nāfiʿah* [The Glittering Stars in Beneficial Politics]. ed. ʿAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār. Cairo, Dār al-Salām, 2007, 83.

30 The ruler bears a great deal of responsibility for the political failure of the state. For more on this, see Zatari, Fadi, and Fili, Omar. "Governance As a Delicate Balance: On the Concept of Luṭf in Islamic Mirrors for Princes." *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 1, no. aop (2024): 9.

31 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* [The Spilled Gold Dust in the Advice of Kings], Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīyah, 1988, 47.

32 Abū Manṣūr Al-Thaʿālibī, *Adāb al-mulūk* [The Ethics of Kings], edit. Jalīl al-ʿAṭīyah. Beirut, Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2005, 91.

33 Ibn Raḍwān. *al-Shuhub al-lāmiʿah fī al-siyāsah al-nāfiʿah*, 95.

34 Ibn Raḍwān. *al-Shuhub al-lāmiʿah fī al-siyāsah al-nāfiʿah*, 95.

35 For more on competent governance, balance and the role of political ethics, see Zatari, Fadi, and Fili, Omar. "Governance As a Delicate Balance: On the Concept of Luṭf in Islamic Mirrors for Princes." *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 1, no. aop (2024): 1-19.

36 Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Sirāj al-Mulūk* [Lamp of Kings] Beirut: Dar al-Minhaj, 2016, 399.

37 Leder, Stefan. "Sultanic rule in the mirror of medieval political literature." In *Global Medieval: Mirrors for princes reconsidered*, eds. Regula Forster, Neguin Yavari (2015): 94-108. Ilex Foundation Series 15

38 Niẓām al-Mulk. *Siyar al-Mulūk aw Siyāsat Nāmah* [The Book of Kings], ed. Yusuf Bakkar. Beirut, Dar al-Manhal, 2007, 54. For an English translation for the book, see Darke, Hubert. *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyar al Muluk or Siyasat-nama of Nizam al-Mulk*. London: Routledge, 2002. For more on Niẓām al-Mulk himself, see Rizvi, S. R. A. *Nizam Al-Mulk Al-Tusi His Contribution to Statecraft, Political Theory and the Art of Government*. Ashraf Printing Press, 1978.

39 Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Sirāj al-Mulūk*, 400.

40 Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Sirāj al-Mulūk*, 401.

41 Al-Murādī, Abū Bakr. *al-Ishārah fī tadbīr al-Imārah* [The Directing in the Management of the State], ed. ʿAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār. Cairo, Dār al-Salām, 2009, 124.

42 Zatari, Fadi, and Fili, Omar. "The Image of Sulṭān in Islamic Mirror of Princes." *darulfunun ilahiyat* 33, no. 2, (2020), 8.

43 Al-Murādī, Abū Bakr. *al-Ishārah fī tadbīr al-Imārah* [The Directing in the Management of the State], ed. ʻAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār. Cairo, Dār al-Salām, 2009, 137-138.

44 For more on the emphasis on the interdependence of the duties of the ruler and the ruled, see Toral-Niehof, I. 'The "Book of the Pearl on the Ruler" in The Unique Necklace by Ibn ʻAbd Rabbih: Preliminary Remarks'. In *Introduction to Global Medieval: Mirrors for Princes Reconsidered*, eds. by Regula Forster and Neguin Yavari, 145-146. *Ilex Foundation* Series 15

45 It is apparent as well that justice is an important religious value and not simply a tool of competent governance. Indeed, competent government is a top priority in the Adab literature but it is not considered in isolation from an ever present moral framework that is driven by Islamic teaching. An illustration of this is al-ʻIzz ibn ʻAbd al-Salām's comment on justice as one of the names of Allah. He describes it as a name that shows Allah's fairness with his creation, in his giving of taking, harming or benefiting. It is an ever-present aspect of divine action that causes fear in the heart of the unjust man and a hope for the victims of injustice. An example for one who seeks to avoid injustice in his behavior in an attempt to manage the affairs of others by being impartial with the various sorts of people under his care. See Al-ʻIzz Ibn ʻAbd al-Salām (1996), *Shajarat al-maʻārif wa-al-aḥwāl wa-ṣāliḥ al-aqwāl wa-al-aʻmāl*, ed. Iyād Khālid al-Ṭabbāʻ, Beirut and Damascus: Dār al-Fikr al-Muʻāṣir, and Dār al-Fikr.

46 Al-Māwardī, Abū al-Ḥasan. *Tashīl al-Naẓar wa-Taʿjīl al-Zafar: fī akhlāq al-Malik wa-siyāsat al-Mulk* [Facilitation Consideration and Acceleration the Victory in the Ethics of the King and Kingdom's policy], ed. Ridwan al-Sayyid. Beirut: Ibn Al Azraq Center for Political Heritage Studies, 2012, 276.

47 Al-Ma'mūn, the seventh Abbasid Caliph known for his patronage of sciences and studies.

48 Another report attributed to Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn narrates that he was asked by his son on how long authority will remain in their hands. To which he responded, "as long as justice remains in this court." See, Al-Menawi, Zain al-din. *Al-Ǯawāhir Al-muḍīyah fī Bayān al-Ādāb Al-sulṭānīyah* [The Glittering Gems on the Mirror of Princes]. ed. Abdullah al-Nassir. Riyadh: King Saud University, 2013, 131.

49 Ibn al-Azraq, Abū ʻAbd Allāh. *Badāʾiʿ al-silk fī Ṭabāʾiʿ al-mulk* [Marvel of State conduct, and the nature of authority]. ed. ʻAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār. Cairo, Dār al-Salām, 2008, 628.

50 Shayzarī, ʻAbd al-Raḥmān. *al-Manhaj al-maslūk fī Siyāsat al-Mulūk* [The Taken Path for the Governance of Kings], edit, Ali Abullah Moussa. Amman: Dar al-Manar, 245.

51 Al-Māwardī, Abū al-Ḥasan. *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* [the Advice for Kings], ed. Khidr Muhammad. Kuwait City: Maktabat Al-Falah, 189.

52 Al-Miṣrī Ibn Nubātah, *Al-Mukhtār min Kitāb tadbīr al-Duwal* [Excerpts from the book of governing states]. ed. Salwa Qandīl. Beirut: Ibn al-Azraq Center for Political Heritage Studies, 2012, 207-208.

53 Ibn al-Rabi'. *Sulūk al-Mālik fī Tadbīr al-Mamālik* [The Behavior of the Ruler in the Administration of Dominions]. ed. Hamid Rabi'. Cairo, Dar al-Sha'b, 451.

54 Cited in Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Sirāj al-Mulūk*, 514. For the translation, see Pickthall, M.M. n.d. Islamawakened. https://www.islamawakened.com./quran/17/16/default.htm

55 Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Sirāj al-Mulūk*, 515.

56 Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Sirāj al-Mulūk*, 515.

57 Ibn Radwan. *al-Shuhub al-lāmi'ah fī al-siyāsah al-nāfi'ah* [The Glittering Stars in Beneficial Politics]. ed. 'Alī Sāmī al-Nashshār. Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2007, 83.

58 Zatari, Fadi, and Fili, Omar. "The Image of Sulṭān in Islamic Mirror of Princes." *darulfunun ilahiyat* 33, no. 2, (2020), 14.

Popular Religious Preaching as Informal Education and its Impact on Medieval Islamic Culture

HATIM MAHAMID AND YOUNIS ABU ALHAIJA

Abstract

This study examines popular preaching in medieval Islamic culture, which served as a form of mass education for the public. Public assemblies (*majālis*) and gatherings were organized by scholars on their initiative of scholars, or by rulers for various purposes. The assemblies took the form of a sermon (*khuṭba*), preaching (*waʿẓ*), *daʿwa*, *dhikr* with a Sufi shaykh, or as a part of a visit (*ziyāra*) to a shrine of a righteous person. Assemblies

Hatim Mahamid is a Senior Lecturer at The Open University of Israel and Sakhnin Academic College for Teachers' Education. He has published several articles and books, including *Waqf, Education and Politics in Late Medieval Syria* (Saarbrücken: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013). Younis Fareed Abu Alhaija is a Lecturer in the Department of Education at Sakhnin College Academic College for Teachers' Education.

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and gatherings were held in mosques, in the courts of rulers, or in public places. The goals of these gatherings depended on the desires of their organizers, the time and place in which they were held, and the religious or social events for which they were arranged. Therefore, the nature of gatherings tended toward religious preaching, the personal interest of the organizers, propaganda, political activities, critique and oversight, and sometimes as a form of celebration or leisure. By means of these assemblies, some leaders enhanced their status, as well as garnering greater publicity from among the general population. The gatherings displayed the level of knowledge among the educated and among the '*ulamā*'. In addition to the stated objectives of holding these assemblies, this study shows that the primary objective centered on the preserving of Islamic values and moral rules.

Keywords: preaching, mass education, medieval Islamic culture, '*ulamā*', Rulers

Introduction

In general, civilization is the cultural, intellectual, and material product of a nation, which distinguishes itself from others in terms of advancement and prosperity in all fields of life. It is measured by characteristics such as material heritage, like buildings, castles, and palaces, its political features, as well as its cultural production. Here, cultural production can be understood as comprising four main elements: political systems, economic resources, moral traditions, sciences and arts. As for Islamic civilization and culture, it is the totality of that which has resulted from Islamic thought, the sciences, and other developments shaped by the religious influences of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet. The Qur'an and Prophetic Sunna have had a central role in the lives of Muslims in a wide range of fields, in addition to what was absorbed from other cultures prior to Islam, and which do not contradict its religious and moral rules. Thus, this study focuses on the cultural phenomena of

informal popular preaching (*majālis waʿẓ*), which had the aim of preserving and consolidating Islamic civilization, and spreading it widely along with religious, intellectual, scientific, as well as political developments of the medieval Islamic era. In Islamic culture, preaching and popular gatherings held by '*ulamā*' were usually devoted to discussion of religious issues and the dissemination of religious and moral values of interest to Muslim societies and rulers alike.[1]

Since the beginning of Islam, important mosques have served as gathering places to hold preaching assemblies, meetings for religious purposes, and to spread the Islamic message. They became official and unofficial religious and cultural centers, overseen and attended by people with religious knowledge and intellectuals, and attended by the public. Later, especially since the first Abbasid era, the palaces of rulers and caliphs, the homes of '*ulamā*' and public places also became gathering centers for such assemblies on the initiative of '*ulamā*' or under the patronage of rulers. These popular gatherings and religious preaching assemblies began to become more diverse in their goals and methods of holding celebrations and offering religious rituals during the month of Ramadan, as well as celebrations of the Prophet's birthday (*ʿīd al-mawlid*) or visits to some holy sites such as the graves of the righteous on religious occasions to seek blessings. They were also sometimes held during periods of drought and natural disasters, or in times of disease and epidemics, etc. in order to ask for mercy and forgiveness.

In addition to these goals, some of the organizers or public attendees considered these assemblies a means of entertainment and an activity to pass time. Thus, by the end of the Mamluk era in the Levant and Egypt, popular religious preaching assemblies often took on the character of a a form of entertainment, in addition to their other religious goals. The importance and success of these gatherings was related to the extent of public participation and interest, and the influence of scholars and their religious status within society, be it in matters of education, religion, morals, and values on the one hand, or as a propaganda tool intended to enhance the status of rulers or scholars on the other. Therefore, these assemblies began to diversify their methods, types, and goals over time to suit certain sectarian, political and social developments. By way of

example, some of these assemblies took on the role of disseminating scientific knowledge (*majālis ʿilm*), some of them served as preaching assemblies (*majālis waʿẓ*), and others were for storytelling, including poetry and literature (*majālis al-samar*).[2]

A study of such assemblies clearly show their goals and their positive nature, which reflects the initiative and leadership of the organizers, as well as the cooperation of wider society. Literary and historical sources from the period indicate the interactions, feelings, and conversations of the participants within the educational and cultural atmosphere of the assemblies.[3] The vivid impressions of various gatherings and assemblies held for a range of different purposes across Islamic civilization demonstrate a need to explore this important phenomenon, which is common to Islamic cultures from different periods, such as from the Abbasid era in Baghdad until the Mamluk era in Egypt and the Levant. Indeed, these kinds of gatherings still exist to this day.

This study focuses on the cultural activities that occur outside formal educational settings. It examines the purposes behind the organizing of such initiatives, most of which are commonly understood as teaching or preaching assemblies. The research methodology in this study relied on a close reading of primary sources from the medieval period. These sources described historical and religious events, and included the biographies of famous figures and scholars in key Muslims regions, such as Egypt and the Levant. Therefore, this study aims to understand the goals and objectives of holding preaching, missionizing and knowledge assemblies, their process, and the desired results achieved from their conduct, by analyzing their results and comparing them with recent studies. To achieve these goals, several hypotheses are proposed:

1 What factors contributed to strengthening the culture of holding such assemblies in Islam?

2 Who are the important actors in running these assemblies and making them successful?

3 What cultural and methodological differences can be deduced between formal education in *madrasa*s and private study circles disseminating scientific knowledge (*al-ḥalaqāt al-ʿilmiyya*), and

between informal preaching assemblies in public meetings or in the palaces of rulers?

4 What are the effects of holding such assemblies at the popular and personal level of those in charge of them, whether positive or negative?

Preaching as Public Religious Culture and Religious-Political Propaganda: *al-Waʿẓ* and *al-Daʿwa*

From Ibn Kathīr's description in the biography of Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256), one can understand, in a brief and general way, the personality and work of the preacher (*wāʿiẓ*) in Islamic civilization, his education, the method of preaching and his influence among the public:

> *"He was of good figure, good voice, good preaching, many virtues, and compilations, and is the author of Mir'āt al-zamān, in twenty volumes, one of the best chronicles. … He preached a sermon every Saturday in the morning at the al-Sāriya [A place in the courtyard of the Umayyad Mosque], where the preachers stand today, by the Gate of the Mashhad of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, and people would sleep overnight on Saturdays in the mosque and leave the orchards in the summer until they heard his peroration, and then rush to their orchards and repeat to each other the beneficial and good words he had said, in the manner of his grandfather…"* [4]

The culture of sermonizing and preaching has existed had been a part of Islamic civilization since the time of the Prophet, with the aim of disseminating religious knowledge, popular education and spreading religious and moral values among the Muslim community using the stories of ancient prophets and legal maxims. The early forms of preaching (*waʿẓ*) were included as a part of formal sermons (*khuṭba*) of Friday prayers in the central mosques in the major cities, especially in the Rashidun and Umayyad periods. Its main purpose was to make political announcements, talk about policy changes, or announce the

calling up of men for military service.[5] Later on, this culture also moved to the courts of rulers and took on a political usage, and also had a positive effect on the development of the Arabic language in literature and poetry.[6] At first, preachers and sermonizers were respected, and had the positive image of being knowledgeable and influential among the public. Jonathan Berkey's study of popular preaching highlights the importance of the various classes of popular preachers (*wāʿiẓ / wuʿāẓ*) and storytellers (*qāṣṣ / quṣṣāṣ*) in pre-modern Islamic society. Those popular preachers and storytellers had the opportunity to reach and influence society to a greater extent than texts written by the '*ulamā*'.[7] This type of preaching became more prevalent due to the conflicts and religious controversies that erupted between different streams of thought in Islam, with each stream trying to influence the community more and spread its teachings, for example the struggles between the legalist-traditional current (*ahl al-naql*) and the rationalist current (*ahl al-ʿaql*). As a result, a strong religious culture can be seen to have spread, both among the rulers and among the 'ulamā' who sought to influence the general population. This activity of preaching also became more prevalent with the intensification of the struggle between the Sunni and the Shiʿi sects. Preaching that took place in the background of these struggles was intended to function as a form of popular education in the mosques, which served the entire population for free, regardless of any official forms of education that was being provided. As an example, consider Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, the founder of the al-Qādiriyya or al-Jīlāniyya Sufi order, who was famous as a well-known preacher in Baghdad, in addition to being one of Ḥanbalī 'ulamā'. Many considered him a popular preacher, yet he adhered to the commandments of the *Sharīʿa* that rely on the Qur'an and the Sunna, and even criticized Sufi movements that deviated from the path of the *Sharīʿa*. After his death, his sons and followers spread his mystical teachings throughout the Muslim world.[8]

Preaching assemblies in mosques were considered informal activities and were held on dates personally determined by the '*ulamā*'. Their primary purpose was religious preaching at the popular level, without any fees expected in return. This was not like private assemblies in formal education in endowed *madrasa*s or other private institutions, which

also indicates the involvement of these scholars in community affairs. Typically, these assemblies were held one day a week, depending on the preacher's availability. The subjects of the sermons or preaching in mosques typically dealt with matters of law and the Islamic tradition at a simplified level, which matched the level of education of the audience. Usually, preaching assemblies were held on Fridays, before or after the sermon and congregational prayer, and often preaching assemblies were held during Ramadan to take advantage of the religious-spiritual atmosphere during this holy month. These assemblies contributed greatly to the dissemination of popular knowledge, education and the preservation of Islamic culture especially in terms of morals and values. These sermons attracted large crowds of people and participants because the mosque functioned as a general religious and educational institution that served the entire Muslim population without any restrictions. Religious preaching, especially in the central mosques, served as a site of competition among preachers from competing religious sects, including between the different schools of Sunni Islam.[9]

At the same time, with the intensification of political struggles, divisions, and religious controversies in medieval Islam, preaching assemblies in mosques in regions such as Syria and Iraq also came to serve a political purpose. These political purposes included, propaganda campaigns against the influence of Shi'i groups on the one hand, and the Crusader occupation of Islamic lands on the other.[10] The example of the great preachers from the Ibn al-Jawzī family serves as a case study of popular preachers who became particularly popular. In Iraq, the name of Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) became widely known. He bequeathed his skills in preaching to his son, Muḥyī al-Dīn Yūsuf Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 656/1258), who preached throughout Iraq and also in Damascus.[11] Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-Jawzī rose to prominence in Baghdad with the support and backing of the Abbasid caliph, and then served as an official envoy to the Ayyubid rulers in Syria and Egypt. He achieved a high status, both in terms of official education as a teacher (*mudarris*) in Baghdad and Damascus, and in the establishment of the al-Jawziyya Madrasa in Damascus. Like his father, he too engaged in popular sermonizing and preaching in front of large

crowds that gathered to hear his sermons. In the words of Ibn Kathīr, "and when his father died, he preached in his place, and he did good, and worked hard…."[12]

Abū al-Faraj's grandson, also known as Shams al-Dīn Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256), was also famous for preaching in Damascus. He was an exemplary preacher, who helps us understand preachers' motivations and goals during the medieval period. In the words of Ibn Taghrī Birdī, "he preached in Baghdad and elsewhere… he came to Damascus and settled in it… and he had a sweet tongue in preaching and remembrance… and he was acceptable to both the private and the public…."[13] Talmon-Heller describes the personality and preaching of Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, as well as the influence of his sermons on rulers, '*ulamā'*, and the wider Muslim community. Her work examines Islamic religious life at the time, while highlighting preachers' motives and goals . These ranged from conveying political messages and particular religious interpretations, to mobilizing public opinion in favor of holy wars (*jihād*), and also as a form of leisure.[14]

Preaching assemblies were also often used as a form of political critique against rulers. Marilyn Swartz, in her study of popular preaching in Baghdad in the sixth/twelfth century and analyzed the sermons of Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī, argues that *majālis al-waʿẓ* in Baghdad at the time were sometimes used to criticize the authorities. This led rulers, in turn, to sometimes take action against particular preachers, canceling certain their gatherings, or imposing a ban on preaching for a period.[15] Talmon-Heller also notes a similar phenomenon in Damascus, but suggests this was less common than in Baghdad, which at the time was the center of the Abbasid Caliphate until the Mongol conquest in 656/1258.[16]

The Shiʿi Fatimid dynasty (*al-Ismāʿīliyya*) in Egypt also used preaching as a form of religious and political instrument against their enemies. To this end, the Fatimids took care to institutionalize the practice of preaching and the holding of sermon known "*majālis al-daʿwa*" at the al-Azhar Mosque and inside the Fatimid Palace, as well as in the *Dār al-ʿIlm* in Cairo. The purpose of these assemblies was diverse: to train missionaries (*duʿāt*) and preachers in the service of the Ismāʿīlī sect, and to spread its doctrines throughout the Muslim world. This process

highlighted the importance and skill of the Chief Preacher (*Da'ī al-Du'āt*), who headed this institution and maintained a ramified hierarchy among missionaries operating in all the regions of the Muslim world. Thanks to these preachers, the Shi'i Fatimid dynasty became well-established in vast areas far from its center of power in Egypt.[17] Daftary has discussed this history in great detail, highlighting in particular the process by which the Ismā'īliyya separated from other Shi'i groups under the leadership of their own imams. After this occurrence, the Ismā'īlīs used *da'wa* as a tool of propaganda, aiming to uproot the Sunni Abbasid rulers, and establish a new Shi'i caliphate headed by the Ismā'īlī imam.[18] Preaching also became a tool for the Sunnis as well. Preaching in mosques contributed to the revival of Sunnis against Shi'i movements, after Shi'i rulers had governed the Islamic world for nearly a century ("The Shi'i Century"). In Baghdad, for example, the role of the preacher was institutionalized, as he was by the caliph to strengthen the Islamic Sunni streams of thought against the Shi'i and rationalist streams.[19]

Ibn Kathīr also stresses the importance of the preacher's authority, such as Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī his position in Baghdad. Here, Ibn Kathīr notes Ibn al-Jawzī's preaching assemblies and their influence among his admirers saying, "The caliphs, ministers, kings, emirs, '*ulamā*', the poor, and all the other types of people attended his preaching. The fewest number that gathered to hear his preaching was [several] thousand, and often a hundred thousand or more."[20] Under Fatimid rule, the al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo was initially a center for Shi'i *da'wa* and propaganda. Later, this changed, especially in the Mamluk period (648-923/1250-1517), and the al-Azhar Mosque became a religious-educational and propaganda institution for the Sunnis.[21] Preaching competitions during this period also gave rise to a rich literary and intellectual culture, and contributed significantly to the "cultural renaissance" of Islam.[22]

Preaching Assemblies as a Platform for Oversight and Criticism

In general, formal teaching occurred within *madrasa*s and other educational institutions under the supervision of judges, rulers, or the owners

of an endowment (*waqf*). Education in these institutions was conducted according to decisions of these supervisors and the conditions of their endowments. The inauguration ceremonies for new teachers were carried out in the presence of judges and the endowment owner as a method of supervising the teacher and testing their work and aptitude for teaching, in addition to applying the endowment conditions to these institutions. Judges and dignitaries attended these ceremonies, which also indicates that they were a way to evaluate the teacher's suitability for the job and showcase their academic, educational, and pedagogical level in addition to acting as an official inauguration ceremony.

Such oversight was not only a part of formal education, but also occurred during informal educational gatherings. There were typically held at the initiative of rulers, both in mosques and at the rulers' courts. These assemblies had various purposes, one of which was a form of competition between learned scholars, resulting in one's colleague's defeat during a debate and opportunity to boast in front of the audience. Indeed, some scholars used these opportunities to showcase their expertise and boast of their knowledge and skills. At the same time, the competitors often participated the discussion in the form of riddles, queries and occasionally jokes about religious matters to embarrass their colleagues and expose their deficiencies to the audience. In so doing, the prime goal was to present their own proficiency in the topics under discussion for the sake of pride, praise, and arrogance, rather than for the purpose of imparting education and knowledge to the audience. There is no doubt that often the audience attended these assemblies to spend time listening to the discussion and debates between the contestants as a form of leisure. Such a confrontation satisfied the audience and aroused in them a curiosity and expectation to know who the winner was and who was more knowledgeable in matters of religion.

Most often, such gatherings and assemblies were held at the initiative of rulers to examine and embarrass a religious scholar in front of his colleagues. The case of the Mamluk Sultan al-Ashraf Qāytbāy (d. 901/1496) and Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī is one such example. The Sultan addressed a question to al-Suyūṭī before the great judges and '*ulamā*' who were seated in the palace. The question was related to an

event connected to the Prophet Muḥammad, which surprised al-Suyūṭī and embarrassed him at first. But, being one of the greatest '*ulamā'* in Egypt, and renowned for his abilities in matters of religion and interpretation of the Qur'an, he eventually managed to answer wisely and convincingly. Ibn Iyās mentions this event saying, "Then Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn answered after that with a good enough answer on this issue."[23]

Some of these assemblies were held by the order of a ruler, to test the proficiency and level of the '*ulamā'*, and to discuss a controversial religious issue. The experience of these debates intrigued the audience and attracted many to watch them. Those present even participated in celebrating the victory, encouraging the winner, and showed their respect and support. This highlights the degree of audiences' involvement in these gatherings and their results, too, as well as the influence of the public's impression on the debaters. An example of this is the gathering held during the reign of the Mamluk Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh in 818/1415, which was intended to examine the religious knowledge of Shams al-Dīn al-Rāzī al-Harawī (d. 829/1426), especially in the sciences of Hadith and the Sunna of the Prophet. The assembly at the Sultan's court was crowded with ordinary people and '*ulamā'*. As a result of this gathering, which took the form of a test by means of debate to check al-Harawī's level of religious knowledge and credibility, his ignorance and falsification of religious knowledge relative to his colleagues became clear. As Ibn Iyās writes, "A debate broke out between him and Ibn Ḥajar in the presence of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad, and his falsity became apparent."[24]

At times, preachers provoked the anger of senior '*ulamā'* or riots from the audience if the topic of the preaching was markedly different from the views of those present. This was the case, for example, with Shaykh ʿAlī b. al-Bannā in 762-763/1360-1361 when, during one of his sermons, he attacked the eponym of the Hanafi School, Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān and his opinions. This behavior led to the issuance of an arrest warrant against the Shaykh by the chief Hanafi judge in Damascus, and he was even banned from giving sermons at the Umayyad Mosque.[25]

Some rulers held gatherings and study assemblies with the aim of correcting distortions of the *Sharīʿa* and behaviors that contradicted religious laws and values. This was especially the case in the later

Mamluk period, with was characterized by the spread of corruption among the ruling class as well as among the '*ulamā'* and educators. The rulers wanted to appeal legal rulings issued by some corrupt '*ulamā'*.[26] Mauder discusses some of these assemblies (*majālis*) held by Mamluk sultans at their courts, which were a key part of the court life during the Sultan Qānişawh al-Ghawrī (r. 906-922/1501-1516) in particular. These assemblies took the form of debates or seminars, where different '*ulamā'* presented their thoughts on topics such as religion, history, law, and literature, and discussed them with the sultan. This shows that al-Ghawrī was not only educated but also worked on improving his knowledge and his image as a scholar. Al-Ghawrī's court and its assemblies were open to different kinds of people, not only the elite. Among the audiences were scholars and officials, as well as travelling scholars and foreigners, and even servants, who were just there to listen.[27]

In one of the assemblies held by Sultan al-Ghawrī in 919/1513, his obvious purpose in summoning judges representing the different Islamic Schools of Law and the presence of many interested '*ulamā'* was to appeal one of the rulings regarding acts considered reprehensible in Islam. He also sought to insult the '*ulamā'* and judges who did not properly enforce the *Sharī'a*, such as banning the drinking of wine, prostitution, selling *waqf* property, and other forms of corruption. However, the historian Ibn Iyās argues that Sultan al-Ghawrī's purpose in hosting these gatherings was also to obtain greater personal fame and to be seen as a man of justice and morality, who would then be remembered in history for putting religious laws into practice. As Ibn Iyās stated, "He intended by that to show justice so that it would be written in his chronicle that he stoned those who committed fornication in his days, as happened in the time of the Prophet…."[28]

Among the '*ulamā'* and scholars of jurisprudence (*fuqahā*'), preaching was used to enhance their status within the community, while at the same time insulting the status of others. Preachers' proficiency and knowledge of religious matters, and their ability to attract supporters, provoked competitions and among the '*ulamā*'. The powerful preacher is the one who attracts a large crowd to hear his sermons and preaching, which provoked jealousy and hostile attitudes among his learned

competitors and other preachers. It can be understood that preaching served as a competition among '*ulamā'* and legal scholars and worked to highlight their knowledge and learnedness among the public in order to gain power, status, and influence in the community. Generally, the high status of the preacher would attract a larger number of followers. In Damascus, for example, the sermons of the Hanbali shaykh 'Abd al-Ghanī Ibn Surūr al-Maqdisī at the Umayyad Mosque attracted large crowds from the lower-class population of the city. They would gather around Ibn Surūr after Friday prayers at the mosque, which would arouse a great deal of jealousy toward him on the part of his competitors, who were preachers from the other Schools of Law. This jealousy led to Ibn Surūr al-Maqdisī's exile from Damascus to Cairo, where his sermons and views were also opposed, especially by the Shafi'i '*ulamā'*.[29]

Preaching to a popular audience did not require a high level of knowledge on the part of the preachers. Gatherings were pitched according to the educational level of the audience, using easily understood methods to arouse the audience's enthusiasm and hold their attention. Since the preacher was aware of the extent of his influence on the audience before him, he would use an attractive and approachable style, such as speaking with a beautiful voice, using folk tales and poetry etc. Shaykh Ibn al-Jawzī's beautiful voice, for example, gave him a strong following in comparison with others, and was an important factor in gaining the attention of those present at his assemblies in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.[30]

By the late Mamluk era in Egypt and the Levant, preaching assemblies and gatherings had acquired a negative image, and the level of religious knowledge had decreased. Some '*ulamā'*, preachers and other religious officeholders were variously criticized or praised for their work, educational activities, knowledge, or status. Such criticism or praise might focus on scholars' and preachers' diligence and level of knowledge, their behavior and morals, or on the mistakes of some scholars, their positions on particular religious matters, and their positions in the service of the rulers. Criticism was aimed at those who strayed from the path of morals, virtue, and the *Sharī'a*, and those who led teaching or preaching assemblies without qualifications or mismanaged the

educational process, or showed a lack of good morals towards others.[31]

From a review of biographies of preachers in this period, it appears that it was the '*ulamā'* who were inferior in terms of their level of education who were the ones who engaged in religious preaching in mosques. This is shown by the case of Shaykh Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Maylaq, who was appointed on behalf of the Mamluk Sultan al-Ẓāhir Barqūq to the post of chief Shafiʿi judge in Egypt in 1387. Ibn al-Maylaq refused to take the office because he knew he did not have the right status for the position of judge, as he was only engaged in preaching and lacked the necessary religious education. Nevertheless, the Sultan forced him to take up the role. Ibn al-Maylaq refrained from wearing the *khilʿa* (robes of honor, indicating acceptance of a position from the sultan), "so the Sultan obliged him to do so, despite his reluctance…."[32]

With the spread of corruption in the later Mamluk period, these preachers were a convenient tool and were exploited by the rulers. This led to the appointment of judges from among those engaged in preaching, and not from among the '*ulamā*' with the right level of education. At the same time, some of the preachers did agree to take up the role of judge even though they were inferior to other high-ranking '*ulamā*'. This was the case with the Hanbali Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn Ibn Mufliḥ (d. 824/1421), who was appointed chief Hanbali judge in Damascus in 1414. Young and lacking in religious education, he only gained the respect of the common people (*al-ʿawāmm*), and even then, engaged only in preaching to the lower-classes and to women while seated on a chair. Al-Nuʿaymī notes this point in the biography of Ibn Mufliḥ saying, "*he used to work for a while in the Umayyad Mosque after the Friday prayer at the Hanbali miḥrāb, and people gathered there and benefited from it… He is a young man with little to offer, he knows nothing of the sciences except that he preaches to the common people and women, while he was sitting on chairs….*"[33]

It seems that taking a chair for preaching in mosques was widespread at this time in Muslim areas. Erzini and Vernoit found that many mosques in Morocco are equipped with one or more chairs, beside the main *minbar* (pulpit) of the mosque, which differ in their form and function from the *minbar*. These chairs are used to give regular lectures to

students of traditional education, or to give occasional lectures to the public for preaching or instruction and guidance (*lil-waʿz wal-irshād).* Erzini and Vernoit say that this tradition of the professorial chair was probably introduced to Morocco from Egypt and the Levants in the seventh/thirteenth century. Most of the existing chairs in Morocco seem to date from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and they continue to be used till to this day.[34]

Preaching and Learning Through Festive Gatherings and a Culture of Entertainment

Some of the assemblies that were held under the auspices of rulers were intended to serve as a leisure activity, even though they had a religious or scientific character.[35] Such gatherings were usually organized on the initiative of the ruling elite or with its support, and sometimes rulers even donated money as prizes for participants in debates. When these assemblies were held in the courts of the rulers, the audience was composed of members of the governmental elite. When they were held in public places, they attracted large and unrestricted crowds from the general population, depending upon the gathering's purpose and location. On such occasions, the presence of a large audience might be out of curiosity or a desire to be entertained and spend time watching the debate between the contestants or have the aim of acquiring religious knowledge from the discussions. Talmon-Heller also notes in her work on preaching assemblies as entertainment that they also included jokes and wordplay, and that these gatherings can be seen as part of the leisure culture of the period in question.[36]

The second half of the second/eighth century to the middle of the third/ninth century (i.e., the early Abbasid period) has been characterized as a period of Islamic renaissance, distinguished by the influence of the rational and philosophical "sciences of the ancients" (the Greek sciences) on Islamic culture. At the time, scholarship in these subjects were the rulers' priority, and their courts served as an arena for the gathering and debates of famous intellectuals. Although the rulers used such assemblies as part of their own leisure activities, the main purpose

was to encourage the advancement of the rational sciences in Islamic culture. The rulers generously supported and funded these activities, thereby creating favorable conditions for such things as the establishment of institutions, creativity in translation and learning, and they were also generous in providing financial prizes to participants in these gatherings.[37]

The theological current that emerged during this period among thinkers with a rationalist and philosophical background (the Mu'tazila) left its mark on some of the rulers. It reached its peak with the establishment of the *bayt al-ḥikma* ("House of Wisdom") in Baghdad in the first half of the third/ninth century.[38] This ruler-supported, rationalist activity provoked a sharp rift and a theological controversy, which began among the elite and then spread to the masses. Shawqi Dif notes that these gatherings in the rulers' courts were characterized by the choice of the most learned scholars in Baghdad in the various sciences, including learned Jews and Christians. The court of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn (d. 218/833) was known for its experts, scholarship and debates, which included topics of such as theology, philosophy, literature and poetry, the religious sciences etc.[39]

From time to time, the intervention of the rulers in support of a particular religious current also affected the contents and topics of the gatherings. Later, with the victory of the legalist-religious current over the rationalist current, and especially in the Mamluk period, the rulers contributed greatly to this shift by holding gatherings and assemblies of a religious nature.[40] The purpose of this policy of the Mamluk rulers was to strengthen their religious status. This was especially the case since the Mamluks were foreigners from outside the region, either from non-Muslim backgrounds or slaves. That is why the Mamluk sultans made sure to define their military campaigns as fighting a holy war against the Crusaders and then against the Mongols. As for domestic policy, they implemented a policy favoring religion, both in the dedication of educational and religious institutions, and in religious studies with the endowment of *waqf*s. In addition, the Mamluks were careful to appoint chief judges from the four schools of Sunni Islam, starting with the first Sultan, Baybars.[41] Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh (d. 824/1421) also

issued an order in 819/1416 requiring the four chief judges of the various schools to come to the Citadel in Cairo on two days a week (Sunday and Wednesday) to be present at the assemblies dediecated to reciting Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. Discussing this order, Ibn Iyās says, "And in it the Sultan decreed that the four judges should go to the Citadel every Sunday and Wednesday, and attend the reading of al-Bukhārī, and the old custom was that only the Shafi'i judge would attend, with a small group of jurists."[42]

These assemblies also formed part of the rulers' leisure activities. Typically, these gatherings were held in the Cairo citadel, in the palaces of the rulers or in other mosques and institutions they endowed. Although these assemblies were characterized by matters of religion, many present saw them as a means of passing time. In these gatherings, it was salient that the main purpose was the revival of certain celebrations and festivals or discussing religious issues, which were conducted while holding debates between the '*ulamā*' on religious matters, sermons and preaching, the festivals of Sufi movements and celebrations such as the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday, parties and religious ceremonies during the nights of Ramadan, etc. Ibn Taghrī Birdī describes one of the ceremonies performed by Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh in 818/1415 at the Siryāqūs Khānqāh in Cairo, which was attended by groups of Sufis and Qur'an readers. This gathering was also attended by singers who sang religious hymns (*munshidūn*) and preachers of the Hadith (*al-samā'*). Sufi and other dancers even participated (*wa-raqaṣat akābir al-fuqarā' al-ẓurafā'*). The ceremony continued all night with food, sweets, and drinks. At the end, the Sultan gave alms of money to the readers and singers (*al-qurrā' wa-l-munshidūn*).[43]

Some rulers used to hold these gatherings in their palaces constantly to discuss religious matters, and controversial religious issues, or to highlight the level of religious scholarship of some of the great '*ulamā*'. The Mamluk Sultan al-Ghawrī arranged ceremonies and parties in the presence of the four chief judges, the '*ulamā*', preachers and Qur'an readers. Sultan al-Ghawrī also held these meetings and assemblies in palaces or public places, such as his annual celebration of the Prophet's Birthday (*'amila al-sulṭān al-mawlid al-sharīf al-nabawī 'alā al-'āda*). Mauder's study of Sultan al-Ghawrī's salons, provides a theoretical

conceptualization of the term "court." Al-Ghawrī's court functioned as a transregionally interconnected center of dynamic intellectual exchange, theological debate, and performance of rulership that triggered novel developments in Islamic scholarly, religious and political culture.[44]

Ceremonies for festive purposes were usually held at the end of Ramadan, and consisted of celebrations attended by great sages of various kinds. In these gatherings, the Qur'an would be recited by readers with beautiful voices and excellent command of the rules of recitation. Senior government officials and '*ulamā*' would be present at these ceremonies.[45] It was also customary to hold gatherings and assemblies at the al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo during Ramadan, the purpose of which was to read from the works of the great scholars of Hadith for religious and educational purposes in an atmosphere appropriate to the holiness of Ramadan. The rulers also used to hold assemblies and gatherings in the Sultan's palace in the Cairo citadel, with the participation of judges and various '*ulamā*'. The rulers' purpose was to perform acts of charity and celebration in Ramadan. At the end of these ceremonies, the rulers would distribute prizes to the participating '*ulamā*' and judges.[46] Other ceremonies were also held such as ceremonies to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet.[47]

During the sixth and seventh / twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Sufism formed into organized public orders, and shifted from a phenomenon of individuals to one of organizations, which were influential and popular among the public. With the spread of Sufi institutions (*ribāṭ*, *zāwiya*, *khānqāh*), Sufism became well-established, both among the ruling classes and other strata of Muslim society.[48] As Sufism further developed, especially in the late medieval Islamic periods, the burial sites of Sufi leaders and various shrines of holy men became places of pilgrimage known as *maqām*, *mashhad*, *mazār* or *ḍarīḥ*. Ceremonial visitations became custom at certain times, and were called *mawṣim* or *ziyāra*. These sites became centers where all kinds of memorial services, sermons and readings were held in memory of the people buried there, or in the hope of obtaining blessings (*baraka*) from them. The preservation of the memory of those buried in these tombs encouraged a popular religious culture that provided spontaneous religious education and knowledge

to the masses.[49] Believers flocked to the homes and graves of holy men to seek their divine intercession, to be near them, and to participate in Sufi rituals. Usually, buried shaykhs and other religious leaders, and their lodges turned into a public place central to the life of the community, and became important for the development of a pilgrimage literature around such places.[50] Mulder has shown how changes in religious sentiment influenced the creation of a unified "holy land" in medieval Syria, which centered around the shrines of the followers of ʿAlī bin Abī Ṭalib from Shiʿi communities. This was the result of the visits (*ziyāra*) and general popular celebrations around these shrines.[51]

The assemblies of Sufi movements stood out as having a popular character, especially during ceremonies and preaching. It is important to mention the Sufis' holding of *dhikr* assemblies within their institutions for reciting praises to God, sometimes called *awrād* (sg. *wird*), as well as holding parties and popular ceremonies, especially during Ramadan, or to mark the birthday of the Prophet. These activities attracted large numbers of people.[52] The prayer and *dhikr* assemblies within the Sufi brotherhoods were open to members only. The purpose of such assemblies was to glorify the name of God through singing together in praise of God and the Prophet (*madā'iḥ*). The influence of the Sufi orders among the elite and rulers was strong, and especially during the period of Mamluk rule in Syria and Egypt, in which the rulers' support for Sufi activities was prominent, both in dedicating institutions to their service and in participating in their special ceremonies.[53] At one of the gatherings held by the Emir Ḥusām al-Dīn Lājīn in 1261 at his home in Damascus, he invited a group of Sufis, and participated himself in the *dhikr* ceremony, which was accompanied by singing and dancing. The Emir Lājīn honored the Sufis in serving a meal with his own hands, and at the end he also presented them with gifts.[54]

Organizations of mystics and Sufi movements held their own assemblies, gatherings, and ceremonies, which were different from the preaching assemblies of the '*ulamā*'. These movements became stronger and more popular across Egypt, Syria, and the eastern Muslim regions, especially from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards. This popularity was found not only among the general populace, but also among rulers

and dignitaries who were influenced by the Sufis. The rulers tended to become more sympathetic to these popular orders as they funded, aided, and supported their religious activities, out of a desire to receive blessings and also to broaden their popular support. Some of the Sufi gatherings were accompanied by poetry, singing, drums and dancing, and innovations and miracles that contradicted the culture of traditional Islam. Such ceremonies, sometimes held in popular processions in the streets and at parties or on holidays, attracted large crowds, and became a typical custom in the public sphere in Islamic culture. This popularity provoked the fierce opposition of the '*ulamā*' from all the orthodox Islamic sects, who viewed the activity of the Sufis as undesirable innovations (*bidʿa*).[55] But, because of the good relationship that had developed between Sufi movements and the ruling class in the Mamluk period, the '*ulamā*' were unable to eradicate this phenomenon of the Sufis' use of drums and music. By the late Mamluk period, these Sufi customs had become commonplace and were regarded as an ordinary part of their behaviors in celebrations. Consequently, '*ulamā*' could not prevent Sufi celebrations accompanied by drumming and dancing, even when they were held in mosques.[56]

Conclusions

By the late medieval Islamic period, preaching, public gatherings, and other informal religious meeting had become a part of the general atmosphere in Muslim socieites. Rulers, '*ulamā*' and Sufi shaykhs maintained this culture, although the purposes for holding these gatherings were different. The rulers held these gatherings mainly in their courts to encourage and strengthen one religious current against another. Rulers benefitted from this propaganda in terms of their status and influence, while some of the preachers were also inspired by the rulers themselves. At the same time, '*ulamā*' held preaching assemblies on their own initiative mainly within the central mosques to increase their status among the public, or to spread simple and popular religious messages to a wider audience. Thus, the main goals of holding these gatherings in Muslim culture were as a form of educational-religious preaching and *daʿwa*;

enhancing one's personal status; preaching as political propaganda, critique and oversight, as well as celebration and as a form of leisure.

Gatherings and assemblies of scholars spread among the ordinary population, increasing the participation of the public, as well among the ruling class. The revival of religious ceremonies expanded in medieval Muslim societies and their purposes were varied. In the early periods of the Muslim empire, gatherings and assemblies were characterized by emphasizing the level of expert knowledge among the educated and the '*ulamā*' with the support of the rulers. In later periods, gatherings for preaching were characterized by being more popular among the lower classes. Nevertheless, the main goal behind these assemblies and gatherings remained the preservation of Islamic values and moral customs.

The conclusions from this study can be summarized in two basic points: First, public and informal meetings and assemblies contributed to the spreading of a popular religious culture among the public. Second: the diversity of religious sects and intellectual and political movements who organized such assemblies for religious preaching and advocacy led to the expansion and multiplication of intellectual and religious viewpoints in thought and practice. This diversification occurred between Shi'is and Sunnis as well as among different Sunni sects, and also between the '*ulamā*' and Sufi movements.

Endnotes

1 On the term *majlis* and its types in Islam, see George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), pp. 10-12.

2 See Shawqī Ḍīf, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī: al-'Aṣr al-'Abbāsī al-Awwal*, (vol. 3), (Cairo, Dār al-Maʿārif, 1966); See also Luṭfī Aḥmad Naṣṣār, *Wasā'il al-Tarfīh fī 'Aṣr Salātīn al-Mamālīk fī Miṣr*, (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Maṣriyya al-'Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 1999), pp. 19-109.

3 For a description of Ibn al-Jawzī's preaching and its effect on his audience in Damascus see Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya*, (vol. 13) (Beirut: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1988): 194.

4 See Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, (vol. 13), p. 194; ʿAbd al-Qādir bin Muḥammad al-Nuʿaymī, *al-Dāris fī Tārīkh al-Madāris*, (vol. 1), (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1981), p. 478.

5 See Makdisi, *The Rise*, pp. 10-11.

6 For further works on the culture of preaching assemblies (*majālis al-waʿẓ/al-da'wa*), their spread in the Fatimid and Abbasid eras, and their religious and political impact see al-Qādī al-Nuʿmān bin Muḥammad bin Ḥayyūn, *Kitāb al-Majālis wa-l-Musāyarāt*, (Beirut: Dār al-Muntaẓar, 1996); ʿAlam al-Islām Thiqat al-Imām, *al-Majālis al-Mustanṣiriyya*, (Beirut: Mu'ssasat al-Nūr, 2006); al-Mu'ayyad fī al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *al-Majālis al-Mu'ayyadiyya*, (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1994); ʿAbd al-Raḥmān bin ʿAlī Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Mawā'iẓ wal-Majālis*, (Tanṭā: Dār al-Ṣaḥāba, 1990).

7 See Jonathan P. Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near* East, (Seattle: University of Washington Press: 2001); See also Adam Metz, *al-Ḥaḍāra al-Islāmiyya*, (vol. 2), (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1967), pp. 146-156.

8 ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, *al-Ghunya*, (vols. 1-2), (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997). See also Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

9 Ḍīf, *Tārīkh al-Adab*, (vol. 3), pp. 100-101; Hatim Mahamid, *Waqf, Education and Politics in Late Medieval Syria*, (Saarbrücken: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013), pp. 189-192; idem, "Mosques as Higher Educational Institutions in Mamluk Syria," *Journal of Islamic Studies (JIS)*, 20, Issue 2, (2009), pp. 205-211.

10 On preaching assemblies, see Daniella Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria: Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons under the Zangids and Ayyūbids (1146-1260)*, (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 115-144.

11 On Muhyī al-Dīn Yusuf Ibn al-Jawzī, see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, (vol. 13), p. 211; al-Nuʿaymī, *al-Dāris*, (vol. 2), pp. 29-31; On Abu al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī, see Shihāb al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Hayy Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār man Dhahab*, (vols., 7), (Damascus-Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1992), pp. 494-496.

12 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidaya*, (vol. 13), p. 211.

13 See Yūsuf Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Maḥāsin Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fi Mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, (vol. 7), (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1963), p. 39; On the biography of Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, and his preaching in Damascus, see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, (vol. 13), pp. 194-195; Al-Nuʿaymī, *al-Dāris*, (vol. 1), pp. 478-480; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, (vol, 7), pp. 460-461; Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety*, pp. 128-131.

14 See Daniella Talmon-Heller, "Muslim Preachers during the Crusades," *Zmanim: A Historical Quarterly*, no, 97 (2007), pp. 84-90; idem, "Religion in the Public Sphere: Rulers, Scholars and Commoners in Zangid and Ayyubid Syria (1150-1260)," in M. Hoexter, S.N. Eisenstadt, N. Levtzion (eds.), *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, (Albany: SUNY, 2002), pp. 49-64; Berkey, *Popular Preaching*, pp. 53-69.

15 Merlin L. Swartz, "The Rules of the Popular Preaching in Twelfth Century Baghdad, according to Ibn al-Jawzi," in George Makdisi et al. (eds.), *Preaching and Propaganda in the Middle Ages. Islam, Byzantium, Latin West*, (Paris 1983), p. 224.

16 Daniella Talmon-Heller, "Islamic Preaching in Syria during the Counter-Crusade (Twelfth-Thirteenth Centuries)," in *Laudem Hierosolymitani: Studies in Crusades and Medieval Culture, in Honour of Benjamin Z. Kedar*, (Iris Shagrir, Roni Ellenblum, and Jonathan Riley-Smith, eds.), (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 85-100. On relations between rulers and preachers in Syria in the Zangid and Ayyubid Era, see idem, *Islamic piety*, pp. 123-28.

17 On the role of some of the Fatimid missionaries see al-Qādī al-Nuʿmān, *Kitāb al-Majālis*; Thiqat al-Imām, *al-Majālis al-Mustanṣiriyya*; al-Shīrāzī, *al-Majālis al-Mu'ayyadiyya*; Mustafā Ghālib, *Tārīkh al-Da'wa al-Ismā'īliyya*, (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1965); Verena Klemm, *Memoirs of a Mission: The Ismaili Statesman and Poet al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din al-Shirazi*, (London & New York: I.B. Tauris in assoc. with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2003); Hatim Mahamid, "Ismaʿili Daʿwa and Politics in Fatimid Egypt," *NEBULA* 3.2-3, (Sept. 2006), pp. 1-17.

18 See Farhad Daftary, *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies: A Historical Introduction to an Islamic Community*, (I.B. Tauris, London, 2005), pp. 62-88; idem, *Ismaili History and Intellectual Traditions*, (London & New-York: Routledge, 2018); idem, "The Fatimid Age: Dawla and Daʿwa," in *A Short History of the Ismailis: Traditions of a Muslim Community*, (Edinburgh University Press; 2020), pp. 63-119.

19 Yitzhak Yehuda Goldziher, *Lectures on Islam*, (Translation: J. Rivlin), (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1997), pp. 145-146; Hatim Mahamid, "Sunni Revival in Twelve-Century Syria: A Renewed Perspective," *Hamizrah he-Hadash* (*The New East*) 49 (2010): 74-76; Makdisi, *The Rise*, pp. 17-19.

20 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, (vol. 13), p. 29.

21 Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*, (Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 51, 85-87. Regarding the al-Azhar Mosque since it was

built in the Fatimid period to serve the Ismaʿili *daʿwa*, and until it was returned by the Mamluk Sultan Baybars to its activities as a mosque and an educational institution for the Sunni service see Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿAbd al-Ẓāhir, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir*, (Al-Riyad: ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Khuwaytir, 1976), pp. 277-280; Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab*, (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004), (30), p. 87.

22 Mahamid, "Sunni Revival," 69.

23 See Muḥammad bin Aḥmad Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr fi Waqāʾiʿ al-Duhūr*, (vol. 3), (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Masriyya al-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb, 1984), p. 297.

24 Ibn Iyās, *Badaʾiʿ*, (vol. 2), p. 21; See also the description of the assembly with al-Harawī, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr bi-Abnāʾ al-ʿUmr*, (Vol. 3), (Cairo: Lajnat Ihyāʾ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1972), pp. 57- 64; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, (vol. 9), p. 194.

25 On this event, see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, (vol. 14), p. 277. At another preaching session, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahmān (a Hanbali) encountered opposition from the followers of the Shafiʿi school, since his preaching in 1416 tended to be in favor of the Shiʿa in the mosques of Yalbughā and Umayyad in Damascus, see al-Nuʿaymī, *al-Dāris*, (vol. 2), pp. 123-124.

26 On the spreading of corruption and conflicts among the '*ulamā*', educators and judges in late Mamluk era in Egypt and Syria, see Mahamid, *Waqf*, pp. 113-129; idem, "Muslim Institutions of Learning (Madrasa) in Ayyubid and Mamluk Syria", in *Research Aspects in Arts and Social Studies* Vol. 8. (ed. Atila Yildirim), (India & United Kingdom: B P International, 2023), pp. 64-65; Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Rāziq Aḥmad, *al-Badhl wa-l-Barṭala Zaman Salāṭīn al-Mamālīk*, (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Masriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Kitāb, 1979).

27 On holding councils and assemblies for scientific and religious aims by Sultan al-Ghawrī see Christian Mauder, *In the Sultan's Salon: Learning, Religion and Rulership at the Mamluk Court of Qānişawh Al-Ghawrī (r. 1501-1516)*, (vol. 1), (Leiden: Brill, 2021). On storytelling and preaching in medieval Islamic societies, especially in Egypt and Syria, see Berkey, *Popular Preaching*, pp. 36-52.

28 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, (vol. 4), p. 343. On the spread of indecent acts contradicting Islam and the Shariʿa laws in that period, and the treatment of the Mamluk Sultan al-Ghawrī in matters which ultimately led to the dismissal and replacement of the four chief judges, see ibid, pp. 340-349.

29 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, (vol. 13), pp. 38-39; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Qalāʾid al-Ǧawhariyya fī Tārīkh al-Ṣāliḥiyya* (vol. 2), (Damascus: Majmaʿ al-Lugha al-ʿArabiyya, 1980), pp. 441-442. See also the example of the Shaykh Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1256), and his influence among the popular crowd at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, (vol. 13), pp. 194-195; Al-Nuʿaymī, *al-Dāris*, (vol. 1), pp. 478-480.

30 See for some examples of such preachers, Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, (vol. 14), p. 277; Taqiy al-Dīn bin Aḥmad Ibn Qādī Shuhba. *Tārīkh Ibn Qādī Shuhba*. (vols. 3). Damascus: al-Maʿhad al-ʿIlmī al-Faransī, 1977), pp. 172-173.

31 On this topic, see Hatim M. Mahamid and Younis F. Abu Alhaija, "Scholars and Educational Positions under Criticism and Praise in the Medieval Islamic Era," *Educational Research and Reviews* vol. 16 (8), (Aug. 2021), pp. 336-342.

32 Ibn Qādī Shuhba, *Tārīkh*, (vols. 3), pp. 219-220; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'*, (vol. 1/2), pp. 387-388.

33 On the Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn Ibn Mufliḥ, see Al-Nuʿaymī, *al-Dāris*, (vol. 2), pp. 50-52. Ibn al-ʿImād says that Ibn Mufliḥ's name became famous and known among common people, see Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, (vol. 9), p. 246.

34 See Nadia Erzini and Stephen Vernoit, "The Professorial Chair (*kursi ʿilmi* or *kursi li-l-waʿz wa-l-irshād*) in Morocco," *Al-Qantara* XXXIV 1, (2013), pp. 89-122.

35 In addition to assemblies with religious aims during the Mamluk era, some of the Mamluk rulers sometimes held entertainment meetings such as drinking, singing, and dancing, see Naṣṣār, *Wasā'il al-Tarfīh*, pp. 112-303.

36 Talmon-Heller, "Muslim Preachers," pp. 87-88.

37 Ḍīf, *Tārīkh al-Adab*, (vol. 3), pp. 102-103. On the rise of rational sciences in the Islam, see Younis F. Abu Alhaija and Hatim M. Mahamid, "The Impact of Doctrinal and Intellectual Conflicts on Medieval Islamic Sciences," *Journal of Positive Psychology & Wellbeing*, vol. 5, no. 4, (2021), pp. 542-546.

38 On the Bayt al-Ḥikma in Baghdad and its influence on the culture of Islam, see Claude Kahan, *Islam*, (Trans.: Emanuel Kopelevich), (Tel-Aviv, 1995). On al-Muʿtazila, its development and its most important intellectual views and works, see Muḥammad Salīm al-ʿAwwā, *al-Madāris al-Fikriyya al-Islāmiyya*, (Beirut: al-Shabaka al-ʿArabiyya li-l-Abḥāth, 2016), pp. 193-245; Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, (trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori), (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 85-100; Yūsuf al-ʿIsh, *Dūr al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya al-ʿĀmma wa-Shibh al-ʿĀmma li-Bilād al-ʿIrāq wa-l-Shām wa-Miṣr fī al-ʿAṣr al-Wasiṭ*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Muʿāṣir, 1991), pp. 41-96; Ḥaydar Qāsim al-Tamīmī, *Bayt al-Ḥikma al-ʿAbbāsī wa-Dawruhu fī Ẓuhūr Marākiz al-Ḥikma fī al-ʿĀlam al-Islāmī*, (vol. 1), (Amman: Dār Zahrān, 2011), p. 41; Khaḍir Aḥmad ʿAṭallah, *Bayt al-Ḥikma fī ʿAṣr al-ʿAbasiyyīn*, (1st ed.), (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1989), p. 33; Jonathan Lyons, *The House of Wisdom: How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilization*, (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009); idem, "Bayt al-Hikmah," in Kalin, Ibrahim (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Science, and Technology in Islam*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Jim Al-Khalili, *The House of Wisdom: How Arabic Science Saved Ancient Knowledge and Gave us the Renaissance*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2011).

39 Ḍīf, *Tārīkh al-Adab,* (vol. 3), pp. 105-109; On Intellectual conflicts on Islamic sciences, and their effect see Abu Alhaija and Mahamid, "The Impact," pp. 542-560; Farhad Daftary (ed.), *Intellectual Traditions in Islam*, (London-New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2001).

40 On the victory of the advocates of the science of transmission (*al-naqliyya*) over the rational sciences (*al-ʿaqliyya*) and the revival of the Sunna and religious sciences, see Abu Alhaija and Mahamid, "The Impact," pp. 552-555; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿAzzām, *Saladin: The Triumph of the Sunni Revival*, (Mecca: Islamic Texts Society, 2014); Jonathan Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800*, (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 189-202.

41 See Yossef Rapoport, "Legal Diversity in the Age of Taqlid: The Four Chief Qadis Under the Mamluks," *Islamic Law and Society*, 10 (2), (2003), pp. 210-228; Jorgen S. Nielsen, "Sultan al-Ẓāhir Baybars and the Appointment of Four Chief Qāḍīs, 663/1265," *Studia Islamica* 60 (1984), pp. 167-176; Hatim M. Mahamid, "Religious Policy of the Mamluk Sultan Baybars (1260–1277 AC)," *Religions* 14, no. 11: 1384, (2023). https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14111384

42 The custom, which was before this order, obliged the Shafiʿi judge to be present in these meetings in the citadel. See Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, (vol. 2), p. 29.

43 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm,* (vol. 14), pp. 38-39.

44 See Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, (vol. 5), pp. 24-25. Mauder's research presented detailed and extensive descriptions of learning and the transmission of knowledge and religious life at the Mamluk Sultan al-Ghawrī's Court by holding of councils and assemblies, see Mauder, *In the Sultan's Salon*, Chapters 4 and 5.

45 See Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Maqrizī, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-Maqrīziyya*, (vol. 2), (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1997), pp. 350, 353.

46 See for example such spectacular assemblies and ceremonies during the month of Ramadan held by the Mamluk Sultan Qāytbāy. At one of these celebrations on the bank of the Nile River in Cairo, all the readers of the Qur'an and the preachers of Cairo were invited. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, (vol. 3), p. 11.

47 Aḥmad bin ʿAlī al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā fī Ṣināʿat al-Inshā*, (vol. 3), (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1987), p. 576; Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, (vol. 2), p. 305; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, (vol. 3), pp. 38, 53, 108, 130, 200, 216. It is important to mention that this tradition of reviving the birthday of the Prophet (*ʿĪd al-Mawlid*) is still celebrated in Muslim world to this day.

48 See Atta Muhammad, *The Public Sphere during the Later Abbasid Caliphate (1000-1258 CE): The Role of Sufism.* (Ph.D. Dissertation: The University of Leeds, 2020); Daphna Ephrat, "The shaykh, the physical setting and the holy site: the Diffusion of the Qadiri Path in late Medieval Palestine," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 19/1 (January 2009), pp. 1-20; idem, *Sufi Masters and the Creation of Saintly Spheres*

in Medieval Syria, (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2021), pp. 83-100; Mahamid, *Waqf*, pp. 193-223; Donald Little, "The Nature of Khanqahs, Ribats, and Zawiyas under the Mamluks," in *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, (eds., Wael Hallaq and Donald P. Little), (Leiden, Brill, 1991), pp. 91-105.

49 See Stephennie Mulder, *The Shrines of the 'Alids in Medieval Syria: Sunnis, Shi`is, and the Architecture of Coexistence*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Stephen Wilson (ed), *Introduction to Saints and Their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). On the expansion of operation in the public sphere and the community that affected by the Sufi leader (*Shaykh*), see Ephrat, *Sufi Masters*, pp. 63-80. On the Ribāṭ as an institution of the "Public Sphere", see Muhammad, *The Public Sphere,* pp. 156-210.

50 See Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173-1325,* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015); Josef W. Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 100-108; Daphna Ephrat and Hatim Mahamid, "The Creation of Sufi Spheres in Medieval Damascus (mid-6th/12th to mid-8th/14th centuries)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 25 / issue 02, (2015), pp. 16-19. See also Christopher C. Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous Ziyara and the Veneration of Saints in Late Medieval Egypt*, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 67-127; Ephrat, *Sufi Masters*, pp. 101-114, 115-134; Eric Geoffroy, *Le Soufisme en Egypte et en Syrie sous les Derniers Mamlouks et les Premi`eres Ottomans: Orientations Spirituelles et Enjeux Culturels*, (Damascus: Institut français d'études arabes de Damas, 1995), pp. 216-217. On Sufi tombs as sacred sites for pilgrimage in Baghdad during the later Abbasid caliphate, see Muhammad, *The Public Sphere*, pp. 235-236.

51 See Mulder, *The Shrines*, pp. 186-266.

52 On the organization of the *dhikr* circles (*halaqat al-dhikr*) of the Sufi orders, see Mahamid, *Waqf*, pp. 222-223. See also the example of the development of Sufism in the public sphere in Islamic regions, especially in Syria, Egypt, and Iraq between the fifth and tenth centuries/eleventh to sixteenth centuries: Ephrat and Mahamid, "The Creation," pp. 189–208; Little, "The Nature," pp. 93-96; Makdisi, *The Rise*, pp. 20-22, 33-34. On Sufi shaykhs' roles in the public sphere as teachers, preachers, ascetics and charitable shaykhs of the *ṭarīqa*, see Muhammad, *The Public Sphere,* pp. 225-246

53 Al-Nuʿaymī, *al-Dāris*, (vol. 2), pp. 197-199; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, (vol. 13), pp. 173-174; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Tārīkh,* (vol. 2), p. 495. On the role of the Sufis in Syria and Egypt in the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, their activity in the public sphere, and their relations with the rulers and the strengthening of their position among the popular community see Mahamid, *Waqf*, pp. 201-214. On Sufis' relations with the ruling authorities and their contribution to the "Public Sphere," see Muhammad, *The Public Sphere,* pp. 211-246.

54 See the descriptive text of this meeting, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Ibrāhīm al-Qurashī al-Jazarī, *al-Mukhtār min Tārīkh Ibn al-Ǧazarī*, (Beirut, 1988), pp. 265-266; Shaykh ʿAlī al-Qaṭnānī (d. 1346), of the Sufi order *al-Rifāʿiyya* in Damascus, also had many followers among the upper class of the city. See Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Tārīkh*, (vol. 2), p. 495; See also the meeting held by the Mamluk Sultan al-Muʾayyad in 818/1415, mentioned above. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm*, (vol. 14), pp. 38-39.

55 Al-Nuʿaymī, *al-Dāris*, (vol. 2), pp. 219-221; ʿAlī bin Yūsuf al-Buṣrawī, *Tārīkh al-Buṣrawī*, (Damascus: Dār al- Maʾamūn li-l-Turāth, 1988), p. 186.

56 See as an example, the meeting of the renowned '*ulamā'* in Damascus in 901/1495, in which they argued about whether to issue a fatwa to prohibit the use of drums. See al-Nuʿaymī, *al-Dāris*, (vol. 2), p. 219; al-Buṣrawī, *Tārīkh*, p. 186. Shams al-Dīn Ibn Ṭūlūn criticized the using of music and drums by the Sufis and even forbade it. See Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Tashyīd al-Ikhtiyār li-Taḥrīm al-Ṭabl wa-l-Mizmār*, (Ṭanta, Dār al- Ṣaḥāba li-l-Turāth, 1993).

REVIEW ESSAY

Integrating Kashmir: Modernity, Development and Sedimented Narratives

KASHMIR IN THE AFTERMATH OF PARTITION

NEW YORK: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2021, 392 PAGES.

SHAHLA HUSSAIN

COLONIZING KASHMIR: STATE-BUILDING UNDER INDIAN OCCUPATION

STANFORD: STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2023, 366 PAGES.

HAFSA KANJWAL

How to make sense of the politics and history of Kashmir since decolonization? Two new important books deal with this question and provide a detailed account of what is/was happening in Kashmir—one

of the most densely militarized regions in the world with a long history of a self-determination movement. For many years now, and these two books are part of that conversation, scholars have centered Kashmir in their analysis instead of fixating on the dispute between India and Pakistan or the internationalisation of the conflict. This change has brought new perspectives and conceptual categories to study the region. This is a much-needed corrective especially considering that scholarly work on Kashmir has relied on the 'nation-state' framework for too long.

In this review essay, I address some of the themes of these two books, focusing in particular on modernity as a hegemonic project in Kashmir. Both books deal with the constituent elements of this project including constitutionalism, democracy, human rights, secularism, law and development.[1] Yet there is, to a certain extent, an unwillingness to see Kashmir as a site for the implementation of this project. Modernity is often simply equated with human progress. Thus, any critique of modernity is fundamentally a critique of its excesses. Meanwhile, the inbuilt violence of modernity in a postcolonial setting like Kashmir emerges partly in the refusal to allow for any other radical or alternative future be even considered. For the most part, one needs to ask what modernity does. This questioning is important because, despite the overpowering violence of this project in Kashmir, modernity presents itself as a benign force. That, however, does not mean Shahla Hussain and Hafsal Kanjwal—both trained historians—let modernity off the hook, rather they, describe in excruciating detail what the nation-state, modernity's most cherished element, has done in Kashmir.

I also concern myself with the politics of these books. In other words, I ask what purpose academic writing serves in a contested political climate. I am interested in this question for two reasons: one, because of the attempts by Kashmiri scholars to challenge the knowledge produced by Indian academia, and second, to consider what this dynamic does to the study of Kashmir and what direction it has to take. First though, I will briefly summarise the two books and present what I consider to be their central concerns.

Two Stones, One Bush: Thinking about Kashmir

In her book, *Colonizing Kashmir: State-Building under Indian Occupation* (hereafter CK), Hafsa Kanjwal is direct and provocative. From the title of the book, much is immediately clear: Kashmir is under a colonial occupation and the Indian state is trying to maintain its rule through state-building. These are important parameters for her book and also inform her style. A key question that Kanjwal foregrounds in her analysis is the way India acquired Kashmir without the popular consent of the people. The argument that follows is that Kashmir is/was ruled by India through client regimes which help it to effectively control the region through a particular form of state-building, that is, the processes through which modern states expand their capacities to govern. While Kanjwal does focus on state-building, she makes it clear early on in the book that such state-building is different from nation-building, although there are some overlaps.

A classic example of a nation-building exercise is France, where peasants were turned into Frenchmen.[2] For the state-building exercise, the classic example can be Kashmir, as Kanjwal shows through a careful analysis of archival research. She focuses on the ten-year rule of Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad, the Prime Minister of Kashmir from 1953-1963. Using the term *politics of life,* which she borrows from Neve Gordon's conceptualisation of Palestinian life under Israel's occupation,[3] Kanjwal notes that state-building was done through implementing economic and educational policies meant to empower the people. These policies served another purpose, as they were intended to showcase the practical benefits of integrating with India. For Indian rule to be legitimized, Kashmiris had to be convinced that such a rule was in their best interests. For that to happen, Kashmiris had to develop an emotional bond with India, and it was here that state-building was preferred over nation-building. Kanjwal highlights how state-building was used "to establish normalcy in the region, territorialize Kashmir in the Indian imagination, create economic dependency, shape Kashmiri subjectivities and culture, and manage dissent" (CK, 32). This was achieved through propaganda, producing films, coopting journalism, patronizing literary culture, managing

foreign relations with Muslim countries and notably, through repression. Despite the historical period (a little more than a decade) that Kanjwal covers, there is urgency in her writing and the book unfolds quickly.

Shahla Hussain presents her work with a more descriptive title, *Kashmir in the Aftermath of Partition* (hereafter KAP). As the title suggests, the book provides a longer history of Kashmir covering almost the whole twentieth century. The book intends to find the historical roots of the deepening estrangement between Kashmiris and the Indian state, and examines different ways in which Kashmiris have thought, and think, about freedom. In addition to showing how Kashmiris have retained the popular notion of self-determination in relation to freedom, Hussain argues that diverse understandings of Kashmiri political identity also complicate this notion. This is because, Hussain suggests, the concept is primarily limited by its political and territorial definition. However, for Kashmiris, freedom is more than self-determination. Instead, freedom is grounded in *Insaaf* (justice), *Haq* (rights), and *Izzat* (human dignity). Hussain situates these ideas of justice, rights, and human dignity in a modern language and suggests that self-determination provided people "with psychological space to question the hegemony of the nation-states treating Kashmiri destiny as a mere territorial dispute" (KAP, 185).

One of the reasons Hussain focuses on the modern history of Kashmir is to flesh out common themes through which Kashmiris think about their political future/s. She draws attention to political mobilization against the Hindu princely rulers of Kashmir (the Dogras) and how decolonisation affected the identity of Kashmiris. She argues that because "at the time of independence, India and Pakistan embraced the colonial construct of territorial nationalism, the retention of Kashmir—by any means necessary—came to seem indispensable to [their] national identity" (KAP, 3). In the later chapters, as she shifts her focus toward Indian rule in Kashmir, Hussain demonstrates how Kashmir became economically dependent on India (occasionally using the term 'occupation' to characterize Indian rule in Kashmir) and how that led to changing the political culture in the region. The change in political culture does not mean Kashmiris disassociated themselves from the myriad ideas of freedom or stopped referencing self-determination, but it helps

Hussain reinforce the point that there were conflicting understandings of "self-determination" in different temporal and spatial frames. These conflicting understandings have both normative and political underpinnings. Normative underpinnings are mostly related to the idea of justice and rights, while political underpinnings are concerned with governance, citizenship, and redistribution of policies and resources. Hussain does not exclusively focus on India-administered Kashmir but also broadens her attention to Pakistan-administered Kashmir, Kashmiris living in diaspora, and Kashmiris of various religious denominations. This attentiveness to different groups, communities, and categories is one of the great strengths of the book.

Endorsing Modernity: Politics, Religion, and Development

A common theme that both Hussain and Kanjwal engage is the narratives surrounding modernization and development in the context of Kashmir. They both also consider the question of what it means to be religious in an age where such sensibilities are considered irrational and pre-modern. Discussions on modernization, religion, development or even liberalism have animated scholarly work on Kashmir for a long time.[4] Sometimes, and because of the post-Cold War and then post-9/11 climates, some of these works had a parochial attitude. For example, Kashmir's war for self-determination and the resistance movement was regarded as terrorism or driven by Pakistan's security interests. India is usually considered to be the aggrieved party. The secular liberal framework of India's nationalism is seen as having the potential to accommodate the 'irrational' secessionist tendencies of Kashmiris. One major reason that this view garnered acceptance is as a result of how we have come to understand the idea of a modern nation-state—as a sovereign power enabled with mechanisms to look after the grievances of minorities (broadly defined).

Regardless of the political context (internal as well as foreign) in which Kashmir became part of India in 1947, what mattered was that Kashmir was now part of a sovereign modern state. It was not a sovereign territory, yet its relationship with India was not final. It was tied to a form of provinciality and in a state of political liminality. It is this

quintessential status quo that India has tried to maintain in the last seventy years. Both Hussain and Kanjwal show that to maintain a status quo, states resort to mechanisms ranging from benevolent practices like providing economic packages to inflicting direct violence. However, such mechanisms are also a form of the tactics of control deployed often against minorities. The question is: if modern nation-states have the innate capacity to accommodate their minorities, then why are there so many self-determination movements in the world? More so, why are these self-determination movements directed toward the formerly colonized countries? Perhaps a different story of the founding origins of the nation-state might provide answers to these questions.

Mamdani has recently argued that the twin developments that, in a historical sense, form the core of the modern state was; first, the ethnic cleansing of minorities—Jews and Muslims in Spain—so that a homogeneous nation could be created; and second, the colonial conquest of Americas by the Castilian monarchy of Spain. Mamdani argues that colonialism and the birth of the modern nation-state were intertwined, implying that nationalism and colonialism emerged simultaneously. In a way, even if India was decolonized and became a modern nation-state, the colonial way of thinking and doing things persisted. Mamdani probes a little more and suggests that the problem lies in embracing political modernity as it originated in Europe which initially drove them to conquer and 'civilize' the world, and then because such a mission was rejected, war and violence emerged. More importantly, this project failed and resulted in a postcolonial modernity in which the idea of nationhood flourished.[5] The idea of nationhood, nation-state, and the modern state is thus common to modernity (liberal, colonial, or postcolonial) in terms of how modernity wants to homogenize the territory. Since the focus is on homogenization, violence becomes part of modernity, and so does resistance. Nevertheless, as the homogenization project of the nation-state unfolds in its violent form through the cleansing of minorities (the Jammu massacres come to mind) or relegating them to second-class citizens (the current state of Indian Muslims offers a case here), its non-violent form takes different shapes. Much like the empires of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, postcolonial

colonialism relies on progress. In both books, the notion of progress is critically analyzed.

One of the most progressive documents that has come to define Kashmir, especially from left-leaning liberals, is the *Naya Kashmir* (New Kashmir) manifesto of 1944. The manifesto provides "a vision for a *modern* Kashmir" (KAP, 56, emphasis mine). Indeed, it is a document representative of modernity as it declared, among other things, the aspiration to "raise ourselves and our children forever from the abyss of oppression and poverty, degradation and superstition, from medieval darkness and ignorance into the sunlit valleys of plenty ruled by freedom, science and honest toil" (CK, 41). Apart from the somewhat flowery language, the manifesto defines emancipation in terms of political rights, economic freedom, and social justice. Kanjwal shows that Bakshi utilized parts of the manifesto in his state-building project.

Meanwhile, according to the manifesto, Kashmir was a distinct country with a Muslim majority but with significant provisions for Hindu, Sikh, Christian, and Buddhist minorities. For the modernity project, the aim was to define political rights clearly. Thus, it declared the struggle of Kashmiris along class lines rather than a communal one (between Hindus and Muslims). However, its detractors like Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah, an important political and religious leader, declared that the document held Kashmiri interests above Muslim interests (CK, 43). Pre-1947, Mridu Rai argues that the exclusion of Muslims from the economic and political resources of the Dogra state led to a religious sensibility that informed political mobilization. Thus, religious discourses became inseparable from the discourse of rights.[6] This pushed religion to the center of Kashmir's social and political life. Despite what the manifesto intended, there was not a neat divide between politics and religion, rather they were enmeshed together comfortably. Most of the political leaders were, therefore, comfortable in referencing religion.

With a secular outlook, Hussain regards Sheikh Abdullah's usage of religious terminology as a way to garner support for Western concepts like nationalism (KAP, 49-50). However, when a political party with a religious outlook such as the Muslim Conference asks the government to improve labor conditions, Hussain uses the word, 'appropriate' (KAP, 46)

to describe this move. The point is not only that the Muslim Conference cannot be honest about improving labor conditions, but that religion has to remain subservient to secular concerns, and that is the defining feature of progressive politics. In another instance, Hussain writes that, "Abdullah's instrumental use of religion to popularize 'self-determination,'… was meant to reach a wider Kashmiri audience by tying the plebiscite demand to their religious sensibilities" (KAP, 197). Yet, when a party like Jama'at-e Islami does something similar, Hussain writes that their politics must be dissociated from the articulation of the religious identity of Kashmiris (KAP, 295). Religion has no value of its own and when it has, it has to be tied to politics. At times, it becomes difficult to see Hussain's critical gaze, especially when she writes about the intersection of politics and religion. She seems herself to be deeply informed by secularization theory and secular conceptuality. In fairness to Hussain, she does advance a very important argument that the doctrine of secularism was spread to bring "Kashmiris culturally closer to India through accelerated political and financial integration" (KAP, 149).

Kanjwal is more alert to such theorization, which also informs her writing. Kanjwal argues that through state-led advances in education, "the [Indian] government attempted to shape a secular, modern Kashmiri subjectivity" (CK, 161). This led to fears that the state was undermining the Muslim identity of the community. Yet, Kashmiris utilized state-led reforms for their own ends. Nevertheless, such attempts at shaping political subjectivity can be also read as part of the expanding regulatory capacity of the Indian state. Kanjwal gives a detailed account of this development that took place during the 1950s under Bakshi's regime. She then asks: "how are we to understand the impact of these modernization schemes?" (CK, 150). One answer that she provides is in terms of the capabilities of state power, which in turn underscores the legitimacy of the government. Another way to look at this phenomena is to critique developmentalism in terms of what it is—a way for the modern state to lay effective control over the areas it governs.[7]

Development is important for another reason as it is a vital part of India's integration policy in Kashmir. Economic integration presented the potential for economic growth (the living conditions were, indeed,

improved) but Hussain makes a damning argument that in reality, this benefited the supporters of political elites and created a class of Indian supporters in Kashmir (KAP, 141, 144), an argument Kanjwal reiterates (CK, 156). Charges of corruption were made not only by political opponents or journalists but also by pro-government newspapers and by writers in their poems, short stories, and novels. However, it seems to me that such an understanding of corruption is rooted, in the first place, in a post-Weberian idea of modernity in which there is a distinction between family and state.[8] In Kashmir, of course, corruption takes on a notorious tone when it is used to reward political services (read affiliating oneself with India or the political establishment). Other than that, corruption is a way for ordinary people to navigate through the murkiness of the bureaucracy and the high-handedness of the police. Vishwanath argues that "corruption stems from the logic of a development model. Our moves to modernity, to development, to creating certain institutional structures either excludes many of our citizens or corrupts the society."[9] This fear or possibility of exclusion forces many to opt for a path that deviates from the institutional path as laid down by the state.

To gauge the mood of Kashmiri society regarding corruption, nepotism, and greed, Hussain and Kanjwal focus on literary works too. As a society in transition coming to terms with top-down, state-led modernization, Kashmiri intellectuals "engaged in considerable soul searching over the relationship between modernity and secularism, and their respective uses and purposes, benefits, and limits. What, they asked, is modernity?" (KAP, 152). However, the modern gaze that these intellectuals and their literary works employed is a manifestation of self-flagellation entrenched by Indian rule—something one of the giants of Kashmiri literature Akhtar Mohiuddin saw through and resisted. He wrote about Kashmir and Kashmiris without pronouncing moral judgments.

However, I want to steer the conversation on corruption and state-building in a different direction. Kanjwal tries to understand the motives of Bakshi for the path he took and allows his nephew an explanation. He says, "once Kashmir had already acceded, [Bakshi] decided that India was too powerful for poor Kashmiris to fight. So he decided *to*

get the best out of India" (CK, 62 emphasis mine). This is a common way of thinking among pro-India politicians in Kashmir when they are pushed to explain their political positions. Integration with India is a practical choice (with benefits), rather than a moral or ethical one. To put "to get the best out of India" into perspective, one can look at the *Ayyangar Committee Report* published in 1967. The committee probed corruption and traced "the emergence of the 'Bakshi Brothers Corporation,' a powerful family of traders who monopolized political power for ten years." The report states that in 1947, "the family of Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad owned a small fur business in Srinagar, generating a total income of 800 rupees per month, along with all immovable property worth 10,000 rupees. Once Bakshi became prime minister of Kashmir, however, he established a monopoly over three main government departments: transport, forests, and public works. As per the report, the value of his property increased to 1.45 crore (14.5 million) rupees approximately within ten years" (KAP, 141). The family had extended into a part of the state. Nevertheless, Kanjwal argues that narratives surrounding corruption helped India to divert attention away from the political sovereignty of Kashmir to good governance in Kashmir. More so, it allowed the Indian state to accuse Kashmiris of being deviant, since they were the ones who were corrupt.

State of the Academy, Academy of the State: Studying Kashmir

In the last two decades, there has been a greater awareness of what is being written about Kashmir in academia. This awareness has led to new methodologies and concepts being employed, but there is much more to this than what meets the eye. Within this shift there emerges a critique of disciplines (say, for example, of postcolonialism) and of scholarly work influenced by state-centric perspectives. Criticism has been directed especially toward Indian academia, who often serve as the chief experts on Kashmir within Western academic circles. If there is any pushback, that does not mean that Indian academia would endorse this critique for a better-informed analysis. Navnita Chaddha Behera's recent work on Kashmir is an apt example to think through some of these questions.[10] She endorses the view that academic expertise is state-centric and that

academia has been complicit in silencing the voices of common people. What is required, Behera tells her reader, is to decolonize the episteme and tools of research.

This is a worthwhile effort but Behera's well-intentioned efforts fall short of being truly decolonial which I have critiqued elsewhere,[11] but also because there is a clear disconnect between her theoretical insights and the factual, on-the-ground situation in Kashmir. Take, for example, her usage of the word 'separatist' to refer to the resistance movement in Kashmir. Although it *was* a widely used word in Indian media circles until recently (now they simply use 'terrorist'), it is a word seldom used on the ground by common people. Using such vocabulary is not only acquiescing to a statist agenda to delegitimize genuine aspirations but, in the long run, the consequences are also more pronounced. I want to suggest that this politics of semantics leads to a sedimentation. By sedimentation, I mean when a specific vocabulary, along with the narratives it generates, remain in use for an extended period. As a result, this vocabulary becomes entrenched, or sedimented, to the point where critiquing it becomes exceedingly challenging. Besides regimes controlling knowledge production, I am also thinking about how academic hierarchies, citational politics, and peer-review processes facilitate this dynamic.

Behera broadly divides the scholarly literature on Kashmir into three genres: the first is grounded in a security studies framework, and analyses the conflict in Kashmir from the perspective of a protracted bilateral conflict arising from the Hindu-Muslim antagonism around India's partition. The second looks at the federal framework of the Indian state, and examines the conflict through the pressures posed by the secessionist movement in Kashmir on India's territorial sovereignty. The third, Behera notes, is the self-defined Critical Kashmir Studies, which studies the everyday effects of violence and militarization in Kashmir. Regarding its promises, Behera points out the methodological choices that have the potential for breaking new ground, but criticizes it for characterizing India as a settler colonial power and writing revisionist histories of Kashmir.

Both claims need to be properly understood in terms of the two books under review here. Although Behera recognizes the potential of

Critical Kashmir Studies (both Kanjwal and Hussain associate themselves with the project as their essays feature in the two edited volumes),[12] her eagerness to dismiss fears of settler colonialism betrays her own promise of letting the Kashmiris (the subaltern) speak and listen to them. As much as the scholarly literature is struggling to adequately conceptualize Kashmir as a settler colony, there are genuine fears that Indians would be settled in Kashmir. Kanjwal is more direct in her approach towards settler colonialism and argues that "settler logic removes… notions of belongingness in an attempt to construct a new identity, an identity that is inextricably tied to the settler state" (CK, 18). For that to happen, new ideas have to be propagated like the idea of a citizen whose subjectivity can be controlled.

Kanjwal makes an effort to grapple with colonialism and settler colonialism, likely out of an awareness that established knowledge regime might critique this effort. Thus, she devotes considerable energy to theorizing these concepts thoroughly. Kanjwal asks "what does it mean to act like a colonial power instead of being a colonial power—where is the line drawn?" (CK, 23). Immediately before that, she writes that there is little articulation that India is fundamentally colonial. What does this tell us about who is writing about India? The triumph of India's colonial project in Kashmir does not stem from employing different tactics or the absence of a clear metropolis and periphery dynamic. Rather, it hinges on India's ability to project itself as non-colonial. To craft such an image, an army of experts is required who work for the nation-state, or come to realize that they are only valued when they produce knowledge helpful to the state. This dynamic does not differ from how colonial empires recruited their own knowledge producers.

Some time back, Suvir Kaul argued that the Kashmiri quest for self-determination shares significant similarities with the anti-colonial movements of the 20th century. However, he pointed out a puzzling challenge in understanding the Kashmir situation, especially when scholars who have previously analyzed anti-colonial movements attempt to grapple with it. According to Kaul, the key hindrance lies in the "self-righteous and aggressive nationalism," of this scholarship which has effectively dampened critical assessments of the state's actions and policies.[13] I

want to go a little further, and argue that such scholarship has not only dampened critical assessments, but also influenced the way scholarship comes to be written. Put more simply, as much as new emerging scholarship assesses Kashmir, it also has to continuously engage with this sedimented nationalist scholarship. This has two ramifications: it slows down the knowledge production and second, future scholarship is seen as revisionist (used pejoratively).

To give an example regarding the events surrounding the accession of Kashmir with India, Hussain writes that "the October 1947 tribal invasion forced the maharaja to appeal to the Indian government [emphasis mine]" (KAP, 66). The usage of the sedimented term 'tribal invasion' seems deliberate here but, even if it is not, Hussain inadvertently falls into a trap laid by the Indian state narrative and adopted by Indian academics. Kanjwal does a better job by looking at the events surrounding this 'tribal invasion,' the way it has been written about, and what purpose it serves for the Indian state narrative. Meanwhile, both books locate the genesis of armed rebellion in Kashmir after the 1987 elections for the local assembly. Again, a corrective is needed, since locating this in 1987 makes it a reactionary movement and immediately ties it to electoral politics. Hussain presents a lot of evidence to show that Kashmiris were engaged in armed resistance from the 1950s onwards. Saying as much also means that 1987 only popularised and expanded armed resistance. Hussain does not make such an argument but perhaps that is as much a historian can do: provide archival evidence, and it is our job to then build upon it. Regarding archives: both Hussain and Kanjwal mention the notable lack of comprehensive records on Kashmir. This intentional absence of archives has, for a long time, posed a significant challenge to the way we understand Kashmir's past.

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that to purposefully think about Kashmir necessitates a critical exploration of modernity and knowledge production. They are not givens, thus enquiries need to be directed toward the hegemony of modernity and the violence of knowledge production. First

and foremost, the question that needs to be asked is what modernity and its constituent elements do. How to make sense of the violence of knowledge production? Questions like these are far from settled. Hussain and Kanjwal look at them in different ways, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly. What emerges is a devastating picture of how colonial occupations work and how there is a complete disregard for people's aspirations. Recent years have only worsened Kashmir's situation.

Iymon Majid
Member
Institute for Advanced Study
Princeton, NJ

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Endnotes

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BOOK REVIEWS

Collective Ijtihad: Regulating Fatwa in Postnormal Times

HERNDON: INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT, 2024, 272 PAGES.

HOSSAM SABRY OTHMAN

In this book, Hossam Sabry Othman examines the relationship between fatwa issuance, *maslahah*, and the application of collective or deliberative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) in the modern context. Othman compares contemporary models of decision-making to traditional mechanisms, as well as analysing the role that jurists (muftis, *mujtahid*s and imams) play in shaping fatwa rulings and final outcomes. While fatwas are technically non-binding, in reality such is the trust and respect that Muslims have for jurists and the institutions that issue them, that they play an important role in shaping Muslim opinion and religious and social norms in the modern context. Othman calls for a reassessment of current institutional practices, contending that Muslim societies need not be vulnerable to the demands of a media driven, technocratic age. Instead, in the interests of a healthy functioning society, the issuance of fatwas should be done in a manner cognizant of the wider modern context, incorporating specialist

knowledge, and take in the cultural diversity that exists within the wider ummatic identity. Additionally, for Othman a significant element of the current context is the need to move beyond a simple weighing of matters in terms of their harm and benefits, and to apply the important legal principle of *maslahah* in a more comprehensive manner that takes into account the *maqasid al-shariah* in its assessments.

Othman asserts that despite the existence of various international bodies, councils and fatwa-issuing committees that externally exhibit an aura of confidence to the wider Muslim public, there exist deep issues within them that cannot be ignored. For instance, are dissenting opinions to be marginalised in favour of a majority vote if no unanimous consensus is achieved? Issues such as this, Sabry argues, have to be able to withstand external scrutiny, because in today's terms the social implications are global, and the demands of modern life both complex and challenging. As a result, jurists (especially if operating alone), are often out of their depth, but nevertheless are responsible for the moral well-being of not only local, but international Muslim communities. Worryingly, muftis are often under pressure to compromise in their rulings. Othman shines a light on the nature of that pressure, calling for constraints to be placed on the state and corporate powers to allow muftis to fully and freely exercise their judgement and resist popular sentiment. Othman furthermore calls for greater regulation of the mufti selection process, claiming the best-qualified should be employed and of course rewarded according to strict parameters that focus on productivity rather than personal ambition or appeasing employers and shareholders. Moreover, Othman argues that muftis must be inclined to share the obligations of their position. Here, Othman means that as part of the decision-making, deliberative process, an inter-disciplinary approach through collective ijtihad should be adopted. This process would allow experts to contribute to respective discourses with a view to aiding the processing of information and providing insight into concepts to address an issue fully. Experts should not be given authority in this process, but rather a distinct role which should be recognised in its own right. For Othman, this is an entirely rational approach since we cannot reasonably expect scholars to struggle with ever specialised developments in scientific and

non-scientific knowledge. This is especially the case when there is insufficient time and insufficient resources to manage or digest the various elements that govern a particular issue. Consequently, inter-disciplinary analysis is essential. A clumsy and fragmented assessment of an issue will neither lead to innovative insight nor to a conceptual understanding that will bring about the best outcomes, not only today but in the future.

There needs to be a shared understanding of this state of affairs. In his work, Othman looks to the past in particular to the Qur'anic call for *shura* (consultation), the practice of the Sahabah in terms of consultation, and early scholars. Othman discusses in detail the concept of *ifta'*, whereby scholars historically consulted one another, overcame divergence of opinion, respected one another's thinking and ultimately reached some level of common agreement. Afterall, this is how the various schools of thought (*madhahib*) came to be formed. These practices (i.e., *ijtihad*) later gave rise to attempts to codify Islamic law. With regard to the codification of Islamic law, Othman discusses two of the most important examples, both of which bore witness to innovative information management processes and the utilisation of a systematic methodology. The result of this was the collation and classification of a vast body of information, for easy reference by *fuqaha'*. The Muhgal and Ottoman empires instigated these processes respectively, which resulted in the monumental *al-Fatāwā al-ʿĀlamgīriyya* a compendium of Islamic law (six volumes). This work contains authoritative doctrines and established juridical rulings relating to various branches of law, including religious, civil, penal and international issues from the viewpoint of the Ḥanafī school. The *Mecelle (Majallah el-Ahkam-i-Adliya)*, issued in 16 volumes, became the civil code of the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In this book, Othman does not simply theorise, but he also delves into real world issues. The issues include: surrogacy, artificial insemination, organ donation, cloning, complex financial instruments, digital investment etc. What does Islam have to say on such topics? Here, Othman analyses the world of modern fatwa pronouncements – packaged, circulated, broadcasted and supplied in a matter of minutes – as part of a 'mentality' of 'one fatwa-fits-all.' As the situations currently stands,

Muslims today wherever in the world or whatever their circumstances happen to be, can simply text, telephone, or email their requests. They will then be provided with an answer by on-line muftis with an immediacy that makes the whole process seem, on certain levels, to Othman to be a decidedly un-sacred affair. Time, the consultation of scholarly sources, and the attention to the unique nature of each case with the provision of detailed explanation that emulate the centuries old classical scholarly tradition would seem, Othman argues, to no longer have currency. Instead, today muftis have to concede to the demands of schedules and growing queues of people wanting an answer.

This is not the only problem. Othman also critiques what he views as a failure by muftis to analyse technical issues involving modern disciplines in the most informed and reasoned manner by making use of the help of experts. An encyclopaedic knowledge of Islamic law is not enough. Some good examples, Othman states, are those of the advances in science, medicine and finance, which are progressively transforming our understanding of what constitutes life and money. These kinds of changes lead to a need for muftis to address many of the new issues that arise, particularly in fields like genetics and reproduction. Given that muftis are not expected to be polymaths and cannot draw on the complex bodies of knowledge required to solve certain intricate problems of the modern age, few would dispute Othman's call for the assistance of experts through collective *ijtihad*. The role of these experts would be to elaborate, clarify, and explain from the perspectives of their expertise in order to aid in the juristic process, and not to actually issue the rulings. The authority of the mufti would remain intact.

Othman's work also analyses in detail the ways in which rulings are controlled, rather than issued with full independence and authority by jurists. Othman points to the practice of muftis working for organisations, e.g., banks. This relationship, Othman claims, leads to attendant pressures on muftis to massage rulings to accord with the demands of those paying their salaries. Then, there are those jurists who are so woefully out of touch with the world around them, Othman asserts, and very out-dated in their thinking. Othman severely criticizes those whom he considers as issuing ridiculous fatwas, those who prefer to be extremely

lax, and those who choose to burden petitioners with the strictest of options. Othman points to the damage such ignorance can cause, not just to Muslims on an individual level, but also potentially to society at large. Indeed, both individual, group, and state sponsored fatwa/juristic activities, as well as the organizational elements which govern them, are analyzed in Othman's work. His analysis is carefully argued, with recommendations given with regards to reform and improvement.

At the heart of all this, and why it is of vital significance for Muslims to get their fatwa house in order is that, for Othman, in the modern world Muslim societies are facing serious moral, financial, medical and other dilemmas. A cavalier approach to fatwa issuance will do much harm, and what is needed is a serious theological perspective. The practice of collective *ijtihad* should utilise the help of experts, and even regulate the qualifications of jurists, in order to better influence policy on matters which concern us all and are likely to have grave societal impact.

Although the face of fatwas and juristic rulings in our times has seen a radical transformation in terms of online programs and social media, Othman argues that the basic precepts of the classical tradition still apply today more than ever. He examines the various Islamic organisations, fatwa councils, fatwa committees, academies and other Muslim organisations that have been set up over the decades. He outlines some of the debates that have taken place, and shows how each has chosen to framework its own understanding and interpretation of the issues at hand. In so doing, Othman offers a methodology (collective *ijtihad*) and various solutions to aid jurists and regulate this process. The key point for Othman is to be extremely vigilant, and not betray the Qur'an's spiritual principles, and the highest standards set by the Prophet, the Sahabah, and early scholars.

Othman hypothesises that the issue of fatwa issuance will become increasingly more complex and problematic as knowledge and technology continue to proliferate, with societies evolving in response. In other words, Muslims will continue to find themselves in highly unusual, challenging situations. This will lead to demands for a correct theological response from jurists. For Othman, internal processes need to be managed today through a strategy employing collective *ijtihad*, so that

Muslim stability is not threatened tomorrow when those evolutions and complexities become too unwieldy.

Shiraz Khan
Researcher
IIIT London Office
London, UK

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Slavery & Islam

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JONATHAN A.C. BROWN

The Euro-American Enlightenment has reformed global moral norms. This reform has provoked humanity to rethink many issues that had been normalized but were nevertheless still moral problems (Hallaq 2019). This notion applies to many civilizational aspects, but especially the issue of slavery. Some might question why such an immoral institution was seemingly casually practiced in the past without significant opposition. Not only in a particular society, but it seems that the majority—without wishing to generalize—of societies historically accepted slavery as a normal practice. This is the question that provokes Jonathan Brown to reassess the issue of slavery. In particular, this inquiry was provoked following the declaration in 2014 by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant / the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIL/ISIS) that the reintroduction of concubinage was legitimate. Following this move, for some the topic of slavery and concubinage came to be identified as a fundamental Islamic teaching. Here, Brown explains the dilemma: whether to place an immoral practice as an essential part of Islam (since Islam remains engaged with the discourse of slavery in its legal tradition) or to defend slavery, which seemingly goes against the universal norm that slavery is evil. Another premise that Brown proposes is that the Euro-American

tradition also continues to uphold slavery to a greater extent than other civilizations (Brown 2019, 10–12). The key difference between the Euro-American tradition and others is that the abolitionist movement arose from within the Euro-American tradition, whereas other traditions, particularly the Islamic tradition, have never consensually abolished it. Moreover, slavery continues in certain forms in modern North Africa, besides the case of ISIS (Brown 2019).

Brown presents what he calls the slavery conundrum, in which he argues that most western thinkers and scholars are trapped. This conundrum occurs as a result of two predicaments: firstly, that slavery is a perennial, absolute evil; secondly, that slavery has no gradation that could escape the evilness (Brown 2019, 4–6). These predicaments also capture the historical fact that many religions and philosophical traditions accepted or defended some form of slavery. As a result, those religions, philosophers, and even—in Brown's proposal—the American Founding Fathers committed an unforgivable evil while simultaneously promoting other ethical views (Brown 2019, 5). Brown argues that a resolution to this conundrum is possible, but two ambiguities must be addressed first. The first ambiguity regards slavery itself (i.e., what actually constitutes slavery?), and the other is about what does it mean for something to be "wrong"? (Brown 2019, 5). Here, Brown begins his assessment from the perspective of moral philosophy side before delving into details. If "wrong" is relative to time and place, at some point, then, certain forms of slavery cannot be valued as evil. However, the bigger problem appears to be that there has never been a consensus on the definition of what constitutes slavery. Furthermore, moral relativism could consider abolitionism as a relative notion as well, and could thus be viewed as an apology for slavery.

Regarding the definition of slavery, Brown shows an appreciation for Ibn Taymiyya's critique of Greek philosophy, which prioritizes definitions. Slavery, Brown suggests, is something that is undefinable if one attempts a definition process that begins with a categorization (Brown 2019, 15–17). To this end, Brown quotes a judge who stated that slavery is recognized as it happens, but it is difficult to categorize it in a definitive statement (Brown 2019, 27). Nonetheless, this issue of indefinability must

be recognized universally, regardless of place and time. The attempt to establish gradations of slavery is difficult, and often one returns to the insistence that slavery is an absolute evil. However, Brown outlines that, despite being indefinable, categorizing some different forms or practices of slavery is possible, though difficult. Thus, Brown distinguishes between the Islamic legal concept of *riqq* and a general form of slavery. Here, he indicates his intention in saying that *riqq* is not slavery in the modern sense of the term, or that it would represent the mildest form of slavery if one were to insist upon a universal concept of slavery.

Brown then digs into the issues related to the practice of *riqq*. First, Brown considers the status of a *raqiq* (an enslaved person in the Islamic legal tradition) as property. Second, the rights of a *raqiq* and what they are entitled to in social life. Third, Brown also highlights that the way *riqq* is constituted is important, because a foundational assumption in the Islamic legal tradition is that everyone is free, unless they are subject to *riqq*. *Riqq* is widely discussed in fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and consequently Brown approaches the issue as a legal debate rather than a purely moral philosophical one. The wide-ranging discussions of *riqq* can be found in relation to issues of rituals and obligtions (*'ibadat*), for instance, the obligation on the master to pay his *raqiq*'s alms-tax, to criminal codes, which discuss compensation for crimes committed by slaves. Here, Brown is careful not to reveal his personal position regarding these legal debates, since his goal is to draw attention to how difficult it is to define *riqq* as slavery in the modern sense of the term.

Among the many complexities that Brown describes include the vagueness of a *raqiq*'s right to property, as legal scholars did not agree upon the legality of a *raqiq* owning something under their own name, though they mostly agreed that a *raqiq* had the legitimate to start a family and travel without his master's permission (Brown 2019, 86, 94). Morever, *mukataba* (a mechanism for gaining freedom by a *raqiq*) was an undeniable request, meaning that a master could not reject his slave's manumission is sufficient payment was made. Even when his master unintentionally called his slave *mawla* (a former slave), the *riqq* status is nullified (Brown 2019, 86). With these points in mind, Brown argues that the concept of *riqq* in the Islamic legal discourse leaned towards

abolition through manumission; while some key figures in Islamic civilization were *raqiq*, such as the *de facto* rulers of the Mamluk dynasty.

Nevertheless, one issue that remains problematic for Brown is concubine slavery. Islamic law legalized the sexual relationship between a male master and his female slave. This idea, naturally, places this practice in the category of evil, according to modern morality. However, Brown prefers not to unreservedly denounce the Islamic tradition's legitimization of concubinage (Brown 2019, 267–68). Instead, Brown prefers to probe questions around the problem of consent, which he connects with the issue of concubinage: were these female slaves consenting to their sexual relationships with their masters? Modern moral norms emphasize the presence of consent as the arbiter for determining a sexual relationship as being evil, yet historically norms have differed (Brown 2019, 276). Throughout this book, Jonathan Brown has resolved to construct his arguments around slavery in the Islamic tradition from the perspective of moral relativism. Nevertheless, he ultimately appears to side with abolition while seeking to defend the Islamic tradition on its own terms.

Anggi Azzuhri
PhD Candidate
Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia
Depok, Indonesia

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Islam and Democracy in the 21st Century

OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2023, 400 PAGES.

TAUSEEF AHMAD PARRAY

The discourse on the relationship between Islam and democracy has been thrust into the limelight amidst the backdrop of the "War on Terror." From this ongoing dialogue, three overarching perspectives have emerged, each shedding a unique light on this complex nexus: Firstly, there is the belief that Muslim societies inherently lack the capacity to cultivate a liberal culture, thereby hindering the attainment of democracy in Muslim-majority nations. This viewpoint is often propelled by Western media narratives. Contrastingly, a second perspective asserts that democracy not only aligns with Islamic principles but contends that historical Islamic polities have exemplified democratic values more profoundly than any other system worldwide. Lastly, a third viewpoint dismisses democracy as a foreign concept, incompatible with the Islamic tradition, and inherently Western in nature. These last two perspectives find resonance within Muslim intellectual circles.

Within these currents of Muslim scholarship, Tauseef Ahmad Parray's work, *Islam and Democracy in the 21st Century*, takes center stage. The book commences with an exploration of the prevalent notion of there being a discord between Islam and the Western conception of democracy, delving into both theoretical frameworks and practical

manifestations. The book unfolds across seven chapters. Each chapter offers a unique lens through which the discourse on Islam and democracy is investigated. These chapters, aside from the introductory and concluding segments, are arranged into three sections, delineating the thematic progression of the narrative.

The first section, encompassing Chapters 1 and 2, lays the groundwork by juxtaposing democracy with key Islamic concepts. In Chapter 1, "Democracy, Democratization, and the Muslim World," Parray furnishes the reader with a conceptual primer on democracy, thereby providing a scaffold for discerning the convergences and divergences between Islamic and democratic principles. Then, Chapter 2 "Democratic Notions in Islam" delves into both historical and contemporary interpretations of key Islamic concepts, which Parray identifies as the bedrock of "Islamic democracy." These concepts, including *Shura* (Mutual Consultation), *Khilafah* (Caliphate), *Ijma* (Consensus), and *Ijtihad* (Independent Interpretive Reasoning), among others, form the crux of Parray's argument, and serve as the linchpin for understanding the relationship between Islam and democracy in the modern era.

In the second section of the book, spanning Chapters 3 to 6, Parray engages in an intricate examination of the compatibility between Islam and democracy. Chapters 3 and 4, titled "Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Muslim Intellectuals on Islam-Democracy Compatibility," evaluate the perspectives of seminal Muslim modernists from the Arab world and South Asia over the past two centuries. Here, luminaries such as Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, Muhammad ʿAbduh, and Muhammad Iqbal among others, are scrutinized for their contributions to the discourse. Continuing into Chapters 5 and 6, "Twenty-First Century Muslim Thinkers on Islam-Democracy Compatibility" (I and II), Parray presents a contemporary panorama, elucidating the viewpoints of scholars and activists from around the globe. These figures include: Mohamed Fathi Osman, Dr. Israr Ahmed, Asghar Ali Engineer, Mawlana Wahiduddin Khan, Sadek Jawad Sulaiman, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Khurshid Ahmad, Muhammad Khalid Masud, Rachid al-Ghannoushi, Abdulaziz Sachedina, Abdolkarim Soroush, Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, Abdelwahab el-Affendi, Louay Safi, Khaled Abou El Fadl, Radwan Masmoundi, Muqtedar Khan,

and Kamran Bokhari. Chapter 6 then enriches this exploration further with a comparative analysis, bridging the thought currents of the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries, thereby providing a holistic view of the evolution of Islamic thought on democracy.

In the third section, encapsulated in Chapter 7, "Democracy and its Muslim Critics: Objections and Observations of the 'Opponents,'" Parray scrutinizes dissenting voices within the Muslim intellectual landscape. Here, perspectives from "radical Islamists" such as Sayyid Qutb, Taqi al-Din Nabhani and Abd al-Qadim Zallum are juxtaposed with academics like Abdul Rashid Moten, presenting an examination of the range of objections to the compatibility thesis. Through this analysis, Parray offers readers a comprehensive understanding of the diverse spectrum of thought within the discourse on Islam and democracy.

The question of whether Islam is compatible with democracy has emerged as a pivotal challenge in contemporary Islamic political thought, and it is the central inquiry around which Parray's book revolves. Before delving into this inquiry, Parray sets out the theoretical groundwork by delineating the definitions of democracy and contextualizing it within an Islamic framework. Parray contends that democracy embodies multiple dimensions in its contemporary usage, including principles of popular sovereignty, freedom, and equality, as articulated by Axel Hadenius; "a general principle of popular sovereignty, a principle of freedom, and a principle of equality" (24). From an Islamic perspective, Parray argues that discussions on democracy and its participatory ethos do not necessitate the direct presence of the term "democracy" within Islamic texts. Instead, he posits that the Islamic tradition inherently harbors notions, values, and institutions that align with democratic principles such as "the rule of law, government responsibility, the general welfare, freedom, justice, equality and human rights" (36). These principles, Parray argues, are ingrained within Islamic political epistemology, rooted in the concept of Tawhīd and exemplified through institutions like the Caliphate and processes such as *Shura* (47). Examining the perspectives of scholars across centuries, Parray observes a concerted effort to forge an Islamic variant of democracy. These scholars endeavor to synthesize Islamic concepts and norms emphasizing equality, leadership accountability, and

respect for diverse faiths, ultimately striving to establish a consultative, democratic, and divinely-inspired Islamic governance model (268).

A notable distinction drawn by Parray lies between nineteenth and twentieth-century Muslim thinkers and their contemporary counterparts. While the former primarily addressed issues within the Muslim world, with the West and its challenges being either "new" or "emerging," the latter engage in a global discourse as these challenges are no longer new, and indeed they are navigating challenges that have persisted since the inception of colonial modernity. Parray argues Muslim modernists – from Tahtawi, Afghani and Abduh in the Middle East to Sir Syed, Iqbal and Azad in the South Asia – responded to the challenges of European colonialism by advocating for an "Islamic modernism" rooted in the compatibility between Islam and reason, rationality, and scientific inquiry (270). Their central concern revolved around reconciling enduring Islamic values with the imperatives of the modern world, embracing concepts of reform, renewal, and independent reasoning. In Parray's own words, "how can Muslims be true to the enduring values of their own past while living in the modern world?" (270).

In his exploration of democracy as a rich, multifaceted cultural phenomenon, Parray deftly unveils an interpretative evolution and renewal, illuminating the transmission and transformation of democratic ideals within the transcendent realm of Islam. Through a contextualization of canonical texts and their interpretations, he navigates the historical, cultural, social, and legal dimensions, providing readers with a nuanced understanding of the Islam-Democracy nexus. In essence, Parray's exploration navigates the terrain of Islamic political thought, offering insights into the ongoing discourse surrounding democracy and its relationship with Islam, two overarching trends emerge: proponents and opponents. Notably, the author dedicates the majority of his book to expounding upon the harmony between Islam and democracy, while allocating only one chapter to exploring potential incompatibilities. This allocation of space within the book appears to favor proponents, potentially disrupting its equilibrium. Particularly noteworthy is his characterization of scholars who perceive democracy as incompatible with Islam as "radical Islamic figures," a label that marginalizes their

perspectives and portrays them as obstacles to so-called mainstream Islam.

While Parray does not shy away from categorizing scholars as either proponents or opponents of democracy, the manner in which he scrutinizes their arguments exhibits a polarizing tone, perhaps inadvertently perpetuating colonial binaries. This approach, though common in academic discourse, may oversimplify these scholars' nuanced perspectives, and overlook the complexities inherent in their positions. Parray's utilization of binary frameworks, such as "Ultraconservative and Extremists/Secularists and Modernists" or "Muslim Democrats/Muslim rejectionists," to categorize scholars is also potentially problematic. These binaries risk oversimplifying complex ideological positions, potentially hindering nuanced understandings of the diverse perspectives within the discourse on Islam and democracy. This categorization and labeling evoke echoes of colonial patronage, as astutely noted by Edward Said in his seminal work, *Covering Islam*. Said aptly critiques the tendency of colonialists to impose their own interpretations of Islam, which seek not to understand Islam but rather to impose preconceived notions upon it.

In his foreword to Parray's book, Muqtedar Khan also presents a somewhat problematic assertion regarding Maulana Mawdudi and Syed Qutb's attempts to modernize Islam by utilizing Arabic terms for modern ideas, and critiques their usage of *Hakimiyyah* for sovereignty and *Shura* for democracy. Usaama al-Azami gives a contrasting view in his article "Locating *Hākimiyya* in Global History," in which he convincingly argues for the historical roots of *Hakimiyyah* within the Islamic scholarly tradition.[1] Al-Azami's work highlights how Islamic conceptions of sovereignty can enrich our understanding of influential Western articulations of the concept. Moreover, Khan's argument seems to be at odds with Parray's thesis, as Parray does not appear to view democracy, particularly popular sovereignty, as wholly compatible with Islam. In fact, Parray views *Shura* as an alternative or an important component of democracy, as the Islamists did.

1 See Usaama al-Azami, "Locating *Hākimiyya* in Global History: The Concept of Sovereignty in Premodern Islam and Its Reception after Mawdūdī and Quṭb," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (2022), 32(2): 355-376.

Islam and Democracy in the 21st Century guides readers through the intricate interplay of historical narratives, socio-political landscapes, and cultural backgrounds that have shaped and reshaped interpretations of democracy within Islamic thought for centuries. The book invites us to engage with diverse Islamic concepts, enriching Islamic scholarship through cross-cultural dialogue and the generation of contextualized meanings beyond conventional boundaries. While the book presents both pro-democracy and anti-democracy arguments, its primary focus lies in amplifying the voices of scholars who advocate for the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Parray's work not only enriches our understanding of the intricate relationship between Islam and democracy but also fosters a deeper appreciation for the dynamic nature of interpretative traditions within Islamic discourse.

Owais Manzoor Dar
Faculty
Jamia Millia Islamia
New Delhi, India

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The Exceptional Qur'ān: Flexible and Exceptive Rhetoric in Islam's Holy Book

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JOHANNE LOUISE CHRISTIANSEN

Johanne Louise Christiansen's *The Exceptional Qur'ān: Flexible and Exceptive Rhetoric in Islam's Holy Book* offers a lucid study of Qur'ānic exceptions and flexibilities. The book begins with a critical discussion of the Muslim creed. In the Introduction, the author argues that "the exceptive particle *illā* ('except,' 'but,' or 'unless') found in the *Shahādah* , is neither an exception nor a general or absolute denial" (1). However, she claims this exception is false because it is "self-contradictory" and "paradoxical in nature." This discussion includes a claim that authoritative scholars of the Muslim tradition, such as al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272), did not consider such exceptions to be a comprehensive and absolute exception, but rather to represent a categorical proposition or argument. The book consists of seven chapters and an Introduction. In the Introduction, Christiansen highlights the categorical or absolute aspects of exception in the Qur'ān.

The exceptional element of the Qur'ān's language is the book's primary focus. In addition to exceptions, the book also examines dispensations in the Qur'ān's legislative language, such as that found in

Q.24:2-9, 4:7, or 11:12. The author examines dispensations and exemptions that have been granted to the believers, particularly in the cases of victims of oppression. The author calls this category of dispensation an "oppression argument" (2). Regarding the language of exception in the Qur'ān, Christiansen argues that:

> *The exceptive language of the Qur'ān and its establishment of a balance between principle and dispensation are part of a deliberate strategy articulated in a flexible and adaptive system that can incorporate a wide range of adherents. (13)*

Thus, the book aims to provide a comprehensive examination of the exceptive language and the flexibility of the Qur'ān.

The first four chapters of the book provide a philological and semantic analysis of the Qur'ānic text, focusing on exceptive language and legal flexibility. The fifth chapter introduces a discussion of legal aspects of the Hebrew Bible, and considers the Qur'ān's legal strategies in relation to pre-Qur'ānic sources. This chapter also discusses Holger Zellentin's understanding of the Qur'ān's legal culture. The final two chapters include a discussion of semantic analysis and the system theoretical framework advanced by the American anthropologist Roy A. Rappaport (d. 1997). Here, Christiansen examines the exceptive language of the Qur'ān from the vantage point of Rappaport's theory of systems.

More specifically, the first chapter focuses on the linguistic and textual features of exception and flexibility in the Qur'ān. The chapter examines the Qur'ānic usage of the *illā* and *ghayr*, discussing the occurrences of both words in the Qur'ānic text with the Meccan and Medinan *sūrah*s. Christiansen argues, "*Ghayr* is sometimes declinable, especially when taking a prepositional function as 'other than' or 'unless'" (17). Therefore, *ghayr* is also understood as representing an exception. In addition to being exceptions, *illā* and *ghayr* function as particles, and frequently occur in the Qur'ānic text. For example in Q.7:184 (18), "he is but a plain warner (*in huwa illā nadhīrun mubīn*)." Christiansen states that, both *illā* and *ghayr* are integral parts of semitic languages, especially Arabic, their translation into English language is complicated,

noting that "the particle *illā* holds a natural but double semantic connotation" (19).

Thus, from a grammatical perspective, *illā* can have the connotations of both an absolute or particular exception. The book provides a comprehensive examination of the Qur'ānic text that positions God as an ultimate exception. Christiansen points out that the "Qur'ānic god [God] is an ultimate grammatical *exception*" (20). The "another common Qur'ānic *illā* phrase with a similar meaning is the exhortation not to worship deities other than God: 'Do not serve anyone *except* God,' *allā ta'budū illā allahā* (Q.11:26; 2:83; 12:40: 17:23; 41:14; 46:21)" (21). Indeed, the Qur'ānic particles *illā* and *ghayr* are consistently used to indicate the absolute oneness of God, along with the other aspects of His nature. A significant portion of this discussion is dedicated to exceptions from groups, which deal with an individual and or group character. An important distinction is made between an individual and a group of characters in the Qur'ānic text, such as between God and a group of gods (*lā ilāha…*) (24), or between generic associations and a family, or between *Iblīs* and a group of angels or *Jinn*. Similarly, a clear exception is made between the wife of Lot and Noah's son. The former was "one of those who tarried (*kānat mina l-ghābirīna*)" (24), while the latter was not saved from the flood (Q.11:40; 23:27). Consequently, exceptions from condemnation and pardon are also discussed and analyzed. In this chapter, other linguistic tools such as *dūn* (other than or apart from or to the exclusion of), *ḥattā* (until, unless as long as or even), *innamā* (only), *min, ākhar, ba'ḍ, ṭā'ifah min, farīq min* are discussed in detail with their grammatical usage analyzed.

Chapter two of the book focuses on legal exceptions in the Qur'ān. Christiansen is of the opinion that "a comprehensive study of law in the Qur'ān is still lacking in the field of Qur'ānic studies" (61). Here, Christiansen suggests that "to fully understand the legal and quasi-legal stipulation expressed by the Qur'ān, the law must be defined in the broadest sense" (61). As far as the general exceptional language of the Qur'ān is concerned, Christiansen highlights that this can be expressed through the particles such as "*illā, ghayr, dūn,* and *ḥattā*" (63). The chapter also discusses the context of law as it occurs in different walks of life,

whether it be in the realm of social norms, governmental regulations, and family life (e.g., marriage, adultery, proper behavior, matters of belief, ritual, behavior toward others etc.).

Chapter three discusses recurring legal arguments of exception and flexibility in the Qur'ān. Here, Christiansen argues that "the Qur'ān appears to develop a common pool of standardized legal stock phrases and arguments that have to do with *exceptions*" (85). From among these recurring arguments for a legal exception within the Qur'ān, a few references are: "best-manner" (Q.6:152; 17:34;29:46), "what-happened-in-the-past" (Q.2:275; 4:22; 5:95), or the "the duress argument" (Q.2:173: 3:28; 5:3; 6:119). Similarly, chapter four discusses legal hypotheticals that have a dispensatory aim in the Qur'ān. Christiansen examines the dispensatory aims found within different verses and considers their hypothetical implications. For instance, in Q.2:196 that deals with the regulation regarding pilgrimage, the author classifies some of its key aspects as follows:

> *Fulfill the ḥajj and 'Umrah for God (wa-atimmū l-ḥajja wa-l-'umrata li-llāhi) [command], but if you are prevented (fa-in uḥṣirtum) [hypothetical], [give] whatever offerings are feasible (fa-mā staysara mina l-hadyī) [expiation] (147).*

Thus, Christiansen argues:

> *The verse [Q. 2:196] demonstrates that Qur'ānic legality does not simply entail 'do's and don'ts' but rather that it voices a clear awareness of the complexities involved in fulfilling its rules. Within the very premise of casuistic law lies the notion that it is neither absolute nor categorical. (148)*

The book also discusses the aims of Qur'ānic hypotheticals in detail. Christiansen argues that "the Qur'ānic hypotheticals are not only linked to Qur'ānic notions of hardship and ease but also to the notions of the divine testing of humans and their absolute obedience to the law (Q. 5:87; 94:47; 47:31)" (148). Similarly, dispensatory circumstances in

the Qur'ān are also discussed in detail. Christiansen has identified ten key dispensatory circumstances in the Qur'ān: sickness, travel, lack of means, gender, fear, safety, obligation and volition, additional external factors, intent and cognitive factors, hostility, abandonment, and recidivism (152). Chapter five of the book discusses the exceptive language in the Hebrew Bible, dealing primarily with the apodictic and casuistic modes found in that text. Christiansen also makes a comparison between the apodictic and casuistic parts of the Qur'ān and the Bible. For instance, in Ex.21:28-32:

> *If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten, but the owner of the ox shall be acquitted.*

The above rule has been compared with the blood money mentioned in Q.4:92. Christiansen is of the opinion that "Although the apodictic and casuistic styles is frequent in the legal portions of the Hebrew Bible, the text does not seem to operate with direct *exceptions* to the same degree as found in the Qur'ān" (183). Christiansen also discusses "the Qur'ān as late antique legal culture," which engages the claims from some Western scholars that the Qur'ān has adopted Biblical stories. However, Christiansen argues that the Qur'ān treats the Biblical traditions differently.

In Chapter six, Christiansen examines "a system theoretical approach to the Qur'ān" and introduces the system theory of Roy A. Rappaport and evaluate the theoretical investigations into the Qur'ānic text. For example, the chapter discusses *sūrat al-muzzamil* (wrapped in a robe), and its style, prose, verse length, form, content, and rhyme from the perspective of a system theoretical framework. In this chapter, Christiansen is discussing a command to the prophet Muḥammad (SAAW) in which he was instructed to spend a portion of night in prayer mentioned in *sūrah* 73 (223) and she argues that "the Qur'ān's negotiation of the vigil, as well as the other ascetic practices, generally demonstrates that the text takes a position in relation to the contemporaneous religious beliefs and practices of Late Antiquity" (223). Lastly, in the seventh chapter,

Christiansen focuses on flexibility in the Qur'ān. She stresses that the Qur'ānic concept of the ultimate God is adaptable and flexible rather than fixed into a particular historical or material context (241). This concluding chapter further demonstrates the exceptions and dispensations discussed in the preceding chapters. It concludes by advancing an important argument that the Qur'ān often does not work in clear-cut dichotomies, but instead applies numerous and complex strategies comprising "loopholes," exceptions, modifications, dispensations, and ambiguities. From a system theory perspective, this complexity appears to represent a new theoretical framework that requires further exploration and substantiation. To conclude, the book differs markedly from traditional Islamic approaches to the Qur'ān, and represents a comprehensive addition to the academic field of Qur'ānic studies.

Ab Majeed Ganaie
PhD Student
Department of Religious Studies
Central University of Kashmir
Jammu & Kashmir, India

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FORUM

The Mazrui Dynasty: Serving Islam in East Africa

MOHAMED ALIO

Abstract

The Islamic presence in East Africa goes back to the Umayyad Caliphate, when the Omani al-Julandi family moved from Oman to East Africa for political and economic reasons. This movement was followed by other migrations from Southern Arabia. This led to the appearance of Muslim settlements and dynasties along the East African coastal region, which played a pivotal role in preaching Islam and introducing Arabian culture to the local communities. One of the Omani dynasties that established themselves along the East African coast was the Mazrui Dynasty,

Mohamed Sheikh Alio is an Assistant Professor at Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). Previously, he worked as a lecturer in Islamic Studies for over 17 years at different Kenyan universities, and he has held a variety of academic and leadership positions in academic and social institutions.

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which ruled East Africa between 1741 and 1837. Though a number of studies have been conducted on the history of Islam in East Africa, the Swahili people, the Mazrui Dynasty and its descendants' prominent scholars, there is still a further need to discuss the Mazrui Dynasty in particular and their efforts on spreading Islam in East Africa. This study demonstrates the contributions of the Mazrui Dynasty to the spreading of Islam in East Africa by shedding light on the origins of Mazrui family, why they immigrated to East Africa, how the Dynasty was established in Mombasa while also examining some of the most important aspects of the promotion Islam in East Africa. The study demonstrates the significant interactions between Islamic civilization and East African societies throughout the era of the Mazrui Dynasty, which promoted the expansion of Islam and Arabian culture across the region.

Keywords: Islam, Arabia, Oman, East Africa, Mazrui Dynasty

Introduction

Islam arrived in East Africa during the reign of the fifth Umayyad Caliph, ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwan (65-86 AH / 685-705 CE). Sulayman and Saʿid, the sons of ʿAbbad al-Julandi, emigrated from Oman to the coasts of East Africa, fleeing the attacks of the Umayyad commander, al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafi.[1] The Kenyan scholar, Muhammad Saeed al-Beidh,[2] adds that Saʿid resided in Lamu (now in Kenya), while Sulayman was stationed in Mombasa (now in Kenya), and moved later to Zanzibar (now in Tanzania).[3] Beidh supported this narrative by showing that an Umayyad coin dating back to the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwan had been discovered at Kizimkazi, Zanzibar, and another old Umayyad coin had been found with Shaykh Bwana Kitini al-Nabhani, one of the descendants of the Nabhani Dynasty (600-1100 AH / 1203-1688 CE) in Bate and Lamu Islands in Kenya.[4] Later, the Muslim migration to East Africa increased significantly, and many Muslim settlements and cities emerged along the East African coast. These included Zeila, Mogadishu,

Merca, Barava, Kismayu, Lamu, Malindi, Mombasa, and Kilwa, among others. The Moroccan traveler, Ibn Batutah, visited the area in 1331, and noted that Mogadishu and Mombasa were large cities that were well established and inhabited by a cultured, religious, and well-organized Shafiʿi Muslim population.[5]

In 1498, a Portuguese Christian pioneer, Vasco da Gama (1460-1524), arrived in Malindi, Kenya with Roman Catholic missionaries in his company on his way to India.[6] The aim of Vasco da Gama and the Portuguese was to conquer East Africa to block the spread of Islam, and manage Indian Ocean maritime routes. To achieve these goals, the Portuguese sent more naval fleets, and the area came under Portuguese control from 1542 to 1698. The Portuguese also built Fort Jesus in Mombasa between 1593 and 1596 to be their military's command center in East Africa.[7] In 1696, the Swahili Muslim rulers in East Africa sought assistance from the Imam of the Omani Yaʿrubi Dynasty[8] at the time, Saif ibn Sultan al-Yaʿrubi (1692-1711), to help them retake their land from Portuguese forces. Al-Yaʿrubi sent a powerful military to Mombasa and managed to defeat the Portuguese military at Mombasa's Fort Jesus in 1698, after two years of siege. The Portuguese tried to recapture Mombasa in 1699 from the Omani forces, but they were defeated again and their control over East Africa came to an end in the same year.[9]

The Portuguese period was followed by the Mazrui Dynasty (1741-1837). The Mazrui Dynasty was initially loyal to the Yaʿrubi Dynasty in Oman, but when they learned that the Yaʿrubi Dynasty had been overthrown by al-Busaʿidi Dynasty in 1741, they declined to declare allegiance to the new rulers. Instead, they established their independent Mazrui dynasty in East Africa, with Mombasa as their capital city.[10] The Mazrui Dynasty was followed by the al-Busaʿidi Dynasty[11] (1837-1895), the British (1895-1963), and then an independent Kenya from 1963 onwards.

This study focuses on the Mazrui Dynasty period (1741-1837) because it is the period that marked the restoration of Muslim control over East Africa from the Portuguese in 1698/1699 and the greater expansion of Islam across East Africa. This expansion took the forms of proselytizing, conversion, the establishment of interior Muslim settlements, and

the building of mosques and introduction of educational institutions and charitable works.[12] This study also examines the contributions of the Mazrui Dynasty to maintaining Kadhi courts in East Africa, and ensuring that later, after the Dynasty was replaced in 1837, these courts remained well-supplied with trained kadhis (judges).[13] Later, descendants of the Mazrui Dynasty also included prominent scholars who led the Islamic reformist and awakening movements in East Africa. This study examines important, yet understudied, elements of the Mazrui Dynasty's contributions (1741-1837) to the development of Islam in East Africa. It contributes to a fuller history of Islam in Africa through this case study, which also highlights significant regional factors that aided the expansion of Islam in East Africa, and thus contributes to the wider study of Islam in Africa.[14]

Origins of Mazrui Family in East Africa

The Mazrui family in East Africa belongs to the Omani tribe of al-Mazrūʿi. The singular is al-Mazruʿi, while the plural form as it is pronounced in the Arab Gulf states as al-Mazariʿ.[15] In East Africa, the title is pronounced and written in Kiswahili as "Mazrui," for both the singular and plural forms, which is the form the name has taken in the majority of European language sources as well.[16] Regarding the history of the tribe, some historians have indicated that the Mazruis belong to the ʿAdnani tribe whose lineage is connected to Thaʿlab ibn Wail ibn Qasit ibn Hanab ibn Aqsa ibn Daʿmi ibn Jadila ibn Asad ibn Rabiʿah ibn Nizar ibn Maʿd ibn ʿAdnan ibn Ismaʿil ibn Ibrahim.[17] The famous scholar, Shaykh al-Amin Mazrui, suggests in his own book (*The History of The Mazrui Dynasty*) that the Mazruis who settled in East Africa can trace their lineage back to Sabaʾ ibn Yashjub ibn Yaʿrub ibn Qahtan, the well-known grandfather of the Qahtani tribes in Arabian Peninsula.[18] Historical sources agree that the original home of Mazrui tribe in Oman was the Yemeni coastal city of al-Shihr in the Hadramout region, where a faction of the Mazrui family emigrated to Oman during the medieval period.[19] In Oman, the Mazruis are scattered across all regions of the country, with significant concentrations in the al-Rustaq region and its

surrounding villages and settlements.[20] Those who emigrated to East Africa settled in Mombasa, Malindi, Takaungu, Gase; now in Kenya, and Zanzibar, Pemba and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.[21] Also noteworthy here is that, though the Mazrui family was originally belonged to Omani Ibadi School,[22] they converted later to the Shafiʿi School, the dominant Sunni School of Islamic jurisprudence in East Africa. This change occurred when the jurist Shaykh ʿAbdallah ibn Nafiʿ al-Mazruʿi (d.1846) adopted the Shafiʿi School during his studies in Mecca and Medina from 1837 to 1846.[23] Since then, all the Mazrui families in East Africa have followed the Shafiʿi School, and all their judges and scholars have ruled in accordance with Shafiʿi jurisprudence, and their descendants are still Shafiʿis to this day. Similarly, despite the fact that the Mazrui Dynasty was overthrown in 1837, its subsequent generations turned into a powerful community in the coastal cities of Kenya, where they served as liwalis (governors), administrators, kadhis, scholars, professors, economists, managers, educationists, doctors, lawyers etc.

Why the Mazrui Family Emigrated to East Africa

In 1696, the Swahili and Muslim leaders of Mombasa went to Oman to seek help to expel the Portuguese invaders. As a response, the Imam of the Omani al-Yaʿrubi Dynasty at the time, Saif ibn Sultan al-Yaʿrubi, sent land and sea military forces to Mombasa and directed them to besiege the Portuguese forces in Fort Jesus, Mombasa. The military conquered Mombasa in 1698 after a siege that lasted for two years and nine months. Although the Portuguese were defeated in the battle, they attacked Mombasa again in the hope of recapturing it. When Imam Saif ibn Sultan heard of this, he prepared another army in 1699, and assigned his commander, Mubarak ibn Gharib al-Mazruʿi, as a leader for the new force. He also appointed Nasir ibn ʿAbdallah ibn Muhammad al-Mazruʿi as the governor of Mombasa after the defeat of the enemy. The second force reached Mombasa that the same year and defeated the Portuguese forces.[24] Soon after Portuguese defeat, Nasir became the governor of Mombasa, under the control of Imam Saif ibn Sultan al-Yaʿrubi

in Oman. This event demonstrates that many of the first Mazruis arrived in East Africa either as commanders or members of the Omani military, which had come to liberate Mombasa from Portuguese occupation in 1699. Shaykh al-Amin Mazrui (d.1947) mentioned that the migration of Mazruis to East Africa began after the conquest of Mombasa by Imam Saif ibn Sultan al-Yaʿrubi in 1668, and that their migration continued to the region at a more rapid pace later. When the Sultan of Zanzibar and Muscat, Sayyid Saʿid ibn Sultan al-Busaʿidi (1791–1856), expelled the Mazrui family from Mombasa in 1837, their migration to Mombasa came to a halt due to the restrictions imposed on them by the government in Oman. As a result, paths of later migrations shifted toward Zanzibar and Pemba (now in Tanzania).[25]

The Mazrui Dynasty's Service to Islam in East Africa: Ending the Portuguese Occupation

Portuguese forces attacked Mombasa multiple times and ultimately conquered it at the third attempt in 1589. Four years later, they began to build Fort Jesus, which was completed in 1596. The fort became the major maritime command station for the Portugese on the East African coast.[26] As a result of Portuguese oppression, the Swahili Muslim leaders sent a delegation to the Imam of Oman in 1660, seeking military support. The delegation was led by Mwinyi Nguti, Mwinyi Mole bin Haji, Mwinyi Ndao bin Haji, Motomato wa Mtorogo and Kubo wa Mwamzungu. However, the Sultan of Oman at the time, Sultan ibn Saif al-Yaʿrubi (1649-1688) declined to interfere. A second delegation went to Oman in 1696 and was able to convince the incumbent Imam at the time, Saif ibn Sultan al-Yaʿrubi (1692-1711) to offer military assistance.[27] In response to that special request, a fleet with more than 3,000 men was sent to lay siege to Mombasa in 1696. After two years of siege, the Omani military managed to conquer Fort Jesus, the Portuguese fortified stronghold in Mombasa, on December 13, 1698.[28] The same year, Zanzibar, the last of Portugal's colonies in East Africa, also fell to the Imam.[29] The Portuguese, who retreated to Mozambique after their defeat, tried to reclaim Mombasa again in 1699, but the Imam sent another

army and the Portuguese forces were defeated again in Mombasa that the same year.[30]

Figure 1. The entrance of Fort Jesus, Mombasa. The image was taken by the author on Sep 19, 2018.

Establishing an Islamic Dynasty and Culture in East Africa

The Mazrui governors in Mombasa were initially loyal to the Imams of the Yaʿrubi Dynasty in Oman. When the Dynasty was overthrown by al-Busaʿidi Dynasty under Imam Ahmad ibn Saʿid al-Busaʿidi (d.1783) in 1741, they established the Mazrui Dynasty in Mombasa for the following reasons:

1. They argued that the agreement to pledge allegiance to Imam Ahmad of Oman had been established through consultation, but rather had been imposed by force.
2. The new al-Busaʿidi Dynasty in Oman wanted to impose their governors on Mombasa and dominate their Mazrui subjects in East Africa without consultation.

3 The Mazrui governors wanted to be independent and had gained in confidence after defeating the Portuguese forces.

As a result, the Mazruis established an independent Mazrui dynasty in East Africa, with Mombasa as their capital city and Fort Jesus as their administrative headquarters.[31] The Mazrui Dynasty was a Muslim dynasty that manifested its Islamic identity through supporting fellow Muslims across East Africa against the Portuguese, preaching Islam, and establishing new trade routes to the interior.[32]

The Mazruis ruled the coast of East Africa for 138 years between 1698/1699 and 1837 through 11 governors, listed as follows:

1 Nasir ibn ʿAbdallah ibn Muhammad al-Mazruʿi. He was appointed by Imam Saif al-Yaʿrubī to be the governor of Mombasa after the expulsion of the Portuguese forces. He held the position until 1728, when he faced a rebellion from some of his soldiers and some Swahili natives in Mombasa. He was imprisoned him in Fort Jesus and, while the rebellion was going on, the Portuguese managed to retake Mombasa. However, the leadership in Mombasa sought assistance again from the sixth Yaʿrubi Imam in Oman, Saif ibn Sultan II (1718-1741) who recaptured the city from the Portuguese in 1728.[33]

2 Muhammad ibn ʿUthman ibn ʿAbdallah al-Mazruʿi. Appointed by Imam Saif ibn Sultan II as governor of Mombasa in 1730 and continued until 1741. He became independent from the al-Busaʿidi Dynasty after the fall of the Yaʿrubi Dynasty in 1741. Consequently, he was the first independent Mazrui ruler in Mombasa.

3 ʿAli ibn ʿUthman ibn Muhammad al-Mazruʿi, the second independent ruler. He conquered Zanzibar in 1755, and his rule lasted from 1745 until 1762.

4 Masʿud ibn Nasir ibn ʿAbdallah al-Mazruʿi, the third independent ruler. He ruled between 1755 and 1779.

5 ʿAbdallah ibn Muhammad ibn ʿUthman al-Mazruʿi, the son of the second governor, and the fourth independent ruler from Oman. He

ruled between 1779 and 1781, and was the first Mazrui ruler who was born in East Africa, whereas all his predecessors had been born in Oman.

6 Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān al-Mazrūʿī, brother to the fifth governor, and the fifth in the list of independent governors from Oman. He ruled between 1781 and 1814.

7 ʿAbdallah ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Mazruʿi, the son of the sixth governor, and the sixth independent governor. He ruled between 1814 and 1823.

8 Sulayman ibn ʿAli ibn ʿUthman al-Mazruʿi, the seventh independent ruler. He governed between 1823 and 1826.

9 Salim ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Mazruʿi, the eighth independent ruler. His ruled from 1826 to 1835.

10 Khamis ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Mazruʿi, the ninth independent ruler. He was brother of the eighth independent governor and ruled from 1835 until 1836, when he was replaced by the son of his brother.

11 Rashid ibn Salim ibn Ahmad al-Mazruʿi, the eleventh independent governor. He ruled between 1836 and 1837 and was the last governor of the Mazrui Dynasty in Mombasa.[34] When al-Busaʿidi forces conquered Mombasa in 1837, he moved to Takaungu, 50 km north-east of Mombasa, and established a local administration at Takaugu. His son, Mubarak ibn Rashid al-Mazruʿi, extended his local authority to Gaze or Gase village, 48 km south of Mombasa, as a local ruler between 1869 and 1896. He led a series of revolts against the al-Busaʿidi Dynasty, to whom he never offered tribute and he never recognized al-Busaʿidi sovereignty over East Africa, and their attempts in the 1850s and the 1870s to force him into submission were both failures. He continued his resistance until 1896 when he was defeated by the al-Busaʿidi army with military support from the British East Africa protectorate (1895-1920).[35]

The Mazrui Dynasty ruled all the coastal regions of East Africa. Their territories extended from Ras Ngomeni (in Kenya) in the north,

to the Pangani River (in Tanzania) in the south, in an area estimated by Shaykh al-Amin Mazrui as 12,380 square miles.[36] Thus, most of the Swahili region inhabited by the Arabs and Swahilis was under their rule. Their influence stretched into the interior of the Swahili region by 60 miles to the west. All the Mjikenda tribes were under their rule, and some of the Wazigua tribe living north of Pangani River. They also extended their rule to Pemba and the Zanzibar islands (now in Tanzania). Pemba became their center for importing agricultural products, grain, fruits, honey and sugar. The Mazruis almost became rulers of Lamu Island (now Lamu County in Kenya), not through conquest but in response to an appeal by the inhabitants. While Pate Island (now in Lamu County, Kenya) never officially come under their dominion, it was effectively part of their territory.[37] The British Captain W.F. Owen, who visited Mombasa on September 7, 1824, noted that the Mazruis had mustered an army of 25,000 to fight against their al-Busaʿidi rivals.[38] Consqeuently, according to Shaykh al-Amin Mazrui, the Dynasty that gathered such an army could not have numbered less than 1,000,000 inhabitants, if we consider that 2.5% of a population is the maximum number it is possible to enroll under a dynasty that has no compulsory service.[39]

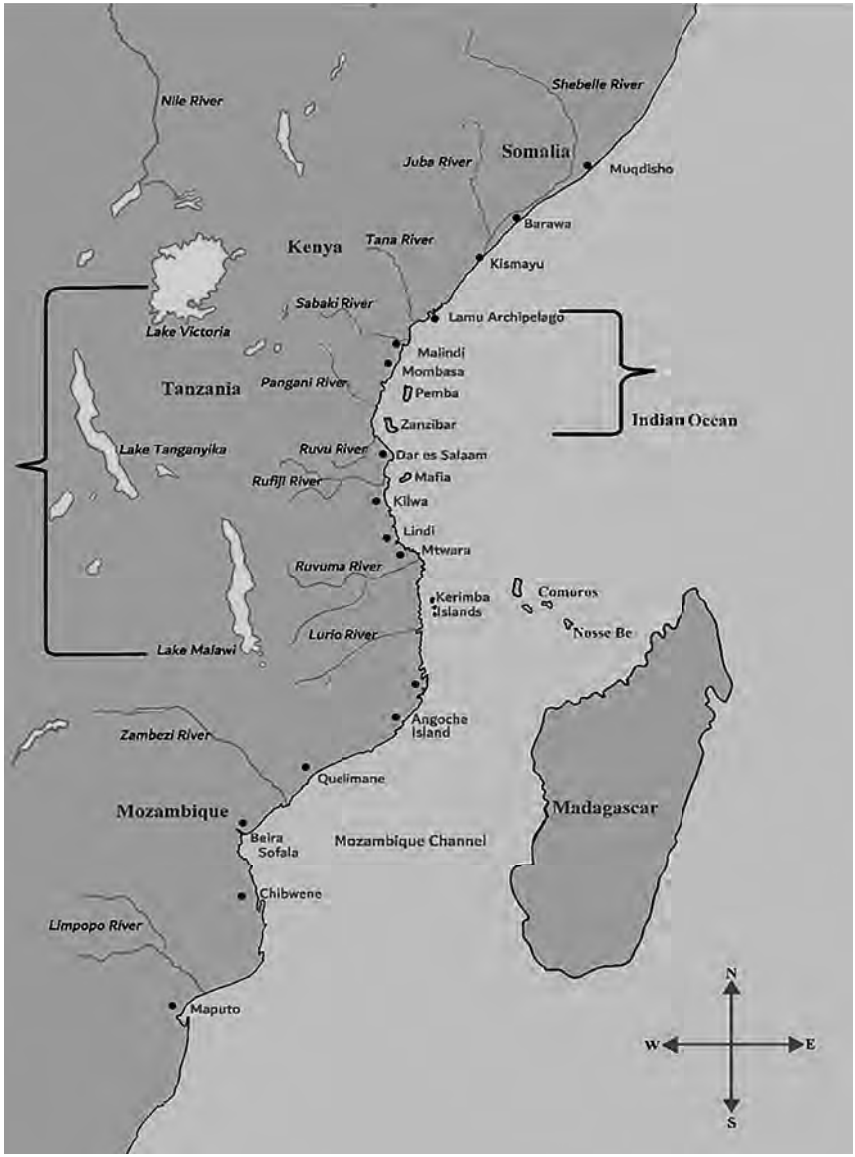

Figure 2. **The Map of East Africa Coastal Areas. The right bracket shows the coastal areas that were under direct or indirect control of Mazrui Dynasty, as per Sheikh Al-Amin Mazrui. The left bracket indicates the hinterland areas that were influenced by Mazrui's cultural and Islamic expansions. The map is designed by the author.**

Preaching Islam in East Africa

The Mazrui's conquest of East Africa from the Portuguese provided an opportunity for Muslim missionaries and preachers, who returned to areas previously under Portuguese control.[40] Thus, Muslim missionary activity began to extend into the deep interior, and more native African communities started to embrace Islam en masse. The new converts in turn supported both their Arab and non-Arab Muslim brethern to spread Islam ever further inland, penetrating deeply into the interior, across forests, jungles and swamps until it reached the Congo Basin and the lakes plateau in Kenya and Tanganyika. As Islam spread, minarets rose in all the villages along the coastal road that leads to the lakes of Nyasa,[41] and Tanganyika,[42] where there was not a single village in those areas without a significant Muslim population among the Swahili and Arab communities. The Omani Yaʿrubi and Mazrui intervention was not only an important factor in abolishing Portuguese control in East Africa, but it also made Muslim missionary activity and created the conditions for Islam to thrive without obstacles after two centuries of Portuguese restrictions.[43] Thus, one of the crowning achievements of the Yaʿrubi and Mazrui eras was that they saved the Swahili region from the Portuguese attempts to prevent Islam from spreading and interacting with the Swahili culture and the native Bantu peoples of East Africa.[44]

Maintaining an Islamic Judicial System

Kadhi Courts, or *Qadhi* Courts, are Islamic Shafiʿi law courts that existed along the East African coast for centuries before the arrival of the colonial powers. The courts were established by the coastal Muslim communities to: a) issue rulings on religious issues, such as, Ramadan moon sightings, Eid celebration days and the Hajj calendar; b) manage the Muslim communities' affairs on issues relating to marriage, woman rights, child maintenance, divorce and other Islamic legal matters; c) document all legal and business transactions; d) settle individual and communal disputes through a reconciliation mechanism that involved all social stakeholders.[45] The jurisdiction of the Kadhi Courts over Muslim

cases under the Swahili rulers, the Mazrui Dynasty and the Zanzibar Sultanate's territories was unlimited. However, under British rule the government restricted their jurisdiction in 1931 to three issues of personal status: marriage, divorce and inheritance. This limitation continued following independence into the current Kenyan constitution.[46]

The Mazrui Dynasty (1741-1837) in Mombasa supported the Kadhi courts in East Africa in three regards: 1) maintaining the Kadhi courts in a similar manner to the Swahili Muslim rulers before the establishment of the dynasty; 2) supervising the appointment of Kadhis to the different coastal cities and regions; 3) producing qualified Mazrui scholars and shaykhs who then served as Kadhis or Chief Kadhis before and after the establishment of the British colonial presence in East Africa in 1895. The key figures in this regard are as follows:

1 Shaykh ʿAli ibn ʿAbdallah ibn Nafiʿ al-Mazruʿi (1825-1894). He was born in Mombasa in 1825 and studied under his father and other prominent shaykhs. When al-Busaʿidi forces took over Mombasa from Mazrui Dynasty in 1937, he moved to Yemen and then Mecca for study. He stayed in Mecca with his father and brother from 1837 until 1846, where he studied in both Mecca and Medina. He came back to Mombasa in 1846 and then returned to Mecca again in 1854 for more studies. In 1856, he travelled to Zanzibar and Pemba and was appointed as Kadhi of Mombasa by the Sultan of Zanzibar at the time, Sayyid Majid ibn Saʿid al-Busaʿidi, where he served as Kadhi of Mombasa between 1856 and 1870. In 1887, he was imprisoned by the Sultan of Zanzibar, Barghash ibn Saʿid al-Busaʿidi (r.1870-1888), as punishment for preaching Sunni Shafiʿi Islam among the coastal cities and criticizing Ibadi theology. His successor, Sultan Khalifah ibn Saʿid al-Busaʿidi (r.1888-1890) released him from prison in 1888. Shaykh ʿAli was a well-versed scholar and Kadhi who wrote several books on Prophetic traditions, Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic theology and the biography of the Prophet Muhammad. He died in Mombasa in 1894.[47]

2 Shaykh Sulayman ibn ʿAli ibn Khamis al-Mazruʿi (1867-1937). He was born in Mombasa in 1867 and became famous as "Shaykh

Suleiman Mazrui." He studied under the great scholars of Mombasa and Zanzibar, became Kadhi of Mombasa from 1910 to 1932, and worked as Chief Kadhi of the Kenya Colony from 1932 until his death in 1937. He was a prominent, influential reformist scholar who wrote several books in Islamic studies.[48]

3 Shaykh al-Amin ibn ʿAli ibn ʿAbdallah al-Mazruʿi (1890-1947). He was born in Mombasa in 1890 and was well-known in East Africa as "Shaykh al-Amin Mazrui." He studied under, and was raised by his uncle, Shaykh Suleiman Mazrui, as his father (first on this list) died in 1894 when he was only four years old. In addition to his studies in Mombasa, he educated at the famous al-Swafa Islamic center in Lamu, and also travelled to Zanzibar several times to study as well. He served as the Kadhi of Mombasa between 1932 and 1934, acting Chief Kadhi of Kenya Colony between 1934 and 1937, and then Chief Kadhi of Kenya Colony between 1937 and 1947. Shaykh al-Amin Mazrui, as he was known in East Africa, was one of the great Muslim reformist scholars of the region. He educated thousands, established several Muslim educational institutions, established two reformist journals, travelled widely to proselytize, and authored more than twelve books in both the Arabic and Swahili languages in Islamic studies.[49]

4 Shaykh Maʾmun ibn Sulayman al-Mazruʿi (1895-1969). He is the son of the former Kadhi, Shaykh Sulayman Mazrui, and was raised in a scholarly family. When Shaykh al-Amin Mazrui was elevated to Acting Chief Kadhi of the Kenya Colony in 1934, he appointed him as Acting Kadhi of Mombasa between 1934 and 1937. In 1937 he was appointed by the colonial government to the position Acting Kadhi of Mombasa, and then served as Kadhi of Mombasa until 1960. He also served as Chief Kadhi of the Kenya Colony in 1958.[50]

5 Shaykh Muhammad ibn Qasim ibn Rashid ibn ʿAli al-Mazruʿi (1912-1982). He was born in Mombasa in 1912 and was known throughout East Africa as Shaykh Muhammad Kassim Mazrui. He was appointed to the judiciary in 1946, serving as a Kadhi of Malindi (1947-1962) and Lamu (1962-1963). He was elevated to the position of Chief Kadhi of

the Kenya Colony in 1963 until he retired in 1967. He was the first Chief Kadhi of independent Kenya, which had gained its independence in 1963. Shaykh Muhammad Kassim was a famous scholar and reformer who wrote several books in Islamic studies and contributed to the establishment of many educational and academic centers in Mombasa and across East Africa. He died in Mombasa in 1982.[51]

6 Shaykh Hammad ibn Muhammad Qasim (Kassim) al-Mazruʿi, the son of the previous Shaykh Muhammad Kassim Mazrui. He was born in Lamu in 1950 and studied in Kenya, Saudi Arabia and Nigeria. He served as the Kadhi of Lamu (1992-1995), Kadhi of Nairobi (1995-2002) and then served as the Chief Kadhi of Kenya between 2002 and 2010. He is a religious and political scholar who still contributes to the Muslim community in Kenya.[52]

Islamic Educational and Charitable Works of the Mazrui Dynasty

The Mazrui Dynasty and their scholars have established multiple educational centers in Mombasa, Takaungu and Gaze in the Kenyan coastal region. In Mombasa, the well-known Madrasatu al-Ghazali al-Islamiyyah was established by the aforementioned Chief Kadhi of Kenya, Shaykh al-Amin Mazrui. This institution has produced a large group of East African scholars, with many graduates going on to serve as Kadhis and Chief Kadhis in their home countries.[53] In addition, the Mazruis have contributed to numerous charitable endeavors, such as building mosques, and allocating endowments for Qurʾanic and religious schools throughout the coastal cities of East Africa. Shaykh Mubarak ibn Rashid al-Mazruʿi, the ruler of Gaze and Takaungu, built the Makadara Mosque in the Kibokoni area of Mombasa and another important mosque in the Gaze region, south of Mombasa. The Mazruis also built a third mosque in the heart of Mombasa's old town, which is known to this day as the "Mazrui Mosque."[54] They also built a fourth mosque in Takaungu, the al-Shakhsi Mosque. Later, new religious educational facilities were added to the mosque complex to accommodate different educational and social activities.[55]

Mazrui Scholars and Islamic Reformist Movements in East Africa

It was Mazrui scholars from the Mazrui community in Kenya that led the Islamic revival and awakening movements in East Africa during the 19th and 20th centuries. They were influenced by the writings of the major Muslim reformers of the time, and their efforts focused on reforming and promoting a Muslim way of life, culture and attitude. Though Mazrui reformist scholars were influenced by international intellectual currents, they were also rooted in their local context and had their own approaches. Like their peers elsewhere in the Muslim world, they navigated between advocating for intellectual and scientific advancement based on Western science, while warning against "blind imitation" and adopting Western cultural values. Likewise, they also promoted the educational advancement of women and the teaching of modern subjects in Muslim *madrasa*s. At the same time, they also published and established Islamic journals and publications that were specific to the East African context.[56] The Mazrui reform movement foregrounded the Islamic revival in East Africa, while al-Amin Mazrui, the latest Mazrui reformer, also transcended the more local reformist context to engage with international African, Global South, and more marginalized perspectives.[57] The following are the most famous Mazrui reformist scholars:

1. Shaykh al-Amin Mazrui (1890-1947)

Shaykh al-Amin Mazrui; the Chief Kadhi of the Kenya Colony (1937-1947), was influenced by the leaders of reform movements from the wider the Muslim world including Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), Muhammad ʿAbduh (1849-1905) and Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935).[58] He was a pioneered of the revival movement in East Africa in the 1930s that aimed transform the condition of Muslim communities in the region by ridding them of those aspects that were deemed to be regressive and contrary to the spirit of Islam, such as ignorance, poverty, backwardness and certain kinds of polytheistic practices.[59] He was the first East African scholar of any social stature to fully embrace

the modernist Islamic perspective, and to write about it and promote it publicly and widely.[60] In order to reach a wider public, he established two weekly newspapers. The first was *al-Sahifa*, published in Swahili using the Arabic script, in 1930. It was distributed for free and lasted for 16 months. The second was *al-Islah*, which was first published in 1932. It was written in Swahili using the Latin script together with Arabic, and focused on religious as well as political issues. It was published weekly and lasted for only twelve months.[61] Both of these publications ran regular editorials aimed at a mass audience to encourage the acceptance of modernist ideas in realms such as education while retaining the core of their traditional values. Shaykh al-Amin's writings focused on the importance of Islamic education in the Muslim community in response to calls for supporting secular education. He also emphasized the importance of the Arabic language as a tool for learning about Islam and also encouraged the teaching of Arabic and including religious education in secular schools. He also supported the idea of writing Swahili using the Arabic script in order to connect Swahili to Arabic. He warned Muslims against the perils of blindly adopting Western cultural values and European secular education. Shaykh al-Amin also supported the education of women, which Muslim society had ignored, and called for the teaching of modern subjects in *madrasa*s. His aspirations went beyond his East African context, and he was in contact with traditional intellectual centers in the Hadramout and Oman as well as modernist theology and jurisprudence coming out of al-Azhar University in Egypt, and elsewhere. He also contributed to modernist Egyptian publications, such as *al-Manar* and *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa*.[62]

Like Muhammad ʿAbduh, Shaykh al-Amin was apprehensive about the growing influence of Western thought and habits among Muslims, particularly among the youth. Fearing for the future, he was deeply concerned that young Muslims had to be convinced of the validity and relevance of Islam in an increasingly secularized society. In his approach, drawing on modernist views, Shaykh al-Amin argued that Islam had a role to play in people's secular, or material, life as well as in their "other-worldly" life. In addition to being the means to ensure an everlasting life in the hereafter, it Islam was also as a discipline whose law served

practical and worldly ends. Like his peer ʿAbduh, he felt that there was a need for both reason and revelation, and that Islam did not require a rejection of worldly affairs. Rather, Muslims had to concern themselves both with life in this world and life after death. He was concerned that people were imitating unbelievers, while neglecting the teachings of their religion and its obligations and duties. Similar to ʿAbduh and Rida, Shaykh al-Amin argued that it was necessary for Muslims to absorb Western scientific knowledge and technology in order to progress. To support his point, he employed the same approach to the Egyptian modernists in arguing that Islam, in its infancy, had also once had been rational and scientific, but was now in need of reform. As such, it was Muslims who had once had been masters of such "modern" subjects as algebra, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, logic, and philosophy. Thus, Muslims of the East African coast would not be sinning in studying and mastering these sciences.[63] Ahmed Idha Salim summarized the impact of Shaykh al-Amin writing,

> *Undoubtedly, [Shaykh al-Amin] was the most outstanding Muslim scholar and reformer to appear in Kenya. His contribution to Islam and Muslim scholarship has been the most endurable. His regular seminars produced many scholars who helped spread Islam further, not only in Kenya but in East Africa as a whole. He himself traveled, preached, encouraged and supported efforts to build madrasas and mosques. He wrote, published and distributed the first religious textbooks in Kiswahili on different aspects of Islam and Islamic history."*[64]

Shaykh al-Amin also argued vigorously against the teachings of the Ahmadiyya community in East Afria that at the time was disseminating the teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani (1835-1908). Shaykh al-Amin wrote three books in Kiswahili warning Muslims against the Ahmadiyya community and its activities. In order to refute both Ahmadi arguments and those of Christian missionaries, who had both published Swahili Qurʾanic translations with concerning commentaries (according to him), he began a project to translate the Qurʾan into the Kiswahili

language himself, but died in 1947 before its completion.[65] It was his well-known student, the then Chief Kadhi of Kenya, Shaykh Abdulla Saleh al-Farsy (1912-1982), who would complete this project and publish the now famous Swahili Qur'anic translation, Qurani *Takatifu*, which was first publications in 1969, and re-published in new editions multiple times due to high demand.[66]

2. Shaykh Muhammad Kassim Mazrui (1912-1982)

Shaykh Muhammad studied under Shaykh al-Amin Mazrui, and continued his Islamic revivalist and modernist project in East Africa. Besides his work as Kadhi and then as Chief Kadhi of Kenya between 1963 and 1967, his publications display the rational principles that the reformist movement relied upon and propagated.[67] He disseminated most of his revivalist ideas through his writings; especially his series *Hukum za Sharia*. In part three of the series, he wrote an article about Islam and politics and noted that the role of a politician is to guide the government in legislating proper laws and practicing good governance. He also stressed the significance of voting and the responsibility of each individual to vote wisely. He noted that, "your single vote can determine the election of a proper candidate who could serve the entire Islamic nation in a prosperous manner." He clearly pointed out that the role of government is not only to serve religion but also to take charge of the welfare of the society.[68] Like Shaykh al-Amin, he also supported women's education and held special seminars for Muslim women separately.[69]

The impact of Shaykh Muhammad Kassim is evidenced through his many books, publications, students, his seminars in mosques and public conferences and gatherings. He translated the first two chapters of the Qur'an into Kiswahili, and wrote several books on Islamic Law. He also write a history of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, a history of slavery in Islam and other religions, in addition to his numerous articles, which he published in the 1930s through the *Al-Islah* and *Al-Sahifa* journals. Additionally, he published a newspaper in Kiswahili titled *Sauti Ya Haki*, the "Voice of the Right," and issued rulings on several socially controversial issues.[70] In turn, Shaykh Muhammad's many students went on to

become reformist leaders across East Africa, or Kadhis and Chief Kadhis within the Kenyan judiciary.[71]

3. Ali Mazrui (1933-2014)

Ali Mazrui was born in Mombasa in 1933. He was the son of the aforementioned scholar and Chief Kadhi of then Kenya Colony, Shaykh al-Amin Mazrui. Ali Mazrui attended school in Mombasa, then taught at the Mombasa Institute of Muslim Education (MIOME),[72] before leaving for Huddersfield Technical College, UK, in 1955 after he won a scholarship from the Colonial Government.[73] Mazrui then obtained his B.A. degree from Manchester University in 1960, his M.A. from Columbia University in New York in 1961, and his PhD in Political Science from Oxford University in 1966. He was both an academic and political writer on the subjects of *African* and Islamic studies and North-South relations. His positions included director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies at Binghamton University, New York, and director of the Center for Afro-American and African Studies at the University of Michigan. In addition to his academic appointments, Mazrui also served as president of the African Studies Association (USA), and as vice president of the International Political Science Association and special advisor to the World Bank. He has also served on the board of the American Muslim Council in Washington, D.C. Ali Mazrui's research interests included African politics, international political culture, political Islam and North-South relations. He is the author or co-author of more than thirty books and also published hundreds of articles in major scholastic journals and media outlets. He also served on the editorial boards of more than twenty international scholarly journals. Mazrui was widely consulted by heads of state and governments, international media and research institutions for political strategies and alternative thoughts.[74] He contributed to various disciplines such as political science, Islamic studies, African studies, cultural studies and literature. This has earned him the name "multiple Mazrui." Yet his most significant contributions were in African and Islamic studies.[75]

Ali Mazrui was considered an international political reformist who became famous for his political theories on Africa, Islam and the world at large. He conceptualized "Africa's triplet heritage," which described modern Africa according to three key influences: a) the colonial and imperialist legacy of the West; b) the spiritual and cultural influence of Islam spreading from the east; and c) Africa's own indigenous legacy.[76] He also conceptualized the theory of "The Paradoxes of Africa." Mazrui theorized six paradoxes that he considered were central to understanding Africa. These were as follows: a) Africa is the first home of humankind but the last to be made truly habitable; b) Africans are not the most brutalized of peoples, but they are the most humiliated; c) African societies were the most exposed to westernization in 20th century; d) Africa is not the poorest region in resources but it is the least developed continent; e) Africa is the second-largest inhabited continent but it is highly fragmented; f) Africa is central in its geographical position, but politically and militarily marginal.[77] Ali Mazrui was a well-known scholar and commentator on Islam and Islamism who advocated for the rights of Muslims around the world and called upon Western powers to build a relationship with the Muslim world, while rejecting all kinds of violence and terrorism.[78] In his book, *Islam: Between Globalization & Counter-Terrorism* he called for reconciliation and a better understanding between Muslims and the United States and added, "But if the United States fails to find creative ways of meeting the Islamic challenge, and descends to the equivalent of feeding Muslims to the lions, then the American empire may experience as decisive a decline as the Roman Empire once sustained."[79] In *Resurgent Islam and the Politics of Identity*, Mazrui analyzed the global causes for political radicalization among Muslims as: a) imperialism which oppressed Muslim countries; b) the State of Israel and its brutal occupation of the Palestinian territory; the annexation of Jerusalem; and the United States' enormous material, diplomatic and uncritical support of the Jewish state; c) multiple humiliations of Muslims in so many countries, such as Afghanistan, Palestine, Bosnia and Kosovo, Kashmir, Chechnya, Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand and elsewhere.[80]

His works envisaged a peaceful co-existence among world cultures and civilizations away from regional and international conflicts and drew upon an Islamic, African and Arab identities in his writings. Mazrui criticized all exclusivism or supremacy movements and theories; thus, he opposed Radical Islamists, Imperialism, Marxism, Zionism, Neoconservatives in the United States of America.[81] Mazrui advocated for Pan-Africanism and demanded the independence of the African peoples and their liberation from their colonizers politically, economically and scientifically.[82]

Criticisms of the Mazrui Dynasty

Although the Mazrui Dynasty had overseen a number of political, civilizational and cultural achievements across East Africa, some critics accused them of engaging in the slave trade, allying themselves with the British and monopolizing the Kadhi Courts. Some Western writers indicated that the Mazrui family, who was a major coastal family owning many slaves, attacked Koromio, between Malindi and Mombasa, in 1852 and Fuladoyo in 1883, to gain the return of their fugitive slaves who had fled from their masters. They also added that in the 18th century, the Mazrui and Nabahani clans' influence on the coast bore responsibility for encouraging a switch in the system of land tenure from being kinship and clientage-based to becoming reliant on land alienation and chattel slavery, that is, establishing a plantation form of production, though communities in both Mombasa and Lamu resisted this change with some success.[83] If the accusation that Mazruis were involved in slavery was indeed true, then it may have been at the individual or family level because the Mazrui Dynasty did not involve itself historically in the slave trade, which became rampant during the reign of their successor; the Sultanate of Zanzibar.[84] Furthermore, the events described happened after the Mazrui Dynasty was removed from Mombasa in 1837.

The Mazrui Dynasty was also accused of allying with the British in their fight against the al-Busaʿidi Dynasty in the 19th century, and that they came to an agreement with a British Captain William Owen in 1824 to become a British protectorate. Two years later the British colonial

administration nullified the so-called Owen-Mazrui agreement and opted to preserve their relationship with the al-Busaʿidi Dynasty in Oman over the Mazrui Dynasty in Mombasa.[85] Arguably, here it was the Mazrui Dynasty that was forced to reach an agreement with Captain Owen in 1824 in oder to shield themselves against al-Busaʿidi attacks, and ultimately the British sided with their enemies, favouring their relationship with the al-Busaʿidi Dynasty.

Another challenge which faced the Mazruis after removal of their Dynasty in 1837 was being suspected of monopolizing the appointment of Kadhi and Chief Kadhi positions in Kenya during the reign of Sultanate of Zanzibar, the British Colony, and then in the independent Kenya. Other communities in the coastal region accused the Mazruis of not allowing other Swahili Muslim communities to serve in Kadhi Courts as they did. This issue caused tensions between the Mazrui family and some of the other Arab and Swahili families in Mombasa and Lamu.[86] These accusations may have merit if we consider the ratio of Mazrui Kadhis and Chief Kadhis in relation to the number of Kadhis and Chief Kadhis from other Arab and Swahili families. There were five Mazrui Chief Kadhis out of 12 Chief Kadhis in Kenyan history, since the inception of the position of Chief Kadhi post under the British authority in 1902, in addition to several official Kadhi posts which existing during and after the Sultanate of Zanzibar.[87]

Conclusion

This study has examined the history of the Mazrui Dynasty in East Africa (1741–1837), beginning with the Mazrui military commanders who came to East Africa with the Omani Yaʿrubi military forces, who reclaimed Mombasa from the Portuguese in 1699. The Mazrui governors in Mombasa were initially under the Yaʿrubi Dynasty in Oman from 1699 to 1741, but when that Dynasty was overthrown by the al-Busaʿidi Dynasty of Oman in 1741, they broke away and established an independent dynasty in East Africa. The dynasty ruled East Africa and the major coastal cities until 1837, when they were defeated by al-Busaʿidi forces from Oman with support from the British East Africa Protectorate. The

study has highlighted the contributions of the Mazrui Dynasty and its descendants to Islamic and Muslim life and culture in East Africa in the following regards:

1 The Mazrui military commanders under the Yaʿrubi Imams in Oman successfully ended the Portuguese rule in East Africa in 1699.

2 The Dynasty established an Islamic culture-based dynasty (1741–1837), which extended from Ras Ngomeni (now in Kenya) in the north to the River Pangani (now in Tanzania) in the south, with Mombasa as the capital city.

3 The Dynasty preached Islam to the East African native communities, and Islam penetrated the interior and reached the Congo Basin and lakes plateau in Tanganyika and Kenya.

4 The Dynasty maintained and supplied the Kadhi Court system for centuries, which existed in East Africa's coastal regions for religious, legal and social purposes.

5 The Dynasty promoted educational and charitable works in Mombasa, Takaungu and Gaze in the Kenyan coastal region and throughout the state.

6 The most notable contribution of the Mazrui Dynasty is that it left behind a vibrant Mazrui community of descendants, which produced prominent scholars who had a great impact on reviving and awakening the Muslim community in the East Africa context through their writings, publications, establishment of educational centers and inspiring their students and followers. Although they were influenced internationally by the modernist Muslim reformists, the Mazruis had their own local approaches and particularities which enriched the scholarly and intellectual milieu of East Africa and led to the emergence of an Islamic reformist movement among East Africa's Muslim scholars.

7 Some scholars and critics have accused the Mazrui Dynasty and families of involvement in slavery, allyship with the British and monopolization of the Kadhi Courts. This study has argued that Mazrui families may well have been involved in slavery, but not at

the level of the state and dynasty, if this happened at all. It was the Mazrui Dynasty that was forced by the al-Busaʿidi threat to seek out British protection. Though Mazrui Chief Kadhis were more common than Chief Kadhis from other communities, this was due to their experience in the Kadhi Court system and Islamic Law.

Endnotes

1 Mahmud al-Huwayri, *Sāḥil Sharq Ifrīqiyā* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1986), 22; Jamal Zakariya, *Dawlat al-Būsaʿīd fī ʿUmmān wa-Sharq Ifrīqiyā* (al-ʿAyn: Markaz Zāyed li-al-Turāth wa-al-Tārīkh, 2000), 27.

2 Muhammad Saeed al-Beidh was a famous scholar and preacher in Kenyan coastal areas who wrote several books on Arabic, Islamic studies and Swahili history, using both Arabic and Swahili languages. He died in 2013. See his biography at https://www.islamicpluralism.org/2172/a-loss-of-one-of-the-great-sons-of-east-africa, accessed May 21, 2023.

3 Muhammad Saeed Al-Beidh, *Ṭayy al-Marāḥil fī Tārīkh al-Sawāḥil* (Lamu: Dār al-Mīrāth al-Nabawī, n.d.), 12.

4 Ibid., 12.

5 Ibn Batutah, Muhammad ibn ʿAbdallah, *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭūṭah* (Beirut: Dāru Iḥyāʾ al-ʿUlūm al-ʿArabī, 1987), 257.

6 David B. Barrett et al., *Kenya Churches Handbook* (Kisumu: Evangelical Publishing House, 1973), 21.

7 Mark Cartwright, "The Portuguese in East Africa," *World History Encyclopedia*, July 15, 2021, accessed March 20, 2023, https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1798/the-portuguese-in-east-africa/

8 The Yaʿrubi Dynasty was an imamate dynasty which existed in Oman between 1624 and 1741. It was established initially in Oman but extended later to the Arabian Gulf, parts of Persia and East Africa. See ʿAbdallah Ibn Muhammad al-Tai, *Tārīkh ʿUmmān al-Siyāsī* (Kuwait: Maktabat al-Rubaiʿān li-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzīʿ, 2008), 47.

9 Al-Amin Bin ʿAli Mazruʿi, *The History of the Mazruʿi Dynasty of Mombasa*, Translated and annotated by J. M. Ritchie (London: The British Academy, Oxford University Press, 1995), 29-30.

10 Ibid., 29-122.

11 The al-Busaʿidi Dynasty was an imamate state which established in Oman in 1741 after the fall of the Yaʿrubi Dynasty. It was originally established in Muscat, but extended later to parts of the Arabian Gulf and East Africa. See al-Tai, *Tārīkh ʿUmmān*, 87.

12 Jamila ʿAbdu Maʿshi, *Juhūd al-Mazāriʿa fī Nashr al-Islām fī Sharq Ifrīqiyā: Dirāsa Tārīkhiyya Ḥaḍāriyya* (Mecca: Umm al-Qura University, M.A. Thesis, 2014), 11-346.

13 The term *Kadhi* is a word derived from the Arabic word *Qāḍī*, which refers to Islamic legal judge. A Chief *Kadhi*, in the British colonial and Kenyan judicial systems. It is effectively the equivalent of the position of Grand Mufti or Shaykh al-Islam in some Muslim countries.

14 See, for example, Ahmed Idha Salim, *The Swahili-Speaking Communities of the Kenya Coast, 1895-1965* (University of London: PhD Thesis, 1968), 19-418; Susan F. Hirsch, *Pronouncing and Persevering: Gender and the Discourses of Disputing in an African Islamic Court* (Chicago: The university of Chicago press, 1998), 16-240; Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels, eds. *The History of Islam in Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 251-302; Twalib Bwana Abbas, *The Kadhi Courts in Kenya judiciary, History, Procedure and Practice* (Mombasa: 2006) 1-70; Roman Loimeier and Rüdiger Seesemann, eds. *The Global Worlds of the Swahili: Interfaces of Islam, Identity and Space in 19th and 20th-century East Africa* (Berlin: Lit; 2006), 1-363; Kai Kresse, Philosophing in Mombasa: Knowledge, Islam and Intellectual Practice on the Swahili Coast (Edinburgh: Edinburg University Press, 2007) 11-287; Shamil Jeppie, Ebrahim Moos and Richard Roberts, eds. *Muslim Family Law in Sub-Saharan Africa; Colonial Legacies and Post-Colonial Challenges*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 10-388; John Chesworth, "Kadhi's Courts in Kenya: Reactions and Responses," in *Constitutional Review in Kenya and Kadhis Courts*, eds. A. Tayob and J. Wandera (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 2011), 3-17; Roman Loimeier, *Muslim Societies in Africa: A Historical Anthropology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 210-247; Kevin Wanyonyi, *The Kadhi Courts in Kenya, Towards Enhancing Access to Justice for Muslim Women* (Lund University: M.A. thesis, 2016), 13-73.

15 Hamad al-Jasir, *Muʿjam Qabāʾil al-Mamlaka* (Riyadh: Manshūrāt al-Nādi al-Adabī, 1981), 748.

16 For this reason, I have preferred the term "Mazrui" throughout this study.

17 Midad ibn Sulayman al-Hanaʾi, *al-Tārīkh wa-al-Bayān fī Qabāʾil ʻUmmān* (London: Dār al-Ḥikma, 2010), 280.

18 Mazruʿi, *History of the* Mazruʿi *Dynasty*,15-20.

19 ʿAbdallah Muhammad al-ʿAlawi, *Nashr al-Nafaḥāt al-Miskiyya fī Akhbār al-Shajara al-Muḥammadiyya* (Manuscript) (Tarim: Maktabat al-Aḥqāf), Vol.1, 6-7.

20 Mazruʿi, *History of the Mazruʿi Dynasty*, 20; Salim Hammud al-Sayyabi, *Isʿāf al-Aʿyān fī Ansāb Ahl ʻUmmān* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmi, 1965), 79.

21 Mazruʿi, *The History of the* Mazruʿi *Dynasty*, 21

22 The *Ibāḍi* sect is one of the offshoots of the *Khawārij* theological sect which appeared during early days of Islam. The sect has had a historical presence in Oman and in some areas of North Africa, and arrived in Zanzibar with *Ibāḍi* immigrants from Oman. See Maniʿ ibn Hammad al-Juhani et al, *al-Mawsūʿa al-Muyassara fī al-Adyān wa-al-Madhāhib wa-al-Aḥzab al-Muʿāsira (*Riyadh: Dār al-Nadwa al-ʿĀlamiyya, 1998), Vol. 1, 62.

23 Abdullah Saleh Farsy, *Baadhi ya Wanavyuoni wa Mashariki ya Afrika* (Zanzibar: Book Room, 1972), 9-11; Ghalib Yusuf Tamim, *Sh. Ali bin Abdalla bin Nafi Mazrui: The Pioneering Role Model of the East Africa Muslim Reformer*, (Nairobi: Signal Press Limited, 2013), 10.

24 Ibid., 29-30.

25 Ibid., 21-22.

26 Timothy J. Stapleton, *A Military History of Africa* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2013), 114.

27 Mwaruvie, J.M. "The Ten Miles Coastal Strip: An Examination of the Intricate Nature of Land Question at Kenyan Coast," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*s 1, no. 20 (2011), 176-182.

28 Ghalib Yusuf Tamim, *Bustani la Ma-Ulama* (Nairobi: Signal Press, 2016), 93.

29 ʿAbdu, *Juhūd al-Mazāriʿa*, 15; Zakariya, *Dawlat al-Busaʿid fī ʿUmmān*, 42.

30 Mazruʿi, *The History of the* Mazruʿi *Dynasty*, 30.

31 Ibid., 24-26.

32 ʿAbdu, *Juhūd al-Mazāriʿa*, 22-426.

33 Mazruʿi, *The History of the* Mazruʿi *Dynasty*, 31-32.

34 This is how their names appeared in order on a hanging plaque in the "Mazrui House," within the Fort Jesus premises, Kenya, with the title "Omani *Walis* of Al-Mazrui Family in Mombasa (1741-1837). This list, which was prepared by the Omani National Documents and Archives Authority, omitted the 1st and 10th governors in the list because the 1st governor was under the authority of the Yaʿrubi Dynasty in Oman, while the 10th governor was sacked after ruling for one year and replaced with his successor in 1836.

35 Salim, *The Swahili-Speaking Communities*,43-44; Randall L. Pouwels, "Sh. al-Amin B. Ali Mazrui and Islamic Modernism in East Africa, 1875-1947," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13, no. 3 (1981), 329-345.

36 Mazruʿi, *The History of the* Mazruʿi *Dynasty*,22-24.

37 Ibid., 22-24.

38 Owen, Capt. F.W., *Narratives of Voyages to explore the shores of Africa, Arabia and Madagascar* (London: Richard Bentley, 1833), Vol.1, 367.

39 Mazruʿi, *The History of the* Mazruʿi *Dynasty*, 24.

40 ʿAbdu, *Juhūd al-Mazāriʿa*, 233-303.

41 It is also called "Lake Malawi" and located between Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania. The Nyasa people are belong to African Nyasa tribe which is found in South-Eastern Africa mainly in Malawi, South-Western Tanzania and parts of Northern Mozambique. They are also referred as the Kimanda, Kinyasa and Manda. See Muhammad Zuhdi Yakan, *Almanac of African Peoples & Nations* (Piscataway: Transaction Publishers, 1999), 580.

42 Lake Tanganyika is an African great lake which is shared by Tanzania, DRC, Burundi and Zambia. See: Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Tanganyika, accessed March 25, 2023.

43 ʿAbd al-Fattah Muqallid Ghunaim, *al-Islām wa-al-muslimūn fī Sharq Ifrīqiyā* (Cairo: ʿAlām al-Kutub, 1997), 196-199.

44 ʿAbd al-Rahman Ahmad ʿUthman, "al-Dawr al-ʿUmmānī fī Taqwiyat wa-Taʾsīl al-Islām fī Sharq Ifrīqiyā," *Dirāsāt Ifrīqiyya*, issue no. 14 (1996), 30.

45 Manswab Abdulrahman, "Quḍāt al-Mazāriʿa Qabl Istiqlāl Jamhuriyat Keenya wa-baʿd," *Proceedings of International Conference on Reformation and Renewal in the light of Prof. Ali Mazrui's Legacy and the Future of Reforms in the Muslim World* (Khartoum: International University of Africa, Centre for research and African Studies, February 2019), 122-123.

46 John Chesworth, "*Kadhi*'s Courts in Kenya: Reactions and Responses," 3-17.

47 Farsy, *Baadhi ya wanavyuoni*, 9-11; Salim, *The Swahili-Speaking Communities*, 288-289; Abdulrahman, "Quḍāt al-Mazāriʿa," 121-154.

48 Farsy, *Baadhi ya wanavyuoni,* 11-12; Manswab, "Quḍāt al-Mazāriʿa,"132-134.

49 Farsy, *Baadhi ya wanavyuoni*, 42-43; Manswab, "Quḍāt al-Mazāriʿa," 135-138; Abdulkadir Hashim, "Qadhis' Intellectual Legacy on the East African Coast: The Contributions of Al Amin ibn Ali Al-Mazrui, Muhammad Kassim Al-Mazrui and Abdullah Saleh Al-Farsy," *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Islamic Civilisation in Eastern Africa, Kampala: Uganda*, eds. Abdu B.K. Kasozi and Sadik Uknay (Istanbul: Organization of Islamic Conference, Research Centre for Islamic History, Arts and Culture, 2006), 204-216.

50 Hassan Mwakimako, "Conflicts and Tensions in the Appointment of the Chief *Kadhi* in Colonial Kenya, 1898-1960s.," in *Muslim Family Law in Sub-Saharan Africa; Colonial Legacies and Post-Colonial Challenges*, eds. Shamil Jeppie, Ebrahim Moosa and Richard Roberts (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 123-124; The Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *The Official Gazette of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya,* (Nairobi: Government Press, June 8, 1937), accessed March 30, 2023, https://books.google.co.ke/books?id=6HMzTua9B7AC&pg=PA678&lpg=PA678&dq=Sheikh+Maamun+Suleiman+Mazrui&source=bl&ots=pCDdHB_WjO&sig=ACfU3U2ovAtbsVb7aa-NN6TVdHL_4EJBBA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjttdyFg43-AhWSoVwKHeGJDZk4FBDoAXoECAUQAg#v=onepage&q=Sheikh%20Maamun%20Suleiman%20Mazrui&f=false

51 Farsy, *Baadhi ya wanavyuoni*, 43; Manswab, "Quḍāt al-Mazāriʿa," 139-142.

52 Tamim, *Bustani la Ma-Ulama*, 45; Manswab, "Quḍāt al-Mazāriʿa," 142-143.

53 Personal interview with Shaykh Hammad Muhammad Kassim Mazrui (Mombasa: September 20, 2018); Hashim, "Qadhis' Intellectual Legacy," 206.

54 Saʿid ibn ʿAli al-Mughiri, *Ǧuhainat al-Akhbār fī Tārīkh Zanjbār* (Cairo: ʿīssa al-Bābī al-Halabī wa-Shurakāʾuh, n.d., 281

55 Personal interview with Ustadh Ghalib Yussuf Tamim (Nairobi: September 27, 2018).

56 Salim, *The Swahili-Speaking Communities*, 327-345; Hashim, "Qadhis' Intellectual Legacy," 204- 214; Manswab, "Quḍāt al-Mazāriʿa," 134-142; Mohammed H. Abdulaziz, "The impact of Islam on Development of Swahili Culture," *Proceedings of the National Seminar on Contemporary Islam in Kenya*, eds. Mohamed Bakari and Saad S Yahya (Mombasa: Mewa Publications, 1995), 172.

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Tackling Displacement: Akbar Allahabadi's Islamic Critique of Modernity in the Colonial Subcontinent

SHAHZAR RAZA KHAN

Akbar Allahabadi (1846-1921) was an influential Muslim Urdu-Persian poet of colonial India.[1] He was born in 1846 in a town near Allahabad as Syed Akbar Hussain, and he belonged to a socially affluent family that had migrated from Iran.[2] In keeping with the practices of the time, he learned Arabic and Persian in Allahabad, where his mother had moved in 1855.[3] The name of the city then became the surname by which he is known. In 1856, he also enrolled in the Jumna Mission School, though he dropped out before completing his studies in 1859.[4] Meanwhile, he

Shahzar Raza Khan is a second-year PhD student in the Critical Studies program at Vanderbilt University's Graduate Department of Religion. He received his BA and MA in Political science from Jamia Millia Islamia and the University of Hyderabad, respectively. His interests include literature, politics, and philosophy in conjunction with Religion, especially focused on South Asian Muslims.

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managed to learn English, which enabled him to study Western philosophy and ensured that he could, with ease, frequently use English words and idioms in his Urdu poetry. He took up a clerkship in a government office after leaving school[5] and, in 1866, passed an exam to become a barrister.[6] After two years, in 1868, he became a Tahsildar (sub-district collector), qualifying as a lawyer at the High Court in 1874.[7] Finally, in 1880, he became a Sessions Court Judge, a position he would hold until 1903, when he retired due to worsening eye-sight.[8] This would also be the height of his professional career, and the title of Khan Bahadur was awarded to him by the British Government for his services in 1895.[9] After his retirement he resided in Allahabad until his passing in 1921.[10]

Shamsur Rahman Faruqi[11] and Abdul Majid Daryabadi[12] write that Allahabadi was the first person in [British] India to understand the repercussions of Western civilisation and modernity.[13] He wrote extensive critiques of it, albeit in poetry.[14] My aim here is to excavate and present his critique of modernity (hereinafter, critique) that, in essence, argued that modernity was displacing Islam and needed to be checked.[15] In so doing, I will address why he had those concerns and the strategies he employed.

The article has five sections. 1) The Peculiarity of Allahabadi's Critique and the Usage of Poetry; 2) The Historical and Intellectual Context; The Critique of Abstract Modernity; The Critique of Applied Modernity and 5) The Critique of Political Modernity. The first section argues that Allahabadi is peculiar because he is the first comprehensive critique of modernity among Muslims on the subcontinent. This section compares Allahabadi with other writers from the time, such as Shibli Nu'mani and Maulana Azad, who might lay claim to such a title, in order to show that their critiques are not as comprehensive as those of Allahabadi. The second section, as is clear from the title, discusses the context in which Allahabadi was writing. There are then three sections discussing his critique. This division of Allahabadi's critique into three sections is based on the treatment of modernity by Allahabadi himself. The first section delineates his critique of modernity's abstract concepts, e.g., method, reason, etc. The second section records his critique of the impact of modernity upon human life, e.g., behaviour, thoughts,

interpersonal relations, etc. Lastly, the third section discusses his critique of modernity's political aspects, e.g., sovereignty, legal system, democracy, etc. This is not a clean demarcation, however, and there are overlaps among the three. Broadly though, these distinctions serve the purpose of rendering Allahabadi's forgotten thought clearer and, therefore, accessible. And it is this forgotten thought's peculiarity to which we will turn in the next section.

The Peculiarity of Allahabadi's Critique and the Usage of Poetry

Akbar Allahabadi was one of the three most influential Muslim intellectuals in the subcontinent in his time, the two others being Shibli Nu'mani (1857-1914) and Maulana Azad (1888-1958).[16] Possessing neither traditional nor legal-rational authority,[17] Allahabadi manifested a charismatic personality that moved people across all walks of life.[18] Members of the laity often quoted his witty couplets,[19] while politicians of stature like Nawab Muhammad Ismail Khan (1884-1958)[20] wanted to write his biography. Abdul Majid Daryabadi (1892-1977), a renowned scholar of the Qur'an in the subcontinent, went as far as to credit Allahabadi for his being a Muslim.[21] Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), the poet and philosopher considered himself his disciple.[22] Allahabdai represents the first comprehensive South Asian Islamic critique of modernity in its diverse forms, i.e., philosophical, cultural, technological, and political. We would have to wait until Muhammad Iqbal himself for another such comprehensive critique.

Some would argue that Shibli Nu'mani and Maulana Azad fall in the same category. However, I disagree with the assessment, as I explain below. Nu'mani was more specifically concerned about the intellectual challenges that Islam faced with the coming of modernity. First, he wrote an intellectual history of *Ilm al-Kalam*, showing that Muslims possess a long tradition of rational inquiry similar to that of modern civilisation.[23] Second, in order to show that Muslim rulers had historically fostered intellectual inquiry, Nu'mani wrote a biography of Abbasid Caliph Al-Mamun (786-833).[24] Third, he also wrote the biography of Caliph

Omar to show that Muslims were also well aware of the art of political rule, and that they had overseen an efficient administrative and legal system.[25] Lastly, Nu'mani also wrote a multi-volume biography of the Prophet to refute the so-called "sword thesis," which was completed by his disciple Syed Suleiman Nadvi after his death. My point here, is that these works were not intended to be critiques of modernity as such, but rather where attempts to show that the Islamic tradition also possessed the concepts and categories that modernity claimed to originate. This point has to be understood in the context of colonial allegations at that time, that Muslims were savages with no sense of rational inquiry, or the rule of law and that Islam had spread via "the sword."

Allahabadi also addresses these issues in his poetry. For instance, he writes that "the people who accuse Islam of having spread through the sword, they will also claim that theism spread through death."[26] Moreover, Nu'mani was something of a half-hearted critic. He critiqued empiricism in his work on *Ilm al-Kalam*,[27] which has been an integral part of modern inquiry, but ultimately based his own principles of inquiry on the same modern principles. For example, Nu'mani strongly criticized the prevailing idea among Muslims that the world was governed directly by God. He argued that although God is the Almighty, he has set the world to be governed through causation and not through spontaneous acts.[28] Furthermore, this project was to reformulate *Ilm al-Kalam* as a sort of "Islamic scholastic theology" that (historically) looks for the relation between reason and the "divine text." To this end, Nu'mani denied the existing methodology for deriving knowledge in Islam, and instead based it on the modern principle of rational inquiry.[29]

Maulana Azad, for his part, could be categorized as a political writer and, in some sense, as offering a philosophical critique of modernity, but not a critique of the method, science or culture advanced by Allahabadi and, later, Iqbal. Politically, Azad offers a critique because he did not separate religion from politics. For instance, he was one of the leaders of the Khilafat movement, a movement that represented the fusion of religion and politics. Philosophically, he offers a critique because, while delineating his method for deriving knowledge from the Qur'an, he calls for a kind of spiritual connection between the reader and the

Holy book, that is, the understanding the reader gains simply from reading through his spirit and dwelling of rational deliberations of what could or, could not, be.[30] This argument is a denial of modernity's claims for a detached perception. However, Azad's philosophical critique has limits, as his approach and sensibility are distinctly modern, which the preface of his *Tarjuman'ul Qur'an* neatly represents. While laying out his scheme for translation, commentary, and prolegomena of the Holy Qur'an titled *Tarjuman'ul Qur'an*, Azad approaches Islam as an idea that was revealed to the Prophet, which has deteriorated since then owing to the (increasing) frameworks and philosophies that act as intermediaries between Muslims and the Qur'an.[31] In comparison with his other works, *Tarjuman'ul Qur'an* is the comprehensive realisation of Azad's thesis. He calls for, and himself circumvents, these mediating, intermediary texts and figures, directly referring to the Qur'an.[32] According to Azad, the motive of *Tarjuman'ul Qur'an* was to reveal the true Qur'an, which Muslims of the time direly needed.[33] To him, a Muslim does not need any intermediary text or person to understand the Qur'an. To understand its true sense, he can and must understand it directly without any framework or philosophical mediation.[34] Azad claims it is an approach specific to him that has not been proposed before.[35] That is certainly an ambitious claim since, in the process, he even argues that the great commentator Fakhr-al-din Razi was at fault in his commentary, and if he had perceived what Azad had come to know, the size of his famous commentary *Tafsir al-Kabir* would have reduced by two-thirds.[36] However, I do not disagree with him since Azad's approach and sensibility are peculiar to modernity and consequently did not exist prior to modernity. Consequently, one can be almost certain that no thinker approached the Qur'an in the precise way that he did. Moreover, discussing his internment in March 1916, Azad tells us in the preface to *Tarjuman'ul Qur'an* that it is not a great burden, for he could pass his life in the solitude of reading and writing books,[37] a sensibility that is also specific to modernity.

Consequently, I argue that we can consider Allahabadi to be the first comprehensive South Asian Islamic to critique modernity as the latter manifests in the subcontinent in its diverse forms, i.e., philosophical, cultural, technological, and political. Unfortunately, he has gone unnoticed

as an intellectual, and has often only been discussed as a satirist.[38] The only work to really analyze Allahabadi's thought is the aforementioned lecture by Shamsur Rahman Faruqi,[39] and a compilation of articles written by Abdul Majid Daryabadi,[40] who was a close associate of Allahabadi and a prominent Qur'anic scholar and thinker in colonial India. There are two key reasons why I think Allahabadi's critical insights have been ignored. First, immediately after him, came the more famous and influential personality in the form of Muhammad Iqbal, who covered much of the same intellectual ground as that of Allahabadi. Second, because he did not write any philosophical treatise, or for that matter, pamphlets or articles. Instead, Allahabadi chose to convey his ideas through poetry, largely in a language which has remained subaltern. Though Iqbal also utilised poetry in much of his writing, and a significant part of his work was also in Urdu, his sheer reputation dwarfs these seeming disadvantages.

I suggest that Allahabadi's use of poetry to critique modernity was a deliberate choice that warrants further discussion. In contrast to other forms of writing, poetry provides much greater room for veiled attacks and subtle ideas. Allahabadi, being a court judge, would certainly know that poetry is difficult to censure as evidence of a rebellious act, of which there was a very possible chance for a critic of the colonial government in his times.[41] In fact, his poetry is dominated by the form of Urdu poetry known as the *ghazal*. This is an interesting choice, as the *nazm* form of poetry is better suited for commenting or presenting one's views about an issue as it is threaded around a central theme, with every couplet related to another and elaborates on the central theme. This contrasts with the *ghazal,* where the theme is absent, and each couplet is independent of the other and potentially serves its own theme. The latter, however, serves Allahabadi's purpose of remaining aloof from any potential legal proceedings as his poetic forms allowed for an infinite number of interpretations given the absence of a single, clear theme. On the other hand, Allahabadi also wished to imitate the style of the the much-revered Persian poet Sa'di,[42] whom Allahabadi presents as an important representative of Islamic tradition, in contrast to John Milton of the Western tradition.[43] Sa'di employed easy and lay Persian ornamented

with sayings and idioms to convey his thoughts. By using this particular poetic form to convey his critique of modernity, Allahabadi, therefore, achieves his twin motives. First, he is able to position himself as a follower of Sa'di's literary style, and also as a result, the second motive, which is to root himself in the Islamic tradition instead of modernity.[44] Furthermore poetry, especially in the *ghazal* form, is infinitely shorter than philosophical treatises. Thus, it is easy to read and remember, and therefore, more transportable, and transmittable. In contrast to, say, the treatises of Shibli Nu'mani or Maulana Azad that were written to critique modernity, Allahabadi's poetry is much more comprehensible and accessible to an Urdu speaking layman and it takes just a few moments to read a couplet that can then be often recited in public in an manner that would be impossible with a treatise. Nevertheless, Allahabadi was also a man of his times, and it is through a more thorough discussion of Allahabadi's own context that we can better appreciate the form and substance of his work.

Historical and Intellectual Context

In his work *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, Allahabadi writes about the famous story of Shirin and Farhad: "Shirin took the contract of providing milk in the magistrate, Farhad started working on the construction of a railroad in the mountains."[45] This selection of Shirin and Farhad's story is a highly intelligent choice for pointing out the interplay of Western ideas and their effects on India. The story of Shirin and Farhad was written by Nizami Ganjavi, a 12th-century Persian Poet where Shirin and Farhad are lovers who eventually died for each other. The story goes like this, Shirin was a beautiful daughter of the King of Armenia to whom Khusrau, the King of Persia, sent a proposal for marriage. Shirin accepted the proposal on the condition that she wanted a river of milk dug through the mountains to benefit the Persians. Khusrau accepted this seemingly impossible condition and delegated the task to a master sculptor named Farhad and married Shirin. One day Shirin came to see the site, and Farhad saw her. Farhad fell madly in love with her and expressed his feelings to Shirin, who rebuked him. Nevertheless, Farhad continued with the work but

then chose to tell Khusrau, who wanted to kill him but was stopped by a minister who made the condition that Shirin would be married to him if he completed the river. Farhad was about to complete the work, but on seeing that, Khusrau told him that Shirin had died. Hearing this, Farhad killed himself. When Shirin learned of this, she also fell dead. Returning to Allahabadi's rendering of the story, the couplet above wittingly satires what happened in the subcontinent after the conflict between tradition and modernity. Through a discussion the ideas generated by the couplet's analysis, I analyse the historical and intellectual context of Allahabadi's critique.[46] The political change in India changed and displaced various traditional structures,[47] which enabled and constrained life in a certain way.[48] In the words of Allahabadi, "Whatever are the ways and bent of the ruler, the country inevitably turns to that."[49] Here, he characterises British rule as equally, if not more, particularistic in a clear criticism of their universal-civilizational logic.

In several instances, Allahabadi laments the lousy condition of public morality owing to the displacement of the Islamic legal system by the modern system: "Wine is drunk in public, piety is not taken care of, drunkards are having fun since there is none to judge."[50] He adds, "Vanity overwhelms the human; religion is nothing but sectarianism now."[51] Daryabadi, while contextualizing Allahabadi's times, also provides a dystopian picture where each existing aspect of life in the subcontinent, e.g., accent, food, cloth, dressing style, hairstyle, sports, means of entertainment, values, morals, beliefs, education etc., had succumbed to, and been changed by modernity.[52] This forces Allahabadi to lament that "every disposition has been overwhelmed by the West."[53]

In the same context that Allahabadi was writing, Sir Syed took a step towards empowering Islam and Muslims in his own efforts to reconcile "tradition" and modernity by establishing the Aligarh school/movement. Sir Syed simultaneously advised Muslims to relax their "undue prejudices" and reconcile themselves to modern sensibilities and conditions of life "so that Islam and Muslims can prosper."[54] However, on closer inspection of Sir Syed's statement, it is clear that the reconciliation in Sir Syed's mind is, in fact, unilinear. In his struggle to empower Islam and Muslims through accepting modernity, Sir Syed does not call for

an equal relationship, but rather something that Muslims should adjust to and accept. In this relationship, then, power is unequivocally tilted toward modernity. Indeed, Sir Syed adds, "The old method is completely broken down. It is like a broom, and the string binding the twigs have been broken so that they have all fallen apart and cannot be reunited unless a fresh cord is provided. The times are constantly changing, and the method suited to the past is not suited to the present."[55] Here, the fresh cord and method suited to the present is modernity.[56] It is important to note that Sir Syed accepts tradition, but also attempts to use the values of modernity to reunite it and serve Islam. So intense was his conviction in the goodness and restorative nature of modernity that he overlooks the power relationship in this metaphorical allegory of fresh cord and scattered twigs.[57] The helpless twigs shall remain useless and be hopeless of becoming a broom until unified by the fresh cord, which, unlike twigs, is a complete thing in itself and makes possible the re-creation of the broom. Nonetheless, Sir Syed was not ignorant of the upheaval generated by his conviction in modernity and tried justifying this relationship of adjustment by referencing a debate around the role of the concept of *maslaha* (the public interest) in Islamic reasoning,[58] which was an important debate of that time.[59] For example, Rashid Rida, the editor or *Al-Manar*, had made a comparable argument.[60] The problem, however, was that foregrounding the principle of *maslaha*[61] as a method for interpreting Islamic tradition results in it no longer remaining the divine blueprint but becoming merely an appendage to the context.[62] Perplexed by this notion, which meant that the modernity of Allahabadi's times was given great power, Allahabadi returned to the thinking of the great mediaeval jurist and philosopher al-Ghazali. Al-Ghazali had also supported the principle of *maslaha* (advocating for change according to the time and context in the name of the public interest) but had argued that, above all, such moves had to safeguard the purposes of the Shariah.[63] Therefore, Allahabadi wrote, "I am not against acting according to the *maslaha* of the time, but remember that faith is also important thing."[64]

Allahabadi agreed that modern knowledge, given the present circumstances, was necessary and beneficial for Muslims,[65] and to a certain extent, they should learn it. He also praised Sir Syed for

fostering modern education among Muslims.[66] But, he also warned Muslims of its shortcomings, such as deism and lack of spirituality and recommended they should stick to Islam. Meanwhile, he was highly doubtful of Islam's ability to remain intact in the face of fading tradition.[67] Therefore, as we have seen and will see below, oftentimes Allahabadi conflates tradition with Islam itself, as he critiques modernity and asks Muslims to stick to tradition/Islam. This broad position then reverberates across Allahabadi's work, and it is this position that I have consider representative of his critique of modernity. In this section, I have argued that Allahabadi's critique was the result of his radically changing times. Below, I move to consider his critique of modernity, of which his critique of what I call "abstract modernity" is the first element.

The Critique of Abstract Modernity

By the time Allahabadi was writing, the British had established themselves as the masters of the subcontinent. Whatever had remained came under British rule after 1857. As part of their claim to an enlightened rule backed by reason and science the British also claimed their superiority over the "savages," and, of course, attacked Islam for being irrational. At this moment, Allahabadi, unlike Nu'mani, who himself had tried to prove Islam's rationality by showing that it also possessed the values of modernity, launched an attack on the most basic premise of modernity, that it allowed for a detached perception which made possible objective rationality. Thus, Allahabadi asks, "why should I see the world by being detached from it?"[68] By questioning the very premise of the modern project, Allahabadi opens up a possibility for emotion and positionality to become valid elements of accessing knowledge. This move would make Allahabadi's claim for the existence of God straightforward, since now he can argue that one only has to feel God's existence to know it is true. Allahabadi's declaration that "the only belief that I espouse is Tawhid"[69] does not need any additional argument now, since it is his emotions that affirm this.[70]

This strategy could be satisfying for readers on the subcontinent who wanted to believe in God, yet were continuously being subjected to the demands of "rational inquiry" in Allahabadi's times. Nevertheless, it was a dangerous manoeuvre. This move clearly leads to a moral relativism, while also denying Islam's claim of being the sole truth. Indeed, polytheists could as well claim the rightness of their own position in the light of such conditions. And it also does not solve the ambiguity that had gathered around the nature of Tawhid in the subcontinent in the wake of intense polemical rivalry between Deobandis and Barelvis.[71] Under such conditions, Allahabadi wrote, "The philosopher does not find God in debate, he tries to disentangle the thread while being elusive of the end."[72] But this kind of reasoning again raises the question as to why the philosopher cannot find God. For Allahabadi, the philosopher is so involved in disentangling the thread, that is, the effort in laying out the argument, that he is not able to find the end, i.e., God. It means that he/she should as well focus on finding the end and not simply on disentangling the thread, both are necessary. However, in this couplet, Allahabadi also asserted that it is part of the speciality of philosophers to approach the matter this way, that is, to not focus on God. Allahabadi then elaborates in another couplet, saying, "Madness is better than such reasoning which does not lead one towards the God."[73] Consequently, Allahabadi fails to present a coherent rebuttal to the challenge of modernity and becomes somewhat self-contradictory. On the one hand, Allahabadi is critical of the approach of the philosophers because they only concern themselves with the means or the argument, and do not concern themselves with the end result or purpose. Allahabadi, on the other hand, is only concerned with the end result and thus rational or reasoned arguments are not allowed to run their course. However, this does simply mean that for Allahabadi the ends for any argument or inquiry justify the means to reach that end. Rather, through a close reading, one finds that he wishes for means, arguments, and inquiries to be structured in such a fashion as to produce the desired end. With this point in mind, Allahabadi declares, "at last, reason is also a creation, to what extent can it support you?"[74] Allahabadi recognizes the feebleness of reason, for the search for God through reason cannot happen without any preconceived

notion of what has to be founded. In other words, how does one maintain a balance between the use of reason, that is, means, and the search for God, that is, the ends? Reason is not an independent entity. Instead, it exists in the mind of a person, who, to an extent, can mould it to reach the desired ends. For Allahabadi, then, reason is feeble, and simply a faculty which is the base of modernity, and not a thing that can be entrusted for everything.

Allahabadi's lack of trust in reason's ability to reach God is contrasted by his stance toward intuition. For him, it is not reason, which resides in the mind, but intuition, which resides in the heart, which has the power to grasp the God.[75] He adds, "language cannot grasp reality."[76] Therefore, God is inexpressible as well as incomprehensible, because it is the mind that comprehends. Through this brilliant approach, that the absolute God is grasped by the heart and not understood (and that which could be understood is not God), Allahabadi has offered a logical means to affirm the Islamic God and reject deism, a peculiarity associated with modernity in the age succeeding Newton. This was anxiety for Allahabadi generated by modern education, which was one of the primary concerns for Allahabadi and can be found recurring throughout his discussions of modernity in his poetry.[77] At the same time, by arguing that God is grasped by the heart, and not understood (and thus , that which could be understood is not God), Allahabadi could evade the difficult situation of appearing to contradict the principle of Tawhid. In other words, to say that one understands a being, one has to comprehend it in consciousness. But to comprehend God in consciousness would mean that God is finite, which would contradict Tawhid.

Aside from intuition, Allahabadi regards love[78] as a means to bring about nearness to God.[79] Here, Allahabadi situates himself in the Islamic mystical tradition where love is considered the essence of God, for it helps gain nearness to God as he is infinitely loving and infinitely loveable.[80] But, it can also be seen that love is being treated here as an instrument to gain nearness to God. It is not the love per se which is necessary, as Allahabadi has been careful to mention. Love, cannot automatically provide access to God, but as noted with regard reason (see above), it should be utilized in such a fashion that would enable it provide access to God.

Chittick also attests to this truism and writes that "Muslim philosophers have never been interested in things per se."[81] Thus, it is the utility of love and not love per se, that is of interest for Allahabadi.

Allahabadi does not, however, totally reject reason. He does not shy away from using it to argue for the existence of God and infers,[82] "The setting and order of the world are telling that there is a creator of this world."[83] The inference, however, is somewhat weak. The setting and order of the world could as well be shown to infer that there are multiple Gods who carry out their different works in alignment with one another. One would have to reason in a particular way to ensure that it proves the existence of one and only God. For example, one will have to first assume that the world is in order, which itself is a highly contentious assumption. Building upon the first assumption, he/she would then have to argue that the things which conjoin to build this order must have a cause or causes and did not come into existence on their own. It does not take much to disrupt the line of reasoning and disprove Allahabadi's conclusion. But, as we have seen throughout the discussion, Allahabadi calls for a form of reasoning which must affirm the desired end. So if one's reasoning goes awry, then it is clearly not the right form of reasoning. One's reasoning must affirm the oneness of God to be the right kind.[84] Another instance of this point is when Allahabadi criticizes the modern sciences and declares that, "Science is not acquainted with the ways of Islam; God is beyond the reach of the telescope."[85] This clearly shows Allahabadi's thinking. Argumentation and reasoning, although not irrelevant, must be utilized in a particular way in order to achieve the desired ends. However, here Allahabadi seems to have conflated science with empiricism. Allahabadi takes the telescope as the representative of science, though it is an instrument to *see* things. Only with this understanding of science can Allahabadi declare that "disbelief has spread its wings in the name of science."[86] It is in this vein of exploiting a particular method to reach an end, i.e., Islam, does Allahabadi declare that "captivity in Islam is better than being free."[87] In the same vein, Allahabadi asserted that "the philosophy which allows everyone to pursue whatever they want is the philosophy of Devil."[88] Thus, the poverty of abstract modernity, e.g., method, reason, etc, as a means to know God and affirm Islam, as

we can see, is the main issue for Allahabadi as far as what I have called abstract modernity is concerned. However, Allahabadi was also far more skeptical of modernity than simply accusing it of forestalling the human knowledge of God or considering its utility for affirming Islam. In fact, as we will see, he saw (or foresaw) that modernity can lead to the inducing of desires that are at odds with Islam, which he saw as a great danger not only for the subcontinent, but for Muslims worldwide.

Critique of Applied Modernity

In his *The Question concerning Technology*, Martin Heidegger points out that the humans who think modern technology is merely an instrument to use in accordance with their wishes are at fault, for modern technology advances a way of thinking and doing things which dominates the human mind and holds sway over every possible genre, e.g., art, poetry, farming, etc.[89] Humans are in an unfree relationship with technology, which hungrily modifies everything that it encounters.[90] Allahabadi says something similar, not only about technology, modernity more broadly, albeit in his own poetic way. Allahabadi laments, "The hope of affection is longer there since when the telephone became the medium of conversation."[91] The key word in this couplet is *muravvat* which means affection in Urdu but comes from the Arabic root meaning good etiquettes, tender-hearted, and loving. The term is usually described in reference to a person for Urdu-speaking Muslims. For Allahabadi, therefore, technology was conditioning people in a way that was an antithetical to Islam. Similarly, he accused technology of subverting the conception of God in people's minds.[92] However, Allahabadileaves to the imagination if technology refers to the tangible modern machines which are so powerful that humans feel like God or if it is the technology itself, as Heidegger means it, that is responsible for the situation. It could even be both, considering there is a common practice in Urdu poets to make one couplet render multiple meanings according to the need.[93] Nevertheless, the couplet does mean that modern technology is fostering values antithetical to Islam. In an interesting *nazm* titled *Barq-i-Kalīsā* (Light of the Church), Allahabadi satirises (colonial) modernity by enunciating

its effects on the Muslim community, and analogises it with a lady who is attractive in almost every aspect.[94] As he describes her, Allahabadi discusses how she has destabilised Turkey, Egypt and Palestine through her beauty.[95] Here, we can notice how Allahabadi considers modernity to be attractive but, at the same time, incompatible with Muslim values and as an element that is unsettling the Muslim territories and spaces by virtue of the attraction that it possesses.

Allahabadi further writes that the "lady" (modernity) is so attractive that he would sacrifice everything for her, but on the precondition that she will have to be his alone.[96] As Allahabadi sees it, not only did the Muslims at large not resist colonial modernity owing to its attractiveness, but rather they imitated it to the extent that they lost their own peculiarity. Such was his conviction that it was the Muslims vociferously using their agency to follow their colonial masters by choice, that is, the proud missionaries of modernity in India, that Allahabadi declared, "What do I call it except the ill fortune of the nation? They do not know anything except imitation."[97]

Furthermore, in the *nazm*, in response to Allahabadi's proposal that one could sacrifice everything for lady modernity, the lady replies that she cannot be affectionate toward the Muslims, for they bravely hold onto their faith and are even willing to sacrifice themselves for it.[98] This is interesting to see as, although Allahabadi says that he would be willing to sacrifice everything, nevertheless the lady considers his faith, i.e., Islam to an exception to that which he offers to sacrifice. This suggests a rather interesting point that modernity assumes that a Muslim, in any way, will stick to his/her religion and, therefore, cannot be a good follower. Moreover, Muslims will have to especially make it clear that they are willing to sacrifice their religion for modernity. However, this idea of sacrifice does not mean that a Muslim should totally forego her/his religion but rather will modify his/her values in line with modernity. This is the counterintuitive reply to the lady's objection that Muslims sacrifice everything for their religion. Allahabadi then tells the reader that lady modernity is not aware of the present conditions of Muslims, for they have abandoned their qualities of bravery and faith for rationality and modern culture. As he puts it, "*consider* Islam a thing of the past"

(*italics mine*).[99] On hearing this, the lady replies happily that if this is indeed the case, then she will love him.[100] For Allahabadi, then, Islamic values are the cornerstone of Islam, and to not observe them means to not observe Islam. One does not have to abandon Islam altogether, but is in essence doing just that by leaving Islamic values and modifying them toward the values of modernity. Only once one's Islamic values have been suitably modified, will modernity accept them.

The obvious objection to this argument could be that these adaptations and modifications are being done out of the free will, and the colonial modernity is irrelevant. I have two replies to the objection. One is that this *nazm* is a satire by Allahabadi about the functioning of modernity in the colonial setting of India. Here, modernity functions to create and promote desires antithetical to Islam, much like Chomsky's concept of manufactured consent. Two, the will of the Muslim talking to the lady in Allahabadi's *nazm* can be discerned in relation to Rousseau's view of "actual will" and "real will." Here, the will to accommodate modernity is the actual will created through modernity's influence, which needs to be replaced by the "real will" of Islam. This will is the true human disposition, that is, "without any corruption." My interpretation is supported by Allahabadi's couplet, where he disregards any kind of personal desire emanating from his own will and sticks absolutely to the Islamic will. He says, "The desire/will is only of God, I do not/will not desire anything; I will try my best to be God's slave."[101] In the same vein, however, more absolutely, he had declared, "be content with God's will; why this word of desire, God is the creator and the sovereign, command is of God, you are nothing."[102] This couplet, apart from rejecting human desires inconsistent with Islam, also marks the political aspect of Allahabadi's thought. It ensures that he will not be accepting the idea that there could be any other sovereign or lawgiver other than God. This makes him a critic of political modernity, and it is to this aspect of his critique that we now turn.

The Critique of Political Modernity

The subcontinent had enjoyed a long period of Muslim rule before the British. British rule eventually came to subside the "Islamic" structures

that the earlier regimes had established. For example, the education system was displaced by Wood's Dispatch of 1854 and was replaced by modern education. The Shariah legal system was replaced by 1864 through codes like the Indian Penal Code of 1860.[103] This replacement initiated a lot of changes in the subcontinent (see above) and also generated anti-Islamic values in the society. As Allahabadi was quick to note, "Wine is drunk in public, piety is not taken care of, and drunkards are having fun in the absence of Islamic Judges."[104]

This change in the polity made Allahabadi dispel the notion that a political modernity was possible while simultaneously launching a bid to re-assert the Islamic political system.[105] As he notes, "If the religion does not have rulership, then it is nothing but a mere philosophy."[106] This is because religion for him is a socio-political system.[107] Hence, backing Islam's bid for rulership, he wrote "God is the creator and the sovereign, command belongs to God, you are nothing."[108] As he makes these arguments, Allahabadi affirms the sovereignty of God along with His legal superiority in the face of the modern conception of human sovereignty and its lawmaking powers, which had become the norm post-1857 as the British Parliament claimed the power to make law according to the usual practice of the Westminster system.[109] In another instance, Allahabadi more clearly declares Islamic law, that is, the Shariah, to be superior and argues, "The exquisite dictum is of Qur'an, the matchless law is of Rahman."[110] It is worth noting that of all ninety-nine names given to God in Islam, Allahabadi chose to cite the name Rahman, which means "the most merciful," thereby reasserting the moral superiority of Islamic laws. This point is further emphasized in Allahabadi's following couplet, "he who abides by the conceptions of Halal and Haram will be safe from punishment in the sky."[111] Allahabadi's claim is made in the face of modernity's perception of Shariah, which considers it inefficient and dogmatic and declares it in need of "modernising revision."[112]

In this wake of these "modernist revisions," Allahabadi argues that the subcontinental Muslims should "not change one's position even if there is change of fortune, and be immovable like a stone in the ring is immovable."[113] To demonstrate his intention of not succumbing to these modernist demands revision, in the very following couplet, Allahabadi

states (while also reminding himself), "O Akbar! The only people who got the pleasure of God's remembrance are those who understood disbelief and stayed away from it."[114] Here, Allahabadi considers modernity to be a kind of disbelief, and asks Muslims to remain aloof from it. He also asks Muslims to be perceptive enough to recognize the disbelief, which could be veiled, and be wary of it. How one might recognize this disbelief, Allahabadi does not say. Rather, he simply issued a warning to the (subcontinental) Muslims writing, "[the Muslim] community is from the Qur'an, if the Qur'an is abandoned, [the Muslim] community is lost."[115] If the foregoing couplet is a strategy to reassert the legitimacy of an Islamic political system, then it undoubtedly fulfils that task efficiently. Indeed, in the words of Wael Hallaq referring to the centrality of the the Qur'an for the first Muslims, "The Qur'an represented the rallying doctrine that shaped the identity of the conquerors, thereby distinguishing and separating them from the surrounding communities."[116] In the face of identities generated by ethnicity, language, territory, which could dampen the communal feeling among Muslims, Allahabadi's aforementioned couplet marks a rejection of modern (secular) identity as well as asserting the primary of an Islamic political community, the Ummah. Through the aforementioned couplet, Allahabadi also rejects the modern conception suggested by figures like Bilgrami that Muslim could be a solely secular-cultural identity,[117] since Allahabadi inextricably links the Muslim community to the Qur'an. Allahabadi would have been quite dismissive of Bilgrami's commitment to being called Muslim even though he found "Islamic theological doctrine wholly non-credible."[118] For Allahabadi, as he writes to Daryabadi, it was upsetting to see Muslims not being committed to [Islamic] piety and focusing only on the political part of Islam,[119] and he said that leaders must be pious as well.[120]

What is also important for Allahabadi, besides his unwillingness to recognize modernity's view that humans are sovereign and have law-making powers, are his attacks on the institution of democracy, which is so cherished by modernity. Allahabadi declares, with a moralistic tone that "although the angels of Rahman are very sacred and pious, the majority is still with the Devil."[121] Through his revealing of the deplorableness of democracy, the two parties at each polar extreme

come to be pitted against one-another, the Party of God (represented by Angels), and the Party of the Devil. For Allahabadi, even the Party of God is bound to lose in the democratic system when pitted against the party of the utterly despicable Devil, as the latter commands a majority. The fact that there is a clear perception of good and evil and even then, the latter wins in Allahabadi's eyes, shows his negative opinion of democracy. Democracy, according to Allahabadi, is not merely prone to favour the rhetorician (as Socrates argued), but is definitely bound to favour the evil on the basis of its reliance on the numbers in place of authority and piety. Allahabadi seemed to have formed this idea of democracy following the Young Turk Revolution, which was a topic of discussion among Indian Muslims at the time.[122] In Allahabadi's view, the revolution, the toppling of the regime of Caliph Abdul Hamid II (in the name of serving the country), proved to be a disaster in wake of the Libyan War and Balkan Wars, and thus Allahabadi said, "if one wishes to serve the country, there is no need of council."[123] Apart from arguing for the devilishness of democracy, Allahabadi also claimed a certain otiosity in reference to British Indian democracy.[124] He drew an analogy between the condition of voters in the General Elections,[125] and to a "puppet is dancing in a cage."[126] Although reductive, it is interesting to see that Allahabadi clearly views the lopsided power relationship between the natives and their colonial masters.

If the British creation of an Imperial Legislative Council in India ostensibly meant a greater say for natives in the colonial government, which was a common feeling among the political elites,[127] Allahabadi disagreed saying that "some are praying to God, some are equipped with swords, only we are the ones believing in the folly of resolutions."[128] He deemed participation a folly as he saw the backing of coercive power as essential and central to any political space, which only the British had.[129] Allahabadi, since he recognized that even limited reforms still entailed a certain kowtowing to the British, protested against the idea of self-governmance, saying that "Nothing could be done in this country through self-government, someone should end the poison itself, temporary relief will not help."[130] The poison, here, is the colonial government, which, as a missionary of modernity, seeks to foster a way of thinking, values,

and political structures antithetical to Islam. How, Allahabadi, can it be ended and permanent relief achieved? By reasserting Islamic thinking, values, and political structures.[131]

Conclusions

In the article, I have discussed Allahabadi's critique of modernity in three aspects: the abstract, the applied and the political. First, I showed that Allahabadi declined to grant modern methods of detached perception and rationality any greater validity and argued that any crticial method must be selected with the end goal in him, i.e., God, which he takes for granted. In the second part, I discussed how Allahabadi saw (colonial) modernity as shaping people in a way that was antithetical to Islam by fostering modern values. Finally, in the third part, we can see Allahabadi challenge modernity's established sway in the political realm by reasserting the validity of an Islamic political system.

Broadly, Allahabadi was concerned about modernity displacing Islam and was critical of modernity itself, from the normative vantage point that Islam was the truth. However, he did not consider modernity and Islam to be two categories which could not coexist. Rather, as we have seen in this article, Allahabadi's concern was the unequal power relationship between modernity and Islam. He was willing to accommodate modernity and modern values to the extent that it does not estrange one from Islam. We can see this view, in the following quadruplet "Study in college with ardour, blossom in parks, fly in the clouds and swing in the sky; but, remember an instruction of this slave, do not forget Allah and your reality." Ultimately, Allahabadi preferred Islam and its tradition,[132] which he presumed to be the normative truth.

Endnotes

1 Case, Margaret H. *The Social and Political Satire of Akbar Allahabadi. Mahfil* (1964), 1(4), p. 11; Rajmohan Gandhi says that in the 1900s, Muslims of India were under the influence of three people. One Among them was Akbar Allahabadi, the two others being Shibli Nu'mani and Maulana Azad (Gandhi, Rajmohan. *Eight Lives, A study of Hindu-Muslim encounter* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 67).

2 Husain. Iqbal. *Akbar Allahabadi and National Politics, Social Scientist* (1988), 16(5), p. 29.

3 Ibid

4 Ibid

5 Ibid

6 Case, *The Social and Political Satire of Akbar Allahabadi,* p. 29.

7 Ibid

8 Ibid

9 Ibid

10 Ibid

11 Faruqi. Shamsur Rahman. *Akbar Allahabadi: Nai Tehzibi Siyasat aur Badalte huye Aqdar,* (New Delhi: Zakir Hussain Yadgar Khutba, 2002), p. 17.

12 Daryabadi, Abdul Majid. *Zikr wa Fikr Akbar Allahabadi* (Uttar Pradesh: Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad Memorial Committee, 1951), pp. 19-23.

13 The concept of modernity in Urdu is referred to through numerous words. Although I am unable to provide an exhaustive list since the meaning of the word, at times, also depends upon its usage in the sentence, I will point out some prominent/common words that refer to modernity. *Jadidiyat* and *nayapan* mean modernity. Simply *Jadid* or *Naya* means modern. *Nai roshni, Tehzib* or *Nai Tehzib* (depending upon the context) refer to modern civilisation, while *Maghrib or Maghribi tehzib,* which literally means West or Western civilisation, also refer to modernity.

14 Allahabadi could also be among the first thinkers in the Muslim world who engaged critically with Western civilisation. The Young Ottomans group that reacted against the modernist *Tanzimat* reforms was formed in 1865, which is roughly the time around when Allahabadi started writing his satirical poetry regarding Western civilisation.

15 One can also see that Allahabadi not only sees Islam as a religion but also as a tradition embodied in figures such as al-Ghazzali and Sa'di, and it is how the usage of the terms Islam and tradition should be understood in the article.

16 Gandhi, *Eight Lives Matter,* p. 67.

17 Although he was a judge in a colonial institution, Allahabadi's influence did not rest on those legal-rational foundations. As we will see, he was very critical of the modern legal-rational authority of the time.

18 Daryabadi, Abdul Majid, *Khutut-i-Mashahir* in *Abdul Majid Daryabadi*, ed., (Lucknow: Nasim Book Depot, 1969), p. 34.

19 Ibid.

20 Nawab Muhammad Ismail Khan was the President of United Provinces Muslim League and is considered one of the founding fathers of Pakistan.

21 Daryabadi, *Khutut-i-Mashhir*, p. 35.

22 Gandhi, *Eight Lives Matter*, p. 67.

23 Nu'mani, Shibli. *Ilm al-Kalam* (Āzamgarh: Matb'a Ma'arif, 1903).

24 Nu'mani, Shibli. *al-Mamoon* (Lahore: Karimi Press, n.d).

25 Nu'mani, Shibli. *al-Farooq: Life of Omar the Great, the Second Caliph of Islam* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1939)

26 Allahabadi, Akbar. *Kulliyat-i-Akbar* (New Delhi, 2011), p. 114.

27 Nu'mani, Shibli. Al-Kalam (Azamgarh: Dar-ul-musannifin Shibli Academy, 2016).

28 Ibid., pp. 21-31.

29 Nu'mani, *Al-Kalam.*

30 Azad, Abul Kalam. *Qur'an Tarjuman'ul Qur'an: Volume 1* (Lahore, n.d), pp. 45-52.

31 Ibid., pp. 45-7.

32 Ibid., pp. 45-6.

33 Ibid

34 Ibid., p. 47.

35 Ibid., p. 52.

36 Ibid., p. 47.

37 Ibid., p. 40.

38 Faruqi, *Akbar Allahabadi*, p. 4.

39 Faruqi, *Akbar Allahabadi.*

40 Daryabadi, *Zikr wa Fikr.*

41 The Gagging Act was in force from 1857 to 1878 to quell the criticism of the British Empire in India, but the Vernacular Press Act of 1978 was especially oriented towards the "Oriental Languages" and penalised the criticism of the British government in India in "Oriental languages."

42 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 32.

43 Ibid., p. 253.

44 This shows that Allahabadi not only saw Islam as a religion but also as a tradition embodied in the Islamic figures such as Sa'di.

45 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 340.

46 I must clarify beforehand that Allahabadi never critiqued modernity systematically. My intellectual pursuit makes me relate to and tease his answer from his poetry and present it in the form of a systematic argument.

47 Daryabadi, *Zikr wa Fikr Akbar Allahabadi*, pp. 19-23. Three major changes that colonial rule fostered was the replacement of the traditional educational structure after Macaulay's reforms, the replacement of the Shariah legal structure with the modern English legal structure, and the replacement of the hand-loomed textile with the mechanically loomed textile imported from Britain.

48 Daryabadi, *Zikr wa Fikr Akbar Allahabadi*, pp. 19-21.

49 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 233.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., p. 253.

52 Daryabadi, *Zikr wa Fikr Akbar*, p. 102. See also pp. 102-04.

53 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 255.

54 Ahmad, Syed. *Writings and speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan* (Bombay: Nachiketa Publications Limited, 1972), p. 94.

55 Ahmad. *Writings and speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, 115.

56 Ibid. See also 198.

57 Ibid., p. 113.

58 Ibid., p. 5.

59 See Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 112-13.

60 Ibid

61 *Masalihat* or *Maslaha* is a theological concept in Islamic jurisprudence and discourse that seeks to know and decide on a matter that does not have any direct-specific reference in the Qur'an and Hadith. *Masalihat-i-waqt* is slightly different from simply *Masalihat*; it is deciding on matters with respect to time and space in the light of scripture in order to benefit humanity.

62 Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age*, p. 113.

63 Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age*, p. 115.

64 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 36.

65 Ibid., p. 238.

66 Ibid., p. 188.

67 Ibid., p. 365.

68 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar,* p. 417.

69 Ibid., p. 393.

70 Later, Wittgenstein attacked Cartesian doubt on the same point and questioned the (logical) necessity of doubting if there is no need. Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *On Certainty* (Oxford, 1969), p. 41.

71 Deobandis and Barelvis, two major sects of South Asian Islam, engaged in an intense polemic on the matter of boundaries and the normativity of Islam. See Tareen, SherAli. *Defending Muhammad in modernity* (Notre Dame, 2020.

72 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar,* p. 151.

73 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar,* p. 87.

74 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar,* p. 13.

75 Ibid., p. 408 and 502.

76 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar, p.* 390.

77 Ibid., p. 365.

78 The word used by Allahabadi is *ishq* which literally translates to love, albeit that is also translated/translatable to passion owing to the feature of love turning to passion. Hence, I will use love and passion accordingly.

79 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar,* p. 9 and 361.

80 Chittick, *Divine and Human love in Islam*, pp. 171-2.

81 Chittick. William C. *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy: The quest for Self-Knowledge in the teachings of Afdal al- din Kashani* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 41.

82 See Daryabadi, *Zikr wa Fikr Akbar Allahabadi,* p. 25.

83 Ibid.

84 By this position, Allahabadi, at once, established himself in the tradition of al-Ghazzali whom he refers as the representative of Islamic tradition.

85 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 318. The invention of the telescope also signifies the power of human intellect; thus, here, he also points toward the limit of intellect. This echoes al-Ghazzali's view of the relation between God and intellect as he said, "Praise be to the God, alone in His majesty and might, and unique in His sublimity and His everlastingness, who clips the wings of intellect well short of the glow of His glory, and who makes the way of knowing Him pass through the inability to know Him." See Imam al-Ghazzali. *The Ninety Nine Beautiful Names of Allah* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2007), p. 1.

86 It is very possible that science in his times meant empiricism and that is the reason he takes the telescope as representative of science which is an instrument to *see* things. Shibli Nu'mani also critiques empiricism in *Jadid Ilm al-Kalam.*

87 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 150.

88 Ibid., p. 164.

89 Ibid., p. 18.

90 Ibid., p. 3.

91 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 403.

92 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 156.

93 W. Pritchett, Frances *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its Critics* (London: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 106-23.

94 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, pp. 181-82.

95 Ibid., p. 182.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid., p. 230. This attests to Fanon's famous argument in his *Black Skin White Masks* that colonised inevitably reject his/her customs/traditions and tries to be like the coloniser. See Franz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 2008).

98 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 182.

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid., p. 407.

102 Ibid., p. 405.

103 Dhulipalia, Venkat. *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam, and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 355.

104 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 291.

105 Allahabadi wrote in a period when the memories of the Mughal rule were fresh, and to critique the modern political system was simply to restore the earlier system rather than advocate of some kind of modern Islamic state, which became a fashion in the 20th century.

106 It should be recognized that here the word philosophy has been used pejoratively. Also, several instances show that Allahabadi does not regard philosophy in high esteem. He declares elsewhere, "We call philosophy the cause of depravity." See Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, pp. 81, 196.

107 Ibid., p. 315.

108 Ibid., p. 405.

109 I consciously chose the word lawmaking over legislating since legislation typically deals with creating and enacting laws in a legislative assembly, while lawmaking is the broader word and is not ordinarily restrained to any institutional setting.

110 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 363.

111 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 281.

112 Hallaq, Wael B. *Sharia: Theory, Practice, Transformation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 3-4.

113 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 312.

114 Ibid.

115 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 348. Following Allahabadi, whom Iqbal called his teacher (Gandhi, *Eight Lives*, p. 67), had also said the same, "Community is from religion, if there is no religion, there is no community." See Iqbal, Muhammad. *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 2018), p. 229)

116 Ibid.

117 Akeel Bilgrami, *Secularism, Identity and Enchantment* (London: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 217-40.

118 Ibid.

119 Akbar Allahabadi, *Khutut-i-Mashahir* in *Abdul Majid Daryabadi*, ed., (Lucknow: Nasim Book Depot, 1969), p. 165.

120 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 357.

121 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 405.

122 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p.383.

123 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, 373.

124 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, 528.

125 There is no date given for the elections. However, the only council elections for self-government that happened in Allahabadi's lifetime were in 1909 and 1920.

126 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, 528.

127 Bandhopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition*, pp. 279-84

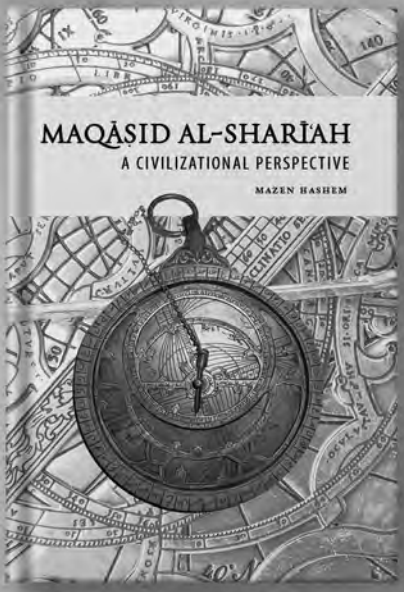
128 Daryabadi, *Zikr wa Fikr Akbar Allahabadi*, p. 59.

129 Ibid., p. 57-9.

130 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 393.

131 Ibid., p. 367.

132 Allahabadi, *Kulliyat-i-Akbar*, p. 333.



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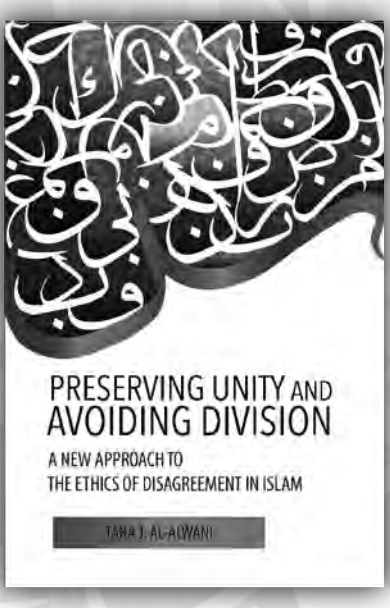
The previous decade witnessed a plethora of books on the subject of maqasid (aims of Shariah), stressing that Islam's commandments have overarching aims, and that the individual texts of Qur'an and hadith can only be adequality understood within the universal principles of Islam. While the classical work on maqasid is immense, that of Shatibi (d. 1388 C.E.) gained the utmost authority as it theorized for five general aims of Shariah, which can take one of three levels of priority. Since then most of the works on the subject of maqasid have been a variation on Shatibi's approach. The major contribution of this book is to marry Ibn Khaldun's perspective with that of Shatibi. In such a way, a new maqasid theory that attends to the insights of history and social sciences is constructed. The proposed theory is marked by a high degree of synthesis and maintains the major categories of Shatibi, but only after redefining and expanding them. Moreover, the new enhanced theory of maqasid is marked by being multidimensional, where the five goals of Shariah operate in an open space. In addition to its academic contribution, this new work hopes to make maqasid more amenable for appreciation and application in our time.

Mazen Hashem is a sociologist who specializes in social theory and social change. His research falls within the areas of discourse analysis, social movement, and institutional analysis. He has published in refereed journals, and is the author of six books in Arabic in addition to many articles. Currently he is working on a series of five books on the subject of social sciences and the integration of knowledge.



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Nonetheless, as Islam underwent expansion and development, and the initial generations of Muslims passed away, theological and jurisprudential debates became prevalent, leading to a neglect of the overarching objectives and aspirations of the Ummah. These protracted and intense divisions and conflicts endured over centuries, adversely impacting the advancement, coherence, and potency of the Muslim civilization. The book in question presents numerous exemplary instances wherein celebrated historical figures and scholars within the Muslim community d*isplayed tolerance and comprehension*. It fervently urges contemporary Muslims to revive such a spirit of forbearance and understanding. By doing so, they can foster a sense of unity, comprehension, and advancement within the broader framework of the Muslim civilization.

Taha Jabir Al-Alwani was a graduate of Al-Azhar University and an internationally renowned scholar and expert in the fields of Islamic legal theory, jurisprudence (fiqh), and usul al-fiqh.

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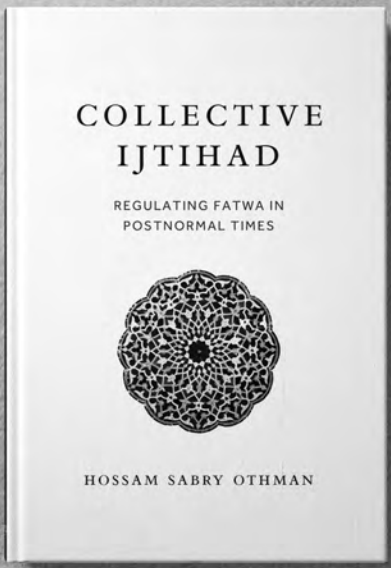

COLLECTIVE IJTIHAD

REGULATING FATWA IN POSTNORMAL TIMES

BY HOSSAM SABRY OTHMAN

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THE CONTEMPORARY postnormal world is posing for Muslims ever strange ethical, financial, and medical dilemmas for which modern jurists are expected to provide a suitable theological response. Yet even with an encyclopedic knowledge of Islamic law, the task facing them is daunting. In the real world this level of complexity has led to chaos in fatwa issuance with many scholars voicing concern at the direction to which things are moving and calling for the process to be regulated. This book critiques fatwa issuance in the modern context and calls for application of a synthesized approach using the mechanism of collective ijtihad to formulate rulings and overcome current weaknesses. It carefully examines central juristic concepts and puts forward consultative ijtihad as a viable alternative to the controversial classical ijma' approach which may be difficult to realize in the contemporary world.

Hossam Sabry is a faculty member at Al-Azhar University in Egypt, College of Languages and Translation, Department of Islamic Studies. His main research interests include Islamic legal theory, contemporary Fiqh issues, and Western Quranic Studies. He has a long history of translating academic papers and books from English to Arabic and vice versa. His Arabic translation of François Déroche's Qurans of the Umayyads: A First Overview was recently published. He also co-translated The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies, which will be published soon.

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IIIT is the premier international organization focusing on providing a platform for the unique perspective of Muslim thinkers, scholars, and practitioners in the humanities and social sciences. For almost 40 years, IIIT has been a voice for moderation, diversity, and modernity in Islamic thought, with an emphasis on concepts such as co-existence and building the capacity of communities to address their common global and local challenges. Today, IIIT is the voice of the Muslim intellectual tradition in the west, and a champion for scholarship, knowledge, and learning in Muslim societies across the world.

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- Disseminate research through publication and translation, teaching, policy recommendations, and strategic engagements;
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- Conduct theoretical research to renew the role of Islamic thought as an impetus to advancing education in Muslim societies.

Mailing Address:
All correspondence should be addressed to:
AJIS, PO Box 669, Herndon, VA 20172-0669 USA
Phone: 703-230-2847 • Fax: 703-471-3922
www.ajis.org • ajis@iiit.org

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